

The Journal Of Edwin Grey

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The Evening Post  
No. 14

# COOLIDGE IS NOW PRESIDENT

## HARDING'S BODY LEAVES TONIGHT

President's Death Painless, Apoplexy Swiftly Taking Him

### Oath Taken In Humble Setting: New Executive On His Way To Capital



Calvin Coolidge  
NEW PRESIDENT



NATION MARKING DEATH

LARGE WORLD'S BEST BASEBALL GAME TODAY

Sir

Scott A. Johnson



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he circumstances surrounding the death of my Uncle, and of how I came into possession of his curious journal, have forever changed my attitude on things unknown. I, who am not prone to flights of fancy and consider myself a rational, sane man, find myself staring more into conditions that cannot possibly be rationally explained, with the creeping dread that there may be more in our world that neither science nor faith can adequately unmask. And yet now, I must relate the story and weather the notions that I am more moved by the superstitions of the uneducated than the logic that befits my station, for such a tale must be told, lest history repeat itself on some unfortunate.

I first recall meeting my uncle, the late philanthropist, Edwin Grey, in the waning months of the summer of 1923. I say recall, for, although I've been assured that I'd met him before when I was a boy, I have no memory of the occasion. My only impressions of the man came from newspaper clippings and family gossip, both of which painted distinctly different portraits of the same man. The former gave accounts of his seemingly endless generosity toward his fellow man by endowing poor houses, schools and the like. Great respect was given whenever there was mention made of his name. The latter, however, told tales of his reclusive nature, and of how he'd dismissed all but one of his serving staff, and that he'd not been beyond the walls of Grey House for more than a year. To the other members of the family, save for his only sister, my mother, he was the eccentric rich uncle who gave away the family fortune and shunned the daylight. There were those, cousins from my father's side, who whispered that it was his dabbling in something arcane that had driven him quite mad, and away from the company of man. Those rumors were silenced, however, with a withering glance from my mother.

It was toward the end of July when I received word that my application to continue my studies at the prestigious Syracuse University had been accepted, and my mother joyfully sent a wire to her brother giving him the happy news. Edwin soon replied with warmest regards, insisting that I lodge at Grey House instead of the men's dormitory on campus. Though we were quite well off, my mother was raised to believe in frugality, and since Grey House was near the university, it was agreed.

I arrived in mid-August by train and was met by the

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only manservant Grey House had left, a large African by the name of Molen, who greeted me formally and helped me place my belongings in the automobile, an arduous task for he ended up having to bind my trunk to the back-end. He seemed something of a curiosity, as his manner of speaking denoted one of high education and breeding, a thing rare for a manservant, rarer still for a black one. But his thick-calloused hands told of a man no stranger to physical labor. Once my belongings were settled, and we were on our way, it took more than an hour to reach our destination of Grey House.

Its name of "Grey" would, if not for the owner's last name, have been a great misnomer, as it was anything but in both appearance and personality. It was surrounded by a great stone fence with pink streaks in the grain of the rocks, broken only by the wrought-iron gates that stood sentinel on the drive. Inside the gates, the house itself resembled more of a castle than a home in modern America, with its great peaked roofs and stretching arches. On first glance, it seemed intimidating by its sheer size alone. The grounds, I noticed, were badly in need of care, and it was no wonder, as Molen could not possibly be expected to maintain the house and the lawn.

As we pulled into the carport, Molen informed me that my uncle was, most likely, anxiously awaiting my arrival in the lounge, the second door on the right from the house's main entrance, and that he'd bring my things to my room presently. I thanked him as I went inside, eyes agape in wonder at this place that was to be my new home. The interior mirrored the outer grounds in that, though still inhabitable, the hallway seemed neglected and dark, the only light coming from windows across the front of the house. Thick with dust, the hallway was congested with stacks of newspapers, some in languages I did not immediately recognize.

I nearly missed the second door, as it blended in with the surrounding walls. Only the tarnished doorknob gave a hint that this section of the hallway was meant to be opened. I felt my stomach flutter as I screwed up my courage to knock, having only the most vague of ideas of what to expect from this blessed lunatic. I was pleasantly surprised when it was a kindly voice that answered my report on the door and bade me enter. Edwin Grey fairly leaped from the chair as he saw me, seeming to instantly recognize my face from many years ago. He called me "dear Christopher," as though I'd grown up under his watchful eye, and

shook my hand vigorously. We then sat and chatted about his latest obsession, the Oriental game of Mah-Jongg, my course of study, and anything else that struck his fancy.

When I retired, later on that night, I imagined that I would sleep well from having been exhausted, not only by my uncle's inquisitiveness, but also from the day's travel. Restful slumber was not to be mine, however. It was not that the bed was uncomfortable, nor that my accommodations were inadequate, but that I was awakened by the most peculiar sound of my uncle shouting in the darkness. So full of venom and hysteria were his shouts that, at first, I scarcely believed Edwin to be the source. I rose from my bed and, finding my robe and slippers, followed the din down the stairs to a door well past the lounge where I could distinctly hear Edwin arguing with someone.

His voice was shrill with rage and he spat curses and oaths at the unknown other in the room, whom I'd assumed to be Molen, but I could hear no other voice. I tried the door, only to find it locked. As the intensity of his shouts grew, my own fear for his wellbeing increased, and I took it upon myself to rap at the door, and call his name. The shouting ceased, and Edwin threw the door open before me. When I'd met him earlier in the day, he'd been dressed comfortably in a satin jacket and looked the model of his aristocratic station, but now, in the dim candlelight, he appeared gaunt and haggard, his hair standing on end in all directions and his eyes wide with what seemed to be an unabated rage. Upon seeing me, his anger did not diminish, rather it increased at being disturbed. He ordered me back to my room and instructed me to never again approach this door so long as I resided in his house, punctuating his growling by slamming the heavy wooden door in my face.

