

# **The Night Land**

## **Vol.I**

**By**

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*Freeditorial* 

# The Night Land Vol.I

## I

### MIRDATH THE BEAUTIFUL

"And I cannot touch her face  
And I cannot touch her hair,  
And I kneel to empty shadows  
Just memories of her grace;  
And her voice sings in the winds  
And in the sobs of dawn  
And among the flowers at night  
And from the brooks at sunrise  
And from the sea at sunset,  
And I answer with vain callings "

It was the Joy of the Sunset that brought us to speech. I was gone a long way from my house, walking lonelywise, and stopping often that I view the piling upward of the Battlements of Evening, and to feel the dear and strange gathering of the Dusk come over all the world about me.

The last time that I paused, I was truly lost in a solemn joy of the Glory of the Coming Night; and maybe I laughed a little in my throat, standing there alone in the midst of the Dusk upon the World. And, lo! my content was answered out of the trees that bounded the country road upon my right; and it was so as that some one had said: "And thou also!" in glad understanding, that I laughed again a little in my throat; as though I had only a halfbelieving that any true human did answer my laugh; but rather some sweet Delusion or Spirit that was tuned to my mood.

But she spoke and called me by my name; and when I had gone to the side of the road, that I should see her somewhat, and discover whether I knew her, I saw that she was surely that lady, who for her beauty was known through all of that sweet County of Kent as Lady Mirdath the Beautiful; and a near neighbour to me; for the Estates of her Guardian abounded upon mine.

Yet, until that time, I had never met her; for I had been so oft and long abroad; and so much given to my Studies and my Exercises when at home, that I had no further Knowledge of her than Rumour gave to me odd time; and for the rest, I was well content; for as I have given hint, my books held me, and likewise my Exercises; for I was always an athlete, and never met the man so quick or so strong as I did be; save in some fiction of a tale or in the mouth of a boaster.

Now, I stood instantly with my hat in my hand; and answered her gentle bantering so well as I might, the while that I peered intent and wondering at her through the gloom; for truly Rumour had told no tale to equal the beauty of this strange maid; who now stood jesting with so sweet a spirit, and claiming kinship of Cousinhood with me, as was truth, now that I did wake to think.

And, truly, she made no ado; but named me frank by my lad's name, and gave laughter and right to me to name her Mirdath, and nothing less or more at that time. And she bid me then to come up through the hedge, and make use of a gap that was her own especial secret, as she confessed, when she took odd leave with her maid to some country frolic, drest as village maids; but not to deceive many, as I dare believe.

And I came up through the gap in the hedge and stood beside her; and tall she had seemed to me, when I looked up at her; and tall she was, in truth; but indeed I was a great head taller. And she invited me then to walk with her to the house, that I meet her Guardian and give word to my sorrow that I had so long neglected to make call upon them; and truly her eyes to shine with mischief and delight, as she named me so for my amissness.

But, indeed, she grew sober in a moment, and she set up her finger to me to hush, as that she heard somewhat in the wood that lay all the way upon our right. And, indeed, something I heard too; for there was surely a rustling of the leaves, and anon a dead twig crackt with a sound clear and sharp in the stillness.

And immediately there came three men running out of the wood at me; and I called to them sharply to keep off or beware of harm; and I put the maid to my back with my left hand, and had my oak staff ready for my use.

But the three men gave out no word of reply; but ran in at me; and I saw somewhat of the gleam of knives; and at that, I moved very glad and brisk to the attack; and behind me there went shrill and sweet, the call of a silver whistle; for the Maid was whistling for her dogs; and maybe the call was also a signal to the menservants of her house.

Yet, truly, there was no use in help that was yet to come; for the need did be then and instant; and I nowise loath to use my strength before my sweet cousin. And I stepped forward, briskly, as I have told; and the end of my staff I drove into the body of the leftward man, so that he dropped like a dead man. And I hit very sharply at the head of another, and surely crackt it for him; for he made instantly upon the earth; but the third man I met with my fist, and neither had he any great need of a second blow; but went instant to join his companions, and the fight thus to have ended before it was even

proper begun, and I laughing a little with a proper pride, to know the bewilderment that I perceived in the way that the Lady Mirdath, my cousin, stood and regarded me through the dusk of the hushed even.

But, indeed, there was no time left to us, before there came bounding up, three great boarhounds, that had been loosed to her whistle; and she had some ado to keep the brutes off me; and I then to beat them off the men upon the earth, lest they maul them as they lay. And directly, there was a noise of men shouting, and the light of lanthorns in the night, and the footmen of the house to come running with lanthorns and cudgels; and knew not whether to deal with me, or not, in the first moment, even as the dogs; but when they saw the men upon the ground, and learned my name and saw me proper, they kept well their distance and had no lack of respect; but, indeed, my sweet cousin to have the most of any; only that she showed no intent to keep distance of me; but to have a new and deeper feeling of kinship than she at first had shown.

And the menservants asked what should be done with the footpads; seeing that they were now recovering. But, indeed, I left the matter, along with some silver, to the servants; and very sound justice they dealt out to the men; for I heard their cries a good while after we had gone away.

Now, when we were come up to the Hall, my cousin must take me in to her Guardian, Sir Alfred Jarles, an old man and venerable that I knew a little in passing and because our estates abounded. And she praised me to my face, yet quaintlywise; and the old man, her Guardian thanked me most honourably and with a nice courtesy; so that I was a welcome housefriend from that time onward.

And I stayed all that evening, and dined, and afterward went out again into the homegrounds with the Lady Mirdath; and she more friendly to me than ever any woman had been; and seemed to me as that she had known me always. And, truly, I had the same feeling in my heart towards her; for it was, somehow, as though we knew each the way and turn of the other, and had a constant delight to find this thing and that thing to be in common; but no surprise; save that so pleasant a truth had so natural a discovery.

And one thing there was that I perceived held the Lady Mirdath all that dear forenigh; and this was, indeed, the way that I had my pleasure so easy with the three footpads. And she asked me plainly whether I was not truly very strong; and when I laughed with young and natural pride, she caught my arm suddenly to discover for herself how strong I might be. And, surely, she loosed it even the more sudden, and with a little gasping of astonishment, because it was so great and hard. And afterward, she walked by me very silent, and seeming thoughtful; but she went never any great way off from me.

And, truly, if the Lady Mirdath had a strange pleasure in my strength, I had likewise a constant wonder and marvel in her beauty, that had shown but the more lovely in the candlelight at dinner.

But there were further delights to me in the days that came; for I had happiness in the way that she had pleasure of the Mystery of the Evening, and the Glamour of Night, and the Joy of Dawn, and all suchlike.

And one evening, that I ever remember, as we wandered in the parklands, she began to say half unthinking that it was truly an elvesnight. And she stopped herself immediately; as though she thought I should have no understanding; but, indeed, I was upon mine own familiar ground of inward delight; and I replied in a quiet and usual voice, that the Towers of Sleep would grow that night, and I felt in my bones that it was a night to find the Giant's Tomb, or the Tree with the Great Painted Head, or And surely I stopped very sudden; for she gripped me in that moment, and her hand shook as she held me; but when I would ask her what ailed, she bid me, very breathless, to say on, to say on. And, with a half understanding, I told her that I had but meant to speak of the Moon Garden, that was an olden and happy fancy of mine.

And, in verity, when I said that, the Lady Mirdath cried out something in a strange low voice, and brought me to a halt, that she might face me. And she questioned me very earnest; and I answered just so earnest as she; for I was grown suddenly to an excitement, in that I perceived she knew also. And, in verity, she told me that she had knowledge; but had thought that she was alone in the world with her knowledge of that strange land of her dreams; and now to find that I also had travelled in those dear, strange dream lands. And truly the marvel of it the marvel of it! As she to say time and oft. And again, as we walked, she gave out word that there was little wonder she had been urged to call to me that night, as she saw me pause upon the road; though, indeed, she had learned of our cousinship before, having seen me go by on my horse pretty oft, and inquired concerning me; and mayhap daintily irked that I had so little heed of Lady Mirdath the Beautiful. But, indeed, I had thought of other matters; yet had been human enough, had I but met her proper before I see her.

Now you must not think that I was not utter stirred by the wonder of this thing, that we had both a dreamful knowledge of the same matters, of which each had thought none other knew. Yet, when I questioned more, there was much that had been in my fancies that was foreign to her, and likewise much that had been familiar to her, that was of no meaning to me. But though there was this, that brought a little regret to us, there would be, time and again, some new thing that one told, that the other knew and could finish the telling of, to the gladness and amazement of both.

And so shall you picture us wandering and having constant speech, so that, hour by hour, we grew gladly aged in dear knowledge and sweet friendship of the other.

And truly, how the time passed, I know not; but there came presently a hullabaloo, and the shouts of men's voices and the baying of dogs, and the gleam of lanthorns, so that I knew not what to think; until, very sudden, and with a sweet and strange little laughter, the Lady Mirdath to perceive that we had missed the hours utter in our converse; so that her Guardian (made uneasy because of the three footpads) had ordered a search. And we all that time awander together in happy forgetfulness.

And we turned homeward, then, and came towards the lights; but indeed, the dogs found us before we were come there; and they had grown to know me now, and leaped about me, barking very friendly; and so in a minute the men had discovered us, and were gone back to tell Sir Jarles that all was well.

And this was the way of our meeting and the growing of our acquaintance, and the beginning of my great love for Mirdath the Beautiful.

Now, from that time onward, evening by evening would I go awander along the quiet and country road that led from my estate to the estate of Sir Jarles. And always I went inward by the hedgegap; and oft I should find the Lady Mirdath walking in that part of the woods; but always with her great boarhounds about her; for I had begged that she do this thing for her sweet safety; and she to seem wishful to pleasure me; but truly to be just so oft utter perverse in diverse matters; and to strive to plague me, as though she would discover how much I would endure and how far she might go to anger me.

And, truly, well I remember how that one night, coming to the hedgegap, I saw two countrymaids come thence out from the woods of Sir Jarles'; but they were naught to me, and I would have gone upward through the gap, as ever; only that, as they passed me, they curtsyed somewhat overgraceful for rough wenches. And I had a sudden thought, and came up to them to see them more anigh; and truly I thought the taller was surely the Lady Mirdath. But, indeed, I could not be sure; for when I asked who she did be, she only to simper and to curtsey again; and so was I very natural all in doubt; but yet sufficient in wonder (having some knowledge of the Lady Mirdath) to follow the wenches, the which I did.

And they then, very speedy and sedate, as though I were some rackrape that they did well to be feared of alone at night; and so came at last to the village green, where a great dance was afoot, with torches, and a wandering fiddler to set the tune; and ale in plenty.

And the two to join the dance, and danced very hearty; but had only each the other for a partner, and had a good care to avoid the torches. And by this, I was pretty sure that they were truly the Lady Mirdath and her maid; and so I took chance when they had danced somewhat my way, to step over to them, and ask boldly for a dance. But, indeed, the tall one answered, simpering, that she was promised; and immediately gave her hand to a great hulking farmerlout, and went round the green with him; and well punished she was for her waywardness; for she had all her skill to save her pretty feet from his loutish stampings; and very glad she was to meet the end of the dance.

And I knew now for certainty that it was Mirdath the Beautiful, despite her plan of disguise, and the darkness and the wench's dress and the footgear that marred her step so great. And I walked across to her, and named her, whispering, by name; and gave her plain word to be done of this unwisdom, and I would take her home. But she to turn from me, and she stamped her foot, and went again to the lout; and when she had suffered another dance with him, she bid him be her escort a part of the way; the which he was nothing loath of.

And another lad, that was mate to him, went likewise; and in a moment, so soon as they were gone away from the light of the torches, the rough hindlads made to set their arms about the waists of the two wenches, not wetting who they had for companions. And the Lady Mirdath was no longer able to endure, and cried out in her sudden fear and disgust, and struck the rough hind that embraced her, so hard that he loosed her a moment, swearing great oaths. And directly he came back to her again, and had her in a moment, to kiss her; and she, loathing him to the very death, beat him madly in the face with her hands; but to no end, only that I was close upon them. And, in that moment, she screamed my name aloud; and I caught the poor lout and hit him once, but not to harm him overmuch; yet to give him a long memory of me; and afterward I threw him into the side of the road. But the second hind, having heard my name, loosed from the tiringmaid, and ran for his life; and, indeed, my strength was known all about that part.

And I caught Mirdath the Beautiful by her shoulders, and shook her very soundly, in my anger. And afterward, I sent the maid onward; and she, having no word from her Mistress to stay, went forward a little; and in this fashion we came at last to the hedgegap, with the Lady Mirdath very hushed; but yet walking anigh to me, as that she had some secret pleasure of my nearness. And I led her through the gap, and so homeward to the Hall; and there bid her goodnight at a side door that she held the key of. And, truly, she bid me goodnight in an utter quiet voice; and was almost as that she had no haste to be gone from me that night.

Yet, when I met her on the morrow, she was full of a constant impudence to me; so that, having her alone to myself, when the dusk was come, I asked her why she would never

be done of her waywardness; because that I ached to have companionship of her; and, instead, she denied my need. And, at that, she was at once very gentle; and full of a sweet and winsome understanding; and surely knew that I wished to be rested; for she brought out her harp, and played me dear olden melodies of our childhood days all that evening; and so had my love for her the more intent and glad. And she saw me that night to the hedgegap, having her three great boarhounds with her, to company her home again. But, indeed, I followed her afterwards, very silent, until I saw her safe into the Hall; for I would not have her alone in the night; though she believed that I was then far away on the country road. And as she walked with her dogs, one or another would run back to me, to nose against me friendlywise; but I sent them off again very quiet; and she had no knowledge of aught; for she to go singing a lovesong quietly all the way home. But whether she loved me, I could not tell; though she had a nice affection for me.

Now, on the following evening, I went somewhat early to the gap; and lo! who should be standing in the gap, talking to the Lady Mirdath; but a very cleverdrest man, that had a look of the Court about him; and he, when I approached, made no way for me through the gap; but stood firm, and eyed me very insolent; so that I put out my hand, and lifted him from my way.

And lo! the Lady Mirdath turned a bitterness of speech upon me that gave me an utter pain and astonishment; so that I was assured in a moment that she had no true love for me, or she had never striven so to put me to shame before the stranger, and named me uncouth and brutal to a smaller man. And, indeed, you shall perceive how I was in my heart in that moment.

And I saw that there was some seeming of justice in what the Lady Mirdath said; but yet might the man have shown a better spirit; and moreover Mirdath the Beautiful had no true call to shame me, her true friend and cousin, before this stranger. Yet did I not stop to argue; but bowed very low to the Lady Mirdath; and afterward I bowed a little to the man and made apology; for, indeed, he was neither great nor strongmade; and I had been better man to have shown courtesy to him; at least in the first.

And so, having done justice to my own respect, I turned and went on, and left them to their happiness.

Now, I walked then, maybe twenty good miles, before I came to my own home; for there was no rest in me all that night, or ever, because that I was grown deadly in love of Mirdath the Beautiful; and all my spirit and heart and body of me pained with the dreadful loss that I was come so sudden upon.

And for a great week I had my walks in another direction; but in the end of that week, I must take my walk along the olden way, that I might chance to have but a sight of My Lady. And, truly, I had all sight that ever man did need to put him in dread pain and jealousy; for, truly, as I came in view of the gap, there was the Lady Mirdath walking just without the borders of the great wood; and beside her there walked the cleverdrest man of the Court, and she suffered his arm around her, so that I knew they were lovers; for the Lady Mirdath had no brothers nor any youthful men kin.

Yet, when Mirdath saw me upon the road, she shamed in a moment to be so caught; for she put her lover's arm from about her, and bowed to me, a little changed of colour in the face; and I bowed very lowbeing but a young man myself; and so passed on, with my heart very dead in me. And as I went, I saw that her lover came again to her, and had his arm once more about her; and so, maybe, they looked after me, as I went very stiff and desperate; but, indeed, I looked not back on them, as you may think.

And for a great month then, I went not near to the gap; for my love raged in me, and I was hurt in my pride; and, truly, neither had a true justice been dealt to me by the Lady Mirdath. Yet in that month, my love was a leaven in me, and made slowly a sweetness and a tenderness and an understanding that were not in me before; and truly Love and Pain do shape the Character of Man.

And in the end of that time, I saw a little way into Life, with an understanding heart, and began presently to take my walks again past the gap; but truly Mirdath the Beautiful was never to my sight; though one evening I thought she might be not a great way off; for one of her great boarhounds came out of the wood, and down into the road to nose against me, very friendly, as a dog oft doth with me.

Yet, though I waited a good time after the dog had left me, I had no sight of Mirdath, and so passed on again, with my heart heavy in me; but without bitterness, because of the understanding that was begun to grow in my heart.

Now, there passed two weary and lonely weeks, in which I grew sick to have knowledge of the beautiful maid. And, truly, in the end of that time, I made a sudden resolving that I would go in through the gap, and come to the homegrounds about the Hall, and so maybe have some sight of her.

And this resolving I had one evening; and I went out immediately, and came to the gap, and went in through the gap, and so by a long walking to the gardens about the Hall. And, truly, when I was come there, I saw a good light of lanthorns and torches, and a great company of people dancing; and all drest in quaint dress; so that I knew they had a festival for some cause. And there came suddenly a horrid dread into my heart that this

might be the marriedance of the Lady Mirdath; but, indeed, this was foolishness; for I had surely heard of the marriage, if there had been any. And, truly, in a moment, I remembered that she was come oneandtwenty years of age on that day, and to the end of her wardship; and this surely to be festival in honour of the same.

And a very bright and pretty matter it was to watch, save that I was so heavy in the heart with loneliness and longing; for the company was great and gay, and the lights plentiful and set all about from the trees; and in leafmade arbours about the great lawn. And a great table spread with eating matters and silver and crystal, and great lamps of bronze and silver went all adown one end of the lawn; and the dance constant upon the other part.

And surely, the Lady Mirdath to step out of the dance, very lovely drest; yet seeming, to mine eyes, a little pale in the looming of the lights. And she to wander to a seat to rest; and, indeed, in a moment, there to be a dozen youths of the great families of the countryside, in attendance about her, making talk and laughter, and each eager for her favour; and she very lovely in the midst of them, but yet, as I did think, lacking of somewhat, and a little paleseeming, as I have told; and her glance to go oddwise beyond the group men about her; so that I understood in a moment that her lover was not there, and she to be alack in the heart for him. Yet, why he was not there, I could not suppose, save that he might have been called back to the Court.

And, surely, as I watched the other young men about her, I burned with a fierce and miserable jealousy of them; so that I could near have stept forth and plucked her out from among them, and had her to walk with me in the woods, as in the olden days, when she also had seemed near to love. But, truly, what use to this? For it was not they who held her heart, as I saw plain; for I watched her, with an eager and lonesome heart, and knew that it was one small man of the Court that was lover to her, as I have told.

And I went away again then, and came not near to the gap for three great months, because that I could not bear the pain of my loss; but in the end of that time, my very pain to urge me to go, and to be worse than the pain of not going; so that I found myself one evening in the gap, peering, very eager and shaken, across the sward that lay between the gap and the woods; for this same place to be as an holy ground to me; for there was it that first I saw Mirdath the Beautiful, and surely lost my heart to her in that one night.

And a great time I stayed there in the gap, waiting and watching hopelessly. And lo! sudden there came something against me, touching my thigh very soft; and when I looked down, it was one of the boarhounds, so that my heart leaped, near frightened; for truly My Lady was come somewhere nigh, as I did think.

And, as I waited, very hushed and watchful; yet with an utter beating heart; surely I heard a faint and low singing among the trees, so utter sad. And lo! it was Mirdath singing a broken love song, and awander there in the dark alone, save for her great dogs.

And I harked, with strange pain in me, that she did be so in pain; and I ached to bring her ease; yet moved not, but was very still there in the gap; save that my being was all in turmoil.

And presently, as I harked, there came a slim white figure out from among the trees; and the figure cried out something, and came to a quick pause, as I could see in the halfdark. And lo! in that moment, there came a sudden and unreasoned hope into me; and I came up out of the gap, and was come to Mirdath in a moment, calling very low and passionate and eager: "Mirdath! Mirdath! Mirdath!"

And this way I came to her; and her great dog that was with me, to bound beside me, in thought, mayhap, that it was some game. And when I came to the Lady Mirdath, I held out my hands to her, not knowing what I did; but only the telling of my heart that needed her so utter, and craved to ease her of her pain. And lo! she put out her arms to me, and came into mine arms with a little run. And there she bode, weeping strangely; but yet with rest upon her; even as rest was come sudden and wondrous upon me.

And sudden, she moved in mine arms, and slipt her hands to me, very dear, and held her lips up to me, like some sweet child, that I kiss her; but, indeed, she was also a true woman, and in honest and dear love of me.

And this to be the way of our betrothal; and simple and wordless it was; yet sufficient, only that there is no sufficiency in Love.

Now, presently, she loosed herself out of mine arms, and we walked homeward through the woods, very quiet, and holding hands, as children do. And I then in a while to ask her about the man of the Court; and she laughed very sweet into the silence of the wood; but gave me no answer, save that I wait until we were come to the Hall.

And when we were come there, she took me into the great hall, and made a very dainty and impudent bow, mocking me. And so made me known to another lady, who sat there, upon her task of embroidering, which she did very demure, and as that she had also a dainty Mischief lurking in her.

And truly, the Lady Mirdath never to be done of naughty laughter, that made her dearly breathless with delight, and to sway a little, and set the trembling of pretty sounds in her

throat; and surely she must pull down two great pistols from an armrack, that I fight a duel to the death with the lady of the embroidering, who held her face down over her work, and shook likewise with the wickedness of her laughter that she could not hide.

And in the end, the Lady of the Embroidering looked up sudden into my face; and I then to see somewhat of the mischief in a moment; for she had the face of the man of the Court suit, that had been lover to Mirdath.

And the Lady Mirdath then to explain to me how that Mistress Alison (which was her name) was a dear and bosom friend, and she it was that had been drest in the Court suit to play a prank for a wager with a certain young man who would be lover to her, an he might. And I then to come along, and so speedy to offence that truly I never saw her face plain, because that I was so utter jealous. And so the Lady Mirdath had been more justly in anger than I supposed, because that I had put hands upon her friend, as I have told.

And this to be all of it, save that they had planned to punish me, and had met every evening at the gap, to play at lovers, perchance I should pass, so that I should have greater cause for my jealousy, and truly they to have a good revenge upon me; for I had suffered very great a long while because of it.

Yet, as you do mind, when I came upon them, the Lady Mirdath had a halfregret, that was very natural, because even then she was in love of me, as I of her; and because of this, she drew away, as you shall remember, beingas she confessed suddenly and strangely troubled and to want me; but afterwards as much set again to my punishment, because that I bowed so cold and went away. And indeed well I might.

Yet, truly, all was safe ended now, and I utter thankful and with a mad delight in the heart; so that I caught up Mirdath, and we danced very slow and stately around the great hall, the while that Mistress Alison whistled us a tune with her mouth, which she could very clever, as many another thing, I wot.

And each day and all day after this Gladness, Mirdath and I could never be apart; but must go awander always together, here and there, in an unending joy of our togetherness.

And in a thousand things were we at one in delight; for we had both of us that nature which doth love the blue of eternity which gathers beyond the wings of the sunset; and the invisible sound of the starlight falling upon the world; and the quiet of grey evenings when the Towers of Sleep are builded unto the mystery of the Dusk; and the solemn green of strange pastures in the moonlight; and the speech of the sycamore unto the beech; and the slow way of the sea when it doth mood; and the soft rustling of the night

clouds. And likewise had we eyes to see the Dancer of the Sunset, casting her mighty robes so strange; and ears to know that there shakes a silent thunder over the Face of Dawn; and much else that we knew and saw and understood together in our utter joy.

Now, there happened to us about this time a certain adventure that came near to cause the death of Mirdath the Beautiful; for one day as we wandered, as ever, like two children in our contentment, I made remark to Mirdath that there went only two of the great boarhounds with us; and she then told me that the third was to the kennels, being sick.

Yet, scarce had she told me so much; ere she cried out something and pointed; and lo! I saw that the third hound came towards us, at a run, yet very strangeseeming in his going. And in a moment, Mirdath cried out that the hound was mad; and truly, I saw then that the brute slavered as he came running.

And in a moment he was upon us, and made never a sound; but leaped at me in one instant of time; all before I had any thought of such intent. But surely, My Beautiful One had a dreadful love for me, for she cast herself at the dog, to save me, calling to the other hounds. And she was bitten in a moment by the brute, as she strove to hold him off from me. But I to have him instant by the neck and the body, and brake him, so that he died at once; and I cast him to the earth, and gave help to Mirdath, that I draw the poison from the wounds.

And this I did so well as I might, despite that she would have me stop. And afterwards, I took her into mine arms, and ran very fierce all the long and weary way to the Hall, and with hot skewers I burned the wounds; so that when the doctor came, he to say I have saved her by my care, if indeed she to be saved. But, truly, she had saved me in any wise, as you shall think; so that I could never be done of honour to her.

And she very pale; but yet to laugh at my fears, and to say that she soon to have her health, and the wounds healed very speedy; but, indeed, it was a long and bitter time before they were proper healed, and she so well as ever. Yet, in time, so it was; and an utter weight off my heart.

And when Mirdath was grown full strong again, we set our wedding day. And well do I mind how she stood there in her bridal dress, on that day, so slender and lovely as may Love have stood in the Dawn of Life; and the beauty of her eyes that had such sober sweetness in them, despite the dear mischief of her nature; and the way of her little feet, and the loveliness of her hair; and the dainty rogue-grace of her movements; and her mouth an enticement, as that a child and a woman smiled out of the one face. And this to be no more than but an hint of the loveliness of My Beautiful One.

And so we were married.

Mirdath, My Beautiful One, lay dying, and I had no power to hold Death backward from such dread intent. In another room, I heard the little wail of the child; and the wail of the child waked my wife back into this life, so that her hands fluttered white and desperately needful upon the coverlid.

I kneeled beside My Beautiful One, and reached out and took her hands very gentle into mine; but still they fluttered so needful; and she looked at me, dumbly; but her eyes beseeching.

Then I went out of the room, and called gently to the Nurse; and the Nurse brought in the child, wrapped very softly in a long, white robe. And I saw the eyes of My Beautiful One grow clearer with a strange, lovely light; and I beckoned to the Nurse to bring the babe near.

My wife moved her hands very weakly upon the coverlid, and I knew that she craved to touch her child; and I signed to the Nurse, and took my child in mine arms; and the Nurse went out from the room, and so we three were alone together.

Then I sat very gentle upon the bed; and I held the babe near to My Beautiful One, so that the wee cheek of the babe touched the white cheek of my dying wife; but the weight of the child I kept off from her.

And presently, I knew that Mirdath, My Wife, strove dumbly to reach for the hands of the babe; and I turned the child more towards her, and slipped the hands of the child into the weak hands of My Beautiful One. And I held the babe above my wife, with an utter care; so that the eyes of my dying One, looked into the young eyes of the child. And presently, in but a few moments of time; though it had been someways an eternity, My Beautiful One closed her eyes and lay very quiet. And I took away the child to the Nurse, who stood beyond the door. And I closed the door, and came back to Mine Own, that we have those last instants alone together.

And the hands of my wife lay very still and white; but presently they began to move softly and weakly, searching for somewhat; and I put out my great hands to her, and took her hands with an utter care; and so a little time passed.

Then her eyes opened, quiet and grey, and a little dazed seeming; and she rolled her head on the pillow and saw me; and the pain of forgetfulness went out of her eyes, and she looked at me with a look that grew in strength, unto a sweetness of tenderness and full understanding.

And I bent a little to her; and her eyes told me to take her into mine arms for those last minutes. Then I went very gentle upon the bed, and lifted her with an utter and tender care, so that she lay suddenly strangely restful against my breast; for Love gave me skill to hold her, and Love gave My Beautiful One a sweetness of ease in that little time that was left to us.

And so we twain were together; and Love seemed that it had made a truce with Death in the air about us, that we be undisturbed; for there came a drowse of rest even upon my tense heart, that had known nothing but a dreadful pain through the weary hours.

And I whispered my love silently to My Beautiful One, and her eyes answered; and the strangely beautiful and terrible moments passed by into the hush of eternity.

And suddenly, Mirdath My Beautiful One, spoke,whispering something. And I stooped gently to hark; and Mine Own spoke again; and lo! it was to call me by the olden Love Name that had been mine through all the utter lovely months of our togetherness.

And I began again to tell her of my love, that should pass beyond death; and lo! in that one moment of time, the light went out of her eyes; and My Beautiful One lay dead in mine arms My Beautiful One.

## II

### THE LAST REDOUBT

Since Mirdath, My Beautiful One, died and left me lonely in this world, I have suffered an anguish, and an utter and dreadful pain of longing, such as truly no words shall ever tell; for, in truth, I that had all the world through her sweet love and companionship, and knew all the joy and gladness of Life, have known such lonesome misery as doth stun me to think upon.

Yet am I to my pen again; for of late a wondrous hope has grown in me, in that I have, at night in my sleep, waked into the future of this world, and seen strange things and utter marvels, and known once more the gladness of life; for I have learned the promise of the future, and have visited in my dreams those places where in the womb of Time, she and I shall come together, and part, and again come togetherbreaking asunder most drearly in pain, and again reuniting after strange ages, in a glad and mighty wonder.

And this is the utter strange story of that which I have seen, and which, truly, I must set out, if the task be not too great; so that, in the setting out thereof, I may gain a little ease of the heart; and likewise, mayhap, give ease of hope to some other poor human, that doth suffer, even as I have suffered so dreadful with longing for Mine Own that is dead.

And some shall read and say that this thing was not, and some shall dispute with them; but to them all I say naught, save "Read!" And having read that which I set down, then shall one and all have looked towards Eternity with meunto its very portals. And so to my telling:

To me, in this last time of my visions, of which I would tell, it was not as if I dreamed; but, as it were, that I waked there into the dark, in the future of this world. And the sun had died; and for me thus newly waked into that Future, to look back upon this, our Present Age, was to look back into dreams that my soul knew to be of reality; but which to those newlyseeing eyes of mine, appeared but as a far vision, strangely hallowed with peacefulness and light.

Always, it seemed to me when I awaked into the Future, into the Everlasting Night that lapped this world, that I saw near to me, and girdling me all about, a blurred greyness. And presently this, the greyness, would clear and fade from about me, even as a dusky cloud, and I would look out upon a world of darkness, lit here and there with strange sights. And with my waking into that Future, I waked not to ignorance; but to a full knowledge of those things which lit the Night Land; even as a man wakes from sleep each morning, and knows immediately he wakes, the names and knowledge of the Time

which has bred him, and in which he lives. And the same while, a knowledge I had, as it were subconscious, of this Present this early life, which now I live so utterly alone.

In my earliest knowledge of that place, I was a youth, seventeen years grown, and my memory tells me that when first I waked, or came, as it might be said, to myself, in that Future, I stood in one of the embrasures of the Last Redoubt that great Pyramid of grey metal which held the last millions of this world from the Powers of the Slayers.

And so full am I of the knowledge of that Place, that scarce can I believe that none here know; and because I have such difficulty, it may be that I speak over familiarly of those things of which I know; and heed not to explain much that it is needful that I should explain to those who must read here, in this our present day. For there, as I stood and looked out, I was less the man of years of this age, than the youth of that, with the natural knowledge of that life which I had gathered by living all my seventeen years of life there; though, until that my first vision, I (of this Age) knew not of that other and Future Existence; yet woke to it so naturally as may a man wake here in his bed to the shining of the morning sun, and know it by name, and the meaning of aught else. And yet, as I stood there in the vast embrasure, I had also a knowledge, or memory, of this present life of ours, deep down within me; but touched with a halo of dreams, and yet with a conscious longing for One, known even there in a half memory as Mirdath.

As I have said, in my earliest memory, I mind that I stood in an embrasure, high up in the side of the Pyramid, and looked outwards through a queer spyglass to the NorthWest. Aye, full of youth and with an adventurous and yet half-fearful heart.

And in my brain was, as I have told, the knowledge that had come to me in all the years of my life in the Redoubt; and yet until that moment, this Man of this Present Time had no knowledge of that future existence; and now I stood and had suddenly the knowledge of a life already spent in that strange land, and deeper within me the misty knowings of this our present Age, and, maybe, also of some others.

To the NorthWest I looked through the queer spyglass, and saw a landscape that I had looked upon and pored upon through all the years of that life, so that I knew how to name this thing and that thing, and give the very distances of each and every one from the "CentrePoint" of the Pyramid, which was that which had neither length nor breadth, and was made of polished metal in the Room of Mathematics, where I went daily to my studies.

To the NorthWest I looked, and in the wide field of my glass, saw plain the bright glare of the fire from the Red Pit, shine upwards against the underside of the vast chin of the NorthWest Watcher The Watching Thing of the NorthWest. "That which hath Watched

from the Beginning, and until the opening of the Gateway of Eternity" came into my thoughts, as I looked through the glass the words of Aesworpth, the Ancient Poet (though incredibly future to this our time). And suddenly they seemed at fault; for I looked deep down into my being, and saw, as dreams are seen, the sunlight and splendour of this our Present Age. And I was amazed.

And here I must make it clear to all that, even as I waked from this Age, suddenly into that life, so must I that youth there in the embrasure have awakened then to the knowledge of this farback life of ours seeming to him a vision of the very beginnings of eternity, in the dawn of the world. Oh! I do but dread I make it not sufficient clear that I and he were both I the same soul. He of that far date seeing vaguely the life that was (that I do now live in this present Age); and I of this time beholding the life that I yet shall live. How utterly strange!

And yet, I do not know that I speak holy truth to say that I, in that future time, had no knowledge of this life and Age, before that awakening; for I woke to find that I was one who stood apart from the other youths, in that I had a dim knowledge visionary, as it were, of the past, which confounded, whilst yet it angered, those who were the men of learning of that age; though of this matter, more anon. But this I do know, that from that time, onwards, my knowledge and assuredness of the Past was tenfold; for this my memory of that life told me.

And so to further my telling. Yet before I pass onwards, one other thing is there of which I shall speak. In the moment in which I waked out of that youthfulness, into the assured awareness of this our Age, in that moment the hunger of this my love flew to me across the ages; so that what had been but a memory dream, grew to the pain of Reality, and I knew suddenly that I lacked; and from that time onwards, I went, listening, as even now my life is spent.

And so it was that I (freshborn in that future time) hungered strangely for My Beautiful One with all the strength of that new life, knowing that she had been mine, and might live again, even as I. And so, as I have said, I hungered, and found that I listened.

And now, to go back from my digression, it was, as I have said, I had amazement at perceiving, in memory, the unknowable sunshine and splendour of this age breaking so clear through my hitherto most vague and hazy visions; so that the ignorance of, Aesworpth was shouted to me by the things which now I knew.

And from that time, onward, for a little space, I was stunned with all that I knew and guessed and felt; and all of a long while the hunger grew for that one I had lost in the early days she who had sung to me in those faery days of light, that had been in verity.

And the especial thoughts of that age looked back with a keen, regretful wonder into the gulf of forgetfulness.

But, presently, I turned from the haze and pain of my dreammemories, once more to the inconceivable mystery of the Night Land, which I viewed through the great embrasure. For on none did it ever come with weariness to look out upon all the hideous mysteries; so that old and young watched, from early years to death, the black monstrosity of the Night Land, which this our last refuge of humanity held at bay.

To the right of the Red Pit there lay a long, sinuous glare, which I knew as the Vale of Red Fire, and beyond that for many dreary miles the blackness of the Night Land; across which came the coldness of the light from the Plain of Blue Fire.

And then, on the very borders of the Unknown Lands, there lay a range of low volcanoes, which lit up, far away in the outer darkness, the Black Hills, where shone the Seven Lights, which neither twinkled nor moved nor faltered through Eternity; and of which even the great spyglass could make no understanding; nor had any adventurer from the Pyramid ever come back to tell us aught of them. And here let me say, that down in the Great Library of the Redoubt, were the histories of all those, with their discoveries, who had ventured out into the monstrousness of the Night Land, risking not the life only, but the spirit of life.

And surely it is all so strange and wonderful to set out, that I could almost despair with the contemplation of that which I must achieve; for there is so much to tell, and so few words given to man by which he may make clear that which lies beyond the sight and the present and general knowings of Peoples.

How shall you ever know, as I know in verity, of the greatness and reality and terror of the thing that I would tell plain to all; for we, with our puny span of recorded life must have great histories to tell, but the few bare details we know concerning years that are but a few thousands in all; and I must set out to you in the short pages of this my life there, a sufficiency of the life that had been, and the life that was, both within and without that mighty Pyramid, to make clear to those who may read, the truth of that which I would tell; and the histories of that great Redoubt dealt not with odd thousands of years; but with very millions; aye, away back into what they of that Age conceived to be the early days of the earth, when the sun, maybe, still gloomed dully in the night sky of the world. But of all that went before, nothing, save as myths, and matters to be taken most cautiously, and believed not by men of sanity and proved wisdom.

And I, how shall I make all this clear to you who may read? The thing cannot be; and yet I must tell my history; for to be silent before so much wonder would be to suffer of too

full a heart; and I must even ease my spirit by this my struggle to tell to all how it was with me, and how it will be. Aye, even to the memories which were the possession of that far future youth, who was indeed I, of his childhood's days, when his nurse of that Age swung him, and crooned impossible lullabies of this mythical sun which, according to those future fairytales, had once passed across the blackness that now lay above the Pyramid.

Such is the monstrous futureness of this which I have seen through the body of that faroff youth.

And so back to my telling. To my right, which was to the North, there stood, very far away, the House of Silence, upon a low hill. And in that House were many lights, and no sound. And so had it been through an uncountable Eternity of Years. Always those steady lights, and no whisper of sound not even such as our distance microphones could have discovered. And the danger of this House was accounted the greatest danger of all those Lands.

And round by the House of Silence, wound the Road Where The Silent Ones Walk. And concerning this Road, which passed out of the Unknown Lands, nigh by the Place of the Abhumans, where was always the green, luminous mist, nothing was known; save that it was held that, of all the works about the Mighty Pyramid, it was, alone, the one that was bred, long ages past, of healthy human toil and labour. And on this point alone, had a thousand books, and more, been writ; and all contrary, and so to no end, as is ever the way in such matters.

And as it was with the Road Where The Silent Ones Walk, so it was with all those other monstrous things whole libraries had there been made upon this and upon that; and many a thousand million mouldered into the forgotten dust of the earlier world.

I mind me now that presently I stepped upon the central travelling roadway which spanned the one thousandth plateau of the Great Redoubt. And this lay six miles and thirty fathoms above the Plain of the Night Land, and was somewhat of a great mile or more across. And so, in a few minutes, I was at the SouthEastern wall, and looking out through The Great Embrasure towards the Three Silverfire Holes, that shone before the Thing That Nods, away down, far in the SouthEast. Southward of this, but nearer, there rose the vast bulk of the SouthEast Watcher The Watching Thing of the SouthEast. And to the right and to the left of the squat monster burned the Torches; maybe half a mile upon each side; yet sufficient light they threw to show the lumbered forward head of the never sleeping Brute.

To the East, as I stood there in the quietness of the SleepingTime on the One Thousandth Plateau, I heard a far, dreadful sound, down in the lightless East; and, presently, again a strange, dreadful laughter, deep as a low thunder among the mountains. And because this sound came odd whiles from the Unknown Lands beyond the Valley of The Hounds, we had named that far and neverseen Place "The Country Whence Comes The Great Laughter." And though I had heard the sound, many and oft a time, yet did I never hear it without a most strange thrilling of my heart, and a sense of my littleness, and of the utter terror which had beset the last millions of the world.

Yet, because I had heard the Laughter oft, I paid not overlong attention to my thoughts upon it; and when, in a little it died away into that Eastern Darkness, I turned my spyglass upon the Giants' Pit, which lay to the South of the Giants' Kilns. And these same Kilns were tended by the giants, and the light of the Kilns was red and fitful, and threw wavering shadows and lights across the mouth of the pit; so that I saw giants crawling up out of the pit; but not properly seen, by reason of the dance of the shadows. And so, because ever there was so much to behold, I looked away, presently, to that which was plainer to be examined.

To the back of the Giants' Pit was a great, black Headland, that stood vast, between the Valley of The Hounds (where lived the monstrous Night Hounds) and the Giants. And the light of the Kilns struck the brow of this black Headland; so that, constantly, I saw things peer over the edge, coming forward a little into the light of the Kilns, and drawing back swiftly into the shadows. And thus it had been ever, through the uncounted ages; so that the Headland was known as The Headland From Which Strange Things Peer; and thus was it marked in our maps and charts of that grim world.

And so I could go on ever; but that I fear to weary; and yet, whether I do weary, or not, I must tell of this country that I see, even now as I set my thoughts down, so plainly that my memory wanders in a hushed and secret fashion along its starkness, and amid its strange and dread habitants, so that it is but by an effort I realise me that my body is not there in this very moment that I write. And so to further tellings:

Before me ran the Road Where The Silent Ones Walk; and I searched it, as many a time in my earlier youth had I, with the spyglass; for my heart was always stirred mightily by the sight of those Silent Ones.

And, presently, alone in all the miles of that nightgrey road, I saw one in the field of my glass a quiet, cloaked figure, moving along, shrouded, and looking neither to right nor left. And thus was it with these beings ever. It was told about in the Redoubt that they would harm no human, if but the human did keep a fair distance from them; but that it were wise never to come close upon one. And this I can well believe.

And so, searching the road with my gaze, I passed beyond this Silent One, and past the place where the road, sweeping vastly to the SouthEast, was lit a space, strangely, by the light from the Silverfire Holes. And thus at last to where it swayed to the South of the Dark Palace, and thence Southward still, until it passed round to the Westward, beyond the mountain bulk of the Watching Thing in the South the hugest monster in all the visible Night Lands. My spyglass showed it to me with clearness a living hill of watchfulness, known to us as The Watcher Of The South. It brooded there, squat and tremendous, hunched over the pale radiance of the Glowing Dome.

Much, I know, had been writ concerning this Odd, Vast Watcher; for it had grown out of the blackness of the South Unknown Lands a million years gone; and the steady growing nearness of it had been noted and set out at length by the men they called Monstruwacans; so that it was possible to search in our libraries, and learn of the very coming of this Beast in the oldentime.

And, while I mind me, there were even then, and always, men named Monstruwacans, whose duty it was to take heed of the great Forces, and to watch the Monsters and the Beasts that beset the great Pyramid, and measure and record, and have so full a knowledge of these same that, did one but sway an head in the darkness, the same matter was set down with particularness in the Records.

And, so to tell more about the South Watcher. A million years gone, as I have told, came it out from the blackness of the South, and grew steadily nearer through twenty thousand years; but so slow that in no one year could a man perceive that it had moved.

Yet it had movement, and had come thus far upon its road to the Redoubt, when the Glowing Dome rose out of the ground before it growing slowly. And this had stayed the way of the Monster; so that through an eternity it had looked towards the Pyramid across the pale glare of the Dome, and seeming to have no power to advance nearer.

And because of this, much had been writ to prove that there were other forces than evil at work in the Night Lands, about the Last Redoubt. And this I have always thought to be wisely said; and, indeed, there to be no doubt to the matter, for there were many things in the time of which I have knowledge, which seemed to make clear that, even as the Forces of Darkness were loose upon the End of Man; so were there other Forces out to do battle with the Terror; though in ways most strange and unthought of by the human mind. And of this I shall have more to tell anon.

And here, before I go further with my telling, let me set out some of that knowledge which yet remains so clear within my mind and heart. Of the coming of these

monstrosities and evil Forces, no man could say much with verity; for the evil of it began before the Histories of the Great Redoubt were shaped; aye, even before the sun had lost all power to light; though, it must not be a thing of certainty, that even at this far time the invisible, black heavens held no warmth for this world; but of this I have no room to tell; and must pass on to that of which I have a more certain knowledge.

