

THE WHITE TREE: A TALE OF INSPECTOR LEGRASSE

Written by

Sean Branney

Inspired by "The Call of Cthulhu"
By H. P. Lovecraft

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

Dark Adventure Radio THEME MUSIC.

ANNOUNCER

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

MUSIC CRESCENDO.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

This is Dark Adventure Radio Theatre, with your host Creighton Cobb. Today's episode: "The White Tree: a Tale of Inspector Legrasse".

THEME MUSIC DIMINISHES. A CREEPY AND MALIGN UNDERSCORING CASTING A VERY DARK TONE. Creighton Cobb ushers in the house with a slightly Vincent Price-ian tone.

CREIGHTON COBB

The police inspector who once probed the mysteries of the Cthulhu cult now finds himself on a case which leads him once again into the foreboding bayous of Louisiana. Will his investigations pit him against deranged cultists, the abominations they worship, or something even more evil and insidious?

MUSIC PUNCTUATION

CREIGHTON COBB (CONT'D)

But first, a word from our sponsor.

A few piano notes from the GRIP-U-RYTE JINGLE.

CREIGHTON COBB (CONT'D)

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(MORE)

CREIGHTON COBB (CONT'D)

Our unique, patented design guarantees it not to slip whether you're at work or play. Grip-U-Ryte is lightweight and waterproof! And our dry cell batteries provide genuine electrical stimulation. Don't wait another day - order our free booklet "Advice for the Ruptured" today.

ANNOUNCER

(quick)

For your free informative booklet, write to Department G, Grip-U-Ryte Medical Supply Company, Box 402, Toledo, Ohio.

CREIGHTON COBB

Grip-U-Ryte - the truss you can trust.

GRIP-U-RYTE JINGLE.

Dark Adventure LEAD-IN MUSIC.

CREIGHTON COBB (CONT'D)

And now, Dark Adventure Radio Theatre presents "The White Tree" - a tale of Inspector Legrasse.

2

GRADUATION

2

Fade up on the closing hour of a graduation party for young CLAUDE LEGRASSE. There are a few distant conversations and someone's NOODLING ON A BANJO. Sipping a bourbon is his grandfather, John Raymond LEGRASSE.

LEGRASSE

Well, young man, I hope you enjoyed your graduation party.

CLAUDE

I most certainly did, grandpa. I'm glad you could be here.

LEGRASSE

Wouldn't miss it. I remember you knee high to a grasshopper... Now look at you, a high school graduate. My, my... What's next for you? I reckon you've been giving that some thought?

CLAUDE

Yes, sir.

Pause.

LEGRASSE

And?

CLAUDE

I'm thinking I want to join the police. Like you. "Inspector Legrasse - New Orleans Police Department".

LEGRASSE

Now why on God's green earth would you want to go and do a thing like that? Huh?

CLAUDE

Well...

LEGRASSE

You got a brain in your head, boy. Go off to college. Get yourself an education.

CLAUDE

But, police work is exciting. And I'd be helping people. Bringing... I don't know... justice.

Legrasse SNORTS dismissively.

CLAUDE (CONT'D)

What? I'm brave enough, I'm smart enough. I think I could be a good cop!

LEGRASSE

Claude, you listen to me and you listen good. Policemen aren't no different than any other men. There's good ones, there's brave ones, and there's ones that aren't so good and aren't so brave.

CLAUDE

Isn't that all the more reason for me to join the force?

LEGRASSE

What about architecture? I hear they got a good program at Louisiana State.

CLAUDE

Grandpa!

LEGRASSE

Justice... bravery... Fetch me that bottle Claude.

Claude does and Legrasse pours himself a refill.

LEGRASSE (CONT'D)

I seen things on the job, Claude. Things no man should have to see.

CLAUDE

Well you were on the job for...

LEGRASSE

Thirty six years... It's true, on the good days you get excitement. You work with good, brave men. You deliver justice. But Claude, they ain't all good days.

CLAUDE

Well, no, they can't all be--

LEGRASSE

There was a case, some years back, not long before I was fixin' to retire from the force. Would have been June of '22.

Music TRANSITION whisks us back in time.

We hear the SOUNDS of a moderately busy police station. CRIMINALS PROTEST their innocence, POLICE STRIKE them with batons. Typing and an occasional RINGING TELEPHONE.

LEGRASSE (CONT'D)

By the end of my policing days, I hardly ever left the precinct building. Stacks of paperwork and files and reports. But every now and again, a case comes and finds you.

3

POLICE STATION

3

A younger Legrasse, now in his late fifties RUMMAGES through police paperwork. He MUMBLES to himself as he browses a case file.

LEGRASSE

(shouting off)

Jabaley! What's all this in my in box?

JABALEY

(from off)

Just last week's closed case files. And the monthly budgets. And the personnel reports from precinct four.

He picks up a case file and leafs through it.

LEGRASSE

Case files... What in God's name..?
(hollering)
Jabaley! Jabaley!

JABALEY

(off)
Yessir?

LEGRASSE

(slightly scary)
Get in here!

Lt. Jabaley hurries into his boss' office. He's a 30ish officer with a clerical bent.

JABALEY

What's the problem, sir?

LEGRASSE

Did you write this report, lieutenant?

JABALEY

Um...

LEGRASSE

Case file for a Antoine LaVache? Says here he was brought in for being drunk and disorderly.

JABALEY

Yep. I remember him. Just some white trash kinda fella. He sobered up and we let him go.

LEGRASSE

That's what this here report says. A report that you signed.

JABALEY

Yes, sir.

LEGRASSE

Also it says here that he was ranting about a gang getting up to things in the woods and that "a monster came to life and killed a negro down in the bayou".

JABALEY

Yes, sir.

LEGRASSE

And you didn't think that was something which I'd want brought to my attention? In person? BEFORE he was released?

JABALEY

Sir, I don't reckon we should bother you with a drunk--

LEGRASSE

How long you been in my department, Lieutenant?

JABALEY

Eight years now, more or--

LEGRASSE

Eight years, eh?

JABALEY

Now, I didn't mean to--

LEGRASSE

I've been on the force thirty six years. In all that time I've only got one case that wasn't solved to my satisfaction. You ever hear about the raid of '07?

JABALEY

Yes, sir. There isn't a man in the precinct who does know about you leading our men into that swamp. Capturing a gang of maniac devil worshippers--

LEGRASSE

I've been chasing down leads on that case for the last fifteen years. And since that time, I tell every man who works here, "If you hear about something like that, if you hear some name you can't figure out how to spell, I want to hear about it straightaway." Did you know that, lieutenant? You ever hear me say something like that?

JABALEY

Yes, sir, but I didn't figure this was nothing like--

LEGRASSE

You didn't figure? You get a lot of drunks talking about monsters in the swamp killing people?

JABALEY

No, sir.

LEGRASSE

You look into this negro being killed?

JABALEY

(sheepishly)

No, sir. I...

LEGRASSE

You listen to me and you listen good: if you EVER heartell of something like this, you come get me. I don't care if you pull me out of bed in my damned pajamas!

JABALEY

Yes, sir.

LEGRASSE

This LaVache - where was he from?

JABALEY

Said he lived in the bayou country, down near Vermilion.

LEGRASSE

Hand me my jacket, Lt. Jabaley.

JABALEY

Where are you going?

LEGRASSE

The bayou country, down near Vermilion!

4

GRADUATION - CONTINUOUS

4

LEGRASSE

Now that raid on the swamp cult was in all the newspapers. The department even gave me a medal for it. But it was the only case I ever had that made me feel more troubled after it was closed.

CLAUDE

Why? You and your men captured the whole group. The survivors were hanged or locked up in the looney bin, right?

LEGRASSE

True enough, Claude, but I always felt it was somehow just a middle chapter of much longer story.

(MORE)

LEGRASSE (CONT'D)

When I saw this LaVache case, I felt sure it had something to do with what happened out in those woods fifteen years before. That afternoon I headed down to Vermilion. As a professional courtesy, I started with the parish's chief lawman.

5

SHERIFF'S OFFICE

5

A DOOR SWINGS SHUT behind Legrasse. Flo, the office secretary greets him with a southern crustiness.

FLO

Help you?

LEGRASSE

Yes, ma'am. I was hoping to have a word with the Sheriff.

FLO

D'you have an appointment?

LEGRASSE

No, ma'am.

FLO

Hmph. And you are?

LEGRASSE

John Raymond Legrasse, Inspector, New Orleans Police.

FLO

(changing her tune)

Inspector, I'm sorry we weren't expecting you. Here, follow me, the Sheriff's out back.

They go out the back door of the building.

FLO (CONT'D)

(hollerin')

Sheriff! Inspector's here to see you from the New Orleans P.D.

MORPAIN

(hollering back)

My hands are full. Send him on down!

FLO

You can go on down. He's working on that motor boat. Mind your step down on the dock.

LEGRASSE

Thank you kindly.

Legrasse walks down onto the dock where MORPAIN is working on an outboard motor. He's a very friendly small town Sheriff.

MORPAIN

Sorry, you caught me up to my elbows in grease. I'd shake your hand but...

LEGRASSE

Inspector John Raymond Legrasse.

MORPAIN

Gerry Morpain.

LEGRASSE

An Evinrude outboard, eh? That a two cylinder?

MORPAIN

Yessir. She's a sassy beast though. But we got to make sure the department's always got a boat that's ready to run. Plenty of places in this parish you can't get to no other way but through the bayous.

The engine ROARS to life like a cantankerous lawn mower.

LEGRASSE

Sounds like you got her.

MORPAIN

For the time being... Now, what brings you all the way down here from New Orleans?

