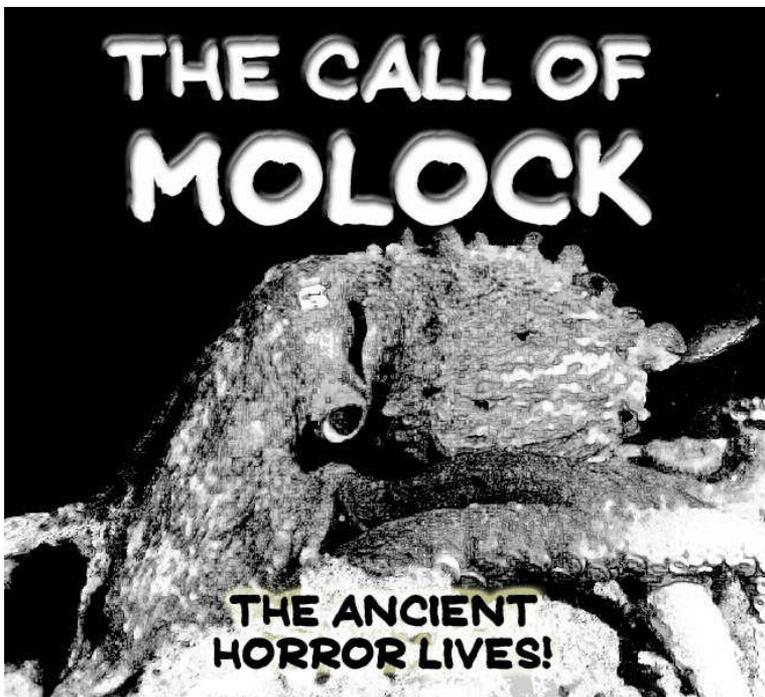


An Amazingly Astounding All-Story Analog of a Blue Nook Weird Story
Preserved for the Next Generation. Presented by June J. (July) August, Editor.



The Call of Molock by "Constable J. Twilliger"¹

Someday the scientific knowledge men of learning have gathered about those unnamable monsters of the darkness will be brought together into a meaningfully coherent manner that will send the majority of mankind into intense insanity at the sheer comprehension of it. This article is fraught with footnotes of verification!

¹ Josephus Twilliger, 1913-2005, law officer Jersey City, 40 year veteran of the police force, twice decorated for saving dogs and cats. Ended career with medical discharge for mental instability.

Editor's Preface²

Upon the lamented demise of Duffkraft a decade ago, such a clamor arose for more of his fiction that I, as his literary executor, scrambled about among his remaining belongings—some disgustingly moldering— and searched frantically for any further manuscripts. I had all but given up when my eyes beheld a shoe shine box in the closet. Flipping open the side lids, I discovered to my amazement a black chapbook notebook containing all of the story germ ideas that Duffkraft had saved for future development. These ranged from entire first drafts (The Cribbage of Kolassus) to mere one word summaries—It (It). In some cases the pages were smudged with shoe polish to such a degree that I had to make up from my imagination what he had written. To satisfy that vast host of fans I have taken the liberty of expanding and finishing all these priceless notes. This story is a sample. Currently I am working on making "It" a critically edited 100,000 word novel. What Duffkraft may have intended when he wrote the word "It" can be surmised from his various writings.³

Augustine Imraptin Burlap
Salem Massachusetts,
September 19?3 (smudged)

² Footnotes so early? One with the credit, yet reality is the real and some fiction by Duffkraft, who we love as a visionary author of interesting stories. This Editor, however, avers all details below are *factual* and Duffkraft was in reporting mode only. NO Fiction! The Reader is advised the web (internet) is available to do your own research if you can't believe the inescapable truth of Andrew Carter's statement.

³ Duffkraft, Tomeni Pyles, American author of Horror and Fantasy Fiction. He's dead, we just don't know when, or where he's buried. It remains a mystery. Seriously, we can't! See that web reference above in footnote 2, the Editor has not found valid reports and doubt you can, too!

