

DARK ADVENTURE RADIO THEATRE:

THE CURSE OF YIG

Written by

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Based on "The Curse of Yig" by H.P. Lovecraft & Zealia Bishop

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, featuring your host, Lester Mayhew. Today's episode: "The Curse of Yig" by Zealia Bishop with H.P. Lovecraft.

WIND whistles across the Oklahoma plains. Crickets.

LESTER MAYHEW

Since the days of the Garden of Eden, mankind has held the snake as a unique embodiment of primal fear. When a young settler crosses the wind-swept plains of Oklahoma with his wife, he's forced to confront his irrational terror of snakes. But local legends of an Indian snake god stoke his anxieties until they border on madness. Will he come to his senses, or will he discover the true nature of snakes to be far more frightening than anything he ever imagined?

But first, a word from our sponsor.

MUSIC.

LESTER MAYHEW (CONT'D)

Friends, did you know that a producer of successful musical comedies once stated that every laugh is worth one thousand dollars? How much does a grouch cost a man or woman who has it?

(MORE)

LESTER MAYHEW (CONT'D)

It costs them everything:
 happiness, contentment, friends. Do
 not carry around an indigestion
 grouch. More careful selection of
 food, proper mastication, and the
 chewing of Beckwith's Mentholated
 Sen-Sen Gum will go far toward
 keeping your digestion in good
 working order, and your laugh will
 spread sunshine and gain friends.
 And it's loaded with energy-
 boosting pure cane sugar, so kids
 love it too! Sanitary foil-wrapped
 packs with five sticks each fit
 neatly in your pocket. They're also
 great to hand out to trick-or-
 treaters, leaving the kiddies with
 sparkling clean teeth. Better than
 a trip to the dentist!

MUSIC.

ANNOUNCER

For fresher breath and a happier
 mood, chew Beckwith's Mentholated
 Sen-Sen Gum. Buy a pack today!

OMINOUS DART MUSIC.

LESTER MAYHEW

And now, Dark Adventure Radio
 Theatre presents "The Curse of
 Yig".

THEME MUSIC DIMINISHES.

2

THE ASYLUM

2

A quiet waiting room outside a doctor's office. KIMBALL is a
 scholar in his 30s. Mr. PALMER is the doctor's secretary.

KIMBALL

Excuse me. I'm here to see Dr.
 McNeill. I have an appointment.

PALMER

And you are...

KIMBALL

Mr. Kimball. Roger Kimball.

PALMER

Have a seat won't you? I'll let him know you're here.

He knocks on a door. A MUFFLED ACKNOWLEDGEMENT comes from the inside. He OPENS THE DOOR.

PALMER (CONT'D)

Dr. McNeill, your four o'clock is here.

DR. MCNEILL

Yes, yes. Here, you can return these to the patient files. And remind Dr. Lebow that we're running a psychiatric hospital here, not a carnival sideshow.

PALMER

(awkwardly)

Yes sir. Your visitor?

DR. MCNEILL

(composing himself)

Ah, right. Show him in.

PALMER

Yes, sir.

(back to Kimball)

If you'd follow me.

(ushering him in)

Dr. McNeill, this is Mr. Kimball.

Dr. McNeill would have retired years ago as the director of the Logan County Memorial Hospital had a successor presented himself. He's not unfriendly, but has a serious demeanor.

KIMBALL

Sorry, looks like I'm catching you at a bad--

DR. MCNEILL

(ushering him into his office)

No, no, it's a welcome break from the routine, I assure you. Would you care for a cup of coffee? Mr. Palmer can--

KIMBALL

Oh, yes, that would be lovely. Milk and sugar if you--

PALMER
Not a problem, sir.

DR. MCNEILL
Sit, sit.

They sit as Mr. Palmer CLOSES THE DOOR.

DR. MCNEILL (CONT'D)
So, what can I do for you, Mr.
Kimball?

KIMBALL
I... I had been hoping that I might
be able to talk with you about an
Indian legend. I'm an ethnographer--

DR. MCNEILL
Oh, yes, yes, yes. You wrote to me.
You're looking into the Yig legend,
eh?

KIMBALL
(handing over papers)
Yes, sir. I have here a letter of
introduction from Mr. Blakely, the
Indian agent to the Wichita. And,
um, other credentials...

DR. MCNEILL
Mm-hmm... Blakely, yes.
(looking through the
documents)
Mmmm.

KIMBALL
I've been finding it a challenge to
unearth specifics about this Yig
and the accompanying...

DR. MCNEILL
Ah. Yig - the half-human father of
serpents. Several ethnologists here
in Oklahoma have tried to connect
it with Quetzalcoatl, but I don't
think any of them have traced the
intermediate steps so well. You've
done remarkable work for a man as
young as you seem to be.

KIMBALL
Thank you, sir.

DR. MCNEILL

So, what exactly is it that I can do for you?

KIMBALL

Well, sir, I spoke to several people about this Yig legend - old timers, mostly. Your name came up in association - more than a few times.

DR. MCNEILL

I see.

KIMBALL

No one wanted to talk to me about it. Major Moore seemed to shudder at the idea. I have some quite ambiguous reports of a tribe called the Kitsawi and a harvest ritual honoring this Yig.

DR. MCNEILL

Do you?

KIMBALL

Reports say drums seemed to play day and night in some kind of--

The door opens as Mr. Palmer returns with coffee. He puts it down in front of them.

PALMER

Here you are, sir.

KIMBALL

Thank you.

PALMER

Dr. McNeill.

DR. MCNEILL

Thank you, Mr. Palmer. Would you please close the door on your way out?

PALMER

Yes, sir.

He goes out and the door CLOSES.

KIMBALL

So, as I said, your name kept coming up.

(MORE)

KIMBALL (CONT'D)

(cautiously)

And references to "a terrible relic" that you had.

DR. MCNEILL

(with a sigh)

I don't suppose old Major Moore or any of the others told you what it is I have here?

KIMBALL

No, sir.

DR. MCNEILL

They don't like to talk about it, and neither do I. It's very tragic and very horrible, but that is all. Nothing supernatural about it.

KIMBALL

So there is something you can show me?

DR. MCNEILL

There is.

(taking a deep breath)

There's a story about it that I'll tell you after you see it - a challenging and sad story. It shows the potency that belief has over some people. I'll admit there are times when I've felt a shiver that's more than physical, but in daylight I set all that down to nerves. I'm not a young fellow any more!

KIMBALL

Oh, no sir--

DR. MCNEILL

To come to the point, the thing I have is what you might call a victim of Yig's curse - a physically living victim.

KIMBALL

What? You mean a--

DR. MCNEILL

We don't let the bulk of the nurses see it, although most of them have probably heard rumors that it's here.

(MORE)

DR. MCNEILL (CONT'D)

There are just two steady old chaps whom I let feed it and clean out its quarters – used to be three, but good old Stevens passed on a few years ago. I suppose I'll have to break in a new group pretty soon; for the thing doesn't seem to age or change much, and we old boys can't last forever.

KIMBALL

(gobsmacked)

So this relic, it's a patient here?

DR. MCNEILL

Hm. I'm not sure that "patient" is quite the right word. We do our best to provide care, but sometimes one finds cases that are simply beyond standard medicine. Did you notice that single ground-glass basement window over in the east wing when you came up the drive?

KIMBALL

I can't say I did.

DR. MCNEILL

Mmm. That's where it is. I'll take you there. Suppose there's no point in procrastinating.

He rises and opens the door.

DR. MCNEILL (CONT'D)

After you...

Transition MUSIC takes us through the asylum.

3

THE CURSE

3

Their FOOTSTEPS ECHO as they move down a deserted hall.

DR. MCNEILL

It's just up ahead. If I may make a suggestion, you needn't make any comment. Just look through the moveable panel in the door. When you're done, close the panel. Then I'll tell you the story, well, as much as I've been able to piece together. Here it is. Room B 116.

BANGING ON METAL DOOR

DR. MCNEILL (CONT'D)
Sometimes that'll rouse it.

Kimball SNIFFS then takes a DEEP BREATH and then SLIDES OPEN THE PANEL.

Eerie MUSIC.

Pause and then a faint HISS.

Kimball GASPS and quick SHUTS THE PANEL and staggers back a step or two.

DR. MCNEILL (CONT'D)
(gently)
Easy there.

KIMBALL
(with great difficulty)
What... is that?

DR. MCNEILL
Tell me what exactly you saw. Be as specific as you can.

KIMBALL
At first I didn't see anything, there was just that smell. Then, something moved on the straw floor. It was... it was like a human being, lying on its belly. But... it had no clothes. Why do you--

DR. MCNEILL
We've tried any number of times. Nothing takes.

KIMBALL
No hair, either. Its back seemed very... rough, or... or...

DR. MCNEILL
Squamous?

KIMBALL
Is that the word? Sort of scaly? Around the shoulders it was speckled and brownish. The head seemed rather flat. And then... it looked up at me... beady little black eyes. They fastened themselves on me.

DR. MCNEILL
Yes. It does that.

KIMBALL
What... what is it?

DR. MCNEILL
Come with me, back to my office.
I'll do my best to explain it to
you.

Their FOOTSTEPS ECHO down the hall. Transition MUSIC.

4 THE STORY

4

DR. MCNEILL
Palmer, clear away the coffee,
won't you? I think Mr. Kimball has
had enough stimulation.

PALMER
(concerned)
Oh, you showed him...

DR. MCNEILL
And that'll be all for today, Mr.
Palmer.

PALMER
Yes, sir.

He OPENS THE DOOR to his office and they enter.

DR. MCNEILL
Have a seat in the easy chair.

Various FOOTSTEPS. DISH CLINKING.

KIMBALL
(shaken)
Do you mind if I smoke, Doctor?

DR. MCNEILL
I recommend it. Here, have a Fleurs
d'Lys. Calm your nerves.

