

Open your mind. Leap into Mounds, a supernatural detective story.

Mounds

**Buy The Complete Version of This Book at
Booklocker.com:**

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/2124.html?s=pdf>

THE CLOUD'S HUNGER, a menacing mosaic of cravings, arrived at the airy creature's outer edges after lying dormant for more than a century. The entity ignored the yearnings as they spread towards his heavier center.

After three months, the demand for nourishment matured beyond his ability to simply ignore the signs. Cramps, debilitating spasms distorted his shape. The airy creature responded with a series of contractions and expansions intended to relax the tortuous patterns and relieve the pain. The effort failed. Thoughts of suicide, a temptress signaling the end to a life born eons in the past, knocked on the door to the creature's control center.

Self-destruction? I desire no such ending. I'll satisfy my hunger, then rest.

The entity discovered a passing cloud within easy reach, surrounded it. Throbbing like a lunatic, he sucked the energy from the captive accumulation of particles and absorbed it into his insane maelstrom.

The snack provided no relief.

Nourishment, the naive creatures roaming the earth, I need them. I can't exist without them. They provide me salvation from self-destruction. A safe feeding ground, I demand a safe feeding ground!

The wispy creature warped and disfigured his public persona into a series of protrusions extending thousands of feet in all

R. E. STARR

directions. Myriad shapes and hues marked these projections as belonging to a single entity.

The environment of his birth, long a witness to his demands, remained silent, oblivious to his billowing surges, his petulant ranting, his lunatic ravings.

BORN INTO AN ECOSYSTEM springing to life three billion years before his birth, the intelligent mass of particles adapted to an evolving environment at a pace exceeding all other life forms during the last billion years. This ensured he retained his advantage over an exploding array of plants and animals. Unable to discover a defense against his depravity, every new or adapted species suffered the same fate if caught during one of his feeding frenzies—agonizing death.

During the last two hundred and fifty million years, earth's evolution spawned most invertebrate groups, fish, insects, and vascular plants. This period also witnessed the dissolution of Pangea, the supercontinent, and two distinct ice ages. The depraved creature enjoyed the feasts each provided.

Further evolution witnessed the earth's domination by dinosaurs. Large marine reptiles populated oceans. Pterosaurs ruled the skies. Distinct ferns, cycads, and conifers of every description characterized the landscape. The first flowering plants appeared, each varietal more appealing to a monster of the sky demanding endless variety in his twisted feeding cycles.

Although all periods in the earth's development experienced increased perversion in the entity's actions, the last million years and its exploding diversity stood as his favorite. This era spawned creatures with an evolving and ever-expanding intelligence driving them to pursue a perfect defense against nature's assaults. The storm cloud marveled at the developments but laughed at the insanity. *How naïve! They dare challenge me? They cannot stop me! They will not deprive me!*

By the year 1900, the entity's depraved ranting reached a world filled with deaf ears. His favorite victims became so enamored with

MOUNDS

their skewed vision of the world and their place in it—they forgot lessons handed down by their ancestors.

Life forms once real to ancient populations became relegated to the back pages of mythological reference books—volumes consigned to unreachable shelves in dusty libraries.

During the last million years, the depraved creature established an existence demanding nourishment through the destruction of humans.

Humans, meanwhile, grew so intelligent—they forgot he existed.

THE AIRY MONSTER SOARED on winds helpless to control his movement. He soared north, south, east and west. Discovering no safe feeding ground, he soared to the upper atmosphere. He paused. *What's this?* He sensed a middling hurricane crossing the Caribbean on a west-northwest track. He knew the storm could provide the cover he needed to feed in safety.

He plotted, planned, and prepared for his anticipated feeding frenzy. *I'll wait until it's left the islands behind and entered the gulf. Together we'll use the warm waters to grow, to swell into a killing machine unlike any the world has ever experienced. I'll join with this mindless freak of nature, quadruple its energy, its destructive power.*

He intended to satisfy his voracious appetite by feeding on the land's destruction and man's death as he and his compliant companion swept across open seas, wide bays, and virgin land.

