

Commonplace Book

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This book consists of ideas, images, and quotations hastily jotted down for possible future use in weird fiction. Very few are actually developed plots—for the most part they are merely suggestions or random impressions designed to set the imagination or memory working. Their sources are various—dreams, things read, casual incidents, idle conceptions, & so on. —H. P. Lovecraft

- 1 Fallen leaves coalesce around tree trunks in a forest, hiding an evil force. (The Barton Wood Mystery)
- 2 A man, cataloging books from an inherited library, uncovers a sinister secret. (The Secret in the Library)
- 3 An old mirror contains a sinister force. Something seen in the mirror becomes material in the real world. (Carnacki's Christmas Conundrum)
- 4 On a bet, Carnacki spends the night in a haunted mansion/library without the use of his usual tools (electric pentacle).
- 5 A monster or haunting appears in a train or train car.
- 6 Carnacki (or the character that contacts Carnacki) engages in spirit/psychic photography and makes a discovery.
- 7 A trip in a boat along the river. Odd figures, made of straw or reeds, flank the river. They are initially mistaken for actual people. (The Witch's Heart)
- 8 Mysterious pane of stained glass from abbey. Installed in a family home with strange results. The area of the house where the glass is installed becomes uninhabitable.
- 9 A portrait or vignette. A dead man in a sealed room. "He waits."
- 10 A marker stone, reputedly used for ritual sacrifices and said to drip blood at midnight, is moved. A supernatural entity appears.
- 11 A bell mysteriously rings in a room in a mansion, as in summoning a servant. No one is in the room.
- 12 A man, drawn to a nearby barrow, sits upon it as the sun sets. He has a strange experience.
- 13 Man becomes obsessed with a nearby landmark (mound, marker, strange stone, etc.). Visits it at night and has a strange experience (e.g. the scene is transformed).
- 14 "Hideous world superimposed on visible world—gate through—power guides man to ancient and forbidden book with directions for access." —HPL's Commonplace Book, no. 135
- 15 "Ancient lamp found in tomb—when filled and used, its light reveals strange world." —HPL's Commonplace Book, no. 146
- 16 Vague lights, geometrical figures, etc. seen on retina when eyes are closed. Caus'd by rays from *other dimensions* acting on optick nerve? From *other planets*? Connected with a life or phase of being in which person could live if he only knew how to get there? *Man afraid to shut eyes*— he has been somewhere on a terrible pilgrimage and this fearsome seeing faculty remains. —HPL's Commonplace Book, no. 157
- 17 Spirits become lost when a ley-marker is removed.
- 18 A tree or clump of trees (Scotch fir) atop a lonely hill hides a secret.
- 19 A section of a mansion has been closed off for decades, but why?
- 20 Gazing through a telescope at a town far below, a man sees a strange misshapen creature no one else seems to notice.
- 21 A prequel, or sequel, to The Horror of Abbot's Grange (Cowles)

