

Dark Adventure Radio Theatre:
At the Mountains of Madness

by
Sean Branney with Andrew Leman

Based on "At the Mountains of Madness" by H.P. Lovecraft
Read-Along Download Version

HPLHS, Inc., © 2006 all rights reserved
2466 E Chevy Chase Drive
Glendale CA 91206
818.731.1770

SFX: STATIC, radio TUNING, snippet of 30s SONG, more tuning
STATIC dissolve to:

DARK ADVENTURE RADIO THEME

ANNOUNCER

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

MUSIC CRESCENDO

ANNOUNCER

This is Dark Adventure Radio
Theatre, with your host Chester
Langfield. Today's episode: H.P.
Lovecraft's "At the Mountains of
Madness".

MUSIC DIMINISHES

CHESTER

The frozen wastes of the Antarctic
continent. Men of science braving
an unknown and unforgiving world.
An expedition to the ends of the
earth resulting in death and
madness. Tonight, Dark Adventure
Radio Theatre reveals the dark and
terrible causes behind the dreadful
demise of the Pabodie-Lake
Expedition of Miskatonic
University. For the first time, the
strange, unimaginable truth of the
ill-fated expedition's discoveries
are revealed by one of its few
survivors. Hear the terrible
secrets frozen in the undiscovered
wastes of the Antarctic in "At the
Mountains of Madness". But first a
word from our sponsor.

A few piano notes from the Fleur de Lys jingle.

CHESTER

When you smoke Fleur de Lys
cigarettes you enjoy all the rare
goodness of choice Turkish and mild
sun-dried domestic tobaccos. For
the tobaccos that go into Fleur de
Lys are never parched or toasted.

(MORE)

Dark Adventure: At the Mountains of Madness 2.

CHESTER (cont'd)

Our method of scientifically applying heat guarantees against that. If you haven't smoked Fleur de Lys lately, compare their fresh mild delight with the sting and burn of dusty dry cigarettes. Smoke Fleur de Lys, then leave them -- if you can.

DARK ADVENTURE LEAD-IN MUSIC

CHESTER

Ladies and gentlemen, today Professor William Dyer is with us to recount the heretofore untold true story behind the Miskatonic Antarctic expedition of 1930 and its tragic results. Today he shares with us the full tale of what happened, including details considered too shocking for release to the public. Professor Dyer, why have you decided to come forward now?

DYER

The discoveries we made in the antarctic and the tragedies that followed have left those of us who were there with the conviction that further antarctic exploration is too dangerous. You may have heard of the Starkweather-Moore expedition...

CHESTER

That's from Chicago's Field Museum, isn't it?

DYER

Yes, that's right. The Starkweather-Moore expedition is preparing to set forth on yet another expedition to the extreme south, and we see it as our responsibility to come forward with the full story, unbelievable though it may be, and provide the full details of our expedition's demise.

CHESTER

Professor, you realize some of your claims will strain the credulity of our listeners.

DYER

Indeed, I do. I can only tell you what happened as I saw it with my own eyes. We will show photographs and drawings we made there. The world will have to draw its own conclusions.

CHESTER

Very well, Professor. No doubt listeners will recall hearing on this very station the news coverage of the expedition and its auspicious beginning....

Volume on Chester fades down as Worldwide Wireless MUSIC fades up.

NATHAN REED

Worldwide Wireless News: September 2nd, 1930. Miskatonic University launches a scientific expedition to the Antarctic.

WWN Theme music

NATHAN REED

I'm Nathan Reed for Worldwide Wireless News. A team from Massachusetts' Miskatonic University embarked today on a research expedition to the frozen South Pole. Leading the expedition are Professors Pabodie, Lake, Atwood and Dyer. Professor Lake, what are you hoping to find?

LAKE

Good evening, Nathan. As perhaps you know, hundreds of millions of years ago, Antarctica was a temperate place, brimming with flora and fauna. We plan to use special apparatus developed by our colleague Professor Frank Pabodie to drill into the ancient rock for samples that will tell us more about the life that once lived on this largely unknown continent.

NATHAN REED

Good luck, Professor. I hope you have a warm parka.

LAKE

I do. Thank you.

NATHAN REED

The professors are accompanied by seven graduate students, nine mechanics and a pack of 55 Alaskan sled dogs. In addition to geologic equipment, the expedition will carry four aeroplanes carefully designed for landing on snow and ice. The brig Arkham and the barque Miskatonic will carry the expedition through the Panama Canal to Hobarth, Tasmania, where the expedition will take on its final supplies. From there they'll sail through iceberg-laden waters until they reach McMurdo Sound in Antarctica where they will set up their base camp. The expedition will then assemble aeroplanes to travel to the frozen continent's interior. We wish them godspeed in their voyage to the unknown.

SFX: cold wind transition to: Worldwide Wireless Music

NATHAN REED

Worldwide Wireless News: November 10, 1930. Miskatonic expedition lands on Antarctic continent.

WWN Theme music

NATHAN REED

I'm Nathan Reed for Worldwide Wireless News. Scientists from Arkham's Miskatonic University landed yesterday on Ross Island in Antarctica and set up a base camp for the expedition's future work. Professor Atticus Lake joins us now by special wireless hookup from the bottom of the earth. Professor Lake, can you tell our listeners what you see?

LAKE'S VOICE comes through with hint of WIND and STATIC from the portable radio. The distant SQUAWK of penguins.

LAKE

I'm at the camp and it's all snow and ice. Mt. Erebus, a huge volcano, is nearby, puffing out little blasts of steam. There are penguins all around, and a rather large number of seals. The locals don't seem to mind our presence at all.

NATHAN REED

And tell us Professor, how's the weather down there?

LAKE

It's a nice day. Twenty one degrees of mercury. Not much wind. A bit like a New England winter.

NATHAN REED

Ha-ha. Thanks Professor. Once base camp is fully established, the expedition plans to take geologic samples from nearby mountains before flying some 700 miles south to set up an advanced camp.

SFX: cold wind transition to: Worldwide Wireless Music

NATHAN REED

Worldwide Wireless News: November 21, 1930. Miskatonic expedition presses on through the Antarctic.

WWN Theme music

NATHAN REED

Good evening, Ladies and Gentlemen. This is Nathan Reed for Worldwide Wireless News. The Miskatonic University Antarctic expedition has made new progress from their advanced base camp. With the use of their experimental ice-melting and drilling equipment, the expedition has been able to excavate numerous fossils, proving conclusively that life was once abundant in this now-lifeless place. The next voice you hear will be that of the expedition's leader and chief Biologist, Professor Lake:

Lake's voice with WIND and STATIC.

LAKE

We've found ferns, seaweeds, trilobites, crinoids, and such molluscs as lingulae and gasteropods from the Cambrian and Devonian periods. We also found a queer triangular striated marking...

Dissolve to STATIC.

NATHAN REED

In addition to discovering fossils, expedition member Professor Frank Pabodie, accompanied by graduate students Gedney and Carroll, climbed to the summit of Mt. Nansen, one of Antarctica's tallest peaks at 13,350 feet above sea-level. The expedition plans to use their aeroplanes to take samples from many parts of the southernmost continent, helping us to better understand the pre-history of this unknown world. As we get further news of the expedition, you know you'll hear it first on Worldwide Wireless News.

SFX: cold wind transition to: Worldwide Wireless Music

NATHAN REED

Worldwide Wireless News: January 6, 1931. Arkham Scientists Fly Over South Pole.

WWN Theme music

NATHAN REED

This is Nathan Reed for Worldwide Wireless News. Scientists from Miskatonic University flew directly over the South Pole today in two of the expedition's aeroplanes. Buffeted by high winds, the expedition was forced to ground its planes for over an hour, but the intrepid scientists built a snow shelter for the craft and before long were in the skies again. The expedition's Professor Pabodie:

Static radio transmission with sound of AEROPLANE ENGINES.

PABODIE

Gentlemen, and folks listening back at home, according to our radio compass we are now flying directly over the South Pole. We bow our heads in memory of Captain Scott and the other brave explorers who paid the ultimate price to come here before us.

NATHAN REED

While the sudden storms of the Antarctic summer have proved difficult for the expedition's aeroplanes, the scientists say they're well-supplied and in high spirits. Discovery of a highly unusual fossil sample has led biologist Professor Lake to change the expedition's itinerary in order to explore regions northwest of their current position. This fossil in question may be a footprint of sorts from an era hundreds of millions of years before such highly evolved life was thought to exist. The search for similar fossils specimens will lead them to regions of Antarctica never before seen by human beings. Whatever they may find beneath the polar ice, Worldwide Wireless News will be there.

CHESTER

And indeed, Worldwide Wireless was there, for the dramatic and terrible news as it unfolded on that distant sheet of ice.