He roared with self-satisfaction.

Viands, I shall call this vacuous servant-storm, Viands—the supplier of a feast to satisfy my hundred-year hunger. Together we'll feed in peace without fear of discovery by—it's not important. He's not important.

The thought brought a surge of renewed vitality to the creature as he compressed his energy into a black ball less than two miles wide. He plunged screaming towards his next meal—growing hordes of humans populating nondescript lands.

R. E. STARR

This mindless storm will muffle my signature, making it difficult for my enemy to detect my presence, but it matters not. He is nothing! I am Gohr! I am God! I am the invincible one!

2

AUGUST 27, 1900 - VIANDS ORIGINATED FROM AN unseen tropical depression in the warm equatorial mid-Atlantic ocean due west of the Cape Verde Islands at 15° 14' N 39° 36' W. The birthing point, positioned equidistance between Africa and the Lesser Antilles in the eastern Caribbean Sea, had a reputation for producing large and violent storms. Witnessed but ignored by a pair of Humpback whales, Viands' birth provided no hint his natural ability to destroy would eventually intensify with his forced coupling to an ancient monster.

Unremarkable in an area of the world known to belch such storms on a regular basis, the event in the Atlantic also failed to foreshadow a looming disaster, thousands of lives consumed before the shared feast sated Gohr's raging appetite.

AUGUST 28, 1900 - AFTER MOVING DUE WEST at 15 mi/h, Viands remained a tropical depression with maximum wind speeds approaching the high twenties. At sunset, a tramp steamer two days out from the port of Cayenne in French Guiana and headed to Marseille, encountered Viands at 15° 15' N 44° 11' W. The captain of the vessel, Andre Lévesque, noted with disinterest the barometric pressure reading as 29.97 inches and 1015 millibars. He instructed his first mate, Pascal Nadeau, to make note of the observation, the pressure reading, the wind speed, and record their location in the

ship's log. He also told Pascal to radio a report to Cayenne, knowing any other ships in the area would take note and avoid the storm if it grew larger.

"This pup will cause little concern among seafarers," Pascal said after returning from his assigned task. "If it's no stronger than this after forming off Africa at least a week ago—I predict it will die a lonely death long before reaching land. Look." Pascal pointed towards his left. "This disturbance doesn't impress a simple barometer."

Andre's eyes glanced at the unchanged instrument. He frowned. "What if it didn't form off Africa? What if it formed today, or yesterday, seventeen hundred miles west of Africa? What if God decides to let the puppy grow into a snarling cur? What would you say then?"

The first mate laughed as his eyes searched for the storm off their port stern and headed in the opposite direction. He turned towards Andre. "I'd say I'm glad we're headed east—away from such a beast."

"WE'VE HEARD FROM THE weather station at Miami," Frank Niles said to his boss, Grant Clifford, after knocking on Grant's open door.

"So?" Grant said. He raised his head from a map of the Caribbean. He had been studying the paths of past tropical cyclones, storms that sprang out of nowhere, tramped across the Atlantic, and as if by lottery—chose a place and people to destroy. So far his studies yielded little enlightening information that might help him predict the path of any given storm in the future. Grant knew he and his successors needed to create more tracking maps of more killer storms before man had any hope of achieving a better record predicting a storm's probable route.

"The Atlantic birthed another," Frank said. He stepped into the office.

Grant noticed a slight tremor in Frank's speech. From experience, Grant knew this meant Frank Niles' instincts screamed for an audience. Never hidden from Grant, excitement in Frank's

MOUNDS

mind mixed with a feeling of trepidation changed Frank's demeanor, especially his voice.

Serene except during periods of heightened stress associated with impending crisis from approaching weather, Grant stared at Frank. "Where?" he asked without a hint of concern. Grant Clifford, Chief Meteorologist, U.S. Weather Service, stared at his employee. Frank Niles, his number one assistant, a man with the ability to ferret out relevant weather information from the tiniest of clues, but a man also prone to hyperbole when placed in a stressful situation, stood before him. Both men called Washington D.C. home.

