



THE DREAMWALKER'S DIARY

by Della Green



MAY 26

I had a strange dream tonight. In it, I met a shaggy black cat who could talk. I've only just woken—it's three in the morning, and I regret to say I fell asleep in the lab again. I should go home, but I need to record the experience before I forget. Dreams are such ephemeral, fascinating things.

We were in a forest. I remember the bright sun making the leaves shine like emeralds. The cat sat on a rock in the middle of a rushing stream, unbothered

by the foamy waters lapping at her paws. She said to me, "Will you rise to meet your fate, or will you let it steal you away in the dark with claws and teeth while you sleep in your bed?"

What an unsettling thing to say! As a scientist, I don't believe in giving any particular meaning to dreams, but the cat was so intent, so serious, it's difficult to shake the notion that she was trying to warn me about something.

I'm exhausted and rambling. I need to rest. Why is it that all I want to do these days is sleep?

MAY 29

I dreamed of the cat again.

We were back in the forest, but it was night this time, and that made me uneasy. Sparse light from a strange, red-hued moon shone down on us, turning the cat's eyes to glowing golden disks. I think I was unsettled because I knew, somewhere in the back of my mind, that I should be awake, that the world was passing by without me, and I was missing it. I was missing something important.

"Take us away if you don't like it," the cat told me in a bored tone. She really was a disheveled, displeased-looking creature.

"What I would like is to wake up," I answered, feeling testy. I smelled something burning then, and wondered if someone was cooking over a fire in the depths of the forest.

"In this enchanted wood, many things can happen," said the cat. "Try to have more imagination next time."

I couldn't give her an appropriate reply because I woke to a searing pain in my palm. I'd fallen asleep slumped against my kitchen counter. In a restless movement, my hand had shifted and grazed the boiling tea kettle. I burned the toast too. That was what I'd smelled in the throes of the dream.

What's happening to me? I keep falling asleep in places I shouldn't, and no matter how much rest I get, it's never enough.

JUNE 2

I continue to struggle staying awake and dream of the cat on almost every occasion. I

should have done a better job writing this all down from the start, but it's taken me time to come to terms with, well, everything. But, as the cat said—how absurd, the cat said!—there is truth that I must not lie down quietly in the dark. I'm a scientist, and I will figure this out the way a scientist would. I will gather information, record the facts, and present my findings in whatever form is available to me. Dream journeys make for unorthodox research, but I am nothing if not adaptable.

Moving forward in that spirit, from now on, I intend these diary entries to be a detailed account of my dreams and the experiences I have within them. I should start, however, with an explanation of who I am and what I believe is happening to me,



so that anyone who reads this diary does not immediately dismiss it.

My name is Della Green. I graduated from Miskatonic University last year and have been working as a lab technician for the School of Applied Science for the past five months. During that time, I've earned a reputation as a diligent worker, with a stamina that outpaces most of my colleagues. The Dean of Science even laughingly suggested that I must never need to sleep.

No one knows my secret.

The problem is that I do sleep, and I can no longer control when or where it happens. That's why I work late nights in the lab, after everyone else has gone home. I must work as fast and as hard as I can to keep up, because I never know how long I can stay awake.

The symptoms are always the same. It starts as a sluggishness in my limbs. At those times, it's hard to write these lines clearly. Then my vision blurs, and I feel displaced from myself. It's the best way I can describe it. Once I began to recognize these signs, and the pattern to them, I get myself safely into a supine position so that I don't collapse and injure myself like I did that night in the kitchen. I judge the time between the onset of symptoms and the point where I fall asleep to be roughly three minutes. This has stayed consistent so far.

I knew something was wrong, of course, even if I refused to admit it to myself at first. I had read in the *Arkham Advertiser* about a mysterious sleeping sickness, the so-called

somnambulist scourge, that was afflicting Arkham. People all over the city falling into a deep sleep, from which they were unable to be roused. Not dead, but disconnected from the waking world, with no explanation as to the cause and no hope of a cure. I knew it was happening around me, but to someone like myself— young, healthy, and eager to make her mark—it was like an insect buzzing in the background. I thought it could never happen to me.

I know better now.

