

DARK ADVENTURE RADIO THEATRE: THE LURKING FEAR

Written by

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Based on "The Lurking Fear" by H.P. Lovecraft

Read-along Script
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SFX: static, radio tuning, snippet of '30s song, more tuning, static dissolves to:

Dark Adventure Radio THEME MUSIC.

ANNOUNCER

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

MUSIC CRESCENDO.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

This is Dark Adventure Radio Theatre, featuring your host, Lester Mayhew. Today's episode: H.P. Lovecraft's "The Lurking Fear".

THEME MUSIC DIMINISHES AND EPISODE MUSIC BEGINS.

LESTER MAYHEW

A mountain storm unleashes a deadly cataclysm upon a backwoods village in New York's Catskill mountains. The local authorities' inquiry points towards an obsessed journalist and the abandoned mansion of a degenerate local family. Has the writer's relentless quest for a story led him to commit unspeakable acts? Or is he being drawn into a monstrous mystery that's terrified the region for centuries? Who will be the next victim of the Lurking Fear?

MUSIC punctuation.

LESTER MAYHEW (CONT'D)

But first, a word from our sponsor.

Sponsor MUSIC!

LESTER MAYHEW (CONT'D)

Gophers. Prairie dogs. Squirrels. And woodchucks. These burrowing pests can be the bane of any homeowner.

(MORE)

LESTER MAYHEW (CONT'D)
 Don't vex yourself with old-
 fashioned traps or messy poisons -
 there's a better way. Get a Beemis
 Brothers .22 caliber rifle. Our
 Davy Crockett Repeater model has
 the power to take care of
 neighborhood pests and it's darned
 fun to shoot. Eliminate those pesky
 vermin in a fun, family friendly
 way.

BLAM!

BILLY
 Got him, dad!

DAD
 Nice shooting, Billy.

BILLY
 Gee, thanks Dad.

DAD
 You're my little man.

ANNOUNCER
 Bid rodents good riddance - buy a
 Beemis Brothers rifle today.

SPONSOR MUSIC TAG. MUSIC TRANSITION.

LESTER MAYHEW
 And now, Dark Adventure Radio
 Theatre presents H.P. Lovecraft's
 "The Lurking Fear".

2

THE VETERAN AND THE ROOKIE

2

POLICE STATION AMBIANCE. A group of New York State Troopers
 are gathered in the bullpen at Police Headquarters in Albany.
 Detective CROFT, well accustomed to being the center of
 attention, regales a handful of other officers. He's a loud
 veteran in his 50s.

CROFT
 So, I've got the three of them
 lined up against the wall, right?

COP 1
 So, what'd you do, Croft?

CROFT

So Mickey the Snitch, he says,
 "Detective, I'd like to make a
 little contribution to the State
 Trooper's Retirement Fund".

COP 2

He doesn't!

CROFT

Oh yeah. And he flashes me a
 sawbuck and I says to him, I says,
 "That may be enough for you, but
 what about your momma?"

The cops ROAR with laughter. The door CREAKS open.

COP 1

It's the Captain.

The laughter dies down immediately as the Captain enters.

CAPTAIN MURRAY

Detective Croft, what have you got
 working?

CROFT

Waiting on a call back on that bank
 job and--

CAPTAIN MURRAY

Drop it. We've got a situation for
 troop F. I need you to head out to
 the Catskills.

CROFT

I could drive out there tomorrow.

CAPTAIN MURRAY

(grim)
 You're going now.

CROFT

Yeah, yeah, all right. It's a
 pretty fair drive out there -
 what's the hurry?

CAPTAIN MURRAY

Apparently there's some kind of
 disaster in a remote village, a big
 storm or something, it's not clear
 exactly what went on.

(MORE)

CAPTAIN MURRAY (CONT'D)
 There's no electricity, no phones,
 hell, this place doesn't even have
 a name. Apparently it's a real
 mess.

CROFT
 I'll head on out, sir.

CAPTAIN MURRAY
 Good. Take someone with you. You,
 Duclair, you go too.

Anthony Duclair speaks up for the first time. He's in his
 early 30s - soft spoken with a serious bearing.

DUCLAIR
 Sir, yes, sir.

CROFT
 You sure? 'Cause me and Miller,
 we're--

CAPTAIN MURRAY
 Take Duclair. Here's a map - the
 village is about here.

DUCLAIR
 There's not much around there.

CAPTAIN MURRAY
 Nearest town's here - a place
 called Lefferts Corners. Croft you
 can figure out how to get there.

CROFT
 Yes, sir. C'mon you, let's go.

MUSIC transition.

3

BACKWOODS DRIVE

3

The Troopers' Model-T RATTLES along a bumpy backwoods road.

CROFT
 So Squeaky McGee and his boys were
 making a run for it, a whole load
 of moonshine, right? So I've got
 one of our boys set up to chase 'em
 a little, you know? Let 'em build
 up a little speed as they outrun
 us. So they're flying down Route 23
 down towards Palenville, right?

DUCLAIR

Mmm.

CROFT

Well, what Squeaky's boys don't know is that we'd been out the night before and dug a little trench, right across 23. So here they go flying down past the Kaaterskills Falls and BAM! Jesus! There's gin and whiskey everywhere. Squeaky's boys running off into the woods. We collared a couple of them and I'll tell you we ain't never seen them making another run down R.R. 23.

DUCLAIR

I'll bet.

Croft is very disappointed in Duclair's response to the story. Awkward pause. Croft HUMS or SINGS a phrase from a popular song.

DUCLAIR (CONT'D)

Kaaterskills, eh?

CROFT

Yep. Old Dutch name. Means "cat creek". Whole area was settled by the Dutch. Couple of nice towns, bits of civilization here and there. But mostly it's a whole lot of this.

DUCLAIR

Forests?

CROFT

Hmph. You've never even been in the Catskills?

DUCLAIR

No.

CROFT

(under his breath)

Jesus H. Christ. Yes, forests. Mountains, ravines... it's a wilderness.

DUCLAIR

Anybody live out here, besides these squatters?

CROFT

Not really. I mean, some Indians, but they don't really count. Out where we're going there was one rich Dutch family had a grand old place, but that was back before the war.

DUCLAIR

That's not so long ago.

CROFT

(bemused)

We're talking about the Revolutionary War, son.

DUCLAIR

Oh.

CROFT

Nowadays it's mostly these kind of hillbilly types trying to live off the land. They're not big on outsiders - mostly they keep to themselves.

DUCLAIR

How much further, you figure?

CROFT

Hey, shine your torch on the map there.

DUCLAIR

Yeah, for all the good it does. Here it is. So this village would have to be between Cone Mountain and this... Maple Hill.

CROFT

Alright. We'll call it Maple Cone. Jesus, sounds like a flavor of ice cream.

DUCLAIR

But the village must already have a name.

CROFT

Nah, almost none of them do. "Village" is kind of overstating it - it's a bunch of squatters gathered together.

(MORE)

CROFT (CONT'D)

They ain't coming from anywhere -
they ain't going anywhere. You ask
'em where they live and they say,
"Here."

(pause, then chuckles to
self)

Maple Cone.

Silence.

DUCLAIR

How long you figure it'll take us
to get there?

CROFT

I'll try to get us to Lefferts
Corners before sunup. We can grab a
cup of coffee there...

DUCLAIR

Shouldn't we head straight--

CROFT

No point in getting up to Maple
Cone in the dark. We'll get up
there at first light and see what's
happened.

Transition MUSIC.

4 NIGHTMARE AMONG THE SQUATTERS

4

The Model-T's TIRES SPIN in the mud.

DUCLAIR

Not much of a road left. We may as
well--

CROFT

No, no, I can make it through this.

There's a THUD and the car's TIRES SPIN.

CROFT (CONT'D)

Ah, for the love of Mike...

DUCLAIR

May as well just walk the rest of
the way. Looks like there's some
people up on top of that ridge.

