DARK ADVENTURE RADIO THEATRE

"THE RATS IN THE WALLS"

by

Sean Branney and Andrew Leman

Adapted from "The Rats in the Walls"
By H.P. Lovecraft

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INTRODUCTION

SFX: static, radio tuning, snippet of ’30s song, more tuning, static dissolves to:

Dark Adventure Radio THEME MUSIC.

ANNOUNCER
Tales of intrigue, adventure, and the mysterious occult that will stir your imagination and make your very blood run cold.

MUSIC CRESCENDO.

ANNOUNCER (CONT’D)
This is Dark Adventure Radio Theatre, featuring your host, Creighton Cobb. Today’s episode: H.P. Lovecraft’s “The Rats in the Walls”.

THEME MUSIC DIMINISHES AND EPISODE MUSIC BEGINS.

CREIGHTON COBB
An American businessman undertakes the restoration of his ancient ancestral home in England. After moving in, he’s haunted by strange phenomena, apparently coming from the very walls of the legend-haunted mansion. A team of experts joins him to dig into the centuried structure’s shadowed past, and its shadowy cellars. Can the investigators solve the lingering mystery of the grim and rumor-shrouded priory, or are they merely ushering in the most horrific chapter of the house’s monstrous history?

MUSIC punctuation.

CREIGHTON COBB (CONT’D)
But first, a word from our sponsor.

A few piano notes from the BILE BEANS JINGLE.

CREIGHTON COBB (CONT’D)
Some listeners simply cannot believe that Bile Beans taken at bed time can provide a miraculous, life changing cure.

(MORE)
CREIGHTON COBB (CONT’D)
But they can, and do! Let's meet
Mildred, an actual Bile Beans
customer.

MILDRED
Hello, Mr. Cobb.

CREIGHTON COBB
Our listeners would love to hear
the astonishing story of how Bile
Beans saved your life.

MILDRED
Well, I had a medical condition
which was very painful. I was
dropping weight and losing the
color in my cheeks. I saw ten
different doctors, and none of them
could cure my condition.

CREIGHTON COBB
That's dreadful. What did you do?

MILDRED
I was at my wits end until my
friendly neighborhood pharmacist
asked if I'd tried Bile Beans. I
hadn't, so I bought a tin that day.

CREIGHTON COBB
What happened?

MILDRED
Oh, Mr. Cobb, it was a miracle. As
soon as the next day the pain was
gone and my face resumed a healthy
glow. A week later, I was feeling
better than ever. I've been taking
Bile Beans at bed time ever since.

CREIGHTON COBB
(flirty)
And now Mildred, I must say you're
the very picture of good health!

MILDRED
(blushing)
Thank you, Mr. Cobb. And thank you
Bile Beans!

ANNOUNCER
Friendly family pharmacies favor
Bile Beans – ask your neighborhood
chemist for them today!
CREIGHTON COBB
Stay healthy, bright eyed and slim
with Bile Beans.

MUSIC TRANSITION.

CREIGHTON COBB (CONT'D)
And now, Dark Adventure Radio
Theatre presents H.P. Lovecraft’s
“The Rats in the Walls”.

2 CARFAX BURNS – 1865

Distant CANNON & MUSKET FIRE and SHOUTING/SCREAMING. The
sounds of a plantation bracing itself for ATTACK. FOOTSTEPS
RUN PAST on the wooden floor.

GRANDPA
Hannah! Is that you? Get in here!
Help me!

FOOTSTEPS of HANNAH, a slave woman, slow down and stop.

HANNAH
The Yankee soldiers broke through
the lines, Mister Delapole. Your
men can’t hold 'em off. They're
coming here – I reckon they’re
planning to burn Carfax for sure!

GRANDPA
(wheezy)
What of Mr. Harper? Where is--

HANNAH
He got himself shot, down at the
front gate. Time for me to go.

FOOTSTEPS as she prepares to go.

GRANDPA
You're not going anywhere! Fetch me
my lock box.

HANNAH
I’d say my days of fetching for you
are done.

GRANDPA
Why you ungrateful nig--
HANNAH
No, sir! Don't you use that word.
Don't you dare! Not ever again!
Times is changed.

MORE RUNNING FOOTSTEPS APPROACH as Lizzie runs in.

LIZZIE
Big Daddy, the Yankees are coming.
They have torches!

GRANDPA
I hear 'em, Lizzie. Where's
Matthew?

LIZZIE
I sent him to hide in the root
cellar.

GRANDPA
Bring him to me.

BREAKING GLASS OUTSIDE. The sound of APPROACHING TROOPS gets
louder. MUSKET FIRE.

LIZZIE
But Big Daddy, they're coming!

GRANDPA
I'm still the master of this
plantation. He's my only grandson!
Bring him to me now!

LIZZIE
Yes sir.

FOOTSTEPS as Lizzie runs out.

HANNAH
That woman's a fool.

GRANDPA
(wheezy)
There's something we can agree on.
Hannah, get me the lock box.

HANNAH
Look at you, squirming on that bed
like a bug on a pin. My, how the
mighty have fallen.

GRANDPA
It's important.
HANNAH
You’re a crazy old man. Mr. Lincoln’s troops at your door and you’re worried about some old box. What’s in it? Money?

GRANDPA
It’s not that. It’s... something for Matthew. That little boy has never done you any harm.

HANNAH
(after a pause)
No, I suppose he hasn’t. Don’t figure I could say the same for you.

GRANDPA
I suppose not. But my time’s about up. What matters now is the boy. The future. The box. Please.

The RATTLE of a metal box and key.

HANNAH
Here you go then, god help me.

GRANDPA
You can go now. The soldiers will treat you kindly enough.

HANNAH
Goodbye, Mister Delapore. (pause) I hope the lord will forgive you and your family for the terrible things you done. I truly do.

GRANDPA
I smell smoke. Go on now--

CROSSING FOOTSTEPS as Hannah leaves and Lizzie brings Matthew. BATTLE SOUNDS INTENSIFY.

HANNAH
Goodbye, Miss Lizzie.

Hannah HURRIES DOWN THE STAIRS.

LIZZIE
Hannah, what--
GRANDPA
Let her go, Lizzie. Is that young Matthew? Bring him here. We don't have much time.

LIZZIE
Yes, sir. Go to your grand-daddy, Matthew.

GRANDPA
(kind but firm)
Matthew, you come here now. Closer. Now listen. What I'm going to tell you is important. I want you to remember every word, understand?

LITTLE MATTHEW
Yes, sir.

GRANDPA
You see what I have here?

LITTLE MATTHEW
Your lock-box.

GRANDPA
That's right. And see inside here is an envelope. You know what that is?

LITTLE MATTHEW
It holds letters.

GRANDPA
So it does. You're a clever little boy. How old are you now?

LITTLE MATTHEW
Seven and a half, sir.

GRANDPA
Well this here envelope holds very important papers. It was given to me by my father, and it was given to him by his father before him. I should give it to your father, but he's gone to Richmond.

LITTLE MATTHEW
Yes, sir. To shoot at Yankees!

GUNFIRE GETTING CLOSER.
GRANDPA
(amused)
That's right. He's shooting at them
Yankees, and these here Yankees are
shooting at us.

LIZZIE
Big Daddy, we--

GRANDPA
Matthew, the papers in here tell
certain things about the past of
our family. They're secrets, meant
for your father. They're not for
little boys. Even clever ones.

LITTLE MATTHEW
Secrets like about cousin Randolph?

LIZZIE
Matthew!

GRANDPA
What do you know about your cousin
Randolph?

LITTLE MATTHEW
Papa said he went among the negroes
and became a voodoo priest.

GRANDPA
He said that to you?

LITTLE MATTHEW
I heard him tell Mama.

GRANDPA
Lizzie, is this true?

LIZZIE
Big Daddy, the soldiers are here!
We can't stay any longer! I had the
men hitch the wagon--

GRANDPA
I'm not leaving Carfax, Lizzie.
Matthew, the Delapores are a proud
and noble family. Don't you talk
about your cousin to anyone. This
envelope. It's sealed, do you see?
I'm going to trust you to keep it
sealed, and give it to your father
for me. Do you understand?
LITTLE MATTHEW
I will, sir.

GRANDPA
Some day, your father will give it
back to you, and then you will read
for yourself. But not until--

BOOM! An artillery shell blasts into the plantation house.
Pandemonium! The WHOOSH OF FLAME. BEGIN TRANSITION MUSIC.

LIZZIE
Daddy! Matthew, come to me!

PANICKED SHOUTS of "FIRE!" from off.

LITTLE MATTHEW
Mama!

LIZZIE
Get away from that window!

LITTLE MATTHEW
But Grand-dad!

Flames ROAR as the mansion burns!

GRANDPA
Take the boy - go!

LIZZIE
Come, Matthew!

They RUN as TIMBERS START TO FALL. MUSIC. CROSSFADE to the
sound of WWI AIRPLANES overhead:

R.A.F. AIRFIELD -- 1917

NORRYS is an affable air force pilot in his late 20s, from
somewhere right about Bolton, England. ALFRED DELAPORTE is a
23-year-old American aviator raised in Boston.

NORRYS
Crikey, Alfred, what a tale! Did your father ever see what was in
the envelope?

ALFRED
No, it burned with the plantation.

NORRYS
No!
APPROACHING FOOTSTEPS.

CAPTAIN HILL
Ten-hut.

NORRYS
Captain Hill, sir!

ALFRED
(simultaneously)
Sir, yes sir!

CAPTAIN HILL
At ease, Lieutenants. We just got word from the Wing Commander there'll be a briefing at 0900 hours. Appears the Hun may be making a move with their planes - our squadron will need to be ready with ours.

ALFRED
We'll be there, sir.

CAPTAIN HILL
Just what are you two gabbing about?

NORRYS
He's telling me stories from America, sir! Burning plantations, family secrets, great stuff!

CAPTAIN HILL
Ha, America! Carry on.

He MARCHES OFF.

NORRYS
You heard him, carry on.

ALFRED
My dad eventually made it through the lines to Richmond and was reunited with my grandpa. But great-granddad was killed that day at Carfax. I wonder what he'd think of me now, fighting in another war.