Spark of a LIGHTER and DRAG on a cigarette as Palmer leaves
and CLOSES THE DOOR.

DR. MCNEILL (CONT'D)
Where to begin? Well, you've come
to know about Yig. Yes, yes, yes.
(MORE)

DR. MCNEILL (CONT'D)

Snake-god of the older, now-extinct plains tribes. You've probably concluded that it's the primal source of the Aztec Quetzalcoatl or the Mayan god Kulkulcan.

Kimball MUMBLES affirmatively.

DR. MCNEILL (CONT'D)

The few accounts we have describe it as a semi-anthropomorphic being of a capricious nature. Never wholly evil, mind you, and actually often well disposed towards those who paid him and his children proper respect.

KIMBALL

Yes, that's in line with my research.

DR. MCNEILL

Now here in Oklahoma, the legends of the Kitsawi say in the autumn he becomes abnormally ravenous. August through October there was a time when drums would be pounding week-in and week-out in the Pawnee, Wichita and Caddo country. You know the area?

KIMBALL

Indeed. I've been doing field work out that way the last few months.

He removes an object from his desk drawer.

DR. MCNEILL

You ever see one of these?

KIMBALL

Looks a bit like an Aztec death whistle.

DR. MCNEILL

It does. But this was made by a Kitsawi medicine man. It's made to keep Yig's children - snakes - at bay so no one could accidentally hurt one.

KIMBALL

Interesting. To protect the snakes from people, not the people from the snakes?

DR. MCNEILL

Exactly. The Kitsawi believed it best if the snakes could be avoided. There was an intense fear of Yig extracting vengeance on any who scorned him or hurt his children. It's said that Yig would torture his victim, before turning him into a spotted snake.

KIMBALL

(quite uneasy)

This is the kind of information that I've been looking for, but until now no one's been willing to tell me anything about Yig.

DR. MCNEILL

In the old days of the Indian Territory, Yig wasn't the secret it is now. But the Kitsawi... they're one of those tribes that hasn't thrived since contact with Europeans. A century ago their legends and autumn ceremonies were more widely known than they are now.

KIMBALL

So what changed?

DR. MCNEILL

Everything changed with the land-rush days of '89. Some extraordinary incidents were rumoured, and then substantiated, by what seemed to be hideously tangible proofs.

KIMBALL

I don't follow.

DR. MCNEILL

The Kitsawi said that the new white men did not know how to get on with Yig, and afterward the settlers came to take that theory at face value.

(MORE)

DR. MCNEILL (CONT'D)

Nowadays no old-timer in central Oklahoma can be induced to breathe a word about the snake-god except in vague hints.

KIMBALL

(warmly)

No offense, sir, but you seem to be embracing this tradition of "vague hints".

DR. MCNEILL

I apologize. You see, the only truly authenticated horror had been a thing of pitiful tragedy rather than of bewitchment.

KIMBALL

Are you talking about the thing we saw in the--

DR. MCNEILL

(clearing his throat)

It began when Walker Davis and his wife Audrey left Arkansas to settle in the newly opened public lands in the spring of 1889. They headed into the country of the Wichitas - north of the Wichita River, in what is at present Caddo County. There is a small village called Binger there now.

KIMBALL

Ah, yes, I've been there. There's a large Indian mound not far from the town.

DR. MCNEILL

Yes, yes there is. Clearly you can picture the scene.

Transition MUSIC takes us back in time to April 1889.

5

DUSTY TRAIL

5

A covered wagon CREAKS and BOUNCES over the rough trail as the MULES pull it across the dusty Oklahoma plains.

AUDREY

Yer gonna have to have a look at Maisy's left hoof. She gonna throw that shoe.

Their dog, WOLF, starts BARKING UP A STORM.

WALKER

Yealright, I'll give it a gander
when we camp fer the night. Hush
you!

Wolf BARKS more.

AUDREY

He must smell something. Wait,
what's that?

WALKER

What?

AUDREY

Way out yonder. Reckon it's another
wagon?

WALKER

Nah, it's a... well, yerp, I reckon
yer right. Wagon and a team.

AUDREY

They look to be stopped. Wonder if
they need help.

Walker WHISTLES as loud as he can, hoping to attract their
attention.

WALKER

Hallooo!

AUDREY

I think I see someone. Maybe they
heared ye.

WALKER

(snapping the reins)
C'mon, heyap!

MUSIC TRANSITION. The mules pick up their pace and the wagon
moves a bit faster.

6

SETTLERS MEET

6

The Walkers' wagon approaches the other wagon.

WALKER

Audrey, lookie there - them is--

AUDREY

Negroes.

WALKER

What are they doing here?

AUDREY

Well, let's go and talk to 'em.

WALKER

Oh, I don't know about that....

AUDREY

They seen us now. 'sides, talkin' to somebody besides you'd be a blessin'.

JOE

(still a little ways off)
Howdy there!

WALKER

Eh... howdy.

AUDREY

Howdy!

SALLY

Ain't you a welcome sight!

WALKER

Y'all are... settlers too?

JOE

Yassir, we're Boomers! I figure if President Harrison says, "Y'all can settle on free land if you gets yourselves out to Oklahoma" - that's about as good a deal as we's ever like to see.

WALKER

One hunnert-n-sixty acres. Figure we oughter be able to make sumthin' outta that.

JOE

Mighty fine country out here. Soil looks good.

WALKER

That it do. We seen a lotter other settlers when we first set out.

(MORE)

WALKER (CONT'D)

Once we broke 'way from the crowd,
we aint hardly seen nobody out this
way.

JOE

Pleased to make yer 'quaintance.
I'm Joe Compton. My wife, Sally.

WALKER

Walker Davis. My wife, Audrey.

SALLY

How'd you do?

AUDREY

A pleasure.

JOE

You look a little surprised there.

WALKER

We just aint used to seein'...

JOE

Colored folks?

AUDREY

No, no...

SALLY

(with good humor)
Aw, come on now--

AUDREY

Well, yes, you're the first we've
seen since we left Arkansas.

JOE

Arkansas? That's where we came
from!

AUDREY

Did you now?

SALLY

Yes, ma'am, up above Jonesboro. We
lived there a spell after Joe here
got out of the service.

WALKER

Saw your Cavalry jacket there. Oh!
You must be one of them... what
they call 'em, Aud?

SALLY
Buffalo Soldiers?

JOE
(proud)
Yes, ma'am. 9th Cavalry.

WALKER
Well don't that beat all! Black
fellers fightin' Red fellers. You
see action against 'em?

JOE
(clearly uncomfortable)
Yes, sir, I did.

Pause.

SALLY
Joe don't like to talk a lot about
the Indian wars.

AUDREY
'Course not.

SALLY
He won't even tell me.

JOE
Hush now, woman. Them days is
behind me.

WALKER
We seen a few Indians out this way
but they all seem pretty nice.
Almost like reg'lar folks.

JOE
Me and Sally here, we was ready for
somewhere new.

AUDREY
Us too.

JOE
Folks is sayin' there's places in
Oklahoma where Black folks can live
without no one payin' no mind to
them being Black. There's whole
towns for us! Tullahassee and Red
Bird and Langston.

WALKER
Well how about that?

AUDREY

Can't figger as it matters to us. A good neighbor's a good neighbor.

JOE

I like the sound of that. We're ready to have our own genuine Oklahoma homestead. And we got our first young'un on the way.

WALKER

'Gratulations.

AUDREY

That's wonderful. When are you due?

SALLY

Round about the fourth of July.

Wolf WHINES a little hoping to get some attention.

AUDREY

Oh don't pay him no mind. His name's Wolf.

SALLY

(scratching him)

Wolf? Are you a sweet old fella?

WALKER

The trail been treating y'alright?

JOE

Could be worse.

SALLY

I'll be happy when we get there. How about you?

WALKER

Well, ol' Maisy here's about to throw a--

Walker SCREAMS in abject fear. Joe draws his revolver. ALL AD LIB PANIC.

WALKER (CONT'D)

Snake! There!

JOE

(quickly drawing a pistol)

Where?

(relaxing)

(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)

Easy there, that's just a stick.
See?

He KICKS the stick with his boot.

JOE (CONT'D)

See? Nothin' to be 'fraid of.

Walker LAUGHS. Once he laughs, the others join in.

WALKER

Sorry... I just, uh...

SALLY

Never you mind, Walker. Joe, put
that gun away.

JOE

Yes, ma'am.

AUDREY

Suns gettin' low. Reckon we oughter
make camp, get a fire goin'.

JOE

It's about that time.

WALKER

Aud, you reckon we might want to
head on 'nother--

AUDREY

No I don't. Right here'll do me
fine.

(enjoying the novelty)

Mr. and Mrs. Compton, would care to
join us for supper tonight?

SALLY

(shocked)

Well... I... um, Joe?

JOE

Right kind of you to offer. We'd
like that very much.

MUSIC, TRANSITIONING TO A SINGLE HARMONICA.

7

DINNER PARTY

7

The last FORKS GRAZE ACROSS TIN PLATES. A fire CRACKLES. Joe
finishes playing a SONG ON HIS HARMONICA.

AUDREY

That were real nice, Joe.

JOE

Thank you, ma'am. And Mrs. Davis, we sure did appreciate your meal.

AUDREY

I'll just be glad when we can build ourselves a cabin and I can cook in a kitchen again.

SALLY

Mmmm... an oven to bake some bread in...

WALKER

Look here, I just wanted to say I were sorry again for givin' y'all a start today. I got this thing 'bout snakes. Had it ever since I were young. When I was a wee fella my mammy took me to the county fair and this was this old Indian woman, a Cherokee I think she was, and she'd tell you your future for a penny. So I give her my penny and she grabbed me with these shrivelly ol' hands and looks me right in the eyes. She were quiet a spell and then she says, "You afraid of snakes, boy?" I couldn't say nothin' so I jest nodded. "That's good" she says so I asks "Why's that?" She looks at me real hard and then says, "It's a snake that's gonna bring about yer end". I were jest a little critter real scared. She says to me, "Don't cry little 'possum - somethin' gotta come fer us all. The Great Spirit gives everyone a fate!" That's what she said. I guess I ain't never quite got that outta my head.