MUSIC. They TRUDGE up the muddy track. We hear VOICES OF THE
SQUATTERS as they identify the approach of the police.

THE SQUATTER FOLK SPEAK WITH AN INCREDIBLY THICK RURAL DIALECT. MOSES MUNNEE, a patriarch of a nearby village is in his 60s. His dialect is so thick it conceals the fact he is in fact speaking English. The fact that he's plastered on white lightning doesn't help his intelligibility. MARVIN'S a middle age squatter and MIKEY'S a wee squatter lad. There's some other locals lingering atop the ridge.

MARVIN MUNNEE

(off)

Them's the police a-comin.

MOSES MUNNEE

(off)

Tell Morris them city men's here - he'd best cover up the still. I got a gun if they come nosin' about.

MARVIN MUNNEE

(off)

I reckon they're here about all the troubles yonder. Go on, Mikey.

MIKEY MUNNEE

(off)

Yep'm, I go.

CROFT

Morning.

Silence.

CROFT (CONT'D)

We're state troopers. We heard there was a spot of trouble.

MOSES MUNNEE

(unintelligible hillbilly rant)

Heard that didjee? We got troubles enough without law men and city men poking round. Go on now - get! We didn't ask ye to come round.

DUCLAIR

(sotto voce)

You understand any of that?

CROFT

Not a word.

DUCLAIR

He's got a gun.

CROFT

Most of 'em do up here.
 (to the squatters)
 We don't want no trouble. Heard
 there was a storm and people got
 hurt. We're just here to help.

MOSES MUNNEE

I don't care if you're Jesus Christ
 himself - we don't want no
 outsiders come a-pokin'--

The big booming voice of MAMA MUNNEE approaches from afar.
 She's 25% more intelligible and 50% louder than Moses.

MAMA MUNNEE

Shut yer big hole, Moses Munnee.
 These men is here for the dead.
 Ain't that right?

CROFT

There's dead bodies here?

MAMA MUNNEE

Ayah. Piles of 'em.

CROFT

(discomfited)
 Oh. Can you show us the way?

MAMA MUNNEE

Ayah. Foller me. The village was
 just up the holler round yonder.

Some of the squatters follow along as they TRUDGE up to where
 they can see the remains of the village.

MAMA MUNNEE (CONT'D)

You can see what's left from just
 round here.

HUGE MUSICAL HIT. SAN points flee out of Croft at an alarming
 rate.

CROFT

Oh, sweet Jesus... are those? M-m-
 m...

He GROANS and falls to his knees, fighting not to hurl. As he
 surveys the apocalyptic scene before them, we see why the
 Captain chose Duclair for the assignment.

DUCLAIR
 Sir, would you help the detective?
 Lead him up over there, let him
 catch his breath.

MARVIN MUNNEE
 Yassir. C'mon you.

RUSTLES, GROANING, FOOTSTEPS.

DUCLAIR
 How many people lived here?

MAMA MUNNEE
 I ain't much at mathymetics but I
 reckon 'bout four score.

DUCLAIR
 These bodies... there must be at
 least forty or fifty.

MAMA MUNNEE
 Reckon so.

DUCLAIR
 Where are the survivors?
 (she doesn't understand)
 Have you seen anyone alive?

MAMA MUNNEE
 Not a soul what lived here. Me an
 my kin, we come from down the crick
 round the far side of Vanderham
 Gulch.

DUCLAIR
 What's your name?

MAMA MUNNEE
 Folks call me Mama Munnee.

DUCLAIR
 That's M-O-N-E-Y?

MAMA MUNNEE
 Huh?

DUCLAIR
 Your name? How it's spelled?
 (she doesn't follow)
 When you write your name down?

MAMA MUNNEE
(thinking he's stupid)
It's spelt money.

DUCLAIR
(giving up)
Okay. What do you think happened
here?

MAMA MUNNEE
Storm.

DUCLAIR
A storm? Some of these bodies look
like they were torn limb from limb.

MAMA MUNNEE
'Twer'n't no reg'lar storm.

DUCLAIR
You can say that again. There's all
these burned spots. Any idea what
might have happened here?

MAMA MUNNEE
Lightnin'.

DUCLAIR
But... I mean there's dozens of
spots like this. The dirt's been
melted into glass. That's not--

MAMA MUNNEE
Lotta lightnin' up here.

DUCLAIR
(brimming with disbelief)
Yeah... But this... looks like the
ground's just collapsed, caved in.
These shanties are completely
destroyed.

MAMA MUNNEE
Happens that way sometimes
hereabouts.

DUCLAIR
You don't say... I should see how
Detective Croft is getting on.

MAMA MUNNEE
That feller were lookin' a might
peaky.

MUSIC TRANSITION.

5

GAWKERS

5

We hear a bit more WALLA from some GAWKERS who have joined the squatters. A couple of reporters have joined the agitated crowd, including Arthur MONROE and Nick CALLUM.

CROFT

C'mon now - stay back. I don't want any of you crossing this line.

MONROE

Officer, we've heard reports of fatalities in the village. What can you tell us?

CROFT

Who wants to know?

MONROE

I'm with the press - Arthur Monroe, *The Albany Evening News*.

CALLUM

We've heard there were numerous fatalities. Can you confirm that?

CROFT

You press too?

CALLUM

Nick Callum, *True Crime Magazine*. Can you give us a statement? Are there murderers on the loose?

CROFT

Look, we just got here. We're still evaluating the scene. Let me talk with my partner, I'll get you a statement. Any of you cross this line, I'll arrest you.

FOOTSTEPS as Duclair and Mama Munnee approach.

MONROE

Must be pretty bad. My source says there's at least twenty dead.

GAWKER

Twenny? Elmer said he was up here last night, whole village is wiped out.

DUCLAIR
You all right?

CROFT
Sorry about that. I...

DUCLAIR
Don't worry about it.

CROFT
We'd best head back to Lefferts
Corners. They've got a phone, we
can call the Captain, get the
county Medical Examiner up here.
Maybe some of these local fellas
can help us push the car out of--

PEARCE
(from a slight distance)
Heya detectives, Moe Pearce, *New
York Evening Graphic*. What's the
story here?

TOWNIE
Whole village done got overrun by a
pack of rabid bears!

PEARCE
A whole pack, eh? How about that.
Anything official, boys?

CROFT
Look, I told you, we're just
starting to--

PEARCE
Our source says a bomb went off,
blew up a whole village.

GAWKER
Weren't that - we'd have heard it.

MAMA MUNNEE
I'm tellin' you, there was
lightning something fierce up here
night afore last.

GAWKER
Maybe so, but I knows lotsa folks
is missing! 'Twere blood poison!
Drove some of 'em mad and they kilt
their kin and lit out! They're on
the run!

TOWNIE

No, it was a pack of bears! Tored 'em to bits. My cousin told me.

MIKEY MUNNEE

Ain't no wild animals in these parts! The monster killed 'em off long ago!

CALLUM

Monster? Now this sounds like my kind of story.

CROFT

Behind the line, you!

GAWKER

Monster?! Who, the Headless Horseman?

LAUGHTER and MURMURING from the crowd.

PEARCE

(mocking)

Maybe it was gnomes! I hear these hills are just crawling with 'em.

MIKEY MUNNEE

No, 'twas the Spekter!

Some of the CROWD GOES QUIET.

MONROE

Oh yeah?

CALLUM

The specter? Go on.

MIKEY MUNNEE

Yup. The Martense Spekter. Lives unner the grount. Comes out when there's lightnin' real bad. Kills dogs, people, bears, deer, it ain't particular.

MAMA MUNNEE

Mikey, never you--

MIKEY MUNNEE

They say the thunder calls the monster outta hiding.

MOSES MUNNEE

Nuh-uh, the thunder is its voice.

MAMA MUNNEE

Moses!

CALLUM

What's your name, son?

MIKEY MUNNEE

Mikey Munnee. I live a spell down the crick.

MONROE

Smile, Mikey!

The POP of a FLASHBULB. The crowd MURMURS again.

