

# *The Statement of Randolph Carter*

H.P. Lovecraft, 1919

*H.P. Lovecraft is a pioneer of science fiction writing. Here is one of his earliest stories.*

I repeat, gentlemen, your inquisition is fruitless. Keep me here forever if you must, but I can say no more than I have already. Everything I can remember I have told with perfect honesty. If anything remains vague, it is only because of the dark cloud which has come over my mind—that and the nature of the horrors which brought it upon me.

I do not know what has become of my friend Harley Warren. For the last five years I've been his closest friend, and have participated in his research into the unknown. I will not deny that we were on the Gainesville pike, walking toward Big Cypress Swamp, at half past eleven that night as your witness stated. But what followed, and the reason I was found alone and dazed on the edge of the swamp the next morning, I must insist I know nothing of. You said there is nothing in the swamp or near it which could have formed the setting of that frightful episode, but I know what I saw. Nightmare it may have been—nightmare I hope it was—but this is all that my mind retains of what took place.

I had no clear idea of our object that night – Warren wouldn't say. We ended up in an ancient cemetery. It was in a deep, damp hollow, overgrown with curious creeping weeds and filled with a vague stench. All around us were signs of neglect and decrepitude, and I was haunted by the notion that Warren and I were the first living creatures to invade the silence of centuries there. Over the valley's rim a waning crescent moon peered through the mist that seemed to emanate from the catacombs, and by its feeble, wavering beams I could distinguish an array of antique slabs, urns, cenotaphs, and mausoleums; all crumbling, moss-grown, and moisture-stained, and partly concealed by the abundance of the unhealthy vegetation.

My first vivid memory of that night is of pausing with Warren before a half-obliterated sepulchre, and throwing down our equipment. I had with me an electric lantern and two spades, whilst Warren held a similar lantern and a portable telephone. No word was uttered, for the spot and the task seemed known to us. Without delay we seized our spades and began to clear away the grass and weeds; drifting the earth from the flat, archaic mortuary. After uncovering the entire surface, which consisted of three immense granite slabs, we stepped back to survey the scene. Then Warren returned to the sepulchre, and using his spade as a lever, pried up one of the slabs.

The removal of the slab revealed a black aperture, from which rushed a miasma so nauseous that we stumbled back in horror. After an interval, however, we approached the pit again, and as our lanterns lit the cavern, we could see a flight of stone steps, dripping with some detestable substance of the inner earth and bordered by moist walls.

Next, I can remember Warren addressing me.



"I'll have to ask you to stay on the surface," he said. "I'm sorry, but I can't let someone with your frail nerves go down there. You can't imagine, even from what you have read and from what I've told you, the things I shall have to see and do. Heaven knows I'd be glad to have you with me, but I couldn't drag a bundle of nerves like you down to probable death or madness. Stay where you are, and I promise to keep you informed over the telephone of my every move—I've enough wire here to reach to the center of the earth and back!"

**(continued)**

I was anxious to accompany my friend into the depths, yet he proved inflexible. After I reluctantly agreed to stay above, Warren picked up the reel of wire and adjusted the instruments. At his nod I took one of them and seated myself upon an aged, discolored gravestone. Then he shook my hand, shouldered the coil of wire, and disappeared into that indescribable ossuary.

For a moment I could see the glow of his lantern, and heard the rustle of the wire as he laid it down after him; but the glow disappeared abruptly, as if a turn in the staircase had been encountered, and the sound died away almost as quickly. I was alone, yet bound to the unknown depths by the telephone wires, whose surface lay green beneath the struggling beams of that waning crescent moon.

In the lone silence of that city of the dead, my mind conceived the most ghastly fantasies and illusions. The grotesque shrines around me seemed to assume a hideous personality. Shadows seemed to lurk in the recesses of the weed-choked hollow and to flit in some blasphemous ceremonial procession past the portals of the tombs in the hillside; shadows which could not have been cast by that pallid, peering crescent moon. I constantly consulted my watch by the light of my lantern, and listened with feverish anxiety to my telephone, but for more than fifteen minutes heard nothing.

Then a faint clicking came from the phone. I called down Warren in a tense voice. Apprehensive as I was, I was still unprepared for the words which came up from that uncanny vault. He who had so calmly left me a little while previously, now called from below in a shaky whisper:

“God! If you could see what I am seeing!”

I could not answer, I could only wait. Then came the frenzied tones again:

“Carter, it’s terrible!”

