

Dark Adventure Radio Theatre: The Shadow Over Innsmouth

by
Sean Branney and Andrew Leman

"The Shadow Over Innsmouth" by H.P. Lovecraft

Read-along Script for Dark Adventure Radio Theatre
March 9, 2009

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Cast List

OLMSTEAD - Matt Foyer
ZADOK ALLEN - Barry Lynch
STATION AGENT - Sean Branney
TILTON - Kacey Camp
BILLY - Steve Coombs
UNCLE WALTER - Andrew Leman
LIBRARIAN - McKerrin Kelly
SARGENT - Andrew Leman
MCGRAW - Dan Conroy
HOTEL CLERK - Mark Colson
PEABODY - John McKenna
CREEPY CUSTOMER - Sean Branney
CHESTER LANGFIELD - Noah Wagner
ANNOUNCER - Josh Thoemke
RUDE PASSENGER - Mark Colson
OPERATOR - Leslie Baldwin
NATHAN REED - Andrew Leman
EVIL-LOOKING MAN - John McKenna
BANK CLERK Josh Thoemke

1 INTRO

1

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

This is Dark Adventure Radio Theatre, with your host Chester Langfield. Today's episode: H.P. Lovecraft's "The Shadow Over Innsmouth".

MUSIC DIMINISHES. The sound of the OCEAN AND GULLS.

CHESTER LANGFIELD

A young man's journey takes him to a dilapidated sea-front town, rife with deformed characters and ungodly secrets. Can he escape the terrifying town with his life, or will the sinister residents of Innsmouth and their hellish allies drag him down to a horrid fate beneath the waves?

A few piano notes from the FLEUR DE LYS JINGLE.

CHESTER LANGFIELD

You know folks, whenever I feel glum or weary after a long day in the studio, I get my energy back by lighting up a Fleur de Lys cigarette. The road to pleasure is thronged with smokers who have discovered the superior fragrance and mellow mildness of Fleur de Lys. You'll enjoy their pleasing, energizing effect, and they never get on your nerves. Fleur de Lys: smoke as many as you want.

Dark Adventure LEAD-IN MUSIC.

CHESTER LANGFIELD
 And now Dark Adventure Radio
 Theatre presents: H.P. Lovecraft's
 "The Shadow Over Innsmouth".

2 PREFACE

2

TRANSITION MUSIC.

CHESTER LANGFIELD
 Folks who listened to their radios
 a few years back might remember
 news stories about a town in
 Massachusetts called Innsmouth....

MUSIC: WORLDWIDE WIRELESS NEWS FANFARE.

NATHAN REED
 Worldwide Wireless News, February
 24, 1928. Federal agents raid
 waterfront town in the government's
 ongoing war against illegal liquor.
 I'm Nathan Reed for Worldwide
 Wireless News. A secret
 investigation of conditions in the
 Massachusetts seaport town of
 Innsmouth culminated today in a
 massive Treasury Department raid. G-
 men stormed crumbling and
 supposedly empty houses along the
 waterfront, arresting dozens of
 people on suspicion of liquor
 trafficking. Wharves and warehouses
 used for illegal activity were set
 ablaze and dynamited by police
 demolition experts. Federal Agent
 Jack McGraw oversaw the vast series
 of raids.

MCGRAW
 The Bureau has been investigating
 Innsmouth for months, based on
 information provided by concerned
 citizens. The government acted to
 protect the public safety and
 health.

NATHAN REED

Agent McGraw declined to provide further details into the ongoing investigation, but residents of neighboring towns say that Innsmouth has long been a dangerous place. An outbreak of plague and resulting riots shook the town in 1846, and it's had a shadowy reputation ever since.

CHESTER LANGFIELD

The story quickly faded from the headlines. There were some rumors about disease and concentration camps -- talk of military prisons and Naval submarines off the coast -- but there were never any formal charges or public trials, and no one ever saw the captives again. People forgot about Innsmouth, except, of course, for one young man....

3 INTERVIEW

3

Someone KNOCKS on a door, hard. It OPENS.

MCGRAW

Robert Olmstead. Remember me?
Federal Agent McGraw.

ROBERT OLMSTEAD is in his early 20s, but his voice is tinged with bleak despair, like a shell-shocked war veteran.

OLMSTEAD

Of course I remember you, Agent McGraw. What's the Bureau of Investigation want with me? That Innsmouth business was a long time ago.

MCGRAW

Oh, just following up on a few things. Mind if I come in?

McGraw STEPS IN. The door CLOSES.

OLMSTEAD

Hmph. Look, I gave you my report right after it happened.

(MORE)

OLMSTEAD (cont'd)

You questioned me again last year
at college.

MCGRAW

If you don't mind my saying so,
Olmstead, you don't look so good.
I'd say you've aged twenty years.
You sick?

OLMSTEAD

Well, I've been through a lot.

MCGRAW

Sure, sure. You've had a rough time
of it.

OLMSTEAD

I haven't been quite myself.

MCGRAW

Really? Why don't you tell me about
it?

OLMSTEAD

You were the one who told me to
keep my mouth shut about it.

MCGRAW

You can tell me.

OLMSTEAD

It's odd, lately I have had an odd
craving to talk about it. Telling
it might help me to restore
confidence in my own faculties; to
reassure myself that I was not the
first to succumb to a contagious
nightmare hallucination. It helps
me, too, in making up my mind
regarding a certain terrible step
which lies ahead of me. I still
remember it all so clearly....

4

OF INNSMOUTH

4

Crossfade to background sounds of the small Newburyport TRAIN
STATION. Olmstead's voice now is noticeably brighter as he
brims with an academic enthusiasm. An older friendly Station
Agent stands in the ticket window.

OLMSTEAD

How much is a ticket to Arkham?

STATION AGENT
Return fare?

OLMSTEAD
No, just one way.

STATION AGENT
One dollar fifteen.

OLMSTEAD
One fifteen?

STATION AGENT
Too much?

OLMSTEAD
I'm afraid so.

STATION AGENT
On holiday?

OLMSTEAD
A sightseeing tour. Making some antiquarian and genealogical inquiries too. But on a student's budget.

STATION AGENT
You could take the old bus, I suppose, but it ain't thought much of hereabouts. Looks like a terrible rattletrap: I've never been on it. Besides, it goes through Innsmouth and so the people don't like it. Run by an Innsmouth fellow -- Joe Sargent ~~--- but never gets any custom from here, or Arkham either. Wonder it keeps running at all.~~ I s'pose it's cheap enough, ~~but I never see mor'n two or three people in it --- nobody but those Innsmouth folk.~~ Leaves the square, front of Hammond's Drug Store, at 10 a.m. and 7 p.m.

OLMSTEAD
Innsmouth? Never heard of it. I don't think it's on my map. Maybe I'll stop off there, have a look around. What's it like?

STATION AGENT

Innsmouth? Well, it's a queer kind of a town. Used to be almost a city. Quite a port before the War of 1812. Rail line used to go there, but there hasn't been a train on it in fifty years. More empty houses than there are people, I guess, and no business to speak of except fishing and lobstering. Everybody trades mostly either here or in Arkham or Ipswich. Once they had quite a few mills, but nothing's left now except one gold refinery running on the leanest kind of part time.

Refinery used to be a big thing, and old man Marsh, who owns it, must be richer'n Croesus. Queer old duck, though. He's supposed to have developed some skin disease or deformity late in life that makes him keep out of sight. ~~Grandson of Captain Obed Marsh, who founded the business. His mother seems to've been some kind of foreigner — they say a South Sea islander — so everybody raised Cain when he married an Ipswich girl fifty years ago. They always do that about Innsmouth people, and folks hereabouts always try to cover up any Innsmouth blood they have in 'em.~~

OLMSTEAD

Why is everybody so down on Innsmouth?

STATION AGENT

They've been telling things about Innsmouth for the last hundred years, and I gather they're more scared than anything else. Some of the stories would make you laugh -- about old Captain Marsh driving bargains with the devil and bringing imps out of hell, or about some kind of devil-worship and sacrifices near the wharves -- but I come from Vermont and that kind of story don't go down with me.

OLMSTEAD

Of course.

STATION AGENT

You ought to hear what some of the old-timers tell about the black reef off the coast. Devil Reef, they call it. The story is that there's a whole legion of devils seen sometimes on that reef -- sprawled about, or darting in and out of some kind of caves near the top. It's a rugged, uneven thing, a good bit over a mile out, and toward the end of shipping days sailors used to make big detours just to avoid it.

That is, sailors that didn't hail from Innsmouth. One of the things they had against old Captain Marsh was that he was supposed to land on it sometimes at night when the tide was right. Maybe he did, for I dare say the rock formation was interesting, and it's possible he was looking for pirate loot and maybe finding it; but there was talk of his dealing with demons there. Fact is, it was really the Captain that gave the bad reputation to the reef.

~~That was before the big epidemic of 1846, when over half the folks in Innsmouth was carried off. They never did figure out what the trouble was, but it was probably some foreign kind of disease brought from China or somewhere. It left the place in awful shape. Never really came back. There can't be more'n three or four hundred people living there now.~~

OLMSTEAD

Is it old superstitions and stories that turned people against it?

STATION AGENT

Nah, the real thing behind the way folks feel is simply race prejudice -- and I don't say I'm blaming those that hold it. I hate those Innsmouth folks myself, and I wouldn't care to go to their town.

OLMSTEAD

Strong words.

STATION AGENT

~~Well, I can see you're a Westerner by your talk, so you don't know how things are in these parts. Our New-England ships used to visit queer-ports in Africa, Asia, the South-Seas, and everywhere else, and they sometimes brought queer kinds of people back with 'em. You've probably heard about the Salem man that came home with a Chinese wife, and maybe you know there's still a bunch of Fiji Islanders somewhere around Cape Cod.~~

OLMSTEAD

Sure, but...

STATION AGENT

~~There's something like that with the Innsmouth people. It's pretty clear that old Captain Marsh must have brought home some odd-specimens back in the twenties and thirties. There's a strange streak in Innsmouth folks today.~~

(hesitating)

I don't know how to explain it but it sort of makes you crawl. You'll notice a little in Sargent if you take his bus. Some of 'em have queer narrow heads with flat noses and bulgy, starry eyes that never seem to shut, and their skin ain't quite right. Rough and scabby, and the sides of the necks are all shriveled or creased up. Get bald, too, very young. ~~Animals hate 'em. They used to have lots of horse-trouble before the autos came in.~~

OLMSTEAD

(humorously)

The whole town's ugly?

STATION AGENT

More to it than that. Nobody around here or in Arkham or Ipswich will have anything to do with 'em. ~~They act kind of offish themselves when they come here or when anyone tries to fish on their grounds. Fish are always thick off Innsmouth Harbour when there ain't any anywhere else around. But just try to fish there yourself and see how them folks chase you off!~~

OLMSTEAD

Is there a place to stay there?

STATION AGENT

Gilman House -- but I wouldn't advise you to try it. Better stay over here and take the ten o'clock bus tomorrow morning; then you can get an evening bus there for Arkham at eight o'clock.

OLMSTEAD

What's wrong with the hotel?

STATION AGENT

A factory inspector stopped at the Gilman House a couple of years ago and he had a lot of unpleasant hints about the place. Seems they get a queer crowd there, for this fellow heard voices in other rooms -- though most of 'em was empty -- that gave him the shivers. It was foreign talk he thought, but he said the bad thing about it was the kind of voice that sometimes spoke. It sounded so unnatural -- slopping like, he said -- that he didn't dare undress or go to sleep. Just waited up and lit out the first thing in the morning. The talk went on most all night.

OLMSTEAD

Really?

STATION AGENT

Aye-yep. This fellow said he found the Marsh refinery a queer place.

