

strategy & Tactics: **Dark Seed**

by Ricard Rouse III

The following pages are taken from the diary of one Mike Dawson, unfortunate inhabitant of an old Victorian house in Woodland Hills, California. Or he did live there, until certain headaches made his continued stay impossible. As the pages below will show, Mike Dawson discovered a world beyond our everyday imagining, beyond the normal veil of what most would consider reality: another world in which the very building blocks upon which all physical matter is based are... changed, twisted, and distorted. Submitted for your approval, the diary of a man whose knowledge of the world stretches beyond the mundane world we see around us and into... The Dark World.

First Day

I woke with a splitting headache, no doubt a result of those horrible nightmares I had the night before. I dragged myself into the bathroom and discovered, inside the medicine cabinet, some medication which the previous owners must have left behind. My head clear, I realized that I stank, so I took a shower. Refreshed, I decided to explore my new house. Wandering out of the bathroom, the opposite of the way I came in, I came across another bedroom with a wardrobe against one wall. In it there was a musty old coat I wouldn't wear in a million years, but in its pocket I found an old library card. Being the good Samaritan I am, I took the card with the intent of returning it to the library.

Around about then I heard the doorbell ring and answered it, happy to receive a package from the postman. On opening it, however, I was terrified at its contents. Though I know better now, I decided I must have fantasized the whole thing: some combination of the nightmares and whatever drug I took for my headache. Now downstairs, I went to the left of the front door and into the study, finding some plans on the desk. Taking a careful look at them, I noticed a secret passageway in the room which I easily opened. In there I found a ladder which I climbed, picking up the rope I found at the top. Exiting from the top of the secret passage into my bedroom, I returned to the top of the stairs only to find another ladder which I hadn't noticed before. Climbing up it I found myself in the attic. There I moved the large trunk, only to find a watch underneath which I wound and wore. I then went out to the balcony to catch a glimpse of the exterior of my new estate.

I sure was tired of carrying that big heavy rope, so I tied it around a gargoyle I found on the railing. Wanting to put my work to good use, I shimmied down the rope to the ground below. I decided to have a peek into my garage while I was there. Exploring the car, I picked up some gloves from the glove-compartment inside and a crowbar from the trunk. Realizing I could use the crowbar to open those big old trunks in the attic, I returned there and pried open the one on the right. Inside I found an old journal which I read. I began to wonder about the nature of the house I had just purchased, but then decided that whoever wrote that journal must have been slightly crazy. At the same time, I felt a burning desire to get away from the house for a short while.

Remembering I still had that library card to return, I decided to venture into the heart of Woodland Hills. Once in town, I went all the way to the library. There I talked to the nice but somewhat ugly librarian, who directed me to return the card to its book in aisle C. But inside the book I found another piece of the journal I had found. On reading this one, I was further disturbed: was the previous inhabitant of my house a madman? Before I left, I noticed a very small, almost unnoticeable bobby pin on the floor in front of the librarian. For some reason, I knew that this very small item would be very important to me. How lucky it was of me to find it!

Exiting the library, I wandered to the grocery store where I bought some scotch to drown my worries. However, this total looser named Delbert showed up and insisted we get together the next day. He did give me a "get out of jail free card," but at the time I couldn't imagine when I would have any use for it.

Returning to my house, I soon got a call from the girl from the library, who told me I had a book there that I should go pick up. I distinctly remembered not requesting any books, and I was particularly irritated that she hadn't told me she had the book while I was there before. I decided to look around the house some more, and found a wonderful old grandfather clock. I couldn't open it, and now began to understand what the last diary entry I had found meant. I wandered my way to the cemetery and located the Tuttle crypt. I went to the urn room and found Joe Tuttle's ashy remains, digging out a key from among the soot. I returned to my house, but, instead of going inside, I trekked to the library to pick up that blasted book. The girl was just as ugly as I remembered, and she handed me the book "I" had reserved. In it, I saw a strange message, which I chalked up to another hallucination on my part. I returned home and took a peek inside that clock, using the key I had found. John McKeegan, eh? Well, I was really tired and had more than enough confusion for one day. I figured tomorrow could only have been better, so I went upstairs to bed.

