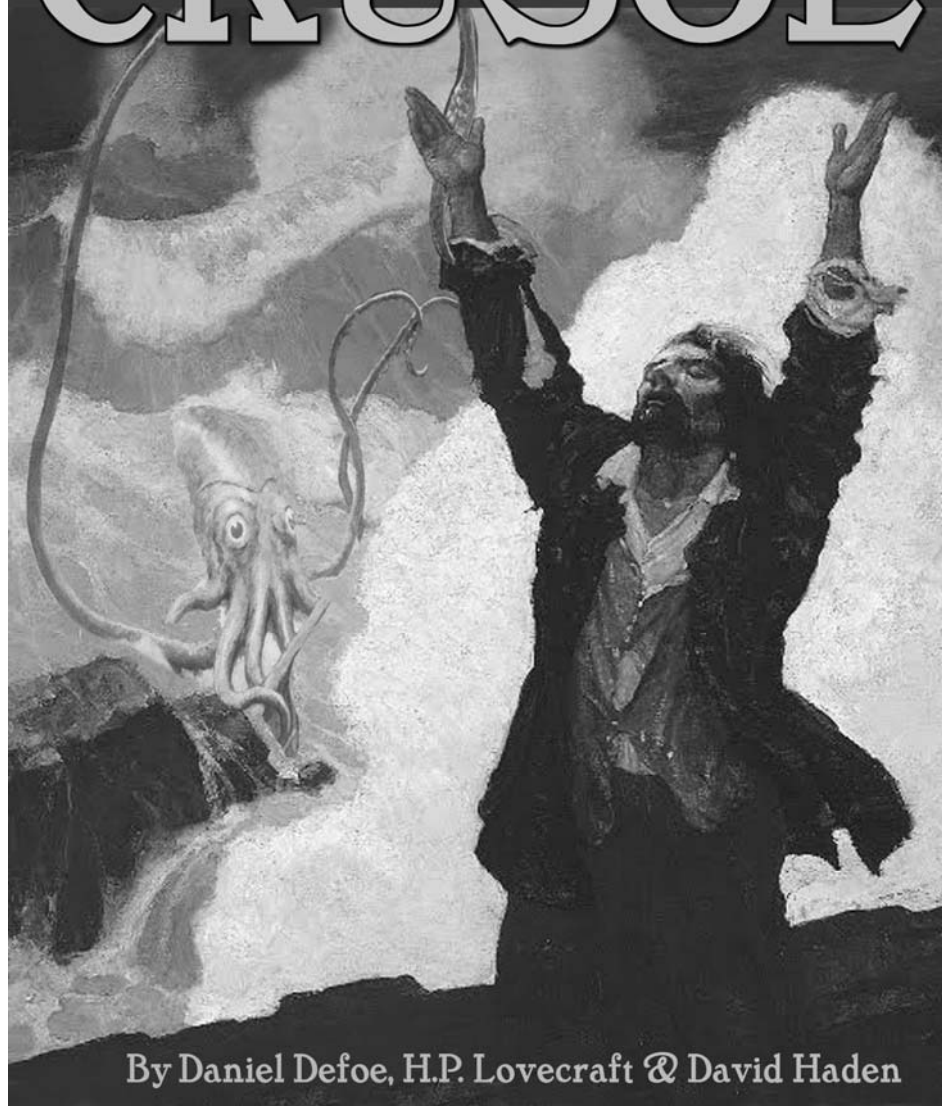


FREE SAMPLE ONLY.

The Macabre Later Adventures of ROBINSON CRUSOE
as transcribed from an ancient secret manuscript
by H.P. LOVECRAFT

CRUSOE



By Daniel Defoe, H.P. Lovecraft & David Haden

CRUSOE

Being

the MACABRE Later Adventures of
ROBINSON CRUSOE, as transcribed
from an ancient manuscript and most carefully
edited by *Mr. H.P. Lovecraft.*



by

Daniel Defoe, H.P. Lovecraft, and David Haden.

“And I too felt that I would pray. Yet I liked not to pray to a jealous God [...]; so I bethought me, instead, of Sheol Nugganoth, whom the men of the jungle have long since deserted, who is now unworshipped and alone; and to him I prayed”. — from *Idle Days on the Yann* (1912), by Lord Dunsany.

Preface to the *Crusoe* manuscript, by H.P. Lovecraft.

I am writing this for the benefit of posterity, since the manuscript enclosed with this note will not be found until after my death. I have appointed Robert H. Barlow as my literary executor, and he alone knows the truth of this matter. The truth is this; that when I was in New York in 1925 I fell into some parlous financial circumstances. I was seeking revision work of any kind. It was then that an old antiquarian sought me out in a café in the Red Hook district, one dismal March morning. He said he had heard of my occult tendencies, and had a most strange and rare manuscript that required a gentleman of especial sensitivity and learning to transcribe and make ready for publication. Now of course I am a life-long and thoroughgoing materialist and atheist, yet I did not disabuse him of his misconception. On seeing my motions of interest, he promptly showed me a folder containing a fat sheaf of yellowed hand-written papers, and explained that they had been passed down among the Crusoe family of Devonshire, England, for a period of over two centuries. The last owners had emigrated to New York in the early 1900s. There had been some unplaceable and growing unease among the family about the contents of the papers, perhaps related to some taint upon their good ancestry, and curious whispers of a sense of dread even at the touch of the very paper. Ten years later the owners converted to become Baptists, and had consequently taken the opportunity to gladly dispose of the manuscript to a rare book dealer in New York. They had taken a good price, even though the manuscript

had been written in code. It had, by that route, come into the possession of this curious old man.

I asked to read the papers and he smiled indulgently as I saw immediately their encryption using some complex cipher. I looked up sharply and queried the old man about this, and he stated that he had tried for many years to unlock the secret of the code, but that now his eyesight was so failing badly even strong eyeglasses would not remedy it. So I took his curious job, for he paid a little in advance, and he promised to pay very well if I could but unlock the code, and yet more should I be able to make the manuscript fit for publication. And the idea of cracking a cipher intrigued me very much.

I am familiar with the obscure methods that wily librarians use to cloak the position of certain books they do not wish to be read by the idly curious. So I was able to find a certain tome among the rare books in the stacks of the Library at the New York Museum of Antiquities. This put me on the right track. It led me to the title of an equally obscure book containing nautical codes and ciphers of the 17th century. This code book was then borrowed for me from an unknown source, and in a very roundabout way, via a Theosophist friend. I believe he may have had some distant connection with the U.S. Navy archivists in Boston. With the aid of the valuable information this little volume contained, I managed to crack the basic code in a little over a week. The effort took no little deduction on my part, and mathematics is not my strongest talent. One or two of the more advanced sections still eluded me, though. I then shut myself away from my friends of the

Kalem Club and set to work on a full uncovering and accurate translation into plain English.

