



Eternal Prisoners

A Story in the Cthulhu Mythos

Thomas Davison

Eternal Prisoners
By Thomas Davison

A publication of:



Author's Foreword	1
Chapter One	2
Chapter Two	10
Chapter Three	18

Author's Foreword

My name is Dr. Thomas Davison,

I am a lifetime fan of horror. The first horror book I read many years ago as a young boy was by H. P. Lovecraft. I was hooked. I have been fortunate to achieve some minor success in publishing over fifty poems and short stories. However, most of these works were in the non-fiction genre. My published work is predominantly about my prison experiences. I teach college coursework inside prisons to incarcerated felons.

I wanted to try my hand at my favorite genre of horror. The short story *Eternal Prisoner* is that attempt. I intended it as a salute to the master, the author of that first book. When I say it was many years ago, it indeed was. I am 65 years old. My close circle of fellow writers, my alpha and beta readers, state it is a scary story. We shall see if what little I have learned about the craft of writing is enough. I must share with the readers that I felt much like that nervous 12-year-old boy reaching for that Lovecraft book.

Edgar Allen Poe died in 1849 at age 40. Then about 30 years later, one of Poe's biggest fans, Howard Phillips Lovecraft, was born in 1880. Lovecraft died in 1937. I have often pondered if Lovecraft was a form of reincarnation for Poe's spirit. They had much in common, including never making a living out of their writing, never receiving recognition for their work during their lives, and finally, never becoming 'famous' until after their deaths.

Yet, today both these men are recognized as significant contributors. Major contributors to the literary genre known as horror. As some of you may know, this series of short stories (EP) is my first outing into Horror writing, my favorite of all genres. I firmly believe you are not living if you don't love a good scare. I am confident I will never learn the craft of writing horror well enough to master it. However, I console myself with the knowledge I can always be a fan for my lifetime. So, please accept my humble beginner's contribution in the spirit from which it comes. A salute to a master of his craft. I would like to extend my gratitude to Filipe Lichtenheld, Editor, Dream of Shadows for the generous gift of his time and mentorship.

I am grateful to all the horror fans and the good folks at I/O Enterprises for making this story possible.

Thank you, the reading audience, for your consideration.

Chapter One

Medusa

My name is Professor Henry Silberhutte, III. From the Southern Texas University of Ancient Studies, STUAS. Three days ago, I received a strange package in my mail. I have kept the mailing label and the accompanying note, which I have preserved and attached to my interpretational text.

H. Silberhutte

Mailing Label:

MAILING LABEL PROPERTY OF: ARKHAM SANITORIUM

From:

Dr. Herbert West, III

Director, Arkham Sanitorium

333 Arkham Abyss Circle

Arkham, Massachusetts 13331

SEE NOTE OF EXPLANATION ATTACHED TO PACKAGE

To:

Attention: Professor Silberhutte

Chair, Ancient Studies Program

STUAS, Southern Texas University of Ancient Studies

Luvcraft, Texas 31113

Note from Dr. West:

Dear Professor Silberhutte, STUAS,

It is my sincere privilege to draft this brief note of explanation for a scholar of your stature and reputation. I must regretfully inform you about the status of a former student of yours, John Steele, initially housed in the Arkham Sanitorium, who is under my care. Approximately two weeks ago, our local authorities discovered Mr. Steele of the renowned AMAH, Arkham Museum of Ancient History. He was in shock, near fugue state, and physically battered. When he did not respond to their questioning, the local authorities brought him to us for a formal diagnosis and treatment. After an initial dose of medications, the patient experienced a brief period of lucidity. Although highly agitated, he produced a manuscript, which you will find attached to my note. Before succumbing to a complete psychotic break, his last request was to mail his work to your attention at STUAS in Luvcraft, Texas. Unfortunately, two days ago, Steele attacked, overpowered, and injured several of our security staff. The local police have

officially placed Steele in the “Missing Persons” status. In an arson investigation, the Arkham police also listed Steele as “A Person of Interest”. Despite a comprehensive search, Steele remains missing. The latest theory is that he must have died in the fire, with my most profound respect and regrets. There was a small fire at AMAH on the same night he assaulted our staff.

Your humble servant,

Dr. Herbert West III, Director, Arkham Sanitorium

***Translator’s Notes: INTRODUCTION TO MANUSCRIPT...**

The manuscript (if I can deem it such) I found enclosed in the package. This very odd text appears to be created by a brilliant former student, John Steele. John, without doubt, is the finest and most gifted student I have ever mentored. Dr. West would not be the first person to underestimate John. People often made the mistake of classifying him as a bookworm, only to be surprised later to find he had the heart of a warrior. However, he was also highly impatient. After two short years of study, he hastily departed STUAS. Before completing the coursework required to earn his doctorate in Ancient Studies, he left us. I have always felt that John moved on because nothing was remaining we could teach him.

His manuscript is bizarre, yet it is also extraordinary. It is, more precisely, a collection of random papers composed of fragments. These fragments incorporate scribblings, symbols, diagrams, and glyphs. I have translated and deciphered most of the fragments and pieced them together. At least now, I have it sorted into chronological order, of sorts. Some portions remain utterly incoherent. Steele's manuscript contains (at a minimum) subject matter scripted in half a dozen distinctive ancient languages. Possibly two more that I must confess, I could not decipher. John Steele wrote some material in what appears to be his blood, and there were pieces of human (John's?) hair stuck in the manuscript. Since Steele did not craft the document in chronological order, interpretation was even more challenging.

It would take me, or another expert, several months to develop such a document. Yet, Dr. West states John produced this in only two days? After three days of labor, I have done all I can with little rest or sleep. Steele’s words are his own. I have left them unchanged. The only exception is a personal note of warning, addressed and written for “my eyes only,” by John. Judge for yourselves. The “occurrence” concerns an entity that John refers to merely as the “Eternal Prisoner.” I cannot believe that John Steele died in that fire. This entire incident may need further investigation. What happened to you, John?

H. Silberhutte

***Translator Notes:**

Written after the occurrence taken directly from John’s notes created during “the brief period of lucidity” referred to by Dr. West in his note. John penned a few transcripts in the past tense, most probably when he was lucid and remembered it correctly, as an event that had previously occurred. John scripted most of the entries in the present tense, almost as if Steele is somehow ‘stuck’ in that actual moment in time. Did he draft these pieces when he was in the “fugue” state of mind? Or after experiencing a “complete psychotic break?”

H. Silberhutte

From an excerpt of the John Steele Manuscript:

Everything has changed since my last visit to my special museum in Arkham, which was so strange and frightening. There is no more normal, no boundaries, no restrictions; it is all simply chaos. She has not permitted me to sleep through an entire night since that horrific day. Every night I awake: screaming, trembling, sweating, shaking like a leaf in the wind. The nightmare of that day's events, her presence, is relentlessly identical. I am akin to a bizarre video, permanently looping, entrenched in my fevered brain. I don't know how much longer I can endure it. If I can't break this circle of madness soon... I'm petrified of what I may have to do to end this. I am experiencing the identical, vivid, terrifying nightmare every single night. In this lurid vision, a prisoner turns the tables on her captors by transforming herself into something "else." She accomplishes this transformation with help from the Old Ones. In return, she has to pay a terrible price. Be forewarned if you read their names aloud. For these ancient names still hold much power!

From an excerpt of the John Steele Manuscript:

The ill-fated museum expedition began like all the others. Choosing the identical, familiar turns, I unexpectedly discovered myself in a completely unfamiliar section. How could this be? My special museum was as familiar to me as my own home. How could I lose my way? It just wasn't possible. At first, the murky room appeared empty. Wait... there is a dark human-sized figure towards the very back of the unfamiliar room. Was it a room? Or was it *
fragment untranslatable from this point * *H. Silberhutte*

From an excerpt of the John Steele Manuscript:

The first feature of the sculpture to appear in my focus is a hard woman-face with a wide gaping mouth. A human couldn't possibly stretch their mouth open that wide, could they? The snarling mouth is the deepest of ebony. Are those teeth? Teeth which are long, piercing, sharp, fangs? Her face looks angry, permeated with hate. I can perceive her upper torso now, her arms and breasts almost entirely covered with ancient hieroglyphics (writing) and glyphs (figures). I can recognize runes from the Egyptian Book of the Dead. Older markings, Mesopotamian, Harrapan, Osirian, others beyond my meager knowledge. How much I wish my old mentor Professor Silberhutte was here. I could use his expertise and his support. I stopped my review abruptly because I felt stunned. I recognize one marking as the symbol of the Necronomicon! Oh my God, what is that? What a strange shape she is. She doesn't have skin below her waist. At least not normal human-looking skin. What is that exactly? Dark circles of scarfs, or veils, or is it scales? The lower part of the carving appears to be circular, coiled. Is it a statue of a woman, an animal, or part of both? It is so lifelike.