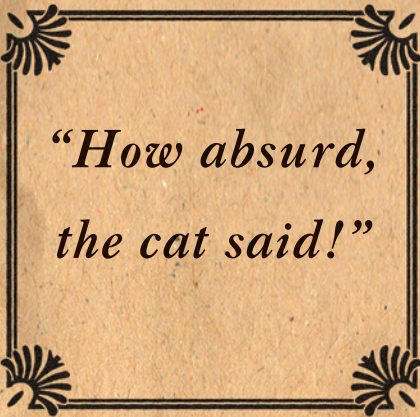
I'm determined not to let my past ignorance hinder me any longer. As I said, I'm a scientist, and I believe that information is power. The more we know about this sickness—how it affects people, when, and what happens before sleep claims them permanently—the more hope I have of finding a cure. I have to believe that it's possible. The alternative is... no, I won't consider it. I can't let fear paralyze me now.

So, following my chosen course, I'm going to record everything that's happened to me, and everything that I've learned since I first experienced the symptoms that may one day result in my endless sleep. I've shared the physical symptoms I've been experiencing, but there is a strong component of the mind as well.

Which brings me back to the talking cat and her warning.

In my last dream, I asked the cat her name.

"Augur," she said.



*"How absurd,
the cat said!"*

I avoided looking into her golden eyes. They were a cat's eyes, it's true, but they were also more. I swore that whenever those eyes ensnared me, I could see my whole life playing out in Augur's gaze—first as a child rolling in the grass in the pale blue dress my parents made me wear to church. Then as I am now, thick black glasses settled on my small nose, a careless braid falling across one shoulder as I hunch over a microscope. When I look up, my blonde hair thins and whitens, skin growing coarse and wrinkled... and then I pull away in fear. No one should see their end laid out in that stark, golden gaze.

Augur and I stood at the edge of the forest, the trees giving way to rolling hills and farmland. In the distance, there was a town.

"Ulthar," Augur told me when I asked about the place. "You said you no longer wanted to be in the enchanted wood." She dipped her head in a gesture that might have been approval. "So here we are."

Ulthar? Is the spelling correct? Does spelling matter in dreams?

It was unlike any town I'd ever been to, a place that might have existed centuries ago. But this was a dream, so I shouldn't have been surprised. A low wall surrounded it and beyond that, the peaks of structures were visible, buildings made of stone topped by tall, crooked chimneys. Next to them squatted

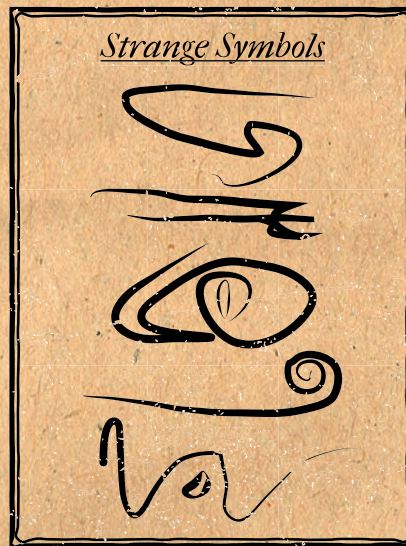
some poorly constructed cottages and a smattering of oak trees that made things a bit more cheerful. But there was still a sense of oddness about the place, the feeling of it not being fully formed. The best way I can describe it is that it was as if someone had looked at a feudal town from a distance and then tried to describe it to an artist with a dark and whimsical eye.

The town lay against the backdrop of an ominous, clouded sky colored purple and black, like a storm was coming. When I was a child, sometimes I dreamed of skies like that. They made me so afraid. It wasn't because of the darkness, or the threat of a storm. I was afraid because I knew that something waited there, just out of sight, but I didn't know what it was. The wondering, the dread of not knowing, was worse than anything.

With that familiar overwhelming fear inside me, I looked upon Ulthar. Then I blinked, and the sky changed to a deep green threaded with yellow.

"Most people feel that way the first time they see a dreamt city," Augur said, as if I had spoken my thoughts aloud. She licked one paw and slicked it across her whiskers. "It's the changeable nature of things. Forces uncontrollable. You humans do so love to be in control."