I uncovered a most dreadful tale of one Mr. Robinson Crusoe. Of course, I had in my youth read a juvenile edition of Daniel Defoe's famous account Mr. Crusoe's life on his isolated island, and had thrilled at his ingenious improvisations and eventual rescue. Yet I found that, here in my own hands, was the full and ghastly account of Crusoe's *later* adventures, as truthfully told by the man himself, rather than via the revision services of Defoe. I will admit that I found Mr. Crusoe's language somewhat rougher than that of Defoe, and I have corrected it as well as I can. Some small coded sections are still obscure to me, and in other cases only certain words remain obscured by a more complex cipher. I have thoroughly abridged, corrected, and added my own small sections, so as to give a final account that is faithful to the words, account, and the spirit of the original manuscript.

One month after I began my thrilling intellectual labour, the old man did not return to check on my progress. He merely sent a short note to my rooms; saying that he was ill, and that I should continue in my work. After six weeks did he did not come, as arranged, for his parcel and the finished work. It was only late in May of 1925, as I was engaged in my periodic and habitual tracking-back through the local news in the public library — for I was then too poor to afford even an evening paper, even if I had fancied risking my neck by venturing onto the rough streets of Red Hook at evening to purchase one — that I learned of the tragic murder of an old man, committed by an unnamed

and as yet uncaptured youth, possibly a sailor. I have ever since then kept the Crusoe manuscript in my careful possession. It will soon be Mr. Barlow's decision as to what to do with it and its translation. He is a young and sensitive lad of great intelligence, and I hope he will make up his own mind on this matter.

Crusoe's account, although it begins in normal enough fashion, becomes an eerie and finally a dreadful one. I could have not published it in my lifetime, nor would I have seen it published by others; for I fear that it would simply not have been believed. Its later facts are too close, and give such painful corroboration, to some of my own fictional stories; that I would have been accused of perpetrating a hoax or worse. Yet, this is the original and true manuscript, or as best as I have been able to decode and patch it together and translate it into modern and readable English. The truth or falsity of it is now to be judged only by future readers.

Mr. Howard Philips Lovecraft, of Providence, R.I.

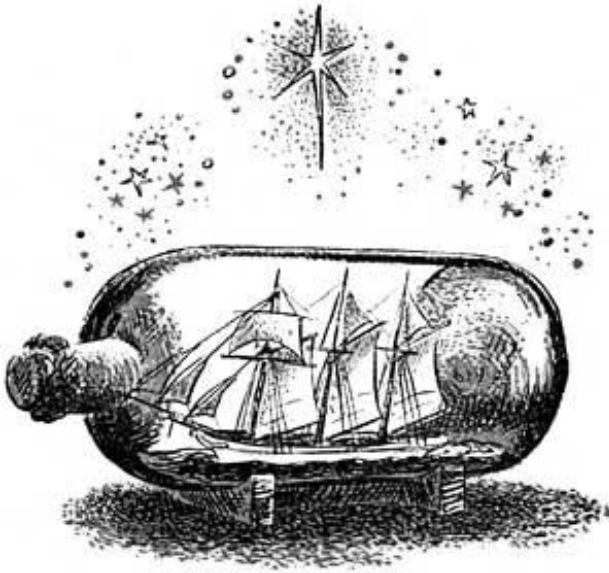
2nd January 1937.

My name is Mr. Robinson Crusoe. I had wished that, after thirty five years' affliction, I might be allowed to have a calm and happy experience of every state of middle and old age. At nearly sixty-one years of age it seemed good to be allowed to stay at home in England, and to have done with the venturing life and fortune seeking among rough men in far parts of the world. I wished only to tend my farm, to pursue my occasional studies of natural philosophy, and to weave tales of my true adventures for the younger folk — they who now grow up happy in the light of knowledge and reason. I wished no foreign adventures, even if I had gained ten thousand pounds.

After my return to England I had purchased a little farm in the county of Devonshire. I had a convenient house upon it, and the land about it, I found, was capable of great improvement; and it was many ways suited to my inclination, which delighted in cultivating, managing, planting, and improving of land. Being in an inland and hilly part of that county I was rather well removed from the chance of conversing among sailors, and thus learning of things relating to the remote and darker parts of the world. Yet I heard tell, occasionally, of the miserable everyday world that was forever busy on the sea coast; labouring for bread and fish, then squandering any spare pennies in vile excesses or empty pleasures at the taverns and bear pits. I envied them not. My quiet house put me in mind of the life I lived in my kingdom amid the ocean, the island, for it had taught me to search farther than the ribald human enjoyments for a full felicity of life.

Yet, in particular, the desire of seeing my new plantation in my island, and the colony men I left there, ran in my head continually. I

dreamed of it all night, and my imagination ran upon it, for those parts of the day when I was not occupied in tasks. My fancy worked so steadily and strongly upon it that I talked of it in my sleep; in short, nothing could remove it out of my mind.



Then a haunting vision began to creep into my dreams, in which I saw again the savagely bright and clustering star-fields, such as one sees on clear nights at sea, so sharp reflected in the clear waters, and I saw floating over all some strange and unearthly creatures. I have often heard persons of good judgment say ghosts and apparitions arise only owing to the strength of imagination; that there is no such thing as a dimensionless spirit appearing, or a great beast walking, or of certain bright stars that bring numinous dreams to the minds of dreamers; that there is nothing but shadow and vapour in all superstition. They really know nothing of the matter.

The vapours began to infest my sickening mind with wandering fancies in those wretched nights in the Winter of 1692: but this I know, that my imagination worked up to such a height, and brought me into such excess of dreaming, that I actually supposed myself often upon the spot, at my old Castle or fort on the island, behind the trees and with all the stars arrayed above at night; and I saw my old Spaniard, Friday's father, and the reprobate sailors I left upon the island. I fancied I talked with them, and looked at them steadily, though I was broad awake, as at persons just before me; and this I did till I often frightened myself with the images my fancy represented to me.

There were also other and yet more terrible dreams. One time, in my sleep, I saw that a cult of savages had descended upon the island, bringing with them a monstrous idol, and barbarously attempted to murder all there, by means of making a human sacrifice to a nameless thing. This was so warm in my imagination, that when I woke I could not be persuaded it was not a dream. I was convinced that, however I came to form such things in my dreams, and what secret converse of spirits injected it, much of it was *true*.

In this kind of distressed temper I lived some years; I soon had no enjoyment of my life, no pleasant hours, and no agreeable diversions. One night my young doctor came for a supper and he very seriously told that he believed there was some secret, powerful impulse upon me, and there was no resisting it; and that it seemed my duty to my own self to go to sea again. He talked of the sea-fever that gets sailors after they have been on land for a few years, and which has to be

obeyed. I tried to correct my wandering fancy, and began to argue with myself sedately what business I had after threescore years, and after such a life of tedious sufferings and disasters, to rush into yet new hazards? I resolved to resist the sea-fever and not to venture forth from my door.

Then one blow unhinged me at once. It drove me, by its very consequences, into a deep relapse of the wandering disposition which was born in my very blood. Like the return of a violent distemper, the fever for travel came on with an irresistible force upon me. This special blow was the attack of a vile Press Gang.