Her body is many murky, sad colors: from dark to darkest blackness. Shades of black I have never seen before. She is a shadowy, evil-looking creature. Why is this corner of the museum so dark? Such weird colors. What is she made of? Certainly not the old, common stones. Perhaps some one-of-a-kind, multi-colored obsidian? Where is the museum's standard bronze name plaque to explain this thing? What is her history? What is her origin?

I feel almost hypnotized. I find myself compelled to take cautious baby steps closer to her. Why do I feel so drawn to this thing? Wait, I can stop myself now, before, before what? Before it is too late. Before an inanimate object does what? Comes to life and bites me? Don't be a fool, John. I am nobody's coward. I am not about to allow this spooky-looking statue to prevent me from enjoying my museum! I am the regular here. This object, this thing, she is the invader, not me. She seems to exude an overpowering sense of ancientness. Maybe if I touch her, I can figure out what they carved her from? I'm nearer to her now. I need to take a few more steps and reach out. No, I am shuddering at the thought. What if she moves? What if the evil of this thing overcomes me? Can an artifact be evil? Yes, I sense it emanating from this dark, shimmering monster.

What is happening here? Stop this right now, John! Me, a grown man, an educated man, afraid of a museum sculpture? I approach her tentatively. I am obsessed with the thought of an even closer look. Simultaneously, I am feeling apprehensive. Why does she frighten me so much? She is not real. She can't be! I am petrified of one thought. What might happen to me if I take my eyes off her, even for a moment? Would she attack me? Would she overcome and devour me?

Suddenly, the air that borders the dark, ominous sculpture bites with an icy coldness. This is incredible! I can see my breath in the chilly air directly in front of me. I feel frigid, frozen, and fearful. Why am I so frightened? I begin to shiver. My teeth are clacking together madly. I clench my jaw as tightly as I can. I was straining to hold it shut, but to no avail. Then I hear a faint hissing sound. I jumped, startled and unnerved. Where is the sound coming from? Can it be? The strange sounds are emitted from the statue's open jaws? I strain, trembling, to hear the soft sounds more plainly.

It takes every ounce of courage I possess. I finally force myself nearer to that gaping mouth-hole. I am practically touching her. I can't seem to curb the trembling contortions of my body. Cold as it is, I can still smell my body sweat. I hear a soft, wheezing resonance from deep within the shadowy, ominous mouth-pit. How can sound spew from the mouth of a statue? It is simply not possible. Perhaps something trapped inside is making these noises? Yes, a rodent. Or a small animal, maybe? Then I hear the vibrating voice, vomit, "*Or-ro-bo-ros.*" Next, I perceive more reverberations. These sounds echo. As if they are away. In the far distance. They ring much louder than before. Like a multitude of voices. Voices that are chanting in unison. "*Or-ro-bo-ros, As-mo-de-us, Nyar-lath-o-tep, Mo-loch, Al-as-tor.*" The chanting stops abruptly.

Again, I can hear a faint sound. This sound is much closer to me. It is issuing from the lightless, obscure mouth-hole yet again. This time, the hissing sounds are clearer, sharper, more distinct, and more powerful. "Ahh... Yesss... the old names... how sssweet." What madness is this? I can feel an overwhelming urge to climb inside her mouth. To the source of the hideous sounds. End the insanity. Find peace. End the pain. Yes, maybe it would be the best solution. Do it now. She has you now. She will be forever in your mind. Deep inside your dreams. I unwillingly reach upwards to grab her shoulders. I pull myself higher up into her gaping maw. I realize my right hand is now grasping her mouth fangs. I feel the strain on my shoulders. I work to pull myself even higher. I am high enough to thrust my left arm inside. Inside with her. I straddle her shoulders with my thighs tight around her, where she waits for me. I place both my hands, up to my forearms, into the pit that is her mouth.

What am I thinking? What am I doing here? My thoughts run amok in maddening circles. I see–hear–smell–feel–thoughts–emotions. Veils–pain–an old hurt–assault–within four walls. I sense an overwhelming hatred for all things male. Tears–men–hurtful–stupid–man–things. I can sense the brutal attacking–tearing–leering of sweaty... what? Men–brutal and cruel men–all hateful men. “No! Not all men do these things. Not me. I didn’t hurt you.” Can others see her? Hear her? Feel her? Smell her? Did she reveal herself to me alone? Why to me? I mean her no harm. My breathing has become hoarse and ragged.

It is so difficult to think straight. Why do my thoughts feel so foggy? Now, what is happening to me? May God in heaven help me. Please. She is moving. The entire statue base is rocking madly back and forth. I feel something wet and sticky, stroking my arms and then pulling. Tugging. Yanking roughly. She shakes more violently. She is dropping me deeper inside her. How is it possible? Now I am immersed down past my shoulders. Almost half of my body belongs to her. Soon. Very soon. What is soon? Suddenly from someplace, deep inside me. I hear a puny, panicked voice. “Stop! Stop this now!” The fog dulling my ability to concentrate inexplicably lifts briefly. “Fight. Fight or die!” I struggle and push hard, out and away. My body jack-knives into the air. Free. Did I do that? Or did she spew me from her mouth? I feel myself falling. I hit the ground with a muffled–painful thump. Then nothing. Smothering darkness.

From an excerpt of the John Steele Manuscript:

Where am I? More importantly, where is she? I find myself crawling. On my hands and knees. Quaking. My hands were searching, seeking the way out. Will she let me leave? After shuffling several feet, I feel elated. I must be heading toward safety. Instead of the path to freedom and security that I seek–my hands grasp onto something cold. It is the coiled, chilly snake base of the statue. What... how... I must let go! What is happening now? The tail twists and turns under my hands. The rough stone scales chaffed my palms mercilessly. I must get away. What if the deadly coils wrap themselves around me? Maybe that was her intent? Is she amusing herself? Is she toying with me? She could easily crush my life. I feel drained and frail as I struggle to pull myself into a standing position.

From an excerpt of the John Steele Manuscript:

My palms feel soaking wet. I bring them toward my eyes for a closer inspection. Instantly I become nauseous. I can clearly see the deep imprint of scales. Scale imprints criss crossing over the palms of each of my hands. There are dozens of tiny cuts. I am oozing, oozing with my blood. This is what madness feels like! I struggle with my erratic thoughts. She is real. I can’t tolerate this anymore! Nowhere or no one is safe. There are no constraints anywhere. No boundaries on what is or isn’t possible. No! Oh my God! Have I gone mad?

I break away, stumbling in my haste to tear myself away from the Stygian monster. Finally, I shake myself entirely free of the statue-thrall. I stumble again. Any sense of false bravado is long gone. Hurriedly, I turn to leave. I am running, stumbling, lurching as fast as my shaky legs will allow me to move. I must get out of this room. I must leave this place. Now! Before she swallows me. Or what remains of my sanity.

End of translatable material, H. Silberhutte

At this point, John (his last moments of clarity?) again references me as his mentor and sends me a personal warning. At this point, I could no longer continue to decipher anything at all. It will probably remain that way. I am considered the foremost living expert on Ancient languages at the risk of sounding braggadocious. I had always hoped that my former student John would return, complete his studies, and become my successor. What did they do to you, John? I can't rest until I find you or avenge you, my son.

From the personal journals of Professor Henry Silberhutte

John Steele's battle with the Eternal Prisoner, that I have named Medusa, marks our first encounter with one of their kind. In our ongoing war with the Elder Gods of Chaos, it may become the first of many such conflicts. To defeat these once human demons, I fear it will become a life-long campaign.