SFX: cold wind transition to: Worldwide Wireless Music

NATHAN REED

Worldwide Wireless News: January 22, 1931. Scientists make dramatic discoveries near South Pole.

WWN Theme music

NATHAN REED

I'm Nathan Reed for Worldwide Wireless News. Researchers from Miskatonic University have discovered what may be the tallest mountains on the planet. While flying in aeroplanes to look for rare geologic samples, Miskatonic's Professor Atticus Lake sent back this dramatic radio transmission.

Lake's voice has some STATIC and the HUM OF AN AEROPLANE under it.

LAKE

Dyer, this is Lake; do you read me?

DYER

Go ahead Lake.

LAKE

10:05pm. On the wing. After snowstorm, have spied mountain range ahead higher than any hitherto seen. May equal, heaven help us, these may exceed the Himalayas! Reaches as far as we can see.

DYER

Lake, can you repeat that?

LAKE

Dyer, the mountains, they're huge - it's incredible!

NATHAN REED

Mechanical problems with one of the aeroplanes caused Lake and his team to land on a glacier at the foothills of the mighty peaks. While mechanics worked on repairs, the scientists had a look around.

LAKE

Dyer, mountains surpass anything in imagination. I'll go up in Carroll's plane. You can't imagine anything like this. Atwood used theodolite, tallest peak over 34,000 feet!

(MORE)

LAKE (cont'd)

Queer skyline effects - regular sections of cubes, must be some kind of crystallization, clinging to highest peaks. Like a land of mystery in a dream or gateway to a forbidden world of untrodden wonder. Wish you were here to study.

NATHAN REED

A bit of the poet there as the awe-struck scientists look on mighty peaks never seen before by man.

CHESTER

But as the news broadcasts would report, the expedition's greatest discoveries were still to come.

SFX: cold wind transition to: Worldwide Wireless Music

NATHAN REED

Worldwide Wireless News: January 23, 1931. Antarctic paleontologists strike paydirt.

WWN Theme music

NATHAN REED

I'm Nathan Reed for Worldwide Wireless News. Researchers from Miskatonic University working near the South Pole followed up yesterday's discovery of what may be earth's largest mountains with a treasure trove of fossils. After melting through a layer of thin wind-blown ice, the team began drilling the Antarctic rock for fossil samples.

STATIC-LADEN broadcast from Gedney.

GEDNEY

Dyer, this is Gedney. We've drilled down to a cave. It's staggering.

DYER

Can you repeat?

GEDNEY

A limestone cave. Inside it's teeming with fossils, species ranging from the Oligocene clear back to the Ordovician. It's incredible. The wind is terrible. Lake's down in the cave now, says he's found something else. I should have more details in a few minutes.

NATHAN REED

We have a live connection now with Professor Dyer, the team's geologist, at the expedition's advanced camp some 300 miles from the cave. Professor Dyer, can you hear me?

Wind whips in background.

DYER

It's quite windy here Nathan, can you speak up?

NATHAN REED

Of course. Professor, can you explain to us in layman's terms what findings in the cave mean?

DYER

Why certainly. Normally rock will contain fossils from the particular age when the rock was formed. For example, rock from the Permian era will show us life forms which lived from 225 to 280 million years ago. But in the cave, the team is describing rock which contains specimens ranging from 25 million to 500 million years ago.

NATHAN REED

What does it mean?

DYER

Well, there's never been anything like it. Perhaps in this part of the world life forms were able to avoid extinction and co-exist in a manner we've never seen.

(MORE)

DYER (cont'd)

Geologically, biologically, it challenges everything we know about the evolution of life on the planet.

NATHAN REED

Exciting news indeed, but more startling announcements have come in. The following broadcast from Professor Lake was just picked up by our radio receivers.

Lots of WIND with STATIC-LADEN radio transmission.

LAKE

We've found more prints - this time in Archean slate. This organism lived from 600 million years ago to maybe 100 million with only minor morphological changes. This will mean to biology what Einstein has meant to physics and mathematics. There may have been whole cycles of life on the planet before the earliest ones we've ever known.

Blast of WIND and STATIC.

LAKE

Found peculiar greenish soapstone fragment about six inches across and half an inch thick. It's shaped like a five pointed star with the tips broken off. Curiously smooth. Under magnification, Carroll describes a series of groups of tiny dots in regular patterns -- dogs seem to hate the thing, we'll have to test it for odors. We need more light. Curse this fiendish wind!

Blast of WIND and STATIC.

LAKE

We found a barrel-shaped fossil of wholly unknown nature; probably vegetable, unless overgrown specimen of unknown marine radiata. Apparently preserved by mineral salts -- more mummified than petrified. Tough as leather yet astonishingly flexible at parts.

(MORE)

LAKE (cont'd)

Six feet end to end, 3.5 feet central diameter tapering to one foot at each end. Like a barrel with five bulging ridges in place of staves. Lateral breakages, as of thinnish stalks are at equator in middle of these ridges. In furrows between ridges are curious growths. Combs or wings that fold up and spread out like fans. All greatly damaged but one, which when spread out gives seven foot wing-span. Ends of body shrivelled, giving no clue as to what was broken off there. Must dissect when we get back to camp. Can't determine if it's animal or vegetable. Dogs can't stand the thing. We're going to haul it back to camp. Wind's up - - we've got some serious weather coming in too.

NATHAN REED

Some say the age of discovery ended centuries ago. This breaking news from the Antarctic stands to challenge what we know of our planet and the history of life upon it. Thirty-four minutes later we received another transmission from the distant south.

STATIC and WIND.

DYER

This is Professor Dyer -- Miskatonic University. Bad weather's interfering with the radio relay. Lake radioed our camp - - they discovered thirteen more of the barrel-shaped organisms in the cave. Lake is confident that these organisms created the fossilized prints found earlier. A specimen was taken to a makeshift lab where... well here, let me just read Professor Lake's description to you: objects are eight feet long all over, each with a six-foot five-ridged barrel torso 3.5 feet central diameter, 1 foot diameters at each end. Dark grey, flexible, and infinitely tough.

(MORE)

DYER (cont'd)

Seven-foot membranous wings of same colour, found folded, spread out of furrows between ridges. The wing framework, if they are wings, of course, is tubular or glandular, of lighter grey, with orifices at the tips. Spread wings have serrated edge. Around the torso, one at the central apex of each of the five vertical, stave-like ridges, are five systems of light grey flexible arms or tentacles, found tightly folded to torso but expansible to maximum length of over 3 feet. Like the arms of a primitive crinoid.

NATHAN REED

I'm sorry to interrupt, Professor, a crinoid?

DYER

Yes, it's an ancient form of marine animal with many segmented feeding arms. Some species look almost like feathery plants, but they're animals, capable of swimming and of moving along the sea floor.

NATHAN REED

I see. Please continue.

DYER

Yes, Lake's description of the thing goes on. Single stalks of 3 inches diameter branch after 6 inches into five sub-stalks, each of which branches after 8 inches into five small, tapering tentacles or tendrils, giving each stalk a total of 25 tentacles. At the top of the torso a blunt bulbous neck of lighter grey with gill-like suggestions hold yellowing five pointed starfish-shaped apparent head, covered with three inch wiry cilia of various prismatic colours. This head is thick and puffy, about 2 feet point to point, with three-inch flexible yellowish tubes projecting from each point. A slit in the exact center of the top is probably a breathing aperture.

(MORE)

DYER (cont'd)

At end of each tube is a spherical expansion where a yellowing membrane rolls back on handling to reveal a glassy, red-irised globe, evidently an eye. Five slightly longer reddish tubes start from inner angles of starfish shaped head and end in sac-like swellings of the same colour.

NATHAN REED

Professor, it sounds absolutely monstrous. What is it?

DYER

We don't know. Lake took one of the specimens and performed a provisional dissection. He described anatomical features that are animal, and some that seem more vegetable in nature. It appears to have three separate systems of respiration -- lungs, gills and pores -- and highly complex muscular and nervous systems. It has vocal organs, but not ones capable of uttering speech like ours. He said it might have communicated with piping sounds, one might almost say musically.

NATHAN REED

It's incredible, Professor. What do you call them?

DYER

I asked Lake the same question. Their fantastic qualities remind him of mythological creatures that a colleague of ours in the English department has described, creatures mentioned in certain ancient books. Lake has taken half-jokingly to calling his specimens by the same name: he calls them The Elder Things.

NATHAN REED

It's unbelievable. What does it all mean, Professor?

Dark Adventure: At the Mountains of Madness 15.

DYER

I have no idea. It changes everything.

WWN Radio music.

NATHAN REED

Worldwide Wireless News, January 25, 1931 - Antarctic team unreachable by radio, rescue mission underway.

