



FROM THE DESK OF JAMESON ROOK, AUTHOR
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So I decided to take some time off, just some rest and relaxation while the sun is out. It lasted a month before Pineapple's reports drew us back to Boston. I think Ted noticed it first when I passed him a copy of the extremely thorough reports, he'd taken a few newspaper clippings of strange events from Boston papers - people burnt in a warehouse, the disappearance of a woman and an unidentified dead body covered in bite marks - and the locations seemed to tie in directly with the few detours that Zeke had made.

I spoke to Brendan O'Shaw at the Globe and though he hadn't been directly involved with the newspaper reports he was able to tell me the officer in charge of the case - our old friend Detective Sergeant Devlin.

Now the last time I'd spoken with Devlin he'd specifically warned us not to take the law into our own hands and it was about ten minutes later that I received a telegram telling me that Dick had taken the law into his own hands; as such I wasn't sure how big a fan Devlin was of us. Regardless Dick went to see him and was able to confirm that the bite marks on the dead body were human as we suspected, he also explained to Devlin that we had employed a PI to follow Zeke and had records of his movements.

I dropped Pineapple's logs off to Devlin later in the day and he was very interested to see that Zeke's three detours coincided with three mysterious events around town. Unfortunately it wasn't enough evidence to make an accusation at this stage and he warned us not to take the law into our own hands - again.

So of course we immediately decided to take the law into our own hands and go to Zeke's house. Now I know I've been pretty hard on Dick for his actions in the past and I still think he's a little trigger happy but frankly we knew beyond reasonable doubt that Zeke was committing these crimes, we knew he had possession of an evil magic rock and we knew that the police didn't have enough evidence to do anything about it.

Now last time I met Zeke I was pretty convinced he had something wrong with him, talons or something growing out of his stomach but I've seen enough weird shit over the past few months that I wanted to be prepared so I acquired myself a shotgun and stored it in the boot of my car.

for hunting of course

We checked first of all for any of those weird little effigies we'd encountered at Garcetti's but there was no sign of them so we progressed to the house itself - apart from Amelia who stayed in the car to keep watch and warn us if anyone turned up. Pineapple had said it was in poor repair but looking in through the windows the house looked like a bomb had hit it, maybe two. It was even worse than Garcetti's place and some of that mould looked like it was evolving into a new form of life. *Little did we know.*

Since we couldn't see anything useful through the windows and particularly since some of them were boarded up we thought it would be prudent to look inside - you know, just to make sure everything was ok. *Hint: Everything was far from okay.*

We'd seen much of the downstairs through the windows, we checked the room with the boarded up windows but the door had a hefty padlock fitted to it and as we couldn't hear any signs of movement we thought we'd leave it alone for now. After that we headed straight upstairs. There were a few doors on the landing so we decided to take them one at a time - I foolishly went to the door immediately at the top of the stairs where we discovered the true depths of Zeke's depravity.

Bound and gagged on the bed was a young woman, visibly pregnant, with her hands and feet amputated and cauterised. She didn't seem properly conscious but she wasn't in any immediate danger so for the moment we didn't want to disturb her until we'd checked the rest of the house.

The next room was a store room, but I did discover a ladder poorly concealed behind a cupboard which led up to a hatch in the ceiling. We made note of this but finished checking this floor first.

Room number three appeared to be a Master bedroom but bizarrely had a large internal window which looked into the fourth room. Peering through the window it was dark in that room but something was moving around inside - Ted seemed to think it might be a few dogs or animals about that size anyway. When we had a look on the landing the fourth door was actually locked and given what we'd seen we thought it best we left it alone for now anyway.

Dick checked the final door on the landing which was just an empty room - I guess an unused bedroom.

The next port of call was the attic and this is where we discovered Zeke's vast collection of occult books and what was clearly a ritualistic altar - there were blood stones and bone fragments on the altar but for the most part we stayed away from it. After making sure we took some of the more significant books we



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headed back down the ladder.

While Dick checked the cupboards for a suitcase to carry the books in I headed back to see to the pregnant young woman; unfortunately we had an unexpected visitor waiting for us at the top of the stairs.

It was some sort of horrific hybrid of human and insect parts; about the size of a man but covered in thick chitinous plates, with numerous segmented arms with talons on the end and as we discovered a set of wings. Dick came up with the name Tyrannoroach and in fairness it did look a hell of a lot like a giant humanoid cockroach.