MIKEY MUNNEE

Hey! What'd you do that fer?

MONROE

You're gonna be in the paper, kid!

MAMA MUNNEE

That were enough. Moses, hush up. Mikey, get over here.

PEARCE

Detectives, is it true that people are missing? Have all the bodies been--

CROFT

Look fellas, save your breath. We're not taking questions yet. We've gotta call in the Medical Examiner and take a careful look at what happened up here.

CALLUM

What do you think it could have been, detective?

CROFT

Do you understand what "no questions" means?

CALLUM

Yeah but, I mean, c'mon... a whole village?

PEARCE

C'mon, give us a quote. Something we can use.

DUCLAIR

Ok. Fine. It was moonshine, all right? A still exploded.

MUTTERINGS OF DISBELIEF from the crowd.

PEARCE

Must have been a pretty big still...

DUCLAIR

OK, it was a whole bunch of 'em. You want a story? It was a regular hotbed of illegal liquor. A bunch of alky cookers didn't know what they were doing and blew themselves up. You want a story? Put that in your paper. Or you can wait until we've got some answers. C'mon now, clear off...

CALLUM

Sure, but detective--

CROFT

You heard him. We'll tell you more when we know more. Now clear the area. We have work to do here.

Transition MUSIC BEGINS. The crowd MUTTERS as they disperse.

CALLUM

(quietly)

Listen, officer. I covered the war in France. I've seen bomb craters. This wasn't caused by any explosion. It's like the village was swallowed whole and everyone left alive went mad.

DUCLAIR

Yeah well, Mr.... What was your name again?

CALLUM

Callum.

DUCLAIR

Well, Mr. Callum, give us a break okay? Let us do our jobs.

CALLUM

Sure, sure. And I'll do mine.

MUSIC PUNCTUATION. Audio MONTAGE - sirens, walla of cops, doctors, shovels, nausea, etc... Fade into:

6

TRIP HOME

6

DOORS TO THE MODEL-T SHUT as the boys finally depart the crime scene. The car RATTLES down the mountain road.

CROFT

(shaken)

Thank Christ that's over and done with.

DUCLAIR

All the cases like this up here?

CROFT

The Catskills. No.... It's yokels and vacationers.

(uncomfortable)

I've never seen nothing like that. I... I...

DUCLAIR

It's ok.

CROFT

But you, you've seen that kind of thing before, haven't you? You were over there? Europe?

DUCLAIR

Yep. Flanders.

CROFT

As bad as they say?

DUCLAIR

(loaded pause)

Worse, I think. The Marne, the second battle... it was... You get used to it. Somehow.

CROFT

Yeah, well this Maple Cone thing was more than enough for me. All that carnage. Doesn't make any sense.

DUCLAIR

Yeah, but we'll get to the bottom of it, right?

CROFT

I doubt it. Folks up there will mourn their dead, but no one on the outside's gonna lose any sleep over it.

DUCLAIR

Hell of a thing.

CROFT

You can say that again. I'm ready to get on back to Albany. Good old fashioned crime. I'll take a drunk & disorderly or a bank heist over this any day.

He chuckles then gives way to an awkward sigh. Pause.

DUCLAIR

Hey, Croft.

CROFT

Yeah?

DUCLAIR

You... don't ever. Not really.

CROFT

What?

DUCLAIR

Get used to it.

Transition MUSIC.

7 MISSING PERSONS

7

A BASEBALL GAME plays on the radio in the background of the Albany State Police headquarters.

DUCLAIR

Hey, Croft. I was thinking about the coroner's report about the Maple Cone deaths...

CROFT

Let it go, Duclair. That was a month ago. I told you there wasn't even going to be a crime to investigate.

DUCLAIR

Yeah, but...

CROFT

Shh, I wanna hear this - Palmer's going to the plate.

FOOTSTEPS as the Captain walks in.

CAPTAIN MURRAY

Croft, Duclair, I need you to come take a statement.

CROFT

Can't it wait? The game...

CAPTAIN MURRAY

Now. We got a lady waiting in the interview room.

DUCLAIR

What's the case?

CAPTAIN MURRAY

Missing person. Come on.

CROFT

Yeah, yeah...

He CLICKS OFF the radio broadcast. FOOTSTEPS click down the hall. A DOOR OPENS. MRS. BENNETT is a working-class mom in her 40s, a little rough around the edges.

CAPTAIN MURRAY

Mrs. Bennett, this is Detective Croft and Trooper Duclair. They'll take your statement.

MRS. BENNETT

Thank you, captain.

The DOOR CLOSES.

CROFT

How do you do, Mrs. Bennett?

DUCLAIR

Ma'am.

CROFT

So, what seems to be the trouble?

MRS. BENNETT

It's my husband, George Bennett. He left on a job he just hasn't come back.

CROFT

And when was this?

MRS. BENNETT

Tuesday. He said he'd be back
Wednesday afternoon.

CROFT

Two full days. Sure, sure, we see
why you're concerned.

DUCLAIR

Ma'am, what line of work was your
husband in?

MRS. BENNETT

He, um, provided security for a
kind of a private investigator.
William Tobey...

CROFT

Oh. I know Bill Tobey.

MRS. BENNETT

Well Bill and George were hired by
this writer. They were all supposed
to go somewhere up in the
Catskills. I rang up to Bill's and
he hasn't come back either. None of
them had. They were supposed to be
back Wednesday.

CROFT

Yeah, that doesn't sound like him.

DUCLAIR

This writer, do you have a name?

MRS. BENNETT

His name's Callum. Nick Callum.

DUCLAIR

Nick Callum? Croft, he was one of
the reporters nosing around up at
Maple Cone.

MRS. BENNETT

What's Maple Cone?

CROFT

It's... nothing for you to worry
about. Do you know this Callum?

MRS. BENNETT

Not really. George and Bill had done a few jobs for him before. They were his go-to guys when he needed a little extra, you know, muscle.

CROFT

Ahh... So, this guy's not writing for the *Saturday Evening Post*.

MRS. BENNETT

No. It's one of those seedy true crime rags.

CROFT

Gotcha. We'll look into it, ma'am. Anything else you think we should know?

(delicately)

Any... troubles at home, money problems, a woman, that kind of--

MRS. BENNETT

No. Nothing like that. George, I mean, he's no prize, but he's a good man. Good enough.

CROFT

Of course. Sometimes these cases have... but not this one, I'm sure.

MRS. BENNETT

We... we have five kids. You know what I mean?

CROFT

I do. Don't you worry. We'll find him. We have a pretty good idea where to start looking.

Transition MUSIC.

8

LEFFERTS CORNERS

8

Inside the diner, SILVERWARE CLINKS ON EMPTY PLATES. Tilly, a young waitress helps them out.

TILLY

More coffee? Boy, you finished off that pie right quick.

CROFT

I am partial to blackberry.

TILLY

Can I get you another slice?

CROFT

No thanks, honey. But maybe there is something you can do for us. We're looking for a guy who's been here in Lefferts Corners recently. Nick Callum? Has he been in here?

TILLY

Sure. That writer - from New York City.

CROFT

You say that like it's a good thing.

TILLY

He is a pretty odd fella.

DUCLAIR

How so?

TILLY

At first he weren't so bad, but last few days he'll sit by himself, just muttering away. And he don't look so good.

DUCLAIR

Like what do you mean?

TILLY

He just kind of looks off into nothing, you know?

DUCLAIR

The thousand yard stare - yeah, I know it.

CROFT

Any idea where we can find him?

TILLY

I think he's been staying over at the hotel but sometimes he's talking about "the mansion".

DUCLAIR

What mansion?

TILLY

Beats me.

The diner's entrance BELL jingles. FOOTSTEPS entering.

TILLY (CONT'D)

Oh, there he is.

(calling off)

Mr. Callum! There's some fellas here want to talk with you.

DUCLAIR

(to Croft)

Yep, he was definitely one of the reporters up there at Maple Cone.