The Call of Molock Starts Here

A Sworn Statement Duly Recorded by Constable J. Twilliger, Jersey City, at 1:40AM from Mr. Andrew Carter. Presented to Commissioner's Court, Jersey City on April 9, 19— regarding allegations of Arson, Public Endangerment, Interference With Public Roads, and Unlawful Use and Cost of Emergency Services by the Defendant. Recorded and Attested. Witnessed by Stephen Allsup and D. B. Bozarth.*

Gentlemen, I know you are sane men, so bear with patience my jumbled and incoherent account of events so different of human ken as to border on the fantastic.

When my great-Uncle Philoctetes Carter died at the advanced age of 113 I discovered, to my surprise, he had left everything in his will to me—all his stocks, his bonds, and his vast, decrepit mansion next to an Early Americana cemetery located on a hill in that primitive and pastoral countryside that lies just north of Jersey City.

"This is true?" I asked the solicitor at my door.

"Quite true. You are sole beneficiary of the Estate of Philoctetes Carter. There is one provision."

"What is that?" I asked, frowning at the papers inside the envelope handed to me.

"You must immediately occupy the mansion and live there the remainder of your life."

Since my rent was due that very week, and my prospects in the city had fallen on decided hard times, it took no extreme thought to plot my immediate course.

"I shall be there perhaps today, depending on train connections, certainly no later than tomorrow," I said.

The solicitor handed me a business card listing a house of solicitors in Jersey City and a set of keys. "To the house, sir. Safe journey." He doffed his hat and departed.

Glancing at the clock, then at the dresser upon which my total sum of cash, eight dollars and thirteen cents lay, I packed a rucksack with all essentials—beef jerky, noodles, my

toothbrush, and a fat copy of the *Complete Works of Poe*.⁴ Descending the stairs, I mounted my bicycle and proceeded to the rail station. In addition, I carried a rain poncho in case of an emergency.

Being practical, the bicycle was sold to a bystander near the train station for a dollar. The ticket was purchased, and, with minutes to spare, I boarded the train.

Arriving some hours later in Jersey City, without incident, I walked from the station toward the heights above the not-so-teeming metropolis.

Near evening I approached the dark, forbidding estate so recently occupied by my relative, who now was, according to his desires as I had learned in reading through the papers the attorney had given me, was buried just inside the cemetery fence about five yards from the east bay window.

I strode up the circular drive and paused at the bottom of the carriage circle. My grand-uncle's enthusiasm for antique architecture was visually evident at once.⁵ I had seen it as a child, but this time I admired it with an adult's eye. The stained-glass fan-lights above each gable dormer and, I noted with some awe for the craft of the builder-artisan, the Neo-Edwardian martlets at each end of the inverted pediments; and along the scalloped escarpment the parapet was intricately indented with enchanting, castellated Pixies carved in ivory. The large veranda covered an equally impressive double-door entry.

Reaching into my pocket, I tested first one, then the other of the two keys, then let myself in. Though the house was old and the furnishings were last century, there was little dust.

I smiled to myself for I had retained memories of a gloomy ancient mausoleum—not a perfectly ordinary Victorian two-story.

⁴ An immense volume in both reading fascination and as emergency door stop, even in 76 mile per hour winds through open windows. Curtis J. Parkes, Jersey City Manager and Hurricane Expert, NOAA Certified. Author of "The Practical Library: Your Shelf Can Save You." Vol 1. Is. 3.

⁵ Missy Wesell, a local real estate agent contacted Philoctetes Carter three different times over his last decade. The property was located near township expansion plans, being some 340 acres. Wessell expressed her reluctance to knock on the door: "Damn creepy if you ask me!"

Switchback stairs lay before me, two doors right and left, a hallway to the side leading to the back. I turned right, to the one room I *did* remember vividly—the library.