The evil must surely have begun in the Days of the Darkening (which I might liken to a story which was believed doubtfully, much as we of this day believe the story of the Creation). A dim record there was of olden sciences (that are yet far off in our future) which, disturbing the unmeasurable Outward Powers, had allowed to pass the Barrier of Life some of those Monsters and Abhuman creatures, which are so wondrously cushioned from us at this normal present. And thus there had materialized, and in other cases developed, grotesque and horrible Creatures, which now beset the humans of this world. And where there was no power to take on material form, there had been allowed to certain dreadful Forces to have power to affect the life of the human spirit. And this growing very dreadful, and the world full of lawlessness and degeneracy, there had banded together the sound millions, and built the Last Redoubt; there in the twilight of the world so it seems to us, and yet to them (bred at last to the peace of usage) as it were the Beginning; and this I can make no clearer; and none hath right to expect it; for my task is very great, and beyond the power of human skill.

And when the humans had built the great Pyramid, it had one thousand three hundred and twenty floors; and the thickness of each floor was according to the strength of its need. And the whole height of this pyramid exceeded seven miles, by near a mile, and above it was a tower from which the Watchmen looked (these being called the Monstruwacans). But where the Redoubt was built, I know not; save that I believe in a mighty valley, of which I may tell more in due time.

And when the Pyramid was built, the last millions, who were the Builders thereof, went within, and made themselves a great house and city of this Last Redoubt. And thus began the Second History of this world. And how shall I set it all down in these little pages! For my task, even as I see it, is too great for the power of a single life and a single pen. Yet, to it!

And, later, through hundreds and thousands of years, there grew up in the Outer Lands, beyond those which lay under the guard of the Redoubt, mighty and lost races of terrible creatures, half men and half beast, and evil and dreadful; and these made war upon the Redoubt; but were beaten off from that grim, metal mountain, with a vast slaughter. Yet, must there have been many such attacks, until the electric circle was put about the Pyramid, and lit from the EarthCurrent. And the lowest halfmile of the Pyramid was

sealed; and so at last there was a peace, and the beginnings of that Eternity of quiet watching for the day when the EarthCurrent shall become exhausted.

And, at whiles, through the forgotten centuries, had the Creatures been glutted time and again upon such odd bands of daring ones as had adventured forth to explore through the mystery of the Night Lands; for of those who went, scarce any did ever return; for there were eyes in all that dark; and Powers and Forces abroad which had all knowledge; or so we must fain believe.

And then, so it would seem, as that Eternal Night lengthened itself upon the world, the power of terror grew and strengthened. And fresh and greater monsters developed and bred out of all space and Outward Dimensions, attracted, even as it might be Infernal sharks, by that lonely and mighty hill of humanity, facing its end so near to the Eternal, and yet so far deferred in the minds and to the senses of those humans. And thus hath it been ever.

And all this but by the way, and vague and ill told, and set out in despair to make a little clear the beginnings of that State which is so strange to our conceptions, and yet which had become a Condition of Naturalness to Humanity in that stupendous future.

Thus had the giants come, fathered of bestial humans and mothered of monsters. And many and diverse were the creatures which had some human semblance; and intelligence, mechanical and cunning; so that certain of these lesser Brutes had machinery and underground ways, having need to secure to themselves warmth and air, even as healthy humans; only that they were incredibly inured to hardship, as they might be wolves set in comparison with tender children. And surely, do I make this thing clear?

And now to continue my telling concerning the Night Land. The Watcher of the South was, as I have set to make known, a monster differing from those other Watching Things, of which I have spoken, and of which there were in all four. One to the NorthWest, and one to the SouthEast, and of these I have told; and the other twain lay brooding, one to the SouthWest, and the other to the NorthEast; and thus the four watchers kept ward through the darkness, upon the Pyramid, and moved not, neither gave they out any sound. Yet did we know them to be mountains of living watchfulness and hideous and steadfast intelligence.

And so, in a while, having listened to the sorrowful sound which came ever to us over the Grey Dunes, from the Country of Wailing, which lay to the South, midway between the Redoubt and the Watcher of the South, I passed upon one of the moving roadways over to the SouthWestern side of the Pyramid, and looked from a narrow embrasure

thence far down into the Deep Valley, which was four miles deep, and in which was the Pit of the Red Smoke.

And the mouth of this Pit was one full mile across, and the smoke of the Pit filled the Valley at times, so that it seemed but as a glowing red circle amid dull thunderous clouds of redness. Yet the red smoke rose never much above the Valley; so that there was clear sight across to the country beyond. And there, along the further edge of that great depth, were the Towers, each, maybe, a mile high, grey and quiet; but with a shimmer upon them.

Beyond these, South and West of them, was the enormous bulk of the SouthWest Watcher, and from the ground rose what we named the Eye Beama single ray of grey light, which came up out of the ground, and lit the right eye of the monster. And because of this light, that eye had been mightily examined through unknown thousands of years; and some held that the eye looked through the light steadfastly at the Pyramid; but others set out that the light blinded it, and was the work of those Other Powers which were abroad to do combat with the Evil Forces. But however this may be, as I stood there in the embrasure, and looked at the thing through the spyglass, it seemed to my soul that the Brute looked straightly at me, unwinking and steadfast, and fully of a knowledge that I spied upon it. And this is how I felt.

To the North of this, in the direction of the West, I saw The Place Where The Silent Ones Kill; and this was so named, because there, maybe ten thousand years gone, certain humans adventuring from the Pyramid, came off the Road Where The Silent Ones Walk, and into that place, and were immediately destroyed. And this was told by one who escaped; though he died also very quickly, for his heart was frozen. And this I cannot explain; but so it was set out in the Records.

Far away beyond The Place Where The Silent Ones Kill, in the very mouth of the Western Night was the Place of the Abhumans, where was lost the Road Where The Silent Ones Walk, in a dull green, luminous mist. And of this place nothing was known; though much it held the thoughts and attentions of our thinkers and imaginers; for some said that there was a Place Of Safety, differing from the Redoubt (as we of this day suppose Heaven to differ from the Earth), and that the Road led thence; but was barred by the Abhumans. And this I can only set down here; but with no thought to justify or uphold it.

Later, I travelled over to the NorthEastern wall of the Redoubt, and looked thence with my spyglass at the Watcher of the NorthEast the Crowned Watcher it was called, in that within the air above its vast head there hung always a blue, luminous ring, which shed a strange light downwards over the monster showing a vast, wrinkled brow (upon which

an whole library had been writ); but putting to the shadow all the lower face; all save the ear, which came out from the back of the head, and belled towards the Redoubt, and had been said by some observers in the past to have been seen to quiver; but how that might be, I knew not; for no man of our days had seen such a thing.

And beyond the Watching Thing was The Place Where The Silent Ones Are Never, close by the great road; which was bounded upon the far side by The Giant's Sea; and upon the far side of that, was a Road which was always named The Road By The Quiet City; for it passed along that place where burned forever the constant and nevermoving lights of a strange city; but no glass had ever shown life there; neither had any light ever ceased to burn.

And beyond that again was the Black Mist. And here, let me say, that the Valley of The Hounds ended towards the Lights of the Quiet City.

And so have I set out something of that land, and of those creatures and circumstances which beset us about, waiting until the Day of Doom, when our EarthCurrent should cease, and leave us helpless to the Watchers and the Abundant Terror.

And there I stood, and looked forth composedly, as may one who has been born to know of such matters, and reared in the knowledge of them. And, anon, I would look upward, and see the grey, metallised mountain going up measureless into the gloom of the everlasting night; and from my feet the sheer downward sweep of the grim, metal walls, six full miles, and more, to the plain below.

And one thing (aye! and I fear me, many) have I missed to set out with particularness:

There was, as you do know, all around the base of the Pyramid, which was five and onequarter miles every way, a great circle of light, which was set up by the EarthCurrent, and burned within a transparent tube; or had that appearance. And it bounded the Pyramid for a clear mile upon every side, and burned for ever; and none of the monsters had power ever to pass across, because of what we did call The Air Clog that it did make, as an invisible Wall of Safety. And it did give out also a more subtile vibration, that did affect the weak BrainElements of the monsters and the Lower MenBrutes. And some did hold that there went from it a further vibration of a greater subtileness that gave a protecting against the Evil Forces. And some quality it had truly thiswise; for the Evil Powers had no ability to cause harm to any within. Yet were there some dangers against which it might not avail; but these had no cunning to bring harm to any within the Great Redoubt who had wisdom to meddle with no dreadfulness. And so were those last millions guarded until the EarthCurrent should be used to its end. And this circle is that which I have called the Electric Circle; though with failure to explain. But there it was called only, The Circle.

And thus have I, with great effort, made a little clear that grim land of night, where, presently, my listening heard one calling across the dark. And how that this grew upon me, I will set out forthwith.

### III

#### THE QUIET CALLING

Now, oft had I heard tell, not only in that great city which occupied the thousandth floor, but in others of the one thousand, three hundred and twenty cities of the Pyramid, that there was somewhere out in the desolation of the Night Lands a second Place of Refuge, where had gathered, in another part of this dead world, some last millions of the human race, to fight unto the end.

And this story I heard everywhere in my travels through the cities of the Great Redoubt, which travels began when I came upon my seventeenth year, and continued for three years and two hundred and twenty five days, being even then but one day in each city, as was the custom in the training of every child.

And truly it was a great journey, and in it I met with many, whom to know was to love; but whom never could I see again; for life has not space enough; and each must to his duty to the security and wellbeing of the Redoubt. Yet, for all that I have set down, we travelled much, always; but there were so many millions, and so few years.

And, as I have said, everywhere I went there was the same story of this other Place of Refuge; and in such of the Libraries of those cities as I had time to search, there were great numbers of works upon the existence of this other Refuge; and some, far back in the years, made assertion with confidence that such a Place was in verity; and, indeed, no doubt did there seem in those bygone ages; but now these very Records were read only by Scholars, who doubted, even whilst they read. And so is it ever.

But of the reality of this Refuge, I had never a sound doubt, from the day of my hearing concerning it from our Master Monstruwacan, who with all his assistants occupied the Tower of Observation in the apex of the Pyramid. And here let me tell that he and I had always an affinity and close friendship one for the other; though he was full grown, and I but a youth; yet so it was; and thus, when I had come to an age of twentyone years of life, he opened to me a post within the Tower of Observation; and this was a most wondrous good fortune to me; for in all the vast Redoubt, to be appointed to the Tower of Observation was the most desired; for thereby, even as in these days doth Astronomy, was the natural curiosity of Man eased somewhat, even while thwarted.

Now, let me tell here also, lest it be thought that I was unduly favoured because of my friendship with the Master Monstruwacan, that there was a sound justification for his choice, in that to me had been given that strange gift of hearing, which we called NightHearing; though this was but a fanciful name, and meant little. Yet the peculiar

gift was rare, and in all the millions of the Pyramid, there was none with the gift to a great degree, saving only myself.

And I, because of this gift, could hear the "invisible vibrations" of the aether; so that, without harking to the calling of our recording instruments, I could take the messages which came continually through the eternal darkness; aye, even better than they. And now, it may be the better understood, how much was to be counted that I had grown to listen for a voice that had not rung in mine ears for an eternity, and yet which sang sweet and clear in my memorydreams; so that it seemed to me that Mirdath the Beautiful slept within my soul, and whispered to me out of all the ages.

And then, one day, at the fifteenth hour, when began the SleepTime, I had been pondering this love of mine that lived with me still; and marvelling that my memorydreams held the voice of a love that had been in so remote an age. And pondering and dreaming thus, as a young man may, I could fancy this aeonlost One were whispering beauty into my ears, in verity; so clear had my memory grown, and so much had I pondered.

And lo! as I stood there, harking and communing with my thoughts, I thrilled suddenly, as if I had been smitten; for out of all the everlasting night a whisper was thrilling and thrilling upon my more subtile hearing.

Through four long years had I listened, since that awakening in the embrasure, when but a youth of seventeen; and now out of the worlddarkness and all the eternal years of that lost life, which now I live in this Present Age of ours, was the whisper come; for I knew it upon that instant; and yet, because I was so taught to wisdom, I answered by no name; but sent the MasterWord through the nightsending it with my brainelements, as I could, and as all may, much or little, as may be, if they be not clods. And, moreover, I knew that she who called quietly would have the power to hear without instruments, if indeed it were she; and if it were but one of the false callings of the Evil Forces, or more cunning monsters, or as was sometimes thought concerning these callings, the House of Silence, meddling with our souls, then would they have no power to say the MasterWord; for this had been proven through all the Everlasting.

And lo! as I stood, trembling and striving not to be tense, which destroys the receptivity, there came thrilling round and round my spiritual essence the throb of the MasterWord, beating steadily in the night, as doth that marvellous sound. And then, with all that was sweet in my spirit, I called with my brain elements: "Mirdath! Mirdath! Mirdath!" And at that instant the Master Monstruwacan entered that part of the Tower of Observation, where I stood; and, seeing my face, stood very quiet; for though he had not the power of NightHearing, he was wise and thoughtful, and took much account of my gift; moreover,

he had but come from the Receiving Instrument, and thought vaguely to have caught the throb of the MasterWord, though too faint to come proper through the Instrument, so that he searched for me, in that I, who had the Hearing, might listen for it, I being, as I have said, gifted in that wise.

And to him I told something of my story and my thoughts and my memories, and of that awakening; and thus up to this present happening, and he hearkened with sympathy and a troubled and wondering heart; for in that age a man might talk sanely upon that which, in this age of ours would be accounted foolishness and maybe the breathings of insanity; for there, by the refinement of arts of mentality and the results of strange experiments and the accomplishment of learning, men were abled to conceive of matters now closed to our conceptions, even as we of this day may haply give a calm ear to talk, that in the days of our fathers would have been surely set to the count of lunacy. And this is very clear.

And all the while that I told my story, I listened with my spirit; but save for a sense of faint, happy laughter that wrapped about me, I heard naught. And nothing more all that day.

Here let me put down that, because of my memories and half memories, I would time and again dispute with our learned men; they being in doubt as to the verity of that olden story of the Days of Light, and the existence of the Sun; though something of all this was set out, as of truth, in our oldest records; but I, remembering, told them many tales that seemed fairylike to them, and entranced their hearts, even whilst I angered their brains, which refused to take seriously and as verity that which their hearts accepted gladly, even as we receive the wonder of poetry into our souls. But the Master Monstruwacan would listen to aught I had to tell; aye! though I spoke through hours; and so it would be, odd times, that having talked long, drawing my stories from my MemoryDreams, I would come back again into the present of that Future; and lo! all the Monstruwacans would have left their instruments and observations and recording, and be gathered about me; and the Master so sunken in interest that he not to have discovered them; neither had I noticed, being so full of the things which had been.

But when the Master came back to knowledge of that present, he would rouse and chide, and they, all those lesser ones, would fly swiftly and guiltily to their various works; and yet, so I have thought since, each with a muddled and bewildered and thoughtful air upon him; and hungry they were for more, and ever wondering and setting questions about.

And so it was also with those otherthose learned ones who were not of the Tower of Observation, and who disbelieved even whilst they hungered. Listen would they, though

I talked from the first hour, which was the "dawn," to the fifteenth hour, which was the beginning of the "night"; for the SleepTime was set thus, after other usage and experiment. And, odd whiles, I found that there were among them, men of extraordinary learning who upheld my tellings as tales of verity; and so there was a faction; but, later, there grew more to believe; and whether they believed, or not, all were ready to listen; so that I might have spend my days in talk; only that I had my work to do.

But the Master Monstruwacan believed from the beginning, and was wise always to understand; so that I loved him for this, as for many another dear quality.

And so, as may be conceived, among all those millions I was singled out to be known; for the stories that I told went downward through a thousand cities; and, presently, in the lowest tier of the Underground Fields, an hundred miles deep in the earth below the Redoubt, I found that the very ploughboys knew something concerning my tellings; and gathered about me one time and another when the Master Monstruwacan and I had gone down, regarding some matter that dealt with the EarthCurrent and our Instruments.

And of the Underground Fields (though in that age we called them no more than "The Fields") I should set down a little; for they were the mightiest work of this world; so that even the Last Redoubt was but a small thing beside them. An hundred miles deep lay the lowest of the Underground Fields, and was an hundred miles from side to side, every way; and above it there were three hundred and six fields, each one less in area than that beneath; and in this wise they tapered, until the topmost field which lay direct beneath the lowermost floor of the Great Redoubt, was but four miles every way.

And thus it will be seen that these fields, lying one beneath the other, formed a mighty and incredible Pyramid of Country Lands in the deep earth, an hundred miles from the base unto the topmost field.

And the whole was sheathed in at the sides with the grey metal of which the Redoubt was builded; and each field was pillared, and floored beneath the soil, with this same compound of wonder; and so was it secure, and the monsters could not dig into that mighty garden from without.

And all of that Underground Land was lit, where needed, by the EarthCurrent, and that same lifestream fructified the soil, and gave life and blood to the plants and to the trees, and to every bush and natural thing.

And the making of those Fields had taken maybe a million years, and the "dump" thereof had been cast into the "Crack," whence came the EarthCurrent, and which had bottom beyond all soundings. And this Underground Country had its own winds and aircurrents; so that, to my memory, it was in no ways connected to the monstrous airshafts of the Pyramid; but in this I may be mistaken; for it has not been given to me to know all that is to be known concerning that vast Redoubt; nor by any one man could so much knowledge be achieved.

Yet that there were wise and justly promoted winds in that Underground Country, I do know; for healthful and sweet they were, and in the cornfields there was the sweet rustle of grain, and the glad, silken laughter of poppies, all beneath a warm and happy light. And here, did the millions walk and take excursion, and go orderly or not, even as in these days.

And all this have I seen, and the talk of a thousand lovers in the gardens of that place, comes back to me; and with it all the memory of my dear one; and of a faint calling that would seem to whisper about me at times; but so faint and attenuated, that even I, who had the NightHearing, could not catch its import; and so went, listening ever the more intently. And oft times calling.

Now there was a Law in the Pyramid, tried and healthful, which held that no male should have freedom to adventure into the Night Land, before the age of twentytwo; and no female ever. Yet that, after such age, if a youth desired greatly to make the adventure, he should receive three lectures upon the dangers of which we had knowledge, and a strict account of the mutilatings and horrid deeds done to those who had so adventured. And if, after this had passed over him, he still desired, and if he were accounted healthful and sane; then should he be allowed to make the adventure; and it was accounted honour to the youth who should add to the knowledge of the Pyramid.

But to all such as went forth into the danger of the Night Land, there was set beneath the skin of the inner side of the left forearm, a small capsule, and when the wound had healed, then might the youth make the adventure.

And the wherefore of this, was that the spirit of the youth might be saved, if he were entrapped; for then, upon the honour of his soul, must he bite forth the capsule, and immediately his spirit would have safety in death. And by this shall you know somewhat the grim and horrid danger of the Dark Land.

And this I have set down because later I was to make huge adventure into those Lands; and even at this time, some thought of the same had come to me; for always I went listening for that quiet calling; and twice I sent the MasterWord throbbing solemnly

through the everlasting night; yet this I did no more, without certainty; for the Word must not be used lightly. But often would I say with my brainelements "Mirdath! Mirdath!" sending the name out into the darkness; and sometimes would I seem to hear the faint thrilling of the aether around me; as though one answered; but weakly, as it were with a weakened spirit, or by instrument that lacked of its earthforce.

And thus, for a great while there was no certainty; but only a strange anxiousness and no clear answer.

Then, one day as I stood by the instruments in the Tower of Observation, at the thirteenth hour there came the thrilling of beaten aether all about me, as it were that all the void was disturbed. And I made the Sign for Silence; so that the men moved not in all the Tower; but bowed over their breathingbells, that all disturbance might cease.

And again came the gentle thrilling, and broke out into a clear, low calling in my brain; and the calling was my name the old earth name of this day, and not the name of that age. And the name smote me, with a frightenedness of fresh awakening memories. And, immediately, I sent the MasterWord into the night; and all the aether was full of movement. And a silence came; and later a beat afar off in the void of night, which only I in all that great Redoubt could hear, until the heavier vibrations were come. And in a moment there was all about me the throbbing of the MasterWord, beating in the night a sure answer. Yet, before this I knew that Mirdath had called; but now had surety.

And immediately, I said "Mirdath," making use of the instruments; and there came a swift and beautiful answer; for out of the dark there stole an old lovename, that she only had ever used to me.

And, presently, I minded me of the men, and signed to them that they should continue; for the Records must not be broken; and now I had the communication full established.

And by me stood the Master Monstruwacan, quietly as any young Monstruwacan, waiting with slips to make any notes that were needful; and keeping a strict eye upon those others; but not unkindly. And so, for a space of wonder, I had speech with that girl out in the darkness of the world, who had knowledge of my name, and of the old earth lovename, and named herself Mirdath.

And much I questioned her, and presently to my sorrow; for it seemed that her name was not truly Mirdath; but Naani; neither had she known my name; but that in the library of that place where she abode, there had been a story of one named by my name, and called by that sweet lovename which she had sent out somewhat ruthless into the night; and the girl's name had been Mirdath; and when first she, Naani had called, there

had come back to her a cry of Mirdath, Mirdath; and this had minded her so strangely of that olden story which had stayed in her memory; that she had answered as the maid in that book might have answered.

And thus did it seem that the utter Romance of my Memorylove had vanished, and I stood strangely troubled for sorrow of a love of olden times. Yet, even then I marvelled that any book should have story so much like to mine; not heeding that the history of all love is writ with one pen.

Yet, even then in that hour of my strange, and quaintly foolish pain, there came a thing that set me thrilling; though more afterwards, when I came to think afresh upon it. For the girl who spoke to me through the night made some wonder that my voice were not deeper; yet in quiet fashion, and as one who says a thing, scarce wotting what they say. But even to me then, there came a sudden hope; for in the olden days of this Present Age my voice had been very deep. And I said to her that maybe the man in the book was said to have had a deep tone of speech; but she, seeming puzzled, said nay; and at that I questioned her the more; but only to the trouble of her memory and understanding.

And strange must it seem that we two should talk on so trivial a matter, when there was so much else that we had need to exchange thought upon; for were a man in this present day to have speech with those who may live within that red planet of Mars within the sky, scarce could the wonder of it exceed the wonder of a human voice coming through that night unto the Great Redoubt, out of all that lost darkness. For, indeed, this must have been the breaking of, maybe, a million years of silence. And already, as I came to know later, was the news passing downward from City to City through all the vast Pyramid; so that the HourSlips were full of the news; and every City eager and excited, and waiting. And I better known in that one moment, than in all my life before. For that previous calling, had been but vaguely put about; and then set to the count of a nature, blown upon overeasily by spiritwinds of the halfmemory of dreams. Though it is indeed true, as I have set down before this, that my tales concerning the early days of the world, when the sun was visible, and full of light, had gone down through all the cities, and had much comment and setting forth in the HourSlips, and were a cause for speech and argument.

Now concerning the voice of this girl coming to us through the darkness of the world, I will set out that which she had to tell; and this, indeed, but verified the tellings of our most ancient Records, which had so long been treated over lightly: There was, it would seem, somewhere out in the lonesome dark of the Outer Lands, but at what distance none could ever discover, a second Redoubt; that was a threesided Pyramid, and moderate small; being no more than a mile in height, and scarce three quarters of a mile along the bases.

When this Redoubt was first builded, it had been upon the far shore of a sea, where now was no sea; and it had been raised by those wandering humans who had grown weary of wandering, and weary of the danger of night attacks by the tribes of halfhuman monsters which began to inhabit the earth even so early as the days when the halfgloom was upon the world. And he that had made the plan upon which it was builded, was one who had seen the Great Redoubt, having lived there in the beginning, but escaped because of a correction set upon him for his spirit of irresponsibility, which had made him to cause disturbance among the orderly ones in the lowest city of the Great Redoubt.

Yet, in time, he too had come to be tamed by the weight of fear of the evergrowing hordes of monsters, and the Forces that were abroad. And so he, being a masterspirit, planned and builded the smaller Redoubt, being aided thereto by four millions, who also were weary of the harass of the monsters; but until then had been wanderers, because of the restlessness of their blood.

And they had chosen that place, because there they had discovered a sign of the EarthCurrent in a great valley which led to the shore; for without the EarthCurrent no Refuge could have existence. And whilst many builded and guarded, and cared for the Great Camp in which all lived, others worked within a great shaft; and in ten years had made this to a distance of many miles, and therewith they tapt the EarthCurrent; but not a great stream; yet a sufficiency, as was believed.

And, presently, after many years, they had builded the Pyramid, and taken up their refuge there, and made them instruments, and ordained Monstruwacans; so that they had speech daily with the Great Pyramid; and thus for many long ages.

And the EarthCurrent then to begin to fail; and though they laboured through many thousands of years, they came to no better resource. And so it was they ceased to have communication with the Great Redoubt; for the current had a lack of power to work the instruments; and the recording instruments ceased to be sensible of our messages.

And thereafter came a million years, maybe, of silence; with ever the birthing and marrying and dying of those lonesome humans. And they grew less; and some put this to the lack of the EarthCurrent, which dwindled slowly through the centuries of that Eternity.

And once in a thousand years, maybe, one among them would be Sensitive, and abled to hear beyond ordinary; and to these, at times, there would seem to come the thrilling of the aether; so that such an one would go listening; and sometimes seem to catch half

messages; and so awaken a great interest in all the Pyramid; and there would be turning up of old Records, and many words and writings, and attempts to send the MasterWord through the night; in which, doubtless sometimes they succeeded; for there was set down in the Records of the Great Redoubt certain occasions on which there had come the call of the MasterWord, which had been arranged and made holy between the two Redoubts in the early days of that second life of this world.

Yet, now for an hundred thousand years, there had been none Sensitive; and in that time the people of the Pyramid had become no more than ten thousand; and the EarthCurrent was weak and powerless to put the joy of life into them; so that they went listlessly, but deemed it not strange, because of so many aeons of usage.

And then, to the wonder of all, the EarthCurrent had put forth a new power; so that young people ceased to be old oversoon; and there was happiness and a certain joy in the living; and a strange birthing of children, such as had not been through half a million years.

And then came a new thing. Naani, the daughter of the Master Monstruwacan of that Redoubt had shown to all that she was Sensitive; for she had perceived odd vibrations afloat in the night; and concerning these she told her father; and presently, because their blood moved afresh in their bodies, they had heart to discover the plans of the ancient instruments; for the instruments had long rusted, and been forgotten.

And so they builded them a new instrument to send forth a message; for they had no memory at that time that the brainelements had power to do thus; though, mayhap, their brainelements were weakened, through so many ages of starvation of the EarthCurrent, and could not have obeyed, even had their masters known all that we of the Great Redoubt knew.

And when the instrument was finished, to Naani was given the right to call first across the dark to discover whether indeed, after that million years of silence, they were yet companied upon this earth, or whether they were in truth lonelythe last poor thousands of the Humans.

And a great and painful excitement came upon the people of the lesser pyramid; for the loneliness of the world pressed upon them; and it was to them as though we in this age called to a star across the abyss of space.

And because of the excitement and pain of the moment, Naani called only vaguely with the instrument into the dark; and lo! in a moment, as it seemed, there came all about her in the night the solemn throb of the MasterWord, beating in the night. And Naani

cried out that she was answered, and, as may be thought, many of the people wept, and some prayed, and some were silent; but others beseeched her that she call again and quickly to have further speech with those of their kind.

And Naani spoke the MasterWord into the night, and directly there came a calling all about her: "Mirdath! Mirdath!" and the strange wonder of it made her silent a moment; but when she would have made reply, the instrument had ceased to work, and she could have no further speech at that time.

This, as may be thought, occasioned much distress; and constant work they had between the instrument and the EarthCurrent, to discover the reason for this failing; but could not for a great while. And in that time, oft did Naani hear the call of "Mirdath" thrilling about her; and twice there came the solemn beat of the MasterWord in the night. Yet never had she the power to answer. And all that while, as I learned in time, was she stirred with a quaint ache at heart by the voice that called "Mirdath!" as it might be the Spirit of Love, searching for its mate; for this is how she put it.

And thus it chanced, that the constant thrilling of this name about her, woke her to memory of a book she had read in early years, and but half understood; for it was ancient, and writ in an olden fashion, and it set out the love of a man and a maid, and the maid's name was Mirdath. And so, because she was full of this great awakening of those ages of silence, and the calling of that name, she found the book again, and read it many times, and grew to a sound love of the beauty of that tale.

And, presently, when the instrument was made right, she called into the night the name of that man within the book; and so it came about that I had hoped too much; yet even now was I strangely unsure whether to cease from hoping.

And one other thing there is which I would make clear. Many and oft a time had I heard a thrilling of sweet, faint laughter about me, and the stirring of the aether by words too gentle to come clearly; and these I make no doubt came from Naani, using her brainelements unwittingly and in ignorance; but very eager to answer my callings; and having no knowledge that, far off across the blackness of the world, they thrilled about me, constantly.

And after Naani had made clear all that I have set out concerning the Lesser Refuge, she told further how that food was not plentiful with them; though, until the reawakening of the EarthCurrent, they had gone unknowing of this, being of small appetite, and caring little for aught; but now wakened, and newly hungry, they savoured a lack of taste in all that they ate; and this we could well conceive, from our reasonings and theory; but happily not from our knowledge.

And we said unto them, that the soil had lost its life, and the crops therefrom were not vital; and a great while it would take for the earth within their pyramid to receive back the lifeelements. And we told them certain ways by which they might bring a more speedy life to the soil; and this they were eager to do, being freshly alive after so long a time of halflife.

And now, you must know that in all the great Redoubt the story went downwards swiftly, and was published in all the HourSheets, with many comments; and the libraries were full of those who would look up the olden Records, which for so long had been forgotten, or taken, as we of this day would say, with a pinch of salt.

And all the time I was pestered with questions; so that, had I not been determined, I should scarce have been allowed to sleep; moreover, so much was writ about me, and my power to hear, and divers stories concerning tales of love, that I had been like to have grown mazed to take note of it all; yet some note I did take, and much I found pleasant; but some displeasing.

And, for the rest, I was not spoiled, as the saying goes; for I had my work to do; moreover, I was always busied Listening, and having speech through the darkness. Though if any saw me so, they would question; and because of this, I kept much to the Tower of Observation, where was the Master Monstruwacan, and a greater discipline.

And then began a fresh matter; though but an old enough trick; for I speak now of the days that followed that reopening of the talk between the Pyramids. Oft would speech come to us out of the night; and there would be tales of the sore need of the Lesser Redoubt, and callings for help. Yet, when I sent the MasterWord abroad, there would be no answering. And so I feared that the Monsters and Forces of Evil knew.

Yet, at times, the MasterWord would answer to us, beating steadily in the night; and when we questioned afresh, we knew that they in the Lesser Redoubt had caught the beat of the MasterWord, and so made reply; though it had not been they who had made the previous talk, which we had sought to test by the Word. And then they would make contradiction of all that had been spoken so cunningly; so that we knew the Monsters and Forces had sought to tempt some from the safety of the Redoubt. Yet, was this no new thing, as I have made to hint; saving that it grew now to a greater persistence, and there was a loathsome cunning in the using of this new knowledge to the making of wicked and false messages by those evil things of the Night Land. And it told to us, as I have made remark, how that those Monsters and Forces had a full awaredness of the speech between the Pyramids; yet could they have no power to say the MasterWord; so had we some test left, and a way to sure knowledge of what made talk in the night.

And all that I have told should bring to those of this Age something of the yet unbegotten terror of that; and a quiet and sound thankfulness to God, that we suffer not as humanity shall yet suffer.

But, for all this, let it not be thought that they of that Age accounted it as suffering; but as no more than the usual of human existence. And by this may we know that we can meet all circumstances, and use ourselves to them and live through them wisely, if we be but prudent and consider means of invention.

And through all the Night Land there was an extraordinary awakening among the Monsters and Forces; so that the instruments made constant note of greater powers at work out there in the darkness; and the Monstruwacans were busied recording, and keeping a very strict watch. And so was there at all that time a sense of difference and awakening, and of wonders about, and to come.

And from The Country Whence Comes The Great Laughter, the Laughter sounded constant as it were an uncomfortable and heartshaking voicethunder rolling thence over the Lands, out from the unknown East. And the Pit of the Red Smoke filled all the Deep Valley with redness, so that the smoke rose above the edge, and hid the bases of the Towers upon the far side.

And the Giants could be seen plentiful around the Kilns to the East; and from the Kilns great belches of fire; though the meaning of it, as of all else, we could not say; but only the cause.

And from the Mountain Of The Voice, which rose to the SouthEast of the SouthEast Watcher, and of which I have made no telling hitherto, in this faulty settingout, I heard for the first time in that life, the calling of the Voice. And though the Records made mention of it; yet not often was it heard. And the calling was shrill, and very peculiar and distressful and horrible; as though a giantwoman, hungering strangely, shouted unknown words across the night. And this was how it seemed to me; and many thought this to describe the sound.

And, by all this, may you perceive how that Land was awakened.

And other tricks there were to entice us into the Night Land; and once a call came thrilling in the aether, and told to us that certain humans had escaped from the Lesser Redoubt, and drew nigh to us; but were faint for food, and craved succour. Yet, when we sent the MasterWord into the night, the creatures without could make no reply; which

was a very happy thing for our souls; for we had been all mightily exercised in our hearts by this one message; and now had proof that it was but a trap.

And constantly, and at all hours, I would have speech with Naani of the Lesser Redoubt; for I had taught her how she might send her thoughts through the night, with her brainelements; but not to overuse this power; for it exhausts the body and the powers of the mind, if it be abused by exceeding usage.

Yet, despite that I had taught her the use of her brainelements, she sent her message always without strength, save when she had use of the instrument; and this I set to the cause that she had not the health force needful; but, apart from this, she had the NightHearing very keen; though less than mine.

And so, with many times of speech, and constant tellings of our doings and thoughts, we drew near in the spirit to one another; and had always a feeling in our hearts that we had been given previous acquaintance.

And this, as may be thought, thrilled my heart very strangely.

## IV

### THE HUSHING OF THE VOICE

("Dearest, thine own feet tread the world at night  
Treading, as moonflakes step across a dark  
Kissing the very dew to holier light  
Thy Voice a song past mountains, which to hark  
Frightens my soul with an utter lost delight.")

Now, one night, towards the end of the sixteenth hour, as I made ready to sleep, there came all about me the thrilling of the aether, as happened oft in those days; but the thrilling had a strange power in it; and in my soul the voice of Naani sounded plain, all within and about me.

Yet, though I knew it to be the voice of Naani, I answered not immediately; save to send the sure question of the MasterWord into the night. And, directly, I heard the answer, the MasterWord beating steadily in the night; and I questioned Naani why she had speech with me by the Instrument at that time, when all were sleeping, and the watch set among the Monstruwacans; for they in the little Pyramid had their sleeptime to commence at the eleventh hour; so that by this it was five hours advanced towards the time of waking; and Naani should have slept; nor have been abroad to the Tower of Observation, apart from her father. For I supposed that she spoke by the Instrument, her voice sounding very clear in my brain. Yet, to this question, she made no answer in kind; but gave a certain thing into my spirit, which set me trembling; for she said certain words, that began:

"Dearest, thine own feet tread the world at night"

And it well may be that she set me to tremble; for as the words grew about me, there wakened a memorydream how that I had made these same words to Mirdath the Beautiful in the longgone Eternity of this our Age, when she had died and left me alone in all the world. And I was weak a little with the tumult and force of my emotion; but in a moment I called eagerly with my brainelements to Naani to give some explaining of this thing that she had spoken to the utter troubling of my heart.

Yet, once more she made no direct answer; but spoke the words again to me across all the dark of the world. And it came to me suddenly, that it was not Naani that spoke; but Mirdath the Beautiful, from out of all the everlasting night. And I called: "Mirdath! Mirdath," with my brainelements, into the night; and lo! the far, faint voice spoke again to my spirit through all the darkness of eternity, saying again those words. Yet, though the voice was the voice of Mirdath the Beautiful, it was also the voice of Naani; and I

knew in all my heart that this thing was in verity; and that it had been given to me to be birthed once more into this world in the livingtime of that Only One, with whom my spirit and essence hath mated in all ages through the everlasting. And I called with my brainelements and all my strength to Naani; but there came no answer; neither sign of hearing, though through hours I called.

And thus at last I came to an utter exhaustion; but neither could be quiet, nor sleep. Yet, presently, I slept.

And when I waked, my first memory was of the wondrous thing which had befallen in the sleeptime; for none in all this world could have known those words; save it had been the spirit of Mirdath, my Beautiful One, looking from above my shoulder in that utterlost time, as I made those words to her, out of an aching and a broken heart. And the voice had been the voice of Mirdath; and the voice of Mirdath had been the voice of Naani. And what shall any say to this, save that which I had in my heart.

And immediately I called to Naani, once, and again twice; and in a little moment there came all about me the throbbing of the MasterWord, beating solemnly in the night; and I sent the MasterWord to give assurance, and immediately the voice of Naani, a little weak as was it always when she had not the Instrument, but sent the message with her brainelements.

And I answered her, and questioned her eagerly concerning her sayings of the past time of sleep; but she disclaimed, and made clear to me that she had no knowledge of having spoken; but had slept through all that time of which I made to tell; and, indeed, had dreamed a very strange dream.

And for a little while I was confused, and meditated, not knowing what to think; but came suddenly again to a knowledge that Naani's far voice was thrilling the aether all about; and that she would tell to me her dream; which had set strong upon her mind.

And she told the dream to me, and in the dream she had seen a tall, dark man, built very big, and dressed in unfamiliar clothing. And the man had been in a little room, and very sorrowful, and lonesome; and in her dream she had gone nigh to him.

And presently the man made to write, that he might ease him by giving expression to his sorrow; and Naani had been able to read the words that he wrote; though to her waking spirit the language in which they were writ was strange and unknown. Yet she could not remember what he had writ, save but one short line, and this she had mind of in that he had writ the word Mirdath above. And she spoke of the strangeness of this thing, that

she should dream of this name; but supposed that I had fixed it upon her, by my first callings.

And then did I, with something of a tremble in my spirit, ask Naani to tell me what she remembered of the writing of that big, sorrowful stranger. And, in a little moment, her far voice said these words all about me:

"Dearest, thine own feet tread the world at night"

But no more had she memory of. Yet it was a sufficiency, and I, maybe with a mad, strange triumph in my soul, said unto her with my brainelements that which remained of those words. And my spirit felt them strike upon the spirit of Naani, and awake her memory, as with the violence of a blow. And for a little while she stumbled, dumb before so much newness and certainly. And her spirit then to waken, and she near wept with the fright and the sudden, new wonder of this thing.

And immediately, all about me there came her voice thrilling, and the voice was the voice of Mirdath, and the voice of Naani; and I heard the tears of her spirit make pure and wonderful the bewildered and growing gladness of her far voice. And she asked me, as one who had suddenly opened the Gates of Memory, whether she might be truly Mirdath. And I, utter weak and shaken strangely because of this splendour of fulfilment, could make no instant answer. And she asked again, but using mine old lovename, and with a sureness in her far voice. And still I was so strangely dumb, and the blood to thud peculiar in mine ears; and this to pass; and speech to come swift.

And this way to be that meeting of our spirits, across all the everlasting night.

And you shall have for a memorypicture, how that Naani stood there in the world in that far eternity, and, with her spirit having speech with mine, looked back through the partopened gates of her memory, into the past of this our life and Age. Yet more than this she saw, and more than was given to me in that Age; for she had memory now and sight of other instances, and of other comings together, which had some confusion and but halfmeanings to me. Yet of this our present Age and life, we spoke as of some yesterday; but very hallowed.

Now, as may be conceived, the wonder of this surety which had come into my life stirred me fiercely to its completion; for all my heart and spirit cried out to be with that one who was Mirdath, and now spoke with the voice of Naani.

Yet, how should this be won; for none among all the learned men of that Mighty Pyramid knew the position of the Lesser Redoubt; neither could the Records and

Histories of the World give us that knowledge; only that there was a general thought among the Students and the Monstruwacans that it lay between the NorthWest and the NorthEast. But no man had any surety; neither could any conceive of the distance from us of that Refuge.

And counting all this, there was yet the incredible danger and peril of the Night Land, and the hunger and desolation of the Outer Lands, which were sometimes named the Unknown Lands.

And I spoke much with Naani concerning this matter of their position; yet neither she nor her father, the Master Monstruwacan of that Refuge, had any knowing either of our position; only that the Builder of the Lesser Redoubt had come out of the Southward World in the Beginning, as they had knowledge of by the Records.

Also, the father of Naani set that ancient Compass to bear; for, as he made explanation to us through the Instrument, so great a power of the EarthCurrent must be ours that, perchance it was our force which did affect the pointer from steadfastness. For, indeed, the needle did swing in an arc, as we heard, that held between the North and the South; within the Westward arc; but this it had done ever with them, and so was a very helpless guide; save that, maybe, as we had thought, the force of the EarthCurrent that was with us, had in truth some power to pull the needle towards us. And if this were so of verity, we made a reckoning that set the Lesser Redoubt to the North; and they did likewise, and put us to the South; yet was it all built upon the sand of guesswork; and nothing to adventure the life and soul upon.

Now we, of curiosity; though a million times had it been done in the past ages, set the compass before us, having it from the Great Museum. But, as ever in that age, it did spin if we but stirred the needle, and would stop nowhere with surety, for the flow of the EarthCurrent from the "Crack" beneath the Pyramid had a power to affect it away from the North, and to set it wandering. And this may seem very strange to this present Age; yet to that, it was most true to the seeming nature of things; and harder to believe that ever it did once point steadfastly, to prove a guide of sureness, and unfailing.

For, be it known, we knew the positions of the Land by tradition, coming from that ancient time when, in the HalfGloom they had builded the Pyramid; they having known the use of that ancient compass, and with sight of the Sun had named the Positions; though we of that far future day had forgotten the very beginnings of those Names of Direction; and used them but because our fathers did a million years and more. And likewise we did the same with the names of the day and the night and the weeks and the months and the years; though of the visible markings of these there was nothing but only and always the everlasting night; yet the same seeming very natural to that people.

Now, Naani, having heed to my constant questions, craved with an utter keen hunger that I might come to her; but yet forbade it, in that it were better to live and commune in the spirit, than to risk my soul, and mayhaps die, in the foolishness of trying to find her in all the darkness of the dead world. Yet, no heed had I taken of her commands, had I but known of a surety the direction in which she might be discovered; and gained some knowledge of the space between, for this might be named by thousands of miles, or but by hundreds; though a great distance it was surely.

Yet, one other thing there was, that has point in this place; for when I sent my speech out into the night, using my brainelements, I came to know that, whether I had a knowledge of the North, or no knowledge at the moment, yet did I turn oft with a sure instinction to that Direction. And of this, the Master Monstruwacan took very great note, and had me to experiment many a time and way, and so enclosed about with screens, or with bandages across mine eyes, that I could not, save by that inward Knowing, have any knowledge to point me the way. Yet would I turn Northwards very frequent, by a certain feeling; and seemed unable of speech, if I were turned otherwise by force.

But when we asked Naani whether she had an unusualness in this matter, she could discover none; and we could but take note curiously of that which affected my habits; and which truly I set to the attracting of her spirit; for I had mind that she did be somewheres out that way in the darkness of the world; but yet was this no more than to suppose, as you perceive.

And the Master Monstruwacan wrote a study of this matter of the Northwardness of my turning; and it was set out in the HourSlips of the Tower of Observation; and so it came to be copied by the HourSlips of the great cities, and made much comment, and much calling up to me through the home instruments; so that with this, and the speech that went about concerning my powers to hear, I was much in talk, and diversely pleased and oft angered by overmuch attention and importunity.

And now, whilst I pondered this matter in all my spirit and being, how that I should some way come to Naani, there befell a very terrible thing. And in this wise must I tell it:

It was at the seventeenth hour, when all the millions of the Mighty Pyramid slept, that I was with the Master Monstruwacan in the Tower of Observation taking my due turn. And sudden, I heard the thrilling of the aether all about me, and the voice of Naani in my soul, speaking. And I sent the MasterWord into the darkness of the world, and presently, I heard the solemn answer beating steadfastly in the night; and immediately I called to Naani with my brainelements, to know what thing troubled her in her sleep.