"A French steamer reported a new disturbance west of the Cape Verde islands."

"How far west?" Grant asked spinning the map around. "Show me."

Frank Niles raised a sheet of paper dangling from his hand. He placed the sheet, a cabled report, within inches of his eyes to overcome failing vision. "There," Frank said. He directed his index finger to a point on the map.

"The barometric pressure?" Grant asked.

Studying the cable again, "29.97," Frank said.

"Why the concern? That far from Africa, a major cyclone would read much lower by now. It's most likely a minor disturbance destined to die out before reaching civilization."

"My instincts say different," Frank said. "I think the Atlantic calved it in the last day or so. If I'm right, it could prove dangerous to the states in another week."

Grant studied his assistant's face and demeanor. He found a sincerity indicating true gut-level belief. Grant decided to play it safe. "You may be right. Ask all stations in the Caribbean to keep a watch—and keep us informed." Grant's eyes returned to the map and his studies.

Frank smiled. He turned to leave the office, changed his mind. "I almost forgot. The Tonopah, an American ship out of Galveston headed east to Havana reported what the captain referred to as a weather anomaly."

Grant's head never left the map. "An anomaly, what?"

"A small but powerful system. The storm remained stationary a few miles from the Tonopah's position as the ship headed across the gulf. The captain said the storm circled and tracked his ship as he zigged and zagged his route to avoid it. One day out from port the captain ordered his ship to stop, the storm also stopped. When he resumed, the storm again took up the chase."

Grant raised his head, smiled his knowing smile. "Sounds like a few of our seafaring friends hit the rum keg harder than usual."

"You may change your mind when I tell you the rest," Frank said. He stepped closer to Grant's desk.

An inquisitive crease replaced Grant's smile.

"The captain described the storm as, let me read his exact words," Frank said. He extracted a crumpled paper from his inside jacket pocket. "'The storm chasing us is a single large cloud, say two miles in diameter and black, blacker than coal dust. The cloud blocks all light from entering, and maybe leaving once trapped inside the beast. Regard...'"

Grant interrupted Frank's reading. "Beast? He used the word, beast, to describe a simple storm? Isn't that a little out of character for a ship's captain?"

"A little. When you hear the rest you'll probably consider him a straitjacket candidate."

Frank cleared his throat, continued. "'Regardless of what evasive actions I order, the black devil of a cloud matches our track. The evil one hasn't threatened us, not a stroke of lightning, not excess wind, not a drop of rain, but still the fear permeating my ship grows by the second. I sense it. My crew feels it, smells it, fights against the impression evil emanates from the beast hanging over and around our ship. They feel it crawling up their spine, spreading through their body, as if attempting to discover their soul's location so it can suck salvation from them. I know I sound like a madman and I apologize. My mind knows our following cloud is nothing more than an unusual weather anomaly. My instincts, however, do not apologize. They scream—the devil above us is more, much, much more. My first mate thinks it's evil incarnate—risen from the depths of hell. Me, I'm not sure. In more than forty years sailing the world's

MOUNDS

oceans, I've never experienced weather that brought more loathing to my heart, more dread to my soul. I pray the Almighty may never again force me to experience such an evil entity.'"

Frank finished. He looked up from the sheet. "Weird, huh? The Tonopah's Mexican crew thought the storm alive, sent by the devil to kill them, extract their souls, and sentence them to an eternity in hell. They threatened to abandon the ship."

"What stopped them?" Grant said. He stared at his map, his mind calm. In his experience, weather anomalies were just that, not living creatures moving across the oceans using free will.

"North of the Yucatan the storm left them, but..." Frank said and hesitated.

"But what? Sounds like nothing more than a strange weather phenomenon."

"The Tonopah's captain report concluded, 'After leaving us, the storm exhibited similar behavior with Argus, a Greek ship crossing our stern headed north.'"

"Have we heard from Argus' captain, hopefully a ship's captain more in control of his faculties?" Grant asked.

"I've cabled him but received no reply."