(MORE)

STATION AGENT (cont'd)

You know it's always been a kind of mystery where the Marshes get the gold they refine. They've never seemed to do much buying, but they shipped out an enormous lot of ingots.

OLMSTEAD

Gold? Hmm.

STATION AGENT

Maybe old Captain Obed traded for it in some heathen port, since he always ordered stacks of glass beads and trinkets such as seafaring men used to get for native trade. Some said he'd found an old pirate cache out on Devil Reef. But here's a funny thing. The Captain's been dead these sixty years, and there ain't been a good-sized ship out of the place since the Civil War, but just the same the Marshes still keep on buying a few of those native trade things -- mostly glass and rubber gewgaws, they tell me. Maybe the Innsmouth folks like 'em to look at themselves. Gawd knows they've gotten to be about as bad as South Sea cannibals and Guinea savages.

OLMSTEAD

They're that primitive?

STATION AGENT

Plague of '46 must have taken off the best blood in the place. They're a doubtful lot now, what they call 'white trash' down South - - lawless and sly, and full of secret things. They sure get a lot of fish and lobsters though.

OLMSTEAD

It sounds unbelievable. I think I should go down there and take a look around.

STATION AGENT

Prying strangers ain't welcome around Innsmouth.

(MORE)

STATION AGENT (cont'd)

I've heard of more'n one business or government man that's disappeared there, and there's talk of one who went crazy and is out at Danvers now. That's why I wouldn't go at night if I was you.

OLMSTEAD

I suppose I could wait and catch the morning bus.

STATION AGENT

I guess a daytime trip couldn't hurt you. If you're just sightseeing, and looking for old-time stuff, Innsmouth ought to be quite a place for you.

OLMSTEAD

Sounds like my kind of town. Any place else I can learn about it?

STATION AGENT

Nobody round here will have much to say on Innsmouth. 'Spose you could check the library. But heed my warning, son, don't go to Innsmouth at night.

5 TIARA

5

TRANSITION MUSIC.

ECHOING FOOTSTEPS as Olmstead enters the library and approaches a middle-aged female librarian.

LIBRARIAN

May I help you?

OLMSTEAD

I'm looking for information about a nearby town. Innsmouth?

LIBRARIAN

Innsmouth? What for?

OLMSTEAD

I'm traveling through the area, and the Station Agent told me about it. Sounds like an interesting place.

LIBRARIAN

Oh, that Edgar... Interesting isn't the word for Innsmouth. You curious about their fishery, refinery, the plague of '46, the jewelry...

OLMSTEAD

Jewelry? He told me they refined gold, but didn't mention anything about jewelry.

LIBRARIAN

Oh yes, they make things in Innsmouth. Terrible, beautiful things.

OLMSTEAD

I don't understand.

LIBRARIAN

Hold on a moment.

The librarian PICKS UP THE PHONE and places a call.

OPERATOR

Central.

LIBRARIAN

Maureen, would you patch me through to Miss Anna?

The phone RINGS. Miss ANNA TILTON answers. She's an elderly lady with sharp edges.

TILTON

Hello?

LIBRARIAN

Miss Anna, it's Annabelle. I have a young man here who might like to see the Innsmouth pieces. May I send him over?

TILTON

Innsmouth? How odd.

LIBRARIAN

May I send him over?

TILTON

He's not one of them?

LIBRARIAN

Now, would I have called you if he was an Innsmouth man?

TILTON

If he leaves now you can send him over. I'll unlock the front.

There's a CLICK as the connection is terminated.

LIBRARIAN

Our Newburyport Historical Society has some of the Innsmouth items. Miss Anna Tilton's the curator. She'll show them to you. You just make a right turn in front of the library and another right on Howard Street. It's at 112 Howard.

OLMSTEAD

Thank you so very much.

MUSICAL STINGER.

A CREAK as Olmstead hesitantly opens the door of the Historical Society.

OLMSTEAD

Hello?

TILTON

So, you're the one interested in Innsmouth?

OLMSTEAD

I'm Robert Olmstead. The librarian said I should come see...

TILTON

Step into the light. Let me look at you.

FOOTSTEPS as they size each other up.

OLMSTEAD

Is something wrong?

TILTON

Where are you from, Mr. Olmstead?

OLMSTEAD

Ohio. I'm a student there.

TILTON
What do you study?

OLMSTEAD
History.

~~TILTON
And where are you from?~~

~~OLMSTEAD
I grew up in Toledo.~~

TILTON
I see. And your people?

OLMSTEAD
What kind of historical society is this?

TILTON
Your people, young man.

OLMSTEAD
My father's family came to Ohio from Connecticut; my mother's from Arkham.

TILTON
Mm. Follow me. So you've never seen pieces from Innsmouth? They have one in Arkham, at Miskatonic University.

OLMSTEAD
Ma'am, I'd never heard of Innsmouth before today.

TILTON
This cupboard in the corner. Here, I'll switch on the light.

She flips the LAMP on. He GASPS loudly.

OLMSTEAD
(narrating)
You had to see it, Agent McGraw. It was an alien, opulent phantasy that rested there on a purple velvet cushion.

(MORE)

OLMSTEAD (cont'd)

It was a sort of tiara, tall in front, and with a very large and curiously irregular periphery, as if designed for a head of almost freakishly elliptical outline. The material seemed to be predominantly gold, though a weird lighter lustrousness hinted at some strange alloy. Its condition was almost perfect, and one could have spent hours in studying the striking geometrical, and marine design, moulded in high relief on its surface with a craftsmanship of incredible skill and grace.

TILTON

Arresting isn't it?

OLMSTEAD

I've never seen any thing like it.
(narrating)

The longer I looked, the more the thing fascinated me. At first I decided that it was the queer other-worldly quality of the art which made me uneasy. This tiara clearly belonged to some settled technique of infinite maturity and perfection, yet that technique was utterly remote from any which I had ever heard of or seen exemplified. It was as if the workmanship were that of another planet. But the longer I stared at it, the more uncomfortable I became. It was as if the strange pictorial and mathematical designs touched off some primal pseudo-memory. Among the reliefs were fabulous creatures of abhorrent grotesqueness and malignity.

(to Tilton)

Those creatures...some kind of ichthyic monstrosities...

TILTON

Batrachian, if you ask me. It's a positively blasphemous design.

OLMSTEAD

The fish-frogs, they're... I've never seen anything that smacked of such unknown and inhuman evil.

TILTON

It tends to illicit strong reactions from people.

OLMSTEAD

Where did it come from?

TILTON

A drunken Innsmouth man pawned it at the old shop on State Street for a pittance. Shortly afterward he was killed in a brawl; this would have been around 1873. The Society acquired it directly from the pawnbroker, at once giving it a display worthy of its quality. The Society labeled it as of probable Indochinese provenance, though I have my doubts.

OLMSTEAD

Where do you think it came from?

TILTON

Educated folks around here believe it's part of some exotic pirate hoard discovered by old Captain Obed Marsh.

OLMSTEAD

The Innsmouth sea captain?

TILTON

The very one. Once they learned we had it, some members of the Marsh family made some sizeable offers for it, but we've held onto it. It's impossibly unique.

A distant CLOCK BELL tolls the hour.

TILTON

Oh dear, it's time I locked up.

They STROLL back towards the front door.

OLMSTEAD

Have you ever been there?
Innsmouth?

TILTON

(incredible disdain)
Oh good heavens no!

OLMSTEAD

Everyone here feels so strongly about the place. I've even heard people talk about devil-worship.

TILTON

There's plenty of good cause: those rumors are partly justified. A peculiar secret cult there has all but engulfed the orthodox churches.

OLMSTEAD

There's a secret cult?

TILTON

"The Esoteric Order of Dagon", a quasi-pagan thing imported from the East a century ago, back when the Innsmouth fisheries seemed to be going barren. It's persisted among the simpletons because of the sudden and permanent return of abundant fish. It's a very religious community.

OLMSTEAD

I'm going there, on the bus tomorrow morning. You know, have a look around.

TILTON

Young man, you've just come from seeing the best Innsmouth has to offer. The rest is decay, squalor and desolation.

MUSICAL STINGER.

OLMSTEAD

(narrating)

Shortly before ten the next morning I stood with one small valise in front of Hammond's Drug Store waiting for the Innsmouth bus. In a few moments a small motor-coach of extreme decrepitude rattled down State Street.

3a INTERVIEW CONT'D

3a

MCGRAW

I bet you wish you'd never gotten
on that bus.

OLMSTEAD

You have no idea.

6 ROAD TRIP

6

Street ATMOSPHERE. A decrepit motor-coach PULLS UP beside him, brakes SQUEALING, engine HEAVING TO A STOP. The DOOR OPENS, and the FOOTSTEPS of three passengers climb down.

OLMSTEAD

Excuse me, is this the...

One of the passengers BUMPS into Olmstead, whose feet SHUFFLE in the dirt.

RUDE PASSENGER

(a bit croakily)

Outta the way!

The FOOTSTEPS of the departing passengers recede. Olmstead questions the driver.

OLMSTEAD

I beg your pardon. Is this the bus
for Innsmouth?

The driver, Joe Sargent, croaks horsely.

SARGENT

Headed to Arkham.

OLMSTEAD

Right, but you stop in Innsmouth on
the way, don't you?

SARGENT

Why? You ain't from Innsmouth.

OLMSTEAD

No, I'm just visiting.

Sargent SNORTS wetly. After a brief pause, Sargent STARTS THE ENGINE and the bus rumbles back to life.

SARGENT

Sixty cents.

OLMSTEAD

The driver was a thin, stoop-shouldered man not much under six feet tall, dressed in shabby blue clothes and wearing a frayed golf cap. His age was perhaps thirty-five, but the odd, deep creases in the sides of his neck made him seem older. He had a narrow head, bulging, watery-blue eyes that seemed never to blink, a flat nose, a receding forehead and chin, and singularly undeveloped ears. His long thick lip and coarse-pored, greyish cheeks seemed almost beardless, and in places the surface seemed queerly irregular, as if peeling from some cutaneous disease. As I extended a dollar bill to him, I noticed his hands were large and heavily veined, and had a very unusual greyish-blue tinge. The fingers were strikingly short in proportion to the rest of the structure, and seemed to have a tendency to curl closely into the huge palm.

The muted CLINK of a couple of coins.

SARGENT

Yer change. Take a seat.

OLMSTEAD

As I turned toward the back of the bus I nearly tripped on the driver's feet, and noticed that they were inordinately immense. I wondered how he could buy any shoes to fit them. He was greasy and gave off the smell of old fish docks. Just what foreign blood was in him I could not even guess. His oddities certainly did not look Asiatic, Polynesian, Levantine or negroid, yet I could see why the people found him alien. I myself would have thought of biological degeneration rather than alienage.

(MORE)

OLMSTEAD (cont'd)

When realized it was only going to be the two of us on the bus, I understood why the local folks avoided it.

The vehicle STARTS WITH A LURCH and RATTLES down the street. The sound of the BUS continues under, with MUSIC.

OLMSTEAD

The day was warm and sunny, but the landscape of sand, sedge-grass, and stunted shrubbery became increasingly desolate as we proceeded. We presently drew very near the beach as our narrow road veered off from the main highway. There were no visible houses. Now and then we crossed crude wooden bridges over tidal creeks that wound far inland and promoted the general isolation of the region. At last we saw the vast expanse of the open Atlantic on our left. The smell of the sea took on ominous implications, and the silent driver's bent, rigid back and narrow head became more and more hateful. As I looked at him I saw that the back of his head was almost as hairless as his face, having only a few straggling yellow strands upon a grey scabrous surface.

