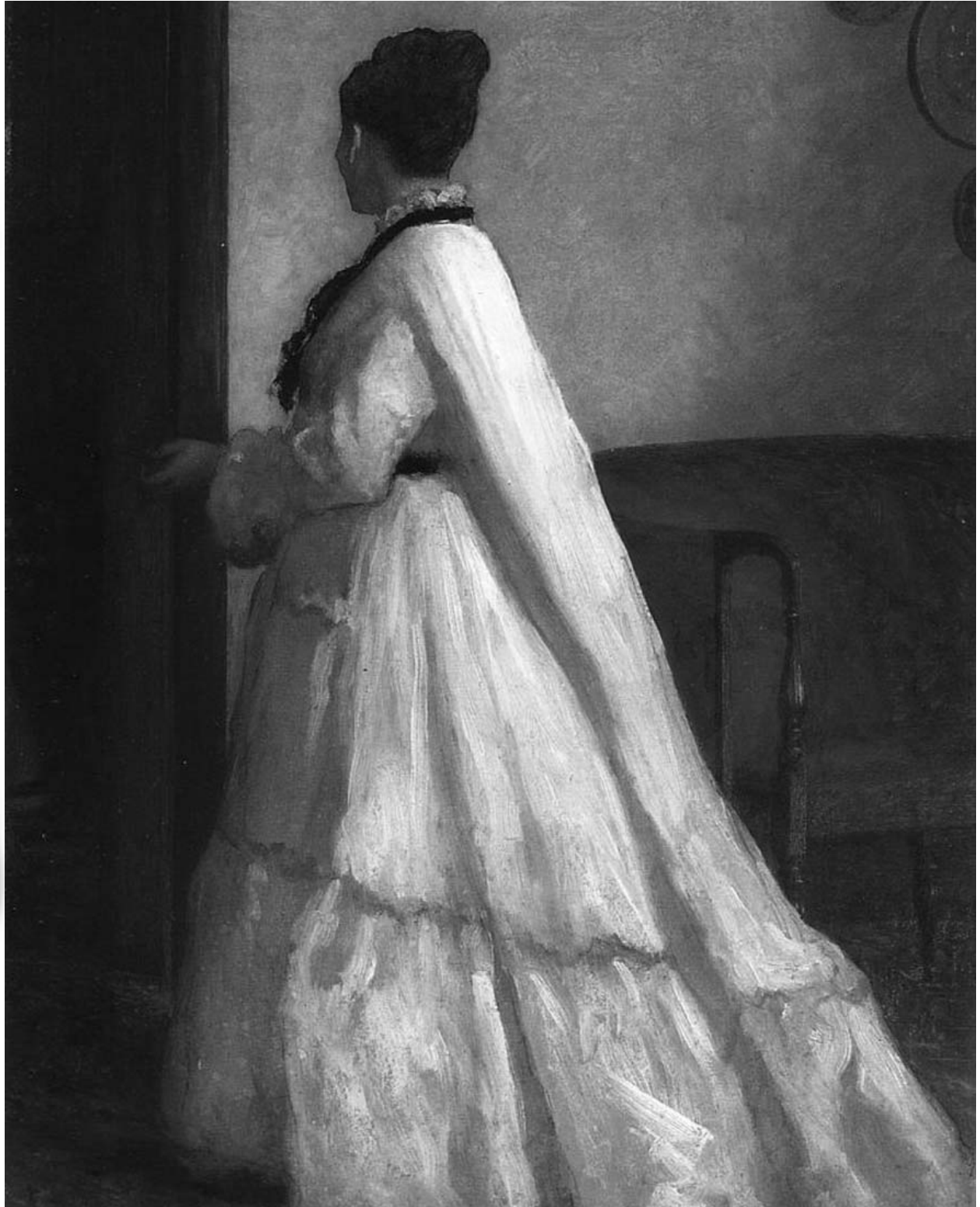




Cthulhu Gaslight

The Woman in Yellow

By Fraser Reed



Introduction

The woman walks alone in the moonlight every month. She dresses in yellow. She says nothing if challenged but continues to walk. Young men are drawn to her like moths, her beauty glimpsed in the pale moonlight, acting like to a flame. The gossip amongst the gentlemen of the vicinity has been slowly but surely growing; the beautiful maiden who walks alone after dark, has been known to slow and give come-hither looks to certain men that she passes. She will single out an individual from a group and leads them off - deeper into the darker, less public undergrowth.