LEGRASSE

Just following up on a fellow who found himself in our jail. Figured I'd check in before I started looking round your parish for him, Sheriff. Just have a couple of questions for him.

MORPAIN

Mighty courteous of you. Now, who are we looking for?

LEGRASSE

Name's Antoine LaVache.

MORPAIN
(stifling surprise)

Mmm.

LEGRASSE
You know him?

MORPAIN
It's a small town here. One way or
another the Sheriff ends up hearing about
most folks.

LEGRASSE
What do you know about him?

MORPAIN
Just a regular fella, I suppose. Runs a
shrimp boat. I seen him in... church.

LEGRASSE
Which church would that be?

MORPAIN
What are you looking at LaVache for,
Inspector? He done something?

LEGRASSE
No, he's not a suspect. I was just hoping
to talk with him about a cold case we've
got back in New Orleans.

MORPAIN
(relieved)
I got you. Well, what do you say we hop
in the boat and I'll take you over to
have a word with him?

LEGRASSE
I don't want to keep you from what you've
got going...

MORPAIN
Not at all. It's a slow day - so far. Why
don't you hop in and we'll run down now
and have a look-see?

Transition MUSIC.

Legrasse and Morpain WALK up the path from the boat dock
to the ramshackle house of Antoine LaVache - shrimper and
klansman.

MORPAIN

Yeah, Antoine's place ain't much to look at, but I figure he does all right. Shrimpin's hard work.

LEGRASSE

I've always heard that.

They KNOCK at his door. A MUFFLED ANSWER comes from within.

MORPAIN

Antoine? It's me, Sheriff Morpain. I got a policeman here from New Orleans - mind if we have a word?

There's a MUFFLED UNINTELLIGIBLE REPLY with a tinge of fear.

MORPAIN (CONT'D)

Much obliged. I'll just let myself in.

They enter. LaVache has clearly been badly beaten up recently.

MORPAIN (CONT'D)

Well what in tarnation happened to you? Looks like you took quite a lickin'.

LAVACHE

I got in a fight.

LEGRASSE

Sure looks that way. Who'd you fight?

MORPAIN

Antoine, this here's Inspector Legrasse from the New Orleans Police Department. He says he's got some questions for you.

LEGRASSE

You all right to talk now, Mr. LaVache? That's a doozy of a shiner you've got there.

LAVACHE

Yeah, I reckon.

LEGRASSE

I just wanted to follow up on some things you said when you were in our jail last week. You said something about a negro being killed down in the bayou. You remember that?

Pause.

MORPAIN

Well? Tell the Inspector...

LAVACHE

(very nervous)

I... no, I don't know nothing about that.

LEGRASSE

No? Well, I suppose that's not so unusual hereabouts. You sure?

LAVACHE

Um...

MORPAIN

Think hard, Antoine.

LAVACHE

I'd been drinking, inspector. A lot.

LEGRASSE

I saw that in your file. I saw you also said something about seeing some kind of strange thing, a monster or something, in the woods. You remember that?

LAVACHE

I... sometimes I say stuff that don't make no sense when I been drinkin.

MORPAIN

I can vouch for that. I mean, not me directly, of course, but some of the drunks we pick up - they'll spin a crazy yarn.

LEGRASSE

Where was it you saw this thing?

LAVACHE

It was...

MORPAIN

What? What are you sayin', Antoine?

LAVACHE

Uh, no, I don't remember nothing about that night. I truly don't.

LEGRASSE

I see. And who'd you say gave you that shiner?

LAVACHE

(pausing just slightly too long)

Denis Blou. He works on my boat.

LEGRASSE

What did you fellows fight over?

MORPAIN

Hell, Denis'd get in a fight with his own shadow. Meaner than a one-eyed cat, that fella.

LEGRASSE

Yeah?

LaVache GROANS in assent.

LEGRASSE (CONT'D)

And when was this fight?

MORPAIN

It...

LEGRASSE

You wanted to say something, Sheriff?

MORPAIN

No, no, go ahead. Answer him, Antoine.

LAVACHE

The night before the night before last.

LEGRASSE

I see. Well, you remember anything about that dead negro, you call my office. Number's right here on my card.

MORPAIN

Or you can just tell me. I'll pass it along to the Inspector.

LAVACHE

OK...

(wanting to spill the beans)
Inspector!

LEGRASSE

Yeah?

MORPAIN

(with a hint of threat)
You got something else to say, Antoine?

LAVACHE

I... I know... it was just the drink talking.

MORPAIN

You hush now, Antoine. We'd best leave you to get some rest.

LEGRASSE

I thank you for your time, Mr. LaVache.

The door shuts behind them. TRANSITION music.

7

BOAT RIDE

7

The outboard carries Legrasse and Morpain back to the Sheriff's office.

LEGRASSE

Looks like he took a hell of a beating.

MORPAIN

Ah, you should see the other guy.

LEGRASSE

Blou? Why, what happened to him?

MORPAIN

No, it's just a saying. So, did you get what you needed outta him?

LEGRASSE

I wouldn't call him a fountain of information. Seemed a trifle skittish.

MORPAIN

Seemed all right to me. Did he blab about anything else back when y'all had him in the lock-up?

LEGRASSE

I'm wondering if maybe he did see something strange out in the woods. Maybe some kind of cult meeting, or some unorthodox church?

MORPAIN

Round here? I mean some of the darkies got their voodoo and all - but no white man gonna be within a mile of that.

LEGRASSE

You've never heard any talk of cults?
Secret societies, that kind of thing?

MORPAIN

I heard stories of a police raid breaking
up something like that years ago. Now, if
there was something like that, Widow
Huberdeau might know.

LEGRASSE

Who's that?

MORPAIN

She owns Mont Blanc, the biggest
plantation in the parish. She and her
husband used to study that kind of thing.
He'd give lectures up at Tulane before he
passed. They were well connected.

LEGRASSE

I should probably stop by and pay her a
call.

MORPAIN

Mmm, why don't you let me see if I can
set something up for you?

LEGRASSE

Much obliged, sheriff.

8

GRADUATION - CONTINUOUS

8

LEGRASSE

The sheriff got us both invited to a
supper at the Huberdeau mansion the
following night. I returned to New
Orleans and picked up this strange idol
the swamp cult worshipped. I've kept it
down in the evidence lockup all these
years. It's an... odd thing.

CLAUDE

I've always wanted to see it.

LEGRASSE

Boy, there's some things it's best never
to see.

CLAUDE

So what happened?

LEGRASSE

The sheriff drove us out to the Huberdeau plantation. It was a grand antebellum mansion, one of the finest I've ever seen.

9

THE PLANTATION

9

Morpain's CAR ROLLS TO A STOP in the mansion's grand driveway.

MORPAIN

Well, here we are.

LEGRASSE

I must say, that is one fine home.

EMERSON, a black servant approaches the car. He's polite and soft spoken middle aged man. He OPENS THE DOORS.

EMERSON

Good evening, gentlemen, welcome to Mont Blanc.

MORPAIN

Impressive, huh, Legrasse?

EMERSON

May I take your valise, sir?

LEGRASSE

What's that? No, this stays with me.

EMERSON

Yes, sir.

LEGRASSE

(to Morpain)

How big a spread they got here?

The go up the steps and Emerson OPENS THE DOOR.

EMERSON

If you gentlemen would be so kind as to wait here, I will let Mrs. Huberdeau know you've arrived.

LEGRASSE

(quiet)

Impressive.

MORPAIN

You can say that again.

Emerson returns with SHERYL HUBERDEAU in tow. She's a southern belle well into middle age. She speaks with a veneer of practiced charm.

EMERSON

Missus Huberdeau, may I introduce Sheriff Morpain and Inspector John Legrasse of New Orleans?

SHERYL

Gerry, always a pleasure to have you here at Mont Blanc.

MORPAIN

Ma'am.

SHERYL

And Inspector, such a pleasure to make your acquaintance.

LEGRASSE

Most gracious of you to extend us such an invitation, ma'am.

SHERYL

Any friend of law and order is always welcome in my home. Gentlemen, why don't we chat in the salon until supper's ready?

They mosey into the salon.

SHERYL (CONT'D)

May I offer you a refreshment?

MORPAIN

I wouldn't say no.

SHERYL

I hope you won't be disappointed, but this is a dry house, Inspector.

LEGRASSE

That suits me fine, ma'am. I am on duty after all.

SHERYL

(barbing Morpain)

Nice to see some members of law enforcement still takes note of Prohibition.

(to Emerson)

Emerson, have Maisy make us a pitcher of lemonade.

EMERSON

Right away, ma'am.

SHERYL

Now why don't you make yourself comfortable, Inspector...

10 GRADUATION - CONTINUOUS

10

LEGRASSE

The Widow Huberdeau put on quite a feast for us that night. But it was afterwards in the library of that fine old mansion that we got down to business.

11 POSTPRANDIAL

11

SHERYL

... we can finish our chat in here. Emerson, bring us some coffee.

EMERSON

Certainly, ma'am.

LEGRASSE

I must say, this is a fine library you've assembled here.

SHERYL

It was mostly my father-in-law's doing. He was what you'd call a bibliophile. But my late husband did what he could to expand the collection.

LEGRASSE

This must be one special volume you've got here in this glass case.

SHERYL

Yes. That's the family bible. More than two hundred years old now. Of course it's irreplaceable.

LEGRASSE

Of course.

SHERYL

Won't you take a seat, Inspector? Gerry?

LEGRASSE

I must thank you again, ma'am, I can't recall the last time I enjoyed such a fine meal.

SHERYL

You're too kind. I confess I'm partial to Maisy's turtle soup myself. Now, Gerry here tells me you have questions for me, about a case?