AUDREY

I ain't never heard of no one as 'fraid a snakes as Walker.

SALLY

I figure that Indian lady musta got inside his head. Maybe she done magic on 'im.

WALKER

I dunno. My mammy said the Indians
got their own gods - lots of 'em.
Not like us with jest one big one.

JOE

(his recollection darkens
his mood a bit)

That's true! When I was in the
army, we had this fella who was a
scout and translator for us. Walks
in the Wind was his name. He'd
traveled 'mong lotsa that tribes
and knew their different talk and
different ways. He knew all about
Indian gods. I remember him talking
about a tribe that had one for jest
about everything - a corn god, a
rain god, a buffalo god, and they
even had a snake god.

WALKER

(rapt)
You don't say!

JOE

Yep, I remember like it was
yesterday - snake god's name was
Yig. They believed snakes was his
children. "Ol' Yig, he's a
trickster and vengeful".

WALKER

Whassat mean?

SALLY

Means if you do him wrong, he's
gonna getcha.

WALKER

Yeah?

JOE

This tribe wouldn't never hurt no
snakes. They didn't want to make
Yig mad - bring down his curse.

WALKER

(a bit stunned)
Yig... Which kinda Indians was
these that worship him?

JOE

Mm, can't recall the name. But they was from somewhere out here in the territories.

SALLY

You hush up, Joe. Gonna scare poor Walker here to death. Nothin' for you to fear this time of year. Snakes is too cold to bother no one now.

WALKER

(unconvinced)

Yeah. Yeah, that's right.

Transition MUSIC.

8 NARRATION 1

8

DR. MCNEILL

The settlers parted ways the following morning. Walker put a new shoe on the mule Maisy, and soon their wagon moved on into Kickapoo country.

9 THE BROOD

9

The wagon CLANKS and PLODS along the trail. Strong WIND.

AUDREY

Time we picked a spot to camp for the night, Walker. The wind's a sweepin' down the plain.

WALKER

Yerp.

AUDREY

Looks sheltered enough over t'other side of that gully.

WALKER

Ye mad, woman? We aint gonna camp near them rocks. Everyone knows--

AUDREY

(aping him)

"Snakes come out on the rocks to warm themselves."

WALKER
 (sheepishly)
 Well they do.

AUDREY
 Enough, Walker! Pull yerself
 together. You damned near scared
 that Kickapoo trader half to death
 today.

WALKER
 I said I were sorry.

AUDREY
 "That ain't no Indian, it's Yig!
 It's Yig in his human form!"

WALKER
 He made me feel all nervy.

AUDREY
 That feller though you was soft in
 the head. We're camping by the
 rocks.
 (to the mules)
 Hey-ya!

WALKER
 I... I'm a-gonna sleep up here in
 the wagon.

AUDREY
 Are you now? Suit yourself. Me and
 Wolf'll sleep on the bedroll. The
 dog's got more common sense than
 you do.
 (to the mules)
 Whoa now!

The wagon STOPS and the MULES BRAY and SNUFFLE.

AUDREY (CONT'D)
 You tie off the team, I'll get a
 fire going. Hand me the rifle.

Walker does.

AUDREY (CONT'D)
 Come on, Wolf. Let's gather up some
 wood.

In the background, Walker talks to the mules and ties them
 off. He unloads some gear from the wagon. We hear Audrey and
 Wolf walking into the brush. Wolf SNIFFS and then bolts off.

AUDREY (CONT'D)
 Wolf! Gol-durnit, dog, what are you
 after?

MUSIC. WOLF BARKS at something he doesn't like. Audrey moves
 up onto the rocks.

AUDREY (CONT'D)
 Whatcha got there, boy? Git back,
 now.

We hear the soft sound of LOTS OF SLITHERING SNAKES. Wolf
 SNARLS.

AUDREY (CONT'D)
 Shhh, get back now, Wolf. Them's
 baby rattlers, a whole mess of 'em.
 Lordy! No you don't!

Audrey SMASHES the baby snakes to death with the butt of the
 rifle. MUSIC. She finishes, BREATHING HARD. A cold WIND picks
 up across the prairie.

AUDREY (CONT'D)
 (under her breath)
 It's all right, Wolf. We got 'em
 all. Thank ye Jesus that Walker
 weren't here to see this.

WALKER
 (off)
 Whatcha doin' up there, Aud?

AUDREY
 (scraping snake remains off
 of the rifle)
 Never you mind. Ain't no need fer
 ye to come up here. Walker!

He hurries up to her, sees the mess and GASPS.

AUDREY (CONT'D)
 Nothin' fer you to be 'fraid of.
 They're dead now.

WALKER
 (horrified)
 Audrey, them's was Yig's chillen!

AUDREY
 A brood of baby rattlers, Walker.
 That's all 'twere. Set yerself down
 now, yer white as a ghost.

WALKER

Gawd knows what ye done to
yourself, gal, a-smashin' a hull
brood o' Yig's chillen. He'll git
ye, sure, sooner or later, unlesse
I kin buy a charm offen some o' the
Indian medicine-men. He'll git ye,
Aud, as sure's they's a Gawd in
heaven – he'll come outa the night
and turn ye into a crawlin' spotted
snake!

Transition MUSIC.

10 NARRATION 2

10

KIMBALL

The poor, superstitious man.

DR. MCNEILL

(narrating)

Indeed. The incident weighed heavy
on the Davises through the rest of
their journey. Walker kept after
her with reproofs and prophecies of
her impending doom. Eventually they
crossed the Canadian River and soon
afterward met with the first of the
real plains Indians they had seen –
a party of the Wichita tribe.
Walker wasted no time in seeking
the advice of a man named Gray
Eagle outside of one of the domed
reed huts of the Wichita.

11 THE CHARM

11

Gray Eagle is a Wichita elder in his 50s.

WALKER

'Scuse me, that there feller at the
tradin' post told me you were
Mister Grey Eagle.

GRAY EAGLE

Yes.

WALKER

Um, well... That feller said you
had medicine to help with Indian
problems.

(pause)

(MORE)

WALKER (CONT'D)

See, I gots a powerful fear a snakes and I heard y'all got a snake god. And I thought maybe you could give me some kind of charm or spell or something so no snakes'll come after me ner my wife, Audrey, cause if there's one thing I just can't abide it a creepin' serpent.

GRAY EAGLE

Hmmm.

WALKER

Please, sir. I can pay - I got cash money.

GRAY EAGLE

Hmmm. Sit down.

WALKER

What, right here? On the ground?

GRAY EAGLE

Sit.

They do.

WALKER

So, you can help me?

GRAY EAGLE

(with a patient sigh)

I can teach you. I know a song - it will bring you good fortune.

WALKER

But what about Yig. Will it keep him away from me?

GRAY EAGLE

Yig? The old snake god. I have not heard his name spoken in many years.

WALKER

No? I weren't s'posed ter say his name?

GRAY EAGLE

No, no. Yig is not a god of my people. Yig is a god of the Kitsawi.

WALKER

What's that?

GRAY EAGLE

In the time of my grandfather the Kitsawi was a small tribe. Their ways were not like the ways of my people.

WALKER

Yer people are the Wichita?

GRAY EAGLE

The white settlers call us Wichita. We call ourselves Kitikiti'sh.

WALKER

Kiki-tiki-ish?

GRAY EAGLE

(giving up)

Kiti-- hmmm. Never mind.

WALKER

Whassat mean?

GRAY EAGLE

The Raccoon-Eyed people.

WALKER

Oh, I can see that. Y'all got tattoos 'round yer--

GRAY EAGLE

The Kitsawi believed in the old gods who came from the stars. Gods who were dead but still dreamed. Yig was such a god.

WALKER

An' what'd happen if you made Yig mad an if he cursed ye?

GRAY EAGLE

The sun has set on the days of the Kitsawi. So too has the sun set on the time of Yig. But I will teach you a song of the Great Spirit. A song to keep you safe from the sleeping gods and their children. One dollar.

WALKER

That sounds right fair to me.

Grey Eagle TAPS OUT A RHYTHM on the ground and begins to SING. MUSIC TRANSITION PICKS UP GREY EAGLE'S RHYTHM AND RUNS WITH IT.

12

NARRATION 3

12

DR. MCNEILL

Grey Eagle taught Walker a song, ostensibly as protection from the curse.

KIMBALL

I'm not surprised. Singing is very important to the Wichita - sacred songs to bring on the rain, songs to ensure a good hunt, that sort of thing. They'd been handed down through the generations for so long that even the Wichita themselves don't know exactly what the words in the songs mean.

DR. MCNEILL

Fascinating.

KIMBALL

In fact, the Wichita don't claim to "compose" any of their songs. They say the songs exist, like living things, and they come to the singer of their own accord.

DR. MCNEILL

Hmm. Well, whatever Grey Eagle taught him, it seems to have helped ease Walker's mind. Powerful thing, the placebo effect. Less than a week after that, the Davises reached their destination and soon traced the boundaries of their homestead. Walker began the spring plowing at once, waiting until seeds were in the ground before beginning work on building a cabin. It was hard work, but within a few months, crops were growing and they could enjoy their first meal cooked in the wide-chimneyed fireplace of their newly finished cabin.

SHORT MUSIC TRANSITION.

A fire CRACKLES in the large fireplace of the Davises' newly completed cabin. Walker pulls the CORK from a bottle of whiskey.

WALKER

Well, missus, tonight we celebrate. Cabin's finally done and you ain't need to cook over a fire outtadoors no more.

She SCOOPS a stew into a bowl. He POURS them both cups of whiskey.

AUDREY

Amen to that. You done a fine job here, Walker.