I tossed the keys upon the library table centered in the room and lit an old-fashioned kerosene lantern set upon the cold fireplace mantle. The yellow light barely pushed back the growing darkness as I settled the glass chimney.

The travel, while not extraordinarily difficult, had tired me. I sat in Uncle's chair and gazed out the east window. As the sun was in progress of setting, the bit of garden and the cemetery beyond were in darkness; yet, a white stone—a tombstone—glowed faintly in the twilight.

I rose and stood at the window. Clearly engraved, the marble not yet touched by time as most cemetery markers are, I read his name, the dates, and observed a queer marking which was indistinct as night came on. Had he expressly arranged his plot to be in such a position that from the library window I would cast my glance out at his headstone from time to time—in gratitude for my inheritance?

I had not been in the house for years. I tried to recall how many years had passed but no accurate number came to mind, only that I had been a very young boy at the time.⁶

I had not particularly liked my Uncle, though he had never been unkind to me. Thus it was very perplexing, this generosity. However he, of course, had had no family—else, I imagined, he would have left this old place to his descendents. Why me?

There was a knock at the front door. I carried the lamp with me, as nightfall was near complete and the entry had few windows.

A sturdy constable stood on the veranda. "Beggin' pardon, sir," he said. "I saw the light. What's your business here?"

A moment of conversation settled it. I showed him the papers, my identification, and my intent to take residence.

⁶ "The protagonist was twenty-seven (27) years of age when these real life events occurred." Duffkraft, *The Stories I Would Have Written*, Sterling Truth Books, 4th reprint, 2010.

The officer gruffly apologized. "It was the light, sir. And knowin' the old gent had passed and all. We have to be careful, sir. Yes, sir."

"Thank you," I said. "Anything else?"

"No, sir." He turned to leave, then paused. I waited, as it appeared there was something on his mind.

"Yes?" I prompted.

"Well, sir, this house... that is while your Uncle was alive... well, there were strange things happening from time to time."

"I'm sure I don't know what you mean," I said.

The constable blinked. Blinked again then nodded. "Of course, sir. Yes, of course. Well, if you need me, I'll be around."⁷

"Thank you, officer." I closed the door.

"Strange things, indeed!" I chuckled and returned to the library to gather my rucksack and ascend the stairs.

That night, in my second floor bedroom, I had an unusual dream—a dream of an odd amorphous quality as if I were being attacked by what seemed to be nothing less than a very hungry octopus.

How long I struggled with that queer horror I cannot recall, but I eventually awoke in a cold sweat to strike a match—the phosphorous smell of which seemed to clear my head—and lit the bedside lamp. Catching my breath, consciously slowing the pounding of my heart, I then, without intending to, fell asleep until the first rays of the rising sun entered my window.

I had not rested well, though I had slept for some hours. There was no kerosene left in the lamp... how long it had burned? I could not know.⁸

"Afraid of monsters in the dark!" I chided myself.

⁷ Constable Twilliger swore in Open Court that this was his first encounter with the Defendant. And duly noted same in his end of shift report that date.

⁸ The reader will question the use of kerosene lamps. Municipal Records show the only utilities available to the Carter House during this time was limited to Water. The Occupant, for some reason, had not turned on Electric or Gas, which oddity was noted in the Court Trial.

The sunlight drove those insubstantial monsters away. I dressed in slacks, shirt and shoes, then tackled the other things which need be done. After a shave then a breakfast in the over-large kitchen, which still had a fair larder of canned and jarred food, I took a walk about to see what I had inherited.

Outside in the clean air the grounds to the west were quite pleasing, a sloping hill spotted with majestic oaks separated by wide areas of grass and wild flowers, to the south lay the town, to the north was the crest of the height and... to the east was the cemetery and some two hundred yards beyond that an old church, which seemed dark and foreboding, even in the bright sunlight.

"Seeing things, old son," I said to myself.