WWN Theme music

NATHAN REED

This is Nathan Reed reporting. After yesterday's shocking news of strange fossil discoveries in the Antarctic, Professor Lake's advance camp has been unreachable by radio. Earlier we reached the expedition's Professor Dyer at his camp some 300 miles from where Professor Lake found the mysterious fossils.

WIND. STATIC.

DYER

Lake's last transmission reported bad winds last night. The wind's blowing at 35 knots here. It's been ten hours since we've heard from Lake. The last of our aeroplanes has flown in from McMurdo sound. We've loaded our team, seven dogs, the sledges and supplies.

Sound of PLANE ENGINE in background.

NATHAN REED

Does Lake's team have a backup radio, Professor?

DYER

Yes, Nathan, they have four.

Pause.

NATHAN REED

Professor, is this a rescue operation?

Dark Adventure: At the Mountains of Madness 16.

DYER

It might be that the storm knocked out their communication, Nathan. We're hoping for the best.

NATHAN REED

Godspeed, Professor Dyer.

WIND and STATIC out.

NATHAN REED

And now, Ladies and Gentlemen, we go to a live transmission from the team on its way to Professor Lake's last known location. Professor Dyer, can you hear me?

Sound of AEROPLANE IN FLIGHT. Blast of STATIC.

DYER

...incredible magnitude. Lake wasn't exaggerating -- like black spires tearing into the reddish ice clouds. The effect is other-worldly. Like some kind of mirage.

HUBBUB of other team members in the background over DRONE of engines.

DYER

Danforth's pointing out formations on the higher peaks, like tiny perfectly formed cubes perched on the upper slopes. The shapes are very...

(pause)

...strange.

NATHAN REED

Can you see Professor Lake's camp?

DYER

Yes, there are some darkish spots on the ice. That may be where they drilled. I think that's it -- there. We'll approach for a landing and let you know if everything is all right. Out.

Worldwide Wireless music.

NATHAN REED

Worldwide Wireless News Network,
January 26, 1931 - Disaster strikes
Antarctic expedition: eleven
confirmed dead.

WWN Theme music

NATHAN REED

I'm Nathan Reed for Worldwide
Wireless News, with sad news
tonight from the Antarctic. A
brutal storm tore through the
advanced camp of the Miskatonic
University team. At present there
are eleven confirmed dead with one
team member missing. Savage
antarctic winds estimated in excess
of one hundred miles an hour
demolished shelters and tents built
at the foothills of a massive
mountain range discovered by the
team earlier this week. We received
the following transmission from
Professor Dyer whose rescue team
arrived at the demolished camp this
morning.

STATIC, noises of WIND, other MEN, DOGS BARKING and CHAOS.

DYER

(his voice is strained and
cold)

This is Professor Dyer. My team
arrived at the Miskatonic advance
camp at 1600 hours. The entire camp
appears to have been destroyed in a
massive storm. It's pure
devastation here. We're searching
the area and have recovered the
bodies of eleven men. We're using
the plane to search for the twelfth
member of their group from the air.
None of their dogs survived.
They... the equipment has been
badly damaged by incredible winds.
It's a scene of heart-wrenching
destruction. I really can't say any
more.

NATHAN REED

Such a tragic ending to an expedition that seemed on the brink of unveiling an exciting new world of scientific discoveries. Professor Dyer reported that the unusual fossil samples found earlier this week were all but destroyed in the storm, although remaining fragments seemed to corroborate Professor Lake's descriptions. The rescuers plan to continue to search the area by aeroplane for the still-missing scientist before flying back to the expedition's home base at McMurdo sound. We here at Worldwide Wireless News extend our heartfelt condolences to the families of these brave explorers.

Musical segue back to Dark Adventure.

CHESTER

A terrible tragedy that saddened the world. But today we'll learn the astonishing details of what really happened in those frozen mountains. Professor Dyer, I gather the information you gave to news reporters about what happened in Professor Lake's camp was not completely correct.

DYER

No, the news accounts themselves are accurate, save what we omitted from our final broadcasts. Those of us who survived, Pabodie, Sherman, Ropes, McTighe, Williamson, Danforth and I, agreed that there were certain details the public need not and ought not know. And the details of what Danforth and I saw the following day we had planned to take to the grave.

CHESTER

And now you've changed your mind?

DYER

The Starkweather-Moore party is organizing with a thoroughness far beyond anything our outfit attempted. If not dissuaded, they will get to the innermost nucleus of the Antarctic and melt and bore till they bring up that which may end the world we know. So I must break through all reticence at last - and speak even of that ultimate nameless thing beyond the mountains of madness. Early in the morning after the terrible storm, we left my camp in our aeroplane en route to Lake's camp in the foothills of the mountains....

Volume on Dyer fades down with MUSIC transition to DRONE of aeroplane engines as Dyer and the rescue team fly.

MCTIGHE

Hang on, it's going to be rough with these gales. I'm taking her down a couple of thousand feet.

DYER

I think you're right, McTighe.

LARSEN

Professor, look.

DYER

What is it, Larsen?

LARSEN

There at 11 o'clock. The mountains.

There's a HUBBUB among the men as they jostle to look out the window.

SHERMAN

My god, look at the size of 'em.

WILLIAMS

Strange shapes rising up like spikes, like... I don't know what.

DRONING of engines.

DANFORTH

Look, above the snow line, on the black part below the summit.

SHERMAN

What are those?

PABODIE

Those must be the cube shapes Lake radioed about.

DANFORTH

They look almost like buildings, like ruins of some kind. They're so...

DYER

(narrated)

The effect was that of a Cyclopean city with no architecture known to man or to human imagination, with vast aggregations of night-black masonry embodying monstrous perversions of geometrical laws. There were truncated cones, sometimes terraced and fluted, surmounted by tall cylindrical shafts. There were pyramids either alone or surmounting cylinders or cubes, and occasional needle-like spires in curious clusters of five - and it all was all knit together by tubular bridges spanning dizzying heights.

ROPES

It's a mirage.

PABODIE

I don't think so.

ROPES

It should be.

MCTIGHE

Look, up ahead -- there's the camp.

DYER

Do you see them?

DRONE of the plane's engines.

MCTIGHE

There's no movement.

ROPES

Where are they?

MCTIGHE

Those patches of darkness... Is that blood on the ground?

ROPES

It's got to be fuel or...

SHERMAN

(softly)

Our father who art in heaven...

DYER

I don't know. Do you see anyone moving down there?

MCTIGHE

I don't even see the dogs.

WILLIAMS

What on earth happened here?

DYER

McTighe, find a place to set down. We'll look on foot.

SHERMAN

I don't want to go.

DYER

We're all going. They may need our help.

SFX of plane LANDING in snow. Antarctic WIND.

DYER

We break into twos. Sherman, you go with McTighe and Pabodie. Stick together, call out if you find anyone. For now, no one leaves the camp.

The men hurry away into the snow, footsteps CRUNCHING, AD LIBS, etc.

DYER

(narrated)

It was as we have told the world. Indeed our only deception was in what we did not -- dared not -- tell. The dark spots we'd seen from the aeroplane were indeed blood. The reddened snow spoke of incredible violence.

(MORE)

DYER (cont'd)

We quickly realized something terrible had taken place, but there were no bodies to be found. We divided into groups to search for survivors. Danforth and I found tent cloths and parkas, deliberately cut apart and reconfigured, as if someone were trying to suit them to some other unguessable purpose.

FOOTSTEPS squeak in the snow. WIND.

DANFORTH

This is crazy. One of them must have gone mad. Turned on the others, don't you think, professor?

DYER

(under his breath)
It wasn't just one.

A DISTANT CRY of surprise.

DANFORTH

What was that?

DYER

Let's go!

They RUN across the camp.

MCTIGHE

(shouting)
Professor!

DYER

What is it?

MCTIGHE

We found them.

DYER

Are they...?

MCTIGHE

You should see for yourself.
They're in the aeroplane shelter.

DYER

(narrated)

We had reported that the storm had left the bodies in a terrible condition, unsuited for the long voyage home. But how could we describe what we truly saw?

In the shelter, LESS WIND, FLAPPING tent.

DYER

Good lord.

MCTIGHE

There's more of them here.

Larsen WRETCHES. Sherman SNIVELS.

PABODIE

Williams, take Mr. Sherman outside. Ropes, take some photographs.

DYER

(narrated)

They were dead of course, but worse than that, they were frightfully mangled. Men and dogs all thrown about together. Most appeared to have been strangled, some terribly lacerated. The fatter, healthier men and dogs had solid masses of their tissue cut away, as if by -- I can barely bring myself to say it -- as if by a butcher. In the snow around the remains we found traces of salt, with its hideous implication. Shards of clothing were roughly slashed, but they offered no meaningful clues as to what had taken place.

PABODIE

Look here, men. There are strange impressions here in the snow. They look like the fossil footprints that Lake had found.