WALKER

I tell you, I couldn't have done it half so soon iffen tweren't for Joe Compton helping me haul in the timber.

AUDREY

So funny, we meet them out in the middle of nowhere and they end up being our neighbors.

WALKER

I reckon he knows good land when he sees it. He traveled all over being one of them Buffalo Soldiers.

AUDREY

Well you done him a good turn too, helpin' haul the timber for him and Sally's house.

WALKER

It's providence, that what it is, missus.

(giving her a cup)

Here you go. It's the last of our whiskey but I figger tonight we celebrate.

They CLANK the tin cups together, DRINK and SIGH contentedly.

WALKER (CONT'D)

Old Wolf here, he sure looks mighty content in front of the fireplace.

AUDREY

Lazy ol' thing. Good heat comin'
off it.

WALKER

Yerp.

AUDREY

Oughter keep off the chill come
winter time. An' the flat stone
floor, oughter keep us cool in the
summer.

WALKER

A reg'lar fancy hotel. Here, give
us a kiss, Audrey.

AUDREY

I ain't gonna kiss you! You bring
in a bucket from the well and give
that face a yers good warsh...
maybe then we'll talk.

WALKER

A farm this size, gonna take a big
family to work it. Need a whole
heap o' young-uns. Reckon we'd best
get started on that.

AUDREY

(playful)

Go warsh, you, and then we'll see.

Their LAUGHTER fades into TRANSITION MUSIC.

14 NARRATION 4

14

DR. MCNEILL

Later in the summer Sally Compton
paid a visit to the Davis farm.

15 CHEWING THE FAT

15

Audrey is outside, tending to her garden as Sally comes
RIDING up on horseback.

AUDREY

Afternoon, Sally.

SALLY

Hey there!

She DISMOUNTS and ties her horse to a hitching post.

AUDREY

You brung that baby over?

SALLY

Sure did. Clyde, say hello to Missus Davis.

AUDREY

He's beautiful. Mmmm, I could just eat him up. Hi, Clyde. Hi, Sweetness.

SALLY

Oh, he likes you. I think he's already sick to death of spending time with me.

AUDREY

I bet he adores his momma.

SALLY

Ain't it 'bout time you and Walker started raisin' some young-uns?

AUDREY

It ain't been for lack of tryin', Sally. Never seems to take.

SALLY

You just stick with it and the good Lord'll bless you - you'll see.

AUDREY

Mmm. It's hot - you all want some water?

SALLY

Naw, I'm alright. Bit of a breeze picking up.

AUDREY

Mm-hmm. Sure smells sweet when the wind comes right behind the rain.

SALLY

You figure I could trouble you for some sugar? Joe'll be making a trip up to El Reno on Tuesday. I can pay you back then.

AUDREY

Don't you worry about it. What's mine's yours.

SALLY

Walker's not about?

AUDREY

He ain't far. Shh, just listen.

At first we hear only the WIND, but slowly under it fades up the sound of Walker FAINTLY MUMBLING HIS ANTI-YIG SONG far off in the distance.

SALLY

What's that he's singing?

AUDREY

Oh, he paid some Indian to teach him this song to scare off snakes.

SALLY

Does it work?

AUDREY

Who can say? Walker's singin' would scare the Good Lord himself. Still, I coulda strangled your Joe fer bringin' up that Indian god, Yig. Walker's obsessed about Yig.

SALLY

Sorry.

AUDREY

Man's got puddin' 'tween his ears.

SALLY

Well, way I sees it, no snake's bit him yet, has it?

AUDREY

Nope.

SALLY

Then I guess it must be working!

They LAUGH.

SALLY (CONT'D)

Oh, speaking of snakes, I did hear the most terrible story...

AUDREY

Well don't tell it to Walker.

SALLY

You bet your life I won't. You know Jenny Rigby, on the farm down below the crook in the river? She'd been to see her cousin in Scott County and her cousin told her of this fella who was clearnin' a stump. Well, he pries the thing up and then loses his footing and he falls. Well he lands smack on top of a whole hoard o' rattlers. They lit into him and bit him all over. Musta been bit fifty times.

AUDREY

Dear lord...

SALLY

By the time they found him, all the poison made his body swell up so big... he... he popped.

AUDREY

He didn't...

SALLY

Just busted right open. That's what Jenny's cousin told her.

AUDREY

Oh, that's horrible. Please, don't say nothing to Walker 'bout that. Ask your Joe not to say nothin' neither.

SALLY

My lips are sealed.

AUDREY

Come on inside, let me get you that sugar.

Transition MUSIC.

16 NARRATION 5

16

DR. MCNEILL

In August, Walker made the trip to Newcastle, the nearest town, where he sought out its hastily constructed trading post.

17 TRADIN' POST

17

Classic old west sounds of BOOTS ON WOOD PLANKS and a SWINGING DOOR. Its proprietor greets him with a warm drawl.

LAFAYETTE

Howdy there.

WALKER

Howdy.

LAFAYETTE

Don't know you - I'm Lafayette Smith. This here's my place.

WALKER

Walker Davis. Good to know you. Lafayette - that a foreign name?

LAFAYETTE

French.

WALKER

Oh.

LAFAYETTE

The name's French but I was born in Virginia. My mother had a bit of a crush on the Marquis de Lafayette ever since she saw him speak in Charlotte back in 1830. Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette. That's his full name.

WALKER

How 'bout that?

LAFAYETTE

Davis. You on the place out past the Comptons?

WALKER

That I am. Me and my missus, Audrey.

LAFAYETTE
 Came out in the boom?

WALKER
 Yassir.

LAFAYETTE
 How y'all making out there?

WALKER
 Cabin's up. Crops in the ground.
 Don't reckon I should complain.

LAFAYETTE
 (good natured)
 'Spose not. What can I get for you?

WALKER
 The missus writ up a list so as I
 won't forget.

LAFAYETTE
 (chuckling)
 Smart woman. Let me see here...
 Yeah, I got all this, 'cept the ten
 penny nails. Sold the last batch to
 some Indians this morning.

WALKER
 Didge? I haven't seen any Wichitas
 'round here.

LAFAYETTE
 They ain't Wichitas. These folks is
 called the Kitsawi. They live up
 off the north fork of--

MUSIC PUNCTUATION.

WALKER
 Wait, what tribe are they?

LAFAYETTE
 Kitsawi - a small tribe. Can't be
 more than a couple dozen of 'em.
 You all right?

WALKER
 (breathless)
 Yep. Eh, maybe I'll come back for
 my order. Where'd you say these
 Kitsawi lived?

Ominous transition MUSIC.

18 NARRATION 5.5

18

DR. MCNEILL

Walker rode up the river to where he saw a small group of dome shaped huts. An old woman stood alone at the end of the path.

19 DAWN CROW

19

Dawn Crow is an elderly Kitsawi woman.

DAWN CROW

I knew you would come.

WALKER

Me? Why?

DAWN CROW

You've been looking for me.

WALKER

I don't... I mean, I just heard about--

DAWN CROW

You bear his mark. Faint, but I can see it.

WALKER

Whose mark?

DAWN CROW

Yig.

MUSIC hit.

WALKER

I do?

DAWN CROW

You do.

WALKER

It weren't my fault! I weren't even there! My wife, this spring, she done killed a whole brood of baby rattlers.

DAWN CROW

(genuinely troubled)
Yig's children.

WALKER

If'n I got Yig's mark, my Audrey
must have it twice as bad.

DAWN CROW

Yig is a great god. His memory is
long - he does not forget. Men, we
are the children of Tiráwa, but
snakes, they are the children of
Yig.

(pause)

It is bad that your wife has killed
his children.

WALKER

I know but now it's too late. What
can I do?

DAWN CROW

Give yourself to Yig in offering.

WALKER

Give myself? What... you mean like
kill myself off?

DAWN CROW

Mmm.

WALKER

Um, ain't there nothing else?

DAWN CROW

Yig will take his revenge.

WALKER

No....

DAWN CROW

The time of the harvest comes.

WALKER

Gray Eagle, he's a Wichita, um,
them raccoon-eyed people, he taught
me a charm to...

DAWN CROW

Yig is wise to the ways of men.

WALKER

Ah no...

DAWN CROW

The children of Yig will be hungry.
The Kitsawi, we give sacrifices,
dance and drum to keep Yig away. We
ask Tiráwa to protect us, his
children and the children of Yig.

WALKER

(meek)

Could you ask this Tiráwa to
protect us too?

DAWN CROW

Tiráwa does not change a man's
fate. Yig is a great god - he does
not forget things.

MUSIC.

20 NARRATION 6

20

KIMBALL

(excited)

So the Kitsawi were real. And this
curse, it really was part of their
beliefs. I've been trying for years
to find corroborating evidence of
this Yig legend.

DR. MCNEILL

Shall I continue then?

KIMBALL

Please!

DR. MCNEILL

As summer gave way to fall, Walker
and Audrey worked fiercely to
gather their harvest and prepare
for the winter that was to come.
Maybe out of habit, Walker
continued to chant Grey Eagle's
song.

21 THOSE DAMNED DRUMS

21

A hot dry WIND blows over the Davis farm. Over the course of
the scenes, the sound of VERY DISTANT DRUMS fades in. Audrey
is hard at work and doesn't hear Walker approach.

WALKER

Uw ah na'-i'-asa' nu-ka'.

AUDREY
(jumpy)
For godsake, Walker!

WALKER
What?

AUDREY
Stop it with that gibberin'.

WALKER
Taint a-gibberin'. I'm trying to
appease Yig fer what YOU done to
his chillun.

AUDREY
Enough already! You, this heat, the
wind, those drums... I have had it.
I'm fed up to here.

WALKER
You hear drums?

AUDREY
You'd hear 'em if you weren't doing
that Indian mutterin' all the time.

Pause. DISTANT DRUMMING carries in the wind.

