

SWINE feature prominently in William Hope Hodgson's fiction. Sometimes they are antagonists outright; at other times they are instruments of the plot or used to describe the attributes of Hodgson's horrors. Put more simply, they are either monsters, victims of monsters, or metaphors for monsters. This is most prominently featured in *The House on the Borderland*, where a lonely man is besieged by porcine demons after his house is accidentally built upon a weak spot in the fabric between the natural and supernatural worlds. Those devilish swine are remarkably similar in form, character, and motive to the porkers that haunt Carnacki's client in "The Hog." The story is also something of a reworking of J. Sheridan Le Fanu's "Green Tea," a supernatural mystery featuring Carnacki's literary ancestor, the occult specialist Dr. Hesselius. In Le Fanu's story, Hesselius is consulted by a troubled minister who is being persecuted by the apparition of a black monkey—a hateful, tyrannical presence seemingly intent upon driving its victim to suicide. Like Carnacki, Hesselius is an old hand at occult phenomena and has a tendency to surround his investigations with elaborate pseudo-scientific theories. Hesselius suspects that his client's excessive consumption of green tea, which he uses to remain awake while obsessively reading from his occult library, has weakened the man's psychic defenses and opened him to supernatural influences. The result is Le Fanu's own variation on the theme that Hodgson develops here: an ordinary human being becomes the unwilling battleground between the civilized self and something dark, alien, and bestial.

II.

Le Fanu's frenzied monkey is similar, symbolically, to Hodgson's slovenly hog. Both animals have a close kinship to mankind, but each represents a different aspect of our darker nature. Monkeys are vain, impulsive, violent, libidinous, despotic, and delusional; they can symbolize mankind's self-importance and the foolishness of our intelligence. Hogs, on the other hand, have long represented our basest and most shameful appetites: stupidity, herd mentality, self-indulgence, corpulence, lack of hygiene, gluttony, rage, fear, greed, envy, lust, and arrogance. They appear as caricatures of human appetite and ignorance in stories such as "The Three Little Pigs" and *Animal Farm*, and their association with demonic possession is particularly old. In the Gospels, Christ casts "Legion"—the multitude of demons possessing the Gerasene madman—into a herd of swine, which then rushes collectively into the sea. Hodgson's use of the animal is especially appropriate to the strange territory occupied by the Carnacki stories. Thomas Carnacki is neither a conventional detective nor a conventional occultist. He approaches supernatural phenomena with the equipment and vocabulary of an Edwardian laboratory: electrical apparatus, photographic experiments, elaborate theories, and defensive devices coexist with ancient manuscripts, magical formulae, and occult lore. Hodgson repeatedly refuses to decide whether these phenomena are genuinely

supernatural or merely manifestations of obscure forces that science has not yet learned to understand. The effect is one of scientific rationalism pushed right up against the edge of the unknowable.

III.

Like Le Fanu's monkey, Hodgson's porkers are deeply symbolic—especially to Hodgson himself. He was intensely concerned with cleanliness, physical discipline, and self-control, and he seems to have regarded the pig as the natural antithesis of these virtues. Swine represented everything he tried to suppress or avoid: filth, appetite, disorder, sensuality, and the surrender of disciplined human will to animal instinct. Hodgson had encountered pigs during his years at sea, when they were sometimes carried as shipboard cargo, giving the imagery a particularly concrete association for him. "The Hog" is therefore a story of possession, but it is also a story about the terrifying fragility of the boundary between the human and the inhuman. Its supernatural cosmology is unusually elaborate even by Hodgson's standards, and the story has often been regarded as the greatest of the Carnacki cases. Brian Stableford called it "by far the best" of the Carnacki stories, praising its vision of a metaphysical realm "dark and hostile," inhabited by degraded entities whose porcine characteristics mock human ambition. It is worth remembering, too, that the Hog is not necessarily a literal giant pig from some supernatural bestiary. The swine-like appearance is part of the way these entities manifest themselves to human perception. What Carnacki encounters is something much larger and stranger: an alien force whose nature seems to exist beyond the ordinary boundaries of physical reality.

IV.

In this respect, "The Hog" moves closer than most of the Carnacki tales to the cosmic horror of *The House on the Borderland*. The familiar Holmesian confidence of the ghost-finder begins to give way to something more unsettling: the realization that intelligence, courage, technology, and even occult knowledge may not be enough to make mankind master of the universe. For Carnacki, this is a particularly terrible possibility. His greatest strength is his confidence in preparation, knowledge, and self-control. Here, however, he confronts a force that seems almost tailor-made to undermine those virtues. The result is one of Hodgson's strangest and most nightmarish stories—and one in which the old ghost-finder comes closer than ever before to discovering just how small a man can be in the presence of the unknown.

— CARNACKI THE GHOST-FINDER AND —

The Hog

{1947}

WE had finished dinner and Carnacki had drawn his big chair up to the fire, and started his pipe.

Jessop, Arkright, Taylor and I had each of us taken up our favourite positions, and waited for Carnacki to begin.

'What I'm going to tell you about happened in the next room,' he said, after drawing at his pipe for a while. 'It has been a terrible experience. Doctor Witton first brought the case to my notice. We'd been chatting over a pipe at the Club one night about an article in the *Lancet*¹, and Witton mentioned having just such a similar case in a man called Bains. I was interested at once. It was one of those cases of a gap or flaw in a man's protection barrier, I call it. A failure to be what I might term efficiently insulated - spiritually - from the outer monstrosities.

'From what I knew of Witton, I knew he'd be no use. You all know Witton. A decent sort, hard-headed, practical, stand-no-kind-of-nonsense sort of man, all right at his own job when that job's a fractured leg or a broken collarbone; but he'd never have made anything of the Bains case.'

For a space Carnacki puffed meditatively at his pipe, and we waited for him to go on with his tale.

'I told Witton to send Bains to me,' he resumed, 'and the following Saturday he came up. A little sensitive man. I liked him as soon as I set eyes on him. After a bit, I got him to explain what was troubling him, and questioned him about what Doctor Witton had called his "dreams."

"'They're more than dreams," he said, "they're so real that they're actual experiences to me. They're simply horrible. And yet there's nothing very definite in them to tell you about. They generally come just as I am going off to sleep. I'm hardly over before suddenly I seem to have got down into some deep, vague place with some inexplicable and frightful horror all about me. I can never understand what it is, for I never see anything, only I always get a sudden knowledge like a warning that I have got down into some terrible place - a sort of hellplace I might call it, where I've no business ever to have wandered; and the warning is always insistent - even imperative - that I must get out, get out, or some enormous horror will come at me."

"'Can't you pull yourself back?" I asked him. "Can't you wake up?"

"'No," he told me. "That's just what I can't do, try as I will. I can't stop going along this labyrinth-of-hell as I call it to myself, towards some dreadful unknown Horror. The warning is repeated, ever so strongly - almost as if the *live* me of my waking moments was awake and aware. Something seems to warn me to wake up, that whatever I do I must wake, wake, and then my consciousness comes suddenly alive and I know that my body is there in the

¹ Founded in 1823, it is one of the world's oldest and most highly esteemed medical journals

bed, but my essence or spirit is still down there in that hell, wherever it is, in a danger that is both unknown and inexpressible; but so overwhelming that my whole spirit seems sick with terror.

' "I keep saying to myself all the time that I must wake up," he continued, "but it is as if my spirit is still down there, and as if my consciousness knows that some tremendous invisible Power is fighting against me. I know that if I do not wake then, I shall never wake up again, but go down deeper and deeper into some stupendous horror of soul destruction. So then I fight. My body lies in the bed there, and pulls. And the power down there in that labyrinth exerts itself too so that a feeling of despair, greater than any I have ever known on this earth, comes on me. I know that if I give way and cease to fight, and do not wake, then I shall pass out - out to that monstrous Horror which seems to be silently calling my soul to destruction.

"Then I make a final stupendous effort," he continued, "and my brain seems to fill my body like the ghost of my soul. I can even open my eyes and see with my brain, or consciousness, out of my own eyes. I can see the bedclothes, and I know just how I am lying in the bed; yet the real me is down in that hell in terrible danger. Can you get me?" he asked.

"Perfectly," I replied.

"Well, you know," he went on, "I fight and fight. Down there in that great pit my very soul seems to shrink back from the call of some brooding horror that impels it silently a little further, always a little further round a visible corner, which if I once pass I know I shall never return again to this world. Desperately I fight brain and consciousness fighting together to help it. The agony is so great that I could scream were it not that I am rigid and frozen in the bed with fear.

"Then, just when my strength seems almost gone, soul and body win, and blend slowly. And I lie there worn out with this terrible extraordinary fight. I have still a sense of a dreadful horror all about me, as if out of that horrible place some brooding monstrosity had followed me up, and hangs still and silent and invisible over me, threatening me there in my bed. Do I make it clear to you?" he asked. "It's like some monstrous Presence."

' "Yes," I said. "I follow you."

"The man's forehead was actually covered with sweat, so keenly did he live again through the horrors he had experienced.

'After a while he continued:

"Now comes the most curious part of the dream or whatever it is," he said. "There's always a sound I hear as I lie there exhausted in the bed. It comes while the bedroom is still full of the sort of atmosphere of monstrosity that seems to come up with me when I get out of that place. I hear the sound coming up out

of that enormous depth, and it is always the noise of pigs² - pigs grunting, you know. It's just simply dreadful. The dream is always the same. Sometimes I've had it every single night for a week, until I fight not to go to sleep; but, of course, I have to sleep sometimes. I think that's how a person might go mad, don't you?" he finished.

I nodded, and looked at his sensitive face. Poor beggar! He had been through it, and no mistake.

"Tell me some more," I said. "The grunting - what does it sound like exactly?"

"It's just like pigs grunting," he told me again. "Only much more awful. There are grunts, and squeals and pighowls, like you hear when their food is being brought to them at a pig farm. You know those large pig farms where they keep hundreds of pigs. All the grunts, squeals and howls blend into one brutal chaos of sound - only it isn't a chaos. It all blends in a queer horrible way. I've heard it. A sort of swinish clamouring melody that grunts and roars and shrieks in chunks of grunting sounds, all tied together with squealings and shot through with pig howls. I've sometimes thought there was a definite beat in it; for every now and again there comes a gargantuan GRUNT, breaking through the million pig-voiced roaring - a stupendous GRUNT that comes in with a beat. Can you understand me? It seems to shake everything.... It's like a spiritual earthquake⁴. The howling, squealing, grunting, rolling clamour of swinish noise coming up out of that place, and then the monstrous GRUNT rising up through it all, an ever-recurring beat out of the depth - the voice of the swine-mother of monstrosity beating up from below through that chorus of mad swine-hunger.... It's no use! I can't explain it. No one ever could. It's just terrible! And I'm afraid you're saying to yourself that I'm in a bad way; that I want a change or a tonic⁵; that I must buck up or I'll land myself in a madhouse. If only you could understand! Doctor Witton seemed to half understand, I thought; but I know

² Swine feature prominently in Hodgson – sometimes as monsters, sometimes as food for monsters, sometimes as metaphors used to describe monsters (the “Tropical Horror” for instance can be remembered for its pig-like eyes). Hodgson – obsessed with self-discipline, cleanliness, and physical wellness – seems to have identified swine as the antithesis of enlightened humanity: foul, filthy, carnal, self-indulgent, undisciplined, lustful, gluttonous, coated in their own feces... Pigs – which he became acquainted with as cargo on some of the ships he sailed as a youth – represented everything within himself that he sought to crush and avoid

³ This is scientifically accurate: psychological studies have shown that sleep deprivation can lead to psychosis, hallucinations, derangement, and eventually death

⁴ Unquestionably there is a shade of “The Baumoff Explosive” being cast here

⁵ A “change” meaning a change in scenery or air (doctors frequently used to recommend that patients suffering from mood disorders take a week off and spend it at a seaside resort where they could steady their nerves and imbibe unpolluted air), and a “tonic” meaning a liquid medicine concocted of “mood stabilizers” that would probably include such sedating (and addictive) drugs as morphine, cocaine, or the opiate laudanum

he's only sent me to you as a sort of last hope. He thinks I'm booked for the asylum. I could tell it."