These fiends roved the backwaters of the Devon countryside with shielded torches on moonless nights, setting upon anyone who ventured abroad in the dark or whose cottage or rick they could invade.

The Gangs snatch those sorry persons up and carry them off by force; to be pressed into a slave-like service among certain ship crews bound for dangerous waters.

Three such evil men crept through my gate one dusky evening in late March of 1693, sliding about my house in the growing dark; yet I heard them before I saw them, and I armed myself well and barred all doors and windows but one. I was still then a strong man, and I roared out of my door and beat them off with a stout club and threw a grievously sharp sickle about as they tried to rush me. They were much aggrieved and had their skulls cracked and their blood was let, before I was able to get back into my house and throw down the wooden bars. The men then rampaged about the yard, wrecking the gates and killing the livestock, and vowing in loud inhuman screams that my farm should be ruined if they could not carry me bodily away to the sea. I am most thankfully that they carried no flint and tinder with them — or if they did then they failed to strike a fire, perhaps due to the especially damp March weather of that year.

After two days in my house I was sure they were long departed. I unbarred my doors and emerged from my house into desolation and mud. I followed a thick trail of blood and found one man dead in the lane, sprawled wet and festering upon the dewy bank. He reminded me a little of those reprobate sailors I had left to dwell upon my island. It was then that my thoughts ran all away again, into the old affair; my head was quite turned with the whimsies of foreign adventures; and my farm, my garden, my cattle, my few servants — which before had entirely possessed me — were as nothing to me. I resolved to leave off

my small plot, let my farm, and return to the port of London; and in a few months after I did so.



When I came to London, I was still as uneasy as I was before in that place; I had no relish for the sprawling city, no employment in its thriving and stinking byways, nothing to do but to saunter about like an idle and useless person. To be idle was the thing which I loathed, of all circumstances of life. There were times when I felt I should rather be back on my farm, spending a month in making a plough board.

It was then the early Springtime of the year 1693, and after some wet weeks in London I discovered my nephew had come home from a short voyage to Bilbao. I had raised him for the sea, as I have previously recounted in my tale of my time on the island, and he now had his first command of a ship. He came to me when he heard I was

in the city, and told me that some merchants of his acquaintance had been proposing a voyage to the East Indies, and to China, as private traders. “And now, uncle,” said he, “if you will go to sea with me, I will engage to land you upon your old habitation in the island; for we are to touch at the Brazils. That will be better than walking about here, like a man with nothing to do, and spending your time in staring at the nonsense and ignorance of our Pagan Englishmen.”



Nothing can be a greater demonstration of a future evolved state of humanity, and of the existence of an invisible world, than the concurrence of events with the idea of things which we form in our minds and dreams, perfectly reserved and kept in secret, and not communicated to any in the world. My nephew knew nothing of how far my curious yearning for wandering and exploring was returned

upon me. In my weeks in London I had formed the wish to go to Lisbon in Portugal, and there to consult with my old sea-captain; and if it was rational and practicable, I would take a ship with colonists from Lisbon and see the island again, and what was become of my people there, and bolster their numbers with families of colonists. I had pleased myself with the thoughts of peopling the place, and carrying decent inhabitants hence, getting a patent for the possession and I know not what. In the middle of all this, in comes my nephew, as I have said, with his notion of carrying me to the East Indies.

I paused a while at his words, and looked warily and steadily at him. "I hope it may not be an unlucky proposal, sir," says he, marking my gaze. "But," said I, "the nub of it is; can you take me up again on your return? I do not wish to be marooned there again". He told me it would not be possible to do so, a fact which I had suspected; he said that the merchants would never allow him to come that way with a laden ship of such value, it being a month's sail or more out of his way. This was very rational; but we both found out a remedy for it, which was to carry a framed sloop on board the ship. This, being taken in pieces, might, by the help of some few carpenters and some dabbings of caulk be set up again in the island, and finished fit to go to sea in a few days.

On hearing this good plan I had an irresistible desire for the voyage he proposed. I then looked for settlers and initially found none. As I nearly despaired of finding families, there came directly to me a young Priest and he suggested ten Irish families all of the same clan. These were some who had fled to England when the War of the Grand

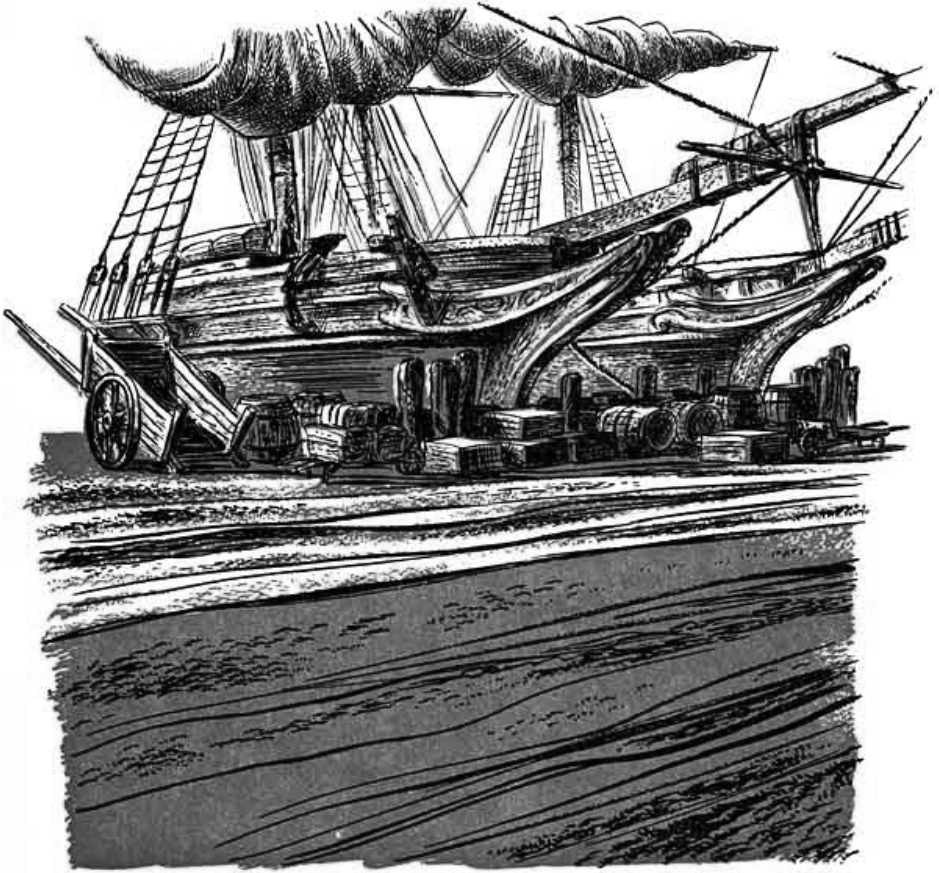
Alliance was spread into Ireland by William III and James II. In the taverns I later heard some dark mutterings about these people among their own folk, but I discounted this as clannish rivalry and petty religious differences. For myself, I cared little for religion and tried to see the quality of men apart from their beliefs. These Irish were sturdy enough for my purpose, and somewhat desperate for a new start having encountered much prejudice in London. They had two Priests with them, and the presence of these on the voyage sealed the bargain. For these people, and from my own fortune, I arranged a second ship to carry them. This was the Danish merchant ship, the *Sainte Dorothea*, then in London and for hire, and the captain formed a plan in which I would profit and which might also bear me back to England. This plan was to ship back cacao from Venezuela, for the chocolate drink was then much in demand in the coffee houses of London. He would carry me also. Yet still my nephew was moved to take the framed sloop with us, as careful insurance for my safe return.