I stood there in shock, for how long I cannot say for certain, for when I had spoken to him earlier he did not seem capable of such ire. I spun on my heels, my every intent to return to my room, pack my belongings, and seek lodging elsewhere, when the ebon face of Molen emerged from the darkened hallway into the flickering candlelight. The suddenness of his appearance startled me and sent me reeling backward a few steps until my back was pressed firmly against the wall. My uncle's protestations began anew from inside, softly at first, then growing in volume and intensity. Molen gestured for me to follow him back toward my room. Once there, and out of earshot of my uncle, he explained to me that Edwin was not a well man, and that it was his delirium that had driven the rest of the staff to seek

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employment elsewhere. Only Molen had stayed, though he would give no reason as to why.

He pleaded with me to stay, to not take the old man's threats and oaths to heart, telling me that what he needed now was family and human contact to save his beleaguered soul. When I asked with whom my uncle was arguing, Molen made a dismissive wave of his hand and told me that there was no one there, that he took to that room every night, and some nights the house remained quiet. Most nights, however, the halls echoed with the madness that it seemed only Molen could bear.

Such dedication I had never seen before, nor have I seen since, as he seemed more of a worried friend than a manservant, and in the end, his persuasive nature convinced me to stay. He assured me that Edwin was harmless, and in the morning I would see again the man I met earlier in the afternoon.

When he was certain that I would not flee in the night, Molen left me to my own devices to try to sleep through the echoing tirade of my uncle's madness. When morning came, Edwin Grey seemed himself again, with no sign of the menace from the night before. Before he served breakfast, Molen cautioned me to make no reference to the previous night's events, and I complied with his wishes, though questions burned in my brain.

And so it was to be for the next two months. My uncle, who never left Grey House, seemed the picture of health and sanity during the day, but in the late night, behind the locked heavy door, he digressed into a frothing madman. I came and went as I liked, taking much time away for studies and always returning just before Molen set the sideboard for supper. Occasionally I would venture out again into the night to converse and carouse with my contemporaries, but always I returned to Grey House to find Molen watching guard over my uncle, and always seemingly grateful to see my return.

It was late into October that I was awakened from my slumber by a different sort of noise, a loud report that echoed through the halls for what seemed like hours. I supposed I had grown accustomed to my uncles rantings, as they no longer kept me from sleep, but this noise pulled me from a dead state and filled me with dread as I sat in bed trying to puzzle out if I'd actually heard it or not. I knew what the sound was, even before I'd decided if it was real. A single gunshot from a pistol that was fired from somewhere within the house.

By the time I exited my room, Molen was already at the door of my uncle's bedchamber with a somber, almost sorrowful, look upon his face. In his delirium, Edwin Grey had apparently taken his own life. A single bullet to his temple had silenced the strange voices and madness for good.

His passing was marked by the city of Syracuse with a day of mourning, the likes of which are usually reserved for the deaths of presidents and dignitaries. The mayor made a formal address, clad in black and showing genuine remorse in losing one of the city's greatest benefactors. My time was spent on the unhappy task of writing my mother and telling her of her brother's passing, though I spared her the details out of respect for her delicate nature. I also found myself in the dubious position of executor of his estate, being the only blood-relative within one hundred miles. I learned that my earlier assumption of Edwin's not receiving guests to be somewhat incorrect, for while social calls were most definitely not welcome, he apparently did have several meetings with his attorney while I was away at my studies.

Edwin had, his lawyer informed me, changed his will upon my arrival, the details of which I found greatly perplexing. His wishes were clear enough, but his reasoning behind them made me, although very grateful, quite leery. Simply put, his will stated that a portion of his estate was to be given to certain charities that he'd endowed over the years. Furthermore, a great sum of money was to be given to Molen, a thing unheard of for the most part. The item that held the most interest, and indeed seemed the strangest to me, was that Edwin Grey had named me the primary beneficiary, and had, in fact, left the bulk of his fortune, his personal items, and Grey House to me. Molen, who was now unsure as to what to do with himself as he no longer had to work, agreed to help me with the difficult task of sorting my late uncle's personal effects.

My mother arrived, notably without my father, for the funeral and was surprised to see the number of people who attended. Edwin Grey was apparently greatly loved, as hundreds came to pay their respects to this man whose generosity had so touched their lives. Each of them passed me with a heartfelt statement of condolences, which I found queer because I felt I scarcely knew the man. When the last of the well-wishers left, Molen and I set to the task of sorting and cataloguing everything within the walls of Grey House. Molen confided in me that he was clueless as to the volume of possessions in the house, and that he'd never

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actually counted the rooms, but that he was keen to lend a hand. Though I accepted his offer of aid, there was only one room to which I wished to gain access. Edwin's study, which even now remained locked with no keys to be found.

In the end we counted twenty-seven rooms, each fully furnished and orderly, though it was clear by the collection of dust that they had not been in use for several years. In all our workings, neither Molen nor I managed to locate the key that would unlock the study, and the mystery of my uncle's demise. It was not until we ventured into his bedchamber that we found the old iron ring on which a single key hung. While logic would have dictated we begin in Edwin's own chambers, neither of us could bring ourselves to open the door. We, neither one, feared spectral apparitions or the like, but the thought of invading Edwin's chambers seemed distasteful to us so soon after his passing. It was nearly a week before we both felt that such an intrusion would not be too soon.

Upon seeing the key, I took them up and noticed that Molen became immediately anxious, as though he considered knocking it from my hand. We left Edwin's bedchamber and went directly to the study where I, with trembling hands, tried the key in the heavy lock. It took some effort on my part, and the lock groaned in protest, but finally I won out and managed to get it open.

I feel that I should explain what was occurring in my mind at that time, so there will be no thoughts that I am irrational or easily spooked by empty rooms. Every room in Grey house held an eerie mood, as if waiting for their absent tenants to return. The heavy dust that caked the oak and cherry dressers seemed to be almost protective in the way it blanketed every thing in the chambers. They were, however, only rooms, and Molen and I had no trouble as we made lists of each one's contents. This room, however, the source of so many nights' screams and noises so terrible I cannot even begin to form the words to describe them, set my nerves jangling with an anticipation that bordered on abject terror.