Then we reached the crest of a long hill and beheld the outspread valley beyond, where the Manuxet joins the sea just north of the long line of cliffs that culminate in Kingsport Head. That instant I came face to face with rumour-shadowed Innsmouth.

MUSIC CRESCENDO. The distant sound of the OCEAN. A SEAGULL. The bus CHUGS along.

OLMSTEAD

It was a town of wide extent and dense construction.

(MORE)

OLMSTEAD (cont'd)

The vast huddle of sagging gambrel roofs and peaked gables conveyed the idea of wormy decay, and as we approached along the now descending road I could see that many roofs had wholly caved in. Stretching inland from among them I saw the rusted, grass-grown line of the abandoned railway, with leaning telegraph-poles now devoid of wires. The decay was worst close to the waterfront, though in its very midst I could spy the white belfry of a fairly well preserved brick structure which looked like a small factory. The harbor was enclosed by an ancient stone breakwater. ~~A sandy tongue had formed inside this barrier and upon it I saw a few decrepit cabins, moored dories, and scattered lobster pots.~~

Here and there the ruins of wharves jutted out from the shore to end in indeterminate rottenness. And far out at sea I glimpsed a long, black line scarcely rising above the water, yet carrying a suggestion of odd latent malignancy. This must be Devil Reef. As I looked, a subtle, curious sense of beckoning mixed with grim repulsion.

The cry of a GULL. The crash of a WAVE.

We passed deserted farms in varying stages of ruin. I noticed a few inhabited houses with rags stuffed in the broken windows and shells and dead fish lying about the littered yards. Once or twice I saw listless-looking people working in barren gardens or digging clams on the fishy-smelling beach below, and groups of dirty children playing around weed-grown doorsteps. Somehow these people seemed more disquieting than the dismal buildings, for almost every one had certain peculiarities of face and motions which I instinctively disliked without being able to define or comprehend them.

(MORE)

OLMSTEAD (cont'd)

The leaning, unpainted houses grew thicker and lined both sides of the road. All were apparently deserted, and there were occasional gaps where tumbledown chimneys and cellar walls told of buildings that had collapsed. Pervading everything was the most nauseous fishy odor imaginable. Soon I saw increasing signs of habitation: curtained windows and battered motor-cars at the curb. Most of the houses were quite old, and as an amateur antiquarian I almost lost my feeling of menace and repulsion amidst this rich, unaltered survival from the past.

As the bus approached the center of town, I saw a large pillared facade ahead. It used to be the town's Masonic Hall. The structure's paint was now gray and peeling, and bore a black and gold sign so faded that I could only with difficulty make out the words "Esoteric Order of Dagon."

A cracked CHURCH BELL across the street RINGS ELEVEN.

OLMSTEAD

There was a squat stone church on the corner whose basement door was open. I shuddered involuntarily when I spied the first person I'd seen in Innsmouth proper. I shuddered. There was no real reason to be frightened: it was clearly just the pastor of the church. But he was clad in some peculiar vestments, and wore a tall tiara just like the one Miss Tilton had shown me. Doubtless it was the unusual dress of the Order of Dagon.

The bus rolled at last into the large town square and drew up in front of a tall, cupola-crowned building with remnants of yellow paint. A half-effaced sign proclaimed it to be the Gilman House hotel.

The brakes SCREECH and the bus comes to a STOP.

SARGENT

Innsmouth.

Olmstead gathers up his luggage and WALKS to the front of the bus.

OLMSTEAD

Thank you. I'm planning to continue on to Arkham this evening. Is this where I'll find you?

SARGENT

Eight o'clock.

Olmstead STEPS OFF the bus. FOOTSTEPS as Olmstead walks over to the hotel. The door CREAKS OMINOUSLY as he opens it and enters the lobby. It sounds EMPTY. The sound of the OCEAN is muted as he goes inside.

OLMSTEAD

Hello? Anyone here?

There is a SHUFFLING OF FEET as the Hotel Clerk emerges behind the desk. He's old, and unfriendly but sounds like a normal person.

HOTEL CLERK

What's that? Who's there?

OLMSTEAD

Hello. You're open for business?

HOTEL CLERK

You looking for a room?

OLMSTEAD

Oh no, thank you. I'm visiting for the day and need a place to leave my luggage. Can I check it with you until the bus leaves for Arkham this evening?

HOTEL CLERK

Visiting? Who?

OLMSTEAD

Just the town in general. Seeing the sights.

HOTEL CLERK
 (dubiously)
 Mmmm. Ye can leave yer bag. That'll
 be a nickel.

OLMSTEAD
 Right.

He RUMMAGES for change. Outside, we hear the BUS ENGINE START UP AGAIN and the bus PULLS AWAY.

OLMSTEAD
 Here you go. Listen, can I ask you,
 about the bus driver...

HOTEL CLERK
 What's that?

OLMSTEAD
 Never mind. I'll be back for the
 bag this evening.

HOTEL CLERK
 Mmmmm.

The clerk takes the bag and SHUFFLES AWAY. Olmstead returns to the street, going through the CREAKY DOOR. The sound of the OCEAN returns, and in the distance we can just barely hear THE BUS driving away south. A GULL. Olmstead WALKS across the cobblestoned square.

OLMSTEAD
 On one side of the town square was the Manuxet River leading to the ocean. The other side was a semicircle of slant-roof buildings. Lamps were sadly few and small: I was glad that my plans called for departure before dark. There were a few businesses that seemed to be open, and a handful of sullen-looking residents milled about. In one of the least dilapidated buildings near the hotel was a grocery store of the First National chain. I went inside.

The store BELL rings as Olmstead ENTERS. A young clerk behind the counter offers assistance.

BILLY

Help you, sir?

OLMSTEAD

Um, why yes, could I have some cheddar, crackers, and two ginger cookies. Oh, and a pack of Fleur de Lys.

BILLY

Sure. Not many places to eat here. You're new in town?

OLMSTEAD

Just got off the bus.

BILLY

Imagine you won't want to miss the next one out.

As they talk, Billy TAKES ITEMS FROM THE SHELVES and packs up Olmstead's order.

OLMSTEAD

It is a queer old place. I'd venture to guess you're not from 'round here?

BILLY

No, sir. I'm from Arkham, but I got transferred here by the company. They said they'd fire me if I didn't stay.

OLMSTEAD

Tough break.

BILLY

You're telling me.

(leaning in)

I can't stand it here. The people are strange and there's that fish smell everywhere you go.

OLMSTEAD

Is there a public library or chamber of commerce? I'd like to take a look at some of the older buildings.

BILLY

There's nothing like that here.
There's some real old churches off
Main Street, abandoned now, but I'd
be careful going anywhere north of
there.

OLMSTEAD

Careful of what?

BILLY

People here ain't friendly to
outsiders. Some strangers have just
plain disappeared. Whatever you do,
stay away from the Marsh Refinery
and the Order of Dagon Hall and any
of the other churches north of the
river.

OLMSTEAD

Why?

BILLY

Innsmouth folk are mighty secretive
about what goes on in their
services. My pastor in Arkham
begged me not to join any church in
Innsmouth.

OLMSTEAD

No one seems very friendly around
here. I was glad when I spotted you
and took you for an outsider.

BILLY

The locals are a strange bunch.
Don't know what they do besides
fishing and drinking -- bootleg
whiskey, they drink like fish. It's
like they're banded together in
some sort of fellowship and
understanding -- despising the
world as if they had somewhere else
to go. Those staring eyes -- hardly
ever blink. Have you talked to any
of 'em, heard their voices?

OLMSTEAD

Not really.

BILLY

It's disgusting. You should hear them chanting in their churches at night, and especially during their main festivals or revivals. That'll be 58 cents.

The CASH REGISTER rings up the sale and COINS CLINK into the till.

OLMSTEAD

They just drink and go to church?

BILLY

And swim! All the time they have swimming races out to Devil Reef. Seems all the young people do it.

OLMSTEAD

The old folks cheer them on?

BILLY

You know, you never really see old folks in Innsmouth. The older they get, they more they get that...

OLMSTEAD

Innsmouth look?

BILLY

Exactly! Maybe the old ones die off. The old clerk at the Gilman House, he's about the only old fellow I've ever seen, but then he don't have the Innsmouth look.

OLMSTEAD

Is it some kind of disease that gets worse as they get older?

BILLY

I don't know. I don't think anybody knows. They'd never talk to anyone who wasn't from Innsmouth and they...

OLMSTEAD

...they'd have it too.

BILLY

Some of them have it extra-bad. So bad they keep them hidden away.

(MORE)

BILLY (cont'd)

You get down on the waterfront north of the river there's all kinds of terrible things. But don't go asking about. There's only one of them who'd say a word to an outsider.

OLMSTEAD

Who's that?

BILLY

An old fellow who lingers around the old fire station: Zadok Allen. Must be nearly a hundred years old. He doesn't have the Innsmouth look. Lives up at the poorhouse. He won't say a word when he's sober, but when he's got drink in him, he can tell stories that'd turn your hair white, crazy stories. The natives don't like it when he talks to strangers.

OLMSTEAD

What do the people do for money?

BILLY

The water around here's full of fish, but the locals don't seem to care much anymore. The only real business is the refinery.

OLMSTEAD

Old Man Marsh's, right?

BILLY

Yep. I've never seen him, but he's got a fancy car that sometimes goes by, with curtains in the windows. The younger Marshes run things now. Oh lord, his eldest daughter, she looks like a reptile and wears this ancient gold jewelry -- apparently came from the hoard of some pirates, or demons, depending on who you ask. But it's the Marshes, the Waites, the Gilmans and the Eliots that run the town. They have big houses up on Washington Street.

OLMSTEAD

Which way's Washington Street?

The TEAR and RUSTLE of paper and SCRATCH of a pencil as Billy draws a map.

BILLY

Here, I'll draw you a map. It'll help. It's easy to get lost here. A lot of the street signs are down. Be sure to keep an eye out...

The DOOR BELL rings and heavy shuffling FOOTSTEPS enter the store.

BILLY

(with trepidation)

Be right with you, sir.

The map RUSTLES as Olmstead shoves it into a pocket.

OLMSTEAD

(softly)

Thank you.

BILLY

Don't mention it.

Olmstead TAKES HIS GROCERIES and begins to go.

CREEPY CUSTOMER

(a croakish growl)

Hey!

OLMSTEAD

Yes?

CREEPY CUSTOMER

I haven't seen you around here before.

OLMSTEAD

No, no, sir.

CREEPY CUSTOMER

You're an Innsmouth man.

OLMSTEAD

No, um, Arkham, actually.

CREEPY CUSTOMER

Mmmmmmmmm.

Olmstead swiftly EXITS, the DOORBELL ringing.

3b INTERVIEW CONT'D

3b

MUSIC and ATMOSPHERE build softly beneath the following description.

OLMSTEAD

With the grocery boy's map to guide me, I decided to thread the principal streets, talk with any non-natives I might encounter, and catch the eight o'clock coach for Arkham. Thus I began my half-bewildered tour of Innsmouth's narrow, shadow-blighted ways.

MCGRAW

So you set out alone? On foot?

OLMSTEAD

I did.

8 MAN ABOUT TOWN

8

OLMSTEAD

I did. I passed close to the Marsh refinery, which seemed to be oddly free from the noise of industry. Recrossing the Manuxet on the Main Street bridge, I struck a region of utter desertion which somehow made me shudder. Collapsing huddles of gambrel roofs formed a jagged and fantastic skyline, above which rose the ghoulish, decapitated steeple of an ancient church. Down unpaved side streets I saw the black, gaping windows of deserted hovels, many of which leaned at perilous and incredible angles through the sinking of part of the foundations. I turned eastward toward the waterfront. The sight of such endless avenues of fishy-eyed vacancy and death, and the thought of such linked infinities of black, brooding compartments given over to cob-webs and memories and the conqueror worm, start up vestigial fears and aversions that not even the stoutest philosophy can disperse.

