

DARK ADVENTURE RADIO THEATRE:
THE COLOUR OUT OF SPACE

Written by

Sean Branney and Andrew Leman

Based on

"The Colour Out of Space" by H. P. Lovecraft

Read-along Script
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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, with your host Erskine Blackwell. Today's episode: H.P. Lovecraft's "The Colour Out of Space"

THEME MUSIC DIMINISHES. At first there is WIND then strange ethereal SOUNDS - perhaps the sound of a distant corner of the cosmos.

ERSKINE BLACKWELL

A meteorite from cosmic space falls to earth on a backwoods Massachusetts farm. The space rock possesses peculiar qualities, and mystifies even the brightest university scientists. But it soon becomes clear that this is no ordinary meteor, as its otherworldly influence unleashes a creeping wave of despair, death and decay into the land and its inhabitants.

A few piano notes from the FORHAN'S TOOTHPASTE JINGLE.

ERSKINE BLACKWELL (CONT'D)

Wow! Nothing lights up a room quite like a mouth full of dazzling white teeth. And nothing can bring a shine to your teeth like Forhan's Toothpaste because Forhan's is made with Radiol. This delightful dentrifice combines scientifically extracted radium with fresh tasting peppermint oil.

(MORE)

ERSKINE BLACKWELL (CONT'D)
 So brush after every meal with
 Forhan's toothpaste and give the
 gals a grin that's gleaming!

Dark Adventure LEAD-IN MUSIC.

ERSKINE BLACKWELL (CONT'D)
 And now, Dark Adventure Radio
 Theatre presents: H.P. Lovecraft's
 "The Colour Out of Space".

2 WATER WORKS 1

2

The sounds of an OFFICE. PHONES and TYPEWRITERS. RUTH, a
 secretary, meets MR. HUGHES at the water cooler.

RUTH
 You want to hear something really
 weird, Mr. Hughes?

HUGHES
 What's that, Ruth?

The GLUG GLUG GLUG of water being dispensed into a cup.

RUTH
 I found this old survey report. I
 don't think it was ever filed.

HUGHES
 Weird? We're a government office.
 Half the paperwork in this place
 gets lost.

RUTH
 No, it's the way it's written. It's
 very... poetic.

HUGHES
 Oh brother. Here, want a drink?

RUTH
 Thanks. Listen to this: "West of
 Arkham the hills rise wild, and
 there are valleys with deep woods
 that no axe has ever cut. There are
 dark narrow glens where the trees
 slope fantastically, and where thin
 brooklets trickle without ever
 having caught the glint of
 sunlight." Isn't that lovely?

HUGHES

It's got some style, I'll give you that. Who wrote it?

RUTH

Someone named Abel Cooke. Ever heard of him?

HUGHES

No. Must have been some freelance contract surveyor. When was it written?

GLUG GLUG GLUG of another glass of water.

RUTH

Back in '26. I found it in a box of old papers in the basement, along with some specimen tubes full of dust. I wonder why it was never filed?

HUGHES

C'mon Ruth, you know what it's like here: his supervisor probably didn't understand those big words.

RUTH

Sure. Listen, here's some more: "On the gentle slopes there are farms, ancient and rocky, with squat, moss-coated cottages brooding eternally over old New England secrets in the lee of great ledges; but these are all vacant now, the wide chimneys crumbling and the shingled sides bulging perilously beneath low gambrel roofs."

MUSIC. As Ruth continues to read, she CROSSFADES with the voice of ABEL COOKE.

3

ABEL'S REPORT 1

3

ABEL

...bulging perilously beneath low gambrel roofs. The old folk have gone away, and foreigners do not like to live there. It is not because of anything that can be seen or heard or handled, but because of something that is imagined.

(MORE)

ABEL (CONT'D)

The place is not good for imagination, and does not bring restful dreams at night. It must be this which keeps the foreigners away, for old Ammi Pierce has never told them of anything he recalls from the strange days. Ammi, whose head has been a little queer for years, is the only one who still remains, or who ever talks of the strange days; and he dares to do this because his house is so near the open fields and the travelled roads around Arkham.

There was once a road over the hills and through the valleys, that ran straight where the blasted heath is now; but people ceased to use it and a new road was laid curving far toward the south.

I would find traces of the old one amidst the weeds of a returning wilderness, but at this point, I had never been to the wild hills west of Arkham. I was hired by the county to survey the region, and I thought it prudent to review some maps before embarking on my first trip to the area. Being in Arkham at the time, naturally I visited Miskatonic University's celebrated Orne Library.

4

THE MAP ROOM

4

MUSIC TRANSITION - followed by ECHOING FOOTSTEPS moving through the marble foyer.

ABEL

Professor Armitage said you might be able to pull an old survey map, Mrs. Green?

EDITH

(warm)

Oh please dear, call me Edith. Now, where exactly do you...

ABEL

West of Arkham, the hill country.
Not that far from here. It's where
the new---

EDITH

(troubled)

Oh. Well, we might have something.
The Walker map of 1887...

ABEL

Is something wrong?

EDITH

No, no, it's nothing...

ABEL

You can tell me.

EDITH

I can't. Not really. It's that
area... People say it's evil.

ABEL

Evil? What, the whole region?

She UNFURLS a map and points out the region.

EDITH

It's this area here. The valley and
the hills and woods that surround
it. They call it the "blasted
heath."

ABEL

Boy, not many details on this map,
eh?

EDITH

There's not much to see. Since the
strange days, the hills there, the
woods, the blasted heath - they're
empty. Touched with something.
Evil's as good a word for it as
any.

ABEL

(with humor)

Strange days, eh? Old "witch
haunted Arkham" sure has never
lacked for superstition.

EDITH

These aren't superstitions, young man. You go out that way and you'll see. Don't stay the night out there.

5

ABEL'S REPORT 2

5

MUSIC - followed by the putting of a Model A on a country road.

ABEL

The following morning, I took the map and drove out West. And sure enough, I soon saw that dark tangle of glens and slopes and ceased to wonder at anything beside its own elder mystery. It was morning, but shadow lurked always there.

The car stops, the engine cuts out and Abel gets out of the car for a look around. His feet scuff along the dirt road.

ABEL (CONT'D)

The trees grew too thickly, and their trunks were too big for any healthy New England wood. There was too much silence in the dim alleys between them, and the floor was too soft with the dank moss and mattings of uncountable years of decay. In the open spaces, mostly along the line of the old road, there were little hillside farms; sometimes with all the buildings standing, sometimes with only one or two, and sometimes with only a lone chimney or fast-filling cellar. Weeds and briars reigned, and furtive wild things rustled in the undergrowth. Upon everything was a haze of restlessness and oppression; a touch of the unreal and the grotesque, as if some vital element of perspective were awry. I did not wonder that no one would stay, for this was no region to sleep in. It was too much like some forbidden woodcut in a tale of terror.

Abel gets back in the car and heads down the road.

ABEL (CONT'D)

I cleared a rise perhaps a mile further on and did not need my map to know I'd found what had to be the blasted heath. No other name could fit such a thing, or any other thing fit such a name. It was as if the poet had coined the phrase from having seen this one particular region. I thought it must be the outcome of a fire; but why had nothing new ever grown over these five acres of grey desolation that sprawled open to the sky like a great spot eaten by acid in the woods and fields? It lay largely to the north of the ancient road line, but encroached a little on the other side. I felt an odd reluctance at entering the valley, and did so at last only because my business took me through and past it. There was no vegetation of any kind on that broad expanse, but only a fine grey dust or ash which no wind seemed ever to blow about. The trees near it were sickly and stunted, and many dead trunks stood or lay rotting at the rim.

The car again comes to a stop and Abel gets out to walk around.

ABEL (CONT'D)

I slowed to a stop when I saw the tumbled bricks and stones of an old chimney and cellar on my right, and the yawning black maw of an abandoned well whose stagnant vapours played strange tricks with the hues of the sunlight. I marvelled no more at Edith's frightened whispers. There had been no other house nearby; even in the old days the place must have been lonely and remote. As twilight approached, I dreaded to backtrack through that ominous spot. I drove circuitously back to the town by the newer road to the south. I vaguely wished some clouds would gather, for an odd timidity about the deep skyey voids above had crept into my soul.

MUSIC - transition leading to Essex Institute.

ABEL

My excursion stirred my imagination and I wanted to learn more about the region. Back in Arkham, I set out for the Essex Institute.

E. LAPHAM PEABODY

I'm afraid I can't help you much there, sir. It's not the sort of place that anyone's gone to the trouble to write much about.

ABEL

But everyone in Arkham seems to know it: the blasted heath, the "strange days"...

E. LAPHAM PEABODY

(hushing him)

Yes, of course, local folks know, but it doesn't make them eager to set it down on paper.

ABEL

Can you tell me anything? I mean, these "strange days" - was that from the time of the witch trials?

E. LAPHAM PEABODY

Heavens no! T'was only back in the eighties. A family disappeared, or was killed. Nowadays hardly anyone even remembers exactly what happened and you can't believe anyone who'd be willing to talk about it.

ABEL

Would you tell me about it?

E. LAPHAM PEABODY

(torn, then covering)

No. I was just a child at the time, I'm afraid. Be careful going down this path, young man. An old timer like Ammi Pierce might spin you a crazy yarn, but you'd want to take that with a grain of salt. Stories of this kind are just best left forgotten.

ABEL
 Ammi Pierce?

E. LAPHAM PEABODY
 I'm telling you, Mr. Cooke. Best
 forget it.

7 ABEL'S REPORT 3

7

MUSIC - transition. Sounds of a COUNTRY DAY.

ABEL
 The next morning I sought out Ammi
 Pierce, having heard that he lived
 alone in the ancient tottering
 cottage where the trees first begin
 to get very thick. It was a
 fearsomely ancient place, and had
 begun to exude the faint miasmal
 odour which clings about houses
 that have stood too long.

8 STATE YOUR BUSINESS

8

Abel KNOCKS against the ancient door. Silence. He KNOCKS
 again before a timid shuffling leads to the door OPENING.
 Ammi's voice reflects years of hard living, but there's still
 some fight left in him.

AMMI PIERCE
 Don't know you. State your business
 here, sir.

ABEL
 (flustered)
 Mr. Pierce? How do you do. My name
 is Abel Cooke. I'm from the Essex
 County Water District. I've been
 brought on as a surveyor, measuring
 the lands west of here for a
 reservoir which the county's
 planning.

AMMI PIERCE
 Reservoir, eh? Whereabouts?

ABEL
 It'll be created with a dam on the
 South Fork of the Annisquam Riv...

AMMI PIERCE

Jest east of the Mattapan Gap. Yep.
So you fellas will flood back...

ABEL

Miller's Top will constrain it to
the north, and we'll submerge...

AMMI PIERCE

All the land through the Santuit
Holler back up beyond Chapman's
Brook? Hmph!

ABEL

Um, yes, sir. That's right. That's
the basic plan.

AMMI PIERCE

Fair bit of land there goin' under.

