

“...we find that the Mayan calendar, which ends famously in the year 2012—far enough off we needn’t worry, eh?—ah. Yes. The Mayan calendar remains a fabulously accurate measure of the movements of the heavens.”

Amanda dutifully writes “movements of the heavens” down in her notes. Professor Walters drones on.

“Curiously enough, when we consult the Mayan calendar to see what this month has in store, we find a celestial phenomenon noted that has not appeared in at least five hundred years and will not appear again before the—ahem—end. It is written thus in the Mayan.”

A new slide appears, all carved stone ideographs. Amanda writes “unusual celestial phenomenon” down and yawns.



“Well, none of you can read Mayan, I don’t suppose, but I can! Happy day. This month we can be expected to witness the ‘Rise of Quetzalcoatl,’ the Feathered Serpent. Now. There is no known star to which this corresponds, so what, precisely, are we to expect? Miss Sharpe?”

Amanda looks up, startled, then down at her notes. She finds that she has drawn coiling, sinuous serpents all over the yellow paper.

Michael straightens his tie. “Louie, he’s down here.” He starts down the alley, leading with his shoulders and his jaw. When Michael McGlen moves like that, strong men get out of his way if they know what’s good for ‘em. “Listen here, fella. O’Bannion don’t like getting played for a-” Michael reaches out and grabs Frankie’s shoulder. Frankie’s two large in debt and two weeks behind and just leaning against the wall in this alley like Michael couldn’t find him?

Frankie’s also deader’n a doornail. “What the deuce? Hey Louie! Come look at this!” It’s Frankie, all right, but he’s all bloated up and his tongue’s hanging out. There’s something sticky on his sleeve. Michael rolls it back and finds two neat puncture wounds about the size of a dime on his arm.

“Louie?” Michael hears a body hit the floor and reaches for his Thompson. “...Louie?”

Sister Mary is on the train, watching the gabled roofs of Arkham grow ever closer. She is eager to do the Lord’s work in this new place and looks forward to the challenges and opportunities she will find there. But still, somehow, she is worried.

When she arrives at the station, Mary gathers her things. Her bible—old and leatherbound, her first bible—falls open. She lifts it and reads aloud: “And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.”

She smiles and tucks the book under her arm. She’s always enjoyed Genesis.

“Ashcan” Pete wakes from another nightmare to the sound of barking. He reaches out to quiet the dog and realizes he’s alone. The barking is coming from down near the river. Pete climbs to his feet and goes to see what inarnation’s got Duke all worked up now.



“Aw, leave off, Duke,” Pete says when he gets close. “Snake like that’s more afeared of you than you is of it, anyhow.” He reaches down and touches Duke’s head. “Aw, shoot. River done rose?” Then he stares.

The moonlight gleams on what he thought was river water risen up above its banks, a shining, shimmering wave moving towards the heart of Arkham. Pete keeps staring and Duke keeps barking as the awfulness of what he’s seeing slowly sinks in.

A tide of serpents is flowing into Arkham.



“Ashcan” Pete wiped the sleep from his eyes. After the last few weeks, it’s been harder and harder to keep going. The battle with the snake people, the horror of friends turned to enemies and back again, the whispers following his fight with the horrors too numerous to count. Laying back down, Pete scratches Duke’s head. “You and me dog. We’s all right. Mebbe tonight we get a good nights sleep.” No sooner than he lays down, Pete watches as a shadow detaches from a tree, and reaches for him. “Ashcan” picks up his walking stick, swings for the fences, and knocks the shadow into the bushes. “I am sick and tired of dealing

with this stuff. You and me dog are gonna hop the train into Dunwich.” Pete turns to grab his pack and sees the shadow rising up again. He picks up his stick and walks toward it with a gleam in his eye.

Jim Culver snaps his trumpet case closed, and heads for the door at Velma’s. He’s got a train to catch, finally get out of this mixed up town. Just last week he ended up fighting with some thing that nearly took his head off. Enough of this, he thinks, I got to get me out of here. Walking down the street, Jim keeps seeing small groups of people with hoods drawn heading toward downtown. I want no part of this. Jim picks up his pace and runs right into a pair of the hooded strangers. Looking up they ask, “Are you here to honor the lord of N’ Kai?” Jim stands up to run, as two more men emerge from the alley holding a struggling young woman. They yell, “What are you two waiting for? Grab that musician and head to the cave.” The pair standing next to Jim grab him by the arms, and pull him into the night.