ROPES

So what?

PABODIE

It's a fresh print in the snow.

ROPES

(after a pause)

Well, Lake was hauling those things he found around. Those Elder Things.

MCTIGHE

I count ten men in here, Professor Dyer. Thirty five dogs.

DYER

So there are two men and two dogs missing?

MCTIGHE

It looks that way to me.

DYER

McTighe, take Larsen, Ropes, and Williams and keep searching. The rest of us will bury the dead.

MCTIGHE

Bury them? Shouldn't we take them back with us?

DYER

And explain it how? Would you want to see your loved ones like that?

Cold WIND.

DYER

(narrated)

We were digging a mass grave for the men, another for Lake's dogs. It was heartbreaking, terrible work -- cold with light snow falling.

SHOVELS cut into the snow. In the distance dogs HOWL and BARK furiously.

DYER

Listen to those dogs. Do you suppose they know that their sled mates are dead?

DANFORTH

No, Sherman found more of those star-shaped soapstones Lake talked about. The dogs can't stand them.

LARSEN
(shouts from the distance)
Professor Dyer! We found something!

Shovelling stops. FOOTSTEPS approach.

DYER
What is it Larsen? Have you found survivors?

LARSEN
No, we found... graves.

DYER
Graves?! Whose graves?

LARSEN
You'll have to see this for yourself, Professor.

They hurry away - WIND.

DYER
(narrated)
It was yet another baffling sight. Young Larsen was right: what he found could only be called graves. Six of them. And buried in each, standing upright, was one of the Archean fossils that Lake had found -- one of the Elder Things. Each grave extended nine feet down into the ice, and was topped with a star-shaped mound of snow, marked with a pattern of dots. McTighe and Ropes exhumed one of the things, it was exactly as Lake had described, down to the broken starfish-like appendages at what I assumed to be its top.

ROPES
Criminy, what a stench! This thing isn't a fossil, it feels like leather.

DYER
Not all fossils are petrified. Lake said they were leathery and tough.

MCTIGHE
Why would Lake's men bury them?

ROPES

To get rid of the stink.

DYER

There are only six? No other burials?

ROPES

No, we haven't seen any.

DYER

Lake radioed that there were fourteen, right?

MCTIGHE

That's right. What happened to the rest of them?

Roar of WIND.

DYER

(narrated)

The graves contained only those specimens which Lake had described as being damaged or incomplete. We decided to send McTighe, Sherman and Pabodie up in an aeroplane to search for the missing men while the light remained good. The rest of us continued to explore the remains of the camp. Danforth and I were at what had been their provisions tent. It had been reduced to tatters, but not merely by the wind. It had been deliberately cut apart. A heap of tin cans were piled on the ground. They were mangled, torn apart in the most unlikely way in the most unlikely places....

Volume fades down on narration, fades up on background WIND.

DYER

What on earth were they doing?

DANFORTH

It's as if they didn't know how tin cans worked. Look, the salt's gone.

DYER

Hmmm?

DANFORTH

The salt's gone from the larder.
And the stove fuel. They must have
taken the salt to the aeroplane
shelter to... merciful heavens.

DYER

Look here, Danforth, matches.

DYER

(narrated)

There was a small pile of matches,
some burnt, some not, some broken,
but all assembled into a strange
little formation.

DANFORTH

Professor, this is madness.

DYER

(narrated)

Without a doubt the most disturbing
discovery for me was Lake's
dissecting tent. It was one of the
last tents we entered, as it
appeared entirely intact. Pabodie
was with me then....

Narration fades out as WIND and Pabodie fade up.

PABODIE

Let's go in here, Dyer. The way I
see it, the third specimen we
exhumed must have been the one Lake
dissected. The others looked torn
up, but that one had been dissected
methodically. They're tough as
nails and...

He shuts up with a small GASP.

DYER

(narrated)

At first we didn't understand what
we were seeing. Strewn about the
room were the remains of a dog and
a human being, each crudely and
inexpertly dissected down to its
component parts. Organs, joints,
skin, all neatly separated and
placed incomprehensibly about the
room.

(MORE)

DYER (cont'd)

Four eyes -- two human and two canine -- were neatly arranged on a side table.

PABODIE

Who could do such a thing?

DYER

(narrated)

I was fascinated by the blotted and smudged medical illustrations lain out on the table, as if the perpetrator were teaching himself mammalian anatomy.

PABODIE

Dyer, the scalpels, all the surgical tools are gone.

DYER

So is the stove. This poor soul is the eleventh man. Who does that leave missing?

PABODIE

Gedney. Lake's graduate student, tall fellow. He climbed Mt. Nansen with us. Do you think he could have done this?

DYER

No. Not all of it.

PABODIE

Dyer, look here at these matches.

DYER

(narrated)

Another curious litter of matches lay on the snow floor of the dissecting tent. Pabodie and I removed the remains and buried them with the other dead. By the time our search plane returned, we were all on edge, trying to convince ourselves we were witnesses to a scene of mass hysteria. While the other men huddled together in one of Lake's two functional aeroplanes, Pabodie, McTighe and I -- as senior team members -- convened a meeting inside one of our aeroplanes....

Fade down on narration and fade up on grim metal RINGING inside the fuselage.

DYER

Do you have any ideas gentlemen?

MCTIGHE

I think it started with Lake's dogs.

DYER

The dogs? How do you mean?

MCTIGHE

They were together in an enclosure but the snow wall was knocked down.

DYER

By the wind?

MCTIGHE

It wasn't the windward side. It looks like it was knocked down from the inside -- the dogs were trying to get out. Something got them going. Our dogs certainly don't like it here.

DYER

Go on.

MCTIGHE

The dogs are frenzied, and running out of control. This added strain is too much for one of the men: his nerves frayed by this hellish wind, he snaps and starts killing the dogs. Somebody tries to stop him, it turns violent, and soon they're all in on it.

Pabodie SNORTS.

MCTIGHE

What? It could happen.

PABODIE

Then they stop to bury the Elder Things, systematically dissect one of the men and one of the dogs, and then dismantle the drill and mechanical equipment?

DYER

What's that about the equipment?

PABODIE

Almost everything mechanical's been half torn apart -- disassembled really. I mean paint's stripped off the planes, nuts removed from bolts. The drill's been dismantled. One of the plane engines was taken apart.

DYER

Couldn't it have been the storm?

PABODIE

The storm? I've never seen the wind take machinery apart to see how it works.

MCTIGHE

What are you saying?

PABODIE

This was more than mad dogs and madmen fighting. Books are gone, food is gone, equipment and tools are gone. The sleds are gone. Flesh... meat from the bodies is gone.

MCTIGHE

You think Gedney did this and set out on his own? With three sleds and one dog?

PABODIE

No I don't.

(pause)

Did you see this, Dyer?

DYER

Sure, it's the soapstone Lake found in the cave.

PABODIE

You're a geologist. Does that strike you as a natural rock formation?

DYER

No, no it doesn't. Someone made this!

MCTIGHE

And hid it in a cave sixty five million years ago?

DYER

Nothing erodes to look like this, McTighe. Look at the little dots on it. They're in a deliberate pattern.

PABODIE

And it should look familiar. That's the same pattern of dots above the graves of the Elder Things.

DYER

Is there no sign of the other Elder Things? The undamaged ones?

MCTIGHE

No sign of them.

PABODIE

Hmm, as if they just vanished into thin air.

MCTIGHE

Now don't start in with your mumbo-jumbo, Pabodie.

PABODIE

This from the man who says madmen and a storm did this?

MCTIGHE

Do you have a better answer?

DYER

What do you think, Frank? Really.

PABODIE

I'm not inclined to say.

MCTIGHE

Now look here, Pabodie!

DYER

Easy, McTighe. Frank?

PABODIE

Bill, there are books, you know the ones I mean, at Miskatonic. You've read them, I've read them.

(MORE)

PABODIE (cont'd)

Poor Lake read them, with their fantastical stories of the Elder Things, earth's first masters, who created earth life as a joke or a mistake. I know your friend Wilmarth takes them seriously, but I've always thought of them as mad ramblings, as occult poetry. But maybe they're not allegories. Being here, seeing this, I can't help but think perhaps they're much more literal than we might have thought. Maybe the mad Arab, Abdul al Hazred, was right, and those ancient tales reveal secrets not meant for mankind.

MCTIGHE

What books? What are you talking about?

DYER

All right, that's enough. I think we can agree that we can't explain what happened here. I say we radio the outside, and tell them what happened, but vaguely. There was a storm, the expedition perished. We'll provide no details. We'll take one last flight to look for Gedney and then we all fly back to McMurdo Sound.

MCTIGHE

But we can't just pretend this, this madness here didn't happen!

DYER

No, it happened, McTighe. But if we can't explain it, I think the less said, the better.