ABEL

Yes, sir. But you don't need to
worry, it won't reach to here.

AMMI PIERCE

I look like an idiot to you, boy?

ABEL

Um, no, si...

AMMI PIERCE

My family's lived this land for two
hundred fifty years. I know it
better than...

ABEL

Than any man I've met, sir.

AMMI PIERCE

Hmph. What ye want?

ABEL

I'm surveying the land that will be
submerged. We need to make a record
of what's there first. Try to
understand what will...

AMMI PIERCE

Understand it?

(chuckles)

Hell, drownin' that land in water's
the best idea you city boys come up
with yet. Ye ever been up there?

ABEL
 Yes, sir, I have.
 (pause)
 Queer country if you ask me.

AMMI PIERCE
 (with a snort of
 agreement)
 I roamed them valleys as a young
 man. Ain't been out that way for
 more than forty years now.
 Reservoir... Reckon it'll be better
 under water now - ain't been no
 hope there since the strange days.

He SIGHS, a massive weight upon him.

ABEL
 What are these strange days? What
 happened?

A distant CROW. The rocker GROANS as he sits.

AMMI PIERCE
 I reckon you'd better set yourself
 down - you want to know the true
 story, you'd best be prepared to
 set a spell.

The SCRAPE of a chair. MUSIC.

AMMI PIERCE (CONT'D)
 You know what a meteorite is, boy?

ABEL
 Sure. A rock that falls from outer
 space.

AMMI PIERCE
 Hmmmph. Close enough.

ABEL
 They found a meteorite up there?

AMMI PIERCE
 Before that thing came there were
 no wild legends at all since the
 witch trials, and even then these
 western woods were not feared half
 so much as the small island in the
 Miskatonic, where the devil held
 court beside a curious altar older
 than the Indians.

(MORE)

AMMI PIERCE (CONT'D)

These woods were not haunted, and the setting of the sun was never terrible till the strange days. But then, 'twas June of '82, there came a white noontide cloud, a string of explosions in the air, and a pillar of smoke from the valley far in the wood. Bedded itself in the ground beside the well at the Nahum Gardner place.

ABEL

Is that the house out on the blasted heath? I was there.

AMMI PIERCE

The one. Hard to imagine it once sat amidst fertile gardens and orchards. Well, Nahum, he was mighty excited to have such a thing come down on his farm and he set out to tell folks about the stone. As this here house sets on the way from his place to Arkham, I was the first he told.

9

THE METEOR COME DOWN THIS MORN

9

MUSIC - transition back 40 years in time. Ammi is a much younger man. A horse canters into Ammi's yard, ridden by NAHUM GARDNER, an earnest rustic.

AMMI PIERCE

Nahum! Come in, I've got a pot of coffee on.

NAHUM GARDNER

No time, Ammi. You seen the meteor come down this morn?

AMMI PIERCE

Well, I heard it afirst, and I seen the pillar of smoke coming from out your way. Can't have come down far from you folk there.

NAHUM GARDNER

(laughing)

Far? The damn thing blasted into the ground not a stone's throw from my well-sweep.

AMMI PIERCE

I'll be!

NAHUM GARDNER

I gotta get over to the university.
Them Miskatonic professors won't
believe it when they see this
thing. We'll come this way on our
way back - ye should come along and
have a gander - bring the missus.
'Tis a queer thing. Don't reckon
there's nothing like it on earth.

He whips his horse and gallops off.

10 AMMI'S TALE 1

10

AMMI PIERCE

(old man narrating)

The following morning, Nahum came
by on his way back from Arkham.
He'd succeeded at getting the
attention of some university
professors. I saddled up horses so
my wife Martha and I could join the
group to go see the thing.

11 THE EXPEDITION

11

HORSES STAMP AND BRAY in Ammi's yard. Ammi saddles up his
horses.

NAHUM GARDNER

Gentlemen, I hope you don't mind,
but I invited my neighbors to come
along and have a look. This here's
Ammi Pierce and his wife Martha.

Professor Barnes is a New Englander in his late 50s.

BARNES

Not at all. How do you do, I'm
Professor Barnes from Miskatonic's
Astronomy Dept.

NAHUM GARDNER

This here's Professor Lamb from the
Geology Department.

Professor Lamb is a southern gentleman in his early 40s.

LAMB

A pleasure. Ma'am.

NAHUM GARDNER

And this is Dr. Humburg from the
Chemistry Department.

HUMBURG

(with a thick German
dialect)

How do you?

AMMI PIERCE

(young Ammi)

A pleasure, sir. Thanks for letting
us come along.

MARTHA

I've never seen a space rock
before.

LAMB

I hope you won't be disappointed.
Some of them look pretty ordinary.

NAHUM GARDNER

This 'uns a full ten foot acrost. I
don't figure none of you'll be
disappointed a bit. Everybody
ready? Let's go.

The horses TROT off towards the Gardner farm.

MUSIC - segue. They ride. The Gardner's dogs BARK fiercely in
the distance.

NAHUM GARDNER (CONT'D)

We'll be able to see the crater as
we come around yonder bend.

BARNES

Did you witness the impact?

NAHUM GARDNER

I weren't a witness exactly. I was
off in our north orchard when I
heard it. Ain't no way you couldn't
hear it. Ground shook when it hit.

(to horse)

Whoa there.

(loud, to the group)

You can see the crater there off to
the left of the house.

Ad libs of impressed scientists.

BARNES

Good lord. It's enormous! I was skeptical of your description, Mr. Gardner, but I must say you were right.

LAMB

Impressive impact crater.

AMMI PIERCE

Looks like a bomb went off there, Nahum. The grass is scorched all 'round it.

NAHUM GARDNER

It were still mighty hot last night.

AMMI PIERCE

Lucky it didn't hit your well.

BARNES

It's miraculous it didn't destroy the entire farm!

NAHUM GARDNER

We'll tie off the horses by the barn and have a look. Follow me.

Horses TROT off. Segue. The group walks towards the crater.

NAHUM GARDNER (CONT'D)

'Llow me to make interductions. This is my wife, Abigail, but we call her Nabby, and my boys,
(calling off)
Merwin, get yourself over here!
(to the group)
This Thaddeus, Zenas and the little feller comin' up yonder is Merwin. Boys, these men are from the university in Arkham. They come to look at the space rock.

Greetings are MURMURED on both sides

NAHUM GARDNER (CONT'D)

(hurrying it along)
Well, perfessers, here we are. Mind your step here, Martha, the crater's steep on the inside.

HUMBURG

Mein gott!

LAMB

(shocked)

Hm, well that's not what I was expecting...

NAHUM GARDNER

Don't it look like other space rocks?

LAMB

Most meteorites of this size are composed largely of iron.

HUMBURG

This doesn't look like metal at all.

BARNES

It's... unusual. Mr. Gardner, you had said it was about ten feet in diameter?

NAHUM GARDNER

Yep. It was well more than twicet as wide as my arms can reach.

LAMB

That would put it among the largest meteorites ever discovered. But this doesn't seem quite that big to me. I'd say... about seven feet?

NAHUM GARDNER

Well... it's shrunk.

LAMB

Stones do not shrink, sir. Let's have a look here.

MUSIC.

HUMBURG

Well, Lamb, what do you think?

LAMB

Well, there's no fusion crust. Some signs of ablation. It's still radiating quite a lot of heat. Let me get my tools...

He RUSTLES in his rucksack for a rock hammer.

NAHUM GARDNER

It were so hot it kinda glowed
yesterday. And it was bigger, I
swear.

LAMB

Here's a rock hammer, Dr. Humburg.
See if you can chip off a piece we
can take back to the lab.

HUMBURG

(cautiously)
Very well.

He strikes the meteor with the hammer. There's a THUNK.

HUMBURG (CONT'D)

It's soft. Almost plastic.

LAMB

Strike it again, sir.

Dr. Humburg hits it again. THUNK.

LAMB (CONT'D)

I'll be...

HUMBURG

This is not making good sense.

MARTHA

Forgive me, most meteors are hard?

LAMB

Indeed they are, Mrs. Pierce. A
meteorite of this size is usually
quite dense.

MARTHA

Maybe as it cools it might harden?

LAMB

Um, maybe...

Prof. Barnes continues to work with the hammer against the
meteor.

HUMBURG

Have you a chisel in your bag,
Professor Lamb? Perhaps we can
strike off a piece.

LAMB

Here.

BARNES

We'll need a something to hold the specimen. Mr. Gardner, do you have a metal container of any kind?

NAHUM GARDNER

I got a tin pail in the barn.
(shouting off)
Merwin, run to the barn an' fetch that old milk pail!

MERWIN

Yes papa!

Merwin runs off. Professor Humburg continues to try and extract a sample.

AMMI PIERCE

(tentative)

If it's not metal and it's not rock... what do you think it's made of?

LAMB

I... am hesitant to speculate. I suppose we'll find out when we take the sample to the lab. I think it's safe to say, we've found something new. Folks will be talking about the "Gardner meteorite" for years.

MUSIC - segue back to narration.

12 AMMI'S TALE 2

12

AMMI PIERCE

(old)

With the sample in the pail, the scientists rode back to Arkham, and Martha and I came back here. Next day, the professors came by here on their way back to the Gardners. They were all excited and eager to share the queer discoveries they'd made...

13 SECOND EXPEDITION

13

Segue back to excitable intellectuals on Ammi's porch...

LAMB

...the pail remained hot the entire trip back to Miskatonic. We had to keep the handle wrapped in cloth.

BARNES

But the sample's gone now. Fully sublimated.

AMMI PIERCE

What's that mean?

HUMBURG

It was like evaporation of the sample all through the day. This morning - all gone!

AMMI PIERCE

Your sample disappeared?

BARNES

Not just the sample: also the beaker that held it!

AMMI PIERCE

Somebody steal it?

BARNES

No, no. Late last night we left all the chips made of the original fragment in a glass beaker. This morning both chips and beaker were gone without trace, and only a charred spot marked the place on the wooden shelf where they had been.

LAMB

We're thinking the meteorite had some kind of strange affinity with silicon.

HUMBURG

I have never seen such thing. It did nothing at all and showed no occluded gases when heated on charcoal. Results completely negative in the borax bead. The sample was not volatile at any temperature, including that of the oxy-hydrogen blowpipe.

LAMB

We tried it on an anvil it appeared highly malleable, and in the dark it was highly luminous.

BARNES

We took a look with the spectroscope and it displayed shining bands unlike any known colors of the natural spectrum.

LAMB

It's unheard of. There's nothing like this in the literature.

BARNES

It may be a previously unknown element!

HUMBURG

We checked its reactions with water, hydrochloric acid, nitric acid, and even aqua regia. No reaction to ammonia, caustic soda, alcohol and ether, carbon disulphide and a dozen others. Its weight grew steadily less as time passed, and the fragment seemed to be slightly cooling, but there was no change in the solvents to show that they had attacked the substance at all.

LAMB

But it does have properties of metal.

