

DARK ADVENTURE RADIO THEATRE®: THE SHUNNED HOUSE

Written by

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Based on "The Shunned House" 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, featuring your host, Lester Mayhew. Today's episode: "The Shunned House" -- a chilling story by the master of the weird tale: H.P. Lovecraft.

CREEPY MUSIC.

LESTER MAYHEW

On College Hill in picturesque Providence, Rhode Island stands a house. To the casual observer, it follows the average colonial lines of the middle eighteenth century. It faces south, with one gable end buried to the lower windows in the eastward rising hill, and the other exposed to the foundations toward the street. It's not especially remarkable. One might even call it quaint. Yet for those who know its strange and gruesome history, it symbolizes terror itself. Can an investigation into the house reveal a way to cleanse it of its unholy pall, or merely confirm it as an abode of enduring evil?

But first, a word from our sponsor.

SPONSOR JINGLE

LESTER MAYHEW (CONT'D)

Hello, Martha.

MARTHA
(yawning)
Oh, good afternoon, Mr. Mayhew.

LESTER MAYHEW
Were you out on a toot last night,
Martha? You don't seem to have much
pep. What's wrong?

MARTHA
Gee, Mr. Mayhew. I don't know. I'm
just feeling out of sorts today. I
haven't been sleeping well and--

LESTER MAYHEW
No? Well not to worry, I've got
something that's just the ticket
right here. Veronal!

MARTHA
Veronal?

LESTER MAYHEW
That's right, Veronal. It's the
modern medical miracle that you're
looking for.

MARTHA
Gosh, can it help me sleep?

LESTER MAYHEW
You bet it can! This new European
formula uses soothing barbiturates
to treat insomnia induced by
nervous excitability.

MARTHA
Barbitu... whats?

LESTER MAYHEW
(chuckling)
No need to worry about them.
They're modern medicines made to
soothe the problems of modern life.

MARTHA
It sounds perfect!

LESTER MAYHEW
Here, try a few tonight and you'll
be sleeping like a baby!

MARTHA
Thank you, Mr. Mayhew.

LESTER MAYHEW
 (chuckling)
 No, thank you Veronal!

ANNOUNCER
 Don't let your neuroses and
 hysteria keep you from the restful
 sleep you deserve. Try Veronal
 tonight! Available from your
 neighborhood druggist.

LESTER MAYHEW
 And now, Dark Adventure Radio
 Theatre presents "The Shunned
 House".

MUSIC.

LESTER MAYHEW (CONT'D)
 From even the greatest of horrors
 irony is seldom absent. For
 instance, in the ancient city of
 Providence, Edgar Allan Poe used to
 stroll. Poe's favorite walk led
 northward along Benefit Street and
 the nearby churchyard of St.
 John's, whose eighteenth-century
 gravestones had for him a peculiar
 fascination.

Now the irony is this. In this walk
 the master of the terrible and the
 bizarre was obliged to pass a
 dingy, antiquated house. It does
 not appear that he ever wrote or
 spoke of it, nor is there any
 evidence that he even noticed it.
 And yet that house, to the two
 persons in possession of certain
 information, equals or outranks in
 horror the wildest phantasy of the
 author who so often passed it
 unknowingly, and stands starkly
 leering as a symbol of all that is
 unutterably hideous.

MUSIC.

2

WELL, MAYBE IT HURTS A LITTLE

2

We're in a treatment room at Dr. Waite's Sanitarium on
 Conanicut Island outside Providence, Rhode Island. Dr. Waite
 is an alienist in his 50s. He's quite nice.

DR. WAITE
 So, like I told you, Clifford,
 today we're going to use the
 Bergonic Chair for your therapy. Go
 ahead, have a seat. I think you'll
 find it's quite comfortable.

Clifford, a young man in his 20s, is rather chipper. The
 metallic chair CLANKS as he situates himself.

CLIFFORD
 Very well, doctor.

DR. WAITE
 I have a few questions for you,
 while the nurse attaches some
 electrodes.

Nurse Paiva attaches him to the electroshock machine.

NURSE PAIVA
 Just lean back. There you go.

DR. WAITE
 When was the last time you saw your
 great-uncle?

CLIFFORD
 (nervous)
 The last time? I... don't really
 recall. Um, maybe it was-- oh,
 that's cold!

DR. WAITE
 Think hard. It might come to you.

Pause.

CLIFFORD
 I... no, sorry, I don't recall
 exactly.

NURSE PAIVA
 Pardon me, I just need to run this
 wire under your arm.

DR. WAITE
 What about the house? Have you ever
 been to the house on Benefit
 Street?

CLIFFORD
 Sorry, what house?

DR. WAITE
You know the one I mean.

CLIFFORD
Um, I'm not sure. I know Benefit Street, but I don't think I've ever been inside any of the houses there.

DR. WAITE
Never been inside? Try to remember.

CLIFFORD
No. Never. Why?

NURSE PAIVA
He's ready, doctor.

DR. WAITE
Thank you, Nurse Paiva. So, Clifford, today's therapy with the Bergonic Chair will try to unlock some memories which are unavailable to your conscious mind. The electrical current will come out of the transformer there, and very small voltages will pass through the electrodes on your skin, through your skull, stimulating cognition in the brain. It doesn't take long.

CLIFFORD
You say it doesn't hurt, right?

DR. WAITE
Heavens no. No, many of my patients actually find it quite pleasant and enjoy their sessions. Activate the Electro-flo and set the sinusoidal oscillator to 60 hertz please, Nurse Paiva.

She throws a BIG SWITCH and scary ELECTRICAL NOISES HUM as the machine gets ready for action.

DR. WAITE (CONT'D)
Comfortable?

CLIFFORD
I guess. I...

DR. WAITE
 Just try to relax. I want you to think about your great uncle and the house on Benefit Street. Oh, yes, one last thing...

NURSE PAIVA
 Open, please.

CLIFFORD
 (alarmed)
 What?

NURSE PAIVA
 (a little brusque)
 Open your mouth.

DR. WAITE
 Just bite down on the wood, Clifford.

CLIFFORD
 (with wooden stick in mouth)
 What's this for?

DR. WAITE
 (cheerfully)
 We wouldn't want you to bite your own tongue, would we?
 (his tone changes)
 Now picture your great uncle. Picture that house. Nurse, set the Fourier Transformer to 800 milliamperes. Stand clear. And--

The machine emits a terrifying and protracted ZAP of electricity.

CLIFFORD
 (muffled spasming and groaning)

DR. WAITE
 (to the nurse)
 Disengage.

She throws a SWITCH and the electrical humming dies down.

DR. WAITE (CONT'D)
 Please remove the bite guard.
 (to the patient)
 Clifford, keep your eyes closed. Now tell me what you see.

CLIFFORD
(unintelligible mumbling)

DR. WAITE
I can't hear you, Clifford.

CLIFFORD
I can't... I don't...

DR. WAITE
What do you see?

Clifford's voice seems much more childish.

CLIFFORD
It's dark.

DR. WAITE
You can open your eyes, Clifford.

CLIFFORD
They are open. I can't see anything. The door latched shut behind me.

DR. WAITE
What door is this?

CLIFFORD
The cellar door.

DR. WAITE
The cellar at your house?

CLIFFORD
No...

DR. WAITE
Whose house are you in, Clifford?

CLIFFORD
I don't know.

DR. WAITE
It's important that you remember. Where are you?

CLIFFORD
It's... it's that haunted house. The one on Benefit Street.

DR. WAITE
What are you doing in a haunted house, Clifford?

CLIFFORD
 Playing. We thought it would be
 fun.

MUSIC TRANSITION as we flashback to Clifford's memory from
 twelve years before.

3

HIDE AND SEEK

3

Young Cliff Babbit and his friends NIELS, DONOVAN, GAGE and
 HEATHER play in the old abandoned Shunned House on a rainy
 afternoon.

NIELS
 C'mon, let's go on up to the attic!

DONOVAN
 I'm not going up there.

NIELS
 What, are you scared, Donovan?

DONOVAN
 No.

HEATHER
 Ha! I'm not scared. Last one
 there's a rotten egg!

She TEARS UP the stairs.

YOUNG CLIFFORD
 Heather, wait! C'mon!

The others RUN AFTER HER, LAUGHING.

YOUNG CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
 Joshi says there's ghosts up there.

NIELS
 He thinks he knows everything. I
 bet Joshi's never even been in the
 attic.

GAGE
 My brother says a vampire lived in
 this house.

YOUNG CLIFFORD
 What's a vampire?

DONOVAN

They're like monsters who don't
ever die, and drink people's blood!

GAGE

My brother says it's still here!

NIELS

C'mon, the attic's up here.

Spooky MUSIC, CREAKY DOORS and FLOORBOARDS.

HEATHER

Nothing up here but a lot of old
junk.

YOUNG CLIFFORD

Still, it's pretty creepy looking.

HEATHER

Hey, let's play hide and seek.

DONOVAN

Here?

HEATHER

Don't be such a nervous nellie.
Gage, count to ten.

GAGE

Not enough. I'll count to fifty.

DONOVAN

Too much! It should be twenty-five.

NIELS

Close your eyes.

GAGE

They're closed. Twenty-five, twenty-
four, twenty-three...

Gage continues the countdown as the other kids TAKE OFF,
RUNNING and LAUGHING. All the other sounds fade out and we
hear young Cliff's HEARTBEAT and HEAVY BREATHING. MUSIC
transition.

DR. WAITE

You're doing very well, Clifford.
What else do you remember?

YOUNG CLIFFORD
I went downstairs. All the way into
the cellar. And then...

We hear the CELLAR DOOR SQUEAK and CLOSE behind him.

YOUNG CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
The door...

He RATTLES the handle.

YOUNG CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
It's stuck. And it's dark.

DR. WAITE
What happened then, Clifford?

YOUNG CLIFFORD
(a little panicked)
I... I don't know.

