

Silas only paced around the back of his study to the traditional extent. Every so often the kobold-man would glance through the broad windows that unveiled the gardens of the Society's headquarters. Not an hour ago the pseudo-retired professor had received an opportunity that the common man would find utterly confounding. Yet still he mused over his tea.

It wasn't that he wasn't interested in the case, the man thought to himself. He got his Parapsychology PhD from the Koestler Unit, after all. It was just that he was worried about the reputation of the august organization who gave him an academic home.

Spontaneous cases of psychical phenomena were always wild. First of course was the combing; many times a well-meaning individual would simply report a dud case, some error of the wind or phantasm of the brain. Even if one did find a genuine case, they'd usually be relatively minor; the disappearance of odd objects or fleeting telepathic connections. And either way there'd be precious little to gain scientifically, and even worse from the media. But he was a man of science, and he did not stop just because the search was slow.

According to the man, the incident had occurred at an old manor in the hills of Lancashire. Strictly speaking someone *still* owned it, but rights were disputed in a legal limbo and no-one was there to indict squatters. The man had allegedly simply gone there to tour a historic location, but quickly bit off more than he could chew. Silas had already gone through the reported case in detail; the RSPK in the atrium, various apparent apports, and, according to the man, a sense of "presence." Of course, the next step was for someone to confirm such phenomena, and preferably one who wouldn't simply run out in terror like the first witness had.

Thus, Silas had himself a job.

The kobold left his study, wending out of the tight confines of the Society for Psychical Research and heading out towards the adjoined parking lot. Soon the man had reached his stoic, tasteful sedan. He opened the car trunk and took a single look.

Yes, everything necessary was in order. Some comestibles, survival equipment, travelling supplies, tools for roadside repairs, and the like. Set aside were his sets of clothing; tweed jackets, spare shirts, pants, hats, and packs of disposable nappies.

The last point didn't bother him like it might other men. He had already experienced the problem in youth and found it resurfacing in his advanced years. He had bigger problems to worry about.

Silas swiftly shut the trunk and got into the driver's seat.

The professor quickly reversed out of his slot and got onto the road. He didn't see himself needing anything from his home, and so the man simply drove with practiced effort through the congested streets of London. Eventually he was able to crest the urban conglomerate and found himself on the intercounty roads.

The roads proper, he thought.

All in all, the trip was uneventful. Not to say that the man didn't enjoy it; the curtain of rolling green was refreshing for the eyes, and the kobold was even able to enjoy a brief lunch at a rest stop, though it coincided with a change. It was just that it didn't come close to what could await the kobold at his

destination, assuming everything panned out. A certain anticipation was growing, and the kobold hoped to get there quickly, that the feeling might not play at his heart for too long.

Luckily, the rest of the trip was not long. As time progressed, many of the structures of organized civilization gave way, replaced by more quaint dwellings and the like. Granted, it was hard to say that things could be truly rural on the small Isle, but Silas recognized and took in the change nonetheless. After passing by the small pensioner-town that tended to accompany all sorts of estates, Silas finally started down the road that would lead to the estate properly. Within the span of ten minutes, the man had found the small paved road that would lead to his prize. With care, Silas wended down the path.

The mansion itself didn't appear too out of the ordinary, the kobold thought to himself. Like many of its type, it rested in a semi-secluded valley-like location, with green hills on either side and a decent copse behind. Comfortable and out of the way, as many would like, though not terribly original. Musing, Silas got out of his car, still munching on a packet of jerkey he had acquired from a corner store (it was surprising how tasteless the biscuits he had packed were). He went back to the trunk and grabbed his backpack, already prepared with necessities. After closing and locking it, the man set out. The kobold walked past the dusty roundabout, leaving his car parked rather haphazardly. It was hardly like courtesy mannered in this scenario, he thought.

With thought, Silas checked the front entrance; a large pair of wooden doors with attached bronze knockers. As the man had elaborated, the door was still unlocked. Gingerly, Silas swung them open. The doors creaked quite a bit, but they were not overly difficult to move. The professor, swung his head around, taking in the surroundings. Everything seemed as much in order as an abandoned mansion in a property limbo could be. There was a fine layer of dust over the back stairwell, with two halls leading out on either side. Down either way Silas could see rows of doors, though the hallways themselves didn't stretch out too long. It wasn't the largest of places, of course.

On a whim, Silas elected to head down the hallway to the left. Granted, there was little to go off of in the first place; the man soon figured that choosing this location would be as good as any. The witness himself sighted phenomena down both of the passageways; with apports of objects behind him in the right hallway and a few vases moving psychokinetically down the left. In all of his life, Silas hadn't actually spotted macro-PK in the flesh, or really any of the more dramatic phenomena beyond ESP. If it was a legitimate case, he thought, it'd be awfully nice to see some effects outside of the lab.

Silas figured that the hall was fine enough. The plastering was done in an almost traditionally British style, with the decorations and adornments seeming as though they would fit well enough into any classical home. A few cushioned coves were even present by the windows that lined the left of Silas, something the man hadn't seen in many homes for quite some time. Homely, he had to admit, despite a certain foreignness to the design.

One thing the kobold did not see, though, was psi.

"Hmm." the man tutted a little as he reached the end of the hall. The fact that phenomena were specifically alleged to have occurred in this very location did dampen the man's spirits a little, but new sights awaited just beyond the bend, including what looked to be a spiralling staircase. The man had spent time and he had time, and so he continued his search.

Silas scribbled down in his journal as he approached the end of the new hallway, one that formed the boundary of the house. He had seen nothing of particular note here either, and so his entries were fast.

Still, he moved. By the time he had reached the end and stowed away the book, the kobold came face to face with the staircase. It was obviously a less grand affair than the one present in the foyer, but it did have a certain timelessness to it. The professor chuckled a little at a youth spent on ghost documentaries. He did not exactly think his younger self would be surprised at his position now.