Nick approaches the table. His manner is slightly grandiose and perhaps a touch insane.

CALLUM

Officers. I knew you'd be back.

CROFT

Oh yeah, how's that?

CALLUM

Once you began to put together the size and scope of what's going on here, its pull would be inexorable.

CROFT

And just what's going on here?

CALLUM

It's a mystery. I'm still working on it.

DUCLAIR

Did you hire George Bennett and William Tobey to help you with this mystery?

CALLUM

(excited)

Yes. I did. I did!

DUCLAIR

Where are they?

CALLUM

I wish I could tell you.

CROFT

Well your wish is granted. We're bringing you in for questioning.

CALLUM

Questioning? Why?

CROFT

You can come voluntarily and give a statement or we can place you under arrest.

CALLUM

I can make a statement? Yes, I want to.

CROFT

Really?

CALLUM

Oh yes.

DUCLAIR

Come on, let's go.

MUSIC.

9

THE FIRST INTERROGATION

9

A thick metal door CLANGS shut at the State Police Headquarters. Callum is in an interview room with Croft and Duclair.

CROFT

Ok, you wanted to make a statement. Let's hear it.

Callum draws a deep breath, savoring the moment and summoning all the drama and theatricality he can.

CALLUM

There was thunder in the air on the night I went to the deserted mansion atop Tempest Mountain to find the lurking fear.

CROFT

To find the what?

DUCLAIR

What's Tempest Mountain?

CALLUM

Ah, yes, forgive me - I should provide some background first. You'll recall we met at the ruins of that settlement after the...

CROFT

Yeah, I remember. You said you were a reporter.

CALLUM

I am an author. I was preparing a piece for *True Crime Magazine*, though I suspect to tell the whole tale, a book may be the preferable format.

CROFT

True Crime? We were up there. It was a tragedy alright. A nightmare maybe, but we didn't see any crime. It was a freak accident.

CALLUM

Hmmm. A freak there may well be, but it was no accident.

DUCLAIR

What the hell are you talking about?

CALLUM

After the village was destroyed, you and your people investigated the scene, buried the bodies and eventually returned to Albany.

CROFT

Yeah, that was our job.

CALLUM

And well you did it. But I stayed on. I wanted to dig a bit deeper. You see, I revel in ghastly explorations.

CROFT

You do, huh?

CALLUM

Yes. You policemen look into such things because it's your duty. I do it because it's my passion.

DUCLAIR

And you wanted to "dig deeper".

CALLUM

Yes, I see what you did there. You see, while the New York State Police were content to describe the deaths of 49 illiterate squatters as a "freak meteorological incident", I suspected there was more to it. So when you went home, I stayed on to truly investigate.

DUCLAIR

Find anything?

CALLUM

Oh my, yes! You see, once the authorities and the press left, all that remained were the nervous neighbors.

DUCLAIR

Like the Munnees?

CALLUM

Just so.

DUCLAIR

You ever find out how to spell their name? None of them seemed to--

CALLUM

No, there's not much need for reading and writing in their community. Interestingly, there's not much need for money either - they get by on bartering. A couple of generations ago, the family did some buying and selling with the outside world and the name stuck.

CROFT

Munnee.

Intense MUSIC transition leads us into a flashback.

CALLUM

They're one of the few families around here that seems to understand the concept. I showed some interest and kindness to the family, and when sufficiently sober they proved a trove of information.

10

CALLUM AND MUNNEE

10

TWEETING BIRDS and MOUNTAIN BREEZE. Callum explores the site of the Maple Cone disaster. The place is empty and desolate.

MOSES MUNNEE

Them bodies all been buried now.
'Tain't nothin' left fer you
gawkers to see.

CALLUM

Not gawking at all sir. I've come
to get to the bottom of what
happened here. Nick Callum,
pleasure to make your acquaintance.

MOSES MUNNEE

Hhmmph. Moses Munnee.

CALLUM

Care for a nip of brandy, Moses?

MOSES MUNNEE

Reckon I don't mind to.

They DRINK.

MOSES MUNNEE (CONT'D)

Mmm. That's good. 'Tain't from no
mountain still - thet's fackery
hootch.

CALLUM

Police are saying it was the storm
that killed them all.

Moses SNORTS in contempt.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

You're not buying it?

MOSES MUNNEE

Kletskoek! I seen them bones, all
clawed and bit up. Ain't no storm
do that. Ain't nothing of this
world. 'Twere the Specter that done
this.

CALLUM

Ah yes, there was a little boy who
mentioned that before. Your
grandson?

MOSES MUNNEE

Eh, kinda... He's a brave lad.

CALLUM

He called it a Specter, too. Like a ghost?

MOSES MUNNEE

Like a demon. We telled 'em but them city men cain't be bother to unnerstand secret things.

CALLUM

I'd like to understand. Tell me more.

MOSES MUNNEE

Hmmmp. Specter haunts the old Martense mansion up on Tempest Mountain. Has done fer at least hunnert years now.

CALLUM

I heard about that place. Right after the... tragedy, a lot of reporters went over there to have a look. I went too.

MOSES MUNNEE

Pups a-chasin' their own tails. And ye all came back - didn't see nothing, did ye?

CALLUM

Can't say as I did. The old place is pretty run down.

MOSES MUNNEE

You know why that were?

CALLUM

Why's that?

MOSES MUNNEE

'Cause ye botkoppen all went in the day. But the Specter - it only comes out at night.

CALLUM

So if I'd gone at night I might have seen it?

MOSES MUNNEE

If'n ye was mad enough to visit the Martense place affer dark, ye mightadone, an if'n 'twere stormin' ye surely would. It speaks in thunder.

CALLUM

Another drink?

They DRINK.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

What about you, Moses? You seen this specter yourself?

MOSES MUNNEE

Yup. That I done. 'Twere far off and it damned near skeert me to death. 'Twere the specter that killed them peoples.

A faint RUMBLE of distant thunder segues us back to-

11

FIRST INTERROGATION PART 2

11

CALLUM

Well, armed with such a tantalizing prospect, my course of action was clear. I had to return to the Martense mansion.

CROFT

Why? We checked that place. It was deserted. It's a couple of miles from the destroyed village.

CALLUM

I believed that the thunder called Munnee's death-daemon out of some fearsome secret place; and be that daemon solid entity or vaporous pestilence, I meant to see it. I hired a pair of sturdy lads, Bill and his man Tobey to come with me.

DUCLAIR

And why was that?

CALLUM

I'm fascinated by the grotesque and the terrible, but I'm not so foolish as to put myself in harm's way.

DUCLAIR

Yeah. So when was this, exactly?

CALLUM

August 5th. We left the city and arrived at the mansion at dusk.

Slightly ominous MUSIC TRANSITION.

12

NIGHT ON TEMPEST MOUNTAIN

12

CRICKETS/NIGHT AMBIENCE. DISTANT THUNDER. A CAR COMES TO A STOP and THREE MEN GET OUT. FOOTSTEPS, BRANCHES, ETC. As we hear them in action, it's clear Tobey and Bennett are what one might call "goons" or "the muscle".

CALLUM

(narrating)

We left the silent motor-car and tramped up the last mound-covered reaches of Tempest Mountain, casting the beams of an electric torch on the spectral grey walls that began to appear through giant oaks ahead.

BENNETT

(spooked)

Those trees. Something's wrong with them. They're all... twisted.

CALLUM

Yes, George. It's from lightning. They've been its target countless times.

TOBEY

Watch your step, boys. The ground's very uneven.

Ominous THUNDER rolls in the distance.

CALLUM

(narrating)

In this morbid night solitude and feeble shifting illumination, the crumbling mansion displayed obscure hints of terror which day could not uncover.

TOBEY

Boy, you know how to pick 'em, Nick. Hard to believe a fancy joint like this was ever built out here.

BENNETT

We're going inside this place? Cripes, it's about to fall down.

CALLUM

No, no. I've searched the place thoroughly in the daylight. I have it all planned out. Come on.