"Nonsense!" I said. "Don't talk such rubbish. You're as sane as I am. Your ability to think clearly what you want to tell me, and then to transmit it to me so well that you compel my mental retina to see something of what you have seen, stands sponsor for your mental balance."

"I am going to investigate your case, and if it is what I suspect, one of those rare instances of a 'flaw' or 'gap' in your protective barrier⁶ (what I might call your spiritual insulation from the Outer Monstrosities⁷) I've no doubt we can end the trouble. But we've got to go properly into the matter first, and there will certainly be danger in doing so."

"I'll risk it," replied Bains. "I can't go on like this any longer."

"Very well," I told him. "Go out now, and come back at five o'clock. I shall be ready for you then. And don't worry about your sanity. You're all right, and we'll soon make things safe for you again. Just keep cheerful and don't brood about it."

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I put in the whole afternoon preparing my experimenting room, across the landing there, for his case. When he returned at five o'clock I was ready for him and took him straight into the room.

'It gets dark now about six-thirty⁸, as you know, and I had just nice time before it grew dusk to finish my arrangements. I prefer always to be ready before the dark comes.

'Bains touched my elbow as we walked into the room.

' "There's something I ought to have told you," he said, looking rather sheepish. "I've somehow felt a bit ashamed of it."

' "Out with it," I replied.

'He hesitated a moment, then it came out with a jerk.

' "I told you about the grunting of the pigs," he said. "Well, I grunt too. I know it's horrible. When I lie there in bed and hear those sounds after I've come up, I

⁶ This concept is endearingly borrowed from J. Sheridan Le Fanu's psychic detective, Dr Hesselius, from his most famous case "Green Tea," wherein a scholarly parson wore away his psychic barrier by drinking copious amounts of green tea (then frequently suspected of being "cut" with toxic herbs and drugs and stimulants), exposing him to the persecution of a demonic monkey – Le Fanu's version of The Hog

⁷ Hints of Lovecraft's "Outer Gods" and "Great Old Ones." Since this story was published after Lovecraft's death, we can tell that there is no influence here, only the brotherhood of two common literary minds

⁸ Placing our story either around Hallowe'en in late October or Valentine's Day in mid February. Of course, atmospherically, Hallowe'en seems the preferable setting

just grunt back as if in reply⁹. I can't stop myself. I just do it. Something makes me. I never told Doctor Witton that. I couldn't. I'm sure now you think me mad," he concluded.

'He looked into my face, anxious and queerly ashamed.

"It's only the natural sequence of the abnormal events, and I'm glad you told me," I said, slapping him on the back¹⁰. "It follows logically on what you had already told me. I have had two cases that in some way resembled yours."

"What happened?" he asked me. "Did they get better?"

"One of them is alive and well today, Mr. Bains," I replied. "The other man lost his nerve, and fortunately for all concerned, he is dead."

'I shut the door and locked it as I spoke, and Bains stared round, rather alarmed, I fancy, at my apparatus.

"What are you going to do?" he asked. "Will it be a dangerous experiment?"

"Dangerous enough," I answered, "if you fail to follow my instructions absolutely in everything. We both run the risk of never leaving this room alive. Have I your word that I can depend on you to obey me whatever happens?"

'He stared round the room and then back at me.

"Yes," he replied. And, you know, I felt he would prove the right kind of stuff when the moment came.

'I began now to get things finally in train for the night's work. I told Bains to take off his coat and his boots. Then I dressed him entirely from head to foot in a single thick rubber combination-overall, with rubber gloves, and a helmet with ear-flaps of the same material attached.

'I dressed myself in a similar suit. Then I began on the next stage of the night's preparations.

'First I must tell you that the room measures thirty-nine feet by thirty-seven, and has a plain board floor over which is fitted a heavy, half-inch rubber covering.

'I had cleared the floor entirely, all but the exact centre where I had placed a glass-legged, upholstered table, a pile of vacuum tubes and batteries, and three pieces of special apparatus which my experiment required.

⁹ This seems to be a fairly obvious metaphor for Hodgson's greatest fear: losing control of one's self-discipline, being courted by one's inner animal, giving in to one's animal appetites and lusts – losing one's humanity in a struggle with one's animalism

¹⁰ There is certainly a bit of gendered signifying going on between these two: Bains' vulnerability, shame, and lack of self-discipline (or his struggle to retain it) make him "womanish" while Carnacki's back-slapping, clubbable assertiveness ("Out with it!" he barks like an officer to a shy recruit) codifies him as unquestionably masculine. Hodgson never fails to hyper-masculine-ize his heroes, nor to provide them with a weak-willed, narrow-shouldered male foil to counterpoint their heroic manliness

"Now Bains," I called, "come and stand over here by this table. Don't move about. I've got to erect a protective 'barrier' round us, and on no account must either of us cross over it by even so much as a hand or foot, once it is built."

'We went over to the middle of the room, and he stood by the glass-legged table while I began to fit the vacuum tubing together round us.

'I intended to use the new spectrum "defense" which I have been perfecting lately. This, I must tell you, consists of seven glass vacuum circles with the red on the outside, and the colour circles lying inside it, in the order of orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet¹¹.

'The room was still fairly light, but a slight quantity of dusk seemed to be already in the atmosphere, and I worked quickly.

'Suddenly, as I fitted the glass tubes together I was aware of some vague sense of nerve-strain, and glancing round at Bains who was standing there by the table I noticed him staring fixedly before him. He looked absolutely drowned in uncomfortable memories.

"'For goodness' sake stop thinking of those horrors," I called out to him. "I shall want you to think hard enough about them later; but in this specially constructed room it is better not to dwell on things of that kind till the barriers are up. Keep your mind on anything normal or superficial - the theatre will do - think about that last piece you saw at the Gaiety¹². I'll talk to you in a moment."

'Twenty minutes later the "barrier" was completed all round us, and I connected up the batteries. The room by this time was greying with the coming dusk, and the seven differently coloured circles shone out with extraordinary effect, sending out a cold glare.

"'By Jove!" cried Bains, "that's very wonderful - very wonderful!"

'My other apparatus which I now began to arrange consisted of a specially made camera, a modified form of phonograph with ear-pieces instead of a horn, and a glass disk composed of many fathoms of glass vacuum tubes arranged in a

¹¹ While the homoeroticism of this story – the slightly pederastic relationship between the two, the dynamic gendering of their personalities (one is a sub, one is a dom), and the matching rubber outfits that they "dress" one another in – is difficult to avoid noticing, this particularly gay-seeming touch (protecting themselves in a glowing, rainbow circle) can be written off as an anachronism: the rainbow was not used as an LGBT emblem until the mid 1970s. Critic Leigh Blackmore notes that the colors and their symbolism correspond almost identically to the colored wheels depicted in the Hindu chakra system. Chakras are energies that emit from the human spirit and are broken into various colors and attitudes and corresponding body parts: as they ascend, the first chakra is red (fear, the reptilian brain), followed by orange (sacral, sexual organs), yellow (metabolism, the navel), green (love and emotion, the heart), blue (communication, the throat), violet and indigo (perception, the "third eye"), and white (pure consciousness – no physical correlation)

¹² Again, there is no intended homoeroticism in this reference: The Gaiety Theatre opened in Dublin in 1871 where it continues to be a busy venue for plays and concerts

special way. It had two wires leading to an electrode constructed to fit round the head.

'By the time I had looked over and fixed up these three things, night had practically come, and the darkened room shone most strangely in the curious upward glare of the seven vacuum tubes.

"Now, Bains," I said, "I want you to lie on this table. Now put your hands down by your sides and lie quiet and think. You've just got two things to do," I told him. "One is to lie there and concentrate your thoughts on the details of the dream you are always having, and the other is not to move off this table whatever you see or hear, or whatever happens, unless I tell you. You understand, don't you?"

"Yes," he answered, "I think you may rely on me not to make a fool of myself. I feel curiously safe with you somehow¹³."

' "I'm glad of that," I replied. "But I don't want you to minimise the possible danger too much. There may be horrible danger. Now, just let me fix this band on your head," I added, as I adjusted the electrode. I gave him a few more instructions, telling him to concentrate his thoughts particularly upon the noises he heard just as he was waking, and I warned him again not to let himself fall asleep. "Don't talk," I said, "and don't take any notice of me. If you find I disturb your concentration keep your eyes closed."

He lay back and I walked over to the glass disk arranging the camera in front of it on its stand in such a way that the lens was opposite the centre of the disk.

I had scarcely done this when a ripple of greenish light ran across the vacuum tubes of the disk. This vanished, and for maybe a minute there was complete darkness. Then the green light rippled once more across it - rippled and swung round, and began to dance in varying shades from a deep heavy green to a rank ugly shade; back and forward, back and forward.

Every half second or so there shot across the varying greens a flicker of yellow, an ugly, heavy repulsive yellow, and then abruptly there came sweeping across the disk a great beat of muddy red. This died as quickly as it came, and gave place to the changing greens shot through by the unpleasant and ugly yellow hues. About every seventh second the disk was submerged, and the other colours momentarily blotted out by the great beat of heavy, muddy red which swept over everything.

' "He's concentrating on those sounds," I said to myself, and I felt queerly excited as I hurried on with my operations. I threw a word over my shoulder to Bains.

"Don't get scared, whatever happens," I said. "You're all right!"

¹³ Okay, this whole exchange (one vaguely suggestive of the dialog in a porno) is open to analysis – interpret away

'I proceeded now to operate my camera. It had a long roll of specially prepared paper ribbon in place of a film or plates. By turning the handle the roll passed through the machine exposing the ribbon.

'It took about five minutes to finish the roll, and during ail that time the green lights predominated; but the dull heavy beat of muddy red never ceased to flow across the vacuum tubes of the disk at every seventh second. It was like a recurrent beat in some unheard and somehow displeasing melody.

'Lifting the exposed spool of paper ribbon out of the camera I laid it horizontally in the two "rests" that I had arranged for it on my modified gramophone. Where the paper had been acted upon by the varying coloured lights which had appeared on the disk, the prepared surface had risen in curious, irregular little waves.

'I unrolled about a foot of the ribbon and attached the loose end to an empty spool-roller (on the opposite side of the machine) which I had geared to the driving clockwork mechanism of the gramophone. Then I took the diaphragm and lowered it gently into place above the ribbon. Instead of the usual needle the diaphragm was fitted with a beautifully made metal-filament brush, about an inch broad, which just covered the whole breadth of the ribbon. This fine and fragile brush rested lightly on the prepared surface of the paper, and when I started the machine the ribbon began to pass under the brush, and as it passed, the delicate metal-filament "bristles" followed every minute inequality of those tiny, irregular wave-like excrescences on the surface.

'I put the ear-pieces to my ears, and instantly I knew that I had succeeded in actually recording what Bains had heard in his sleep. In fact, I was even then hearing "mentally" by means of his effort of memory. I was listening to what appeared to be the faint, far-off squealing and grunting of countless swine. It was extraordinary, and at the same time exquisitely horrible and vile. It frightened me, with a sense of my having come suddenly and unexpectedly too near to something foul and most abominably dangerous.

'So strong and imperative was this feeling that I twitched the ear-pieces out of my ears, and sat a while staring round the room trying to steady my sensations back to normality.

'The room looked strange and vague in the dull glow of light from the circles, and I had a feeling that a taint of monstrosity was all about me in the air. I remembered what Bains had told me of the feeling he'd always had after coming up out of "that place" - as if some horrible atmosphere had followed him up and filled his bedroom. I understood him perfectly now - so much so that I had mentally used almost his exact phrase in explaining to myself what I felt.

'Turning round to speak to him I saw there was something curious about the centre of the "defense."

'Now, before I tell you fellows any more I must explain that there are certain, what I call "focussing", qualities about this new "defense" I've been trying.