- 22 An old man, long deaf, begins to hear strange, otherworldly sounds.
- 23 Having become lost on the moors, Carnacki makes a strange discovery (abandoned village, marking stone).
- 24 People can't be left alone—ever—or some evil force will destroy them.
- 25 Protagonist trapped in a haunted castle, can't find the means to escape.
- 26 An ancient artifact is hidden in an old yew tree full of holes and cavities. Its long-dead owner goes in search of it. The property owner witnesses the entity.
- 27 The entrance to a graveyard is bricked over, but why? To keep people out, or *something* in?
- 28 A fairy door leads to a magical shadow world.
- 29 A mound covering the remains of Roman soldiers is disturbed. A supernatural force is summoned to protect it.
- 30 Couple trapped after hours in futuristic mall after visiting gun shop. Man taps on glass partition separating customer area from employee-only area to get an employee's attention, hoping the employee will help. Employee says only, 'send the snipers after them.' Gun-play and action results. Eventually, a giant robot named 'The Spirit' is called to dispatch the couple. The action continues.
- 31 When the sun shines on a peculiarly arranged stone formation on a specific day, a strange, supernatural effect results.
- 32 The superstitious practice of drawing the sortes. —The Ash Tree
- 33 A treasure is removed from under a foundation stone. An entity manifests to get it back.
- 34 A castle farm, built upon an ancient mound, is haunted by a ghost that disappears in a specific spot. An underground passage leads to a nearby old church. —The Old Straight Track, p. 134
- 35 "... and the very gravestones used in paving the scullery and offices of the grand new parsonage built to match the grand new church." —Hampshire Days
- 36 A man falls asleep during a church service and is accidentally locked in the church over night. He witnesses strange events.
- 37 A man comes upon the old stone foundation of a lock-tenders house on the canal next to the river, and has a strange experience. Witnesses an accident or crime that occurred at the location.
- 38 A play of light on a wall at night reveals a strange force at work. A scene is repeated over and over, or something is trying to deliver a message.
- 39 An aged, prolific composer dies. But, brilliant compositions continue to appear at his desk on a regular basis.
- 40 A haunted piece of furniture (e.g. chair, cupboard) exhibits strange behavior.
- 41 A hiker, lost in the wilderness, comes upon a cabin. There he finds a book containing a strange narrative about the death of the previous tenant. As he reads more, it becomes familiar, and he realizes the narrative is his own.
- 42 The aspect of a room changes from clean and new to ruinous based upon some supernatural manifestation. —The Half-Haunted
- 43 Fishermen in becalmed waters must sing a song on deck every night lest a dark spirit that walks the surface of the water come aboard. —Lumley, The Clock of Dreams
- 44 The perusal of an occult book leads to unanticipated, and dangerous, results. A cautionary tale.
- 45 A workman repairs the wall of some old structure (e. g. church, house). As he experimentally knocks upon one of the stone walls with his hammer, *something* knocks back.
- 46 Man plans the construction of a cabin in a forest. He selects what seems a prime location but finds, as he spends more and more time there, that something about the place *feels* wrong. Possible discovery of horrible past occurrence.
- 47 A runner unaccountably dreads a particular length of road on his run.
- 48 A man somehow sees through the veil to another realm, experiences horror. He gains to the ability to project this horror onto others, using it as a weapon.

- 49 A prism containing an exorcised demonic essence is broken and the demon freed.
- 50 A town, castle, or church is built upon the partially buried skeletal remains of a giant.
- 51 Protagonist discovers an ancient occult manuscript in a haunted castle. Is pursued by a beastly guardian and must escape.
- 52 A supernatural disturbance at a house-warming party. Attendees include a medium, who suggests they try to contact the agency to find out what it wants.
- 53 A haunted book. A story is somehow revealed to a reader. It tells of some past misdeed or perhaps a hidden treasure. Upon resolution, the story disappears from the book.
- 54 An effigy sculpted upon a sarcophagus holds a book. The book's pages turn over time, revealing a secret or telling a story.
- 55 A man, wanted by church authorities, hides himself in a priest hole. He dies there, and later haunts the chamber immediately adjacent.
- 56 The memories of Duncan Aster: man inherits large estate from unknown benefactor. Is contacted through a mysterious intermediary. Unreliable narrator. Memories doubtful. Words shift: Duncan Aster becomes Duncaster. Exploration of dark, gothic estate and narrator learns more. Circular narrative.
- 57 On vacation, Carnacki arrives in Woodhall Spa. Stormy weather strands a party of interesting guests there, including a famous novelist and actor. The proprietor relates an interesting story of a haunted chamber to Carnacki, and he investigates. Multiple characters join the investigation.
- 58 A garden sundial displays the same time irrespective of actual time of day.
- 59 A spring found in a wood has magical properties.
- 60 The adventures of Father Vincent, a Cistercian Monk and amateur occult detective.
- 61 I was not wholly prepared to deny that human flesh may now and then, once perhaps in ten millions cases, be the veil of powers which seem magical to us-powers which, so far from proceeding from the heights and leading men thither, are in reality survivals from the depths of being. —Machen, *The Novel of the Black Seal*
- 62 A figure is witnessed passing through a solid wall. Investigation reveals a hidden chamber and evidence of a crime long past.
- 63 On a driving tour, the narrator arrives at a charming, but oddly silent (or deserted) town. Investigation reveals a strange happening.
- 64 A solar eclipse has strange effects in the garden of an ancient manor house.

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