NORRYS
And a Yank in the bargain, eh what!
ALFRED
Ha! By god, Norrys, that's right!
Well with the old homestead
destroyed the family did move
north, where my grandmother was
from. That's when we finally lost
our last real link with the old de
la Poer line. I never imagined I'd
pick it up again here in England.

NORRYS
And I never imagined I'd meet an
American with a tie to Exham
Priory! And flying with my own
squadron, no less.

ALFRED
I'm writing a letter to my father -
he's going to love hearing about
the old family seat. I mean c'mon -
a ruined castle complete with all
the old legends you've told me
about. He'll think it's a gas!

NORRYS
Yes, they're right ripping, some of
them, although the people up the
valley take them pretty seriously.

ALFRED
Dad's always told me that we
Delapores fled from England under a
cloud of suspicion, but if he knew
anything about the murders
committed by... what did you say
his name was?

NORRYS
Walter de la Poer, eleventh Baron
Exham.

ALFRED
Yes, if he knew about them he's
never mentioned it. And you say no
one's lived in Exham Priory since
my family left it?

NORRYS
Not since the 17th century. I must
take you there. It's a fascinating
old ruin. Quite picturesque.

(MORE)
NORRYS (CONT'D)
The locals avoid it, but my uncle gets requests from architects and that lot to study it because it has Gothic towers resting on a Saxon or Romanesque substructure, they say. And the foundation in turn is of a still earlier order: Roman, and even Druidic or native Cymric, if legends speak truly. Built right into the side of a limestone cliff!

ALFRED
Amazing. And it's your uncle who owns it now?

NORRYS
It's part of his estates, but it's not much use to him. I'm sure he'd be glad to hand it back to the de la Poers. For a reasonable sum, of course.

They LAUGH.

ALFRED
Ha! Wouldn't that be great? My dad would love that! He's got the money. Since mother died he's not too attached to Massachusetts. I'll put that in my letter too.

AIRPLANES fly overhead and FOOTSTEPS of a band of men rush by.

CAPTAIN HILL
Look alive, chaps! Jerry is on the move. The Commander wants us on the double. We're to fly at dawn!

ALFRED
Right! Come on, Norrys.

BEGIN MUSIC TRANSITION.

NORRYS
This beastly war. Good luck, Delapore. My best to your father when you write.

ALFRED
Thanks so much, Norrys. Keep your nose up! I'll see you on the other side!
The ROAR of the AIRPLANES and the WHISTLE of a DROPPING BOMB crossfades into the WHISTLE of a STEAM TRAIN.

MANCHESTER -- 1923

Fade up the BUSY SOUND of the Manchester train station.

CONDUCTOR
(shouting off)
Windemere! All aboard for Windermere!

TRAIN DOORS OPEN and the many FOOTSTEPS of passengers. The voice of SIR WILLIAM BRINTON is warm and wise and very British. He's in his 60s.

NORRYS
Sir William!

BRINTON
(shouting)
Captain Norrys! I say!

NORRYS
(approaching)
Right this way. Good to see you again, sir. Welcome aboard. Mind the gap.

BRINTON
Yes, yes, thank you.

NORRYS
 Porter, see to it that Sir William Brinton's bags are on the private car heading to Anchester.

PORTER
Right you are, governor.

The CLINK of some coins. The porter SHUFFLES the baggage. We follow the men as they ENTER the train car and WALK DOWN THE AISLE.

NORRYS
Thank you so very much for coming.

BRINTON
Thank you for the invitation. It will be a pleasure to see Exham Priory again. Such a curious place.
NORRYS
I think you'll find the changes remarkable. Mr. Delapore has poured his heart and soul into the restoration. And his considerable fortune.

BRINTON
So I've gathered. Typical.

NORRYS
Typical, sir?

BRINTON
Americans. Always overdoing it.

NORRYS
Oh, forgive me, Sir William, but no, it's not what you think. It's all to do with his son.

BRINTON
His son?

NORRYS
Yes, Lieutenant Alfred Delapore. A wonderful fellow. I flew with him in the war, you know.

BRINTON
Oh, bully.

NORRYS
Yes. Alfred was shot down over the Somme, and he was frightfully maimed. Richthofen.

BRINTON
The Red Baron! I say...

NORRYS
The nearest field hospital was at Saint Eloi, where he got some dodgy treatment. Alfred lived for two years an invalid. His father did all he could, of course. He was devoted. I tried to be of some assistance, but... well....

BRINTON
Yes, no, of course.

A BLAST OF STEAM announces the train's departure and we hear the SOUND OF ITS MOTION throughout.
NORRYS
After Alfred's death Mr. Delapore was utterly adrift, and he had so enjoyed Alfred's and my letters about the priory and the old family legends that he bought the place. Truth be told, my uncle practically gave it away.

BRINTON
I see.

NORRYS
With Alfred gone, you see, Mr. Delapore is now the last of his line. I think he restored the priory as a sort of monument to his son, re-creating the past in mourning for a future that is now lost. Keeping the memory of his son alive, in a way. Doing for the building what he couldn't do for his boy. Let's to the salon car...

BRINTON
I had no idea. I wonder...

NORRYS
What, Sir William?

BRINTON
Was that entirely wise?

NORRYS
Ah, well, as I mentioned in my telegrams, there have been some unexpected discoveries, some... complications, and... well, now here we all are.

BRINTON
We all?

NORRYS
Yes, you're the last to arrive. The others are awaiting us in the salon. It's just in here. Come, I'll introduce you.

The DOOR OPENS into a small room containing several people.
AD LIB MURMURS of recognition/relief/etc.
NORRYS (CONT'D)
Gentlemen, and Madame, Sir William
made it in the nick of time! An old
family friend, distinguished
professor of archaeology at
Cambridge, and fresh from the dusty
fields of Anatolia.

POLITE APPLAUSE and AD LIB GREETINGS.

BRINTON
You're too kind, Edward.

LEEDS is substantially more introverted than Brinton. He's a
quiet, studious man in his 50s.

LEEDS
Hello, Brinton. Good to see you
again. How did you find the Troad?

BRINTON
With difficulty, Leeds.

POLITE CHUCKLES.

NORRYS
Professor Leeds is--

BRINTON
Yes, Leeds and I know each other
well. The professor is quite the
authority on Anglo-Saxon
archaeology, here in Britain. He
spearheaded the excavation of
Sutton Courtenay. A Cambridge man!

LEEDS
Magdelene College, yes.

NORRYS
May I present Dr. Gilbert Trask,
Kings College London.

Trask is professorial, though not quite as advanced in years
or social standing as Sir William.

TRASK
How do you do, Sir William? It's an
honor to meet you.

BRINTON
What's your field, Dr. Trask?
TRASK
Physical anthropology.

BRINTON
Ah, the study of human remains. An interesting speciality. What do you make of this Piltdown Man business?

TRASK
It would certainly be exciting if it proves to be genuine, but many of my colleagues have their doubts.

THORNTON is young, around 30, and has a delicate, sensitive nature. He is not, in any way, a deliberate fraud.

THORNTON
I'm sorry, Piltdown Man?

NORRYS
And this is Mr. Neville Thornton.

THORNTON
Hello. Who is this Piltdown Man?

TRASK
It's a fossilized anthropoid specimen discovered about ten years ago, fifty miles south of London, which purports to show human evolution.

BRINTON
Some have called it the "missing link".

THORNTON
Ah. And you think it's a fraud.

TRASK
Well... I'm convinced that mankind evolved, but not that it happened in East Sussex.

Mulvany, Brinton and Leeds might chuckle.

THORNTON
You're too circumspect to say it's a fake, but that's what you think. Every field has its fraudsters. It makes difficulties for those of us doing legitimate work.
BRINTON
And what work do you do, Mr. Thornton?

Slight pause.

NORRYS
Mr. Thornton is a highly esteemed psychic investigator. His references are impeccable.

BRINTON
(dubious all the same)
I see.
(pause)
Good to meet you, young man.

NORRYS
And here we have Mrs. Mary Mulvany. She teaches the history of ancient Britain at Trinity in Dublin.

BRINTON
Charmed.

Mrs. Mulvany is a widower. She's very well versed in her subject matter and is no wilting flower. She's also fond of a drink.

MULVANY
I've followed your work, Sir William. An honor to make your acquaintance.

NORRYS
Mrs. Mulvany has published a fascinating monograph connecting the mysterious fate of the Roman Ninth Legion to the origins of the creature Grendel in Beowulf.

BRINTON
That's the legion that vanished into Scotland?

MULVANY
Ah, that's a fine question. Don't believe everything you hear.

NORRYS
She's quite an expert on ancient Latin inscriptions.
BRINTON
Well I must say it's a motley crew
you've assembled here, Norrys.

NORRYS
Yes, thank you all so much. Mr.
Delapore is hoping that your
diverse expertise will help him
resolve the current situation at
the priory.

BRINTON
And where is our host?

NORRYS
Mr. Delapore's at Exham Priory
making preparations for your
arrival. He's arranged for
motorcars to take us from the
station to the house, and he looks
forward to greeting you all at
dinner and giving you the full
story.

TRASK
It all sounds a bit like one of
those mystery novels by that young
woman from Devon--

MULVANY
Mrs. Christie, with her odd little
Belgian detective.

NORRYS
I assure it's nothing so thrilling
as that. We'll arrive at Anchester
in less than an hour and you'll be
able to see Exham Priory in all its
restored glory.

TRANSITION MUSIC.

5

THE DRIVE

5

The sounds of CARS DRIVING.

NORRYS
Well, Sir William, it'll be just
around this bend.

MUSIC RESolves in a note of AWE and possibly DANGER.
BRINTON
Good heavens!

NORRYS
Quite a change from the old days, eh? Mr. Delapre spared no expense.

LEEDS
How much of it is new? It certainly has the look of a Jacobean or older...

NORRYS
The towers were the only bits standing above ground, Professor Leeds. All the rest of it's been rebuilt as accurately as possible. Mr. Delapre and I did exhaustive research.

BRINTON
Extraordinary work, really. I know he couldn't have done it without you, Edward. You should be proud.