Romantic memories faded quite abruptly as Silas started to ascend the staircase. While he was healthier than many his age, he still found this task more painful than it'd likely be for many men. Silas counted himself lucky that it was due to fatigue rather than back pain.

Slowly moving along, the professor detected a certain chill in the air develop as he passed by the first few flights of steps. The kobold immediately went through the usual rigmarole of cautious hesitancy. The change was so slight that it was potentially attributable to self-suggestion, and in either case, he had no idea of this kind of place may simply remain cool better than the rest of the house. For a moment Silas cursed himself for not bringing a thermometer.

The chill didn't leave as Silas finally made his way to the upper floor, but it at least wasn't too much colder, the kobold thought. Silas started to freely walk down the hall, no longer fighting against gravity. The upper floor appeared to house bedrooms, as was par the course. Silas was more surprised by how many there seemed to be. Surely some of them had to be tertiary rooms or the like, the man thought to himself. If he recalled correctly, this was the place where the wi-

Silas froze for a second. The kobold felt a familiar yet annoying sensation down below. Before he could apply any holding pressure, he felt a sudden spike of pain and let the bowel movement have its way. After a few relief-filled seconds, the kobold was left frustrated and smellier.

“There has to be a...ah bloody hell, the place is abandoned.” Silas shook his head, beginning to root through his pack for a spare diaper and wipes. The man just lay down on the laminated floor and began the change there, swiftly cleaning himself up and donning new protection. It was just as the kobold began to throw the old one into a small trash bag that the kobold felt the dizzy spell come over him. He heard little and saw nothing as he faded into unconsciousness.

The first emotion that Silas felt when he woke up was more anger. This was because of a certain sensation that the man had previously rectified. The kobold brushed aside his more immediate concerns for the reason for his fainting, despite the fact that such a thing could hardly bode well for his otherwise fine health. It was only on closer examination of the trash bag that Silas' mind stilled.

It was empty.

Silas' eyes immediately scanned the floor. It was nowhere in sight. Further down the hallway; nothing. And no mechanism by which it could have been moved in his unconsciousness. Unless...

Silas' arms spready out ever so slightly and the man swiftly gathered up his backpack. He did not know *what* was up, but something most assuredly was. The distinct sensation of a certain...coldness...to his used diaper, as well as an open, clean one on the ground more than testified to that fact. The man didn't even bother to count out how many spares he had left in his backpack. The question now was; *why* had whatever *thing* done *this*?!

Concern with decorum not quite faded, Silas swiftly disposed of the undoubtedly twice-worn messy diaper. He wiped himself - extra-thoroughly this time – and got on the still-good clean diaper. Silas

looked around his environment hazily, eyes alighting when he found a thin wooden dowel propped along the windowsill that gazed on over the forest below. The man grabbed the thing and gripped it like a baton. Perhaps irrelevant to whatever he was facing, the man thought, or perhaps such could serve as a wand. Slinging his backpack more tightly, Silas started to tread cautiously back down the hall he had come from.

That was when he heard the noise of stair-ascension.

Silas felt an almost alien anger come over him. No matter that he was a senior, no matter that he was a world-shy professor, no matter that he was going against a damn spook with a stick. This fool had insulted him in a way he could scarcely even imagine. Barreling down the hall, Silas shouted.

“TAKE YOUR GAMES BACK TO HELL, YOU DAMN PERV-”

Silas saw the outline of a figure as he crested the stairs and crashed straight into them. In his panic, he made quite sure that the dowel was aimed directly for whatever the thing was. Silas made the identification when he finally opened his eyes and found himself pinned over a man, half of his body hanging over the bannister.

“Fucking 'ell.” the kobold muttered, eyes narrowing. “If you can get off me, senior, I'm sure we can find whatever ghost has got you in a twist.”

Silas' mind came back to him and he immediately got off of the man. The kobold swiftly got off from the banister and landed on the solid ground of the second floor.

“I...apologies, sir, I'm afraid that you were not the intended target.” Silas bowed his head a little, before raising it once more. “Wait, how were you aware of the...being?” Silas slowed down towards the end.

“I should really be asking the same of you.” the kobold rolled his eyes.

“Hmph. I suppose in this circumstance it is not confidential. There have been reports of paranormal phenomena from this location, and I am the SPR's liason for the operation.” Silas said, his own gaze now tightening.

The man paused for a second.

“...wait, like the SPR that Crowley was so pissy about?” the man said.

Silas sighed. Both at the words and a certain tone to the voice that he was now noticing. Damn Yankees.

“I presume the very same. I can understand why a dress-up wizard would feel anger at an organization soberly examining that 'magic' that they're so fond of.”

“Well then, I'm sure that another wizard meddling with SPR business would be harmless then. It is a shame that the Parapsychological Association has eclipsed you so in these latter years...” the man went on. Silas just sighed some more and waved his hands.

“Look, let's just forget all of this for a moment. A *seriously* unusual phenomenon has just occurred and

I fear that we must prepare ourselves.” Silas said.

The man looked around for a moment, before speaking.

“Okay, whatever. The name's Colin, what's yours?” the younger kobold said.

“Silas.” the professor responded, straightening his posture a little.

“Alright then, Silas. Now, I'm already quite inclined to take your word for this, but I could use a little more info. What exactly has been happening here? I've only been able to detect that this place is a location of some occult significance.” Colin spoke, heading beginning to look down the hallway.

Silas raised his brow a little, but soon opened his mouth to speak.

Until he remembered.

“I, well, it's a bit particular...” the kobold trailed off.

“Wait...I think I see...what?” Colin's head was now firmly affixed away from Silas. Before the other kobold could move, the man began to jog down the hallway.