This time my voice did not fail me, and I poured into the transmitter a flood of excited questions. Terrified, I continued to repeat, “Warren, what is it? What is it?”

Once more came the voice of my friend, still hoarse with fear, and now tinged with despair:

“I can’t tell you, Carter! It’s too utterly beyond thought. No man could know it and live. Great God! I never dreamed of THIS!” Stillness again, except for my now incoherent torrent of shuddering inquiry. Then, Warren said in a pitch of wilder consternation:

“Carter! For the love of God, put back the slab and get out if you can! Quick, leave everything else and go; it’s your only chance! Do as I say, and don’t ask me to explain!”

I heard, but was able only to repeat my frantic questions. Around me were the tombs and the darkness and the shadows; below me, some peril beyond human imagination. But my friend was in greater danger than I, and through my fear I felt a vague resentment that he should deem me capable of deserting him under such circumstances. More clicking, and after a pause a piteous cry from Warren:

“Beat it! For God’s sake, put back the slab and beat it, Carter!”

Something in the boyish slang of my companion unleashed my faculties. I formed and shouted a resolution, “Warren, brace up! I’m coming down!” But at this offer Warren’s tone changed to a scream of utter despair:

**(continued)**



“Don’t! You can’t understand! It’s too late—and my own fault. Put back the slab and run—there’s nothing else you can do now!” The tone changed again, this time acquiring a softer quality, as of hopeless resignation. Yet it remained tense through anxiety for me.

“Quick—before it’s too late!” I tried not to heed him; tried to break through the paralysis which held me, and to rush to his aid. But his next whisper found me still held inert in the chains of stark horror.

“Carter—hurry! It’s no use—you must go—better one than two—the slab—” A pause, more clicking, then the faint voice of Warren:

“Nearly over now—don’t make it harder—cover up those steps and run for your life—you’re losing time— So long, Carter—won’t see you again.” Here Warren’s whisper swelled into a cry; a cry that gradually rose to a shriek fraught with horror —

“Curse these things—My God! Beat it, Carter! Beat it! Beat it!”

After that was silence. I know not how long I sat whispering, muttering, calling, screaming into that telephone. Over and over again I called, shouted, and screamed, “Warren! Warren! Answer me—are you there?”

And then there came to me the crowning horror of all—the unbelievable, unthinkable, almost unmentionable thing.

Eons seemed to elapse after Warren shrieked his last despairing warning, and only my own cries broke the hideous silence. But after a while there was a further clicking in the receiver, and I strained my ears to listen. Again I called down, “Warren, are you there?”, and in answer heard the thing which has brought this cloud over my mind.

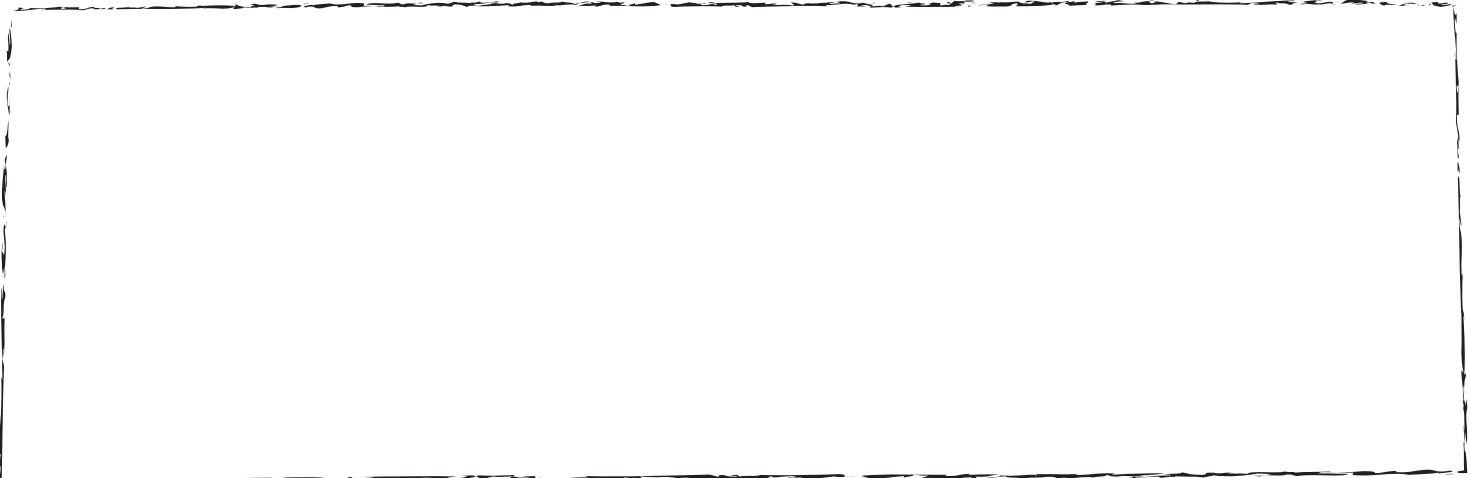
I do not try, gentlemen, to account for that thing—that voice—nor can I describe it in detail, since the first words took away my consciousness and created a mental blank which reaches to the time of my awakening in the hospital. Shall I say that the voice was deep? Hollow? Unearthly? Inhuman? Disembodied? What shall I say? It was the end of my experience, and is the end of my story. I heard it, and know no more.