AMMI PIERCE

How can you tell?

LAMB

Magnetism, for one thing; and after its immersion in the acid solvents we detect faint traces of the Widmanstätten figures sometimes found on meteoric iron.

AMMI PIERCE

It's like no metal I ever heard tell of.

A gale of nervous laughter comes from the scientists.

HUMBURG
Jah, this is truth.

AMMI PIERCE
So you fellows are heading back for
more samples?

BARNES
We are.

LAMB
This is extraordinary science.
We're incredibly lucky to have a
discovery like this.

AMMI PIERCE
I'd sure like to take 'nother look
at it. OK if I join ye?

BARNES
Of course. Let's go.

MUSIC - transition

14 AMMI'S TALE 3

14

AMMI PIERCE
(old)
We set out as quick as we could,
all of us excited to see the thing
again. We met with Nahum and he led
us back out into the crater...

15 LET'S TAKE A SAMPLE

15

Boots stumbled down the steep sides of the crater interior.
The Gardners' fierce dogs bark in the distance.

NAHUM GARDNER
...gettin smaller. At this rate
there ain't a-gonna be much left by
week's end.

HUMBURG
Clearly it is shrinking.

LAMB
Here's a measuring tape - it can't
be more than five feet in diameter
now. Ah!
(recoiling)
Still quite hot though.

HUMBURG

We must find a way to stabilize it.

BARNES

It's still too big for us to move.
I propose we take another large
sample back to the lab. Agreed?

MURMUR of consent.

LAMB

May I take the sample? I'm thinking
if I can chip inward along one of
these striations, we might get a
good cross section.

His hammer strikes the chisel which strikes the meteor with
an odd plastic THUD.

BARNES

Careful there.

He strikes it again.

AMMI PIERCE

That's good - looks like it's a
cuttin' inward.

LAMB

Nearly there. I think one more hit
and this piece will break off. Here
goes!

With effort, Prof. Lamb strikes it again and a large piece
comes off the meteor. All GASP at what's revealed.

NAHUM GARDNER

What in tarnation...

BARNES

Good heavens!

AMMI PIERCE

I ain't never...

LAMB

Inside... it's too big to be a
chondrule - some kind of shiny
globule...

BARNES

It looks wrong. The optics... It's
like it's creating prismatic
interference of some kind.

HUMBURG

Die farbe!

NAHUM GARDNER

The color... I mean what color is that?

BARNES

It's... I... don't know.

NAHUM GARDNER

It's like a soap bubble. Like solid, but like it's moving too.

HUMBURG

It's all colors... and none.

LAMB

I think it resembles some of the irregular bands we saw in the spectroscope at the lab. But no, this is....

AMMI PIERCE

What do you mean?

BARNES

The human eye perceives colors created by certain wavelengths of light. This... this must radiate through some unknown part of the spectrum.

AMMI PIERCE

So, it's a new color? Nobody's ever seen it afore?

BARNES

Well, I don't know what else to call it. It's...

LAMB

Shhh. Listen.

He taps his chisel against the globule at the meteor's core.

LAMB (CONT'D)

The interior globule. It sounds brittle. Almost hollow. Listen.

BARNES

Careful...

TICK, TICK, POP - like a broken Christmas tree ornament. All REACT.

HUMBURG

It shattered!

LAMB

No, there are no fragments. It's like it vaporized.

HUMBURG

The color, it's dissolving.

NAHUM GARDNER

There weren't nothin' inside it.

BARNES

What can you see?

LAMB

He's right. The colored globe is gone - it's just spherical empty space inside. Maybe three inches in diameter...

BARNES

Might there be more of those globules elsewhere in the interior?

LAMB

I suppose there's only one way to find out. But I'm going to get a smaller hammer.

The scientists HAMMER and DRILL and WORK OVER the meteor. The sound of the field work gives way to the sound of Old Ammi's porch.

ABEL

Did they find any more of the globules inside?

AMMI PIERCE

(old)

Nope. They hammered and drilled away at it for quite a while. 'Tweren't easy cause a the heat and all. 'Tweren't easy to look at neither. Something about the color of it, just left you kind of baffled.

ABEL

So did they ever identify it?

AMMI PIERCE

In the end, they took another pail full of fragments back to Miskatonic. I guess the tests of that second sample showed the same as the first. It never did firm up, but it had heat, magnetism, and slight luminosity. It cooled a bit in powerful acids and wasted away in the air. At the end of the tests them college scientists were forced to own that they could not place it. It was nothing of this earth, but a piece of the great outside; dowered with outside properties and obedient to outside laws.

ABEL

Well, that's extraordinary. No wonder you all came to call them the "strange days".

AMMI PIERCE

Ah, son, that were only the beginning of those days. So much more was to follow...

(pause)

The following morning, I joined the professors for a third trip out to the Gardner farm. There had been a powerful thunderstorm during the night, and when Nahum met us he broke the bad news...

17 THIRD EXPEDITION

17

SEGUE - to the farm. They walk up to the rim of the crater. Dogs bark in the distance.

NAHUM GARDNER

I'm sorry, but I reckon ye best see this for yourselves...

BARNES

Gone? Where is it?

NAHUM GARDNER

Don't rightly know. Just gone.

LAMB

(running down into the
crater)

I'll look. The sides of the crater
have caved in. Maybe it's buried.

HUMBURG

Did anything happen last night, Mr.
Gardner, that could have...?

NAHUM GARDNER

I'll say! There's a fierce
'lectrical storm last night.

AMMI PIERCE

It raged out at our place.

NAHUM GARDNER

The way I figure it, the meteor had
some electrical properties 'cause
it drew down the lightning right
to it.

BARNES

Lightning struck it?

NAHUM GARDNER

I seen six different bolts hittin'
down right in the crater last
night. Felt the hairs standing up
all over me. Dogs howlin' to beat
the devil! Damnedest thing... Once
the storm settled early this morn,
I come out to the crater but...
Well, ye can see yerselves tain't
nothin' left.

BARNES

(calling down)

See anything down there, Professor
Lamb?

LAMB

(upset)

Nothing. There's no trace of it!

BARNES

Loose fragments? Residue?

LAMB

There's nothing! It's completely
gone!

Dr. Humburg lets out a GROAN of despair. Fade back to Ammi's porch.

18

AMMI'S TALE 5

18

ABEL

Do you suppose Mr. Gardner moved it? Hid it away?

AMMI PIERCE

Why in the world would he do that?

ABEL

I don't know. Maybe to sell it to a collector. A big meteorite could be a very valuable thing.

AMMI PIERCE

It didn't bring no riches to Nahum Gardner. No, it was just plumb gone. There was nothing left for them scientists but go back to their laboratory and test again what pieces they had. Dr. Humburg carefully cased them in some lead box, and they lingered for a week, but they didn't learn nothing else about 'em. Finally those last fragments wasted away too.

ABEL

What a loss to science!

AMMI PIERCE

Hmmmm. You a scientist, Mr. Cooke?

ABEL

Well, not really. More of an engineer, I guess you could say.

AMMI PIERCE

Then I guess you can't explain it neither. As for me, I went back out to Nahum's a few days after, a-figurin' I'd just pay a social call to the Gardners and see how they were gettin' on.

MUSIC TRANSITION. Segue to the SOUNDS of nature on the porch of the Gardner farm.

NAHUM GARDNER

(with humor)

I tell ye, Ammi, after the
'lectrical storm, I thought those
perfessors' hearts was gonna break.

AMMI PIERCE

When Professor Lamb saw it had
gone, and left nothin' behind, he
told me he could scarcely feel sure
he had ever really seen it. Said it
was like a dream. Like some
important message that he got and
then lost the paper it was written
on. That's what he called it: a
message. From a faraway place, some
fathomless gulf outside, he said,
and you can't quite remember it.
Ah, looks like you've got a visitor
riding up.

Distant horse hooves approach.

CHAS NEEDHAM

(calling out from afar)

Hello there!

AMMI PIERCE

I tell you, visiting you's like
goin' to the Essex County Fair.

NAHUM GARDNER

Looks like a city fellah - I reckon
he's another of them newspaper men.

(off)

Nabby! Come up here and bring the
boys. We got another newspaper man!

The visitor approaches.

CHAS NEEDHAM

How do, gentlemen. Chas Needham
from the Boston Daily Advertiser.
One of you, Mr. Gardner?

NAHUM GARDNER

That's me, Nahum Gardner.

AMMI PIERCE

Ammi Pierce, I live a few miles
back down the valley.

CHAS NEEDHAM

Sir.

Abigail and the boys approach.

NAHUM GARDNER

My wife, Abigail and my boys,
Zenas, Thaddeus and Merwin. This
Mr. Needham from...

CHAS NEEDHAM

Boston Daily Advertiser. We'd like
to do a story about you and your
meteor. Could I get you all to pose
for a photograph out by the crater?

AMMI PIERCE

Reckon I best leave you to it.

NAHUM GARDNER

Ayah.

(to Needham)

Here Mr. Needham, you see I were
out in the north orchard when I
hears...

Transition MUSIC.

20

AMMI'S TALE 6

20

AMMI PIERCE

(old)

So, Nahum became a sort of local
celebrity for a bit. Naturally he
was proud of the notice his place
had attracted, and liked talking
about the meteorite. That July and
August were hot; and Nahum worked
hard at his haying in the ten-acre
pasture across Chapman's Brook.
Martha and I visited him and
Abigail often that summer.

MUSIC - transition.

21

FIRST HARVEST

21

ABIGAIL

(shouting off)

Nahum, you leave your work be for
now! We've got company. Come set
like civilized folk.

NAHUM GARDNER

(off)

I'm a comin'.

ABIGAIL

You'll have to forgive him, Martha.
It's that time of year.

AMMI PIERCE

Nahum told me you're expecting a
bumper crop. Had to order in extra
barrels just to handle it.

ABIGAIL

We never seen anything like it,
Ammi. The apples, the pears...
they're huge and each tree's got
more fruit than we've ever had.

MARTHA

That's marvelous. Maybe the space
rock brought you a spell of good
luck!

ABIGAIL

(as Nahum approaches)

Come set, Nahum. I've got a
lemonade for you.

Nahum sounds exhausted as he approaches.

NAHUM GARDNER

Martha, Ammi. You're just in time.
(setting them down)
It's our first bushel of apples for
the season. Phew, I'm worn out. I
tell you, Ammi, this year I'm
feeling my age.

He drinks his lemonade.

MARTHA

Well those are beautiful, Nahum.
Must be twice the size of the
apples we've got in our orchard.

ABIGAIL

It's not just the apples grown big.
My tomatoes, the melons;
everything's big and beautiful.

NAHUM GARDNER

I praise the lord for the bountiful
harvest he done brung us.

(MORE)

NAHUM GARDNER (CONT'D)

I don't have to tell you Ammi what it means to have a good year on this land.

(to Ammi)

Here, have one. Martha. Nabby.