Eternal Prisoners: as defined by John Steele

Any of the many beings who were once human and committed the unforgivable sin of making a deal with The Old Ones, Elder Gods, or The Chthonic Gods, as referred to by Professor Silberhutte. Worshipers of Chaos have been employing these sad creatures for centuries as their tools. Now they are immortalized monsters, a steep price to pay for making a deal with demons. My pity for the Eternal Prisoners is barely outweighed by my fear of them ~ ***John Steele***.

Codicil—added to Last Will and Testament of Henry Silberhutte:

My name is Professor Henry Silberhutte, from the Southern Texas University of Ancient Studies, STUAS. *In the event of my sudden or untimely death or disappearance:* my attorney has been instructed to send these journals immediately, without any concern for the rest of my estate, to John Steele. *In the event:* John proceeds me in death, then they are to be passed on to Sierra Masters. *In the event:* that both John and Sierra proceed me in death, then they are to be passed on to Frederick Masters. *In the event:* all three people named herein proceed me in death, it won't matter any longer. The world as we know it will have come to a grisly end.

Selected excerpts from the personal Journals of Professor Henry Silberhutte:

What happened to John Steele in Arkham is only the beginning of this war with Chaos. His experience with an Eternal Prisoner reinforces how fraught with danger our entangled lives have become. I, Professor Henry Silberhutte, hold a large part of the responsibility for our current reality. Let me be more transparent and more honest. If a man cannot be honest in his diaries, when and where can he be? John, Sierra, and Frederick have several things in common. First, they have all been students of mine at some point in their lives, and all are gifted in ancient studies. Second, they have all encountered one or more of the Chthonic Elder Gods and their handiwork. Finally, they all have put their lives at risk to investigate "activities" when requested to do so by me, their old professor. An additional thing they all hold in common, which I never speak of aloud but will put into this journal, is that I love them as if they were my own children. John Steele finally recovered enough from his near-death encounter with one of the Eternal Prisoners, let us call her *Medusa*, to reach out to me. I have brought him home to Luvcraft, Texas, to rest and heal. Here in Luvcraft with his family, the four of us.

Selected excerpts from the personal Journals of Professor Henry Silberhutte:

I am a very, very old being. Never mind, how old exactly. Let us just say much older than the lifespan most humans will be blessed with. I am not Henry Silberhutte the second or third. I am the one and only Henry Silberhutte. This is as it was meant to be for many centuries. No, I have not found the elixir of life, and, no, I am not immortal. Because of my (gift?) of longevity, I am a very wealthy man. Occasionally, it has required me to bequeath my wealth to a second (son) or third (grandson) version of myself. I am forced to move too often and have had few close friends. It is challenging to grow to love someone, only to watch them die in what appears to me to be the blink of an eye. Wealth built over many ages can be handy indeed. I used my money and the power that comes with it to demand an independent investigation into what occurred at Arkham last summer. All charges and inquiries have been dropped, and John is now a free man again. The two people responsible for filing the charges against John dropped them when it became apparent that a real investigation was at hand.

The first, Dr. Herbert West, III, (a real third, well, sort of) Director of the Arkham Sanatorium. Secondly, Hank Seamus was the newly appointed Chief of Police (said to have come from the Chicago area). These are the only two of our enemies entirely out in the open in our life-or-death struggle. There are many more in that cursed area. Some in Arkham itself. Others from Salem, Innsmouth, Dunwich, and other more rural areas in Essex County. It has long been a human stronghold for those who worship the Elder Gods, the Old Ones. I have always called them the Chthonic Gods during my long struggle with them.

Selected excerpts from the personal Journals of Professor Henry Silberhutte:

We know Arkham is the center of modern Chthonic sorcery. We understand that the AMAH, Arkham Museum of Ancient History, is the source of multiple portals. Some groups, coven, or sects of immense power have opened these portals. Their end game is to bring back the Chthonic Gods themselves. The result would be the end of our world! Who can stop this powerful cult of chaos worshipers? I don't know if we can prevent them from world domination. However, my small group of friends and I are determined to try. A brief description of our team follows:

The Team: as defined by Professor Silberhutte

John Steele- his parents were both killed by an occurrence. As a small child, he managed to survive with a heightened sense of all things Chthonic. While not wholly immune, he has developed an extreme resistance to these powers. He is an expert marksman, trained in martial arts, and a world-class expert on ancient history and artifacts. Put bluntly; he is one tough guy. John Steele is my warrior against Chaos.

Sierra Masters- she is simply the most gifted psychic object reader I have ever witnessed in my entire long lifetime. In ancient times they would have called her an Oracle. Today the art of reading token objects is called psychometry or psychoscopy. She is a highly gifted psychic. She is a beautiful, intelligent woman, focused on avenging her elder sibling. Her older brother Adam Masters was kidnapped, tortured, and sacrificed by the same Cult of Chaos we remain battling today. Her younger brother Frederick is also a member of our team.

Frederick Masters- is a former Army Ranger with intensive elite military training. He possesses a psychic ability; Frederick can sense danger. He can feel it in objects, people, or any given

situation. This unusual talent has saved our little band on numerous occasions. Frederick also has an unhealthy infatuation with explosives. He feels the best way to seal an other-dimensional portal is to destroy it utterly.

Professor Silberhutte- as I have previously mentioned in this journal, I possess some knowledge of the ancient. With a specific focus on all things Chthonic. I am the last surviving member of an elder race of man, the Alnass Najma. I am small in stature, as are all of my people. However, we have larger brains with greater capacity than humans. Depending upon your perspective, I have been blessed/cursed with longevity. Many centuries ago, I dabbled with Alchemy. Now, I would be considered by some to be a full-fledged Wizard. I know a few spells, and I have accumulated a personal collection of ancient artifacts. These select items possess specific properties. Most people would refer to these properties as *'magical.'* I have been in this war since I first encountered a cult of demon-worshippers.

“Ph’nglui mglw’nafh Cthulhu R’lyeh wgah’nagl fhtagn”

I am attempting to be transparent and honest, so... my motivation is this. Out of fear of our abilities with extrasensory perception, ESP (magic), the Chthonic Gods and their followers killed my wife, children, family line, and entire race. They hunted us down, like animals and killed us, one by one. There never were a lot of us, my people. We lived very long lives, were slow to marry, and even slower to have children. The population of my race was roughly two thousand. Now, I am the last of my people. They did not torture and murder my race in its entirety because of something we had done. Oh no, they made my race extinct simply because we were gifted with extrasensory perception, and had the potential to stand against the Chthonic deities and demons. The same damned group of Cthulhu worshippers is now headquartered in the northeastern United States and more potent than ever. John managed to seal one portal, but there are many more.

Chapter Two
Night-Gaunts

“Ph’nglui mglw’nafh Cthulhu R’lyeh wgah’nagl fhtagn”

From the Journals of Professor Henry Silberhutte:

Frederick reports that our worst fears have come to fruition. The local Arkham coven has become regionally strengthened by utilizing a recent post-COVID-19 phenomenon, the Zoom meeting. While working undercover at a local rave in the infested Arkham area, Frederick obtained a scrap of paper containing a series of numbers and letters circulating amongst suspected cult members. Frederick later determined that the sequence of letters and numbers was a Zoom meeting code.

By leveraging this newly rediscovered and enhanced technology, every dark witch, warlock, wizard, or wanna-be supporter in that forever accursed area could meet together online, pool their dark psychic powers, and chant open a portal. Frederick (our computer guru) has managed to hack into their plans. The chanting John heard when he encountered the Gorgon-like entity is what opened a portal from her other-dimensional prison into our world. I shudder when I consider the damage this unleashed evil would have wrought had John not burned the rune-covered timbers that framed her portal. The portal vanished once the runes on these massive timbers were burned away. As an Eternal Prisoner of the Chthonic Deities, she cannot be slain. She will live for as long as the Demi-Gods and Demons who created her remain alive.

Finally, Frederick discovered their plans to host a nationwide (blanketing the entire USA) online meeting in precisely thirty days. At that innocuous Zoom meeting scheduled for next month, they will open a portal to allow them to pass freely back and forth between Arkham and The Nameless City itself. Then, precisely 60 days later, once certain spells have been cast and required blood sacrifices met, his sleeping place in R’lyeh will be unsealed. A second upcoming Zoom meeting will be held worldwide to accomplish this unsealing.