I re-entered the house. Going from room to room the second story first—and it was just a house. Three bedrooms above, a closet, a cubby, and access to the attic, an area filled with cobwebs and dust, apparently having not been entered in years. There was nothing there and no reason to enter.

The first floor had the library, which was quite large, appointed with tall floor-to-ceiling bookshelves, an over-stuffed divan, two large wingback chairs, the library table and fireplace. Across the entry was the formal parlor, well-faded by the setting sun over the years through the large bank of windows, equipped with an Oriental divan, lounge chair, and wingback chair with footstool, a small writing desk, fireplace and sidebar. A kitchen with a separate large pantry, mud room, work room, and another space which seemed to hold nothing but junk odds and ends. It might make a nice office when cleared out.

Thinking that, I realized I would need to contact those in town who held Philoctetes' finances as I would need to draw upon same to maintain this place. With thought came action.

It was a bare half-hour walk from the mansion to the doors of Burroughs, Burroughs, Lovecraft, Orzcy & Smith. The brass plaque was well-polished and the secretary was a smartly dressed young man who gripped my hand in warm greeting.

"We've been expecting you, sir! Please... a moment while I tell Mr. Burroughs you are here."

I did not have time to ask *which* Burroughs before the secretary returned, took my hat, and ushered me into the inner office to the left.⁹

Burroughs was an imposing man, though a bit florid in appearance—perhaps he enjoyed the drink a bit too much—but his hand was firm and there was a hint of steel in his gaze. I sat in the indicated chair across the mahogany desk.

"I have been expecting you," he said after the secretary brought a carafe of coffee and cups. "The constable told me this morning you had arrived last night."

"Apparently," I said, "my comings and goings have been of local interest..." I deliberately left the sentence unfinished.

There was a bit of nervousness about him—for the life of me I could not determine why—but he also seemed intent on his business and, in that, I was in full accord.

"Here are," he said, having opened a file cabinet and locating a folder, "the specifics on your Uncle's estate, in greater detail than the summary papers Johnson gave you. If you will please take a look you will observe you are a *very* wealthy young man."

I did. I *was*. I was startled. I put on my poker face.

Mr. Burroughs looked expectant. When I said and did nothing, his collar seemed suddenly tight. He eventually asked, "Do you have any questions, sir?"

I did, but could not frame them properly. First the constable, now this lawyer... the signals given of far were a bothering confusion indeed. I chose a different tact.

"I was pleased to know that the property was under observation by the police. That gives me rest that the house and contents have been undisturbed."

⁹ Edward Ribald Burroughs, Solicitor, Jersey City 1945-1999. Suicide, the note read: "Damn my parents! 'Ribald'? How dare you name me that!" which came out in cross from Defendant's attorney and haunted Mr. Burroughs in Jersey City thereafter. Mr. Burroughs' testimony revealed affection for his client. "A strange young man! Spoke few words while he was in my office. Most peculiar considering the enormous sum of money inherited! I did like him immediately," Burroughs testified. "He is a smart and well worthy young man."

"Undisturbed for sure, sir. *No one* would—" Mr. Burroughs caught himself in an instant. It was not guilt I saw on his face, it was more like *fear*.

"No one would ... *what?* Mr. Burroughs?"

Burroughs abruptly cleared his throat. "Philoctetes, your Uncle that is, was an unusual man. He had his ways, sir, that he did. Always in my congress with him he was a fine gentleman, but there are some in the community who viewed him as... well, shall we say... a bit odd?"

Odd? Well, yes, that fit with my memory of Uncle Philoctetes. I smiled. "Found him that way myself," I said agreeably.

Mr. Burroughs looked relieved.

An hour later I departed the office in possession of a bank book and more knowledge of my Uncle's significant wealth... but actually no wiser as to how he had gathered it, or how to continue it beyond the ordinary growth by dividend and deposit interest already established. My previous existence in the business world had already established my total lack of skill in that regard, though even my most profligate expenditures imaginable might require more than twenty years to completely exhaust Uncle's Legacy.