“W-Wait! Don't, don't head down there, it's-” Silas' feeble voice was cut off.

“Uh...there's some sort of, shitty diaper on the ground. It looks pretty modern and recently used...was this here when you came?” Colin's voice echoed a little down the hall.

Silas started a sprint down and regrouped with the kobold. While he was still catching his breath and formulating words, Colin looked down a little at the professor.

“Oh, uh, sorry man, I hadn't noticed before...” the man started to scratch his head a little. Silas just cocked his head until he realized that the bulk and waistband wasn't completely invisible.

“...I'd just hope that you'd throw it out instead of leaving it here in a historical place or whatever-” Colin was cut off.

“Goddamnit man! I had just finished changing out of the one that damn *thing* changed me into! I'm not going to bother looking for a bloody wastebasket when I hear footsteps and figure I might be murdered by some other-” the professor's fevered rant was stilled only by Colin's raised hand.

“Wait, did you say you were changed *into* it? A used one?” Colin asked.

“I, well yes. I know it sounds ridiculous; believe me, I wish my first spectral encounter was something amaz-” Silas was cut off once more.

“No. That's possibly the first real clue we have.” Colin spoke.

“...What?” was Silas' response.

“Alps.” Colin said simply.

“...*What?*” Silas asked again.

“They honestly wouldn't have been my first guess, but the entity matches up the German heritage that the family has, which I'm sure you've already discovered...”

“...Aye.” Silas feigned a nod. He hadn't figured historical research would have actually been beneficial. “How, how does this relate back to this...entity you're postulating, though?”

“Alps are a well-known German fairy or demon thing. Most importantly in this case, though, folklore held that they would attempt to put an old diaper back onto a baby after they were changed. Or, well, adults, if they turn out to be at the root of this case.” Colin explained.

“Huh.” Silas said. He'd have to check that up on his phone later. Really damn specific.

“I, you seem rather knowledgeable on, well, myth I suppose. Given that plus your previous comment, I take it you're not a psychological researcher?” Silas spoke.

“You would be correct. As I said before, I am an occultist, dedicated to the magical arts.” Colin responded succinctly.

“Hmm. Strange bedfellows it seems we have ended up.” Silas mused. “And you're...well, I'm going to just come out and say it. You're American, correct?”

“Well I suppose it would be pretty damn obvious. Yes I am. Currently on 'vacation' in the United Kingdom or what have you. There are many points of power here, and you don't even have to learn a new language to visit. Really quite convenient...” Colin rambled on.

“...Indeed.” Silas blinked a little. “In any case, I think we should keep investigating. If there really is a non-corporeal intelligence of some sort involved here, and not just spontaneous psi phenomena of living minds, then we could be in, well...”

“Danger.” Colin nodded.

Silas looked on for a moment, before returning it.

“So then, where were you?” Colin asked.

“Oh, right this way...” Silas said. Together the two men began to head further into the second floor.

The two wended on through mostly unremarkable halls. They were beginning to check rooms, now, but nothing seemed to be of much interest. Most were bedrooms, only interrupted by the occasional study, lounge, or bathroom. Silas kept up the search with vigor that was surprising for frame but not for his motivation. The man was kind of curious of why Colin looked to be a bit nervous now, though. After all, the man had not even witnessed the presence to the degree that the professor himself had.

“Everything alright back there, lad?” Silas asked, not bothering to look behind.

“Yeah. Just-” Colin was cut off.

“Then the 'yeah' is irrelevant. What's going on?” Silas asked.

Colin looked at Silas oddly for a moment, before shrugging.

“I dunno, it's just. Well. I almost hear noises sometimes. Like movements or whispers.” Colin said lowly.

“Hmm. I haven't heard a thing. Might be creaking or tricks of the mind.” Silas suggested.

“It's...not just that.” Colin almost whispered.

“What *is* it, then?” Silas asked with a certain strength.

Colin paused for a moment. The group arrived at another door ready to be opened.

“...Sometimes I feel like we're being watched.” Colin managed.

Silas turned back around suddenly. He gazed with slits for eyes for a moment. A moment later, the tension released.

“Scopoaesthesia.” Silas said.

“...What?” Colin cocked his head.

“Scopoeasthesia. The psychic staring effect. Surely you know of the tests with CCTV monitors and monitoring of bystander reactions...” Silas went off.

“...Right.” Colin nodded after a bit of faint recollection.

“Now the question is...who is staring at us.” Silas spoke.

The man's hand hovered over the doorknob. An almost electric ambiance filled the space around the men, before Silas' hand finally gave way to movement.

When the kobold opened the door, it revealed a nursery.

“Quite the build-up.” Colin shook his head.

“Quite.” Silas absentmindedly spoke, beginning to walk into the room.

All around was fine, if old, wood paneling, a little world of baseboards and plaster. The room was dominated by a fine set of windows that revealed green woods down below, the area surrounded by a cushioned inlet. Elsewhere were the usual rudiments of youth; carved chests, scattered toys, and all sorts of natural motifs dotting the walls. More unusual was the fact that the room had two cribs instead of one. Silas' eyes fell upon the scene.

“Tasteful architecture.” the man eventually admitted. Colin's gaze shot off to the man in an odd manner.

“Looks Edwardian, at least judging by the baseboard design and materials. I can see a bit of the homeland's influence if that whole German thing really made an impact.” Silas spoke. The man absently touched the walls with extended arms as he toured the perimeter of the room, seemingly lost in some historical examination. Reluctantly, Colin began to enter into the room as well.

“Well, aye.” the man looked on at the room, albeit with fewer recollection of whatever classes Silas must have taken. “I just, I don't know man. Something about this gives me the creeps. I don't know if it's just the stereotypical horror movie thing or whatev-”

“Did the Alps have anything to do with children, by any chance?” Silas asked. His head didn't turn.

