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### The Shadow over Capilano

I shivered as a cold breeze swept through the Translink bus. It was February and, by now, we could all see it: a thin layer of snow had enveloped the ground and the roads had been salted and were covered in the slushy residue of snow. As I exhaled, a puffy cloud of condensation exited my mouth and wafted up to the ceiling. “Next stop. . .Lillooet Road,” the robotic voice chimed; I began to gather my belongings in preparation for my departure from the bus. “Next stop. . .Capilano University.” The cluster of students proceeded out of the vehicle, and, like a docile little lamb, I followed the procession onto the moistened concrete. To me, the University had always been somewhat of a special place: situated on the base of Mt. Fromme, the school campus was dominated by a dense foliage, with moss-ridden trees, ferns, and various other flora strewn between the various staircases and buildings that one would walk to and from for their various classes. Walking to one such class, I noticed a strange aura that surrounded a grand douglas fir, which stood out amongst the foliage. As if all rational thought escaped me, a sudden, irresistible urge overtook me: the tree seemingly emanated a dark, inexplicable aura that enticed me to inspect the thing—despite the reality that I was already running late to the first class of the day. Against my better judgement, I trudged through the small pile of snow that had accumulated over the soil, and went to get a better view of this

mysterious tree. As I drew closer to it, I felt a malaise overtake me—not only of the mind, but it was as if my whole body began to move in a torpid state, as one does after immense physical exertion. Nevertheless, I did not falter, and I eventually reached the fir with some effort. As I examined the tree closer, I noticed a deep crevasse near the bottom of its trunk, as if some animal had dug its claws deep into the flesh of the tree and sundered a deep wound into it. A black, tar-like substance oozed out of the gaping hole, and it seemed to radiate a purple aura that darkened as it drew closer to the centre of the void. Overcome by fear, but also by a morbid curiosity, I sampled a bit of the ooze with my index finger. My vision began to blur and the very movement of the wind against the tree's, the swaying of the clouds, and even the peripheral noise of chatter had ceased. Consumed by primordial curiosity, I gazed into the abyss, and plunged my arm into the void.

*“Iä-R’lyeh! Cthulhu fhtagn! Iä! Iä!” A voice reverberated through my skull. I looked around—the little colour that graced the earth had been desaturated, and all that remained was a dull monochrome. The voice became louder, shriller:*

*And They did Bleed,  
They Bled.  
Rejoice, Rejoice!  
The King in Yellow  
Hath come.  
Here in Carcosa,  
They will come.  
Here in Carcosa,  
There will be Blood.  
They will come and  
There will be Blood.*

*The voices rings in my skull—full of fire and scalding, scarlet blood. I dig my nails deep into my faceskin and scream out in anguish. An image of a terrible creature forms in my mind—with thick, black tendrils jutting out from its body and*

*the same purple ooze dripping down from it—appears, looming over the school, as if signalling the coming of some apocalypse. It descends upon the schoolground, tainting the area with its dark aura, which immediately causes the vegetation in the area to decay and wither away. Darkness spreads across the land.*

“Are you alright, Rob? You look like you’re spacing out.” My friend Jeremy sat beside me in class, and was giving me a concerned look. My head throbbed.

“Where—where am I?” I asked.

He gave an awkward chuckle: “You’re in our history class man. Are you sure you’re alright?”

“My head hurts—give me a moment, just have to go to the washroom.”

I stumbled as I got out of my chair, and then walked as quickly as I could to the men’s washroom, up the stairs to the third floor. I found an open stall and proceeded to vomit into the toilet. I felt as if sirens were singing a shrill, piercing cry that echoed throughout the open walls of my whole body, which shook with a veritable terror. After I had expunged the rest of my breakfast from my stomach, I went to rinse out my mouth with sink water. I looked at the mirror: my eyes had become slightly bloodshot, and I had trouble focusing on the image before me, but the rest of myself appeared normal, if a little unkempt.

*“Iä-R’lyeh! Cthulhu fhtagn! Iä! Iä!” That voice, again! I shiver.*

I formed a vice grip around the railing as I descended down the staircase, practically choking the thing as my legs trembled wildly. My history professor had started lecturing again, and gave me a brief glance before returning to the whiteboard and writing down his lecture notes. Jeremy mouthed the words “Are you ok” to me as

I sat down, to which I gave a slight nod. The rest of the lecture was a haze as I tried typing down the lecture notes about the rise of national socialism in Germany, only to be distracted by the lingering anguish that had overwhelmed my mind.

