

## Nightmare Alley

Written by Bob Alexander

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*“No live organism can continue for long to exist sanely under conditions of absolute reality; even larks and katydids are supposed, by some, to dream. Hill House, not sane, stood by itself against its hills, holding darkness within; it had stood so for eighty years and might stand for eighty more. Within, walls continued upright, bricks met neatly, floors were firm, and doors were sensibly shut; silence lay steadily against the wood and stone of Hill House, and whatever walked there, walked alone.”*

So begins Shirley Jackson's classic *The Haunting of Hill House*.

Perceptions and appearances cannot be trusted. Hill House *looks* like it was properly built, “... *walls continued upright, bricks met neatly, floors were firm, and doors were sensibly shut ...*” but Hill House is not sane.

Why?

Because ... *No live organism can continue for long to exist sanely under conditions of absolute reality.*

But ... is Hill House alive? Ask whatever walks there. It knows. Whenever *it* dreamt, the dreams too were not sane. When mad dreams and absolute reality are peculiarly inverted ... that's when *everywhere* becomes Hill House ... and everyone who lives there ... lives alone. Come daylight they dream with their eyes wide open, and at night they keep their eyes sensibly and tightly shut against the darkness of reality.

When mad dreams and absolute reality are peculiarly inverted the people are ruled by a Kakistocracy (kak-uh-STOK-ruh-see): A government by the worst persons; a government in which the worst persons are in power. Because only the worst of the madmen look outside, see the dying world they have created, and proclaim, “*Behold ... it is good.*”

We might be aghast at what is happening, but isn't it far worse somehow that we have even reached this place where it is happening at all? Did we all sleepwalk up to the precipice? Is this the inevitable destination for those who dream with their eyes wide open?

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Myths are dreams a country has about itself.

The country born from genocide and slavery incinerated two cities in Japan leaving another quarter of a million lives in its death wake. After the nuclear fires died down, even with that much blood on its hands, somehow it viewed itself, through the lens of its myths, as the Greatest Country on Earth. At the end of politician's speeches we hear them implore, "*... and God bless these United States of America*" hoping their all-powerful all-knowing deity has amnesia.

The dream of the Greatest Country on Earth came into existence after the nuclear fires of 1945. No other nation on Earth could stand up to the power of the Greatest Country on Earth without risking obliteration. These first moments of absolute power became the bedrock of the dream that has been handed down from generation to generation. The past has become more important than the present. When politicians speak of the shining city on the hill they are referring to those moments of absolute power America first wielded 70 years ago.

Listen to their iconic president, "*... But in my mind it was a tall proud city built on rocks stronger than oceans, wind-swept, God-blessed, and teeming with people of all kinds living in harmony and peace, a city with free ports that hummed with commerce and creativity, and if there had to be city walls, the walls had doors and the doors were open to anyone with the will and the heart to get here. That's how I saw it and see it still.*"

Ignorant of their ignorance, those dreaming with their eyes wide open felt it was as though he was describing an American Heaven on Earth. The only thing missing was a long dead saint judging those waiting at the open doors to see if the teeming throng's will and heart were pure enough to enter.

From one of the holy book of myths there is a prayer to the creator of the universe that states, "*... on earth as it is in heaven.*"

" But outside of the myth, there is no heaven, there is no Heaven on Earth, and there is no shining city upon the hill. The iconic president invoked the nation's myths and then oversaw the murder of anyone caught within the cross-hairs of the Greatest Country on Earth. Every president who followed has done the same even unto the end of the world. Amen.

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Those who dream with their eyes wide open fervently desire to go back to those first moments of absolute power. They cry out they want to take their country back but what they honestly mean is they yearn to take their country back into the past. Their dream within the dream is to return to the time when their women and children obeyed the holy book of myths and submitted to husbands and fathers as if to the Lord thy God. They want to return to the time when people of darker skin could be systematically oppressed or wantonly murdered for sport without hindrance from the law. Their eyes glitter with dark madness from these dreams.

Their leaders also hunger to return to those mythical moment of absolute power because they say that power should be unleashed to do unimaginable good throughout the world. They need to use these myths to mask the results of the brutal righteousness of their greed.

Living within the dreams of those who dream with their eyes wide open is akin to being in constant telepathic contact with a lunatic. The majority of the citizens of the Greatest Country on Earth believe **The Exact Opposite** of what is true. Dwell upon that fact for awhile. Let it seep into consciousness for a moment or two. Here is just *one* instance:

A Gallup poll released on October 20, 2015 shows the majority of the citizens of the Greatest Country on Earth believe that if more citizens carried concealed weapons, the country would be safer. Every nation on Earth that has passed stringent gun control laws to improve public safety has experienced the opposite. The Leaders and their followers, all dreaming with their eyes wide open, may say they fear the enemy from without, but they arm themselves, to protect themselves, from their own neighbors and ultimately themselves.

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But the night grows late, and we still, you and I, must make our way down through the dark alley to the bright streetlights beyond. This plot of territory seems to have been built with wrong geometry; non Euclidian angles that confuse the eye and hurt the mind. Maybe in this dream the sum of a triangle's three corners don't equal 180 degrees. Or maybe add up to more. Now this dark ordinary alley is much longer than it seems. Those aren't bright lights after all. They are the portholes to all mad dreams.

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And now listen ... slithering up from behind. Were there voices or only the wind? Listen. A mud-choked voice intones *something is coming ... something is coming*. Those who dream with their eyes wide open reveal eyes which have gone an utter, glistening black.

(Thanks to Stephen King and Shirley Jackson)