DR. WAITE
It's safe to remember. Nothing will
hurt you here.
(sotto)
100 more milliamps, nurse.

We hear another ZAP and another convulsion from Cliff. MUSIC
BUILDS TENSION.

DR. WAITE (CONT'D)
What do you see?

YOUNG CLIFFORD
It's all dark, but there's
something down by the floor. It's
kinda like smoke, sort of... coming
up from the ground.
(sniffs)
Ugh, the smell...

He SQUEAKS in terror.

YOUNG CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
It touched me. It's... all around
me!

He GASPS.

5 PARTY'S OVER

5

MUSIC STING. The cellar DOOR BURSTS OPEN. Cliff's great-uncle DR. ELIHU WHIPPLE, a physician in his late 60s, steps through.

ELIHU
Clifford!

YOUNG CLIFFORD
(falling on him, sobbing)
Uncle Elihu!

ELIHU
Are you all right there, lad? It's
only me. Are you hurt?

YOUNG CLIFFORD
No, sir.

ELIHU
Come on, the others are upstairs.
Now, what have I told you about
abandoned houses?

They CLIMB THE STAIRS.

ELIHU (CONT'D)
Well?

YOUNG CLIFFORD
(mumbling)
Not to play in them.

ELIHU
And about THIS house?

YOUNG CLIFFORD
I know but Niels said...

ELIHU
Niels! That scoundrel? If Niels
told you to jump off the Washington
Bridge, would you do that too? I'm
serious, Clifford.
(to the others)
I found him. He was down cellar.

The gang AD LIBS greetings and apologies.

DONOVAN
Sorry, Dr. Whipple.

ELIHU

Donovan, I expect you to know better. You too, Heather. And Niels, you're a terrible influence, young man. Now I don't ever want to hear of you setting foot in this house again. Any of you! Understand?

The kids MUMBLE VAGUE ASSENT.

ELIHU (CONT'D)

Now get on home!

They SCURRY OFF with ad libs of HALF-HEARTED APOLOGY.

ELIHU (CONT'D)

And you - you're coming with me.
(much kindlier now the
others have gone)
You sure you're all right? Let's
get you home. Delilah's making
donuts.

YOUNG CLIFFORD

Donuts!

MUSIC.

6 DONUTS, COFFEE, AND EXPOSITION

6

Elihu UNLOCKS THE DOOR of a large home eerily redolent of 598 Angell Street.

ELIHU

Here we are, let's get inside.

They GO IN.

ELIHU (CONT'D)

We're back!

They are greeted by DELILAH, a vivacious, middle aged black woman who is clearly the force holding this household together.

DELILAH

Clifford Babbit! Where have you
been, child?

YOUNG CLIFFORD

Delilah, a ghost almost got me
today, but Uncle Elihu saved me!

DELILAH

Is that so? Well, he did you a fair turn. Did you thank him for that?

YOUNG CLIFFORD

Thank you, Uncle Elihu.

DELILAH

Evening, Dr. Whipple. And thank you for fetching him.

ELIHU

Evening, Delilah. Where's Susie? Gone to bed?

DELILAH

Yes, sir. Mrs. Babbit said her head was about to split open. I sent her up with a compress. I got a cold supper for you in the ice box. Oh and I put a pot of coffee on. It sounds like you two had a big afternoon.

ELIHU

Big enough. But I can't say as we saw any ghosts.

YOUNG CLIFFORD

But everybody knows that house is haunted.

ELIHU

Do they?

BUSTLE and CLINKING DISHWARE as Delilah serves up plates of food.

DELILAH

What house is that?

YOUNG CLIFFORD

The creepy one up on Benefit Street. The one with the--

DELILAH

I know the one you mean. Not a soul's lived in there as long as I can remember. It's unlucky. And in fairness to Clifford, folks do say things about that place, Dr. Whipple.

ELIHU

Oh, I know. It's a strange place... terrible history. I've looked into it, but not once have I heard a tale of rattling chains or wailing ghosts in that house.

DELILAH

Even when I was a girl, everyone knew to steer clear of that place.

ELIHU

Everyone but this one - and his friends.

YOUNG CLIFFORD

It was Niels' fault--

DELILAH

Serves him right to have the bejeesus scared out of him.

(pause)

What do you mean when you say you "looked into it"?

ELIHU

One of my colleagues shared some information with me shortly after I finished medical school. It piqued my curiosity and I... looked into it. I conducted a bit of an investigation. I've got volumes and volumes of notes.

DELILAH

Mmm-hmm. And you wonder where Clifford gets it from.

ELIHU

(busted)

Well... but in my case... it was... science.

DELILAH

Of course, Doctor. So what's wrong with it?

Elihu begins to EAT while he talks. Astute listeners will hear DONUTS FRYING. If you turn the volume way up you can hear the powdered sugar.

ELIHU

I can't really say. What I do know is a frightful number of persons have died there. Too many. That and decades of neglect... No one will rent the place. It sits there, brooding and abandoned.

DELILAH

Why on earth don't they just tear it down?

ELIHU

They can't! A 17th century house like that - it's on the registry of historic buildings.

YOUNG CLIFFORD

What happened to the people? Did ghosts get 'em?

ELIHU

No.

YOUNG CLIFFORD

Gage's brother says the house has vampires.

DELILAH

Vampires? Lord have mercy. That boy spends too much time reading dime novels. Vampires...

ELIHU

(bemused yet sad)

No... I don't think that's it either. Truly, there was never just one cause of the deaths. Let's just say the building was... insalubrious. Each case was different, so that each one died the sooner from whatever tendency to weakness he may have naturally had. And those who didn't die displayed in varying degrees a type of anaemia or consumption, and sometimes a decline of the mental faculties.

DELILAH

(what a word!)

Insalubrious! I'm gonna remember that one.

ELIHU

(to Clifford)

You, on the other hand, don't seem any the worse for wear from today's adventure.

YOUNG CLIFFORD

I want to read all your notes on the place, Uncle Elihu.

ELIHU

(laughing)

Then YOU might die... of boredom!

YOUNG CLIFFORD

There was something in the cellar today. It smelled funny. And I saw something.

ELIHU

(hiding his genuine curiosity)

Did you now? What was that?

YOUNG CLIFFORD

There's white stuff that kind of grows on the dirt.

ELIHU

Hmm. Sounds like good old fashioned mold or fungus to me. Lots of cellars have--

YOUNG CLIFFORD

No, this was something dark - sort of yellow and shimmery - coming up from the ground.

DELILAH

Dr. Whipple...

ELIHU

Mmmmm. Best remedy for that, lad, is one of Delilah's delightful donuts. Right? And a sound night's rest.

MUSIC brings us out of the flashback and back to the present day.

7

LAW AND ORDER

7

Dr. Waite meets with Providence Police detective Walt Brennan.

BRENNAN

So, Dr. Waite, were you able to get anything out of Babbit? Did he remember anything?

DR. WAITE

Yes, Detective, I'm pleased to say he did. Following the electroconvulsive therapy he was able to share a number of memories.

BRENNAN

What about the uncle?

DR. WAITE

Dr. Whipple featured prominently in his recollections.

BRENNAN

Anything on the uncle's current whereabouts?

DR. WAITE

Not yet. But I have another session with him in just a few minutes. I'm hopeful he'll continue to regain memories.

BRENNAN

We can't wait forever, doctor.

DR. WAITE

Of course, I understand. But we're talking the human mind, Detective. It moves at its own pace.

BRENNAN

Sure, sure. But the D.A. wants to know if we've got enough evidence to charge him.

DR. WAITE

That is not my concern, Detective Brennan. I'm not aware that any crime's been committed. Do you even know if the uncle's dead?

BRENNAN

We know no one's seen Elihu Whipple since the night he and his nephew went to that house. Memory loss? Damned convenient if you ask me.

DR. WAITE

I assure you there's nothing convenient about it. But, I'm planning to play the Ediphone recording, to see if that jogs his memory.

BRENNAN

You ask me, there's better ways to jog--

DR. WAITE

I didn't ask you, Detective. Make no mistake, it is not my job to extract a confession for you. My medical opinion is that something traumatic happened to Clifford that night.

(ushering him to the door)

I'll let you know what progress we make.

BRENNAN

I'll show myself out.

The DOOR OPENS. Clifford is on the other side of it.

CLIFFORD

(surprised)

Oh, Detective... I...

BRENNAN

Mr. Babbit. Good day, Dr. Waite.

He goes. Clifford enters.

DR. WAITE

Come in, Clifford. Have a seat. How have you been feeling since our last session?

CLIFFORD

Good, I suppose. I have been a little sore.

DR. WAITE

That can happen with the muscle spasms. Comfortable now?

CLIFFORD

Yes, thank you.

DR. WAITE

Last week you were telling me about playing a game in the haunted house, and your uncle...

CLIFFORD

Right. He knew a lot about the house. I'd always ask him to tell me stories about the place, but he said that house's stories weren't for children.

DR. WAITE

Hmm. And how did that make you feel?

CLIFFORD

Even more curious, I suppose.

DR. WAITE

Why do you think both of you were so fascinated by that house?

CLIFFORD

I don't know. It was a mystery I guess. Something exciting: our own haunted house.

DR. WAITE

Your uncle was a physician. Did he think your obsession was a healthy one?

CLIFFORD

I wouldn't say I was obsessed, just interested. My great-uncle, now he was obsessed.

DR. WAITE

(struggling to contain his excitement)

Go on.

CLIFFORD

He always said it started just after he graduated from medical school. He was apprentice to a Dr. Hopkins here in Providence, back in... Oh, it must have been the 1850s.

MUSIC whisks us there in a flashback.

8

STRANGE CASES

8

In which Old DOC HOPKINS trains his young apprentice, a 25 year old Dr. Elihu Whipple.

DOC HOPKINS

So, Dr. Whipple, what did they teach you about death certificates?