Her words were not delivered in a tone meant to comfort. The cat's voice was a wiry scratch, her expression smug and wild. I felt like Carroll's Alice, confronted by her own



unreliable guide. It's difficult to be a scientist in a nonsense story.

Fortunately, I was distracted by the wall surrounding the town. We had moved closer, though I didn't remember walking a step. When I asked Augur about this, I received what I interpreted as a faint look of approval and a whisker twitch.

"If you think of a place hard enough, you can end up there," she declared. "Impressive, isn't it?"

I didn't believe her. She felt too much like a puppeteer leading me by the strings.

But, I digress. I was talking about the wall. I'm feeling tired again already. My thoughts are scattered. There were strange symbols on the wall. Some of them looked like they'd just been carved, while others were so worn by wind and time that I could barely decipher them. Thinking they might be part of some ancient language, I committed as many to memory as I could, intent of looking them up later in the university library.

Augur watched me study them. "The town is marked. There are rules here. If you walk within its walls, you must harm no cat, nor by your actions or words cause harm to come to any cat. The penalty for doing so is death."

It didn't seem much of a threat, despite the direness of her tone. "You can't die in a dream," I said. "You'd wake up."

The cat turned her face to regard me, and I'm not exaggerating when I say that her menacing look chilled me to my core. No animal should look like that. "What makes you think you will be allowed to wake, human child?"

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The landscape shattered. Thankfully, I did wake, covered in sweat, my heart pounding, hands trembling with fear.

I don't know how much longer I have. But I'll keep recording these encounters, including all my interactions with Augur. The cat visits my dreams for a purpose. I'm sure of it. I have the strangest feeling that, despite her malice and disdain, she needs something from me.

JUNE 8

It was snowing in the dream tonight. I couldn't feel the cold. I was back in the forest and alone for the first time. I worried that I had angered Augur enough for her to abandon me until I saw the tracks in the pristine snow. They were cat's paw prints. I



followed them for what felt like miles until my path was blocked by a fallen log. Blood stained the snow all around it.

Other tracks surrounded the spot, but these were many and smaller. Bite marks had shredded parts of the log. Rats, I surmised. Heaven knows I'd spent enough time with them in the lab to recognize the signs. Except these were bigger, acting in a swarm to kill something.

My heart leapt to my throat. I still had not seen Augur. She'd told me it was a crime to harm a cat in Ulthar, but this forest—this enchanted wood—was not Ulthar. What if she was dead?

I had no time to dreadfully ponder that possibility, for just then I heard a scratching sound coming from within the log. I backed away, the hem of my skirt dragging over the snow. Fear surged inside me as a large, dark shape wriggled out from a hole in the log. Just as I'd guessed, it was rat, bigger than any I'd seen on the streets of Arkham. But it was... sick. Wrong. Wormlike parasites writhed on its face. Beady yellow eyes regarded me with a hunger and intelligence that made my skin crawl. As I watched, transfixed, it squealed and shook the snow from its matted fur, then darted toward me. A rotten stench hit my nostrils.

Gagging, I surged backward, but my feet tangled in something. Was it my skirt? The snow? Or was it the cruel narrative of the dream itself that was determined to make me helpless? I couldn't say, but I was suddenly flat on my back, frozen in fear, as I felt the prick of needle-like teeth at the toe of my boot. I felt it, I swear. The gulping, panicked breaths I took froze in my chest.

Was this actually real, and not a dream at all? Had I been transported from my bed to this strange, otherworldly place?

I couldn't move. It was as if an invisible anchor pressed me down into the snow. I thrashed, strands of hair tangling in my eyes as more scratching and scabbling of tiny claws and—was that laughter?—echoed through the trees.

One by one, more rats emerged from the forest and leaped upon the fallen log, towering over me like a menacing army. The rat gnawing at my boot abandoned its meal and scrambled up my leg.

I screamed, hoping to wake myself, but no sound emerged from my constricted chest. I stared up at the sky, looking for some deliverance. All I saw was an endless canopy of uncaring trees.

And suddenly, there was Augur, unharmed, leaping from branch to branch, high above the amassing rats.