The young men chosen by the Woman in Yellow return with unbelievable tales of lubricious activity - undreamt of even in albums of French postcards - and stories of peaks of pleasure never before scaled. It seems the Woman in Yellow has a sexual appetite undreamt of even in high-class whores of the highest technical skill and the basest of morals.

These men reflect in their quieter moments on their time in company of the Woman in Yellow, realizing that nothing like it will ever happen again in their lifetimes. Then the horror starts. Fellows who have enjoyed the Yellow Woman's charms find their good fortune starting to reverse: accidents happen, some insubstantial, some mortally fearful. Gentlemen are found dead by their own hand or in mysterious circumstances. Some are committed quietly to the safety of a private asylum in order to save the family name from scandal as they sink further into madness and depravity trying to recapture what they once had.

A pallor fall across the community, as the next generation is slowly but surely affected in one way or another. The Woman in Yellow still walks in the moonlight every month, but there are fewer souls braving the night air to visit her, and perhaps take momentary pleasure in her charms.

Possibilities

1. An avatar of Yidhra prowls the area seeking new genetic material. The deaths and misfortune of the men the avatar sleeps with are as a result of Yidhra subtly re-writing the avatar's partners' DNA so that they are more susceptible to Fate. The depression is a result of Yidhra's telepathic interference with the partners. There is no cure in the nineteenth century for these afflictions other than magic. In game mechanics, a man who intimately encounters the Avatar suffers POW loss. This is not lost instantly but gradually over a week or two. This will affect Luck rolls and POW based skills. Sanity points are unaffected by the encounter but can be lost through further revelation.
2. A wife scorned is a dangerous woman. Hurt by her husband, Mrs. Edwin Harcourt seeks revenge, recompense, or an insight into infidelity. Perhaps the woman's husband refuses to meet her wanton demands; or she has become tainted by her husband's venereal disease and seeks a salve in sexual pleas-

ure or a revenge on his sex or both; or the woman's husband prefers louche youths whose attention can be purchased with a small gift or three for several hours rather than her company.

When Mr. Harcourt discovers his wife's flagrant indiscretions, he starts upon a course of revenge against his wife's many lovers to regain his lost honor, a course that will end in the death of his wife in the arms of her latest lover. He calculates that a court will never find him guilty of such a 'crime passionnel'.

3. The woman is an actress who lost her mind whilst rehearsing the outré French play 'The King in Yellow'. Running away from the theatre and her stage company, Miss Constance White has fetched up here, wearing little more than the opulent gown she was wearing for the dress rehearsal. Taking on her stage persona as a mask, 'Cassilda' seduces the handsome but doomed young men that cross her path.

As Cassilda Miss White is channeling Carcosa and its effects; Miss White's partners experience strange dreams thereafter filled with fascinating and disturbing images. The longer the dreams continue, the closer the partners will come to reaching through reality into Carcosa. If they do not reach Carcosa through their dreams, entropy will reach out and claim them.

4. Mrs. Ravel is a professional blackmailer. She understands the power of the forbidden, and uses it as bait to lure her prey. She specializes in youths, as they lack maturity and are more pliable - as well as being more fun. Once she has ensnared them, Mrs. Ravel turns the screws starting with letters and ending with a personal visit or two, culminating, hopefully Mrs. Ravel reckons, with a pay-off.

Mrs. Ravel is about to move on to newer pastures, having exhausted the potential of the area. She is going to take one more promenade in the moonlight (or perhaps two), as the widow is almost as addicted to the forbidden as her prey.

5. A local and ancient coven has accepted a number of new witches into its circle. As an initiation rite each new witch has to take a lover, and conceive and bear a child to sacrifice to the Black Man. Each young woman chooses the nights she walks the moors alone, taking lovers from the men she meets. All the women have a similar hairstyle and wear the same yellow dress in order to allay suspicion. The Woman in Yellow will continue to walk the moors until each of the witches have conceived a child from their illicit assignations.

The influence of the coven on the community and its affairs also means that the Woman in Yellow has not become the local scandal that it should be, and that the community's young men are almost being encouraged to seek out the Yellow Woman - she has almost become a local legend - as she walks once a generation or so it seems. The coven will also prepare the excuses for the girls to be away from the community when their time comes to give birth to their sacrifice. The coven isn't unkind enough to make the girls follow through with their sacrifice if they cannot bring themselves to kill their offspring, but these girls will never enter the inner circle of the coven. If the investigators can find one such mother she may be able to shed light on whom the Woman in Yellow really is.