He distributes the apples and all of them take a bite. Each RECOILS as they taste the fruits' bitter sickishness. Nahum spits his out.

ABIGAIL

Oh, dear lord...

Martha GAGS a bit.

MARTHA

Excuse me... oh this is...

NAHUM GARDNER

They've all gone off? Each of yours'?

AMMI PIERCE

'Fraid so.

NAHUM GARDNER

They look good. Here I'll cut into this one.

(slicing into it with a pocket knife then biting into it)

Blech... Horrible!

ABIGAIL

Oh, that taste... it's still on my tongue...

MARTHA

Here, have my lemonade.

NAHUM GARDNER

Good lord, I hope the whole crop ain't gone off like that.

MUSIC - transition.

AMMI PIERCE

(old)

It had.

(MORE)

AMMI PIERCE (CONT'D)

Into the fine flavour of the pears and apples had crept a stealthy bitterness and sickishness, so that even the smallest bites induced a lasting disgust. It was the same with the melons and tomatoes. Nahum's entire crop was lost.

ABEL

The meteorite poisoned the soil?

AMMI PIERCE

That's how Nahum figured it. He just thanked Heaven that most of the other crops were in the upland lot along the road and away from the crater.

Winter came early that year, and was very cold. I saw Nahum less often than usual - when I did he had a worried look about him. Whole family seemed taciturn; we rarely saw them at church or social events. Martha asked Abigail about it but she claimed only that she'd felt poorly. Come January I saw Nahum outside the general store in Clark's Corners and asked after him.

23

DON'T LIKE THE FOOTPRINTS

23

Cold WIND blows, horses NEIGH not far off.

NAHUM GARDNER

Don't like the footprints I seen in the snow, Ammi. Not right.

AMMI PIERCE

I don't follow you, Nahum. What footprints are you talkin' 'bout?

NAHUM GARDNER

(slightly unhinged)
Red squirrels, white rabbits...
foxes. I seen 'em.

AMMI PIERCE

This time of year we'd all see...

NAHUM GARDNER

Something's wrong with 'em.
Arranged funny. Not like they's
supposed to be. No rabbit leaves
tracks like that.

AMMI PIERCE

Now and again you'll see a queer
one, Nahum. Don't you worry
yourself. Well, you take care. Get
yourself home safe and give my best
to Nabby and the boys.

24

AMMI'S TALE 8

24

Crossfade back to Old Ammi's porch.

ABEL

Hmm. What did you make of that?

AMMI PIERCE

(old)

I didn't pay him much mind at
first, but that night I took my
sleigh home past his farm. As I
neared the farm house, I saw a
rabbit in the light of the full
moon. At first I reckoned it was
the power of suggestion or the
like, but I swear to you, there was
something wrong - its leaps were
too long. My horse, Hero, seen it
and bolted, so scared I could
barely rein him in. Got up near the
farm house and Nahum's dogs, which
used to be some of the fiercest
you'd see on any farm, they were
cowed and quivering under the
porch.

I weren't the only one to take note
that something was amiss at the
Gardners. It became a regular topic
of whispered conversation at the
general store.

25

GENERAL STORE

25

The bell on the door of the general store RINGS as a young
local farmer, Stephen Rice, joins Ammi and Amos McGregor.

STEPHEN RICE
Afternoon, Ammi.

AMMI PIERCE
How do, Stephen.

STEPHEN RICE
Good to see you, Amos.

MCGREGOR
Afternoon, Stephen. How's the
weather holdin' out there?

STEPHEN RICE
Still blowin' from the southwest.
Just spittin' down a little light
snow. They say it's gonna be an
early thaw.

MCGREGOR
(sotto voce)
Earlier some places than others.

STEPHEN RICE
How's that?

MCGREGOR
You been down round the Gardner
place? Ain't hardly no snow on the
ground there.

AMMI PIERCE
It's true. We got the better part
of a foot at our place.

STEPHEN RICE
Something's queer wrong there, no
doubt.

MCGREGOR
You want queer wrong? Listen to
this. My boys were out huntin'
woodchucks, bout a half mile from
Gardner's. They bagged one and took
a look at the thing... said it's
body were all proportioned wrong,
and the face... well, it had a sort
of expression ain't nobody never
seen on no woodchuck. Gave the boys
a serious fright, and Ammi you of
all people know, my boys ain't
inclined to be squeamish.

AMMI PIERCE

No sir, they got backbone.

STEPHEN RICE

You know, I seen skunk cabbages coming up out of his ground. Jest this morning, comin' right up out of the mud.

AMMI PIERCE

This time of year - that's just wrong.

STEPHEN RICE

That ain't all. They were big and all weird colored.

MCGREGOR

Why, what color were they?

STEPHEN RICE

I don't know. I can't even describe it - it was like no color I ever seen. My horse wouldn't go nowhere near 'em.

AMMI PIERCE

You know he lost nearly his whole harvest, right? The way I figure it, it's on account of that meteorite.

MCGREGOR

Gardner's "visitor"? How could it? That thing melted like ice.

STEPHEN RICE

And good riddance.

AMMI PIERCE

Maybe it left something behind. Whatever that visitor was, none of them men from the university could make heads nor tails of it.

STEPHEN RICE

Figure his land's spoiled for good?

AMMI PIERCE

Can't say as I know. Most the time ye get poison in the soil, a season or two and it'll get washed out by the water and the ground goes right again.

STEPHEN RICE

Sure hope so, Nahum's looking
peaky.

26

AMMI'S TALE 9

26

MUSIC - transition to Old Ammi's porch.

AMMI PIERCE

(old)

The trees budded prematurely around Nahum's, and at night they swayed ominously in the wind. Nahum's second son Thaddeus, a lad of fifteen, swore that they swayed even when there weren't no wind. Thaddeus, all of them really, took to listening all the time.

ABEL

Listening? What were they listening to?

AMMI PIERCE

It wasn't to anything in particular. Leastwise not to anything they could name. It was more like they slipped off into a trance or some kinda daydream. Like they were listening FOR something. Everybody what knew 'em agreed there was something was wrong with all the Gardners.

By April, local folk had all but stopped using the road past Nahum's. It was a shame, but I couldn't blame 'em. I figured it was on account of the vegetation. All the orchard trees blossomed forth in strange colors. No sane wholesome colors were anywhere to be seen except in the green grass and leafage; but everywhere there was shades of some diseased, underlying primary tone without a place among the known tints of earth. The only thing I could liken it to was the color of that odd globule inside the meteorite.

(MORE)

AMMI PIERCE (CONT'D)

Nahum ploughed and sowed the ten-acre pasture and the upland lot, but did nothing with the land around the house. He knew it would be of no use, and hoped that the summer's strange growths would draw all the poison from the soil. He was prepared for almost anything now. He took it to heart that so many of his neighbors would shun his farm; but the toll was worse on his wife. The boys were better off, being at school each day; but they couldn't help being frightened by the gossip. Thaddeus, he was especially sensitive. He suffered the most.

ABEL

Poor kid. That's terrible.

AMMI PIERCE

It weren't over yet. Come May, I paid another visit to the Gardners.

27

BLACKBERRY PIE

27

Music transition. Ammi and Martha dismount from horses and approach the farmhouse.

AMMI PIERCE

Evenin', Nahum, thought we'd pay you all a visit.

MARTHA

Nahum, I baked you a blackberry pie.

NAHUM GARDNER

(distracted)

A might kind of you, Martha. Shhh.

They stop in their tracks. It's quiet save for the BUZZ of insects.

AMMI PIERCE

(whispering)

What is it?

NAHUM GARDNER

Can't quite make it out. It's there though.

Martha slaps at a mosquito.

MARTHA

Mercy, bugs sure are thick up here.

NAHUM GARDNER

Gets worse as the night goes on.

AMMI PIERCE

Really?

MARTHA

Where's Nabby and the boys?

NAHUM GARDNER

They's on watch.

MARTHA

On watch?

NAHUM GARDNER

One of us keeps an eye out each direction.

AMMI PIERCE

What are you watching for?

NAHUM GARDNER

I can't say. We'll know it when we sees it.

Nabby approaches.

MARTHA

Evenin' Nabby.

ABIGAIL

Have you heard it, Martha?

MARTHA

Heard what?

ABIGAIL

See how still 'tis tonight? No wind.

MARTHA

Yep.

ABIGAIL

Hush now - just you watch that maple tree and listen.

Over the buzz of the insects, there's a faint movement of the branches.

AMMI PIERCE

It moved! The branches moved!

ABIGAIL

(trailing off in a crazed
mumble)

Darn right it moved. It's the sap,
that's what done it... movin'...
sound of that colour...

MARTHA

(at a loss)

Nabby... here's a pie I baked for
ye. And the boys.

ABIGAIL

(creepy)

Pie.

Pause.

MARTHA

I'll just set it here. Ammi, reckon
we should be riding on home. You
all take care now.

Ammi's horse, Hero, PLODS along the country road.

28

AMMI'S TALE 10

28

AMMI PIERCE

(old)

We were only too happy to leave
that night. We headed up the road
to the last bend from which you can
see Gardners' and I looked back. It
was faint, really faint, but I
swear there was a slight glow
coming off the plants. It sort of
moved and lingered over everything.
It got to where I hardly could bear
going over there any more, and
there wasn't nobody in the county
who went there more than me.
Finally, summer was coming on,
approaching of the anniversary of
the night the meteor fell, when
Amos McGregor rode up to my
place...

29 TURN FOR THE WORST

29

Amos RIDES up on his horse.

 MCGREGOR
 (calling from his horse)
 Ammi!

 AMMI PIERCE
 (from off)
 How do, Amos?

Ammi approaches.

 MCGREGOR
 Bad news, Ammi. Seems Nahum's
 luck's taken another turn for the
 worst.

 AMMI PIERCE
 Doesn't hardly seem it could get
 much worse. He told me the cows'
 milk went bad last week.

 MCGREGOR
 It's the horses now. Nahum said
 something fired them up in the
 night, neighing and kicking
 something fierce in their stalls.
 He opened the stable door and all
 four of 'em bolted. His boys are
 lookin' on foot. Reckon you could
 saddle up and lend a hand to help
 track 'em down?

Music transition.

30 AMMI'S TALE 11

30

 AMMI PIERCE
 (old)
 We rode up to the Gardner place to
 look for the animals. Tracking them
 was easier than we expected. It
 seems everything green on the farm
 was turning gray and brittle. Even
 the flowers what had such strange
 colors before were greying now. We
 located the poor beasts. Amos and I
 drew straws for which of us would
 have to do it. I was the one to
 break the news to Nahum.

31 NOTHING LEFT TO DO FOR 'EM

31

Music transition. We are on Nahum's porch.

NAHUM GARDNER
Ammi, did you find the horses?

AMMI PIERCE
We did. Down t'other side of the
brook. They're in a bad way, Nahum.

A distant gunshot echoes through the valley.

AMMI PIERCE (CONT'D)
Couldn't hardly approach 'em. Eyes
rolling, teeth bared...