NORRYS
Thank you, sir. It was quite an undertaking. And here we are. That's Wakefield, the butler. It seems he's got the others sorted already.

The car ROLLS TO A STOP in front of Exham Priory. The CAR DOORS OPEN.

WAKEFIELD
Gentlemen, welcome to Exham Priory.

CRUNCHY FOOTSTEPS as they get out.

NORRYS
Wakefield.

WAKEFIELD
Always a pleasure Captain Norrys. You must be tired from your journey. If you gentlemen will allow me, my staff will show you to your rooms, where refreshment awaits you.

BRINTON
Good show.
LEEDS
Thank you.

WAKEFIELD
Carlton here will show you to your room, Professor Leeds, and Miller will escort you, Sir William. Your baggage will brought up presently and Mr. Delapole has requested that you join him for supper in the dining room at eight. If you need anything whatsoever, please let your valet know and we'll attend to it immediately.

NORRYS
Don't mind me, Wakefield. I know my way.

WAKEFIELD
Indeed, sir.

FOOTSTEPS as the men go their ways.

ROOM SERVICE

MILLER
If you'd follow me, sir.

Brinton heads into the house, following Miller.

MILLER (CONT'D)
This way, sir. Up the stairs.

Brinton
(pausing to admire details of the restoration)
Marvelous. The stone work...

MILLER
What's that, sir?

Brinton
The restoration, it's quite amazing. You can see here where the original stonework joins the more recent.

MILLER
Oh. Thank you, sir.
BRINTON
Magnificent. How does it feel
living in a place with such a
tremendous history?

MILLER
I'm sure it's quite an honor, sir.

BRINTON
You're not from the local area,
then?

MILLER
No, sir. Dungworth, sir.

BRINTON
I see.

MILLER
Your room's just down this
corridor, sir.

BRINTON
And what about Mr. Delapore? Has he
been good to work for?

MILLER
(uneasy)
I wouldn't know, sir. He keeps
mostly to himself.

BRINTON
I suppose it's difficult for an
American. And there's no other
family, it's just the staff?

MILLER
That's right, sir, the seven of us.
And the cats.

BRINTON
Cats, you say?

MILLER
Yes, sir. Mr. Delapore has nine of
them.

BRINTON
Oh my! Nine cats!

MILLER
And Captain Norrys. He's been like
a son to Mr. Delapore these several
months.
BRINTON
Of course.

Miller OPENS THE DOOR to Brinton's room.

MILLER
Here we are, sir.

BRINTON
Oh, this is quite splendid. Hmm, what lovely arras.

MILLER
(ominously)
They help keep the chill out, sir. The W.C. is just through that door. Will there be anything else, sir?

BRINTON
No, I can manage for myself, thank you... Miller, isn't it?

MILLER
Kind of you to remember, sir. Dinner is at eight.

MUSICAL transition. A GRANDFATHER CLOCK STRIKES 8.

THE GRAND BANQUET OF EXPOSITION

Fade in MURMUR of the gathered investigators and the occasional CLINK of glassware.

BRINTON
(fading in)
...Five score and one, I said. One to change the bulb, and the rest to realign the stones!

Polite LAUGHTER. A LARGE WOODEN DOOR CREAKS OPEN and a light BELL RINGS.

WAKEFIELD
Mrs. Mulvany, gentlemen, may I present your host, Mr. Matthew Delapore.

MATTHEW DELAPORE is 66 years of age. He's a warm and enthusiastic host, if not quite by the book. He is more casual in his manner than anyone else in the house, possibly the county.
DELAPORE
(delighted)
That's all right, Wakefield. I'm not much for ceremony. My friends, thank you so much for coming to my home. I'm sorry if I've kept you waiting. I hope you found your rooms agreeable.

AD LIB ASSENT.

BRINTON
Splendid. Really, the restoration work is quite extraordinary. My congratulations.

MULVANY
I thought the same thing. It's like stepping back in time. Well done.

DELAPORE
Thank you. High praise from an historian! I'll admit there are a few cheats - you'll see above you: those flickering candles are really electric lights.

Polite LAUGHTER and OOHS and AAHS.

DELAPORE (CONT'D)
But please, be seated. Let us begin our meal and I'll explain why I've brought you all here. Mrs. Mulvany, please, here at my right. Let's see, Mr. Thornton, you'll be here, next to Professor Leeds. Sir William, you're just opposite, that's right.

Everyone SHUFFLES AROUND to their appropriate seats.

DELAPORE (CONT'D)
All right, Wakefield, what's cooking?

WAKEFIELD
Our soup this evening is a Consommé Olga, paired with a dry Madeira.
(to Mrs. Mulvany)
Madame?

MULVANY
Yes, thank you.
A MURMUR of approval as the servants begin to make their rounds.

DELAPORE
Now then, to what brings us here. I moved into Exham Priory on the 16th of July, after a restoration that took over two years.

Sounds of CUTLERY and EATING.

DELAPORE (CONT'D)
It would have been difficult under the best of circumstances, but on top of that the foreman couldn't hire a worker who'd been born within fifty miles of the place. Laborers, materials, everything had to be brought in.

LEEDS
This was because of the superstitions and legends?

DELAPORE
Exactly.

NORRYS
This is a table full of educated people, but for the locals, having a Delapore restoring the priory, well, you might as well tell the Transylvanian villagers that Dracula was back and rebuilding his castle.

A RIPPLE of mirth.

DELAPORE
I couldn't have done it at all without Edward's help. The locals wouldn't even talk to me until he convinced them how little I knew of my heritage. And then I think they held my ignorance against me. They viewed Exham Priory as nothing less than a haunt of fiends and werewolves.

THORNTON
Fiends and werewolves? I'm sorry, Mr. Delapore, but what would make them think that? What happened here?
DELAPOR
The priory represents only the most recent building at this location. This site has been occupied for... well, you tell us, Sir William. You're one of the experts.

BRINTON
The priory stands on the site of a prehistoric temple; a Druidical or ante-Druidical thing which must have been contemporary with Stonehenge. Indescribable rites were celebrated here; and there are unpleasant tales of the transference of these rites into the Cybele-worship which the Romans introduced.

THORNTON
I'm sorry, what's that?

MULVANY
Cybele's the original earth-mother figure, worshipped even before the days of classical Greece.

THORNTON
Worshipped here? You mean... here?

TRASK
Has anyone done a proper excavation? It could be an important site archeologically.

BRINTON
Actually, this isn't my first visit to Exham. I participated in a survey here many years ago. In the sub-cellar we saw inscriptions referring to the Magna Mater whose dark worship was once vainly forbidden to Roman citizens. I assume they're still there?

DELAPOR
You bet they are.
MULVANY
Anchester had been the camp of the third Augustan legion - there's plenty of evidence for that - and it was said that the temple of Cybele was splendid, and thronged with worshippers who performed nameless ceremonies at the bidding of a Phrygian priest.

THORNTON
Phrygian?

LEEDS
That's where Turkey-in-Asia is now.

BRINTON
South of Bythinia.

LEEDS
West of Cappadocia.

NORRYS
Just think of the Trojan War.

MULVANY
Thank you. It's said that the fall of the old religion did not end the orgies at the temple, but that the priests carried on in the new faith without real change.

THORNTON
I'm sorry, orgies?

MULVANY
I don't mean to shock you, Mr. Thornton, but there are episodes in the Anglo-Saxon chronicles which suggest these rites did not vanish with the Romans.

LEEDS
Certain among the Saxons added to what remained of the temple, and gave it the essential outline it subsequently preserved, making it the centre of a cult feared through half the heptarchy.
BRINTON
About 1000 A.D. the place is mentioned in a chronicle as being a substantial stone priory housing a strange and powerful monastic order, and surrounded by extensive gardens which needed no walls to protect them.

THORNTON
No... people would have feared the place.

LEEDS
It was never destroyed by the Danes, though after the Norman Conquest it must have declined tremendously; since there was no impediment when Henry the Third granted the site to Gilbert de la Poer, First Baron Exham, in 1261.

Discreet FOOTSTEPS as the staff returns.

DELAPORE
(delighted)
Ah, my great-great-great whatever he was. My direct ancestor! Of course back then it was pronounced "de la Poer". We changed it after we came to America. Ah, Wakefield!

WAKEFIELD
Begging your pardon, sir. The fish course tonight is Poached Salmon with Mousseline Sauce, and Cucumbers. The wine is a moselle from Riesling.

TRASK
A moselle? Splendid!

SERVING. AD LIB APPRECIATION.

THORNTON
Well that's all... very... interesting, but is that what has the local populace so terrified now? It does seem rather a long time ago.
TRASK
Yes, one presumes there are legends
about the family as well as the
location.

DELAPORE
Oh, Dr. Trask, a great many. But
neither my parents nor I knew much
about the family history. It was my
son Alfred who first learned about
all of it from young Captain Norrys
here, during the war. It was they
who told me!

NORRYS
The Norrys family have been
neighbors to Exham Priory for
centuries, so I had heard quite a
few of the tales. One chronicle
gives a reference to a de la Poer
as "cursed of God" in 1307.

BRINTON
Why's that?

NORRYS
Most accounts are vague. Fireside
tales of a grisly and ghastly sort.

THORNTON
Such as?

NORRYS
Local lore held the de la Poer line
as a race of hereditary demons,
blamed for the disappearance of
villagers over generations.

DELAPORE
I think some of the locals around
here still believe it.

All LAUGH.

NORRYS
The worst characters, apparently,
were the barons and their direct
heirs. There seemed to be an inner
cult in the family, presided over
by the head of the house, and
sometimes closed except to a few
members.

(MORE)
NORRYS (CONT'D)
Temperament rather than ancestry was evidently the basis of this cult, for it was entered by several who married into the family. Lady Margaret Trevor from Cornwall, wife of Godfrey, the second son of the fifth baron, became a favorite bane of children all over the countryside.

DELAPORE
Yes! She was the heroine of this horrible old ballad - it came from Wales or somewhere, didn't it, Edward?

MULVANY
I know it! "At yon cliffside those wee bairns died,
And knew their mothers never;
That knew the house o'the warloch's spouse,
The witch, old Maggie Trevor."