DISTANT WAVES break and NEARER ONES lap at the rotting wharves. A GULL.

OLMSTEAD

Fish Street was as deserted as Main, though it differed in having many brick and stone warehouses still in excellent shape. I picked my way back over the tottering Water Street bridge.

Strange SHAMBLING and SHUFFLING noises creep and poke out of the decaying buildings. The occasional CROAK.

North of the river there were traces of squalid life -- active fish-packing houses in Water Street, smoking chimneys and patched roofs here and there, occasional sounds from indeterminate sources, and infrequent shambling forms in the dismal streets and unpaved lanes. The people were more hideous and abnormal than those near the center of the town; ~~so that I was reminded of something utterly fantastic which I could not quite place.~~ Undoubtedly the alien strain in the Insmouth folk was stronger here than farther inland.

Strange CREAKINGS and SCURRYINGS.

I heard faint sounds. They ought naturally to have come from the visibly inhabited houses, yet they were often strongest inside the boarded-up facades. I thought about the hidden tunnels suggested by the grocery boy, and hastened out of that vile waterfront slum.

I worked my way to the decayed patrician neighborhood of northern Broad, Washington, Lafayette, and Adams Streets. Though these stately old avenues were ill-surfaced and unkempt, their elm-shaded dignity had not entirely departed.

(MORE)

OLMSTEAD (cont'd)

Fine old mansions lined the streets, most of them decrepit and boarded up, but one or two in each street that showed signs of occupancy. The most sumptuous of these, in Washington Street, with wide terraced parterres, I took to be the home of Old Man Marsh. ~~There were neither cats nor dogs nor any other living things visible, yet I could not escape the sensation of being watched from ambush on every hand by sly, staring eyes that never shut.~~

A distant BELL chimes three.

OLMSTEAD

I crossed again to the south bank of the river where furtive, shambling creatures stared cryptically in my direction. Innsmouth was rapidly becoming intolerable, and I turned down Paine Street toward the square in the hope of getting some vehicle to take me to Arkham before the still-distant starting-time of the bus.

It was then that I saw the tumbledown fire station, and noticed the red faced, bushy-bearded, watery eyed old man who sat on a bench in front of it talking with a pair of unkempt looking firemen. This had to be Zadok Allen, the half-crazed, liquorish nonagenarian full of hideous and incredible tales of old Innsmouth.

MUSICAL STINGER.

3c

INTERVIEW CONT'D

3c

MCGRAW

You could have left then. Why didn't you get out of there?

OLMSTEAD

It must have been some imp of the perverse -- or some sardonic pull from dark, hidden sources -- which made me change my plans as I did.

9

IMP OF THE PERVERSE

9

OLMSTEAD

Curiosity flared up beyond sense and caution when I reflected that old Zadok must have seen everything which went on around Innsmouth for nearly a century. I couldn't resist. Maybe I shouldn't admit this to you, McGraw: bootleg whiskey wasn't cheap, but it wasn't hard to find. I ducked into a dingy variety store and purchased a quart. I brandished the bottle to gain his attention and within a few minutes he was following me at a distance as I headed towards the deserted waterfront I'd visited previously.

FOOTSTEPS on pavement. The distant SURF. Zadok approaches.

ZADOK ALLEN

(already inebriated)
Hey mister!

OLMSTEAD

May I help you?

ZADOK ALLEN

My rheumatism is acting up.
Perchance could ye spare a nip for my health?

OLMSTEAD

Be my guest. Robert Olmstead.

ZADOK ALLEN

Zadok Allen, young squire.

They WALK ALONG, and the sound of the SEA grows louder.

OLMSTEAD

(narrating)
He followed me along the rotted wharves.

(MORE)

OLMSTEAD (cont'd)

Piles of moss-covered stones near the water promised tolerable seats, and the scene was sheltered from all possible view by a ruined warehouse on the north. Here, I thought was the ideal place for a long secret colloquy. The air of death and desertion was ghoulish, and the smell of fish almost insufferable; but I was resolved to let nothing deter me.

OLMSTEAD

They tell me you know quite a lot about Innsmouth.

ZADOK ALLEN

Eh?

OLMSTEAD

They say you know about Innsmouth and its secrets...

ZADOK ALLEN

Can't say nothing. I have lost my reputation... immortal... just a beast.

OLMSTEAD

What?

ZADOK ALLEN

Do you think you could spare another taste...

OLMSTEAD

(disappointed)

Go ahead. Mind if I eat?

Zadok DRINKS and Olmstead MUNCHES his cheese and crackers.

ZADOK ALLEN

There's more things than you dream in yer philosophy. I've always said that if there's one thing a man must be, it's given his...

Zadok trails off in MUTTERING AD LIB beneath Olmstead's next speech.

OLMSTEAD

(narrating)

I endured nearly two hours of evasive gibberish, and I was on the verge of leaving when I saw him fix his eyes on the low distant line of Devil Reef.

Zadok GRUMBLES some obscenities about the reef in a voice too low, gravelly and nervous to comprehend.

OLMSTEAD

What? What did you say about the reef?

ZADOK ALLEN

(leaning in, in an urgent whisper)

That's where it all began -- that cursed place of all wickedness where the deep water starts. Gate of hell -- sheer drop down to a bottom no sounding line can take. Old Captain Obed done it -- him that founded out more than was good for him in the South Sea islands.

OLMSTEAD

What did he find?

ZADOK ALLEN

Everybody was in a bad way them days. Trade falling off, mills losing business. Best of our menfolk killed privateering in the War of 1812. Obed was the only one that kept on with the East-Indies an' Pacific trade.

(sinister chuckle)

Never was nobody like Captain Obed -- old limb of Satan! He'd tell about foreign parts, and call folks stupid for going to Christian meetings. Says they'd ought to get better gods, ones that in return for sacrifices would really answer folks's prayers.

Told about an island where they was old stone ruins with carvings of faces that looked like the big statues on Easter Island.

(MORE)

ZADOK ALLEN (cont'd)

There was a little volcanic island near there with other ruins and different carving -- ruins all worn away like they'd been under the sea once, an' with pictures of awful monsters all over 'em.

OLMSTEAD

Monsters?

ZADOK ALLEN

He says the natives around there had all the fish they could catch, an' sported bracelets an' armlets an' head rigs made out o' a queer kind of gold an' covered with pictures of monsters just like the ones carved over the ruins on the little island -- sort of fish-like frogs or frog-like fishes that was drawn in all kinds of positions like they was human. Nobody could get out of them where they got all that stuff, and all the other natives wondered how they managed to find fish aplenty when there weren't none elsewhereabouts. ~~Obed wondered too, and noticed that lots of the men and some young folks would drop out o' sight fer good from year to year, an' that there wasn't many old folks around.~~

Obed wormed the story out o' the heathen chief -- Walakea, they called him. Nobody but Obed'd ever a-believed the old yeller devil, but the Cap'n could read folks like they was books.

(sinister chortle)

Nobody never believes me now when I tell 'em, an' I don't s'pose you will -- though come to look at ye, ye have kinda got them sharp-readin' eyes like Obed had.

OLMSTEAD

What'd the chief tell him?

ZADOK ALLEN

(an intense whisper)

These Kanakys was sacrificing heaps of their young men and maidens to some kind of god-things that lived under the sea, and getting all kinds of favor in return. They met the things on the little islet with the queer ruins, and it seems them awful pictures of frog-fish monsters was supposed to be pictures of these things.

They had all kinds a' cities on the sea-bottom, an' this island was heaved up from there. Seem they was some of the things alive in the stone buildings when the island come up sudden to the surface, That's how the Kanakys got wind they was down there. Made sign-talk as soon as they got over being scared, and pieced up a bargain afore long.

Them things liked human sacrifices. What they done to the victims it ain't fer me to say. But it was all right with the heathens, because they'd been having a hard time an' was desperate about everything. They give a certain number o' young folks to the sea-things twice every year regular as cud be. Also give some a' the carved knickknacks they made. What the things agreed to give in return was plenty o' fish -- they drug 'em in from all over the sea -- an' a few gold like things now an' then.

The natives met the things on the little volcanic islet -- going there in canoes with the sacrifices et cet'ry, and bringing back any of the gold-like jewels as was coming to 'em. At first the things didn't never go onto the main island, but after a time they come to want to. Seems they hankered after mixing with the folks, an' having ceremonies on the big days - May-Eve an' Hallowe'en.

(MORE)

ZADOK ALLEN (cont'd)

Ye see, they was able to live both
in and out o' water—~~what they~~
~~call em....~~

OLMSTEAD

~~Amphibians.~~

~~ZADOK ALLEN~~

~~That's it!~~ Now the Kanakys told 'em
as how folks from the other islands
might want to wipe them out if they
got wind of their being there, but
they says they don't care much,
because they could wipe out the
whole brood o' humans.

When it come to mating with them
toad-lookin' fishes, the Kanakys
kind o' balked, but finally they
learned something as put a new face
on the matter. Seems that human
folks has got a kind a' relation to
such water-beasts -- that
everything alive come out o' the
water once an' only needs a little
change to go back again. Them
things told the Kanakys that if
they mixed bloods there'd be
children as would look human at
first, but later turn more and more
like the things, till finally
they'd take to the water an' join
the main lot o' things down there.

OLMSTEAD

Good god!

ZADOK ALLEN

An' this is the important part,
young feller -- them as turned into
fish things an' went into the water
wouldn't never die. Them things
never died except they was killed
violent.

Them islanders they was all full o'
fish blood from them deep water
things. When they got old an' begun
to shew it, they was kept hid until
they felt like takin' to the water.
~~Some was more touched than others,~~
~~an' some never did change quite~~
~~enough to take to the water;~~

(MORE)

ZADOK ALLEN (cont'd)

~~but mostly they turned out just the way them things said.~~ Them as was born more like the things changed early, but them as was nearly human sometimes stayed on the island till they was past seventy. Folks as had took to the water generally come back a good deal to visit, so's a man would often be a'talkin' to his own five-times-great-grandfather who'd left the dry land a couple o' hundred years or so afore.

Everybody got out of the idea of dyin' and simply looked forward to a kind o' change that wasn't a bit horrible after a while. They thought what they'd got was well worth all they'd had to give up -- an' I guess Obed kind o' come to think the same himself.

Walakea he showed Obed a lot o' rites an' incantations as had to do with the sea things, an' let him see some o' the folks in the village as had changed a lot from human shape. But he never would let him see one of the regular things from right out o' the water. In the end he give him a funny kind o' thingumajig made out o' lead or something, that he said would bring up the fish things from any place in the water where they might be a nest of 'em. The idea was to drop it down with the right kind o' prayers an' such. Walakea allowed as the things was scattered all over the world, so's anybody that looked about cud find a nest an' bring 'em up if they was wanted.

~~Now Matt Eliot, Cap'n Obed's first mate, was against folks's doin' heathen things. He didn't like this business at all, an' wanted Obed should keep away from the island; but the Cap'n was sharp for gain, and found he could get them gold-like things so cheap it would pay him to make a specialty of them.~~

(MORE)

ZADOK ALLEN (cont'd)

~~Things went on that way for years-- an' Obed got enough o' that gold-like stuff to make him start the refinery in Waite's old run-down mill. He didn't dare sell the pieces like they was, for folks would be all the time asking questions. But he let his women-folks wear some o' the pieces as was more human like than most.~~

Well, come about thirty-eight -- when I was seven year' old -- Obed found the island people all wiped out between voyages. Seems the other islanders had got wind of what was going on, and had took matters into their own hands. Suppose they must a had them old magic signs as the sea things says was the only things they was afeared of. Pious cusses, these was -- they didn't leave nothing standing on either the main island or the little volcanic islet except what parts of the ruins was too big to knock down. Folks all wiped out no trace o' no gold-like things an' none the nearby Kanakys would breathe a word about the matter. Wouldn't even admit they'd ever been any people on that island.