Pause.

PABODIE

Nobody should ever know what really happened here.

WIND GUST.

CHESTER

Professor Dyer, your tale is a shocking one.

(MORE)

CHESTER (cont'd)

It's hard to believe, after what we've heard, that there were yet more terrors in store for you.

DYER

I wish it weren't true, Mr. Langfield, but our horrifying discoveries were just beginning. It is only with hesitancy and repugnance that I let my mind go back to Lake's camp and what we really found there. I am constantly tempted to shirk the details, and to let hints stand for actual facts, and the deductions to which they inevitably led. But I must speak out before others put themselves -- and even the whole world -- in peril.

CHESTER

Well, Professor, what happened next?

DYER

The following morning, as soon as weather conditions permitted, Danforth and I left the others to search for Gedney by air. We thought that with the plane empty of the other men and equipment we could gain enough altitude to see what was on the other side of the mountains.

CHESTER

Wasn't that a dangerous thing to do, Professor Dyer, given the circumstances?

DYER

Absolutely. But in spite of the prevailing horrors we were left with enough sheer scientific zeal and adventurousness to wonder about the unknown realm beyond those mysterious mountains. Geologically, there's nothing else like this on earth. I had to go. Danforth and I bundled in our heaviest furs, and climbed in our aeroplane to a pass leading over the mountains.

(MORE)

DYER (cont'd)

What we saw matched Lake's descriptions perfectly -- those towering peaks had stood basically undisturbed for perhaps fifty million years. But it was the mountainside tangle of cubes, ramparts, and cave mouths which fascinated and disturbed us most.

CHESTER

Tell us about them.

DYER

As Lake had said, the edges of the cubes were crumbled and rounded from untold aeons of savage weathering. Young Danforth was an avid reader of bizarre material, and mentioned that the scene reminded him of certain passages in the works of Edgar Allan Poe. In fact he claimed to have heard in the wind itself that strange sound from Poe's Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym. For me, it brought to mind of the ruins at Macchu Picchu or Kish, but how to account for such things in this place was frankly beyond me, and I felt queerly humbled as a geologist. The cave mouths were square or semicircular as if the natural orifices had been shaped to greater symmetry by some magic hand....

Fade down on Dyer's narration, as the sound of AEROPLANE ENGINES with WIND blasting outside fades up.

DANFORTH

Professor, hand me the binoculars and take the controls.

DYER

(nervously)

Alright.

DANFORTH

It's the same! Look around the mouth of that cave -- the dots, they're the same as the soapstones and the graves, look, look!

DYER

It's probably just a coincidence, a formation that...

(pause)

Danforth, I think you're right.

The WIND whistles outside with the subtlest trace of PIPING or WHISTLING in it.

DANFORTH

(loudly over the wind)

It's like a dream, Professor. There's something unnatural here, some ancient lurking evil.

DYER

Steady on, Danforth. Don't let your imagination carry you away.

DANFORTH

Do you see that pass looming up ahead? Beyond that pass lies a world no human eye has ever seen. In a moment we shall look into an elder, alien earth without the stain of man.

DYER

What's our altitude?

DANFORTH

23,570 feet. Here we go!

A pause with only the ENGINE and the WIND and eerie hint of PIPING. Both suddenly burst out in exclamation.

DYER

Merciful heavens!

DANFORTH

Professor, can you believe it?

DYER

(narrating)

As the plane flew through the pass and crested that momentous divide, we beheld a limitless, tempest-scarred plateau covered with an endless labyrinth of colossal, regular and geometrically and architecturally arranged stone masses which reared their crumbled and pitted crests above the glacial sheet. The monstrous sight seemed a violation of natural law. Here, 20,000 feet high, in a climate deadly to habitation since mankind was little more than an ape, thrived a cyclopean city of obscene proportions, tearing upward through the ice, hideous and menacing.

DANFORTH

It's a city. It goes on for miles.

DYER

The foothills, they're covered with the cube...buildings.

DANFORTH

Look, those walls must be a hundred, a hundred and fifty feet high.

DYER

(narrating)

The buildings varied in size. The general shape of these things tended to be conical, pyramidal, or terraced; though there were many perfect cylinders, perfect cubes, clusters of cubes and other rectangular forms, and a peculiar sprinkling of angled edifices whose five-pointed ground plan roughly suggested modern fortifications. In the middle of the city a vast circular gulf, perhaps once the base of great tower, opened to unthinkable blackness below. The construction was magnificent; arches were used expertly and domes probably existed in the city's heyday.

(MORE)

DYER (cont'd)

In many places the buildings were totally ruined and the ice-sheet deeply riven from various geologic causes. A wide swath wholly free of buildings cut across from the foothills....

DANFORTH

Professor, could that have been a river?

DYER

It looks like it.

DANFORTH

Where did it flow to?

DYER

There are probably caves under the city. Maybe a drainage to an underground sea.

DANFORTH

It's crazy, the city just keeps going. What do you think, fifty miles south?

DYER

At least. Maybe 30 to the east. Look, there are carvings on the river embankment.

DANFORTH

Professor, we don't have a lot of fuel. We should head back.

DYER

We could land. Go on foot.

DANFORTH

I'm sorry, sir, but are you out of your mind?

DYER

Don't tell me you don't want to see this place, Danforth. To know who or what built it?

DANFORTH

No one will ever believe it.

DYER

We'll take photos and make sketches. We'll document it for the others.

DYER

(narrating)

Danforth guided the plane back towards the pass and brought it down on a snowfield devoid of obstacles and well-suited for a swift takeoff. We loaded ourselves with supplies and headed downhill over the crusted snow towards the stupendous stone labyrinth before us. The air was very thin at this altitude, but the absence of wind made the going more bearable. We approached a roofless rampart and at last touched its weathered Cyclopean blocks. I felt deeply affected, as if I'd established an unprecedented and almost blasphemous link with forgotten aeons normally closed to our species. It was built from irregularly shaped blocks of Jurassic sandstone, most six feet tall, eight feet wide and five feet thick. We wished Pabodie had been with us as perhaps his engineering skill could have explained how such titanic blocks could have been handled in the unbelievably remote age when the place was built....

Fade down Dyer's narration, fade up on dialogue.

DANFORTH

Professor, we can climb in. Follow me. There's carvings on the walls inside.

DYER

Yes, I can see something on the wall. Careful there.

THUMP of Danforth's feet as he leaps onto interior floor.

DANFORTH

There. Careful, sir, the ice is slick down here.

Dyer jumps down with a THUMP.

DYER

Merciful heavens! Danforth, look at it.

DANFORTH

It's a mural. It keeps going and going this way.

DYER

It goes on this way too. What exquisite workmanship! Such detailed stonework. Shine your torch over here.

DANFORTH

So this must be a picture of...

DYER

The life and history of an unimaginably ancient time. Get the camera out! We have to take pictures.

Sound of FLASHBULB popping. Danforth's voice trails off a bit as he follows the murals.

DANFORTH

Look there, Professor, in that panel. It's more of the dot patterns. It must be writing in some forgotten language.

DYER

(reeling)
A pre-human language...

DANFORTH

The hallway's blocked with ice down here. We'll have to turn back.

DYER

If only we had Pabodie's ice-melting gear.

DANFORTH

The buildings towards the river had less ice in them.

DYER

What do you mean?

DANFORTH

We might have better luck at ground level. More of the structures might have survived....

DYER

(narrating)

I felt a wash of terror flood through me, but my curiosity, like Danforth's, was irresistible. We made our way further into the city proper.

Sound of feet on ice and snow with distant SHRIEKING/PIPING DEVIL WIND.

DYER

(narrating)

The upper wind shrieked vainly and savagely through the skyward peaks yet the air was deadly still as we walked. Between us and the churning vapors to the west lay that monstrous tangle of dark stone towers. It was a mirage in solid stone, and were it not for the photographs I would still doubt that such a thing could be. In places we could see through transparent parts of the ice sheet to the tubular stone bridges that connected the crazily sprinkled stone structures below. It began to take its toll on our nerves....

Fade down on narration and up on dialogue. CRUNCHING FOOTSTEPS on snow, with the sound of PIPING WIND quietly in the background.

DANFORTH

What was that?

DYER

What?

DANFORTH

Something's moving over there. In the shadows.

DYER

Shine your torch, there's nothing there.

DANFORTH

They left their prints in the snow.

DYER

Who did?

DANFORTH

The things, the Elder Things from camp! They survived. They've come here.

DYER

Nothing's been here for half a million years, Danforth. Pull yourself together. Let's concentrate on our work, it will calm our nerves. Collect some rock samples along that wall. When we analyze them we can determine the age of this place.

Sound footsteps on ice then of ROCK CHIPPING with a pick.

DANFORTH

(calling out)

Professor? Professor Dyer?