“Well, not in particular, beyond what I already told you. They were mainly just mischevious beings in general, blamed for pretty much any mayhem you could think of.” Colin shrugged. He was closer to Silas now, though his gaze was fixed more toward the window. The sky was edging ever so slightly into indigo.

“Hmm.” Silas nodded along.

All of a sudden, the door to the room shut swung shut.

Colin's gaze was the first to swing to the sound.

“I-I didn't do that! Silas!” Colin's head jumped back to the man.

Silas turned around swiftly. His gaze took a while to steady, but his voice came fast.

“Assuming no other individual was close to the thing, PK.” he said quickly. “In all likelihood RSPK, unless you have some psychokinetic powers you'd like to tell me about.”

“Well beyond me being God and all, no.” Colin responded with a bit of a fevered smile. Technical talk like this tended to ease the mind, he was glad for.

“Then we will have to assume the former. Originating source; likely whatever 'entity' we're dealing with.” Silas spoke.

Just then, faint outlines flickered toward their vision. They were small, bipedal, and familiar only in the vaguer sense of the word, like tessellated 3D blackness formed into a wirey goblins. They originated near the doors but swiftly approached the men.

“This is not my forte.” Silas swiftly responded. The voice was firm, but Colin could tell by the eyes that the main was legitimately disturbed. “I take it you have something that can work on these...beings, wizard?”

“I..” Colin mumbled a little, only slightly less surprised by the apparitions than Silas. He had rarely seen spirits in visible form before, and only then when he had intentionally evoked them. This was something unprecedented.

Colin steadied his mind briefly. After an inaudible Cross Qabalistic, he began to chant



“Yod-AH!”

Colin didn't get a God-name out before he was suddenly seized by an invisible force. Silas saw his friend thrown into the air toward the back of the room, coming to a sudden stop above some old, lacquered wooden table. He fell down rather gently.

“I, uh, trust you ha-” Silas' speech was interrupted by his backpack coming straight off of him.

Still rather grateful that the force was weak enough to let him retain his limbs, Silas looked on in mute amazement as his bag floated in the air, the drawstring coming undone. His face went blank as soon as he was what was coming out.

Colin still struggled with whatever psychokinetic field gripped his limbs, but his attention was enough for him to see some filmy, white plastic object approaching him. Given the entire scenario, he could only make out utter befuddlement at first. By the time the object began to unfold, and nigh-inhuman resistance came, a warping effect near the man's mouth covered up what must have been a train of expletives. At least, that was what Silas hypothesized when he saw a grown man's mouth moving wordlessly as he was diapered by the psychokinesis of inky black gremlins. By the time Silas remembered his own attacker, he just looked down to see a small Alp pinch the fringe of his diaper for confirmation. Privately Silas felt like reality had been completed and that everyone could go home.

If Silas was left shell-shocked, Colin was left a veritable demon of rage. By the time the process of diapering had been completed and invisible forces began to get him redressed, the man's pants had been left on the ground and in fact were apported away. Colin presumed this was because he had tried to kick the little Alp who was overseeing the change with all of his worldly strength. When he was finally able to get off of the table at the end of the procedure, the man simply found that all of his attacks passed through the being harmlessly. He should have fucking figured.

A few of the Alps phased out of the room soon afterwards. The remainder clustered harmlessly around the room, their motions seemingly indifferent to the two men. Having recovered and not quite being ready to acknowledge what just happened to Colin, Silas tried the door.

“It won't budge. I don't even believe it's locked, it's more like the knob won't turn.” Silas said with barely a trace of emotion.

“Well damn dandy.” Colin huffed. He had since given up trying to attack the Alp presumably responsible for his change and now hung around the back of the room, still not really wanting to be looked at.

“We're going to need to break the ice and discuss things plainly if we want to get out of this room.” Silas sighed.

“What even is there to discuss?! I can barely even think of a reason for *why* these things would have done this to us; it doesn't fit their lore in the slightest.” Colin said.

“Or hardly the slightest. Honestly of all the beings of lore I think they might qualify to the closest one would get to this situation.” Silas suggested.

“Oh fucking whatever...there's probably like kid deities or something that I can just barely imagine doing something like this...” Colin trailed off, mostly shaking his clenched fist as if smashing something in frustration.

Just then, something came upon Colin.

“Unless...” the man's movements and voice stilled. He looked back on off toward the window, wondering.

“...What?” Silas started to actually look toward Colin. The seeming numinosity of his current reverie actually diminished the ridiculousness of his diapered sight quite a bit.

“...Children. They did it to children.” Colin said, his mind clearly somewhere else.

“Yes? We've already gone over this.” Silas spoke after a second.

“And yet they did it to you. Perhaps they think us children...yet what would they need those for?”

Silas just moved his hand as though to signal Colin to continue.

“Adding more to their number, perhaps.” Colin stroked his chin.

Silas stood in silence for a few moments.

“...Did that PK that lifted you jiggle your brain, by any chance?”

“Oh c'mon, it's about as a good a theory as any.” Colin raised his voice a little.

Silas looked back on at the room. The entities were just kind of...hanging about them. Not even doing anything more overtly mischevius. If that was their main motivator, than why wouldn't they be doing it now?

“...Well. I suppose whatever their real motivation is, we should be getting out soon. Honestly, the fact that they *aren't* doing anything right now is almost more disturbing.” Silas spoke.

“Agreed.” Colin nodded.

Both men started to look around the room more carefully, rebuilding composure.

“Hmm. I think the window might be a good option.” Silas spoke.

“...You think you can handle that, Gramps?” Colin said. The man was busy searching through one of the small kid's chests. Mostly for something to cover up the obvious.