I made a fresh will and testament at the lawyers, settled the renting of my farm and estate with the servants included, and signed onboard my nephew's ship. This was the HMS *Erebus*, and she was ready to sail about the beginning of January 1694-5; and I went on board, in the Downs, on the 8th. Besides that sloop which I mentioned above, a very considerable cargo of all kinds of necessary things had been shipped aboard for the supply of my little colony. If I did not find my island in good condition, then I resolved to leave it so. The colonists I had recruited sailed in tandem with the *Erebus*, well

provisioned aboard the *Dorothea*. The War of the Grand Alliance, latterly called the Nine Years' War, was still raging in the nearer Atlantic, and the *Dorothea* also carried guns in case of attack. If our two ships were to become separated, we had marked charts that should bring us into alignment again near the mouth of the Orinoco River.



I had not such bad luck in starting this voyage as I had been used to meet with. Yet contrary winds first put us to the northward, and we were obliged to put in at Galway, in Ireland, where we lay wind-bound two-and-twenty days; but we found that provisions there were exceeding cheap, and in the utmost plenty; so that while we lay here we never touched the ship's stores, but rather added to them. Yet we did lose one family of the Irish, who decided to take up with their old country after hearing certain wild rumour and legendry from their kinfolk in the sea-taverns.



The *Erebus* and *Dorothea* set out on the 5th of April from Ireland, and we had a very fair gale of wind for some days, and then a calmer time. As I remember, it might be about the 20th of April in the late evening fog, when the mate, having the watch, came into the round-house and told us he saw a flash of fire, and heard a gun fired; and while he was telling us of it, a boy came in and told us the boatswain heard another. This made us all run out upon the quarter-deck, where for a while we heard nothing; but in a few minutes we saw a very great light, and found that there was some ship on fire at sea. We feared it might be the *Dorothea*, for she was sailing off from us in that general

direction. The nearer we sailed, the greater the light appeared; though, the weather being hazy, we could not perceive anything but the light for a while. In about half-an-hour's sailing, the weather clearing up a little, we could plainly discern that it was a merchant ship on fire in the middle of the sea, and we knew her for the *Dorothea*. Upon this sight I immediately ordered that five guns should be fired, one soon after another, that we might give notice to them that there was help for them at hand.

We lay by some time upon this, only driving onward as the burning ship drove, when at first daylight; to our great terror, the ship's powder kegs and gun room blew her up in the air. We saw no small boats putting out from the wreck. In a few minutes all the fire was out, and the rest of the ship was sunk. We hung lanterns from the weather pin-rails that night, and kept firing small guns on the half-hour all the night long, to let any survivors know there was a ship not far off.

About eight o'clock in the morning we discovered the ship's boats by the help of our spy-glass. There were two boats, both thronged with people, and deep in the water. We immediately spread our ancient British flag, to let them know we saw them, and hung a waft out, as a signal for them to come on board. We dropped more sail and little more than half-an-hour later we came up alongside them; and took them all in. Together with some crew there were less than fifty men, women, and children, or perhaps four families of the nine that had left Galway. On the fire spreading they had despaired of sailing back to Ireland, or of finding us, and had hoped in their long-boats to strike out for the banks of Newfoundland. There they had perhaps hoped to

take some fish, to sustain them till they might go on shore in New England. But there were so many chances against them; such as storms, rains and cold, to benumb and perish their limbs; contrary winds, to keep them out and starve them; that it would have been next to miraculous if they had managed to reach Boston or Providence from their wrecked ship.



In the midst of their consternation, every one being hopeless and ready to despair, the merchant captain had heard our guns and seen our lights. As they came aboard there were some in tears; some raging and tearing themselves, as if they had been in the greatest agonies of sorrow; some stark raving and downright lunatic; some ran about the ship stamping with their feet, others wringing their hands and talking of a 'fire demon'; some were dancing, some singing, some laughing, more crying, many quite dumb, not able to speak a word; others sick and vomiting; several swooning and ready to faint; and a few were

crossing themselves and giving God thanks in queer terms which I took perhaps to be their own Gaelic language. The insane passion was too strong for these Godly ones at first, and they were not able to master it: then were thrown into ecstasies, and a kind of trembling frenzy. I am not philosopher enough to determine the cause, nor could I get the cause of the fire from any of them; but nothing I had ever seen before came up to it. This mad mummerly then infected the silent ones of the rescued party. A man that we saw this minute dumb, and, as it were, stupid and confounded, would the next minute be dancing and hallooing like an antic; and the next moment be tearing his hair, biting down on his own fingers, or pulling his clothes to pieces, and stamping them under his feet like a madman; in a few moments after that we would have him all in tears, then sick, swooning, and, had not immediate help been had, he would in a few moments have been dead. Thus it was, not with one or two, or ten or twenty, but with the greatest part of them; and, if I remember right, our surgeon was obliged to let blood of about thirty persons.

I saw that the two Priests were among them: one an old man, and the other a young man; and that which was strangest was, the oldest man was the worst. As soon as he set his foot on board our ship, and saw himself safe, he dropped down stone dead to all appearance. Not the least sign of life could be perceived in him; our surgeon applied proper remedies to recover him, and was the only man in the ship that believed the old priest was not a corpse. At length the doctor opened a vein in his arm, having first chafed and rubbed the part, so as to warm it as much as possible. Upon this the blood, which only dropped a little onto the floor at first, then began flowing freely — and in three

minutes after this the man opened his eyes. A quarter of an hour after that he spoke, grew better, and after the blood was stopped, he walked about, told us he was perfectly well, and took a dram of peppery cordial which the surgeon gave him. About a quarter of an hour after this two of our boys came running to the surgeon and told him the old priest was gone stark mad. It seems he had begun to revolve the change of his circumstances in his mind, and again this put him into an ecstasy of joy. His spirits whirled about faster than the vessels could convey them, the blood grew hot and feverish, and the man was as fit for Bedlam as any creature that ever was in it. Since the doctor had done all he could, I had the old man strapped up with thick leathern belts and then confined to the brig for the duration of his fit.