DELAPORE
Ha! That's it!

MULVANY
There's another ballad, the hideous tale of Lady Mary de la Poer, who shortly after her marriage to the Earl of Shrewsfield was killed by him and his mother, both of the slayers being absolved and blessed by the priest to whom they confessed what they dared not repeat to the world.

TRASK
Good lord, Delapere. One can see why the peasantry harbored trepidations about your family.

NORRYS
The ballads fueled this folklore about the priory and its inhabitants.

DELAPORE
The legends weren't just about the family. They were about the land too. They were intertwined.
TRASK
How so?

NORRYS
Of course there are tales of wails and howlings in the barren, windswept valley beneath the limestone cliff; of the graveyard stenches after the spring rains; of the floundering, squealing white thing on which Sir John Clave’s horse had trod one night in a lonely field...

DELAPORÉ
And of the servant who had gone mad at what he saw in the priory in the full light of day. A whole lot of ridiculous spooky tales. I never took any of it seriously, of course.

THORNTON
No?

MULVANY
Accounts of vanished peasants wouldn't seem especially significant in view of mediaeval custom. Prying curiosity meant death.

BRINTON
More than one severed head had been publicly shewn on the bastions of the priory - just outside.

NORRYS
Alfred was always amused by an exceedingly picturesque tale of a legion of bat-winged devils that were said to keep Witches’ Sabbath each night at the priory – a legion whose sustenance might explain the abundance of coarse vegetables harvested in the vast gardens.

DELAPORÉ
Yes. But his favorite was the tale of the rats – a scampering army of them which burst forth from the castle three months after my family fled.

(MORE)
DELAPORÉ (CONT'D)
A monstrous rodent army which
devoured all before it: fowl, cats,
dogs, hogs, sheep, and even two
hapless human beings.

TRASK
Good lord.

NORRYS
Around that unforgettable rodent
army a whole separate cycle of
myths revolves, for it scattered
among the village homes and brought
curses and horrors in its train.

DELAPORÉ
So, you can see what I was up
against as I pushed to complete the
restoration of my ancestral home.
It was a constant impediment to the
work - but not to me personally.

NORRYS
Quite to the contrary. You did an
extraordinary job of marshalling
the workers and the antiquarians
who advised you through the
process.

DELAPORÉ
You're too kind, my lad. When the
task was finally done I viewed
these great rooms, vaulted
ceilings, mullioned windows, and
broad staircases with a sense of
satisfaction which made it all
worthwhile.

LEEDS
I must say, every attribute of the
Middle Ages has been ingeniously
reproduced.

TRASK
And the new parts blend perfectly
with the original walls and
foundations.

BRINTON
It's a remarkable achievement.
THORNTON
(correcting himself
halfway through)
Your son is-- would be quite proud.

An awkward pause.

DELAPORE
Yes, well you're very kind. While
it's been medievally refitted, we
made sure the place is free from
old vermin and old ghosts alike.

All CHUCKLE.

DELAPORE (CONT'D)
I decided I would reside here
permanently. I even changed my name
to the original spelling to prove
that a de la Poer need not be a
fiend.

RED MEAT.

NORRYS
Ah, the trusty Wakefield returns.

WAKEFIELD
If I might interrupt sir - the
entree.

DELAPORE
Ah!

WAKEFIELD
Filets Mignon Lili and Vegetable
Marrow Farcí, with a Bordeaux
claret, 1914. Madame?

MULVANY
Good on you, Mr. Wakefield.

DELAPORE
It looks wonderful. Compliments to
the kitchen.

WAKEFIELD
Yes, sir.

SERVING.
BRINTON
Mr. Delapore, it's an astonishing tale, and yet it seems it's not finished. Captain Norrys mentioned a discovery? A... complication. Clearly something...
(grasping for polite words)
...of note must have led you to invite us all here. Archaeologists, historians, anthropologists, a psychic researcher...

DELAPOR(E (with an embarrassed chuckle)
Ah, Sir William. Edward told me you'd see through to the heart of things. There is more I have to tell you, but it might seem a little strange. Shall I continue?

The guests all AD LIB their encouragement.

DELAPOR(E (CONT'D)
So, as I said before I moved in on July 16th. It was just me, and my cats. You must like cats, Mrs. Mulvany, don't you?

MULVANY
They offer beauty, sufficiency, ease, and good manners — what more can civilisation require?

DELAPOR(E
What indeed? I'm very fond of cats. My eldest, Pluto, is seven years old and came with me from my home back in America, in Bolton, Massachusetts. I'm sure you'll see him about. He's a black cat but don't let that scare you. He's always been good luck to me!

MULVANY
I'm sure.

DELAPOR(E
The others I accumulated whilst living with Captain Norrys' family during the restoration.
NORRYS
He's like a magnet for them!

DELAPOROLE
Anyway, for five days I spent my
time pouring over some very old
family data. I had obtained an
account of the final tragedy and
flight of Walter de la Poer. One of
the greatest of the family secrets.

THORNTON
Did they confirm your fears?

DELAPOROLE
Worse, I suppose. My ancestor was
accused, with much reason, it
seems, of having killed all the
other members of his household,
except four servants. Killed them
in their sleep.

AD LIB shocked murmurs.

DELAPOROLE (CONT'D)
This happened about two weeks after
he'd made a discovery of some kind
which changed his whole demeanor.
Apparently he disclosed the
discovery to no one save the
servants who assisted him then
fled.

BRINTON
I say. Go on.

DELAPOROLE
This deliberate slaughter, which
included a father, three brothers,
and two sisters, was largely
condoned by the villagers. And the
law apparently allowed de la Poer
to escape honored, unharmed, and
undisguised to Virginia.

TRASK
Outrageous!

MULVANY
But why?
DELAPORE
The general whispered sentiment seemed to be that he had purged the land of an ancient curse.

TRASK
What was this "discovery" that set him off?

DELAPORE
I've no idea. Walter de la Poer must have already known the sinister tales about his family. He was described as a shy, gentle youth in England. People who knew him in Virginia described him as troubled and apprehensive.

THORNTON
Curious...

DELAPORE
(trying to get back on track)
But that's... on July 22 occurred... an incident which... which I dismissed at the time. It was so simple as to be almost negligible. I mean, I was in a building practically fresh and new...

BRINTON
Out with it, man.

DELAPORE
(overcoming hesitancy)
My old black cat, whose moods I know so well, was out of sorts: alert and anxious. He roved from room to room, restless and disturbed, and sniffed constantly about the walls in the old Gothic section.

There is an awkward pause. The GRANDFATHER CLOCK ticks.

BRINTON
I'm sorry, that was the--
DELAPORE
No, I realize how trite it sounds – like the inevitable dog in the
ghost story, which always growls before his master sees the sheeted
figure. I didn't even really notice it myself at the time, it was only
later, after... other incidents... that it seemed significant.

BRINTON
Other incidents?

DELAPORE
The next day Wakefield came to me in my study, and told me that all
the cats in the household were behaving very strangely. I told him
that there must be some singular odor from the old stonework,
imperceptible to us, but which the cats could detect.

THORNTON
Cats can be preternaturally perceptive.

LEEDS
Seems more likely that there were mice, or rats.

NORRYS
We didn't think so. There are field mice in the countryside but they've
never strayed into the high walls of the Norrys manor. And don't
forget, there had been no rats at the priory for three hundred years.

DELAPORE
In the end, I dismissed the whole thing. That night, I retired to my
chamber in the west tower. This room is circular, very high, and
hung with arras which I had myself chosen in London. Seeing that Pluto
was with me, I shut the door and sank into bed with my furry friend
in his standard place across my feet.

MUSIC and SOUNDSCAPE UNDERSCORE.
DELAPORE (CONT'D)
I must have fallen asleep, for I recall waking from a strange dream when the cat started violently. I saw him, head strained forward, fore feet on my ankles, and hind feet stretched behind. He was looking intensely at a point on the wall somewhat west of the window. And as I watched, I knew that Pluto was not vainly excited. Whether the arras actually moved I cannot say. I think it did, very slightly. But what I can swear to is that behind it I heard a low, distinct scurrying as of rats or mice.

A MURMUR passes through the rapt diners. We hear what follows.

DELAPORE (CONT'D)
Suddenly the cat had jumped on the tapestry, bringing the whole section to the floor, and exposing a damp, ancient wall of stone; patched here and there by the restorers, and devoid of any trace of rats. Pluto raced up and down the floor by this part of the wall, clawing the fallen arras, trying at times to insert a paw between the wall and the oaken floor. He found nothing, and after a time returned to his place across my feet. I had not moved, but I did not sleep again that night.

TRASK
I should think not. Go on.

DELAPORE
In the morning I questioned all the staff, and found that the cook remembered the actions of a cat which had rested on her windowsill.

THORNTON
What did this cat do?
DELAPORE
Howled at some unknown hour of the night, awaking the cook in time for her to see him dart purposefully out of the open door down the stairs.

NORRYS
Mr. Delapore paid a call on me in the afternoon, and he told me about the strange behavior of the cats. I became exceedingly interested. The odd incidents appealed to my sense of the picturesque, and we reminisced about the local ghostly lore.

BRINTON
I see.

NORRYS
No, we recognized how silly it was, and I gave him some traps and Paris green to use, on the presumption that it really was mice.

DELAPORE
I had Wakefield place them in strategic locations. Now, that night I retired early, being very sleepy, and was harassed by dreams of the most horrible sort.

THORNTON
Dreams? What were they?

TRASK
What does it matter?

THORNTON
You'd be surprised how important dreams can be. Please, continue.

Eerie NIGHTMARE MUSIC.

DELAPORE
I seemed to be looking down from an immense height upon a twilit grotto, knee-deep with filth, where a monstrous white-bearded swineherd drove about with his staff a flock of fungous, flabby beasts – they were dreadful.

(MORE)
DELAPORE (CONT'D)
Then, he paused and a mighty swarm
of rats rained down on the stinking
abyss and fell to devouring beasts
and man alike.

Pluto suddenly SNARLS and HISSES! Then we hear the RATS!