Only a worldwide chanting and spell cast could generate enough of the ESP gifted and telepathic dark energy required to unseal His dreaming home deep under the seas. Awaken Him from his eons-long, dream-like state. Open a portal between Arkham and His place of slumber. I am referring to Him, the vilest, most evil incarnate Chthonic deity or demon of them all, Cthulhu himself. This insane sect of Cthulhu-worshippers would reanimate this Thing, which is steeped in filth and death. They would help It to rule our world. They must be stopped! Tonight, we intend to strike back.

From the personal journal of Sierra Masters

My name is Sierra Masters, and I have been in love with John Steele since the first day we met in the private library of Professor Silberhutte. Our relationship has been the worst unrequited love that could be imagined. Yet, the only times I have been truly happy are when we are together in my life. I am the only person whom he allows to call him Johnny. He is the only man I have ever allowed to call me Red. He is my fate, my soulmate, and the love of my life. On that first day, we met, my hand brushed against his accidentally, and I received a psychic reading

of John. In a lifetime of psychic readings, the most potent positive reading I have ever received. I learned more about John Steele, the man, in a few brief moments than anyone else has or ever will learn about him. After catching that flash of insight into the very depths of his soul, I instantly fell head-over-heels, deeply in love with this man. He is a man of core values, goodness, and all things light. Unlike most men I have met in my life, he is not intimidated by a woman's power or intellect but instead responds warmly, lovingly, and sincerely. Johnny is simply the best man I have ever met in my life.

We never seem to have the time to discuss what exists between us. Later tonight, we (all four of us) will be going on a mission to strike back at The Cult of Cthulhu, The Worshipers of Chaos. It saddens me to sense the vast number of fellow human beings who embrace this madness, this route to insanity on earth: so much anger and hate. Before we leave on our mission tonight, Johnny and I will have a long discussion about our relationship. I am weary of behaving like some emotional school girl afraid to move forward. If we don't survive tonight's efforts, I refuse to die without first claiming what is mine, John Steele.

Sierra Masters –Second journal entry

I have just now returned from John's room. Glorious! It was as if he sensed my intent and every move. Like he could read my mind. He was so thoughtful. He is a kind and gentle lover, yet filled with unbridled passion. He was so serious. Before he would make love to me, he promised me that we would marry upon our return. Oh, my Johnny, you are so funny. Of course, we will wed. Did you actually believe you had a choice in the matter? I suppose for the sake of your male ego I will let you go on thinking it was all your decision.

From the personal journal of John Steele

I have just returned from our team's briefing in preparation for tonight. Our enemies' arrogance will be their downfall. Their series of computer servers are all housed in one central location. Due to their fear of discovery by the authorities, they maintain their servers, which contain the sole source of their membership data, historical data, and financials—basically all of their critical records. According to Frederick, this data is not backed up anywhere. No backup tapes are stored offsite. No encrypted copies are sitting in the cloud. Just one source. Why take such a risk? The servers are housed in a business called Arkham, C.T.U & C.H.A.O.S. Enterprises. A very subtle group, hey? They feel there is no risk because a portal guards the servers. Knowing their penchant for using Eternal Prisoners (EPs), you get the picture.

Our biggest problem, we don't know which EP we will be facing, or what to prepare for tonight. Frederick plans to blow their servers to bits. We must get past their security, another EP or multiple EPs, and destroy their servers. If we can accomplish these tasks, the faction's hellish plans will be set back months, possibly years—no national or worldwide Zoom meetings. Most importantly, no Cthulhu would be released upon our world.

In my final moments of struggle with the EP the professor calls Medusa, I read her thoughts. I did not push myself free from her mouth. Instead, she spat me free. I believe she did this after she determined I wasn't like the men who had kidnapped, raped, and abused her for many years. When I returned to burn the timbers of her portal door, she never stirred or tried to use her powers. I sensed her approval and relief, of my closing the portal.

On a personal note, earlier today, the most beautiful, intelligent, funny, and powerful woman I have ever met in my life agreed to become my wife. I can't believe that she said yes. I realize that I am the luckiest man in the world. I also realize we will need a great deal of luck to survive this night. I pray I have some good luck remaining. Red has blessed my life from the first time we met. I strive to be the type of man, and husband, someone as unique as Sierra Masters deserves.

From the personal journal of Frederick Masters

When we first arrived at the field near Arkham, C.T.U & C.H.A.O.S. Enterprises, I immediately went into Ranger mode. Our squad has the finest equipment. Thanks to the Professor's wealth and connections, we are equipped with the latest communications, including cameras, earpieces, personal microphones, and body monitors. We possess night vision, heat-detecting goggles, and full body armor. Also a plethora of guns and ammunition.

Most importantly, we had the Professor with his spells and powerful artifacts that he has collected over the centuries. I took the point. My military training and my special gift made me the obvious best choice to lead this evening's shindig. I loathed the idea of going into this mission with such limited info on the nature of what we will be facing. Who or what is the portal guard? Possibly guards? We have no choice. There is no time. We must strike now!

It was evident at the mission briefing that my sister Sierra and John had finally consummated this long-standing attraction between them. Their smoldering looks, their drawn-out touching, their physical closeness. The professor was grinning at them like the Cheshire cat. I was happy to see it. I would never say it to his face (it is a guy thing), but John Steele is a man I admire and respect greatly. John Steele is a man's man, and he is good for Sierra. I constantly bust his chops and call him Johnny, but I would take a bullet for him in a heartbeat.

Sierra Masters senses something above them and shares a quick psychic thought with the Professor. "Something powerful above us. Yes, it is an EP!"

Sierra finds herself slipping into the mind of the mighty monster.....

She is the mother of her kind and a creature of the dark. She sits patiently with her Flight—the last brood of Night-Gaunts. Nesting within the crisscrossed metal I-beams located in the massive warehouse's uppermost reaches. She can sense the other, much smaller members of what remains of her once vast brood. Two dozen of her children remain, the last of her breed, her kind. They had once numbered in the thousands. Now they were near extinction. Perhaps others still existed in the dream worlds, the realms between. In this realm, they were all that remained.

The metal building is the size of four football fields squared, with the sect's servers located in the center, the core, the heart. She waits. Once many eons ago, she had been human. Now, she has grown weary. Every day she wishes for the peace and deep sleep of death. She cannot die. She will be forever trapped in this monster's body. Her ancient head begins to nod, and she soon falls back asleep. Moments later, she abruptly awakens. She smells humans nearby. Not the ones she is accustomed to observing. The humans wore the robes of the cult, which

granted them safe passage to and fro. These four humans wear no robes and are sneaking slowly into the darkness. She is tired of blood and death. Rather than go herself, she sends out a mental directive to one of the young ones, one of the eager ones. She sends a mental shout-thought in the direction of Hegra. “You have wanted to play. I am sure you have heard them. Go and kill them all.”

She begins to nod off again. Much to her surprise, she is awoken some five minutes later. The four tiny humans are surrounding the fluttering, spasming, dying body of Hegra. She plays with the idea of becoming angry. She begins to bunch her muscles, spring out, and dive into a flight of death and utter destruction. She pulls herself back with a weary sigh. “Those who wish to go and avenge Hegra, go now. Do not be as careless as he.”~ She is watching intently as all but a handful of the brood begin their gliding dives to destroy the humans.

Sierra breaks her link with the EP....

As they journeyed more profound into the dark, unlighted warehouse, Sierra heard the mental command from the mother to her brood. Sierra called out in a calm voice loud enough for all to listen to her, “*Night-Gaunts!*” The intruders' heads immediately looked upward. All of their party were schooled in the lore of the Elder Gods. Now they knew their enemy. Night-Gaunts.

Sierra tries to recall everything she knew from Chthonic lore....

According to the legends, Night-Gaunts were a species of flying creatures that worshiped the Elder God Nodens. They were described as having a smooth, whale-like, blackened hide. Their bodies were long, slender, and humanoid. They sported curving horns on their head and possessed leathery, bat-like wings. However, the Night-Gaunts had no faces. Instead, they had a dark, blank expanse of flesh where one would expect a face to be.

