

Cognophage

Manifestations: The appearance of nonce-words in everyday vocabulary that no-one can give a sensible definition for. People having difficulty in recalling the right word for a situation, even when the word is very common. A spate of accidents in the home or workplace that can only be explained by people simply doing the wrong thing for no good reason.

Agents: A Cognophage agent is a sinister but nondescript figure that stalks a particular victim for weeks at a time. Its features are ordinary but unmemorable, and while it speaks it is difficult to recall exactly what it said. When challenged, it will make neutral-sounding excuses, denying it has been following anyone, but will make no attempt to defend itself against physical attack. An agent will, over a period of days, use its power on the victim at an increasing rate, until there is nothing left but a husk incapable of coherent speech or thought.

Power: The power that agents of the Cognophage wield is the theft of thought. They can rob a person of their understanding of a word or simple task. When confronted with a missing word, a character will simply not understand what it means, as if he has never heard it before. He will understand synonyms, but is unable to recognise the stolen word, even if the meaning is explained to him. These words need not be nouns or adjectives; they can be literally any word- even ones like 'and' and 'when'. When a simple action is stolen, the character will be convinced he knows how to perform it, but will simply make a series of mistakes when trying to do so. For example, if the act of making tea is taken, the person may forget to boil the kettle and use cold water, neglect to use tea bags, or simply pour the scalding hot water over the back of his hand. If somebody else helps the victim with the task, they end up more-or-less doing it themselves because of the mistakes the victim keeps making. The victim cannot learn how to perform the task anew. The stolen words and actions only return when the taker is killed or destroyed.

Doom: The hands wither away to nothing but ash, and fall away. The person becomes a simpleton, mute and incapable of all but the simplest of tasks. Any stolen words or actions return to their original owners.

THERE'S NOTHING BUT THE PAGE IN
 'SAYS IN 'MITHS' EN SO KIND
 OR DO I MEAN 'YES?' I'M NOT
 EVEN SURE ANY MORE EVERYTHING
 WHILE OF EN 'SAYS' IN 'DIXO' COL
 ABOUT ROGERLY - ROGERLY? I'VE
 LOST A LETTER I CAN'T SEE
 THAT'S SOO LHM. FROM ANY
 MEAN? IS THIS THE END
 I CAN'T EVEN SEE THE
 AIR ANY MORE HOW
 CAN I WRITE IF I CAN
 SEE IT TO WRIT.
 SAY WHY BUT I'M SURE THAT WORKS
 ARE MY LIFE AND I'LL ONLY
 LIVE AS LONG AS THIS TRAIN
 OF THOUGHT LASTS. I CAN'T SEE
 ANYTHING BUT THE PAGE IN
 EVEN BUT ME OF FRONT
 SWIMMING WRONG, SEEMS THAT
 IN AND OUT OF FOCUS LIKE,
 & LIKE... I CAN'T EVEN MAKE
 AN ANALOGY ANY MORE

I HAVE SO FEW WORDS LEFT SO I HAVE TO USE THEM
 I DON'T KNOW WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I
 CAN'T SAY ANY MORE
 I HAVE SO FEW WORDS LEFT SO I HAVE TO USE THEM
 I DON'T KNOW WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I
 CAN'T SAY ANY MORE