I opened the door slowly, half expecting for some specter or phantom to come rushing at me as I crossed the threshold. What I found inside, however, I found more curious than if the room had been filled to the brim with ethereal beings. I had never seen the inside of this room, as my uncle had always blocked it from my vision with his wild gesturing and foaming, but I'd always assumed it to be a study like any other, filled with books and other fineries.

How wrong I was, for the room was bare. The walls were obviously made of the same stone as the rest of the house, yet it matched no other room in construction. Each other chamber in Grey House was as a room should be, rectangular in shape with ceilings of a sensible height. This room, however, was built like a turret, round with a high ceiling. The stones, as I've said, appeared to be the same pink rock from which the other walls were made, but with the heavy velveteen curtains drawn across the window, they seemed black, as if the stone used in this room were obsidian. It took our eyes a moment to adjust to the dim candle light, but when they did, we were astounded by the room's lack of furnishings. Set into one wall was a fireplace that had obviously not been used for the entirety of the summer. The only other items in the room were a large oak writing desk, a leather chair, and, sitting on the desk, a leather-covered book.

It was a large volume, of the sort I'd seen in the university's library in the section reserved for in-library only use. Adorning its rich grain was a design, which I believed to be either oriental or Prussian in origin, of such intricate craftsmanship that there was no doubt that one would find none other like it. Holding its many pages inside was a leather flap that closed with a carved ivory peg.

I gingerly opened the cover to the first page and found it inscribed in my uncle's neat, right-handed script, *The Journal of Edwin Grey*.

I'd scarcely read the words aloud when Molen, a panicked look upon his face, snatched it from beneath my gaze and slammed it shut. It was the master's personal tome, he said, and he would see to it that it was properly disposed of.

His tone set off a warning in my mind that he knew something of this journal, and of my Uncle's death, about which he'd not been forthright. I demanded to know what he was on about, but he shook his head and replied that no good could come of reading a dead man's innermost thoughts. After nearly an hour of arguing, with me demanding the book and he steadfast in his resolve, I finally reminded him that I was now lord of Grey House, and all of Edwin Grey's possessions were now mine. I remember threatening, hollowly, I might add, to call the magistrate if he did not turn the volume over to me immediately, at which he pleaded with me to let him burn the damned thing. I admit it seems an overly-inflated reaction over such a thing as a dead man's

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journal, but, at the time, my curiosity only redoubled each time he refused to relinquish his hold on it. Had I known then what I knew now, perhaps I would have allowed him to destroy the volume.

Molen placed the book gingerly on the table with a look of sadness that I couldn't fathom. He seemed regretful that I was determined to read the entries, and told me as much. He went across the room to the fireplace and sat on the hearth with his head in his hands. As I settled into the chair, Molen began to relate to me the curious circumstances in which Edwin Grey had acquired the journal.

Apparently, Edwin Grey was not always the philanthropist the city knew and loved. He was, in fact, a reclusive hermit, held fast in the throws of a deep melancholy that seemingly had neither cause nor cure. This was, Molen pointed out, several years ago, when Edwin still maintained a household staff of twelve and never once thought about giving any of his money to the poor. He would call his doctor on a weekly, sometimes daily, basis to help him with phantom ailments that, in truth, arose from his depression. Exasperated and without further recourse, his doctor had recommended keeping a journal in which he could document all his aches and pains and possibly discover a cause to the profound misery that so tormented him.

Edwin had thought the idea grand and inspired, and immediately set off into town, the first such excursion he'd taken in months, in search of what he called a "proper journal." Molen had driven him about town searching for his prize to no avail, until they came to a district with which he was unfamiliar, and was uncertain he could find again. It was there that Edwin entered a curious shop. Above its door hung a shingle bearing Chinese symbols, alongside a notation that designated the establishment as importers. The windows, he said, were full of wondrous and terrible things, masks that resembled demon heads and carved monkeys. He cautioned his employer against entering such a bizarre place, but Edwin was determined. Such an establishment, he reasoned, might just have that which he sought.

What transpired inside, Molen could not say, but when Edwin had returned to the car, he was giddy and holding a package beneath his arm. In it, he later told Molen, was his salvation: a proper journal and a fountain pen.

Edwin had retired early that night to his study, almost the moment they arrived back to Grey House, and wrote his first entry, full of hope for release against this disease of the mind that so gripped him. He followed a for

several days, his mirth and joy waning little by little every day until he'd slipped back into the same melancholy from which the journal was to be his savior. It was two weeks when Edwin had awakened and exclaimed with such joy that he alerted the entire house. The servants gathered at the source of the noise, the outer door of his study. The master appeared, his eyes alight with fires of giddy inspiration, filling his servants with fear that he'd lost his senses, only to have him explain his wonderful plan of helping his fellow man.

Over the following weeks, Molen related, my uncle continued his pattern of writing in his journal, each time coming away with more wonderful ideas of how to make himself more useful to his fellow man. Then, one morning, there came an awful shriek from the study. Molen and the other servants had come to the door in time to see Edwin locking it, his eyes wide and crazed with a fear that none of them could fathom or reason. He instructed that no one was to enter the room again, and he stayed away himself, for a few days. But then he would steal in, as if it were forbidden from even him in his own house. Then the screaming would begin anew, and his disposition went from melancholy to fearful and erratic. In less than a month, he'd driven off all the staff but Molen, whose reasons for staying he never made clear, only saying that he could not leave his longtime employer in such a state.

He raised his eyes to me with a look of great sorrow and gravity and told me he felt the journal had somehow been at the root of it all.