DYER

(in the distance)

Danforth, come here. I think I've found the perfect opening for us.

Sound of Danforth running on the snow.

DANFORTH

It's great! I'll bet that a bridge used to connect right there at that archway.

DYER

The floor inside may be intact. If we climb up this rubble here, we could go inside.

Sound of Dyer beginning to climb rubble. Very faint weird piping/wind noise.

DANFORTH

Sir... I'm not sure we should.

DYER

We're men of science, Danforth.
And this is the greatest
opportunity for discovery we'll
ever have.

DANFORTH

Do you hear that? It seems to be
coming from inside the building!

DYER

Steady on, Danforth. That's the
wind rushing through all these
passageways. We can't be deterred
by phantoms and imaginings. Follow
me!

Sound of LABORIOUS CLIMBING. AD LIB comments: watch your
step, mind this ice, etc.

DYER

Come along, Danforth. There's a
solid floor up here!

DANFORTH

I'm losing my grip!

DYER

Take off your mitten and take my
hand.

Sounds of EFFORT, Danforth being HAULED UP the last few feet.

DYER

(breathlessly)
There you are!

DANFORTH

Thank you, Professor.

DYER

At least there's no ice in here.
The corridor goes as far as I can
see. Hmm, floor looks like slabs of
archaean slate.

We hear the sound of PAPER TEARING.

DYER

What are you doing?

DANFORTH

Bits of paper to mark our trail.
Like breadcrumbs.

DYER

I guess the air is still enough.
Good idea. That's the spirit,
Danforth.

As they continue to talk, their voices take on a CAVERNOUS ECHOING quality. The sound of the WIND grows more quiet, but the PIPING becomes more pronounced. Their FOOTSTEPS echo.

DANFORTH

How far do you think it goes?

DYER

With the bridges and tunnels, we
could probably go on for days.
These passages might connect
through the entire city.

DANFORTH

There's no sign of disaster. It's
more like the place was abandoned.

DYER

It seems like whoever built this
place took their belongings and
left the buildings behind. Maybe
they knew the ice would come.

DANFORTH

This is amazing. The sculpted
murals here are perfectly
preserved.

DYER

Take a photograph.

FLASHBULB

DANFORTH

That's the end of our film.

DYER

(narrating)

The structures were filled with mural sculptures which tended to run in horizontal bands three feet wide, arranged from floor to ceiling in alternation with bands of equal width given over to geometrical arabesques. The technique was mature, accomplished and aesthetically evolved to the highest degree of civilised mastery; though utterly alien in every detail to any known art tradition of the human race. In certain rooms the dominant arrangement was varied by the presence of maps, astronomical charts and other scientific designs on an enlarged scale.

CHESTER

It sounds fantastic, professor, to see such things.

DYER

It was. But I don't mean to arouse curiosity in those who believe me. It would be tragic if any were allured to that realm of death and horror by the very warning meant to discourage them.

CHESTER

What did the murals depict?

DYER

(after a pause)

The subject matter of the sculptures came from the life of the vanished epoch of their creation, and contained a large proportion of evident history. There could now be no further merciful doubt about the nature of the beings which had built and inhabited this monstrous dead city millions of years ago, when man's ancestors were primitive archaic mammals, and vast dinosaurs roamed the tropical steppes of Europe and Asia.

CHESTER

What were they?

DYER

The things once rearing and dwelling in this frightful masonry in the age of dinosaurs were not indeed dinosaurs, but far worse. Mere dinosaurs were new and almost brainless objects -- but the builders of the city were wise and old, and had left certain traces in rocks even then laid down well nigh a thousand million years -- rocks laid down before the true life of earth had advanced beyond plastic groups of cells -- rocks laid down before the true life of earth had existed at all. They were the makers and enslavers of that life, and above all doubt the originals of the fiendish elder myths which things like the *Pnakotic Manuscripts* and the *Necronomicon* affrightedly hint about.

CHESTER

What do you mean, Professor?

DYER

They were the great "Old Ones" that had filtered down from the stars when earth was young -- beings whose substance an alien evolution had shaped, and whose powers were such as this planet had never bred. And to think that only the day before Danforth and I had actually looked upon fragments of their fossilized remains, and that poor Lake and his party had seen them in their entirety!

CHESTER

You realize, some will dismiss your reporting as madness.

DYER

Of course. Were it not for the snapshots soon to be made public I would refrain from telling what we found and inferred, lest I be confined as a madman.

(MORE)

DYER (cont'd)

And of course, I understand that early parts of the story representing the life of the star-headed things on other planets and other galaxies may be interpreted as the fantastic mythology of the things themselves. Yet they sometimes featured designs and diagrams so uncannily close to the latest findings of mathematics and astrophysics that I scarcely know what to think. Let others judge when they see the photographs I shall publish.

CHESTER

You were able to learn the history of these things solely from the carvings?

DYER

It's a wonder we deduced so much in our short time there and through our subsequent study of the photos and sketches. No one set of carvings told more than a fraction of their story, nor did the details unfold in anything approaching the proper order. Their story, as our crude understanding would have it is as follows: myth or fact, the star-headed things came to a lifeless earth from cosmic space. They seemed to be able to traverse interstellar aether on their membranous wings. They ruled the earth for unthinkable aeons. They could move on land, swim or fly, and their toughness suited them to even the deepest ocean. Here they made great cities under the sea. Under the sea they first created life on earth. Using methods known to them they first made food, and later multicellular protoplasmic masses capable of molding their tissues into all sorts of temporary organs under the hypnotic control of the Elder Things. These formed ideal slaves to perform the heavy work of the community.

(MORE)

DYER (cont'd)

These viscous masses were no doubt the "shoggoths" whispered of in Alhazred's frightful *Necronomicon*, though he could never have imagined that such things existed on earth except in drug-induced dreams.

CHESTER

And these things, these "shoggoths" built their cities?

DYER

Indeed. The Elder Things appeared content to let byproducts of their first life forms evolve, and indeed all life on earth evolved from their creation of simple living matter. They continued to build and evolve their cities with the work being done by these shoggoths. The things were truly hideous and filled Danforth in particular with horror and loathing. They were normally shapeless entities composed of a viscous jelly which looked like an agglutination of bubbles roughly fifteen feet in diameter, but their shape and volume shifted constantly as they would spontaneously throw out organs of sight, hearing and speech as directed by their masters.

CHESTER

It's no wonder Danforth hated them. They sound horrifying.

DYER

Yes. They served the Elder Things for a length of time that is almost unimaginable to us. But the shoggoths apparently became more intelligent and eventually rebellions and uprisings plagued the Elder Things, particularly once the shoggoths adapted to life on land. There were ample images of Elder Things slime-coated, and heads torn off, destroyed in conflicts with the shoggoths.

CHESTER

Did these shoggoths destroy their civilization? What happened to them?

DYER

The shoggoths were again subjugated, but it's not entirely clear from our brief study of random murals what happened next. We saw the continents of earth moving into their current positions, and their maps showed fewer and fewer of their cities. This affected Danforth quite deeply...

Fade down on narration with music cue, fade up on dialogue with atmospheric sound effects. Their FOOTSTEPS ECHO through the stone corridors as they speak.

DANFORTH

The city we're in was sacred to them. It's the place where they first came when they arrived on earth, their first and last bastion. They have here sacred stones preserved from their first settlement under the sea. And it stands at the foot of the unholy mountains which even they feared.

CHESTER

He could tell all that just from looking at their carvings?

DYER

(still narrating)

Yes. Their murals were uncanny in communicating subtleties which even language would struggle to impart.

Danforth hurries down the corridor examining more murals.

DANFORTH

Look, here you can see snow and ice are encroaching on the city. There's almost no plant and animal life left. And look here at this panel, the Elder Things are engineering new shoggoths that are larger and stronger than before.

DYER

Hmm, you're right. They're even worse than the earlier ones.

DANFORTH

Yes, yes. See, they're preparing for the task of relocating their city to this subterranean sea here. They're leaving their slowly freezing city to return to this sunless sea in an abyss deep below.

DYER

Then what?

DANFORTH

I can't really tell here. The quality of these carvings gets worse the further we go. I think the new sea-cavern city survived. Do you think it's still down there?

DYER

I wouldn't presume to know.

DANFORTH

What about Lake's undamaged specimens, Professor? They could have been...

DYER

Where he found them, those individuals could not have been less than thirty million years old. They would have lived in a time when this frozen wasteland was lush with Tertiary vegetation and life.

(hesitating)

But I'll admit the same thoughts have gnawed at me.

DANFORTH

Professor, look on this side, this is a map of the city! There's the river. So, let's see, we entered the buildings about there.

DYER

Look at this causeway, it leads down to...

Ominous pause.

Dark Adventure: At the Mountains of Madness 50.