The younger Priest behaved with great command of his passions, and was really an example of a serious, well governed mind. Yet there was something I did not like about him. The man was altogether too tight. He contained a kind of flinty zeal that was as unnerving as the old man's madness. At his first coming on board the ship he threw himself flat on his face, prostrating himself in thankfulness for his deliverance. He continued in that posture about three minutes. I told him I had no need to thank God for it, nor should he thank me for it, for I had merely done what reason and humanity dictated to all men. After this the young Priest applied himself calmly and coldly to his countrymen, and laboured to compose them: he persuaded, entreated, argued, reasoned with them in a strange dialect, and showed them an old book that he was careful not to let the crew see. By this means he did his utmost to keep his flock within the exercise of their reason; and with some he had success, though others were for a time out of all

government of themselves. Still, for all his ministry, I did not trust the man. One of the older men later whispered to me in his madness; “I know not what the matter is with him,” says he, “but, on my conscience, I think he is a heretic in his heart, and he has been obliged to conceal himself for fear of the Inquisition.” Not being able to put the old farming man out of his talk, of which he was very opinionated or conceited, I did not know if it was the truth, or the madness talking through him.

I began to watch the young Priest carefully, and I believe he noticed this and thereafter used reserve in many of his expressions, to prevent stirring in me any suspicion. I scarce heard him once call on the Blessed Virgin, or mention St. Jago, or his guardian angel, though this is so common with the rest of them. Of his mysterious book I could gain no sure glimpse, yet I felt sure it was not a Bible.

We were somewhat disordered by these psychic extravagances among our new guests for the first day; but after they had retired to lodgings below they became calmer, and we provided for them as well as our ship would allow, and most of them slept heartily. When most had returned to their senses their captain said they had saved some money and some things of value in their boats, caught hastily out of the flames, and if we would accept it they were ordered to make an offer of it to us. They now desired not to go to my island but to be set on shore somewhere in our way, and would this make their way to the Massachusetts Bay Colony where they had contacts at Salem and Boston. For there was then said to be

a considerable number of Catholics secretly in the colonial capital. The Irish could not stay aboard the *Erebus* and reach my island, since our provisions were not enough to feed fifty extra mouths.

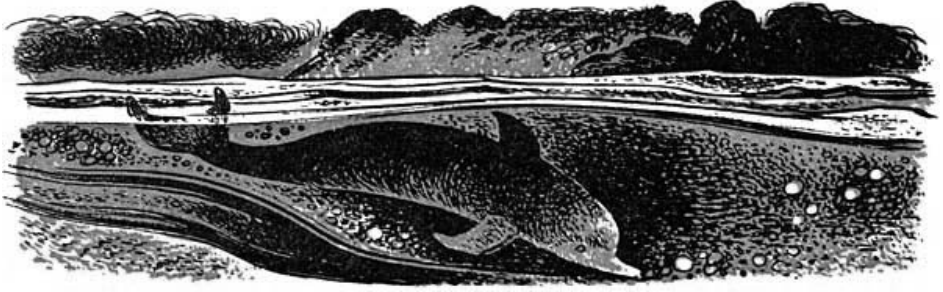


Knowing at first hand of the perilous circumstances of such abandoning — especially as we were at that time near another war with France, and the Spanish ports were none too friendly to English ships — I told them that was an exceeding difficulty to us, for our ship was bound to the East Indies via the Cape. Though we were driven out of our course to the westward a very great way to take them to my island, we could not now change our voyage northward on their particular account; nor could my nephew, the captain, answer it to the freighters, with whom he was under charter to pursue his voyage by way of Brazil. All that I knew we could do for them was to put ourselves in the way of meeting with other ships homeward bound from the West Indies, and thus get them a passage, if possible before starvation set in, to England or Ireland.

They were in very great consternation, especially the families, at the notion of being half-starved or carried away to the East Indies, for I believe now what their Priest must have spoken to them of the unspeakable and barbarous practices practiced to placate the ancient and terrible gods of those Islands. They then entreated my nephew and I that, since the Erebus was driven so far to the westward, we should hold on the same course to the banks of Newfoundland, where it was probable we might meet with some ship or fishing boats they might hire to carry them into Providence or Boston.

I thought this was but a reasonable request on their part, and it would mean that they would not be ruining our whole voyage by devouring all our provisions. So we reluctantly consented that we would carry them near to Newfoundland, if wind and weather would permit: and if not, my nephew would carry them on quarter-rations to Martinico, in the West Indies.

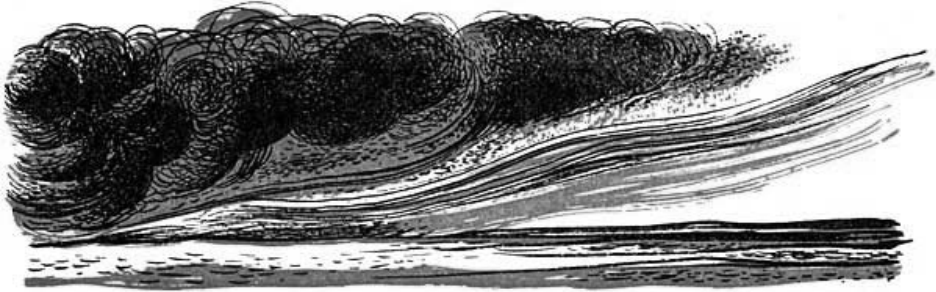
It was about a week after this that we made the banks of Newfoundland; where we put all our Irish people on board a bark, which they hired at sea there, to put them on shore, and afterwards to carry them to Salem in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, if they could first get provisions to victual themselves with. When I say all the Irish went on shore, I should remember that the severe young priest I spoke of, desired to remain aboard, and be put down on my island to tend to the men there. He offered to pay in a strange silver coin for this, but I declined and said he was welcome as my guest. Also four of the merchant seamen of the *Sainte Dorothea* entered themselves on our ship's register, and proved very useful fellows.



The ship was now in the latitude of 19 degrees 32 minutes, and had hitherto a tolerable voyage as to weather, though at first the winds had been contrary. I shall trouble nobody with the little incidents of wind, weather, currents, and suchlike, on the rest of our voyage — but to shorten my story, shall observe that after some searching among the pleasantly warm waters I came to my old habitation, the island, on the 10th of May 1695. In the search, the Priest came forward and said he knew a little of these waters, yet he would not name the ship he had sailed on to discover such things. At that time I mentioned to the young Priest the basic story of my living there, and the manner of it, and the disposition of its various features.

It was with no small difficulty that I found the place, and with much use of the compass and old and inaccurate charts. I thought I came to it and sometimes spied the south and east side of the island. But I was mistaken. One time during this search there was a most curious occurrence; towards evening, the sea smooth, and the weather calm but overcast with looming black rain clouds, we saw the sea as it were covered towards the land with something very black; not being able to discover what it was, our chief mate, going up the main shrouds a little way, and looking at the black with a spy-glass, cried out it was a great

sea monster. This affrighted the boys and younger sailors, but an old one laughed and called it: “a great seaweed, more likely!”, for he had encountered such floating mats of weed before, which sometimes tear loose from the sea bed when it is subject to a great subsidence. Still, I saw it move in the water in a way that no wave moves.