Frederick dropped quickly to his knees and began wrestling with the contents of one of his canvas backpacks. Within seconds Steele was by his side. Frederick never looked up from his work. “Sticky bombs,” he muttered to Steele. “Okay, I will distract it. You stick the damned thing,” responded Steele. Frederick simply nodded. As quickly as he had appeared, John disappeared into the darkness to Frederick’s right side.

John was staring upwards and his night goggles gave him the view of a dark mass above their heads dropping quickly toward them. The mass began to grow rapidly and soon was only moments from them. “You only have a few seconds left, Freddie. Then it will be right on top of us. I will draw it out further to your right,” Frederick snapped a reply “Got it, Johnnie-boy!”

John Steele barely had time to determine that the Night-Gaunt was at least three times the average human's size. The descriptions never mentioned they came that large, he thought to himself. He rolled nimbly to his right. The eerily quiet, diving creature seemed to be heading straight for the professor. Steele quickly but firmly pushed the professor down and out of the sight of the diving monstrosity and pulled his .45 caliber, 1911-style pistol. He began pumping shots directly at where he thought the thing’s heart must be, continuing to stride further right. The diving Night-Gaunt adjusted its glide and now was centered over John Steele. John emptied all twelve rounds from his magazine into it. The monster didn’t seem to be affected by Steele’s bullets. As the creature swooped closer and closer, it seemed inevitable that it would take John

Steele's head off. John did a nimble drop, tuck, and roll as the creature passed harmlessly over his flattened body.

It turned in flight, surprised that it had missed him. John heard an audible clunking sound. The silent Night-Gaunt felt something sticky and heavy on its backside. The creature reached up with its claw-like hands to pull off the offending item. John saw tiny, brief, flashing lights, followed by a loud *BOOM!* The Night-Gaunt dropped heavily from the air and hit the concrete warehouse floor with a sickening thud. It was lying, twitching on the ground just in front of Steele. Its body was smoking heavily. Frederick was by his side, his face covered by a wide grin. Suddenly Frederick heard awful piercing cries. It took a moment for him to realize the screams were probably mental, not physical, coming from the mouthless, dying Night-Gaunt. Its grayish life-blood was oozing onto the concrete floor. The thing was huge and very intimidating-looking, even as it lay dying.

Sierra heard the EP above thinking, "How is it that four such puny little creatures can destroy a mighty one of the brood?" She was angry with herself for sending only one of her children on the attack flight and angry at her child for toying with them too long. Sierra heard a quick message directed to the dying Night-Gaunt "Hegra, goodbye, little one. I warned you not to play so much with your food." Sierra Masters sensed the dying Hegra was struggling mightily to respond to its mother, but it coughed up a thick grayish ichor and died.

Sierra was staring intently at John Steele to ensure he was safe. No sooner had the first creature died when she heard the professor shout out, "Watch out, about twenty more are on the way, and there is an EP up there. She is worse than all of them put together." He turned his head toward Sierra and thought, "Quickly, girl. I need you" She gained her composure, cursing herself for taking time out to check on Johnny.

John was studying the dead Night-Gaunt. It was an unpleasant-looking, dark mass. Its skin appeared oil-like. The thing's horns were curved inward towards each other. The bat wings hadn't seemed to make any audible sound. Its paws were prehensile and ended with long, thick, wicked-looking claws. It had a longish, whip-like tail that ended in a deadly sharp barbed tip. The creature's lack of a face was disquieting. The demon had made no sound until its mental death cries. A deadly silent killer from the skies. It had probably quickly killed many unsuspecting humans. However, this particular group of humans had the unique abilities and knowledge to fight back—twenty more of these monsters and then an Eternal Prisoner. For the first time, John Steele wondered if maybe they had bit off more than they could handle?

Frederick dropped a heavy, camouflaged canvas backpack at Steele's feet. "Stickies and some hand grenades!" he barked. Steele looked up from his study of the dead Night-Gaunt and nodded, "Thanks, Freddie-boy." John began stuffing explosives into the many pockets and clips that were a part of his garb, working fast and quiet. Frederick thought, not for the first time, does this man ever lose his calm? He acts as if it was a day at the park. His confidence seemed unflappable. Frederick noticed approvingly that his sister Sierra had smartly positioned herself next to the Professor. The Professor was sure to have a few tricks up his ancient sleeves. Frederick hoped it was a big one. They were going to need a miracle to get out of this. Frederick shouted to the busy John Steele, hoping to get a rise from him, "We make a good team, kid." John Steele gave a tiny half-smile and a brief wave. Then he went back to fully concentrating on his work.

“This is Sierra: listen up, everybody. Frederick, you leave now. Find those servers and blow them to hell. The rest of us will kill off these Gaunts. If you get things done quickly enough, we can leave before the E.P gets involved. Now hurry!” John was stunned. It was his first-ever ESP message from his beloved Red. Was it because of their new-found closeness? It didn’t matter. It was just one more thing that made their relationship special. Fredrick began speaking aloud, “Look, sis, I don’t think–” Steele interrupted him. “No time to argue. She’s right. She usually is. We need to make her our official Captain when this is over. Please go, my friend, now!” Frederick bit his tongue, grabbed a couple of backpacks, and began sprinting lithely toward the center of the enormous warehouse. All the while cursing under his breath.

After seeing his .45 bullets bounce off the first creature, Steele armed himself with their heaviest caliber weapon: a 60-caliber machine gun. He snatched the extra ammo can filled with armor-piercing bullets. He threw a 7.62 caliber rifle and a bandolier full of thirty-round clips sliding across the floor. In seconds, he was beside the gun and bandolier, sighting upward with the special night-scope attached to the 60-cal. He began shooting at the swiftly dropping brood of Night-Gaunts. He emptied the first strand of 60-cal ammo in practically one complete long burst, spraying the sky. He popped open the second can of armor-piercing shells and felt the heat coming off the 60-cal barrel. He swiftly loaded the new strand, closed the top, and cocked the first round into place. Now Steele began to fire in short, accurate bursts at individual Night-Gaunt targets. The Gaunts were much closer. His armor-piercing, heavy-caliber ammo was having a better effect. Four or five of the diving figures were hit and flying erratically. Two of them seemed to be plummeting downward at a death speed.

The Professor could be seen chanting slowly and steadily. His ancient fingers were moving dexterously, fiddling with a bone, a glyph, a stone. Sierra Masters took two quick steps toward the Professor and slapped her left hand on his right arm. Within seconds she began chanting the ancient spell words in unison with the professor. If you asked her three minutes after the spell was completed, what the words she had been chanting were, she wouldn’t know. Now, she was deeply involved in it, and she added some of her psychic energy to the Professor’s. Sierra was puzzled by the Professor’s powerful yet unique aura. When reading other humans, even humans with a psychic ability, she could always read one hundred percent of that person's thoughts, their deepest and darkest hidden secrets. She could only read ninety percent of the Professor. There was always ten percent of his mind Sierra could never see. When she had asked the Professor about it, he said sadly, “The ten percent you are referring to, Sierra, is what got my people exterminated. You might call it my soul. Never forget, child, I am not human. I am the last of the Alnass Najma, the star people, the last of my lineage. I am more different than you could ever imagine.” He never spoke more about the subject.

John quickly noticed that, for this attack, the Night-Gaunts used a different strategy. Instead of trying to swoop silently, the creatures dropped entirely to the ground yards in front of them and attempted to slide directly into their targets. John looked swiftly around. Three dead monsters, two more in spasms on the warehouse floor psychically screaming their death cries. Three more of the grounded creatures were limping or moving stiffly. Not bad, he thought to himself, five dead and three wounded. John dropped the empty and now-useless 60-caliber to the ground. He scooped up the 7.62 caliber armor lite rifle and the bandolier with six additional thirty-round magazines. Each mag was filled with green-tipped armor-piercing and orange-tipped tracer rounds, which would light things up. Steele grinned a sharkish grin. Let’s see how much

damage I can do with these last 210 rounds and my pockets full of explosives, he thought. A lone demon dropped to the concrete floor behind John Steele and continued to slide directly towards his exposed backside.

Sierra could sense the Professor's chanting coming to a crescendo. Her hand clutching his arm seems to crackle with power. She observed that the surviving Night-Gaunts had broken into two groups of five or six demons. One group has begun the trek toward her and the Professor. The other group has turned their attention to Johnny. Whatever the Professor had in mind better come soon, or it would be too late.