Such a statement, I need not say, struck me as the most preposterous notion ever conceived in man's imagination, and I told him as such. He took no offence, only shook his head sadly. I further informed him that I believed that this journal did, in fact, hold the key to the cause of my uncle's suicide, and it was my full intention to read every page to piece together what clues lay inside. At this, he stood as though he'd been shocked, his face taut with dread, and he again pleaded with me not to read the thing and to let him dispose of it. I could not be dissuaded, especially by superstitious drivel, and I stood fast to my word. As he saw that he could not sway me of my opinion, Molen bade me good night and left me in the nearly empty room.

Alone now, I again opened the volume and turned to the first entry, which was dated the fifteenth of August, 1921. This first entry, true to the description that Molen had provided, was full of hope and joy, as though Edwin had

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dreamt of liberation of his burden of depression for many months and had, at that time, found his deliverance.

August 15, 1921

I returned home today with the most amazing sense of hope and anticipation, as though the melancholy with which I've been afflicted of late has taken leave, full knowing that this journal is the key to its dismissal and to my salvation. What wonders shall I uncover in my explorations of my own mind, I wonder, and will those discoveries make me again a whole man? I scarcely feel that I can bear waiting, as I am anxious to begin my journey.

I sat reading the entries of nearly thirty days, longer than Molen had indicated, until my eyes could no longer focus on the pages. I recognized the pattern the old servant had mentioned, that my uncle's mood had grown increasingly dark during that time, when he, no doubt, began to realize that such a cure was not to happen over the course of one night. I felt a great swell of pity for my uncle, who wanted nothing more than to be useful and remembered, and could not fathom such a way on his own. Still, there was no indication of suicidal thoughts. The answer, I concluded, must lay deeper within the volume.

I rose from my chair and left the journal on the table, taking care to lock the door as my uncle had done, in the case that Molen, meaning well in his superstitious nature, take advantage of my rest and spirit the journal away. I should, I confess, have taken the book with me to my room, where it would have been easier for me to guard it, but I could still feel the presence of my uncle, his screaming madness, all around the tome, and, to be quite honest, the thing set my skin prickling. A single thought that troubled me did occur, however. Why had Molen acted so strangely at seeing the book, and what was it that he did not wish for me to read? Perhaps my uncle did not commit suicide at all and his death lay in the hands of another. Perhaps my uncle had named his killer before he died, and his name was Molen's.

During the next day, my time was occupied with other affairs concerning the estate of Edwin Grey, and now my own estate, as it seemed the town was in no shortage of those in need. My sleep from the night previous had not been at all restful, as my mind continuously puzzled over Molen's possible motives, or if he were, indeed, a murderer.

By day's end, I was thoroughly exhausted, and was quite thankful to find that old habits died hard in the old manservant, who still had set the sideboard for supper. I, ignoring his protestations, helped him tidy up afterward, reminding him that he was not my servant, nor was he actually in my employ, and retired to the study to continue my sleuthing. As I unlocked the door, I felt a flutter in my stomach, as though I could actually be afraid of such a thing as an empty room and a book. I brushed the feeling aside and assumed my place in the great leather chair and opened to where I'd left off the night previous. It was nearly a month after the first entry that I read, and the signs of my uncle's insidious condition were evident in the text.

September 11, 1921

*Is it not meant for man to achieve joy? Is man not a creature of happy thoughts and dreams? Why, then, is there no relief? Why, then, can a man of apparent wealth and means find no source of delight amid his world of finery and comfort? What shall I do? How shall a man, without whom he feels the world would function adequately, find fulfillment?*

The tone of the letter dripped of such hopelessness, that it caused me pain to read it. Though I'd not known my uncle for any great length of time, and though he did indeed have his eccentricities, he was, after all, still my uncle. So deep was the wretched feeling that washed over me that I very nearly mistook the scribbled pen lines below as just that. On closer inspection, I saw the lines had shape and formed words. Help your fellow man. I sat confused, as the handwriting, if such scrawl could be referred to as such, was clearly not my uncle's neat, right-handed script. The author, if not for the syntax, might have been wholly illiterate. But the words were there, nonetheless. Such vague advice, obviously not by the same hand, seemed an intrusion on my uncle's most private thoughts, for who would be possessed of such audacity as to write in the journal of another man? My thoughts immediately flashed to Molen, who, meaning well and to soothe the melancholy of Edwin's humor, might have stolen in and given what he thought to be a way to lift the spirits of his employer.

The next entry was again in the hand of my uncle, and showed the success of following the cryptic instructions of the book, though he knew not the author.

## The Journal of Edwin Grey/15

September 12, 1921

Where shall I begin? On the advice found in these pages, I ventured forth from my home this morning. Of course, this is not entirely true, as I ventured forth in an attempt to get away from this journal and the strange writings I found upon its pages. But as I found a man and his son in need, I heard the words of the book in my ears as if buzzing. I took the two to dine. Oh! How they ate! The man ate more than I'd ever seen one man consume in one sitting, and the boy ate nearly twice that amount! And such a wondrous feeling I had, to be able to help my fellow man in such a way, that I was nearly giddy with joy. They thanked me as we parted ways, and, rather than send them back out on the street to beg for their next meal, I gave the father money, making him promise to do the same for another some day! They looked upon me as though I, Edwin Grey, were the Savior himself! Hooray, for the curse of melancholy has lifted!

There was, in my uncle's style, a giddiness that seemed to border on intoxication with the generosity that he'd just discovered possible. I continued to read the passing pages, each entry showing a bit more wear on the joyous outlook that so possessed him of generosity, until, at last, Edwin Grey was again in the throws of a deep depression. Again he wrote of his despair, and again he begged some unseen sage for guidance, and again, the scrawling hand provided answers.

September 28, 1921

I have become, of late, something of a vigilante, though my works of good will toward my fellow man are aimed toward easing the strain of hunger and poverty of those stricken rather than the apprehension of criminals. But, for all my good deeds, it is not enough. I am greeted with smiles among the downtrodden, with the hope that today will be their day, but there are still so many more. So many more. It grieves me to think that for all my wealth, I am still useful to a very few, and that I remain clueless as to how to give genuine aid. I leave my home each day with a dread, a terrible dread, of seeing those that I cannot help, and I see those to whom I have lent aid again in the streets gandering for coins. It seems that all I have done is futile, and that history will forget Edwin Grey, or remember him as a man who did nothing of significance. How then shall I help my fellow man, not just to feed him for one meal, but to help him feed himself in perpetuity? This hateful feeling of obsolescence burns within my heart. What can I do?