YOUNG ELIHU

(dismissive)

Nothing much. We document the death: the manner, mechanism, proximate cause, underlying cause, etcetera etcetera... It's paperwork.

DOC HOPKINS

True, they're not glamorous. But, every death, no matter how humble, no matter how notorious, deserves to be properly recorded. Once you learn to read them properly, you'll see every one tells a story. Then you can learn to write one properly.

YOUNG ELIHU

Yes, Doctor Hopkins.

DOC HOPKINS

Did you take a look at the samples I gave you?

YOUNG ELIHU

Yes, sir.

DOC HOPKINS

And?

The RUSTLE OF PAPERS.

YOUNG ELIHU

Well I noticed this group of fever victims...

(thumbing through the papers)

...all lacking in blood.

DOC HOPKINS

Yes?

YOUNG ELIHU

Well...

DOC HOPKINS

What about them?

YOUNG ELIHU

They all lived at the same address in Benefit street. But they died years, decades apart. With the same symptoms. Strange.

DOC HOPKINS

Well done, very perceptive, Dr. Whipple... Yes, it is strange. The old Harris place...

YOUNG ELIHU

Sir?

DOC HOPKINS

I was never able to specify the manner of death. But it illustrates my point. You see all the certificates are marked "undetermined".

YOUNG ELIHU

(confused)

But these records all indicate it was some kind of anemia. It says here the blood--

DOC HOPKINS

Oh, you might think that. They were quite anemic. All four of them.

YOUNG ELIHU

Then wouldn't that count as a "natural" death?

DOC HOPKINS

Natural? Pshaw. Each one of them presented with a kind of progressive madness. They became a danger to their own families, attempted to attack relatives in the house, to cut their necks or wrists.

YOUNG ELIHU

Wait, each of them did this?

DOC HOPKINS

Oh yes. The authorities tended to overlook it at the time, these patients were all... uneducated folks of a decidedly lower station. No one of good reputation would live in that house. So these depredations were ignored.

YOUNG ELIHU

That doesn't seem right.

DOC HOPKINS

You'll find, young man, that sometimes a physician feels pressured to sign off on a document before completely understanding its story. But some stories aren't so easy to tell. Like how all four of these patients were observed to babble in French, a language I'm quite certain none of them studied to any extent.

YOUNG ELIHU

(flummoxed)

What... They... what are you saying?

MUSIC transition.

9

THE SESSION 1

9

CLIFFORD

It seems old Doc Hopkins was fascinated with the mystery of the Harris house and he passed that fascination on to my uncle. Back then, two of them would discuss it over drinks at the old Turk's Head Tavern.

MUSIC whisks us again to 1850s Providence.

10

DOCTORS OF EXPOSITION

10

Over drinks at the Turk's Head, we fade into the conversation as Doc Hopkins lays out what he knows about the house.

DOC HOPKINS

... the other new houses on the hill.

(MORE)

DOC HOPKINS (CONT'D)

So, William Harris built the house back in 1763 and moved in with his wife Rhoby Dexter and their children, Elkanah, Abigail, Ruth and William Jr. Rhoby had a still-born boy not long after.

YOUNG ELIHU

That happens.

DOC HOPKINS

Mm.

(sighs)

No child has been born alive in that house, Dr. Whipple.

YOUNG ELIHU

Ever? It's been, what, more than seventy-five years.

DOC HOPKINS

Not a one. Let's see...

(rummaging through his notes)

The Harris' maid, Hannah Bowen, died shortly after that child. Another servant, Eli Liddeason complained of sickness and a year later he was dead. William Harris himself died right after, and two years later, his daughter Elkanah.

YOUNG ELIHU

Good god.

DOC HOPKINS

That pushed his wife, the unfortunate Rhoby Harris, to madness.

YOUNG ELIHU

The poor woman.

DOC HOPKINS

Oh, we're not done yet. Rhoby's sister, Mercy Dexter, moved in to help care for the family, and she took ill. Then Mehitabel Pierce, the maid hired to replace Hannah Bowen, died, and her counterpart, a servant named Preserved Smith, left the family service saying "he disliked the smell of the place".

YOUNG ELIHU

And all this happened over how many years?

DOC HOPKINS

Five.

YOUNG ELIHU

That's...

DOC HOPKINS

Mercy hired two new servants: Ann White and Zenas Low.

YOUNG ELIHU

And they died?

DOC HOPKINS

Not exactly. It seems Ann was quite the gossip, spreading rumors about the house, so Mercy fired her. Replaced her with a woman named Maria Robbins. But Zenas Low, yes, he died in 1772.

YOUNG ELIHU

This is unbelievable.

DOC HOPKINS

It's all well documented. Poor Rhoby Harris' madness progressed. There's accounts of her screaming out the contents of her dreams. In very vivid, coarse French.

YOUNG ELIHU

And you say she didn't know French?

DOC HOPKINS

Not when she was lucid. William Jr. couldn't endure his mother's screaming and moved out to live with a cousin, Peleg Harris. About a year later, poor mad Rhoby was dead. William went on to join the army and made his way up the ranks through the Revolutionary War. Eventually he moved back home with a new bride, Phebe Hetfield, from Elizabethtown.

YOUNG ELIHU

No more now, enough...

DOC HOPKINS

He found his aunt, Mercy, a shriveled shell of her former self, cared for by Maria, the only remaining servant. You can probably imagine what's next: Phebe delivered a stillborn daughter early in 1782 and not long after that, Mercy died.

YOUNG ELIHU

Clearly people must have realized there was something wrong there.

DOC HOPKINS

Oh, aye. William built a new house in Westminster Street. In 1785 his son, Dutee was born there.

YOUNG ELIHU

(awaiting the next
horrible revelation)

And...?

DOC HOPKINS

William and Phebe died in 1797, but I don't think there's anything strange in that. That was the year of the yellow fever epidemic. Their son Dutee was raised by Peleg Harris's son, Rathbone.

YOUNG ELIHU

Good lord.

DOC HOPKINS

Barman, two more brandies!

(pause)

In 1804 the town council demanded the place be fumigated with sulphur, tar and gum camphor.

YOUNG ELIHU

Did that help?

DOC HOPKINS

What do you think?

He tosses coins on the bar. The barman PLUNKS down glasses for them.

DOC HOPKINS (CONT'D)

To your very good health, Dr. Whipple.

(MORE)

DOC HOPKINS (CONT'D)

(they toast and drink)

There were others, of course.
Gwenivere Stafford back in 1815. A
sweet old lady, and a boarder in
that house.

YOUNG ELIHU

Ah, yes. Here's her death
certificate.

DOC HOPKINS

(distracted)

Mm? Oh, yes. I was her physician.
She was wasting away. Anemic, like
the others. She was...
transfigured, most horribly. She'd
stare at me, eyes glassy. But I'd
see these flashes of a... hunger, I
suppose you'd call it. But that
wasn't the half of it.

YOUNG ELIHU

What do you mean?

DOC HOPKINS

I had a patient named Eleazar
Durfee. He was a school teacher, a
middle-aged fellow. This would have
been in '45.

YOUNG ELIHU

A full thirty years later.

DOC HOPKINS

Just so. Mr. Durfee, he rented a
room in that house. When I went to
see him, he was sickly and weak.
And he too was changed... a sort of
vacant look in his eyes. And he--

YOUNG ELIHU

Did you see the same flashes of--

DOC HOPKINS

The man barely had the strength to
lift his arm. But there was
something in the way he looked at
me I'll never forget...

TRANSITION MUSIC takes us on flashback of just a couple of
years.

11 THE HUNGER

11

We're in the bedroom in the Shunned House.

DOC HOPKINS
(15 years younger now)
Mr. Durfee, I want you to put this
sugar cube under your tongue. It
has laudanum on it...

DURFEE
(wheezes pathetically)

DOC HOPKINS
It'll help you sleep. Open up now.

DURFEE
(wheezes a question)

DOC HOPKINS
What's that?

DURFEE
(nearly dead)
Closer.

Suddenly Durfee LUNGES at him. SCARY MUSIC. TUSSLE. CLATTER
OF FURNITURE.

DOC HOPKINS
(struggling)
Eleazar! Stop it!

DURFEE
(GAGS on sugar cube)

The MUSIC quiets, as does Durfee.

12 DOCTORS OF EXPOSITION 2

12

We hear the sounds of the Turk's Head tavern again.

DOC HOPKINS
Tried to bite my throat.

YOUNG ELIHU
Good lord. Did the sedative calm
him?

DOC HOPKINS
Eleazar Durfee was dead before I
reached the bottom of the stairs.

YOUNG ELIHU
 All these people in that house.
 What do you think it was?

DOC HOPKINS
 As I wrote on the certificates.
 Undetermined.

Doc finishes his drink.

DOC HOPKINS (CONT'D)
 It's late and I'm old. I should be
 getting home.

YOUNG ELIHU
 Yes. Of course.
 (pause)
 This house, it's still there?

DOC HOPKINS
 Oh yes. Walk down Benefit Street on
 your way home. You'll know it when
 you see it.

Transition MUSIC brings us all the way back to the present.

13

THE SESSION 2

13

CLIFFORD
 So, yes, to use your words, my
 uncle may have become obsessed.
 Clearly there was something deeply
 wrong there. Something terrible
 connected with the house and not
 with the family.

DR. WAITE
 And what about you, Clifford? Did
 your uncle pass his obsession on to
 you?

CLIFFORD
 He didn't want to. I was always
 begging him to tell me more about
 the place, but he'd never say a
 thing. It wasn't until a couple of
 years ago. A few months after I
 graduated from college, I finally
 got him to engage with me at all on
 the topic.

Transition MUSIC.

14 THE INVESTIGATION

14

He returns to his uncle's house.

CLIFFORD

...I'm telling you, the place is evil!

ELIHU

Evil, eh? When you were a boy it was ghosts. So tell me, what evil is it, exactly?