"You will never survive if you refuse to take part in the play," she said, staring down at me with those gleaming, dispassionate eyes.

I screamed again. Only a whimper emerged, and so I cursed her perched up there, watching my suffering and doing nothing.

"Fine," Augur said, sounding very put out. "I'll help you this once, but I won't be able to protect you forever." She flicked her tail. "Remember when you were young, human child? Too young to steal your father's revolver, to take it to your neighbor's field and shoot tin cans off the fence." A satisfied purr rumbled from Augur's chest. "But you did it anyway, thrilled and ashamed at what

you were getting away with. The memory still burns in you. Well, there's no one to stop you now, is there?"

The rats swarmed over my body. "I have no weapon!" Two of the rats brushed against my arm, nibbling at my sleeve with wretched black teeth. Why couldn't I get up?

"The fear will kill you, if you let it," Augur warned. "Fear makes the malleable rigid. Fear seals fate. Don't forget it."

A loud squeal, right in my ear. A rat had grabbed my braid and gnawed on it, while another scurried gleefully toward my unprotected face.

I felt as if I drifted up out of my body then. I stood in that field Augur had described from my memory, giddy with shame and delight as I raised my father's revolver and aimed at the tin can balanced on the fence post.

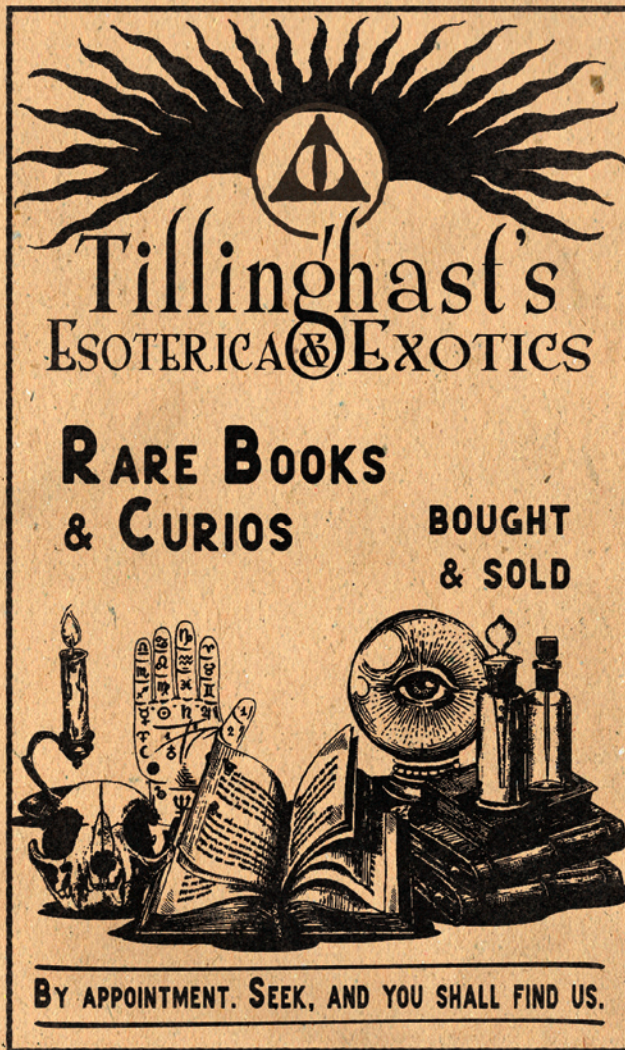
The gunshot was loud in my ears.

A new rat gnawing on my boot dropped dead in the snow. I sat up, hurling rats off me, pointing and shooting at anything I could hit as they scurried away. My father's revolver was warm and solid in my hands, conjured from a memory and accurate right down to the worn grip.

I woke up then, bedsheets twisted around my body, the putrid smell of the rats still clinging to me. I scrubbed my skin raw in the bath until the stench faded. I was terrified, enraged, but also empowered as I had never been before.