DELAPORE (CONT'D)
From this terrific vision I was
abruptly awakened. On every side of
the chamber the walls were alive
with nauseous sound – the
slithering of ravenous, gigantic
rats. I switched on the light and
saw a hideous shaking all over the
tapestry.

Suddenly, the RATS depart, leaving only the MURMUR of the
diners.

BRINTON
Great Scott!

DELAPORE
Springing out of bed, I poked at
the arras with the long handle of a
warming-pan, and lifted one section
to see what lay beneath. There was
nothing but the patched stone wall.
Even the cat had lost his sense of
anything abnormal. I examined the
circular trap and found all of the
openings sprung. They were all
empty.

BRINTON
(under his breath)
Curiouser and curiouser...

Bed of eerie MUSIC with SFX rising underneath.

DELAPORE
Further sleep was out of the
question, so I lit a candle, opened
the door and went out toward the
stairs. Before we had reached the
stone steps, however, the cat
darted ahead of me and vanished
down the ancient flight. As I
descended the stairs, I became
aware of unmistakable sounds in the
great room below.
We hear a cacophony of rats THUNDERING through the oak panelling.

DELAPORE (CONT'D)
The oak-panelled walls were alive with rats. Pluto raced about with the fury of a baffled hunter. Reaching the bottom, I switched on the light, but the noise didn't stop. The rats continued their riot, stampeding with such force and distinctness that I could finally tell which way they were moving. These creatures were migrating from inconceivable heights to some depth conceivably, or inconceivably, below.

Wakefield CLEARS HIS THROAT.

DELAPORE (CONT'D)
Ah, Wakefield, your timing is perfect, as always.

WAKEFIELD
The kitchen is pleased to offer a Lamb with Mint--

DELAPORE
Yes, yes, I was just telling them about the night of the rats. Wakefield was there. Tell them what you saw, Wakefield.

WAKEFIELD
Sir? I wouldn't presume to--

DELAPORE
It's all right. I have no secrets from my guests in this matter. Tell them what you heard.

WAKEFIELD
Well, all the cats of the household had been thrown into a some kind of snarling panic. Mr. Miller and I had followed them down the stairs, where we met you, sir.

THORNTON
Where did they go?
WAKEFIELD
The cats all converged in front of the closed door to the sub-cellar, Mr. Thornton. They made quite a racket, sir, with their yowling. They were most... insistent.

BRINTON
Did you hear the rats, Wakefield?

WAKEFIELD
I'm sorry, sir, but no, I didn't.

DElapore
That noise had ceased as mysteriously as it began. The three of us went down to the sub-cellar door, but by then the cats themselves had begun to disperse. But we checked all the traps, didn't we, Wakefield?

WAKEFIELD
Indeed we did, sir. They had all been sprung but all were empty. There was no trace of whatever had so vexed the cats.

BRINTON
Did you check the sub-cellar?

WAKEFIELD
Not at that time...

DElapore
(an inspiration)
By God, let's look at it now!

WAKEFIELD
I beg your pardon?

DElapore
Yes! Wakefield, my guests should see the sub-cellar for themselves. You all don't mind, do you?

A general MURMUR of surprise/assent.

LEEDS
After that story I don't know that I have much appetite left.

WAKEFIELD
But, sir--
DELAPORÉ
Wakefield, we'll skip the lamb and
the rest of it and take our coffee
and what-not down there. That's the
place to continue this story.

WAKEFIELD
(stiffly)
As you wish, sir.

DELAPORÉ
Come on, everyone! Follow me!

MUSIC TRANSITION.

10

BURNT OFFERINGS.

FOOTSTEPS ECHO in the cavernous space. The investigators
wander all over.

BRINTON
Ah yes, here they are. The
inscriptions, just as I remember
them. See here, Leeds.

LEEDS
"P.GETAE. PROP . . . TEMP . . .
DONA . . . L. PRAEC . . . VS . . .
PONTIFI . . . ATYS . . .

TRASK
Sorry, my Latin's rustier than I
thought.

LEEDS
Well, they are partly effaced.

MULVANY
The markings denote it as a sacred
location, "Pontifex" meaning
"priest" and "Atys" being the male
consort of Cybele.

THORNTON
That's the mother-goddess you
mentioned?

MULVANY
Spot on, Mr. Thornton.
BRINTON
Catullus tells us that Atys was
worshipped with some rather
gruesome rites.

THORNTON
Oh? Like what?

BRINTON
Well, perhaps it will suffice to
mention that his priests were all
eunuchs.

THORNTON
But how did-- Oh. Oh!

MULVANY
Ah, Catullus. Desine de quoquam
quicquam bene velle mereri! Cheers.

TRASK
So this vault is Roman?

LEEDS
Every arch and pillar of it. It's
the severe and harmonious
classicism of the age of the
Caesars.

DELPORÉE
You Brits may be used to such
things, but I still feel a thrill
when I think of it. See these
altars here? Imagine what went on
in this very chamber!

BRINTON
Leeds, look here. See this pattern,
a sort of rayed sun. To me it
implies a non-Roman origin.

LEEDS
Meaning what, exactly?

BRINTON
These altars were merely adopted by
the Roman priests from some older
and perhaps aboriginal temple on
the same site.

TRASK
This one has some rather curious
brown stains. Is that... blood?
APPROACHING FOOTSTEPS and CLINKING.

BRINTON
Almost certainly. And see here, these features on the upper surface indicate its connexion with fire – probably burnt offerings.

DELAPORE
Speaking of which, here's Wakefield with coffee and cigars.

THORNTON
Oh, I say.

DELAPORE
Just set up the tray over there please, Wakefield.

WAKEFIELD
Very good, sir. I've brought a decanter of brandy as well.

THORNTON
I'll take one of those. My nerves could use it.

MULVANY
Make mine a tall one.

WAKEFIELD
Very good, Madame.

DELAPORE
So... the cats had howled up at the top of these stairs. I called on Captain Norrys the very next day and we both poked around down here and didn't see any trace of rats, but I was determined to pass the night down here and see if it happened again.

NORRYS
And I, for one, was not going to have him do it alone.

MULVANY
Good on you!

THORNTON
You're fortunate to be immune to psychic emanations.
NORRYS
Perhaps so.

DELAPORE
Couches were brought down by the servants, and I brought Pluto along as much for help as for companionship.

NORRYS
We decided to keep the great oak door closed, and we retired with lanterns to await whatever might occur.

Very OMINOUS MUSIC!

DELAPORE
I was certain this vault had been the goal of the scuffling and unexplainable rats.

MULVANY
But why?

DELAPORE
We're very deep in the priory's foundations, well down towards the cliff that abuts the valley. We kept vigil for... well, Edward, you should tell this part of the story. I'm embarrassed to say I was more than a little drowsy.

BRINTON
You tell us then, Captain.

MUSICAL TRANSITION.

NORRYS
(a bit of stage fright)
Ah, well, yes, I was just here, and Mr. Delapore was lying on a couch just over there....

CROSSFADE TO FLASHBACK

Delapore MUMBLES as he nods off in the sub-cellar.

NORRYS (CONT'D)
What's that?
(chuckling to himself)
Ah, Pluto, the old man has nodded off again. Just me and you now, eh?
NORRYS (CONT'D)
(to the investigators)
The setting had me on edge, and I
watched with some fascination as my
friend here appeared wracked by
potent dreams.

Delapore MUMBLES in his sleep. Suddenly he SCREAMS! Pluto
HISSES in fright.

NORRYS (CONT'D)
(flashback)
Easy there!

DELAPOROE
God, no! That hideous...

NORRYS
(laughing)
Matthew, wake up! You're dreaming.

DELAPORE
What?

NORRYS
It's only a dream. You were quite a
sight - you scared Pluto here half
to death.

DELAPORE
(embarrassed)
A dream, yes... sorry... It's just
that it was so...

NORRYS
Go on.

DELAPORE
It was that same twilit grotto, and
the swineherd with those fungous
beasts wallowing in filth...they
were nearer and more distinct...

NORRYS
Well, you're all right now. Here,
sir, have a nip from my flask.

Delapore DRINKS.

DELAPORE
Oh, thank you.
NORRYS
Think nothing of it. Go back to sleep. Pluto and I will wake you if anything real happens.

DELAPORE
(nodding off)
Yes... yes...

NORRYS
(to Pluto)
Come here, you. What's a nice cat like you doing with a crazy old lout like him?

Pluto PURRS. DREAMY TRANSITION MUSIC.

NORRYS (CONT'D)
(to investigators)
It was less than an hour later when the phenomenon began.
(flashback, sotto voce)
Matthew. Matthew, wake up dammit!

DELAPORE
Hm? What--

NORRYS
Shh! Listen, man! The cats! Upstairs!

Atop the stairs and outside the door, all the household's cats YOWL and CLAW AT THE DOOR. PLUTO joins in.

DELAPORE
Something's got their blood up.

NORRYS
Look at Pluto.

DELAPORE
Scurrying around. He hears them! It's them, they're on the move again.

NORRYS
The cats?

DELAPORE
The rats!

NORRYS
What do you mean?
DELAPORE
Don't you hear them? Listen!

NORRYS
I just hear the cats, Matthew.

DELAPORE
But... no, they're there. Right there, like they're inside the stone. See, look, Pluto hears them.

NORRYS
Ah. He is on the prowl.

DELAPORE
What, you think I'm imagining it?

NORRYS
You're sweating. Here take another nip--

DELAPORE
No! I hear them, scurrying, moving... this way, they're going down.

NORRYS
I really don't--

DELAPORE
(sharp)
No, of course you don't.

NORRYS
I'm not having you on. All I hear are the cats upstairs.

DELAPORE
(frightened)
My god. What's going on here? I mean, you believe me, right? That I heard them, scurrying downward into the cliff?

NORRYS
The cats have stopped.

DELAPORE
Do you believe me?
NORRYS
I... don't know, Matthew. I didn't hear anything, but you seem to have. Something upset those cats. I don't know what to think.

DELAPORE
Look, look at Pluto! He's clawing at the base of the altar there.

NORRYS
So he is. What do you smell, boy?