And her voice came into my spirit, weak and far and faint, and so that scarce I could make to hear the words. Yet, in a while I gathered that all the peoples of the Lesser Redoubt were in very deadly trouble; for that the EarthCurrent had failed suddenly and mightily; and they had called her from her sleep, that she might listen whether we answered their callings by the Instrument; but, indeed, no calling had come to us.

And they who had been of late so joyful, were now grown old with sorrow in but an hour or two; for they feared that the fresh coming of the EarthCurrent had been but the final flicker and outburst before the end. And, even in this short while of our speech, did it seem to me that the voice of Naani grew further off from me; and I felt like to have broken my heart with the trouble of this thing.

And through all that remained of that sleeptime, did I converse with Naani, as might two lovers who shall presently part forever. And when the cities awoke, the news went throughout them, and all our millions were in sorrow and trouble.

And thus was it for, maybe, a little month; and in that time had the voice of Naani grown so weak and faroff that even I that had the NightHearing, could scarce make real its meaning. And every word was to me a treasure and a touch upon my soul; and my grief and trouble before this certain parting drove me that I could not eat, neither have rest; and this did the Master Monstruwacan take upon him to chide and correct; for that, if any were to help, how should it be done if I that had the NightHearing, and heard even now that the recording Instruments were dumb, came to illhealth.

And because of this, and such wisdom as was mine, I made to eat and order my life that I might have my full powers. Yet was this beyond all my strength; for, presently, I knew that the people of the Lesser Pyramid were threatened by the monsters that beset them; and later I had knowledge from faint, far words whispered in my brain, that there had been a fight with an outside Force that had harmed many in their minds; so that in madness they had opened the gate and had run from the Lesser Pyramid, out into the darkness of the Lands about them; and there had their physical bodies fallen to the monsters of those Lands; but of their souls who may know?

And this, we set assuredly to the failure of the EarthCurrent, which had robbed them of all force and power; so that, in those few weeks all life and joy of living had left them; and neither hunger nor thirst had they, much, nor any great desire to live; but yet a new and mighty fear of death. And this doth seem very strange.

And, as may be thought, all this made the Peoples of the Great Redoubt think newly of the EarthCurrent that issued from the "Crack" beneath the Pyramid; and of their latter

end; so that much was writ in the HourSlips concerning this matter; yet in the main to assure us that we ourselves might each be free from a disturbed heart; though some went foolishly to the other event, and spoke of a speedy danger to us, likewise; as is ever the way. But the truth of our own case lay, maybe, somewhere between.

And all the HourSlips were full also of imaginings of the terror of those poor humans out in the darkness of the world, facing that end which must come upon all, even upon our mighty Pyramid; though, as most would believe, so far away in some future eternity, that we have no cause to trouble.

And there were sad poems writ to the peoples of that Lesser Redoubt, and foolish plans set about to rescue them; but none to put them to effect; and no way by which so great a thing might be done; and doth but show how loosely people will speak out of an oversecurity. Yet to me, there had come a certain knowledge that I must make the adventure, though I achieved naught save mine own end. Yet, it were better to cease quickly, than that I should feel, as now I did feel.

That same night, in the Eighteenth Hour, there was a great disturbance in the aether about the Mighty Pyramid; and I was awakened suddenly by the Master Monstruwacan; that I might use my gift of the NightHearing to hearken for the throbbing of the MasterWord, which they had thought to come vaguely through the Instruments; but no one of the Monstruwacans was sensitive enough of soul to account truly whether this was so.

And lo! as I sat up in the bed, there came the sound of the MasterWord, beating in the night about the Pyramid. And immediately there was a crying in the aether all about me: "We are coming! We are coming!"

And mine inwards leaped and sickened me a moment, so shaken was I with a sudden belief; for the message seemed some ways to come to me from very near to the Great Redoubt; as that they who sent it were nigh to hand.

And, forthwith, I called the MasterWord into the night; but no answer did there come for a while, and then a faint thrilling of the aether about me, and the weak pulse of the MasterWord in the night, sent by a far voice, strangely distant. And I knew that the voice was the voice of Naani; and I put a question through all the darkness of the dead world, whether she were within the Lesser Redoubt, and safe thus far.

And presently, there came a faint disturbance about me, and a small voice in my soul, speaking weakly and out of an infinite distance; and I knew that far away through the night Naani spoke feebly, with her brainelements; and that she abode within the Lesser

Pyramid; but that she too had heard that strange pulse of the MasterWord in the night, and that message: "We are coming! We are coming!" And vastly had this thing disturbed her, waking her within her sleep; so that she knew not what to think; save that we were devising some method to come to them. But this I removed from doubt, saying that she must not build on vain hoping; for I would not have her doubly tortured by the vanity of such believing. And, thereafter, having said such things as I might, though few they were, to comfort her, I bade her, gently, to sleep; and turned therewith to the Master Monstruwacan, who waited in quiet patience; and had no knowledge of that which I had heard and sent; for his hearing was but the normal; though his brain and heart were such as made me to love him.

And I told the Master Monstruwacan many things as I put my clothing about me; how that there had indeed been the calling of the MasterWord; but not by any of that Lesser Redoubt; but that, to my belief, it had come from nigh about the Great Pyramid. Moreover, it was sent by no instrument; as I wotted that he did guess; but, as it seemed to me, by the brainelements of many, calling in unison.

And all this did I set out to the Master Monstruwacan; and with something uncertain of fear and trouble in my heart; yet with a blind expectation; as, indeed, who would not. Though, no longer was I shaken by that first thought of Her nearness.

And I said to the Master Monstruwacan that we should go to the Tower of Observation, and search the Night Lands with the great spyglass.

And we did this, and lo! presently, we saw a great number of men pass over the Electric Circle that went about the Pyramid; yet they came not to us; but went outwards towards the blackness and the strange fires and hideous mysteries of the Night Land. And we ceased from spying, and looked swiftly at one another, and knew in our hearts that some had left the Mighty Pyramid in the SleepTime.

Then the Master Monstruwacan sent word to the Master Watchman that his wardership had been outraged, and that people left the great Pyramid in the SleepTime; for this was against the Law; and none ever went out into the Night Land, save the Full Watch were posted to the Great Door; and at a due time, when all were wakeful; for the Opening Of The Door was made known to all the Millions of the Great Redoubt; so that all might be aware; and know that no foolishness was done without their wotting.

Moreover, ere any had power to leave the Pyramid, they must pass The Examination, and Be Prepared; and some of this have I set out already. And so stern was the framing of the Law, that there were yet the metal pegs upon the inner side of the Great Gate, where had been stretched the skin of one who disobeyed; and was flayed and his hide set there to be a warning in the Early Days. Yet the tradition was remembered; for, as I

might say it, we lived very close about the place; and Memory had no room whereby she might escape.

Now the Master Watchman, when he heard that which the Master Monstruwacan had to tell, went hastily with some of the Central Watch from the WatchDome, to the Great Gate; and he found the men of the SleepTime Watch, with the Warder of the Gate, all bound, and stopt in the mouth, so that none could make outcry.

And he freed them, and learned that nigh five hundred young men, from the Upper Cities, by the bigness of their chests, had come upon them suddenly, and bound them, and escaped into the night through the EyeGate in the top of the Great Gate.

And the Master Watchman was angry, and demanded why that none had called by the instruments of the Watch House; but lo! some had made to call thus, and found them unable to wake the recorders which lay in the central WatchDome; for there had been tampering.

Now, after this, they made certain new rules and Laws concerning the order of Watching, and made tests of the lesser instruments of the inward Pyramid, nightly, upon the coming of the SleepTime, which was, even in that strange age, by tradition called the Night, as I have given hint; though hitherto, until the way of my story was known, I have used a word for the sleep hours that was yet not of that time; but somewhat an invention to make this history free from the confusion of "night" and "day," when, in truth, it was always night without upon the world. Yet, after this, shall I keep to mine use the luxury of the true names of that time; and yet, how strange is it that the truth should be of so little to our thinking.

And so to go forward with my telling; for, though all this care were now taken, it had no force until afterward; and at this moment were those poor foolish youths out in all the danger of the Night Land, and no way by which they might be succoured, or called back; save that Fear or Wisdom should come to them quickly, that they cease from so wild an attempt. For it was to make rescue of those in that other, unknown Pyramid, out in all the darkness of the World's Night that was their intent, as we had speedy knowledge from those boon friends that had been in the secret of their plot, which had seemed to them great and heroic; and was so, in verity, but that neither they who went, nor they who stayed, had a true awareness of the danger they had dealing with, being all naught but raw and crude youths; yet, doubtless, with the makings of many fine and great men among them.

And because some had thus abetted that which they knew to be against the Law, which was framed to the wellbeing and safety of all, there were certain floggings, which might

the better help their memories in the future as to the properness of their actions and wisdom.

Moreover, they who returned, if any, would be flogged, as seemed proper, after due examination. And though the news of their beatings might help all others to hesitation, ere they did foolishly, in like fashion, yet was the principle of the flogging not on this base, which would be both improper and unjust; but only that the one in question be corrected to the best advantage for his own wellbeing; for it is not meet that any principle of correction should shape to the making of human signposts of pain for the benefit of others; for in verity, this were to make one pay the cost of many's learning; and each should owe to pay only so much as shall suffice for the teaching of his own body and spirit. And if others profit thereby, this is but accident, however helpful. And this is wisdom, and denoteth now that a sound Principle shall prevent Practice from becoming monstrous.

Yet, now I must hasten that I set down how it fared with those five hundred youths that had made so sad an adventure of their lives and unprepared souls; and were beyond our aid to help them, who might not so much as make any calling to them, to bid them to return; for to do this would have been to tell to all the Monsters of the Land that humans were abroad from the Mighty Pyramid.

And this would have been to cause the monsters to search the youths out to their destruction, and maybe even to awaken the Forces to work them some dread Spiritual harm, which was the chief Fear.

Now, presently, through all the cities of the Great Redoubt, the news had gone how that five hundred foolish Youths had adventured out into the despair of the Night Land; and the whole Pyramid waked to life, and the Peoples of the South came to the Northern sides, for the Great Gate lay in the NorthWest side; and the Youths had made from there, not straightly outwards, but towards the North; and so were to be seen from the NorthEast embrasures, and from those within the NorthWest wall.

And thus, in a while were they watched by all the mighty multitudes of the Great Pyramid, through millions of spyglasses; for each human had a spyingglass, as may be thought; and some were an hundred years old, and some, maybe ten thousand, and handed down through many generations; and some but newly made, and very strange. But all those people had some instrument by which they might spy out upon the wonder of the Night Land; for so had it been ever through all the eternity of darkness, and a great diversion and wonder of life was it to behold the monsters about their work; and to know that they plotted always to our destruction; yet were ever foiled.

And never did all that great and terrible Land grow stale upon the soul of any, from birth until death; and by this you shall know the constant wonder of it, and that sense of enemies in the night about us, which ever filled the heart and spirit of all Beholders; so that never were the embrasures utterly empty.

Yet, many beheld not the Land from the embrasures; but sat about the ViewTables, which were set properly in certain places throughout the cities, and so beheld the Night Land, without undue cranings, or poisoning of spyglasses, though less plainseen. And these same tables were some form of that which we of this age name Camera Obscura; but made very great, and with inventions, and low to the floor, so that ten thousand people might sit about them in the raised galleries, and have comfortable sight. Yet this attracted not the young people, save they were lovers; and then, in truth, were they comfortable seats for quietness and gentle whisperings.

Yet now, as may be supposed, with all the Peoples of the Mighty Pyramid grown eager to look towards one part of the Night Land, the embrasures were hid in the crowds; and such as could gain no view therethrough, thronged about the ViewTables. And so was it in all the hours of leisure; so that women had scarce patience to attend their children; but must hasten to watch again, that lonesome band of foolish youths making so blind and unshaped a trial to come upon that unknown Lesser Redoubt, somewhere out in all the night of the world.

And in this wise passed three days and nights; yet both in the sleeptime and the time of waking did great multitudes cease not to watch; so that many went hungry for sleep, as in truth did I. And sometimes we saw those Youths with plainness; but other times they were lost to our sight in the utter shadows of the Night Land. Yet, by the telling of our instruments, and the sense of my hearing, there was no awaredness among the Monsters, and the Forces of Evil, that any were abroad from the Pyramid; so that a little hope came into our hearts that yet there might be no tragedy.

And times, would they cease from their way, and sit about in circles among the shadows and the grey mossbushes, which grew hardly here or there about. And we knew that they had food with them to eat; for this could we see with plainness, as some odd, grim flare of light from the infernal fires struck upon one or another strangely, and passed, and left them in the darkness.

And who of you shall conceive what was in the hearts of the fathers, and the mothers that bore the youths, and who never ceased away from the Northward embrasures; but spied out in terror and in tears, and maybe oft with so good glasses as did show them the very features and look upon the face of son and son.

And the kin of the watchers brought to them food, and tended them, so that they had no need to cease from their watching; and beds were made in the embrasures, rough and resourceful, that they might sleep quickly a little; yet be ever ready, if those cruel Monsters without made discovery of those their children.

Thrice in those three days of journeying to the Northward, did the Youths sleep, and we perceived that some kept a watch, and so knew that there was a kind of order and leadership among them; also, they had each his weapon upon his hip, and this gave to us a further plea to hope.

And concerning this same carrying of weapons, I can but set out here that no healthful male or female in all the Mighty Pyramid but possessed such a weapon, and was trained to it from childhood; so that a ripe and extraordinary skill in the use thereof was common to most. Yet some breaking of Rule had there been, that the Youths had each achieved to be armed; for the weapons were stored in every tenth house of the cities, in the care of the chargingmasters.

And here I must make known that these weapons did not shoot; but had a disk of grey metal, sharp and wonderful, that spun in the end of a rod of grey metal, and were someways charged by the EarthCurrent, so that were any but stricken thereby, they were cut in twain so easy as aught. And the weapons were contrived to the repelling of any Army of Monsters that might make to win entrance to the Redoubt. And to the eye they had somewhat the look of strange battleaxes, and might be lengthened by the pulling out of the handles.

Now, the Youths made, as I have told, to the Northward; but had first to keep a long way to the NorthEast, that they might come clear of the Vale of Red Fire. And this wise they journeyed, and kept the Vale about seven miles to the NorthWest of them, and so were presently beyond the Watcher of the NorthEast, and going with a greater freedom, and having less care to hide.

And this way, it may be, certain of the giants, wandering, perceived them, and went swiftly to make attack and destroy them. But some order went about among the youths, and they made a long line, with a certain space between each, because of the terror of their weapon, and immediately, it seemed, the Giants were upon them, a score and seven they were, and seeming to be haired like to mighty crabs, as I saw with the Great SpyGlass, when the great flares of far and mighty fires threw their fierce light across the Dark Lands.

And there was a very great and horrid fight; for the Youths broke into circles about each of the Giants, and many of those young men were torn in pieces; but they smote the

Monsters from behind and upon every side, and we of the Mighty Pyramid could behold at times the grey, strange gleam of their weapons; and the jether was stirred about me by the passing of those that died; yet, by reason of the great miles, their screams came not to us, neither heard we the roars of the Monsters; but into our hearts, even from that great distance and safety, there stole the terror of those awesome Brutes; and in the Great SpyGlass I could behold the great joints and limbs and e'en, I thought, the foul sweat of them; and their size and brutishness was like to that of odd and monstrous animals of the olden world; yet part human. And it must be borne to mind that the Fathers and the Mothers of those Youths beheld all this dread fight from the embrasures, and their other kin likewise watched, and a very drear sight was it to their hearts and their human, natural feelings, and like to breed old age, ere its due.

Then, in a time, the fight ceased; for of those seven and twenty Giant Brutes there remained none; only that there cumbered the ground seven and twenty lumbering hillocks, dreadful and grim. For the lesser dead we could not see proper.

And we that were within the Pyramid saw the Youths sorted together by their leaders, all in the dim twilight of that place; and with the Great SpyGlass I made a rough count, and found that there lived of them, three hundred; and by this shall you know the power of those few monstrous things, which had slain full two hundred, though each youth was armed with so wondrous a weapon. And I set the word through the Pyramid, that all might have some knowledge of the number that had died; for it was better to know, than to be in doubt. And no spyglass had the power of The Great SpyGlass.

After this fight, the youths spent a time having a care to their bodies and wounds; and some were made separate from the others, and of these I counted upon fifty; and whilst the others made to continue their march towards the Road Where The Silent Ones Walk, these were constrained by one who was the Leader, to return to the Pyramid. And in a little, I saw that they came towards us, wearily and with many a halt, as that they suffered great wounds and harm of the fight.

But those others (maybe two hundred and fifty Youths) went onwards into the Night Land; and though we sorrowed at this thing; yet was there come a huge pride into our hearts that those raw ones, who yesterday were but children, had so held themselves in the battle, and done a great deed that day. And I wot that whilst their mothers wept, easeless, their fathers' hearts swelled within them, and held somewhat of their Pain away from them for a time.

And all this while, those wounded Youths came slowly, and rested, and came on again, the better helping the worse; and a great excitement and trouble there was in all the Mighty Pyramid, to learn which were they that came, and they that went, and who lay

out there quietly among the slain. But none might say anything with surety; for, even with that great spyglass in the Tower of Observation, they were not overplain; save when some light from the fires of the Land flared high, and lit them. For they stood not up into the glare of the fires, as had the Giants. And though I saw them with clearness, yet I knew them not; for there was so mighty a multitude in that Vast Redoubt, that none might ever know the half even of their rulers.

And about this time, there came a fresh matter of trouble to our minds; for one of the Monstruwacans made report that the instruments were recording an influence abroad in the night; so that we had knowledge that one of the Evil Forces was Out. And to me there came an awareness that a strange unquiet stole over the Land; yet I knew it not with mine ears; but my spirit heard, and it was as though trouble and an expectation of horror did swarm about me.

And once, listening, I heard the MasterWord beating strangely low, and I knew the aether to thrill about me, and a faint stirring was there in my soul, as of a faint voice, speaking; and I knew that Naani called to me some message across the night of the world; yet weak and coming without clear meaning; so that I was tormented and could but send comfort to her, with my brainelements. And presently I knew that she ceased to speak.

And, later, I heard that there was a new matter forward in the Redoubt; for ten thousand men had assembled to attend the Room of Preparation for the Short Preparation; and by this we knew that those poor Youths who stumbled towards us through the dark, were presently to have help.

And through all that SleepTime, there went forward the Spiritual and the Physical Preparation of the ten thousand; and upon the morrow they slept, whilst an hundred thousand made ready their arms.

And in this space of time the two hundred and fifty Youths that went towards the Road Where The Silent Ones Walk, had come very nigh thereto; having gone very warily and with some slowness, because, as may be, of the lesson of the Giants.

And to us in the Pyramid, the instruments made known constantly that Influence which was abroad, and which all those of the Tower of Observation thought to proceed from the House of Silence. Yet, nothing could we see with the Great SpyGlass, and so could come to no sure knowing; but only to fear and wonder.

And, presently, the Youths were upon the Great Road, and turned to the Northward. And beyond them, a great way, stood the House of Silence, upon a low hill at a certain distance to the right of the Road.

By now, they that were wounded had come to within, maybe, fifteen miles of the Great Redoubt; and the news went through all the Cities, that the ten thousand men that were Prepared, made to arm themselves. And I went down by the Tower Lift, and saw them come down by thousands from the Room of Preparation; and none might go nigh to them, or cause them to speak; for they were made Ready, and were, as it might be, holy.

And all the millions of the Mighty Pyramid stood in their cities about certain of the Main Lifts, and watched those thousands go downwards, all in their armour of grey metal, and each one armed with the Diskos, which was that same very terrible weapon, which all had training to.

And I doubt not but that the Young Men of the Pyramid looked, with longing in their hearts, that they might have been among those that went forth to succour. Yet, the older men had graver thoughts in their hearts; for the blood ran more soberly in them, and they had knowledge and memory of the Peril. And by this, I would make clear that I speak less of the peril of the body, which is common to every state of life; but of the peril of the spirit.

And it may be thought by those of this age, that it was most strange that they of that, having all the knowledge of eternity to aid them, had no weapon by which to shoot, and kill at a distance.

But, indeed, this had not been so in the past; as our Histories did show; for some wondrous weapons there had been, that might slay without sound or flash at a full score miles and more; and some we had whole within the Great Museum; and of others but the parts in decay; for they had been foolish things, and reckless to use; for we of that Great Pyramid, wanted not to kill a few of the Monsters that lay at a great distance; but only those which came nigh, to harm us.

And concerning those same weapons that killed silently at a great distance, we had now little knowledge, save that they did waste the EarthCurrent; and no practice had we concerning their workings; for it was, maybe, an hundred thousand years gone that they had been used, and found to be of no great worth in a close attack, and harmful otherwise to the peace, in that they angered, unneedful, the Forces of that land, slaying wantonly those monsters which did no more than beset the Mighty Redoubt at a great distance. For, as may be seen by a little thought, we did very gladly keep a reasonable quietness, and refrained from aught that should wake that Land; for we were born to the

custom of that strange life, and lived and died in peace, for the most part; and were very content to have security, and to be neutral in all things that did not overbear us; but, as it were, always armed, and ready.

But concerning the great and Evil Forces that were abroad in the Night Land, these we had no power to harm; nor could we hope for more than that we had security from them, which indeed we had; but the hugeness of their power was about us, and we dared not to wake it; save through such extremity as had come to pass by this folly of the Youths; though, even now, we had no thought to attack aught; but only to succour those wounded ones.

And concerning this simplicity of weapons, which excites somewhat even my wonder in this our present age, it may be that the powers of chemistry were someways quaintly limited by conditions in that age; and there to be always a need to spare the EarthCurrent; and hence, by this cause and by that, we were brought, by the extreme, nigh to the simplicity of the early world; yet with a strange and mighty difference, as all may know who have read.

Now, presently, the Word was sent to every City throughout the Great Redoubtas was the Law that the Great Gate should be opened; and each city sent its Master, to form the Full Watch, as was the Law. And each went clad in grey armour, and carrying the Diskos. And the Full Watch numbered, two thousand; for there were also the Watchmen.

Then the lights in the Great Causeway were made dim; so that the opening of the Gate should cast no great glare from within into the Night Land, to tell the Watcher of the NorthWest, and all the Monsters, that certain humans went out from the Mighty Pyramid. But whether the vast and hidden Forces of Evil had knowledge, we knew not; and they who went must but chance it, remembering that they were Prepared, and had the Capsule.

And the ten thousand that were Prepared, went out through the Great Gateway, into the night; and the Full Watch stood back from them, and spoke no word, but saluted silently with the Diskos; and they that went, raised each the Diskos a little, and passed out into the dark.

Then the Great Gate was shut; and we made to wait and to watch, with trouble and expectation within our hearts. And at the embrasures many did comfort the women of those men.

And I went back, upwards by miles, until I came to the Tower of Observation; and I looked out from there into the Night Land, and saw that the ten thousand halted at the Circle, and made arrangement of themselves, and sent some before and upon either hand, and so went forward into the Night Land.

And after that, I went to the Great SpyGlass, and turned it towards the two hundred and fifty Youths that were far off, upon the Road Where The Silent Ones Walk; yet for awhile I could not perceive them, for all the Road seemed empty. But afterward I saw them, and they were clambering back into the Road, having gone aside, as I thought, because of the passing of one of those Silent Ones, that I saw now at a distance to the Southward of them.

There passed then, some three hours; and in that time I varied my watching between those faroff Youths, and the Tenthousand that went forward to succour the wounded, that were now, maybe, scarce nine miles distant from the Mighty Pyramid, and the Tenthousand came very close to them. And, in truth, in a little while, they spied one the other, and I gathered, in spirit, something of the rejoicing of those youths; yet weak and troubled were they, because of their wounds, and their knowledge of failure, and their disobedience of the Law.

And, presently, they were surrounded by the Tenthousand, and carried upon slings; and all that body swung round towards the Pyramid, and came back at a great pace.

And, in the same time, I heard the sound that made them so swift to hasten; for there smote up through the night the Baying of the Hounds; and we knew that they were discovered. And I swept the Great SpyGlass over the Land, towards the Valley Of The Hounds, that I might discover them quickly; and I saw them come lumbering, at a strange gallop, and great as horses, and it might be only ten miles to the East.

And I looked once upon the Watcher of the NorthEast, and I saw and marvelled that the great bellar quivered constantly; and I knew that it had knowledge, and gave signal to all the Land. Then did one of the Monstruwacans report that a new and terrible Influence was abroad in the Land; and by the instrument, we had knowledge that it approached; and some of the Monstruwacans called foolishly with weak voices to the Tenthousand to haste; forgetting, and desiring only their safety from that which came near.

Then, looking with the Great SpyGlass, I saw that there moved across the Land, from the direction of the Plain of Blue Fire, a mighty Hump, seeming of Black Mist, and came with prodigious swiftness. And I called to the Master Monstruwacan, that he come and look through one of the eyepieces that were about the Great SpyGlass; and he came

quickly, and when he had looked a while, he called to the Monstruwacan that had made report. And the Monstruwacan answered, and replied that the Influence drew nearer, by the reading of the instrument; yet of the thing itself the man had no sight.

And I ceased not to look, and in a little while, the Humped thing passed downwards into the Vale of Red Fire, which lay across the Land that way. But I watched steadfastly, and presently I saw the black Hump climb up from the Vale of Red Fire upon this side, and come through the night, so that in scarce a minute it had come halfway across that part of the Night Land.

And my heart stood quiet with fear, and the utter terror of this Monster, which I knew to be surely one of the Great Forces of Evil of that Land, and had power, without doubt, to destroy the spirit. And the Master Monstruwacan leapt towards the HomeCall, and sent the great Sound down to the Tenthousand, that they might attend, and immediately, he signalled to them to Beware. Yet, already I perceived that they knew of this Utter Danger that was upon them; for I saw them slay the Youths quickly, that their spirits might not be lost; for they were Unprepared. But the men, being Prepared, had the Capsule, and would die swiftly in the last moment.

I looked again towards the Hump, and saw that it came like a Hill of Blackness in the Land, and was almost anigh. Then there happened a wonder; for in that moment when all had else gone quickly, that they might save their souls, out of the earth there rose a little Light, like to the crescent of the young moon of this early day. And the crescent rose up into an arch of bright and cold fire, glowing but little; and it spanned above the Tenthousand and the dead; and the Hump stood still, and went backwards and was presently lost.

And the men came swiftly towards the Mighty Pyramid. Yet, ere they were come to safety, the Baying of the Hounds sounded close upon them, and they faced to the danger; yet, as I could know, without despair, because that they yet lived after so enormous a peril.

And the Hounds were very nigh, as now I beheld with the Great SpyGlass; and I counted five score, running with mighty heads low, and in a pack. And lo! as the Hounds came at them, the Tenthousand drew apart, and had a space between the men, that they might have full use of that terrible Diskos; and they fought with the handles at length, and I saw the disks spin and glisten and send out fire.

Then was there a very great battle; for the Light that arched above them, and held away The Power from their souls, made not to protect them from this danger of the lesser monsters. And at an hundred thousand embrasures within the Mighty Pyramid, the

women cried and sobbed, and looked again. And in the lower cities it was told, after, that the Peoples could hear the crash and splinter of the armour, as the Hounds ran to and fro, slaying; aye, even the sound of the armour between their teeth.

Yet, the Tenthousand ceased not to smite with the Diskos; and they hewed the Hounds in pieces; but of the men that went forth, there were a thousand and seven hundred slain by the Hounds, ere the men won to victory.

Then came that wearied band of heroes back to the home shelter of the Vast Redoubt; and they bore their dead with them, and the Youths that they slew. And they were received with great honour, and with exceeding grief, and in a great silence; for the thing admitted not of words, until a time had passed. And in the cities of the Pyramid there was mourning; for there had been no sorrow like unto this through, mayhap, an hundred thousand years.

And they bore the Youths to their Mothers and to their Fathers; and the Father of each made thanks to the men that they had saved the soul of his son; but the women were silent. Yet, neither to the Father nor to the Mother, was ever made known the name of the slayers; for this might not be; as all shall see with a little thought.

And some did remember that, in verity, all was due to the unwisdom of those Youths, who had heeded not the Law and their lifeteachings. Yet had they paid to the uttermost, and passed outwards; and the account of their Deeds was closed.

And all this while did great numbers spy toward the Road Where The Silent Ones Walk, that they might watch that band of Youths afar in the Night Land, who went forward amid those horrid dangers. Yet, when the dead Youths had been brought in, many had ceased to look out for a time and had turned to questioning, and some had made inspection that they might know which had come back, and which lay out there where the Giants had slain them, or went forward to more dreadful matters.

But who of those that were abroad, were slain, or still went onward, we had but indifferent knowledge; though the men of the Tenthousand knew somewhat, having had speech with the wounded Youths, ere they slew them. And, as may be thought, these men were sorely questioned by the Mothers and the Fathers of those Youths that were not accounted of; yet I doubt that few had much knowledge wherewith to console them.

Now there was presently, in the Garden of Silence, which was the lowermost of all the Underground Fields, the Ending of those seventeen hundred heroes, and of the Youths that they saved and slew. And the Garden was a great country, and an hundred miles every way, and the roof thereof was three great miles above, and shaped to a mighty

dome; as it had been that the Builders and Makers thereof did remember in their spirits the visible sky of this our present age.

And the making of that Country was all set out in a single History of seven thousand and seventy Volumes. And there were likewise seven thousand and seventy years spent to the making of that Country; so that there had unremembered generations lived and laboured and died, and seen not the end of their labour. And Love had shaped it and hallowed it; so that of all the wonders of the world, there has been none that shall ever come anigh to that Country of Silencean hundred miles every way of Silence to the Dead.

And there were in that roof seven moons set in a mighty circle, and lit by the EarthCurrent; and the circle was sixty miles across, so that all that Country of Quiet was visible; yet to no great glare, but a sweet and holy light; so that I did always feel in my heart that a man might weep there, and be unashamed.

And in the midst of that silent Country, there was a great hill, and upon the hill a vast Dome. And the Dome was full of a Light that might be seen in all that Country, which was the Garden of Silence. And beneath the Dome was the "Crack," and within it the glory of the EarthCurrent, from which all had life and light and safety. And in the Dome, at the North, there was a gateway; and a narrow road went upward to the gateway; and the Road was named The Last Road; and the Gateway was named by no name, but known to all as The Gateway.

And there were in that mighty Country, long roadways, and hidden methods to help travel; and constant temples of rest along the miles; and groves; and the charm of water, falling. And everywhere the Statues of Memory, and the Tablets of Memory; and the whole of that Great Underground Country full of an echo of Eternity and of Memory and Love and Greatness; so that to walk alone in that Land was to grow back to the wonder and mystery of Childhood; and presently to go upwards again to the Cities of the Mighty Pyramid, purified and sweetened of soul and mind.

And in my boyhood, I have wandered oft a week of days in that Country of Silence, and had my food with me, and slept quietly amid the memories; and gone on again, wrapped about with the quiet of the Everlasting. And the mansoul within would be drawn mightily to those places where the Great Ones of the past Eternity of the World had their Memory named; but there was that within me which ever drew me, in the ending, to the Hills of the Babes; those little hills where might be heard amid the lonesomeness of an utter quiet, a strange and wondrous echo, as of a little child calling over the hills. But how this was I know not, save by the sweet cunning of some dead Maker in the forgotten years.

And here, mayhaps by reason of this Voice of Pathos, were to be found the countless Tokens of Memory to all the babes of the Mighty Pyramid, through a thousand ages. And, odd whiles, would I come upon some Mother, sitting there lonely, or mayhaps companied by others. And by this little telling shall you know somewhat of the quietness and the wonder and the holiness of that great Country hallowed to all Memory and to Eternity and to our Dead.

And it was here, into the Country of Silence, that they brought down the Dead to their Burial. And there came down into the Country of Silence, maybe an Hundred Million, out of the Cities of the Pyramid, to be present, and to do Honour.

Now they that had charge of the Dead, did lay them upon the road which ran up unto The Gateway, even that same road which was named The Last Road. And the Road moved upwards slowly with the Dead; and the Dead went inward through The Gateway; first the poor Youths, and afterward they that had given up life that they might save them.

And as the Dead went upwards, there was a very great Silence over all the miles of the Country of Silence. But in a little while there came from afar off, a sound as of a wind wailing; and it came onwards out of the distance, and passed over the Hills of the Babes, which were a great way off. And so came anigh to the place where I stood. Even as the blowing of a sorrowful wind did it come; and I knew that all the great multitudes did sing quietly; and the singing passed onwards, and left behind it an utter silence; even as the wind doth rustle the corn, and pass onwards, and all fall to a greater seeming quietness than before. And the Dead passed inward through The Gateway, into the great light and silence of the Dome; and came out no more.

And again from beyond the far Hills of the Babes there was that sound of the millions singing; and there rose up out of the earth beneath, the voices of the underground organs; and the noise of the sorrow passed over me, and went again into the distance, and left all hushed.

And lo! as there passed inward to the silence of the Dome the last of those dead Heroes, there came again the sound from beyond the Hills of the Babes; and as it came more nigh, I knew that it was the Song of Honour, loud and triumphant, and sung by countless multitudes. And the Voices of the Organs rose up into thunder from the deep earth. And there was a great Honour done to the glory of the Dead. And afterwards, once more a silence.

Then did the Peoples of the Cities arrange themselves so that from every city whence had come a Hero, were the People of that City gathered together. And when they were so

gathered, they set up Tokens of Memory to the Dead of their City. But afterwards did charge Artists to the making of sculpture great and beautiful to that same end; and now did but place Tablets against that time.

And afterwards the People did wander over that Country of Silence, and made visit and honour to their Ancestors, if such were deserving.

And presently, the mighty lifts did raise them all to the Cities of the Pyramid; and thereafter there was something more of usualness; save that ever the embrasures were full of those that watched the Youths afar upon the Great Road. And in this place I to remember how that our spyglasses had surely some power of the EarthCurrent to make greater the impulse of the light upon the eye. And they were like no spyglass that ever you did see; but oddly shaped and to touch both the forehead and the eyes; and gave wonderful sight of the Land. But the Great SpyGlass to be beyond all this; for it had the Eyes of it upon every side of The Mighty Pyramid, and did be truly an Huge Machine.

And to me, as I went about my duties, or peered forth through the Great SpyGlass at the Youths upon the Road Where The Silent Ones Walk, there came at times a far faint thrilling of the aether; so that sometimes I was aware that there was the beating of the MasterWord in the night; but so strange and weak, that the Instruments had no wotting of it. And when this came, then would I call back through all the everlasting night to Naani, who was indeed Mirdath; and I would send the MasterWord with my brainelements; and afterwards such comfort as I might.

Yet hard and bitter was the truth of my helplessness and weakness, and the utter terror and might of the Evil Forces and Monsters of the Night Land. So that I was like to have brake my heart with pondering.

And the silence would come again; and anon the weak thrilling of the Aether; but no more the far voice speaking in my soul.

**INTO THE NIGHT LAND**

Now, after that destruction which had come upon the Tenthousand, and the fresh assurance that was upon us of the terror of the Night Land, it may be known that there could be no more thought to succour. Though, in truth, those Youths that went now upon the Road Where The Silent Ones Walk were far beyond our aid.

Yet might it be thought that we should have signalled to them, calling by the HomeCall, which was that great Voice which went forth from the Machine above the sealed base of the Mighty Pyramid. But this we might not do; for then we gave signal to the Monsters of that Land, that some were even now abroad from the Pyramid; yet we could no more than hope that the Evil Forces had no wotting of them; for, in verity, none might ever know the knowledge or the Ignorance which those Powers did possess.

Yet, it must be kept to the mind that we knew even then there was an Influence abroad in the Land, strange and quiet; so that the Instruments did not more than make record of it. And as I have surely set down ere now, we had belief that it did come from that House of Silence, afar in the Night Land, upon that low hill to the North of the Great Road. And many among the Monstruwacans feared that it was directed upon the Youths; but of this there could be no surety; and we could but wait and watch.

Now, about this time those poor Youths did draw nigh to that part of the Road Where The Silent Ones Walk, where it turned more swiftly to the North; and they to be now at no mighty distance from that grim and horrid House.

And presently we knew that the Influence had a greater Power in the Land; and I had an assuredness that it came from the House; yet no certain proof was this. But I set out my feelings to the Master Monstruwacan; and he had trust in them and in my power; moreover, he also had belief within himself that some secret Power came out from the House of Silence.

And some talk there was at times that we send the HomeCall into the night, to give warning to the Youths of our knowledge and our fear; and to entreat them to make a safe endeavour to return swiftly. Yet was this an error; and refused by the Master Monstruwacan; for it was not meet that we put the souls of those Youths in peril, until such time as we had certainty that they should be lost if we did not bestir ourselves. For, indeed, this HomeCall was as a mighty Voice, calling over the world, and did have so exceeding a noise, that it had immediately told all that Land how that some were yet abroad from the Great Redoubt. And here will I set down how that the HomeCall had no

use in those ages; but had been a Call in the olden time when yet the great flyingships went abroad over the world.

And there passed now a day and a night; and in all that time there ceased not great multitudes to peer forth into the Night Land at the Youths. For it was known concerning the Influence, and all felt that the Youths did draw nigh very speedy to their fate; and much talk there was; and many things said, and much foolish speech, and kind intent; but no courage to go forth to make further attempt to rescue; which, in truth, calls not for great astonishment, as I have surely writ or oft thought.

And in this place let me set down that the Land was, as it might be said, waked, and unquiet, and a sense of things passing in the night, and of horrid watchfulness; and there were, at this time and at that, low roars that went across the Land. And if I have not told the same before this time, it must be set to count against me and my telling; for, indeed, I should have writ it down before this place. Yet is the difficulty of my task great; and all must bear with me, and entreat for me that I have courage, so that I may come at last to strength and wisdom to tell all that I did see.

Now, in the space of this day and night, it was known that the Youths had not slept, neither had they eaten, save once, as they who had the watch through the Great SpyGlass did affirm. But they to hasten alway at a woeful speed towards the North, along that Great Dismal Road, so that presently they must cease, or slay themselves with their endeavour.

And all this did give surety to our fears that they were under a spell from that horrid House afar in the Land; and we had an assurance that this thing was. For, presently, there came a Monstruwacan to the Master Monstruwacan to report that there had come sudden a mighty Influence into the Land; and in the same moment, as it might be, I spied through the Great SpyGlass, and did see those Youths break swiftly from the Road Where The Silent Ones Walk, and begin to run very swift that they might come quickly to the House of Silence.

Then did the Master Monstruwacan hesitate not; but did send the HomeCall across the world, aye, even to those poor doomed ones that hastened, unknowing, to the terror which did compel them. And immediately upon the sound, the Master did send a message to the natural eye, in set language, and made warning that they suffered themselves to be drawn to their destruction by a Force that came from within the House of Silence.

And he besought them to put forth the strength of their spirits, and do battle for their souls; and if they could in no wise compass a victory over that which drew them

onwards, to slay themselves quickly, ere they went into that House to the horror of utter destruction.

And in all the Pyramid was there a great silence; for the bellowing of the HomeCall bred a quietness, because of that which it did portend; and it was swiftly known by the millions that the Master Monstruacan did plead for the souls of the Youths; and there went forth, unknowingly, a counterforce from the Mighty Pyramid, by reason of the prayers and soulwishings of the countless millions.

And the counterforce was plain to my inward hearing, and beat all the aether of the world into a surge of supplication; so that it stunned my spirit with the great power of it. And it seemed to me, as it were, that there was a vast spiritualnoise in all the night; and I spied tremblingly through the Great SpyGlass, and lo! the Youths did cease from their swift running, and were come together in a crowd, and had a seeming to be confused; as might some who have waked suddenly from sleep, to find that they walked in their sleep, and had come to a strange place.

Then came there a great roar from all the millions that spied from the embrasures from nigh five hundred thousand embrasures they did look, and I count not the great ViewTables. And the shouting rose up like to the roaring of a mighty wind of triumph, yet was it overearly to sound for victory. For the counterforce which came from the intensity of so many wills blent to one intent, was brake, and the Evil Force which came forth out of the House did draw the Youths again; so that they heeded not their salvation; but turned once again to their running.

And the Mighty Pyramid was full of a shaken silence, and immediately of lamentation and sorrow and horror at this thing. But in that moment there did happen a fresh wonder; for there grew suddenly before those poor Youths, billows of mistas it had been of pure white fire, shining very chill; yet giving no light upon them.

And the mist of cold fire stayed their way, so that we had knowledge that there fought for the souls of them, one of those sweet Powers of Goodness, which we had belief did strive to ward our spirits at all times from those Forces of Evil and Destruction. And all the millions saw the thing; but some with a great clearness, and many doubtful; yet were all advanced more in spiritual sight and hearing than the normal Peoples of this Age.

But of them all, none had the NightHearing, to know a soul having speech in the aether half across the world. Yet, as I have said, some there had been aforetime who were thus given the Hearing, even as was I.

And there came a Monstruwacan to the Master Monstruwacan to make report that the Influence had ceased to work upon the Instruments; and by this thing we knew that in verity the Force which proceeded out from the House of Silence was cut off from us, and from those Youths; and we had assurance that there fought a very mighty Power for the salvation of the souls of the Youths.

And all the Peoples were silent, save for an underbreath of wonder and talk; for all were utter stirred with hope and fear, perceiving that the Youths had some chance given unto them to return.

And whilst the Youths yet wavered in their minds, as I perceived with the Great SpyGlass, and the knowledge of my soul, and of my natural wit, lo! the Master Monstruwacan sent once more the great Voice of the HomeCall abroad into the Land; and immediately besought those Youths for the sake of their souls and the love which their Mothers had for them, to come swiftly Homewards, whilst they had yet this great Power to shield them, and allow them sweet sanity.

And I thought that some did look towards the Pyramid, as that they answered to the mighty Voice of the HomeCall, and did read the message which the Master Monstruwacan made to them. But in a moment they faced about, seeming to have a good obedience to one who did always lead; and of whom I had inquired, and found to be one named Aschoff, who was a great athlete of the NineHundredthCity. And this same Aschoff, out of the boldness and bravery of his heart, did make, unwitting, to destroy the souls of them all; for he went forward and leapt into the billows of the bright shining fire that made a Barrier in the way of their Destruction.

And immediately the fire ceased from its shining, and gave way and sank and grew to a nothingness; and Aschoff of the NineHundredthCity began again to run towards the House of Silence; and all they that were with him, did follow faithfully, and ceased not to run.

And they came presently to the low Hill whereon was that horrid House; and they went up swiftly and they were two hundred and fifty, and wholesome of heart, and innocent; save for a natural waywardness of spirit.

And they came to the great open doorway that "hath been open since the Beginning," and through which the cold steadfast light and the inscrutable silence of Evil "hath made for ever a silence that may be felt in all the Land." And the great, uncased windows gave out the silence and the light, the utter silence of an unholy desolation.

And Aschoff ran in through the great doorway of silence, and they that followed. And they nevermore came out or were seen by any human.

And it must be known that the Mothers and the Fathers of those Youths looked out into the Night Land, and saw that thing which came to pass.

And all the people were silent; but some said presently that the Youths would come forth again; yet the people knew in their hearts that the young men had gone in to Destruction; for, in truth, there was that in the night which spoke horror to the souls of all, and a sudden utter quiet in all the Land.

But unto me (that had the NightHearing) there came a great Fear of that which might be whispered into my spirit, out of the Quietness of the night of the agony of those young men. Yet there came no sound, to the hearing of the soul; neither then nor in all the years that were to come; for, in verity, had those Youths passed into a Silence of which the heart cannot think.

And here will I tell how that the strange Quiet which did fill all the Land, seeming to brood within the night, was horrid beyond all the roarings which had passed over the darkness in the time that went before; so that it had given my spirit some rest and assurance to hear but the farechoing, low thunder of the Great Laughter, or the whining which was used at times to sound in the night from the SouthEast, where were the Silverfire Holes that opened before the Thing that Nods. Or the Baying of the Hounds, or the Roaring of the Giants, or any of those dreadful sounds that did often pass through the night. For they could not have offended me as did that time of silence; and so shall you judge how dreadful was that quiet, which did hold so much of horror.