CLIFFORD

Well, it's...

ELIHU

Where does it come from? What does it do?

CLIFFORD

I don't know.

ELIHU

Facts, young man! We'll get nowhere with your proclamations and superstitions - that's for simpletons. Be off with your talk of "evil". Come back to me with facts. Evidence! Then we'll talk.

MUSIC

15 THE SESSION 3

15

CLIFFORD

So I set out to find the proof my uncle demanded. Proof that went beyond his accounting of the house's countless tragedies. Evidence that might prove what I could feel in my heart.

DR. WAITE

Mm, interesting. Tell me about that.

CLIFFORD

I'd felt it ever since I was a boy. I mean intellectually I could understand that I got scared there when I was a kid. But...

DR. WAITE

Go on.

CLIFFORD

There really was something there. Something unlike anything I'd ever felt before or since. And it was coming for me.

DR. WAITE

For you? Personally?

CLIFFORD

I don't... I wanted to prove it to my uncle - and myself. My great uncle was uncomfortable with the term, but I could feel there was something evil about that house.

DR. WAITE

So what did you do?

CLIFFORD

I did my research. Learned everything I could about it. I even studied French so I could read the Parisian occult journal *Revue des Deux Mondes* in the search for clues.

DR. WAITE

Did you really?

CLIFFORD

I went to the Essex Institute. Do you know it? I saw the poor doomed Harris family - paintings of poor Rhoby and William, of Mercy Dexter and others. I found some utterly fascinating old documents there.

DR. WAITE

Such as?

CLIFFORD

Well... I found a curious account from a quilting bee back in 1773 attended by Ann White. Remember her? She was the Harris' servant dismissed for her loose tongue.

Revolutionary flashback MUSIC.

A quilting bee is underway; the year is 1773.

MARY

Be a dear, Georgianne, and pass the beeswax. Heavens but this thread wants to tangle!

GEORGIANNE

Here you are, Mary. I'll trade you for the plumbago. I can barely see my markings here.

BONNIE

This embroidery is certainly fine work. The Gutcheons will not have had a lovelier quilt, I'm sure.

ANN WHITE

It'll be a great comfort for them.

MARY

Ann, I've heard you're in service once again. Is the work treating you well?

ANN WHITE

Well enough. But it's work though, isn't it? But yes, we're off to a solid beginning.

MEGAN

And the family, what are they like?

ANN WHITE

Decent enough, Megan. A far cry better than before.

BONNIE

You mean the Harrises?

ANN WHITE

Oh, Bonnie, speak not their name. A curse on them.

GEORGIANNE

I'd swear that house of theirs is cursed already.

MEGAN

That's what happens if you build over old burying grounds.

MARY

Aye, a curse.

ANN WHITE

It was no curse. I told them what it was. But the missus refused to believe me.

BONNIE

What was it?

ANN WHITE

I'm not to repeat it.

BONNIE

Come now, you can tell us.

ANN WHITE

(sotto voce)

A vampire. Buried under the house.

MEGAN

Lord protect us!

BONNIE

No! What's that?

ANN WHITE

Dead beings who live on, feeding on the blood or breath of the living.

BONNIE

Living dead? I never heard of such an infernal notion!

ANN WHITE

No? Everyone in Exeter knows about them. They send their preying shapes or spirits abroad by night.

MEGAN

Mmmm hmm. My grandmother says the only way you can kill one is to exhume it and burn its heart, or at least drive a stake through it.

ANN WHITE

Aye. That's what they do in Exeter. Preserved Smith, did you know him? Worked at the house before me. I'll never forget him telling me "something sucked his breath at night".

MARY

Everyone knows there's something wrong in that house. The family, the servants dying left and right.

ANN WHITE

I kened it, Mary. And all I did was insist the cellar be searched for revenants. Does that seem like too much to ask?

GEORGIANNE

Perfectly reasonable if you ask me.

ANN WHITE

Well Rhoby Harris said it was presumptuous for a servant to demand such a thing. Gave me the boot.

BONNIE

She didn't!

All AD LIB to confirm that she did.

GEORGIANNE

Well, from what I hear, Rhoby Harris has all but lost her wits entirely.

ANN WHITE

Drove me mad and I was only there but a few years.

GEORGIANNE

Mehitabel Pierce, she used to work for the family. She bade me not to repeat it, but...

(conspiratorial)

Mercy Dexter herself told her of the queer things Rhoby says and does.

MARY

Like what?

MUSIC TRANSITION takes us to a sub-flashback.

17

FLASHBACK WITHIN A FLASHBACK

17

We're in the Shunned House in the late 18th century. Mercy Dexter looks after her mad/sickly sister, Rhoby. Rhoby sounds terrible. MUSIC UNDER.

MERCY

You need to eat. You won't get your strength back without some food in you.

RHOBY

I can't get my strength back with him watching me.

MERCY

Who's watching you, Rhoby?

RHOBY

He is.

MERCY

Oh, Rhoby... there's no one.

RHOBY

You can't see him? He'll wait until you go. All glassy-eyed, lurking.

MERCY

Who, Rhoby? Who is it?

MUSIC BEGINS TO BUILD.

RHOBY

(her voice changes to something deeper and creepier)

D'aucuns m'ont appelé Etienne. Mais les sages m'appelloient Celui qui Dévore les âmes.

MERCY

What? What did you say?

RHOBY

(still creepy)

J'ay grand soif de vous.

MERCY

(tired and terrified)

Stop it now, Rhoby! Stop that prattling! You know I don't understand it!

RHOBY

(wailing in fear)

He's killing me, Mercy! Teeth like knives!

MUSIC STING AND TRANSITION back to the present day.

18 THE SESSION 4

18

DR. WAITE

That sounds... disturbing. Did you find these accounts credible, Clifford?

CLIFFORD

I looked for corroborating documents. A librarian, Mrs. Cole, at the Shepley Library found just what I was after.

DR. WAITE

And what was that?

CLIFFORD

Minutes from a city council meeting in 1697.

DR. WAITE

1697? Your research does sound... exceptionally thorough. Did you feel it was necessary to--

CLIFFORD

Now this was really important. It revealed a whole new angle on all of it.

MUSIC sends us into flashback to early colonial era of the 17th century.

19 THE FRENCH CONNECTION

19

We're in a meeting of the Providence Town Council, 1697. Old-timeyness pervades the scene.

MAGISTRATE

...and that resolves the issue appertaining to the tanners' pits. Moving on...

(shuffles papers)

Next on the docket is a motion as to whether to permit a lease upon a tract of the subdivided lands of the Throckmorton property.

We hear a CHAIR SLIDE as EZEKIEL PRICE, 60, rises to bloviate.

PRICE

Permission to address this issue,
magistrate.

MAGISTRATE

Proceed, Goodman Price.

PRICE

Thank you. Friends, the question at hand here is not merely whether land from the Throckmorton parcel should be leased, but to whom. Providence is a thriving community, robust in agriculture, trade and manufacture. We are the envy of other colonies! And why is this so? We have honored the heritage of our homeland. Our colony is peopled with good, hardworking English folks, maintaining our traditions and folkways. Now let us see... the name of this proposed tenant is (clearly pained to say it) Etienne Roulet. Does that sound like a good English name to ye?

There's a CHUCKLE from the council members.

PRICE (CONT'D)

It's French as frog's legs! A Frenchman proposes to move his whole family into our midst. Now, this proposed lease is only for land up on the hill, but really, who among us, what good English citizens of Providence want to allow foreign elements so close to the city? To our wives and children? And make no mistake here, friends, the lessee is a Huguenot, and a swarthy one at that! I've looked into the man and by all accounts, he's not known as a skilled tradesman - no! He's bookish! And we all know the French are inclined to be litigious against their English neighbors. No! It's time we take a firm stand and send these foreigners--

LOUCKS

Objection!

MAGISTRATE

Yes, Mr. Loucks?

Josiah Loucks speaks with a Jed Bartlet kind of reason and compassion.

LOUCKS

Is it the purpose of this council to assassinate the character of a man unable to stand before us to defend himself?

PRICE

Come now, sir, do you contest the veracity of my claims?

LOUCKS

You tell us Monsieur Roulet is a Huguenot from France. But a man of your erudition is surely familiar with the Edict of Nantes, are you not? Where the French King granted French Protestants, the so-called Huguenots, the same rights as Catholics? And of course a learned fellow such as you knows that twelve years ago King Louis XIV revoked those protections. Our hard-working Protestant brethren suddenly found themselves vilified and persecuted in their own country. Some of us here know that experience for ourselves all too well. They've been forced to flee their homes in France. Some have sought refuge here. The Roulet family tried to settle in East Greenwich. Citizens there, whose thinking was in line with our esteemed Master Price, said "no", and cast them out.

There's some WALLA of disapproval.

LOUCKS (CONT'D)

Without a home, now they come here, to Providence. Our city, famed as a refuge for the free, odd and dissenting. Shall we turn them away? Shall we behave as the French King does? Or shall we embrace this learned man as our brother?

(MORE)

LOUCKS (CONT'D)

I have spake with Pardon
Tillinghast, and he's willing to
put monsieur Roulet to work as a
clerk in his warehouse. Let us open
our hearts and grant permission for
the lease of this property! What
say you?

We hear the old-time WALLA of the selectmen moving to vote on
the issue. MUSIC brings us back to the present.

20

THE SESSION 5

20

CLIFFORD

(effusive)

So the Roulets came around 1697
from Caude in France via East
Greenwich and the selectmen allowed
them to settle on the very property
where the Harris house would one
day be built. Finally, our French
connection! And the quilters were
right! The Roulets had indeed laid
out their graveyard behind their
cottage, and no record of any
transfer of graves existed. The
Harris house was built right on top
of it.

DR. WAITE

How did that discovery make you
feel?

CLIFFORD

Triumphant! It was starting to make
sense.