Another distant gunshot.

AMMI PIERCE (CONT'D)
Nothing left to do for 'em, Nahum.

Another.

AMMI PIERCE (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, Nahum.

Nahum MUMBLES an indeterminate bit of sorrow. One last
GUNSHOT rings out.

NAHUM GARDNER
Don't 'spose it matter none. Not
now that Nabby's gone.

AMMI PIERCE
Nabby's gone? Where'd she go?

NAHUM GARDNER
She's upstairs, but her mind
ain't... there no more.

AMMI PIERCE
You mean she's gone soft in the
head?

NAHUM GARDNER
Ayah. Not much of her left
nowadays.

AMMI PIERCE
How 'bout you take me up there to
say hello? Friendly face might do
her a bit of good.

NAHUM GARDNER

Reckon so. Maybe. She don't talk much now.

FOOTSTEPS as they walk through the door and up the stairs.

NAHUM GARDNER (CONT'D)

I let her wander the house and the yard for a spell, but can't do that no more on account of her crashin' into everything...

AMMI PIERCE

Nahum, where is she?

NAHUM GARDNER

Locked in the attic.

AMMI PIERCE

Nahum, you can't keep her locked up!

NAHUM GARDNER

Can't let her wander free no more. She's a danger to herself and she's mighty disquieting company. Got to where even the boys couldn't abide her no more. Poor Thaddeus nearly fainted when he seen some of the faces she made at him. Come on, this way.

AMMI PIERCE

What about the boys? They keepin' well?

NAHUM GARDNER

Mm, I reckon they've come over a might queer, but they ain't so bad as Nabby nor the horses.

32

VISITING NABBY

32

He takes out his keys and opens the padlock on the attic door. Something scurries on the other side.

NAHUM GARDNER

Nabby? Ye gots a visitor. Ammi Pierce come by to pay a call on ye.

The door CREAKS open and Ammi gasps slightly as he sees her.

NAHUM GARDNER (CONT'D)
 (quietly to Ammi)
 Best ye be kinda quiet - she can be
 skittish.

AMMI PIERCE
 (softly)
 Hello, Nabby. It's me, Ammi.

Nabby MOVES slightly closer. Her movement does not sound very human.

ABIGAIL
 Ammi... It were taken... drained of
 something - fastening itself on me
 that ought not to be - someone must
 make it keep off - nothing was ever
 still... - the they shifted. Things
 they a moving, you. Hear the
 flutterin' of them. It gets...
 there's more of it than ye can
 know. It takes and you... there's
 nothin left. Make it go a tingle as
 it talks... don't make no sound,
 but I hears it...

She lopes into the corner.

NAHUM GARDNER
 See that? She moves queer like and
 kinda got a glow comin' off her.

He shuts the door and locks it. Nabby SCREAMS in a pained dementia.

33 AMMI'S TALE 12

33

MUSIC - transition to old Ammi's porch.

ABEL
 My lord that's terrible! The poor
 woman! Did he take her to a doctor?

AMMI PIERCE
 (old)
 No sir. Nahum figured if those
 university men didn't know what it
 was, doctors wouldn't be much use
 neither. He had taken some of his
 strange crops into Arkham, showed
 'em to a fellow at Miskatonic and
 to the editor of the Gazette.

(MORE)

AMMI PIERCE (CONT'D)
 Didn't get much for his trouble but a paragraph in the paper about foolish country superstitions. He reckoned the queer time would come to pass and hoped Nabby'd come around again. But by September all the vegetation was fast crumbling to a greyish powder, and Nahum feared that the trees would die before the poison was out of the soil. Nabby come to have spells of terrific screaming, and he and the boys were strung pretty tight. They shunned people now, and when school opened the boys didn't go.

34 HOW ARE YOU KEEPIN'?

34

MUSIC TRANSITION to Nahum's. Hero NEIGHS nervously as Ammi dismounts.

AMMI PIERCE
 Nahum! You here? I brung that lamp oil for ye!

No answer but the BUZZ of terrible insects.

AMMI PIERCE (CONT'D)
 Nahum? Nahum, you in there?

The CREAK of the screen door opening.

AMMI PIERCE (CONT'D)
 Hello Nahum. Here's that lamp oil you were needin'. Five gallons of kerosene too. I'll put it here on the porch. How are you keepin'? How are the boys?

NAHUM GARDNER
 They're about.

AMMI PIERCE
 They're missed down at the school house.

NAHUM GARDNER
 Hmmmm.

AMMI PIERCE
 Hot day. Mind if I water Hero at your trough?

NAHUM GARDNER

Mmmm.

The sound of a HAND PUMP and WATER splashing into a wooden trough. Nero SNORTS and NEIGHS in fright.

AMMI PIERCE

Whoa there! Hero! Whoa! What's wrong, boy?

The horse STAMPS the ground. Ammi SIPS the water and SPITS it out again.

AMMI PIERCE (CONT'D)

Lord, Nahum! Your water's gone foul!

NAHUM GARDNER

Is it?

AMMI PIERCE

Can't you taste it? It's rank, kinda salty. You need to dig yourself a new well. Up on higher ground away from the house till this blows over.

Nahum SIPS the water.

NAHUM GARDNER

Can't say as I taste it.

AMMI PIERCE

No, Nahum, it's wrong. Bad wrong. Dig a new well. For the boys' sake. Give 'em something to do anyway.

NAHUM GARDNER

Mmmmm.

35

AMMI'S TALE 13

35

MUSIC TRANSITION back to Old Ammi's porch.

ABEL

Did Gardner dig a new well? They'd have to have good water...

AMMI PIERCE

(old)

Nahum had become calloused to strange and unpleasant things.

(MORE)

AMMI PIERCE (CONT'D)

He and the boys continued to use the old well, drinking from it as listlessly and mechanically as they ate their meagre and ill-cooked meals and did their thankless and monotonous chores through the aimless days. I suppose I should have tried harder to help, but truth is the place made my skin crawl, and I kept away. There was something of resignation about them all, as if they walked half in another world between lines of nameless guards to a certain and familiar doom. It was a month or two later, I had called the Arkham veterinarian, Dr. Fleming, to come take a look at Hero. Turned out, he'd just been up at the Gardner farm...

MUSIC - transition.

36

THE VETERINARIAN

36

FLEMING

...I hadn't been out to see Nahum since '80 - what a transformation! Whole farm looks like it's dying. He called me out saying he thought there was some livestock disease.

AMMI PIERCE

Was there?

FLEMING

It's like nothing I've ever seen, Ammi. All the poultry turned greyish and died very quickly. I cut one open - the meat was dry and noxious.

AMMI PIERCE

All the birds?

FLEMING

It was more than the birds. I looked at his hogs that were still alive and...

(faltering)

I don't know how to describe it. They're growing grey and brittle and falling to pieces.

(MORE)

FLEMING (CONT'D)

Their eyes and muzzles distorted.
Never seen a thing like it.
Whatever it is, it's hit the cattle
too: I saw cows where the whole
body was shrivelled or compressed -
whole bodies collapsing and
disintegrating... turning gray and
brittle like the hogs.

AMMI PIERCE

Could it have been tainted food?
Something in the water?

FLEMING

Hell if I know! Nahum swore they'd
never been fed from the tainted
vegetation. No sign of poison or
bites... I couldn't do a damned
thing to help.

37 AMMI'S TALE 14

37

AMMI PIERCE

(old)

Hearing Dr. Fleming's tale I felt
bad for having put off a visit for
so long. I loaded up some staples I
figured might be useful in their
pantry and set out...

38 A TROUBLING VISITATION

38

MUSIC - transition. Ammi trots up on his horse. There's a
very distant CRY from a anguished lunatic.

AMMI PIERCE

Nahum! Nahum it's me. Ammi Pierce.

The front door opens and Nahum steps out on the porch.

NAHUM GARDNER

Hello Ammi. Care to come up here to
the porch and set a spell?

AMMI PIERCE

I brought a sack of flour and a few
pounds of coffee...

NAHUM GARDNER

Mighty kind, Ammi. We don't get
visitors no more.

A distant INSANE SCREAM comes from the attic.

AMMI PIERCE

(after a nervous pause)

Sure.

(pause)

How're you keeping?

NAHUM GARDNER

Reckon I been better, Ammi. My boy, Thaddeus, his mind went soft a few weeks back...

AMMI PIERCE

Thaddeus too?

A loud UNINTELLIGIBLE BABBLING comes from the upper part of the house. A different lunatic SHRIEKS in response.

NAHUM GARDNER

Went a visit to the well. He had gone with a pail and had come back empty-handed, shrieking and waving his arms, and making this little titter. I said, "What's the matter with you, boy?" And he tells me "the moving colour's down there."

AMMI PIERCE

Oh, Nahum...

NAHUM GARDNER

I let him run about for a week or so, but he started stumbling and hurting himself so I shut him in the attic room across the hall from his mother's.

The door to the house opens and little Merwin steps out. His voice is small and adorable.

MERWIN

Papa...

NAHUM GARDNER

Where's yer manners, boy? Give a greeting to our guest, Mr. Pierce.

MERWIN

Good afternoon, Mr. Pierce.

AMMI PIERCE

Merwin, right?

MERWIN

Yassir.

AMMI PIERCE

Merwin, I got some butterscotch here, would you like one?

MERWIN

(straightforward)

No. Papa, Thaddeus says that mg'naf kitab'aq don't need to sha-amog wf'ahll, but mama ain't having none of that; she cthal-eddos be'hetah!

NAHUM GARDNER

Now you run along and play and tell Thaddeus not to pay her no mind. Jest yet.

Merwin runs back inside.

AMMI PIERCE

(shocked)

Nahum...

NAHUM GARDNER

Guess Nabby and Thaddeus been talking in some kinda tongues to each other. Litter feller were powerful fond of his brother. Likes to sit outside the locked door.

(pause)

I can't tell you how I 'preciate your neighborliness, Ammi...

MUSIC - transition. Narration maybe underscored with shoveling and faint screams.

AMMI PIERCE

(old)

On the nineteenth of October Nahum appeared at my house with dreadful news. Death had come to poor Thaddeus in his attic room, though Nahum was unable to find words for just what had killed the boy. He had dug a grave in the family plot behind the farm. Martha and I gave what comfort we could.

(MORE)

AMMI PIERCE (CONT'D)

Stark terror seemed to cling round the Gardners and all they touched, and Nahum's presence in our house was deeply uncomfortable. I reluctantly accompanied him home, and did what I might to calm the sobbing of little Merwin. His brother Zenas needed no calming. Of late he did nothing but stare into space and obey what his father told him. Maybe that was for the best. Now and then Merwin's screams were answered faintly from the attic. I ask Nahum about Nabby and he said she was abiding but had grown very feeble. As night approached, I hurried to get away. The whole journey home, the screams of the mad woman and the heartbroken child rang horribly in my ears.

Three days later Nahum burst into our kitchen in the early morning. I was already out in the fields...