Pluto SNIFFS quietly and SCRATCHES against the stone. He MEOWS.

DELAPORE
What is it, Pluto?

MEOW.

DELAPORE (CONT'D)
Oh I know that look. He senses something.

NORRYS
Here, take the lantern.

A CLINK and BURNING WHOOSH.

NORRYS (CONT'D)
Hold it close, where the altar meets the floor.

DELAPORE
It's covered with... is that lichen?

NORRYS
Yes. I have a jackknife. I can scrape it away.

We hear the PURR of Pluto as Norrys SCRAPES at the ancient stone for a tense moment.

NORRYS (CONT'D)
No, nothing.

Delapore GASPS.

DELAPORE
Look.
NORRYS
What?

DELAPORE
The flame of the lantern. It's flickering.

NORRYS
(excited)
There's a draft of air - coming up from below!

DELAPORE
It's coming up from near where you were scraping. Good god, man, there's something down there!

NORRYS
(disturbed)
You're right. Ah, perhaps there's no need for us to remain...

DELAPORE
A capital idea. Come on, Pluto, let's upstairs!

MUSIC transition out of flashback.

NORRYS
(to the investigators)
So now you know our discovery, and our complication.

DELAPORE
A vault deeper than the deepest of the Romans ruins - a vault unnoticed by curious scholars - a vault kept secret by a family known for strange murders. It thrilled and terrified us. And we faced a decision. Should we exercise caution and abandon the search and simply leave well enough alone?

NORRYS
Or should we gratify our sense of adventure and brave whatever horrors might await us in the unknown depths?
DELAPORE
By morning we had compromised, and decided to recruit a group of investigators fit to cope with the mystery. And that, at long last, is why you are here. I don't know what awaits us down there, and of course if any of you wishes not to continue I won't blame you a bit. But each of you possesses an expertise that may prove critical in further exploration, and I hope you'll join me.

BRINTON
I'll admit I had my doubts, Delapore, but I am quite intrigued.

THORNTON
There are undoubtedly powerful forces at work.

TRASK
I, for one, admire your pluck, Delapore.

MULVANY
But beyond the uncanny, this may prove quite an important find.

LEEDS
I should say so! Count me in.

BRINTON
You've demonstrated admirable prudence and caution in inviting us here. I'd say if Exham Priory has secrets to yield, this team shall uncover them.

DELAPORE
Thank you. Thank you all. Then for tonight, let us retire. Wakefield, thank you and the staff for a wonderful meal. I suspect our visitor's beds are turned down and ready?

WAKEFIELD
Indeed they are, sir.
TRASK
I propose a toast to our host, and
the Captain, and to the
extraordinary discoveries that lie
ahead.

BRINTON
Hear, hear!

TRANSITION MUSIC. They TOAST and AD LIB. CLINKING GLASSES.

THE NIGHT BEFORE

ECHOING FOOTSTEPS as Mulvany, Thornton and Trask return to
their rooms. Perhaps some SPOOKY OLD CASTLE room tone.

MULVANY
This is me, gentlemen. Thank you
for the escort.

TRASK
Well, with a horde of phantom rats
on the loose, we couldn't let you
wander these halls alone.

Mulvany and Trask share a light CHUCKLE.

THORNTON
(serious)
Oh, I don't think there's anything
left to fear on that score.

MULVANY
(a touch of sarcasm)
No?

THORNTON
No. You see, certain psychic
manifestations have been trying to
draw Mr. Delapore's attention. And
now that these ethereal forces have
shown him what they wanted him to
see, they will no longer manifest
themselves corporeally.

TRASK
Oh, of course. And they wanted him
to see--

THORNTON
They brought him to the altar in
the sub-cellar.

(MORE)
THORNTON (CONT'D)
Cats, you know, are highly susceptible to psychic vibrations.

MULVANY
(thick with incredulity)
Are they?

THORNTON
(oblivious)
Oh yes! So are parakeets. Tomorrow should be a very exciting day!

TRASK
Well, Thornton, I'm sure you're right about that. Good night to you both.
(under his breath)
...parakeets....

MUSIC. Polite KNOCKING at Brinton's door.

BRINTON
Who is it?

MILLER
(through door)
Miller, the valet, sir. Will you be needing anything else this evening?

Brinton OPENS THE DOOR.

BRINTON
Ah, Miller. You were there, with Wakefield, weren't you? On the night of the cats, a week or two ago, if I understand it correctly. You and Wakefield met Mr. Delapore on the stairs? The cats were...

MILLER
In an uproar. Yes, sir.

BRINTON
Did that kind of thing happen often?

MILLER
No, sir. I mean now and again we'd see Pluto or another one poking about here and there from time to time, but that particular evening was a bit unusual, sir, I must say.
BRINTON
Did you hear anything other than the cats?

MILLER
Um, no sir. They were making quite a commotion. But otherwise it was just us talking, sir.

BRINTON
Hmm. And do you find Mr. Delapere to be a... sober gentleman?

MILLER
(a non-denial)
Mr. Delapere has been very kind to all of us, Sir William.

BRINTON
Yes, of course. He seems a splendid chap.

FOOTSTEPS as Leeds approaches.

MILLER
Ah, Professor Leeds. Is there anything I can do for you before you retire?

LEEDS
I would be grateful for a fresh carafe of water, if it's not too much trouble.

MILLER
I'll see to it at once. If there's nothing else, Sir William?

BRINTON
No thank you, Miller.

FOOTSTEPS as Miller departs.

LEEDS
Well, Brinton. What think you?

BRINTON
Our host spun quite a ghost story. M. R. James couldn't do better.

LEEDS
Yes. But... well, it would seem it's not yet reached its grand finale.
BRINTON
And before it does, we'll all be in it.

TRANSITION MUSIC crossfades into a SOOTHING PIECE PLAYING ON THE RADIO in Delapore's room in the background. Pluto PURRS.

NORRYS
I hope you can get some sleep, sir.

DELAPORE
Me too, Alfred. If I can just avoid another of those damned dreams.

An awkward pause.

NORRYS
I'm Edward, sir.

DELAPORE
(confused)
What? Of course you are. What did I say?

NORRYS
Never mind, sir. You did well tonight. Try to rest. Tomorrow is a big day. Shall I turn off your phonograph?

DELAPORE
It's the wireless, actually. Shortwave. This signal's coming all the way from New England. I miss the old US of--

The MUSIC CUTS OUT and WILFRED CRANE, a fraught amateur shortwave radio operator takes up the microphone.

WILFRED CRANE
Um hello. If you can hear me, this is Wilfred Crane, broadcasting on 180 meters from Providence, Rhode Island. A special edition of the newspaper's just been released. I'm afraid there's some... terrible news.

DELAPORE
What was that? Turn that up!

The RADIO LOUDER.
WILFRED CRANE
I'm reading here: "In the early hours of last evening, after a day which had brought renewed hope of recovery, death came suddenly and struck down Warren G. Harding with a stroke of cerebral apoplexy. The American people from coast to coast, and in the territories beyond the seas, bowed their heads in grief, for their President was dead....

The news report CONTINUES softly in the background.

DELABORE
My god! The president...

NORRYS
What a shock. I'm so sorry, Matthew.

DELABORE
It's an omen.

NORRYS
Oh sir, you mustn't--

DELABORE
Yes, we're poised on the brink of frightful revelations. Secrets that have eluded me since childhood. I feel very...

NORRYS
You have help, Matthew. You've assembled a wonderful team.

DELABORE
You did that. Thank you, my boy. Now go get some sleep. We have a date with destiny.

NORRYS
Yes, sir. Good night.

TRANSITION MUSIC.

12 THE CELLAR

The team mills before the great oak door leading to the subcellar. Sir William approaches, his gear CLANKING.
DELAPORE
There, you are, Sir William. You look well prepared.

NORRYS
Here, let me take one of the search lights. Oh, they're heavy.

BRINTON
Batteries. This is just a preliminary survey expedition, but it's vital that we have good illumination if we're going to find what's under that altar.

DELAPORE
Everyone ready?

AD LIBS of ASSENT.

DELAPORE (CONT'D)
(with humor)
Now, Wakefield, don't you lock this door.

WAKEFIELD
No, sir. We'll be standing by.

The DOOR OPENS. The cat MEOWS.

DELAPORE
Lead the way, Pluto.

The group CLANKS and BANGS their way down the steps into the sub-cellar.

BRINTON
Captain Norrys, would you be so good as to set your light there? A bit to the right. Yes, right there.

LEEDS
I'll do my best to map out the room and document the positions of the various altars. I'll need to establish a datum point.

MULVANY
I'll take advantage of this light to get some rubbings of these inscriptions. I can correlate them with others I have back at Exeter.
The academics get to work with FOOTSTEPS, SCRIBBLING, SCRAPING, CLANKING ETC.

TRASK
Not much for an anthropologist to do at the moment. What about you, Thornton? Picking up any of your psychic residuum?

THORNTON
No, I'd say the spirits seem very much at peace here. Though there is... something I can't quite put my finger on.

TRASK
Extraordinary to think of the kinds of things that must have taken place here. Perhaps I'll try to get some samples of those bloodstains. Chemical analysis might yield something of interest.

THORNTON
I think I'll follow the cat.

BRINTON
(across the chamber)
When I tell you, Norrys, push. Delapore, have that prybar ready.

NORRYS
I feel it yielding!

BRINTON
And push --

GRUNTS of effort.

DELAPORE
(thrilled)
It's moving!

BRINTON
Slide it in. Good - and on three we lift up. One, two, three --

THE GRINDING OF HEAVY STONE. MUSIC!

LEEDS
By George, you've done it!
DELAPORE
The altar was balanced with some kind of counterweight. Well done, Sir William.

BRIXTON
I thought it might be. I've seen such traps before. Professor Leeds, would you make note - passage opening square in shape, a bit less than a meter on each side.

Leeds WRITES in his notebook.

LEEDS
Fiendishly cunning mechanism, that.

MULVANY
I can't see, are those steps going down?

BRIXTON
Norrys, bring that torch closer. Let's see what we've got here.

MUSICAL STING. ALL REACT in shock and terror.