"The Sigsand manuscript puts it something like this: "Avoid diversities of colour; nor stand ye within the barrier of the colour lights; for in colour hath Satan a delight. Nor can he abide in the Deep if ye adventure against him armed with red purple. So be warned. Neither forget that in blue, which is God's colour in the Heavens, ye have safety."

"You see, from that statement in the Sigsand manuscript I got my first notion for this new "defense" of mine. I have aimed to make it a "defense" and yet have "focussing" or "drawing" qualities such as the Sigsand hints at. I have experimented enormously, and I've proved that reds and purples - the two extreme colours of the spectrum¹⁴ - are fairly dangerous; so much so that I suspect they actually "draw" or "focus" the outside forces. Any action or "meddling" on the part of the experimentalist is tremendously enhanced in its effect if the action is taken within barriers composed of these colours, in certain proportions and tints.

"In the same way blue is distinctly a "general defense." Yellow appears to be neutral, and green a wonderful protection within limits. Orange, as far as I can tell, is slightly attractive and indigo is dangerous by itself in a limited way, but in certain combinations with the other colours it becomes a very powerful "defense". I've not yet discovered a tenth of the possibilities of these circles of mine. It's a kind of colour organ upon which I seem to play a tune of colour combinations that can be either safe or infernal in its effects. You know I have a keyboard with a separate switch to each of the colour circles.

"Well, you fellows will understand now what I felt when I saw the curious appearance of the floor in the middle of the "defense." It looked exactly as if a circular shadow lay, not just on the floor, but a few inches above it. The shadow seemed to deepen and blacken at the centre even while I watched it. It appeared to be spreading from the centre outwardly, and all the time it grew darker.

"I was watchful, and not a little puzzled; for the combination of lights that I had switched on approximated a moderately safe "general defense." Understand, I had no intention of making a focus until I had learnt more. In fact, I meant that first investigation not to go beyond a tentative inquiry into the kind of thing I had got to deal with.

"I knelt down quickly and felt the floor with the palm of my hand, but it was quite normal to the feel, and that reassured me that there was no Saaaiti mischief abroad; for that is a form of danger which can involve, and make use of, the very material of the "defense" itself¹⁵. It can materialise out of everything except fire.

¹⁴ References to ultraviolet and infrared waves

¹⁵ A possessive, shapeshifting, elemental force encountered in "The Whistling Room"

'As I knelt there I realised all at once that the legs of the table on which Bains lay were partly hidden in the ever blackening shadow, and my hands seemed to grow vague as I felt at the floor.

'I got up and stood away a couple of feet so as to see the phenomenon from a little distance. It struck me then that there was something different about the table itself. It seemed unaccountably lower.

"It's the shadow hiding the legs," I thought to myself. "This promises to be interesting; but I'd better not let things go too far."

'I called out to Bains to stop thinking so hard. "Stop concentrating for a bit," I said; but he never answered, and it occurred to me suddenly that the table appeared to be still lower.

"Bains," I shouted, "stop thinking a moment." Then in a flash I realised it. "Wake up, man! Wake up!" I cried.

'He had fallen over asleep - the very last thing he should have done; for it increased the danger twofold. No wonder I had been getting such good results! The poor beggar was worn out with his sleepless nights. He neither moved nor spoke as I strode across to him.

"Wake up!" I shouted again, shaking him by the shoulder.

'My voice echoed uncomfortably round the big empty room; and Bains lay like a dead man.

'As I shook him again I noticed that I appeared to be standing up to my knees in the circular shadow. It looked like the mouth of a pit. My legs, from the knees downwards, were vague. The floor under my feet felt solid and firm when I stamped on it; but all the same I had a feeling that things were going a bit too far, so striding across to the switchboard I switched on the "full defense."

'Stepping back quickly to the table I had a horrible and sickening shock. The table had sunk quite unmistakably. Its top was within a couple of feet of the floor, and the legs had that fore-shortened appearance that one sees when a stick is thrust into water. They looked vague and shadowy in the peculiar circle of dark shadows which had such an extraordinary resemblance to the black mouth of a pit. I could see only the top of the table plainly with Bains lying motionless on it; and the whole thing was going down, as I stared, into that black circle.'

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'There was not a moment to lose, and like a flash I caught Bains round his neck and body and lifted him clean up into my arms off the table. And as I lifted him he grunted like a great swine in my ear.

'The sound sent a thrill of horrible funk¹⁶ through me. It was just as though I held a hog in my arms instead of a human. I nearly dropped him. Then I held

¹⁶ Disturbing repulsion

his face to the light and stared down at him. His eyes were half opened, and he was looking at me apparently as if he saw me perfectly.

'Then he grunted again. I could feel his small body quiver'¹⁷ with the sound.

'I called out to him. "Bains," I said, "can you hear me?"

'His eyes still gazed at me; and then, as we looked at each other, he grunted like a swine again.

'I let go one hand, and hit him across the cheek, a stinging slap.

"Wake up, Bains!" I shouted. "Wake up!" But I might have hit a corpse. He just stared up at me. And. suddenly I bent lower and looked into his eyes more closely. I never saw such a fixed, intelligent, mad horror as I saw there. It knocked out all my sudden disgust. Can you understand?

'I glanced round quickly at the table. It stood there at its normal height; and, indeed, it was in every way normal. The curious shadow that had somehow suggested to me the black mouth of the pit had vanished. I felt relieved; for it seemed to me that I had entirely broken up any possibility of a partial "focus" by means of the full "defense" which I had switched on.

'I laid Bains on the floor, and stood up to look round and consider what was best to do. I dared not step outside of the barriers, until any "dangerous tensions" there might be in the room had been dissipated. Nor was it wise, even inside the full "defense," to have him sleeping the kind of sleep he was in; not without certain preparations having been made first, which I had not made.

'I can tell you, I felt beastly anxious. I glanced down at Bains, and had a sudden fresh shock; for the peculiar circular shadow was forming all round him again, where he lay on the floor. His hands and face showed curiously vague, and distorted, as they might have looked through a few inches of faintly stained water. But his eyes were somehow clear to see. They were staring up, mute and terrible, at me, through that horrible darkening shadow.

'I stopped, and with one quick lift, tore him up off the floor into my arms, and for the third time he grunted like a swine, there in my arms. It was damnable.

'I stood up, in the barrier, holding Bains, and looked about the room again; then back at the floor. The shadow was still thick round about my feet, and I stepped quickly across to the other side of the table. I stared at the shadow, and saw that it had vanished; then I glanced down again at my feet, and had another shock; for the shadow was showing faintly again, all round where I stood.

'I moved a pace, and watched the shadow become invisible; and then, once more, like a slow stain, it began to grow about my feet.

'I moved again, a pace, and stared round the room, meditating a break for the door. And then, in that instant, I saw that this would be certainly impossible; for there was something indefinite in the atmosphere of the room - something that moved, circling slowly about the barrier.

¹⁷ More unmistakable gendering to this pederastic relationship

'I glanced down at my feet, and saw that the shadow had grown thick about them. I stepped a pace to the right, and as it disappeared, I stared again round the big room and somehow it seemed tremendously big and unfamiliar. I wonder whether you can understand.

'As I stared I saw again the indefinite something that floated in the air of the room. I watched it steadily for maybe a minute. It went twice completely round the barrier in that time. And, suddenly, I saw it more distinctly. It looked like a small puff of black smoke.

'And then I had something else to think about; for all at once I was aware of an extraordinary feeling of vertigo, and in the same moment, a sense of sinking - I was sinking bodily. I literally sickened as I glanced down, for I saw in that moment that I had gone down, almost up to my thighs into what appeared to be actually the shadowy, but quite unmistakable, mouth of a pit. Do you understand? I was sinking down into this thing, with Bains in my arms.

'A feeling of furious anger came over me, and I swung my right boot forward with a fierce kick. I kicked nothing tangible, for I went clean through the side of the shadowy thing, and fetched up against the table, with a crash. I had come through something that made all my skin creep and tingle - an invisible, vague something which resembled an electric tension. I felt that if it had been stronger, I might not have been able to charge through as I had. I wonder if I make it clear to you?

'I whirled round, but the beastly thing had gone; yet even as I stood there by the table, the slow greying of a circular shadow began to form again about my feet.

'I stepped to the other side of the table, and leaned against it for a moment: for I was shaking from head to foot with a feeling of extraordinary horror upon me, that was in some way, different from any kind of horror I have ever felt. It was as if I had in that one moment been near something no human has any right to be near, for his soul's sake. And abruptly, I wondered whether I had not felt just one brief touch of the horror that the rigid Bains was even then enduring as I held him in my arms.

'Outside of the barrier there were now several of the curious little clouds. Each one looked exactly like a little puff of black smoke. They increased as I watched them, which I did for several minutes; but all the time as I watched, I kept moving from one part to another of the "defense", so as to prevent the shadow forming round my feet again.

'Presently, I found that my constant changing of position had resolved into a slow monotonous walk round and round, inside the "defense"; and all the time I had to carry the unnaturally rigid body of poor Bains.

'It began to tire me; for though he was small, his rigidity made him dreadfully awkward and tiring to hold, as you can understand; yet I could not think what else to do; for I had stopped shaking him, or trying to wake him, for the simple

reason that he was as wide awake as I was mentally; though but physically inanimate, through one of those partial spiritual disassociations which he had tried to explain to me.

'Now I had previously switched out the red, orange, yellow and green circles, and had on the full defense of the blue end of the spectrum - I knew that one of the repelling vibrations of each of the three colours: blue, indigo and violet were beating out protectingly into space; yet they were proving insufficient, and I was in the position of having either to take some desperate action to stimulate Bains to an even greater effort of will than I judged him to be making, or else to risk experimenting with fresh combinations of the defensive colours.

'You see, as things were at that moment, the danger was increasing steadily; for plainly, from the appearance of the air of the room outside the barrier, there were some mighty dangerous tensions generating. While inside the danger was also increasing; the steady recurrence of the shadow proving that the "defense" was insufficient.

'In short, I feared that Bains in his peculiar condition was literally a "doorway" into the "defense"; and unless I could wake him or find out the correct combinations of circles necessary to set up stronger repelling vibrations against that particular danger, there were very ugly possibilities ahead. I felt I had been incredibly rash not to have foreseen the possibility of Bains falling asleep under the hypnotic effect of deliberately paralleling the associations of sleep.

'Unless I could increase the repulsion of the barriers or wake him there was every likelihood of having to chose between a rush for the door - which the condition of the atmosphere outside the barrier showed to be practically impossible - or of throwing him outside the barrier, which, of course, was equally not possible.

'All this time I was walking round and round inside the barrier, when suddenly I saw a new development of the danger which threatened us. Right in the centre of the "defense" the shadow had formed into an intensely black circle, about a foot wide.

'This increased as I looked at it. It was horrible to see it grow. It crept out in an ever widening circle till it was quite a yard across.

'Quickly I put Bains on the floor. A tremendous attempt was evidently going to be made by some outside force to enter the "defense", and it was up to me to make a final effort to help Bains to "wake up." I took out my lancet¹⁸, and pushed up his left coat sleeve.

'What I was going to do was a terrible risk, I knew, for there is no doubt that in some extraordinary fashion blood attracts.

¹⁸ The namesake of the previously mentioned medical journal is a tool once used by doctors to open veins in order to "bleed" patients. Operating like a pocket knife, it consists of a blade (or several blades of various sizes) that folds into a protective case when not being used

"The Sigsand mentions it particularly in one passage which runs something like this: "In blood there is the Voice which calleth through all space. Ye Monsters in ye Deep hear, and hearing, they lust. Likewise hath it a greater power to reclaim backward ye soul that doth wander foolish adrift from ye body in which it doth have natural abiding. But woe unto him that doth spill ye blood in ye deadly hour; for there will be surely Monsters that shall hear ye Blood Cry."

"That risk I had to run. I knew that the blood would call to the outer forces; but equally I knew that it should call even more loudly to that portion of Bains' "Essence" that was adrift from him, down in those depths.