And surely it will be known that none had thinkings now, even in idle speech, that any should have power to succour the Peoples of the Lesser Redoubt. Neither, as I have said, had any the knowledge of the place where it did stand.

And so was it made plain that those Peoples must suffer and come unhelped and alone to their end; which was a sad and dreadful thought to any. Yet had those within the Great Pyramid come already to much sorrow and calamity because that some had made attempt in this matter. And there had been for gain, only failure, and the sorrow of Mothers, and the loneliness of Wives, and of kin. And now this dread horror upon us, which concerned those lost Youths.

Now, as may be conceived, this sure knowledge that we might give no succour to the People of the Lesser Redoubt, weighed heavy upon my heart; for I had, maybe with foolishness, held vague hopes and wonders concerning our power to make expedition

secretly into the Night, to discover that Lesser Pyramid, and rescue those poor thousands; and above all, as may be thought, had I the thought of that sweet moment in which I should step forward out of the night and all mystery and terror, and put forth mine arms to Naani, saying: "I am That One." And knowing, in my soul, that she that had been mine in that bygone Eternity, should surely know me upon the instant; and call out swiftly, and come swiftly, and be again unto me in that age, even as she had been in this.

And to think upon it, and to know that this thing should never be; but that, even in that moment of thought, she that had been mine in these olden days of sweetness, might be even then suffering horror in the Power of some foul Monster, was like a kind of madness; so that nearly I could seize the Diskos, and run forth unprepared into the evil and terror of the Night Land, that I should make one attempt to come to that Place where she abode, or else to cast off my life in the attempt.

And oft did I call to Naani; and always I sent the MasterWord beating through the night, that she might have assurance that it was indeed I that did speak unto her spirit, and no foul thing or Monster, spelling evil and lies unto her.

And oft did I make to instruct her that never should she be tempted forth from the shelter of that Redoubt in which she did live, by any message out of the night; but always to await the MasterWord; and, moreover, to have a sure knowledge that none that was her Friend would ever seek to entice her into the night.

And this way and that way would I speak with Naani, sending my words silently with my branelements; yet was it doleful and weariful and dreadful always to have speech into the dark, and never to hear the answering beat of the MasterWord, and the sweet, faint voice whispering within my soul. Yet, once and again, would I have knowledge that the aether did thrill about me, weakly, and to mine inward hearing it would seem that the MasterWord did beat faintly in the night; and thereafter would my heart have a little comfort, in that I had assurance, of a kind, that the lovemaid of my memorydreams did still live.

And constant, I put forth my soul to hark; so that my health failed me, with the effort of my harking; and I would chide my being, that I had not a wiser control; and so make a fight to do sanely.

Yet, day by day, did my heart grow more weary and restless; for, indeed, it did seem that life was but a very little matter, against so great a loss as my heart did feel to suffer.

And oft, at this time and that, did there come a Voice speaking plainly out of the night, and did purport to be the voice of Naani; but ever I did say the MasterWord unto the Voice, and the Voice had no power by which it could make the one answer. Yet I jeered not at the Voice, to show contempt of its failing to bewit me; but let the matter bide; and the Voice would be silent a time; and again would make a calling unto me; but never did I make speech with it (for therein lies the danger to the soul), but always did speak the MasterWord to its silencing; and thereafter would shut the thing from my memory, and think only upon sweet and holy matters, as it might be Truth and Courage, but more often of Naani, which was both sweet and holy to my spirit and heart and being.

And so it was as I have set down, there were Monsters without in the Night that did torment me; having, it may be, intent to lure me unto destruction; or indeed it doth chance that they had no hope but to plague me with malice.

And, as may be thought, all this considering of my trouble, and the giving of my strength unto Naani through the night of the world, that she might have comfort and help, did work upon me; so that I grew thin, plainly to the eye of those that loved me.

And the Master Monstruwacan, he that did love me, as I were his son, chid me gently, and had wise speech with me; so that I but loved him the more, yet without having gain of health; for my heart destroyed me, as it doth if love be held back and made always to weep.

And it may be thought strange that my Mother and my Father did not talk also with me; but I had neither Mother nor Father those many years; and this thing I should have set down early; so that none should waste thought pondering to no end. But the blame is to my telling.

Now, concerning my lovetrouble, there did happen a certain thing which gave me to decide; for one night I waked from a sore troubled sleep, and it did seem that Naani did call my name, mine olden love name, and in a voice of utter anguish and with beseeching. And I sat up in the bed, and sent the MasterWord into the Night, with my brainelements; and presently all about me there was the solemn beat of the MasterWord, answering; but weak, and gone faint, that scarce I might hear it.

And I called again with my brainelements unto Naani, that was Mirdath; and spoke to give her assurance, and to haste to tell unto me that which was so wrong and pitiful with her. And who shall be amazed that I was shaken with the eagerness of my spirit, in that it was so long since Naani had spoken clear within my soul; and now behold, her voice.

Yet, though I did call many a time unto the everlasting night, there came no more the voice of Naani, speaking strangely within my spirit; but only at times a weak thrilling of the aether about me.

And, at the last I grew maddened with the sorrow of this thing, and the sense and knowledge of harm about the maid; and I stood upright upon my feet, and I raised my hands, and gave word and honour unto Naani through all the blackness of the night, that I would no more abide within the Mighty Pyramid to my safety, whilst she, that had been mine Own through Eternity, came to horror and destruction by the Beasts and Evil Powers of that Dark World. And I gave the word with my branelements, and bade her to be of heart; for that until I died I would seek her. But out of the Darkness there came naught but the silence.

Then I clothed me swiftly, and went up quickly to the Tower of Observation, that I might speak instant with the Master Monstruwacan; for my heart burned in me to intention, and to be doing speedily that which I had set upon myself to do.

And I came to the Master Monstruwacan, and told all to him; and how that I did mean no more to suffer in quiet and to no end; but to make adventure into the Night Land, that I find Naani, or perchance find a swift peace from this my long troubling.

Now, when the Master Monstruwacan heard that which I had to say, it sat heavily upon him, and he besought me long and many times that I refrain from this thing; for that none might achieve so great a task; but that I should be lost in my Youth before many days were gone by. Yet to all his speech I said naught, save that this thing was laid upon me, and even as I had promised, so should I make to act.

And in the ending, the Master Monstruwacan perceived that I was set to this thing, and not to be moved; and he did put it to me how that I had grown to leanness, with so much troubling, and that I should have wisdom to wait awhile, that I put on my full strength.

But even as I was, so would I go; and this I told to him, gently; and showed how that the thing was meet and helpful to the safety of my soul; for that my strength was still in me; yet was I sweeter in spirit because that I stood lean and pure, and much poor dross and littleness had been burned from me; so that fear was not in me. And all do I lay to the count of my love, which doth purify and make sweet and fearless the human heart.

And because I was even as I have said, so was I the less in trouble of the Forces of Evil; for long and sore had been my Preparation of Spirit; and I wot that none had ever gone forth into the Darkness, so long withholden from that which doth weaken and taint the spirit.

And here let me set down how that the Three Days of Preparation, which were Proper to those that willed to go forth into the Night Land, had for their chief aim the cleansing of the spirit; so that the Powers of Evil did have a less ableness to harm.

But also it was, as I have said, that none should go forth in ignorance of the full dreadfulness of all that held the Night; for it was at the Preparation that there was made known certain horrors that were not told unto the young; and of horrid mutilations, and of abasements of the soul, that did shake the heart with fear, if but they were whispered into the hearing. And these things were not set down in any book that might be lightly come by; but were warded and safe locked by the Master of The Preparation, in the Room of Preparation.

And, indeed, when I did hear that which presently I was to hear, I had wonder in my heart that ever any went out into the Night Land; or that ever the Room of Preparation should have other than Students that meant not to go forth, but only to achieve some knowledge of that which hath been done, and mayhaps shall be once again.

Yet, in verity, is this but the way of the human heart; and hath always been, and will be so in all the years, for ever. For to adventure is the lust of Youth; and to leave Safety is the natural waywardness of the spirit; and who shall reprove or regret; for it were sorrowful that this Spirit of Man should cease. Yet must it not be thought that I do uphold fightings to the death or to mutilation, between man and man; but rather do sorrow upon this thought.

Now, when the morrow came, if thus I shall speak of that which was outwardly even as the night, though changing alway within the Mighty Pyramid, I went unto the Room of Preparation; and the Door was closed upon me; and I underwent the Full Preparation; that I might have full power and aid to come to success through all the terror of the Night Land.

And three days and three nights did I abide within the Room of Preparation; and upon the fourth day was mine armour brought unto me; and the Master of the Preparation stood away from me, silent and with sorrow upon his face; but touching me not, neither coming anigh to aid me; nor having any speech with me; for none might crowd upon me, or cause me to answer.

And, presently, was I clad with the grey armour; and below the armour a closeknit suit of special shaping and texture, to have the shape of the armour, and that I might not die by the cold of the Night Land. And I placed upon me a scrip of food and drink, that might keep the life within me for a great time, by reason of its preparation; and this lay

ready to me, with the armour, and was stitched about with the Mark of Honour; so that I knew loving women thus to speed me.

And when all was done and made ready, I took up the Diskos, and bowed in silence to the Master of the Preparation; and he went towards the door, and opened it; and signalled that the People stand back; so that I might go forth untouched. And the People stood back; for many had crowded to the door of the Room of Preparation, so that I knew how that my story must be to the heart of all, in all the Cities of the Great Redoubt; for to come unbidden anigh that Door was against the Lesser Law, and that any erred in this matter, betokened much.

And I went out through the Door; and there was a mighty lane of people unto the Great Lift. And about the Great Lift, as I went downwards, did the countless millions stand; and all in a great silence; but having dear sympathy in their souls; yet loyal unto my safety, in that none in all the Mighty Pyramid did make speech unto me, or call out aught. And as I went downward through the miles, lo! all the aether of the world seemed to be surged with the silent prayers and speedings of those quiet multitudes.

And I came at last unto the Great Gate; and behold the dear Master Monstruwacan did stand in full armour, and with the Diskos, to do me honour, with the Full Watch, as I went forth. And I looked at him, quietly, and he looked unto me, and I bent my head to show respect; and he made silent salute with the Diskos; and afterwards I went onwards towards the Great Gateway.

And they made dim the lights in the Great Causeway, that there should no glare go forth into the Land, when the Gate was opened; and behold, they opened not the lesser gate within the greater, for me; but did honour my journey, in that they swung wide the Great Gate itself, through which a monstrous army might pass. And there was an utter silence all about the Gate; and in the hushed light the two thousand that made the Full Watch, held up each the Diskos, silently, to make salute; and humbly, I held up the Diskos reversed, and went forward into the Dark.

## VI

### THE WAY THAT I DID GO

Now I went forward for a space, and took heed not to look backwards; but to be strong of heart and spirit; for that which did lie before me had need of all my manhood and courage of soul, that I come to the succour of that Maid afar in the darkness of the World, or meet my death proper, as it might need to be.

And thus did I go forward steadfastly, and conscious in all my being of the emotions of that parting from my mighty Home, and of the tenderness and wiseness that did underlie so much curbed rule and guidance.

And my heart was warm towards the Master Monstruwacan for that great honour, that he should come downward in armour to make one with the Full Watch, that he might uphold me to a lofty spirit at the moment of my going.

And all that time as I went forward, was the aether of the night about me, in tumult with the thoughts and blind wishings of the great millions I had but now left to my back.

And, presently, as I steadied somewhat upon my emotions, I was conscious of the exceeding coldness of the night air, and of the different taste of it upon my lungs and in the mouth; and it had, as it were, a wondrous keen sharpening upon my palate, and did fill the lips more in the breathing; so that it may be supposed it had more body within it than that air which did fill the plateau of the Thousandth City where was my home; for the air of every City was of difference, and the greater between one that was afar up and another nigh to the earth, as may be thought; so that many Peoples did migrate unto that level which gave them best healthfulness; but under rule, and with a guidance of quantities. And not all that were lacking of health; for, some are ever contrary.

And here let me set down that, within the deeps of the Fields, there was air utter varied and wonderful, that might charm one here and likewise sorrow another that were happier elsewhere; so that all might have suiting, did they but wander, and have Reason to companion them.

And thus did I go forward, full of new thoughts and olden memories, and freshbreaking wonders; neither forgetting something of doubts and fears more than a little. And again was it most cunning strange to be out there in the Night Land though not yet afar where often had my fancies and imaginings led me; yet until that time never had I touched foot, in all that life, upon the outward earth. And this must be a wondrous quaint seeming thought to those of this present day.

And so came I, at last, nigh to the Circle that did go about the Redoubt; and presently I was come to it; and something astonished was I that it had no great bigness; for I had looked for this by reasoning; having always a mind to picture things as they might be truly, and hence coming sometimes to the wonder of a great truth; but odd whiles to errors that others had not made. And now, lo! I did find it but a small, clear tube that had not two inches of thickness; yet sent out a very bright and strong light, so that it seemed greater to the eye, did one but behold from a distance.

And this is but a little thing to set to the telling; yet may it give something of the newness of all; and, moreover, shall you have memory with me in this place, how that oft had I seen Things and BeastMonsters peer over that same little tube of light, their faces coming forward out of the night.

And this had I seen as child and man; for as children, we did use to keep oft a watch by hours upon an holidaytime, through the great glasses of the embrasures. And we did always hope each to be that one that should first discover a monster looking inwards upon the Mighty Pyramid, across the shining of the Circle. And these to come oft; yet presently to slink away into the night; having, in verity, no liking for that light.

And pride had we taken of ourselves to perceive those monsters which had most of ugliness and horror to commend them; for, thereby did we stand to have won the game of watching, until such time as a more fearsome Brute be discovered. And so went the play; yet with ever, it doth seem to me now, something of a halfknown shudder to the heart, and a child's rejoicing unknowingly in that safety which had power to make light the seeming of such matters.

And this, also, is but a small matter; yet doth it bear upon the inwardness of my feelings; for the memories of all my youth and of the many Beasts that I had seen to peer across the Light, did come upwards in my mind in that moment; so that I did give back a little, unthinking of what I did; but having upon me the sudden imagining of that which might come out of the Dark, beyond.

And I to stand a little moment, and presently had grown free in my heart to have courage of farewell; and so did turn me at last to the viewing of that wondrous Home of the Last Millions of this World. And the sight was an astonishment and an uplifting, that indeed there was so mighty a thing in all the earth.

And well might be that there were Monsters and Forces gathered together about that Hill of Life, out of all the Darkness of the World; for the thing was as a Mighty Mountain

that went up measureless into the night; and spread out upon the earth to the right and to the left of me, so that it did seem to hold all the world with its might.

And in the nearer slope were there three hundred thousand great embrasures, as well I did know; there being in all the four sides of the Redoubt, twelve hundred thousand embrasures, as was set out in the books of the schools, and upon the cover of Atlasbooks as they still quaintly to be called, and many another place, as might be supposed.

And half a mile upward was the lowest tier of those great windowplaces, and above that, countless other tiers. And a great light came out from them into the darkness; so that I looked up into the night many miles, and yet did see them in shining rows; and did make separate each embrasure from its fellow for a great way. But there grew yet more, above in the mighty distance, so that they were lost in the upward space of the night, and did seem to me presently but as a constant, glimmering fire, that did shape a shining Peak into the blackness of the heavens, dwindling into the utmost height. And thus was that Everlasting Monument.

Then did it come to me that those little things, which I did see to cluster against the embrasures, were in truth the countless millions of the Mighty Redoubt; and this I could make out with some plainness in those lower embrasures, which were the more near to me than they above; for the Peoples were set against the light within, yet were as small things like unto insects, in that distance, and within so Huge a Bulk.

And I knew that they looked out upon me, and did watch through their spyglasses. And I sent my gaze upwards again along that great Slope of grey metal, aye! upward again to where it strode glimmering into the Blackness, and so at last to the little star that did crown that Wonder of the World in the eternal night. And, for a little, I did stare towards that far light; for it came from within that Tower of Observation, where so lately I had spended my life; and I had knowledge within my heart that the dear Master Monstruwacan did bend the Great SpyGlass upon me, through which so oft had I spied. And I raised the Diskos unto him, in salutation and farewell, though I saw him not at all through that vast space.

And my heart was very full; yet my soul but the stronger for it. And then, behold, I was aware of a murmur in the night, coming to me, dim and from afar off; and I saw the little shapes of the Peoples in the lower embrasures, in constant movement; and I knew upon the instant that the Multitudes did take that salute unto themselves, and cried out and waved to me their farewells, or to come backas may be.

And, indeed, I was but a lonesome person looking up at that great mountain of metal and Life. And I knew that I had danger to realise my plight; and I stayed no more; but

did raise the Diskos, reversed, as was but meet from one young man unto all the Millions.

And I looked swiftly upward through those eight great miles of night, unto that Final Light which did shine in the black heavens; so that my friend should know that I thought of him that was beyond my sight, in that last moment. And it may be that the invisible millions that were far up in the night, in the Upper Cities, did take that also to be a meaning of farewell to themselves; for there came down out of the monstrous height, a far, faint murmur of sound, as of a vague wind up in the night.

Then did I lower the Diskos, and turn me about. And I breasted strangely against the Air Clog, and stept forward across the Circle, into the lonesomeness of the Night Land. And I looked no more behind; for that which was my Home did weaken my heart somewhat, to behold; so that I made determination that I look not again to my back, for a great while.

Yet, about me as I went, there was constant surging in the aether of the world; and it did tell unto me how that those, my people and kin, had continual mind of me, both in prayer and wishings, and in a perpetual watching. And the same gave to me a feeling as of being something companied; yet, in a time, it came to me that this disturbance of the aether should tell to some Evil Force how that I was there abroad in the Land. But how to stop this thing, who should have power? For, of truth, had I been among them to make a full explaining of the danger, they had been yet powerless to cease; for but to have such great multitudes athink upon one matter, was to set a disturbance about, as should be most clear to all.

Now, at the beginning, I did walk outwards into the Night Land, somewhat blindly, and without sure direction; being intent only to put a good space to my back, that I might cure somewhat the ache which did weaken my heart at the first.

But, in awhile, I ceased somewhat from my overswiftness, and did put thought to my going. And I came quickly to reason that I should try a new way through the Land; for it might be that there was an overwatchfulness in that part which had been trod by the Youths.

And I began therewith to set this thought to the practice; and went not direct towards the North; but to the North and West; and so in the end to mean to circle around to the back of the NorthWest Watcher, and thence to the North of the Plain Of Blue Fire; and afterwards, as might be, have a true and straightway to the North; and by this planning come a long way clear of that House of Silence, which did put more fear upon me than all else that was horrid in the Land.

Yet, as all will see, this made to me a greater journey; though, in verity, it were better to go slowly and win to success, than to make a greater haste towards Destruction; which was, indeed, surely to be mine end, did I not go warily.

Now it may be thought upon with wonder, that I did go so assuredly to the North; but I went thiswise, part by an inward Knowing, and part come upon by much latter studying, within the Pyramid, of olden books; and by reasoning upon all things that I did observe, that had seemings of verity in them.

And because of this constant searching upon one matter, I had come, but a while back, upon a little book of metal, very strange and ancient, that had lain forgot in a hid place in the Great Library through ten hundred thousand years, maybe, or less or more, for all that I had knowing.

And much that was writ in the book was common knowledge, and set mostly to the count of fairytales and suchlike, even as we of this our age take not oversurely any belief in Myths of olden times. Yet had I always much liking for such matters, perceiving behind that outer shell which did win always so much unbelief, the kernel of ancient truths and happenings.

And thus was it, concerning this little book which I had made discovery of; for it told again, that which oft I had heard (even as we in this age, read of the Deluge) how that once, in a time monstrous far back from that, but utter future to this age of ours, the world did brake upwards in a vast earthquaking, that did rend the world for a thousand miles.

And there came a mighty chasm, so deep that none might see the bottom thereof; and there rushed therein an ocean, and the earth did burst afresh with a sound that did shake all the cities of the world; and a great mist lay upon the earth for many days, and there was a mighty rain.

And, indeed, this was just so set in certain Histories of the Ancient World. Also, there was made reference to it, within some olden Records. Yet nowise to be taken with a serious mind, to the seeming of the peoples of the Mighty Pyramid; but only as a quaint study for the Students, and to be set out in little tales that did entertain the nurseries; or, as it might be, wise men and the general.

Yet, there was this, about that small and peculiar book, that it did speak of many of these things, as it were that it did quote from the pens of those that did have actual witness; and set all out with a strange gravity, that did cause one to consider it as meant to be

indeed the tellings of Truth, and to seem thiswise to have great difference from all that I had read before concerning those matters.

And there was, further, a part in the ending of the book, that did seem to be writ of a time that came afterwards, maybe an hundred thousand, and maybe a million years; but who shall say.

And therein it did tell of an huge and mighty Valley that did come out of the West, towards the SouthEast, and made turning thence Northwards, and was a thousand miles both ways. And the sides thereof were an hundred miles deep, and the Sun did stand in the Western end, and made a red gloom for a thousand miles. And in the bottom there were great seas; and beasts strange and awesome, and very plentiful.

Now this, as may be seen, was as the talk of Romance; yet did I turn my wits to their natural end, and made thus plain of it. For, in truth, I to have something of belief, and it to seem to me that in a bygone Eternity, when the world was yet light, as in my heart I knew to have been indeed a thing of verity, there was a great and wondrous earthquake.

And the earthquake did burst the world up, along a certain great curve where it had weakness; and there fell into the yawning furnace of the world, one of the great oceans; and immediately made of itself steam, and so brake upwards again, and tore the earth mightily in its swift uprising.

And thereafter there was a mist and confusion and rain upon the world.

And, indeed, all very seemly put; and not to be taken as a light tale.

Then, in that ending of the book, there was one that did write, having lived in a vast later age, when the Sun had come anigh to his dying, and the upward earth was grown quiet and cold and not good to live upon. And in that time the Mighty Chasm had been calmed by the weight of an Eternity, so that it was now a most deep and wondrous Valley, that did hold Seas and great Hills and Mountains; and in it were great forests of kinds, and Lands that were good and healthful; and Places given over to Fire, and to Steamings, and Sulphur Clouds; so that they held Poisons that had ill for Man.

And Great Beasts were there down in that far depth, that none might see ever, save by a strong spyglass. And such there were in the Early World, and had now been bred in the Ending by those inward forces of Nature which did make the Valley a place of Good Warmth; so that there was, as it were, once more the Primal World born to give new birth unto such olden Monsters, and to others, new and Peculiar to that Age and Circumstance.

And all this, indeed, did the book give also; but constrained and difficult to take clearly to the heart, and not like to the wise plain speech of the early tellings; so that I must even set it out here in mine own speech.

And it did seem to me, by my reading, that Man had come at one time to a great softness of Heart and Spirit through many ages of overease. But that the World did come to coldness and unfriendliness, by reason of the Sun's slow ceasing.

And there was presently, in naturalness, a Race upon the earth that were hardy, and made to fight for their lives; and did perceive that the Mighty Valley that cut the World in twain, was a place of Warmth and Life; and so did make to adventure their bodies down that wondrous Height; and were many Ages coming safe to the Bottom; but did find safe places in the downward way where they built them Houses, and made to live, and begot them children; and these grew up to that life of constant and great climbings, and of hard workings upon The Road, which was the One Intent of that People; so that the book did speak of them always as The Road Makers.

And thus did they make downwards through the long years and the ages; and many generations did live and die, and saw not the reaching of the Road down into that Great Vale that lay so monstrous deep in the World.

But in the end they did come there with the Road; and they were very Hardy; and they did fight with the Monsters and slay many; and they built them many Cities, through great years in the Mighty Valley, and did make the Road from City unto City along that Great Valley, even unto the Bight of the Valley. And they found here a constant darkness and Shadow; for that the Sun could not make a shining around that Great Corner. Yet, even here they ceased not to make the Road; but took it around, and a mighty way unto the North; passing it among strange Fires and Pits that burned from out of the earth.

But there was presently, such a power and horror of Monsters and Evil Things in that Valley of Shadow, that the Road Makers were made to go Backwards into the Red Light which did fill the Westward Valley, and came from that low Sun.

And they went back unto their Cities; and lived there mayhaps an hundred thousand years; and grew wise and cunning in all matters; and their Wise People did make dealings and had experiment with those Forces which are Distasteful and Harmful unto Life; but they did this in Ignorance; for all that they had much wisdom; thinking only to Experiment, that they come to greater knowings. But they did open a way for those Forces; and much harm and Pity did come thereby. And then had all People to have Regret; yet too late.

Now, presently, when an hundred thousand years had gone, or it may be a greater space; there came slowly the utter twilight of the world, as the sun to die the more; so that presently it gave but an utter gloomy light. And there grew upon many of the Peoples of the Cities of the Valley, a strangeness and a wildness; so that strange things were done, that had been shameful to all in the Light. And there were wanderings, and consortings with strange outward beings, and presently, many Cities were attacked by monsters that did come from the West; and there was a Pandemonium.

Then was an Age of Sorrows and Fightings, and Hardenings of the Spirit and of the Heart, for all that were of good Fibre; and this did breed a Determined Generation; and there grew up into the World a Leader; and he took all the sound Millions; and did make a mighty Battle upon all Foulness and upon all that did harm and trouble them; and they drove their Enemies down the Valley, and up the Valley, and did utterly scatter and put them to flight.

Then did that Man call all his Peoples together; and did make it plain how that the Darkness grew upon the World, and that the Foul and dreadful Powers abroad, were like to be more Horrid when a greater Gloom came.

And he put to them that they Build a Mighty Refuge; and the Peoples did acclaim; and lo! there was built, presently, a Great House. But the Great House was not Proper; and that Man did take all the Peoples to Wander; and they came to the Bight; and there was built at last that Great and Mighty Pyramid.

Now this is the sense and telling of that book; and but late had I read it; and talked somewhat of it with my dear friend, the Master Monstruwacan; but not overmuch; for I had taken so sudden a mind to GO, that all else had dropped from about me. Yet, to us it did seem clear that there was no life in all the invisible upper world; and that, surely, that Great Road whereon the Silent Ones did walk, must be that same Road which the hardy Peoples of that age did make.

And it did seem wise to the Master Monstruwacan, and unto me, that if any should find the Lesser Redoubt, they must surely do so somewhere within the mighty Valley; but whether The Road that led into the West, where was the Place of the Abhumans, should bring me to it, I had no knowing; nor whether it might lie on the Northward way. And I, maybe, to wander a thousand miles wrong; if, in truth, I were not into some dreadful trouble before.

And, indeed, no reason of value was there to give me hope that the Lesser Pyramid lay either to the West, or where the Road went Northward, beyond the House of Silence. Yet I did so feel it to be somewhere to the North, that I had made a determination to search

that way for a great distance, the first; and if I could not come upon aught, then I should have sober thought that it did lie Westward. But in the Valley someways, I had feeling of assurance that it must be; for it was plain that the telling of the book was sound in its bottom sense; as might be seen; for how should any live in the utter bleak and deadly chill of the silent upper world that lay an hundred miles up in the night, hid and lost for ever.

And strange is it to think of those wondrous and mighty cliffs that girt us about, and yet were fast held from us in the dark; so that I had not known of them, save for the telling of that book; though, in truth, it had been always supposed that we lived in a great deep of the world; but, indeed, it was rather held in belief that we abode in the bed of some ancient sea, that did surely slope gradual away from us, and not go up abrupt and savage.

And here let me make so clear as I may that the general peoples had no clear thought upon any such matters; though there was something of it taught in the schools; yet rather this and that, of diverse conclusions, as it might be thinkings of the Teachers, after much study, and some ponderings. For one man, having a lack of imagining, would scoff, and another, maybe, to take it very staidly, but some would build Fancy upon the tellings of the Records, and make foolish and fantastic that which had groundings in Truth; and thus is it ever. But to the most Peoples of the Pyramid, there was no deep conviction nor thought of any great hid World afar in the darkness. For they gave attention and belief only to that which lay to their view; nor could a great lot come to imagine that there had been ever any other Condition.

And to them, it did seem right and meet that there should be strange things, and fires from the earth, and an everabiding night, and monsters, and matters hid and tangled much in mystery.

And very content were the most of them; though some had in them the yeast of imaginings, or the pimples of fancy upon them, and to these there seemed many possibilities; though the first to read out to sanity; and the second, to expect and have speech towards much that was foolish or to no purpose.

And of these vague believings of the peoples, have I made hint before, and need not have much trouble to it now. Save that, with the children, as is ever the way, those olden tales had much believing; and the simplicity of the Wise did mate with the beliefs of the Young; and between them did lie the Truth.

And so did I make speed towards the North, having a strong surety in my heart and mind that there were but two ways to my search; for without of the Valley, afar up in the

dead lonesomeness of the hidden world, was a cold that was shapen ready to Death, and a lacking, as I must believe, of the sweet, needful air that yet did lie in plenty in that deep place of the earth. So that, surely, the mighty Valley somewheres to hold that other Redoubt.

Yet, as I have said, I went not direct to my journey, but otherwise, for those sound reasons which I did set down a time back.

## VII

### THE NIGHT LAND

Now, as I went towards the North and West, I steered me warily for a great while, that I come safe of that Great Watcher of the NorthWest. And as I made forward, I put thought to all matters which must concern me; so far as I had imagining to see. And first I did consider the speed that I should keep; and found presently that I did well to be moderate; for that I had before me a great and mighty journey; and indeed, who might speak knowingly of the end thereof?

And another matter, I did arrange; for I would make the times of my goings forward, and the times of mine eatings and sleepings all to a wise and regular fashion; that, thereby, I might go a great way, with the less harm to my body; so that I should be strong when the need did come for my strength. And I made in the end that I should eat and drink, at every sixth hour, and at the eighteenth hour sleep me until the twentyfourth.

And by this means did I eat thrice in that time, and have six hours of sleep. And this seemed very good to me, and I did strive always to manage thus in all my great journeying in the Night Land. Yet, as may be supposed, there were times oft and many when I must watch without ceasing, and leave my slumber unto the future; for the Land was full of grim and dreadful Perils.

And, as doth be human, I brake my rule straightway in the beginning; for I ceased not to walk for oneandtwenty hours, hiding and creeping, as the need did be in those places that were like to show me unto the Watcher; and when I did think upon food, it did sicken me; so that I would eat by and by, as I made it within my thoughts.

But when oneandtwenty hours had gone, I grew very weary and something faint; and was forced that I look about for some place where I might have rest. And, in a little while, I did see, away off, a small firehole, the like of which I had passed odd times even so early. And I made to come nigh to that part; for there would be warmth from the chill of the Night Land, and mayhaps a place dry and convenient to my slumber.

And when I came anigh, I saw that it was a cheerful place, as it might be said, amid so much gloom; for the hole was but a few paces wide, and full of a dull, glowing fire, that did bubble somewhat, and throw off a small sulphur-smoke. And I sat me down, at no great way, and did place the Diskos on the rock to my hand.

And I moved not, awhile; but was aweary, so that I had not the courage to eat, neither to drink; but must turn me and look back to the Mighty Pyramid; and, in truth, though I had come a very good space, yet was I so anigh to it, that I was both cheered and put out of heart; for it did seem close upon me, by reason of its greatness, so that I, who had journeyed a hard and weariful way, was shaken with the greatness of the task that was upon me.

Yet was this but one side of my heart; for it was good to feel the nearness of my Mighty Home; and I knew that there did countless millions make watch upon me, as I sat; yet did I make no sign; for it is not meet to make a constant farewell; but to GO. Yet was it very strange to be thus near, and to show such behaviour as were proper to one afar from all humanity. But so it was that I ordered my ways; for it did seem proper to me; yet was I happy to know that the dear Master Monstruwacan must, time and oft, have spied upon me through the Great SpyGlass; and mayhaps did watch me in that moment.

And it grew in me that I did act weakly to hold off from mine Vittles, and showed foolishness before my kind friend afar; and I did ope my scrip, and take therefrom three tablets, the which I chewed and did eat; for this was a strong food, treated that it had but small bulk. Yet were they not filling to the belly; and I made that I would drink well, that I might feel that something was therein.

And to this end, I shook from a strong and especial tube, a dust; and I caught the dust within a little cup; and the air did make an action upon that dust, as it were of chemistry; and the dust did boil and make a fizzing in the cup, and rose up and filled it with a liquid that was of simple water; yet very strange to see come that way; but ordinary after a time.

And in this way, as might be seen, had I such food and drink in but a little scrip, that might keep life within me for a great time. Yet was it a way of discomfort, and lacking to the mouth and to the belly; but a sufficient thing unto the need of the body, and good matter for a thankful heart, in that dark and hungry Land.

Now, when I had eaten, I did go over in their order, those things which I did carry; for there was, beside the Diskos and that scrip of food, a pouch that did contain matters various. And these, I did look into; and afterward did take out a small compass that I had been give by the Master Monstruwacan, so that I might find of its workings without the Great Redoubt; and, he had said unto me, that it might be that I should pass far off into the Night Land, and lose the Mighty Pyramid amid so great a Country and so plentiful a Darkness. Then, perchance, if that ancient principle did still lurk within the machine, though turned no more to the North, but unto the Pyramid, then should it

guide my feet Homeward out of the Everlasting Night, and thus have once more that ancient use which, as I do know, is common unto this age.

And this was a very cunning thing to have with me, if but it held service to the EarthCurrent, and a rare thing, which the Master Monstruwacan did make with his own hands and much skill and pains, from an olden one that had place within the Great Museum, and concerning which I have told somewhat, before this place.

And I set the thing upon the ground; but it had no certain way with it; but did spin and waver constantly, and this I made to consider, and remembered that I was yet above that part where, afar in the earth did spread the greatness of the Underground Fields; and I was, haply, but a little way off from the "Crack"; though a mighty way above.

And it pleased me to wonder whether the dear Master Monstruwacan did behold how that I made test with the compass; for the light was good from the firehole; and the Great SpyGlass had a great strength. Yet, had I no certainty; for, as I did know, from much watchings, there was no surety in the searching of the Land, by the Glass; for there was oft plainness where you did think surely none should see, and anon a dullness where might be thought that the sight went gaily. And this may be plain to all; for the wavering of the lights from the strange fires was not to be accounted to rule; but made a light here, and a darkness there, and then did change about, oddly. Moreover, there were smokes and mists that did come upwards from the earth, in this place and in that; and had somewhiles a greatness; but oft were small, and did lurk low, and had no power but to confuse the sight.

And, presently, I did put by the compass in my pouch, and made to compose myself unto sleep. But here would I now set down how that, in the end, after I had gone many days' journeyings outward from the Mighty Pyramid, I did indeed find it to draw the Northward part of the needle unto it; and this was a comfort and a pleasure to my spirit; moreover, if ever I did get back, as I did think, it would be a matter for great interest unto the Master Monstruwacan; yet, in verity, were there other matters that should hold him more; for he was right human, as all should know.

And, moreover, concerning this same compass, I did find a fresh thing; for, after a yet greater time, as I shall set out in a due place, if I do but remember, which doubt is ever my fear to fret me, I came a mighty way from the Redoubt, and, lo! fearing that I might indeed lose that, My Great Home, in the Darkness of the World, I did pull out that strange wonder of the needle, that I might have comfort by its homeward pointing. And I did discover a new power in the night; for the machine did point no more directwards unto the Great Redoubt; but was a point unto the Westwards; so that I had knowledge that some Great Power afar in the Darkness of the World did sway upon it; and I had a

childlike wonder that this might be, in truth, that same Power of the North, of which the books, and my MemoryDreams did tell. And, indeed, no doubt should there be upon this matter; yet who might not have doubt in that time, that they should perceive after an eternity, that ancient Northward Force swaying that small servant unto an olden obedience. And it was, as it were, a revealing unto me, how that to know within the brain is one matter; but to have knowledge within the heart is another; for I had always known concerning this Northward Force; but yet had not known with the true meaning of Knowledge.

And yet one other matter there was to cause doubt, at that moment of this new knowing; for it came to me that maybe the power of that Lesser Redoubt did begin to act upon the machine, even as the EarthCurrent of the Great Pyramid did hold yet a strong drawing upon the needle; and were this so, then did I not surely begin to stand anigh unto my Journey's end; for that less power of the Lesser Redoubt could have no impudence to pull, save that I had come to a closeness with it.

Yet, in truth, as I do now have knowledge, it was the North that drew; and I do seem to make a great telling about this little matter; but how else shall I show to you mine inward mind, and the lack of knowledge and likewise the peculiar knowings that did go to the making of that time, and the Peoples thereof, which is but to say the same thing twice over.

And now, as I did say, I made to compose myself for sleep; and to this end, I took a cloakmatter which did cross my shoulder and hip, and wrapt it about me, and lay down there in the darkness of the Night, by that strange firehole.

And I lay the Diskos beside me, within the cloak; for it was, indeed, my companion and friend in bitter need; so that I had pleasure to feel the strange thing anigh to me. And as I did lie there, in those moments that do drowse the Soul, as it were that they do proceed as breath out of the mouth of Sleep, I had a halfknowing that the aether did surge about me; and I doubt not but that there had watched my every doing, many of the Millions, and had been humanly stirred, at my commending of my spirit unto sleep; and thus did shake the aether of the world about me, with their unity of sympathy.

And, mayhaps, I had some little knowing of this thing, as I did pass, drowsy, into slumber; and it is surely like that I slept the better for it. Moreover, I was wondrous tired and worn, and thus did sleep very strong and heavy; yet I mind me that my last dim thinkings were upon that sweet maid I did go to find. And in slumber did I have speech with her in dreams, and a strange happiness about me, and all seeming to be touched by fairylight, and freed from the sorrow of life.

And it was from a sweet and lovely sleeping, such as this, that I was waked suddenly by a great and mighty sound; and I came instant to a possessing of my senses; and I knew that the mighty Voice of the HomeCall did go howling across the Night. And, swift and silent, I slid the cloak from about me, and took the haft of that wondrous Diskos into mine hand.

And I did look towards the Pyramid, quickly, for a message; for I had a sure knowledge that there had a great Need arisen, and that some Terror came towards me out of the Dark; else they had never waked all the Night Land to a knowing that an human was abroad out of the Mighty Refuge.

And even as I did peer towards the Great Redoubt, I could not abide to keep my gaze entire that way; but did take a large and fearful look all about me; yet could make to see nothing; and so did stare, eager and anxious, afar into the upper blackness of the Night, where did shine that Final Light of the Tower of Observation; and the same while crouched, and holding the Diskos, and making to glance across my shoulders, and to watch for the message, and all in the same moment.

And then, afar upwards in the prodigious height, I did see the great, and bright and quick darting flashes of a strange green fire, and did know that they spelled to me in the SetSpeech a swift warning that a grey monster, that was a Great Grey Man, had made scent of me in the dark, and was even in that moment of time, crawling towards me through the low mossbushes that lay off beyond the firehole to my back. And the message was sharp; and bade me to leap into the bushes unto my left; and to hide there; so that I might chance to take the thing to an advantage.

And, as may be thought, they had scarce flashed the tale unto me; but I was gone in among the shadows of a clump of the mossbush that did grow anigh; and I sweat with a strange terror, and a cold and excited shaking of the heart; yet was my spirit set strong to conquer.

And lo! as I did crouch there, hidden, I saw something come very quiet out of the bushes that did grow beyond the firehole; and it was great, and crept, and was noways coloured but by greyness in all its parts. And the glare from the firehole did seem to trouble it; so that it looked, laying its head to the ground, and spying along the earth, in a strange and Brutish fashion; that it might oversee the glare of the firehole. Yet, I doubt that it saw beyond the fire with plainness; for, in a moment, it crept swift in among the bushes again, and came out towards the edge of the firehole in another place; and this it did thrice unto my left, and thrice unto my right; and every time did lay its head to the earth, and spy along; and did hunch its shoulders, and thrust forward the jaw horribly and turn the neck, as a very nasty beast might go, wanton.

Now, as you may think, this manner of the BeastMan did shake my courage mightily; for I did think each time that it did go inward among the mossbushes, that it had made discovery of me, and would make to take me in the back, from out of the dark of the bushes; and this was an uncomfortable thing to consider, as others might think also, had any been there in the bush with me. And then, in truth, did that same swift sense of mine Hearing, prove helpful to my saving; for, behold, the thing did go back into the mossbushes, after that last coming out; and did seem to make as it had made a failing to discover me, and had no further intent, save to return unto the Night; and I had this thought truly in mine heart, and for maybe a minute; and then, lo! within my soul a voice did speak plain, and did warn me that the thing did make a great compass among the mossbushes about the firehole, having made discovery of me; and it did go warily to take me in the back, from the other side.

Now, when I heard this voice speak within my spirit, I had knowledge that the dear Master Monstruwacan made watch from the Tower of Observation, and did send the speech with his brainelements, having in mind that I had the NightHearing. And I trusted the speech; for in the same moment of time there did beat all about me in the Night the solemn throb of the MasterWord, as that it had been added with speed, to give instant assurance. And I leapt quick from that clump of the mossbush, unto another, and crouched, and made a watch all about me; and kept the ears of my spirit open, knowing that the Master Monstruwacan did also watch all, for me.

And, suddenly, I saw a little moving of a bush that grew to the back of those bushes in which I had been hid; and there came out of the bush that moved, a great grey hand, and moved the moss of the clump where I had been, as it were that something peered out of the moving bush. And there followed the great grey head of the Grey Man, and the head went into the clump of the mossbush where I had been.

And I knew that I must strike now; and I leapt, and smote with the Diskos; and the thing fell upon its side, and the great grey legs came out of the hither bushes, and twitched and drew upwards; but the head remained in the bush where I had been hid. And I stood away from the thing whilst it died; and in mine hand the Diskos did spin and send forth fire; as it were that it did live, and did know that it had slain a great and horrid monster.

And presently the Grey Man was dead; and I went away from those bushes, unto the far side of the firehole. And I stood with the Diskos held high and spinning and sending out fire, that they within the Mighty Pyramid might know that I had slain the BeastMan; for it might be that it lay too much in the shadow for them to look upon.

But the Master Monstruwacan spoke not again to me; for, indeed, it was not meet to do so, except it might save me from a sure danger; for, as you may know from my past tellings, there were Powers of the Night Land that did hearken unto such matters; and it was like enough that there had been overmuch done, even thus, for my further safety. Yet the thing could not be helped.

And now that I was a little calmed, and eased from my fear, I could know that all that the aether of the night was disturbed by the gladness of the millions within the Great Redoubt; so that it was plain how great a multitude had given note unto the fight; and their hearts to beat in sweet sympathy and natural fear; so that I did feel companied and befriended; though, as it may be thought, something shaken yet about the heart.

Now, in a little time, I did gather unto me my wits and had myself to order; and I looked to see how the hours did go, and I found that I had surely slumbered through ten hours. And I reproached myself; for, indeed, I had slept oversound by reason of my having lacked a regular way and time, as I had with a proper wisdom made to be my rule. And I resolved that I would obey the wit of my Reason in all the future time, and make to eat and rest in due season, as you will wot that I did before intend.

Then, with a selfreproachful heart, I went around the small firehole, and caught up my cloak and other matters. And I turned me towards the Mighty Pyramid, and did look once upwards along all the great slope, where it did go measureless into the far blackness of the Everlasting Night; and I made no salutation; for I had so resolved, as you will know; moreover, I desired not to call forth any unneedful disturbance of the aether of the world, which indeed must be, did I make to stir the emotions of the Millions.

And I turned me then away, and went off into the night, going swift and cautious, and bearing the Diskos cunningly and almost, as it were, with a love for that strange and wondrous weapon that had so befriended me, and slain the foul Grey Man with one stroke. And I had feeling that it did know me, and had a comradeship for me; and I doubt none will understand this; save, it might be, they of the olden days that did carry one strong sword always. Yet was the Diskos more than the sword; for it did in truth seem to live with the fire and the flame of the EarthCurrent that did beat within it.