I then bid Mr. Burroughs good day and, taking directions from the helpful secretary-clerk, stopped at the central bank and drew some funds to have ready cash. I next located a nearby grocery and ordered some perishables for the house—a few steaks, bacon, eggs, tomatoes, leaf greens, potatoes, and dried beans—to be sent up to the mansion by five o'clock. I spent the next two hours in town, getting the feel of the place.

And the community got a feel of me.

Curious!

Everywhere I went I was greeted with guarded, but polite conversation. Was a man with such wealth as I inherited unapproachable, or had I inherited something else? Philoctetes had, according to my father, been a most unusual man. I could not tell which attribute might explain the reactions of those I encountered during that time I spent walking through the small town, but I certainly could feel their eyes on my back as I ascended the long winding drive to the mansion on the hill.

A few minutes before five in the afternoon there was a knock at the door. A young boy, who had pushed a bicycle equipped with large wire saddle baskets up the hill, had my grocery order. I reached into my pocket for coins, saying, "The kitchen is down the hall next to the stairs..."

"Sorry sir!" the wide-eyed boy cried as he swiftly, but carefully, placed the paper sacks on the veranda and turned. The little scamp jumped on his bike and half-pedaled and gravity-rolled down the steep drive like a rocket.¹⁰

I stood there with two bits in hand.

* * * * *

Putting the groceries away, I grilled a steak, roasted a potato and drank coffee as it made. The house made noises, as all houses do, but unlike that tenement where the solicitor found me there were no voices, music, or cacophony of a city which never seemed to sleep.

I had no need for more than one lamp for what I need do and—despite the sudden wealth come into my life—remained yet the conservative, so the edges of the kitchen were in shadow. After washing up skillet, plate, fork and knife, that reassuring yellow light accompanied my walk to the library where I sat, once again, in Philoctetes' chair. In hand I had a copy of the local newspaper, which some kind soul had stuffed into the grocery delivery.

There was a mention that the Philoctetes Carter mansion had a new occupant. Hardly more than a line or two. I supposed that even prosaic Jersey City had local news of note and chuckled to having been singled out for front page news. I turned the page to catch up on what else was going on in the nation and around the world.

There was a bit of green glinting in my peripheral vision which eventually drew my attention. A lead crystal decanter—most exquisitely engraved—complete with a highly-figured flowered stopper, perhaps crafted in Bavaria, sat on a side table on a silver tray. The green was the liquid. The scent within,

¹⁰ "That Carter place scared the crap out of me," young Bill Pocket said years after the event and trial, appearing in a broadcast of "Mysteries of Real Life", episode 1,773, televised on Specter Cable.

when opened, was absinth. A set of delicate demitasse crystal stems were on the tray. I poured one and tasted.

Excellent!

I returned to the chair and paper and devoured what remained of it, and the absinth, too.

Checking the level of kerosene in the lamp, I carried it upstairs and went to bed.

I had no dreams that night.

At breakfast I felt like a glutton, fixing two eggs and four rashers of bacon. For too many years I had lived hand to mouth... and I again reminded myself, I am a rich man. *A Rich Man!*

And after breakfast and the kitchen chores I admitted to myself that I was bored.

I had no purpose.

I no longer had to work for a living, or pursue those things which just a few days ago I had found to be all-consuming, so important to eventually make my mark on the world! I was lord of all I surveyed and was set for life—and had done *nothing* to achieve it.

Though the hour was quite early, the absinth in the library eased some of that depressing realization.

Leaning against the drape at the edge of the east window I looked at my Uncle's tombstone, muttering both thanks and curse. When last I lifted the little glass—to find it empty—I turned my eye to the crystal decanter... but in doing so noticed something anomalous about the library table.

The morning sunlight illuminated one edge of the table, near the right hand drawer. There was an odd polish, something different, as if that section had been handled more than any other surface of the piece. A closer look revealed it was also more worn. An exploring touch produced an extraordinary response!