That naturally hit Obed pretty hard, seeing as his normal trade was doing very poor. It hit the whole of Innsmouth, too, because in seafaring days what profited the master of a ship generally profited the crew proportionate.

Obed he begun a-cursin' at the folks fer being dull sheep an' praying to a Christian heaven as didn't help them none. He told 'em he'd knowed of folks as prayed to gods that give something ye really need, an' says if a good bunch of men would stand by him, he could maybe get a hold of certain powers as could bring plenty of fish an' quite a bit of gold.

(MORE)

ZADOK ALLEN (cont'd)

Of course his sailors that'd seed the island knowed what he meant, and wasn't none too anxious to get close to sea-things like they'd heard tell on, but them as didn't know what 'twas all about got kind o' swayed by what Obed had to say, and begun to ask him what he could do to set them on the way to the faith as would bring 'em results.

Pause.

OLMSTEAD

Zadok?

Zadok MUMBLES incoherently.

OLMSTEAD

What's the matter? Do you see something out there?

The old man MUMBLES some more.

OLMSTEAD

Do you... want some more? Why don't you finish the bottle?

Zadok SNATCHES the bottle away and CHUGS it down, SMACKING his lips.

ZADOK ALLEN

(in a frantic whisper)

Poor Matt tried to line up the folks on his side, and had long talks with the preachers -- no use -- they run the Congregational parson out o' town, an' the Methodist feller quit -- never did see Resolved Babcock, the Baptist parson, again -- Wrath o' Jehovy -- I was a little critter, but I heard what I heard an' seen what I seen -- Dagon an' Ashtoreth -- Belial an' Beelzebub -- Golden Calf an' the idols o' Canaan an' the Philistines -- Babylonish abominations -- Mene, mene, tekelili, upharsin...

OLMSTEAD

Zadok? Let me have the bottle, I think maybe you've had enough.

ZADOK ALLEN

(aggressive)

Don't believe me, hey? Then tell me why Cap'n Obed and twenty-odd other folks used to row out to Devil Reef in the dead of night and chant things so loud ye could hear 'em all over town? Tell me that, hey? An' tell me why Obed was always dropping heavy things down into the deep water t'other side of the reef? Tell me what he done with that funny-shaped lead thingumajig as Walakea give him? Hey, boy? An' what did they all howl on May-Eve, an, again the next Hallowe'en? An' why'd the new church parsons -- fellows that used to be sailors -- wear them queer robes and cover their-selves with them gold things Obed brung? Hey?

OLMSTEAD

I...I don't know.

ZADOK ALLEN

(with an evil cackle)

Beginning to see hey? Maybe ye'd like to 'a been me in them days, when I seen things at night out to sea. Oh, I kin tell ye' I wasn't missing nothing of what was gossiped about Cap'n Obed an' the folks out to the reef! How about the night I took my pa's ship's glass up to the cupola and seed the reef a-bristlin' thick with shapes that dove off quick soon's the moon rise?

OLMSTEAD

What shapes?

ZADOK ALLEN

Obed an' the folks was in a dory, but them shapes dove off the far side into the deep water an' never come up... How'd ye like to be a little shaver all alone a-watchin' shapes as wasn't human shapes?

(laughing mirthlessly)

(MORE)

ZADOK ALLEN (cont'd)

S'pose one night ye seed something heavy heaved off of Obed's dory beyond the reef' and then learned next day a young feller was missing from home. Hey! Did anybody ever see hide or hair o' Hiram Gilman again? Did they? An' Nick Pierce, an' Luelly Waite, an' Adoniram Southwick, an' Henry Garrison. Hey?
(more laughter)
Shapes talkin' sign language with their hands... them as had real hands...

OLMSTEAD

You think he was...?

ZADOK ALLEN

That was the time Obed begun to get on his feet again. Folks see his three daughters a-wearing gold-like things as nobody'd never seed on 'em afore, and smoke stared coming out of the refinery chimney. Fish begun to swarm into the harbor fit to kill. ~~Some Kingsport fishermen heard about the catch an' come up in sloops, but they was all lost. Nobody never see 'em again.~~

OLMSTEAD

So, it was just like what the Kanakys had done?

ZADOK ALLEN

I don't think Obed aimed at first to do no mixing, nor raise no young-uns to take to the water an' turn into fishes. He wanted them gold things, an' was willing to pay heavy, an' I guess the others was satisfied fer a while.

In forty-six the town done some looking and thinking fer itself. Too many folks missing -- too much wild preaching at meeting of a Sunday -- too much talk about that reef. They was a party one night as followed Obed's crowd out to the reef, an' I heard shots betwixt the dories.

(MORE)

ZADOK ALLEN (cont'd)

Next day Obed and thirty-two others was in jail, with everybody a-wondering jest what was afoot and just what charge against 'em could be got to hold. God, if anybody'd looked ahead... a couple o' weeks later, when nothing had been thrown into the sea fer that long...

Zadok heaves an exhausted SIGH. A LARGE WAVE breaks as the tide begins to come in. A GULL.

OLMSTEAD

What happened?

ZADOK ALLEN

That awful night... I seen 'em... hordes of 'em... swarms of 'em... all over the reef an' swimming up the harbor into the Manuxet... God, what happened in the streets of Innsmouth that night... they rattled our door, but Pa wouldn't open... then he climb out the kitchen window with his musket to see what he could do... Mounds o' the dead an' the dying... shots and screams... shoutin' in Old Square and Town Square an' New Church Green... jail throwed open... proclamation ... treason ... called it the plague when folks come in an' found half our people missing ... nobody left 'cept them as would join in with Obed and them things or else keep quiet... never heard o' my Pa no more...

OLMSTEAD

So there was no plague.

ZADOK ALLEN

They just called it that! Everything cleaned up in the morning -- but there was traces... Obed he kind of takes charge and says things is going to be changed... others is gonna worship with us at meeting-time, and certain houses have got to entertain guests...

(MORE)

ZADOK ALLEN (cont'd)

they wanted to mix like they done with the Kanakys, and he for one didn't feel bound to stop 'em. He says they brung us fish and treasure, and should have what they hankered after.

OLMSTEAD

He'd gone mad.

ZADOK ALLEN

Far gone. Said nothing was to be different on the outside, only we was to keep shy of strangers if we knowed what was good fer us.

We all had to take the Oath o' Dagon, an' later on they was second an' third oaths that some of us took. Them as would help special, would get special rewards -- gold an' such -- No use balking, for there was millions of 'em down there. They'd rather not start rising an' wiping out human-kind, but if they was gave away an' forced to, they could do just that. We didn't have them old charms to cut 'em off like folks in the South Sea did.

Yield up enough sacrifices and savage knick-knacks an' harborage in the town when they wanted it, and they'd let well enough alone. Wouldn't bother no strangers as might bear tales outside -- that is, without they got prying. All in the band of the faithful -- Order o' Dagon -- and the children should never die, but go back to the Mother Hydra an' Father Dagon what we all come from once... Ia! Ia! Cthulhu fhtagn! Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah-nagl fhtagn.

Zadok's raving trails off. MUSIC begins to build underneath the story.

OLMSTEAD

It's not real, Zadok. These are just stories, legends...

ZADOK ALLEN
 (moaning in horrified
 agony)

I was there! God, what I seen since
 I was fifteen year' old -- Mene,
 mene, tekelili, upharsin! -- the
 folks as was missing, and them as
 killed theirselves -- them as tried
 to tell outsiders was all called
 crazy -- but God, what I seen!
 They'd a killed me long ago for
 what I know, only I'd took the
 first an' second Oaths o' Dagon off
 of Obed, so was protected -- but I
 wouldn't take the third Oath -- I'd
 a died rather than take that --

OLMSTEAD
 What was the third oath?

Pause.

ZADOK ALLEN
 Around Civil War time, when
 children born since 'forty-six
 begun to grow up -- some of 'em,
 that is. I was afeared -- never did
 no prying after that awful night,
 an' never see one o' *THEM* close to
 in all my life. That is, never no
 full-blooded one. I went to the
 war, an' if I'd a had any guts or
 sense I'd a never come back, but
 settled away from here. ~~But folks
 wrote me things wasn't so bad
 'cause government draft men was in
 town after 'sixty three.~~ After the
 war it was just as bad again.
 People begun to fall off -- mills
 an' shops shut down -- shipping
 stopped and the harbor choked up --
 railroad give up -- but they...
 they never stopped swimming in an'
 out o' the river from that cursed
 reef o' Satan -- an' more an' more
 attic windows got a-boarded up, an'
 more an' more noises was heard in
 houses as wasn't supposed to have
 nobody in 'em...

In 'forty-six Cap'n Obed took a
 second wife.

(MORE)

ZADOK ALLEN (cont'd)

Had three children by her -- two as disappeared young, but one gal as looked like anybody else an' was educated in Europe. Obed finally got her married off by a trick to an Arkham feller as didn't suspect nothing. Barnabas Marsh that runs the refinery now is Obed's grandson by his first wife.

Barnabas is about changed. Can't shut his eyes no more, an' is all out o' shape. They say he still wears clothes, but he'll take to the water soon. Maybe he's tried it already -- they do sometimes go down for little spells afore they go down for good. Ain't been seed about in public fer nigh on ten year. ~~Don't know how his poor wife-kin feel -- she come from Ipswich, and they nigh lynched Barnabas when he courted her fifty odd year ago. Obed he died in 'seventy eight an' all the next generation is gone now -- the first wife's children dead, and the rest... God knows...~~

He stops with a little GASP. Another LOUD WAVE breaks with the incoming tide. Zadok GRABS Olmstead's clothes.

OLMSTEAD

What is it? Zadok, do you see something out there?

(pause)

Zadok? What is it? Hey! Let go of my coat!

ZADOK ALLEN

Hey, you, how'd ye like to be living in a town like this, with everything a-rotting and dying, and boarded-up, monsters crawling and bleating an' barking an' hopping around black cellars an' attics every way ye turn? Hey? How'd ye like to hear the howlin' night after night from the churches an' Order o' Dagon Hall, an' know what's doin' part o' the howlin'? How'd ye like to hear what comes from that awful reef every May-Eve an' Hallowmass? Hey?

(MORE)

ZADOK ALLEN (cont'd)
 Think the old man's crazy, eh?
 Well, Sir, let me tell ye that
 ain't the worst!

OLMSTEAD
 Zadok, stop, please!

ZADOK ALLEN
 (loud and frenzied)
 Curse ye, don't set there a-staring
 at me with them eyes -- I say Obed
 Marsh he's in hell, an' has got to
 stay there! In hell, I says! Can't
 get me -- I ain't done nothing nor
 told nobody nothing!

OLMSTEAD
 Let go of me!

ZADOK ALLEN
 You just set still an' listen to
 me, boy -- this is what I ain't
 never told nobody... I says I
 didn't get to do prying after that
 night -- but I found things about
 jest the same!

Yew want to know what the real
 horror is, hey? Well, it's this --
 it ain't what them fish devils have
 done, but what they're a-goin' to
 do! They're a-bringin' things up
 out of where they come from into
 the town -- been doing it fer
 years, an' slackening up lately.
 Them houses north o' the river be-
 twixt Water an' Main Streets is
 full of 'em -- them devils an' what
 they brung -- an' when they get
 ready ... I say, when they get...
 ever hear tell of a shoggoth?