And it was well acknowledged within the Great Redoubt, that none might touch the Diskos of another; for that the thing went crustily, as it might be said, in the hands of a stranger; and if any made foolishness of this knowledge, and did persist much to such an handling, or making to use, the same would presently act clumsy with the weapon, and come to an hurt; and this was a sure thing, and had been known maybe an hundred thousand years; or perchance a greater time.

And by this it doth seem wise to believe that there did grow always an affinity between the nature of the man which doth, as ever, include the woman and the Diskos that he did use in his Practice; and because of this known thing, and that the place would otherwise be lumbered with olden weapons of those that did die, it was a Law and Usage that there was placed with the Dead, the Diskos of the Dead, there upon The Last Road in the Country Of Silence, and was thus made to give back unto the Earth Current, the power that did lie in it. And this doth seem to a careless thinker, as it were that I told once again those olden customs of the Ancient Folk; but this is otherwise, and had a sound reason to it; yet, if you do so believe, I doubt not but that a right human sentiment was something at the bottom, which is proper; for it is meet that Love should mate with Wisdom to mother Comfort in our sorrows; and it is a warm thing to do aught for our dead; and none may say nay to this.

Now, as I did go onwards into the Night Land, looking ever to this shadow and to that, it may be conceived how my heart would stir with swift fear, at this and that; and that my body would oft quiver to leap aside; and as swift discover that naught assailed.

And so did I go forward, and always with imaginings and wonders concerning what manner of uncouth Being or Brute might come out of the darkneses all about. Yet, in all that time, there was a certain proudness of the heart, that I did come safe out of the power of the Grey Man, and did surely slay him. But, truly, it were well that the praise be considered, and not overmuch given unto me; for I had died as I slept, but that they of the Great Redoubt, had made a watch over me, and waked me unto my saving.

Now, presently, as I walked, I grew something faint, and had knowledge that I did foolishly; for, indeed, I should have eat after my fight; yet may I be forgiven for this forgetting, in that I had been much shaken and put about.

And I sat me down in a little clear place among the bushes, and did eat three of the tablets, and did once more shake forth the dust that did turn in the air to a natural water by a proper and natural chemistry of these matters. And after I had eat, I sat a little while, and did think, and did look upwards at the great slope of the Pyramid in the night; and all the time did I listen with mine ears and with my spirit; and kept the Diskos across my knees, and looked this way and that, very frequent; but nothing came anigh.

And so I rose presently, and went onwards, and walked for six hours towards the North and the West. And I made much to the West, for a little, that I might come clear of the NorthWest Watcher. Yet, after a space, I made to do foolishly; for I changed my mind

about, and kept something more towards the North, so that I should have a surer sight of that Monster.

And this was, in truth, a rash and naughty thing to consider; for if I were but seen, then should that grim Brute make a signal unto the Evil Powers, and I be met swiftly with destruction. But surely the heart is a strange and wayward thing, and given to quick fears, and immediately unto great and uncountable rashnesses. And so I did go forward unwisely to the Northward of a safe and proper going; and it may be that an influence was upon me, and drew me thatwards; but who shall say.

Now, a great time I walked, and made a halt upon every sixth hour, and did eat and drink, and look a little unto the monstrous towering of the Great Redoubt; and afterwards make strong mine heart, and go forward again. And always I did go warily, and chiefly among the low mossbush; but sometimes out upon stony ground, and oft across places where sulphur did puff somewhat from the ground in a low smoke, very strong in the nostrils and not liked inwardly.

And as I made onwards, I looked always to my right and to my left, and anon to the rear; yet made a constant observation of the Mighty Watcher, that I did begin to draw nigh unto. And oft did I stoop to crawl, and my hands did bleed somewhat; but after I was troubled so, I put on the great gloves that made complete the grey armour, and so was shod proper to such journeying.

And, presently, when eighteen hours did have passed since that my sudden awakening to the peril of the Grey Man, I did search about for a place to slumber; for I would keep wisely unto my ruling, and go not over long lacking of sleep; and by this planning I should be the less like to sleep oversound, and so should set my spirit to listen whilst I did sleep; and by so much as my spirit should serve me with faith, should I have safety. And this thing is plain, and wants not more to the saying thereof.

And I came presently unto a sudden place where the land did go downwards brokenly, as that it had been burst a great while gone by the inward fires; and I looked downwards over the edge of that place, and went round about it, and did see presently a ledge upon the far side, that was difficult to come upon; yet a place of some little safety to any that might go down to it; for it was awkward to see, and did any monster seek to come at me, I should have chance of warning; and might go downwards a greater way in time to my salvation.

And by this determination, I abode; and came down to that place with labour; but was cheerful of heart that I had found so sure a shelter. And I eat my three tablets, and drank the water that I did get from the powder. And so made to compose my body to sleep.

Yet, at this time, a thought did come to me, and I made calculation afresh; and laughed somewhat at that my poor counting; for, indeed, I had thought to eat but thrice in the twenty and four hours; yet by my arranging, I was made, indeed, to eat four times, as you shall see immediately by a little thought. And this thing came more strong upon my spirit than any might think; for I did eat overmuch for the lasting of the food; though, in verity, it was but little to my belly; as you must all think, and have sympathy for my discomfort.

And I considered a little, and had determined that I should afterwards in my journeying, eat but two of the tablets to my meal; and this was a wise thought, and like much wisdom, a discomposing thing. But so it was, and I set it down that you may know the arranging of my ways at that time.

Now, in all this while of meditation, I had been setting my cloak about me, and was fast set to my sleeping; for I had walked a weary way. And I lay me down upon my left side, with my back to the rock, which did overhang me something above; so that I was contented to feel hid from things that might pass by in the Night. And I had the cloak about me, and the Diskos close against my breast, within the cloak, and my head upon my pouch and upon my scrip.

And as I lay thus a moment easeful, I could see that so mighty was the uprising of the Great Pyramid that it was not hid from me even thus, but did stand upward into the night, and did shine, and was plain to be seen above the further edge of that deep place where I did lie.

And I fell upon sleep, looking upward at that Final Light, where, as might be, the Master Monstruwacan did bend the Great SpyGlass upon my lonesomeness, as I lay there upon the ledge.

And this was a thought of sweet comfort upon which to slumber; the which I did; but my spirit lay wakeful within my breast, and did listen through the night; and harked for all evil matters and things that did make to come anigh. But also my spirit did whisper unto Naani as I went into sleep; and so passed I into dreams.

Now, it may be thought that I did act with a strange valiance, in that I composed my body so properly to slumber, and with but a little trouble of the heart concerning the coming of monsters. And in truth this hath seemed somewhat so to me, thinking since that time; but I do but set the thing that is truth; and make not to labour to an illusion of truth; and so must tell much that doth seem improper to the Reality. Yet must all bear with me, and have understanding of the hardness of setting forth with true seeming the

honesty of Truth, which, in verity, is better served oft times by timely and cunning lies. And so shall you understand this matter so well as I.

And presently my spirit waked me there in the half dark of the Night Land; and I looked swift about me, and upwards, and saw nothing to fear. Then did I peer at my dial; and made to discover that I had slept full over six quiet hours; and by this I knew the reason of mine awaking; for it was so great impressed upon me by mine inward sense and being. And this you shall understand, someways, who have thought, ere sleep, to wake to a certain time of the morning; and by understanding shall you believe and give me all your kind harking and human sympathy.

And I made to have a smartness of going, which is ever hard to the newly waked; and I eat two tablets, the while my belly did cry out for an wholesome and proper filling; but I drank some of the water, and so did ease somewhat of my hunger.

Then did I wind my cloak to its shape, and put upon me my gear, which was the scrip and the pouch, and the Diskos to my hip; and I clomb out from that place of rest. Yet, before I did come rightly up into the open, I peered about, and made some surety that no evil Brute was anigh. And then I gat me out, and stood upon my feet, and looked for a little upwards at the mighty slope of the Great Redoubt, which did seem yet very nigh unto me, by reason of it being so monstrous in bigness.

And I wondered whether in that moment the Master Monstruwacan did look down upon me, with the Great SpyGlass. And afterwards I turned away swiftly, and went on into the Night Land; for it did always make me shaken with lonesomeness to look upon my Great Home. And so I did go forward with a strong and uncaring stride; but grew presently to quietness, and to have back the proper caution of my going. Yet had I not gone all foolishly, for I had taken the Diskos from my hip, ere this; so that I possessed it handily.

Now there is one matter which shall seem but a small and natural occurring unto you; yet was strong upon me in that time; and this thing was that I did begin now to see the Night Land from the new outlooking of my distance from the Mighty Pyramid. And it was as that a man of this day did go from the earth to travel among the stars, and lo! should he not find them to shift upon his vision; so that the Great Bear and this and that shaping of the star clusterings, should make a new order, as he did wander onwards; and so should he find that there was naught that was truly fixed, as he did before then think; but all to alter according unto the place whence the looking! And this thing shall be plain unto you, though no thought be put to the matter; for it is of an evident verity that doth need not argument to expound. And so shall you have memory of me, there awander among those strange shapings and wonders of that grim Land, the which I had never but supposed to seem but as my memory did retain them, from the lookings of all

my life within the Great Redoubt. And so it was; and ever there did this thing and that open out to a new view, and the Night Land take to itself a constant new aspect to mine eyes which had never until that time had but the one fixed vision of the same.

And you shall understand with me how that when, about the fourteenth hour of that day's travel, I did draw very nigh unto the monstrous Watcher of the NorthWest, it did seem so utter strange from this fresh aspect that I had been like to think that I did see a new Monster. For, in truth, when I did come at last to creep to within a mile of it, among the low mossbushes, I was confounded that the mighty chin did come forward towards the Great Redoubt, even as the upward part of a vast cliff, which the sea doth make hollow about the bottom; for it did hang out into the air above the glare of the fire from the Red Pit, as it had been a thing of Rock, all scored and beweathered, and dull red and seeming burned and blasted by reason of the bloody shine that beat upward from the deep of the Red Pit.

And by the way in which I do tell upon it, you shall know that I did surely view it something from the side at this immediate time; for, in truth, it was then that I did draw the nearer; and, moreover, I was the more astonished at this viewing, than I had been to the front; for it was so utter strange, and shapen so different from the Brute that did hang in my memory.

And a great time I did lie there upon my belly; and shaken by a fear of the Beast; yet emboldened, as you may conceive, by having come to the side; and being hopeful in my heart that I was very secure within so great a shadow and the thick sheltering of the mossbushes.

And surely it was that I did creep more nigh, the while that I did look; for presently I had a very plain seeing of the Great Monster; and did know where I had gotten to, and thereby did acknowledge unto myself that this was an utter foolishness; and like, for all that any might say, to lead unto destruction. Yet, as all must know, there was the first fear, and the ceasing of this fear, as I did wot that I was so little a thing to heed out there in the shadows. And presently a gaining of courage, and the prick of my Being that did crave to see clear this exceeding Wonder. And so was I come close, more or less, having gone far upon my hands and knees; yet sometimes to pause; but afterwards on again.

Now by this nearness, I was the more truly able to perceive how that the Bulk of the Watcher did rise up into the Night, like a Hill; and the colour was mostly black, save and indeed where it did face to the red shine of the Pit; and concerning this I have done telling.

And so did I lie there, and stare a great while, parting a small hole in the mossbushes that I might spy through the same. And the thing was squat there, and might have root within the earth, so it did seem to mine imaginings, as I did stare with a dumb wonder. And there were monstrous warts upon the thing, and indents and a mighty ruggedness and lumpings; as it were that it did be pimpled with great boulders that were inbred within that monstrous hide. And where the shine from the Pit of Red Fire did strike upon these, they did stand out into the darkness away from the skin, as you of this Age shall see mountains of the moon catch a bright fire from the Sun, and show plain upon the night of the moon.

Now, as I have set down, I did lie there and look a great while; and it came presently to me that there was unease within the Mighty Pyramid, among the Millions; for I did feel the aether of the world to be disturbed by their distress; and so had a knowing that they had a cunning wareness concerning the place where I did hide among the mossbushes.

And the thrilling in the night did bring a wisdom into my head; for, in verity, as I have said, this was a foolish matter that I was upon. And I gat a thought that the Watcher might have an awaredness of the trouble of the Multitudes; and, indeed, for all that I did know, it had a full knowledge of all my wandering; though concerning this, I did think otherwise truly in my heart; as is a most human and proper way to make comfortable the spirit, where Doubt can have no ease from Reason.

And I made that I would go backwards to a good distance from the Watcher, and go forward again upon my journeying, if but that I come safe from so unwise an adventuring. And as I did begin to return, it was to me as that all my senses were newly awake; for I had a sudden knowing that I was within the atmosphere, should I not call it, of the Monster.

And I gat an abrupt and horrid shaking of the spirit; for I did feel in verity that my soul had come too anigh; and that the Beast had a sure knowledge concerning me; yet did make to my destruction with no haste; but after that way and fashion that did seem proper unto it.

And this feeling you shall understand the better, maybe, when I do tell that it was to me as that the air all about me was full of a quiet and steadfast life and keen intelligence that I did believe to come forth from the Watcher on every side; so that I did feel as one already within the gaze of some Great and Evil Power.

Yet, though I had a great terror upon me, I made no foolish haste; but commanded my soul to courage, and put a guard upon my way of going, and so made a very quiet journey for maybe two full miles; and afterwards did allow myself something more of

haste; for I was now grown easier in my spirit; and felt apart from the spirit of the Great Watcher.

And after a longer while, I did leave that hill of watchfulness to my rear; and was gone onward into the night; yet, as may be known, with a vague unease and trouble to my heart, and a swift and frequent turning to learn surely that no Evil Thing came after me. For, as you may know, I could nowise have forgetting, concerning that great quiet Life which did seem to be living in all the air around that Mighty Bulk. For it had been all about me in the night, as I have told, and I to feel that I had been surely discovered! And thus shall you know how shaken was my spirit, in verity.

Now, presently, at the eighteenth hour of that day's travel, I ceased from my journeying, that I might eat and drink; and I did sit a little while, and looked back upon the strange and monstrous thing which I had come beyond. And the great humped back and vast shoulders of the WatchingThing rose up into the night, black and cumbrous against the red shine of the Pit. And thus, as you shall think, had that Brute looked always unto the Mighty Pyramid, through Eternity, and did cease not from watching, and was steadfast and silent and alone; and none did understand.

And after I had eat, and drunk some of the water, I went onward for a full matter of six hours more; being minded to have no sleep until I had put a great way between me and the Watcher. And in this part of my journey did I come to The Place Where The Silent Ones Kill, as it was named in the Maps. And I observed a very wondrous caution, and went away from it a little, unto the North, where I did see at a distance the shinings of fireholes; the which did promise me warmth through my slumber.

And here you must know that the Place Where The Silent Ones Kill was an utter bare place, where all did seem of rock, and no bush did seem to grow thereon; so that a man might not come to any hiding; though, in truth, there might be some hole here or there; yet was none shown in any map within the Pyramid; neither did there seem to be any such to me, as I did creep there among the mossbushes to the Northward of the Place, and look constant and fearful towards it; so that I should see quickly whether any Silent One did move across all the grey quiet of that rocky plain.

And concerning this same Place Where The Silent Ones Kill, it were well to make an explanation how that there was always a little and farspreaded light over all that lonesomeness; and the light was something greyseeming; as it were that a lichen might grow upon the rocks, and send out a little uncomfortable glowing, even as certain matters do in these times, if you do but know the place and the time to seek them. Yet was the light exceeding weak, and very cold and dismal, and did seem truly to show naught with a sureness; so that it did appear to the eye, if one did look fixedly, that there

were shadows that did move here or there, as it were of silent beings; and none might know, in truth, whether this shaping of the greyness was to the clouding of the Reason, or that the eye did see of Reality. Yet, if one did look with the Great SpyGlass, then might there be some surety and plainness; and likewise was it so, if one did have come sufficient anigh to that uncomfortable Place, even as I then did be. And so you shall conceive how that I did slide very quiet from bush unto bush; for I had alway in all my life had a very dread fear of this place; and oft did I peer out into the dim grey light of the lonesome plain unto my left; and would think sometimes to perceive the shapes of the Silent Ones stood vague and watchful; yet, on the instant, to see nothing.

And thus I did go onward, and came presently to a part where the grey plain did stretch out a bareness into the Night Land to my front; so that my way ended, unless I did make a long passing round about.

And I sat there among the mossbushes, and did consider, and lookt out cunningly through a spyhole of the bush in which I did sit. And I perceived that the part of the plain which did jut bareness into the Land before me had no greatness of size; but might be passed swiftly in but a little running. And this thing should save me a wearisome going round; so that I made to consider it with a serious mind; and all the time did I search the bare greyness before me, and saw presently that it was surely empty.

And I made to adventure myself across, running very swift until I had come to the far side. And lo! as I did go to rise up out of the bush, mine eyes were opened, as it were, and I saw that there was something amid the constant greyness; and I fell quickly into the bush; and did sweat very chill; but yet did haste to look.

And I saw now that there were, in truth, matters that did show vague upon that part of the plain that was before me. And I did peer very constant and anxious, and, behold, I saw that there was facing me, a great line of quiet and lofty figures, shrouded unto their feet; and they moved not, neither made they any sound; but stood there amid the greyness, and did seem to make an unending watch upon me; so that my heart went unto weakness, and I did feel that there was no power of the mossbushes to hide me; for, in verity, they that stood so silent were certain of the Silent Ones; and I was very nigh to the Place of Destruction.

Now, I moved not for a time; but was made stiff by the greatness of my fear. Yet I was presently aware that the Silent Ones came not towards me; but stood quiet; as that they did mind not to slay me, if but I did keep from that Place.

And there grew therefrom a little courage into mine heart, and I obeyed my spirit, and took an hold of my strength and went slowly backward in the bushes. And presently I was come a long way off. Yet troubled and disturbed, and very strict to my going.

And I made a great circling about that place where the plain of the Silent Ones did come outward; and so did gain to the NorthWest; and was thence something the happier in my heart; and went easily, and oft upon my feet; yet making a strong watching to every side.

And so I came at the last to a time when I had walked through fourandtwenty weariful hours; and was eager that I should come to a safe place for my sleep; yet did lack a happy belief of safety, in that I had come twice anigh to so grim trouble; and unsure I was that I did not be secretly pursued in the night. And this you shall believe to be a very desperate feeling; and a plight to make the heart sick, and to long with a great longing for the safety of that mine Home. Yet had I put myself to the task; and truly I did never cease to the sorrowful remembering of that utter despair that had sounded to me plain in the last calling of mine own love, out of all the mystery of the night. And but to think upon this was to grow strong in the spirit; yet to have a fresh anxiousness that I did the more surely keep my life within me, and so come to that maid's salvation.

Now, as you shall mind, I had spied the shine of certain fireholes somewhat to the Northward, and had thought to make thereabouts a place for my sleep; for, in truth, there was a bitterness of cold in all the air of night that did surround me; and I was warmed nigh to a slow happiness, by thinking upon a fire to lie beside; and small wonder, as you shall say.

And I made presently a strong walking unto that place where did glow in the night the shine of the fireholes, as I did well judge them to be; and so was like to have come overswiftly upon my death, as you shall presently see; for, as I came anigh to the first, I perceived that the light came upward out of a great hollow among the mossbushes, and that the firehole burned somewhere in the deep of the hollow; so that I did but look upon the shine thereof.

Yet very eager was I to come to that warmth; and I made more of haste than care, as I did hint; and so came very swift to the top of the hollow; yet was still hidden by the kindness of the mossbushes.

And as I made to thrust forward out of the bushes, that I might look and go downward into the hollow, there rose up to me the sound of a very large voice, and deep and husky. And the voice was a dreadful voice that did speak as that it said ordinary things, and in a

fashion so monstrous as that it were that a house did speak, and, in verity, this is a strange thing to say; yet shall it have the truth of my feelings and terror in that moment.

And I drew back swiftly from discovering myself; and was then all feared to move, or to make to go more backward, lest that I should give knowledge that I was come anigh. And likewise did I shiver lest that I was even then perceived. And so shall you have something of the utter fear that did shake me. And I abode there, very quiet, and moved not for a very great space; but did sweat and shake; for there was a monstrous horridness in the voice that did speak.

And as I crouched there within the mossbushes, there came again the large voice, and it was answered by a second voice; and thereupon there arose, as it did seem, the speech of Men that must have the bigness of elephants, and that did have no kindness in all their thoughts; but were utter monstrous. And the speech was slow, and it rose up out of the hollow, brutish and hoarse and mighty. And I would that I could make you to hear it, and that you could but borrow mine ears for a little moment, and forthwith be shaken with that utter horror and an afraidness, even as was I.

Now, presently, there was a very long quiet, and I ceased at last a little from mine overfear; and later I did calm somewhat; so that I made to shift my position, which was grown very uneasy.

And there was still no sound from the hollow. Wherefore, having a little boldness and much curiousness, and these despite my great fearfulness, I put forth mine hand, very cautious, and did move the mossbush a little from my face. And I went forward upon the earth, and did lie upon my belly; and was by this so close upon the edge of that place, that I was abled to look downwards.

And you shall know that I peered down into that great hollow, and did see a very strange and horrid sight; for, in truth, there was a large firehole in the centre of that place, and all about the sides there were great holes into the slopes of the hollow, and there were great men laid in the holes, so that I might see a great head that did show out to my sight here, from one of those holes, and would seem to be that of a monstrous man heavy with sleep. And there I would see but the buttocks of another, as that he did curl himself inward to his brutish slumbering. And so was it all about; and to my memory there were maybe a score of these holes; yet had I not time to the counting, as you shall see. For, after that I had made but a glance, as it were, at these sleeping and utter monstrous men, I perceived that there sat beyond the firehole, three great men, and they were each greater than elephants, and covered a large part with a stiff and horrid hair, that did be of a reddish seeming. And there were upon them great segs and warts, as that their skin had been hides that had never known covering. And there was between

them the body of a mighty hound, so big as an horse, that they did skin; and I judged that this beast was one of those fearsome brutes which we did call the Night Hounds.

Yet, as I should set down, they did nothing in that time in which I lookt at them; but did sit each with a sharp and monstrous bloody stone in his fist, and did look to the ground, as that they heeded not the earth or the food that they did prepare; but did listen to some outward sound. And you shall know that this brought to me a very swift and sudden terror; for I perceived now the why of their long silence; for, in verity, they had an unease upon them, being subtly aware that one was anigh, even as are the brute beasts in this manner and kind, as all do know.

And I made to draw back, and win unto safety, if indeed this thing were to be done. And as I moved me, it may be that I shook a little earth into the hollow; for there was, indeed, a little sifting of dry dust below me, as I did wot, being very keen to hear, by reason of my fright. And immediately did those three monstrous men look upward, and did seem to me to stare into mine eyes, as I did lie there hid amid the mossbushes. And I was so put in fear that I did clumsily, and sent another siftering of dust downward, as I did strive to go backward swift and quiet from the edge. And all the time I did look through the bushes very fixedly into the eyes of the giants; and lo, their eyes did shine red and green, like to the eyes of animals. And there rose up a roar from them that did nigh slay my soul with the horridness of the noise. And at that roaring, all the giants that did lie in the holes did awake, and began to come outward into the hollow.

Now, I was surely lost, and given over to destruction; for they had possessed me immediately, but that in that moment, as I went backward, the earth gave behind me, and I fell into a hole among the mossbushes to my back, and I made first to come out very hurried, and all choked with a dust of sand and ash; but in a moment I was sane to know that I had come to a sudden hidingplace; and I lay very still and strove neither to cough nor to breathe. And well for me, I came to so close a hiding; for there were all about me the sounds of monstrous footsteps, running, that seemed to shake the ground; though maybe this to be an imagining bred of my fear.

And shoutings of great voices there were; and the thudding of huge feet all about; and the noises of the bushes rustling; but presently the search drew away to the Southward. And I perceived that there had surely fought for me some power of good fortune. And I came up out of the hole, very cautious, and shaken and a moment weak with the beating of my heart; yet with a lovely thankfulness for my salvation. And I gat me about, and went swift through the mossbushes to the North and West for three hours, and ceased not to run upon my hands and knees. And by that time was I come a great way, and did have a surety in my heart of present safety.

And I ceased to run, and lay quiet; for, in truth, I did near swoon away with the hardness of my travel. And indeed as you shall know, I had slept not for seven and twenty hours, and had scarce ceased to labour in all that time. Moreover, I had eat not, neither drunk, for nine hours; and so shall you conceive that I was truly aweary.

And, presently I did slumber there as I lay, and all abroad to any monstrous thing that should come along. Yet did I wake unharmed, and found by my dial there had gone by a full ten hours, the while that I did lie there and sleep unwotting. And I was sore perished with the cold of the Night; for I had not the warmth of my cloak about me, and my belly was very empty.

And I stood me up, and did peer about for any dread matter, but all seemed proper, and I began to stamp my feet against the earth, as that I would drive it from me, and this I do say as a whimsy, and I swung mine arms, as often you shall do in the cold days; and so I was presently something warmed. And I dismantled my cloak, and wrapped it about me, and did feel that the Diskos was safe to my hip.

Then did I sit me down, and did glow a little with relish, in that I should now eat four of the tablets; for, indeed, these were my proper due, by reason of my shiftless fasting ere I came so wotless to my slumbering. And the memory of that eating doth live with me now, so that I could near to smile; for the eagerness of mine inwards was proper and human; yet were even four tablets but a little matter to so great an emptyness; and I drank a double portion of the water, that I might make less the void. And this thing was seemly; for, indeed, there were two portions due unto me.

And when I had eat and drunk, I did fold the cloak once more to shape across my shoulder, as I did carry it; and afterwards I took the Diskos into my hand, and went forward again to the North and West.

Yet, as you shall know, I did pause a little in the beginning, and peer to every side for any close danger; and then did look more abroad of that place; but could nowhere see any matter to have me to immediate fear. And afterwards, I looked a little while at the monstrous humped back of the Watcher of the NorthWest; and it did grow to me how steadfast that thing did look toward the Mighty Pyramid; and this set me to new hatred and horror of the Monster, as you shall conceive and believe.

And presently, I looked beyond the Watcher, unto the vast Mountain of the Great Redoubt; and I was still seeming close upon it; yet, in truth, gone a long and weariful distance. But this you shall understand was by the greatness and utter height and bulk of that shining Mountain of Life.

And strange and wonderful it was to me to think that even in that one moment, it might be that the dear Master Monstruwacan did look upon my face, through the Great SpyGlass. And I should not seem utter far to him, by reason of the power of the big Glass. But to me, as I did look upward through the Night, unto that far and utmost light in the upper blackness of the everlasting gloom, it did seem doubly to me that I was afar off and lost forever from mine Home. And this thinking did breed in me such a great and lonesome feeling, and a weakness of the heart and spirit, that forthwith I took my courage close unto me, and did turn away quickly; and went onward to the North and West, as I have told.

Now I walked for twelve hours, and in that time, did eat and drink twice; and made onward again very steadfast, and happy that all did go so quiet with me; so that it was as if I had at last come to a part of the Land that was given over to quietness, and lacking of monsters. Yet, in truth was I come to a worse place than any, maybe; for as I went forward, striding very strong, and making a good speed, I did hear presently a little noise upward in the night, and someways unto my left, that had seeming as that it were a strange low sound that did come down to me out of an hidden doorway above; for, indeed, though the sound did come from very nigh, as it did seem no more than a score feet above my head, yet was it a noise that did come out of a great and mighty distance, and out of a Foreign Place. And I did know the Sound; though never, as you may suppose, could I have heard it in all my life. Yet had I read in one of the Records, and again in a second and a third, how that certain of all they that had adventured from the Pyramid into the Night Land to seek for knowledge, had chanced to hear a queer and improper noise above them in the Night; and the noise had been strange, and did come from but a little way upward in the darkness; yet was also from a great and monstrous distance; and did seem to moan and hum quietly, and to have a different sounding from all noises of earth. And in the Records it was set forth that these were those same Doorways In The Night, which were told of in an ancient and halfdoubted Tale of the World, that was much in favour of the children of the Pyramid, and not disdained by certain of our wiser men, and had been thus through all the latter ages.

And I did seem to know the sound upon the moment; for my heart grew swift to understand. And it was a very dread uncomfortable sound; and you shall know how it did seem, if you will conceive of a strange noise that doth happen far away in the Country, and the same noise to seem to come to you through an opened door near by. And this is but a poor way to put it; yet how shall I make the thing more known to you? So that I must even trust unto your wit and true sympathy that you shall conceive of the fullness of my meaning.

Now, in all the Histories of those that had adventured into the Night Land, there were but three sure Records that did concern this Sound; and each did tell of a Great Horror;

and of them that did hear the Sound there had died the most part, out in the Night Land. And the Records did make always that they had come upon Destruction, and not simply unto Death; but were destroyed by a strange and Invisible Evil Power from the Night.

And of those that came alive unto the Pyramid, they had all one strange tale to tell, how that there were secret and horrid Doorways In The Night. Yet how this thing could be plain to them, who may know truly; save it be that the eyes of their spirits did behold that which was hid to the eyes of the flesh.

And there was afterwards writ a proper and careful treatise, and did set out that there did be ruptures of the Aether, the which did constitute doorways, as those more fanciful ones did name them; and through these shatterings, which might be likened unto openingsthere being no better word to their namingthere did come into this Particular Condition Of Life, those Monstrous Forces Of Evil, that did dominate the Night, and which many did hold surely to have been given this improper entrance through the foolish and unwise wisdom of those olden men of learning, that did meddle overfar with matters that did reach in the end beyond their understanding. And this thing have I told before, and it doth seem proper unto my belief; for it is always thus, and I have that same taint within me, as must all that have the zest of life.

Now, by this that I have set down swiftly, to make a little clear the sure horridness of this Sound, you shall know, even with me, the great horror that did come immediately upon my Spirit; and I did know that my Search was surely like to have an end in that moment; and I bared mine arm, for my teeth, where the Capsule did lie below the skin; and so was ready to an instant Death, if that Destruction did come upon me. And in the same moment, I did fall silent, inward among the mossbushes, and did begin to creep very quiet toward the right; for, as you will mind, I had heard the Sound over beyond my left. And all that time, as I did creep, there was a great sickness upon me, and it did seem that my mouth had weakened unto water; so that I could scarce hold my teeth tightly from unseemly clitterings.

And I crept always very silent, and did often stare quick and painful over my shoulder, upwards, and this way and that; but did never see anything; neither could I hear now the Sound.

And I went thiswise for a great hour, and was like to faint through the effort of my care and the soreness of my going. But upon the end of that long while, I grew something easier in the Spirit, and did perceive that I was saved from the Destruction that I had come so dreadful anigh. And this thing, it may be, was because that I did chance to hear it, whilst yet it was beyond, and before I did come right unto it, to pass below. Yet may I

be wrong in this thought, and do but make a guessing. But, as I shall here explain; after that time, I kept mine ears newly keen unto hearing; and did chide my Spirit, for that it had not taken account of that Sound a great while earlier. Yet, as I did presently conceive, the spirit had no power to hear that thing; which was very strange; but truly so.

Now, because that I went with a very wary hearing, I heard the Sound once a far way off before me, and I hid upon the moment, and went backward, and after a while, did judge myself to have come unto safety; and so it was, in verity, for I heard no more that time. And so did I come presently unto the eighteenth hour, and did eat and drink, and made me a place of slumber in a little hollow of a rock that stood upward out of the mossbushes. And I slept for six hours, and afterwards waked, and was come to no harm.

And after I had eat and drunk again, I did look outward over the Night Land, and with particularness to that part that I did travel in, as it might be called, the yesterday. And I did observe it to be a very bleak and desolate Country, and not given over to fire, or other warmth, nor to sulphurvapours; but to be very quiet, and with but a little light in all its breadth. And I could conceive that it was no place for anything of life to desire; but rather to avoid; and that Country did seem to be yet all about me; for I was by no means come clear from it at that time; though, Northward, there was a glimmer, as of fireholes; and beyond those, the strange shining of the Plain of Blue Fire. And, after that I had thought awhile, I did believe that I should meet no Monster of Natural Life in all that Country of Desolation, until I did draw nigh, once more unto fire. And I conceived that this Sound from out of the invisible Doorways might yet trouble me; but whether the quietness of that part was because all of natural life did fear the Sound, or because that there was neither fire nor warmth, I do not say, having no knowing in this matter; but may yet believe that it was to be laid to both causes; and this doth seem of common reason, as you shall agree.

And when I had looked a while unto the Mighty Pyramid, which was now truly a great way off; for I had walked so many weary hours; I turned me once more to my journeying. And here let me observe that I had gone very far; yet not so distant, as might be thought; for, oft, I did go less than one mile in an hour or maybe two hours, having to be of great caution, and oft to hide, and to go upon my belly, or to crawl, all as might be. And, further, as you may have perceived, I made not a straight forwardness; but did strike this way and that way, being very intent to escape the Monsters and Evil Forces that were all about.

Now, because that I believed that I travelled in a Place where was surely to be discovered those strange Doorways within the Night, I made an especial care of my going; and did stop oft that I might listen, and watch, and keep a very strict ward in all the Night about

me. Yet, as you shall see, this served not to prevent me from going forward into the fearfulness of that which did haunt all the void; for, sudden, as I went carefully, I heard a faint humming noise come downward from the night a little unto my rear; and the humming noise did grow more plain, as that a door were opened slowly above, and did let out that Sound ever more loud. And surely, after I did hear that, I could not doubt that a door were opened upward there; for the noise did grow in such wise as you shall hear a distant sound come through, when a door truly is oped; for, if the noise had been made just in that place, it had seemed to come from there; but this Sound, though it did come through there, was as that it did come outward from some far lost and foreign Eternity. And this I do struggle always to make plain; and you shall not blame me that I think overmuch upon it; for, in truth there was an horror so wondrous and drear about it, that I can forget not; but do strive always that others should know with me that peculiar woe and terror that did haunt the night.

Now, as you will see, I had in truth gone past the place where the Doorway in the Night did open; yet had come to no harm; but rather it did seem that it opened by chance, unwotting that I was anigh; or it may be that my quiet passing did disturb an Evil Power, so that it did even come to listen, or to make search. And all this doth pass through my brain, as I do write, and it doth seem to me that my thoughts are but the thoughts of a little child, before so great a mystery; and that I touch not even the edge and fringe of the truth with my thinkings, and so do cease upon them; and will but go forward so plain as I may with my telling. Now, as you may truly believe, when I heard that Sound, and did understand that I had, in verity, come past beneath that Place, I did surely sicken to an utter weakness of body and heart, though it was but for a moment; and then was I swift hid within the close shelter of the low and thick mossbushes.

And I shook in all my being, and crept, shaking, upon my hands and knees, and did near totter to my face thrice, so weak gone was I in that moment of terror; and I did have a wickedness of forgetting in that time; for I bared not mine arm, to have the Capsule to a readiness for my death, if that did need to be; and this was an abominable foolishness, and I do shake now when I think upon it; for Death is but a little matter by the side of Destruction; though, in truth, dreadful enough for all. Yet, as it did chance, no harm came to me, and I gat away, as that some wondrous power did cast a viewless cloak about me, that I might be utter hid; and oft have I wondered whether this was truly so; but have no knowing.

And, presently, I ceased from fleeing, and had some calmness, and did eat and drink; and so came to the comfort of a firm spirit, the which had been sore troubled, above all understood causes, by that horrid sounding upward in the Night. And after that I had eat and drunk, I did rest a little; but afterward, went onward to the Northward, going

towards that place where the fireholes did glimmer, the same being by this time no great way off.

Then, as I did come anigh, I thought to hear once again the Sound in the night, and I stopt very swift, and hid into the mossbushes, and did listen; but did hear naught; and so was hopeful that fancy did play upon me. Yet, because of this matter, I went upon my hands and knees for a good way; and so came at last nigh unto the shine of one of those fireholes, the which I did see for so long.

Now, as you shall suppose, I went very cautious through the bushes, unto that redshining fire; being careful, both that I did attract not any Evil Force that might listen in the Night, and because that there might be some Monster nigh to the firehole. But, presently, when I was come so that I could peer through the bushes, I did see a little firehole set in a small hollow, and there did no thing seem to lurk anigh; and the sight of that warmth did cheer me; for it was long since I did have the comfort of such a matter.

And when I had lain hid awhile, that I might watch all about, I saw the place to be safe and quiet; and I went out from the mossbushes, and sat down a space from the fire, which did fill the pit in which it did lift and bubble. And the noise that it sent out was strange and slow, and it did seem to gruntle gently unto itself in that lonesome hollow, as that it had made a long and quiet grumbling there, through Eternity. And oft was it still, and made no sound; and again would give an odd bubbling in the quietness, and send off, as it did seem, a little smoke of sulphur, and afterward fall once more upon a quiet.

And so I did sit there very hushed and restful, and the loneliness did lie all about me, and the red shine of the firehole did glow soft in the hollow; and I was glad to be quiet, for my heart was weary.

And there was to my back a little rock that did jut upward so high as a man; and the rock was warm and pleasant to lean upon, and moreover did seem to guard me from behind. And there I ate and drunk, and kept very still; and so was presently rested. And this I did need, as you have perceived; for I was gone sudden weary of the heart, as I did say; and this might be because that I did never cease to have Destruction over me to companion my way, though as you will mind, I had been no more than twelve hours afoot, since my last sleeping. Yet I doubt not you do understand.

And presently my heart grew strong again within me, and I had a warmth in my Spirit; and I got up from the earth, and stretched out mine arms; and I saw that my gear was safe upon me, and afterward did grip the Diskos, as it were newly.

Then I went away from the firehole, and climbed the far slope of the hollow, and went Northward. And there were before me many of the fireholes; for I did perceive them to shine in the Night for a great way; as it did seem that they were a path of red shinings that led me onward to the NorthWest of the light of the Plain of Blue Fire.

Now, I had a believing that I had come out of the Country where did lurk those horrid Doorways in the Night; and I went not with so utter a weight upon my heart; and did feel that naught should come now upon the back of my neck, which had been an odd and troublesome fancy whilst that I did creep through that Country of Gloom. Yet, as you shall know, I went with no foolish confidence; but with a great caution, and mine hearing keen to hark, and a care to my steps, and did ever watch around me as I journeyed.

And because that I went forward in this proper and sedate manner, I had great cause for a thankful heart, as you may perceive; for I had come after a long way to another of those hollows where did burn one of the fireholes; and I made a pause upon the edge of the hollow in which it did lie, and looked downward, keeping guarded within the mossbushes, where they grew anigh to the top thereof. But there was no living thing there to be seen, and I went downward, so that I should warm my body at the fire. And lo! as I stood upon this side of the firehole, and turned myself about, I looked presently more keenly to the other side; for the yellowness of the earth did seem a little strange in one place. But I could see with no plainness, because that there arose a glare from the fire against mine eyes; and I went round, that I should look the better; yet with no fear or thought of Evil in my heart. And, truly! when I was come upon that far side of the firehole, lo! there was spread out in the yellow sand of that place, a Curious Thing; and I went more nigh, and stooped to look upon it; and behold it moved, and the sand all about did move for a great space; so that I gave back very swift, and swung upward with the Diskos.

And, strangely, I heard the sand to stir at my back, and I looked round very quick, and the sand rose upward in parts, and sifted back, and there came to my sight odd things that did move and curl about.

And immediately, before I knew which way to go, I knew that the sand did shift under my feet, and did work and heave, so that I was tottered, and was shaken also in the heart; for I knew not what to think in that instant. Then did I perceive that I was all surrounded, and I ran swift upon the heaving sand, unto the edge of the firehole, and I turned there, and looked quickly; for I did not know what this new Terror should be.

And I saw that a Yellow Thing did hump upward from out of the sand, as it had been a low hillock that did live, and the sand shed downward from it, and it did gather to itself

strange and horrid arms from the sand all about it. And it stretched two of the arms unto me; but I smote with the Diskos, and I smote thrice; and afterward they did wriggle upon the sand. But this was not the end, as I did hope; for the Yellow Thing arose, and ran at me, as it might be that you should see a spider run. And I did leap backward, this way and that; but the monster had a great swiftness; so that I did seem surely lost.

Then made I a strong and instant resolve; for I perceived that I had no hope to slay this thing; save that I should come at it in the body. And I put everything to the chance, and made not to escape any more; but ran straight in among the legs; and there were great hairs like to spines upon the legs, and these had pricked me to the death, but that the armour saved me.

Now, I had done this thing with a wondrous quickness; so that I was under the mighty arching of the legs before the Yellow Thing did wot of my intent. And the body was bristled with the great hairs, and poison did seem to come from them, and to ooze from them strangely in great and shining drops. And the Monster heaved itself up to one side, that it might bring certain of the legs inward to grasp me; yet in that moment did I smite utter fierce with the Diskostrusting. And the Diskos did spin, and hum, and roar, and sent out a wondrous blaze of flame, as that it had been a devouring Death; and it sundered the body of the Yellow Thing, and did seem as that it screamed to rage amid the entrails thereof; so wondrous was the fury and energy of that trusted Weapon.

And I was covered with the muck of the thing; and the claws upon the legs seized me, so that the grey armour did bend and crack to the might thereof, and I grew sick unto death with the pain within; but smote with the shining Diskos, using my left hand weakly; for my right was gript dreadful fast to my body. And lo! I was sudden free, and a great blow did knock me far across the hollow, so that I was like to have fallen into the firehole; but fell instead upon the edge, and came backward unto safety.

And I turned me about, and the Yellow Thing did throw the sand all ways, as it did die; but had lost power to come upon me. And for my part, I lay weak upon the earth, and was no more able to fight; nor could I do more than breathe for a great while; but yet came presently to health, and made to examine my hurts.

Then I saw there was no great wound anywhere upon me; but only an utter bruising; and I found upon my right leg that there was a sharp and hairy claw clipt about it; but the armour had saved me from harm of the horrid thing; so that I did but kick it free with my left foot, and thence into the firehole.

Now, by this time, that Monstrous Creature was dead; but I held off from it, and went upon the other side of the fire; for I was yet surely in horror of it. And I sat for a time,

and did think upon all matters that did concern me; and I saw that I should have not comfort of heart, until I was washed clean from the taint of the Monster.

And I gat me up wearily to go forth into the Night again, that I should make a search for a hot spring, of which I had come past many. And I had oft found them to be nigh unto the fireholes; so that I was trustful that I should see one ere long. And lo! there was a little hollow just beyond, and scarce a hundred paces off; and in the hollow, there did shine three small fireholes, and there was a steaming puddle, as did seem, beyond the third of the holes.

Now, before I adventured downward into this place, I went all about the topmost edge, and made a search of the mossbushes about; but found naught that should scare me. And afterward, I went all across the hollow; but did find no monstrous thing hid anywheres. Yet, there was that in the place that discouraged me, and did keep me from stripping mine armour, so that I should bathe in the hot puddle; for I stept upon a small serpent, and the same did lap about my leg; but could do me no hurt, for the armour, which was a very blessed protection. And I freed myself from it with the handle of the Diskos.

And because that I could not go naked to my cleansing, I tried first the hotness of the water, which was not over great, and afterward did take off the scrip and the pouch, and the cloak, and laid them with the Diskos upon the edge of the warm puddle.

Then I stept into the water, and was immediately gone downward a great way; for, truly it was no puddle as I had supposed; but a deep well, as you might call it, of hot and sulphury water. And this doth show how a man may act foolishly, even when he doth believe that he hath a great caution; and surely it is borne in upon me afresh that none should trust over freely unto unproven matters, the which shall you heartily agree with; but yet do as foolishly, according to your lights and characters. And so shall you laugh not over hardly upon me.

Now I had gone over the head, and, surely I do not know what deepness was there. Yet, as you shall think, I stayed not to consider upon this matter; but made to climb out, and much shaken with my splutterings and the smartings of mine eyes; for, truly, the water was strong with sulphur matters. Yet, very cleansing was it, as I did presently see; for there was no more any taint or horridness upon mine armour, or the flesh of my face or hands. And I took the Diskos, and washed it clean, also; and then the cloak, and afterward the scrip and the pouch, and the bands of the same.