Beneath his carefully written right-handed script, the unseen had responded with scrawling advice no longer in a single sentence. What followed, I shall provide in its entirety to the best of my memory, as it had great bearing on the life that my uncle was to make his own.

There are those whose lives are unfortunate through no fault of their own. These are the tired denizens of the city whose lives have been touched. The key to their salvation is simply a chance, an opportunity. Such a thing is rare for those in need. The place of congregation is where to start, as it is there they shall find their footing and become, again, proud men.

How my uncle interpreted such advice, I could scarcely imagine, but interpret he did, and with a grander scheme than my own faculties could have contrived. As newspaper reports now confirm, Edwin Grey began, first with poor houses in his own locality, to donate great sums of money, with which clothing and food was to be bought to bring those so unfortunate as to need them the means to seek work.

And so it continued in this fashion. Edwin Grey would find tiny crumbs of happiness, but would eventually fall again into disparity. His reason clouded, he would write questions while in the throws of a particularly deep melancholy, and the unseen would respond with vague suggestions. It is true that at this point I suspected that the unseen was, in fact, Molen, who would steal in after his employer had retired for the evening and read his tortured thoughts. And though such actions were the deepest sort of betrayal, his motives were noble, and I felt a warmth toward him for his treatment of my uncle.

I continued my investigation, only skimming the entries to which the strange hand had not replied, and found the tone of the hand to grow darker with each entry. There was no place to which I could point for the source of this opinion, but perhaps it was the way the scrawl became slightly neater, or that the words became less of scratches and more of deep slashing lines in the paper. Whatever the case, I do know for certain that my skin crawled at the sight of the writing that did not belong to my uncle.

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Over the next few days, my time was spent almost exclusively in that dark chamber perusing the thoughts of the dead master of Grey House. I must confess, often in my thoughts I could see his body twitching on his bed with deep crimson staining his pillow. Such a sight is not something that one is soon to forget. It may have been this memory that prickled my mind, spurring me to read on the journal, which, for the most part, was quite ponderous in nature.

It wasn't until I'd almost lost interest that I came upon a page that was marked by a morbid clipping from the city newspaper, one which told of the gruesome death of a street-woman. At first, I thought nothing of it, as such things were, as terrible as it may sound, almost commonplace. My eye happened to glance, however, at the date on top of the clipping and discovered it to be the day after that of the entry it marked. It seemed odd to me, although no more odd than a randomly misplaced scrap of newspaper, until I read the journal entry. In it, my uncle spoke of wondrous feelings toward his fellow man and the respect his philanthropy had brought him thus far. He had ended his entry with a broad question: "What will tomorrow bring?" In answer, the scrawling hand had replied in a most dreadful manner. For the first time, it spoke not in riddles or vague references, but was concisely to the point.

Tomorrow, it said, shall bring the murder of Mary Harper.

On closer inspection of the news clipping, I discovered that, indeed, the slain woman's name was Mary Harper, and that she'd been murdered in a most brutal fashion in the back lot of the mission on 34th Street. Whether my uncle knew or did not know the woman in the article was far from my mind as I stared at the slashed and scratched ink with growing revulsion. It was painfully obvious that the entry had come from the night before. I can only imagine my uncle staring, much the same way I now was, at the great leather volume, trying to puzzle out why it had told him what was going to transpire. Even now, with the more than two years past, I felt my stomach clench with the knowledge that somehow, my uncle had prior knowledge, warning. What did he do, I wondered, at the shocking revelation? Or, more precisely, what could he have possibly done? I imagine he went mad for a time, cursing himself that he could not have somehow sought out this woman, this stranger, and warned her, protected her in some fashion. But, as the clipping told, he was unable to stem the flow of death.

It occurred to me that the hand that wrote such

vague passages must have been the same who committed the crime, as I could figure no other way for the unseen to obtain such grizzly knowledge. Even now, with the more than two years past, I felt my stomach clench with the knowledge that somehow, my uncle had foreknowledge of the unfortunate woman's demise. And if, as I surmised, it was Molen who advised my uncle unseen, was it not possible that he had committed the heinous crime, leaving a scrawled confession on the page for my uncle to read?

My distrust and suspicions about the quiet manservant grew, for though he spoke affluently enough, it seemed reasonable to me that penmanship might have been ignored, his sole purpose that of keeping the appearance of a cultured man. Though he seemed kind, the model of the modern manservant, it was possible that he wore a mask of gentility over his animal's soul.

Upon my arrival several months before, I'd taken it upon myself to have a telephone installed in my chambers as there were none in the house. My uncle seemed to have no use for them, preferring to make use of Molen as a personal messenger. I used the telephone to contact the local magistrate and voice my suspicions, taking great care to leave the matter of the journal out of the situation. While it is true that the book fanned the embers of distrust toward Molen, I'd long suspected him of murdering my uncle. It was he, after all, who'd been first at my uncle's bedchamber the night he died. It was he, also, who'd stayed to torment my uncle while the rest of the staff sought richer fields. And although his name was not mentioned anywhere in the book in less than kindly terms, had he not tried to snatch it from my grasp? Clearly he had something to hide from me, from the world, concerning the death of Edwin Grey.

The magistrate came and, upon agreeing with my estimation, arrested Molen. He, of course protested, asking how I could think him capable of such things, and claiming true friendship with my uncle, but in the end they took him away. It did not strike me as odd at the time, that even in his moment of incarceration, he shrieked for me to burn the book. His protestations seemed to only confirm my suspicions that he was trying to destroy the evidence that would prove his guilt.