BRIXTON (CONT'D)
(tense)
Dr. Trask. We need you.

TRASK
(across the room)
What is it? Remains? Are they human?

MULVANY
Dear God, so many...

TRASK
(moving up close)
Step aside, let me have a look.

Trask emits an UNPLEASANT SOUND.

BRIXTON
What do you make of them, Trask?

TRASK
(fighting to hold it together)
Anthropoid skeletons as far down the steps as I can see... Maybe forty individuals, perhaps more...
(MORE)
TRASK (CONT'D)
Many articulated skeletons in attitudes of fear or panic...

NORRYS
What are those marks? - See there, on that skull. And there. My god, they're all over.

TRASK
The surfaces are highly lacerated.

NORRYS
What's that?

TRASK
Feeding traces. They've been... gnawed. Judging from the size, probably by rats.

AD LIB GROANS as the group audibly digests this.

THORNTON
The heads, they're not right.

DELAPORE
Well, surely that's just one--

TRASK
No. Look at the supraorbital torus, the prognathic jaws... some kind of biologic idiocy or cretinism.

MULVANY
Are they even fully human? Look at that one.

TRASK
I'd have to study them at length in a proper laboratory. Some are certainly ape like...

THORNTON
Like that Piltdown Man you mentioned.

TRASK
Except this is no fraud. My god.

BRINTON
Leeds, please note that the center of the stone steps shows extensive wearing - it's nearly just a ramp there in the middle.
LEEDS
   (scribbling furiously)
Noted.

NORRYS
Did you notice the air?

DELAPORE
What of it?

NORRYS
There was no gush as of a sealed passage being opened. Just a cool fresh breeze coming up.

LEEDS
He's right.

NORRYS
So where's it coming from?

BRINTON
And please note... the passage isn't built of masonry, but appears to be hewn from solid rock.

The SCRIBBLING suddenly stops.

LEEDS
   (scared by this)
Brinton, those tool marks.

BRINTON
Yes, I know.

LEEDS
They're going the wrong way.

BRINTON
   (nervous)
Yes. This passageway was dug up from below.

DELAPORE
But that would mean--

Pluto MEOWS and heads down the passage.

THORNTON
Look out!

DELAPORE
Pluto!
BRINTON
I see your cat's not afraid to lead the way. Shall we?

Dramatic MUSICAL STING.

THE GROTTO OF THE DAMNED

A few bones CLATTER and CRUNCH as the group makes their way down the steeply sloped passage.

NORRYS
Mind your step, Mrs. Mulvany.

MULVANY
Don't worry about me, young man. Do try not to crush the evidence, if you can.

THORNTON
It's a good thing Sir William was prepared with these torches, eh?

TRASK
We couldn't be in better hands.

DELAPORSE
All these skeletons, Sir William, what do you think they were going to...

BRINTON
I fear the salient question may be: what were they trying to get away from? Hmm. Looks like there's some kind of light up ahead.

The group TROMPS on.

LEEDS
Some kind of phosphorescent organisms?

BRINTON
No, I think it's... sunlight.

LEEDS
How could that be?

BRINTON
The priory is built into the side of the cliff.

(MORE)
BRINTON (CONT'D)
Leeds, Captain Norrys, turn off your torches. Better to let our eyes adjust.

CLICKS as the electric torches go off. MUSICAL TENSION RISES.

NORRYS
By god, there is a bit of light. It must be filtering in through fissures undetectable from the outside. To think I've lived in this valley all my life and never noticed--

BRINTON
Look everyone, up ahead. We're entering a cavern.

HUGE MUSICAL HIT. AD LIB GASPS and HISSES! Thornton GROANS as he faints.

LEEDS
My god!

MULVANY
(trying to revive him)
Mr. Thornton? Mr. Thornton? He's fainted.

DElapore
Steady on.

TRASK
Let's lay him down here. What on God's green earth - these... it's all bones!

NORRYS
It's like a sea of them... insanely tangled everywhere - as far as the eye can see.

DElapore
(for himself)
The twilit grotto...

LEEDS
Look out there, Brinton. Too regular for stalagmites. Are those some kind of buildings?

BRINTON
I was thinking the same thing. A megalithic construction of sorts--
DELAPORE
(lost in his own thought)
Like Stonehenge or something...

LEEDS
Yes, some Roman ruins there, and
that - a Saxon pile. And that, it
looks a bit like an early English
structure...

BRINTON
(softly)
Well, I don't know about that...

Thornton GROANS as he comes around.

TRASK
Mr. Thornton, are you all right?

THORNTON
Yes, thank you. It's, well, the
psychic residue here is so pungent--

MULVANY
What?

THORNTON
I fear it rather overwhelmed me.
I'm sensitive to such things. I'll
be all right.

MULVANY
That's a relief.

DELAPORE
We're here. This is the grotto I
dreamed of. With the demon
swineherd and his... flock.

BRINTON
Look, this discovery clearly
exceeds what any of us were
expecting. It could take us years
to discover just what this place is
and just what happened here. I
suggest we conduct a cursory
reconnaissance of the site. We
break into three groups: Mrs.
Mulvany and Dr. Trask if you'll
look at those structures to the
right; Mr. Thornton, Mr. Delapare
and Captain Norrys if you'll
examine the area there, just up
ahead.
THORNTON
May I go with Dr. Trask's group?

BRINTON
If you like. Professor Leeds and I will examine the region to the left. Now despite the ghoulish nature of our surroundings, there doesn't seem to be any imminent threat to us.

NORRYS
They're all dead.

BRINTON
Quite so. And as such, they're unable to bring us any harm so long as we watch our step. But, should you discover anything of urgent concern, do cry out. We should be able to hear each other in this cavern. Each team take an electric torch, just in case. It's half-two now, let us reconvene here at four. Alright?

AD LIBS of agreement. MUSIC. Each of the groups goes its merry way.

14 TEAM TRASK

Trask's team tiptoes with their gear through the sea of bones.

TRASK
Mrs. Mulvany, Mr. Thornton, let's see if we can make our way to that stone structure out there.

MULVANY
Dr. Trask, take a look at these two skeletons. There's a pair for you.

TRASK
Yes, entwined together in some kind of final clinch. Perhaps protecting each other?

THORNTON
No, it was something more ghastly.
MULVANY
Look, down here, under the human bones. Tiny bones. These are rat skeletons?

TRASK
By the hundreds. Thousands.

MULVANY
Do you think all the rat bites were posthumous?

TRASK
Madame, I'm not even certain that they're all rat bites. The marks on this skull correspond to the teeth of this one. These people appear to have been eating each other.

THORNTON
(poetically)
'Tis the very antechamber of hell.

MULVANY
Not Hoffmann or Huysmans could conceive a scene more Gothically grotesque.

THORNTON
I simply can't fathom what happened here. The deformed bones, the skeletons grappling in some kind of mortal combat, the rats...

MULVANY
It's not only what happened, it's when. Was it hundreds of years ago, or a thousand, or two thousand, ten thousand...

TRASK
Oh, now see here. Oh that's disturbing.

THORNTON
What is it?

TRASK
There seem to be two evolutionary paths at work here. Look at the refinements of this skeleton: large brain, high forehead, the skull is sensitively developed. The lumbar curve, arched feet--
MULVANY
Yes?

TRASK
But look at these back here. See the pelvis is higher and flatter, and the spine is arched. The legs noticeably shorter. These creatures were knuckle walkers. They've evolved, or devolved, into a nearly quadrupedal form.

MULVANY
So they're apes of some kind?

TRASK
No, no the skulls show most of the basic features of homo sapiens. Although I dare say they were incapable of articulate speech.

MULVANY
How can you tell that from the skeleton?

TRASK
The height of the larynx. Despite developed intelligence, this poor devil could do little more than scream.

THORNTON
I don't know much about Darwin and all, but if they evolved, doesn't that take time?

TRASK
At least twenty generations or more.

THORNTON
You mean these things have been here--

Thornton GROANS again and collapses in a faint.

TRASK
There he goes again.

MULVANY
Ah, for the love of...

TRANSITION MUSIC.
Delapore and Norrys step through the bones working their way to an ancient ruin.

DELAPORE
Come on, Norrys, this way. That structure, it a low-Saxon compound.

NORRYS
How can you tell?

DELAPORE
I just know. Great god, look at this!

NORRYS
It's like a pen - for livestock.

DELAPORE
But not any kind we know. The skeletons, see how hunched over... they ARE the livestock. Can't you almost see them, fighting to break free in some kind of delirium of starvation or rat-fear?

NORRYS
It certainly looks like the "lower" types were penned up in there.

DELAPORE
(a little unhinged)
Yes. Yes. Fattened up on the legendary "coarse vegetables". No wonder my ancestors had such excessive gardens above.

NORRYS
But what was the purpose of keeping this slave class?

DELAPORE
You haven't guessed? Come on, let's go inside.

MUSIC.

Leeds and Brinton make their way toward what appears to be the ruins of an ancient temple.
LEEDS
These bones, Sir William, I've never heard of another site on earth like it. I mean, if it was a burial, that would be one thing...

BRINTON
No, this is quite something else. "Alas, poor Yorick." What do you make of this stone work?

LEEDS
Looks Roman. Like the vaulting from the sub-cellar. It's shaped like a temple. Look, Latin inscriptions there at the base of the altar!

BRINTON
It's all pristine. To think of the things that must have happened here. And here it remains, in perfect condition.

LEEDS
I wish Mrs. Mulvany were with us. My Latin's not good enough.

BRINTON
Let's see. I think it begins here: Dea sancta Cybele, rerum naturae parens - Goddess revered, Cybele, of all nature Mother... it's a pretty typical invocation... (mumbles for a bit) Oh, good god! Thank god Mrs. Mulvany isn't here...

LEEDS
What?

BRINTON
The rite, the sacrifice...

LEEDS
Human, yes? Not surprising for a Phrygian--

BRINTON
Phrygian, maybe. But human? No wonder the Romans outlawed the cult. God knows how long before the Romans, or after, this kind of thing went on.
LEEDS
Surely you're not surprised by--

BRINTON
Whatever happened here is quite beyond the pale. It's far worse than the cult of Atys. The things that were eaten...