By the end of class, I had regained some of my composure, and the intense pain had dulled into a numbing ache. Jeremy stayed behind, making certain that I was okay.

“Yes, I feel alright,” I replied, “a bit woozy but I’ll be okay.”

“Hey, if you’re feeling up to it, a couple people I know are going to the inaugural Free Speech Club meeting right after this class, in Cedar 136. You’re welcome to come, if you want to.”

“S-sure. I don’t have anything else going on.”

I followed him to the Cedar Building, and into the off-white room. There were a handful of boys about the same age as me. A few of them had unkempt beards, and a few more had various buttons, one with the words “SJW” written on it, then crossed out with a “no” sign. I took a seat beside him and introduced myself. They told me their names in kind.

“We were just talking about this new Jordan Peterson interview—the one with Cathy Newman.”

They showed me a clip of it, then chuckled amongst themselves: “Just look at this stupid bitch get owned,” Michael, the one with the button, said.

I nodded and gave a nervous chuckle. I wasn’t comfortable here, but Jeremy had invited me—I would have felt guilty to leave now. After he had shown me a few more clips from the video, I the haze returned to my mind, accompanied by a familiar pounding: *They will come and there will be Blood.*

“...Next week,” said Christopher, the blond-haired fellow on my left.

I must have zoned out for an indeterminate amount of time, because I had no recollection of what he must have said preceding that.

“Yes, next week,” the others formed an offbeat chorus.

There was a general chatter for a few minutes, and then we gathered our belongings and departed the darkened room. Jeremy approached me as I exited, giving me a slight nod: “Well, what’d you think?”

I shrugged, “It was interesting, I guess.”

His mouth formed into a smile: “Well, if you’re interested in coming next week, you’re free to join. Anyway—see you in History class next Tuesday.”

I nodded and we walked separate ways. I immediately went to investigate the fir that had enraptured me earlier this morning. Only, when I went to the very spot where I had first seen the mighty tree, I saw nothing but leafy ferns and an overturned rock. I searched the area further, thinking that I must have just come to the wrong place; alas, the fir was nowhere to be found. I scrambled around the soil, grabbing at it desperately like a Tantalean grape. *Rejoice, Rejoice! The King in Yellow hath come.* My scavenge remained fruitless. Defeated, I decided to make my way to the bus stop, stumbling my way there until I sat firmly in the seat of the bus. Attempting to close my eyes and rest, I saw vague, frozen images in time and space—as one does when looking at the reflection of the sun for too long, and finds themselves with tinges of blood-red in their eyes. The outside scenery flew by as images on a zoetrope do, stopping and starting in an uncontrollable stutter.

And then I found myself in my house, in my bedroom. The light above me flickered a bit as I tried to piece together my journey home, tried to remember how I

must have gotten here. I scratched at my head and looked outside: the dim glow of dusklight had covered the surrounding trees. Although, upon closer inspection, the area appeared to be drained of all colour and life. A thick, cobweb-like substance covered the branches of the tree. As I lifted myself out of my chair, I found myself foot-deep in the tarry ooze. Making my way upstairs, I trudged through the cold and bleak substance with every step. The echoes of whispering pounded in my head: *They have gone to the Yellow King. We are not worthy, but They have ascended. Soon, we will all. Soon, our Day of Reckoning will come.*

“Hello, Robert.”

It was Christopher, from earlier today. His head had turned narrow, with bulging, watery blue eyes that seemed pried open. His mouth formed a wide grimace that almost reached from ear to ear. He stuck a long, greasy tongue out of his mouth and he licked around his nose and chin.

“W-what are you doing in my house?” I demanded.

As he drifted towards me, his head contorted and spasmed in an almost mechanical way. “Get away from me!” I yelled at him. His neck jutted and turned until his head practically formed a ninety degree angle, and a large appendage spurted out of his neck, covered in blood. The blade-like thing made a slash at me that I dodged.

“Join us, Robert,” he uttered, “join us, next week. Join us in Carcosa.”