'Before lancing him, I glanced at the shadow. It had spread out until the nearest edge was not more than two feet away from Bains' right shoulder; and the edge was creeping nearer, like the blackening edge of burning paper, even while I stared. The whole thing had a less shadowy, less ghostly appearance than at any time before. And it looked simply and literally like the black mouth of a pit.

"Now, Bains," I said, "pull yourself together, man. Wake up!" And at the same time as I spoke to him, I used my lancet quickly but superficially.

I watched the little red spot of blood well up, then trickle round his wrist and fall to the floor of the "defense". And in the moment that it fell the thing that I had feared happened. There was a sound like a low peal of thunder in the room, and curious deadly-looking flashes of light rippled here and there along the floor outside the barrier.

'Once more I called to him, trying to speak firmly and steadily as I saw that the horrible shadowy circle had spread across every inch of the floor space of the centre of the "defense", making it appear as if both Bains and I were suspended above an unutterable black void - the black void that stared up at me out of the throat of that shadowy pit. And yet, all the time I could feel the floor solid under my knees as I knelt beside Bains holding his wrist.

' "Bains!" I called once more, trying not to shout madly at him. "Bains, wake up! Wake up, man! Wake up!"

'But he never moved, only stared up at me with eyes of quiet horror that seemed to be looking at me out of some dreadful eternity.'

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'By this time the shadow had blackened all around us, and I felt that strangely terrible vertigo coming over me again. Jumping to my feet I caught up Bains in my arms and stepped over the first of the protective circles - the violet, and stood between it and the indigo circle, holding Bains as close to me as possible so as to prevent any portion of his helpless body from protruding outside the indigo and blue circles.

'From the black shadowy mouth which now filled the whole of the centre of the "defense" there came a faint sound - not near but seeming to come up at me out of unknown abysses. Very, very faint and lost it sounded, but I recognised it as unmistakably the infinitely remote murmur of countless swine.

'And that same moment Bains, as if answering the sound, grunted like a swine in my arms.

'There I stood between the glass vacuum tubes of the circles, gazing dizzily into that black shadowy pit-mouth, which seemed to drop sheer into hell from below my left elbow.

'Things had gone so utterly beyond all that I had thought of, and it had all somehow come about so gradually and yet so suddenly, that I was really a bit below my natural self. I felt mentally paralysed, and could think of nothing except that not twenty feet away was the door and the outer natural world; and here was I face to face with some unthought-of danger, and all adrift, what to do to avoid it.

'You fellows will understand this better when I tell you that the bluish glare from the three circles showed me that there were now hundreds and hundreds of those small smoke-like puffs of black cloud circling round and round outside the barrier in an unvarying, unending procession.

'And all the time I was holding the rigid body of Bains in my arms, trying not to give way to the loathing that got me each time he grunted. Every twenty or thirty seconds he grunted, as if in answer to the sounds which were almost too faint for my normal hearing. I can tell you, it was like holding something worse than a corpse in my arms, standing there balanced between physical death on the one side and soul destruction on the other.

'Abruptly, from out of the deep that lay so close that my elbow and shoulder overhung it, there came again a hint, marvellously faint murmur of swine, so utterly far away that the sound was as remote as a lost echo.

'Bains answered it with a pig-like squeal that set every fibre in me protesting in sheer human revolt¹⁹, and I sweated coldly from head to foot. Pulling myself together I tried to pierce down into the mouth of the great shadow when, for the second time, a low peel of thunder sounded in the room, and every joint in my body seemed to jolt and burn.

'In turning to look down the pit I had allowed one of Bains' heels to protrude for a moment slightly beyond the blue circle, and a fraction of the "tension" outside the barrier had evidently discharged through Bains and me. Had I been standing directly inside the "defense" instead of being "insulated" from it by the violet circle, then no doubt things might have been much more serious. As it was, I had, psychically, that dreadful soiled feeling which the healthy human

¹⁹ This reinforces the theory that Hodgson views swine as symbols of the antithesis to humanity: his human nature bucks at the porcine noises coming from his friend

always experiences when he comes too closely in contact with certain Outer Monstrosities. Do you fellows remember how I had just the same feeling when the Hand came too near me in the "Gateway"²⁰ case?

'The physical effects were sufficiently interesting to mention; for Bains left boot had been ripped open, and the leg of his trousers was charred to the knee, while all around the leg were numbers of bluish marks in the form of irregular spirals.

'I stood there holding Bains, and shaking from head to foot. My head ached and each joint had a queer numbish feeling; but my physical pains were nothing compared with my mental distress. I felt that we were done! I had no room to turn or move for the space between the violet circle which was the innermost, and the blue circle which was the outermost of those in use was thirty-one inches, including the one inch of the indigo circle. So you see I was forced to stand there like an image, fearing each moment lest I should get another shock, and quite unable to think what to do.

'I daresay five minutes passed in this fashion. Bains had not grunted once since the "tension" caught him, and for this I was just simply thankful; though at first I must confess I had feared for a moment that he was dead.

'No further sounds had come up out of the black mouth to my left, and I grew steady enough again to begin to look about me, and think a bit. I leant again so as to look directly down into the shadowy pit. The edge of the circular mouth was now quite defined, and had a curious solid look, as if it were formed out of some substance like black glass.

'Below the edge, I could trace the appearance of solidity for a considerable distance, though in a vague sort of way. The centre of this extraordinary phenomenon was simple and unmitigated blackness - an utter velvety blackness that seemed to soak the very light out of the room down into it. I could see nothing else, and if anything else came out of it except a complete silence, it was the atmosphere of frightening suggestion that was affecting me more and more every minute.

'I turned away slowly and carefully, so as not to run any risks of allowing either Bains or myself to expose any part of us over the blue circle. Then I saw that things outside of the blue circle had developed considerably; for the odd, black puffs of smoke-like cloud had increased enormously and blent into a great, gloomy, circular wall of tufted cloud, going round and round and round eternally, and hiding the rest of the room entirely from me.

'Perhaps a minute passed, while I stared at this thing; and then, you know, the room was shaken slightly. This shaking lasted for three or four seconds, and then passed; but it came again in about half a minute, and was repeated from

²⁰ Carnacki makes a rare reference to an extant story rather than apocrypha

time to time. There was a queer oscillating quality in the shaking, that made me think suddenly of that *Jarvee* Haunting case²¹. You remember it?

'There came again the shaking, and a ripple of deadly light seemed to play round the outside of the barrier; and then, abruptly, the room was full of a strange roaring - a brutish enormous yelling, grunting storm of swine-sounds.

'They fell away into a complete silence, and the rigid Bains grunted twice in my arms, as if answering. Then the storm of swine noise came again, beating up in a gigantic riot of brute sound that roared through the room, piping, squealing, grunting, and howling. And as it sank with a steady declination, there came a single gargantuan grunt out of some dreadful throat of monstrosity, and in one beat, the crashing chorus of unknown millions of swine came thundering and raging through the room again.

'There was more in that sound than mere chaos - there was a mighty devilish rhythm in it. Suddenly, it swept down again into a multitudinous swinish whispering and minor gruntings of unthinkable millions; and then with a rolling deafening bellow of sound came the single vast grunt. And, as if lifted upon it the swine roar of the millions of the beasts beat up through the room again; and at every seventh second, as I knew well enough without the need of the watch on my wrist, came the single storm beat of the great grunt out of the throat of unknowable monstrosity - and in my arms, Bains, the human, grunted in time to the swine melody - a rigid grunting monster there in my two arms.

'I tell you from head to foot I shook and sweated. I believe I prayed²²; but if I did I don't know what I prayed. I have never before felt or endured just what I felt, standing there in that thirty-one-inch space, with that grunting thing in my arms, and the hell melody beating up out of the great Deep: and to my right, "tensions" that would have torn me into a bundle of blazing tattered flesh, if I had jumped out over the barriers.

'And then, with an effect like a clap of unexpected thunder, the vast storm of sound ceased; and the room was full of silence and an unimaginable horror.

'This silence continued. I want to say something which may sound a bit silly; but the silence seemed to trickle round the room. I don't know why I felt it like that; but my words give you just what I seemed to feel, as I stood there holding the softly grunting body of Bains.

²¹ Not printed here, "The Haunted 'Jarvee'" combined Hodgson's two greatest legacies: nautical horror stories and Carnacki. It follows Carnacki as he sails in the yacht of a friend - a yacht which turns out to be haunted by spiritual vibrations which ultimately lead to its destruction and Carnacki's assertion that these supernatural shudders could have been caused by any negative mojo, ranging from the mood of the carpenter driving a nail to the way a tree was cut down before being rendered into planks

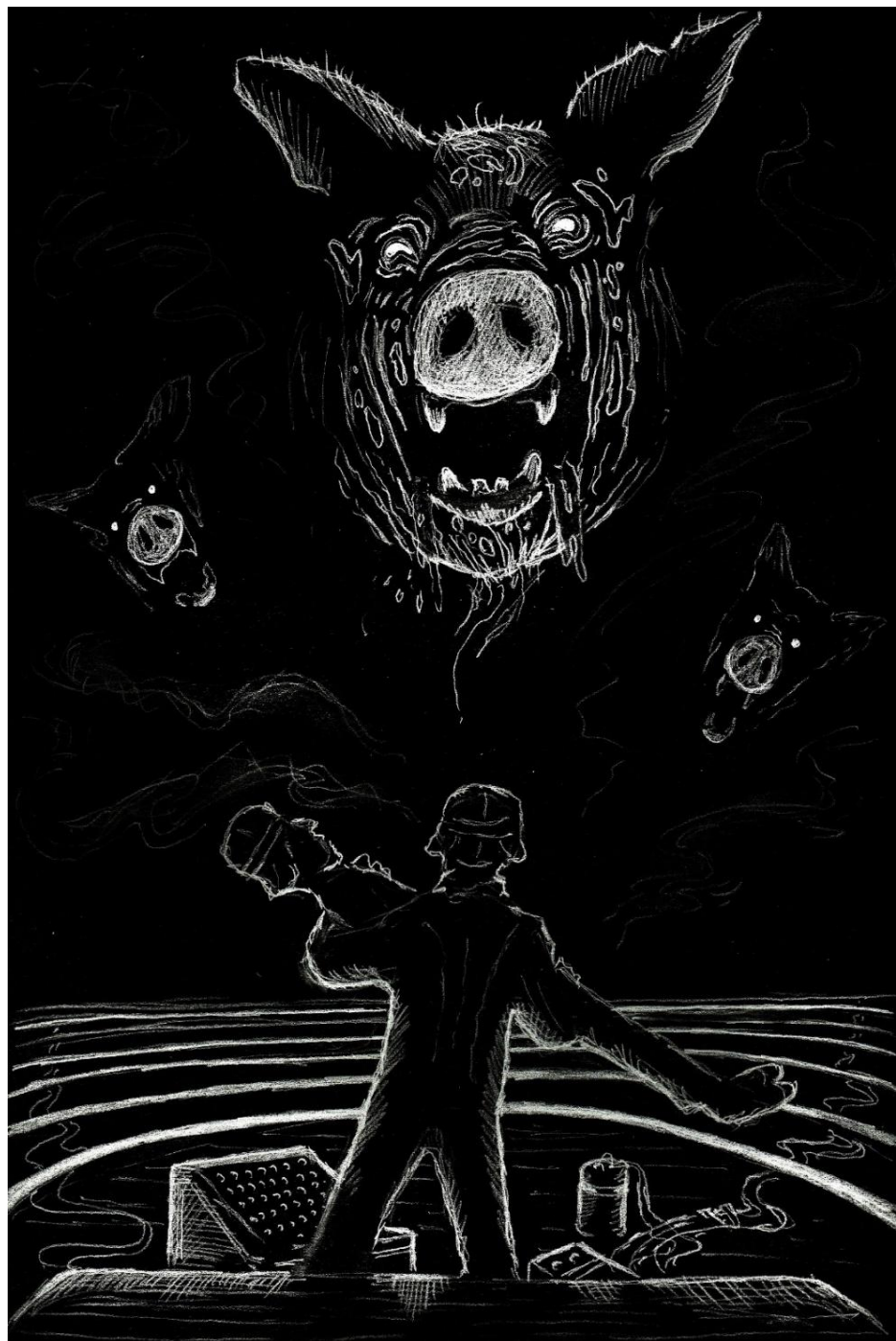
²² Not unlike the sometimes-atheistic, sometimes-pantheistic, sometimes-pious narrator of "Out of the Storm" who instinctively turns to religion in the moment of his greatest peril

'The circular, gloomy wall of dense black cloud enclosed the barrier as completely as ever, and moved round and round and round, with a slow, "eternal" movement. And at the back of that black wall of circling cloud, a dead silence went trickling round the room, out of my sight. Do you understand at all?...