Never one to believe in the mythologies of seafarers, Grant shook his head. "Let me know if you do. Still sounds like too much rum to me. For now, file it. Concentrate on the tropical disturbance causing your instincts such discomfort."

3

AUGUST 30, 1900 - FOR TWO DAYS, moving as if driven by an unseen hand, Viands surged forward at an average speed exceeding 20 mi/h. The tropical storm shifted direction slightly to the northwest. Continuing its downward movement, Viands' barometric pressure registered 29.53 inches and 1000 millibars.

In the early afternoon, with winds fluctuating between 50 and 60 mi/h, Viands' position approached 15° 45' N 61° 30' W, splitting the Lesser Antilles in two. The storm's route skirted between the islands of Dominica to the south and Guadeloupe to the north. Viands swept through the Dominica Passage, a route taken by Christopher Columbus on his second voyage in September 1493.

Viands' winds created moderate damage to the island of Guadeloupe but Marie-Galante and Iles Des Saintes, lying much closer to the storm's swirling center, suffered complete destruction of their flimsy native dwellings. These islands experienced fifteen hundred deaths, most from flying debris but a few from mudslides caused by five inches of rain in less than four hours.

In the small village of Morne Soleil on Dominica Island, the natives scampered from hut to house searching for shelter from a fearsome storm arising from the depths of the Christian hell so vividly described by a resident missionary.

Amichia, one of a few thousand remaining Caribs, an indigenous tribe nearly driven to extinction by the Spaniards,

MOUNDS

gathered her children into her arms. She squeezed the four of them into a corner of her single room home. She feared for her life, her children's life, but even more she feared for the safety of her husband, not yet returned from his day at sea, fishing for their next few meals, their livelihood.

To comfort and calm her children, shivering not from cold but from fear induced by the howling winds of Viands, Amichia hummed an ancient tribal song created to entice the great Carib god, Kobo Tano, to protect them.

As Amichia neared the end of the song, an unknown sound forced her voice to halt its search for the final crescendo. Driven by a screaming fear threatening to consume her mind and deposit the remains in a state of irreversible insanity, Amichia's voice slid from its near-peak position to a point approaching the guttural depth of her octave range.

The sound invading her musical incantation, a deafening roar growing in intensity with each passing second, announced the arrival of Viands. The Carib woman dropped to her knees. With a booming voice she implored Kobo Tano, "Please great God of Life. I've always followed your teachings. Have mercy. Take me. Save my children."

Like thousands after her who prayed to a wide array of gods, Amichia hoped her offering of homage would entice Kobo Tano to intervene. The vacuous howls of a killer storm let loose by a mindless ocean only too willing to birth the beast announced a different answer to her pleadings.

Viands visited Amichia's home and her family for the first and last time. Another visit would be unnecessary. The storm's tropical force winds first crushed Amichia, her children, and her home. Then, as if not satisfied—Viands swept their remains out to a welcoming sea where they joined husband and father on a journey from the top of the food chain to the bottom.

No glee issued forth from Viands—only a monotonous howling. The resonance grew in intensity as the storm left the Lesser Antilles in destructive disarray and moved on a steady path towards the easternmost island of the Greater Antilles—Puerto Rico.

"IT'S TAKEN ITS FIRST LIVES," Frank Niles said in a tone belying the churn in his gut. He caught his boss, Grant Clifford as he prepared to leave his office at the U.S. Weather Service.

"Your disturbance?" Grant asked. He removed his jacket, hung it behind the door. He expected to miss dinner. *Maybe she'll keep it warm for a few hours*, the she—his wife of thirty years, Mary Beth.

"It's no longer a disturbance. It's a full-fledged tropical storm."

"Tell me." Grant sat behind his desk, pulled out his dog-eared and worn map of the Caribbean. He spun it towards his assistant.

"A station on Dominica reported through Puerto Rico and Cuba that our friend stormed through the Dominica Passage headed west-northwest. He recorded the barometric pressure as 29.53 and sustained winds at 52 mi/h."

"How many killed?"

"Not sure. They're still counting, but...?"

"What?"

"He said the storm washed entire villages out to sea."