Ducking underneath the swiping tendril, and ran towards the kitchen, hearing the occasional dripping of blood and ooze follow me down the hallway. I fumbled through the kitchen drawer and grabbed at the first knife I could find. As I turned

around, a massive, mantis-like creature loomed over me. Dangling from its chest was the severed, mangled head of Christopher, whose eyes had whitened over.

“See...the...Yellow...King,” his mouth formed the words forcefully, as if moved by some mechanical device.

I went to jab at the grotesque monster, and was swiped to the floor by one of its lower arms. The thing stepped on me and pinned my body down, licking at my face with its black, slimy tongue. I stabbed it in the abdomen, and it let out an ear-piercing squeal, letting me free in the process. I sprinted down the hallway again into the main bedroom before shutting the door closed. I dove behind the ottoman, praying that it would provide me with enough shelter to hide under. The door came crashing down and the terrifying beast trampled into the bedroom.

“Come out, Robert. We’re waiting for you,” he said.

I could hear the thing moving around its feelers on the bed and the floor. I realised very quickly that if I wanted to survive, I would have to make a move and go on the attack. As I noticed the thing’s frontal legs pass by the ottoman, I took the chance to spring up, using the ottoman to leap off of, and plunged my knife into the hard carapace of the insectoid. He let out another wail and shook his back violently, swatting at me with its right arm. The spikes on his arm dug into my backside. I winced in pain, but held onto the grip of the knife, digging it deeper into where I thought must be his heart. The shaking became less violent, and then stopped altogether, as the thing shriveled into a foetal position. I sat there and panted for a while, but not long afterward I began to feel an increasing pain around where he had wounded me. The aching ran up along my spine and into my forehead, and a blackness soon shrouded my eyes.

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“Next stop. . .Capilano University.” I woke up to the sound of the bus grinding to a halt. As a fellow student was getting off the bus, I tried getting their attention:

“Wh—what day is it?” I demanded.

They gave me a quizzical look: “February 23?”

“And the year?”

“...2018.”

I sighed and thanked them for their troubles, then gathered my belongings and walked off the bus. Taking shelter in the nearby passenger refuge, I felt my back for any signs of trauma or wounding: the area where I had been wounded did indeed sting, and when I examined my back in a bathroom mirror later, my suspicions were confirmed that the wound, while treated and partially healed, remained on my back. I winced as I felt the wound on my back. Puss oozed out of the wound, but it didn't seem to be infected upon a closer glance. I buttoned my shirt and headed down the staircase towards the history classroom. Descending the stairwell, I noticed a dark, dense fog covering the campus, and felt the faintest of chills crawling down my spine. At the bottom of the stairs, Jeremy's figure lingered at the entrance to the second floor doorway.

“Hello, Robert,” he said. I thought I saw a purple glint in his eye, but it must have been a reflection of the light coming from outside.

“Hi Jerr,” I said.

He moved toward me and grabbed me by the wrist. I winced and struggled to unhinge his arm from mine. He looked at me and smiled.

“Coming today?” he asked.



“To history class?”

*We gather ‘round the fire.  
The stakes have been drawn.  
The sheep have been herded.  
The flock gathers into the fire.  
We light the torch, set it aflame.  
It starts at the feet, and the  
Howling commences. We  
Watch with glee as the human flesh  
Melts, as the body is set alight.  
Hail, Yellow King,  
Hail!*

He let go of my arm and proceeded through the doorway and down the hallway. I stood silent for a moment, with a muted face. A nausea overtook me, and I rushed to the washroom once again, vomiting just as I reached the toilet. I began to feel dizzy, and the my vision faded to black.

A loud banging of the bathroom door awoke me. An Asian girl with long, braided hair stood beside me. She looked at me with horror and, when I went to speak, she silenced my mouth with her open palm. I muffled a yell into hand, until I heard the bathroom door creak open, followed by the sound of slithering across the tiled floor.

“Ra...chel,” I heard the sound of Jeremy’s voice—but it had distorted. I dared not look outside the bathroom stall to see what he had become.

“I can smell you, Rachel. The ritual has been prepared.”