LEGRASSE

It's my understanding that you and your late husband had some familiarity with... shall we say fringe religious groups in the region. Cults, secret societies... that sort of thing.

SHERYL

One doesn't like to boast, Inspector, but my late husband was a well regarded authority on such topics. I may have soaked up a bit of that knowledge as well.

LEGRASSE

For some years now, I've been following up leads from a case that led me to a kind of cult of half-breed seamen that got up to some kind of rituals out in the swamp. They worshipped a god they said came from the stars. I brought their idol with me. Does it mean anything to you?

MUSICAL PUNCTUATION as he removes the Cthulhu idol from his valise.

SHERYL

(fascinated)

What a queer thing... I can't say I've ever seen anything like it. Does it have a name?

LEGRASSE

They call their god Cthulhu. That sound familiar?

SHERYL

I think I'd remember a name like that. Emerson, bring it here.

EMERSON

Yes, ma'am.

LEGRASSE

Careful with that.

EMERSON

Of course, sir.

MORPAIN

Seems to me, we'd have heard plenty if anyone 'round here was praying to that thing.

SHERYL

We have enough troubles with the Catholics.

Morpain LAUGHS.

LEGRASSE

As I said, this was years ago. I'd near forgotten about it, but another case came up recently and wondered if there might be some connection there.

MORPAIN

You mean Antoine LaVache, right? I still don't see the connection.

LEGRASSE

I can't be sure there is one just yet, but...

SHERYL

Inspector, it shouldn't shock you to know we do have one, how did you put it? *Secret society* at work in the parish.

LEGRASSE

How's that?

MORPAIN

I think what Mrs. Huberdeau is referring to is more of a civil defence force.

SHERYL

Like minded folks who have joined together to protect this great nation and our way of life.

(to Emerson)

That'll be all now, Emerson.

EMERSON

Yes, ma'am.

SHERYL

Good local citizens, coming together to take a stand against the moral threats to our community.

LEGRASSE

I see...

MORPAIN

You've got to know yourself, Inspector, there's crimes that the law can't touch.

SHERYL

Moral crimes. Someone's got to stand up to them. Adulterers. Bootleggers. Immigrants. Uppity negroes. Catholics. Threats to our nation's Christian values.

LEGRASSE

I believe I discern your meaning, ma'am.

SHERYL

Good. I sleep better knowing the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan are out there to protect us.

LEGRASSE

How many members in your local chapter?

MORPAIN

That's not the sort of thing one discusses in polite company. Company business, you know.

SHERYL

I'd like to think a man in your position, Inspector, would likely already share an affiliation with organizations like ours.

LEGRASSE

No shortage of folks joining up in New Orleans these days. Across the whole country.

SHERYL

Of course they are! Our way of life is under siege. Millions of decent folk see that and are called to action.

MORPAIN

And when the Klan speaks - well, let's just say they can send a message that no officer in his uniform can match.

LEGRASSE

Yes, I've seen such messages delivered. Very powerful. But I'm afraid the group I'm looking for stays even further in the shadows than the Klan.

SHERYL

Well I do hope you can ferret out whatever foreign mongrels made this horrid idol. Simply dreadful.

LEGRASSE

I'll do my best, ma'am.

MORPAIN

You just say the word if you want some local help through "unofficial channels".

LEGRASSE

Mighty kind of you, Gerry. I'm just poking about - not sure there's any connection at all. Well, I figure we've exhausted more than our fair share of Mrs. Huberdeau's hospitality.

MORPAIN

Yep, yep, that we have.
(rising)

Mrs. Huberdeau, always a pleasure.

SHERYL

Sheriff.

LEGRASSE

Ma'am. My thanks for a lovely evening and a fine, fine meal.

SHERYL

A sincere pleasure, Inspector.
(off)

Emerson! Will you show the officers to the door?

EMERSON

Certainly, ma'am. Sir, your, uh, statue.

LEGRASSE

Thank you. Ma'am.

Emerson leads them out.

12 GRADUATION - CONTINUOUS 12

LEGRASSE

It was a quiet ride as the sheriff took me back to the hotel where I was staying the night...

13 GREGORY 13

Morpain's CAR PULLS TO A STOP at the hotel parking lot.

MORPAIN

Seems we got ourselves an elephant in the car - I figure we'd best talk it out.

LEGRASSE

And just what elephant is that, exactly?

MORPAIN

The way you talked back there sure didn't make it sound like you're entirely on board with the actions of the Ku Klux Klan.

LEGRASSE

I don't figure I'd be much of a lawman if I was. No offense.

MORPAIN

(chuckling)

None taken. Like I said, there's some things that the long arm of the law just can't reach.

LEGRASSE

I can't argue with that.

MORPAIN

So then, we gonna have any problems over this issue?

LEGRASSE

If I refused to work with lawmen who were in the Klan, that'd be half of the lawmen in Louisiana. Maybe more. But I'm gonna try and solve my case by the Louisiana Code of Criminal Procedure.

MORPAIN

(relieved)

The other good book! All right then! Sounds like we have ourselves and understanding.

LEGRASSE

That we do. You got a file of missing persons? I thought I might take a look and see...

MORPAIN

I could certainly arrange that. You want to come by the office around one?

LEGRASSE

I may just do that.
(opening the car door)
Now where'd I put my room key?
(he discovers something in
the pocket of his jacket)
What in tarnation...

MUSICAL PUNCTUATION.

MORPAIN

Whatcha got there?

LEGRASSE

I found *this*, in the pocket of my coat.
Look.

MORPAIN

(hushed and truly terrified)
Great god almighty.

14 GRADUATION - CONTINUOUS

14

CLAUDE

What was it?

LEGRASSE

I didn't know. It was like a little leather wallet, about three inch square. Inside was a piece of paper with markings and symbols on it. And bit of shedded snake skin.

15 GREGORY - CONTINUOUS

15

LEGRASSE

Here, have a look.

MORPAIN

I'm not touching that! The blacks call it a "gregory". It's voodoo! It's a curse, the worst kind.

LEGRASSE

Voodoo, huh?

MORPAIN

You just found it in your pocket?

LEGRASSE

Somebody must have slipped it in there.

MORPAIN

This is bad.

LEGRASSE

Well, I don't hold with no...

MORPAIN

I've seen a man killed by them things.
You need help. Close the door.

Legrasse SHUTS THE DOOR and Morpain peels out of the parking lot.

LEGRASSE

Where are we going?

MORPAIN

You need to see the Voodoo Queen!

LEGRASSE

What, like Marie Levaux? You're taking me in the middle of the night to some candle-burning fortune teller?

MORPAIN

It's nothing like that. I don't think you appreciate the seriousness of your predicament.

LEGRASSE

(dismissive)

Voodoo...

MORPAIN

Look, you want to know where it came from? Who made it? What it means?

LEGRASSE

Course I do!

MORPAIN

There's one woman round here who can tell you. And she's the only one with any chance of getting a gregory hex off you.

The CAR PULLS UP in front of a dark apparently abandoned church.

LEGRASSE

What are you stopping here for?

MORPAIN

This is it.

LEGRASSE

This old church? Doesn't look open for visitors. Place is falling down.

MORPAIN

She'll be there. Listen, her name's Sarafine Glapion. You ask for her, and you show her that gregory.

LEGRASSE

What, you're not coming?

MORPAIN

Ah, she's had a brush or two with the law 'round here - she ain't gonna do me no favors. You, on the other hand, well, maybe.

LEGRASSE

And this Sarafine Glapion, she's the Voodoo Queen?

MORPAIN

She is.

LEGRASSE

(opening the door and getting out)

Well, all right then. I'll go see what she's got to say.

Very ominous MUSIC.

16

VOODOO QUEEN

16

The door of the crumbling church SQUEAKS as Legrasse enters. It's quiet and pitch black. Legrasse's voice echoes through the empty church.

LEGRASSE

Hello? Anyone here?
(stumbling into a pew)
Dammit.

A MATCH is struck in the distance.

LEGRASSE (CONT'D)

Hello? Is someone there?

SARAFINE GLAPION, the Voodoo Queen, is younger than one might expect, but her rich Creole voice commands authority. Those not steeped in voodoo may find her creepy as hell.

SARAFINE

What? You think the candle just lights itself?

LEGRASSE

Sarafine Glapion?

SARAFINE

I'm not seeing anyone tonight.

LEGRASSE

Yes, well--

SARAFINE

Are you deaf? Closed. Go home.

LEGRASSE

Yes, and I'm sorry but--

SARAFINE

Of course you sorry. You're a white man, a policeman, the rules don't apply to you!

LEGRASSE

I didn't mean any offense, ma'am. I was told it was urgent that I should show you this.

He whips out his gregory. MUSICAL PUNCTUATION.

LEGRASSE (CONT'D)

I don't know how this works. I can pay money to--

SARAFINE

Where did you get that?

LEGRASSE

This? I found it in my pocket. Someone must have slipped it--

SARAFINE

(under her breath)

Nouzòt Popá, ki dan syèl-la...

LEGRASSE

My friend says it's a Gregory.

SARAFINE

Not "gregory". This is *gris-gris*. Mmm.

(under her breath)

Holy St. Jude, apostle and martyr, great in virtue and rich in miracles...

LEGRASSE

He said it's some kind of voodoo curse.

SARAFINE

This friend is an idiot.

LEGRASSE

So it's not a curse?

SARAFINE

Oh, it may be a curse. The power of the *gris-gris* comes from who makes it. It can be a worthless tourist trinket. It can be a token of terrible power. But this... Saint Jude pray for me.

LEGRASSE

(confused)

You're Catholic? I thought you were-

SARAFINE

Voodoo. Catholicism. One coin, two sides. Bring the *gris-gris* near the flame, let me see.