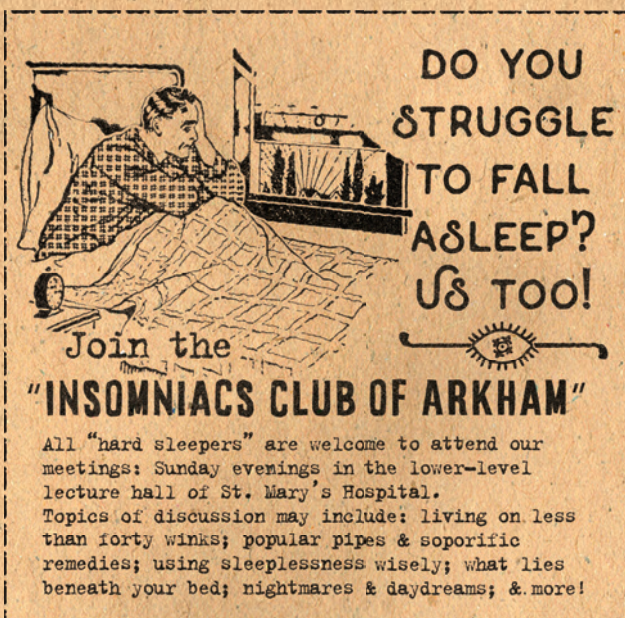
For I knew now that if I tried hard enough, I could exert control over my dreams. Augur had been trying to tell me all along. I just hadn't been listening.

JUNE 10



The illustration features a central sun with a triangle containing a vertical line inside it. Below the sun, the text reads "Tillinghast's ESOTERICA & EXOTICS". Underneath, it says "RARE BOOKS & CURIOS" and "BOUGHT & SOLD". The central image shows a hand holding a palm-leaf manuscript, an open book, a crystal ball with an eye inside, a lit candle, and a skull.

BY APPOINTMENT. SEEK, AND YOU SHALL FIND US.



The illustration shows a man sitting up in bed, looking out a window at a cityscape. The text reads "DO YOU STRUGGLE TO FALL ASLEEP? US TOO!" and "Join the 'INSOMNIACS CLUB OF ARKHAM'". Below the text, it says "All 'hard sleepers' are welcome to attend our meetings: Sunday evenings in the lower-level lecture hall of St. Mary's Hospital. Topics of discussion may include: living on less than forty winks; popular pipes & soporific remedies; using sleeplessness wisely; what lies beneath your bed; nightmares & daydreams; & more!"

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Tonight, I encountered Augur while walking through a field toward Ulthar. Waving grasses lashed at my ankles, propelling me forward. The dream seemed to be pushing me to enter the strange town. Whispers in the grass urged me onward. I kept part of my attention on the town in the distance, and the other part on the grass, searching for any sign of those horrifying rats.

I tensed when I heard a rustling beside me. Augur stepped out of a patch of tall grass to block my path, a spot of cinder black in the middle of the lush, green land.

"Are you certain you're ready to enter the city?" the cat asked. "You should turn back if you carry any doubts."

My anger, still simmering from my last encounter, boiled over at another cryptic warning. "If I'm not ready, then why bring me here at all?" I demanded. "Why force me to dream up this place?"

The cat's ears twitched. She turned to look across the field toward Ulthar. I followed her gaze, but nothing seemed out of the ordinary.

"What do you want from me?" I pressed, voice rising. The wind carried my words far across the field.

Augur regarded me as if I were an insect that kept landing on her tail. "You are arrogant as any human I have ever met," she said. "Do you really think your tiny mind brought Ulthar into existence? Or the rest of these dreamt lands?"

"Then how big are they? A city? A country? A world?" I pressed. "And if I

didn't build them in my own dreams, then who did?"

The cat hissed in annoyance, padding back and forth. "You are all the same! You ask questions whose answers could not possibly make any difference! If I told you this place was as large as the dreams of a million philosophers, as small and imprisoning as the nightmares of children left alone in the dark, would it mean anything to you?"

I opened my mouth, ready to argue that she made no sense, but then it occurred to me that we were two strangers speaking different languages. I was trying to force my understanding of the world onto a place that defied reason at every turn. I resolved then to be silent, to let the cat speak, in the hope that if I kept an open mind, I might find some common ground.