The door CREAKS open in classic horror film style.

BENNETT

Geez, Nick, could you find a creepier place?

TOBEY

Ah, don't be a pansy. We'll be fine!

CALLUM

Come on, we're going upstairs, to the bedroom of Jan Martense! His murder here may have left his unquiet spirit doomed to roam among the living!

MUSIC.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

(narrating)

I felt that the apartment of this ancient victim was best for my purposes. The chamber, measuring about, oh, twenty feet square, contained some rubbish which had once been furniture. It lay on the second story, on the southeast corner of the house, and had an immense east window and narrow south window, both devoid of panes or shutters.

CALLUM (CONT'D)
George, if you'd affix the rope
ladders out that window there...

BENNETT
What for?

CALLUM
In case we wish to flee with
alacrity and the stairs are
blocked. And Bill, if you'll help
me push this old bed frame over
into the corner...

HEAVY WOOD SLIDING across the floor.

BENNETT
Cripes! Check out this fireplace!
It's huge. And the tiles, they got
little pictures on 'em. This place
used to be nice.

Bill and Callum GRUNT WITH EFFORT as they get the bed in
place.

CALLUM
Perfect, just as I planned it.
Should the daemon fall upon us from
within the house, we can use the
rope ladders out the window. And
should it swoop in through the
window--

BENNETT
We go down the stairs with me
leading the way!

They share a CHUCKLE. A bed of EERIE MUSIC creeps in as the
lads settle in.

TOBEY
So, now what?

CALLUM
We wait for the specter of Jan
Martense to return to the room
where legend holds that his own kin
struck him dead. We'll take turns
with one of us keeping watch while
the other two rest.

Thunder RUMBLES and the wind BLOWS through the trees outside.

TOBEY

(amused)

Geez, Nick, all the weird places you take us to... And we ain't never seen no demon.

BENNETT

Yeah, but if we ever was gonna see one, this'd be the place for it.

TOBEY

So you think this guy got murdered, right here?

CALLUM

Ah, interesting story. I should go back to the beginning... you're familiar with the Dutch East India Company? No? Well in 1647, Peter Stuyvesant was appointed as the new Director General overseeing the colony of New Amsterdam. Among the colonists at his stockade fortress of Wiltwyck were Dutch settlers from the Martense family...

Tobey YAWNS loudly. Bennett SNORES. A feisty STORM RAGES outside. Callum's lecture fades out.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

(narrating)

After supper and the day's exertions, the lads were clearly tired. I must say, even with the open window and the thunder and lightning outside, I felt singularly drowsy myself.

CROFT

But they were both still with you at this point?

CALLUM

Indeed. I was between them. Bennett was asleep on the side of the bed nearest the window, and Tobey was nodding on the other side, though his shift on watch was drawing nigh. I remained on my watch though. It is curious how intently I had been watching that fireplace.

DUCLAIR

Did you have a fire going?

CALLUM

Oh no, the house was in no shape for that. The tiles depicted a story from scripture, the Prodigal Son, and perhaps it tickled something in my subconscious. For a while a flickering lantern lit the room with undulating shadows, but the incessant wind finally left us in darkness. Never before had the presence of evil so poignantly oppressed me.

Thunder RUMBLES and Callum MUMBLES in his sleep. He STARTS and we hear RUSTLING. The EERIE MUSIC BUILDS.

A HIDEOUS SHRIEK BEYOND ANYTHING IN EXPERIENCE OR IMAGINATION pierces the night! Thunder CRASHES dramatically!

13

FIRST INTERROGATION PART 3

13

CALLUM

I must have fallen asleep, and awoke to red madness and the mockery of diabolism. There was no light, but I knew from the empty space at my right that Tobey was gone.

DUCLAIR

Gone where?

CALLUM

God alone knows. Across my chest still lay the heavy arm of the sleeper at my left.

CROFT

Bennett slept through all this?

CALLUM

Please, I'm... allow me to continue, detective. A devastating stroke of lightning shook the whole mountain. In the flash the sleeper started up suddenly while the glare from beyond the window threw his shadow vividly upon the chimney above the fireplace. That I am still alive and sane, is a marvel I cannot fathom.

CROFT
Why? What do you mean?

CALLUM
I cannot fathom it, for the shadow on that chimney was not that of George Bennett or of any other human creature, but a nameless, shapeless abomination which no mind could fully grasp. In another second I was alone in the accursed mansion, shivering and gibbering. George Bennett and William Tobey had left no trace, not even of a struggle.

MUSIC PUNCTUATION.

CROFT
(dubious)
All right. You sit tight here, Mr. Callum. Trooper Duclair and I will be right back.

14 KICK HIM

14

In the hall outside the interrogation room, the Captain approaches.

CAPTAIN MURRAY
Well? What do you think? Does Callum know where these guys are?

CROFT
Doesn't seem like it. I don't think we've got enough to keep holding him. It's not like there's dead bodies. We don't know these two guys didn't just ditch him there. I would've.

CAPTAIN MURRAY
Hmm. You agree?

DUCLAIR
I think the detective's right. The guy's a weirdo, that's for sure.

CROFT
Yeah, if only it were a crime to be a weirdo in New York.

CAPTAIN MURRAY

What do you mean?

DUCLAIR

His language. It's strange. A guy who's guilty of something tends to clam up, but this guy talks too much. He spouts off about ghoulish stuff like he's Edgar Allan Poe. Maybe he's nuts, maybe he's just yanking our chain.

CAPTAIN MURRAY

All right, kick him then.

CROFT

You sure, Captain?

CAPTAIN MURRAY

We don't want him wasting any more of our time. If he is up to something, he sounds like the kind of idiot who'll end up getting caught eventually.

15

FIRST INTERROGATION PART 4

15

The METAL DOOR OPENS and the cops come in.

CROFT

All right, Callum. You're free to go.

CALLUM

I am? What a relief. Oh, that's splendid. So you're coming?

CROFT

Are WE coming with YOU?

DUCLAIR

To go where, exactly?

CALLUM

To the Martense mansion! A hellish mystery's still afoot and we must plumb its depths.

CROFT

You go ahead. See if you find anything interesting.

CALLUM
 (hurt)
 So, you're not coming?

DUCLAIR
 Good luck, buddy.

CROFT
 Happy plumbing!

The metal door CLANGS shut. Transition MUSIC.

16 SURRENDERED TO THE AUTHORITIES

16

POLICE STATION WALLA.

DUCLAIR
 So, Croft, the whole family coming
 over for Thanksgiving?

CROFT
 Are you kidding me? My brother and
 his family are coming. The in-laws.
 The wife's sister and her family...
 you should see the size of the
 turkey the missus is gonna roast.

BRISK FOOTSTEPS.

CAPTAIN MURRAY
 Croft, Duclair! I got something for
 you.

CROFT
 What is it, Captain?

CAPTAIN MURRAY
 Suspicious death out in the
 Catskills.

CROFT
 Again?

CAPTAIN MURRAY
 Out at that same village where all
 those squatters died in August. And
 guess who was at the scene?

DUCLAIR
 Nick Callum.

CAPTAIN MURRAY
 You got it.

CROFT

Aw, for Pete's sake. Ok, we'll see
if we can round him up and bring
him--

The DOOR OPENS. MORE FOOTSTEPS.

DUCLAIR

Speak of the devil...

CROFT

Callum. We were just talking about
you.

DUCLAIR

You come to turn yourself in?

CALLUM

Turn myself in? No, I've come to
demand the immediate assistance of
the police.

CROFT

Yeah? With what?

CALLUM

A thorough investigation of the
death of Arthur Monroe!

DUCLAIR

You've got something to tell us
about that?

CALLUM

Oh, indeed I do. An otherworldly
horror is afoot and it cost poor
Arthur his life.

CROFT

(weary of this)

Come on, this way... Have a seat
and let's hear your story.

CALLUM

Ah, well after you sent me away, I
found myself in a dazed stupor of
fear. I returned to Lefferts
Corners desperate to find
answers...