WALKER
Them's the drums that keep Yig
away. The old Kitsawi woman said
so.

AUDREY
Hush-up about you and yer damned
Yig!

WALKER
That ain't no good way to talk
about a god. Yig is--

AUDREY
One more word about Yig and I'm
gonna knock you all the way to
Kansas.

WALKER
All right, all right... sheesh.
(pause, then an
appeasement)
I brung water in from the well.

AUDREY
Set the pail in the kitchen.

He goes and starts in with his CHANT under his breath.

AUDREY (CONT'D)
And no more of that Indian chantin!

WALKER
(off)
Yes, dear. Hey, Aud...?

AUDREY
What?

He comes back outside where she is.

WALKER
I been thinking...

AUDREY
That's a change for ye.

WALKER
Be nice now. I been thinkin', Aud,
maybe it's high time we otter
celebrate.

AUDREY
Celebrate?

WALKER
Yeah. The house is built, well's
dug, the crops is in... We gone
from livin' in that ole wagon to
havin' a real home.

AUDREY
You mean like... fun?

WALKER
Well...

AUDREY
What's the date?

WALKER
It'll be November come Sunday.

AUDREY
Well that's it then!

WALKER
What?

AUDREY

Halloween's a comin'. I say we
throw ourselves a Halloween party.

WALKER

Halloween?

AUDREY

We invite Joe and Sally and folks
from the farms all 'round over.
Young 'uns can put on guises - I'll
make soul-cakes. You'll spit-roast
a pig and folks can bring pot-luck.

WALKER

Well... I s'pose.

AUDREY

Maybe even some music!

WALKER

(pause)

Yeah, I guess, iffen ye like.

AUDREY

If I like? Walker Davis, I figure
this is about the best danged idear
you ever had.

She gives him a BIG WET KISS and they LAUGH!

Transition MUSIC.

22 NARRATION 7

22

DR. MCNEILL

Reports said the weather turned
cold, damp and windy on October
31st. But Walker still managed to
keep a pit burning as neighbors
arrived for the festivities.

23 GUISING

23

There's a lot going on at the Davis homestead. The CRACKLE of
a big fire. Neighbors MILL and GOSSIP. Children RUN and
LAUGH. Horses NEIGH and wagons CREAK. COLD WIND blows outside
and a discerning ear will pick up the sound of distant DRUMS
carried on it. The mood is decidedly festive. Sally's been
drinking and we catch her mid-joke.

SALLY

... so I says "with kernels like that, I'd hate to see the size of his cob"!

Audrey LAUGHS along with Sally.

AUDREY

Oh, my gracious. Here Sally, have some more punch.

She FILLS Sally's glass.

JENNIE

(hollers from afar)
Audrey, the little 'uns is ready!

AUDREY

(hollerin' back)
I got the soul cakes. Bring 'em on around, Jennie.
(to the adults)
Everyone! The children are gonna come 'round and show their Halloween guises.

The grown-ups AD LIB some responses to see the parade. Wolf BARKS at the kids in costume.

WALKER

Hush now, you ol' thing. This is jest the chillen.

AUDREY

Oh, Sarah Mae, aren't you the scariest witch I ever done seen? Here's your soul cake.

EMMA JEAN

Thankee, ma'am. But I'm Emma Jean. That's Sarah Mae.

AUDREY

Right, Sarah Mae, I see you've got a crown. Who--

SARAH MAE

(an imperious 8 year old)
I am Queen Victoria.

The ADULTS LAUGH.

AUDREY
 (giving a treat)
 Here's your soul cake, your
 majesty.

Next up is the very wee Jimmy Jack.

AUDREY (CONT'D)
 Oh, and what are you, darlin'? Are
 you a kitty cat?

JIMMY JACK
 (indignant)
 I'm a mountain lion!
 (roars!)

More LAUGHTER.

SALLY
 Quick, Audrey, throw that cougar a
 soul cake!

AUDREY
 Oh, I can't be sure now, but look
 at you five! You know the Rigbys
 have five children but all I see
 here is...
 (working at it)
 a bunny rabbit, the devil,
 President Lincoln... might you be
 Captain Nemo?
 (a child laughs at the
 recognition)
 and... um, what are you, honey?

DELBERT
 I'm Flap. A stack of flapjacks!

BIG JIM BARROW
 Quick, somebody get the butter!

Even more LAUGHTER! AD LIB SETTLER PARTYING!

DR. MCNEILL
 Soon all the neighbors' children
 had paraded past and the weary
 homesteaders had a night to kick up
 their heels!

The settlers live it up. The occasional child RUNS past. LAUGHTER, HOOTS and HOLLERS. SEAMUS and his wife MAGGIE are a bit older than the other settler adults and carry the sound of their native Ireland.

LAFAYETTE

Sure is nice t'see the wee ones havin' a good time, Joe.

JOE

Yassir. Say, whatcha got in that there valise, Lafeyette?

LAFAYETTE

Ain't no valise - this here's a fiddle case.

He opens it up and takes it out.

JOE

A fiddle? You gonna play for us all?

LAFAYETTE

We'll see what comes out of her tonight. What do have for me, darlin'?

He plays a dreadful note. They LAUGH.

TOM

Say, Seamus, I couldn't help but notice you got a jug there.

SEAMUS

The way I sees it, Tom, first thing ye need after a well is a whiskey still.

TOM

You mean...

SEAMUS

Potín! Moonshine! Here, whet yer whistle.

MAGGIE

Ah, go easy now, this batch - it's kinda mean spirited.

Tom takes a slug and winces.

JENNIE
Leave some fer me, Tom!

She takes a slug too and squeals with delight.

JENNIE (CONT'D)
Oh! Oh! Dear Lord!

MAGGIE
Ah, I tried to warn ya now Jennie.

JENNIE
Ay yippie yi ki yay!

AUDREY
Big Jim, you get 'nough ter eat?
Walker's got more on the fire.

BIG JIM BARROW
Cain't manage another bite, Audrey.
But say, if ye got a drop more o'
that punch.

AUDREY
It's in the kitchen, you jest wait
right here.

She steps inside where it's a bit quieter. Something LEAPS
out at her, HISSING insidiously. MUSIC HIT.

AUDREY (CONT'D)
Oh Lordy!

MAX STILLMAN hurries in.

MAX
What's wrong?

AUDREY
(composing herself)
This...

MAX
Newt, fer pete sakes, I tol' ya not
be sneakin' up on folks. Sorry,
Audrey, it's just my boy Newt in
his Hallerween guise.

Newt's a kind of creepy nine-year-old.

NEWT
I'm a ssssssnake!

AUDREY

You... sure are.

MAX

His momma helped fashion him this here snake guise. Take that mask off, boy.

AUDREY

It's... it's a very good guise, Newt.

NEWT

Thankee, ma'am. HISS! You know what snakes like most to eat?

AUDREY

What's that?

NEWT

Your soul! Your soul! Soul cakes! Please good Missis, a soul-cake! Apple, pear, plum or cherry, any good thing to make us merry. One for Peter, two for Paul, three for Him who made us all!

AUDREY

(a little freaked out)

Oh no, I'm sorry. The other children ate up all the soul cakes. You can still bob for apples. And there's horehound candy.

NEWT

(very ominous)

Uh oh. Snakes don't like horehound candy. Now there will be mischief.

Newt RUNS OFF.

AUDREY

Newt! I--

MAX

Sorry, Audrey. Don't mind him. He's an odd one.

He GIVES CHASE.

MAX (CONT'D)

(running off)

Newt, you put that down!

Outside we hear the SOUNDS OF A FIDDLE TUNING.

AUDREY
(shouting after)
Stay away from the fire!

She HURRIES OUTSIDE as Lafayette gets ready to play.

WALKER
Give us a song, Lafayette.

JOE
Something fer Halloween.

LAFAYETTE
Halloween, eh? Let's see whatcha
think of this - it's an old reel I
learned off my granddaddy.

He plays an IRISH REEL to a lively, grateful crowd.

26 PUMPKIN NARRATION

26

DR. MCNEILL
Out back of the house, other
traditions of the evening were
observed.

27 JACK O' LANTERN

27

We hear the FIDDLE MUSIC and REVELERS on the other side of
the house. And somewhere, in the far distance, the incessant
DRUMS.

AUDREY
Declan, have you seen the Stillman
boy run through here? He was
dressed up as a snake.

DECLAN
No ma'am, he's not been here.

AUDREY
I don't want Mr. Walker to--

Wee Jimmy Jack walks up.

JIMMY JACK
Hey! Whater y'all doin' out here?

DECLAN
My daddy's carvin' up a turnip.

JIMMY JACK

What he wanna go an' do that fer?

DECLAN

He's carvin' the Devil's face to scare off any evil sprits. Look!

Jimmy Jack SQUEAKS in fear and runs off. Seamus and Declan LAUGH.

SEAMUS

Poor little crater.

Pause.

DECLAN

S'nice, in't Missus Walker?

AUDREY

How's that?

DECLAN

To have a night, you know, where we just... have a bit of a laugh.

SEAMUS

Ah sure, your American Halloween, it's a bit of an old cod and a bit of craic - not like it was in the old world. Samhain. The night we welcomed the dark half o' the year. It wasn't just a laugh and a nip of potín - there was somethin' to it.

DECLAN

But, Da--

SEAMUS

Listen to yer old man now - Samhain's the night when the barrier between our world and the spirit world is thinnest. The night when spirits of the dead could cross over an' have a word with the livin'. The night yer most like to hear the rumble of the Pukah, changin his shape whenever he like, or the wail of the banshee. The night when the wee folk, the fairies, they'd--

There's a RUSTLE in a nearby patch.

AUDREY
 (nervous)
 Hey, who's there? Newt?

Pause. RUSTLE. Then we hear wee FOOTSTEPS as Jimmy Jack approaches struggling with something.

SEAMUS
 What have you got there, Jimmy Jack?