'It seemed to me to show very clearly the state of almost insane mental and psychic tension I was enduring.... The way in which my brain insisted that the silence was trickling round the room, interests me enormously; for I was either in a state approximating a phase of madness, or else I was, psychically, tuned to some abnormal pitch of awaredness and sensitiveness in which silence had ceased to be an abstract quality, and had become to me a definite concrete element, much as (to use a stupidly crude illustration), the invisible moisture of the atmosphere becomes a visible and concrete element when it becomes deposited as water. I wonder whether this thought attracts you as it does me?

'And then, you know, a slow awaredness grew in me of some further horror to come. This sensation or knowledge or whatever it should be named, was so strong that I had a sudden feeling of suffocation.... I felt that I could bear no more; and that if anything else happened, I should just pull out my revolver and shoot Bains through the head, and then myself, and so end the whole dreadful business²³.

²³ Not the first time Carnacki has considered suicide as a last resort to avoid spiritual torture



'This feeling, however, soon passed; and I felt stronger and more ready to face things again. Also, I had the first, though still indefinite, idea of a way in which to make things a bit safer; but I was too dazed to see how to "shape" to help myself efficiently.

'And then a low, far-off whining stole up into the room, and I knew that the danger was coming. I leant slowly to my left, taking care not to let Bains' feet stick over the blue circle, and stared down into the blackness of the pit that dropped sheer into some Unknown, from under my left elbow.

'The whining died; but far down in the blackness, there was something - just a remote luminous spot. I stood in a grim silence for maybe ten long minutes, and looked down at the thing. It was increasing in size all the time, and had become much plainer to see; yet it was still lost in the far, tremendous Deep.

'Then, as I stood and looked, the low whining sound crept up to me again, and Bains, who had lain like a log in my arms all the time, answered it with a long animallike whine, that was somehow newly abominable.

'A very curious thing happened then; for all around the edge of the pit, that looked so peculiarly like black glass, there came a sudden, luminous glowing. It came and went oddly, smouldering queerly round and round the edge in an opposite direction to the circling of the wall of black, tufted cloud on the outside of the barrier.

'This peculiar glowing finally disappeared, and, abruptly, out of the tremendous Deep, I was conscious of a dreadful quality or "atmosphere" of monstrosity that was coming up out of the pit. If I said there had been a sudden waft of it, this would very well describe the actuality of it; but the spiritual sickness of distress that it caused me to feel, I am simply stumped to explain to you. It was something that made me feel I should be soiled to the very core of me, if I did not beat it off from me with my will.

'I leant sharply away from the pit towards the outer of the burning circles. I meant to see that no part of my body should overhang the pit whilst that disgusting power was beating up out of the unknown depths.

'And thus it was, facing so rigidly away from the centre of the "defense", I saw presently a fresh thing; for there was something, many things, I began to think, on the other side of the gloomy wall that moved everlastingly around the outside of the barrier.

'The first thing I noticed was a queer disturbance of the ever circling cloud-wall. This disturbance was within eighteen inches of the floor, and directly before me. There was a curious, "puddling" action in the misty wall; as if something were meddling with it. The area of this peculiar little disturbance could not have been more than a foot across, and it did not remain opposite to me; but was taken round by the circling of the wall.

'When it came past me again, I noticed that it was bulging slightly inwards towards me: and as it moved away from me once more, I saw another similar

disturbance, and then a third and a fourth, all in different parts of the slowly whirling black wall; and all of them were no more than about eighteen inches from the floor.

'When the first one came opposite me again, I saw that the slight bulge had grown into a very distinct protuberance towards me.

'All around the moving wall, there had now come these curious swellings. They continued to reach inwards, and to elongate; and all the time they kept in a constant movement.

'Suddenly, one of them broke, or opened, at the apex, and there protruded through, for an instant, the tip of a pallid, but unmistakable snout. It was gone at once, but I had seen the thing distinctly; and within a minute, I saw another one poke suddenly through the wall, to my right, and withdraw as quickly. I could not look at the base of the strange, black, moving circle about the barrier without seeing a swinish snout peep through momentarily, in this place or that.

'I stared at these things in a very peculiar state of mind. There was so great a weight of the abnormal about me, before and behind and every way, that to a certain extent it bred in me a sort of antidote to fear. Can you understand? It produced in me a temporary dazedness in which things and the horror of things became less real. I stared at them, as a child stares out from a fast train at a quickly passing night-landscape, oddly hit by the furnaces of unknown industries. I want you to try to understand.

'In my arms Bains lay quiet and rigid; and my arms and back ached until I was one dull ache in all my body; but I was only partly conscious of this when I roused momentarily from my psychic to my physical awareness, to shift him to another position, less intolerable temporarily to my tired arms and back.

'There was suddenly a fresh thing - a low but enormous, solitary grunt came rolling, vast and brutal into the room. It made the still body of Bains quiver against me, and he grunted thrice in return, with the voice of a young pig²⁴.

'High up in the moving wall of the barrier, I saw a fluffing out of the black tufted clouds; and a pig's hoof and leg, as far as the knuckle, came through and pawed a moment. This was about nine or ten feet above the floor. As it gradually disappeared I heard a low grunting from the other side of the veil of clouds which broke out suddenly into a diafaeon of brute-sound, grunting, squealing and swine-howling; all formed into a sound that was the essential melody of the brute - a grunting, squealing howling roar that rose, roar by roar, howl by howl and squeal by squeal to a crescendo of horrors - the bestial

²⁴ Carnacki is clearly battling for the soul of his young mentee: Bains' soul is already taking on the characteristics of a young swine, which suggests the potential to develop into a full fledged porker. Symbolically, Carnacki is trying to protect Bains from falling under the government of his animal lusts. Impressionable, weak willed, naïve, undisciplined, and sensitive, Bains – unlike the spiritually burly Carnacki – is a ripe victim for his own personal demons

growths, longings, zests and acts of some grotto of hell.... It is no use, I can't give it to you. I get dumb²⁵ with the failure of my command over speech to tell you what that grunting, howling, roaring melody conveyed to me. It had in it something so inexplicably below the horizons of the soul in its monstrousness and fearfulness that the ordinary simple fear of death itself, with all its attendant agonies and terrors and sorrows, seemed like a thought of something peaceful and infinitely holy compared with the fear of those unknown elements in that dreadful roaring melody. And the sound was with me inside the room - there right in the room with me. Yet I seemed not to be aware of confining walls, but of echoing spaces of gargantuan corridors. Curious! I had in my mind those two words - gargantuan corridors.

As the rolling chaos of swine melody beat itself away on every side, there came booming through it a single grunt, the single recurring grunt of the HOG; for I knew now that I was actually and without any doubt hearing the beat of monstrosity, the HOG.

'In the Sigsand the thing is described something like this: "Ye Hogge which ye Almighty alone hath power upon. If in sleep or in ye hour of danger ye hear the voice of ye Hogge, cease ye to meddle. For ye Hogge doth be of ye outer Monstrous Ones, nor shall any human come nigh him nor continue meddling when ye hear his voice, for in ye earlier life upon the world did the Hogge have power, and shall again in ye end. And in that ye Hogge had once a power upon ye earth, so doth he crave sore to come again. And dreadful shall be ye harm to ye soul if ye continue to meddle, and to let ye beast come nigh. And I say unto all, if ye have brought this dire danger upon ye, have memory of ye cross, for of all sign hath ye Hogge a horror."

'There's a lot more, but I can't remember it all and that is about the substance of it.

'There was I holding Bains who was all the time howling that dreadful grunt out with the voice of a swine. I wonder I didn't go mad. It was, I believe, the antidote of dazedness produced by the strain which helped me through each moment.

'A minute later, or perhaps five minutes, I had a sudden new sensation, like a warning cutting through my dulled feelings. I turned my head; but there was nothing behind me, and bending over to my left I seemed to be looking down into that black depth which fell away sheer under my left elbow. At that moment the roaring bellow of swine-noise ceased and I seemed to be staring down into miles of black aether²⁶ at something that hung there - a pallid face floating far down and remote - a great swine face.

²⁵ Silent, speechless

²⁶ Or "ether" - at one time the atmosphere of space was believed to be made of this dense gas. Carnacki essentially equates this blackness to the void of space

'And as I gazed I saw it grow bigger. A seemingly motionless, pallid swine-face rising upward out of the depth. And suddenly I realised that I was actually looking at the Hog.'

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'For perhaps a full minute I stared down through the darkness at that thing swimming like some far-off, dead-white planet in the stupendous void. And then I simply woke up bang, as you might say, to the possession of my faculties. For just a certain over-degree of strain had brought about the dumbly helpful anaesthesia of dazedness, so this sudden overwhelming supreme fact of horror produced, in turn, its reaction from inertness to action. I passed in one moment from listlessness to a fierce efficiency.

'I knew that I had, through some accident, penetrated beyond all previous "bounds", and that I stood where no human soul had any right to be, and that in but a few of the puny minutes of earth's time I might be dead.

'Whether Bains had passed beyond the "lines of retraction" or not, I could not tell. I put him down carefully but quickly on his side, between the inner circles - that is, the violet circle and the indigo circle - where he lay grunting slowly. Feeling that the dreadful moment had come I drew out my automatic²⁷. It seemed best to make sure of our end before that thing in the depth came any nearer: for once Bains in his present condition came within what I might term the "inductive forces" of the monster, he would cease to be human. There would happen, as in that case of Aster who stayed outside the pentacles in the Black Veil Case, what can only be described as a pathological, spiritual change - literally in other words, soul destruction.

'And then something seemed to be telling me not to shoot. This sounds perhaps a bit superstitious; but I meant to kill Bains in that moment, and what stopped me was a distinct message from the outside.

'I tell you, it sent a great thrill of hope through me, for I knew that the forces which govern the spinning of the outer circle were intervening. But the very fact of the intervention proved to me afresh the enormous spiritual peril into which we had stumbled; for that inscrutable Protective Force only intervenes between the human soul and the Outer Monstrosities.

'The moment I received that message I stood up like a flash and turned towards the pit, stepping over the violet circle slap into the mouth of darkness. I had to take the risk in order to get at the switch board which lay on the glass shelf under the table top in the centre. I could not shake free from the horror of the idea that I might fall down through that awful blackness. The floor felt solid enough under me; but I seemed to be walking on nothing above a black void,

²⁷ Semi-automatic pistols first became widely available in 1896 (the first was invented four years earlier). While Carnacki may have one of many different types of pistols - including Mausers, Lugers, and Colts - his is probably a Browning

like an inverted starless night, with the face of the approaching Hog rising up from far down under my feet - a silent, incredible thing out of the abyss - a pallid, floating swine-face, framed in enormous blackness.

'Two quick, nervous strides took me to the table standing there in the centre with its glass legs apparently resting on nothing. I grabbed out the switch board, sliding out the vulcanite²⁸ plate which carried the switch-control of the blue circle. The battery which fed this circle was the right-hand one of the row of seven, and each battery was marked with the letter of its circle painted on it, so that in an emergency I could select any particular battery in a moment.

'As I snatched up the B switch I had a grim enough warning of the unknown dangers that I was risking in that short journey of two steps; for that dreadful sense of vertigo returned suddenly and for one horrible moment I saw everything through a blurred medium as if I were trying to look through water.

'Below me, far away down between my feet I could see the Hog which, in some peculiar way, looked different dearer and much nearer, and enormous. I felt it had got nearer to me all in a moment. And suddenly I had the impression I was descending bodily.