LEGRASSE

Here you go.

SARAFINE

I cannot touch it.

(in Creole)

Chatte brile pair di feu.

LEGRASSE

What's that?

SARAFINE

A burned cat don't go near no fire.

(examining it)

Mm, yes. Hmm.

LEGRASSE

Can you tell who made it?

SARAFINE

There are few who would dare to call upon
the old gods named in this gris-gris.

LEGRASSE

What gods?

SARAFINE

We do not speak their names.

LEGRASSE

So it is a curse?

SARAFINE

John Raymond, you are Catholic?

LEGRASSE

You know my name.

SARAFINE

I know many things.

LEGRASSE

I was schooled by nuns, but I don't... I
haven't been to mass for a bit.

SARAFINE

Do you believe in God?

LEGRASSE

(a difficult question)

Well, yes, I suppose I do.

SARAFINE

You will want faith in the battle that is
to come.

LEGRASSE

Battle, what battle?

SARAFINE

The person who has put this on you, they
mean to help you or to destroy you.
Which, I cannot say.

LEGRASSE

Those markings, can you read them?

SARAFINE

Some. Voodoo calls on the old gods of Africa, the gods worshipped by the Fon, Bantu, Yoruba and Kongo-slaves brought to this land. This gris-gris, calls the names of great old ones, those who lived before the gods of Africa, before the gods of any men.

LEGRASSE

Did you say "great old ones"? Is it a cult?

SARAFINE

What is a cult but a church with no walls?

LEGRASSE

No, but I mean--

SARAFINE

You pray to St. Jude?

LEGRASSE

Not as such.

SARAFINE

God is a busy man - pray to a saint instead. St. Jude Thaddeus, patron saint of policemen and lost causes. He's the one for you.

(worried)

Mmm, this gris-gris, it invokes Le Grand Zombi.

LEGRASSE

Zombie? The walking dead?

SARAFINE

No, no. Our brothers and sisters on Haiti have a voodoo different from ours. Their magic can breathe life into the dead - this they call zombi. But here we give prayers to Le Grand Zombi - the snake god.

LEGRASSE

Is that good or bad?

SARAFINE

You keep eyes open, John Raymond. This snake can cause you great harm, but this snake can save your life. You watch for Le Grand Zombi.

LEGRASSE

You know, I don't believe in any of this.
Voodoo or--

SARAFINE

What difference that make? If I tells you
I don't believe the world is round, you
still know that it is. You tells me you
don't believe in voodoo - that don't make
it not real.

LEGRASSE

Can you tell me anything else?

SARAFINE

There is nothing more I can tell you,
John Raymond. But *les lois*, the spirits,
they speak through Sarafine. You put your
hand on each side of this candle. You
know the Lord's Prayer?

LEGRASSE

(unsure)

I do.

SARAFINE

You say it and you keep saying it until
they have gone.

(pause)

What you waiting for?

Legrasse haltingly dives in on quietly reciting the
LORD'S PRAYER as Sarafine invokes the spirit world.
Underscore of otherworldly MUSIC that turns frightening.

SARAFINE (CONT'D)

(in Creole French)

Je demande à toi, Loi Maître d'l 'Tête de
nous apporter la sagesse du monde des
esprits. Aide cet homme voir ce qui ne
peut être vu et savoir ce que ne doit pas
être connu. Gorgeaux, mormeaux - tenir
compte de mon appel à travers la
fracture. La Fleur s'apres ancien.

(her voice suddenly changes -
an old Indian man speaks
through her)

Beware of what you seek. In the Black
Heart there is an island and on the
island is the White Tree. Seek it and
know the darkness of man. This is evil
that lives and grows.

(MORE)

SARAFINE (CONT'D)

(she gasps - now in her own voice - she's being strangled)

Someone else is here. They see you, John Raymond.

(she channels Castro from the Call of Cthulhu, chuckling evilly)

We are everywhere. We are nowhere. We call to the Great Old Ones and they answer. We come for you. Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu--

LEGRASSE

(terrified)

Enough!

The spell is broken and Sarafine collapses to the ground.

LEGRASSE (CONT'D)

Are you all right? Here, let me help you.

SARAFINE

No. Do not touch me. Go. Now. Go!

His footsteps echo as he leaves the darkened church.
Transition MUSIC.

17

GRADUATION

17

CLAUDE

What did all that mean? She sounds crazy.

LEGRASSE

I didn't rightly know. But knowing that the Sheriff was working with the Klan, I wanted to have a look around without him keeping tabs on me.

CLAUDE

You think it was real?

LEGRASSE

What's that?

CLAUDE

The Voodoo Queen, the gris-gris, the curse!

LEGRASSE

You just listen up and then you can tell me. The next morning I took the idol back to the police lockup.

18

EVIDENCE LOCK-UP

18

A LOCK OPENS and a METAL DOOR SWINGS OPEN in the basement of the New Orleans Police Dept. Legrasse walks through with SGT. BLAIR, an old red-neck sergeant.

BLAIR

You find what you were looking for down in Vermilion?

LEGRASSE

You know how it goes - you don't find what you're looking for but you find a lot of other... stuff.

BLAIR

Any sign of your old swamp cult?

LEGRASSE

No, sir. But they all but invited me to join the Klan last night.

BLAIR

Huh.

Legrasse puts the idol back in a locked metal box.

BLAIR (CONT'D)

I was in the Klan once. I got kicked out.

LEGRASSE

You got kicked out of the Ku Klux Klan?

BLAIR

Yep. The Exalted Cyclops said he didn't like my attitude.

LEGRASSE

The Exalted--?

BLAIR

Cyclops. Yeah they got all kinds of crazy titles and names, but the Cyclops runs the klonklave. That's kind of a local chapter.

LEGRASSE

Klonklave...

BLAIR

I didn't like it. It was kinda like being in the Elks Club, except for the burning crosses and... well, you know what they get up to.

LEGRASSE

I do.

BLAIR

You heading back down there again?

LEGRASSE

That I am.

BLAIR

You mind yourself down there, John.

The metal door CLANGS shut.

19

INTO THE WOODS

19

LEGRASSE

(narrating)

When I got back, I went down to the docks
and hired an ol' Cajun guide to take me
out into the bayous.

A crappy MOTOR BOAT PUTTS its way deep into the swamp.
It's captain is Edgar DUGAS, a crusty ol' Cajun.

DUGAS

I aint never had no'un wannoo come back
dis way. Coeur Noir - your Black Heart -
bayou a place maybe you go huntin' but I
looks at you and sees you ain't no
hunter.

LEGRASSE

There an island in that bayou, Mr. Dugas?

DUGAS

(laughing)

What you call me dat for?

LEGRASSE

I thought that was your name.

DUGAS

(tickled)

"Mister"... Like I be de Mayor of
Vermilion. "Mr. Dugas". What your name
again?

LEGRASSE

John.

DUGAS

Da family name?

LEGRASSE

Legrasse.

DUGAS

Mmmm, your people not from down dis ways,
no.

LEGRASSE

I live in New Orleans. My father came
from De Soto parish.

DUGAS

(makes an odd noise)
You gonna find tings is different
herebouts.

20

GRADUATION - CONTINUOUS

20

LEGRASSE

It was a miracle he could find his way
through the tangle of trees. We got to
where he could no longer use the motor
and poled the boat along through the moss
and trees. In another hour or two, we'd
reached the island named by the Voodoo
Queen.

21

THE ISLAND

21

There's a SPLASH as Dugas jumps over and hauls the boat
ashore.

DUGAS

Dis da biggest island in de'bayou. Here,
climb over. Now what you lookin for
exactly?

LEGRASSE

Not sure, exactly. A white tree?

DUGAS

Wha??

(amused)

We take a look for yo tree. You keep your
eye open for de snake. You don't want no
run-in with dat ugly Cottonmouth Joe, no
sir.

LEGRASSE

Got it.

Legrasse MOVES OFF INTO THE WOODS. Dugas CHUCKLES and heads the other way.

DUGAS

(off)

They's gators out here too. Don't you step on none of them neither. Dey don't like dat not one bit!

22 GRADUATION - CONTINUOUS

22

LEGRASSE

I moved slowly around the island to the right as Dugas went around to the left. The trees were dense and the going was hard. I finally decided I'd had enough of this nonsense.

23 THE ISLAND - CONTINUOUS

23

Legrasse stumbles and falls with a wet SPLAT.

LEGRASSE

(under his breath)

Son of a...

In the distance, Dugas WHISTLES to get Legrasse's attention.

DUGAS

(distant)

Hey Legrasse!

LEGRASSE

Yeah?

DUGAS

You best come see dis!

Legrasse SLOGS through the swamp.

DUGAS (CONT'D)

(nearer)

Dis way - they's a big clearing...

LEGRASSE

What the--

DUGAS

...and mebbe dis your white tree.

MUSICAL STING!

24 GRADUATION - CONTINUOUS 24

LEGRASSE

In the middle of the island was a big clearing where the grass had been trampled flat and at one end of it was a huge white oak tree. There was a big fire ring and a couple of posts driven into the ground with leather straps fixed to them.

25 THE ISLAND - CONTINUOUS 25

DUGAS

(chuckling)

Well you look for a white tree - you sure find one! I never seen no tree like this out in de bayou, for sure.

LEGRASSE

Hm, look at this. Looks like dried blood here on the ground by this post.

DUGAS

Hmm. Maybe somebody shoot a deer and dress it here?

LEGRASSE

(not believing it)

Yeah, maybe.

DUGAS

Hey, hey look out dere!

LEGRASSE

What?

A snake HISSES.

DUGAS

Ooh, you got ol' Cottonmouth Joe's attention now. You jest stand real still now. Ooh, he gettin' ready to bite, see how he show you dat mouth full o' cotton? Lemme grab a stick.