MUSIC transition

17

A FRIEND IN NEED

17

QUIET DINER WALLA.

CALLUM

... That shadow! Something had lain between me and the window that night, but I hardly dare to analyze or identify it. If it had only snarled, or bayed, or laughed... But it was so silent! Why did it pick them, and leave me for the last? Drowsiness is so stifling, and dreams are so horrible...

Pause.

TILLY

That's awful. More coffee?

CALLUM

Coffee? Don't you see--

MONROE

Nick, give the poor girl a break.

CALLUM

What? Oh, Arthur, it's you. Yes, you, you can understand.

MONROE

Trying my best, Nick.
(to Tilly)
I'd love a cup of that coffee, darling.

TILLY

(pouring)
Of course. Here you go.

She GOES. Arthur leans in and speaks quietly.

MONROE

Some damned strange stuff going on up here. Evening News assigned me to write up a piece on those two missing fellas. Anything new on that?

CALLUM

Nothing. I fear the worst, Arthur. I'm trying my best to calm my nerves and steel myself for another trip up Tempest Mountain to the Martense place.

MONROE

You sure that's prudent after what happened to you boys up there?

CALLUM

You believe it, Arthur?

MONROE

What's that?

CALLUM

My story. I've told you, the police, my editors, anyone who will listen. You're the only one who's believed me.

MONROE

No reason not to believe you, Nick. I saw those bodies up at the squatter's village. Seems like Bennett and Tobey really have gone missing. There's a story here.

CALLUM

Come with me! Back up to the Martense mansion! Perhaps if we--

MONROE

Let's not be foolhardy, Nick. If there's really something up in that house, I don't want to confront it without knowing what it is.

CALLUM

Then what do we do?

MONROE

Let's see if we can figure out what it is. Come with me.

Transition MUSIC.

They arrive at the hovel of Moses Munnee. He's hammered on moonshine.

CALLUM

(narrating)

Arthur and I visited Moses Munnee
in his mountain shack.

MOSES MUNNEE

I remember you - sittee down - and
yer friend thar. Ye were the one
what stayed. The one what listened.

CALLUM

Yes. That's right.

MONROE

Sir, we hoped we could learn
something about the Martenses.
Their history. This specter, when
did it first appear?

MOSES MUNNEE

Histree? I can't tell ye no book
lernin' but I seen the specter more
times than I got toes. 'Tain't no
man been nearer it and lived than I
done.

CALLUM

Well, I was in bed--

MOSES MUNNEE

'Tain't always lookin' the same
way. Sometime it's a snake a-
burrowing unnergrownd. Sometimes
it's a man all giant-like. It's a
thunder devil, that's fer sure and
a bat sorta wingy vulture 'cause
sometimes it's a walkin tree that
can appear outta thin air whenever
it done feel--

Mama Munnee comes roaring in like a freight train.

MAMA MUNNEE

Moses Munnee - these men don't want
yer whiskey-addled brains a
dribblin' on their good shoes! Give
me that jug.

MOSES MUNNEE

Aww...

MAMA MUNNEE

Give it now.

The SLOSH of the jug. The GRUNT of resistance.

MAMA MUNNEE (CONT'D)

What are ye yammering on about anyway?

MOSES MUNNEE

(awed whisper)

The specter.

MAMA MUNNEE

Godverdomme! The specter ain't no walking tree. I told you that! It's a ghost.

CALLUM

A ghost? No. It touched me that night in the house. I felt a very physical presence.

MAMA MUNNEE

Course ye did. Everybody knows a ghost can poke or pinch ye!

MOSES MUNNEE

Can not!

MAMA MUNNEE

Hush up, you.

MONROE

Would there be anyone else who might know more about the specter? Old tales or...

MAMA MUNNEE

Old Weduwe Vrooman might know. Plenny o' book learnin' - knows how ter read AND write. Got a whole shelf of old books.

CALLUM

Yes, yes, where might we find him?

MAMA MUNNEE

The place is a fair hike up Vanderham Crick.

MONROE

Could you take us there?

MAMA MUNNEE

Reckon ye can pay us? With cash money?

CALLUM
Certainly!

MAMA MUNNEE
(hollering)
Mikey! Get in here!

The PITTER PAT OF LITTLE FEET come running in through the door.

MIKEY MUNNEE
Yas'm?

MAMA MUNNEE
Mikey, you need to take these fellers up to Old Weduwe Vrooman's place. Ye know the way?

MIKEY MUNNEE
Yas'm. Foller me!

Transition MUSIC.

19 WEDUWE VROOMAN

19

CALLUM
(narrating)
The lad led us on quite an extended hike alongside a picturesque mountain stream. Hours later we arrived at a hovel whose decrepitude and malodorous decay shocked me.

MIKEY MUNNEE
There it be, misters.

CALLUM
There's... books in there?

MONROE
Look out, something's moving inside.

The DOOR CREAKS OPEN. MUSIC PUNCTUATION.

MIKEY MUNNEE
It's the Weduwe!

A very ancient crone speaks.

VROOMAN
Wat wil je, jong Munnee?

MIKEY MUNNEE

Mama told me to bring these fellers
to ye so they can--

CALLUM

We're hoping you might be able to
provide us with some information
about the Martense family.

MONROE

They built a mansion up on--

VROOMAN

Tempest Mountain. Aye, them was
'mong the first settlers hereabouts.
A bad line, evil blood in the
Martenses. Why d'ye come all the
way up here to ask about that
doomed stock?

MONROE

Two of our associates have gone
missing, and we were hoping--

VROOMAN

Long is the list of folks gone
missing thereabouts. Y'think ye can
find 'em?

CALLUM

I think there's something wrong at
the old Martense mansion. A
supernatural presence preying on
the people of the region.

VROOMAN

Oh ye do, do ye?

CALLUM

Yes. And we want to get to the
bottom of it.

VROOMAN

If'n a man falls in a well, he
finds the bottom soon enough.

Awkward pause.

MONROE

Yes. So he does.

VROOMAN

Ye can come in but 'tain't much
room for to be three visitors. Ye
want I should make ye tea?

MONROE

Oh, that would be splendid.

MUSIC evocative of Dutch colonialism.

CALLUM

(narrating)

Soon we were seated outside on
rocks near a fire as the ancient
woman told the tale of the Martense
family.

VROOMAN

The place up-aton Tempest Mountain
'twere first built by Gerrit
Martense. Of course he came hither
'round 1652 with Stuyvesant. They
drove off the Injuns and built a
stockade. Stayed there for a spell,
but then the war came and by and by
the English took over.

MONROE

The war? Sorry, which war?

VROOMAN

(annoyed)

Der Engels-Nederlandse Oorloggen,
Jij idioot!

CALLUM

The Anglo-Dutch war of 1664,
presumably.

VROOMAN

(mollified)

Ah, this one knows. Yes. But old
Gerrit couldn't abide the rule of
the English, so he takes his family
deep into the woods and builds a
grand house atop a mountain there.
But he were in fer a surprise -
onweersbuien... thunderstorms all
the time on this mountain. Now a-
first Mynheer Martense thought
'twas the seasons, but storms come
to the mountain all year long.

(MORE)

VROOMAN (CONT'D)

He done dug his cellar extra deep so's his family could go somewheres safe in the storms. That great house, that's been the home of the Martense family ever since.

MONROE

But surely, no one's lived there for centuries.

VROOMAN

Is that so? Ye see, them Martenses kept to themselves for they were all reared to hate the English. Them that did have traffic with 'em said ye could spot a Martense by their eyes. Something in their blood made one eye go blue and one go brown.

CALLUM

Now that's curious.

VROOMAN

Keepin' to theyselves like that, the family's said to gone degenerate - breedin' 'mongst themselves and with the servant class. A handful moved away - ye'd see some Martense blood in some of the hill folk here - but the rest of 'em stayed at the old mansion, keepin' clannish and quiet. 'Tweren't no man of quality left the place 'til Jan Martense.