JIMMY JACK
 I picked this here punkin. I bet you could cut it into a real scary shape!

SEAMUS
 A pumpkin, eh? Never carved one o' them. Bring it here, let's give it a try!

Transition MUSIC leads us into a later and quieter phase of the party.

28 HEADLESS NARRATION

28

DR. MCNEILL
 As the night wore on, a pile of children ended up asleep on the Davis' bed, while the adults gathered around the fire outside.

29 A HEADLESS HORSEMAN

29

A COLD WIND BLOWS, still carrying faint distant DRUMMING. The FIRE CRACKLES slowly and the grownups take the occasional nip from the jug of potín. Walker is having a really good time.

WALKER
 Hey, any y'all know a ghost story? That'd be perfect, all spooky-like round the fire?

AUDREY
 Walker, these folks don't need no...

WALKER
 How 'bout you, Big Jim?

BIG JIM BARROW

There's a story I heard down in Texas.

PATRICIA

(excited)

Is this the one with the... you know what? And he...?

BIG JIM BARROW

Yep.

WALKER

Well, c'mon, let's hear it.

The other adults ad lib agreement.

BIG JIM BARROW

This is a true story. Happened down in San Anton right after the Mexican war. Seems this fella came to town by the name of Cassius Calhoun. He were a captain from the army, mean and arrogant as could be. A real low-down dirty snake of a man. They said he killed horse thieves just for fun, and once he'd cut off the head of a man, and propped up that headless body in the saddle and sent that poor horse riding around the countryside as a warning to anyone else as might have a mind to steal a horse.

Well now he hadn't been in San Antonio more'n a day or two when he sets his eyes on Louise - the purtiest gal in the whole county - and young Mr. Calhoun figured he was just gonna have to marry her. Problem was, it seems Miss Louise was the secret sweetheart of another suitor. This feller were Maurice Mustanger, from Ireland.

MAGGIE

Mustanger? What the hell kind of Irish name is that?

LAUGHTER. Lafayette PLAYS A BIT OF AN IRISH TUNE ON HIS FIDDLE.

BIG JIM BARROW

See it was the name he got for what he did, for ol' Maurice was about the best horse man in South Texas and made a speciality of wrangling wild mustangs. So they called him Mustanger.

MAGGIE

Ah, well that's alright then.

PATRICIA

Go on, Jim.

BIG JIM BARROW

Now Louise and Maurice carried on in secret 'cause Louise's father, ol' Mr. Poindexter, didn't approve of no Irish horseman for his daughter.

SEAMUS

(mock offense)

Hey now!

MORE LAUGHTER. MORE FIDDLE. Lafayette plays along with the tale from time to time.

BIG JIM BARROW

But it turns out old Poindexter is pretty high and mighty, and he don't approve of Calhoun's reputation neither, West Point notwithstanding. So mean old Calhoun gets a brainstorm on how he can get rid of both his obstacles at once. That snake up and sneaks in one night and murders poor old Poindexter, and he leaves behind the Mustanger's gun so's Maurice he gets the blame. Poor Miss Louise has her heart broke twice over, and Calhoun he tries to slither his way into the gap in her affections.

Now Mustanger he has friends that know he didn't do no murder, but all the same San Antonio is crying out fer justice, and Maurice finds himself caught by the long arm o' the law and next he knows he's at the gallows fixin' to hang. Miss Louise was there, and weepin' bitter tears.

(MORE)

BIG JIM BARROW (CONT'D)

And Calhoun, he's there too, gloatin' 'cause his scheme's goin' just as planned. Now the leader of the posse he allows as Maurice can say a final word or two, and Mustanger calls on the spirit of the dead man to appear and vindicate him. Well it seems a pretty desperate gamble but it's a passionate speech, and what do you suppose appears coming out of the shadows of the trees?

Lafayette ADDS TO THE TENSION with his fiddle.

BIG JIM BARROW (CONT'D)

A huge rider mounted on a huge horse, his eyes a'blazin' with fire. The assembly was quite startled by this apparition as you might expect, but none more than Calhoun himself. He cried out in terror but the rider just silently pointed at him. The other men stepped back and the rider reared up on his great black horse, ripped off his own head and threw it right at the terrified captain. Coward Calhoun broke down in fear and confessed to every murder he had ever done, and begged for mercy. Miss Louise just fainted dead away.

FIDDLE MUSIC. The audience responds with enthusiasm for the odd tale.

PATRICIA

No, no, it aint done yet.

BIG JIM BARROW

Once the doctor took hold of the lady and the posse had put the hangin' rope on Calhoun and carried him away to jail, that rider suddenly grew a new head! It was Maurice's friend old Zeb Stump, cloaked and riding Maurice's prize mustang that tricked a confession out of Calhoun. That head he threw was a shattered pumpkin now a-burnin' in the fire. Zeb and Mustanger laughed in triumph and turned around to go back to the Poindexter Ranch and the fair lady.

(MORE)

BIG JIM BARROW (CONT'D)

But on the darkest part of the ride, they heard the clatter of hooves behind them in full gallop. Not one so easily frightened, Maurice wheeled his horse 'round. On the road, charging towards him was a satanic spectre come straight from hell, riding a giant horse and this rider - this rider truly had no head. The ghostly steed and rider together galloped straight through them and off into the night. Zeb Stump lit out and was never seen again, and poor Miss Louise never recovered from her fright. By the next morning, Maurice Mustanger's hair had turned stark white, cursed for his impudence by the real headless horseman.

Lots of AD LIB enthusiasm from the crowd. A MUSICAL BUTTON FROM THE FIDDLE.

PATRICIA

Gives me the willies every time that does.

AUDREY

(nervous)

But that never really happened.

BIG JIM BARROW

(laughingly)

May God strike me dead!

WALKER

Give us 'nother one.

AUDREY

Now Walker...

WALKER

(pleasantly drunk)

Let's have another. Who's got a story?

MAGGIE

Ah, I suppose I do. Well, my story's not like that one though.

(MORE)

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

It's somethin' that **really** really happened. I mean to me. Back in Ireland when I was a girl.

The mood tenses a little. The FIRE CRACKLES. WIND. DISTANT DRUMS.

SALLY

Go on, Maggie.

MAGGIE

My gran lived off in a wee village - a place called Finney. So wee it didn't even have a pub, you know? After '47 there just wasn't hardly anyone left there. But it was her home and she just wasn't going anywhere. Now me gran, she got to that age where... well, you know how it can be for some of the aul ones. She'd just sit in front of her fire, staring into the coals. And you'd think that'd be about as lonely a life as you could have, but my gran... she saw faces in the coals. She saw them clear as could be and she'd talk to them - and they'd talk right back to her. Tell her things. She'd say, "Hard rain's a-coming tomorrow." I'd say, "Oh yeah, how'd you know, Gran?" And she'd point into the fire and say, "The man with the lop-sidey mustache told me". We'd have a bit of a laugh but the thing was, she'd make these prognostications and most of the time she'd be spot-on. This one year she told us Yellow Bonnet was gonna win the big horse race up in Leenane, and don't you know she came in first place. We asked Gran how she knew and she pointed to the fire and said, "Ah yer one with the scarf and the frizzy hair told me." And, you know, with all these faces in the coals, she sorta had - well, you know - it was like she had her own lot of friends.

Even so, me mum liked to check in on her every couple of days and this one day she took me with her to see Gran.

(MORE)

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

And it was a fair walk, you know. So we get there and me mum was gonna bake Gran a loaf of soda bread only she didn't have any buttermilk. So me mum says, "C'mon now Gran, let's walk over to the McCulloughs and get some buttermilk," but Gran says she can't as the man with the cart and the girl with the cat are coming to take her home. You know, they were people she seen the fire. So my mum sends me to the McCulloughs and I come back with the buttermilk and then I ask her if I can go out and play, you know, while she's making the soda bread and all. She says aye and off I go.

So not so far out the back behind Gran's there was this ol' fairy road that led up to a rath--

TOM

What's that?

MAGGIE

A fairy road? Ah, they're these old paths that cut here and there all over Ireland, but they were made... I don't know when, but they were made by the fairies. And this one led up to this rath - sort of like the ruins of a real old fort from the stone age or the bronze age or some age or another. But it was a grand place to play and you could usually find something interesting there. Only this day there was this girl there and she says to me, "I'm Aoife - do you want to play?" So we had a grand old time running about, you know, girl fun - just messing about.

So, it got to be time when the bread'd be done and me mum would be wondering where I was, so I says my goodbye to Maeve and headed back down the fairy path. And I'm about halfway back to Gran's and I look back and I can see Aoife way off by the rath and she reaches down and picks up this great big black cat.

(MORE)

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

A huge one. Which was odd, you know, 'cause I hadn't seen it about when we were playing. And so I make it back near Gran's and see an aul fella with a donkey cart heading down the road, which was kinda odd too as you'd hardly ever see something like that in Gran's village. And so I go inside and I can tell right away somethin's wrong and I say, "What is it, Mum?" And she looks over at Gran and I knew right then she'd... I mean, well, she'd passed over, you know... died. And so I told Mum about Aoife and the cat and the aul fella with the donkey cart I'd just seen and pulled her outside, 'cause of course he'd still be there since, you know, they were goin' real slow. But we get outside and there was no one there. Anywhere. He'd gone, you know? So... So, I don't know. Later, at the wake I went up to Mrs. McCullough and I asked her. Asked her about the girl up in the rath, you know, Aoife. She said she'd never heard of a girl by that name anywhere around here.

Pause.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

So, you know... anyway, that's me story.

The grownups AD LIB a response of shuddered enthusiasm to the tale.

SEAMUS

It was grand, missus. Ah, looks like our fiddler's nodded off here.

Lafayette SNORES.

AUDREY

(unsettled)

That's quite a story, Maggie. And those awful drums! Well, I suppose we all...

JOE
 (quiet)
 I seen somethin' too.

SALLY
 What's that, Joe?

