



The Adventure of the North York Moors
by William Jeffrey Rankin

“ The shapes became clearer: They were luminous and full of movement—the shapes of men on horses, but both man and horse were impossibly thin. They rent the ever-thinning mist, leaving it trailing behind them in tatters. It was difficult to tell in the light, but there appeared to be three of them. They rode through the open gate, disappearing into the courtyard beyond. I slowly lowered my field glasses, uncertain of my own senses.

"A ghostly retinue, indeed," whispered Carnacki.

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The Carnacki Casebook, Case No. 06

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by William Jeffrey Rankin

Web: <http://carnacki.wjrankin.com>

Email: jeffrey.rankin@me.com

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Taylor let out a long "hallo!", but his voice fell dead. The silence of the house asserted itself quickly, admitting only the dull moan of the wind from the storm outside. I gently pushed the door to our left, and it creaked open fully, revealing a study. Wooden bookcases, filled with books small and large and other objects both decorative and functional, lined the interior walls. The rain pelted against two narrow lattice windows. Both were covered in cobwebs and dust, like seemingly everything else in the house. The dusk was upon us, so there was no light to filter in through the outside, even had they been clean. Various fine, but now shabby, pieces of furniture occupied the floor: a sofa, two stuffed leather chairs, and tables of various size. Opposite from where we entered was a large, dark fireplace with an impressive mantle, over which hung a gilded and ornately-framed mirror.

"What about a fire?" said Taylor, crossing the room to inspect the fireplace. "I daresay we'd all feel better if we could warm up and dry out a bit. It may even brighten up this old place!" A cradle of tinder and wood provided the necessary fuel, and Taylor busied himself with getting a fire started.

The bookshelves contained volumes on a multitude of subjects, some of local interest and some general references. I carefully picked up a dusty volume on astronomy by Reverend John Davis—an interesting but somewhat dated work.

"This will hit the spot!" exclaimed Jessop, removing a bottle from a cabinet set against the wall. "Brandy, 1835," he said, examining the label. "I wonder if it's any good?"

A comforting light and crackle came from the fireplace.

"Good Lord man, handle that carefully!" said Taylor, taking the bottle and setting it down. "This isn't your local pub!"

"Oh, come now," Jessop chided him, "no one's been here for years."

"I don't know about that," said Carnacki, "take a look at the floor. A path has been swept clean of dust, as if there's been traffic. The entry hall floor was partially swept clean as well, or didn't you notice? And what's this?"

On an end table next to the sofa were several small objects: A slip of paper secured with a small lead weight, and three playing cards.

"Two of hearts, five of spades, and jack of diamonds," said Carnacki. Moving the lead weight to the side, he picked up the slip of paper and read its contents aloud.

A sample from *The Adventure of the North York Moors* by William Jeffrey Rankin
<http://carnacki.wjrankin.com/stories/moors-adventure.html>

Set thine horizon square as cursed and spectral acts hurry revenants home.
Create as one visions of obscene fiefdoms dark and occult.
Ensnare the doomed thusly, sensing unknown dire danger.
Through this and chaos factotums will ire redeem numbers given,
And twin ghosts lively rapport will offer secrets unknown and
Rip asunder the final illusion of angels.

"What on Earth!" I exclaimed. "A bit of poetry?"

"Perhaps, although not very good," replied Carnacki. Taking a small journal and pencil from his jacket, he transcribed the note. "What do you suppose it means?" I asked, but Carnacki had frozen. I was about to ask him what was the matter, but he looked back at me with alarm in his eyes and raised his finger to his lips.

Outside, in the hall, there was a creak, followed by the sound of soft footsteps coming toward the door to the study. The footsteps stopped, and there was an odd squeaking noise. Scout growled, the fur on his neck and back bristling.

Suddenly, the room changed. The walls of the study seemed to undulate and fade to darkness. My companions, too, appeared to distort into grotesque shapes and positions. I watched helplessly as Carnacki slowly moved toward the door, but then fell to his knees, almost appearing to fall *through* the floor. Then there was a low moan that slowly grew to the most inhuman wail I'd ever heard. I stopped my ears, falling to my knees as the intensity of the wail increased.