CALLUM

Yes! It's his ghost that still haunts the mansion!

VROOMAN

(to herself)

Hij is gek op geesten... (He is crazy for ghosts...)

MONROE

Can you tell us anything about Jan Martense?

VROOMAN

Oh, aye. I've a book, writ by one of his mates. I'll fetch it.

CALLUM

(narrating)

The old woman came back with a handwritten 18th century diary, written by one Jonathan Gifford. Apparently he'd met Martense when the two of them served together in the French and Indian War. As the evening's gloom set in around us we gathered closer to the fire to read Gifford's tale.

MUSIC cues us into a flashback as we leap back to 1754.

20

FRENCH AND INDIAN WAR

20

We hear the SCRIBBLE of Gifford's pencil as he writes in his diary.

GIFFORD

10 September - Word came today that the French surrendered on Monday to Major General Amherst at Montreal. They may keep fighting in France and England but everyone seems to believe the war has ended here and we'll all be going home soon. It's rather hard to believe. While it took years to get used to the privations of army life, now the idea of merely returning home seems strange and foreign. My closest friend and confidante, Jan, seems particularly troubled by the notion.

Musical SEGUE to Jan and Jonathan talking at the army camp.

GIFFORD (CONT'D)

Well, old friend, I suppose this is it. We've got our discharge papers and the army's breaking camp. Sun-up tomorrow we go back to being regular citizens.

JAN MARTENSE

(glum)

Aye. That we do.

GIFFORD

Think about it, Jan: no more bivouacs in the mud, no army victuals, no lunatic Frenchmen firing muskets at you or Indians trying to take your scalp.

JAN MARTENSE

Yes, I'll miss it.

They share a CHUCKLE.

GIFFORD

You don't want to go home?

JAN MARTENSE

I was the first of my family to leave Tempest Mountain. To see new sights, meet new people - to see the grandeur of the world. And now, after seeing it, to return to that house again feels like going to my grave.

GIFFORD

In truth, you've made your family out to be a bit queer, but surely they'll welcome ye back heartily.

JAN MARTENSE

Jonathan, you've saved my life in battle and truly you've been a good friend to me. But there's still much you do not know.

GIFFORD

Let us exchange letters then. I'll tell you of my tribulations and you can tell me of yours.

JAN MARTENSE

'Tis a fair bargain, Jonathan. Truly. God keep ye, my friend.

GIFFORD

And you as well.

MUSIC leads us back to the diary.

Gifford's PENCIL CONTINUES TO SCRATCH an entry into his diary.

GIFFORD

23 March - I finally received another letter from Jan today. Their increasing infrequency has begun to trouble me. The poor fellow finds no joy at all among his kinsfolk - they continue to resent him for his excursion into the outside world. He fought bitterly with his brother, whom he said "seemed all but ready to lunge at his throat." The thunderstorms which oft batter the homestead he no longer finds intoxicating and he longs to leave for good. Poor fellow. I shall write and encourage him to do so.

MUSIC CONTINUES.

GIFFORD (CONT'D)

9 September - still no response from Jan. I've decided I'll make the journey out to Tempest Mountain next week. 'Tis a few days' ride, but a surprise visit might buoy his sagging spirits.

MUSIC.

GIFFORD (CONT'D)

20 September - I arrived at Tempest Mountain. I was unprepared for what I found...

Gifford's horse CLOPS along the mountain trail and stops.

GIFFORD (CONT'D)

(in real time)

Good god.

There's a RUSTLE from the bushes and BERNT MARTENSE emerges. The horse WHINNIES and PACES nervously.

BERNT MARTENSE

Wat in hemelsnaam wil je?

GIFFORD

I'm sorry, I don't speak... Is that Dutch?

BERNT MARTENSE

Een Engelsman? Meer afval van de buitenwereld.

GIFFORD

My intentions are peaceful, sir. No need for the blunderbuss.

BERNT MARTENSE

(switching to very bad English)

Whatcheewant?

GIFFORD

Greetings. Is this home to the Martense family?

BERNT MARTENSE

It be. Whatzitooyee?

GIFFORD

(dismounting)

Sir, I am Jonathan Gifford.

No response but a DISTANT CROW.

GIFFORD (CONT'D)

Your, um... Jan Martense and I served in the war together.

No response. The horse WHINNIES.

GIFFORD (CONT'D)

So, I was wondering if I might prevail upon his hospitality for a brief visit.

BERNT MARTENSE

Ye come too late.

GIFFORD

I see. Is he out?

BERNT MARTENSE

He dead.

GIFFORD

What?

BERNT MARTENSE

Hit be der lightnin' a-time back.

GIFFORD

Lightning?

BERNT MARTENSE

Yerp. Killed him dead.

GIFFORD
 (incredulous)
 Really?

BERNT MARTENSE
 Donna ye bleev me? Here, look 'n'
 see fer yerself. That thar, that be
 the family plot. Jan's aan de
 rechterkant - der new one.

GIFFORD
 (appalled)
 That's his grave? It's so... Not
 even a headstone?

BERNT MARTENSE
 (surly)
 'Tain't made a-yet.
 (insincere)
 We be grievin'.

GIFFORD
 I'm very sorry, Mr....

BERNT MARTENSE
 Bernt.

GIFFORD
 Ah, yes. Jan wrote of you. It was
 lightning, you say?

BERNT MARTENSE
 Ben je doof? (Are you deaf?) Thet
 be what I said, but enough o' that.

The HORSE is nervous.

GIFFORD
 I've come a long way. My horse
 needs water. May I trouble you for
 a dip from your well?

BERNT MARTENSE
 Hmmm. This way.

GIFFORD
 Thank you.

They begin to WALK. It's painfully awkward.

GIFFORD (CONT'D)
 So, Bernt, you're Jan's older
 brother...?

BERNT MARTENSE
 (somehow this seems a
 complicated question)
 A bit.

GIFFORD
 I can see the family resemblance.

BERNT MARTENSE
 Whatchee mean by thet?

GIFFORD
 Your eyes... the two colors, brown
 and blue like Jan's. It's...
 distinctive.

The horse DRINKS at a trough.

GIFFORD (CONT'D)
 Jan never made it clear in his
 letters - how many of you live here
 at the house?

BERNT MARTENSE
 (another difficult
 question)
 I reckon there's enough kin folk
 ter get the job done.

GIFFORD
 Ah. The house is... I don't suppose
 there's anywhere nearby where I
 might be able to stay the night?

BERNT MARTENSE
 Take the trail back to der main
 road an' veer rechts... right.
 They's a tavern some miles down.
 Jacob Leffert keeps it.

GIFFORD
 I see. Well, then... I extend my
 condolences to you and your family
 and--

BERNT MARTENSE
 Yer what?

GIFFORD
 Condolences. I'm sorry for the loss
 of your... of Jan.

BERNT MARTENSE
 He ain't lost.

GIFFORD

I mean his death. I'm very sorry to hear of his death. I thank you for your time, sir.

Gifford MOUNTS HIS HORSE and RIDES AWAY. MUSIC leads us back to the diary where he SCRIBBLES furiously.

GIFFORD (CONT'D)

(the diarist)

Jan had always spoken of his family with a sense of dread and loathing which I'd attributed to a slightly comic exaggeration. But now, meeting one of them in person and seeing the Martense homestead, I shared in his pervasive sense of dread. The home, and his kinsman too, had a sense of moldering decay, of rotted grandeur and of taciturn secrecy.

Bernt's tale of Jan's death by lightning seems entirely unconvincing. Jan deserves better than this. I shall find out what's become of him.

MUSIC. PENCIL.

GIFFORD (CONT'D)

22 September - spent the day acquiring some provisions needed for my inquiry. It's a ghoulish plan but I have no doubt Jan would thank for me for it.

MUSIC. PENCIL.

GIFFORD (CONT'D)

24 September - last night I brushed against the boundaries of the nether regions where nightmare and madness reign. After midnight, I set out for the Martense mansion.

