

The Haunting of Halton Grange



by William Jeffrey Rankin

“ You must understand we’re dealing with forces not bound by the laws of our world. The portal, hallway, and rooms beyond are a manifestation of an Outside force. These places are, quite literally, not of this world.

The Haunting of Halton Grange
(The Black Obelisk, Part I)
The Carnacki Casebook, Case No. 01

The Haunting of Halton Grange (Sample)

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A sample from *The Haunting of Halton Grange* by William Jeffrey Rankin
<http://carnacki.wjrankin.com/stories/halton-grange.html>

“I began to feel the influence of the Outside force before we reached the portal. I’ve become accustomed to these sensations in my cases dealing with manifestations of the Outside, so I knew what to expect: A drain of energy, of will, and a growing sense of panic. I noticed the character of the hall had changed as well. Despite the time of day and clear weather, it was filled with shadows, the air felt stale, and the mansion itself had a neglected, abandoned quality to it.

“‘It has spread,’ whispered Lord Halton. He was standing inches from me, but his voice was distant.

“We arrived at the portal. I could see little of the narrow hallway beyond. I instructed Lord Halton and Carlisle to wait outside, and to not enter the portal unless the situation became dire. Taking a deep breath, I stepped through.

“‘This is not a place for the living,’ I whispered. It was exactly as Lord Halton had described: Dark, stifling, and decayed. The sense that I was being drained by something increased, and I had to steady myself to proceed. I focused on the work at hand: Explore, observe, analyze, and solve the problem.

“Proceeding down the dimly lit hallway, I paused to examine one of the paintings lining the walls. Even with it in front of my very eyes, it was difficult to describe. There were objects and symbols I recognized, but arranged and stylized in an incomprehensible manner.

“I entered the small library. The drain on my energy and will intensified. I searched the shelves lining the walls and found the titles incoherent, just as Lord Halton had.

“The door to the bed chamber was still ajar and I cautiously entered. I immediately felt a strong sense of anger, seething and palpable, coming from the thing in the room. Then I saw it, opposite from where I entered, hanging by a noose in the dark corner next to the bed. It was watching me with its black, void eyes.

“Kneeling on the floor, I opened the case I’d brought. I took a piece of chalk and drew a large circle on the floor near the door, opposite the bed. I was careful to never step outside it, knowing that doing so would compromise the circle’s protective qualities. I marked the perimeter of the circle with garlic and drew protective symbols inside the circle.

“I next drew a defensive pentacle inside the circle. At each of the five points of the pentacle, I placed a vacuum tube, connecting them to a portable battery. I threw the switch on the battery, and the vacuum tubes hummed to life, emitting a blue glow that seemed a counter to the pale light of my surroundings.

“In the minutes that elapsed, I could feel the presence and gaze of the thing

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occupying the opposite side of the room. While it took no action and made no sound, I felt a sense of anticipation, as if it were also making preparations.

“Inside the electric pentacle, I immediately felt some degree of relief. The drain on my energy and will decreased, and the sense of panic I’d felt receded. I was able to concentrate on the ritual I was about to perform.

“I began the chant. The vacuum tubes in the electric pentacle flared in response, partially dissipating the darkness in the room and my mind. The thing responded: a roaring sound began, as of the ocean, and the darkness in the room intensified. A dome-shaped barrier formed around the pentacle as I continued the ritual. Within the dome the tubes of the pentacle continued to brighten, while outside the darkness and clamor increased as the thing opposed the effects of the ritual.

“Abruptly, I heard a sharp pop, and the brightness of the electric pentacle decreased. I knew one of the tubes had burnt out. I attempted to refocus my energy on the ritual and continued the chant. Once again I began to feel the energy drain. The darkness, now solid around the dome, was trying to find a way into the pentacle. The roaring sound increased, and I could no longer hear the sound of my own voice.

“Simultaneously, the tubes of the electric pentacle flared up brightly, and were extinguished! The darkness rushed in, the roaring sound stopped, and I found myself in a lightless, soundless void.”