DR. WAITE

Was it?

CLIFFORD

Etienne's son, Paul, apparently was
quite a character and his erratic
behavior drew the ire of the
community. Of course Providence
never shared in the witchcraft
panic of her Puritan neighbors, but
folks took note that his prayers
were neither uttered at the proper
time nor directed toward the proper
object.

DR. WAITE

To what object were they directed?

CLIFFORD

The records never got that specific, but whatever it was, it was enough to set off a riot around 1737 that wiped out the family entirely.

DR. WAITE

Let's get back to--

CLIFFORD

No, no, wait. I found something else! It was an account of one Jacques Roulet of Caude, France, who in 1598 was condemned as a daemoniac.

DR. WAITE

That's disconcerting.

CLIFFORD

He'd been found covered in blood and shreds of flesh in some woods, shortly after the killing of a boy by a pair of wolves. One wolf was seen to lope away unhurt. Quite a coincidence, eh? Another Roulet? In Caude?

DR. WAITE

Perhaps, but...

CLIFFORD

Had anyone known of it back in 1697, well, I'm sure the selectmen would have voted differently. But perhaps the story somehow made its way to Providence. Perhaps that was the fuel for the 1737 riots!

DR. WAITE

Well, this is quite a history you were putting together. But I'd like to return to the present--

CLIFFORD

Yes, yes! Me too. I'd covered the past, but what of the present? That's why I spoke to Carrington Harris.

DR. WAITE
And who's that?

CLIFFORD
He's the current owner of the
house, the last in his family line.

DR. WAITE
And was your uncle present for this
meeting?

CLIFFORD
(troubled)
No... No, I was hoping to amass all
the information I could and then
give him what he wanted: facts.

DR. WAITE
I see.

Transition MUSIC.

21 TEA AND ALBATROSS

21

At the Babbit home, Clifford and Delilah await the arrival of Carrington Harris. Delilah is ten years older than she was last time we met her.

DELILAH
It's not right you going behind
your uncle's back, Clifford.

CLIFFORD
Oh I'll tell him, Delilah - I'm
gathering this information for him.

DELILAH
Well don't expect me to be keeping
secrets for you.

CLIFFORD
I don't--

The DOORBELL RINGS.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
There he is.

The DOOR OPENS to reveal CARRINGTON HARRIS, a genial chap in his 50s.

DELILAH

Mr. Harris, I presume? Please come in. May I take your hat?

CARRINGTON HARRIS

Why yes, thank you.

DELILAH

May I introduce Clifford Babbit. Mr. Harris.

CLIFFORD

Thank you so much for coming, Mr. Harris.

CARRINGTON HARRIS

Oh, you can call me Carrington.

CLIFFORD

Have a seat, Carrington. Delilah, would you please bring us some tea?

DELILAH

It's all ready, I'll just get it.

She GOES. The men SIT.

CARRINGTON HARRIS

So this is all about the Benefit Street house, eh? You seem awfully young to be a property broker.

CLIFFORD

Me? Oh, yes, I mean no! I'm not... looking to buy it. Are you trying to sell it?

CARRINGTON HARRIS

As if I could! No one wants the place. It's been nothing but an albatross. Can't use it, can't rent it, can't get rid of it.

CLIFFORD

Have you ever lived in it?

CARRINGTON HARRIS

Me? Good lord, no. The place doesn't even have plumbing! No one in the family has lived there in over a hundred years. Hasn't been a tenant of any kind since the Civil War. I haven't even been in it but a few times.

CLIFFORD

Oh really?

CARRINGTON HARRIS

Yes, just on assessment matters. My father used to store some old junk in there, but the roof barely keeps the rain out.

CLIFFORD

Have you ever had to deal with trespassers, or squatters or anything like that?

CARRINGTON HARRIS

No, not really. Even the hoboes leave it alone. Why do you ask?

CLIFFORD

I just thought there might be... reports of... I don't know... people who had seen...

CARRINGTON HARRIS

Seen what?

Delilah RETURNS with tea. The CLINKING of dishes on a tray.

DELILAH

Here you are gentlemen. There's sugar and lemon here, if you want it.

CLIFFORD

Thanks, Delilah. We can pour for ourselves.

DELILAH

Nonsense! You just go right on like I'm not even here.

She POURS, eavesdropping.

CARRINGTON HARRIS

You were saying? Reports... of what?

CLIFFORD

(hesitant)
Of...

DELILAH

Of mischievous children, playing where they shouldn't?

CLIFFORD

No, not--

CARRINGTON HARRIS

(laughing)

Oh, well, that. Yeah. There's a handyman keeps the fence in good repair. We haven't had too much trouble.

CLIFFORD

You're aware that there are lots of old stories about the place, aren't you?

CARRINGTON HARRIS

Of course - all sorts of crazy tales. I wouldn't have given them a second thought, but they're what makes the place impossible to rent.

CLIFFORD

Ah. Well I've been studying them. There's some fascinating details in old town records.

CARRINGTON HARRIS

(suspicion mounting)

Studying them? Why? What's this all about?

CLIFFORD

(flailing)

Oh, no, it's nothing.... It's just, the house, well, my great uncle too, who... a doctor, he knew that...

DELILAH

Mr. Babbit and his great uncle, Dr. Whipple, have long had a purely historical interest in that house of yours, Mr. Harris. They're a pair of academics. They don't mean any harm.

CARRINGTON HARRIS

I see. Well then, I suspect you already know more about the place than I do. I had a great uncle myself, Rathbone Harris. He's the last member of the family who really had anything much to do with it.

(MORE)

CARRINGTON HARRIS (CONT'D)

But I'm afraid I don't have any old ghost stories or skeletons in the closets there.

CLIFFORD

Of course. That's okay. I hope I haven't wasted your time.

DELILAH

If you don't mind my saying, sir, you do have one thing that's even better than old stories, Mr. Harris.

CARRINGTON HARRIS

(unaccustomed to good ideas from the hired help)

Oh? What's that?

DELILAH

Access. These men have studied that house about as much as a body could from the outside, but if they were to have a look around on the inside...

MUSIC STARTS.

CARRINGTON HARRIS

Inside?

CLIFFORD

With your permission, sir, I might find something new.

DELILAH

They might be able to finally put those old stories to rest and end its insalubrious reputation.

CARRINGTON HARRIS

Hmm. I don't know, my lawyer would probably--

CLIFFORD

I'd sign any kind of indemnity waiver he wants.

CARRINGTON HARRIS

(after a pause)

It's that interesting, is it?

CLIFFORD
 (very earnest)
 Yes sir, it is.

CARRINGTON HARRIS
 Well... I've never liked my lawyer
 very much anyway. No sense of
 humor.

Clifford and Delilah chuckle. Some RUSTLING AND CLINKING as
 Harris takes a key off a ring in his pocket.

CARRINGTON HARRIS (CONT'D)
 Here. This key opens the side door
 to the cellar off Benefit Street.

CLIFFORD
 Oh Carrington, thank you.

CARRINGTON HARRIS
 I can't imagine you'll find
 anything except dust and
 disappointment, but live it up. If
 you get yourself hurt, I'll deny
 this conversation ever took place.

CLIFFORD
 Of course.

DELILAH
 Don't you worry, sir. I'll look
 after him.

MUSIC TRANSITIONS.

22

THE SESSION 6

22

DR. WAITE
 Did you go to the house? Now that
 you had the key?

Awkward pause.

CLIFFORD
 I don't recall.

DR. WAITE
 Clifford...

CLIFFORD
 I... don't think I did. I don't
 remember going there.

DR. WAITE

I see. Did you tell your uncle that you had a key to the house?

CLIFFORD

No.

DR. WAITE

Why not?

CLIFFORD

I... I don't know.

DR. WAITE

It's hard to remember that, isn't it?

CLIFFORD

Mmmm.

DR. WAITE

Do you still have the key? Do you have it with you?

CLIFFORD

Yes.

DR. WAITE

Good. May I see it?

(taking it from him)

Yes, this will do handsomely. Clifford, I'd like to hypnotize you.

CLIFFORD

What? Why?

DR. WAITE

As you know, you've misplaced some of your memories. Your treatments have helped you find some of them. I think this could help us unlock more of them.

CLIFFORD

You think you can unlock memories with a key, eh?

DR. WAITE

Why not, eh? Lean back. Make yourself comfortable. You don't need to do anything but listen to my voice and keep your eye on the key. Deep breath. Good, just relax.

(MORE)

DR. WAITE (CONT'D)

And watch the key. And deep
breath... and watch the key. Now, I
want you to count backwards from
five. Go ahead.

CLIFFORD

Five. Four. Three. Two. One.

MUSIC helps us realize he's crossing into a hypnotic trance.

DR. WAITE

Very good. You are completely
relaxed but you are not asleep. I
want you to think back in time -
after Mr. Harris gave you the key.

CLIFFORD

Very well.

DR. WAITE

Where is it?

CLIFFORD

It's in my pocket.

DR. WAITE

Good. And where are you?

CLIFFORD

I'm walking. Down Benefit Street.
It's nighttime. Dark.

DR. WAITE

Why did you go there in the dark?

CLIFFORD

It was something Delilah said.

DR. WAITE

Really? I didn't think she shared
your... interest in ghosts and
vampires.

CLIFFORD

Oh she thought it was all nonsense.
But she did observe that in stories
about them, they always come out at
night.

DR. WAITE

I see. Is your uncle with you?

CLIFFORD

I'm alone.

DR. WAITE
Where are you going?

CLIFFORD
To the house. The cellar door. I...
I open it.
(sniffs)
There's a smell.

DR. WAITE
Do you go inside?

CLIFFORD
Yes.

His BREATHING IS RAGGED. We hear the events he narrates. The DOOR OPENS AND CLOSES behind him. A tease of creepy MUSIC underscores.

DR. WAITE
Where are you?

CLIFFORD
It's the cellar again.