And after I had done this, I was minded to dry myself by the little fireholes; but when I was come there, lo! maybe a score small serpents were about those places; and I was

strongly pleased that I should keep away. Yet that I must warm and dry me in that desolate and bitter Night Land, you shall agree. And to this end, I put the scrip and the pouch upon me, and afterwards took the Diskos readily into my hand, and ran quietly unto the hollow where I did fight with the Yellow Thing. And the cloak I bore in my left hand.

Now, when I was gat there, I was truly glad to think that there were no serpents in that place; and because that I had slain the Monster of the Place, how should it be that any harm might come unto me; for truly, was it not like that a Creature of such Might should keep all that Hollow unto itself, and slay any that did come therein, and thereby preserve that place from all other horror; though, surely, until it did die and cease to Be, there had been no call for any greater abomination.

Now, all this did go through my brain, as I did sit to dry mine armour and my body and my gear, upon that side of the firehole which was away from the slain Monster. And I made presently to think that this would be a sure and proper refuge wherein to sleep; for, truly, it must have gotten a place where none other Creature should be like to come to work me harm. And it must be that you do all see with me in this matter, and commend me that I thought with properness.

And so did I resolve that I put my disgust within my pocket, as we do say, and stay safe and quiet within that Hollow. And this thing I did surely, and did eat and drink; and presently I went over to the dead Monster, and made very sure that it was truly slain; which indeed it was. And after that I had seen to this matter, I returned unto the firehole, and made a comfortable place in the sand, for my rest; for I was well dry by this.

And I wrapped the cloak about me, and took the Diskos to my breast, for a sure Companion, as it had truly proved in my need. And I could think almost that it did nestle unto me, as that it knew and loved me; but this thing can be no more than a fancy; and I do but set it down as such, and that it doth show my feeling and mind at that time.

Then, ere I did compose myself to slumber, I looked about me, upward to the edges of the Hollow, and I perceived that I was lost to the sight of the Mighty Pyramid; for I was come so far off that it looked not down from so wondrous a height, as you shall perceive; and moreover, the Hollow was something deep.

And afterward, as I lay my head back upon the scrip and the pouch, which were to me my pillow, I went to think a little upon Naani, as always I did in my constant journeying; yet, presently, I strove sometimes that I put her from my mind, that I should sleep; for a

bitter sorrow and anxiousness was oft upon me when that I did think upon her; and this you may know; for truly I knew not what terror was come to her, afar in the silence of the Night. And did I think overmuch, I should feel that I could have no calmness needful to sleep; but to need to walk for ever until I died, which could not be long; and so should I make a foolishness of mine anxious journeying to do her true service and to save her from Destruction, if such did truly threaten.

And I was soon gone over to sleep, and waked not for seven hours, being much wearied by the fight and the soreness of my body, the which did put me into a great pain as I did rise upward from my slumber. But this was presently something less, and I eat two of the tablets and drank some of the water, and afterward did put my gear upon me, and went forward into the Night, having the Diskos in my hand. And my heart was glad that I had come safe through the time of my sleep.

Now I walked six hours, and did stop a little to eat and drink, and went on again. And it was in this second Third of the day that I saw afar to my right, two strange and wondrous men, and they did shine, as they had been made of a pale mist. And they came anigh, going very swift, and did seem as that they were maybe forty feet high, yet having no thickness; and I hid downward into the mossbushes. And they past me, so quiet as a cloud of this day might go, and did appear to be, if I did guess, but an hundred fathoms off; yet was this no sure thing; for their position had no more surety than shall a rainbow have in this age. And so they were gone onward into the Night, and did seem to come out of the North. And they did appear not to wot of me; and whether they were harmful, I know not, for they harmed not me.

And I lay there in the mossbushes, until they were well gone away; and I had belief that they must be those same mistmen that were told of in certain of the olden Records; but were never seen anigh to the Pyramid; though I had thought, odd times, to see men, as of mist, through the Great SpyGlass, when I was within the Tower of Observation. But they were always a mighty way off; and some would say it was but a bright vapour that did move; yet would others be in doubt, and so is it ever in such matters.

And here let me take chance to say how that it is a hard thing to speak of such happenings to men of this age, and to make the truth proper unto them; and because of this, oft am I tempted to say no word upon many things that I did see; yet must I tell my tale, or suffer from the weight of it within me. And so shall you hark to me and give me your sympathy and human understanding. And concerning these mistmen, I have wondered oft whether they were the visible shape of some of those many Forces that were abroad in the Night Land; for they did truly seem to me as that a thing of Strange Life were half shown to my human eyes; yet I do not know, and am but telling of my natural thoughts and ponderings.

Now, as I did say, those mistmen were never seen nigh unto the Pyramid, and were, as I did hint, always so far off that they were half given over to the fables of the olden days, in the beliefs of the Peoples of the Mighty Redoubt; and set about with an halo of unrealness, for none within the Great Pyramid had ever beheld them with surety.

And because that now I saw them anigh to me, it was borne in afresh upon my spirit how greatly I had wandered away, and how that I stood afar in the lonesomeness of that Land of Night; as it had been that a man of this Age did wander amid the stars, and perceive a great comet to go by him very close; for then he should know in his heart how that he was far off in the Void. And this I do say to you, that you may know somewhat of the emotions of my heart in that moment.

Yet, presently I shook free of my melancholy and lonesomeness and rose up out of the mossbushes, and went onward. And, as ever, I thought much upon the Maid that I did search for; yet strove to think quietly concerning her state; else should I have turned to running, and wrecked my body before that I had gone any great way.

And that day, I passed seven large fireholes, and two that were small; and always I came softly unto them; for there were oft living things about the warmth. And at the sixth firehole, I did see that which I did think to be a great man, that did sit to the fire, with monstrous knees drawn upward unto his chin. And the nose was great and bent downward; and the eyes very large, and did shine with the light from the firehole, and moved, watching, always this way and that, so that the white parts did show, now this side and now that. But it was not properly a man.

And I went away very quiet from that place, and looked oft backward, until that I was sure of safety; for it was a very horrid Monster, and had that place to be for a Lair, as I did judge from the smell thereof.

And when the eighteenth hour was come, I looked about for a safe place to my sleep; and I kept away now from the fireholes; for I did always find the more life there. Yet, when I came to my rest, I was lacking of warmth, by reason of this care; and could scarce sleep at all, because that I was so cold. Yet managed something of slumber after a while; but woke very stiff, and was glad to beat my hands and bestir myself that I should come to some warmth of life.

And after that I had eat and drunk, I put my gear upon me, and took the Diskos in my hand, and went forward again upon my journey. And here I should tell that I was come soon unto the NorthWest border of the Plain of Blue Fire. And presently, I was but a

little way off from it, and did go direct to the North; so that the Plain was always upon my right.

Now this Plain was a strange and fearsome place, as you shall see; for it was as that a blue void did rise upward from the earth in all the country of that Plain. For, surely, the Plain did not lumber with flame; but was hid with a strange and inburning light, as of a shining atmosphere of a cold blue colour. And it did throw no sure light upon the Night Land, as had seemed proper; but was a very dreadful, cold shining, as of a luminous and blue void. And the mossbushes grew nigh to the edge of the plain, and did show to me black and strange against that horrid gloom of light.

And you shall know that I could not see into the plain; for it was as that the cold blue light was a void that swallowed all within it; and gave no power to the eye that aught should be perceived. And it stood between me and the Mighty Pyramid, and I could nowise see across. And I know not whether I do make all this matter clear unto you; for surely it is no easy task.

And presently I had gone very quiet upon my hands and knees through the mossbushes; and I came near upon the edge of the Plain, and hid there in a clump of the mossbush, and peered forth and harked. And I heard constant voices that did call to one another across the Plain; as it were that strange peoples of Spirits did wander within that blue Shining, and did make a calling one to the other, and were all hid and held apart. And surely I could see naught, and did judge, as I have writ, that they likewise went blindly. And truly is this a strange matter to set out; and easy to think on with doubt. Yet as I did see, so have I told; for, in verity, there were surely hidden Peoples of Spirits scattered and lost afar upon that improper Plain.

And you shall judge that I kept safe hid; for whether this might have any natural explaining, or whether it was a matter that did go utter beyond knowledge of man, I did not know; for surely in that strange Land, it did like to be an Horrid Danger in any case; and whether of some Monstrous Creatures, or of the Evil Forces of the Land, I did wisely to be away.

And for two days I did make a safe coasting of the Plain of Blue Fire; and did keep well off, maybe two great miles, among the mossbushes. And I made a very good speed through the darkness. And at the eighteenth hour of each journey, I made a place for my slumber; and the first I did manage under a thick bush; but the second was high upon the ledge of a rock that grew upward in the night amid the bushes. And, save that I was bitter cold there did no harm come to me. And in all that time of journeying, I had no sight of the Mighty Pyramid; for the blind shining of the Plain of Blue Fire was ever between.

Now there had been certain little matters in my journey beside the Plain of Blue Fire, which I have not set down; for they were of no account, and do but repeat much that I have told before. And, indeed, there was naught in that part of my journey, save that I did pass nineteen great fireholes, and four small; and did observe no life beside any, save about one of the great holes that there was no hollow around, and here I did happen to see some strange and ugly creatures so big as my head, that did have a look of the scorpion of this Age; but proportioned more squat and thick. Yet, though they were naught to remark upon in that Land, they had been but woeful bedmates to any man; as you may think.

And you shall know how it gave a rest to my spirit, that I did go so long with no trouble of the Monsters of the Night, or the Evil Forces thereof. And I grew bolder to my journeying, and made ever a greater speed of going; and it was like that I took presently a less heed for my safety, which was a wrong and foolish state. Yet there came no harm unto me, in all that part of my travel.

Then, it was in the sixteenth hour of the third day of my journey beside the Plain, that I did come out beyond the end of it, and had fresh sight of the Mighty Pyramid, afar in the night upon my Right. And I stopt there in a bare place among the mossbushes, and did in a weak moment hold up the Diskos, so that I make a salute unto the Pyramid, Mine Home; for truly was I so utter glad to behold it once more.

And in a little while was I aware that there was a disturbance of the aether of the world all about me; so that it did seem that there had been one at the Great SpyGlass to watch for my coming into their sight from behind the shining of the Plain of Blue Fire.

And it was like that news had gone downward through the Cities of the Great Redoubt; so that they did print the word of it in the HourSlips; and by this there would be many great Millions thinking upon me, and a rushing unto the Embrasures, that they might spy out at me. Yet I doubt that any glass might perceive me surely at so great a space, save the power of the Great SpyGlass in the Tower of Observation. But the Emotion of the Millions to reach to me.

And you shall know that it did seem homely and sweet unto me to hear all about me the shaking of the aether of the world, and to be ware that so many did think humanly upon me, and had prayers unto my safety.

And it was a strange thing to stand so utter far off in the Night, and to look back to that Everlasting Hill of Light, that was grown something small by the distance, and to have surety that I was lookt upon through the Great SpyGlass, maybe by the kindly eye of my

dear friend the Master Monstruwacan, and so keenly that he could, it might be, make almost to guess the look within mine eyes, as I did gaze backward unto that Mine Home.

Yet, though this dear and homely sympathy was a sweet and companionable thing to my heart, it came swift to my thought that I was in a sore danger, if that they ceased not quickly to think so onely upon me; for surely was I not come overnear unto that dreadful House of Silence; and well might so much Emotion of the Millions tell unto the Horrid Power that dwelt within, how that I was even anigh. And so shall you see the mixt feelings that came upon me everyway.

Yet, as it did chance, the aether was quieted in a little; for it did need unity of the Millions (being that they were untrained to their spiritual powers) to stir the aether. And so was I more easy of mind, and went forward again upon my way.

Now, as it did chance, at the eighteenth hour, I was come to a place where I heard a noise of water; and I went to my left, that I might come upon it; and there boiled a hot fountain that went up out of the rock of that place. And the water rose upward in a column, and was, maybe, so thick as my body; and it fell unto the North, for the water came not up straightly, but did shoot out from the earth unto that way. And I saw the thing plain; for there were many fireholes all about, as you shall have wotted from my telling; and so was there a certain and constant light in that part of the Land.

And I followed the water that ran from the fountain, and tried it with mine hand; but found it to burn; and so did go further beside it; for presently it should be no hotter than I did need. And it went onward, winding among the mossbushes, and sent up a constant steam, that hung about it; and the steam made a red cloud about the way that it did go; for the lights from the fireholes made a shining upon it; and so was it a wondrous pretty sight.

Now, presently, I tried the stream again, and found it to be nicely warm; and I sat upon a little rock, and took off my footgear, that I might bathe my feet, which were gone something tender; moreover, I did ache to have the sweetness of water about me. And I made that I should bathe my feet, and afterwards find a place among the mossbushes, and so eat and drink, and have my slumber.

Then, as I did sit there beside that warm stream, with my feet dabbled therein, I heard sudden, afar off, the voice of a mighty NightHound, baying in the night. And the sound came from the NorthWest of the Plain of Blue Fire. And there was afterward a quiet; and you shall see me sitting there upon the rock by the side of that smoking river, and the steam all about me, and my feet within the lovely warmth of the water; and I very still

and frozen with a sudden fear; for, it did seem to me, in an instant, that the NightHound might surely be upon the track of my goings.

And after that there had passed a little time, the while that I did listen very keen, lo! there burst out in the night, as it did seem scarce a mile off, the monstrous deep baying of the giant Hound. And I knew surely that the Brute did track me, and a sick and utter horror did fall upon me; so that I could scarce get my footgear upon me, once more. Yet, in truth, I was not long to the matter, and was to my feet, and did hold the Diskos ready; and very desperate I was to the heart; for it is ever a fearsome thing to be put in chase, and the worse an hundred times when there is a sure knowledge that a deathly Monster doth be the pursuer.

Now, I did stand there but a moment it did seem, to make an anxious considering how that I might best assure me some chance to live through this swift coming Danger. And then did I think upon the stream, to use it, and I leapt quick therein, and did run very strong down the middle part, which was nowheres so much as thighdeep, and oft not above mine ankles. And as I did run, there came again the bellow of that dire Brute, following, and was now, as mine ears did say, scarce the half of a mile to my rear.

And I did run but the stronger, for the dread of the sound; and so, maybe, for a little minute; and after that time, I stopt from mine heavy running, and went very wary, that I made no loud splashing; for by now the MonsterBrute should be something anigh to that place where I did enter the stream. And I looked round, with a constant looking; but did see no surely visible thing; though my fear did shape me an Hound from every shadow of the mossbushes about me.

Then, in a moment, I did hear the Great Beast; for it bayed but a little way up the stream, as that it had overshot the place where the scent did end. And immediately, I sank swiftly into the water, which was there so deep as my knee, and turned upon my belly. And the water surged over my shoulders; for I kept my head above. And so I did look eager and fearful through the steam into the shadows and the halfdarkness, towards where I did think to see the NightHound.

And in a moment I saw it coming; and it was a little vague, by reason of the smoke of the river; yet did seem black and monstrous in the gloom, and great as a mighty horse. And it went past me at a vast and lumbbersome gallop; but I did not see it in that moment; for I dived my head down unto the rock of the river bottom, and held downward, until that I was like to burst for sore longing of breath.

Then I put upward my head, and took swift and deep breathings, and lookt about me, very cautious and fearful, as you can know. And I heard the NightHound casting round

among the mossbushes, and it did send up a wild and awesome baying; and I heard the bushes brake and smash beneath it, as it did run to and hither. And afterward there was a quiet; yet I moved not; but stayed there, very low in the water, and did have a thankful heart that it was warm and easy to persist in; for I had surely died of a frozen heart, if that it had been cold; for, by this time, you do know even with me, how bitter was the chill of the Land.

Now, I had been awhile lain thus upon my belly, and heard no sound from the monstrous Hound. Yet, I ceased not to be full of an horrid unease, concerning the Great Beast; for I did better to know what it did, than to have no knowing. And, sudden, I heard the sound of it, running very swiftly and coming nigh; and it passed me, and did go up the stream; and there was surely a quick stupor upon me; for I ducked not my head under the water; but stayed very still; which as it did chance, was maybe not such an utter foolishness; for my head did seem in that halfgloom to be, mayhap, no more than a little rock in the water, and I made no move to tell of life; yet should the Hound have smelled me; and that it failed in this matter, doth be a puzzle to me.

And as the great NightHound past me, it tore the earth and the bushes, with the exceeding strength that it put forth to run, and clods of the earth and stones of bigness were cast this way and that by the feet of the Hound, running. And so shall you have a little knowledge of the strength of that Beast.

And the Hound ran on into the distance, and presently, I heard it baying in the Night. Then I rose, and went onward, down the warm stream, and made a strong walking, yet keeping alway to the water; and oft did stop a little that I should listen; and always I heard the NightHound a great way off in the night, baying, and seeming that it did surely run to and fro, searching.

Now, I journeyed thus for twelve hours, and the baying of the Hound making search, did never cease. And I kept always to the water, as I did say, that I should leave no scent unto the Hound. And by that twelve weary hours had gone, I found that I was come anigh unto the House of Silence. And this put me in great trouble; as you may perceive; for surely had mine whole effort been to the end that I should avoid that House, by a great way. Yet had the Hound driven me thus anear.

Now I saw that the small river did go onward, and did make a breach across the Road Where The Silent Ones Walk; and I determined in my heart that I should leave the water, which was now grown nigh to a bitter cold, in that it was so long upon the face of the Land. Yet chiefly did I mind to leave the water, that I should come no more anigh unto that House of Silence; for the water did go that way. And I stood awhile, and did

listen for the baying of the Hound; but could hear it no more; and did have a surety within me that it was indeed gone from searching for me.

Then I came out of the water, and went forward, stooping and creeping, among the mossbushes, going outward to the Westward of North, so that I should go away so quickly as I might from the nearness of the House. Yet, lo! I was gone upon my hands and knees no more than an hundred fathoms, when I did find the mossbushes to cease to the Westward, for a great way, and there to be a great bareness of rock, which, in truth, was much shown thereabout. And I dared not to go outward upon that naked Land; for then I had not been hid by the mossbushes; but had stood plain there for all things of the Night to behold; and moreover, though I could nowise have a sure knowledge concerning this matter, yet did I hope within me that I should make a sure hiding from the Power of the House of Silence, did I but go very low among the bushes. But, indeed, it was like enough that naught could give me hiding; yet should I lose no chance unto my safety.

And because of this, I went backward among the bushes, and ceased to escape out unto the Westward. And I found presently, that the mossbushes made but a narrow growth in that path, and grew only for a while by the side of the Great Road; so that I was surely fain to keep nigh to the Road, that I have the covering of the bushes.

And, in a while, I found the Road Where The Silent Ones Walk, to bend inward at the North of the House of Silence; so that it came right horribly close unto the House; for here the hill on which the House did stand, was very abrupt and fell steeply unto the Road. And so was that Dreadful House stood up there above me in the Silence, as that it did seem to brood there upon the Land. And this side did seem truly as the other; and equal lone and dreadful. And the House was monstrous and huge, and full of quiet lights; and it was truly as that there had been no Sound ever in that House through Eternity; but yet was it as that the heart did think each moment to see quiet and shrouded figures within, and yet never were they seen; and this I do but set down that I bring all home unto your hearts also, as that you crouched there with me in those low mossbushes, there beside the Great Road, and did look upward unto that Monstrous House of Everlasting Silence, and did feel the utterness of silence to hang about it in the night; and to know in your spirits the quiet threat that lived silent there within.

And so shall you have mind of me, hid there among the bushes, and sodden and cold; and yet, as you will perceive, so held in my spirit by an utter terror and loathing and solemn wonder and awe of that Mighty House of Quietness loomed above me in the Night, that I wotted not of the misery of my body, because that my spirit was put so greatly in dread and terror for the life of my Being.

And also you shall have before you, how that I knew in all my body and soul, that I stood anigh to that Place where but a little while gone there had passed inward so dreadful to an everlasting Silence and Horrid Mystery those poor Youths.

And after that you have minded you of this, you shall consider how that the memory of all my life held dread thoughts of the monstrousness of that House; and now was I anigh unto it. And it did seem to my soul that the very Night about it, held an anguish of quiet terror. And always my mind did come back to the sheer matter that I was so anigh. And this thing I do say unto you once and again; for truly, as you do see, it hath imprinted itself deep into my spirit. Yet shall I now cease from saying further in this manner; for, surely, you shall never know all that was in mine heart; and if I cease not, I do but be like to weary you.

And so did I hide and creep, and oft pause to a time of shaking quiet; and afterward gather something of new courage, and go onward; and peer upward at that monstrous House, stood above me in the night. Yet, as it did come about, I came presently clear of that horrid place; for the Road came round again unto the North, and I began that I made a better way through the mossbushes; but never that I grew to much speed; for I had oft to go about, that I should miss a naked part here, and another there; for truly there was an abundance and bareness of rock, so that the bushes grew not so thick as I could wish.

And in the space of five hours was I clear of that House; and did have a greater ease about my heart; but yet was not free to come to food nor to slumber, the both of which I did sorely need; for I had slept neither eat for a weariful time, as you do know. But first I must go further off from the House, and afterwards come to some firehole, that I should dry myself and get warmth again into my body, which was bitter cold.

And now that I had come unto the Northward of the House of Silence, there came to me a great Wonder, which bred in me a mighty Hope and Gladness. For as I did go among the bushes, there broke sudden all around me in the aether, the low and solemn beat of the MasterWord. And the throb of the Word was utter weak; so that one moment I did say unto myself that I heard, and in a moment that I did not; yet had I no proper doubt in my heart.

And I reasoned with myself, and with a great shaking of excitement and expectation upon me, that the MasterWord came not from the Great Pyramid, which should have power to send it as a Great Force across the everlasting Night; whilst that this that throbbed about me was faint and scarce to be known even unto the keenness of the NightHearing, which was mine.

And, immediately, as I crouched low there, and thrilled with the hope that was bred in me, lo! there seemed to come the far faint voice of Naani, calling with a little voice within my spirit. And I thought the cry to have an utterness of supplication within it; so that I grew desperate to up and go to running; yet did curb such foolishness, and stayed very hushed, to listen.

But I heard no more; yet was shaken continually with the Joy and Hope which this calling did breed in me, for truly did it seem now that I was right that I did determine to go unto the North; for sure was I now that the Lesser Redoubt lay that way in the Night. And it did seem plain unto me, that the House of Silence had put a barrier between; and had power to withhold so weak a calling. And now had I come beyond the Barrier. And I did perceive in my heart how that Naani had called off, maybe in the sadness of Despair; yet had the weak crying of her brainelements been held from me by the horrid power of the house; and surely, as I did think, it was well named; for it did make a silence.

And so shall you stay with me in your hearts, and take to ourselves something of the new Gladness that held all my being; for it did seem truly that my bitter task and adventuring should not in the end be offered to Uselessness; and that I did truly draw unto that far place in the Everlasting Night, where mine own Maid did cry for me, that I should succour her.

And ever as I went, did I hark; but there was no more the low eating of the MasterWord in the Night; not at that time.

And presently, I spied outward to the West, as it did seem a good mile off in the night, the shining of a firehole; and I began to plan that I should come unto that place, and have warmth and dryness, and food and slumber. And, in verity, so set was I to the need of these matters that if there did be a Monstrous Thing nigh to the fireas was so oft the casethen would I give battle unto it; for neither my Joy nor my labours did serve to put warmth into my body; and I must surely come anigh to fire, or die.

Then, as I kneeled upward among the mossbushes, and made to lay a true course unto the firehole, I perceived that there came a Being along the Road unto my right; and I went low into the bushes, and moved not; for truly I had seen that there drew nigh one of the Silent Ones.

And I made a little place that should let me to see; and I spied out, with an utter caution; and lo! the Being came on very quiet, and with no hurry. And in a time, it went by me on the road, and did take no heed to me; yet did I feel that it had knowledge that I stooped there among the mossbushes. And it made no sound as it went; and was a Dreadful thing; yet, it did seem unto my heart, as that it had no trouble of Wanton Malice to work

needless Destruction to any. And this, I crave strangely that you to understand; for it was so to me that I had a quiet and great respect for that thing; and did feel no hatred; yet was very dreadly in fear of it. And it was Huge in size, and was shrouded unto its feet, and seemed, maybe ten feet high. Yet, presently, it was gone onward down the Road, and I was no more troubled by it.

Then did I make no waste of time; but set off unto the firehole; and kept so much to shelter as I might; but was oft made to run over baked places, ere that I should come to more of the bushes.

And I came presently nigh unto the firehole, and made a pause, and crept unto it, with a great care. And I found it to be in the bottom of a deep hollow of the rock of that part. And the rock was clear looking of all living matters, the which did make me to be glad. And I went round about the top of the hollow, carrying the Diskos very handily; but there was nowhere any living thing; and I feared not to go downward into the deep hollow, and so unto the firehole, which lay in the bottom, as you have perceived.

And when I was come there, I made a close search of the rock, and found it was very sweet and warm; and there were no serpents, neither any stinging creatures; so that a certain comfort came upon my spirit.

Then stript I off mine armour and gear, and afterward all my garments, so that I stood naked there in the hollow. Yet was that place almost so warm as some mild oven, and I had no fear to suffer from the cold of the Night Land; but was uneasy lest that any monstrous thing should be anigh to come to take me so unawares.

Now I wrung the garments, and spread them upon the rock near unto the firehole, where it was hot; and I did rub my body very brisk with my hands, so that I glowed into health and had no fear of a stiffness.

And afterward, I did look to my food and drink, and to the matters in the pouch; but there had no harm come to any, by reason of the tightness of the scrip and the pouch, that had kept off the water. And I eat and drank, there as I stood waiting for the garments to come to dryness; and I walked about a little, as I eat; for I was restless to be into mine armour swiftly. And now I did turn this garment upward of the dry side, and now that; but did find them to steam, so that I turned them many times before they were proper.

Yet, in truth, they dried in but a little while, and I gat me into them very swift, and into the armour; and I felt the strength and courage of my spirit to come back into me, which had gone outward somewhat when I did stand there so naked. And this feeling you shall

all have understanding of; and know that you would have felt that way, likewise, had you but stood there in that Land in so unhappy a plight.

And when I had come into mine armour, I put my gear upon me, and took the Diskos into my hand, and did climb out of the hollow; for I would find a more secure place to my slumber, and did not dare to sleep in that place; for it was beyond seven and thirty hours since that I did have sleep; though as I do see by my count, I have made it to seem but as five and thirty; yet was a part consumed in diverse matters that I have not set down. And you shall mind how bitter had been my labour and weariness in all that time; and I did know of a surety that sleep must come heavily upon me; so that I was sorely in need that I should search out a safe place; for I should not be lightly waked, until that I had slept away the tiredness of my heart, and the weariful achings from my body. And, indeed, I should mind you how that I was not yet come perfect from the bruising which I had gotten from the fight with the Yellow Thing.

And presently, when I had searched but a little while, I did find that a rock stood upward from a great clumping of the mossbushes unto my left; and I went over to the rock, and made a search about it. And I found that there was a hole into the bottom part of the rock, and I thrust the Diskos into the hole, and made the blade to spin a little, so that it sent out a light; but there was no thing in the hole, and it did seem a dry and safe place for my sleep.

Then I turned me about, and went into the hole with my feet that way; and I found that it was so deep into the rock as the length of two men, and just so wide as I could lie in it without having it to pinch me. And there I made my bed in the hole, and went swift unto my sleep, and scarce had but a moment even to think upon Naani; and by this thing shall you know how utter was my weariness.

Now I waked of a sudden, and was very clear and refreshed. And I crept to the mouth of the hole, and lookt out; but there was all a quietness round about, and nothing to threaten.

And I found that I had slept ten hours; so that I made a haste to eat and drink, that I should go forward swiftly upon my journey. And at that time, as in the time when I did eat, naked, in the hollow, by the firehole, I eat four of the tablets; and this you shall understand to be rightly due unto me, in that I had gone so long fasting in that my great journeying to come safe from the Hound, and to come past the House of Silence. And this shall seem but a little thing to you; yet was it a wondrous important matter unto me, that had gone so long with an empty belly, and was never satisfied. And neither should any be, that had eat so little as I did eat, and made to fill their belly always with a drink

of water. Yet, I doubt not but that it did keep my soul sweet and wholesome and no useful thing to the Powers of Evil of the Land.

And when I had made an end of so great a gorging, and had ceased to be drunken with water, I gat my gear upon me, and took the Diskos into mine hand, and so went forth once more towards the North.

And presently, I was nigh unto the Road again; for it did curve something Westward a space beyond. And I was sore tempted to go upon the Road; for the ground was rough and the mossbushes did catch my feet. Yet did I stay among the bushes, though the Road was true and smooth, by compare. And by this telling, you will perceive that I walked once more upright, and had given over to crawl between the bushes. And, in truth, this was so; for the Land did seem very quiet in all that part; and I had less of fear, now that I stood beyond the horrid unease of the House of Silence.

Now, after that I had journeyed twelve hours, I saw that I was come upon the commencement of a great and mighty slope, as that the world did slope downward always towards the North. And I went on again, after that I had eat and drunk, as I did likewise before this at the sixth hour of that day's journey.

And presently, I perceived the Road to cease; and surely this did confound me; as that a man of this age had come to a part where the world did end; for you shall know that the Road was that which had seemed to go on for ever; and you shall mind the way of my life up till that time, and so shall you the better conceive of my bewilderment, and as it were a feeling of great strangeness unto one that was overprest, as you would believe, with strange matters.

Yet, truly, was this all as the little book of metal had told unto me; and so should I have been something prepared; yet are we ever thus needing eyeproof; and perhaps it is more proper that it be so.

Yet, you shall perceive me adrift somewhat as to direction; for I had steered before this time so that I should come to the North of the House of Silence; and afterward had shaped my way by the Road. But now was I adrift, as it might be set down, in the wilderness.

And so did I stand and consider, and presently did look unto the far Pyramid, which was now a great way off in the night, and had seemed but small by that which I knew it to be. And lo! as I did look, I perceived that I could but see the high upperpoint of the light of the Great Pyramid, where did shine the Last Light; and I was confounded afresh; yet in a moment I saw that the greatness of the slope did account for this. But here I should tell

to you that the slope was nowise steep; but did seem as that it should never cease. And mayhaps this is clear unto you.

And I perceived surely that the time was come when I should make an utter parting from the Great Redoubt; and the thought came very heavy upon me. And in the same time I knew that the aether was stirred by the emotions of the Millions; so that I had knowledge they watched me with the Great SpyGlass, and did send word down unto the HourSlips; and by this did the Millions know, and have a great thinking upon me in that moment.

And you shall perceive how utter lost and lonesome I did feel. And it was at that time that I did test the compass, to comfort me, as I did tell before this, and feared I must sure forget, when I did come to the proper place; yet have I minded me, as I did desire.

And I saw now that the Night Land that I did wot of, was hid from me by the slope. And I turned and looked down the slope; and surely all before me was utter wildness of a dark desolation; for it did seem to go nowhither but into an everlasting night. And there was no fire down there, neither light of any kind; but only Darkness and, as I did feel, Eternity. And downward into that Blackness did the great slope seem to go for ever.

Now, as I did stand there, looking downward into the Dark, and often backward unto the shining of the Final Light, and put to a horrid desolateness, behold! there came the low beating of the MasterWord in the Night. And it did appear as that it had been sent to give me courage and strength in that moment; and did seem unto my fancy that surely it did come upward unto me from out of the mighty blackness into which the Great Slope ran. Yet could this have been but a belief; for the aether doth have no regard unto direction to show you whence the spiritual sound doth come; and this did my knowledge and Reason know full well.

And I made that I would send back the MasterWord, sending it with my brainelements, and so give news unto Naani how that I did struggle to come unto her. Yet did I have caution in time; for in verity, had I sent the MasterWord, then had the Evil Forces of the Land wotted that I was out; and mayhaps had come swift unto my Destruction; and so did I contain my spirit and desire, and made to do wisely.

Yet was I put in courage by the low beat of the MasterWord; and did listen very keen, that some message should follow; but there came none, neither did the weak throb of the Word come about me again, at that time. And because that I was now grown more to my natural state, and did feel that I should indeed find the Maid, I looked once more unto the Great Pyramid, long and eager and with a solemn heart; yet with no sign or

salutation, as I was before determined. And afterward, I turned and went downward into the dark.

## VIII

### DOWN THE MIGHTY SLOPE

Now I went downward very quiet and slow into that Darkness; and did make but a cautious way; for now you shall know me truly wrapped about with such a night as did seem to press upon my very soul, and such as you shall never have seen nor felt; so that I did seem lost even from my self, and did appear as that I went presently in unreal fashion, and did pass onward for ever and for ever through everlasting night; so that odd whiles I did make to walk with random, as that I stepped no more upon this earth; but did go offwards into the Void. Yet was this foolishness of the mind set straight and proper each time that it did come about; for lo! I did kick against an upjutting rock here, and fall upon a great and unseen boulder there, and so was shaken very quickly to a sound knowledge that I trode the hard and actual earth; and had no true dealings with unreal matters.

And ever I did go downward; and by this only did I have a guide to my way. Yet, as you shall think, through reason of the utter dark I made scarce a mile in an hour or even two full hours; and so grew bitter by reason of mine unableness to go forward with a proper and free stride.

But I did think me presently upon a thing that I should do to light my path; and to this end, I did make the Diskos to spin, odd whiles, and did look down the mighty slope, the little way that the strange glistening of the Diskos did show, and so fixed my path into mine inward remembering, and would go forward afresh, until that I was shaken once more by the darkness, and would fain to look once again upon the blessedness of light, and make me some knowledge of my way.

And, truly, the light from the Diskos did seem astonishing great, and this to be because there was so monstrous a darkness all about me there forever. And thereafter would I go onward again, until the pain of my stumblings did bid me surely to have that sweet shining once more unto my path.

And so shall you perceive my going; and sore and miserable was it unto the heart; and like to shake the courage of the spirit; yet, in verity, I had come through much, and did have intent to give way to no foolishness of thought.

And you shall well believe that I did make the light not more oft than I did surely need; for it was no properness of wisdom to use the power of the Diskos, save for mine extremity.

Now, presently, when I had done thiswise through six long and bitter hours, and it being now beyond the twentieth hour since I did last slumber, I sat me down there upon the Mighty Slope, in the everlasting Dark, and did eat two of the tablets, and made the water, and could but feel and hearken whether I did this thing right and that.

And when I had eat and drunk, I unfolded my cloak, and wrapt it around me, and placed the scrip and the pouch under my head; and the Diskos I took to company me; and so fell swiftly upon sleep; yet did think earnestly but vaguely upon Naani, as I came unto slumber.

And I slept all but six hours, and did waken very sudden there in the utter dark; and I got me to mine elbow, and did listen very keen; for I had waked immediately, as that something had touched me or come nigh unto me; and I gript the Diskos, and listened; but there did not even a little sound come to me out of all that night.

And presently I had more assuredness that naught did make harm about me; and I sat me up in the dark, and reached for my scrip, and did eat and drink, there in that utter night; and fumbled somewhat, as you shall think. Yet I was done in a while, and got my gear upon me, and the Diskos into my hand, and so to my feet and forward.

Now all that day, I did have a strange unease of the spirit, so that I stopt oft to listen, as that my soul told of something nigh unto me that did follow very quiet. Yet did mine ears perceive nothing; and so I alway to go downward again into the night that held the slope.

And here should I tell how that in the early part of the seventh hour, after I had eat and drunk, and went forward as ever, upon my journey down the Mighty Slope, I did have a very sore tumble against a sharp rock; for I put my foot sudden into a small hole, and this did make me to pitch. And I was utter shaken by the fall and lay very quiet for a time; for the rock had surely ript my body, but for the armour.

And after that I was something renewed of strength and spirit, I made that I should go no more upon my feet, but upon my hands and knees; and thus should I feel the way that I went, and have a less need of the Diskos, which had not overmuch use to light my way, in that I shone it not often, and did guess more than I did perceive, as you may think.

And so I crept all that day, which was a bitter way of travel; yet had I done many a sore mile thus through the Night Land. And when that I had gone downward for eighteen hours, and eat and drunk thrice, I ceased from my labour, and did feel about in the

darkness, that I come to a level place for my rest; and so did find presently, a place not so bad, and did push and cast away such small boulders as had been like to irk me.

Then did I eat and drink, and afterward composed me to my sleep, and had many a thought of Naani, as I did drift unto slumber; yet also had I memories of the strange half-fear that had been with me all that day, as though something went constantly near me in the Dark. And because of this, twice did I rise unto mine elbow, and listen; but heard no sound to trouble me, and afterward did trust that I did but fancy; and so came at last unto slumber, that yet was not over-restful, for truly I did listen even as I slept.

And when I had been asleep scarce six hours, I waked again very sudden, as I had done before, and had belief that something did be anigh unto me; and I gript the Diskos, and did hearken; yet was there no sound that mine ears did wot of; neither aught that had power to be surely known of the spirit.

And all that day was as the day before; save that about the eighth hour I came near to fall into some monstrous pit in the Great Slope; but did only fall with my breast upon the edge, and so drew back, and presently did crawl all around it in the dark, and come safe unto the lower side; yet shaken and put more in trouble of spirit than before, and fearful how I should go; for I knew not whether I had come among such things, or whether I had but few to sorrow me.

And so you shall perceive that I went over-cautious for a great while in all that utter dark; but did think at last upon a plan to go with more surety and speed. But to this I did need a cord, and surely I had no cord upon me; and if a boy be no boy that hath none such about him, shall not the same be said of any man! And this I did think, as I searched me; for the sayings of that day had many that were like to this.

Yet in the end I did compass my plan; for I did buckle the scrip and the pouch together, and took one of the straps from the pouch; and this strap was long and thin, and well suited unto my purpose. Then I fixt a stone into the end of the strap, and buckled it there, and after that, I cast the stone before me, as I went upon my hands and knees; and I did hold to the hither end of the strap, and so was able to have something of knowledge whether there lay any great deepness immediately before me, and thiswise to strive that I fall not down some monstrous cliff in the night.

And so did I go, casting the stone continually to my front, down the slope; and this you shall think to be a cumbersome fashion of travel; yet was I in better case than in all the time since I had begun to go downward of the Mighty Slope in the everlasting darkness.

And at the eighteenth hour I did sleep; and was waked strangely before the sixth hour, even as I had waked before. And this did put always upon me a new wonder and unease. Yet did no harm seem to come unto me, and I did strive that I have no needful trouble of mind. But that something was always nigh unto me in the dark, I do truly believe; yet have I no knowing that it was evil; for it harmed not me.

And three days more I journeyed thus, and did never cease to creep downward weariful upon my hands and knees; and the Diskos I had to my hip, and so shall you know how I carried it. And by this, as you do know, I had been on the Great Slope six days of utter Dark; and did have no wotting but that I went unto some dire and dreadful place; for, surely, I had gone for ever downward a monstrous way.

And here, before I tell further, I must set down how that the cold was much gone from out of the air upon the slope; and the air was grown, as it did seem, very heavy unto my chest. And concerning this matter I should say something. For, if I do mind me, I have said not overmuch concerning the air of the Night Land and the Mighty Pyramid; for truly I have been so set to tell my story of all that I did truly see and adventure upon. Yet, though I have said but little, you will surely have perceived that the air of that far and chill time was not as the air of this; but was thin and keen within the Night Land, and lay not, as I do think, to a great height above the land, but only nigh to the earth.

And as you do know through my tellings, there was a wondrous difference between the air within the Mighty Pyramid, and that which lay without around the base; for upward beyond that, I did understand that there was no outward air that any should breathe; and so was all the Pyramid sealed in certain wise in all the upper Cities for ever; and whether it was sealed utterly from the outward air at the base, I do not surely remember, if, in truth that I did ever bother my head to such matters.

Yet, if I be set proper in memory and understanding, we did draw air from the Underground Fields; but whether they gat any change or newness of air from the Night Land, I have no knowledge; and do lament that I have no sure knowing. Yet, as you shall believe, I could surely write an hundred books upon that Wonder of the Future, and be still lacking in the half of all that there is to be told; and so do I try to have courage to this my task, and to have no overtrouble, because that I do tell but a little of a Great Tale.

And here in this place will I set down how that the Peoples of the Pyramid were greater to the chest, methinks, than we of this age; but yet do I have no oversurety in the matter; for well it may be that the Reason of this age doth blind within me somewhat the Knowledge that I have concerning that; for, in verity, is it not but a natural thing to believe those Peoples to be great of the chest, so that they should make a proper dealing

with the thin air of that place and that time? And yet, as I do strive to make plain unto you, because that this thing should be, by the making of my Reason, I do the more distrust that Reason shall make foolish my Knowledge; for even a fool should suppose that which I have told; and the truth may be even otherwise.

Yet that the Peoples of the Upper Cities had great chests, I do well know; for this was a common knowledge; even as we of this age do acknowledge the Peoples of Africa to be of blackness, or those of Patagonia to be of great stature. And by this one thing should any know a man of the Upper Cities, from a man of the Lower Cities. And because that there grew this difference among the Peoples, there had been once, as any could learn from the Histories, a plan whereby the Peoples should be moved upward and downward through the great height of the Mighty Pyramid, from this city unto that. Yet had it met with great disfavour; and was put out of force; and this is easy to be seen as the natural way of the human heart.

And here it doth occur unto me that it was like enough to be a plan for health, beside of training of the mind, that each youth and maid was put to travel through all the cities of the Mighty Pyramid; the which did take three years and two hundred and twentyfive days, as I have told before this. For by this plan, were they made to breathe the air of every height, and this, mayhaps, unto the good of their developing. And they also to discover that air which was best to their need.

And concerning the air of the Night Land, you shall know that there was in all that Land no flying thing, because that the air was grown very thin; yet, as the Records did show, there had once been monstrous flyingbrutes, that went over the Land in mighty bounds; but this was in a long gone age; and we could but suppose that the Records gave truth.

And here you shall know that, when the Monstruwacans did learn that I would journey through the Night Land, in search of Naani, there had been some foolish and wellintended talk among them that I take a small flyingship, that was in the Great Museum beside the models of the Great Ships. For, truly, this machine was yet sound to go; for it was made of the grey metal of the Mighty Pyramid, that did seem to have no power to cease. Yet, in verity, I had no skill to manage this, neither had it flown, through an hundred thousand years; so that none did know the mastership of that art, which did be learned but by a constant practice, and oft made uneasy by fallings that did wreck the machine, as I did know from the Book of Flying. And, moreover, as I have told, the air of the Night Land was grown overweak to uphold such a thing; which, I doubt not, had made the Peoples of the Pyramid to cease from flyings, quite so much as that they did fear the Forces of Evil in the night.

And if that there had been air and skill sufficient unto this purpose of flying, yet had I been wickered with foolishness that I should work to be hung upward in the night, for all the Evil of the Night Land to behold. And though I had gone up some great way, yet the machine had surely made a great noise in the quietness of the eternal night, as you shall suppose.

Now indeed am I gone weary that I should need to tell so much concerning the air of that Time and Place; for surely I do seem to make this my story as that I did make a lecturing upon matters of chemistry; and so do I cast about, that I may not bother to tell more upon this matter. Yet, in truth, a little more of my thinkings and observings had I better set down here, and so be done with it. But you shall have patience with me, and know that had this, my story, been no more than an idle tale, I had been free to make no labour with such matters.

Now there doth a wonder come to me why that the Road Makers, who were of that faroff Age which was before the Age of the Mighty Pyramid, did not fly downward from the upper world into the deep of the monstrous valley; but did instead build a road.

Yet it may be that the air of the upper world had grown thin a great age, so that they had truly forgot that once man did have power to fly. But even if that they did have proper machines to this purpose, surely it were a wondrous and fearful thing to fly downward an hundred great miles; for they surely to have a dread that they never to rise again through so huge a deep.

And, moreover, the downward world that was the bottom of the Great Valley, was full of monsters, as was told in the little metal book. And the monsters were very strange and unknown; and foreign to the whole world, that had never come unto the deep of the Valley. And the Valley had come, as you shall mind, when the earth did split; and this thing was, in truth, like to be thought that same Ending of the World, which all Nations have been taught to believe shall come. For in verity, when the world did split and burst, and the oceans rushed downward into the earth, and there was fire, and storms, and a mighty chaos, surely it was proper to think that the End had come. Yet was it, in truth, but the beginning of hope of a new Eternity of Life; so that out of the End came the Beginning, and Life out of Death, and Good out of that which did seem a dire matter. And so is it always.