Here, I must pause, for such memories cause me terrible pain, and I must account for myself as well as my actions. Where most would probably have skipped to the end of Edwin's journal, my thought was not originally to unveil a murderer. I had thought simply to unravel the mystery of

## The Journal of Edwin Grey/19

his suicide. I thought it necessary to follow his thoughts from the beginning to glean insight to a despair so deep that his only recourse for escape was to end his own torment. The further I read, the more engrossed I became, so compelling was the mind behind the pages. Often, while reading, I could almost feel shadows of my uncle's affliction, their weight dragging my soul downward until I pried my eyes away from the book.

With Molen gone, I was forced to tend to my own needs, for the rustics of the area had heard of the reputation of the master of Grey House, and his passing did nothing to ease their apprehensions. The house was shunned as though diseased, and as I had taken leave of my studies due to my uncle's passing, doubtless I seemed to be the same reclusive sort as Edwin Grey.

The workers who came to install electrics in the house, a thing which my uncle never saw a need to do, spoke in hushed tones when they were not aware of my presence, and ceased speaking abruptly when I was known to them. They wired a total of seven rooms, more than I needed, and ignored, at my insistence, the study where the journal lay sleeping.

My sleep became fitful as I continued to read, as dreams of death and dark forces flitted in and out of my consciousness. However, as I stated before, I found the book and the account of the life therein addictive, and could not sate my desire to know. As I studied the journal over the following days, I found more morbid strips of folded newspaper, each bearing the names of victims murdered or killed in some bizarre fashion. It wasn't until I came to an entry for November 26, 1922, that the newspaper and entry took a startling turn. Keeping in mind that, until this point, I steadfastly believed Molen to be responsible for the deaths which the scrawled handwriting told of, the entry startled me and gave me reason to doubt.

My uncle's entry had been monotonously like the others for months, each ending with a question for the unseen, and each followed by the scrawling epitaph for some unfortunate. What followed his entry on this day, however, set my flesh crawling with the knowledge that everything I knew of how the world functions was to be brutally cast aside.

The entry of Edwin Grey, in this case, is unimportant, and so I shall dispense with the relating of it, but the response, however, however, read as follows.

Beneath the sands of ancient time, amid the kings  
whose rules are but things of legend, shall be found  
a boy of great power.

The accompanying piece of newspaper confirmed my suspicions, that the journal had made reference to the discovery of the tomb of the Egyptian king, Tutankhamen, a boy of twelve when he ruled Egypt. I sat aghast at the picture of Carnavon and Carter grinning at the opening of the burial mound, for how could someone such as Molen have known? The jagged script was the same hand as all the previous answers, and yet it could not be that the unseen had known. My mind reeled with the magnitude of that one cryptic line, that some being could have sight enough to see not only the present, but what lie ahead.

I immediately made for town and the police station therein, my purpose to question Molen myself. I was led to a cell in the very darkest bottom of the station, where the only light came a barred window, and Molen lay still on a filthy mattress on the floor. He heard the door open and rose to meet me, his face coming into the spill of light. To this day, I carry with me a grim sorrow for my having put him in that place, as it became apparent me that his jailers were not kind during his incarceration. His left eye was swollen shut, his lips were split and caked with blood, and although his speech was slurred for his injuries, his voice was the same even tone I'd first heard on the day of my arrival. The guard left us, and I asked Molen of my suspicions, of the murders, of the strange prophetic notes in the journal. He smiled as best he could, his voice dripping with sadness, as he told me that he could see the journal beginning to take hold of me as it had my uncle.

As a testament to the type of man he was, he held neither grudge nor malice toward me for what he regarded as a grave misunderstanding. It was not he, Molen said, who wrote in the book, confessing that he never actually learned to read or write. But he had heard enough, through the study's thick door, to know that whatever evil was contained in the book, it was released each time my uncle laid his pen to a page. He told of nights spent huddled in his room with candles burning, for the dark was too much to bear when Edwin's madness overtook him. The shrill cries and piercing oaths that echoed through the halls of Grey House seemed to make the darkness all the worse, like a palpable thing in which he feared he would be engulfed. He explained that he

## The Journal of Edwin Grey/21

had stayed out of loyalty for my uncle, and feared the worst would befall him were he to be left alone. All this and more he told me, most of which had the flavor of rustic superstitions. But then he related to me an event, which to this day I feel, has great bearing on my uncle's death.

Past the witching hour Molen arose from his bed at the sound of scuttling in the main hall. How he could have heard such a quiet noise I cannot say, but he rose to investigate thinking it rats or some other creature that had somehow gained entry. When the dim light of his candle reached the great hall, he was chilled, he said, to find Edwin Grey lying on the stony floor clutching for his pen which lay just out of reach. It was odd, he said, because he was reaching with his left hand, which now flitted and flopped like a fish on the stone. He went to aid Edwin and, upon seeing his face in the candlelight, realized he was still asleep! As he bent to wake him, that hand, cold and powerful as a snake, snapped around his wrist with such a strength that Molen cried out in pain, snapping Edwin from his deep slumber. Almost immediately, the hand released the manservant, who readily helped his disoriented employer back to his room. Edwin slept there peacefully for the rest of the night, but Molen did not as he sat outside his employer's chamber door should something else arise. That which he found strange, he said, was not so much that his employer had been sleepwalking, as he'd done so on numerous occasions and Molen had grown accustomed to such things, but that it was his left hand that reached and flailed, as his employer was right handed. His statement jogged my memory to that terrible night when Edwin Grey lay bleeding on his bed with a smoking pistol in his hand. It was, I suddenly recalled with frightening clarity, in his left hand.

I summoned the jailer and demanded the release of Molen, but was informed despite my protestations that it would have to wait until morning. Though it was I who'd put him here, I would still have to wait to retrieve the kindly man. I bade him good evening and promised I would return on the morrow to bring him back to Grey House. He thanked me most warmly and shook my hands through the bars of that old cell. And though it grieved me to leave him in such a place, I departed hastily, as Molen's recount had stirred something within my mind. I was certain the book was a malignancy, and that it must be destroyed, but I still wanted to know. I wanted to see what it was that could have driven a man such as my uncle insane, and the answers waited in that accursed journal.