Diana Stanley ties her pack closed. Tonight is the night she has planned for. Try to sacrifice someone to this toad, she thinks, I will stop you. She tightens her robe, and slips out into the night. Heading down towards the Silver Twilight Lodge, she runs her plan over in her mind. Distracted by her heroic thoughts, she misses two men step in behind her. As she walks they catch up and grab her by the shoulder.

“Evenin’ Diana. Where you headed this time of night?” “Tony, David I didn’t expect you to be part of this ceremony.” “What ceremony? We were told not to let anyone near the lodge tonight.” “Well I wouldn’t expect you to be told...” Her voice trails off as two midnight tendrils whip out of the alley, snagging both men by the neck. She turns and flees to sound of screams in the night.



The bass notes still ringing in the air, Marie Lambeau steps off stage. She left it all up on the stage, and now she needs a drink. Sitting at the bar, nursing a scotch, she watches the crowd mingle and move. The air feels tense tonight, she thinks. The doors burst open and liquid darkness moves in the room. The inky shape oozes across



the floor, and slithers up the end of the bar. No one in the room has noticed it yet, and it is moving slowly down the bar. Nonchalantly Marie stands up and walks out the back door. Once out the door, she hails a cab and heads for Ma’s Boarding House. That nice fella Michael McGlen’ll know what to do.

Changing out the bulb on his flash, Darrell Simmons mutters to himself. I have seen some crazy things, but nothing is like that stuff I saw on the train ride over here. Dunwich is a far hike just for a photo, yet Darrell jumped at the chance

when his editor asked for shots of the newly opened train depot in Dunwich. The ride over was fairly uneventful, an older lady went missing, something was found eating a passenger, scuttling noises turned out to be beetles with human faces feasting in the baggage car, you know normal stuff. Hopping off the train, Darrell saw a shadow duck into the depot. I know it was right here, Darrell thought as he scouted the building. Concentrating so hard on looking low, he missed the inky darkness drop from the ceiling. With a thump, it lands in front of him. Startled Darrell took a panicked picture, and falls backward. The formless thing grabs the gentleman who had been standing next to Darrell, and dashes out into the night.

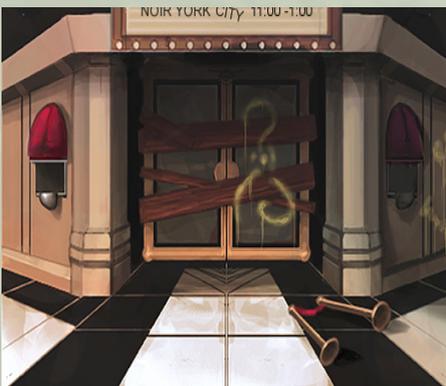


Rita shoulders her backpack and heads up the university stairs. The play the University is putting on is giving me the creeps, she thinks as she walks towards her lecture. Ever since it started there has been graffiti everywhere, this weird looking yellow symbol. Everyone in town is buzzing about the lead actor, a Mr. Aster or was it Mr. Hastern, she couldn't remember. All Rita knows is she hasn't gotten a wink of sleep after reading the manuscript, and her dreams are full of a man in a mask. Weird thing is, she can't remember his face when he takes the mask off, just that she knows he did. Oh man I'm gonna be late, Rita thinks as she picks up the pace. Distracted by her tardiness, she runs straight into a hunched figure clad in tattered yellow robes. "Get out of here you dirty hobo," Rita yells. As the figure turns, his face is a mask, and the mask is the same as the one in her dreams. Rita stares in horror as he begins to remove the mask. All she can hear are the words Dim Carcosa.

Sitting by the docks, "Ashcan" Pete sits in the shade of a tree. He hasn't had an easy time, each day reminding him why he tried to leave this wretched city. Funny thing is, last time he hopped a train to Dunwich, he ended up back in Arkham. Reckon it's bout time me an' Duke find a place to hole up for awhile, he thinks. Calling in his dog, Pete ambles off towards Ma's Boarding House to sit tight and wait for all this nonsense to calm down. As he walks off, a flyer blows up off the street into his hand. Glancing at it, all that appears to be on it is a strange yellow sign. Enough of this weirdness, I don't care what this means. I just want to be left alone.