A drawer slid out horizontally from the side, cleverly hidden in the rail which supported the table top. It was relatively shallow, but as wide as the space between the legs and inside...

...was a pile of papers. Several piles in fact. Some aged, some not so aged, some quite recent by manufacture if the ruled blue lines were correct!

What is this? I asked myself.¹¹

I extracted the papers, gathering them, new on top then not so new and the oldest on bottom. A significant stack of papers in all and, which after reading the first page, turned out to be the private memoirs of my benefactor.

That you have found these pages means I am gone from this world...

Stunned, I sat down, the bundle in hand, staring out the window to that white monument. A sense of foreboding, for some strange reason, came over me. It was as if Uncle Philoctetes was talking directly to me from the grave.

I set the papers aside. I did not want read them at the moment. I did not want to do much of anything as the import of his planning, of his preparations, seeped into my being.

"Pshaw!" I shouted. Birds foraging the cemetery grass took raucous flight. Their cries and flight drew my attention. Racing to the front door I stepped into the sunlight, raising my face to take in the warmth. I felt a steadiness return.

Damn him! I thought. *This gift is no gift!*

I entered the drear, neglected cemetery via a small gate through the iron-picket fence separating the properties and strode directly to that non-imposing, just very new, monument. This time I noted not only the words which proclaimed his life and the chiseled eulogy, but also there was carved into the cold marble which marked his eternal resting was a strange emblem, that of a *Cephalopod*, an octopus to be precise.

I shuddered.

* * * * *

That evening, I settled into the big leather chair in the library. Near at hand was a warm cup of green tea spiked with absinth and hashish (which had been in the small bag I had kept with my *Complete Works of Poe*). With a leisure that came from

¹¹ These alleged papers were never found.

the effects of the brew, but which I did not truly feel, I leaned back and proceeded through Philoctetes' memoirs.

I became transfixed as I learned, with a slowly creeping sensation of horror, of "the research", of the "discovery of ancient documents", of the many odd and unthinkable "interests" that my Uncle had developed for molluscs, those horrific beings from the seas. And as the pages went from newer to older to oldest... I saw that indeed Philoctetes had found something not known to Men for ages upon ages.¹²

I stood, shivering with fright, and was determined to find something else—anything else!—to read. Each book that I pulled down from the shelves was some similar hideous textbook about octopi, squid, or *Cephalopod* monstrosities from the deep! Finally I found a book on *Arthropods* and sat back down to read. But before long—now that my irrational fear had somewhat subsided—my natural curiosity now fully piqued, caused me to turn back to the hoary stack of memoirs.

What I read in the oldest pages can be described but partially, for there are no words for the strange deeds that my uncle committed in that house after his obsession with molluscs had begun that summer of 19—.

The very eldest pages were in an ancient language, not quite Latin or Teutonic... nothing like I've ever encountered—and I am not without some education—but my Uncle seemed to have some grasp of the meanings hidden within because he had, even on these old and probably most precious historical documents, penned in a spidery script, dozens of cryptic notes on those very sheaves!

Also in those papers were a few contracts, some receipts for work done, or to be done, and the very oddity of those "jobs" helped explained why neighbors had complained about strange squeals heard for miles, coming from the house; it explained, too, why the delivery boy in my immediate ken, and much earlier before I inherited this macabre old place, that men in deliv-

¹² Prosecutors were unable to deny or disprove Defendant's statements regarding these documents. Defendant was equally unable to produce them. As Bess Blanchard, jury foreman, said after the Trial: "Such poppy cock! What were they thinking about?" (as regards either Prosecution or Defendant)

ery trucks had wondered at the large numbers of live table-size fish and *ferrets*(?) were delivered to his estate—all told, it was far more meat and fish than one man could consume!

I saw in these records a reasonable connection to the curious constable, the guarded Burroughs, and the strange, cautious looks from the citizens of Jersey city... I saw... saw...