Second Day

Still more nightmares, this time involving that mirror downstairs. I rushed to the medicine cabinet to alleviate the pain in my head. While showering, I had a revelation about what the book at the library had meant about "tuning into the right station." After I dried off, I went out to the car and listened to the radio. It told me to leave some doors open before "crossing over." Though I had no idea what this meant at the time, this "crossing over" business, I acted on a hunch and went back to the secret passageway, went up the stairs, opened the door up there, then went back downstairs and exited to the study. I then left that door open as well. This was invaluable to me later, and it was sheer luck that I had the foresight to do this.

By this time, the doorbell rang. Answering it, I got another strange package, this one with a mirror shard inside. Realizing this might go with the mirror I had dreamt about, I went to the living room and placed the shard in the hole in the mirror. And just then I got the strangest notion. It must have sprung out of my dream or perhaps some old Roger Corman film I'd seen. But, I pondered, what if I tried to jump through the mirror. Maybe through the mirror there could be some mirror world. Insane as the notion may sound, I decided to try it... and it worked.

I found myself in a gray-scale world of biomechanical monstrosities. Terrified, I ran through the door to the right and then through the next exit I saw. I found myself in a room strangely reminiscent of my study. On the desk I found plans for the... unspeakable things the aliens wished to do to me. I ran through what was the parallel of the secret passage into a room with a strange woman on the wall. I found myself transported by a strange teleportation device, into what could be described as "upstairs." There, I left through the one exit and found a pair of sleek alien binoculars. I also noticed, by pure luck, a nearly invisible lever on the wall, which just begged me to pull on it. Not wanting to actually touch anything in this strange place, I used my gloves to operate the lever. I returned downstairs and found a portal, parallel to the front door on my house, now open. Still in a frenzied panic, I dashed outside and ran up the road to where the cemetery was in the normal world. There I found a shovel which somehow regrounded me in reality. I picked it up, thinking it might help me in finding McKeegan's last diary entry, and went back to the mirror, returning to the normal world.

On a hunch, I thought McKeegan might have taken the rest of his diary to the afterlife with him, perhaps having the pages placed inside his coffin. I'm still amazed that I was able to do it, but I went to the cemetery and dug him up, recovering the page as I had suspected I would. Reading the pages confirmed my suspicions about the parallel nature of the two worlds.

Returning to my home, reality slapped me in the face once more as the police were waiting to arrest me for grave robbing. Explaining to them my situation only caused more problems, and I was promptly thrown in jail. Strangely, contrary to police procedure everywhere but in this town, I was put in a cell with all my possessions: including a crowbar. No matter, I had come to doubt reality anyway. Following McKeegan's advice, I exploited the parallel nature of our two worlds by hiding some of my items under the pillow in the cell, so I could use them were I ever incarcerated in the dark world. I figured I would need the bobby pin to pick the lock to escape, the gloves in case I needed to touch anything, and the money because... well, money makes the world go round. I remembered that I still had the fool Delbert's card: that moron did come in handy after all! I rattled the tin cup on the bars and gave the guard the "Get Out of Jail Free" card. On the way out, I noticed that the police were fool enough to leave their guns lying around for anyone to steal, so I taught them a lesson by pilfering the pistol off the wall.

By then, it was almost time to meet up with Delbert: I had to thank him for the card. At six PM sharp I met him out back by my garage, and he went off to play with his dog. I followed him and, wanting to show my thanks, offered him the bottle of scotch I still had. He chugged it down, the louse, and left to go do who-knows-what with his dog. I picked up the dog's saliva covered stick: why, I don't know, but it seemed like an awfully good idea.