Yet doth this go past my first wonder, which did concern the wherefore that they made not to descend in Things of Flight. Yet, maybe, shall my reasons stand to show why this was not.

And again, mayhap it did chance that some were wild adventurers, and did leap over the edge of the upper world, having to ease their flight certain contrivings, like to parachutes. And these you shall picture, as that you watched them to leap; and so shall you see them go downward into the gloom; and you shall see them for maybe ten miles, and maybe for twenty miles; and afterward shall they be lost utterly in that Great Deep, and seen no more of any man for ever.

But when the Nations became RoadMakers, and came downward slowly to the monstrous Deep of the Mighty Valley that did split the World, then were they come there by millions, and with power sufficient to fight against the Beasts; and afterward to grow back again to an ancient Civilizing; and so to the building of the great airships that were yet shown in the Great Museum of the Pyramid. And here shall I cease from these my thinkings on this matter; for indeed, who shall say what did be truly a Reason for those peoples and what was their Need? And so do I come to no surety by my wonderings.

Yet, as you do know, all things do seem verily to go in a circle; for, behold, in time, they of the Mighty Pyramid, were likewise held off from the glory of the airships; and so were gone backward a great way, according as we do look upon this matter. And so hath this been the way always, as you shall know who have studied and thought, and seen the true ways and goings of Life.

And now will I go forward in my telling; and here will set down a sure thing that I did perceive, both by mine ears and by my fingers; for, as I did make clear to you but a while gone, there had come a change into the air as I did go downward of the Mighty Slope; and truly I was come to a great and new Deepness, even beyond that of the wondrous depth where did stand the Last Redoubt. So that I was afar down and in a monstrous night. And the air here was of a great thickness and abundancy, even as it might be the air of this our Age; or maybe more or maybe less; for who may compare two matters with a sure guessing, that do have an eternity to keep them asunder. And because that the air was grown very strong and apparent, it shall be, mayhaps, that it was by reason of this thing that the water, when I did make it, did fizz upward in a moment very loud and plentiful, and did boil overward to the earth from out of the cup, and wet upon my hand. And surely this thought did come very keen to my Reason, as I did fumble, each time of mine eating, there in the everlasting night and lonesomeness of the Great Slope.

And so shall you have knowledge now of this and that thing which did come upon my thought, and of the little and the big wonders, and all shall help something to give unto you the ache of newness and bewilderment that was constant companion unto me.

Now by this time, as I have said, I was gone downward ever for six great days; and I did seem as that I should presently come to the middle of the world; for of going downward there was no end.

And then, when it did be that I was near ready to believe this, I perceived far off in the deep of the night a little shining that was yet weak and unsure. And I do not know whether I can truly give unto you the great astonishment and pain of hope that did come upon me; so that I grew sick in all my being but to behold once again the blessedness of light, and to have help unto my belief that I went not downward to an utter desolation.

And I stood upward from my knees, and did look very earnest, and surely it did seem that a light was there afar downward in the night; and again it did seem that I must be plagued by my hopes and by my fancy, and that there was nowhere any light. And then again I did see it very clear, and not to be mistaken, and I had a shaking to come upon me, and I gat me to a run, and made a great and mad speed down the dark slope. And lo! I was not gone any way, but I went headlong, and near brake myself; and could but hold my teeth together very fierce and quiet until that the pain was something gone from me.

And afterward, I gat me again to mine hands and knees, and went slowly, as before; and so for a great hour or more, and did look oft; and alway the light became more plain to my sight; but ever to come and go, oddlywise. Yet did I go six hours, before that I was come anywise near to it. And by this shall you know how great a space off it had been. And lo! when that I did seem surely anigh unto it, truly was it still far away in the night; and I came not indeed near to it until that I was gone onward again for three hours more. And all that time did I yet go downward into the night; but the Slope now did not be so utter dark.

Now, presently, I made a pause, and stood upward to my feet, so that I should the better perceive the light. And lo! as I did look toward it, I heard a faraway sound in the dark, as that something did set up a strange and monstrous piping in the night. And immediately, I went to mine hands and knees among the stones of the Slope, and kept myself low in the darkness, so that I should be the less plain to be seen, did any Monster approach.

But there came nothing to trouble me, and I went downward of the Slope for yet another hour; and all the time that I did go, the sound of the piping grew more in the great eternity of the night upon the Slope.

And by this time was I come truly near unto the light; but yet did not behold it plainly; for it did burn beyond certain monstrous rocks that stood between. And I went to the left for, maybe, the half of a big mile; and all the while that I did go, the piping made a

mightier whistling in the Night; and it did seem presently as that the earth sent forth the sound and revelry of wild roarings. And I went the more silent; and later did kneel among three rocks, and peered forth for a while upon the place before me.

And now, being come nigh unto the light though yet it was not unhid from behind the great barriers of the uprising rocks, I perceived that I crouched within the mouth of a mighty gorge; and the left side was a great way off, and I saw it plain at whiles when the light did rise; but the light was to the right, and it was so wondrous great that it did make clear to me that a mountain was to that side of the gorge, and went upward into the everlasting night, as it did seem for ever.

And afar down the gorge, I did see the shinings of strange fires, faint and a great way off. And so was I come at last to the bottom of the Mighty Slope. Yet the gorge also to go downward, but not so great.

And presently I did go forward again; and so did open the point of the rocks, as the sailors do say. And I saw now that there gushed forth a great blue flame from the earth; and the mighty rocks stood about it, as that they were olden giants group't there to some strange service.

And concerning this flame I was not overmuch astonished in my Reason; for it had seemed to me as I drew anigh, that the fire and the sound should be made by the roaring and whistling of a burning gas that did issue forth among the rocks. Yet, truly, though it did be a natural matter, it was yet a wondrous sight, and set amazement on my senses; for the flame did dance, and sway whitherward monstrously, and sometimes did seem that it dropt so low as an hundred feet, and afterward went upward with a vast roaring unto the utter height, and did stand mighty and blazing, maybe a full thousand feet, so that the far side of the gorge was lit, and surely it was seven great miles off or more; but yet did show plain and wondrous. And the light did show me the flank of the mountain, that made the right hand side of the Gorge, to go up measureless into the night.

And so shall you perceive that I stayed awhile among the rocks that were in the mouth of the gorge, that I should gaze upon this thing; but afterward I lookt this way and that way, so that I should have a knowing of the place where I was come.

And it was a wild and stark and empty place, as you must perceive. And the far side did be great miles off, as I did say; and everywhere there was abundance of rock and lonesomeness. And before me there went the great and dim length of the gorge, and there were lights here and lights there, in a great distance, and oftas it did seem the quiet dancing of lights in diverse places; but yet were these gone on the instant. And ever there was a strong and vacant silence upon that place.

And presently, after that I had looked once more unto the mighty dancing flame, and perceived nowhere any life around it, I went onward down the quiet gorge. And for a great way as I journeyed was my path lit by the dancing of the blue flame; and oft should I seem to be going but dimly among the rocks, and my shadow faint and long; and lo! the flame would leap, and all the gorge come to a wondrous brightness, and my figure to shorten, and the shadows to be black and strong. And so shall you perceive how I went.

And oft did I turn me about to behold the dancing of the Great Light; for it was solemn to my spirit, even amid so much of Greatness and Eternity, to think upon that Flame, and to conceive that it had an utter age danced there at the foot of the Mighty Slope, unseen, through lonesome Eternities. And this I do tell unto you; that thereby may you have some knowledge of the strangeness and the bitter loneliness of that place; which, in verity, did seem the expressing of all the lonesomeness of my wanderings.

And all the time as I did go downward of the great Gorge, there sounded the blast of the roaring, that was presently afar to my back; and the mountain sides did catch it here and in that place, and sent it offwards with strange and improper echoings, as of a chill piping, or oddwise as hushed whisperings of monstrous creatures; so that I did oft stoop to hide a little among the boulders; for truly I knew not but that some unnatural thing called from the darkness of the mountain side.

And for six hours I walked onward thus, and sometimes did hide, having a sudden fear, as I have told.

And presently, in a great while, the roaring was sunk to a far and monstrous piping; but in the end to no more than a far and uncertain whistling, that yet did catch strange echoes in the night. And in the end there was only a quietness. And yet, as you do perceive, there had been always a silence in that Gorge, as I have told, and this to the despite of the whistling. And I do hope that you have understanding with me in this matter; for it was truly as I have told, and there is no contrariness of telling in this matter.

Now in all this time that I had walked in the great Gorge, I had past four of the far lights that I did see from the bottom of the Slope; and the two first and the fourth were blue, but the third was green; and all did dance and quake, and sent fitful shinings into the belly of the Gorge. And there came also from them whistlings, and from the second one a low and strange moaning noise; and I doubted not the gas did come oddly and with trouble. And I past these things with no great thought; for truly they were no matters for notice, after that which I had beheld.

Now, as you shall mind, it was surely in the early Third of the seventh day of my journey down the Mighty Slope that I saw the first shining of the monstrous gas fountain; and from that time until now had there past maybe sixteen hours. And, as you do wot, I had eat not in all my travel since that I had seen the light; so that I was gone to a proper lack inward; and moreover, it was full nineteen hours or more since that I had slept; and all that while had I laboured.

And I ceased me from wandering, and lookt about that I should come to a safe and proper place for my slumber; and this I saw very quick; for there was dry stone and rock everywhere, and no failing of holes and diverse places to my purpose; so that I was soon in a little cave between two mighty boulders.

And here I eat four of the tablets; for truly so many were my due, and I had not been violent had I eat more. And afterward, I made some of the water, and it did fizz up in a moment; so that I perceived that but a good pinch made a great cupfull. And this I set to the count of the strong and heavy air, as I have told, which I did think to have a greater power of chemistry.

And presently I slept, having my gear about me as ever, and the Diskos to my breast. And as I went into slumber, I thought sweetly upon Naani, as I had done, indeed, an hundred times since I was come to the hopefulness of the lights of the Gorge.

Now, whilst I slept, I dreamed that the MasterWord did presently beat all about me in the night. Yet, as I do mind, I waked not; and because that I continued to sleep, I have no sure knowing whether this was truly a dream, or an Happening. And I minded me upon it, when I waked; but this was after that I had slept seven hours; and I could have no sureness anywise of the matter; but only that I was come safe through my sleep; though heavy within my head and limbs, as that the air did call me unto a further slumbering, as is like enough.

And after that I had eat and drunk, I put my gear about me, and the Diskos to my hip, for I needed both my hands to the task of journeying amid the great boulders. And I set forth again down the halflight of the mighty Gorge, and through eighteen hours I made a strong going, save when I did pause at the sixth and the twelfth hours to mine eating.

And by the eighteenth hour was come, I was very ready to my food and slumber; and presently I was asleep in a place of the rocks. And that day had I past three and twenty of the dancing gas fires; and five been like a white fire; but the others blue and green. And all did dance and made a strange and uncertain light within the great Gorge; yet was it a peaceful thing unto my spirit that there was truly light, as you shall understand.

And I slept six hours, and waked, and did want more sleep, as you shall think. But I eat and drunk and put my gear upon me, and went on downward of the Gorge.

And at the sixth hour, after that I had eat and drunk, I came to a part where the big gas fires did cease to dance, and there was a certain darkness upon that place. Yet was it not a proper dark; for there came the glimmer of a flame here and the glimmer of a flame there, as that little flames came upward between the stones, and did vanish, and come upward in another part. And so did light and die out constant and forever amid the stones and the boulders of that lonesome Gorge; and made a lowspread light, so that it did seem unto me that strange shudders of light beat upward through the dark of that place.

And I went onward, and a heavy fume did seem to hang in the air, and horrid gases to come upward from the earth in odd puffings; and anon a light would leap upward beyond the next stone, and afterward vanish, and there would be an hundred thousand such upon every hand, running to and fore; and afterward for a moment an utter dark, and again the little flames everywhere; so that it did seem I went one moment amid the heart of a strange country of fire, and immediately through a country of utter night. And this was to me strange and a peculiar matter. Yet, as I do think, the gases did bother me the more; for they did seem as that they were like to hurt mine health utterly; for, in verity, oft did I seem as that I should choke and breathe no more, by reason of the poison that came upward from among the stones and the boulders.

And all that time, as they came or went, did the little flames make small phlocks of sound in the Gorge as they did flash or die; and the sounds did seem, to my likening, as stones cast into an utter silent pool; for they but made apparent the everlasting quiet of the Gorge.

And afterward, I came beyond this place, and you shall see me going very lonesome among the rocks of the Gorge, beyond. And by this, it was come nigh unto the eighteenth hour; and I did find a place proper to my slumber, and did eat and drink, and was quickly gone over unto sleep.

And here, I should tell how that I had not an overfear of Evil Powers whilst I was in the great Gorge; for truly it did seem as that nothing that ever did live came anigh to that wild and silent place of stone and rock; but that I journeyed through it alone, and was surely the first that did go that way for maybe a million years. And this feeling that was upon me, I do hope you to perceive and take unto yourselves, and thus have an understanding of my heart at that time.

And as you shall know, I went always unto slumber with sweet and with troubled thoughts of the Maid. Yet, for a great while, I had been put so mightily to the labour of my way that my heart did suffer less at this time than should be thought; and truly it doth show me how I was drawn unto that One with all my being, that I did surely think so oft and sweetly upon her amid so many perils and matters of horror. And this doth seem something strange to say, when that you do consider that I was adventured unto these same perils and horrors but only for the sake of the Maid.

And in six hours did I wake, as I did strive alway to set myself to do; yet was I very heavy and slow for a little, until that I was more properly come to wakefulness. And surely, as I did think before, this was like to be put upon me by the weighty air of the place; but yet it might be that the gas which did float in the Gorge was upon my lungs. And also, as you have perceived, if but you have attended my way, the air was grown warm, and oft were the rocks pleasant to the seat, and all of these matters did contrive to make me slumbrous.

Now, presently, the gas fires did cease utterly in the Gorge, and I lookt downward, along that great place, and saw only a greyness, but above the greyness there was, as it did seem, something of a vague and ruddy shining in the night. And this did wake me to wonder what new thing lay before; so that I grew more eager among the boulders.

And, later, when I had eat at the sixth and the twelfth hours, and gone on awhile, I came to a place where the Gorge made a quick turning unto my left, and at the end of the turning was a red and glowing light that was very great and wonderful; so that I was utter keen to come to that place, that I should discover what made the shining. And the place where I was come then, was very dark, because that I was nigh under the mighty wall of the mountain of the right side of the Gorge. Yet above, as it did seem to me, there was a far red upward glowing in the night.

Then did I go forward very fast, and presently, in a good while, I discovered that I drew near to a second great turning, that went to the right. And about the seventeenth hour, I came nigh unto the second great turning. And here did I put caution upon me, and crept for a while among the dark rocks of that place, that I should come to a sight of that which made the monstrous red shining.

And presently, I was beyond the corner of the mountain, and did look downward into a mighty Country of Seas, and the burning of great volcanoes. And the volcanoes did seem as that they burned in the Seas. And the country was full of a great ruddy light from the volcanoes. And so shall you perceive me there among the rocks that did all stand upward strange and bold and silent in the red and monstrous glare of the light. And I, as it did

seem, the one thing of life in all that desolation and eternity of rock and stone, there in the end part of the great Gorge.

And I peered forth into the wonder of the light, and was full of thrillings and fancies that I was surely come to the place where the Lesser Redoubt had been builded. And immediately I knew that this was not so, for surer had not Naani told how that they were in a land of darkness. And if this did be so, truly, how wondrous and dread a way had I yet to go, if that this Country of Seas and mighty volcanoes stood between.

Surely, it did seem to me then as that I must wander searching unto the world's end. And so shall you be company unto me there with my trouble and my thoughts, and the immediate wonder and strange glory of that mighty Country.

## IX

### THE DARK PYRAMID

Now in two hours more I was come clear down out of the Gorge, and stood in that Country; and for all that I did feel fresh troubled and bewildered, yet was I rejoiceful, as you may believe, in the surprising light and splendour of that sudden Land.

And before that I had come down out of the great Gorge, I had stood high within the mouth thereof, and lookt well out over the mighty Country. And I had counted seven and twenty great volcanoes, and this doth not take heed of two monstrous ranges of firehills that burned afar off, something unto my right. Neither doth it take account of an hundred thousand lesser places of fire.

And truly it did seem a very land of fire and water. For there was a small firehill stood within a sea, as it did seem no more than a little mile from that place where I did stand. And maybe a score to the back of it, spread all about. And here shall I do proper to tell concerning the seas. For there were of these, that I did count at that time, three that were small, and a mighty sea that went onward for ever into the red light of the firehills, so that it was gone utterly out of my sight, and did show no ending.

And there rose up out of the seas, islands; and on the islands, volcanoes. But in other parts the firehills did come upward straightly from the sea. And over the near sea, as it did seem, there lay a plentitude of steam, as that the sea did boil at whiles and in diverse places.

And there did seem to me, as it were within the red atmosphere of that place, as that there were a muttering thunder, low and constant, shaking the air, now from that distance and now from this, and this did I judge to be the voices of the firehills, speaking with the fire that lived in them.

And you shall conceive how utter new was all this unto me; for there was in that Country a constant Voice of the Energy of Life, so that the WorldNoise of this our Age was even there again, and with a keen and undoubted apparentness; and the more so some ways, than now.

And here shall I set down more closely the things that were ready to my gaze.

And first, that it did much attract me, there was a huge and blackened mountain unto the left of the mouth of the Gorge, and the mountain did go upward into the night, maybe fifteen and maybe twenty miles. And there was a mighty peaked volcano that

grew out from the side of the mountain so high up as five miles, as I did guess that height; and this was upon the far side. And above this there was a second, maybe nine or ten great miles up in the blackness of the night that hung afar upward. And, as that this were not great wonder enough, there did burn and glow two other mighty firehills, at an utter height, upon the left crest of that black mountain; and these were upward so monstrous a way, as that they did seem to make strange and smouldering suns within the night. And truly, as you shall perceive, this was a wondrous thing.

And below these upward firehills there rose up from the earth vast mountains of ash and burned stuff, that had been cast forth by these perched volcanoes, and had poured downward unto the earth throughout Eternity, and so to build grey and sombre monuments unto the dreadful glory of Time.

And to my right there was always sea and sea and the red blazing of the firehills; but unto my left, there were mighty forests, and there rose upward here and in that place, as that they were beyond the great woods, monstrous firehills. And so do you take from me something of that first impressing upon my brain and sense.

And after that I had come down out of the mouth of the great Gorge, as I did tell a little while gone, I came upon a pause; for, surely, which way was the way proper unto my search. And I lookt about for a great while, and afterward did climb back into the Gorge, and called myself foolish, that I had not thought to map my way ere I came down.

And when I was come up into the Gorge again, lo! I saw that there was but one way that I should go; for truly, as I have said, there was only the seas unto my right; but unto the left, where the shores did meet the seas, there seemed, so far as mine eyes did tell to me, a clear way for a space. And mayhap, when I had come so far, I should even find a further way to go forward. And so did I descend again unto the Country of the Seas, as I did ever call that redshining country of water and fire.

And by, that I was come again from the height of the Gorge, it was four and twenty hours since that I did last sleep; so that I was fain that I should put into some nook, and come to slumber, as you shall well believe.

And I found me a neat and proper place, where three great trees grew about a little basin of rock that was very dry and warm. And here, after that I had eat three of the tablets, and drunk some of the water the while that my belly did yearn, as ever, for proper eatingstuff I made my bed in the little basin of the rock, and lay me down, and did begin to think awhile upon Naani; but was gone over to sleep before that I was aware.

And lo! I was suddenly awake, and did find that I swam in a hot water; and a mercy, I did think, was it that I was not drowned as I did sleep. And I gat me to my feet, and the basin was full of water, hot and steaming, and pungent to the taste, as well I did know. And I perceived now that the water poured in from a smoothed slit upon the far side, and did come with a strange gurgling and bubbling, so that I conceived some deep well to boil, and thus to drive upward this water into the basin; and glad was I that it did not boil as it came forth.

And surely, now that I was upon the dry land, and did consider, I did quickly suppose that the water had poured forth at seasons into the basin for an eternity of time, and afterward did go back by fissures in the bottom of the basin; and this to happen, as I soon did find, a little beyond the length of every hour; and, indeed the basin to empty slow as I did watch.

Now, being much wetted, I stript off mine armour, having before this dipt out mine effects from the hot pool, and so did come down to the naked flesh, and I found a place where the rock was hot, and here I did spread my garments. And whilst that they came to dryness, I gat me into the hot pool, and had a very pleasant bathing, and did have no great fear of any dangerous thing; for, as it did seem, I had surely left all such behind, within the Night Lands. Yet did I have the Diskos upon the pool edge to my hand; for I had no proper assurance in this matter. Yet, as it did prove, there were many monstrous beasts in that Country; but never did I feel the nearness and horrid power of any Evil Force; for these, as I do conceive, were congregate and gathered about the Mighty Pyramid, being attracted thereto by the great spiritual essence of so wondrous a multitude of humans gotten so close in one spot, even as sharks do come after the ship that hath bullocks within. Yet, how that the Evil Powers were given entrance unto this State of our Life, I have no sure knowing; yet have I put forward certain thoughts on this matter in an earlier place; and more than such thinkings is surely vanity; for there is no certainty in my Reasoning concerning the thing.

Now, presently was my clothing dry, yet before this, I had come out from that bath, which truly was nigh all gone backward into the earth. And I dressed me again, and got my armour upon me, and afterward was I in a more lightsome state of the mind; and yet very ready to come again unto my sleep. And this I did, and had six hours more beside the pool; and once was wakened somewhat by the gruntling and bubbling noise of the water, that was made as the pool did fill time and again.

And when the six hours were gone, I waked very well fitted in my senses and feelings to go forward again through that redlighted Country, and this I did, after that I had eat and drunk.

Now all that day I went forward at a great pace; and the nameless woods were unto my left, and the shores of the seas unto my right. And oft did I find that the trees grew even into the water, so that oft did I go forward among the trees, and a very wonderful thing was this to me, that never had known before in all my life, until I was come into that Country, how that a glad and wild mystery doth live among forest trees. For there was no such strange wildness among the groves of the Underground Fields; though a solemn beauty in plenty. And the scent of the woods was sweet unto my spirit, as you shall wot.

Now all the time that I did go, there was the shore unto my right; but alway to my left, and around me oftentimes as I did say, the great forests. And as I did go, lo! there was life in all those darksome woods, and living eyes did peer out odd whiles upon me, and afterward go backward into the dark; so that I wotted not whether to fear, or to have no heed of trouble. Yet naught did come anigh to me, to make any hurt.

And thrice in that day did I come to little firehills that burnt redly, and sent out fire and noise, so that I heard their trouble each time through the forest, before that I was come to them. And about each was there a deadness and desolation, where the fire had killed the big trees; yet, as I did observe, the quick life of little plants did grow more nigh, as that they were born and lived between the times of the firebursts. And this I do take it that you perceive.

And in that one day I past thirty and seven boiling springs; but whether they boiled truly, I do have no knowledge; only that they sent out a great steam oftentimes; and some did make a strong roaring noise; so that to hear them afar off in the forests was to think odd times that some wild beast roared strangely.

Now, when the eighteenth hour was come, I sat me down, as I had done upon the sixth and the twelfth hours, and eat two of the tablets, and drank some of the water, which here did fizz very rich and quick.

And afterward I lay down to my slumber, for I was greatly wearied. And I had chosen a place against a great rock, which was so that no creature might come upon me from behind. And I came easy upon sleep; but yet I did fix it upon me that I slumber only with the body; for I did know, by the shining of the eyes in the darksome woods, that strange creatures abode in the mighty forests.

And ere I was gone over to sleep, I thought upon Naani, as I had done much all that day, as though her spirit did hover near unto mine, and did strive pitiful to speak with me. And this I set out to you, that you shall know how it did seem unto me in my thoughts and fancyings. And as I lay there, I put a blessing upon her, and a determination into my heart that I make a more desperate speed of my going, if that might be; so that I come

the sooner to that strange, and unknown place in the dead world where did stand the lesser Refuge. And I was then asleep in a moment.

And lo! sudden I was awake. And lovely was the brightness of that Country, that did show me in a moment my danger, and did not keep me suspend in fearful Doubt, as did the grey darkness and strange shadows and lights of the Night Land. For I saw, on the instant that I got me to mine elbow, how that certain things did crouch within the borders of the trees, no more than a score paces off. And I perceived in a moment that my spirit had been given knowledge, and had wakened me. And I stared, the while that I did grip the Diskos; and I saw that there were six squat men that were humpt at the neck and shoulder; and they did crouch all there in a row, and were something hid by the shadows; and I perceived that they watched me; and the eyes of the men did shine like the eyes of beasts; and so shall you know somewhat of the strange terror that came upon me. Yet had I the Diskos and mine armour; and though my heart did shake a little, yet was my spirit assured to conquer.

Now I gat me to my feet, and had the Diskos ready within my hand; and behold! I could not see the Humped Men, for they were gone from that place; yet never did I see them go, though I had kept my gaze very steadfast upon that part where they did hide. And, as you shall understand, I was near ready to believe that there had been nothing there within the border of the wood; yet truly I knew that the men with the humps had been there, as I had seen.

Now, I looked presently, and found that I had slept five hours; and I eat two of the tablets, as I did stand there, watchful; and afterward drank some of the water; and so was ready to go forward again; for I was grown very anxious to be gone from that place; and did have no knowledge but that those strangely humpt Men were but a little way off, among the trees, and might come upon me in a moment; or, further, that they did go to call an army of other humped men to my destruction.

And after that I was ready, and had my gear secure upon me, I set off at a great stride, and did hold the Diskos very handy, and lookt this way and lookt that way, and all the while made onward with speed; for, truly, I was grown so lean and hard that it did seem to me that I had power to outpace those men or aught else of their kind.

And all that day, through thirty great hours did I go forward, at that stride, and did always watch; and at every sixth hour, I eat two of the tablets and drank a little of the water, and went onward again.

And so did I hope that I was lost from those Humped Men. Yet, though I did hope, my faith was not this wise; for twice and thrice did it come to me that there went things

through the woods to my left all that day, and did keep always to a level with my speed; yet were always hid. And, as you shall believe, this did be a very shaking thing to my heart, and did make my hope of but little account.

Now, because that I had no faith to company my hope, I was not easy to have slumber, until that I was come to a place proper and safe. And so, as I have told, I went onward through thirty great hours; and, in truth, in all that while I did find nowhere that did seem to fit my need.

And lo! about the end of the thirtieth hour, I perceived that there was water ahead, besides the water of the sea that was ever to my right. And I thought, maybe, that the sea did go inward at that part of the land; but it was otherwise; for when I was gotten to that place, I found that a river came into the sea, and did come out of all the country that lay unto my left.

And in the mouth of this river, there was a small island; and surely I did look across to the island, and think it a refuge from the Humped Men that did surely play dog upon my going. Yet, truly, this was but an idle thought, and my need was that I should come to some way to cross over the river, that I go forward beside the great sea, which did stretch onward, as it did seem for ever, before me upon the far side.

And I knew not how to go across; for I had no power to swim, and had I swum, there were surely monsters in that great and warmflowing river, as you shall believe.

And I went upward of the riverbank, that I might come to some place where the river did narrow; and surely I had been like to walk a mighty distance to this purpose, but that I came soon to a second river that did enter the first, not a mile above the shore of the sea; so that, as you do perceive, there was the sea to one side of me, and this second river unto the other, and the first river before me; and thus was I sorely perplexed, as any had been truly that was in a like trouble.

Yet, as it did chance, the need to go forward, and the danger of the Humped Men, put wit into me, so that I lookt about for a tree that was fallen. And there were many, yet great, so that I was much wearied and something strained of the spirit, before that I gat two little trees unto the water.

Now, when this was done, I made me a rough pole of a young treeplant; and afterward, I lashed the two trees together with my belts and straps, and so had somewhat of a raft.

And you shall picture that, all the time as I did go about this business, I was very heedful lest the Humped Men should come upon me, ere that I was gone free upon the water.

And this constant heeding did double the labour of my work, as you shall perceive; yet, in the end, it was done, and I ready to adventure over the river.

And so I did push off with the pole, and I pushed and paddled maybe the half of an hour, for, indeed it was all a clumsy contriving, and mayhap I the more so in my labours. Yet, presently, I was come so far over, that I drew nigh to the island; and it did seem a wise and proper thing that I should have my slumber there, and afterward go onward to the farther shore. And this I did; and after that I had eat and drunk, as ever, I lay down to sleep. And by this time it was three and thirty hours since last I did slumber; so that I was bitterly awearied.

And I had a great and restful sleep; for, truly, the island did seem a very safe place; and, in verity, I came to no harm, though I was as a dead man for nine great hours; and so shall you perceive my weariness.

And when I was come proper awake, I eat two of the tablets, and drank some of the water; and afterward made an end of my voyage, and then did take back my belts and straps from binding the trees, and so forward again upon my way, and no more fearful of the Humped Men; for, surely, I did think I had left them all upon the far shore of the river; though afterward I minded me that they might grow likewise upon the two sides; but yet was I only discovered by those upon the one, as you do know.

And all that day I went very swift, and past many strange matters and did coast upon wonders oft. And at the sixth and the twelfth hours did I eat and drink, as ever; and between the eighth and the fourteenth hours did I come past two mighty firehills, that made all the Country to tremble with their noise. And four times did monstrous creatures pass by me; but I was swift hid, and came to no harm.

And oft as I did go, were my thoughts upon the dear Maid that I journeyed to save from destruction. Yet, as you must see, always were my thinkings brought sharply unto my going; so that scarce was I ever set off to ponder upon Naani, but that there came some danger or wonder to give me heed to my way. And because of this, as you have learned, I was more put to plan free of the instant trouble and peril of my way, through all that mighty journey, than to have quiet chance for thoughts of love unto mine Own. Yet, truly, was not my journey one whole thought of love unto Naani? And, that peril made oft dumb my brain, was but the truer song unto my Maid.

And at times I was among trees; but oft did go past unnumbered boiling springs and small firehills; and oft was the air full of the noise of the little firehills, and the roar of the boiling springs; but there came no harm unto me.

And a thousand times did I perceive things that had life; and I made a very cautious way; though with a great speed and cleverness of going that made my heart glad.

And oft did I come to parts where a great life held the trees, and green stuff did flourish exceedingly, and the air rich and full and wondrous sweet; so that I was fain to think how that in some faroff time, it might be that our children's children should come down unto this Country, when the Upper Valley of the Night Land was grown to an utter chill and lacking of air; and here build them a new Refuge, if, indeed any should come clear of the Evil Forces and the Monsters that did live about the Mighty Pyramid in the Night Land. Yet, how should they come clear of those things; so that this is, as you do perceive, no more than a thought that did rise vaguely in me. And yet, again, who shall say what may be?

And onward I did pass, and I do mind me how that I saw the lower fires of that Country to burn very fierce; and this I set to the richness of the air; but yet with no surety of knowledge; and do but tell the same that you shall see the oddments of thought that went off across my brain, and so have so much knowledge as I, concerning this and that.

Now, a little before the eighteenth hour was come, I came out from among the trees, and the sea was downward of a great cliff unto my right, for I had gone upward for a long and weary hour. And I did see now a thing that made me to be cautious, and yet that did hold my heart to go swiftly to perceive the thing; for it was very strange.

And I went forward quickly, yet with a wise care; and so was come presently more nigh. And I perceived that the thing was, in part, a high rock, very tall and pointed and maybe an hundred feet high; but afterward I did find it to be more. And there was a monstrous great thing upon the top of the rock, that did seem very strange; and I stopt and lookt, and afterward went forward again; and so for a time, until that I was but a little way off. And now I saw that there did seem to be a mighty long rock laid across the topmost part of the upstanding rock, and yet had a very strange and shapely appearance; and did seem upon the underpart to be as that I had lookt before upon it. And upon the upper part, there grew trees and green things, even as these did grow upon odd ledges of the upstanding rock. Yet, for the most, the rock was very stark, as that a blast had blown upon it, and made it bare.

Now, when I had lookt for a while, I bethought me that this should be a safe and proper place for my slumber, if that I had power to come safe to the top. And when I had thought this thing, I began at once to climb up the rock; and I found that the rock was very high; so that in a while I was come a great way off the earth, and yet was not come to the top of the rock. And because that I was awearied, I lookt about for a safe place to

mine hand, and lo! there was a shelf of the rock very nigh, that went inward a little to the side.

And I gat me to this ledge, and did eat and drink, and presently I slept, and scarce had thought of Naani in the moment of my slumbering; for a great weariness was upon me, the which I do think to have come by reason that I was not yet proper rested from the task of the day that was gone before that one.

Now I waked very sudden, maybe seven hours after; and I had knowledge within me that my spirit did wot of some nigh danger. And I gat upward from the rock, very quiet, and had the Diskos ready in my hand. And I lookt swift about me in the moment that I did wake; yet did see nothing; for there was naught on the ledge with me.

And I crept to the edge, and lookt downward, and lo! I did see that there came up the rock two Humped Men; and they did climb very swift and silent; and I perceived that they smelled me, and came to destroy me. And I made ready the Diskos to do battle, and ceased not to look downward. And I saw how that the Humped Men did seem to be humpt by reason of their being so monstrous thick and mighty of the neck and the shoulder, as that they had been human bulls. And I saw that they were very strong, and by the speed of their climbing, I knew they were swift; and so did I make steady my attention and my heart to the saving of my life; for truly I did know that I should be dead in a little, or they.

Now I stept back a space from the edge of the rock, and had the Diskos very ready; for it was needful that I should kill one of those brute men speedy, that I have no danger that one take me in the back, whilst that I fight with the other.

Then, in a moment it did seem, there came upward of the rock edge, the great and brutish face of the man. And in that moment that I slew him, I did note curiously how that he had large teeth upon each side of the mouth; and was aware that he had come so quiet as a great cat. And in the backward parts of my brain, I bethought that even thus, maybe, was primal man, so that a strange and secondary questioning and wondering did live in that part of me; and I did learn from these scarce conscious reasonings that I was of belief the thing was truly a man; but very crude and dangerous. And surely it is strange that I had all this thought in that little moment; but in verity so it was; though I doubt not but I bettered it with after thoughts, when a while had gone.

Now the first man died ere his great haired breast was come upward over the rock; and he sank back, and sagged and fell dully, and I heard him bodge downward from rock to rock, very lumberesome; and so in a moment was silence.

Then did I look this way and that way of the ledge; for the second Humpt Man was not yet upon me; and I feared that the pause did mean a cunning mischief and strategy. And when a little time had past, and all the while I was ready with the Diskos, and naught did come upward to harm me, I stept very soft to the edge of the rockledge, and lookt downward; but there was nowhere any thing to see.

Now, for a little moment, I did think that the brutish man had run off, being feared by the death that I did deal unto the first; yet I put this from me at once; for I did wot that such a creature did not be like to fear in such wise; but was rather set to some horrid cunning of attack, as I did fear, and was somewhere below me among the holes of the great rock.

Then I did think sudden that he might be gone upward, so that he should come down upon my back, and I lookt upward of the mighty rock; but did see naught; and afterward I stoopt forward a great way beyond the edge, so that I should perceive whether the man did hide beneath. And, behold! he was there below me, and crouched under the rockshelf, ready to his spring. And in that moment, he made unto me with so mighty a leap as any tiger should give. And he came half over the edge, and gript the Diskos by the handle, in an instant.

And surely I had lost that trusted weapon, or been pulled over and cast into the depth, but that the Diskos did spin, and the EarthCurrent did make live the handle as was intended save where the "grip" was set. And lo! the man gave loose the handle very swift, for it had burned and shaken the creature sore. And I staggered back, with the effort I had made to withhold the Diskos; and the brutish man came upward again over the rock edge, and leapt at me. Yet he gat me not; for I sprang unto my right, and made a blow with the Diskos, even as I did leap. And the blow came something short; but yet harmed the Humpt Man with a gash upon the belly, very sore and horrid among the great brown hairs of the man. And immediately he sprang after me; but I smote full at the face; so that he leaped back from the strange roar and blaze of the Diskos, and yet was harmed; for he gat not right free of the blow; but did be cut very sore on the mighty and haired arm.

Now, seeing that he was something feared of the weapon, I ran in upon him, and smote again at the face; yet was the man gone out of my reach before that the blow did reach; for, truly, he was quick as a panther. And immediately, he did leap unto the ending of the ledge, where it did join upon the Rock; and he caught the living Rock between his two hands. And truly the Rock must have been splitten there; for he tore out a monstrous lump, so great near as my body; and did run upon me with the rock above the head of him.

Now, I perceived I should be smashed in a moment, if that I did not slay the man very quick. For so mighty was he, that he did leap this way and that way after me, as though the great rock did cumber him no more than it had been but a light matter.

And you shall perceive that I leapt this way and that way, to avoid the man; and twice did strike him; but yet was feared to brake the Diskos upon the rock, which the man did use as a shield each time that I did make a blow. And all the while, I did act to escape when that the man should cast the rock, as I did conceive at the first to be his intent. Yet, truly, it was as that he had no wotting that a rock may be thrown; for he strave only to come at me with the rock, that he should crush me, as with a monstrous club. And, in verity, what should a man do against so horrid an attack.

And time and oft did I leap now to the right and now to the left, and again in a moment, I did cut the Humpt Man; but the blow was something turned off by the great rock in the hands of the man; yet so strange and mighty was the power of the Diskos, that it shored away a small portion of the rock, and did come to no hurt in itself.

And, surely I had presently failed in wind and limb, because of the leapings and chargings that I did make; and because of the weight of the armour, that was not overmuch, yet to be considered; but that I fainted not, was by reason of the wondrous hardness and leanness that I was grown to, with so constant a journeying and strait living; for the tablets did keep the strength in a man, though, truly, they eased not the yearnings of the belly.

And lo! even the brutish man did grow weary, and the hot breath and bodystink to come from him; and surely who shall wonder, for always he did rush to and fro upon me, with the monstrous rock to crush me. And sudden, I leapt unto the right of the man, thinking within me that I did perceive a chance that I should cut him upon that side; but, truly, he was less aware than I did know; for he came very sharp upon me, and had me between him and the wall of the Rock; and surely I had no room to make escape, and had died in a moment, but that I made a sudden sham toward the left with the Diskos, as that I should leap that way. And in the same instant, I did go to the right with a strong bounding; and immediately did come in upon the Humpt Man from that side; and I put my fortune of life to the stroke, and stood anigh to the man, and I smote him across the middle part, before that he did wot of my intent. And the blow slew the man very surely, and did nigh cut the mighty creature in twain. And surely he fell, half leaping even as he died, so that the monstrous rock that was in the hands of the brutish man, did crash down almost upon my feet, and I leapt very high that I should escape the thundering of the rock; for in verity, I was near slain in that last moment of the life of the Humpt Man.

But yet I lived and came free of death, and did have a relief of happiness about my heart, as you shall believe.

Yet, truly, I was much shaken; and a little weakness took me, so that I was fain to go down upon the rockshelf, that I have back my strength.

And presently, I was grown steady again, and I took my gear, and did haste down the Rock, and so was come presently to the earth again. And I saw the first of the Humpt Men that I did slay, lying very quiet a little off from the bottom of the Rock; so that I went round upon the other side to avoid the man; for it was no pleasure to mine eyes or to my heart. And, truly, it did trouble me always to make a death.

And when I was come round upon the other, which was the seaward, side of the Rock, I perceived that I was yet shaken; and I remembered that it were wise to eat and drink and rest a little, before that I did go further upon my way.

Now, as I did sit there at the bottom of the Rock, I looked upward at the strange crown thereof; and until that time, I had been taken up with the fight and with gazings this way and that to see whether there came others of the Humped Men to work me an harm.

But now that I was given some ease of the mind and of the body, I saw plainly that I knew the thing that lay upward upon the Rock; for the shape had been something strange and halfknown to me even before that moment, as that I had a vague knowledge concerning it; but yet with no surety. And now, truly, I did know in a little instant that the thing was one of the olden flyingships, the which, as you shall mind, there were certain in the Great Museum of the Mighty Pyramid.

And surely, I was ready to wonder why that I had not seen the thing plain before that moment; yet was this like to be because that there was a shadow upon the other side of the great Rock; but upon this side there was a little firehill a way off to the cliff edge, and this did throw a warm light that made a glimmer upon the dull metal of the ship's bottom, which was uncovered to my sight, and was surely of that same deathless grey metal that made the Great Redoubt.

And yet, as you shall believe, even as I said this thing to my mind, that the strange matter upon the top of the Rock was truly one of the olden airships, I did feel that I should be proper to doubt; for it was a very wondrous thing to perceive a thing common to man, in that utter strange Country, and after that I was gone so far off from the Mighty Pyramid. Yet, in verity, I did know in my heart that it was indeed that which I did perceive it to be; and I did stand and walk to and fore and look upward constant; for I was very keen that I look well upon it.

And truly, as I did look from this place and from that place, it was scarce a thing for wonder that I had not wotted it to be an air vessel; for there were great trees and abundance of earth and living matters upon the topmost side of the ship; so that none could easy perceive it to be aught save a great and desolate rock that did lie upon the other rock. Yet, truly, it was as I have told; and presently I did make to climb upward of the great Rock, that I should come to the air vessel to enter it. But yet was this not proper; for I had surely no duty save to go forward forever, until that I found the Maid; but yet did I spend a little while to this searching of the ship; and I do but set down that which I did, and with a serious spirit. And truly, as it doth here occur to me, I do be ever seeming a serious young man, as you maybe shall have grown to think; but yet was I to a dread and serious business, and the strain did be too great upon me and the trouble too much prest upon my heart to give me much of laughter, as you do surely perceive, and so you to give me your ear and your understanding. For, indeed, before that I did lose Mirdath my Beautiful One, I was not overgrave; but so young and joyous as any.

Now it took me a great time to go upward of the Rock; for it was so monstrous steep and high. Yet, presently was I come nigh under the bottom of the ship; and here I did perceive that she had been sore battered in that faroff age when she did come upon the Rock; for, surely, as I did perceive, the peak of the Rock was through the bottom of the ship, so that the metal was burst this way and that, and very plain to be seen in some parts; but in other places the earth and growing matters did make a hiding.

And after that I had climbed this way and that way, I perceived that I must come to the topmost part by the plants that did hang over, and grow downward. And after that I had pulled upon them, to know that they were strong to hold me, I went upon them, and was soon to the top of the ship. Yet, truly, I might so well have been upon the earth; for the ship was covered above by the earth and dust of a monstrous age of years; so that I was like to need much time to dig downward unto the ship; and because of this, I considered a little while, and afterward made no more to search her; but did go downward again, that I should come once more to my journey. Yet, as you shall think, it was with a queer thrilling of the heart, and with strange thoughts upon the end of those that did come, maybe, to a bitter and lonesome dying in that ship of the air, in that faroff time when she did fly.

And surely, it did seem to me as I went downward of the great Rock, how that the flyingship had been there for an hundred thousand years; and that mayhaps the sea did live all about the Rock in that Age; and truly this was no improper thing to think, for it was like that the sea had been monstrous high and great in those days; so that the Rock was but a little island in the midst of the sea; and now was the sea gone small from a great sea to lesser seas, and this through an eternity of years. And always, as it doth

seem to me, had the ship lain upon the Rock, and lookt quiet and silent over the change and wonder and the lonesomeness of all that Country of Fire and water, for ever.

But how the airship did come upon the rock, how shall I know; save, maybe, it doth seem as that she might have flown low over the sea in that olden age, and come hard upon the Rock, because, maybe, there was one to the helm that did steer unwittingly. And again, it shall well be otherwise, and I do but set down mine odd thoughts; and such as they be, they have no especial use, save that they do show to you the different workings of my mind at that time, as I did go downward. And so to set you the more in possession of all that I did have knowledge of.

And presently, I was come again to the earth, and did go forward with a great speed, so that I should waste no more of that day. Yet, oft did I think upon that ship hid there upon the mighty Rock, under the wondrous quiet ashes of eternity.