DANFORTH

The abyss. According to this map,
it's probably less than a mile from
here.

DYER

We don't have much battery left for
our torches.

DANFORTH

I'll turn mine off.

DYER

We don't have much time -- we need
to get back to camp. We'll have to
move quickly.

DANFORTH

Let's go.

Sound of difficult TRUDGING through ECHOING caverns beneath
the following narration.

DYER

(narrating)

We threaded our dim way through the
labyrinth with the aid of map and
compass; traversing rooms,
clambering up and down ramps, over
bridges. We were repeatedly
tantalized by sculptured walls
along the route but pressed on,
drawing ever closer to where we
expected the tunnel's mouth to be.

DANFORTH

(alarmed)

Stop.

DYER

What is it?

Danforth SNIFFS.

DANFORTH

Do you smell that?

Dyer SNIFFS too.

DYER

What is it?

DANFORTH

It's the same smell as when we dug the Things out of their graves at Lake's camp.

Pause.

DANFORTH

Shine the light over there.

DYER

What?

DANFORTH

Look. At the rubble.

DYER

(narrating)

I did not want to admit it. We had spent the day climbing over rubble which had laid undisturbed for countless millennia. Yet here a kind of swath had been made through the nearby debris. There was nothing clear, nor definite, but in smoother places there was a suggestion of a heavy object having been dragged. We hurried along, following the trail of movement until Danforth stopped me again.

DANFORTH

Look!

DYER

It can't be.

DANFORTH

Those are sled tracks!

DYER

(a panicked instinct)

Shhh!

He SNIFFS again. Dyer SNIFFS too.

DYER

That's...

DANFORTH

Gasoline. I told you I saw the things' footprints in the snow. They're here!

DYER

No, it's Gedney. He went mad,
brought one of the sledges from
camp.

DANFORTH

Turn off the lamp.

DYER

(narrating)

Dim light filtered down through
collapsed upper stories of the
building. We moved ahead as our map
suggested but found the way
completely choked with debris.
Nearby were several arched
doorways, one of which emanated the
smell of gasoline. We crept
forward, drawn by unbearable
curiosity and stepped into the next
chamber...

DANFORTH

(whisper)

There's something there. Turn on
the torch.

DYER

(narrating)

Items littered the floor. All from
Lake's camp: mangled cans of food,
spent matches, a spilled fuel can,
odd scraps of cloth and fur, a
broken fountain pen, ink, some
illustrated books, the manual that
came with the tent heater. I tried
to convince myself that Gedney, in
a deranged mental state might have
brought these items, fumbling with
them in his madness. But when we
examined papers there, that hope
dimmed. Some were oddly blotted,
like those I saw in Lake's
dissection tent. And there were
sketches, sketches like those
Danforth and I had made copying the
contents of the murals. But these
were executed with absolute
assurance and perfection with the
unmistakable technique of the Elder
Things.

(MORE)

DYER (cont'd)

There could be no more doubt: the creatures Lake's team had unearthed from the cave were not fossilized, not dead at all, but in some state of suspended animation. Now they were awake and on the move. Looking back, I can scarcely recall changing our objective. Certainly we did not mean to face that or those which we knew had been there, but we decided to follow in their footsteps to the great circular place they had drawn on their maps.

CHESTER

You were mad not to run for your lives!

DYER

Perhaps we were mad, for have I not said those horrible peaks were mountains of madness? Half-paralyzed with terror though we were, there fanned within us a blazing flame of awe and curiosity which triumphed in the end. After studying their sketches, we believed the great round tower whose remains we had seen from the aeroplane, and which now lay ahead of us, would provide us -- and them -- with a shortcut to the abyss below. A shortcut they had taken. We plunged ahead, well aware that we were following their path, as we regularly saw traces of their recent passage before us, and that dreadful smell lingered behind them. They led us to the circular place. At last our tunnel opened on to a great cylindrical shaft some two hundred feet in diameter. Bright daylight streamed into the shaft which plunged downward into darkness.

CHESTER

Was it the opening to the abyss?

DYER

So we thought. Archways like ours led into the shaft from different angles, and a titanic stone ramp wound spirally up the inside shaft, leading some sixty feet above us and downward to an unthinkable depth. The ramp was a marvel of construction and engineering despite the ravages of eons. We assumed the Elder Things had gone downward and so began our descent.

DANFORTH

Stop. Look at that.

DYER

What is it?

DANFORTH

There.

DYER

It's just a...

DANFORTH

No, it's the sledges. All three of them.

DYER

A little wear and tear but they're in good shape. Well packed and strapped down.

Dyer UNTIES the strapping of a sledge.

DYER

Supplies from Lake's camp.

DANFORTH

I can't get this strap to budge. Hand me the jack knife.

Sound of FABRIC BEING CUT. Danforth CRIES OUT.

DYER

What is it?

DANFORTH

(startled)

Gedney. It's Gedney. And the dog. Dead. Wrapped up.

DYER

Clearly Lake wasn't the only one collecting specimens. They wrapped him so delicately.

DANFORTH

Poor devil. What do we do with him?

DYER

Cover him back up and we'll...

DANFORTH

Shhh!

At first there is silence. Then a very minute NOISE, high in pitch. It is followed closely by a distant SQUAWKING sound.

DYER

(narrating)

What we heard was not the fabulous note of any buried blasphemy of elder earth - rather it was a sound mockingly familiar from our time at McMurdo Sound: the raucous squawking of a penguin. It came from a tunnel nearly opposite us and could only imply a nearness to water. We set out quickly to find the bird and follow it to the hidden sea. We hurried into the archway from which the sound had come.

DANFORTH

Look, sir, more prints. They left their supplies and went scouting. Or they knew they were close to the...

DYER

(terrified)

Torch! Torch!

DANFORTH

What, where?

DYER

There!!

(narrating)

A bulky, white shape loomed ahead of us. We realised at once it was not one of the others, not as large nor as dark and it moved awkwardly.

DANFORTH

It's a damned penguin!

DYER

You're right. Look at the size of the thing. It's taller than you.

DANFORTH

It's all white.

DYER

No coloration, eyes atrophied to useless slits, like a cave fish. It's evolved for life in...

DANFORTH

The abyss. We're getting close.

DYER

It's warmer in here. Come on.

DYER

(narrating)

We passed a flock of these bizarre penguins, and moved down a steep, uncarved tunnel into a massive dome-shaped chamber. Low archways opened all around it, but one black arched aperture opened to what we knew would be the abyss.

Dyer UNZIPS his parka.

DANFORTH

These penguins don't seem bothered by us at all.

DYER

The air in this tunnel's warmer still.

DANFORTH

Maybe there's a geothermal system. Maybe what Lake thought was volcanos was a steam vent.

DYER

It's possible that the underground ocean is warm. Come on.

DANFORTH

I wonder what else besides penguins lives down here.

DYER

(narrating)

As we went down the tunnel, we could easily see the tracks of the others leading down and the penguins coming up. Carvings here were sparse, and after a time the cyclopean masonry gave way and the tunnel was cut directly out of the rock. We noted some small lateral galleries not noted on our map and thought them welcome hiding places if the others returned from the abyss.

CHESTER

I have to stop you, Professor. This was madness. Your exploration was suicidal.

DYER

In retrospect, I agree. But, the lure of the unplumbed is stronger than most of us suspect. It's what brought us to that unearthly polar waste in the first place. We descended perhaps a quarter of a mile before we came upon a careless heap of furs and tent-cloth taken from Lake's camp. We shared an uneasy glance but neither of us spoke. Not far past that point the tunnel opened into a natural looking cavern with many immense side passages leading away.

Danforth sniffs.

DANFORTH

Do you smell that?

DYER

No, I don't smell them any more.

DANFORTH

No, it's something else. Like rot or decay.

DYER

Perhaps there's some kind of fungi or...

DANFORTH

Sir, look at the floor. It's so smooth.

DYER

You're right, it's almost polished. Not even dust. How strange.

DANFORTH

I don't like it.

DYER

Shine your torch on the wall again, Danforth. Look at that. Their technique has degenerated.

DANFORTH

The Elder Things didn't make this. The perspective's wrong. This is a bad imitation, a parody of their style.

DYER

(narrating)

We moved on over the smooth floored tunnels. We saw and heard fewer penguins, although occasionally we would hear what sounded like great numbers off in the distance. The new odor was unbearably strong here and puffs of visible vapor suggested we were very close to the sunless sea. And then, at last, we saw the Elder Things.

DANFORTH

(in a whisper)

Turn on the other torch.

CLICK.

DYER

They're dead.

DYER

(narrating)

It was clear they posed no threat. There were four of the Elder Things, as damaged and torn as the exhumed specimens at camp, although a dark green pool gathering beneath them suggested their demise was far more recent.