He SNAPS a long stick off a tree.

LEGRASSE

Dugas--

DUGAS

Don't you move now.

He lunges with the stick, pinning the snake down.

C'mon now, off you go now, Ugly Joe. Dere he go.

The cottonmouth SLITHERS off into the brush.

LEGRASSE

Thank you.

DUGAS

Dats why we keep our eyes open out on de bayou. Got to have de snakes though, cause dey eat dem muskrats. Why you come to dis island for, Legrasse?

LEGRASSE

I'm a policeman. There's men, crazy men with a kind of crazy church. I think they come out here and do very bad things. You ever hear of anything like that?

DUGAS

Naw, but if dey want to get up to crazy in the woods - dis the right place. Ain't nobody going to hear no thing dat happen on dis island.

LEGRASSE

More blood here on the ground in front of the tree.

DUGAS

What we gonna do now?

LEGRASSE

You wanna help me stop them?

DUGAS

You sure bet I do!

Dugas LAUGHS in assent. As THEY BEGIN TO PLOT their next move their voices fade out.

CLAUDE

Was it the Cthulhu cult? What were you going to do?

LEGRASSE

We'll get to that. For the moment, I had Dugas take me back to town and left him with a task to do. I went looking for the Sheriff but he found me right quick.

27

MORE PAIN

27

As Legrasse walks back to his hotel, Morpain PULLS UP IN HIS AUTO.

MORPAIN

Inspector, where you been? I've been looking all over for you. I was afraid something happened last night. You met with Sarafine?

LEGRASSE

That I did. And lived to tell the tale.

MORPAIN

She able to do her voodoo on that gregory?

LEGRASSE

She... I'm not sure what she did. But she did something.

MORPAIN

Where you been today? I've been looking for you.

LEGRASSE

Just following up on a couple of leads.

A truck RUMBLES past.

MORPAIN

Care to say what?

LEGRASSE

If they pan out, you'll be the first I'd tell.

MORPAIN

Much obliged, Inspector.

LEGRASSE

I'm still following an angle that maybe LaVache was involved in a cult kind of thing.

MORPAIN

You mean like the voodoo? I tell you,
that ain't nothing a white man would get
hisself mixed up in.

LEGRASSE

Let's say it ain't voodoo. But maybe he
ran afoul of someone. Saw something he
wasn't supposed to see. You heard about
that band o' devil worshippers got busted
up nearly twenty years back?

MORPAIN

Some crazed bunch of mulattoes and half-
breeds, right? I looked into it. It was
you who brought them in.

LEGRASSE

Yessir.

MORPAIN

We ain't got nothin' like that round
here. Folks take going to church pretty
serious down this way.

LEGRASSE

I see.... Well, I'll just have to keep
poking about, see if I get lucky.

MORPAIN

You best be careful, Inspector.

LEGRASSE

Well now Gerry, do I detect a hint of a
threat there?

MORPAIN

Not at all. But folks can be touchy if
you go prying into their affairs, and
what with that gregory on you...

LEGRASSE

I'll keep that in mind, Sheriff.

MORPAIN

You do that. I'll be seeing you,
Inspector.

LEGRASSE

Now I'd had Dugas build us a blind in the
woods at the edge of the island.

(MORE)

LEGRASSE (CONT'D)

He was a duck hunter and knew how to make us a hideout where we could watch what went on without being seen.

CLAUDE

What happened?

LEGRASSE

We waited in the blind 'til after nightfall. It was nearly midnight when we saw flickering torches on the other side of the island. Boats were landing and people were coming ashore.

CLAUDE

So was it the Cthulhu cult?

LEGRASSE

The first couple of 'em seemed to be getting things ready. They lit a big bonfire and then went back to the boats. They didn't seem like the kind of crazed half-breeds we'd rounded up all those years ago.

CLAUDE

What'd you do?

LEGRASSE

Dugas and I agreed we'd just sit tight and watch. There was only the two of us and we didn't want to bring any attention on ourselves.

(a pause as he remembers)

We heard 'em, before we actually saw 'em.

29

THE RITUAL

29

A distant MARTIAL SNARE DRUM is accompanied by marching feet of perhaps 50 people. A BUGLE sounds as we hear the MARCHERS STEP into positions.

LEGRASSE

(narrating)

I hope you never live to see the sight of the white robes and hoods of the Ku Klux Klan gathered together. They lined up in military rank and file, surrounding three sides of the bonfire.

The KLADD, the Klan's MC, leads the ceremony. The astute listener will realize this is Gerry Morpain.

THE KLADD

Here ye! I now officially proclaim that this Klonklave Klan number 17, Realm of Louisiana of the Invisible Empire, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan duly opened for the dispatch of business.

THE KLAN

(in unison)

Ku Klux!

THE KLADD

Let any man who has not attained citizenship in the Invisible Empire set forth now under the escort of the Night-Hawk.

(pause - no one leaves)

The Klexter and the Klarogo will take their posts to guard this Klavern!

Two men march into place.

THE KLADD (CONT'D)

I call forth the Exalted Cyclops!

SNARE DRUMS ROLL as a hooded leader enters into the proceedings.

THE KLAN

All hail the Exalted Cyclops. Iä Ku Klux!

LEGRASSE

(narrating)

Another hooded figure entered wearing a robe with red and black stripes and insignias, followed by another one carrying in a big wooden cross.

THE KLADD

We await your instructions, Excellency.

The EXALTED CYCLOPS speaks - she is Sheryl Huberdeau. She speaks to her troops with utter authority and confidence.

EXALTED CYCLOPS

My terrors! I charge you to preserve peace and persevere with honor in promoting and guarding well every interest of the Invisible Empire, the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan!

THE KLAN

Hail Exalted Cyclops!

EXALTED CYCLOPS

Prepare the sacred altar!

There is a WHOOSH of flame as the cross is set alight.

LEGRASSE

(narrating)

They stuck the cross into the ground near the post and lit it on fire.

THE KLADD

Your Excellency, the sacred altar is prepared, the fiery cross illumines the Klavern.

EXALTED CYCLOPS

You, faithful Klokard, what means the fiery cross?

The KLOKARD is not the sharpest Klansman present and has a hard time remembering the official answer.

KLOKARD

(nervous)

It means we're unselfish, and uh, devoted to the doings of the Klan, uh, in full. All the time.

EXALTED CYCLOPS

My terrors and Klansmen, what means the fiery cross?

THE KLAN

We serve and sacrifice for the right!

EXALTED CYCLOPS

My Terrors and Klansmen, in the sacred cause we have entered, be thou faithful unto death.

THE KLAN

Unto death! Iä Ku Klux!

EXALTED CYCLOPS

Bring forth the accused!

Klansmen move about, and bring in THOMAS PHIPPS, a bound black man who STRUGGLES against them. They tie him to the post.

EXALTED CYCLOPS (CONT'D)

Affix him to the post! Thomas Phipps, you stand accused before this Klavern of the grave crimes of lewdness, disrespect and dishonoring our nation.

THE KLADD

Terrors and Klansmen, what verdict do you here render?

THE KLAN

Guilty!

Thomas PLEADS desperately into a gag.

EXALTED CYCLOPS

A verdict has been rendered. Bring in the great Kloran!

LEGRASSE

(narrating)

Another hooded figure came out of darkness carrying the huge old "family bible" from Widow Huberdeau's library.

CLAUDE

And they called it the "Kloran"?

LEGRASSE

Yep. Crazy.

DUGAS

(whispering)

Legrasse, what we gonna do?

LEGRASSE

(to Dugas)

Best keep quiet. Don't figure there's much we can do.

DUGAS

Dey gonna kill dat man.

LEGRASSE

I know.

EXALTED CYCLOPS

Thomas Phipps, you have been found guilty by this Klonklave. For your crimes, you are hereby sentenced to death.

Thomas GROANS desperately.

EXALTED CYCLOPS (CONT'D)

In keeping with the sacred secrets of
this Klonklave, your body is to given in
sacrifice to the White Tree.

THE KLAN

Iä Klavoroth!

EXALTED CYCLOPS

In the name of the name of the Great Old
Ones, I call thee unto life, Shub
Niggurath, Dreamer in Death and Devourer
of the Unrighteous!

THE KLAN

Iä Shub Niggurath!

EXALTED CYCLOPS

Phnglui mgwl naf Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah nagl
fhtagn!

LEGRASSE

(sotto voce)

God in heaven...

She UNSHEATHS a ceremonial dagger.

DUGAS

She gotta knife! They gonna kill him--

EXALTED CYCLOPS

Great one, we make this sacrifice--

DUGAS BOLTS out of the blind where he's been hiding with
Legrasse.

DUGAS

Dats enough!

LEGRASSE

Dugas, no!

The valiant Cajun runs into the middle of the ceremony.

DUGAS

You free dis man--

LEGRASSE

(narrating)

He ran straight for them, but didn't make
it half way before one of them shot him
dead.

BLAM!

LEGRASSE (CONT'D)

Their leader, she stabbed the condemned man and I turned to run.

THE KLOROGO

There's another one. He's running!

EXALTED CYCLOPS

Take arms my Terrors and Klansmen! Kill them!

THE KLOROGO

Yonder, past the trees.

THE KLEXTER

Come on, boys. Get him!

Lots of guns FIRE and bullets THWAP into trees as Legrasse hurries back towards the boat. His flight is NOISY and awkward. He SPLASHES into the water and climbs into his boat. He BANGS the oars against the side of the boat. BULLETS WHIZ by. Someone grabs him by the arm.

EMERSON

(hushed)

Come with me. Before they kill you.

LEGRASSE

Go with you?