And I went eighteen hours walking, and in all that time I did see no more of the Humped Men; yet three times was I put in a sudden danger, for there went past me thrice, between the fourteenth and the seventeenth hours, great flying monsters, that were winged very ugly, and did go, as I thought, in a great bounding, rather than that they did fly proper as doth a bird. Yet I suffered no hurt from these; for I was swift to hide between the great boulders that were very plenty in that part; but no trees. For I was gone now past the forests of trees; there being none since that I had gone through a very shallow river, that I came to about the thirteenth hour. And this had I waded, and sounded my path with the staff of the Diskos; but I had kept mine armour upon me, lest there be things, even in water so shallow, that might bite and work harm upon me. But I gat through pretty quick, and had no hurt done me. Now I had eat, as ever, at the sixth and the twelfth hours; and by that the eighteenth hour was come, I was nigh again unto a forest, that came down to the shore that went alway upon my right; and I to be very sore and wearied, as you shall know; for I had fought very desperate after my waking, and afterward climbed the great Rock, and then again to journey, so that it was, by this, nigh to one and twenty hours since that I did sleep.

And surely, I lookt this way and that way, constant, and did see no place proper to my slumber. But afterward, I considered I did be a fool, to lack such; for truly the trees were plentiful, and I could climb a great one, and strap my body safe, and so have a sure bed for my rest. And I did this thing, and went upward into a great tree, and did tie my body to the tree, with my belts; yet I eat and drank before that I went up the tree.

Now when I was fast upward in the tree, and had made a bed upon a monstrous branch, and had the Diskos ready upon my hip, so that it should not fall but be nigh to my hand,

I lay a little while thinking upon Naani; and I went not over to sleep immediately, which was strange; yet mayhaps because that my bed was so uncertain.

And I considered very gravely how that it was a monstrous long while since that I did hear the MasterWord from the dear Maid; and truly I was come a dreadful way from mine home, which was the Mighty Pyramid; for I had gone onward for ever through five and twenty great days of travel, and was not yet come to any place that did appear like to be that place where the Maid did abide.

And it did seem that I might even wander onward in that great Country of Fire and Water for a time beyond all that I had before gone; and this thought did put a great weight of trouble and weariness upon my heart; for the Maid had been in sore need of me, and I did feel sudden to be all adrift in the wilderness. But before this time, it had seemed as that I surely went aright. And mayhaps your sympathy shall tell you just how I to feel in the heart.

And after that I had lain there very awkward, and thought upon all matters, I minded me that I would try the compass again upon the morrow; but had no great hopes of the machine; yet did be willing to try aught to see where I had gotten to. And truly, as it did come to my mind, if that the compass did point a little as I did wot it was used to point in the Lesser Redoubt, then, in verity, I was surely come something more anigh to that unknown place of the world than I did dare to believe. And this to be plain to you.

Then a little time did pass in which I did wake and sleep, and wake and sleep, a little; but with no surety of sleep; but as that I was very tired of the heart, and did but lie too wearied to come properly to sleep.

And odd whiles I did lie with mine eyes half to open, and did look very dreamful upward among the dark branches of the tree, as they did show black and pretty against the redness of the shining that came from the sea; for there was stood a great and brightburning firehill in that part of the sea that lay off the shore from me. And above the glaring of the firehill, there was the deep night that did brood for ever above in a monstrous black gloom of eternity, and did make the red smoke of the volcano to show deep and mighty and thunderousseeming, afar up in the great dark. And the red and shining smoke did but show the utter hugeness of the night, that had been upon the world through the great ages.

And, in verity, as I did lie there so dreamful, it did come to me afresh how wondrous strange was mine adventure; and how that I did lie warm and alive in a Country of red light and smoking seas. And, truly, as I did remember and consider, there was a great

and lost world above me, upward through the dark maybe an hundred and fifty great miles up in the grim night.

And this thing did strike me very solemn, as I did lie; and I do trust that you conceive how that there was, in truth, afar above in the eternal and unknown night, the stupendous desolation of the dead world, and the eternal snow and starless dark. And, as I do think, a cold so bitter that it held death to all living that should come anigh to it. Yet, bethink you, if one had lived in that far height of the dead world, and come upon the edge of that mighty valley in which all life that was left of earth, did abide, they should have been like to look downward vaguely into so monstrous a deep that they had seen naught, mayhaps, save a dull and utter strange glowing far downward in the great night, in this place and in that.

And surely, as you shall have seen, I have set the Great Deep of the Valley to be, maybe, an hundred and fifty miles of night; for, as you do mind, it was conceived that the Valley of the Night Land was an hundred miles deep, and mayhap to be more; and I had come from that Place downward of the Mighty Slope, and of the Gorge, a very great way. Yet, in verity, I do believe in my heart this measuring was utter wrong; for I think the deep to have been monstrous, beyond these miles that I do give; yet have I no proving of this belief, and do set it down for no more than it is.

Now, presently, I had ceased from these vague thinkings and half dreamings, and was gone truly to sleep. Yet, nowise did I sleep very strong; but did seem to come anigh to wakefulness, this time and that. And, as it did chance, this was mayhaps a very good thing for my life; for I did presently come awake more surely, and did turn on the great branch; for there was a noise in the air, that was not the noise of the great firehill.

And the noise did grow, very heavy and lumbbersome. And, in a moment, there came seven Humped Men, running among the trees, as that some monstrous thing did pursue. And immediately they were beneath the tree in which I did lie; so that a great fear came upon me, and I loosed the belt from the branch, that I should be free to fight.

And, directly upon this, I saw that the men did leap upward into the tree, beneath me; but not as that they did wot of me or make to come at me; but as that they did pay a great heed to some creature or happening that was far off among the trees. And surely, the noise did seem to come from that part, and did grow loud and mighty, and the Humped Men did all crouch very silent, and did make no noise or motion one to the other; but were quiet upon the lower branches.

And, as I did look now more to my ease, I perceived that they had each a great stone, and bloody, that did seem as that it were split to a certain sharpness, even as a stone

doth break very natural. And they carried the stone under this arm or under that arm, so that they had their hands free to all matters.

And, always the noise did come the more anigh, and I saw that a Humped Man did come running from among the trees, and did run beneath that place where the seven Humped Men did be on the branches. But they made no sign to the man, to save him; yet truly it was very plain that some monster pursued the man.

And immediately I saw how this thing was; for the Humped Man upon the ground, did not run so fast as might be; and I conceived that he did act to make some creature to come after him, to pass under the men within the tree. And surely this thing did prove to be; for there came very quick, a great and ugly thing, that had an ugly way of putting down the feet, and did have seven feet to each side, which was very strange; and the back was as that it were horny, and the belly of the thing did seem to brush heavy upon the earth, and it grunted, as it went, and shook the earth with the weight of it; so that a monstrous noise came from it, upon so hasty a journey. And I did wot that it was not such a thing as did properly pursue after matters of food; but did rather eat of that which did need little haste, but a monstrous strength, to gain. And that it did so make after the man, was in truth because that it had been wounded and made fierce; for, indeed, there came blood from the creature from great wounds upon the back; but how these were made, I could not know in that instant.

And it did go under the tree in which I was hid; and in that moment when it past under the tree, the seven Humped Men did leap out of the branches, and did catch to the brute by the great horns of the spine; and I saw that the wounds were in the joints of the spine, as was plain when the back did work, with the going of the creature. And the seven Humped Men took the sharp stones from under their arms, and did strike very brutal in the wounds that were in the joints of the spine; and the creature roared and cried, and went onward into the trees at a great speed; and in all the time that it ran, the Humped Men ceased not to strike with the stones.

And sudden, when it was gone a distance off, it did roll very swift over upon the back, first to the right, as that it would go that way; so that the Humped Men did leap off upon the other side. And immediately the creature rolled to that side; and there ran clear of the brute only four of the Humped Men; so that I knew that three were slain. And afterwards, they that lived, ran beyond the beast, and gat up into a second tree, and the one that was chased, did entice the creature to follow, and so did tease it once more to pass beneath the other men; and they very swiftly again to the back of the creature; and so from my sight, striking with the great stones, and the beast bellowing very loud and piteous. And how many of the Humped Men there were to the beginning of that strange hunting, I know not; but surely there were few that lived to the end.

And surely there were such things as this thing in the beginning of the world, and again was it thus in the end; and I did ponder this a little while, as I did sit upon the great branch, and hearken unto the sound of the hunting, that was now gone a great way off, and was presently beyond my hearing.

And afterward, I gat me to the earth, and did look this way and that way, to see that no beast was anigh, neither any of the Humped Men; and afterward, I eat two of the tablets and drank some of the water.

And when I had gat this far to a readiness for my going, I minded me that I should try the compass again, as I did intend. And surely the machine did point between the North and the South, upon the Westward arc, even as Naani had told unto me; yet, as it did seem, with somewhat more of a Southward pointing than she had made me to think. And because of this telling of the compass, a great ease came upon my spirit; for, surely, was not this but a sure sign that I did go direct unto that hidden place of the world where the Lesser Refuge did abide; but yet was not come overclose, so that the pull of the Mighty EarthCurrent of the Great Redoubt was something stronger than in the place where was the Little Pyramid.

And all this did I think very swift to myself, and had a glad uplifting of the heart, as you do perceive; so that I went forward upon my journey, with a great stride, and did scarce fear any strange thing that all the Country did hold, in that moment.

And I went all that day at a strong pace, and did be oft tempted to send the MasterWord unto Naani; yet did keep from so foolish an acting, the which, mayhaps, had brought straightway upon me an Evil Power, and had given me to Destruction when that I was near come to the succour of the Maid. And it was this quick and constant fear of the Evil Forces of the Night Land, that did keep me ever from calling unto Naani, lest that they should discover me, and follow after; and this, I doubt not, you to know by now so well as I.

Now, by the sixth hour, I was come into a part of the Country where there were an exceeding abundance of steam fountains and sprayings and great upboilings of water in basins of rock; and the air did be full of the sounds and the roarings of the boilings and the spoutings, and of a hot mist and spray; so that, truly, I had scarce the power to see to my front, nor to any side.

And here, presently, I made a pause, and did eat and drink, and afterward went forward again; and I did keep the shore of the sea always to my right, and so did go proper to my way; yet with no great ease; for the sea also did steam very strong in that part, and

because of this great fog of steam, I was surely much laboured to make a great speed, lest unseeing I go headlong into an hole of the boiling water.

And in the ninth hour, I did go clear of the hot boilings, and was come again free of the mist and the steam, and might look with mine eyes to my going. And, surely, as I did perceive, I was come to the end of the great sea that had been ever to my right; for it did go against the feet of great and monstrous mountains, that went upward for ever into the night, and did seem as that they were the hither wall of that strange Country of Fire and Water. And so was I stood there very much taken upon doubt; for how should I go farther.

And after that I had been there a while, in a bewilderment of doubt and of wit, I went to the left, along the feet of the mountains; and truly this but of common sense; for how might I go any other way, save I go back again!

And at the twelfth hour I eat two of the tablets, and drank some of the water, and went forward once more. And lo! at the fifteenth hour, I was come to a place between the mountains, even an upward gorge, very dark and gloomy, and without light for a great way.

And, in verity, I did not want to go up the gorge, in that it was so dreary a place and narrow and horrid and drearseeming, after the light and wideness of the Country in which I did yet stand.

And presently, I did go past the mouth of the gorge, that I should learn whether there went another way out of that Country. And thiswise, for a great hour more, along the feet of the mountains, and did presently come to a monstrous black river, that was, maybe, a mile wide. And it to be very shallow, and seeming as that the water scarce to cover the mud of the bottom. And here and there a great steam did come from it, and spirtings and moundingsup of the mud in many places, and monstrous babblings and puffingsup of strange smoke, as that a great heat went beneath it in this place and in that.

And surely it went backward into the country for a mighty way, so far as my sight did go; and I did think it to be no river, but truly a further sea. And there was no way across; for there were no trees anigh, to make me a raft, neither might I wade across; for it might be shallow here and deep there, and the mud be in all places. And, moreover, I had been like to be caught in one of those upburstings of mud, even did I have a raft to go upon. And because of all these things, I gat me back again to the Gorge, and presently I did go upward into the darkness.

Now, I went upward very steady, save that I did stumble oft, and did go through six great hours. And truly it did seem that I went in an utter dark, because that I had been awhile in so constant a light.

And, by that I had been six hours in the Gorge, I was gone right away from the Country of the Seas, and did be as that I was back into some place that was like to the dreadness of the Night Land. For there were in this place and in that place of the Gorge, red fireholes, even as in the Night Land. Yet not many until that I was come a great way up of the Gorge. And there did be life of horrid things about the fires, as soon I did wot; so that I made to keep off from them. Yet, as you shall perceive, I must come oft pretty near, because that the Gorge was nowheres scarce an hundred good paces across, and did oft come very narrow, so that I did come oft anigh to the fireholes, whether that I did heed to or not.

And all that time, and ever, did the Gorge go very sharp upward, so that it was a very weary thing to make great trial of speed, as you shall know. But yet I went so fast as I could do; for I was grown sudden very excited about the heart, and to feel as that I did surely draw anigh to that strange and hid place of the world, where was the Lesser Refuge.

And when I had gone upward through six great hours, as I did say, I took caution for a place proper to slumber; for I was surely very wearied.

And I saw a place presently, afar upward of the dark side of the Gorge, upon the right, where a ledge of the Rock did show in the glaring from one of the fireholes that made a gloomy light in that place. And I climbed unto this ledge, and did find it to be secure, and awkward to come upon. And presently, after that I had eat and drunk, I did compose myself unto sleep, the which came very speedy upon me, whilst yet I did believe I thought only upon the sweetness of the Maid. And truly it had been something over three and twenty hours, since last I did sleep; so that I was greatly awearied.

And in six hours I waked and did eat, and did climb downward again to the Gorge, and so unto mine upward journey.

Now, as you do perceive, when that I was come properly a great way up the Gorge, and had come among the fireholes, there was no more an utter darkness, for the dull red glare of the pits beat upward upon the black sides of the rockmountains, that did make the sides of the Gorge; so that oft I did see both sides very plain in the lower parts; yet of the height of the Gorge, who might know aught; for the black sides did go upward for ever into the everlasting night.

And because of the light from the firepits, I did see, time and oft about the fires, horrid monsters, both that were snakes, and others like to scorpions so great as my head; but no more than these for a long while. And afterward I perceived that surely other matters did move among the rocks of the Gorge; so that I did keep the Diskos very ready in mine hand; yet had truly no use for it all that day.

Now I eat and drank at the sixth and the twelfth hours, and went onward at a very strong speed. And at the sixteenth hour, I did seem as that I knew the aether to be stirred about me, and the beat of the MasterWord very faint upon mine inward ear. And immediately, a wondrous great and lovely thrilling did wake all my being; for surely, I said, this was the spirit of my love, calling unto me with her brainelements. And, indeed, this was a very proper and sensible thinking; for had the MasterWord been sent from the Mighty Pyramid, I had been like to hear it very plain, by reason of the force of the EarthCurrent which was with them and to their command. But, as you do know, the EarthCurrent was nigh gone from the Peoples of the Lesser Refuge; so that they were overweak to make any proper calling. And this I have spoken of before this place.

Yet, in a little while, as I did stand very hushed, that I should hark the better, I was come to doubt whether that I did truly hear the MasterWord. And one moment I did say that it had surely beat in the night about me; and immediately would I be just so unsure; and so in a while I gat once more to my journey, and had doubt in my heart; yet, as you shall conceive, more of hope. And because of this thing, I went onward for thirty great hours from the time that I did wake; for my heart was excited within me. And when that I had gone so long forward as this, I did see how that I did foolishly; and I lookt about for a place for my slumber; and I found a small cave that was clean and empty, as I did discover by the shining of the Diskos which I made to spin a little time. And the cave was in the cliff of the mountain that made the right side of the Gorge, and was nigh twenty good feet from the bottom of the Gorge, and hard to approach.

And when I was come secure into the cave, and sure that it was proper to my purpose, I eat four of the tablets, as was just and nice to my belly, and did afterward drink some of the water, and so to my slumber; and all the while, very sweet and strong in my thoughts upon Naani; so that surely I was a little time before that I had myself rightly unto sleep.

And I slept six hours, and did wake, for I had set my spirit hard unto such wakening; yet was I still greatly yearning for sleep. But this did go somewhat, when that I had fought a little with my need. And afterward, I eat two of the tablets, and drank some of the water, and did gat my gear upon me, and was presently down unto the Gorge; and so again to my journey.

Now in all that day I did go with a very stern speed; for it did seem as that my soul did know for surety that I was truly come something nigh unto that hid place in the night where I should find mine Olden Love again. And the sweet hope that was bred of the calling that had seemed truly to sound about my spirit, was in all my being, and more sure on that day, than before that I had slept.

And I went thirty hours in all, even as before, ere that I did come again to sleep, and I eat and drank at every sixth hour, so that my strength should abide within me. And by that I was come to the ending of the thirty hours, I was sorely awearied, and gat me upward of the monstrous cliff that did make the left side of the Gorge, having perceived in a place a great ledge of the rock, that did seem very proper for my purpose of slumber.

And when I was come upward upon the ledge of the rock, I saw that there did seem something, like to a mighty spider, that did stay half without of a hole in the back part of the ledge. And I smote the thing gently with the Diskos, so that it was very quickly dead; and afterward I searched well about; but did gladly perceive that there abode there no other horrid creature.

And I eat two of the tablets, and drank some of the water; and did afterward make me ready for slumber, as ever. But now I did put the cloak well about me; for truly there was grown a chill into the air of the Gorge; and here also will I tell how that it did seem unto me that the air was gone something from that great thickness and strength which had been with me in the past days of my journeying.

Now I was gone so tired, that I fell upon sleep in a moment, yet with a dear thought and anxious, concerning Naani; but was so starved of the body for slumber, that even mine anxiousness kept me not awake. And I was then so fast with sleep that I knew naught for eight hours of very sound slumber. And then did I awake, and very thankful of the heart that no evil beast or creeping thing had come upon me whilst that I was so utter lost in sleep.

And now, truly, was I something fresh and ready; and I ate and drank, and had my gear once more upon me, and so down into the Gorge. And afterward, I went upon my journey for eighteen hours, and did pause but a little while at the sixth and the twelfth hours that I should eat and drink.

And when the eighteenth hour was nigh come, I perceived that the nature of the Gorge was grown very horrid and dank. And in verity, I did feel as that afar upward in the night the black mountains that did make the sides of the Gorge had come together, and did make a monstrous roof unseen in the utter height.

And this thing I do tell, only as of my belief; for I have no very sure proof. Yet, truly, my reason doth say likewise; for there did oft drip water upon me out of the darkness, even though I walked in the middle way of the Gorge; and how should this thing be, save that there went an overreaching of the sides, that should let the mildew down upon me.

And in this place, and for more than eleven great hours, there were fireholes and firepits only in this part and in that, and each a great way off from another. And they burned very dull, and did seem to throw a fume of sulphur into all the air, as that there was no freedom above for the stink to pass away. And in every place were the rocks of the Gorge very thick and slippery with strange growths; so that it was a sorrow to walk upon them. And all that time was there an heavy wetness and slowness in the air; and a smell, beside the stink of the firepits, as that I did go forward through a place where dead things did be.

And for a great time there was a horrid darkness, as it had been that the air was grown thick with the fumings of the firepits, as I do believe; and beside this thing there was, as I have said, but a dull fire here and another there; so that it was like that there should be a heavy dark. And because that it was so utter black, and because that there were growths upon the rocks in the bottom of the Gorge, I did go but slowly, and with pain of stumblings; and always with the stink of that place to trouble me half unto a sickness.

And sudden, as I did go past one of the firepits, I saw that the fire made a dull shining upon some monstrous thing that did move before me, upon the far side of the fire. And I came in one moment unto a swift silence, and hid among the rocks of the bottom of the Gorge. And I lookt very cautious at the thing that moved beyond the fire, and surely I had seen no thing so monstrous since that I had come free of the Night Land; for it was as that some huge Creature, like to the hull of a great ship did move down out of the dark of the upper way of the Gorge. And it went by the firehole, and onward into the dark of the lower way of the Gorge; and I had perceived somewhat of it, as it did go past the fire, and, surely, it was black and beslimed, and utter great in height and in length, and it went always without noise, so that I had not known it to be there, but that I saw it plain with mine eyes. And, truly, if I do say that it was somewhat as that I had seen a monstrous slugthing, surely I should use wise and proper words to make known to you this horrid brute.

And I stayed very quiet a time, and afterward I went upward again of the Gorge, and did use a new caution to my way, and saw that the Diskos was free upon my hip; for even thus I did carry the weapon, being that I must use both hands to my way, and to save me in my stumblings and slidings over the slippery rocks.

And once it did seem to me that some great thing moved in the darkness, and I went downward among the rocks, and stirred not my body for a great while; and sure am I that there went some living monster past me, that did stink as a loathsome grave. And afterward, I went on again.

And three hours did I go thus, and came at last to a place where a firehole did shine more ruddy; and I did look well about me, that I should perceive that part of the Gorge the better. And as I stood there, very quiet, away off from the fire, so that it did show no great light upon my person, I did note how utter still was that place; and this to take me anew, as though it had come fresh upon me. And here, there would be the drip of water, and again in that place, and again elsewhere; and all very solemn and very dismal. And the silence to be constant.

And presently, as I lookt, now to this way and again to that, I saw that there was a monstrous slugthing laid upward against the black side of the Gorge, as that it had stood up on end; and the one end of the monster went upward beyond the light from the firepit; but the other part did come down and trail into the Gorge, as a long hillock, very ugly and black and beslimed.

And I near sweat with a disgust and horror of the thing; but afterward I had more courage, and spied well upon the brute. And surely, it moved not at all, any more than the side of the cliff of the Gorge; and I conceived that it stood not upward upon any feet; but clung to the rock, even as you shall see a slug to go. And for a great space I was very quiet and moved not, neither did I make to hide, but stood there very stupid.

Yet, in a time, I had more of courage which brought strength unto my heart, and I began again to go upon my way, but with an utter caution, and I then to creep for a weary time upon my hands and knees among the dank and weariful rocks and boulders that lay in the bottom of the Gorge. And thrice between four hours was I passed by hidden and monstrous things in the horrid dark places of the Gorge; yet with no noise, save, as it might be, the odd rattle of a rock in this place and that; but with an utter and dreadful stinking. And I to be quiet as they went, as you shall think.

And each time now that I did go by the firepits and fireholes that lay oddways in the Gorge, I did pause and search about me with mine eyes, very cautious, and oft now did I perceive how that the monstrous slug creatures did lie in this place and in that against the cliffs of the Gorge. And I did go then utter still, from this space to that space among the rocks, and oft upon the flat of my belly, and with a constant heed that I make not mine armour to knock against the boulders.

And always as I did go, there was a monstrous stench, and the choking of sulphurous smoke very oft. And here and there, as mine heart doth believe, there were utter great caverns within the mountains to the right and to the left; and of this thing I have some small proof; for once I did go by a place where a fire did burn, as it should be a firehole, afar inward of the mountain side upon my right; so that I saw in a moment that I looked in the darkness through the mouth of a mighty caveplace; and I went past very quick and silent, for I knew not whether any horrid thing should come forth out of that place to slay me.

And, truly, as I did think, if there did be one such place, there were like to be many; and mayhaps the slugs came forth from those caverns, where, as I did conceive there was naught save an eternal dripping of waters and the foul growth of things in all parts. Yet is this last but a thought, as I do say, and you shall wisely take it for no more than that.

Now, I came clear of the darkness and the slime and the stinking in about twelve hours after the time that I did think the mountains to be a roof unto the Gorge; and the air was now free and did seem as that some life and health did abound in it; and the fires did be more plentiful, and burned very bright and clean, and threw all their fumings upward, so that there was no more any bitter pain of sulphur within my throat.

And surely, it was with a thankful heart that I went onward, and with a good speed; for there was much of light all about me, in that there burned an hundred firepits here and in that place; so that I saw clear before me and behind, and conceived that the slugs did abide only in the closed part of the Gorge. And oft I did take the air very full into my lungs, for the sweetness of it, after the horrid stenchings that I had abode all those hours.

And presently, when I was come free of the roofed part of the Gorge, maybe some three good hours, I lookt for a place proper to slumber; for it was surely something over three and thirty hours since that I did last come upon sleep; and I was utter worn and lost of strength with so much of creeping and harking for monsters, as you shall believe; moreover, about that time I had gone bitter long whiles between slumberings through more than an hundred hours, as you shall have perceived from my tellings.

Now, presently, I saw a small cave that went inward of the side of the Gorge. And I lookt into the cave, and found it to be sweet and clean, and very dry. And there was a small firepit off from the mouth of the cave that did throw a good light for my purpose; so that I saw there was no creeping thing or horror in the place; and I went in, and made to prepare for my slumber.

But truly, when I was come to look upon myself, I was utter soiled and did seem as that I stank with the slime and disgust of the dark part of the Gorge, where I had gone upon my hands, and upon my belly. And because of this, I was set that I should not eat or come to sleep, without I washed me.

And I went out from the cave, and there was a spring near to the firepit, as was oft in that part of the Gorge. And the spring was hot and did fill a hollow of the rock, very quiet and with a fuming of sulphur, as I did bend above it. And I washed mine hands and face and mine armour and gear, in the hot spring, and did dry me with my pocketcloth; and so was sweetened and put to happiness of mind.

And I went back into the cave, and did sit in the mouth of the cave, with the Diskos to mine hand; and I eat four of the tablets, for I was gone a mortal long while without, and afterward I drank some of the water. And as I did eat and drink, I lookt out upon the lightness of the Gorge before me, and with a cheerful and composed heart.

And I saw presently that there came certain creatures out from their holes, even as it might be that they were part rats; but very strange looking, and not properly such. And some did lie about the firehole, and some did hunt about in the rocks; and one came presently, and had a snake by the neck. And it stood upon the snake, and did eat it, even while that the snake did lash about upon the rock. And the snake did lash until that it was nigh all eat; and a very strange thing this was to see, and something troublesome to the pity. Yet was I glad to perceive that there were enemies to the serpents of that place.

And when the rat creature did make an end of the snake, it made across to the spring, and did drink the hot water a while; and afterward back unto the fire, and there laid down anigh to the edge, and seeming very sweetly comforted of the belly, which, in truth, was much otherwise with me. And, after that, I saw many creatures that went about the fire, and did have warmth from the fire and drink from the spring; and surely I did ponder that the Peoples of this our Age should say, if they had stood with me, that Providence had made nigh together the warmth and the drink that were needful unto life (for it was grown to a bitter chill now in the Gorge). But rather did this thing seem to me otherwise, that these creatures did be but of their circumstance, and if that it had been another way, then had they grown of their wits to meet it to their means of life. Yet, as some would say, the arguments do but meet, and be the same thing. And neither way do I care in this place; but do no more than to show unto you the working of my brain, in this way and that, as I made my journey.

Now, presently, when I was done eating, and come very ready to fall upon sleep, I went out from the cave and gat me certain boulders, the which I did carry into the cave. And when I was come back for the last time, I put them very secure in the entranceway, that

no small stinging creature come at me as I slept. And after that, I made ready, and went to my sleep, having sweet thoughts and slumbrous, of the Maid.

Now I slept very quiet that time, and was not over troubled with the chill of the Gorge, which was but little in that place, both by reason of the firepit and because that the cave did help to keep my warmth to me. And I had a deep slumber for eight hours, and waked then pretty tired, but strong to go upon my way. And after that I had sat a little while, I came full to wakefulness and afterward did eat two of the tablets and drink some of the water, the which I did, sitting in the mouthpart of the cave, after that I had cast free the boulders.

And afterward, I gat my gear upon me, and I went again upon my journey. And the Gorge did continue very light and cheerful, with the shining of the fires; and oft there did be a little steam that did hiss from this part or that of the bottom of the Gorge and did blow very quaint and noisy in the quiet of that place. And oft there did be hot pools, and everywhere the great boulders in the bottom way, and to the right and to the left the black and mighty sides of the Gorge that did go upward for ever into the everlasting night.

And so I did go, and had eat and drunk at the sixth hour, and gone onward again. And, lo! at the eighth hour, I did thrill sudden with a wondrous great thrilling; for, in verity, it did seem to me that the MasterWord did beat softly about me, out of all the night of the world. And all my heart did throb with great glowings of joy; yet was the beat of the Word unsure, so that I knew not truly whether my spirit had indeed heard aught, for there was immediately a silence, as ever, about mine inward being. Yet, as you shall believe, there was a new hope and strength of courage in all my body and soul.

And I went forward very swift, and all renewed, as it were; and my strength and hope did make naught of any terror that should lie to bar my way, neither did I have further heed of the boulders that lay always upon my path, but did go over them with quick leapings, and a wondrous and thrilling eagerness of the heart within me.

And, sudden, in the end of the tenth hour, I perceived that the mighty walls of blackness that made the sides of the Gorge did be no more there, and that I was come truly upon the end of the Gorge. And I near trembled with hope and astonishment; for when I was gone a little way on, I had ceased to go upward any more, and was come clear out from the mouth of the Gorge, and did peer forth across a mighty country of night.

And it did seem to me as that I was come to a second Land of Strange matters, even as the Night Land where did lie the wonder of the Mighty Pyramid. And surely, I did think within my heart that I was come at last to that far and hidden place of the world where

did be the Lesser Redoubt. But yet was there no place in all that night where did tower the shining lights of the Lesser Pyramid, the which I did hope vainly to perceive. And because that I saw them not, a great heaviness came upon my spirits for a time; but afterward the heaviness did go; for I put Reason to help my courage, and did plan this cause and that to show why that I was not come to sight of the shining embrasures of the Lesser Redoubt. But yet was there left an ache of doubting, as you shall well conceive.

Now this Land was very new and strange, and had a great light in this part, and a wondrous grim darkness in that. And I did pause a great while to determine how that I should go properly. And presently I bethought me of the compass, and did draw it forth, and set it upon the earth, that I should see how it did act. And truly it did go almost as Naani had told to me; so that I was very sure in all my being that I was in verity come anigh to the hidden Refuge. But yet did the compass give me no proper guiding to my way; so that I was no more wise to this end than before, only that I had the comfort of that which it did seem to assure.

And, in a little while, I went forward into the Land, and did hope that I should come presently to some matter to help my choice. And I went first toward a certain great glowing of fire that lay before me, and did seem joined to another great glare that went afar to my left.

And I found the ground of that Land to be very fair for my feet, and to have in this place and that certain bushes, even as it did seem to me, of the kind that we named mossbushes in the Night Land, as you do know. And I made a very good speed, and went thus until I had gone for maybe six long hours. And by that time, I was come anigh to the glowing of light; and did keep now a strong caution to my going; for truly, as I did know from the tellings of the Maid, there were very horrid and dreadful Powers in that Land, and I did well to remember that I was come again to parts where might be the destruction of the spirit. Now I made a pause, and lookt toward the glowing light; and it seemed to me that for a monstrous way unto the right and unto the left, there did be surely a great, hid valley in the earth before me. For the shining did seem as that it came up from out of a valley, as that there burned a deep light in such a place; but yet was I all unsure, and had no proper knowing whether indeed there did be any valley there, but only a strange and luminous shining that did come upward from the earth.

And I made no great haste now to go unto that place; but went down sudden into the bushes, and lay upon my belly, and had a new great fear upon my spirit. And presently, I parted the bushes a little, and made a place for spying.

And I looked a great time unto the place of the light, and now to this part and now to that. And sudden, I saw, as it did seem, a monstrous head within the glowing; for the

glowing did seem at whiles as that it swept to and fore, as should a shining smoke that went obedient to a quiet wind: and so to hide and again to uncover. And in a moment I lost the great face, and was all unsure that ever I had seen aught.

And lo! in a little minute, I did see it again; but whether it did be the shape of some utter monster of eternity even as the Watchers about the Mighty Pyramid or whether it did be no more than a carven mountain of rock, shaped unto the dire picturing of a Monster, I did have no knowing. But I made that I should get hence very quick, and I did turn me about in the bushes, and went upon my hands and knees; and so came at last a great way off.

Now, presently, I came again upon my feet, and did take a new look around that Land. And I had the mouth of the Gorge to my back, and this I perceived by the shining of the firepits that made the place shown to me.

And to the left of the Gorge was an utter blackness, as I did conceive of black and monstrous mountains, through which the Gorge did come. And to the right side of the Gorge there were many low volcanoes, that went always along the feet of the great mountains that made the right wall of the Gorge. And I saw the feet of these dark mountains, because that the light from the little volcanoes made a glare upon the lower slopes.

And so shall you have some knowing of that part of this second Land of Night.

And a good way off, was the shining that I had journeyed unto, and the shining went into a distant light through a part of the Land that lay afar to my left, for it stretched a great and strange way toward me, out of the leftward gloom, and came unto my front, and so away into an utter distance. Yet, though it was so great, you shall not think that it made any huge light in the Land; but was rather as that it had a shining made unto other ends; for it made not a great lightness in the Land.

And you do now perceive something roughly how the Land did seem to my back part and unto my left, and somewhat before my face. And because that I did think to have no profit to my search, if that I went to the left, I made attention unto the Right. And here there was much of darkness; yet oft the shining of fireholes in this place and that amid the darkness. And, as I did look, it grew very plain upon me how great was the spread and drear wideness of that Country of Night; and how that I did be an utter lonesome person in all that dark. And so shall you be with me in sympathy of the utter greatness of my task, and know of the fear that did breed, odd whiles, that I should search until I die, and never find. And you to give me good human understanding.

Now I made no more to delay, but went unto the right, and did keep the chain of the little volcanoes something level to my course; though a great way off. And I went thus with a strange growing of hope, and an excitement, for ten hours, and had eat not then for more than twenty hours, and surely not since the sixth hour of that day and this because that I was so utter shaken from my calmness of going.

And at the tenth hour, I went utter weak, and did seem surely as that I must swoon. And lo! I bethought me how that I was gone so long without aught for my belly. And surely, when I was quiet a time, I eat four of the tablets, and in a good while did feel all renewed, and would rest no more, after that I had drunk some of the water, but went onward; for, in verity, my spirit did be as that it had slain me, if that I had lain down at that time. And this because hope was so fierce in me; for I to feel indeed that I was come near to the Maid.

And I went ten hours more, until that I did truly totter upon my feet, with utter and dreadful weariness; for I had gone now through someways of forty great hours, and had been foolish in mine eating and drinking, as you have perceived; but yet was this to be forgiven; for I was as that I should come any little minute upon the wonder of the Lesser Pyramid, shining afar in the night. Yet, truly, there was nowhere anything that might be likened unto it.

And I lay down there, just as I did be, and with no proper heed to my safety. And I was gone asleep in one moment, as it did seem; and waked not for twelve hours; and then did come suddenly unto knowledge; and thankful was I in the heart that no monster had come upon me in that deadtime of slumbering. And I eat four of the tablets, as was surely due unto me, and drank some of the water, and so gat forward again into the night.

And truly I was mortal stiff and did ache for a great while, and this did be in part because that I had wrapped not the cloak about me, ere I slept; for the Land was bitter cold and did make the blood very chill.

Now when I had gone onward through six hours, I ate and drank; for I did mind now to be wise and keep my strength good within me. And I went onward again at a very great speed, and full of an excitement. And surely, I did be glad at last that the tablets were so easy gone in the mouth, and unfilling to the belly; for I had been without power and patience to eat proper victual.

And at the tenth hour, I saw that there rose a redshining out of the Land before me, as that it came upward from a mighty pit. And I made slow my way, and so, when I was gone on for two great hours more, I saw that monstrous figures went about, against the

red glare of the shining. And I gat me down into the bushes which were very plentiful in that part.

And I stayed there for a certain while, and made a watch upon the redshining and the figures; and, truly, it did seem to me that there were horrid giants in that Land, even as in the Night Land. And afterward, I crept away, and went outward from the little volcanoes, into that part of the Land that was dark, save, as you do mind, for the glare of fireholes in this part and that.

And I went now with an utter care; for the giants had put a new caution into my heart, and I did surely mean that I should live to rescue mine own Maid, and have joy through all my life. And thereafter, I went with the Diskos in my hand, and at each hour that was the sixth, I eat two of the tablets, and drank some of the water, and so did keep my strength very good within me.

Now, presently, I was come to a place where the Land did go downward a great slope, and there was a difference in the earth that went beneath my feet, and no great plenty of the bushes; but only one in this place and one in that, and nowhere any firehole.

And I gat me down and did feel the earth with my hands, and lo! I did find presently smooth stones, and afterward olden shells. And immediately, a great delight took me; for Naani had told how that the Lesser Pyramid stood something nigh to the shore of an ancient sea, that was long dried up in the years of eternity. And surely it might be that I was come down into the dry bottom of that same olden sea, and should presently have sight of the Little Pyramid.

And because that hope was put so fresh into me, I went forward through, maybe, thirty hours, across the olden seabed; but in all that time I had no sight of the lights of the Lesser Redoubt. And a great trouble began to take me; for, indeed, Naani had not told me how great was the sea; and it might be that I should wander a weariful age across it, before that I come to the far side.

And it did come to me, presently, how that I should be wise to see that my way was very straight, so that I waste not my strength in useless wanderings. And I had a great care now to observe that the redshining did be always upon my right, to my rear; and by this reasonable cunning did I make to steer very nicely through the great gloom of that place.

Now, as I did go across the bed of the great sea, I heard strange sounds, now in this part of the darkness, and now in that; and oft did there be a noise, as if things did run this way and that way in the bed of the sea. And once, afar off in the night, there did be a

strange and horrid screaming; so that I did know truly that the monsters of that Land were out, and did go about in the dark.

And, as you shall perceive and understand, I was all unknowing of the lore of that Land; so that I knew not what to think of this strange sound or that, neither knew I what they might portend, but only that, as I did say, there were Monsters abroad. And I could do no more than have my way forward with an utter care always, and be very ready with the Diskos, or to hide, each as maybe according to the need.

And, surely, I went oneandforty hours that day, and eat and drank after every sixth hour. And before this, in the sevenandthirtieth hour, I heard a great roaring and bellowing in the night, coming nigh unto me; and afterward the thudding of monstrous feet, as that a giant ran past me in the darkness, and did make a chase of some creature. And the thudding of the feet and the roaring went far off into the night; and there did seem presently to come back to me from a great way, a little screaming; but of this thing I had no surety; and I abode very hushed in a clump of bush, until quietness was come again all about; for there had been an utter frightening sound in the horrid voice and in the thudding of the great feet.

Now, in the oneandfortieth hour of that day, I came upon the farther shore of the olden sea. But lo! there was nowhere any light to tell me aught of the Lesser Refuge. And truly, a great doubt and bewilderment took me; for, indeed, I could not perceive how it might be that I saw not the lights of the embrasures of the Lesser Pyramid. And a great despair took me; so that I sat down there upon the shore of the olden sea, and had no heed of anything for a while.

But afterward, I ate and drunk, and went into a clump of bush, and wrapt the cloak about me, and so went fast unto sleep, with the Diskos handy to my breast. And, in verity, the pain of the despair and the bewilderment of mine heart did make rather for sleep, than to keep me wakeful; for, indeed, I was half stunned of the brain and of my courage; and did seem now the farther off from the ending of my search than ever I had been.

And I slept six hours, and waked then, sudden. And I leaned up upon mine elbow in the bush, and harked very quiet, perchance some noise had shaken my sleep from me. But, indeed, there was nothing, only that I was wakeful, and did mind me of my trouble of failure. Yet now, I did invent this thing and that thing to make natural account that I was not come to the Lesser Redoubt; and so had hope again within me; yet much also of doubt and bewilderment.

And I eat two of the tablets, and drank some of the water, and again to my journey. And I made that I should keep along the shore of the sea, the which I did through twelve hours, and was then still so much in doubt as ever.

And I ceased from my journeying, and lookt about me over the Land, and lo! I did note how that a weak and strange shining was in the air of the Land, at a great way; as it had been that a far spreaded and faint glowing made a little glare into all the night unto my left and before me.

Now I ate and drank, and made to steady my spirit; for I did fear lest I should feel utter lost in all the night of the world, and to know not where to make any more my search, and so to grow desperate in despair. And this thing you will understand.

And afterward, I did make across that Land, unto the place where it did seem that the dull shining was something bright. And I went thus through eighteen hours, and did make pause at each sixth hour, and ate and drank very resolute; though, in verity, it did seem as that even so small a matter as the tablets did be like to choke me. And by this is it plain to me how great an anguish was come upon my spirit, lest that I was all astray, and should have no joy to succour mine Own.

And thrice in the time that I did go, there did be a running of feet amid the darkness; and odd whiles strange and horrid cryings in the night; so that I put a force upon my despair, and hid me; for, indeed, I had no right to lose care of my life, if there did be any chance yet that I find the Maid.

And lo! in the eighteenth hour, which was truly the thirtieth of that day, I found the shining in the night to be grown very plain, and an utter stinking of sulphur; and truly I did be aware that the Land went upward.

And I made upward through seven hours, and the light did grow more plain, and was of a dull redness, very sombre and heavy. And in the end of six more hours, I ceased to go upward, and did know of a strange low sound, that did be like to no other sound that ever I did hear; and was like to a dull roar that did never have ceased through eternity.

And I went forward unto the light, and the Land to be now as that I went over an upland plain. And I did go thus through five hours, and the low roar did grow ever upon mine ears. And truly! even as I did shape my thoughts to take a caution for my body, I went upward again a little, and came out upon the edge of a mighty cliff, and the low and constant roar did moan upward against me with an everlasting muttering. And I lookt downward a monstrous way, and surely there was spread out a mighty sea, as it did

seem, of dull fire, as that a redhot mud did lap very deep and quiet below me in all that night.

And I lookt outward across the strange sea, and the far side was hid from me; for, surely, there were dull and solemn clouds that came off the sea, and hid the distance from me. And the clouds to glow a little redly; and so to rise, and presently to blacken into the night. And I lookt to the right and to the left, and it was plain that the black cliffs did stretch out both ways, and did go downward ever into that monstrous sea of slow fire. And there were great headlands that went out into the fire, as into a sea; and the fire did lap very quiet about these, and where the fire lapt about them, there did shine and spirt out green flames and vapours at diverse times.

And, indeed, as I did perceive, I was come to an upward sea of fire, as it were the deep inwards of a low and utter monstrous volcano, that was flat of the top and utter big across. And, in verity, I did look downward into the fires of the inward earth, and a very wondrous sight was it, to stand there alone upon the cliffs of that everlasting sea. And a great heat came upward from the dull and grim fire of that gloomy sea, and a reek of sulphur; so that I was like to be choked, and did go backward from the edge of the cliff.

And surely, I was come to the end of that Dark Land upon that side, and had nowhere perceived the Lesser Pyramid in all the night of my travel. And a new despair came upon me; for, indeed, it seemed I was come all astray in the night of the World, and did nowise have any knowing whether I stood near to the Country of the Lesser Redoubt, or whether that I was gone half across the World unto a strange place.

And, then, as the despair troubled my spirit and dulled the beating of my heart, a sudden thought did light up a fresh hope within me; for, indeed, as you do know, I was come upward of a great height, and did surely have a huge view over all that Land; and mayhaps the Lesser Pyramid did lie somewhere in a valley, if, in verity, it did be anywheres at all in that Country. And I turned me from the cliffs, and lookt backward over all the night of the Land; but there was nowhere in all that Country the shining of the Lights of the Lesser Pyramid.

And lo! of a sudden I did know that there was something in the night. And I stared, with a very keen and anxious look. And behold, there was the black shape of a great pyramid afar off in the night, that did show against the shining of the distant light; for it did stand between me and the faroff fires. But until I was come to that place, whence I did look, I had not stood to have it plain against the shining upon the other side of that Land.

And how I did feel in that moment, I have no words to set out unto you. But surely was my heart gracious with thankfulness, and I ready to leap with joy and hope, and all my body thrilled with an excitement that would not have me to be silent; so that, suddenly, I began to shout foolishly across the night. But I came soon to wisdom and silence, as you shall think.

***Freeditorial*** 