“Well, it's only a two-story, is it not? It's not like we have many options, anyway.” Silas shrugged.

“Well, true...” Colin nodded. Silas noticed toward the end that the kobold's eyes seemed to catch on something, and before he could notice much more, the man practically fell into the chest.

When he rose back up, he was donning a black cloak with blue trim.

“Ah, lo, to become attached to the apparel of the Grades is idolatry, but I must say, this *is* badass, is it not, good brother?” Colin spoke in a tone with admittedly little affect, clearly lost in some practiced world of theatre that was alien to Silas.

“Well, it does look quite nice.” Silas nodded. He didn't exactly want to mention how it didn't cover the man's diaper all too well.

“...You didn't, like, mean anything by that last statement, right?” Silas' expression went a bit concerned for a moment.

“Oh...fuck that did not come out right given the circumstances...I meant it in like a magical, masculine context of two souls uniting in brotherhood, equals seeking liberation together, y'know?” Colin spoke quickly, nodding desperately toward Silas.

“Oh, I'm fine with all of you L, G, B, T, folks, I'm just not into that myse-”

“No, it was platonic...nevermind.” Colin interrupted quickly. “Anyway, the window, yes. I say we go with that.” Colin said.

Silas silently mused for a few moments, but the eventual nod came out confident.

Allowing a smirk, Colin began to move toward the window.

Just when an Alp moved in front of it.

“Oh fucking 'ell!” Colin picked up his pace at the sight. Silas could see a darkness come over his visage then. He at least could not blame the man.

Colin felt confident when his body moved through the Alp, as expected. What was less welcomed was his sudden crash just before the window.

“GAH! WHAT THE HELL DID YOU GUYS DO THIS TIME?!” Colin swung back a little, massaging the arm that had hit...whatever, first. It couldn't have been the glass given his speed, and it hurt like hell too...

“Pretty obviously PK, lad. Though I can't say I've seen it projected in a stationary, barrier-like manner. Seems more like science-fiction than psi.” Silas rubbed his scaly chin a little.

“Of course that's your breaking point...” Colin sighed, shaking his head. “Still just shitty timing...”

“No.” Silas said.

It took Colin a few seconds to really cognize what the elder kobold had just said, and a second more to actually look back at him confusedly after that.

“...What do you mean?”

“It was not timing except in a more abstracted sense. Think about it; what were we doing before we decided to go with the window?” Silas “asked.”

“My cloak and accidental insinuations?” Colin looked a bit weirdly toward the man.

Silas simply shook his head.

“We were *thinking* about going with the window. Quite intensely, in fact.” the kobold started to pace about the room. His bladder actually came loose soon after he started, though the man took solace in the fact that he wasn't the one who was pantsless.

“So you're saying they're telepaths now too?” Colin's eyes narrowed.

“Likely only very surface thoughts, hence why they would take an action like that only after we had deliberated on it for quite a while beforehand.” Silas suggested.

“Well if that's the case then we're just boned no matter what! How can we implement an escape plan without discussing the damn escape plan?!” Colin shouted a little.

“Never fear, good sir, that's why you've got a psychical researcher! Now then, I do remember an old trick from a lab...and a certain old sf novel...” Silas began.

“But you just...nevermind...” Colin sighed.

“As I was saying, there is a certain method we could use to bypass their teeping. Tell me, Colin, do you know of any terribly catchy, annoying jingles?” Silas asked.

“...Oh fuck why did you make me think of it again...” Colin moaned

“Perfect! If you can just keep that in mind, its grip should be able to block out the rest of our thoughts – and thus plans – from reaching the Alps. If it's as emotionally-loaded for you as what it sounds like, then even better.” Silas bowed his head in a little pseudo-nod. “So, what's the earworm anyway?”

“Oh, you're going to enjoy those words now and regret them later. Just don't come running to me about elder abuse when this is all over...” Colin shook his head. Readying a breath, the man began.

“Condensation, Evaporation, Alliteration! The rain coming down goes 'Tat!' 'Tat!' 'Tat!' on the tall man's hat!”

Silas stood still and utterly silent for three seconds.

“...Where the hell did you learn that?”

“It doesn't matter.” Colin sighed. “Anyway, we got the 'mind-shield' or whatever now. I guess that just leaves the actual planning to be done. You got any clues?”

“Ah...” Silas stroked his chin a bit. “...none, actually.”

“Should have figured.” Colin didn't even shake his head much.

The two men stood together for a short while, each in thought. Colin's discernments were interrupted by a belly growl, however.

“Damn it, I'm hungry.” the man sighed. “I thought I'd at least be able to get back to the...wait, that's it!” Colin's eyes briefly lit up.

“Eh, what?” Silas began to look back at the man.

“If we can act like we're hungry, perhaps they'll take us out of the room!” Colin thought to himself, and immediately made a very important remembrance. The rain goes tat, tat, tat...

“That's...not a bad idea.” Silas said. Colin could tell by the pause that he was mentally employing the jingle as well.

“I mean, technically speaking I'm guessing maybe other reasons could work, but this one seems easy. At the very least, putting up enough of a fuss in the right way should enable our escape, it just has to be clear that the means of 'calming us down' are out of the room. Pretty sure this should be somewhere in their behavior patterns if they think we're children...” Colin elaborated.

“Worth a shot, really.” Silas shrugged.

With the defense-jingle still firmly planted in each of their minds, Colin began to walk up to the closest Alp. He rubbed his stomach a little and repeated “hungry” to the being. The being looked on at the man in the strange-gaze of these things at first, little bundles of light seemingly worming their way up to the surface of the being in perception. Colin thought that under other circumstances, these things would be even more frightening than they currently were.