'I had a sense of a tremendous force being used to push me over the side of that pit, but with every shred of will power I had in me I hurled myself into the smoky appearance that hid everything and reached the violet circle where Bains lay in front of me.

'Here I crouched down on my heels, and with my two arms out before me I slipped the nails of each forefinger under the vulcanite base of the blue circle, which I lifted very gently so that when the base was far enough from the floor I could push the tips of my fingers underneath. I took care to keep from reaching farther under than the inner edge of the glowing tube which rested on the two-inch-broad foundation of vulcanite.

'Very slowly I stood upright, lifting the side of the blue circle with me. My feet were between the indigo and the violet circles, and only the blue circle between me and sudden death; for if it had snapped with the unusual strain I was putting upon it by lifting it like that, I knew that I should in all probability go west pretty quickly.

'So you fellows can imagine what I felt like. I was conscious of a disagreeable faint prickling that was strongest in the tips of my fingers and wrists, and the blue circle seemed to vibrate strangely as if minute particles of something were impinging upon it in countless millions. Along the shining glass tubes for a couple of feet on each side of my hands a queer haze of tiny sparks boiled and whirled in the form of an extraordinary halo.

'Stepping forward over the indigo circle I pushed the blue circle out against the slowly moving wall of black cloud causing a ripple of tiny pale flashes to curl

²⁸ Stiff, black (vulcanized) rubber – as a tire

in over the circle. These flashes ran along the vacuum tube until they came to the place where the blue circle crossed the indigo, and there they flicked off into space with sharp cracks of sound.

'As I advanced slowly and carefully with the blue circle a most extraordinary thing happened, for the moving wall of cloud gave from it in a great belly of shadow, and appeared to thin away from before it. Lowering my edge of the circle to the floor I stepped over Bains and right into the mouth of the pit, lifting the other side of the circle over the table. It creaked as if it were about to break in half as I lifted it, but eventually it came over safely.

'When I looked again into the depth of that shadow I saw below me the dreadful pallid head of the Hog floating in a circle of night. It struck me that it glowed very slightly - just a vague luminosity. And quite near - comparatively. No one could have judged distances in that black void.

'Picking up the edge of the blue circle again as I had done before, I took it out further till it was half clear of the indigo circle. Then I picked up Bains and carried him to that portion of the floor guarded by the part of the blue circle which was clear of the "defense". Then I lifted the circle and started to move it forward as quickly as I dared, shivering each time the joints squeaked as the whole fabric of it groaned with the strain I was putting upon it. And all the time the moving wall of tufted clouds gave from the edge of the blue circle, bellying away from it in a marvellous fashion as if blown by an unheard wind.

'From time to time little flashes of light had begun to flick in over the blue circle, and I began to wonder whether it would be able to hold out the "tension" until I had dragged it clear of the defense.

'Once it was clear I hoped the abnormal stress would cease from about us, and concentrate chiefly around the "defense" again, and the attractions of the negative "tension."

'Just then I heard a sharp tap behind me, and the blue circle jarred somewhat, having now ridden completely over the violet and indigo circles, and dropped clear on to the floor. The same instant there came a low rolling noise as of thunder, and a curious roaring. The black circling wall had thinned away from around us and the room showed clearly once more, yet nothing was to be seen except that now and then a peculiar bluish flicker of light would ripple across the floor.

'Turning to look at the "defense" I noticed it was surrounded by the circling wall of black cloud, and looked strangely extraordinary seen from the outside. It resembled a slightly swaying squat funnel of whirling black mist reaching from the floor to the ceiling, and through it I could see glowing, sometimes vague and sometimes plain, the indigo and violet circles. And then as I watched, the whole room seemed suddenly filled with an awful presence which pressed upon me with a weight of horror that was the very essence of spiritual deathliness.

'Kneeling there in the blue circle by Bains, my initiative faculties stupefied and temporarily paralysed, I could form no further plan of escape, and indeed I seemed to care for nothing at the moment. I felt I had already escaped from immediate destruction and I was strung up to an amazing pitch of indifference to any minor horrors.

'Bains all this while had been quietly lying on his side. I rolled him over and looked closely at his eyes, taking care on account of his condition not to gaze into them; for if he had passed beyond the "line of retraction" he would be dangerous. I mean, if the "wandering" part of his essence had been assimilated by the Hog, then Bains would be spiritually accessible and might be even then no more than the outer form of the man, charged with radiation of the monstrous ego of the Hog, and therefore capable of what I might term for want of a more exact phrase, a psychically infective force; such force being more readily transmitted through the eyes than any other way, and capable of producing a brain storm of an extremely dangerous character.

'I found Bains, however, with both eyes with an extraordinary distressed interned quality; not the eyeballs, remember, but a reflex action transmitted from the "mental eye" to the physical eye, and giving to the physical eye an expression of thought instead of sight. I wonder whether I make this clear to you?

'Abruptly, from every part of the room there broke out the noise of those hoofs again, making the place echo with the sound as if a thousand swine had started suddenly from an absolute immobility into a mad charge. The whole riot of animal sound seemed to heave itself in one wave towards the oddly swaying and circling funnel of black cloud which rose from floor to ceiling around the violet and indigo circles.

'As the sounds ceased I saw something was rising up through the middle of the "defense". It rose with a slow steady movement. I saw it pale and huge through the swaying, whirling funnel of cloud - a monstrous pallid snout rising out of that unknowable abyss.... It rose higher like a huge pale mound. Through a thinning of the cloud curtain I saw one small eye.... I shall never see a pig's eye again without feeling something of what I felt then. A pig's eye²⁹ with a sort of hell-light of vile understanding shining at the back of it.'

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"And then suddenly a dreadful terror came over me, for I saw the beginning of the end that I had been dreading all along - I saw through the slow whirl of the cloud curtains that the violet circle had begun to leave the floor. It was being taken up on the spread of the vast snout.

²⁹ Previously used as a motif for animalistic evil and degeneration in "A Tropical Horror"

'Straining my eyes to see through the swaying funnel of clouds I saw that the violet circle had melted and was running down the pale sides of the snout in streams of violet-coloured fire. And as it melted there came a change in the atmosphere of the room. The black funnel shone with a dull gloomy red, and a heavy red glow filled the room.

'The change was such as one might experience if one had been looking through a protective glass at some light and the glass had been suddenly removed. But there was a further change that I realised directly through my feelings. It was as if the horrible presence in the room had come closer to my own soul. I wonder if I am making it at all clear to you. Before, it had oppressed me somewhat as a death on a very gloomy and dreary day beats down upon one's spirit. But now there was a savage menace, and the actual feeling of a foul thing close up against me. It was horrible, simply horrible.

'And then Bains moved. For the first time since he went to sleep the rigidity went out of him, and rolling suddenly over on to his stomach he fumbled up in a curious animallike fashion, on to his hands and feet. Then he charged straight across the blue circle towards the thing in the "defense".

'With a shriek I jumped to pull him back; but it was not my voice that stopped him. It was the blue circle. It made him give back from it as though some invisible hand had jerked him backwards. He threw up his head like a hog, squealing with the voice of a swine, and started off round the inside of the blue circle. Round and round it he went, twice attempting to bolt across it to the horror in that swaying funnel of cloud. Each time he was thrown back, and each time he squealed like a great swine, the sounds echoing round the room in a horrible fashion as though they came from somewhere a long way off.

'By this time I was fairly sure that Bains had indeed passed the "line of retraction", and the knowledge brought a fresh and more hopeless horror and pity to me, and a grimmer fear for myself. I knew that if it were so, it was not Bains I had with me in the circle but a monster, and that for my own last chance of safety I should have to get him outside of the circle.

'He had ceased his tireless running round and round, and now lay on his side grunting continually and softly in a dismal kind of way. As the slowly whirling clouds thinned a little I saw again that pallid face with some clearness. It was still rising, but slowly, very slowly, and again a hope grew in me that it might be checked by the "defense". Quite plainly I saw that the horror was looking at Bains, and at that moment I saved my own life and soul by looking down. There, close to me on the floor was the thing that looked like Bains, its hands stretched out to grip my ankles. Another second, and I should have been tripped outwards. Do you realise what that would have meant?

'It was no time to hesitate. I simply jumped and came down crash with my knees on top of Bains. He lay quiet enough after a short struggle; but I took off

my braces³⁰ and lashed his hands up behind him³¹. And I shivered with the very touch of him, as though I was touching something monstrous.

'By the time I had finished I noticed that the reddish glow in the room had deepened quite considerably, and the whole room was darker. The destruction of the violet circle had reduced the light perceptibly; but the darkness that I am speaking of was something more than that. It seemed as if something now had come into the atmosphere of the room - a sort of gloom, and in spite of the shining of the blue circle and the indigo circle inside the funnel of cloud, there was now more red light than anything else.

'Opposite me the huge, cloud-shrouded monster in the indigo circle appeared to be motionless. I could see its outline vaguely all the time, and only when the cloud funnel thinned could I see it plainly _ a vast, snouted mound, faintly and whitely luminous, one gargantuan side turned towards me, and near the base of the slope a minute slit out of which shone one whitish eye.

'Presently through the thin gloomy red vapour I saw something that killed the hope in me, and gave me a horrible despair; for the indigo circle, the final barrier of the defense, was being slowly lifted into the air - the Hog had begun to rise higher. I could see its dreadful snout rising upwards out of the cloud. Slowly, very slowly, the snout rose up, and the indigo circle went up with it.

'In the dead stillness of that room I got a strange sense that all eternity was tense and utterly still as if certain powers knew of this horror I had brought into the world.... And then I had an awareness of something coming... something from far, far away. It was as if some hidden unknown part of my brain knew it. Can you understand? There was somewhere in the heights of space a light that was coming near. I seemed to hear it coming. I could just see the body of Bains on the floor, huddled and shapeless and inert. Within the swaying veil of cloud the monster showed as a vast pale, faintly luminous mound, hugely snouted - an infernal hillock of monstrosity, pallid and deadly amid the redness that hung in the atmosphere of the room.

'Something told me that it was making a final effort against the help that was coming. I saw the indigo circle was now some inches from the floor, and every moment I expected to see it flash into streams of indigo fire running down the pale slopes of the snout. I could see the circle beginning to move upward at a perceptible speed. The monster was triumphing.

'Out in some realm of space a low continuous thunder sounded. The thing in the great heights was coming fast, but it could never come in time. The thunder

³⁰ Suspenders (U.S.A.). Requiring him, of course, to go trousers-less

³¹ In the early novel "The Night Land," Hodgson appears to demonstrate something of a predilection for BDSM fantasies. This lashing and restraint of a submissive mentee is far less sexualized than the domineering relationship between the protagonist and his sylph-like female subordinate (one which includes ritualistic flogging, erotic restraints, and multiple instances of foot fetishizing)

grew from a low, far mutter into a deep steady rolling of sound.... It grew louder and louder, and as it grew I saw the indigo circle, now shining through the red gloom of the room, was a whole foot off the floor. I thought I saw a faint splutter of indigo light.... The final circle of the barrier was beginning to melt.

'That instant the thunder of the thing in flight which my brain heard so plainly, rose into a crashing, a worldshaking bellow of speed, making the room rock and vibrate to an immensity of sound. A strange flash of blue flame ripped open the funnel of cloud momentarily from top to base, and I saw for one brief instant the pallid monstrosity of the Hog, stark and pale and dreadful.

'Then the sides of the funnel joined again hiding the thing from me as the funnel became submerged quickly into a dome of silent blue light - God's own colour³²! All at once it seemed the cloud had gone, and from floor to ceiling of the room, in awful majesty, like a living Presence, there appeared that dome of blue fire banded with three rings of green light at equal distances. There was no sound or movement, not even a flicker, nor could I see anything in the light: for looking into it was like looking into the cold blue of the skies. But I felt sure that there had come to our aid one of those inscrutable forces which govern the spinning of the outer circle, for the dome of blue light, banded with three green bands of silent fire, was the outward or visible sign of an enormous force, undoubtedly of a defensive nature.