I suddenly realized that I had had too much of the tea—absinth and hashish! I staggered upstairs, head whirling. Tomorrow. Tomorrow I would figure this conundrum out. Tomorrow...

I again dreamed that night, a terrible dream of a malevolent hungry octopus, one which might be a member of the subclass *Coleoidea*, but most unscientifically *howling* soundlessly in the Stygian darkness of an ink-like and vast watery abyss. The sound, the bits of yellow baleful gleams shot through a smothering curtain that not even the void of vacuous Space itself could compare, sent my mind to near insanity. Chest pounding, drawing breath as deeply as a Marathoner at the end of his race, I woke, wide-eyed, choking back a scream. Again a match was struck, again the pungent phosphorus-ignited cleared the brain, but this time, those dreams also suggested that down, down in the depths of the house itself, lay the answer.

Something was working on my mind. What? I hoped it was not some *Thing!*

The lamp was well-fueled. The light reached all corners of the bedroom. I gripped tight on my irrational state, shook sense back into my thoughts, decried my weakness (inexplicable!) and swung my legs to the floor— But not without looking under the bed first!

That silliness returned all sanity. "Bitty Boy!" I cried out. "Scared of Monsters Under The Bed?" I laughed... but it was not a pleasant laugh.

At dawn, having somewhat reassured myself I was not *Non compos mentis*, I set out to explore the shadowy, crypt-like basement.

Down had been the thrust of my dread dream. *Down* meant below the first floor...

The basement contained naught but a few garden implements and a great deal of dust, cobwebs and dirt. Just as I turned to leave, however, I noticed a round trap-door in the corner, opening—apparently—into the floor! And no cobwebs, no dust, no...

A cold chill came upon me as I considered that *there was another basement beneath the basement!*

A simple house in an ordinary place, built by ordinary labor... *and a second basement?*¹³

My sleep had been much disturbed, more so than I believed upon waking. My first thought was: *What kind of unspeakable evil would cause someone to dig up a basement beneath another basement? How low are some misguided individuals willing to go, to achieve their dark ends?*

And as those wildly-insane thoughts ran through my mind I wondered from what inspiration or vaporous knowledge did that disturbing premonition evolve? Yes, my Uncle had been an unusual man, one who had frightened me as a young boy... but I had *never*...

Even in those tortured thoughts, a bolt of reality struck... as it should. *I am a modern man with general good education.* The spooky house, the change in local, the oddities of the community... all had worked on my mind. The answer was suddenly obvious:

The memoirs were not memoirs...

My Uncle had penned a pulp fantasy novel and created interesting exhibits in some gibberish of his own devising and I had taken it hook, line and sinker!

Oh! How idiot!

How... then a grudging instant admiration came forth. That his words on paper could so enrapture my thoughts was amazing!

A moment of regret passed wherein I realized Uncle had not been published or recognized for his astonishing creative

¹³ Later geological research indicates there is a series of underground caverns, but nothing like described.

ability. I had read stories much like his with extreme relish for a dime as had thousands of others since we craved the heroes and horrors, the romance and detectives...

I had had no idea my Uncle was an author undiscovered.

That was the answer.

I had let my imagination run wild.

Laughing, I went upstairs, refusing to consider the contents of that unexplored sub-basement or what his queer, yet exciting manuscript regarding nameless grotesque sea creatures such as molluscs might have been if the Publishers had bid their pennies per word on his work.¹⁴

* * * * *

Lunch was...unsatisfactory. I could not turn my mind off. Uncle was *not* an author. What I had read was *not* intended to titillate or entertain. It had *not* been created to market for income... these were the notes of a scientist—*perhaps ghoulish*—but a scientist who did not have the traditional background of life-long study in ABC or XYZ or whatever the real brains do in their research.

Uncle's notes were different. They were more like those of a Zealot, a Seeker, one embarked on...

Nuts!

What am I doing to myself?

That second basement.

I had no doubt that it had been built in secret, for no mention had ever been made by relatives or visitors to this house. Not to my knowledge!

