

Dark Adventure Radio Theatre

The Players

Leslie Baldwin	Mulvany
Sean Branney	Matthew Delapore
Kacey Camp	Mildred, Lizzie
Dan Conroy	Capt. Hill, Wakefield
David Carey Foster	Trask
Hollie Hunt	Hannah
Andrew Leman	Sir William Brinton
Jacob Andrew Lyle	Alfred Delapore, Miller, Young Matthew
Barry Lynch	Grandpa Delapore, Wilfred Crane
Grinnell Morris	Thornton
Kevin Stidham	Captain Edward Norrys
Josh Thoenke	Announcer
Time Winters	Creighton Cobb, Leeds

The Staff

Based on the story by H. P. Lovecraft

Written by Sean Branney & Andrew Leman

Original Music by Troy Sterling Nies

Vocals Recorded at The Jungle Room, Glendale, California

Audio Engineering by Ben Soldate

Cover and Disc Illustrations by Darrell Tutchton

Prop Inserts by Andrew Leman & Sean Branney

Research Assistance by David G. Cercone II

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His Grace the Duke of Norfolk and Craig Irving of the Arundel

Castle Archives, and George C. Spina.

Produced by Sean Branney and Andrew Leman



"The Rats in the Walls" was one of the few Lovecraft stories to be published in hardcover during his lifetime. It appeared in this British horror anthology in 1931, along with "The Curse of Yig". The Not At Night anthology series eventually ran to 11 volumes, plus two "best of" collections, published between 1925 and 1937, and reprinted, among other things, 100 stories that had previously appeared in *Weird Tales*.

But first, a few words from our sponsor....

In a way, the HPLHS owes its very existence to "The Rats in the Walls." Sean Branney's first acquaintance with H.P. Lovecraft came through this story roughly 35 years ago. His very weird friend (and current DART illustrator) Darrell Tutchton handed him an anthology of horror stories with this one bookmarked and said, "You've got to read this story — it's really weird." That fateful literary encounter, lo these many years ago, set Sean on a course of a lifelong love for Lovecraft, which he later shared with Andrew Leman through the role-playing game *Call of Cthulhu*.

"Rats" is among HPL's earlier works — one of the first as he transitioned from publishing stories through the amateur press to selling stories to pulp magazines. He wrote it late in the summer of 1923 and infused the tale with many motifs which would resurface throughout the remainder of his career: a protagonist suffering an ancestral curse; dangerous cults worshipping even more dangerous gods; ancient legends of unspeakable acts and an underground world that hides sanity-wrenching horrors. There's also a nod to Poe and his dread House of Usher — a house whose destruction is tied to the fate of the family dwelling in it. "Rats" gives us a team of brave investigators, risking their health and sanity in a manner that will surely be familiar to those who have played Chaosium's role-playing game. It gives us an unreliable narrator tormented by otherworldly phenomena which may or may not be real. And it gives us a finale untypical for Lovecraft — a moment of surprising and genuinely shocking horror.

In adapting the story for radio, as usual, we had to make a few changes. We wanted to open up the perspective and see what it was like to experience Exham Priory as one of the investigators. We were eager to flesh out the characters on that team and give them expertise which would inform the house's not insubstantial backstory. And, of course, we had to deal with that damned cat. Those who know the short story know that the cat is stuck with a profoundly offensive name. In his youth Lovecraft actually had a beloved cat with that name, and we presume he used the name in the story as an affectionate tribute to his childhood pet without considering its horrifying racism. During HPL's lifetime such a name might not have seemed as terribly shocking, but the world has made some important changes in the century since the

story was penned. It was our feeling that there was little to be gained in keeping the cat's original name and much to be lost. Printings of the tale after its original *Weird Tales* publication in 1924 changed the name to "Black Tom," but after considering a variety of options we decided to take a cue from Mr. Poe and the poor titular feline from his story "The Black Cat." While we strive to keep the "Lovecraftian" feel alive and well in our adaptations, we're glad to be able to fix a few things that our esteemed friend Howard didn't get right the first time around.

The story makes references to a number of real historical characters. In alluding to the Roman poet Catullus, Lovecraft used a technique that he would continue to deploy, salting his fiction with genuine scholarship to make the fantastical elements seem more real. He likewise refers to Piltdown Man, a paleoanthropological forgery that was commonly believed to be authentic when Lovecraft wrote. (The idea of human evolution has always been controversial, but that controversy was especially heated in the early 1920s, leading up to the infamous "Scopes Monkey Trial" of 1925.) And the unexpected 1923 death of Warren Harding also gets a mention in Lovecraft's story.

The HPLHS isn't the only august affiliation that got its start from this tale. In the climactic moments, Delapore insanely babbles a genuine Gaelic curse which Lovecraft quoted from *The Sin Eater* by Fiona Macleod. Lovecraft knew it was a bit of a cheat to use Gaelic and that it really should have been Welsh, but he believed no reader would really notice the difference. But at least one reader did notice: Robert E. Howard. He wrote an insightful letter on the subject to *Weird Tales* which was passed on to Lovecraft, thus beginning an epistolary friendship that would unite two of the giants of 20th-century pulp fiction. "The Rats in the Walls" is a true classic and we're very pleased to add it to the *Dark Adventure* repertoire.

—SB & AHL



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