Hoping to get away from Delbert as much as possible I returned to the dark world, left my "house," and went in the opposite direction of the crypt this time. There was this rather disgusting dog blocking my way. Perhaps it would like Delbert's dog's disgusting stick? I threw the stick into the pit to the right and the dumb dog jumped right in after it. I

continued on until I came to a large building. Curious as to what was inside, I was caught by the dark world police and thrown in jail. How could I have been so stupid as to not realize this was the parallel to the police station in my world? Anyway, I found the items under the pillow, just as McKeegan said I would. I tried several times to pick the cell lock with the bobby pin and soon managed to escape the cell. Outside, I met this weird chap named Sargo, who I gave the bobby pin to, in exchange for which he gave me a headband of invisibility. I should make deals like that more often!

Exiting the dark world police station, I went on to the right and came to what I figured must be the parallel to the library. There was some brain-with-legs standing in front of it who didn't seem to want to let me in, so I put on the headband, became invisible, and scurried past him. Inside, I diddled some controls and "turned on" some mechanical woman who was much more attractive than the librarian from my world. She turned out to be the "keeper of the scrolls," and she told me about the ancients, the buggers who infected my brain, and how I must destroy them. Then she gave me, get this, a piece of microfiche. I thought to myself, yeah, right, only in really really really bad science fiction B-movies do aliens use earth technology to store their information. I was going to point out that microfiche was an extremely primitive method for archiving data, but I felt that it wasn't my place to say such things, so I took the 'fiche, ran back past the guard, and returned to my world. Dead tired, I went immediately to bed. I hoped I wouldn't have any more nightmares, but I knew I would, probably worse than ever before. Tomorrow I knew I would put a stop to them forever, or die trying.

Third Day

The nightmares were worse than ever and the headaches became proportionally more excruciating. I remedied them with the usual medicine, as well as showering. Soon a package arrived containing an ax handle. I had come to understand that these were "presents" from the keeper of the scrolls, yet I didn't yet know what she wanted me to do with this one. I was curious to read that microfiche, so I decided to set off for the library. Remembering the keeper's warning about the police on this world, I used my rope to exit the house and sneak away to the library. There I used their microfiche reader to figure out where the keys to the car were hidden. Figuring out it was the cellar, I returned home, picking up another bottle of scotch on the way, just in case I had to drown my sorrows later. On the way back into the house, I remembered to use the rope to evade the coppers, and then headed for the cellar. There I located the loose rock, took it, and then looked again and found some keys under it.

The rock seemed like it would be the perfect mate for my ax handle. But I still needed something more. I returned to the dark side and hunted around the parallel cemetery for a time, until I found this strange power nexus thing. I tossed the rock in, and it came out glowing, now fitting together perfectly with my ax handle. Returning to the normal world, I wanted to smash the mirror right then and there, but I realized that wouldn't solve my, or humanity's, long term problems.

I still hadn't tried out those car keys, so I sneaked down the rope and back to the garage. I tried the keys, but nothing happened. Perhaps it needs some gas, I concluded, or a gas substitute. I poured in the scotch I had purchased, sad I wouldn't be able to savor it later on, but also happy that Delbert wouldn't ever get his hands on it either. I tried the keys again and the car started right up. Remembering the parallel nature of our two worlds, I returned to the dark side. There, I explored outside the front of my house and found the controls to the ancient's space craft. I used my gloves to initiate its lift-sequence, and then quickly ran outside. The ship flew off and I returned to the normal world.

The ancients were no longer a threat. But what about the mirror? It needed to be destroyed so that our two worlds could never interact again. I used the hammer on the mirror, smashing it forever.

Oh you think it's a happy ending, eh diary? Not so. That really ugly girl from the library showed up again, and I had to jump town to escape her advances. But I'm safe now... sad that I'll never be able to see my true love, the keeper of the scrolls. Sigh. It never could have worked for us anyway.