40

CAIN'T FIND HIDE NOR HAIR OF 'IM

40

The door bursts open and Nahum staggers into the Pierce's kitchen.

MARTHA

Nahum - what's wrong? Sit down.
You're white as a sheet. I'll call
for Ammi.

(steps outside and
bellows)

Ammi!

NAHUM GARDNER

Gone - I looked and looked but
cain't find hide nor hair of 'im.

MARTHA

Slow down now..

NAHUM GARDNER

He'd been going to pieces for days,
screamin' at everything...

MARTHA

Who, Nahum?

NAHUM GARDNER

Lil' Merwin. He's gone. I been searchin' all through the night.

MARTHA

Easy now - tell me what happened.

NAHUM GARDNER

Merwin went out to the well with a lantern and a pail and ain't never come back. I heard a shriek from the yard then, but afore I could get to the door the boy was gone. I run out to the well, but didn't see him nor the lantern nor the pail. I searched all 'round till the sun come up and then I seen things by the well.

MARTHA

What things?

NAHUM GARDNER

'Twas a crushed and melty mass of iron which had been the lantern; then besides that I seen a bent handle and twisted iron hoops half-fused which were the remnants of the pail.

MARTHA

I don't understand...

NAHUM GARDNER

I... who could I tell this to? Dear lord...

(breaks down sobbing)

Ammi runs into the kitchen.

AMMI PIERCE

What is it? What's happened?

Martha shushes him.

NAHUM GARDNER

(dangling at the end of his rope)

What am I s'posed to do? Little Merwin gone, Thad gone... there's somethin' a creepin' and waitin' to be seen an' heard. It's a gonna come for me, you mark my words.

(MORE)

NAHUM GARDNER (CONT'D)
 Ammi, you promise me you'll look
 after Nabby and Zenas once I'm gone
 - promise me!

AMMI PIERCE
 You know we'll do our...

NAHUM GARDNER
 It's some kinda judgment day; like
 the Book o' Job. I been an upright
 man, Martha, I tried to walk in the
 Lord's ways... Oh god!
 (trails off sobbing)

MUSIC - sad transition

41 AMMI'S TALE 16

41

AMMI PIERCE
 (old)
 For over two weeks I saw nothing of
 Nahum. Finally I was so worried
 about what might have happened, I
 overcame my fears and rode up to
 the Gardner place. There was no
 smoke from the great chimney, and
 truly, I feared the worst. The look
 of the farm was shocking - greyish
 withered grass and leaves on the
 ground, vines falling in brittle
 wreckage from the walls and gables,
 and great bare trees clawing up at
 the grey November sky.

42 THE LAST VISITATION

42

Ammi dismounts his horse and hurries up onto the Gardner
 porch and opens the door.

AMMI PIERCE
 Nahum?

NAHUM GARDNER
 (his voice weak)
 Yeah, here on the couch... That
 you, Ammi?

AMMI PIERCE
 Yep. You alright, Nahum? It's
 freezing in here.

NAHUM GARDNER

Tad chilly.
(bellowing)
Zenas, bring some more wood!

Ammi crosses to the fireplace.

AMMI PIERCE

Fireplace is stone cold, Nahum.
We'll get you boys warmed up
alright...

NAHUM GARDNER

(as if wood had just been
delivered)
There - the extra wood make you a
bit more comfortable?

AMMI PIERCE

I don't understand, Nahum. There's
no wood here.

NAHUM GARDNER

Nonsense, Zenas just brung some in.

AMMI PIERCE

(delicately)
I... haven't seen Zenas, Nahum.

NAHUM GARDNER

(with a sigh)
Ah, not likely that you would. Not
these days.

AMMI PIERCE

Why's that?

NAHUM GARDNER

In the well - he lives in the well.

AMMI PIERCE

(to himself)
Oh dear god...
(to Nahum)
Nahum - what about Nabby? She
alright? She must be freezing up
there.

NAHUM GARDNER

Nabby, why ask her yourself - here
she is!

The empty room is frighteningly silent.

AMMI PIERCE

I'll be right back, Nahum.

He grabs the keys off a nail and runs upstairs to the attic. He stops in front of the door. Silence. He puts the key in the lock and opens the door.

43

AMMI'S TALE 17

43

MUSIC BED starts.

AMMI PIERCE

(old but reliving the
horror vividly)

I took the key and ran up to the attic. It was quite dark inside, for the window was small and half-obscured by crude wooden bars. I could see nothing at all on the wide-planked floor. The stench was more than I could bear and I stepped back to the hall to catch my breath. I entered again and this time saw something dark in the corner. I screamed - only time in my life I ever did that - and while I screamed I thought a momentary cloud eclipsed the window. A second later I felt myself brushed as if by some awful current of vapour. Strange colours danced before my eyes - you know the one I mean. In front of me was a monstrosity, one which all too clearly had shared the nameless fate of young Thaddeus and the livestock. But the terrible thing was that it very slowly and perceptibly moved as it continued to crumble.

I suppose I went a bit mad in that moment - I don't figure a sane mind could endure such a thing. If it were madness, it was merciful in a way. I somehow stumbled away through that low doorway and locked the door to that horror behind me. There would be Nahum to deal with now; he must be fed and tended, and removed to some place where he could be cared for. I started down the dark stairs.

A loud THUD sounds from below followed by a feeble GROAN.

AMMI PIERCE (CONT'D)

I was too scared to scream now. I thought of the clammy vapour which had brushed by me in that attic room. What presence had my cry and entry started up? I stopped there as I heard more sounds from below.

The sound of a sort of heavy DRAGGING, and a most detestably STICKY NOISE as of some fiendish and unclean species of suction.

AMMI PIERCE (CONT'D)

(wracked with the horrific recollection)

Good God! What dream-world had I blundered into? I was petrified, and stood there trembling at the black curve of the boxed-in staircase. Every trifle of the scene burned itself into my brain. The sounds, the sense of dread expectancy, the darkness, the steepness of the narrow step - and merciful Heaven! - the faint but unmistakable luminosity of all the woodwork in sight; steps, sides, exposed laths, and beams alike.

Downstairs and outside there's a frantic WHINNY from Ammi's horse followed at once by mad galloping. Then a dreadful SPLASH of some liquid.

AMMI PIERCE (CONT'D)

My horse had surely bolted, startled by god knows what... and the splash - perhaps he'd knocked a stone into the well...

A FEEBLE SCRATCHING comes from downstairs.

AMMI PIERCE (CONT'D)

I tightened my grip on a piece of baluster in my hand. Had I broken it off from the stair rail? Found it on the floor? I didn't know but I took some comfort in holding a makeshift weapon. I steeled myself and slowly descended the stairs and crept towards the couch where I had left him.

(MORE)

AMMI PIERCE (CONT'D)

But Nahum was no longer there. He had come to meet me. Whether he had crawled or been dragged by some external force, I do not know; but the death had been at him during my brief absence upstairs. Collapse, greying, and disintegration were already far advanced. There was a horrible brittleness, and dry fragments were scaling off. I could not bear to touch him, but looked into the gray echo of his face.

44

LAST VISITATION 2

44

AMMI PIERCE

(young)

What was it, Nahum - what was it?

NAHUM GARDNER

(in a faint, cracked
whisper)

Nothin'... nothin'... the colour... it burns... cold an' wet, but it burns... it lived in the well... I seen it... a kind of smoke... jest like the flowers last spring... the well shone at night... Thad an' Merwin an' Zenas... everything alive... suckin' the life out of everything... in that stone... it must a' come in that stone poisoned the whole place... dun't know what it wants... that round thing them men from the college dug outen the stone... they smashed it... it was the same colour... jest the same, like the flowers an' plants... must a' ben more of 'em... seeds... seeds... they growed... I seen it the first time this week... must a' got strong on Zenas... he was a big boy, full o' life... it beats down your mind an' then gets ye... burns ye up... in the well water... you was right about that... evil water... Zenas never come back from the well... can't git away... draws ye... ye know summ'at's comin' but tain't no use... I seen it time an' agin senct Zenas was took... whar's Nabby, Ammi?... my head's no good...

(MORE)

NAHUM GARDNER (CONT'D)
 dun't know how long since I fed
 her... it'll git her if we ain't
 careful... just a colour... her
 face is gittin' to have that colour
 sometimes towards night... an' it
 burns an' sucks... it come from
 some place whar things ain't as
 they is here... one o' them
 professors said so... he was
 right... look out, Ammi, it'll do
 sumthin' more... sucks the life
 out...

A horrible dusty CRUMBLING marks Nahum's final words as his
 head fully caves in.

45

AMMI'S TALE 18

45

AMMI PIERCE

(old)

But that was all. That which spoke
 could speak no more because it had
 completely caved in. I laid a red
 checked tablecloth over his
 crumbled remains and stumbled
 outside. I climbed the slope to the
 ten-acre pasture and walked home by
 the north road and the woods. I
 dared not go near that well, but
 could see at a distance no stone
 was missing from the rim. The
 splash had been something else -
 something which went into the well
 after it had done with poor Nahum.
 I walked through the night and
 arrived at home to find Martha in a
 frantic state. Hero had come home
 without me and she'd feared the
 worst.

MUSIC - punctuation followed by transition.

ABEL

My god, Mr. Pierce. Did you notify
 the authorities?

AMMI PIERCE

I told Martha all about it, and
 then set out to tell them in Arkham
 the same news.

Transition to the comparatively urban soundscape of the Essex County Sheriff's Office of 1882.

LAVEQUE

Excuse me, Sheriff, we've got a gentleman here I think you'll want to give a listen to.

SHERIFF CLARK

Thank you, Deputy Laveque. I'm Sheriff Clark. And you are...

AMMI PIERCE

Name's Ammi Pierce, sir. I live out west off the Emmetsville Pike. I needed to make a report about my neighbors the Gardners.

SHERIFF CLARK

Gardner... I know that name. They lost their boy, Thaddeus, a few months back. The farm was where that meteorite came down a year or more back, right?

AMMI PIERCE

Yes, sir. Nahum Gardner. Him, his wife Abigail are dead.

SHERIFF CLARK

Dead? What happened?

AMMI PIERCE

I don't rightly know, sir. And it looked as if his boys Merwin and Zenas had disappeared. All their livestock was dead too. Maybe some kind of sickness.

SHERIFF CLARK

Jesus, Mary and Joseph... When did you see this?

AMMI PIERCE

I was out there yesterday, just before sundown. Checking up on Nahum. The farm had been headed downhill this past year...

SHERIFF CLARK

Sounds like we'd better set on out there, take a look for the boys and see what's happened. Mr. Pierce, you mind taking us up there to have a look?

AMMI PIERCE

(terrified at the notion)
I'd rather not, it was... well you can imagine.

SHERIFF CLARK

All the same, we'll need you to come along. Deputy, if there's bodies, we'll need the Medical Examiner, so notify Doc Marsh and the Coroner. If there's something wrong with the livestock, we should bring that veterinarian too, Dr. Fleming. Have Deputy Peterman harness the democrat-wagon; we'll set out at two.