DR. WAITE
Again?

CLIFFORD
Where I got stuck... when I was a boy.

DR. WAITE
Is anyone in the house?

CLIFFORD
I don't think so.

DR. WAITE
Can you see anything?

CLIFFORD
Yes. I have an electric torch from home.

We hear the DOOR UNLOCKING and then CLOSING behind Clifford as he returns to the cellar.

The CREEPY MUSIC ratchets up a notch.

DR. WAITE
Does it look different than before?

CLIFFORD

It's the same but... no. I see
uncanny shapes and distorted, half-
phosphorescent fungi. And--

He lets out a small GASP.

DR. WAITE

Go on.

CLIFFORD

There - among the whitish
deposits...

DR. WAITE

What is it?

CLIFFORD

That's the huddled form I saw on
the dirt as a boy.

DR. WAITE

Is it--

CLIFFORD

It's a sort of shimmering yellow
vapor coming up off the floor...
it's shaped... almost like a person
but it trails off...

DR. WAITE

Is it coming for you?

CLIFFORD

It's... No. It's going to the
chimney. No, it's stopping. It...
it's watching me.

DR. WAITE

It has eyes?

CLIFFORD

No. But somehow it's looking right
at me. It's going now, up the
chimney.

The MUSIC resolves.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)

It's gone, but I still smell it.

DR. WAITE

Now what's happening?

CLIFFORD
 Nothing. It's gone. I wait, but...
 still nothing. It's time to go
 home.

DR. WAITE
 And do what?

CLIFFORD
 Tell Uncle Elihu. Tell him
 everything.

DR. WAITE
 That's right, you did.

CLIFFORD
 Yes. But how do you know that?

DR. WAITE
 Delilah saw you. She told the
 police and they told me.

CLIFFORD
 Delilah? Is that why that detective
 keeps asking questions?

DR. WAITE
 Tell me what happened next.

CLIFFORD
 I... I told Uncle Elihu what I'd
 seen. In the cellar. Told him
 everything.

23 GAME ON

23

Back at the Babbit house, Clifford brings Elihu up to date.

CLIFFORD
 ...so, those are my facts. What do
 you think, Uncle Elihu?

ELIHU
 I think... you're a remarkable
 young man. I'm very proud of you,
 Clifford.

CLIFFORD
 (moved)
 You are?

ELIHU

I've spent years researching that old house. I learned things, but you... you've found key facts and now you literally have the key. I couldn't be more proud of you. I've wanted to tell you that since you were a boy, but I couldn't encourage you back then - too risky. But now you're ready. I've been waiting for this day. Now we can tackle it together. It's time, my boy.

CLIFFORD

Time for what?

ELIHU

To test, and if possible, destroy the horror in that house.

VERY THRILLING MUSIC

24 THE SESSION 6.5 24

DR. WAITE

Delilah confirmed that she helped you and your uncle procure your equipment, and that she helped you unload it at the house.

25 THE LOAD-IN 25

We hear the three of them UNLOADING BOXES from Elihu's car onto the sidewalk of Benefit Street.

DELILAH

You make me look as crazy as the two of you, what with bringing all this stuff into the cellar.

ELIHU

Careful with that, Delilah. It's very fragile.

CLIFFORD

Just set the rest of it on the sidewalk. We'll take it inside.

DELILAH

Mm-hm... Camp chairs, a cot, just how long are you two planning to stay here?

ELIHU

We're not sure. We just want to be well prepared.

DELILAH

And if the two of you don't come back, you expect me to come looking for you?

BOTH

No.

DELILAH

Suit yourselves.

CLIFFORD

Thank you, Delilah. We appreciate it.

ELIHU

I'm sure we'll be back before long.

DELILAH

Looks like it's going to rain. You two best get inside. I hope you still have at least that much sense. You two be careful.

CLIFFORD

Yes, ma'am.

The CAR DOOR CLOSES and she DRIVES OFF.

ELIHU

Right, let's get the rest of this inside before neighbors start asking questions.

MUSIC.

26

THE VIGIL

26

CELLAR AMBIANCE. The last heavy box of stuff lands with a DUSTY THUD.

CLIFFORD

How'd you get all this stuff, anyway?

(MORE)

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)

I mean, the camping gear I can understand, and the Ediphone recorder but the--

ELIHU

(with a chuckle)

I called in a few favors with some old colleagues at the laboratories at Brown to get the Crookes tube and the batteries.

CLIFFORD

What's it do?

ELIHU

Well, as we don't know what we're up against here, I tried to prepare for all eventualities. Should it prove intangible or invulnerable to mechanical force, the Crookes tube should allow us to inundate it with ether radiation.

CLIFFORD

How does it work?

We hear WEIRD SCIENCE NOISES as Elihu demonstrates the apparatus.

ELIHU

When we turn it on here, electricity from this battery array moves through an induction coil here and is introduced into this vacuum tube here. The movement of the electrical particles between the cathode and the anode creates ionized rays of energy which get emitted here if you depress this trigger.

CLIFFORD

It's like a real life ray gun...

With a CLICK he shuts it off and the science noises stop.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)

(grabbing something else)

What about this?

We hear a SMALL BURST OF FLAME.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)

(surprised)

Oh my god!

ELIHU

Careful there! That's a flame thrower. Lent to me by a friend at the Cranston Street Armory. If it could clear a trench of Huns in Flanders, it should suffice for anything we run into here.

Distant THUNDER. MUSIC UNDERSCORE BEGINS.

ELIHU (CONT'D)

Scared?

CLIFFORD

(scared)

No. Nervous maybe...

ELIHU

(also scared)

Me too. Nervous. That's all right. Scientific study and reflection teach us that the known universe of three dimensions is only the merest fraction of the whole cosmos of substance and energy. You and I have amassed a great deal of evidence indicating the tenacious existence of certain forces of great power in this house, and so far as the human point of view is concerned, exceptional malignancy. I'd say we're entitled to a few nerves.

CLIFFORD

Right. That doesn't make us superstitious. I'm not a kid anymore. I don't think we're going to see a "vampire" or a "werewolf".

ELIHU

Ah, there was a time when you were sure there were ghosts in this house.

They share an UNEASY LAUGH.

ELIHU (CONT'D)

As men of science, we admit the possibility of certain unfamiliar and unclassified modifications of vital force and attenuated matter; existing very infrequently in three-dimensional space because of its more intimate connection with other spatial units, yet close enough to the boundary of our own to furnish us occasional manifestations which we, for lack of a proper vantage-point, may never hope to understand.

CLIFFORD

There's something here. And we don't know what it is.

ELIHU

Like I said.

THUNDER.

ELIHU (CONT'D)

Maybe some coffee?

CLIFFORD

Please.

He POURS SOME from the Thermos.

ELIHU

I think we can agree that an incontrovertible array of facts point to some lingering influence on the house.

CLIFFORD

I concur. And it seems to have begun with the French settlers from two centuries ago.

ELIHU

Yes.

CLIFFORD

And somehow it continues to operate after their deaths.

ELIHU

It's my theory that the Roulet family had an abnormal affinity for outer circles of entity — dark spheres which for normal folk hold only repulsion and terror. Perhaps the riots of the seventeen-thirties set in motion certain kinetic patterns in the morbid brain of one or more of them...

CLIFFORD

That Paul Roulet seems to have been decidedly sinister.

ELIHU

Indeed. What if he somehow survived being murdered and buried by the mob, and continued to function in some multiple-dimensional space hellbent on revenge?

CLIFFORD

But survived how?

ELIHU

Such a thing can no longer be thought of as a physical or biochemical impossibility in the light of the new theories of relativity and intra-atomic action. I can easily imagine an alien nucleus of substance or energy, formless or otherwise, kept alive by imperceptible or immaterial subtractions from the life-force or bodily tissues and fluids of other and more palpably living things into which it penetrates and with whose fabric it sometimes completely merges itself.

CLIFFORD

Like a vampire!

ELIHU

Exactly.

CLIFFORD

Staying alive by attacking people living in this house.

ELIHU

Perhaps. Or maybe it's just self-preservation. It doesn't matter. Such a thing is an anomaly and an intruder, whose extirpation is our utmost duty.

Rumble of THUNDER.

CLIFFORD

Ann White said it was a vampire more than a hundred years ago.

ELIHU

Insightful, those folks from Exeter.

CLIFFORD

It could be pure energy. A form ethereal and outside the realm of substance.

ELIHU

I suspect it's partly material; some unknown and equivocal mass of plasticity, capable of changing at will to nebulous approximations of the solid, liquid, gaseous, or tenuously unparticled states. The anthropomorphic patch of mould on the floor, the form of the yellowish vapor... it all argues some connection with the human shape.

CLIFFORD

Look at it - there on the ground - it looks more distinct than it did before.

ELIHU

Mmm. Perhaps. Is it still raining out?

CLIFFORD

Sounds like it. A little.

Pause.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)

You can almost feel the decay in here.

ELIHU
 (tired)
 How's that?

CLIFFORD
 Decay. The mildewed walls. Those rotten bits of furniture over there. The old planks and beams... the crumbling stairs. You don't feel it?

ELIHU
 Mmm. The door to the outside's unlocked?

CLIFFORD
 I'll check.

FOOTSTEPS.

ELIHU
 I think our "tools" here should allow us to handle whatever may be here. Hard to know how long it might take.

CLIFFORD
 (at the door)
 Yes, it's closed but not locked.
 (grasping for levity)
 We'd make quite a sight, the two of us dashing out into Benefit Street with a flame thrower. That'd get the neighbors talking.

ELIHU
 Ha. They'd probably haul us off to Waite's asylum!

MUSIC

27 THE SESSION 7

27

DR. WAITE
 Clifford?

Pause.

CLIFFORD
 (drowsy)
 Yes, Dr. Waite.

DR. WAITE

You're still in the cellar with your uncle. I need you to tell me what's happening now.