(MORE)

DYER (cont'd)

We approached them slowly and reluctantly. I stared at them with a certain awe or reverence.

DANFORTH

What happened to them?

DYER

The penguins couldn't... I don't know. Some conflict with the other four?

DANFORTH

We shouldn't be here.
(sniffing)
Do you smell that?

DYER

Danforth. Look at the slime on their bodies. Their heads are gone, torn off. Remember?

(narrating)

In an instant it came back to us, the murals we'd seen depicting a viscous coating on the Elder Things who had fallen in their battles to control the horrid shoggoths. The dreadful sculptures depicted those things as formless protoplasm able to mock all forms of organs and processes, viscous masses of bubbling cells ever growing more sullen, more intelligent and more malignant. As we saw the freshly glistening and iridescent black slime which clung to those headless bodies -- and sparkled less voluminously on a smooth apart of the re-sculptured wall in a series of grouped dots -- we understood the quality of cosmic fear to its uttermost depths. No longer did we fear the missing Elder Things. After all, they were not evil things of their kind. They were men of another age and another order of being. Nature played a hellish jest on them and this was their tragic homecoming.

(MORE)

DYER (cont'd)

That awful awakening in the cold of an unknown epoch -- perhaps an attack by the furry, frantically barking quadrupeds, and a dazed defence against them and the equally frantic white simians with queer wrappings and paraphernalia... poor Lake, poor Gedney, and poor Elder Things! What had they done that we would not have done in their place? God, what intelligence and persistence! Radiates, vegetables, monstrosities, star-spawn -- whatever they had been, they were men! They crossed the icy peaks on whose slopes they had once roamed among the tree ferns. They found their dead city brooding under its curse and read its carven latter days as we had done. They tried to reach their living fellows in fabled depths of blackness they had never seen -- and what had they found? It seemed aeons that we stood there, but it could not have been more than ten or fifteen seconds. Then Danforth turned the beam from his torch away, shining it into the mist which curled as if driven by some advancing bulk.

A loud and hideously PIPING SOUND of "Tekeli-li! Tekeli-li!" rumbles through the tunnel. Danforth SCREAMS. They run for their lives. Penguins SQUAWK.

DYER

RUN!!!!

(narrating)

We were in full flight, knowing that the remaining Elder Things could be upon us instantly if they wished to do so. Still we thankfully did not slacken our pace. The curling mist pushed through the passage behind us. The penguins shrieked in terror. We hoped somehow their chaotic noise and scurrying combined with the multitude of openings that pervaded the place might throw our pursuers off our course.

(MORE)

DYER (cont'd)

From an instinct of sheer primitive anxiety, both Danforth and I looked back, flashing our torches into the briefly thinned mist.

Pause.

CHESTER

And?

DYER

(hesitant)

I might as well be frank -- even if I cannot bear to be quite direct -- in stating what we saw. My words could never really communicate the awfulness of the sight. We had expected to see a terrible and incredible moving entity if the mists were thin enough; but of that entity we had formed a clear idea. What we did see -- for the mists were indeed all too malignly thinned -- was something altogether different, and immeasurably more hideous and detestable. Its nearest comprehensible analogue is a vast onrushing subway train as one sees it from a station platform -- the great black front looming colossally out of the infinite subterranean distance, constellated with strangely coloured lights and filling the prodigious burrow as a piston fills a cylinder. But we were not on a station platform. We were on the track ahead as the nightmare plastic column of fœtid black iridescence oozed tightly onward through its fifteen foot sinus; gathering unholy speed and driving before it a spiral, re-thickening cloud of the pallid abyss-vapour. It was a terrible, indescribable thing vaster than any subway train - a shapeless congeries of protoplasmic bubbles forming and unforming as pustules that bore down on us, crushing the penguins and slithering over the floor it and its kind kept so free of debris. And still it bellowed its terrible mocking cry.

CHESTER

Professor, are you alright?

DYER

The fact we survived is proof the thing took a wrong gallery, while fate led us to the right one. We ran and ran, past the abandoned sledges, eventually up the great stone ramp leading us to a level above the city, above the ice sheet. Out of the structures, the antarctic cold bit into us.

Dyer ZIPS his parka. Danforth MUMBLES.

DYER

We did not speak. What words would or could suffice? Danforth muttered under his breath as we climbed out of the great tower's base and headed back into the labyrinthine city. I strained to make out the repetitive phrase he murmured under his breath.

DANFORTH

South Station Under - Washington
Under - Park Street Under - Kendall
- Central - Harvard...

DYER

The poor fellow was chanting the stations of the Boston - Cambridge tunnel that burrowed through our distant homeland in a desperate effort to calm his mind. As swiftly as we could, we left the place, climbing the steep slope to where we'd left the aeroplane. Half-way uphill we paused to catch our breath and turned to look again at the fantastic palaeogaen tangle of incredible stone shapes below us. There now lay revealed on the ultimate white horizon behind the city a dim, elfin line of pinnacled violet whose needle-pointed heights loomed dream-like against the beckoning rose colour of the western sky.

(MORE)

DYER (cont'd)

For a second we gasped in admiration of the scene's unearthly cosmic beauty, and then vague horror began to creep into our souls. For this far violet line could be nothing else than the terrible mountains of the forbidden land -- highest of earth's peaks and focus of earth's evil -- shunned and prayed to by those who feared to carve their meaning, untrodden by any living thing of the earth. We were the first human beings ever to see them, I hope to God we may be the last.

The AEROPLANE ENGINE fires up and takes off. Danforth continues to MUMBLE the names of the subway stops. The outside WIND grows in strength and strains of the terrible PIPING blend into it.

DYER

(narrating)

Even in his rattled state, Danforth was able to get the plane aloft and climb to the altitude of the pass. As we grew close to the jutting peaks, the wind's strange piping became manifest.

(to Danforth)

Danforth, you're shaking. I'll take the controls for a bit if you like.

DANFORTH

(mumbling and gibbering)

Why not? Yes, relax my nerves, relax. We're safe here.

DYER

(narrating)

We had nearly cleared the pass summit when Danforth shrieked so terribly and grabbed me with such force, that I fumbled with the controls, nearly crashing the plane. He never spoke to me of what final horror caused him to scream so, but I have no doubt it was the cause of his present breakdown and hospitalization. As we approached Lake's campsite, he gathered some composure.

DANFORTH

A pact. We must make a pact!

DYER

A pact?

DANFORTH

You and me. We'll never speak of what we saw today. The photos, the drawings, no one sees them. None of it.

DYER

But we should warn...

DANFORTH

Never! Swear it.

DYER

(narrating)

I hesitated briefly, but realized he was right. What we saw should never have been seen. The sanest course would be to forget it all.

(to Danforth)

I swear.

(to Chester)

I have stood by that oath until now, and I would not speak of these things were it not for the need of heading off that Starkweather-Moore Expedition, and others, at any cost. It is absolutely necessary, for the peace and safety of mankind, that some of earth's dark, dead corners and unplumbed depths be let alone; lest sleeping abnormalities wake to resurgent life, and blasphemously surviving nightmares squirm and splash out of their black lairs to newer and wider conquests.

CHESTER

Your case is compelling Professor, and no doubt your photos and drawings combined with your telling of the full story will give pause to such exploration. One last question: Danforth, what did he see from the plane that disturbed him so deeply?

DYER

Before he went to the sanitarium, all he would tell me was that it was a mirage: a single fantastic demonic glimpse of those other westward mountains that the Elder Things shunned and feared. But it was so real to Danforth, that he suffers from it still. He's spoken to me in whispers of "the proto-shoggoths", "the nameless cylinder", "the mi-go" and "whisperers in the darkness" and other bizarre occult concepts. But at that moment, on the aeroplane, his shrieks were confined to the repetition of a single mad word of an all too obvious source: tekeli-li! Tekeli-li!

Dark Adventure closing THEME.

CHESTER

You've been listening to HP Lovecraft's "At the Mountains of Madness, brought to you by our sponsor, Fleur de Lys, - the cigarette that's never parched or toasted. Fleur de Lys -- made fresh and kept fresh. Until next week, this is Chester Langfield reminding you to never go anywhere alone; if it looks bad, don't look; and save the last bullet for yourself.

ANNOUNCER

At the Mountains of Madness was adapted for radio and produced by Sean Branney and Andrew Leman. Original music by Troy Sterling Nies. The Dark Adventure Ensemble features: Sean Branney, Seth Compton, Andrew Leman, Barry Lynch, David Mersault, Josh Thoemke and Noah Wagner. Tune in next week for The Forbidden Gateway -- an all new Nate Ward adventure. Dark Adventure Radio Theatre is a production of the HPLHS Broadcasting Group, a subsidiary of HPLHS, Inc., copyright 1931...plus seventy-five.

Radio STATIC and fade out.