Coming out from the Brazils, I slipped in between the Main and what I thought must be the bearing to my island, but having no trustworthy chart for the coast, nor any landmark, I did not know it when I saw it, or, know whether I saw it or not. We beat about a great while, and went on shore on several islands in the mouth of the great river Orinoco, but found none that were mine. I eventually learned, by my coasting the shore, that I had made one great mistake — the ‘continent’ which I thought I saw from the island I lived in was really no continent, but a long island, or rather a ridge of islands, reaching from one to the other side of the extended mouth of that great river. For this reason I now surmised that the savages who came to my island were not proper Caribbees, but had come from elsewhere.

In short, I visited several of these islands to no purpose; some I found were inhabited, and some were not. On one of them I found some swarthy Spaniards who had come thither to make salt, and to catch some pearl-mussels if they could; they belonged to the Isle de Trinidad, which lay farther north, in the latitude of 10 and 11 degrees.

Thus coasting from one island to another, sometimes with the ship, sometimes with our long-boats, at length I came on the south side of my island, and presently knew the place: so I brought the ship safe to an anchor, broadside with the little creek where my old habitation was.

I looked out from the decks for many hours, scanning the western shore. But I saw no one, not even with the use of a spy-glass. At noon I caused the ancient British flag to be spread, and fired three guns, to give them notice we were friends; but we saw nothing.

We came to an anchor for that night; the wind also falling calm next morning, when we then found a most curious thing. The young Priest had stolen a musket and some other weapons, taken the surgeon's kit, and had hacked out the ship's compass with a ship-axe and taken the other compass from its bag, and run away with his booty to the shoreline.



As soon as we found this, in haste I ordered the long-boat on shore, with four men well armed, if we had found any new guests there whom we did not know of, and the mate at the bow. Away we went to seek the rogue. As we came up on shore upon the tide of flood, near high water, we rowed directly into the creek and then drew up on the beach and walked out along it. We had no sign of him once his footprints entered the woodlands.

I looked then for my old routes and tracks on the island, but found I could no more find any way to my castle than if I had never been there; for someone had planted so many trees, and placed them in such a position, so thick and close to one another, and in ten years' time they were grown so big, that my old castle was inaccessible, except by such windings and blind maze-like ways as only those who made them could find. It seemed obvious to me that the men I had left here had become dreadfully fearful of attacks or discovery.

In the afternoon we found that the men had once made shelters on the north shore of the island, but a little more to the west. I presumed this site to have been chosen to be out of danger of the savages, who in my time had always landed on the eastern parts of the island. These men seemed, if I judged correctly by the debris around the huts, to have chiefly lived on turtles' eggs, extended by several types of roots and some dried fish. There was some evidence of planted corn, although much of their little plantation was old and awry. Of the wild goats I saw none, nor any footprints.

Hanging up in one of the huts I found a small manuscript page rolled in a secure copper cylinder, the paper written on both sides with

a shaken and hasty penmanship. This note was short, and I give it in full here:—

“The battle with the savages was very fierce, and held for two hours in the evening. We at last resolved that we would retreat and stand armed within the redoubt, and whoever or whatever came into the grove, we resolved to sally out over our rough wall and kill them. Our scout, ensconced high in a tree, set a small flame to give us a stealthy notice of the oncoming savages. The day was then moving rapidly toward the dark night, and to our joy the savages did not come. Yet we heard them giving great screaming shouts of “Nig’Rath!” “Nig’Rath!” as they returned to their canoes. After what we thought, to judge by the sound their chanting, that they might be some parading or ritual. After they were gone, and got off to sea, we came out of our den. Near the beach we found about two-and-thirty savage men dead in a horrible mangled heap in the moonlight; most of them were killed with great gashing *black* wounds, the manner of which we could not explain. These wounds were not the work of swords, and we saw plain in the light of day the dripping black ichors or spittles that unnaturally infested and suppurated the wounds. We reasoned that whatever had been the cause of such wounds, it has used an inexpressible rage and fury. After this discovery we afearred there was some great beast-cat abroad upon the island. Perhaps even brought here by the savages, and loosed by them so as to devour us. We reasoned that in a clumsy uncaging of

it, many of the savages had themselves been killed by the enraged monster.

We did not go abroad at night after that battle, for in the day we saw or heard nothing except very strange tracks — that vanished after a few steps when followed. In the nights we often heard great and hideous commotions far off amid the jungle, the like of which we had not heard before and which later haunted our dreams.

We then planted trees, or rather thrust in stakes, which in time all grew up to be trees, for some good distance before the entrance to our various fortified and high retreats. This became a Maze of trees as thick as a man's thigh, and we also set many traps and blinds and stakes of wood. As the Maze grew apace, we planted more. After three years there was only one way into the castle plantation. This was a narrow way, that we alone knew all the turns and dead-ends of, and which could be easily defended. This way wound through a palisade a quarter of a mile thick, and it was next to impossible to penetrate it, for even a small cat could hardly get between the trees, they stood so close. In the inner area we also set ladders that could be swung up, so that nothing but what had wings or witchcraft to assist it could come at us in the night. All this we undertook because some nameless dread thing was preventing us from walking our island in the nighttime. We would have quit the island and left it to the savages and their devil-beast, but we saw no ships on the horizon in the daylight. We lived

two years after this in our nightly confinement, and it had some appreciable effect upon our nerves. In that time we only had, by the light of the moon, a little sight of *IT*...”

There was no more of that pitiful and dreadful message, if message it was. I wondered then what had become of my poor island colonists. Had a ship taken them off? If so, I might have heard of it in the sea-taverns of London. Or had they been taken and eaten by the savages — or something worse?

I could find no further evidence, except when my party took our long-boat to the sea again and landed on a further beach. There I and two men wandered into the scrubland woods as it grew toward evening. There we found that the islanders had also found themselves a retreat in the thickest part of the woods, just behind the place where an old trunk of a tree stood, which was hollow and very large. Behind it there was not a natural cave, as I had found during my time on the island — yet to my amazement they had made one with incessant labour of their hands and sticks, and begun to stoutly fortify it and build a barred door across its mouth.

I determined that I and my party would do well to return to my ship before nightfall, and we returned swiftly to our boats. It was clear to me that a monstrous dread had lain upon my island, and at that moment I felt it was not wise to roam there under the abysses between the stars, such abysses as swept down chill currents to made men shiver in dark and lonely places.

When we rowed back and boarded the *Erebus*, my men quickly spread wild stories and put some of our younger people into the utmost consternation. The officers had cooler heads and — after I had stowed my tackle and cleaned my boots from the day's search — I found them on deck in the sunset, debating if we could steer by the night stars to a port such as Caracas. If we could barter or purchase there a new compass then the voyage might continue quickly enough. Then I, coming up to them, let fly with a reminder of the sloop I had framed for setting up and sailing back to the mainland. I told them that for this I had equipped a good small sea-compass and sextant, which I had just now found was stowed safe in my sea-trunk and was unknown to the Priest. I was slapped upon the back and called a hearty intelligent fellow at this very good news.