EMERSON

Shhh. Get on the raft.

THE KLOROGO

(off)

I think he went this way!

LEGRASSE

What are you--

EMERSON

Lay down flat. Keep your head down. Say nothing.

We hear strong quiet PULLS of a paddle in the water. The Klansmen are distant but gaining. More GUNSHOTS.

THE KLEXTER

There's a boat over there.

THE KLOROGO

Ain't nobody in it.

BLAM, BLAM, BLAM.

THE KLEXTER

There, now ain't nobody going nowhere in that boat.

THE KLADD

Split up, Knights. There ain't nowhere for him to run in the swamp. We'll flush him out.

THE KLOROGO

You know who it is?

THE KLADD

I got a hunch. C'mon boys, let's get him!

GUNSHOTS and WHOOPS of Klansmen going on the hunt!

Transition MUSIC.

30 GRADUATION - CONTINUOUS

30

LEGRASSE

Laying flat on the raft, my rescuer paddled his way through the bayou in silence. How he found his way in that darkness, I'll never know. He turned up a side canal and finally sat up and spoke.

31 SAFEHOUSE

31

Emerson SETS THE PADDLE onto the raft. In the distant background, Klansmen HOLLER, hounds BRAY, shots RING OUT and motorboats PUTTER across the bayou.

EMERSON

(quietly)

You can sit up now. They won't be able to see us here. We got a few minutes until they come looking for you.

Legrasse sits up.

LEGRASSE

Um, who are you?

EMERSON

We met before, Inspector. At Mont Blanc.

LEGRASSE

Yes. I'm sorry, I didn't catch your name.

EMERSON

Emerson.

LEGRASSE

Emerson... that's right. I'm--

EMERSON

I know who you are, Inspector.

LEGRASSE

Where are you taking me? This some kind of old hunting shack?

EMERSON

This is my home. I got to hide you somewhere.

Some nearer SHOUTS of Klansmen.

EMERSON (CONT'D)

They gonna be here soon. Come 'round this side of the house.

Emerson RATTLES a metal fence, OPENING THE LATCH.

EMERSON (CONT'D)

Go on in.

LEGRASSE

You're gonna hide me in a dog kennel?

EMERSON

Ain't no dog kennel. It's a coon pen. This here's Auggie.

A raccoon TWIRS.

LEGRASSE

You're locking me in with this raccoon?

EMERSON

Aw, he's pretty nice. Climb on into the coonhouse back there.

(with great friendliness)

Come here, Auggie. Here, I got a little something for you.

LEGRASSE

What are you feeding him?

EMERSON

I'm putting rice pudding on his face. Makes 'im look like he's got the rabies. An' he likes it.

(MORE)

EMERSON (CONT'D)

Get yourself all the way in there - make sure your feet's tucked in. Here they come. Keep quiet.

A MOTORBOAT APPROACHES (with an Evinrude outboard).

MORPAIN

(off)

Hey boy! Get on out here!

THE KLEXTER

We got some questions for you.

EMERSON

Yes, sir?

MORPAIN

We're looking for somebody. You seen a white man come 'round this way?

EMERSON

No, sir.

THE KLEXTER

Don't lie to us, boy!

EMERSON

Ain't been no one around here.

THE KLEXTER

Jesus, this sure is one sorry nigger shack.

EMERSON

You can have a look inside, if you want.

THE KLEXTER

You tellin' me what to do, boy?

MORPAIN

What you got 'round back, a dog run?

EMERSON

Careful, there. There's a raccoon in there.

Morpain opens the raccoon pen. Auggie TWIRS.

MORPAIN

Jesus Christ!

EMERSON

I reckon it might be sick.

MORPAIN

You think?

THE KLEXTER

You oughta shoot that thing.

MORPAIN

(closing the pen)

You work for Widow Huberdeau, don't you, boy?

EMERSON

Yes, sir, I do.

MORPAIN

You see that policeman from New Orleans, you let her know straight away, you understand me?

EMERSON

I'll do that, sir.

THE KLEXTER

Don't you go getting all uppity. I can't stand no uppity nigger.

(pause)

You hear me boy?

The Klexter PUNCHES Emerson in the stomach.

MORPAIN

Hey now, he works for the widow. 'sides, we got more important fish to fry.

They get back in their boat. The OUTBOARD STARTS UP.

MORPAIN (CONT'D)

(to Emerson)

We find out you been lying to us, you gonna wish you'd never been born.

They SPEED OFF in their boat. Emerson CATCHES HIS BREATH and OPENS the raccoon pen.

EMERSON

Hey there, Auggie.

(to Legrasse)

They've gone. You can come on out now.

Legrasse CRAWLS out of the raccoon house and DUSTS HIMSELF off.

LEGRASSE

I... I hardly know where to begin. Thank you.

EMERSON

Tomorrow I can take you in the canoe back to Vermilion. Wouldn't be safe tonight with them out looking for you. You ain't likely to be safe even when you get back there.

LEGRASSE

I'm much obliged.

Awkward pause.

EMERSON

C'mon, Auggie, let's see if we got you some supper in the crawfish trap.

The raccoon TWIRS and follows Emerson to the water where he pulls ashore a crawfish trap.

EMERSON (CONT'D)

Mmm, mmm. Looks like supper for all of us.

(to Legrasse)

You like crawfish?

LEGRASSE

Uh, sure.

EMERSON

I'll boil us some water. Don't let Auggie eat 'em all.

The RACCOON CRUNCHES on a crawfish. Emerson ADDS WOOD to his stove and PUTS A POT ON IT.

LEGRASSE

Emerson, what were you doing out there?

EMERSON

About the same as you, I figure. I'd heard the Klan had it out for Thomas. I wanted to see what I could do to help. Not much.

LEGRASSE

You saved my life.

EMERSON

Yup.

LEGRASSE

That wasn't a regular Klan meeting.

EMERSON

I wouldn't know. My first time.

LEGRASSE

It was mine too. I don't go in for that sort of... you know I'm not in the Klan?

EMERSON

Didn't figure you was.

LEGRASSE

It was half Klan rally and half... some kind of black magic.

EMERSON

There's folks say Widow Huberdeau's a witch. That old book of hers has spells in it.

LEGRASSE

They were sacrificing Thomas in front of that tree.

EMERSON

I don't know what it is, but that ain't no regular tree. Here, grab a handful of them crawdads and toss 'em in the pot.

Legrasse does so. Auggie continues to MUNCH on them.

LEGRASSE

What do you mean, it's not a regular tree?

EMERSON

There's stories, legends about that island and its tree. Ain't nobody who'd go near there except the Klan.

LEGRASSE

What kind of legends?

EMERSON

I don't remember that good. When I was a boy, there was an old blind man who'd tell us crazy old stories. They'd scare the bejeezus out of my brothers and me.

LEGRASSE

Can I talk to this old man?

EMERSON

What, tonight? No, sir. You got a swamp full of Klansmen looking to skin your hide and you saying you want some old man to tell you stories?

LEGRASSE

That's exactly what I'm saying.

Emerson LAUGHS in despair. He scoops out boiled crawfish for Legrasse.

EMERSON

Here - eat. We'll be safer if we lay low tonight.

LEGRASSE

You want to stop this - the Klan?

EMERSON

You asking me that? Seriously?

LEGRASSE

Take me to him. Tonight.

Transition MUSIC.

32

GRADUATION - CONTINUOUS

32

CLAUDE

So you went back out into the swamp?

LEGRASSE

We did. Emerson knew his way about in the canoe. Now and again we'd hear the Klansmen off in the distance as we paddled through the darkness.

CLAUDE

Where did he take you?

LEGRASSE

It took maybe an hour and we came to a kind of small hut standing on poles lifting it up out of the water.

33

THE WHISPERER

33

Emerson's canoe BOBS at the landing below a swamp shack.

EMERSON
(whisper/shout)
Leroy! Leroy! You hear me?

A shotgun CHAMBERS A ROUND and the RICKETY BOARDS CREAK as Leroy emerges. He is a very old African American man who has seen it all.

LEROY
Who's there?

EMERSON
Leroy, it's me. Emerson.

LEROY
I don't see so good. Emerson who?

EMERSON
Emerson Hardy.

LEROY
Hmph.

EMERSON
You knew my father.

LEROY
Boy, I knew your father and I knew your grandfather. Hell, your grandmother was mighty keen on me until she met him.

EMERSON
Yes, sir.

LEROY
Who's that there with you?

LEGRASSE
John Raymond Legrasse.

LEROY
You brung a white man here?

EMERSON
He's a policeman too.

LEROY
Boy, I oughta unload a round of buckshot right into your backside!

LEGRASSE
I asked him to bring me here. I wanted to ask you about something.

LEROY

I got nothin to say to no white pol--

LEGRASSE

I want to know about the white tree.

Leroy is stunned. He MUMBLES incoherently and sets the shotgun down.

EMERSON

Leroy, you all right there?

LEROY

Y'all best come inside and set a spell.

Legrasse and Emerson CLIMB OUT OF THE CANOE and up into Leroy's shack.

34

THE WAR

34

There's a soft CRACKLE from a wood burning stove. Leroy SITS heavily.

LEROY

Set yourselves down.

LEGRASSE

You know the tree I mean?

LEROY

There's only one white tree brings a white man out here the middle of the night.

LEGRASSE

It's not a normal tree is it?

LEROY

You hush up now. I tell you about that tree - you decide for yourself. Dis was some time back now, would have been in the third year of "the War of Northern Aggression", 'bout April of '64.

As he tells the tale we hear FAINT STRAINS OF DIXIE, the HOOVES OF CAVALRY HORSES and distant GHOSTLY CANON FIRE of the civil war.