As I sat petrified in that cemetery in the hollow, amidst the crumbling stones and the falling tombs, I heard it well up from the innermost depths of that open sepulchre as I watched amorphous shadows dance beneath an accursed waning moon. Then, a voice said to me:

“YOU FOOL, WARREN IS DEAD!”



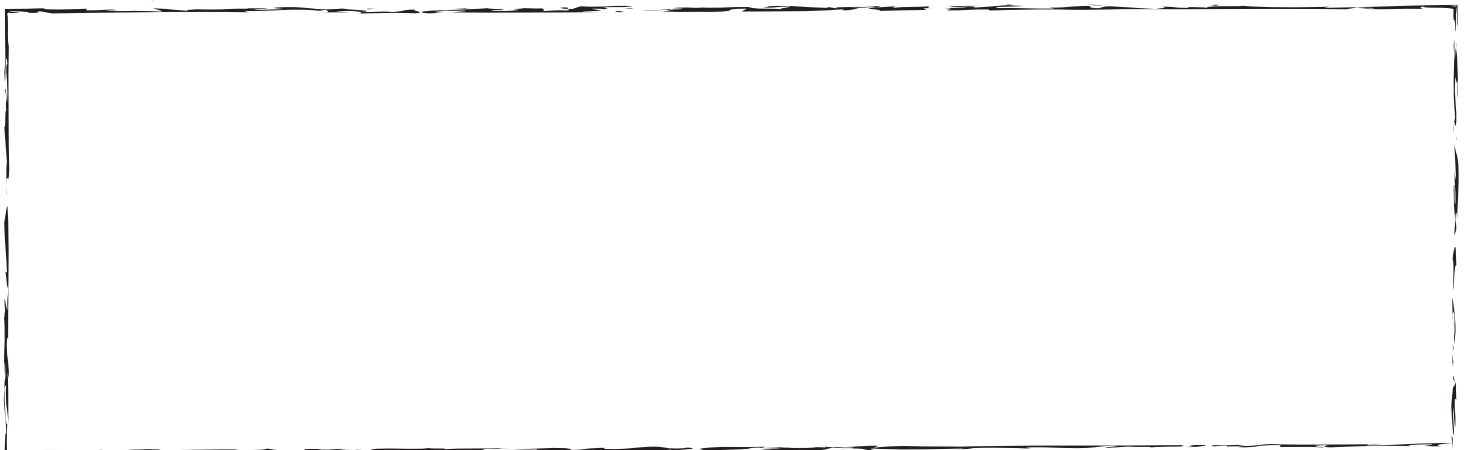
***The Statement of Randolph Carter is full of great description. Draw a detailed picture of each scene below.***



*We ended up in an ancient cemetery. It was in a deep, damp hollow, overgrown with curious creeping weeds and filled with a vague stench... Over the valley's rim a waning crescent moon peered through the mist that seemed to emanate from the catacombs, and by its feeble, wavering beams I could distinguish an array of antique slabs, urns, cenotaphs, and mausoleums; all crumbling, moss-grown, and moisture-stained, and partly concealed by the abundance of the unhealthy vegetation.*



*As our lanterns lit the cavern, we could see a flight of stone steps, dripping with some detestable substance of the inner earth and bordered by moist walls.*



*The grotesque shrines around me seemed to assume a hideous personality. Shadows seemed to lurk in the recesses of the weed-choked hollow and to flit in some blasphemous ceremonial procession past the portals of the tombs in the hillside; shadows which could not have been cast by that pallid, peering crescent moon.*