Steele felt the tremor as the lone Night-Gaunt slammed onto the warehouse floor behind him. He pushed his body sideways, landing on his back, sliding away from the oncoming monster. John swung the AR-17, filled with the deadly 7.62 caliber of mixed ammo, and pointed it toward the creature as it slid within a couple of feet of him. He centered the sight on the demon's chest, triggered the rock-and-roll feature, and released all thirty rounds in a continuous blast. The magazine was empty in a matter of seconds. Out of habit, John ejected the empty mag with his right thumb, letting it drop to the ground.

Simultaneously he slid a full replacement magazine out of the bandolier with his left hand and slammed it into place. He pulled back the cocking mechanism and released it to load the first round of the new clip into position.

There was a loud hissing, wheezing noise. John Steele looked incredulously at the Night-Gaunt that he had just pumped thirty rounds into. It was gasping at him again and began pulling itself, crawling closer. A horrified Steele used his left hand to slip the AR into single-shot mode. From less than two feet away from the hissing monstrosity, he aimed carefully at the top of the creature's head and pulled the trigger. A strip of dark, gelatinous demon flesh ripped from the top of the thing's head and began to ooze grayish sludge. John thought to himself if I were a brain, heart, or another critical organ, where would I be hiding inside that head with no face? Why dead center, of course. Where I would be most protected. He swiftly moved his sights to the center of the faceless Night-Gaunt and gently squeezed the trigger from less than a foot away. He was rewarded with a loud popping noise as the armor-piercing round hit dead center. The faceless head imploded into a mass of Night-Gaunt pieces of flesh, organs, and gray blood splatter. Yuck, he was covered with tissue and gray splatter. Not sure if Sierra and the Professor could "hear" him, he thought hard and loud, "The center of its face is the kill shot, dead center and it will die." He heard the quick response of the soothing voice of the Professor, "Thank you, son, that will certainly help."

John sprang swiftly to his feet and glanced around in dismay. He was utterly encircled by six of the lumbering Night-Gaunts. The devils were slowly and cautiously advancing. Their circle around him shrank with each moment. They were too close to use the explosives. He glanced swiftly toward the Professor and Sierra and perceived another line of creatures advancing toward his friends. Well, it had been a great run. He prepared himself to kill as many of the demon Gaunts with the AR-17 as he could. He decided he would use his pocket's contents, blow it all at once, and hopefully take his remaining enemies with him.

The professor finally made his move. He stood up fully and displayed a small hollow bone he had been chanting over. He brought it to his lips, then blew into it with his entire lung

strength. Neither Sierra nor John could hear any sound emitting from the bone whistle. However, the monstrous Night-Gaunts were immediately affected. The brood began convulsing in pain as the whole group fell to their knees.

John slung the rifle over his shoulder, sprinted directly at one of the kneeling creatures encircling him, and leaped up and over the fallen monster. He came to a sliding stop. Steele reached into his pockets and swiftly tossed three hand grenades behind the line of Night-Gaunts that had been advancing on his friends. He spun quickly in the opposite direction and lobbed several sticky bombs up over the head of the same demon-creature he had just vaulted over. They landed with a loud splat in the center of the circle John had recently inhabited. He spun for the third time and ran full speed away from the ring, but parallel to his friends' location. At that moment, the professor either ran out of air or ran out of spell. The Brood began to rise to their feet in unison. The grenades and bombs exploded. *BOOM-BA-BOOM-BA-BOOM-BOOM*, a string of noise sounding like the finale of a July fourth celebration.

Steele came sliding to a stop directly between the Professor and Sierra. He whipped the AR-17 off of his shoulder and into shooting position. All three watched as the smoke and rubble settled. The warehouse floor looked like a slaughterhouse, littered with Night-Gaunt body parts, bits, and pieces of gelatinous masses, wings, horns, and unrecognizable internal organs. Four of the demons remained standing. They leapt upward before Steele could steady his sights on them and began flying in a zig-zag pattern upwards to safety. Uncertain of the effectiveness of the lighter ammo at this distance, John lowered his weapon. Better to keep the last of the ammo and last two stickies for what was to come. They still had an Eternal Prisoner to deal with.

They heard Frederick shouting before seeing his figure running full-speed around a warehouse pillar. Sierra called, "He is telling us to run for the entrance because all hell is about to break loose." As the threesome turned to run, a voice thundered in their heads. Its power and magnitude froze them rooted to their spots. Frederick must have felt it as well because he came skittering to a stop. They all looked upward, and all wished they hadn't. The Eternal Prisoner came down from the nest, and she was a sight from the most hellish of nightmares. As she screamed in rage inside their minds, she came swooping down on a wingspread of at least 100 feet. Her faceless head and body were covered with abscesses and sores they could observe from the ground. They were oozing and throbbing as if alive. Her living carcass glowed a molded greenish color that made them want to turn away or vomit. It was difficult to gaze at her and not experience severe cognitive dissonance. The human brain wasn't created to view or conceive of such a thing. She was a living, breathing demon nightmare. She made Dante's hell look like a picnic.

Then the explosions began. If John's display was a fireworks finale, this was tenfold the sound. The entire structure felt like it was shuddering. The dropping monster began to shimmer. The portal! The explosions must have destroyed whatever was anchoring the portal here. As the demon's mind-spell was broken, the four friends turned and ran faster than they ever had in their entire lives. Not to escape from the explosions but to get as far away from the sight of the vile creature as possible. A presence that they deeply felt had rattled their very souls.

Chapter Three

Y'gala

From the personal journal of Frederick Masters

Somehow, someway, we are 2-0 against the Arkham cult and their forever *damned* Eternal Prisoners. I am a professional soldier. I am a former Army Ranger. I know, deep in my soul, we can't keep beating these impossible odds in this way. John Steele defeated the Eternal Prisoner (EP) Gorgon Statue and sent it back to its other-dimensional prison. Just barely: it almost killed him. It took him months to recover from the ordeal. We were very, very lucky to slay so many of the giant Night-Gaunts and send their EP nightmare of a mother and the remaining Gaunts back home to roost. If we want to win this war, and some of us actually survive it, we have to get serious. I am already serious, deadly serious. I am the one who found our brother Adam's body. I am the one who saw what was leftover from the torture and human sacrifice committed upon my brother by these demons and their human helpers. I spared my sister Sierra from that sight.

During my scouting trip at the rave, after discovering their plans, I identified and eliminated twenty-two of the bastards. I only wish I could have taken out more of them. Their remains will never be found. During our raid on Arkham, C.T.U & C.H.A.O.S. Enterprises warehouse, I found ten of their human allies: IT experts running their massive computer and communications systems. I eliminated them. Any human willing to work for these monsters deserves to die. I am also the one who attached several bombs to the main gas line in the warehouse. I wanted to send a more powerful message than simply destroying their computer storage. I wanted them to know fear. Since we were children, I have been able to hide some things from my sister's psychic abilities. No one knows about these steps I have taken. Perhaps the Professor suspects something? That dude doesn't seem to miss anything. But, what the hell? He hates them more than I do. They started this war when they murdered Adam. I intend to only end it when they are all dead. Tonight, we will be returning to the *AMAH, Arkham Museum of Ancient History*. Sierra says there is another EP there that must be sent back. I would prefer to simply level the entire *AMAH* flat with explosives. Send them all to hell.

From the personal journal of John Steele

Since our mission last month, I have been spending every free moment with my beloved. I have never been happier. Things will have to change after tonight. I cannot allow Frederick to keep on waging this one-man-war all by himself. I found the thumb drive where he downloaded info from the cult's computer records before destroying them. Pretty gruesome stuff. The cult is making its money from underage sex trafficking, child porn, and artificial heroin labs. Just a few fun ways they can add to the Chaos of our society. Every other night or so, he disappears. The

following day, I read in the papers or see something on the news. It is evident and easy to figure out. We have crippled their communications; now Freddy-boy is going after their income sources. Well, that is going to have to change. With both of us hitting multiple targets, things will heat up quickly. I am sure Sierra will understand. Stopping these *Chthonic Worshipers* and all the harm they do must be our number one priority.