A tentacle slid under the stall door, and started to feel along the floor and walls of the bathroom stall. Rachel dug a hand into her coat pocket and procured a switchblade from it. She pressed the silver button, and the blade sprung outward. Without hesitation, she plunged it into the tentacle, and then kicked the stall door into Jeremy’s face as he let out a cry. She lept at him and stabbed him in his eye.

“My eye! I can’t see!” he shrieked.

Rachel looked at me and yelled, “What’re you doing? Run!”

I snapped out of my bedazzled state and followed her into the hall. As the two of us descended the stairway, the doorway above us swung open. We were being pursued. We took a quick left turn, down the hallway. She stopped in front of a locked door, punching in the code and swinging the door open. She beckoned me into the room, and then slammed the door shut.

There was a bit of cardboard covering the rectangular door window, blocking any attempts to see in or out. Inside was a long couch, a couple bean bags, and enough comforts to please at least half a dozen people at once: a television in the right hand corner; a kettle and a teapot, with a handful of Earl Grey, English Breakfast, and Jasmine tea bags—and a few others I didn’t recognise; and a refrigerator. As I continued to inspect the room, I asked in wonderment:

“What *is* this room?”

“Welcome to the Queer Room,” she answered, “we’re safe here as long as that door is closed—they can’t get in here.”

“But we can’t get out?”

“It’s not safe, not even for you.”

“What does *that* mean?”

“Somebody recently attacked you at your house, yeah?”

I nodded.

“They knock you out and take you in, until you think, speak, and look the way they do.”

“And what about—what about people *like you*?”

She turned her gaze away from mine and paused.

“Let me make us some tea, and I’ll tell you,” she said.

I made myself comfortable on one of the bean bags as she brewed the tea. We were both silent for a while, until the tea had been fully steeped—she grabbed two mugs, poured the tea, and handed me my cup before sitting down beside me.

“You aren’t one of them yet, so I assume you’re at least half-decent,” she started.

“I don’t get along with those alt-right types if that’s what you mean,” I said.

She nodded and then said, “I was completely oblivious to it before last year. You know, my parents never warmed up to the idea of me—” she looked down at her waist, “—transitioning. But they didn’t hate me for it either.”

“So you’re a—”

“I’m a *girl*,” she interrupted me.

“Right. I’m sorry.”

“It’s fine,” she said as she let out a sigh. “So before I finished transitioning last year I dressed up a lot like this and it was pretty obvious that—you know. Most people got it. I got weird looks every now and then, but most people didn’t care. Then these guys—the free speech club or whatever—they find me. They start following me wherever I go and they harass me, call me a boy and call me a faggot and say that I’m pretending.”

She paused.

“And then, one night, I’m walking to the bus stop, the one near the Bosa building, and out of the corner of my eye I see the guy with blond hair—I think Chris is his name. But he isn’t Chris. His face has gotten bloated and his eyes have glazed

over. And his teeth are sharp when he smiles. I tried running away from him, but it was slippery and late and I was all alone. And I fell. And—” tears welled up in her eyes.

“—that’s how I lost my virginity.”

The sound of the clock’s ticking precipitated across the room’s walls as I crafted my response.

“I’m so, so sorry, Rachel,” I said.

“Thank you,” she paused, “You know, you’re the first person I’ve really told the whole truth to—beside my therapist.”

“What? Why?”

“They wouldn’t believe me—not even my therapist did. Tried to explain it all away as built up trauma after transitioning. The cops would never believe me. My own family would never. It’s not a safe world for people—well, for people like me.”

I embraced her in my arms and we wept together for some time. Words would never express the compassion I felt for her—but I hoped that, by doing this, she at least knew that I was in solidarity.

“So, why are they after you?” I asked.

“Not just me, Rob. Before all this started to happen, this room was filled with queer, trans, gay—all sorts of folk. And then they started disappearing. And now it’s just me. They picked us off, one by one, and we just stood by and we did nothing. We were paralysed by fear and we all turned inward at a time we needed to bond together. Now I’m all alone.”

“You’re not alone.”

“So, what? We’re just gonna go out there and fight them, you and me?”

“What other choice do we have—just hide here ‘til we whittle away and die?”

There was a long pause.

“Look, we don’t have a chance of living if they pick us off one by one. But, maybe, if we fight together. . .” I said.

She nodded and took my hand in her’s.

“Let’s go,” she said.

And she opened the door and led me outside.

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