"The size of this place doesn't matter," the cat continued. "How it came to be is a secret better left unspoken. What matters is how you exist here, what you contribute."

She stopped pacing and sat on the ground in front of me. "Everything builds upon what has come before."

"You're telling me what I do here affects this place?" I said slowly, recalling her admonishment about harming cats. "But I must be here for a reason, then, and I'm not the only dreamer," I said, remembering her words about the other humans she'd met.

"The reasons are unknowable," Augur said. "But if you are here, it is my hope you can be of use." Her tail flicked in the direction of the city. "There are battles to fight."

"Like the rats in the forest," I said, remembering the cat tracks, the blood in the snow. "You're fighting them?"

"The zoogs," Augur said. "They live in the enchanted wood. They are our enemies, and they multiply at a rate we can't match."

The enchanted wood. Ulthar. Zoogs. All of them felt like they came from a fairy tale. My scientist mind was still repelled by the idea that I'd found myself in such a dream,



yet I had no choice but to play by the rules I'd been given.

And at least now I thought I knew what Augur wanted from me.

"More people like me—dreamers—are coming to these lands," I said. "What you're looking for is an alliance, isn't it? Because the zoogs will attack humans as readily as they attack the cats?"

"As you saw."

Augur then pranced off through the field toward Ulthar. "Hurry, now. They're coming."

A chill crept over my skin. I looked at the wavering grasses. Plenty of places to hide a rat, even ones the size of the zoogs. I hurried to catch up to my enigmatic guide.

"Was that a test?" I demanded as we entered the town. There were no guards at the gate, but I could see winding streets beyond, densely packed buildings, and several cats. They draped themselves across the tiled roofs or darted quickly across the streets to escape the wagon and foot traffic.



"In the forest, were you testing me to see if I could dream up my father's revolver to protect myself?"

How did Augur see into my memories?

"It was a warning," Augur said, leading me across a wide thoroughfare and into a dim alley. I smelled the smoke that wreathed a nearby blacksmith's forge, and the delicious aroma of cooking meat drifted from a cottage across the next street. It no longer seemed strange to me that I could smell these things so intently in a dream. "The blood you saw came from a dreamer just like you."

That stopped me cold. I leaned my shoulder against the wall of the nearest building. "What happens if a human dies in this world? This dream?" I asked.

The cat looked back at me, saying nothing, but I read the answer in her golden eyes.

"This place, where no one may harm a cat, can be a sanctuary for you," Augur continued. She crossed another street, and I followed. Townspeople milled about, dressed in simple clothing that came from a different era. They didn't notice either of us.

"But I can't stay here," I protested as the cat paused in front of a building that looked abandoned. The windows were partially boarded over, and so was the door. "I have my own world and my own life to get back to."

Augur ignored me. She stretched out a furry paw and batted the door frame, drawing my attention to the long, jagged marks that scarred the door near the ground, as if some creature had tried to claw its way inside the building.

"What is this place?" I asked. "Why bring me here?"

"To show you that we are all threatened, even here in Ulthar," Augur said.

"But why would the zoogs attack this place?" I reached out and pushed experimentally at the door. A moment ago it had been boarded over, but at my touch it swung open, creaking on its hinges. Inside, it was dim and dusty, with only a tall bench and some rickety chairs for furnishings. The rotten smell of the rats returned to me, although it was fainter here than it had been in the forest.

"It isn't just the zoogs," Augur said, leaping up onto an old workbench. "Other nightmares are clawing at this place, worming through the cracks, trying to get a foothold. Even in Ulthar, where it is a crime to harm a cat. We need allies who understand the danger, dreamers who can help beat back our enemies. If these dreamt lands succumb, your world will no doubt be next."

"I'm a scientist," I said stubbornly. A wave of dizziness overtook me as I spoke, and the room swam. Was I falling asleep? Or trying to wake? It was so hard to tell anymore. "This place is out of the past. There's nothing for my talents here. Let me dream of some future time instead, a place that's ready for me."

"We can only walk on the stage we're given," Augur admonished. "Would you truly waste this opportunity?"