Hey, d'ye hear me? I tell ye I know
 what them things be -- I seen 'em
 one night when...

A terrified SHRIEK erupts from Zadok. Olmstead looks past
 him, out into the water.

OLMSTEAD
 What is it? Did you see something?

For a moment there is only the SOUND OF THE SEA.

ZADOK ALLEN

(panicked whisper)

Get out o' here! Get out! They seen us -- get out for your life! Don't wait fer nothing -- they know now -- Run fer it -- quick -- out o' this town.

(screams)

E-yaahhhh! ... Yheaaaaaa!

GULLS cry and another HEAVY WAVE smashes against the crumbling wharf. Zadok lets go of Olmstead and RUNS wildly into town.

OLMSTEAD

(calling after him)

Zadok!

MUSICAL STINGER.

Olmstead CATCHES HIS BREATH for a moment and then begins WALKING back into town. MUSIC under the following narration.

3d INTERVIEW CONT'D

3d

MCGRAW

Good god, man, why didn't you tell me this before?

OLMSTEAD

(narrating)

I didn't believe him, McGraw.

9a IMP OF THE PERVERSE CONT'D

9a

OLMSTEAD

It was an episode at once mad and pitiful, grotesque and terrifying. But puerile though the weird allegory was, old Zadok's insane earnestness and horror added to my sense of loathing for the town and its blight of intangible shadow.

The hour had grown perilously late - - my watch said 7:15, and the Arkham bus left Town Square at eight -- so I walked rapidly toward the hotel where I had checked my bag and would find my bus.

(MORE)

OLMSTEAD (cont'd)

Near the corner of Fall street I began to see scattered groups of whisperers, and when I finally reached the Square I saw that almost all the loiterers were congregated around the door of the Gilman House. It seemed as if many bulging, watery, unblinking eyes looked oddly at me as I claimed my valise in the lobby, and I hoped that none of these unpleasant creatures would be my fellow-passengers on the coach.

10 YOU CAN CHECK OUT ANY TIME YOU WANT

10

OLMSTEAD

I stood next to an evil-looking fellow and was greatly relieved to see the bus arriving a few minutes early.

MUSIC winds down as the BUS rattles up to the curb and the brakes SQUEAL to a stop. The DOOR OPENS and a COUPLE OF PASSENGERS shuffle off the bus.

EVIL-LOOKING MAN

(croaky)

Hey, Sargent...outsider done...

His VOICE falls to an unintelligible level and his exchange with Sargent sounds like a series of QUICKLY CROAKED BARKS. Shuffling FOOTSTEPS as Olmstead tries to move onto the bus.

OLMSTEAD

Excuse me, please, one ticket to Arkham. One way.

SARGENT

The bus is broke.

OLMSTEAD

What?

SARGENT

Bus is broke.

OLMSTEAD

But you just--

SARGENT

Engine trouble. Not going anywhere.

OLMSTEAD

Oh. When will it be fixed?

SARGENT

Mebbe tomorrow.

OLMSTEAD

Tomorrow? It can't be fixed tonight?

SARGENT

Nope.

OLMSTEAD

Well... is there some other way I can get to Arkham tonight? I'm expected...

SARGENT

Ain't no other way. Can't go nowhere. Have to spend the night. Gilman House'll give you a room cheap. No other way.

Olmstead heaves a SIGH and WALKS back to the hotel as townsfolk WHISPER and MUTTER. The DOOR to the Gilman House CREAKS OPEN. Olmstead RINGS THE BELL for the Hotel Clerk. The clerk SHUFFLES out.

HOTEL CLERK

You again?

OLMSTEAD

Hello. Um, the bus...

HOTEL CLERK

Broke down, uh-huh. Happens. I got a room for ye.

OLMSTEAD

My funds are rather...

HOTEL CLERK

Large room, top floor, no water, one dollar.

OLMSTEAD

Uh, yes, well then, that will be fine.

Olmstead HANDS OVER a dollar.

HOTEL CLERK
Room 428. All the way up.

The CASH REGISTER opens and Olmstead WALKS away. He climbs the CREAKING STAIRS, SNIFFING unpleasant fragrances as he goes.

OLMSTEAD
My room was a dismal rear one with two windows and bare, cheap furnishings, overlooking a dingy court-yard. At the end of the corridor was a bathroom -- a discouraging relic with ancient appointments. As far as I could tell, I was the hotel's only guest.

I turned on the one feeble electric bulb over the bed, and tried to read a newspaper I picked up in the lobby. I felt it advisable to keep my mind occupied, ~~for it would not do to brood over the abnormalities of this ancient, blight shadowed town while in it.~~

TILTON
(a ghostly recollection)
Innsmouth is decay, squalor and desolation.

BILLY
(ditto)
...there's that fish smell everywhere you go.

STATION AGENT
(ditto)
Gilman House - but I wouldn't advise you to try it. Voices...

ZADOK ALLEN
(ditto)
~~Everything a rotting and dying.~~ You want to know what the real horror is, hey?

OLMSTEAD
My fancies got the better of me and I went to bolt the door, but was disturbed to find there was no bolt.

(MORE)

OLMSTEAD (cont'd)

One had been there, as marks clearly showed, but there were signs of recent removal. No doubt it had been out of order, like so many other things in this decrepit edifice. In my nervousness I looked around and discovered a bolt on the clothes press which seemed to be of the same size. I busied myself by transferring this hardware to the vacant place with the aid of a handy three-in-one device including a screwdriver which I kept on my key-ring. The bolt fitted perfectly, and I was somewhat relieved when I knew that I could shoot it firmly upon retiring. There were adequate bolts on the two lateral doors to connecting rooms, and these I proceeded to fasten.

BOLTS shoot home.

I decided to read till I was sleepy and laid down with only my coat, collar, and shoes off. I took a hotel matchbook from the bedside ashtray, and placed it in my pocket so that I could read my watch if I woke up later in the dark. That's when I heard it.

There is a moment where the only sound is Olmstead's heavy, slow BREATHING and the distant sound of the SURF. A CREAK comes from the stairs, followed by ANOTHER, as if someone were slowly and carefully ascending.

OLMSTEAD

At first I thought another guest was in the hotel. But there were no voices, and the creaking was somehow subtly furtive. Was this one of those inns where travelers were slain for their money? Or were the townsfolk really so resentful about curious visitors?

He BOLTS out of bed, CROSSES to the door and THROWS THE BOLT. He CLICKS OFF the light and returns to FLOP DOWN on the hard bed. We hear his BREATHING. CREAK. It's closer now, just outside the door. The lock RATTLES gently and then a KEY slides into it.

The knob TURNS but the bolt holds the door closed. The following is underscored with the sounds as they happen.

OLMSTEAD

Without a shadow of a doubt,
someone was trying to enter my
room. I kept deathly quiet,
awaiting the would-be intruder's
next move.

Stereo right, a door is UNLOCKED and CREAKS OPEN. Furtive FOOTSTEPS, and FUMBLING at the lock of the connecting door. CREAKING, soft FOOTSTEPS move from STEREO RIGHT TO STEREO LEFT. A stereo left DOOR is UNLOCKED and softly CREAKS OPEN. Again a furtive TRYING of a bolted connecting door, and again a receding CREAKING. Soft FOOTSTEPS FADE AWAY stereo left.

OLMSTEAD

Terrified though I was, I knew the
one thing to do was to get out of
that hotel alive as quickly as I
could, and through some other way
than the front stairs and lobby. I
rose to turn on the light.

CLICK. Click-click.

OLMSTEAD

The power had been cut off.
Clearly, some cryptic, evil
movement was afoot on a large scale
-- just what, I could not say.

A muffled CREAKING comes from the floor below, followed by deep CROAKING noises in conversation.

OLMSTEAD

I tiptoed to the windows and saw
only a sheer three story drop to
the cobbled courtyard. On the right
and left, however, some ancient
brick business blocks abutted on
the hotel; their slant roofs coming
up to a reasonable jumping distance
from my fourth-story level. To
reach either of these buildings I
would have to be in a room two from
my own -- either to the north or
south.

I could not risk the corridor,
where my footsteps would surely be
heard and I might not be able to
access the room.

(MORE)

OLMSTEAD (cont'd)

I would have to go through the less solidly-built connecting doors of the rooms, and use my shoulder as a battering-ram if they were set against me. My own outer door I reinforced by pushing the bureau against it -- little by little, in order to make a minimum of sound.

My chances were slender, but I was fully prepared for any calamity. Even getting to another roof, I'd still have to make it to the ground and flee. The door on the south side of the room opened in my direction, but the door on the north was hung to open away from me. It was locked from the other side, but I knew that must be my route.

A fresh and heavier CREAK comes from the stairs, followed by low vocal UTTERANCES, and approaching heavy FOOTSTEPS. Slowly: KNOCK-KNOCK.

OLMSTEAD

For a moment I simply held my breath and waited. Eternities seemed to elapse, and the nauseous fishy odor of my environment seemed to mount suddenly and spectacularly.

The KNOCKING continues, steady and insistent. SOUNDS underscore the narration.

OLMSTEAD

I drew the bolt of the northward connecting door, bracing myself for the task of battering it open. The knocking grew louder, and I hoped that its volume would cover the sound of my efforts. I lunged again and again at the thin paneling with my left shoulder. The door resisted more than I expected, but I did not give in. And all the while the clamor at the outer door increased.

The door CRASHES and SPLINTERS open. The pounding on Olmstead's door changes to a BATTERING. FOOTSTEPS and the jangle of KEYS outside.

OLMSTEAD

I rushed into the next room and succeeded in bolting the hall door before the lock could be turned; but even as I did so I heard the hall door of the third room -- the one from whose window I had hoped to reach the roof below -- being tried with a pass key.

Olmstead RUNS through the room, PUSHING furniture aside as he goes. He SLAMS shut the hall door from the inside and THROWS THE BOLT. BATTERING at doors stereo left and right, JANGLING keys, pounding FOOTSTEPS. Muttering of croaky VOICES in the hallway. Olmstead PUSHES FURNITURE against various doors. Hideous PANTING, GRUNTING, and subdued BARKINGS at odd intervals.

Feet SCURRY along the hall outside the room, then BATTERING on the adjoining door. ESCAPE MUSIC. SOUNDS under the action described.

OLMSTEAD

I made it into the third room, and opened the window that offered the best access as they began an assault on the flimsy connecting door. The bedstead slowed their progress, despite their use of some kind of battering ram.

The window was flanked by heavy velour draperies. I yanked at the hangings and brought them down, pole and all; then quickly hooking two of the curtain rings in the shutter catch I flung the drapery outside. The heavy folds reached fully to the abutting roof, and I saw that the rings and catch would be likely to bear my weight.

The door SHATTERS and the attackers HEAVE THE BED out of the way. Olmstead LEAPS out the window, SLIDING down the drapery onto the adjacent roof.

ESCAPE MUSIC. ATMOSPHERE.

3e INTERVIEW CONT'D

3e

MCGRAW

It's a miracle you got out of there
in one piece.

OLMSTEAD

I know.

11 FLIGHT FOR LIFE

11

OLMSTEAD

I landed safely on the steep roof,
and hurried to a gaping black
skylight. I glanced at the window I
had just left, and saw it was still
dark. There seemed to be no one in
the courtyard below, and I hoped I
could get away before the spreading
of a general alarm. I clambered
over the brink of the skylight and
dropped down onto the dusty floor.

