



The Call of Cthulhu

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H. P. Lovecraft

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512 pages

Présentation de l'éditeur

In the text, narrator Francis Wayland Thurston, of Boston, recounts his discovery of notes left behind by his granduncle, George Gammell Angell, a prominent Professor of Semitic languages at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island. The first chapter, The Horror in Clay, concerns a small bas-relief sculpture found among the papers, which the narrator describes: "My somewhat extravagant imagination yielded simultaneous pictures of an octopus, a dragon, and a human caricature.... A pulpy, tentacled head surmounted a grotesque and scaly body with rudimentary wings". The sculpture is the work of Henry Anthony Wilcox, a student at the Rhode Island School of Design who based the work on delirious dreams of "great Cyclopean cities of titan blocks and sky-flung monoliths, all dripping with green ooze and sinister with latent horror". Frequent references to Cthulhu and R'lyeh are found in papers authored by Wilcox. Angell also discovers reports of "outré mental illnesses and outbreaks of group folly or mania" around the world (in New York City, "hysterical Levantines" mob police; in California, a Theosophist colony dons white robes to await a "glorious fulfillment").

Howard Phillips "H. P." Lovecraft, August 20, 1890 – March 15, 1937, was an American author who achieved posthumous fame through his influential works of horror fiction. Virtually unknown and only published in pulp magazines before he died in poverty, he is now regarded as one of the most significant 20th-century authors in his genre. Lovecraft was born in Providence, Rhode Island, where he spent most of his life. His father was confined to a mental institution when Lovecraft was 3 years old. His grandfather, a wealthy businessman, enjoyed storytelling and was an early influence. Intellectually precocious but sensitive, Lovecraft had begun composing rudimentary horror tales and had begun to be overwhelmed by feelings of anxiety by the age of 8. Although he seems to have had some social life, attending meetings of a club for local young men, Lovecraft in early adulthood was established in a reclusive 'nightbird' lifestyle without occupation or pursuit of romantic adventures. In 1913 his conduct of a long running controversy in the letters page of a story magazine led to his being invited to participate in an amateur journalism association. Encouraged, he started circulating his stories; he was 31 at the time of his first publication in a professional magazine. Lovecraft contracted a marriage to an older woman he had met at an association conference. By age 34, he was a regular contributor to newly founded Weird Tales magazine; he turned down an offer of the editorship. Lovecraft returned to Providence in 1926, and over the next nine months he produced some of his most celebrated tales including "The Call of Cthulhu", canonical to the Cthulhu Mythos. Never able to support himself from earnings as author and editor, commercial success increasingly eluded him in this latter period, partly because he lacked the confidence and drive to promote himself. Lovecraft subsisted in progressively straitened circumstances in his last years; an inheritance was completely spent by the time he died at the age of 46.

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