I awoke in my lab, staring up at the water-stained ceiling, neck aching from

falling asleep on the hard floor. It was after midnight, but part of my mind was still in the dream. I swore I could smell the dust and dirt of the feudal town, hear the blacksmith tending to his forge.

Despair settled over me, and that rage boiled up again. I clenched my fingers into a fist and brought it down hard on the floor. A small bit of glass from a broken test tube sliced into my hand. Cursing, I stood and went to the sink to run water

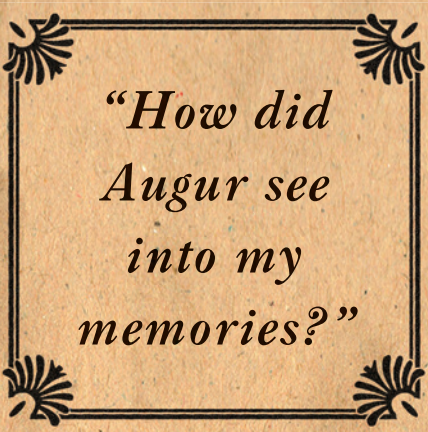
over the wound. I kept the stream running to hide my soft sobs.

So this was my fate. To be trapped in a dream, a world so much more primitive and dangerous than my own. I might never see my brothers, or any of the rest of my family again. Dreamers didn't wake.

However the sleeping sickness wasn't oblivion, as I'd feared. Augur had shown me that there was a chance at something. Could I truly call it a life? It wouldn't be real. Just a dream, a malleable landscape that operated on rules I might never fully comprehend. Science would have no place there. So why was I, a scientist, chosen for this curse?

Why did it have to be me?

I can't do this anymore. Writing it all down is making it real, it's showing me the inevitable end of the path. All the plans I had for my life mean nothing now! Why did I work so hard if it was all going to be meaningless in the end?



*"How did
Augur see
into my
memories?"*

 JUNE 15

I went several days without dreaming, but I'm sleeping for longer and longer stretches at a time. I left my position at the university lab. I felt I could no longer keep my secret. It was only a matter of time before someone discovered my unnatural sleeping habits and learned the truth. I couldn't bear to see the pitying looks of my colleagues, or their well-meaning advice to contact the doctors at the Sanitorium. I had to leave first.

I'll tell Richard tonight. He deserves to hear about my affliction from me. I should have told him before now, but I feared what the news would do to him. He's my older brother, and he's always tried to protect me. But even though he can't save me from my fate, he can still help me. I'm putting together a plan. It might be foolish, and maybe no one will believe me, but I think that Augur was right. This place is in danger. We need allies. The Dreamlands must be linked to our world, otherwise, why would I have been brought into them? What will happen to the waking world if the world of dreams falls apart?

People need to know that there are towns where it is a crime to kill a cat, places where you can find sanctuary, and places where it's dangerous to walk alone. There are nightmares in the fairy tale woods, and we need to bring them from the shadows into the light. People need to know about the Dreamlands.

I also need to tell fellow dreamers that we can exert some control. I intend to test how much in the next dream. If I'm able, I'll report back on the results. Time is short

now, but I'll record as much as I can. I intend to leave this account behind with Richard when I... when I go. He's resourceful. He'll find a way to use it, to get it into the hands of dreamers who are starting to walk the path that I'm on. That's my hope anyway. I'm not sure how I'll be able to explain all this to him, but I must try.

 JUNE 17

My name is Richard Green, Della's brother. I still don't know what to make of all this, and it feels beyond strange to be writing in my sister's diary, but I trust her, and she was determined that I have the last entry in order to bring her story to a close.

She succumbed to the sleeping sickness. She didn't have long to explain things to me, but I've done what she asked, and I hope by publishing these diary entries her words will be able to reach other readers of such fantastical tales. The last thing she said to me before she fell asleep was that I should give all of you her final message:

Tell the dreamers to find me. I drove the zoogs from the building Augur showed me in Ulthar and took it for my own. Come find me there. The dreamers must gather. If we do, maybe one day we can return home. Until then, I'll reshape this place as best I can, using science and reason at every turn, because that is who I am and why I was brought here.

Come. Come and find me in the dream.



Jaleigh Johnson