LEROY (CONT'D)

Like most slaves, I'd gone off to war with my master.

(with a rueful chuckle)

(MORE)

LEROY (CONT'D)

He fought the Yankees and I served him faithfully through it all. Colonel John Paul Hébert the Louisiana 6th Cavalry, Confederate States of America. We'd been in battles clear up to Vicksburg and beyond. But now them Yankees, they moved down the Red River. We took a pretty good licking at a place called Monnet's Ferry.

SOUNDS of ARTILLERY, HORSES AND COMBAT become more present.

LEROY (CONT'D)

What was left of the Colonel's troop got driven back, way down deep in the swamp. We'd split off from the others and them Union men they came after us. Got to where we was driven onto an island in the Couer Noir bayou, and they bluebellies had us full surrounded. The nighttime came and the Colonel spoke to his men before this great big white oak tree.

FLASHBACK: a group of twenty or so Confederate soldiers gather around a big fire. Nervous HORSES NEIGH nearby. Colonel HEBERT, a maniacally true believer speaks up.

COLONEL HEBERT

Men, I won't lie to you: at this point few options remain for us. There's no good way out, and I'd wager the Yankees are going to come for us at sunrise. Our scout figures we're outnumbered about nine to one.

LT. JACKSON

We could fortify the north side of the island, sir, try and repel their attack.

COLONEL HEBERT

(amused)

A fine notion, son, but they've got us trapped here. We fortify one side, they'll cut right through our flanks.

SGT. HENDERSON

We could try and slip out while it's still dark.

COLONEL HEBERT

Hard to be stealthy when you're leading horses through a swamp in the dark, sergeant.

SGT. HENDERSON

Well, sir...

LT. JACKSON

I'll be damned if I'll surrender to no Yankee.

COLONEL HEBERT

It'd seem the only way out is in chains or in a coffin. Unless...

LT. JACKSON

Unless what, sir?

SGT. HENDERSON

We're prepared for anything, sir.

COLONEL HEBERT

You mean that sergeant?

SGT. HENDERSON

Yes, sir. We all are.

COLONEL HEBERT

Leroy, bring me the book.

LEROY

(narrating)

Through the war I looked after my master's things, and among them was a great big old book which he told me was more important than anything else he had, even money, so you can imagine I took perfect care of that book. So I brung it out in front of that fire and the other soldiers.

COLONEL HEBERT

Men, every last one of us is going to die on this island. Now, we can die a meaningless death, shot down by the ranks of Yankee dogs, or we can die in way that will keep our cause alive and wreak havoc on our foes.

SGT. HENDERSON

I don't understand.

COLONEL HEBERT

This book has been in my family for generations. It calls on demons and the Devil, and things far worse.

(MORE)

COLONEL HEBERT (CONT'D)

But if we give our lives unto them, they'll be forced to serve our cause for a thousand years. We die, but every bit of rage and contempt and spite we have for our enemies lives on. The fire in our blood feeds a power and that power is bound to kill our enemies. All men die, and every man here's marked to die come sun-up. Sure, we can stand and fight and fall to Yankee muskets. But if we make a stand and sacrifice ourselves, our cause endures forever. Who's with me?

Silence. CRICKETS. The CRACKLING FIRE.

LT. JACKSON

I am.

SGT. HENDERSON

Me too.

The other soldiers AGREE somberly. We HEAR the events Leroy describes underneath his narration.

LEROY

(narrating)

The colonel had his men kneel in a circle at the foot of that great white tree. And then he took the book and read things - well, I couldn't understand them - but it seemed he was striking some unholy bargain with the Old Scratch himself. And as he read them devil words, he moved from man to man. Each soldier pledged his life and hate, and after he done so, the Colonel... he took his bayonet to each of their necks. So much blood... One after another, he killed them, all while reading from that unholy book. After he done them all, it was only him and me left.

COLONEL HEBERT

Leroy, you've served me to the end. Now I need you to do one last thing for me.

LEROY

(narrating)

I told him I wasn't no murderer and wasn't gonna do no such thing.

COLONEL HEBERT

It's no murder. I'm ordering you to do it. Here, take the bayonet.

(MORE)

COLONEL HEBERT (CONT'D)

(loud)

Do it!

LEROY

(narrating)

I took that knife, but I couldn't do it.

COLONEL HEBERT

You do it, you damned good for nothing nig--

Leroy STABS the Colonel who gasps.

COLONEL HEBERT (CONT'D)

(dying)

Klavoroth, Mekuros my life makes thine!

He dies as a WEIRD OTHERWORLDLY WHOOSH signifies something intense and weird has happened.

LEROY

I don't know what he called up from that book, some demon, maybe Satan himself, but it come forth and went right into that white tree. And as I looked at it, I swear to you that tree come to life. The limbs they begun to move like arms, reaching out and wrappin' themselves round them poor dead soldiers. It weren't a tree no more - it was some *thing* come up straight from hell. It was the last thing my poor eyes ever did see. I tore them right outta my face.

(pause)

It were some time after that - days maybe - Yankee troops found me, blind and stumblin around all soft in the head. I ain't never been the same and I swear to you that ol' white tree aint never been the same. There's still something in it. And them white fellas, they used to go to it when the Klan first got started just after the war. Then Klan kinda died off for thirty years or more. But you know how it is, evil like that just won't stay dead. A few years back, folks started joinin' the Klan again and sure enough, them fellas start coming back to that white tree.

EMERSON

What do you figure they do out there?

LEROY

I wouldn't know - same as before, I figure. They spit out their hate and somehow that tree soaks it up.

LEGRASSE

That's about how I figure it too.

LEROY

You'd think them rich white fellas would have better things to do.

EMERSON

I sure do wish that was true.

35

GRADUATION - CONTINUOUS

35

LEGRASSE

Now stopping the Klan wasn't going to be like busting up the Cthulhu cult. These old boys had guns and would be willing to put up a hell of a fight.

CLAUDE

Were there men on your force even willing to stand up against the Klan?

LEGRASSE

I wondered that too. And whatever I might try to do, there were a whole lot of men in this parish who wanted my hide.

CLAUDE

What'd you do?

LEGRASSE

I figured whatever black magic they were up to out there, they needed the Widow Huberdeau's book. They'd kill Emerson for so much as talking to me, but he told me when the widow would be out and said he'd unlock the case in her library for me.

CLAUDE

Didn't you need a warrant or something?

LEGRASSE

Well, officially, yes. But there's as many judges in the Klan as cops. Sometimes you just can't do things the official way.

Transition MUSIC.

LEGRASSE (CONT'D)

It was about five o'clock in the afternoon I had a cab run me out to the plantation. I slipped in the back door, went straight to the library. There, in that glassed-in case was the book I'd seen her read from on the island. The case was unlocked so I grabbed it up as swift as I could and headed out the door.

36

BOOK CLUB

36

The DOOR to Mont Blanc SHUTS behind him as Legrasse emerges and discovers unexpected company, Morpain and half dozen of his flunkies.

MORPAIN

Well, well, well, if it isn't the big city police inspector.

LEGRASSE

Gerry. What do you say you fellows step aside and let me pass?

MORPAIN

I've been looking around for you but ain't seen hide nor hair of you 'round town. And now look, here you are.

LEGRASSE

I'm just heading out.

MORPAIN

So I see. You got a warrant for that old book you've got there?

LEGRASSE

No, sir, I do not.

MORPAIN

I know you like to stick by the rules. According to the rules, we'd have to call that stealing.

LEGRASSE

The widow wasn't--

MORPAIN

You gonna come along nice now or are you planning to resist arrest?

He THWAPS his nightstick into the palm of his hand.

LEGRASSE

I don't figure you'll need your club,
seeing as how there's so many of you...

MORPAIN

Smart choice, inspector. Blou, take the
book.

He does.

MORPAIN (CONT'D)

Sorry, but cuffs will be required here,
Inspector. Hands, please.

He RATCHETS them onto Legrasse.

MORPAIN (CONT'D)

Oh, and just one last thing--

CRACK! He smacks Legrasse upside the head with his club.
He FALLS TO THE GROUND hard. AD LIBS as the Klansmen take
turns KICKING him.

MORPAIN (CONT'D)

Hey! That's enough now.

They back off. Morpain approaches him. Legrasse GASPS.

MORPAIN (CONT'D)

Well... I guess one more wouldn't hurt!

He kicks Legrasse hard.

Musical STING!

37

THE WHITE TREE

37

There's the NIGHT NOISE of the bayou and the CRACKLING of
a lively bonfire. There's a SPLASH as a bucket of water
is thrown on Legrasse's face.

THE KLOROGO

Wake up, you!

Water SPLASHES on Legrasse's face. He SPUTTERS and
MUMBLES. A SNARE DRUM sounds ominously in the background.

EXALTED CYCLOPS

My terrors and Klansmen, this man stands
before us in a trial before God. He is
charged with violating the secrecy of our
eternal rites. He has profaned our sacred
place of meeting.

(MORE)

EXALTED CYCLOPS (CONT'D)

He has stolen our sacred Kloran, the book of our divine Imperial secrets. He has dared to interfere with our sacred cause. This so-called lawman has violated the laws of God! So is he charged!

THE KLAN

So is he charged!

She moves in close on Legrasse.

EXALTED CYCLOPS

How do you plead, Inspector Legrasse?

LEGRASSE

I do not acknowledge the authority of this court.

THE KLADD

He refuses the authority of our nation, God and the Klan!

Klansmen chime in with terrifying AD LIBS.

EXALTED CYCLOPS

Terrors and Klansmen, what verdict do you render?

THE KLAN

Guilty!

EXALTED CYCLOPS

We find you guilty as charged. My Klansmen and Terrors, what shall the sentence be?