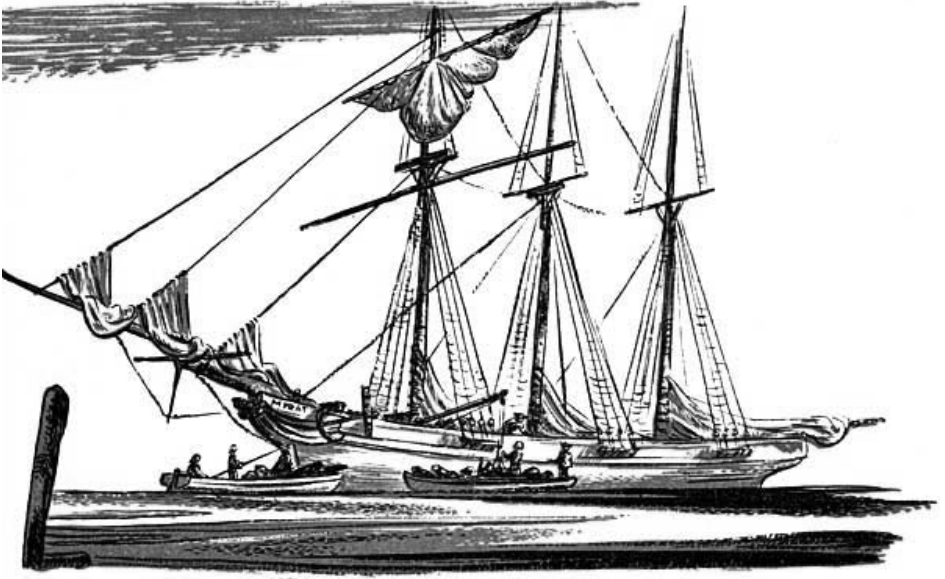
I then told clearly and rationally all of my discoveries on the island, and I had the mate read aloud the manuscript we had found. This caused no little comment, but in the end the fear was decided to have been a mixture of isolation, superstition and mental distress after the raid of the savages. Even if there *had* been a great savage cat, it might well be dead after five years had passed. My report of the absence of wild goats from my island was given as corroboration. Perhaps the men in their greed or desperation had eaten these up. Yet if a large cat had indeed taken the goats, it seemed it had exterminated them and it would not afterward have found sufficient food on the island. For my island had no rats, no large birds, and its occasional sea-turtles could not be got at by a cat. Nor would a cat have found a mate and left offspring. Thus it was settled that the island was now likely to be safe.



This being so, we decided to follow a variant of my nephew's original plan. I would stay on my island with some men, to make a good and well-surveyed map of it and its new arrangements. This map would form a backing for my patent with the Government, and would help encourage new settlers. We would also set up some facilities for settlers, clear a way up to my old castle, and if possible to bring that damnable mad Priest to justice. My framed sloop and two carpenters would be left with me on the island — if necessary I could steer by the stars and wind for Caracas or Georgetown when the time came, there sell my sloop and with the money take passage back to England via those British ports and places where they have a free commerce and the rule of law.

My nephew in the meanwhile would take the sloop's compass and head for Georgetown in about twenty-two days, an unremarkable

passage along the coast of Brazil. There he would fit a new compass and gain a new medical kit, without which he would not risk the passage to Africa, around Cape of Good Hope and into the Ocean of the Indies. He would leave word of my plight with the British authorities at Georgetown — and also at Cape Town if their superintendent of cargo permitted it — together with the news of my making good maps for a claim to a patent in subjection only to that of England, and of my exact latitude and longitude, and of the crime of the mad Priest. We could do no more, in such circumstances, than to trust that I would find the Priest and thus have myself a good compass again. In which case, my nephew's plan should proceed as before. All was settled thus.



My nephew left me on my island, having first ferried a good deal of my cargo, tools and provisions to the shore, and had his men stow them tidily in several piles. He had left me well supplied and with two carpenters, two strong boys, a big ox of a man fit for heavy labour, and six volunteers — five of these being the armed men whom I had taken on the first search for the priest. Among these men were several very useful fellows, able to build a forge and weave large shelters from the tough forest fronds. Other showed great skill at fishing with nets in the creek and some of the lesser inlets.

The first major activity was to fit and ready the small sloop, lest the frame be warped through the action of the humid climate and the resting of the wood upon the beach. The weather continued calm and I was able bring the new sloop to completion in but one week, for she was already framed. She was then made sea-ready with boiling pitch,

and with a barrel of rosin, tallow, and oil, and such stuff as the shipwrights use for that work.



After all the tars in my sloop had set dry we dragged her into the water, hauled up and trimmed her rigging, and took her out to a good anchorage. We named her the *Felis*, in a brave jest at the superstition that some big cat was loose upon the island. We were now set, with a fair wind, for Brazil or even Lisbon if we so wished it. The next morning we took the *Felis* out to fish in the deeper waters, as a test of

her being seaworthy, and brought her safe back into the inlet.

Thereafter we hauled her far up on the beach, for safety from any storms, and stowed her sail in her bottom, together with certain vital provisions. I also set a roster for a permanent guard upon her — for I feared the Priest might return to our beach and cause mischief with her.

Then I and my men set about making my island ready for future settlers, such that I might take a patent from the government to have secured my property, in subjection only to that of England. I promised men and boys alike a small share of the eventual profits, and they were most keen. I used such finely spoken enticements with some abandon, for without a patent from the Crown I had no other real authority or power to act or command one way or other, further than voluntary consent and future compensation might move them to comply. I made also a promise to them that I had would surely fetch them away if any desired it in one year's time, that they might see their country and their people again, or that they might seek their fortune in some other manner.

In a few days our first and most necessary preparations were completed. I then speculated idly to the men that the British authorities might eventually post a reward for the capture of the Priest, and this made them most eager to plan a hunting party for him. Such ambition was well fortified, since every man had a fusee or musket, a bayonet, and a pistol; some of them had broad cutlasses, and the two boys had poleaxes. I also had a box of twelve hand grenados, for use in deterring any invasion of savages.

After all the basic necessities were set up for our stay, I called a Council, to consider what we had to do; and presently we resolved to divide into three parties. I and the two boys would cut and map the Maze, and find the correct way up to my old castle. Four men would search out any signs of the Priest, making themselves a base of operations in the dug-out cave by the old tree, and looking also for signs of my wild goats. My two carpenters, my labourer, and the other two handy men would continue to build a strong storehouse by the creek, to cut and haul timber, to guard our sloop *Felis*, find fresh provisions and make salt.

I did not say as much to the men, but I feared there was a chance the fugitive Priest now lay concealed in my old castle, having entered there perhaps with the aid of some map he might have found, as I had found the manuscript in that copper cylinder. For — the local savages not being able to read — might my Spaniards have formed such a map for their own use, and for planning the expansion and seasonal alterations of the great Maze?