AMMI PIERCE

Two?

SHERIFF CLARK

That a problem, Mr. Pierce?

AMMI PIERCE

Well, no, it's just, that farm isn't a place you'd want to be at after sundown.

SHERIFF CLARK

Don't you worry, there's nothing to be afraid of.

MUSIC - ominous transition

47

AMMI'S TALE 19

47

AMMI PIERCE

(old)
I led the way on horseback with the six of them following me in the wagon. We made it to the Gardner place around four.

(MORE)

AMMI PIERCE (CONT'D)

I suppose those officers and medical men had seen some gruesome sights before, but not one remained unshaken by the scene in the attic and what was under the red checked tablecloth on the ground floor. The whole aspect of the farm with its grey desolation was terrible enough, but those two crumbling objects were beyond all bounds.

48

WEIRD BUT TRUE

48

SHERIFF CLARK

Mason, what would you say was the cause of death?

MASON STUBBS

That'd be mighty speculative at this point. Ain't seen nothing like this since I've been Coroner. What do you think, Doc?

MARSH

I've never... I mean, we could take samples back to the hospital but...

SHERIFF CLARK

Yes?

MARSH

The bodies are hardly more than dust. Not much to analyze. Still, I suppose I should gather a couple of phials....

MASON STUBBS

I don't see anything that suggests foul play, do you, Sheriff?

SHERIFF CLARK

None I can imagine. Mr. Pierce's story rings true. Weird but true.

MARSH

Any sign of the boys?

SHERIFF CLARK

Nothing yet. Deputies are outside with the vet, Dr. Fleming, having a look.

MASON STUBBS

Something terrible happened here. I don't understand it at all.

SHERIFF CLARK

You alright over there, Mr. Pierce?

AMMI PIERCE

It's just... the sun's gonna be down soon.

SHERIFF CLARK

You're sure keeping an eye on that well. Anything you might have forgot to tell me?

AMMI PIERCE

(hesitant)

It's just that... Nahum was afraid of that well and when I looked for the boys, I didn't think to look down there for Merwin or Zenas.

The sheriff strides through the door and then WHISTLES loudly.

SHERIFF CLARK

(shouting off)

Gentlemen, let's take a look at this well!

MUSIC - drama!

49

WELL, WELL, WELL

49

The sheriff huddles round the well with the Medical Examiner, the Coroner, Dr. Fleming and Ammi as the deputies finish hauling water out of the well. The bucket SLOSHES its contents on to the ground. Dr. Marsh SNIFFS in disgust at the foul water.

LAVEQUE

Well's about empty now, sir. That's about all we can take out with the pail.

MARSH

I can't get over how foul the water is. I've never seen water like this comin' up out of a well.

AMMI PIERCE

I told Nahum he needed to dig a new one, but he didn't pay no mind.

FLEMING

Well none of you drink it. As best I can figure it was the water made the animals and the family sick.

MASON STUBBS

I wouldn't drink this filth!

SHERIFF CLARK

Deputy Laveque, you ready to go down and have a look?

LAVEQUE

Not me, sir! Peterman's going in. He drew the short straw.

PETERMAN

(gung-ho)

I'm ready, sir. I tied this lantern to a rope. I'll climb down and have you fellas lower it as I go so I can see the hand holds. I'll see what's down there.

He climbs over the side of the well.

MARSH

Careful there, son.

PETERMAN

I been down in the well at my daddy's farm a hunnert times. You got the lantern there?

SHERIFF CLARK

Here it is.

PETERMAN

Here we go.

He starts climbing down.

LAVEQUE

Shouldn't take him long. There wasn't much water. We hit bottom pretty fast.

PETERMAN

(from in the well)

Alright, I'm on the...

(MORE)

PETERMAN (CONT'D)
(panicked)
Slack! Give me slack on the
lantern.

Pause.

SHERIFF CLARK
What do you see, Peterman?

PETERMAN
Think I found 'em. There's some
bones down here. Two human skulls.

SHERIFF CLARK
(to the Medical Examiner)
They shouldn't be reduced to bones
that fast, should they?

MARSH
That usually takes a few weeks or
months.

PETERMAN
Hey, can somebody toss a pole or
maybe a real long stick down here?

FLEMING
(loud)
I'll run grab one from the barn.

SHERIFF CLARK
You see anything else, Peterman?

PETERMAN
There's a bunch of bones: the two
people, a small deer probably, a
big dog, some small animals... The
bottom of the well's all bubbly and
oozy. It's like no well I ever
seen.

AMMI PIERCE
(frightened)
He should come back up.

Dr. Fleming runs up with the pole.

FLEMING
I'm dropping the pole down now.

It lands with a SPLAT.

PETERMAN

Yep, I was right. I can just push the pole down into the.... it just keeps going, like there's no hard bottom at all. Smells funny. Hang on, it's kind of gurglin' now.

AMMI PIERCE

Bring him up. Now.

MASON STUBBS

(under his breath)
What about the bodies?

SHERIFF CLARK

Mmmm...

MARSH

We can't just leave the boys' remains down there.

Pained pause.

SHERIFF CLARK

Peterman - we're lowering the pail down to you. Put the boys' remains in it and then come on up.

There's shuffling in the well.

PETERMAN

The bones are all gray and brittle. They crumble apart when I try to move them.

(nervous)

It's gurgling more down here.

SHERIFF CLARK

(scared)

Peterman, come on back up now. Just... just let it all be.

Peterman begins to climb out of the well.

AMMI PIERCE

(old)

Twilight had fallen, and the officers went into the ancient sitting-room to confer while I watched the intermittent light of a spectral half-moon playing wanly on the grey desolation outside. The men were as baffled as those professors had been, and couldn't see no good link between the strange vegetation, the live-stock disease, the madness of Abigail and Thaddeus, and the inexplicable deaths of Merwin and Zenas in the tainted well.

ABEL

It's like a poison. And a curse come down from the heavens.

AMMI PIERCE

Hmm. Curse is right. 'Bout the only thing we could agree was the meteor had poisoned the soil. The illness of people and animals who didn't eat anything grown in that soil was another matter.

ABEL

And the meteorite had disappeared more than a year before...

AMMI PIERCE

And what kind of poison could have made both boys jump into the well - that was far beyond our understanding.

MUSIC TRANSITION back to Gardner farm.

51

SOMETHING WITH THE WELL WATER

51

SHERIFF CLARK

I'm inclined to agree with Ammi here, I think it must be something with the well water.

MARSH

I'll take a sample back to Arkham, see if I can find something in it back at the lab.

LAVEQUE

That don't make sense. If it was the water, why would those boys jump into it? And what took the wits from their mama and the older brother?

SHERIFF CLARK

I don't know. I don't understand any of this.

52

AMMI'S TALE 21

52

Pause. We faintly hear the action beneath as Ammi narrates it. MUSIC BED.

AMMI PIERCE

(old)

It was the coroner, Mason Stubbs, seated near a window overlooking the yard, who first noticed the glow around the well. Night had fully set in now, and all the grounds seemed faintly illuminated with more than the fitful moonbeams. This new glow was something definite and distinct, and appeared to shoot up from the black pit like a softened ray from a searchlight, giving dull reflections in the little ground pools where the water had been emptied. It had a very queer colour and I feared to think what it might mean. I seen it in the nasty brittle globule in that meteorite two summers ago. I seen it in the crazy vegetation of the springtime, and I thought I seen it for an instant that very morning against the small barred window of that terrible attic room. It had flashed there a second, and a clammy and hateful current of vapour brushed past me - and then poor Nahum had been taken by something of that colour. After that had come the runaway in the yard and the splash in the well -and now that well was belching forth into the night a pale insidious beam of the same.

(MORE)

AMMI PIERCE (CONT'D)

It wasn't right - it was against
Nature - and I couldn't help but
think of what Nahum said at the
last...

NAHUM GARDNER

(a ghostly remembrance)

It come from some place whar things
ain't as they is here... one o'
them professors said so...

53

DON'T GO OUT THERE

53

MUSIC STING. The three horses NEIGH and PAW frantically. Dr.
Fleming makes for the door.

FLEMING

Those animals need...

AMMI PIERCE

(young)

Don't go out there, Dr. Fleming.
There's more to this than what we
know. Nahum said somethin' lived in
the well that sucks your life out.
He said it must be something that
growed out from the globule in the
meteor. Sucks an' burns, he said,
an' is jest a cloud of colour like
that light out there now, that ye
can hardly see an' can't tell what
it is. Nahum thought it feeds on
everything livin' an' gits stronger
all the time. He said he seen it
this last week. It must be
somethin' from away off in the sky
like the men from the college says
the meteor stone was. The way it's
made an' the way it works isn't the
way of God's world. It's something
from beyond.

Awkward pause as the horses PAW and WHINNY with increasing
frenzy. MUSIC STING.

SHERIFF CLARK

(gasping)

My god, look at the trees!

PETERMAN

The branches... they're moving.

MARSH

It's just the wind, surely....

AMMI PIERCE

Ain't been no wind tonight. It's dead calm. Anyhow, no wind moves branches that way.

LAVEQUE

It's like they're twitching, scratching at the air...

PETERMAN

Clawing toward the moon, reaching for it...

54 AMMI'S TALE 22

54

AMMI PIERCE

(old)

Not a man breathed for several seconds. Then a cloud passed over the moon, and the silhouette of clutching branches faded out momentarily.

The men emit a MUFFLED CRY OF AWE at what they see next.

AMMI PIERCE (CONT'D)

(still old)

But terror did not fade with the silhouette, and in a fearsome instant of deeper darkness we saw wriggling at that tree top height a thousand tiny points of faint and unhallowed radiance, tipping each bough like the fire of St. Elmo. It was a monstrous constellation of unnatural light, like a gluttoned swarm of corpse-fed fireflies dancing over an accursed marsh, and its colour was that same nameless intrusion which I'd come to dread.

55 DON'T GO OUT THERE 2

55

Panicky horses NEIGH and STAMP outside. MUSIC STING.

PETERMAN

Look at the well! The light coming out of the well!

LAVEQUE

It's pouring out! Flowing straight
up into the sky!

FOOTSTEPS as Ammi rushes to the door. The THUNK of a heavy
bar blocks his way.

AMMI PIERCE

The horses! Dr. Fleming....

FLEMING

There's nothing we can do for them
now, Ammi.

The horses BOLT, with CRASHING AND RATTLING as they run off
with the democrat wagon. Hero NEIGHS.

LAVEQUE

Our wagon! They bolted!

MARSH

It's getting brighter! The
buildings themselves are glowing!

PETERMAN

The trees! Reaching to the sky!

LAVEQUE

Whatever it is, it got to the
horses.

AMMI PIERCE

Hero! Run boy!

The CREAK OF WOOD, the SCREAM of Ammi's horse as it PAWS in
the road outside.

MARSH

It spreads on everything organic
that's been around here.