CLIFFORD

Just... small talk. He's sleepy. He looks so old. I don't think I've ever really appreciated just how old he is.

DR. WAITE

What's he doing?

CLIFFORD

Sleeping. On the cot.

We hear the LIGHT SNORES of Elihu. The RAIN OUTSIDE. An occasional DRIP and CREAK from the house.

DR. WAITE

And you?

CLIFFORD

Just staring at the crumbling masonry. A feeble light's coming in through the windows from the streetlights outside. It's stuffy... I need a breath of fresh air.

We hear Clifford GO TO THE DOOR AND OPEN IT. He INHALES the night air deeply. He YAWNS. The DOOR CLOSES.

ELIHU

(mumbles)

DR. WAITE

Did you hear something?

CLIFFORD

He's talking in his sleep. I'm switching on the Ediphone recorder.

28

EDIPHONE

28

We hear the EDIPHONE recorder spin up and the MUMBLINGS of Elihu who seems to be having a nightmare. Elihu's BREATHING IS VERY IRREGULAR.

CLIFFORD
 (into recorder)
 My uncle's stirring in his sleep.
 It's 12:22am. Elihu?

The RUSTLE of a blanket.

ELIHU
 (a choking moan)

CLIFFORD
 Can you hear that? Let me get the
 electric torch.

CLICK.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
 He's turned away from me. I'm going
 to cross over...

We hear him moving further away from the microphone as he
 CROSSES over to see Elihu's other side. Clifford GASPS and
 comes back to the mic quickly.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
 He's...it's his expression. Maybe
 he's dreaming, but he's so
 agitated. He almost doesn't look
 like himself. His face is covered
 in sweat.

ELIHU
 (muttering)

CLIFFORD
 Wait. What?

ELIHU
 (agitated muttering)

CLIFFORD
 I don't know if the recorder's
 getting this. Here, I'll reach the
 microphone toward--

We hear a slight KERFUFFLE, and then...

ELIHU
 (mumbling)
 ...Adonc, ils vinrent. Occasion
 bienvenue pour moy mesme de me
 repaistre du sang et de la vie
 d'iceux.

CLIFFORD
My god. That's French!

RUSTLING and LURCHING.

ELIHU
(gasping)
...can't breathe!

CLIFFORD
Elihu!

He shuts the recorder off and lunges for the cot.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
It's you.

ELIHU
(breath recovering)
Who?

CLIFFORD
Are you all right? You were--

ELIHU
Dreaming! Yes. No. My god...

CLIFFORD
What? What did you dream?

ELIHU
(reliving it)
At first, it was nothing: a very ordinary series of dream-pictures. But then... It was of this world, and yet not of it... a shadowy geometrical confusion, familiar and unfamiliar. Perturbing combinations, like pictures superimposed one upon another; time and space seemed dissolved, mixed... Like a kaleidoscope of phantasmal images...

CLIFFORD
The images, what were they?

ELIHU
I lay in a pit with a crowd of angry faces looking down at me - long hair and three cornered hats...

(MORE)

ELIHU (CONT'D)

I was in an old house - but its inhabitants constantly changed, new faces, new furnishings, even the rooms and doors changed... and the queer thing was...

(sheepishly)

The faces... I think they were members of the Harris family.

CLIFFORD

Your breathing was--

ELIHU

I couldn't catch my breath. Like something inside my body trying to wrest my vital processes away.

CLIFFORD

For a man of eighty--

ELIHU

Eighty one! Don't be trying to short change me. Dreams... Hardly surprising the stuff and nonsense that bubbles up with our minds so singularly focused on this house all these years.

CLIFFORD

(worried)

You were speaking French, Elihu.

ELIHU

Was I? And you think... No... I...

CLIFFORD

I don't know what to think.

ELIHU

Are you all right?

CLIFFORD

Yes, sir. I think so. Tired.

ELIHU

Yes, yes, you young fellows need your sleep. Have a bit of a lie down. I'll wake you if anything happens.

CLIFFORD

Are you sure?

ELIHU
 (rising)
 Oh yes. Now where's that thermos
 with the coffee?

MUSIC.

29

THE SESSION 8

29

DR. WAITE
 So you went to sleep on the cot.
 What happened next?

CLIFFORD
 (scared)
 I... I don't know.

DR. WAITE
 I think you do.

CLIFFORD
 I... I don't remember.

DR. WAITE
 You're in safe place now. You're
 relaxed. You can tell me what
 happened after you fell asleep.

CLIFFORD
 I was asleep! I don't... How could
 I remember?

DR. WAITE
 Your uncle used the Ediphone to
 make a recording. I have it here
 and I'm going to play it for you.
 Remember, you're perfectly safe
 here.

Dr. Waite FITS A CYLINDER onto his Ediphone and plays it. We
 hear the NEEDLE SCRATCHING in the groove. We hear a TINNY
 RECORDING of Clifford TOSSING AND TURNING AND MUMBLING -
 possibly in French. [see EDIPHONE RECORDING at end for full
 script of cylinder contents]

DR. WAITE (CONT'D)
 Is that you, Clifford?

CLIFFORD
 I don't know. That could be anyone.

DR. WAITE

It sounds like your sleep was
uneasy.

ELIHU

(on recording, off)
Hmm, poor lad.

He YAWNS and pours more coffee. More TOSSING and MUMBLING from Clifford on the recording. There's a note of violent desperation in it.

ELIHU (CONT'D)

He seems to be stirring more. I
barely managed to nod off here.

A little more MUMBLING and RUSTLING.

CLIFFORD

I'm sorry, but I don't--

DR. WAITE

Shhh... listen to this.

The recorder replays the quiet scene for an uncomfortably long time. Suddenly, Elihu lets out a PITEOUS SCREAM OF SOUL SHATTERING, ABJECT TERROR. MUSIC OF ABJECT TERROR! In the recording, Clifford awakes and leaps up. It's unclear what exactly has happened. The recording comes to an end. Dr. Waite SHUTS IT OFF.

MUSIC escalates in intensity through the scene.

DR. WAITE (CONT'D)

What happened, Clifford?

CLIFFORD

(stunned)
I... I don't know.

DR. WAITE

I think you do know. You woke up.
What did you do?

CLIFFORD

(in a fog of memory and
fear)
...a scream.

DR. WAITE

So you heard a scream. It was your
uncle?

CLIFFORD

Did I?

DR. WAITE

You just said you did.

CLIFFORD

Right. Yes. But after that... I...
I really don't...

DR. WAITE

What happened to your uncle?

CLIFFORD

Are you not listening to me? I
don't remember!

DR. WAITE

(stern)

What did you do, Clifford? Did you
hurt your uncle?

CLIFFORD

What? No, god no... I had to get
out.

DR. WAITE

You went outside.

CLIFFORD

Yes. I think so.

DR. WAITE

You did. We have witnesses who saw
you walking past the Athenaeum.

CLIFFORD

That may be. I don't really...

DR. WAITE

It happened, Clifford. You were
there.

CLIFFORD

(dimly)

It was raining.

DR. WAITE

Where did you go?

CLIFFORD

Uh... home?

DR. WAITE

I don't want you to guess. You need to remember what happened.

CLIFFORD

I went home.

DR. WAITE

That's right. Delilah saw you there. Do you remember what you did?

CLIFFORD

I... I made a telephone call...

DR. WAITE

Who did you call?

CLIFFORD

Butterfield's hardware store.

FLASHBACK MUSIC

31 RINGING BUTTERFIELD'S

31

We fade in to the middle of the call. Clifford is a bit panicky.

CLIFFORD

...that's right, charge it to the Babbit account. I'll need a pickaxe... a spade, and acid. ...The strongest. Yes, hydrochloric. What's the biggest size you have? ...A carboy? Um, I'll take four-- no, make it six. ...A what? Oh, right, a gas mask. Good idea, add that.

(pause)

No, I need it delivered, as soon as possible. 135 Benefit Street, the cellar door. Yes, thank you.

Clifford HANGS UP and heaves a great sigh. Delilah walks in.

DELILAH

(concerned)

Clifford? What's all that about?

CLIFFORD

Delilah... I didn't know you were...

DELILAH

Well?

CLIFFORD

(choking back tears)

You shouldn't... I can't tell you.

DELILAH

What do you mean "you can't tell me"? Where's Dr. Whipple?

CLIFFORD

(barely holding on)

He's... We...

DELILAH

(absorbing the gravity)

Clifford... what's happened?

(pause)

You know there's nothing you can't tell me.

CLIFFORD

Not this. Just... stay out of it!

DELILAH

Clifford!

CLIFFORD

I'm sorry. I'll... forgive me!

As Clifford RUNS OUT, MUSIC returns us to Waite's asylum.

32

THE SESSION 9

32

MUSIC CONTINUES UNDER.

DR. WAITE

(building in intensity)

A shovel? Acid? Why did you need these things, Clifford?

CLIFFORD

(his brain starts shutting down again)

I... I don't know.

DR. WAITE

Why did you need to dig in the cellar? What happened to your uncle?

CLIFFORD
 (nearly in tears)
 I don't know.

DR. WAITE
 Yes you do. You heard him scream!
 Did you kill Elihu Whipple?

CLIFFORD
 What? No. I would never...

DR. WAITE
 Maybe you weren't in control of
 your faculties.

CLIFFORD
 I would never do that. Never!

DR. WAITE
 Then tell me what you saw!

CLIFFORD
 I can't.

DR. WAITE
 You must!

A final emotional barrier gives way and Clifford allows himself to relive that moment. The MUSIC HITS A CLIMAX and then resets, easing us back into the cellar.

We hear the sounds from the scene in the cellar as Clifford relives it. MUSIC UNDERSCORE

CLIFFORD
 I wasn't facing him. I was facing
 the door when I heard him cry out.
 The room... there was this
 yellowish glow and this stench. I
 turned to look...