So it was that my two boys and I began to explore and map the lower reaches of the dark Maze, making a scheme of measuring by my steps, making markings, and paying out a stringy rope from a large ball, all so as to find our way out again. As I first entered it I saw the forest walls were as close worked as a basket, and very strong, standing about seventeen feet high. Here and there near the main entrance stood very strong posts; round the top of which he laid strong pieces, knit together with wooden pins, and linked to a

series of spikes, somewhat corroded over the last five years by the humidity and rainy season. The lower parts of the walls were infested with long-legged black spiders, weaving webs upon the lower debris and twigs. It seemed they drank from the dew that formed and lingered there, and as the morning mist drew up a curling bluish vapour, in certain dark spots it became difficult to distinguish the twinkling of spider eyes from the twinkling of dew.

I had no more sense to go to into that Maze than a man at full liberty has to go to the turnkey man at Newgate Prison, and ask to be locked up among the prisoners there, and to starve. Yet I feared that, even if it took a week of winding and retracing steps, I *must* find the way to my old castle. There was the question of the Priest, yet I also felt sure that some great mystery of this place and the fate of its men would be revealed to me there. And such an intellectual and active venture, or so I thought, done in such bright young company, would both guard and diverted me from the dreadful melancholy that creeps unnoticed upon a man in an isolated place.

Settling to my work I stripped off my waistcoat and shirt, had the boys bind each hand with old fabric, flung down shovel and bag; and taking my machete from the latter I commencing to clear away underbrush and soon had the boys carrying off great armfuls of the cuttings. It was a weary and blistering task, and now and then I felt a curious shiver as some perverse root arose to hamper my motion with a skill approaching deliberateness. At times it seemed as if a half-tangible force were impeding me as I worked — almost if formless hands tugged at my wrists. My energy seemed used up without

producing adequate results, yet for all that I made some progress. The quality of the air was mostly very tolerable, and the noon sun was not yet shining directly down into the green canyons; though foetid zones were now and then met with, especially in a last great cavern of branches that afforded a depressing dampness.

I made several false starts, and I turned in my course accordingly. It became hard going as I hit upon what considered the correct way — not only because the ground was rising, but because the plants that had grown up on the trail were now thicker. My bare skin was all speckled from the bursting sticky seed pods which struck it from all sides, and my hair crawling with the tiny spiders that glittered as a strong sunlight came down directly into the woodland around noon and burned off all trace of ground mist. Every time I stepped forward my feet sank down an inch into the rotted debris made by old fallen branches and leaves.

By the late afternoon I and my boys had cleared the initial chambers and routes of that living maze and — as they washed and swam in the creek — I was able to map and clearly mark a safe route up to this foetid chamber. Yet I knew I was only at the start of a very great work, of hacking through tracks that would double-back and provide further false starts, and passages that might suddenly drop to deadly traps, and ways that would take me to where the rocks are impassable — all such as no enemy could possibly enter unbidden, and I knew that on all this work the men of the island had labored for five years. Work that I was now seeking to undo in a mere five days. These men must have been in great fear. Indeed, I must acknowledge, that of all

the circumstances of life that ever I had any experience of, nothing makes mankind as completely miserable as that of being in constant fear. Fear is a life of death, and the mind is so entirely oppressed by it, that it is capable of no relief.

I had dreams of the Maze that night. All the greater weight of the anxieties and perplexities of the madness of the Irish, every malady, were all to be found in each facet and way of the Maze, each hoary chamber of it representing some especial type of madness or melancholy, each small spider was turned to some mad spark of diseased fancy. And through its sea-green ways ran strange black goats. As I lifted up my hands to the heavens, a great ghost-octopus appeared from the roaring sea. My boys told me they had dreamed too, and that both had felt a very heavy load upon his back, which he was to carry up a hill, and yet each found that he was not able to stand longer under it, and collapsed to the ground in spasms and agony. As they lay on the ground thus, the boys dreamed they saw prints and tracks. As they said it: “not hooves, nor hands, nor feet, nor precisely paws, sir.” It was a most uncanny parallel, and had I not known the boys to be of a strong character, and had I not recalled my own unsettling dream, I would have suspected a puerile prank had been played upon me.

On the morning of the second day at the Maze, we stripped off our shirts and entered. We were easily able to follow the stakes and strings and notches left by the previous day’s labour, and did not need my map. We then cut and explored five new passages that ran off

from the foetid cavern of trees, measuring the winding ascent and turnings of each; we found two that became close-knit and tricky tunnels of about two yards high, and as many thick in some places. These branched and jiggged, yet all but one led up to some deadly pit-traps, each as wide as three men and nine feet deep. When we peeled the matted covers from these we found them to be the homes of great writhing colonies of fat brown snakes.

At the end of this safe tunnel we found an access to the sky and some signs of grading of the earth, and of some primal attempt at rock-surfacing, but not enough was left to make the route safe to follow around the cliff. I had only some faint recollection of this outcropping of rock, thinking it was perhaps half-way up to my castle. This was a most curious ending. Had we entered at a false entrance? Was there some other, correct place to begin? It was utterly and bafflingly strange that the Maze should end thus.

We went back to each of the pit-traps again, seeking for some signs that one of them might be jumped across and continued on the other side. At the right-hand side of one we found certain artificial improvement and subtle rubbings were discernible in the wall of trees. A sharp push and a thrust revealed the tree trucks here to be the fronting of a large artificial doorway, most cleverly concealed by the use of natural facings and by the passage of years.

We swung ourselves into this doorway and entered in most carefully, fearing a further trap. Yet here we found a wide square stockade buried under the jungle canopy, and almost pitch black within. With hands and a dry stick we probed the floors and ascertained the size of

this stifflingly warm and pungent place. It was then that I stumbled and fell over a dead body. I thought for a moment that one of the boys had fainted and fallen silently before me. Yet as I felt with my fingers I found this body at my feet had no human warmth and was perhaps partly a dry preserved husk. I cried out, and this brought the boys groping and clinging to me. "A man's body!" I whispered, and dared not touch it further but merely felt around it with my stick. This action caused a most unnerving clinking in the darkness, at the points where my stick touched some bare bone.

I had at that moment a faint and unnerving vision. It was of fishy, sea-green eyes, squatted somewhere in the blackness on a monstrously hieroglyphed pedestal and embraced by the all-covering dust and cobwebs of immemorial aeons. Yet I knew that darkness and bad festering air sometimes threw men into the vapours and bewildered our understandings, and set the imagination at work to form a thousand terrible things that perhaps might never happen. So I shook off the foul sight, and ordered the boys to skirt the rim of the room and find us a second door and thus to let in air. This was quickly done, and when the door was opened it presented only a solid green wall of young saplings, a most unexpectedly beautiful sight, due to the pale noon light filtering through their translucent leaves. This, I felt sure, was the correct path. By the new half-light we looked back into the stockade and saw the moth-blown husk of the dead man sitting in the centre of the stockade. He was a dried thing at the top, and eaten away to sour yellow bone at the bottom. His staring eyes were fishy and sea-green.

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