

The House on El Nino Diablo Court

by Shawn J. Higgins

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Excerpted from "Minion Web," A novel by Shawn J. Higgins

From "The Journal of Parapsychology" by Dr. Alan Browning

On a cold, dark night near to All Hallows' Eve in October of 1930, I was summoned by Constable John Wakefield to the house of Vernalier Driscoll. The constable was wild-eyed and very nervous, his hair appeared to be standing on end. He told me that Anne Driscoll had come to the police station by coach, saying that her husband had been murdered by the devil.

I have read of people who claimed in the midst of hysteria that Satan had come and killed someone they knew. In many cases the story is nothing more than a bizarre cover-up for murder on the part of a severely mentally-distressed person, but I have never heard such an outrageous story with my own ears.

Vernalier Driscoll himself was a very cold and humorless man who, on the two or three occasions I had seen him in town, seemed to be harboring some dark secret. All I really knew for certain about the man was that he had emigrated from Ireland a few years earlier, was an art or antique dealer, had married a plain and quiet woman, and had a young son whose name escapes me. To my knowledge, he had no close friends. Despite the obvious hard work and attention Driscoll had put into his house—including meticulously-detailed hand carvings in the woodwork on the front of it—on this evening it radiated a feeling of ill will. It sounds very melodramatic to the reader, but the overriding feeling to the casual observer upon viewing the house on this evening would have been: *Stay away; you are not welcome here.*

At least, that was the feeling I had as we approached the abode. I followed the constable inside the house, and the sensation

intensified into dread as we crossed the threshold. The inside of the house was as dark as the nightfall out of doors, save for the burning of a few sparse candles with flickering light that seemed to cast eerie, ghost-like silhouette images of ourselves upon the walls as we passed through the sitting room. We descended a stairway that led into the basement, and a sour aroma assailed my nostrils akin to the burning of some kind of foul poultice on the stove. As we approached the enormous, arch-shaped wooden door—which was buttressed about with iron slats that appeared designed to hold the diabolical contents within against the goodness they lay without—it appeared to us upon our approach to be some kind of a barrier between this world in which we dwelt, and some horrific nether-world that beckoned us from beyond.

I shall not describe the condition of Vernalier Driscoll's body, for that would be beyond the capacity of you, gentle reader, to bear. As a physician, I found myself incapable of discerning precisely what kind of fate could have befallen him in the mangled state his remains were in. Suffice for me to merely say that he was not recognizable.

For the sake of the record, however, I will describe for you the tableau of horror that awaited us inside the room itself. It appeared to my eyes that Mr. Driscoll had been dabbling deeply into the sort of black arts that I had mistakenly presumed modern people were wise enough to have shunned centuries ago. The room appeared to be a medieval shaman's house of sorcery. A bizarre pattern was drawn on the floor of the room in an only vaguely-familiar, seven-sided pattern—only upon much later study did I recall the shape of the pattern to be nearly identical to that of a cabalistic *Sephirot*—a portal of entrance, I believe, for otherworldly monstrosities seeking to enter the peace and placidity of our world. Such was the degree of chaos and horror in theirs. A tableau of animal-like creatures, deeply carved within the wooden slats of the floor, was etched into distinct sections of the diagram.

These images burned into my mind like a fire, for these were indeed the same images Driscoll had so skillfully wrought into the

woodwork on the exterior of his house. The images consisted of a spider or other type of arachnid, a wolf howling at a crescent moon, a winged creature that vaguely resembled a bat or perhaps a raven, a fish-like creature, a sheaf of wheat or other grain, a mysterious-looking small circle with lines radiating out from it, and—the largest image of them all—the silhouette image of a bull's head. An ancient book sat on the floor in a wooden holder near what remained of Driscoll himself. I learned Greek in medical school and still understood it well, but I will not write the words that were written within this atrocious tome, for they speak of necromancy and wickedness.

Vernalier Driscoll was tampering with sorcery; there is no doubt in my mind about that. He was presumably in the midst of invoking some obscene, alien presence like Faust himself, and somehow I had the feeling that—glory be to God—he was unsuccessful. That is the only conclusion that I can draw, based on the miniscule evidence that I have collected.

I could not, and will not, speculate on the exact cause of his death. The investigation that followed—conducted by myself and Constable Wakefield—was inconclusive. I am not afraid to say that I personally believe that Driscoll brought about everlasting damnation upon himself by tampering with a black art long since mercifully abandoned. I tremble to the bone when I think that my own hometown could be the location of such a diabolical plan.

I fear greatly that someday, someone else shall have a similar plan, and that next time, we will not be as fortunate.