After some slowness, though, the Alp did start to move. Colin did get frustrated when the being actually held onto his hand with an inhuman grip, but he figured they could get to rectifying that situation when the time came. The Alp also took a surprised Silas' hand and began to head toward the door. Colin breathed a sigh of relief when he realized that none of the other Alps were joining in accompaniment. That would make their job a bit easier.

“Mmm.” Colin nodded along to himself. “Not bad, lad.” Colin said as the Alp opened the door and the pair began to be ushered into the dim of the hall.

Colin's head bopped up and down a little.

“Well, thank you. Though I'd say that we should reserve the congratulations for when we actually figure out how to get away from the...Alp.” Colin's voice instinctively went down as he remembered the presence of the fairy. Did, did these things even really listen to them?

“Alliteration...ah sorry.” Silas' mumbling ended. The kobold's brow furrowed a moment later. “You didn't have a plan for that?”

“...Not really.” Colin said rather lowly. His gaze instinctively went away, toward the rest of the hall. The night was looking rather complete past the windows.

“Well I'd say it'd be good to come up with a plan soon. I don't exactly want to think about how this thing will try to feed us...” Silas's speech trailed off into thought.

Colin shuddered a little bit and nodded.

“I'll come up with something...”

“Well, I can trust you there. You're kind of my selected subject for the evening.” Silas gave him a slap on the back with his free hand.

“...What?” Colin's head went cocked.

“Ah, nevermind. They don't even teach kids about traditional parapsychological terms anymore...” the kobold professor tsked.

Colin just went silent for a little while in cognition. The Alp was still leading them down the hall, one that Colin could now tell led to a pair of stairs. It would make sense for the kitchen to be on the first floor, come to think of it.

Still in thought, Colin noticed a thin beam of moonlight spread across the wooden floor before them. It was kind of surprising how they were even able to see, the man thought to himself. The grip of darkness was strong without artificial light.

Wait, darkness!

“Alright Silas, I'll have to see how good my visualization is. No wands or proper forms today, I'm afraid.” Colin stilled his mind even as he spoke.

“I, what exactly are you planning?” Silas' head went cocked this time.

“You'll see in the result.” Colin said.

Colin steadied the sigil of Saturn in his head, all black and indigo. Not a few moments before he had thought that this would probably be one of the dumbest, most RPG magical operations he had ever thought of. But in some strange intuition, he discerned that in this situation, it may fare better than even an exorcism.

“ARARITA...” Colin vibrated the first divine name, summoning the hexagram before him in his mind. Just then the Alp became to turn toward him, but its ink-black hand was not able to cover his mouth before he got the second out.

“YHVH ELOHIM!” Colin shouted, slamming with all his powers of concentration the sigil of Saturn into the six-pointed star that he had previously formulated.

In an instant the Alp's grip fell away from the men. Silas looked back shocked, only to find the twitching tessellated form of the Alp frozen in place.

“Goddamn lad, we need to get you in the lab!” Silas exclaimed.

“After we get the hell away from this place!” Colin shouted, grabbing the old man behind him. He had spied the set of stairs at the end of the corridor aimed straight for his salvation.

“I never thought I could call you beloved, Lady of Darkness...” Colin giggled to himself in what Silas could only guess was some strange magical fit.

“Ah...easy on the legs there boy...” Silas made out as he dashed with Colin. “How, how long is that good for, anyway?”

“No clue.” Colin quipped. The pair swiftly reached the stairs and nearly tumbled down them. Silas recollected himself as the pair reached the bottom floor. He remained silent until they reached the end of the corridor home, though.

“I suppose it's fine as long as we get to the front door in-TIME!” Silas' speech quivered as the pair crested the bend that would lead to the front doors. An Alp stood before them, fizzling at the edges and vibrating with incomprehensible speed. Colin got out the banishing pentagram of blue fire with his finger and mind before the spirit could touch either one of them. The being was repelled from them like the positive end of one magnet against another, slamming against one of the hallway walls.

“How the fuck...quick thinking lad...” Silas' speech slipped as he continued to be practically dragged along by Colin.

“Again...don't thank me yet...” the man made out.

Soon enough, though, the pair arrived at the atrium. Colin went for the front doors immediately and started to turn the handle.

It didn't move.

“GODDAMNIT ALL!” the wizard slammed a hand against the door.

“W-What?” Silas asked.

“They did whatever fucky wucky trick they used for the nursery on the second floor! The thing won't budge.” Colin fought back a tear.

“Keep...keep calm, lad.” Silas looked on at the man, and eventually he returned the gaze. Somehow - and Colin wanted to kick himself for this – it actually worked.

“I...alright.” Colin sniffled.

“Now, I think we should be keeping up that jingle routine. It would have already been obvious to them that we'd head for the front door or any other obvious escape route the first chance we got, but if there's some more...obscure means of exit, we could still hide it from them.” Silas spoke.

“That's, that does make sense.” Colin nodded along. He began the routine once more in his mind, now that the travails of magic were over with for the moment.

“Now then, it seems like you were the most knowledgeable about the history of this place. Was there

anything you can recall that may give us a hint here?" Silas' voice came again.

"I, well...oh, how the hell did I forget?! There was an occultist in the German family, some Nathaniel Scheit if I recall correctly. If this isn't a 'natural' appearance of Alps, then it is entirely possible that he *evoked* them here! Or at least left a thin boundary for some to slip in..." Colin speculated.

"I see...and how can that help us?" Silas asked.

"If either of those options are true, there could be some gate that he made or accidentally left, or a fetish that he bound the beings to. If we can close up or destroy whatever is allowing them to manifest here, then we'll be free from them *and* be able to say we permanently fixed the place to boot." Colin spoke.

"...And if they're 'naturally' here as you say?" Silas' eyes narrowed.

"Then we're boned. This is the only option we're left with." Colin said. The solemnity was only partially feigned.