Grant needed to pull a team together. Unless he missed his guess, Franks tropical storm would soon grow into a tropical cyclone, or hurricane, as a few of his staff insisted on calling the most powerful of cyclones found in the Caribbean and southeast United States. Beyond warning those islands in the expected path of the cyclone, there wasn't much they could do until the building behemoth took aim at the United States and they identified a potential location for the storm to sweep ashore. "Call our guys together. We're a little early to anticipate where or if it might make landfall in the states, but we need to prepare contingency plans."

Without responding, Frank headed for the door.

"And, Frank," Grant said.

Frank paused, turned.

"Watch this one close...closer than normal. My instincts now match yours. I think we're in for a rough week or two."

AUGUST 31, 1900 - DAWN OF THE THIRTY-FIRST found Viands positioned at $17^{\circ} 41' N$ $66^{\circ} 24' W$, thirty-five miles south of Guayama on the southern coast of Puerto Rico.

Sustained at 75 mi/h out to forty miles from his center, Viands' winds lacked the punch to inflict major damage to the island's interior or northern coast. Aimed at the coastal towns and villages on the south side of Puerto Rico, however, Viands' blows landed with deadly force. Not a single coastal village or town came through the hurricane without major damage, without unimaginable death.

Viands' forward movement slowed to 12 mi/h before reaching the island. This change over the preceding few hours enabled him to extract massive amounts of moisture from the warm sea. When gorged, Viands expelled the assembled excess on the island's southern coastal flatlands and central mountains. During his passing, Viands' rains accumulated on the island at a rate of one inch an hour for fourteen hours.

While pounding Puerto Rico, Viands' barometric pressure continued to fall. It registered 29.15 inches and 976 millibars at a weather station on Puerto Rico's southern coast.

"This tropical cyclone took pity on us," Juan López Marcos, a Puerto Rican fisherman said to his wife, Maria. His eyes never wavered from the instrument hanging from the wall, his brother-in-law's government-provided barometer.

"The storm's growing fast but will be well away from our island before it reaches maximum strength," Juan said. He and his wife stood in the kitchen of her sister's home in Cayey, fifteen miles inland from their home on the coast in Puerto de Jobos.

"With God's blessing, you aren't home for this," Maria's sister said after Viands announced his arrival. "I told you no good would come from your move to the sea. Fisherman, I'll never understand."

Juan ignored his sister-in-law. He and Maria arrived in Cayey two days before Viands struck the island. They traveled there to join in the family's birthday celebration for Juan's one hundred year-old grandmother.

"When can we..." Maria started. A gust of wind exceeding 60 mi/h slammed into the dried mud walls of the house. Frightened, Maria covered her head with her hands. When the wind again subsided, Maria said, "When...when can we return to our home?"

"Tomorrow, I should think." Juan spoke with confidence, no hesitation.

"Are you sure?"

Juan nodded. "The storm moves west. Tomorrow should be fine."

"Will we find a home, or...or rubble?" Maria asked. Thoughts of her mother's china lying shattered in her kitchen, her beloved rose garden smashed beyond recognition, and her neighbors, forced to ride out the cyclone within walking distance of the pounding surf of the Caribbean Sea, caused anguish for Maria. Tears erupted.

"Prepare yourself for the worst, but remember—we're alive," Juan said. He reached for his wife's face, smiled. His caress helped to settle each of them. "We have each other. We'll rebuild. This is not the first and, I fear—won't be the last time we're visited by a storm of this magnitude."

Maria's eyes cleared after a few dabs of her handkerchief. She agreed with her husband. "Where's it headed next?" she asked. "Jamaica?"

Juan pondered the question for a moment before answering. "Due west? I don't think so. I'd say northwest. Our friends on Hispaniola and Cuba will take a beating, but they should be fine.

MOUNDS

After that, normal steering currents should swing the storm to the north and east through Florida. I'll try to cable your brother in Tampa. Unless I miss my guess, this storm will be a monster by time it crosses the west coast of Florida."

"IT HIT PUERTO RICO," Frank said to Grant two minutes after receiving the cabled report from a weather station in San Juan.