The place was ghoulish-looking, and
I struck a match. I made at once
for the staircase revealed by its
feeble light. The steps creaked,
and I raced down past a barnlike
second story to the ground floor. I
reached the lower hall and darted
out the back door to the grass-
grown cobblestones of the
courtyard. ~~Some of the windows on
the Gilman House side were faintly
glowing, and I heard confused
sounds within.~~ I walked softly
across the courtyard, looking for a
door that would give me access to
the street. I looked across the
courtyard to the Gilman House,
where a large crowd of doubtful
shapes was pouring into the street.

Distant CROAKING and GRUMBLING voices flood the street.

OLMSTEAD

Lanterns bobbed in the darkness,
moving uncertainly. They did not
know where I had gone.

(MORE)

OLMSTEAD (cont'd)

Their features were indistinguishable, but their crouching, shambling gait was abominably repellent. One figure was strangely robed, and unmistakably surmounted by a tall tiara. They fanned out from the hotel. The fishy odor was detestable, and I wondered I could stand it without fainting. I opened a door off the courtyard and came upon an empty room with closely shuttered windows. Fumbling in the flicker of another paper match, I opened the shutters and tumbled out onto Washington Street. I headed south, hoping to make my way to the road to Arkham.

I walked rapidly, close to the ruined houses. ~~At Bates Street I drew into a vestibule while two shambling figures crossed in front of me, but was soon on my way again.~~ Ahead of me was an open square, fully flooded with moonlight. My best option was to cross it boldly and openly; imitating the typical shamble of the Innsmouth folk as best I could.

No one was about, though a curious sort of buzz or roar seemed to be increasing in the direction of Town Square. South Street led down towards the waterfront, and I hoped that no one would be glancing up it from afar as I crossed in the bright moonlight.

Involuntarily, I paused for a second to take in the sight of the sea, gorgeous in the burning moonlight at the street's end. Far out beyond the breakwater was the dim, dark line of Devil Reef, and as I glimpsed it I could not help thinking of all the hideous legends which portrayed this ragged rock as a veritable gateway to realms of unfathomed horror and inconceivable abnormality.

(MORE)

OLMSTEAD (cont'd)

Then, without warning, I saw intermittent flashes of light on the distant reef. They were definite and unmistakable. And to make matters worse, there now flashed forth from the lofty cupola of the Gilman House, which loomed behind me, a series of analogous though differently spaced gleams which could be nothing less than an answering signal.

MUSICAL STINGER.

What the whole proceeding meant, I could not imagine; unless it involved some strange rite connected with Devil Reef, or unless some party had landed from a ship on that sinister rock.

Olmstead GASPS.

It was then that the most horrible impression of all was borne in upon me. I saw that the moonlit waters between the reef and the shore were alive with a teeming horde of shapes swimming toward the town. The bobbing heads and flailing arms were alien and aberrant in a way scarcely to be expressed or consciously formulated.

He RUNS FRANTICALLY then stops for a moment. A voice BARKS croaked commands nearby. A truck ROARS down a street ahead.

OLMSTEAD

I heard the hue and cry of organized pursuit. They were blocking off the southward highway ahead of me; I had to find another way out of Innsmouth. They were not following me directly; rather, they were simply obeying a general plan of cutting off my escape. If they were patrolling this one, all roads out of Innsmouth were likely cut off. Then I thought of the abandoned railway line stretching off to the northwest. I had seen it clearly from my hotel window and knew about how it lay.

(MORE)

OLMSTEAD (cont'd)

It seemed my only chance of deliverance, and there was nothing to do but try it.

He STRIKES A MATCH.

I consulted the grocery boy's map with the aid of one of my few remaining matches and soon started once more. I hurried along Babson Street until I reached Eliot Street. I heard noises and ducked behind a car.

SHUFFLING FEET and CROAKING conversation echoes down the deserted street. Olmstead SNIFFS and grimaces.

OLMSTEAD

A sudden rise in the fishy odor nearly choked me. Then I saw a band of crouching shapes loping and shambling in the direction I was headed; and knew that this must be the party guarding the Ipswich road. Two of the figures I glimpsed were in voluminous robes, and one wore a peaked diadem.

When the last of the band was out of sight I resumed my progress, darting around the corner. My greatest dread was in re-crossing moonlit South Street. At the last moment I decided I had better make the crossing as before in the shambling gait of an Innsmouth native.

When the view of the water again opened out, I was determined not to look at it. But I could not resist; I cast a sidelong glance as I shambled toward the protecting shadows ahead. The first thing which caught my eye was a small rowboat pulling in toward the abandoned wharves and laden with some bulky, tarpaulin-covered object. Several swimmers were also still discernible;

(MORE)

OLMSTEAD (cont'd)

while on the far black reef I could see a faint, steady glow unlike the winking beacon visible before, and of a curious color which I could not precisely identify. The fishy odor now closed in again with maddening intensity.

I had not quite crossed the street when I saw a muttering band advancing into the open square less than a block ahead of me. At this range I could see the bestial abnormality of their faces and the doglike sub-humanness of their crouching gait. One man moved in a positively simian way, with long arms frequently touching the ground; while another figure -- robed and tiaraed -- nearly hopped. I do not know whether they saw me or not. If they did, my stratagem must have deceived them, for they passed on across the moonlit space.

The things CROAK and JABBER in their hateful guttural patois. Olmstead SHUFFLES for a moment and then breaks back into a TROT. The ROAR of a waterfall gradually escalates.

OLMSTEAD

No one was stirring on Bates Street beside the river-gorge, and it was an easy run past great brick warehouse walls. At last I saw the ancient train station -- or what was left of it -- and made directly for the tracks that started from its farther end.

The rails were rusty but mainly intact, and not more than half the ties had rotted away. I hurried as best I could down the tracks which followed the side of the river gorge until I reached the long covered bridge which crossed the chasm at a dizzying height. I entered, stepping tie to tie.

A barrage of BATS bursts out of the covered bridge.

OLMSTEAD

A cloud of bats flapped past me. About half-way across there was a perilous gap in the ties. I risked a desperate jump which fortunately succeeded and I soon emerged on the far side of the river. The dense growth of weeds and briers hindered me, but also provided some cover, as the tracks were clearly visible from the Rowley road which ran along the tracks before it cut across them.

I glanced behind me, but saw no pursuer. The ancient spires and roofs of decaying Innsmouth gleamed lovely and ethereal in the magic yellow moonlight, and I thought of how they must have looked in the old days before the shadow fell. Then, as my gaze circled inland from the town, something less tranquil arrested my notice.

I saw motion: a very large horde must be pouring out of the city along the level Ipswich road. The distance was great and I could distinguish nothing in detail; but I did not at all like the look of that moving column. It undulated too much, and glistened too brightly in the rays of moon.

The sound of a MARCHING ARMY with wet, irregular steps being led by CROAKING commanders, wafts across the distance.

OLMSTEAD

Where could so many persons be coming from? I thought of those extreme Innsmouth types said to be hidden in crumbling, centuried warrens near the waterfront; of those nameless swimmers I had seen. Did those ancient, unplumbed warrens teem with a twisted, uncatalogued, and unsuspected life? Or had some unseen ship indeed landed a legion of unknown outsiders on that hellish reef? Who were they? Why were they here?

Olmstead PUSHES his way through dense brush, BREATHING hard. He SNIFFS.

OLMSTEAD

The tracks cut through a low hill and were heavily overgrown. I struggled along at a very slow pace when that damnable fishy odour again waxed dominant. Had the wind suddenly changed eastward, so that it blew in from the sea and over the town?

GUTTERAL MURMURS are followed by the sound of a kind of wholesale, colossal FLOPPING or PATTERNING approaching.

OLMSTEAD

Oh dear god, they're here.

(narrating)

Something was coming up the Rowley road. I buried myself into the brush, praying that while I could see where the road crossed the tracks, they should not be able to see me.

The noises swell to a bestial babel of CROAKING, BAYING and BARKING without the least suggestion of human speech. That flopping or pattering is MONSTROUS.

OLMSTEAD

I could not bear to see the source of the sound. I would keep my eyes shut until the sound receded to the west.

The air is foul with their hoarse SNARLINGS, and the ground almost shakes with their alien-rhythmed FOOTFALLS.

OLMSTEAD

But my resolution to keep my eyes shut failed. It was foredoomed to failure -- for who could crouch blindly while a legion of croaking, baying entities of unknown source flopped noisomely past, scarcely more than a hundred yards away?

OLMSTEAD

I thought I was prepared for the worst. My other pursuers had been accursedly abnormal...

(MORE)

OLMSTEAD (cont'd)

But nothing that I could have imagined -- nothing, even, had I credited old Zadok's crazy tale in the most literal way would be in any way comparable to the demoniac, blasphemous reality that I saw... in a limitless stream -- flopping, hopping, croaking, bleating -- urging inhumanly through the spectral moonlight in a grotesque, malignant sarabande of fantastic nightmare. And some of them had tall tiaras of that nameless whitish-gold metal... and some were strangely robed... and one, who led the way, was clad in a ghoulishly humped black coat and striped trousers, and had a man's felt hat perched on the shapeless thing that answered for a head.

3f INTERVIEW CONT'D

3f

MCGRAW

Good god.

OLMSTEAD

Did you ever really see them yourself, McGraw? Up close?

11a FLIGHT FOR LIFE CONT'D

11a

OLMSTEAD

They were a greyish-green, though they had white bellies. They were mostly shiny and slippery, but the ridges of their backs were scaly. Their forms vaguely suggested the anthropoid, while their heads were the heads of fish, with prodigious bulging eyes that never closed. At the sides of their necks were palpitating gills, and their long paws were webbed. They hopped irregularly, sometimes on two legs and sometimes on four. I was somehow glad that they had no more than four limbs. Their croaking, baying voices, clearly used for articulate speech, held all the dark shades of expression which their staring faces lacked.

(MORE)

OLMSTEAD (cont'd)

But for all of their monstrousness they were not unfamiliar to me. They were the blasphemous fish-frogs of the nameless design -- living and horrible. Their number was past guessing. It seemed to me that there were limitless swarms of them. In another instant everything was blotted out by a merciful fit of fainting; the first I had ever had.

TRANSITION MUSIC.

12 LEGACY

12

MCGRAW

You were lucky to get out of there alive, Olmstead.

OLMSTEAD

Lucky? I suppose so. Sometime after noon the following day, I awoke on the tracks. It was raining a little. I staggered out to the roadway, but I saw no trace of any prints in the fresh mud. The fishy odor, too, was gone. I looked but didn't see anyone.

MCGRAW

And you walked the tracks all the way to Rowley?

OLMSTEAD

That's right. I reported it to the Arkham Police, but they said it would be an issue for the Massachusetts State Police. I don't think they believed me. That's when they sent me to you.

MCGRAW

And it's a good thing they did.

OLMSTEAD

Are the rumors true, McGraw, about a submarine firing torpedoes into the deeps off Devil Reef?

MCGRAW

Let's just say that the government has been very thorough about cleaning up the mess in Innsmouth. In fact, that's why I'm here today. We've been keeping an eye on you.

OLMSTEAD

On me?

MCGRAW

We suspect you haven't quite put Innsmouth behind you.

OLMSTEAD

(uneasy)

What do you mean?

MCGRAW

We know you've been doing some genealogical research.

OLMSTEAD

Oh, yes. After Innsmouth, I gave up the rest of my tour -- but when I got to Arkham I tried to collect some information about my family. The curator of the historical society there -- Mr. E. Lapham Peabody -- was very courteous about assisting me....

TRANSITION MUSIC. Peabody, an ancient but enthusiastic genealogist helps Olmstead sort through his notes.

PEABODY

So your grandmother is Eliza Orne? Hmph!

OLMSTEAD

Something wrong, Mr. Peabody?

PEABODY

Years ago I helped, well, he would have been your maternal uncle, with this same research. Your grandmother's a bit of local mystery among the genealogically inclined.