"Then it's not much of an option." Silas sighed to himself. "Show me the way I suppose." Silas gave Colin a firm nod.

"I...well..." Colin's voice wandered off.

"...You don't know where this portal thing would be, don't you?" Silas' voice went blank.

"Yeah." Colin made out.

"Then let's begin the search! We don't exactly have much time, you know..." Silas spoke and grabbed onto Colin's hand. The younger kobold began to lead the way once more after he recovered from the shock.

The two started to head down the other hall of the foyer, the right hall that Silas had neglected upon initially entering the building. Silas shot a few glances back, and saw that the Alp that had previously been banished was now following them from behind, albeit at something of a distance. The sounds of floorboards creaking were not inspiring much confidence either.

"So, any idea?" Silas asked.

"Looking for the cellar. Assuming the guy didn't have a whole study for this kind of stuff, that would make the most sense. He seemed like a one-off guy rather than the continuer of some family tradition of magic, so it kind of makes sense that he wouldn't get the cream of the crop room-wi-GAH!" Colin's speech was cut off.

Just before the man stood a small contrail of near-black violet sparks. Based upon how they led back to the pursuing Alp, Silas could guess that the thing had sent some bolt upon the man. In panic, he looked back on at his friend.

"Colin?! Are you alright? Answer me, man!" Silas shouted.



However, the man's eyes had sufficiently adjusted to the gloom. He could see that at least visibly the man didn't look injured, though there could be some hidden sickness, or mind-altering effect, or Who-Knew-What from these weird fairy demon things.

Silas' speculations ended when the man looked more towards the lower half of the man's body.

"I...they fucking made me piss myself!" Colin fumed, looking down toward his clearly sagging diaper before attempting to cover it with his cloak. "Goddamn it man, this is...disgusting! How am I supposed to walk in this thi-"

"We're getting chased by ghosts and ghouls! Get a grip man!" Silas' slapped the man on the cheek and began to start dragging the man more. The two resumed their jog even as Colin's speed lowered.

"I just...I feel violated dude! How *is* a man supposed to respond to that..." Colin trailed off, though not for the reason he was expecting.

"I do that everyday. You don't see me bemoaning my fate." Silas rolled his eyes even though it wouldn't be visible. He kept dragging on the man as the two crested the bend, another hallway coming into full view. Silas' pace was maintained, and the man only started to look back as he realized that Colin's silence had been maintained for a good while after a snarky comment.

"Co, Colin? Pick up the pace, we-" Silas' speech ended as he noticed an unearthly fatigue to the younger kobold's expression. A second later the firmness to his legs gave way and the professor found himself forced to hold up some of this weight.

"I...sorry, Silas. Bad timing I'm afraid." Colin made out something of a smirk despite his fevered state.

"What are you talking about?! Did that bolt do something else to you?" Colin's expression grew more frantic, particularly as he recalled how close the pursuing Alp had been.

"No...I...I've been in Portal for a while, awaiting the perpetual kiss of the Angel. I just hadn't expected it to come while we were here of all places..." Colin spoke. Despite his weary state, Silas thought he could make out hints of some bliss beyond the contours of his face.

"What's 'it'? What're you even talking about man..." Silas felt his voice give way a little. He could almost hear the Alp cresting the bend.

"The child is coming. My magical child..." Colin spoke with a far-away gaze. Silas recognized the look as the same kind his father described in war, and felt the grip of terrible sacredness tighten in his chest.

"Colin, you're going to get up right now. That's a goddamn order." Silas stated immediately.

"I wouldn't dream of resting on the ground, not now and forever-more!" Colin shouted as much as hoarseness allowed. He began to reassert the strength of his legs, and soon stood alone, however unsteadily. Silas maintained a tight grip though; the man's eyes danced around the manor as though enraptured by beauty. In his current state he doubted the man could be useful for much.

"Upcoming, take a left and enter the first door on the left. It should lead to the basement, where we can begin our work." Colin spoke quietly, and with utter confidence. Silas recognized clairvoyance and

began to drag the man a little further down the hallway.

“This, 'child.' When are they coming?” Silas asked. The two had crested the end and now found themselves in another hallway. As told, Silas immediately moved for the door on the left.

“Soon, very very soon.” Colin spoke and looked as though lapsed into another trance. Silas made sure to shake him out of it. The elder opened the door and ushered Colin down the stone steps. Mustiness and dust pervaded, yet there were...lights further down past the wooden posts on the side. Flames.

“Once the child is come, I shall have the strength to perform the banishing; yea, I shall have strength to cleanse this ground for all eternity...” Colin rambled along to himself.

“Easy there...” Silas just sort of mumbled, keeping his mind steady as he listened to the almost hypnotic ranting of his comrade. In some other world he might be scared, but in comparison to the Alps, the lad felt like salvation.

Soon the two made it down the steps safely and began to filter into the cellar proper. The flames came further into view; little tea lights before carved wooden plaques. Upon the plaques were scores of sigils. On the ground was a piece of cloth with intricate occult diagrams painted on, ringed by divine names neither could bother to count. Colin took his place in the center of the circle almost instinctively, and Silas, going on movie logic, followed in suit.

Just then, the last of Colin's strength fell away. Silas failed to catch the man, who was left draped under his cloak like an egg of blackness in an abyss far below the world. Colin could hear the creaking of the floorboards above, and knew that the Alp – or *Alps* – were right by the door that led to the basement. He prayed nameless prayers.

Silas did not know how much time passed. He presumed that it was not that much, but did not keep count. What did shock him to awareness, far more than the inky black shadows that were beginning to fall on the ritual site, was the sudden rise of Colin.

At just that moment, Silas blinked and everything felt clearer. Not really intellectually, or emotionally, but literally. As though some lens that had rested before his eyes for his entire life had just been removed, and the world now stood before him with unbelievable sharpness.