"Damages? Deaths?" Grant's mind swirled with the potential disaster he anticipated from a direct hit on the island.

"They had luck on their side. The storm skirted the southern coast with winds exceeding seventy five miles an hour."

"The barometer – still dropping?"

Frank's face gave Grant his answer. "29.04 and falling."

"Warn Jamaica but demand Haiti and Dominican Republic governments take action. They must evacuate everyone from low-lying areas or they'll have a disaster on their hands."

"Grant, you know we can't demand anything from them. They barely recognize our existence after the way we've treated them over the years."

"I know, I know. Do your best." Grant crossed himself. "May God have mercy on those poor souls."

5

SEPTEMBER 1, 1900 - GRANT AND JUAN LOPEZ MARCOS' prediction remained on track as Viands, on a northwest heading, crossed the southern coast of Dominican Republic on the island of Hispaniola at 18° 30' N 69° 57' W. The track carried Viands through the center of the capital, Santo Domingo. The storm's barometric pressure continued to fall, registering 28.64 inches and 954 millibars. Viands' winds kept up their steady rise, peaking out at over 104 mi/h as the storm swept across the town and trundled towards the island's border with the unprepared country of Haiti.

By time Viands arrived at Haiti's doorstep, his 110 mi/h winds, reaching out to a diameter of one hundred miles, had diminished to a still explosive 90 mi/h. The storm's forward movement dropped to a 9 mi/h. Viands' lethal winds and deluging rains spread across the breadth of Hispaniola on a north south axis.

Reaching the border with Haiti and still at the mercy of unseen steering currents, Viands made a quick turn to the west towards the sleepy village of Port-au-Prince. The storm arrived before dawn on September 2, 1900.

SEPTEMBER 3, 1900 - TRAVERSING THE ISLAND OF Hispaniola drained immense strength from Viands. The trek defoliated every bush, every tree within a narrow ten-mile swath, destroyed half the island's structures, and ravaged the island's population.

MOUNDS

Viands left a wake of devastation across Hispaniola. The destruction touched four out of five people without regard for nationality, race, or creed.

From La Romana in the far east of Dominican Republic to Petite Riviere at the western tip of Haiti, the smell of death permeated the air hanging above the land once Viands passed. The wails of the living left behind to bury the dead not washed out to sea reverberated across the island.

Traveling a route neither preordained nor planned by an overseer of all things good and evil, Viands swept across the Windward Passage separating Cuba from Haiti.

Reaching the island of Cuba at 19° 50' N 75° 32' W in the early morning of September 3rd, Viands' wind speed dropped to 88 mi/h. His barometric pressure increased to 28.91 inches and 966 millibars. The cyclone entered Cuba near Sigua on the southeast coast at the base of the rugged Sierra Maestra Mountains, a range exceeding 6,000 feet in elevation. Passing over, around, and through these mountains forced Viands to surrender additional precious resources.

In another forty-eight hours, after traversing the length of Cuba and entering the Straits of Florida, Viands' vast reserve of power would experience further weakening until his rotating wind speed dropped into the lower seventies.

Viands' reduced power plus additional warnings from the inhabitants of Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, and Haiti meant his passing inflicted reduced death and destruction upon Cuba. This, however, did not mean a proportional reduction in rainfall. During his two days over Cuba, from first frontal squall until the last vestiges of his trailing edge cleared the island, Viands dumped over twenty-five inches of rain, ten inches alone at Santiago in an eight hour period.

"IT'S CONTINUING TO LOSE POWER," Frank Niles said to Grant Clifford. Frank read from a report out of the weather station at Key West.

"What are the latest readings?" Grant asked.

"Barometric pressure has risen above 29.00 and wind speed dropped below eighty," Frank said. "Also, it's barely moving forward."

"Do we think the run up Cuba killed its ability to regenerate?" Grant asked. He knew the answer. The question reflected his hope Frank's instincts might differ from his.

"Not a chance. Our friend is pausing to refresh. Once it gathers additional strength, the damn thing will restart its black-hearted engine from hell. I predict we'll see it resume its destructive track in the next twelve hours."