Transition MUSIC.

17 TRASK'S PRIZE

MULVANY
I really should go back and wait for Thornton. A man with his nerves, regaining consciousness around this.

TRASK
Just a moment - there's something back here. I can't quite reach it. Shine the torch.

MULVANY
Here.

CLICK. MUSICAL STING.

TRASK
(terrified)
It moved! It's alive!

MULVANY
Pull yourself together, man. It's Delapore's cat. Perched there like it's the most natural thing in the world.

TRASK
I'm sorry, I just... Um, I can't quite reach that skull there. If I lift up on this, can you reach under and grab it? One, two, three.

TOPPLING BONES. The cat MEOWS.

MULVANY
Thank you, Pluto. Oh, there he goes. Maybe he really was trying to show us something. Here you are, doctor.

(MORE)
MULVANY (CONT'D)
(marveling at skull)
Heavens, but this one is primitive.

TRASK
Yes. Pithecanthropoid. Only
slightly more human than a gorilla.
Look, these look like ideograms
carved on the cranium. What could--

A SQUEAK of fear comes from Thornton, off.

MULVANY
Ah, he's up again.

THORNTON
(scared - off)
Mrs. Mulvany? Dr. Trask?

MULVANY
Don't panic, we're on our way.

Transition MUSIC.

18  BREAKING POINT  18

DELAPORE
Come, Norrys, the door's fallen
away, let us see what's within.

NORRYS
(shaken)
All right. Just for a moment. We
should go back soon to see the
others.

DELAPORE
Cells! Look at the rusted bars.
Oho, and these poor devils locked
within. See now, these are the
refined types.

NORRYS
They're clearly not the "livestock"
types. That one even has a ring.

Delapore KNOCKS the rusted iron bars aside.

DELAPORE
So it does. Let's have a look.

MUSICAL STING BEGINS INCREASINGLY TENSE UNDERSCORE.
NORRYS
Are you all right? What is it?

DELAPORE
'Tis a seal ring.
(pause)
The seal is my family's coat of arms.

NORRYS
This it too much, let's go.

He BOLTS outside of the building, Delapore following.

DELAPORE
Should we take in yon building -
looks like an English butcher shop -
maybe from Tudor days.

NORRYS
No. No, I don't want to see it.

DELAPORE
You were in the trenches, man. You
survived. I wouldn't expect you to
be squeamish. Come, come, this way.

NORRYS
It's a cave. It just keeps going
into the darkness.

DELAPORE
S'blood! Straight from my dream. A
sightless stygian world! Such
secret places are not for mankind.

NORRYS
Wait, move your torch there again,
on the ground. My god, are those
some kind of pits in the ground?

DELAPORE
The rats! It's where they feasted.
Until Walter's cowardly dagger put
an end to it. Cousin Randolph was
right! And then a lack of
replenishment drove the ravenous
rodent army first to turn on the
living herds of starving things,
and then to burst forth from the
priory in an orgy of devastation!
You've heard the stories, eh?
NORRYS
You know I have. Matthew...

Delapore, fully bonkers now, STORMS ABOUT the pitted cavern floor. MUSIC RAMPs UP.

DELAPORE
God! These carrion black pits of sawed, picked bones and opened skulls! These nightmare chasms choked with the bones of centuries! Look here! No bottom! And there, what horrors skulk in such depths? What of the hapless rats that stumbled into such traps amidst the blackness of their quests in this grisly Tartarus?

NORRYS
Careful there!

THE CLATTER of bones and rocks falling into pits. The HISS and MEOW of the cat.

DELAPORE
Shhh! What is that? Listen? Look - 'tis my cat darting like a winged Egyptian god, straight into the illimitable gulf of the unknown. He heard them. Do you hear them?

NORRYS
Matthew, I don't hear anything. Let's go--

DELAPORE
(rising to full on nut job)
Don't tell me you can't hear them. It's the scurrying of those fiend-born rats, always questing for new horrors, and determined to lead me on even unto those grinning caverns of earth's centre where Nyarlathotep, the mad faceless god, howls blindly to the piping of two amorphous idiot flute-players.

NORRYS
Matthew, please step away from--

DELAPORE
Don't worry about me. D'ye know, you've grown plump, Norrys. Soft.
MUSICAL CRESCENDO.

TEPMPLE OF DOOM

Meanwhile, back in the Roman temple....

BRINTON
These steps probably lead down into some kind of crypt.

LEEDS
Is there no end to these horrors?

An agonized SCREAM from far away echoes through the grotto.

BRINTON
Come, let's go!

They RUN OFF towards the cry.

OVER THE EDGE

CONVERGING HURRIED FOOTSTEPS CRUNCH AND ECHO as Brinton and Leeds run from one side and Trask, Mulvany and Thornton approach from the other side.

LEEDS
Look, there's one of the lights out past those ruins.

BRINTON
Come on.

TRASK
(off)
Delaporte? Is that you? Norrys! Answer me!

THORNTON
Follow the cat!

Delaporte, now totally insane, rants as he eats Captain Norrys.

DELAPORE
Why shouldn't rats eat a de la Poer as a de la Poer eats forbidden things?... The war ate my boy, damn them all... and the Yanks ate Carfax with flames and burnt Grandsire Delapore and the secret...

(MORE)
DELAPORE (CONT'D)
No, no, I tell you, I am not that
daemon swineherd in the twilit
grotto!

Brinton and Leeds RUN CLOSER.

LEEDS
Good god, I think it's Delapore.
Norrys is on the ground.

BRINTON
Delapore, are you all right? Can
you hear me?

DELAPORE
You flabby, fungous thing! Who says
I am a de la Poer? He lived, but my
boy died!... Shall a Norrys hold
the lands of a de la Poer? ...It's
voodoo, I tell you ...that spotted
snake...

TRASK
There they are. It's Delapore!

MULVANY
And the Captain. He's bleeding!

THORNTON
(mind blown)
My god, he's... eating.

Thornton GROANS and faints again.

BRINTON
Delapore, stop!

DELAPORE
I’ll teach you to faint at what my
family do! ...'Sblood, thou
stinkard, I'll learn ye how to gust
...wolde ye swyne me thilke wys?
...Magna Mater! Magna Mater!
...Atys!

Pluto YOWLS and leaps on Delapore, scratching frantically.
CRUNCHING CHAOS as the investigators scramble.

DELAPORE (CONT'D)
Begone, foul apparition!

TRASK
Stop him!
BRINTON
Distract him from the front. I'll move around behind.

LEEDS
Delapore! Let him go! Do you hear me?

DELAPORE
Dia ad aghaidh 's ad aodann . . .
agus bas dunach ort! Dhonas 's
dholas ort, agus leat-sa! . . .
Ungl . . . ungl . . . rrrlh . . .
chchch . . .

BRINTON
That's enough!

THUNK! GROAN! CLATTER! MEOW! Brinton strikes Delapore in the head with his electric torch. Thornton JOLTS AWAKE.

THORNTON
(freaked)
Oh my god! He ate him! He ate him!

BRINTON
Mrs. Mulvany! Hold him back!

MULVANY
Hold on, Thornton. Hold on.

THORNTON
Oh my god!

TRASK
What happened? What has he done?

LEEDS
He's mad.

MULVANY
He's cursed.

BRINTON
Here, let's cover up Captain Norrys. Dr. Trask, tie up Mr. Delapore. Soundly.

TRASK
Right.

MULVANY
This place. What do we do? Who do we tell? It simply should not be.
BRINTON
I think there's only one thing to be done. But first, let's get Mr. Thornton and leave this place.

Big sad MUSIC transition.

21 AFTERMATH 21

WATER DRIPS in the halls of Hanwell Asylum. Behind a locked door, Delapore SCREAMS and RAVES. Brinton's APPROACHING FOOTSTEPS echo. Wakefield is standing outside Delapore's door.

BRINTON
Wakefield? This is a surprise.

WAKEFIELD
Sir William. They asked me to bring a few of Mr. Delapore's things, and I thought I would pay a last visit.

BRINTON
Are you all right?

WAKEFIELD
I've never been inside an asylum.

BRINTON
Yes, Hanwell is... secure.

WAKEFIELD
I'm sorry to see him like this. He seemed a kind man.

BRINTON
It is quite a tragedy. I was just upstairs talking with the doctors. Poor Mr. Thornton is just down the hall, you know. But there's hope for his recovery.

WAKEFIELD
And Mr. Delapore?

BRINTON
He shall never be released, I'm afraid.

WAKEFIELD
Perhaps that's as well. Now that Exham Priory has been dynamited into oblivion, where would he go?
BRINTON
Where will you go, Wakefield? What will you do?

WAKEFIELD
With the death of Captain Norrys, I shall be leaving Ancheater, sir. I believe I shall leave service entirely. Being known as the butler of a madman, even an American one, makes retirement appealing.

BRINTON
You're a good man, Wakefield. Perhaps there's a place for you in my own household, if you change your mind.

WAKEFIELD
Thank you, sir. But perhaps we would both prefer to put the past weeks behind us forever.

BRINTON
You may be right. Good luck to you.

WAKEFIELD
God help us all, sir.

As FOOTSTEPS echo away, we can hear more clearly...

DELAPORE
(through the door)
Pluto! Where are you? It wasn't me! I loved him like he was my own boy!
It was the rats! Please! Listen to me! The demon rats that race behind the padding! Pluto! I forgive you!
Why don't you help me! Don't you hear them? They're calling to me!
Damn you all! It's the rats! The rats! The rats in the walls!

MUSICAL DENOUEMENT.

22 CONCLUSION

CREIGHTON COBB
You too have been listening to "The Rats in the Walls", brought to you by our sponsor, Bile Beans. Stay healthy, bright-eyed and slim - take Bile Beans every night!

(MORE)
CREIGHTON COBB (CONT'D)

I’m Creighton Cobb. Until next week, this is Dark Adventure Radio Theatre reminding you to never go anywhere alone; if it looks bad, don’t look; and save the last bullet for yourself.

ANNOUNCER


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Radio STATIC and fade out.