PETERMAN

Maybe that long pole stirred up
something in the well. There was no
bottom at all. Just ooze and
bubbles and the feeling of
something down there.

AMMI PIERCE

Nabby said it fed on them - on
every living thing it touched -
maybe it lives in the water.

PETERMAN
 (grasping the implication)
 Oh my god. I was in that water.
 What's it doin' now?

MASON STUBBS
 I pray it's fixing to go home.

MARSH
 That colored light coming from the
 well. I'd swear it's taking on a
 shape. Do you see it?

Ammi's horse emits a HORRID SOUND OF AGONY.

AMMI PIERCE
 Hero....

FLEMING
 Don't look, Ammi. It's too late for
 him.

MUSIC STING. PSSST - the Sheriff draws everyone's attention.

SHERIFF CLARK
 (very quiet)
 Boys, it's here. It's inside the
 house. Look. Up there by the
 mantel...

FLEMING
 It's over there too - that colour!

PETERMAN
 God in heaven!

AMMI PIERCE
 (old)
 A phosphorescence had begun to
 pervade the entire room. It glowed
 on the broad-planked floor and the
 fragment of rag carpet, and
 shimmered over the sashes of the
 small-paned windows. It ran up and
 down the exposed corner-posts,
 danced about the shelf and mantel,
 and infected the very doors and
 furniture.

57 DON'T GO OUT THERE 3

57

SHERIFF CLARK

We should leave here, right now.

AMMI PIERCE

(young)

This way - out the back.

The men hurry out of the house into the farmyard.

58 AMMI'S TALE 24

58

AMMI PIERCE

(old)

We fled quick as we could into the dark through the fields. We walked and stumbled as in a dream, and did not dare look back till we were far away on the high ground. Thank god for the path, for we daren't have gone to the road in front, by that well. It was bad enough passing the glowing barn and sheds, and those shining orchard trees with their gnarled, fiendish shapes. The moon went under some very black clouds as we crossed the rustic bridge over Chapman's Brook, and we blindly groped our way to the open meadows.

Looking back, we saw a fearsome sight. The farm was shining with the hideous unknown colour; trees, buildings, and beyond. The boughs were all straining skyward, tipped with tongues of foul flame, and tricklings of the same monstrous fire were creeping about the ridgepoles of the house, barn and sheds. Over all the rest rode a riot of glowing alien poison from the well - seething and lapping and shimmering like it was... like it was feeling, or reaching out...

59 DON'T GO OUT THERE 4

59

SHERIFF CLARK

Oh, dear lord... look at it.

Deputy Peterman WEEPS and the others MUMBLE in terrified awe.

60 AMMI'S TALE 25

60

AMMI PIERCE

(old)

Then without warning the thing shot vertically up toward the sky like a rocket. God as my witness, it was like that meteor going back up into space, leaving behind no trail and disappearing through a round and curiously regular hole in the clouds. I'll never forget the sight - none of us will. I stared at the sky where the thing had melted into the Milky Way.

ABEL

Good god.

AMMI PIERCE

But then there was something more.

61 DON'T GO OUT THERE 5

61

A horrid dry CRACKLING SOUND echoes through the valley.

MARSH

What the devil is...

The crackling culminates in a ERUPTIVE CATACLYSM at the distant farm. The men GASP and shield their eyes.

62 AMMI'S TALE 26

62

AMMI PIERCE

(old)

There burst up from that doomed farm a cataclysm of unnatural sparks and substance; our eyes burned as it sent forth to the zenith a cloudburst of such coloured and fantastic fragments as our world must needs disown. Weird vapors consumed the thing and in a moment they were gone too. Behind and below was only darkness.

A fierce cosmic WIND rages through the valley below.

AMMI PIERCE (CONT'D)

Then suddenly from the stillness all about was a mounting wind which seemed to sweep down in cold black gusts. It shrieked and howled, and lashed the fields and distorted woods in a frenzy. The moon was blotted out by the clouds, but it didn't make no matter. We didn't need to see it to know the Gardner farm was gone. Plain wiped away. There wasn't nothin' to say, and we just kind of started driftin' back down the north road. In time we reached the crossroad: my farm in one direction, and Arkham in t'other.

63

ROAD HOME

63

The walking feet stop. There's a quiet awkwardness.

SHERIFF CLARK

Well, Ammi, I guess this is the road back to your place. Rest of us will make on into town.

AMMI PIERCE

(young)

Yeah.

SHERIFF CLARK

I think we can all agree there's no need to tell anyone... Wouldn't do any good.

MASON STUBBS

Nobody should know.

LAVEQUE

Nobody'd believe it anyway.

Ammi MUMBLES.

FLEMING

You gonna be alright there, Ammi?

AMMI PIERCE

I... don't wanna go on alone. Not through them woods...

FLEMING

I'll walk with you, Ammi.

MARSH

I'll come too.

AMMI PIERCE

Just as far as my house. Just get me inside to the kitchen.

FLEMING

We'll be alright together, Ammi.
You fellows... you all take care.

Quiet MURMURS of assent as the two groups go their separate directions.

64

AMMI'S TALE 27

64

MUSIC TRANSITION back to Old Ammi's porch.

AMMI PIERCE

(old)

It was good of them fellers to come with me that night.

ABEL

Yes, well, you'd all experienced quite a shock.

AMMI PIERCE

Some of them men went back the next day, to see the ruins in the daylight. 'Tweren't nothing left but a few stones from the chimney and the cellar. Nothing that had ever been alive.

ABEL

Did you go back?

AMMI PIERCE

No sir. I don't need to go back. It's forty-four years ago since that night, but I see it all like it was yesterday. And I'll tell you somethin' I never told none o' them. Somethin' I never told anyone before.

ABEL

What's that?

AMMI PIERCE

As we were walking away down the road that night, after Gardner's was destroyed, the men were looking straight ahead. D'ye know? But I made the horrid mistake of turning and looking back. And there, in that far away spot, I saw something rise up, not much, just kinda feebly, only to sink down again at the place from which the great shapeless horror had shot into the sky.

ABEL

What was it?

AMMI PIERCE

It was just a colour: that colour. I didn't say nothin' about it, but I knew something had stayed behind. Something lingered on that blasted heath. You fellas plan to flood that land for a reservoir? You won't hear a complaint from me. Let the water blot it out. Drown it!

MUSIC - transition.

65

ABEL'S REPORT 3

65

ABEL

(in report)

I thanked Mr. Pierce for telling me his story, and as I left him I shuddered, for I knew it was true. I knew from my own experience that something of evil remained on that land. Five eldritch acres of dusty grey desert remained, nor has anything ever grown there since. To this day it sprawls open to the sky like a great spot eaten by acid in the woods and fields - it truly is "the blasted heath." I did all I could to confirm Ammi's tale, I even found the dust samples collected by Dr. Marsh. Those last remains of Nahum and Abigail Gardner had been forgotten in an evidence locker for decades.

(MORE)

ABEL (CONT'D)

Their silent testimony is all we'll ever have, since there is no one else but Ammi to question; Arkham people will not talk about the strange days, and Sheriff Clark and the others, including the professors who examined the meteorite and its coloured globule, are dead now. There were other globules - depend upon that. One must have fed itself and escaped, and probably there was another which was too late. I believe it is still down the well - I know there was something wrong with the sunlight I saw above the miasmal brink. The farmers say the blight creeps an inch a year, so perhaps there is a kind of growth or nourishment even now. But whatever demon hatchling is there, it must be tethered to something or else it would quickly spread. Is it fastened to the roots of those trees that claw the air?

What it is, only God knows. In terms of matter I suppose the thing Ammi described would be called a gas, but this gas obeyed laws that are not of our cosmos. This was no fruit of such worlds and suns as shine on the telescopes and photographic plates of our observatories. This was no breath from the skies whose motions and dimensions our astronomers measure or deem too vast to measure. It was just a colour out of space - a frightful messenger from unformed realms of infinity beyond all Nature as we know it; from realms whose mere existence stuns the brain and numbs us with the black extra-cosmic gulfs it throws open before our frenzied eyes. One thing I do know...

CROSSFADE from Abel to Ruth, as she finishes reading the report. The sounds of the OFFICE fade in underneath.

RUTH

"...One thing I do know with certainty, is that the planned reservoir must never be built, lest the fatal poison of that blasted heath be spread throughout the county. I will submit this report, along with the phials of Gardner dust, to the authorities. The project must be stopped at all costs."

HUGHES

(seriously rattled)
Wait, he means those tubes?

RUTH

My god, Mr. Hughes, these...
They're human remains!

HUGHES

How did they end up in the basement? Why wasn't this report properly filed? Someone needs to read this!

RUTH

We should show it to the Commissioner.

FOOTSTEPS approach. BARROW, a manager, saunters up to the water cooler.

BARROW

Show what to the Commissioner?

GLUG GLUG GLUG as Barrow fills a cup with water.

HUGHES

Mr. Barrow, sir, Ruth found an old survey report when she was cleaning out the storeroom.

BARROW

Oh really?

RUTH

By someone called Abel Cooke.

BARROW

Abel Cooke! Haven't heard that name in years.

RUTH

It was in a box with other papers
and these samples contain...

BARROW

Well, it's sad. Cooke's dead. Oh,
that was years ago.

RUTH

Dead!

BARROW

Suicide. Shot himself. Terrible
thing.

HUGHES

Why did he shoot himself?

BARROW

I heard it had something to do with
his final assignment. The Mattapan
Reservoir project. But who knows?
He seemed a bit crazy toward the
end. If that's his final report,
I'd just lose it again if I were
you. Doesn't make any difference
now. The reservoir worked out fine.

RUTH

Wait, are you saying they built the
reservoir? The one in this report?

BARROW

Of course. It supplies water to the
whole Arkham region. You're
drinking it right now. Bottoms up!

67

CONCLUSION

67

END TITLE MUSIC.

ERSKINE BLACKWELL

You've been listening to H.P.
Lovecraft's "The Colour Out of
Space" brought to you by our
sponsor, Forhan's Toothpaste. Say
no to dental gloom - have a smile
that lights the room. Use Forhan's
toothpaste. Until next week, this
is Erskine Blackwell reminding you
to never go anywhere alone; if it
looks bad, don't look; and save the
last bullet for yourself.

ANNOUNCER

"The Colour Out of Space" was adapted for radio and produced by Sean Branney and Andrew Leman. Original music by Troy Sterling Nies. The Dark Adventure Ensemble featured: Leslie Baldwin, Aidan Branney, Sean Branney, Kacey Camp, Adele Colson, Mark Colson, Dan Conroy, Andrew Leman, Barry Lynch, David Pavao, Kevin Stidham, Sara van der Pol, Josh Thoenke, and Time Winters. Tune in next week for "The Curse of Lobelia's Tomb". Dark Adventure Radio Theatre is a production of the HPLHS Broadcasting Group, a subsidiary of HPLHS, Inc., copyright 1931...plus eighty-two.

Radio STATIC and fade out.