I paced the library floor for hours, thoughts turned inward as I puzzled on these "discoveries". My brain grew fevered with speculation upon speculation. Perhaps the liberal use of absinth enhanced that wild fancy. Ultimately, as the hour grew late, I ate a cold meal in the large kitchen, listening to the groans of aging wood and stone, feeling the hairs rise on the back of my neck... and suddenly laughed at myself.

"Posh!"

¹⁴ No record or reference exists that P. Carter was ever published.

I determined to find out once and for all what lay in the sub-basement and be done with it. I tried not to think about that detestable and archaic volume in the library that described *Mollock*, the dark god of the *Molluscs*.

I boldly descended to the basement and used a crowbar to open the round trap-door that opened into Nicomakphantean darkness below. A shoddy wooden ladder dropped straight down into the infinite, eternal black which exceeded even that of the darkest moonless night. My battery flash beam futilely shot down into the abyss as I began the descent.

I descended the rickety ladder for what seemed hours though I had no doubt that my fevered brain distorted all sense of time. At odd intervals I clearly heard a kind of splashy, *spllooshy* sound faintly echoing from the depths immeasurably far beneath. The narrow walls of the shaft occasionally transmitted a profane *goo-gurgle*, but for most of that harrowing descent there was absolute silence—the eerie silence of the tomb itself.

My shoulders ached, the descent having been great, my nerves keyed high. My breathing alternated between gasping for wind into tortured lungs, and held in slow silence that I might hear better.

At length my foot sink into some cold, peculiarly elastic substance. Frantic, I turned my flashlight down to reveal that the base of the ladder extended yet farther into a vast tank of oily water. Into that fetid liquid, for my nostrils now burned, the toe of my boot had dipped.

Now, gentlemen, I do not seek to defend my sanity. Not by any means! For as we are all agreed I am now entirely and thoroughly barmy. But I can recall what happened next with some degree of accuracy.

You found me staggering and stumbling pell-mell down the lane at midnight, shrieking like a damned soul in Hades. Found me with a large, obscenely bouncing octopus horror clinging to my half-eaten leg, the poison of its tentacle claws coursing through my veins, for when my foot sank into the murky depths of the tank it was then that the abomination occurred. That primal repugnance which sent me flying like a maniac up

and out of that house forever, knocking over the kerosene lamp and thereby destroying my legacy.¹⁵

When my foot dropped into that slimy pool a mass of suckered tentacles ferociously enwrapped my quivering limb.

And the near-unendurable pain began.

Which remains.

I sprang upward on the ladder, pulling my leg up and saw the full horror of it—a ghastly thing that my Uncle had grown from a tiny baby octopus—in his basement! A mollusc which had haunted my dreams in that house, a mollusk which had gnawed hungrily at my reason from that darkness of the abyss. And as I screamed childishly, girlishly—frantically!—I made my escape even as the hellish creature gnawed hungrily upon my leg and foot, its cruel beak buried in my soft flesh. It had not been fed in the two weeks since my uncle's demise. It was angry that I had not succumbed to its lure it...

Then, as I made all effort to save myself, I saw that which sent me into this mindless delirium—I saw two beady, bulging eyes of immense size... I saw the parent beast of the creature that near-killed me. I saw, in those foul dark depths, the loathsome, stone-cold yellow orbs staring into my own wild eyes, an entity antipathetic to all human kind, a being attempting to mesmerize me into submission—*Molock, lord of the vast empty sea bottoms!*

—signed, Andrew Carter

*Hope you enjoyed the story!
Stephan Allsup and David Bruce Bozarth
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¹⁵ "He was nuts!" said Twilliger. "Running around with an octopus on his leg screaming 'The World is in Danger!' and other schizophrenic remarks." Testimony during Trial.

"Pompous Ass!" Andrew Carter exclaimed, shrugging off his Attorney to pull high his pant leg to display horrific scars. "Explain this!"