Excerpt from the personal journals of Professor Silberhutte

Does Frederick Masters think I am a complete idiot? Doesn't he realize that blowing up a drug lab or two accomplishes nothing? Another one will simply spring up next door..... after tonight, I will have to take him to task and teach him about the importance of the supply and distribution chain. If he thinks I will allow him to go completely rogue and endanger the team, he better think again. Sigh.....

Excerpt from the personal journal of Sierra Masters

.... Men! Sometimes they can be so infuriating. A brother who thinks he is protecting me from the horror of what we are doing. My lover, who is afraid I won't understand if he needs to prioritize his actions over me. Even the Professor is caught up in this stupidity! Well, tonight, some things are going to change around here pretty quickly! ...

Story....

Sierra Masters felt dirty and unclean after her latest psychic reading. She had taken three showers today; they were becoming obsessive. Everyone on the team arrived separately at around noon. The Professor had catered food and drinks. They were all there to be briefed about what she had discovered about the ancient artifact. After taking a psychic reading from the artifact (a knife), the Professor had somehow obtained the sacrificial blade. Sierra insisted on returning to *AMAH* and ridding the world of another Eternal Prisoner. She wasn't sure that they could accomplish the task. She was convinced they must try.

Once everyone had eaten something and was comfortable, she began. "First thing we need to make clear, we are a team. This means we work and coordinate everything together, everything!" Sierra ambled over toward her brother Frederick and gave him a withering look. "Are we crystal clear on this, brother?"

Frederick looked uncomfortable and began squirming in his seat. Finally, he nodded an affirmative to his sister. "Good! now we need to talk about the *EP* we will be facing tonight." Sierra cleared her throat, "Our enemy is an *Eternal Prisoner* named *Y'gala*, half-human, half elder-god."

She continued in a firm voice, "Her father is *Y'golonac*! Her mother was one of his human high priestesses. *Y'golonac*, The Defiler, The Elder God of Depravity and Perversion, one of the Great Old Ones.

Frederick exclaimed, “*Jesus!*”

In a cool, detached voice, Sierra Masters continued, “There is more, brother.” She paused and made eye contact with her team members. “After *reading* the dagger, I can state, without doubt, it was the weapon used to torture and kill our oldest brother, Adam. Finally, the person or thing that wielded this blade and murdered him was... *Y’gala.*”

Frederick erupted from his chair, spilling his food and drink, “*Bitch* is going down!”

In a frosty voice, Sierra snapped, “Sit down, Frederick!” She flashed a smile that was hard and businesslike. “The *bitch* will indeed go down. But, only if you follow orders and stick to my plans.” Frederick nodded an affirmative to his sister. “We have a late-night, after-hours special appointment with the assistant curator of *AMAH*, Dr. Wahsh. It seems we may have somehow received an ancient sacrificial blade that might have been stolen from their museum. I have a plan. Everyone has a role, everyone has assignments, everyone will follow my orders.” She continued to speak confidently for the next two hours.

For those who read of evil and search for its form in their minds call forth evil, and so may *Y’golonac* return to walk among men...

~ *A passage from Cold Print on Y’golonac*

Two excerpts from the personal journals of Professor Silberhute

.... If a human is tricked into reading the forbidden literature *The Revelation of Gla’aki* and reads his actual name aloud, *Y’golonac* will appear. He offers the hapless human the option to become his priest or priestess. If they refuse, he devours them. He has done this countless times. Recently, he does this with the eager help of his half-breed daughter....

.... There is an ancient tale of how *Y’golonac*, The Great Old One, will escape his prison. It is referred to as a ‘*brick wall*,’ a metaphor for his powerful restraints. He will impregnate his own daughter, re-birth himself, and release himself from his other-dimensional prison. His daughter *Y’gala* is unlike the other EPs we have dealt with. I feel no pity for her. This monster loves to slaughter, and she embraces human sacrifice. *Y’gala* is evil incarnate. An overused cliché, but truthful nonetheless. *Y’golonac* must not be permanently freed from his prison! Yet, another reason *Y’gala* must be eradicated. The damage he would inflict upon our world would be immeasurable. I believe I have found a weapon, a tool which could destroy her, a half-goddess

....

Story continued...

Dr. Kahinat Wahsh met the Professor and his academic team inside her large opulent office. She was dark-skinned, Middle Eastern, and looked like an Egyptian goddess. Her voice was throaty and deep, “Where is Stephan from security? He should have escorted you here?”

The taller, more military-looking man on the Professor’s team answered quickly. “Oh, he received a phone call and asked us if we could find the way ourselves.”

Kahinat gave him an amused look, “Of course, he did” she surprised them all when she giggled. The giggle was high-pitched and contrasted greatly with her deep voice. “Well, Professor, I thought we could conduct the exam of the blade you brought with you. To see if it is indeed the one that went missing from *AMAH*. We will use one of our special rooms. Would you and your umm ... academic team, please follow me?”

Not waiting for a response, Dr. Wahsh grabbed a large keyring filled with keys and strode briskly out of her office.

She led them to a secluded wing of the *AMAH* building, which was under repair. Ironically, or was it fate? The area being repaired and the location of the special examination room were both in the portion of the museum where Egyptian ancient artifacts were displayed. Her human mother had been an Egyptian high priestess from the identical era.

"Dr. Wahsh," inquired the smallish Professor, “would it be rude to ask if you have a middle name?”

Kahinat paused and smiled wolfishly, “*Lil*,” she answered, and then continued walking at a quick pace. She turned to ensure the Professor followed behind her with his so-called academic team. After taking her visitors through several large metal doors that she first unlocked and then relocked behind them, she came to a halt. They found themselves locked in a workroom of some kind. There was a wooden workbench with tools and supplies against the near wall. The ceiling, floor, and all four walls were poured concrete. The door she had recently locked was a heavy-duty metal. They were effectively trapped inside of a sound-proofed dungeon. The only key out was possessed by an insane, giggling demon half-god.

“So,” continued the Professor, “your full given name is *Kahinat Lilwahsh*? You do realize what your full name means in Arabic?”

Another smile, “Of course I do; my name translates into, priestess of the monster.”

The Professor pressed on, “Isn’t that an unusual name to give to a child?”

Kahinat giggled like a schoolgirl, “Not if you met my father, Professor. Perhaps we can arrange for it, and you could ask him yourself?” She giggled again inanely, “Any more questions before we begin?”

The Professor responded, “Yes, several more. Could you tell me exactly how many humans you have killed in this room?”

Dr. Washsh laughed loudly, “That is a difficult question, Professor. I would answer it this way, dozens, which is not nearly enough, but I plan to add four more really soon.” She finished her answer with another girlish giggle.

She turned to face the team, and her entire body was glowing a sickly green color. She shrugged her shoulders and the beautiful Middle-Eastern doctor was gone. In her place—human skin removed—stood *Y’gala, Priestess to the Monster*. She was a smaller version of her father. About eight feet tall, she was naked, completely headless, and extremely obese. Her body was covered with awful sores, oozing a sick, greenish ichor. The sores bubbled and writhed as if something was alive, moving just below the surface of the skin.

Layer upon layer of blubber rolled across her body. It was impossible to tell where her breasts ended, and her stomach began. Y’gala was much larger and grotesque than anything the team had seen before. Her eight-foot-tall frame had to weigh in at over one thousand pounds. Twelve or fourteen hundred pounds, perhaps? Her two outstretched arms were held with her palms upwards. Each palm had a grotesque-looking mouth. From each obscene mouth-hole came tendrils, tentacles, tongues, and other unrecognizable filth.

It was almost too much for any human brain to fathom. A moving headless body with alien otherworldly pieces and parts extending from within it. The minds of most humans would freeze and numb with incomprehension. The cognitive dissonance caused by the mere sight of this half-god demon would render the average stunned human into easy prey.

The ghastly, headless hag raised one of her obese arms higher into the air, and the team found themselves floating in the air, feet from her pulsating body. From one of the mouth-like orifices issued a familiar mocking voice, “Any more questions, Professor?” Quickly followed by a little-girl giggle that sounded slightly insane.

“Well, yes, actually, I have two questions, and a statement, if it isn’t being rude?” queried the calm voice of the floating Professor.

She said, “This will be rich; please ask away.”