'Through ten minutes of absolute silence I stood there in the blue circle watching the phenomenon. Minute by minute I saw the heavy repellent red driven out of the room as the place lightened quite noticeably. And as it lightened, the body of Bains began to resolve out of a shapeless length of shadow, detail by detail, until I could see the braces with which I had lashed his wrists together.

'And as I looked at him his body moved slightly, and in a weak but perfectly sane voice he said:

"I've had it again! My God! I've had it again!"

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'I knelt down quickly by his side and loosened the braces from his wrists, helping him to turn over and sit up. He gripped my arm a little crazily with both hands.

"I went to sleep after all," he said. "And I've been down there again. My God! It nearly had me. I was down in that awful place and it seemed to be just round a great corner, and I was stopped from coming back. I seemed to have been fighting for ages and ages. I felt I was going mad. Mad! I've been nearly down

³² This is both according to Carnacki's antiquarian tome, and to general Christian tradition. Blue – the color of the heavens – is symbolic of eternity, God the Father, and the Advent Season. It is also closely associated with the Holy Virgin, who is typically robed in blue with a pink dress beneath

into a hell. I could hear you calling down to me from some awful height. I could hear your voice echoing along yellow passages. They were yellow. I know they were. And I tried to come and I couldn't."

"Did you see me?" I asked him when he stopped, gasping.

"No," he answered, leaning his head against my shoulder. "I tell you it nearly got me that time. I shall never dare go to sleep again as long as I live. Why didn't you wake me?"

"I did," I told him. "I had you in my arms most of the time. You kept looking up into my eyes as if you knew I was there."

"I know," he said. "I remember now; but you seemed to be up at the top of a frightful hole, miles and miles up from me, and those horrors were grunting and squealing and howling, and trying to catch me and keep me down there. But I couldn't see anything - only the yellow³³ walls of those passages. And all the time there was something round the corner."

"Anyway, you're safe enough now," I told him. "And I'll guarantee you shall be safe in the future."

The room had grown dark save for the light from the blue circle. The dome had disappeared, the whirling funnel of black cloud had gone, the Hog had gone, and the light had died out of the indigo circle. And the atmosphere of the room was safe and normal again as I proved by moving the switch, which was near me, so as to lessen the defensive power of the blue circle and enable me to "feel" the outside tension. Then I turned to Bains.

"Come along," I said. "We'll go and get something to eat, and have a rest."

'But Bains was already sleeping like a tired child, his head pillowed on his hand. "Poor little devil!" I said as I picked him up in my arms³⁴. "Poor little devil!"

I walked across to the main switchboard and threw over the current so as to throw the "V" protective pulse out of the four walls and the door; then I carried Bains out into the sweet wholesome normality of everything. It seemed wonderful, coming out of that chamber of horrors, and it seemed wonderful still to see my bedroom door opposite, wide open, with the bed looking so soft and white as usual - so ordinary and human. Can you chaps understand?

I carried Bains into the room and put him on the couch; and then it was I realised how much I'd been up against, for when I was getting myself a drink I dropped the bottle³⁵ and had to get another.

'After I had made Bains drink a glass I laid him on the bed.

"Now," I said, "look into my eyes fixedly. Do you hear me? You are going off to sleep safely and soundly, and if anything troubles you, obey me and wake up. Now, sleep - sleep - sleep!"

³³ Recall the infernal symbolism of yellow, according to Carnacki

³⁴ More pederastic, gendered coding

³⁵ Presumably from trembling with terror

'I swept my hands down over his eyes half a dozen times, and he fell over like a child. I knew that if the danger came again he would obey my will³⁶ and wake up. I intend to cure him, partly by hypnotic suggestion, partly by a certain electrical treatment which I am getting Doctor Witton to give him.

'That night I slept on the couch, and when I went to look at Bains in the morning I found him still sleeping, so leaving him there I went into the test room to examine results. I found them very surprising.

'Inside the room I had a queer feeling, as you can imagine. It was extraordinary to stand there in that curious bluish light from the "treated" windows, and see the blue circle lying, still glowing, where I had left it; and further on, the "defense", lying circle within circle, all "out"; and in the centre the glass-legged table standing where a few hours before it had been submerged in the horrible monstrosity of the Hog. I tell you, it all seemed like a wild and horrible dream as I stood there and looked. I have carried out some curious tests in there before now, as you know, but I've never come nearer to a catastrophe.

'I left the door open so as not to feel shut in, and then I walked over to the "defense". I was intensely curious to see what had happened physically under the action of such a force as the Hog. I found unmistakable signs that proved the thing had been indeed a Saaitii manifestation, for there had been no psychic or physical illusion about the melting of the violet circle. There remained nothing of it except a ring of patches of melted glass. The gutta base had been fused entirely, but the floor and everything was intact. You see, the Saaitii forms can often attack and destroy, or even make use of, the very defensive material used against them.

'Stepping over the outer circle and looking closely at the indigo circle I saw that it was melted clean through in several places. Another fraction of time and the Hog would have been free to expand as an invisible mist of horror and destruction into the atmosphere of the world. And then, in that very moment of time, salvation had come. I wonder if you can get my feelings as I stood there staring down at the destroyed barrier.'

Carnacki began to knock out his pipe which is always a sign that he has ended his tale, and is ready to answer any questions we may want to ask.

Taylor was first in. 'Why didn't you use the Electric Pentacle as well as your new spectrum circles?' he asked.

'Because,' replied Carnacki, 'the pentacle is simply "defensive" and I wished to have the power to make a "focus" during the early part of the experiment, and then, at the critical moment, to change the combination of the colours so as to have a "defense" against the results of the "focus". You follow me.

³⁶ Sub/dom relationship

'You see,' he went on, seeing we hadn't grasped his meaning, 'there can be no "focus" within a pentacle. It is just of a "defensive" nature. Even if I had switched the current out of the electric pentacle I should still have had to contend with the peculiar and undoubtedly "defensive" power that its form seems to exert, and this would have been sufficient to "blur" the focus.

'In this new research work I'm doing, I'm bound to use a "focus" and so the pentacle is barred. But I'm not sure it matters. I'm convinced this new spectrum "defense" of mine will prove absolutely invulnerable when I've learnt how to use it; but it will take me some time. This last case has taught me something new. I had never thought of combining green with blue; but the three bands of green in the blue of that dome has set me thinking. If only I knew the right combinations! It's the combinations I've got to learn. You'll understand better the importance of these combinations when I remind you that green by itself is, in a very limited way, more deadly than red itself - and red is the danger colour of all.'

'Tell us, Carnacki,' I said, 'what is the Hog? Can you? I mean what kind of monstrosity is it? Did you really see it, or was it all some horrible, dangerous kind of dream? How do you know it was one of the outer monsters? And what is the difference between that sort of danger and the sort of thing you saw in the Gateway of the Monster case? And what.... ?'

'Steady!' laughed Carnacki. 'One at a time! I'll answer all your questions; but I don't think I'll take them quite in your order. For instance, speaking about actually seeing the Hog, I might say that, speaking generally, things seen of a "ghostly" nature are not seen with the eyes; they are seen with the mental eye which has this psychic quality, not always developed to a useable state, in addition to its "normal" duty of revealing to the brain what our physical eyes record.

'You will understand that when we see "ghostly" things it is often the "mental" eye performing simultaneously the duty of revealing to the brain what the physical eye sees as well as what it sees itself. The two sights blending their functions in such a fashion gives us the impression that we are actually seeing through our physical eyes the whole of the "sight" that is being revealed to the brain.

'In this way we get an impression of seeing with our physical eyes both the material and the immaterial parts of an "abnormal" scene; for each part being received and revealed to the brain by machinery suitable to the particular purpose appears to have equal value of reality that is, it appears to be equally material. Do you follow me?'

We nodded our assent, and Carnacki continued:

'In the same way, were anything to threaten our psychic body we should have the impression, generally speaking, that it was our physical body that had been threatened, because our psychic sensations and impressions would be super-

imposed upon our physical, in the same way that our psychic and our physical sight are super-imposed.

'Our sensations would blend in such a way that it would be impossible to differentiate between what we felt physically and what we felt psychically. To explain better what I mean. A man may seem to himself, in a "ghostly" adventure, to fall actually. That is, to be falling in a physical sense; but all the while it may be his psychic entity, or being - call it what you will - that is falling. But to his brain there is presented the sensation of falling all together. Do you get me?

'At the same time, please remember that the danger is none the less because it is his psychic body that falls. I am referring to the sensation I had of falling during the time of stepping across the mouth of that pit. My physical body could walk over it easily and feel the floor solid under me; but my psychic body was in very real danger of falling. Indeed, I may be said to have literally carried my psychic body over, held within me by the pull of my life-force. You see, to my psychic body the pit was as real and as actual as a coal pit would have been to my physical body. It was merely the pull of my life-force which prevented my psychic body from falling out of me, rather like a plummet, down through the everlasting depths in obedience to the giant pull of the monster.

'As you will remember, the pull of the Hog was too great for my life-force to withstand, and, psychically, I began to fall. Immediately on my brain was recorded a sensation identical with that which would have been recorded on it had my actual physical body been falling. It was a mad risk I took, but as you know, I had to take it to get to the switch and the battery. When I had that physical sense of falling and seemed to see the black misty sides of the pit all around me, it was my mental eye recording upon the brain what it was seeing. My psychic body had actually begun to fall and was really below the edge of the pit but still in contact with me. In other words my physical magnetic and psychic "haloes" were still mingled. My physical body was still standing firmly upon the floor of the room, but if I had not each time by effort or will forced my physical body across to the side, my psychic body would have fallen completely out of "contact" with me, and gone like some ghostly meteorite, obedient to the pull of the Hog.

'The curious sensation I had of forcing myself through an obstructing medium was not a physical sensation at all, as we understand that word, but rather the psychic sensation of forcing my entity to re-cross the "gap" that had already formed between my falling psychic body now below the edge of the pit and my physical body standing on the floor of the room. And that "gap" was full of a force that strove to prevent my body and soul from rejoining. It was a terrible experience. Do you remember how I could still see with my brain through the eyes of my psychic body, though it had already fallen some distance out of me? That is an extraordinary thing to remember.

'However, to get ahead, all "ghostly" phenomena are extremely diffuse in a normal state. They become actively physically dangerous in all cases where they are concentrated. The best off-hand illustration I can think of is the all-familiar electricity - a force which, by the way, we are too prone to imagine we understand because we've named and harnessed it, to use a popular phrase. But we don't understand it at all! It is still a complete fundamental mystery³⁷. Well, electricity when diffused is an "imagined and unpictured something", but when concentrated it is sudden death. Have you got me in that?

'Take, for instance, that explanation, as a very, very crude sort of illustration of what the Hog is. The Hog is one of those million-mile-long clouds of "nebulousity" lying in the Outer Circle. It is because of this that I term those clouds of force the Outer Monsters.

'What they are exactly is a tremendous question to answer. I sometimes wonder whether Hodgson there realises just how impossible it is to answer some of his questions,' and Carnacki laughed.

'But to make a brief attempt at it. There is around this planet, and presumably others, of course, circles of what I might call "emanations"³⁸. This is an extremely light gas, or shall I say ether. Poor ether, it's been hard worked in its time!

'Go back one moment to your school-days, and bear in mind that at one time the earth was just a sphere of extremely hot gases. These gases condensed in the form of materials and other "solid" matters; but there are some that are not yet solidified - air, for instance. Well, we have an earth-sphere of solid matter on which to stamp as solidly as we like; and round about that sphere there lies a ring of gases the constituents of which enter largely into all life, as we understand life - that is, air.

'But this is not the only circle of gas which is floating round us. There are, as I have been forced to conclude, larger and more attenuated "gas" belts lying, zone on zone, far up and around us³⁹. These compose what I have called the inner circles. They are surrounded in turn by a circle or belt of what I have called, for want of a better word, "emanations".