I unloaded my revolver into it at close range which obviously brought Ted and Dick out from the store room to unload some more rounds into the thing. The thing managed to clamp it's mandibles down on Dick's face - he's fine now but I wouldn't be surprised if it leaves a nasty set of scars. Amelia obviously heard the gunshots as she turned up with my shotgun. She took a shot from the bottom of the stairs but missed so she quickly drew her blade and disembowelled the thing. *Do cockroaches have entrails?*

Once we had regained our composure we went to check on the pregnant woman, the gunshots had obviously woken her up and she panicked when she saw us. We tried to reassure her and explain we were here to help but it quickly became evident she was giving birth spawning in labour. What she gave birth to was far from human, insects that tore their way out of her and scattered into cracks and crevices around the room; the fact that she died was perhaps a mercy but it's a sight I unfortunately don't think I'll ever be able to forget.

So we went back downstairs and broke the lock off the door there. It was obviously a makeshift dungeon with manacles lining the walls. Fortunately it was empty.

Given my prior suspicions about the bulges in Zeke's suit and given the sights we had seen, the conclusion we drew was that Zeke had transformed himself or somehow been mutated by the power of the stone. He was now kidnapping and impregnating people to create monstrous offspring. Obviously we needed to deal with him permanently and the safest assumption was that with the dark stone in his possession he was probably a major threat - so we decided to set up an ambush.

We moved the cars out of sight and then set ourselves up in the room adjacent to the hallway. I had my shotgun, Dick had his revolver, Amelia had her sword and Ted drew his machete. When Zeke returned home we gave him a moment to enter and then kicked the door open to confront him. I took careful aim with my shotgun and unloaded a shot into the wall behind him - this is not how it happens in my books. We took a few blows from Zeke and he eventually tore his suit open to reveal that he was indeed a Tyrannoroach. After a few more dramatic misses I finally hit him squarely with a blast from the shotgun and combined with the injuries my companions had caused that felled him; I emptied another shell into his chest just to be sure.

Right so Zeke was dealt with. We debated whether or not we should set the house on fire but figured that would draw too much attention, especially given that Dick - on trial for murder - had spoken to the police about Zeke just hours before. Instead we decided it would be better to keep asking after Zeke like we were still investigating and let someone else actually discover what had happened, there was enough bizarre stuff going on in the house that we were pretty sure the government would cover up the whole thing anyway.

First though we needed to deal with that last locked room with the dog sized things scurrying around; with a bunch of torches shining through the window we were able to see what they actually were - baby Tyrannoroaches. It was pretty messed up, I mean they looked basically like toddlers, their faces were normal to look at but things got worse below the neck and we couldn't really leave these things here for someone else to stumble across.

Dick did his best to keep them cowering in the corner with his torches while Ted and Amelia moved in to dispatch them - I stood at the door with the landing lights on just in case any made a dart for freedom. Amelia took a nasty blow in the conflict but we were able to dispatch the last of the children and then we departed the house.

We've been to the sailor's club a couple of times - obviously Zeke hasn't been available to speak to us but the bartender didn't seem concerned. I think we'll probably ask Pineapple to track Zeke down and make sure he hasn't fled town - hopefully when he realises the car hasn't left the house for a few days he'll be able to report it to the police independently from us.



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In other news Stanley has been in touch, he's prepared a letter of reference and pointed me in the right direction to get registered as a PI in New York. When I speak to these people I'll ask about getting cross registered in Massachusetts.

Khepri

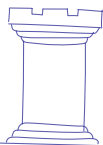
"He Who is Coming into Being"

Khepri was associated with the scarab or dung beetle (*Scarabaeus sacer*), making him one of the most famous insect gods. The Egyptians watched the scarab beetle rolling dung into a ball and pushing it along the ground to its burrow. The Egyptians made a connection between the movement of the sun across the sky and the movement of the ball of dung pushed by the beetle. The solar connection was enhanced by the fact that the scarab has antenna on its head and when the scarab pushed a ball of dung along the ground, the ball would sit between the antenna in a way that was reminiscent of the solar disc flanked by a pair of horns which was worn by many deities.



He was given a central role in the "book of the dead" ("the book of coming forth by day") and the "amduat" ("the book of that which is in the underworld" or "the book of the secret chamber") and scarab amulets were placed over the heart of the deceased during the mummification ritual. These "heart scarabs" were meant to be weighed against the feather of Ma'at (truth) during the final judgement. Scarabs were often inscribed with a spell from the Book of the Dead which instructed their heart .. "do not stand as a witness against me."

Most tales mention three Furies: Allecto (endless), Tisiphone (punishment), and Megaera (jealous rage). Usually imagined as monstrous, foul-smelling hags, the sisters had bats' wings, coal-black skin, and hair entwined with serpents. They carried torches, whips, and cups of venom with which to torment wrongdoers. The Furies could also appear as storm clouds or swarms of insects.



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