"It's not a supernatural creature, Frank. It doesn't have a heart—black or otherwise."

"Tell that to the thousands whose lives it's ended."

Grant let it lie. People throughout history referred to storms as if they contained devil-driven intelligence, not a freak of nature controlled by an entity much more powerful. "Where's it headed next? Still thinking Florida's west coast?" Grant asked.

Frank's head bobbed like a Halloween apple in a washtub. "All indications are...are...well...uh, everything points that way."

"Why the hesitation? Where's your mind? What are you thinking? Talk to me. Hundreds if not thousands of lives could be at risk if our warnings don't reach the right people!"

Frank hesitated before continuing. "Remember last week, when...when I told you about the reported anomaly in the gulf?"

Grant chuckled as he remembered the conversation. "You mean the stalking storm?"

"I never said it stalk...forget it. It's not important anyway," Frank said.

"If you're concerned—it's important. What?"

Frank heard the sincerity in his boss' voice. He continued. "I've received two more reports about the anomaly, the storm. Each corroborates the report I read last week, the one from the captain of the Tonopah. The first mate of the Argus, the Greek steamer the Tonopah's captain mentioned, radioed one of the new reports."

"Let me guess. Each reports on a storm stal...I mean tracking a ship?" Grant asked. His tone displayed a hint of sarcasm.

MOUNDS

Frank nodded, ignored the tone. "But..." He paused.

"But what?"

"I don't think the reported storm tracks the ships, at least that's not its purpose," Frank said and stopped. He felt foolish repeating the lines he spent the morning practicing.

Knowing his assistant would never state a position without considering his facts, his suppositions, and the potential ramifications associated with incorrect conclusions, Grant said, "Purpose? You said purpose. You think this anomaly shows purpose by its actions?"

"I...Yes, I'd say I do. It does. It shows purpose."

"Explain," Grant said.

Frank took a deep breath to calm his nerves. "Looking at all three reports, I'm leaning towards the conclusion..." he paused as if reconsidering his next statement.

"Frank?" Grant said. He watched his assistant's demeanor switch from confusion to skepticism – to resolute belief.

"The storm isn't stalking ships, Grant. It's toying with them as it wanders the gulf, east to west, north to south, and back."

Grant gave Frank a look more questioning than incredulous. "Wandering? Storms don't wander to all points of the compass. There has to be a weather related reason for what these people reported seeing."

"I don't think so," Frank said. "Maybe...maybe..." he hesitated.

"Maybe what?" Grant asked. "Speak up. Now's not the time to show a timid side."

"Maybe the storm's not tracking. Maybe it's waiting."

Now incredulous, "Storms don't wait! Waiting for what?" Grant asked.

"Our tropical cyclone, our hurri...no. Forget I mentioned it. The idea is insane."

"Frank, I've known you a long time. I've never known you to show the slightest sign of insanity. Give me your whole rope. I promise I won't hang you."

"It doesn't make sense."

"Let me be the judge," Grant said.

R. E. STARR

Frank grimaced and related his crazy idea the anomaly waited for the Caribbean hurricane to arrive in the gulf, for what reason—he didn't know, extra power, united forces? He could only guess. "While waiting, the anomaly traverses the gulf like an expectant father pacing the hospital floor," Frank said.

When he finished, he apologized for wasting Grant's time. He promised to set his theory aside and concentrate on tracking the Caribbean hurricane, saving as many lives as possible.

Grant remained skeptical during Frank's recitation. When he finished, Grant placed his arm on Frank's shoulder to escort him from the office. "I'm old enough to know one should never say, never, but for now let's concentrate on what we can prove. For instance, depending on the anomaly's location when our hurricane decides to move—this wandering phenomenon could impact where our killer heads next. The rest we'll leave for quieter times when we can give the subject a proper amount of time and reflection."

Open your mind. Leap into Mounds, a supernatural detective story.

Mounds

**Buy The Complete Version of This Book at
Booklocker.com:**

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/2124.html?s=pdf>