OLMSTEAD

How do you mean?

PEABODY

There's been plenty of discussion about the marriage of her father, Benjamin Orne, since the ancestry of his bride was peculiarly puzzling. Your great grandmother, she would have been. She was understood to have been an orphaned Marsh of New Hampshire -- a cousin of the Essex County Marshes -- but she'd been educated in France and knew very little of her family. A guardian had deposited funds in a Boston bank to maintain her and her French governess; but that guardian's name was unfamiliar to Arkham people, ~~and in time he dropped out of sight, so that the governess assumed the role by court appointment. The Frenchwoman -- now long dead -- was very taciturn, and there were those who said she would have told more than she did.~~

OLMSTEAD

That's the mystery?

PEABODY

Well, you see, no one's been able to place the recorded parents of the young woman -- ~~Enoch and Lydia (Meserve) Marsh~~ -- among the known families of New Hampshire. It seems the records may have been falsified. Some say she was from another branch of the Marsh family -- she certainly had the true Marsh eyes.

OLMSTEAD

Marsh eyes?

PEABODY

Oh you know them when you see them. You've got them yourself! Anyway, she died early, at the birth of her only child: your grandmother.

OLMSTEAD

Wait. Are you saying I'm a Marsh?

PEABODY

No doubt about it.

OLMSTEAD

(troubled)

I see.

MUSICAL STINGER.

OLMSTEAD

I went directly home to Toledo to recuperate from my ordeal. In September I entered my final year at Oberlin. But you know that from when you and your men came to see me on campus.

MCGRAW

Mm-hm, just following up on some leads. Just like you've been following up on your family history, right?

OLMSTEAD

Well, you probably know I spent a week with my late mother's family in Cleveland last year. I did not relish the notion of a week in that depressing household, but I hoped to learn more family history while among the Williamsons.

My mother had never encouraged my visiting her parents as a child. My Arkham-born grandmother had seemed strange and almost terrifying to me. I was eight years when she disappeared. They she wandered off in grief after the suicide of my Uncle Douglas, her eldest son. He had shot himself after a trip to New England -- the same trip, no doubt, which had caused him to be recalled by Mr. Peabody. Douglas resembled her, and I never liked him either. Something about their staring, unblinking expressions. My mother and Uncle Walter had their father's looks, though my poor cousin Lawrence -- Walter's son -- looked just like my grandmother.

MCGRAW

Yes, I spoke with your Uncle Walter.

(MORE)

MCGRAW (cont'd)

He's been very concerned about his son, your cousin Lawrence. And you. Your uncle showed you some things that once belonged to your grandmother, didn't he?

OLMSTEAD

Oh yes, Agent McGraw, he did...

TRANSITION MUSIC.

13

FAMILY TIES

13

UNCLE WALTER

So, Robert, researching the family tree, eh?

OLMSTEAD

Just putting the pieces together.

UNCLE WALTER

I have some of your mom's old family papers on the Ornes. She had a safe deposit box, I think there's stuff in there too; we'll go downtown and have a look. You feeling alright? Heard you fell ill back east last summer.

OLMSTEAD

Just nerves, really. I'm better now, thanks. I meant to ask, how's Lawrence doing?

UNCLE WALTER

He's still in the sanitarium over in Canton. They do the best they can for him, but...

Walter SIGHS.

OLMSTEAD

I'm sorry.

UNCLE WALTER

What can you do?

OLMSTEAD

(narrating)

Going over the letters and pictures on the Orne side, I began to acquire a kind of terror of my own ancestry.

(MORE)

OLMSTEAD (cont'd)

~~My grandmother and Uncle Douglas had always disturbed me. Now, years after their passing, I gazed at their photos with repulsion and alienation. I could not at first understand the change, but gradually a horrible sort of comparison began to obtrude itself on my unconscious mind.~~ I struggled not to think about it. My uncle took me to my mother's bank.

ECHOING FOOTSTEPS as a bank clerk leads Walter and Olmstead to a safe deposit box.

BANK CLERK

The safe deposit box is here. When you've finished, just lock it up and we'll return it to the vault.

UNCLE WALTER

Thank you.

The bank clerk WALKS away.

OLMSTEAD

Why did mom keep papers in a safe deposit box?

Walter FITS A KEY into the box. It CLICKS open.

UNCLE WALTER

She had some of her grandma's old jewelry. There we go, now let's see what she had in here... Here's someone's marriage certificate...

OLMSTEAD

Ah.

UNCLE WALTER

Photos... what do you think, a graduation?

OLMSTEAD

Could be. What's in that cardboard box?

UNCLE WALTER

That? Oh...well, it's... that's probably where she put your great-grandmother's old jewelry.

OLMSTEAD
Really? I wonder...

UNCLE WALTER
They're weird, old things. Grandma would look at them, but even she wouldn't wear them. Really, they're hideous.

OLMSTEAD
Hideous? May I?

Walter UNWRAPS the tissue from around the pieces.

UNCLE WALTER
Are you alright, Robert? You're shaking.

OLMSTEAD
(not)
I'm fine, fine.

UNCLE WALTER
I think this one's a tiara, see?

Olmstead MOANS and falls to the floor with a THUD.
MUSICAL STINGER.

14 SHOWDOWN

14

OLMSTEAD
From that day on my life has been a nightmare of brooding and apprehension. Is that what you came here to learn, Agent McGraw?

MCGRAW
Your great-grandmother was a Marsh whose husband lived in Arkham.

OLMSTEAD
And Zadok said that the daughter of Obed Marsh by a monstrous mother was married to an Arkham man through a trick. He also muttered about me having eyes like Captain Obed's.

MCGRAW
You know, we were never able to question Zadok Allen.

(MORE)

MCGRAW (cont'd)

By the time my men raided
Innsmouth, he had already
disappeared.

OLMSTEAD

Imagine that. Obed Marsh, my own
great-great-grandfather. Who -- or
what -- then, was my great-great-
grandmother?

MCGRAW

I think you already know the answer
to that, Olmstead. You should have
left it all alone.

OLMSTEAD

No, Agent McGraw, it's you who
should have left it alone.

There is a RUSTLING sound as Olmstead draws something from
his pocket.

MCGRAW

Olmstead, put down that gun! What
are you doing?

OLMSTEAD

No sudden moves, please. I bought
this pistol months ago, intending
to kill myself, as my Uncle Douglas
did when he, too, learned the
truth.

MCGRAW

Easy now, Olmstead. This is all
nothing to get worked up over. The
jewelry might have been bought from
some Innsmouth sailor. And that
staring-eyed look you thought you
saw in the faces of your
grandmother and uncle is sheer
fancy on your part -- ~~sheer fancy,~~
~~bolstered by the Innsmouth shadow~~
~~which has influenced your~~
~~imagination.~~

OLMSTEAD

Then why did my uncle kill himself
after an ancestral quest in New
England? If this is all sheer
fancy, then why are you here now?

MCGRAW

We can help you, Olmstead. Put down the gun.

OLMSTEAD

No, McGraw, there's no help for me anymore. For more than two years I fought off this "sheer fancy". My father secured me a place in an insurance office, and I buried myself in routine. In the winter of 1930 the dreams began. Great watery spaces opened out before me, and I seemed to wander through titanic sunken porticos and labyrinths of weedy cyclopean walls with grotesque fishes as my companions. Then the other shapes began to appear, filling me with nameless horror the moment I awoke. But during the dreams they did not horrify me at all -- I was one with them; wearing their trappings, treading their aqueous ways, and praying monstrosly at their sea-bottom temples.

MCGRAW

Olmstead...

OLMSTEAD

Some frightful influence, I felt, was seeking gradually to drag me out of the sane world into unnamable abysses of blackness and alienage. My health and appearance grew steadily worse, till finally I was forced to give up my position and adopt the static, secluded life of an invalid. Some odd nervous affliction had me in its grip, and I found myself at times almost unable to shut my eyes. I saw my face in the mirror with mounting alarm. My father and uncle seemed to notice it, too, for they began looking at me almost affrightedly. What was taking place in me? Could it be that I was coming to resemble my grandmother and uncle Douglas? Is that why they called you, McGraw?

MCGRAW

Olmstead, please, we all just want to help you. Give me the gun. Please, don't do anything foolish.

OLMSTEAD

One night I dreamed I met my grandmother under the sea. She lived in a phosphorescent palace of many terraces, with gardens of strange leprous corals and grotesque brachiote efflorescences, and welcomed me. She had changed -- as those who take to the water change -- and told me she had never died. Instead, she had gone to a spot her dead son had learned about, and had leaped to a realm whose wonders he had spurned with a smoking pistol. This was to be my realm, too -- I could not escape it. I would never die, but would live with those who had lived since before man ever walked the earth.

I met also that which had been her grandmother. For eighty thousand years Pth'thya-l'yi had lived in Y'ha-nthlei, and thither she had gone back after Obed Marsh was dead. Y'ha-nthlei was not destroyed when your pathetic submarines shot death into the sea, McGraw. It was hurt, but not destroyed. The Deep Ones can never be destroyed. For the present they rest; but some day they will rise again for the tribute Great Cthulhu craves. It will be a city greater than Innsmouth next time. They have planned to spread, and have brought up that which will help them, but now they must wait once more.

MCGRAW

Olmstead, I'm warning you for the last time....

Another RUSTLING sound.

OLMSTEAD

Ah, I see you have a gun as well. Do you think I am frightened?

(MORE)

OLMSTEAD (cont'd)

Last night I had a dream in which I saw a shoggoth for the first time: that's a sight to set me awake in a frenzy of screaming. This morning the mirror definitely told me I have acquired the Innsmouth look.

I'm not afraid of you, McGraw. I feel queerly drawn toward the sea-deeps instead of fearing them. I hear and do strange things in sleep, and awake with a kind of exaltation. I do not need to wait for the full change as most have waited. If I did, you and my father would probably shut me up in a sanitarium like my poor little cousin. Stupendous and unheard-of splendors await me below, and I shall seek them soon. Ia! R'lyeh! Cthulhu Fhtagn!

A pistol COCKS.

OLMSTEAD

No, I shall not shoot myself -- I cannot be made to shoot myself! I shall plan my cousin's escape from that mad-house, and together we shall go to marvel-shadowed Innsmouth. We shall swim out to that reef in the sea and dive down through black abysses to Cyclopean and many-columned Y'ha-nthlei, and in that lair of the Deep Ones we shall dwell amidst wonder and glory for ever!

GUN SHOTS ring out. Dark Adventure closing THEME.

15

CLOSING

15

CHESTER LANGFIELD

You've been listening to H.P. Lovecraft's "The Shadow Over Innsmouth", brought to you by our sponsor, Fleur de Lys, the cigarette made from the finest tobaccos. Fleur de Lys -- a boon for a breathless age. Until next week, this is Chester Langfield reminding you to never go anywhere alone; if it looks bad, don't look;

(MORE)

CHESTER LANGFIELD (cont'd)
and save the last bullet for
yourself.

ANNOUNCER

"The Shadow Over Innsmouth" was adapted for radio and produced by Sean Branney and Andrew Leman. Original music by Troy Sterling Nies. The Dark Adventure Ensemble featured: Leslie Baldwin, Sean Branney, Kacey Camp, Mark Colson, Dan Conroy, Steve Coombs, Matt Foyer, McKerrin Kelly, Andrew Leman, Barry Lynch, John McKenna, Josh Thoemke, and Noah Wagner. Tune in next week for "Fate of the Ancients" -- a Nate Ward adventure. Dark Adventure Radio Theatre is a production of the HPLHS Broadcasting Group, a subsidiary of HPLHS, Inc., copyright 1931...plus seventy-seven.

Radio STATIC and fade out.