Walking down these long hallways is enough to give me a heart attack, thinks Carolyn as she finishes her rounds at Arkham Asylum. Every so often a patient jumps up and grabs at her as she walks by. So many afflictions, how can we hope to save them all? She pulls out her keys and unlocks the door leading to her office. As

she walks in and flips the light she notices her desk is turned over. She races to the opposite side and sees all her notes are gone. As she turns, her foot catches the cord on the lamp, and she falls to the floor. Putting a hand on the upturned desk to help lift her up, she sees a carving has been etched all over the desk. That was the sign my last patient in Providence told me about. Carolyn stands up and heads for the door, determined to get to the bottom of whatever that sign means.



Taking a slug from the bottle at his hip, Wilson sizes up the town he has come to hate. *When I heard there was work here, I thought that sounded pretty darn good. Man was I wrong. I been chased by things I thought were only fairy tales, and I fought off things with more eyes than fingers. Only fella I met here worth talking to was Pete, and who knows where he and Duke got off to.* Wilson hops on his motorcycle and makes ready to leave. A passerby catches his arm, and hands him a ticket. "What's this for," he asks. "Well you fixed my fence so well, this is a reward for you. The famous King In Yellow play is being performed tonight at the University, and I got you a ticket." "That's mighty kind of you, but I ain't a play-going fella most of the time." "Nonsense, I insist you go. I will see you there at 8 sharp." Wilson looks at the ticket and tries to figure out the weird shape on it. *Why not, I guess I can go see a show before heading out.*



The road of the league has been long and hard. Every step of the way has been fought for, tooth and nail. Shadowy figures, snakes in the guise of men, monsters without shape or number, infesting spidery broods, sanity shattering plays, tentacled horrors and things beyond the comprehension of mortals. It has led up to this. A showdown of legendary proportions, one that promises to leave the town of Arkham changed forever. Many investigators have played their part, and many have been lost along the way. This battle is a testament to the strength of conviction. Each investigator has a story, each investigator is a hero.

“Ashcan” Pete stands over the body. Another friend fallen. This fight has taken its toll. Pete’s eyes seem to be looking at something beyond the contents of the room. He is beyond sorrow, beyond exhaustion. So many horrors faced, too many. The streets are filled with people running for their lives. Madness has gripped the city. “Ashcan” knows what the madness is. He has seen it coming for a long time. The nightmares are no match for the horror that he has faced in the streets. They now just show the next abomination, the next battle. He has embraced the nightmares, used them to his advantage. The apocalypse is here, and he is in the middle of it. Calling to Duke, “Ashcan” walks out of the room. He hefts the sword he took during a battle with flying creatures, and walks out to finish the fight.

The streets are flooded with people. They push and shove, but somehow Wendy walks past them without so much as a nudge. The moon stares down on the town of Arkham, eerie with its red glow. Wendy pauses as she glances up, the face of her father flashing before her. Disbelief flooding her, Wendy goes towards the man she hasn’t seen in many years. The crowd shifts around her blocking her view. She slips between them, but when she gets through, her father is nowhere to be seen. Eyes downcast, Wendy spies a small slip of paper on the ground. Picking it up she sees that it has part of



the symbol on her necklace. “Tonight will be tough, tougher than any you have seen before. Keep hidden, and stay safe. I love you, my little girl.” Wendy touches the necklace, and a smile creeps across her face.

Pulling his coat tighter, Wilson heads in the direction of the river docks. Last he’d heard there was plenty of work for a guy who works hard, and doesn’t ask too many questions. After all the awful things that have been going on, Wilson is looking to lose himself in work. A passing stranger bumps hard into Wilson as he walks by, nearly knocking him down. “Watch it pal!” yells Wilson. The man turns, and for a moment their eyes lock. Wilson feels the edges of his mind waver. The man turns back and hurries down the street. Shaking off the cold



grasp, Wilson heads back down the road. He just can’t shake the feeling of evil he got from the stranger. As the screams begin behind him, Wilson turns and breaks into a run. *This town will be the death of me yet...*