When he was able to put such pure vision against the risen form of Colin, Silas could understand how men could believe in prophets.

The man's eyes were straight toward him in an unrelenting stare, yet he didn't seem to so much as notice him at all. The cloak shrouded the man like primeval waters, full of terrible and mysterious life. What once had been a man now stood as a sculpture, and behind it all was some grand, ineffable radiance beyond light...

While Silas stood in religious rapture, Colin made his proclamation.

“I am Horus, come to perform my will among the living.” the man spoke clearly towards the Alp-shadows leaking down the stairs. In an instant their progression ceased, and the man-god continued.

“Lo, for this is the fruit of adeptship. I take my place in the Invisible College, Crowned and

Conquering.” Colin spoke without emotion. In Silas' ears, every word felt like law.

“Yea, I am the Headless One!” Colin shouted and Silas could have sworn the room vibrated.

“With Sight in the Feet! Strong, and the Immortal Fire!”

The Alp-shadows began to retreat, wending back up the steps.

“I am He! The Truth! Who hate that evil should be wrought in the World!”

The flames of the tea lights seemed to grow brighter, and in his stupor Silas could see the Alp-mass retreat back to the uttermost top of the stairs.

“Who Lighteneth and Thundereth, Whose mouth ever Flameth!”

A few straggling Alps vanished. A piercing sound akin to a dog-whistle emanated from the remaining ones, who sounded like they had been forced back into the hallway above.

“Who manifests Light, Who is that Glory of the World!”

Silas could feel a certain...presence begin to leave him. Like an invisible residue spread across the whole of the house was evaporating.

“For my Name is a Heart Girt with a Serpent, and every Spirit of the Firmament, and the Ether, and the whole Earth is bound unto me! Yea, every last Spell and Scourge of every last God is subject unto mine will!”

Colin prepared one last breath.

“And I Say, EGRESS!” Colin vibrated.

It was only after the completion of the last syllable and several seconds worth of surreal silence that Silas was able to discern a, lightness. A lightness to everything. There were no sounds or lights or zaps but Silas knew without a doubt that every last Alp had vanished. The house was...normal, now.

Colin dropped to a knee, breathing but not panting. Silas was still in quite the reverie, but even he thought to ask.

“...How?”

“The attainment of Tiphareth.” Colin said simply, and with lucidity Silas would not have expected given his previous states. Colin looked back on at the man with solemnity, though not as much as Silas had expected.

“The child is come. The extra strength I got from reaching Adeptus Minor is what allowed me to fully exorcise those Alps, even if I botched the Headless Rite.” Colin looked on at the room, taking it all in with a serene expression. Despite the difference in age, Silas felt almost inadequate looking on at him. He could not shake off the feeling that he was looking on at a real...*person*. For the first time in his life.

It was Colin who extended his hand and invited Silas back into the world of light above. It was not Colin who held in Silence, for he had already incubated in those divine waters for long enough. As he had proclaimed and as was law, he was now in the world to work his will. He walked along hallways and contours where he once held fear. Now, there was only quiet confidence. Alas, pride *was* the vice of Tiphareth.

Though, the magician now knew more than ever that all vices could be overcome.

The two men exited the front doors of the mansion, into a world of twilight and shadows. Silas, admittedly, was surprised when the pair spied figures cloaked in robes on the dirt road in front of the mansion. Colin simply walked down the steps and greeted them.

“Hail, brothers.” he bowed his head. He knew that he was still dressed in a kid's cloak and a wet diaper, of course, but things in general did not bother him much anymore.

“Hail, brother.” a single figure spoke, singling themselves out from the crowd. This one undid his hood, and revealed the visage of another kobold, thankfully.

Silas' head shot between the two.

“Do you...know these people, Colin?” Silas' head went cocked and his mind was just about ready to give up.

“No.” Colin responded succinctly.

The frontmost of the foreign kobolds began to speak.

“It is good to have seen your performance. I must say that you outdid all expectations.” the kobold spoke. Silas could notice some strange...design embroidered on their cloaks, but he couldn't really decipher it.

“What was this, then? I take it you are responsible for these Alps in some capacity. Are you related to the family?” Colin spoke.

“Hehehe, a good try, but I am afraid that you are incorrect. There was never such a family in the first place, though you would be surprised by how easy it is to falsify information in the records.” the kobold said. “What you encountered was an Egregore, based on the historical Alp, but ultimately of our own design.”

“Egre...what the hell?” Silas just looked dumbfounded.

“An egregore, an occult construct formed by the will of men. Countless have been constructed through belief over the years, though few have been intentional.” Colin responded.

“That still doesn't explain why they went with the damn rediapering fairy goblins though?! Just who are you people?!” Silas shouted in exasperation.

“We, good sir...” the kobold made a little bow. “...are of the Ordo Infantilus.”

The kobold smiled to himself while the two just stood silent.

“I trust that we are one of the only magical orders in existence that cater to your predilections, and we do keep ourselves exclusive for a good reason. It is rare to find individuals of magical competence who also happen to be...given to this particular area.”

The men kept silent.

The kobold's eyes went wide, and his gaze immediately shot to an inferior to his side.

“Daniel, you vetted the right ones, right? That parapsychologist down by the SPR and that American occultist?” the leader spoke.

“I...wait, we were supposed to vet them for what?” a confused voice came back.

The leader looked back on at the two kobolds before him.

A retired, incontinent old professor stationed up at the Society for Psychical Research.

An occultist on vacation from the United States who had just become an Adept in the most transcendent manner and in the most silly of situations.

Who had both just fought off frightful servitors in what they must have anticipated would be a damnation or salvation scenario.

Standing there beneath the light of the full moon, everyone present could only think of one thing.

What a day.