The Professor smiled lightly, “The statement first. You are thousands of years old but still a child in elder-god years. Too young, too small, not enough evil psychic energy to lay with your father and re-birth him into our world, yet.”

More giggles, “Your questions?”

The Professor, in an unhurried manner, “First question Y’gala, do you remember one of your victims, his name was Adam Masters?”

Between giggles, “You can’t expect me to remember every single human I sacrificed to my father?”

The Professor said calmly, “Oh, of course not, here let me help your memory. Do you recognize him?” The Professor held his hands about one foot apart; a blue glow occupied the space. A 3D hologram of a moving, speaking Adam Masters could be viewed.

Y’gala had ceased giggling; she stared hard at the psychic holograph and at the Professor. “I remember him. Very strong-willed. He lasted much longer than the others.”

Y’gala addressed the Professor, “There is more to you than meets the eye, little man. Wait! You are Alnass Najma? They were all supposed to have been exterminated before I was born. You are one of them, aren’t you?”

The Professor smiled, “Yes, I most certainly am. I am the last of the Alnass Najma. The last of the star people. I have my final question for you. Could you summon your father here, if you please? I would like to kill him at the same time I kill you!”

Y’gala snarled, raised her other arm, and made a flinging motion; Frederick and Sierra were psychically thrown against the far concrete wall. Steele somehow withstood part of the force, fell into a tuck-and-roll, and landed short of the wall. The Professor continued to hover, facing the Creature, surrounded by a brilliant blue light. For the first time, the monster sounded uncertain of herself. “How?...What?...” The wizard was chanting a spell. Y’gala, recognizing the danger lurched and lumbered toward the little man.

Suddenly John Steele came up from behind the rambling creature. There was a flash of metal, and Steele stuffed something into the open maw of her neck, where her head belonged. There was a muffled roar as the grenade exploded inside the half-goddess. She screeched and cried, “It burns, oh Father, it burns!” She began rolling on the concrete floor in anguish. Frederick, pulling himself erect, snarled, “Eat some white phosphorous, you murderous demon!” The Professor slapped his hands together. He immediately was lowered slowly to the ground. There appeared to be a thick, yellowish substance raining down upon the screaming creature.

Sierra, now on her feet, rushed to the Professor’s side. As the little man began chanting again, she held his left shoulder with her right hand. Sierra was soon chanting in unison with Silberhutte and adding her psychic energy to his. They both glowed with the identical bright blue aura. Y’gala, now completely covered with the yellow, sticky-looking substance, began struggling to her monstrous feet. Frederick from one side and John from the other both started hacking with their shortened katana blades. Blades that hung nicely inside their sports coats. They each managed to cut off a hand and fling it in the direction of the tool bench. Steele found some paint thinner, covered the two hands with it, and soon burned a smoky fire.

Y'gala pushed herself forward with her two arm-stubs trailing greenish blood. They all heard her psychic roar as she bellowed, *~ IS THAT ALL YOU GOT!~* She appeared to be recovering quickly from the white phosphorus grenade. Her Half-Elder-God body had literally pulled itself together and mended from the white phosphorous damage. She rose and towered over the two spell-casters and flexed her obese muscles. Frederick and John placed themselves in her path. *~ NOW IT'S MY TURN AND YOU ARE GONNA PAY!~* John and Frederick shared a quick look. Nodded to each other and prepared to go down fighting and protecting their vocalizing teammates.

Just then, the intonation stopped. The team heard a loud gurgling noise come from within the Creature. Followed by another, and then very quickly another. Y'gala halted her murderous advancement. Stopped cold. She slumped into a sitting position. Professor Henry Silberhutte walked directly toward the monster. He stopped just inches out of the hideous thing's reach. *~ Help me, please, I will give you anything you want, or can dream of, just help me~* In a cold voice, the Professor asked, "Can you give me back my wife? My children? My people? Can you give me back my former student and friend?" *~ Money... Power~* Frederick's voice boomed, "That's for my brother, rot in *Hell* for eternity!"

The Professor began walking swiftly away from the fallen monster. "I would move away fast if I were you two." Frederick and John ran as the Creature's obese body imploded. Green ichor and unrecognizable bits and small pieces of body parts were strewn everywhere throughout the tool room. They waited for hours as they kept watch. The body elements would animate with a ghoulish green light and try to pull themselves together. But, the thick yellowish substance kept them stuck in place, unable to move; after several hours, the pieces quit trying. The greenish lights flickered one final time and winked out of existence one-by-one. Simple as that, following the leadership and plan of Sierra Masters, their team had slain their first demi-god.

As they watched the last of dying greenish embers, the Professor stated, "The final ingredient for my spell just became available a couple of days ago, very fortuitous." John Steele smiled at his mentor. "What ingredient are you referring to, sir?" Silberhutte laughed and responded, "The yellow rain, the sticky stuff that kept her body pieces from re-joining and reanimating. A recent find in Egypt of large jugs, containers. Made from Nile clay, sealed with wax, thousands of years old. I bought them all."

Steele asked, "What was sealed in those ancient jars?" The little man responded, "They were filled with royal jelly, from an ancient, Egyptian queen bee. It was fate, John. The ingredient I required became available just when we needed it!"

Steele muttered, "Maybe, someone or something is on our side in this war, sir?"

The Professor sighed, "I'm afraid we are going to need all of the luck we can muster. I noticed that three of those security guards we took out earlier had identical markings. Tattoos, all in the same place, on their inner wrists. I have seen those markings before, son."

It was Steele's turn to sigh, "Where was that, sir?"

The Professor, "From followers of Nyarlathotep, the Outer God."

John Steele reacted, "So, we have an entire cult of Chaos worshippers, then we find followers of Y'golonac, and now Nyarlathotep. Just what in the heck is going on in Arkham?"

Silberhutte looked troubled, "I don't know, John. But, whatever it is, it is something big, huge. These groups that have historically fought amongst themselves appear to be joining forces and working together?"

The Debriefing, later the next day...

Sierra Masters stood at the front of the team. Just as she was ready to start speaking, John Steele stood up and began, "Excuse me, folks, but before Sierra starts, I have something I would like to say."

Everyone turned to look at Steele. Sierra thought to herself, "That's my Johnny; he always could command a room." John continued, "Listen up, people. As far as I'm concerned, this was our most successful mission yet. And, it was due to the planning and leadership of Sierra." He paused and surveyed his fellow team members. "That is why I am proposing we make her leadership permanent. Put Sierra officially in command of the team."

John indicated Silberhutte with a wave of his hand. "The Professor will always be our spiritual leader and our mentor. But, when it comes to tactical leadership, it has to be Sierra hands-down. Before we debrief or do anything, I want to know how the rest of the team feels about it?" John slipped lithely back into his seat.

The Professor spoke first, "I totally agree with you, John. Sierra has amply demonstrated her knack for planning and successfully defeating our enemies. If we are going to be a democracy here, well then, she has my vote." All eyes turned to Frederick. With his military background and experience, it would seem natural to make him the leader. Everyone seemed to be holding their breath, waiting to hear his thoughts. Frederick's face was unreadable. He appeared in no hurry to speak. Finally, he stood and looked at his teammates.

"I have only one goal, the same goal I had when we started fighting this war. Kill as many of these *bastards* as we can, period. Oh *hell*, I've been taking orders from my sister for most of my life. I guess I can tolerate her for a while longer." Frederick flashed a brilliant smile towards Sierra, "Congratulations, Chief, you got the job!"

Sierra had been initially dumb-founded. She wasn't sure how many times she would need to prove herself to these men before they accepted her guidance and leadership. Her Johnny, as always, was the most honest man she had ever known. He always called them, as he saw them. It made the next steps Sierra had planned for her team much easier now that Steele had opened the

door for her. Dear God, I truly love that man. Her team, she thought. Yes, that is precisely what they were, her team, her tool, her weapon to leverage and win this war.

Sneak preview . . .

Chapter Four of the Eternal Prisoners: Baldgura coming soon...

“I have something here.” Sierra pulled a wrinkled, letter-sized flier from her pocket and passed it to Johnny. “This changes everything.” She had found the flier on one of the AMAH security guard’s desks. The entire team crowded around Steele so they could view the flier together.

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