JOE
 I seen something. When I was in the
 cavalry.

WALKER
 (enjoying this)
 Somethin' strange? Go on, Joe, tell
 us.

SALLY
 You sure 'bout this, Joe?

JOE
 (working through some PTSD)
 Some of y'all maybe don't know, but
 I was in the army, the 9th Cavalry.
 We fought the Indian Wars out west.
 Our unit, we'd been sent all the
 way up to Fort Abraham Lincoln in
 the Dakota Territory. Got there in
 the winter time. Seems that the
 year before something happened out
 west at a place called Little Big
 Horn.

TOM
 I know that - that's where the
 Custer Massacre happened.

Some AD LIBBED concerned recollection. MUSIC UNDERSCORE: NOT
 LAFAYETTE'S FIDDLE.

JOE
 That's the place. Well Uncle Sam's
 War Department weren't gonna let
 something like that happen again,
 so they sent us up that way. Word
 was, there was a band of the
 Arapaho that the Army figured was
 getting ready to make an attack
 against our men. And somebody,
 probably some general in an office
 back in Washington, figgered we
 should strike first - you know, get
 them before they could get us. So
 we had our orders and we rode out
 west into the Montana Territory.

(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)

We had scouts - Indians on our side who knew where these Arapaho was. Once they led us out near where they was, we got our orders.

The sergeant came to me - Sgt. Washburn - with my orders. The plan was the main cavalry unit was gonna ride in towards where the Indian camp was. They'd attack the camp from the east. But we were going to send a second, smaller group of men to circle out 'round the camp and come in from the northwest, from behind 'em. This was me and my men. We was... we was to round up the women and the ol' folks and the children, disarm 'em and then hold 'em, as hostages, in case things went bad.

A RUSTLE of uneasiness from the listeners. Someone CLEARS THEIR THROAT.

JOE (CONT'D)

I know what you're thinkin' and I was thinkin' the same thing. I didn't join the United States Cavalry to be rounding up women and old men. But let me tell you, when Uncle Sam tells you to do somethin', you do it. You do it or you get the lash, or the stockade or... worse.

We hear quiet SFX that underscore Joe's story.

We had our orders. There was me and five other men and our scout - a fella called Walks in the Wind. I liked him. He knew the ways lots of different tribes, spoke a lot of their languages. He seemed troubled about this assignment; I thought it was 'cause of the weather. It was snowing like hell, so we rode out early. We was s'posed to get to the Indian camp 'bout the same time as when our main unit was comin' at 'em from the east. If we got there too early, we'd spook 'em and if we got there too late, we couldn't do no good.

(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)

So we ride out and eventually we end up on this ridge, up above where the Indian camp was. The snow's still comin' down, and we can just barely make out smoke from their camp. And we have to wait there, until it's time. Walks in the Wind, he has this look on his face and I asked him what's wrong. He tells me he doesn't think it's good for us to do this. I tried to explain that orders are orders and our men weren't gonna hurt nobody, but just make sure they don't have weapons to attack our men. I knew he weren't happy with that, but... you know? So finally I look at my watch and it's about time and I tell the boys. Walks in the Wind rides up next to me and leans in close. And he whispers something. By then I'd heard Sioux and Crow and Blackfoot but this wasn't nothing like that. An' then he reaches out an' touches me with his finger on both cheeks and then holds up his finger and I see it's cut and there's blood on the tip. He says, "You are marked - you will see." I still don't understand what he's tryin' to tell me, but it's time and the other men set out for the village and I follow 'em.

It were snowing like hell and right off the bat I lost sight of the others. I rode on towards where I'd seen the smoke from the Indian fires. As I got in close I could tell something was wrong... none of them were running or shouting nor nothin'. They were just going 'bout their business. A pair of women tastin' food they were cooking over the fire. This old man playing with this boy, a little feller maybe two or three. He was laughin'. All of 'em, they were just... reg'lar folks livin' their lives. I slowed my horse down to a walk, and not a one of 'em ever looked up at me. I went clear through that camp and it was like they couldn't even see me - like I wasn't even there.

(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)

I didn't understand what was happenin' and looked 'round for my men but couldn't see hide nor hair of 'em. It was just quiet. Wind and snow. Then I heard a sound, a cavalry bugle off to the east. And finally I could make out a couple of cavalrymen headin' my way. I look back at the Indian camp and...

(struggling to find the words)

...they were all dead. Just bodies fallen in the snow. Something terrible had happened. A second before they were fine, but now... Nobody was moving and the snow was settlin' on the bodies - blotches of red soakin' through it here and there. The tents had all been burned. I could smell gun smoke. There were hoof prints everywhere in the snow now, where riders had galloped through. I figured I must be dreamin', right? Some kinda nightmare. But the Sergeant he rides up next to me and says, "We thought we'd lost you out there." I couldn't find words and my horse just walked back through the camp. He followed me. "We had orders - brass said no prisoners." I looked down, just to my left, and seen one of the bodies - it was clutchin' somethin' in its arms. It was that old man and... well, you know.

(pause)

I don't know if they was ghosts I'd seen - or maybe I'd been the ghost moving among them. But now I was alive and they was dead. Maybe it was 'cause Walks in the Wind marked me... Maybe he saved me from bein' a part of it. Maybe he cursed me to have to remember it. I don't know...

SALLY

Oh, Joe.

This makes the listeners uncomfortable.

JOE

All I knew was I'd had enough of
life in Uncle Sam's army. I'm
sorry, that wasn't no kind of story
to be tellin' at a party.

SEAMUS

Ah, you're all right now, Joe.

AUDREY

(nervous)

Well... reckon it's time we sort
out these young-uns and folks head
on home.

TOM

Jennie, gimme a hand here an' help
me gather our bunch.

WALKER

Lafayette, come on now, wake up,
the party's over.

MUSIC PROVIDES A MASSIVE MOOD CHANGE. The guests gather up
their children, horses, wagons, etc...

32 PARTY'S OVER NARRATION

32

DR. MCNEILL

Soon the neighboring families were
packed up and riding on back to
their own farms and the Davises
were left alone.

33 AND GOODNIGHT

33

MUSIC. DEPARTING HORSES. COLD WIND. DISTANT DRUMS.

WALKER

(a little drunk)

Aud, that were about the swellest
time I ever did have. You hear them
scary stories and it makes a body
see his own fears don't amount to
much after all. Sorta gits it out
yer system.

AUDREY

(not agreeing)

Mmmmm. Go on, you. Yer drunk.

(hearing the drums)

(MORE)

AUDREY (CONT'D)

Augh, when they gonna stop beatin'
them damned drums!

WALKER

(with humor)

Gotta keep ol Yig at bay. Hey, did
you see that Stillman boy with his
snake guise?

AUDREY

(worried)

You saw that?

WALKER

He hissed at me! Gave me a good
laugh, that queer little nipper.
Come on, Wolf, you lazy ol' beast.

Wolf gets up with a SHAKE and a SIGH and goes inside.

AUDREY

Downright chilly tonight. Grab one
o' them logs fer the fireplace
inside.

Walker grabs a log. She OPENS THE DOOR and they go in. Walker
TOSSES THE LOG on the embers in the big fireplace. Wolf lies
down by the hearth.

WALKER

I don't know about you, but I'm
done fer.

AUDREY

Yeah, we'll clean up in the
morning.

WALKER

C'mon now. Let's git ter bed, you.
We should have a Hallerween party
every year...

They undress and get into bed. The sound of an AMOUROUS KISS.
The room is quiet, only the TICKING of a cheap clock and the
DISTANT DRUMS pulsing in the chill night wind.

DR. MCNEILL

(removing his glasses)

You'll soon appreciate that some conjecture was involved in piecing out all that happened after the guests left.

35

THE NIGHTMARE

35

Audrey sleeps fitfully, TOSSING and TURNING in a nightmare. She springs awake, annoyed at Walker.

WALKER

Hush, woman. You're dreamin'...

AUDREY

Damn you, it was that snake god of yours. Looked like that engraving of Satan we seen in that church in--

WALKER

Hush, Aud! Don't ye hear somethin' a-singin' and buzzin' and rustlin'? Reckon it's the fall crickets.

AUDREY

I don't hear--

As she stops speaking, there is a FAINT SOUND in the cabin. And beyond it the DISTANT DRUMS.

AUDREY (CONT'D)

Walker - s'pose it's - the - the - curse o' Yig after all?

WALKER

Well look who took them stories to heart! From what ol' Gray Eagle says, that Mister Yig is shapen like a man, except ye look at him clost. This here's just some varmints come in outen the cold - crickets er sumsuch. Don't you worry. I'd orter git up and stomp 'em out afore they make much headway or git at the cupboard.

Walker gets up, and FUMBLES WITH A MATCH to LIGHT THE LANTERN. As he TURNS UP THE FLAME it illuminates the room. The two of them SCREAM. We hear SLITHERING!

WALKER (CONT'D)
 (barely able to speak)
 Snakes!

AUDREY
 My god, Walker, there's thousands
 of 'em!

One RATTLES followed by A FEW MORE. Walker GROANS and FALLS OVER onto the stone floor. The LANTERN SHATTERS and the room is plunged into darkness.

Dramatic MUSIC hit.

36 NARRATION 9

36

TRANSITION MUSIC UNDER.

KIMBALL
 Good god, man! The curse--

DR. MCNEILL
 Ah, there's more to it. After Walker fainted, Audrey was paralyzed with fear. She fell back on her pillow, hoping to wake from a nightmare. But Walker was no longer beside her - and she'd been unable to help him. He died by snakes, just as the Indian woman predicted when he was a boy. Wolf never even roused from his senile stupor. And Audrey was left with no thought other than that the crawling things were coming for her.

37 THE WAITING

37

Audrey lays in bed, petrified. MUSIC BED.