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I raced back to Grey House, my mood divided as to whether to read or burn the thing. With thoughts of my uncle in my mind, I decided on the later, though the closer I got to the heavy door of the study my resolve thinned. As the heavy key clanked into the lock and squealed in protest at being turned, I could feel the book calling to me from beyond the door, as surely as if it were a lover calling my name. I shoved the heavy door open and found myself unable to move, held fast by an unseen force as my eyes fell on the journal. It was conflict that held me, I know this now, as the sensible thing to have done would have been to burn it, throw it into the fireplace and be done with the damnable thing. But it was my own insatiable curiosity, my need to know, that made me take several leaden steps and reclaim my place before the journal on the desk.

I opened it to a page randomly, my breath shallow as I could not fathom what new horrors awaited my eyes in the form of scrawling ink. The entry on which the page fell was marked for August 1, 1923 in my uncle's right-handed script. He'd ended his entry in what I'd come to know as his customary way, with the open-ended "What shall tomorrow bring?" Tucked neatly below it, covering the reply which I both sought and dreaded, was another of the ominous clippings of newspaper, this one larger than the rest. I gingerly lifted the clipping away to read the unseen's answer.

*The great leader shall die. and a power will be sent into mourning. A quiet man of ruthless power shall succeed him.*

I knew the date as did any man who held residence and love of the country, and as I unfolded the article, my breath froze in my lungs. Warren G. Harding, the President of the United States of America, had died the next day, and somehow the journal warned of his demise. I skimmed through several other pages, each containing clippings of smallish size, until I came across another, dated September 1, barely a month after my arrival. The clipping that accompanied that page was in equal size of the one that detailed the death of the president, and it was with great trepidation that I read the entry beneath my uncle's.

*The great land across the sea shall fall.*

## The Journal of Edwin Grey/23

The accompanying article from the next day's news told of the collapse and complete decimation of Tokyo and Yokohama in the great land across the sea, Japan. It had been an earthquake, the likes of which had never been seen before on the island, and the casualties measured in the hundreds of thousands.

I could no longer believe my own senses, for what I now saw was, in my mind, quite impossible. No man could know the fates, and no journal could predict the future. However, the predictions were there, in a script that dripped of the evil power which surely gave the journal its sight. To try to describe the revulsion I felt at the time would be futile, as there are no words that can bring to mind the loathsome nausea that permeated my being at the sight of that handwriting. But I could not tear myself away from its jagged lines, and I passed a few more pages until I found myself at the last entry, made the night before my uncle's death.

October 28, 1923

I am so very tired. With each passing day, more horrors greet me in the form of this journal and the newspapers that I scarcely know how I shall continue my existence. Much like the Cyclops of myth, who gave one eye in trade for prophecy only to be granted none but that of his own death, I feel compelled by some morbid purpose to continue writing each day, only to see the grisly reaper winking back at me through events that are out of my control. How and when shall it all end?

Beneath this strange epitaph, the unseen had written the chilling line that, even today, haunts my sleep.

*Tonight, and by the very hand sought to these months*

Though I was certain I had not noticed it before, or if I had, the change had been so gradual that it garnered no notice from me, the scrawling handwriting was now much more clean, polished, as though practiced. While it still did not resemble my uncle's right-handed script, it was at least a match for it in beauty, and the unseen had written with flowing lines and without smudging the paper.

I looked back to the beginning, pausing, not to read but only to see, at each of the unseen's entries and found them all to be in stages of development, such as a child's would be were he just learning to write, until at last he

he wrote as well as his schoolmaster.

In my excited state, my mind began to formulate wildly far-fetched theories as to my uncle's demise. A test was in order, though now I could not even begin to fathom how I rationalized doing so. Perhaps it was my thirst for knowledge, for if knowledge can be truly equated with power, then one who possessed the knowledge of things to come would be like unto a god.

With my hand trembling violently, I took up my uncle's pen and turned to an empty page in the journal. I scarcely breathed as I steeled my nerves for a leap into the breach of my own beliefs and touched the pen to the page. It was a simple entry, one which would satisfy my curiosity, though the possible outcomes could have been calamitous. I wrote only one line aside from the date, Edwin Grey's customary closing question. What will tomorrow bring? No sooner had I written it than I wished I could blot it out, take the ink back into the pen and forget I'd ever touched the damned book. I did not know what entity had written for my uncle, nor did I know if it would answer my question, but I did know that I had no wish to lay eyes upon it. I rushed from the room and locked the door with the heavy iron key, then went to my bed where I remained huddled amid the candlelight until exhausted sleep overtook me.

I awoke in unfamiliar surroundings and soon realized that I'd been walking in my sleep. I was, I was horrified to discover, in my uncle's bedchambers, laying on his bed much the same as he'd been when Molen had found him. I came up with a choking scream, and half-ran, half-fell, out of the room that still held the pungent odor of death. Outside the doorway I stood, my heart racing as I struggled to find my orientation. It was then that I realized that I held my uncle's pen in my left hand. It seemed queer for I, like my uncle, am right-handed. My brain began to burn with suspicion and dread as I raced down the stairs to the study. Was my supposition correct?

Taking the key from the pocket of my robe, I unlocked the door and threw it open, my stomach lurching at the sight of the journal lying on the table. My approach was cautious, as, in my wild state, I half expected it to leap at me from the table. As I came closer, I could see that the unseen had indeed answered my question, and that the handwriting had reverted to that of a child, with jagged points and backward letters. As I read the reply, my blood froze in my veins with terrible recognition.

## The Journal of Edwin Grey/25

*A falsely accused man shall die in a cage, beaten by those who cannot understand.*

It took only a moment for the words to sink in, and in that moment I must have screamed, for I remember the sound reverberating off the stony walls as I raced up the stairs to my bedchamber. I snatched up the telephone and rang the magistrate, my heaving breaths making my frantic question difficult for the simple man to understand. When at last I could make myself clear, he informed me in a voice that I'm sure was meant to be somber that Molen was dead.