DR. WAITE
 Keep going. What did you see?

CLIFFORD
 It was worse than I had dreaded. Oh
 god! The earth was ridden with
 fungus... a vaporous corpse-light,
 yellow and diseased, steamed up,
 bubbled and lapped to a gigantic
 height in a... humanoid outline! I
 could see the chimney and fireplace
 through it.

(MORE)

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)

It was all eyes - wolfish and mocking - and the head... like an insect's... dissolved at the top to a thin stream of mist which finally vanished up the chimney. But no...

DR. WAITE

So it was like a ghost--

CLIFFORD

Ha! No! God, no! It was...a seething, dimly phosphorescent cloud of fungous loathsomeness, enveloping and dissolving the one object to which all my attention was focussed.

DR. WAITE

And what was that?

CLIFFORD

(reliving it all)

My uncle! Elihu Whipple! He was leering and gibbering at me... his features were blackening and decaying right in front of me... he reached out dripping claws to rend me in the fury which this horror had brought!

DR. WAITE

Oh my--

CLIFFORD

I'd drilled myself in preparation for the crucial moment, and blind training saved me. This bubbling evil was nothing material chemistry could hurt so I ignored the flame-thrower and threw on the current of the ray gun.

DR. WAITE

That energy device!

CLICK: SCIENCE NOISE!

CLIFFORD

Yes! I aimed the ether radiations and fired. There was a bluish haze and a frenzied sputtering.

DR. WAITE

You fired at your uncle. What happened?

CLIFFORD

(wry)

It had no effect whatever.

(pause)

It was then I saw the fresh horror that sent me reeling into the street.

DR. WAITE

Yes...

CLIFFORD

In that dim blend of blue and yellow the form of my uncle had commenced a nauseous liquefaction that eludes all description. Lit by the mixed and uncertain rays, he was at once a devil and a multitude, a charnel-house and a pageant. His gelatinous face assumed a dozen... a hundred... aspects... grinning, as it sank to the ground on a body that melted like tallow, in likenesses strange and yet not strange.

DR. WAITE

What... who?

CLIFFORD

I saw the features of the Harrises. I'd seen their portraits and here they were again: young, old, male, female, familiar and unfamiliar. Toward the last, a blend of faces of servants and babies flickered close to the floor where a pool of greenish grease was spreading, and it seemed as though the shifting features fought against themselves, and strove to form contours like those of my uncle's kindly face.

DR. WAITE

Oh, Clifford.

CLIFFORD

I think that at that moment he still existed.

(breaking down)

(MORE)

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)

I think he... tried to bid me
farewell.

DR. WAITE

My word.

CLIFFORD

I... I staggered out into the
street...down Hopkins Street, and
over the bridge... I don't know
where. But I looked back as the
dawn unfolded wetly from the east,
and beckoned me to the place where
my terrible work was still
unfinished.

DR. WAITE

Wait, you went back to that house?

CLIFFORD

Yes.

DR. WAITE

(incredulous)

You didn't go for help?

CLIFFORD

Help? Who could help with this? Who
could I tell?

DR. WAITE

What about Delilah? Couldn't she--

CLIFFORD

No! No! How I could I tell her...

DR. WAITE

Well... yes, I see.

CLIFFORD

(struggling to keep his
composure)

Inside, the grease was gone, drawn
into the porous floor. And in front
of the fireplace was no vestige of
the giant doubled-up form in nitre.
I looked at the cot, the chairs,
the instruments... and the yellowed
straw hat of my uncle. I was in a
daze - I could scarcely recall what
was dream and what was reality.

DR. WAITE

Could it all have been a dream?

CLIFFORD

I wish it was! Doctor, I witnessed things more horrible than I could dream. I sat on the cot and thought just what had happened, and how I might end the horror.

DR. WAITE

Clifford, what you've described to me... you know it can't have been--

CLIFFORD

(angry)

Real? I don't know what it was, Doctor - but it WAS real. It didn't seem to be matter, or ether, nor anything else conceivable by mortal mind. What, then, but some exotic emanation; some vampirish vapor such as Exeter rustics say lurks over certain churchyards? This I felt was the clue, and again I looked at the floor in front of the fireplace where the mould and nitre had taken strange forms.

In ten minutes I made up my mind and set out for home. There I bathed, ate, and called Butterfield's with my order.

DR. WAITE

And that's when you---

Through the following, we hear Clifford's toil as he DIGS in the cellar earth. As he relives the story, Clifford becomes increasingly composed while Dr. Waite becomes increasingly terrified.

CLIFFORD

At 11 a.m. the next day I commenced digging. It was sunny weather, and I was glad of that. I was still alone, for as much as I feared the unknown horror I sought, there was more fear in the thought of telling anybody.

DR. WAITE

Did you see anything in the dirt?

CLIFFORD

As I turned up the stinking black earth in front of the fireplace, I trembled at the thoughts of what I might uncover. Some secrets are not good for mankind, and this was one of them.

DR. WAITE

(now truly frightened)
You really shouldn't have--

CLIFFORD

Too late for that, doctor. After a while I was standing in the large hole I had dug. It was now about six feet square, and the evil smell had increased. I no longer doubted that I was about to make contact with the hellish thing whose emanations had cursed the house for over a century and a half. I wondered what it would look like - what its form and substance would be.

At length I climbed out of the hole and dispersed the heaped-up dirt, then arranged the great carboys of acid around and near two sides, so that I might empty them into the pit in quick succession.

DIGGING.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)

I continued my excavation. The smell grew so bad that I put on the gas mask. I was unnerved at my proximity to a nameless thing at the bottom of a pit. Then suddenly--

We hear the SHOVEL HIT SOMETHING SOFTER AND MEATIER than dirt.

DR. WAITE

Good god man, what was it?

CLIFFORD

I steeled myself and scraped away more dirt in the light of the electric torch.

(MORE)

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)

There was tissue of some kind - fishy and glassy - a kind of semi-putrid congealed jelly with suggestions of translucency. I scraped further, and saw that it had form. It was more than a foot across, and it was somewhat... spherical. It took me a moment to understand what I was looking at. And then it opened. And it... looked at me.

DR. WAITE

(mind blowing)

It didn't.

CLIFFORD

I scrambled out of the hole and in a terrified panic I unstoppered four carboys of acid.

SPLOOSH! SFX and MUSIC RAMPS UP. Maybe a satisfying hint of VAMPIRE SUFFERING.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)

A blinding maelstrom of greenish-yellow vapor surged up as the floods of acid descended. It was... shocking... unspeakably so. I emptied down the two remaining carboys for good measure, and after the bubbling stopped I felt it safe to shovel the earth back into the pit. It was twilight before I was done, but fear had gone out of the place. The dampness was less foetid, and all the strange fungi had withered to a kind of harmless greyish powder, which blew ash-like along the floor.

DR. WAITE

Do you...think it worked? Is it gone?

CLIFFORD

One of earth's nethermost terrors perished forever; and if there be a hell, it had received at last the daemon soul of an unhallowed thing.

DR. WAITE

Good lord. And your poor uncle, there was no more sign of--

CLIFFORD

(moved)

No, doctor. That Ediphone cylinder you have there. That's all that's left of him. May I see it?

DR. WAITE

(hesitant)

Of course.

A little CLUNKING as the cylinder is removed from the machine. Then a SMASH as Clifford throws it to the floor.

DR. WAITE (CONT'D)

Clifford! What have you done? That was--

CLIFFORD

Mine! To do with as I see fit. And I don't want to hear that recording ever again. Damn you for making me listen to it!

DR. WAITE

Clifford, I'm... It's all right. You're safe here. I believe you.

CLIFFORD

(with a mirthless laugh)

Good. But who's going to believe YOU? That detective outside the door? Or... Delilah?

DR. WAITE

We should talk about that.

CLIFFORD

Should we? No, I don't think we should. We're done here, Doctor. It's been months since that dreadful night in that shunned house. I patted down the last of the earth over my dear uncle's final resting place, and I shed the first of what I know will be many tears in his memory.

(composing himself with a deep breath)

But Carrington Harris finally rented the place. He's renovating it for the new tenants. He actually thanked me.

DR. WAITE

Really?

CLIFFORD

Walk by it some time. You'll see.
The barren old trees in the yard
have blossoms on them, and last
week I saw a pair of birds nesting
in their gnarled boughs.

MUSIC SWELL.

34

CONCLUSION

34

LESTER MAYHEW

You've been listening to "The
Shunned House", brought to you by
our sponsor, Veronal! Your secret
for a really, really sound night's
sleep.

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

MUSIC.

ANNOUNCER

"The Shunned House" was adapted for
radio and produced by Sean Branney
and Andrew Leman. Based on the
story by H.P. Lovecraft. Original
music by The Composer. The Dark
Adventure Ensemble featured: many
fine actors. Tune in next week for
"Knutbaard in The Forbidden Fjord",
a tale of virile Viking raiders.

Dark Adventure Radio Theatre is a
production of the HPLHS
Broadcasting Group, a subsidiary of
HPLHS, Inc., copyright 1931...plus
ninety two.

Radio STATIC and fade out.

35

THE EDIPHONE RECORDING

35

LIGHT RAIN OUTSIDE. TOSSING AND TURNING ON THE COT.

CLIFFORD
(Mumbles. Maybe French.)

ELIHU
Mmm. Poor lad.

THUNDER. MORE AGGRESSIVE TOSSING AND TURNING.

ELIHU (CONT'D)
He seems to be stirring more. I
barely managed to nod off here.

CLIFFORD
(Desperate, agitated
mumbling.)

The MICROPHONE MOVES.

ELIHU
(terrified)
My god. Clifford? Is that...
AAAAAAAAAAAAAHHH!

As Elihu screams in terror, the MICROPHONE FALLS to the
floor. Clifford JUMPS UP.

CLIFFORD
Uncle--

NEEDLE SCRATCH ends recording.

*