AUDREY
 (muttering)
 This must be the curse of Yig. Sendin' out his chillun on All-Hallows' Night. Samhain. When the living are like to meet the dead. Why'd they have to take Walker? He never did nothin' wrong. I were the one what killed them little rattlers!
 (with a small gasp)
 (MORE)

AUDREY (CONT'D)

Walker said Yig weren't gonna kill me... just turn me to a spotted snake. Ugh!

(lightbulb)

That song! How'd it go? Uh aw...

The charm sticks in her throat. There's only the sound of the CLOCK and distant DRUMS which continue under the narration.

38 NARRATION 10

38

DR. MCNEILL

The poor woman's mind must have been pushed to its very limits. The snakes were taking a long time to get to her. Every now and again she'd feel the steady, insidious pressure of something slithering on the bedclothes, but each time it turned out to be nothing more than the twitching of her own overwrought nerves. And slowly her thinking began to change.

39 THE WAITING CONT'D

39

AUDREY

No... no, these ain't no messengers from Yig - just some rattlers nested below the rock, drawn out by the fire. They ain't comin' for me.

(her fear ebbing)

Maybe Walker scared 'em off. Maybe he's alright--

40 NARRATION 11

40

DR. MCNEILL

But any fleeting notion of hope was snuffed out. At the thought of her husband's body lying there in the pitch blackness a thrill of purely physical horror passed over Audrey as she recalled Sally's story about the man in Scott County! Bitten by innumerable rattlesnakes... the poison rotted the flesh and swelled the whole corpse, and in the end the bloated thing had burst horribly - burst horribly with a detestable popping noise.

(MORE)

DR. MCNEILL (CONT'D)
 Was that what was happening to
 Walker down there on the rock
 floor?

KIMBALL
 No....

41 THE WAITING 3

41

MUSIC, CLOCK and distant DRUMMING continue.

AUDREY
 Damned clock. Dawn's gotta be
 coming afore long. I... don't wanna
 see it. Sally'll come round.
 Somebody'll come round...

She GASPS. The drums stop, leaving only her BREATHING, the
 RUSTLE of bed clothes and the night noise of the cabin.

AUDREY (CONT'D)
 It stopped. Thank the Lord...
 (sigh of relief, pause,
 then slowly)
 The Indian drumming - Walker said
 it kept Yig away. If the drums have
 stopped...

Now there's only the TICKING of the clock, louder. She steels
 herself...

AUDREY (CONT'D)
 Only one way to know for sure...

She throws the bedcovers aside and the bed CREAKS as she
 looks out the window.

AUDREY (CONT'D)
 Moon's gone down.

She rises. There's a shocking, unutterable sound - A PUTRID
 POP OF CLEFT SKIN AND ESCAPING POISON in the dark.

Dramatic MUSIC hit.

42 THE FRAMERS

42

KIMBALL
 Oh my god - the bloating, the
 rupture, that really happens?

DR. MCNEILL

Oh my, yes. It was too much for
poor Audrey.

KIMBALL

Did she faint?

DR. MCNEILL

(wry)
If only...

43 THE FRENZY 43

Audrey SCREAMS in a stark, unbridled frenzy. A plodding
FOOTSTEP. Heavy BREATHING. It moves towards her clumsily.
CLIMACTIC MUSICAL BUILD.

AUDREY

(insane)
Go away, snake-devil! Go 'way, Yig!
No! Stay away from me!

44 THE FRAMERS 2 44

DR. MCNEILL

Something was coming for her and
she snapped, changing at once from
cowering child to raging madwoman.
She knew where the axe was hung on
the wall on pegs near the lantern.

45 THE FRENZY 2 45

She grabs the axe and goes to town. Horrible SOUNDS OF AXE
HITTING FLESH AND BONE. She pants in a rage, swinging madly
then cackling madly.

AUDREY

You can't take me, you devil! No!

MUSIC CRESCENDO. The horrible scene fades into the calm of
the asylum.

46 THE BOOKEND 46

DR. MCNEILL

(clearing his throat)
So.

KIMBALL

She lived? She was found? Was it ever explained?

DR. MCNEILL

(slowly)

Yes, she lived, in a way. And it was explained. I told you there was no bewitchment - only cruel, pitiful, material horror, and the power of stories we tell ourselves. It was the Comptons, the devoted neighbors, who came upon the scene the following afternoon.

TRANSTION MUSIC.

47

THE MORNING AFTER

47

Sally and Joe canter towards the Davis cabin. The HORSES WHINNY and SHUFFLE uneasily.

JOE

Whoa there, Toby. What's wrong? It's just the Davises.

SALLY

No smoke in the chimney? Queer - Audrey oughta have something cooking by now. C'mon...

They RIDE UP, DISMOUNT and TIE THE HORSES. We hear hungry mules BRAYING from the barn.

JOE

(calling the dog)

Wolf? Where are you, boy? Walker? Party mess still everywhere. Looks like they're still in bed.

(laughing)

Walker was looking pretty lit last night. I'll bet he kept her up all hours!

SALLY

(from the porch)

Audrey? It's Sally and Joe!

She KNOCKS.

SALLY (CONT'D)

Audrey? I'm coming in.

The door SQUEAKS open. Sally SNIFFS and smells a hellish odor.

SALLY (CONT'D)
 (reeling)
 Oh, sweet Jesus!

MUSIC.

JOE
 (running up)
 What is it? Sally!

48 THE FRAMING DEVICE

48

KIMBALL
 What was it?

We hear the sounds of the Davis cabin under McNeill's description.

DR. MCNEILL
 In the shadows of the cabin, were three... disturbing sights. Near the burned-out fireplace was the old dog, Wolf. Its bare patches of skin were purple with decay and the whole carcass burst by swelling brought on by rattlesnake poison. It had apparently been bitten by a veritable legion of reptiles.

KIMBALL
 Oh...

DR. MCNEILL
 To the right of the door was the axe-hacked remnants of what had been a man - clad in a nightshirt, and with the shattered remnants of a lantern clenched in one hand. He showed no signs of any snake-bites. Near him lay the axe, carelessly discarded.

KIMBALL
 Walker? Oh, dear god... she...

DR. MCNEILL
 And wriggling, flat on the floor, was a loathsome, vacant-eyed thing that had been a woman, but was now only a mute mad caricature.

(MORE)

DR. MCNEILL (CONT'D)

All that this thing could do was to hiss, and hiss, and hiss.

KIMBALL

(whispering)

The curse of Yig... Oh, no.

DR. MCNEILL

(composing himself and
grabbing snifters)

Brandy?

KIMBALL

(seriously shaken)

Please.

Kimball LIGHTS ANOTHER CIGARETTE. McNeill POURS for them both.

KIMBALL (CONT'D)

So Walker only fainted that first time - her screams roused him, and then she...

DR. MCNEILL

Yes. But he met his death from snakes just as the old Indian woman had predicted when he was a boy. It was his fear working in two ways - it made him faint, and it made him fill his wife with the wild stories that caused her to strike out when she thought she saw the snake-devil.

KIMBALL

(his fear now pretty
intense)

And Audrey, it's as if... as if the curse of Yig actually was carried out!

DR. MCNEILL

Oh, I suppose one could look at it that way, if one was inclined to superstition but, as I say, there's certainly a more reasonable and scientific interpretation of the facts.

KIMBALL

What do you mean?

DR. MCNEILL

The placebo effect can bring relief, but it can also be a double-edged sword.

KIMBALL

Those hissing snakes must have been fairly ground into her. It was too much for her sanity to bear.

DR. MCNEILL

Mmm. She had lucid spells at first, but they became fewer and fewer as time went on. Her hair turned white at the roots as it grew, and later began to fall out. The skin grew blotchy, and when she died--

KIMBALL

Died? I don't understand. If she's... what was... that thing downstairs?

DR. MCNEILL

(gravely)

That, Mr. Kimball, is what was born to her three-quarters of a year afterward. There were three more of them - two were even worse - but this is the only one that lived.

Dramatic MUSICAL HIT. Kimball SQUEAKS in fear.

DR. MCNEILL (CONT'D)

You all right there, son?

KIMBALL

I... ah...

DR. MCNEILL

You're pale. Here, put your head down between your knees. Take a few deep breaths.

KIMBALL

No, no, you don't understand!

DR. MCNEILL

Don't understand what?

KIMBALL

I was there. Doing field research. Caddo County - near Newcastle.

(MORE)

KIMBALL (CONT'D)

The Kitsawi... they're all wiped out now.

DR. MCNEILL

So?

KIMBALL

We'd pitched a tent and I'd gone to gather wood for a fire. In the grass, I found...

DR. MCNEILL

Oh, no.

KIMBALL

...a nest of baby snakes. I didn't know. I just... you know... with my boot... 'til I'd killed 'em. All of them. I didn't know they were...

DR. MCNEILL

(gravely)

Yig is a great god. He does not forget things.

MUSIC FINALE.

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CONCLUSION

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LESTER MAYHEW

You've been listening to "The Curse of Yig" brought to you by Beckwith's Mentholated Sen-Sen Gum. Sanitary packs make the perfect Halloween treat for the tricksters who ring your doorbell this season.

Dark Adventure Closing Theme MUSIC.

LESTER MAYHEW (CONT'D)

Until next week, this is Lester Mayhew reminding you to never go anywhere alone; if it looks bad, don't look; and save the last bullet for yourself.

ANNOUNCER

"The Curse of Yig" was adapted for radio and produced by Sean Branney and Andrew Leman. Based on the story by H.P. Lovecraft and Zealia Bishop. Original music by Troy Sterling Nies.

(MORE)

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

The Dark Adventure Ensemble featured an ensemble of wonderful actors. Tune in next week for "The Phantom of the Sausage Mill", a gruesome tale of gourmet grindings.

Dark Adventure Radio Theatre is a production of the HPLHS Broadcasting Group, a subsidiary of HPLHS, Inc., copyright 1931...plus eighty-nine.

Radio STATIC and fade out.