I sank to the floor trying to puzzle out which path had led me to this place. I now knew the secret of the unseen, but too late as dear Molen was now gone. In a pique of sorrow-fueled rage, I hurried down the stairs to the study and snatched the cursed journal from the desk and began tearing pages from it with feverish intent. I barely noticed that, with each page I pulled loose from the binding, a small cut opened on my left hand. Soon it dripped crimson as I threw the remains of the journal into the empty fireplace and threw a lit candle atop it.

My body was wracked with pain as it felt as if my hand were burning. Through no volition of mine, it began to spasm and jerk as if going through its last struggle for life. I ran to the hallway where several stacks of newspaper sat collecting dust, and, with wicked determination in my eyes, I began to feed the fire with all of the prophecies that the book had summoned until it was no more than ash and my hand was crippled from pain.

Now, two years later, I still shudder to think of that journal, and of what power it possessed. But I was never certain if the power lay in the journal or in the hand that wrote on its pages. Only now do I know how severely I wronged Molen, and, in fact, my uncle, and I shall carry that guilt on my shoulders for all my days. My withered left hand is a constant reminder to me, of both Edwin Grey and Molen, and of those wrongs I visited upon them. And that I nearly shared the same fate as my uncle, murdered by forces beyond my control, and yet within my own hand, has set my beliefs of what is and is not real in this world to crumbling.

In addition to being a professional writer, Scott A. Johnson is the Paranormal Studies Editor for Dread Central ([www.dreadcentral.com](http://www.dreadcentral.com)), where he writes a twice-monthly column, called Cold Spots, about real haunted places in the world. When he's not writing, he teaches martial arts classes, plays golf (poorly) and spends time with his wife, Tabatha, and their two children, Anna and Zoe. He currently lives in San Marcos, Texas, where he works for Texas State University.

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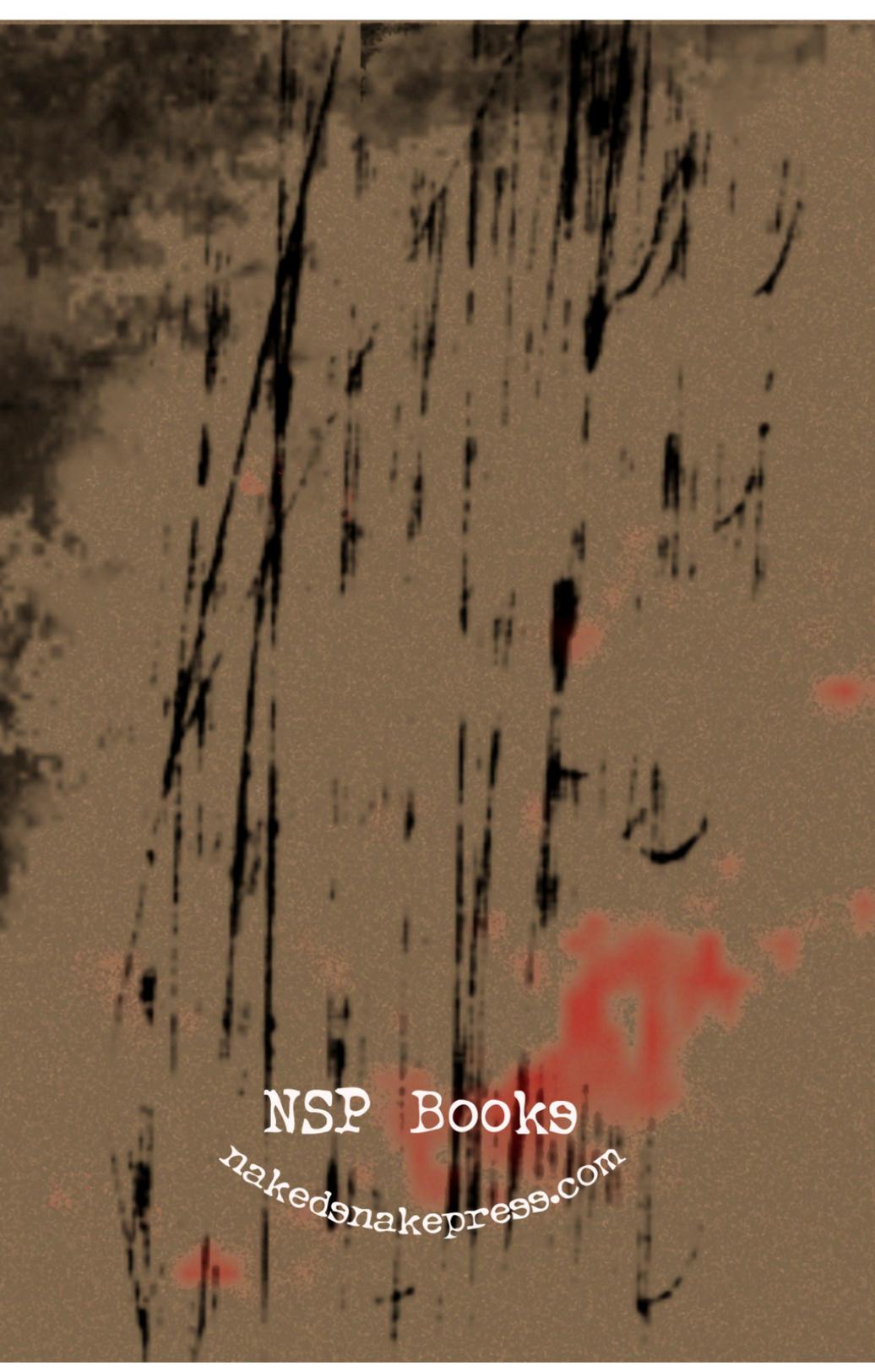
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