'This circle which I have named the Outer Circle can not lie less than a hundred thousand miles off the earth⁴⁰, and has a thickness which I have

³⁷ Hodgson uses the infancy of electric technology to his advantage (just as Le Fanu used the vague speculations about the additives in green tea to make his story more believable) in a bid to imbue his story with a sense of possibility. Don't forget that he is writing in the miraculous Age of Tesla and Edison

³⁸ Half a century before the discovery of the Van Allen Belt, Hodgson stabs at an idea which – though not supernatural – was not far from the truth

³⁹ Apparently describing the various strata of the atmosphere (though again with a spiritualist flavor)

⁴⁰ Or roughly half the way to the moon (239,000 miles from earth)

presumed to be anything between five and ten million miles⁴¹. I believe, but I cannot prove, that it does not spin with the earth but in the opposite direction, for which a plausible cause might be found in the study of the theory upon which a certain electrical machine is constructed.

'I have reason to believe that the spinning of this, the Outer Circle, is disturbed from time to time through causes which are quite unknown to me, but which I believe are based in physical phenomena. Now, the Outer Circle is the psychic circle, yet it is also physical. To illustrate what I mean I must again instance electricity, and say that just as electricity discovered itself to us as something quite different from any of our previous conceptions of matter, so is the Psychic or Outer Circle different from any of our previous conceptions of matter. Yet it is none the less physical in its origin, and in the sense that electricity is physical, the Outer or Psychic Circle is physical in its constituents. Speaking pictorially it is, physically, to the Inner Circle what the Inner Circle is to the upper strata of the air, and what the air - as we know that intimate gas - is to the waters and the waters to the solid world. You get my line of suggestion?'

We all nodded, and Carnacki resumed.

'Well, now let me apply all this to what I am leading up to. I suggest that these million-mile-long clouds of monstrosity with float in the Psychic or Outer Circle, are bred of the elements of that circle. They are tremendous psychic forces, bred out of its elements just as an octopus or shark is bred out of the sea, or a tiger or any other physical force is bred out of the elements of its earth-and-air surroundings.

'To go further, a physical man is composed entirely from the constituents of earth and air, by which terms I include sunlight and water and "condiments"! In other words without earth and air he could not BE! Or to put it another way, earth and air breed within themselves the materials of the body and the brain, and therefore, presumably, the machine of intelligence.

'Now apply this line of thought to the Psychic or Outer Circle which though so attenuated that I may crudely presume it to be approximate to our conception of aether, yet contains all the elements for the production of certain phases of force and intelligence. But these elements are in a form as little like matter as the emanations of scent are like the scent itself. Equally, the force-and-intelligence-producing capacity of the Outer Circle no more approximates to the life-and-intelligence-producing capacity of the earth and air than the results of the Outer Circle constituents resemble the results of earth and air. I wonder whether I make it clear.

⁴¹ Not a terribly long distance astronomically: Venus' orbit is some 25 million miles away, and Mars' is about 55 million miles off

'And so it seems to me we have the conception of a huge psychic world, bred out of the physical, lying far outside of this world and completely encompassing it, except for the doorways about which I hope to tell you some other evening. This enormous psychic world of the Outer Circle "breeds" - if I may use the term, its own psychic forces and intelligences, monstrous and otherwise, just as this world produces its own physical forces and intelligences - beings, animals, insects, etc., monstrous and otherwise.

'The monstrosities of the Outer Circle are malignant towards all that we consider most desirable⁴², just in the same way a shark or a tiger may be considered malignant, in a physical way, to all that we consider desirable. They are predatory - as all positive force is predatory. They have desires regarding us which are incredibly more dreadful to our minds when comprehended than an intelligent sheep would consider our desires towards its own carcass. They plunder and destroy to satisfy lusts and hungers exactly as other forms of existence plunder and destroy to satisfy their lusts and hungers. And the desire of these monsters is chiefly, if not always, for the psychic entity of the human.

'But that's as much as I can tell you tonight. Some evening I want to tell you about the tremendous mystery of the Psychic Doorways. In the meantime, have I made things a bit clearer to you, Dodgson?'

'Yes, and no,' I answered. 'You've been a brick⁴³ to make the attempt, but there are still about ten thousand other things I want to know.'

Carnacki stood up. 'Out you go!' he said using the recognised formula in friendly fashion. 'Out you go! I want a sleep.'

And shaking him by the hand we strolled out on to the quiet Embankment.

⁴² And THERE we see Hodgson merge into Carnacki: it is almost as if the writer has become so passionate about this idea that his voice thunders from Carnacki's mouth. This is a story about resisting temptation, self-indulgence, and animalism. The Hog represents the antithesis of all that is desirable in humanity (from Hodgson's perspective: namely, self-control, strength, cleanliness, a certain degree of chastity, tidiness, and emotional restriction). The Hog is Hodgson's worst nightmare: the genius of laziness and indulgence – the manifestation of the Id

⁴³ A good fellow; a Mensch; a chap's chap

CARNACKI'S *final* case is probably his most complex and spiritually terrifying. There is more of a reckoning with the cosmic sublime here than in almost any of Hodgson's short fiction. The story comes closest to touching the existential terror of *The House on the Borderland*, another nightmare vision in which human beings find themselves confronted by infinity, vastness, and the apparent meaninglessness of the universe. In such a world, the mutated humanoids and weed-choked landscapes of *The House on the Borderland* almost become secondary; what matters is the terrible realization that the universe is immeasurably larger, stranger, and less concerned with humanity than we have imagined. And yet *The Hog* arrives at this cosmic horror through a remarkably intimate doorway: sleep. Bains' ordeal begins not in some distant alien world but in the moment when an ordinary man closes his eyes and loses control of his consciousness. Hodgson makes sleep into a kind of threshold between worlds, a state in which the ordinary defenses of the human personality become porous. Bains knows that he must wake himself, but cannot; his waking consciousness can recognize the danger while his deeper self continues to descend toward it. The story therefore turns one of our most ordinary and necessary biological functions into a terrifying act of surrender. Even Carnacki, who normally approaches supernatural phenomena with equipment, theories, and careful preparation, is ultimately forced to confront something that cannot simply be mastered by remaining awake and rational.

II.

This makes Bains more than merely the victim of the story. He is the vulnerable human being who stands at the boundary between civilization and animality. His involuntary grunting, his gradual loss of bodily control, and his eventual movement on all fours turn the abstract danger into something horribly physical. Carnacki is not merely trying to prevent a supernatural creature from entering the room; he is trying to preserve Bains' humanity. The Hog's victory would be, in a sense, the reduction of a human being to appetite and instinct. Carnacki's disgust at the porcine sounds coming from his friend is therefore also disgust at the possibility of humanity itself becoming animalistic. The story's escalating imagery reinforces this transformation. At first there is only a sound: distant grunting from some unimaginable depth. Then comes the shadow, followed by the pit, the black cloud, the snouts, the hoof, the enormous face, and finally the Hog itself. Hodgson steadily moves from something that cannot

be perceived to something that can almost be touched. The horror becomes progressively more concrete while simultaneously becoming less comprehensible. This is one of the story's great paradoxes: the more Carnacki sees, the less he understands. That paradox is particularly important because Carnacki's defining characteristic is his faith in understanding. He is a ghost-finder in the tradition of the scientific detective. He collects evidence, constructs apparatus, consults ancient manuscripts, categorizes phenomena, and invents increasingly elaborate theories to explain what he encounters. Even during his greatest crisis, he is observing, measuring, comparing, and theorizing. Yet his own elaborate apparatus is partly responsible for bringing the danger into such concentrated form. His desire to understand the unknown has itself become dangerous.

III.

This is where Carnacki's hubris becomes central to the story. He has been "meddling," as the Sigsand Manuscript repeatedly warns against meddling, and the story makes it clear that knowledge is not automatically synonymous with wisdom. Carnacki possesses considerably more knowledge than Bains, but that knowledge does not make him invulnerable. In fact, it may be precisely his confidence in his ability to experiment safely that places both men in danger. His greatest strength—the willingness to investigate—contains the seed of his greatest weakness. This also helps explain why the story feels so different from the more conventional Carnacki adventures. Usually, Carnacki enters a supernatural mystery, identifies the nature of the threat, establishes the appropriate defenses, and emerges as the triumphant rationalist who has successfully imposed order upon the unknown. Here, he barely survives his own investigation. He is reduced to carrying Bains around the room in terror, unable to devise an escape, and at one point contemplates killing both himself and his companion rather than allowing the horror to claim them. For once, Carnacki looks utterly small. For once, we pity him. There is also something fascinating in the story's uneasy mixture of Christianity and materialism. Carnacki's vocabulary is scientific: electricity, vibrations, atmospheric forces, psychic bodies, energy, concentration, and physical manifestations. Yet the imagery remains stubbornly religious. The Sigsand Manuscript speaks of Satan, the cross, and God's colors; Carnacki identifies blue as "God's colour in the Heavens"; and when salvation finally arrives, it comes in the form of an almost numinous dome of blue fire.

IV.

Hodgson never completely resolves this tension. The protective force may be supernatural, or it may be some undiscovered physical principle. Carnacki himself cannot quite decide. That ambiguity is crucial to the story's atmosphere. Rather than replacing superstition with science, Hodgson allows the two systems to overlap until neither is entirely sufficient. The universe remains intelligible enough to investigate but mysterious enough to inspire awe. The final conversation consequently functions as both an explanation and a refusal to explain. Carnacki attempts to construct a vast cosmology in which the Earth is surrounded by concentric physical and psychic circles, and in which the Outer Circle breeds its own forms of life and intelligence. The explanation is wonderfully characteristic of Hodgson: simultaneously scientific-sounding, mystical, astronomical, and wildly speculative. Carnacki compares the Outer Monsters to sharks, tigers, and other predators, suggesting that they are not demons in the traditional moral sense but forms of life pursuing their own appetites. And this is perhaps the story's darkest idea. The Hog may not hate humanity at all. It may simply be hungry. That distinction places *The Hog* surprisingly close to the cosmic horror that would later become associated with Lovecraft. The monsters are terrifying not because they are embodiments of human wickedness in the conventional sense, but because they operate according to appetites and laws so alien that humanity cannot meaningfully understand them. To a human being, such a creature appears evil. But to the creature itself, humanity may be little more than food.

V.

Leigh Blackmore has therefore aptly noted the story's resistance to the usual supernatural categories: Carnacki's monsters may be preternatural rather than supernatural, immense forces that are horrifying without necessarily being morally evil. Like Lovecraft's later cosmic entities, they reveal the puniness of mankind rather than merely threatening it. This existential cosmicism brings Hodgson remarkably close to the astronomical weird fiction of Lovecraft—particularly *At the Mountains of Madness* and *The Shadow Out of Time*—despite the obvious differences between the writers. He belongs here alongside Ambrose Bierce, Algernon Blackwood, Oliver Onions, and Arthur Machen: writers who understood that the most frightening supernatural horror does not necessarily come from ghosts or devils, but from the possibility that reality itself is vastly stranger than human beings are equipped to comprehend. The story's ending is therefore fittingly strange. Carnacki survives, Bains survives, the immediate danger has passed—and yet Carnacki cannot stop investigating. Almost immediately, he is thinking about the new combinations of colors he might

use in his apparatus. The catastrophe has taught him something, and his response is to experiment again. The cycle begins anew. His curiosity has nearly destroyed him, but it remains inseparable from the qualities that make him Carnacki.

VI.

That is perhaps the final irony of “The Hog.” Carnacki’s courage, intelligence, self-control, and scientific curiosity are precisely what save him. They are also what lead him into the abyss. He is a man who survives the encounter with cosmic horror not by defeating it, but by escaping it—and then sitting down afterward to devise a better experiment.

Regardless of when it was technically written, “The Hog” is traditionally remembered as Hodgson’s “last story,” and the designation is fitting. It opens a window onto the vast, punishing universe that so much of his fiction struggled to manifest: an existence in which human dignity, intelligence, ambition, and self-control are precious precisely because they are so fragile. Beyond them waits something older, larger, hungrier, and utterly indifferent—the enemy of human mastery, the foil to human dignity, and the vast, grinning face of oblivion.