THE KLAN

The Greatest Terror! The White Tree!

EXALTED CYCLOPS

Let blood be spilt and the Klavoroth awakened.

(to The Kladd)

Bring forth the Kloran!

Legrasse STRUGGLES against his restraints.

THE KLADD

No point in struggling, Legrasse. There's no way this ends well for you.

LEGRASSE

You don't have to do this, Gerry.

THE KLADD

This ain't me. You brought all this on yourself.

EXALTED CYCLOPS

Gergehmoth aun Temegor futh l'crob M'gah Cthonos. Iä Shub Niggurath!

THE KLAN

Iä Shub Niggurath.

EXALTED CYCLOPS

Which of my Terrors shall lend his blood in sacred offering?

DAVE

I will.

EXALTED CYCLOPS

Come forth to the flaming altar.
(to the Kladd)
Bring the condemned forth.

THE KLADD

That's you.

We hear a PISTOL COCK and a KNIFE CUTS through the restraints.

THE KLADD (CONT'D)

Move!

EXALTED CYCLOPS

Phnglui mgwl naf Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah nagl fhtagn! In the name of the name of the Great Old Ones, I call thee unto life, Shub Niggurath, Dreamer in Death and Devourer of the Unrighteous!

THE KLAN

Iä Shub Niggurath!

DAVE

I here give my blood so that it may live!

The Exalted Cyclops SLITS Dave's arm and blood SIZZLES as it sprays into the flame.

EXALTED CYCLOPS

It lives!

THE KLAN

Iä Shub Niggurath. Iä Yog Sothoth!

THE KLADD
(to Legrasse)

Kneel.

He does.

EXALTED CYCLOPS
Great one, take this sacrifice, given
unto you by the Knights of the Invisible
Empire. The unrighteous die so that you
may live.

The HORRIFIC DIN OF CHAOS which has been unfolding dips
down a bit under Legrasse's narration.

LEGRASSE
(narrating slowly)
I don't hardly know how to describe it.
As that man's blood spattered on that
burning cross, I swear to you that tree
came to life. It wasn't a tree, the limbs
were great white twisting arms, groping
blindly towards me. I... just froze.

EXALTED CYCLOPS
Take what is yours! So sayeth the sacred
Kloran!

The wood of the TREE GROANS HORRIBLY as otherworldly
forces bend it to their will.

LEGRASSE
(narrating)
The widow, she came for me, that book in
one hand and a dagger in the other. I
couldn't save myself, but the good lord,
or maybe Le Grand Zombi... someone sent
me an avenging angel. A black one.

EMERSON
I'll take that, ma'am.

LEGRASSE
(narrating)
It was Emerson. He ripped that old book
from her arms and flung it into the
flames.

He does. She turns the knife on him.

EXALTED CYCLOPS
(to a Klansman)
Save the book!
(MORE)

EXALTED CYCLOPS (CONT'D)

(to Emerson)

How dare you!

THE KLADD

(to Exalted Cyclops)

I got him!

BLAM! He shoots Emerson who GASPS in anguish.

LEGRASSE

It was so fast. The book went in the fire and Morpain shot him. I'd half lost my mind... I'd looked away from the white tree and there was a snake, a big cottonmouth right in front of me on the ground. I don't know why and I sure don't know how, but I reached down, picked up that snake and threw it right onto the Sheriff.

HISS! The snake BITES Morpain who SQUEALS in pain.

THE KLADD

Snake! Get it off me!

LEGRASSE

(narrating)

The widow was about to use the dagger on Emerson. I gave her a shove from behind and learned something.

EXALTED CYCLOPS

Die, you lousy nig--

Legrasse shoves her into the burning cross. She goes up like a torch SCREAMING.

LEGRASSE

Klan robes burn.

Morpain YOWLS in agony. MASS CHAOS.

LEGRASSE (CONT'D)

(narrating)

It was a scene from some painting of a medieval inferno. Serpents and flames and the devil incarnate... I didn't figure we'd leave that island alive. But that White Tree - or whatever it was that inhabited that thing, reached its limbs out and took hold of the sheriff. And the widow. And... well, hell had broke loose. That was the end of that Klonklave.

(MORE)

LEGRASSE (CONT'D)

Everyone on that island just ran for their lives, including yours truly.

38

GRADUATION - CONTINUOUS

38

Legrasse polishes off his bourbon and SETS THE GLASS DOWN hard.

CLAUDE

(deeply at a loss)

Grandpa...

LEGRASSE

Aw, hell... I didn't mean to tell that whole story.

CLAUDE

I don't believe it.

LEGRASSE

Well, that's probably for the best. But now you see why I encourage you to explore other career choices. What about architecture?

CLAUDE

Grandpa.

(pause)

What really happened?

LEGRASSE

I don't suppose I truly know what happened. I just know what I saw that night.

CLAUDE

What happened to Emerson? I mean, you got away?

LEGRASSE

Hmmm...

Transition MUSIC.

39

THE LAST GETAWAY

39

LEGRASSE

(narrating)

It was pure pandemonium. I grabbed him to make a run for it and pulled him to where he'd stashed his canoe. He was in a bad way, bleeding from where he'd been shot.

They SPLASH in the water as Legrasse tries to help him into the canoe. In the background Klansmen SHRIEK in terror and White Tree continues its ARBOREAL RAMPAGE.

LEGRASSE (CONT'D)

I got it, steady - just step up in.

EMERSON MOANS in agony and collapses into the canoe.

LEGRASSE (CONT'D)

There you go. Just lay back there. Hold on.

(he climbs into the canoe)

All right. I'm gonna get you to a doctor.

EMERSON

Not sure we got time for that, Inspector.

LEGRASSE

I figure about now it's all right if you call me by my name. I'm John.

EMERSON

John. Yes, sir, John.

LEGRASSE

Now you just rest.

Legrasse PADDLES off into the darkness. The sounds of chaos fade.

LEGRASSE (CONT'D)

Emerson. Emerson!

EMERSON

What?

LEGRASSE

I... I don't have the slightest idea where we're going.

Emerson HEAVES what may be HIS FINAL BREATH, but it devolves into an AMUSED CHUCKLE. LEGRASSE LAUGHS too.

EMERSON

You city fellas... Ah, I don't think it much matters where we go now.

LEGRASSE

Don't you talk like that.

EMERSON

A man should have something he can look forward to. A world better than this one.

LEGRASSE

There's... there's something I don't understand. Why'd you do it?

EMERSON

How's that?

LEGRASSE

What's a black man doing saving a white policeman at a Klan rally? Twice!

EMERSON

I didn't do nothing but what any man ought to do.

LEGRASSE

It was you. You put the gris-gris in my pocket.

EMERSON

Yessir, I did.

LEGRASSE

But, why?

EMERSON

(weakening)

I said a prayer to Le Grand Zombi for help. Then you turned up. I guess you were the answer to my prayer. Not really what I had in mind...

He GROANS in weak agony.

LEGRASSE

Hell now, it was you who saved *me*. Now which way you figure I should go up here? We want the canal, right? Emerson?

(silence)

Emerson? Ah, hell...

Sad MUSIC transition as Emerson dies.

40

BACK TO WORK

40

Legrasse enters his office and hangs up his jacket.

JABALEY

Inspector, welcome back.

LEGRASSE

Lt. Jabaley.

JABALEY

How was Vermilion? I saw in the papers something about a liquor still blowing up at Klan rally out that way. You hear about that?

LEGRASSE

There was some talk of it. Hell of a thing.

JABALEY

I can't imagine. The Klan usually frowns on bootlegging. In public, anyway.

LEGRASSE

Sometimes, lieutenant, folks aren't what they appear to be.

JABALEY

Amen to that. Find any ties between LaVache and your swamp cult?

LEGRASSE

Nope.

JABALEY

Aw, beans. Anything on that dead negro Lavache mentioned--

LEGRASSE

That'll be all, lieutenant.

JABALEY

Oh. Yes, sir. I'll.. Just go now.

The door closes behind him. Legrasse SIGHS heavily.

41

GRADUATION - CONTINUOUS

41

LEGRASSE

Courage? Justice? You don't need to be a policeman for that. Probably better if you're not.

CLAUDE

But you stopped them. I mean, without you they'd still be...

LEGRASSE

Ah, forget it. Don't pay no mind to a word I've said tonight. It's just the bourbon talking.

CLAUDE

If you were trying to talk me out of it, you didn't succeed. We need policemen. There's men out there we should be afraid of.

LEGRASSE

That there are. But you'll never know which ones they are just by looking at them.

42

CONCLUSION

42

End title MUSIC.

CREIGHTON COBB

You've been listening to The White Tree, a Dark Adventure Radio Theatre original tale, brought to you by our sponsor Grip-U-Ryte; the truss that's guaranteed to treat your rupture right. Until next week, this is Creighton Cobb, reminding you to never go anywhere alone; if it looks bad, don't look; and save the last bullet for yourself.

ANNOUNCER

"The White Tree" was written by Sean Branney and produced by Sean Branney and Andrew Leman. Original music by Troy Sterling Nies. The Dark Adventure Ensemble featured: Leslie Baldwin, Sean Branney, Kacey Camp, Hollie Hunt, Andrew Leman, Jacob Lyle, Barry Lynch, Grinnell Morris, David Pavao, Kem Saunders, Kevin Stidham, Josh Thoemke and Time Winters. Tune in next week for "The Prisoner of the Glacier", a two-fisted tale of Neanderthal vengeance. Dark Adventure Radio Theatre is a production of the HPLHS Broadcasting Group, a subsidiary of HPLHS, Inc., copyright 1931...plus eighty-five.

Radio STATIC and fade out.