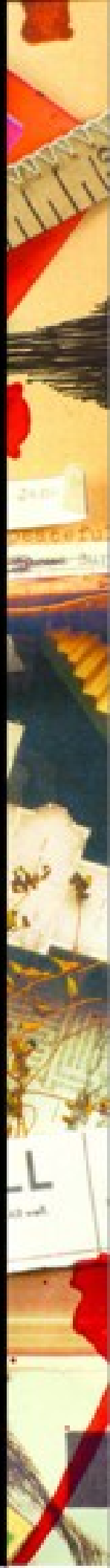


# HOUSE OF LEAVES



MARK Z. DANIELEWSKI

*A Novel*



**MARK Z. DANIELEWSKI'S**

**HOUSE OF LEAVES**

**by  
Zampanô**

**with introduction and notes by  
Johnny Truant**

2<sup>nd</sup> Edition  
Pantheon Books New York

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This novel is a work of fiction. Any references to real people, events,  
establishments, organizations or locales are intended only to give the fiction

a sense of reality and authenticity. Other names, characters and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, as are those fictionalized events and incidents which involve real persons and did not occur or are set in the future. — Ed.

## A Note On This Edition

### Full Color

- The word *house* in blue; *minotaur* and all ~~streak~~ *streak-passages* in red.
- The only struck line in Chapter XXI appears in purple.
- XXXXXX and color plates.

### 2-Color

- Either *house* appears in blue or ~~streak~~ *streak-passages* and the word *minotaur* appear in red.
- No Braille.
- Color or black & white plates.

### Black & White

- Color is not used for the word *house*, *minotaur*, or ~~streak~~ *streak-passages*.
- No Braille.
- Black & white plates.

### Incomplete

- No color.
- No Braille.
- Elements in the exhibits, appendices and index may be missing.

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## FOREWARD

The first edition of House of Leaves was privately distributed and did not contain Chapter 21, Appendix II, Appendix III, or the Index. Every effort has been made to provide appropriate translations and accurately credit all sources. If we have failed in this endeavor, we apologize In advance and will gladly correct in subsequent printings all errors or omissions brought to our attention. — The Editors

This is not for you.

## Introduction

I still get nightmares. In fact I get them so often I should be used to them by now. I'm not. No one ever really gets used to nightmares.

For a while there I tried every pill imaginable. Anything to curb the fear. Excedrin PMs, Melatonin, L-tryptophan, Valium, Vicodin, quite a few members of the barbitol family. A pretty extensive list, frequently mixed, often matched, with shots of bourbon, a few lung rasping bong hits, sometimes even the vaporous confidence-trip of cocaine. None of it helped. I think it's pretty safe to assume there's no lab sophisticated enough yet to synthesize the kind of chemicals I need. A Nobel Prize to the one who invents that puppy.

I'm so tired. Sleep's been stalking me for too long to remember. Inevitable I suppose. Sadly though, I'm not looking forward to the prospect. I say "sadly" because there was a time when I actually enjoyed sleeping. In fact I slept all the time. That was before my friend Lude woke me up at three in the morning and asked me to come over to his place. Who knows, if I hadn't heard the phone ring, would everything be different now? I think about that alot.

Actually, Lude had told me about the old man a month or so before that fateful evening. (Is that right? fate? It sure as hell wasn't -ful. Or was it exactly that?) I'd been in the throes of looking for an apartment after a little difficulty with a landlord who woke up one morning convinced he was Charles de Gaulle. I was so stunned by this announcement that before I could think twice I'd already told him how in my humble estimation he did not at all resemble an airport though the thought of a 757 landing on him was not at all disagreeable. I was promptly evicted. I could have put up a fight but the place was a nuthouse anyway and I was glad to leave. As it turned out Chuckie de Gaulle burnt the place to the ground a week later. Told the police a 757 had crashed into it.

During the following weeks, while I was couching it from Santa Monica to Silverlake looking for an apartment, Lude told me about this old guy who

lived in his building. He had a first floor apartment peering out over a wide, overgrown courtyard. Supposedly, the old man had told Lude he would be dying soon. I didn't think much of it, though it wasn't exactly the kind of thing you forget either. At the time, I just figured Lude had been putting me on. He likes to exaggerate. I eventually found a studio in Hollywood and settled back into my mind numbing routine as an apprentice at a tattoo shop.

It was the end of '96. Nights were cold. I was getting over this woman named Clara English who had told me she wanted to date someone at the top of the food chain. So I demonstrated my unflagging devotion to her memory by immediately developing a heavy crush on this stripper who had Thumper tattooed right beneath her G—string, barely an inch from her shaved pussy or as she liked to call it—"The Happiest Place On Earth." Suffice it say, Lude & I spent the last hours of the year alone, scouting for new bars, new faces, driving recklessly through the canyons, doing our best to talk the high midnight heavens down with a whole lot of bullshit. We never did. Talk them down, I mean.

Then the old man died.

From what I can gather now, he was an American. Though as I would later find out, those who worked with him detected an accent even if they could never say for certain where it came from.

He called himself Zampanô. It was the name he put down on his apartment lease and on several other fragments I found. I never came across any sort of ID, whether a passport, license or other official document insinuating that yes, he indeed was An Actual-&-Accounted-For person.

Who knows where his name really came from. Maybe it's authentic, maybe made up, maybe borrowed, a nom de plume or—my personal favorite—a nom de guerre.

As Lude told it, Zampanô had lived in the building for many years, and though he mostly kept to himself, he never failed to appear every morning and evening to walk around the courtyard, a wild place with knee high weeds and back then populated with over eighty stray cats. Apparently the cats liked the old man alot and though he offered no enticements, they