We hear the SFX unfold as he narrates it in his diary.

GIFFORD (CONT'D)

I left my horse down the road and set off on foot. In fighting alongside the Iroquois in the war, I learned the skill of moving with stealth through the woods.

(MORE)

GIFFORD (CONT'D)

I soon approached the mansion and found it curiously unlit in any way. I carried with me a small spade and a shuttered lantern. Silently I made my way to the family burial plot.

It is slow and terrible work to exhume a dear friend. I proceeded methodically so as to remain unnoticed. Finally, my spade made contact with a crude pine box and I hurried to clear it of dirt. I opened the shutters on the lantern just enough to show me what I wished to see.

MUSICAL PUNCTUATION. Gifford GASPS slightly at the sight.

GIFFORD (CONT'D)

(in real time)

Oh, Jan...

BERNT MARTENSE

Indringer! Dood de Engelsman!

BOOM! He fires the blunderbuss at Gifford. RUNNING. SHOUTING IN DUTCH.

GIFFORD

I was discovered. I sought to flee Bernt's ancient gun and ran as quickly as I could into the forest. But I had seen enough. My friend's skull crushed cruelly as if by savage blows. His military uniform torn and tattered. I resolved to bring a suit to the magistrate asserting that Jan Martense had been murdered by his loathsome family.

MUSIC leads us back to the present where the widow Vrooman closes the diary.

22

VROOMAN PART 2

22

The FIRE CRACKLES.

CALLUM

(enthralled)

Were charges ever brought? What happened?

VROOMAN

Magistrate would'na lissen to the case - weren't fishent evidence. But the rumors left a stain on what people thought of the Martense family, believe me. Wouldn't no one deal with 'em no more, and the old manor house was shunned. 'Til finally no one saw lights there no more.

MONROE

Are any of them left - the Martenses?

VROOMAN

Some folks hereabouts got some o' their blood in them, but the family's gone and that house's set empty for nigh on a hunnert years.

CALLUM

But there must be a ghost! Jan Martense was murdered, his unquiet spirit--

MONROE

(overlapping)
We don't know that.

MIKEY MUNNEE

(overlapping)
My mammy says issa specter.

VROOMAN

I cain't say what it is, but there's some bad thing awerk there. Drawn out by the bad weather, jest like at that village where them people died a-summertime.

MUSIC TRANSITION STARTS. AN OWL SCREECHES.

VROOMAN (CONT'D)

Weather's been pretty fair a-late, but don't ye worry - storm's a-comin'.

CALLUM

(narrating from police station)

(MORE)

CALLUM (CONT'D)

Monroe and I decided to return to the site of the summer tragedy. Mrs. Munnee escorted us to the ruins of the village. We hoped to see if anything suggested the specter had somehow been drawn up from below the earth.

RAIN SPATTERS DOWN as they TRUDGE their way through the remains of Maple Cone.

MAMA MUNNEE

Wind's a pickin' up. Reckon we should head back.

MONROE

Callum. Look here - it's a sort of sink hole. It's possible there was some kind of tunnel here and the earth gave way.

CALLUM

A tunnel? Could that mean--

Not-so distant THUNDER RUMBLES. WIND BLOWS HARD through the trees and the RAIN INCREASES.

MAMA MUNNEE

We's in fer a squall. Best take shelter up yonder.

BOOM! A nearby lightning bolt strikes.

CALLUM

(narrating)

Knowing the village itself was destroyed in a storm, we followed Mrs. Munnee and took refuge in a shack that was still standing.

The STORM RAGES AND POUNDS against the hovel. WIND and SCARY NOISES abound.

MAMA MUNNEE

Best we just wait it out.

MONROE

Wait, do you hear that?

MAMA MUNNEE

It's the wind.

MONROE

Are you sure? It's kind of a groan...

MAMA MUNNEE

Wind'll make some queer sounds up this way.

CALLUM

(narrating)

Arthur went to the window and opened the shutter just enough to peek out into the storm. The resourceful Mrs. Munnee managed to light a fire in an old stove fashioned from a steel drum.

MAMA MUNNEE

Now it's catching.

CALLUM

Oh, well done. Arthur, she's got a fire going. We can warm up a bit. Arthur? Arthur?

MAMA MUNNEE

Mister, come warm yerself.

CALLUM

(narrating)

As he didn't respond, I moved to him and pulled him away from the window.

MUSIC HIT! Mama Munnee and Callum SHRIEK in fright.

24

SECOND INTERROGATION - PART 2

24

CALLUM

I felt the strangling tendrils of a cancerous horror, detective.

CROFT

Speak English, Callum.

CALLUM

Arthur Munroe was dead. And on what remained of his chewed and gouged head there was no longer a face.

DUCLAIR
 (disbelieving)
 And this happened right in front of
 you.

CALLUM
 (quite manic)
 Something moving about outside in
 the storm. It was Jan Martense -
 his ghost or specter or what have
 you. Drawn out of the earth by the
 storm just like the old woman said.

CROFT
 Right.

CALLUM
 As soon as the storm subsided, I
 left Mrs. Munnee behind and went
 there to see for myself!

DUCLAIR
 Went where?

CALLUM
 Tempest Mountain.

CROFT
 Oh, for the love of Mike...

CALLUM
 There was no time to waste. Arthur
 was dead but I was closing in on
 this apparition which had left a
 trail of bodies in its wake.

CROFT
 (sotto voce to Duclair)
 Lock the door.
 (to Callum)
 So you went back to the Martense
 place?

CALLUM
 Yes! Yes, to follow in the
 footsteps of Jonathan Gifford and
 personally exhume the grave of Jan
 Martense!

MUSIC INTENSIFIES.

We hear the sounds of Callum's endeavors as he narrates his
 experience.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

I was still soaked from the storm
and shivering with cold and fright,
but all the same I went to the
small burial plot behind the
Martense house.

CROFT

(humoring a lunatic)
Makes sense.

CALLUM

No, it sounds idiotic. I suppose it
was. I soon unearthed the coffin --
it wasn't buried deep. It held only
dust and nitre - so I kept digging.

CROFT

Why?

CALLUM

I don't know! I thought I might
exhume his ghost. I delved
irrationally and clumsily down
beneath where he had lain. God
knows what I expected to find--I
only felt that I was digging in the
grave of a man whose ghost stalked
by night.

CROFT

Let's settle down a bit now...

CALLUM

No, no! Don't you see, this is the
important part. As I dug, the
ground collapsed! It gave way
beneath me.

DUCLAIR

You fell into his grave?

CALLUM

No, not his grave. A tunnel. A man-
sized tunnel dug out of the earth.
A sort of burrow.

CROFT

(dripping disbelief)
Sure...

CALLUM

I wasn't thinking straight. I
wanted answers. I...

(MORE)

CALLUM (CONT'D)

wanted to avenge poor Arthur. I had a pocket torch - I lit it and descended into the earth. I rambled and writhed and scrambled through the darkness, god knows how far I went. Miles I'm sure.

DUCLAIR

Miles? Hmmm. You see anything down there?

CALLUM

No. Not for the longest time until at last the light from my torch caught a bit of something in the darkness ahead. The tunnel suddenly inclined upward, and I realized I was near the surface again, somewhere. And as I raised my glance it was without preparation that I saw glistening in the distance two demonic reflections of my expiring lamp; I could see two reflections with a baneful glow. I stopped automatically, though lacked the brain to retreat.

DUCLAIR

Eyes? Like some kind of animal?

CALLUM

They stared at me with vacuous viciousness. I was frozen in terror. Whatever it was was approaching me. It was a creature of some kind - with claws...

CROFT

All right, all right. You made it out of there.

We hear a bizarre kind of CRACKLING THUD, followed by a MONSTROUS SQUEAL. RAIN.

CALLUM

There was a sound and my hair stood on end. The thing fled and there was a metallic smell. And then light above me. It was storming again and a lightning bolt had hit the earth. The cave-in allowed me to scramble to the surface. I found myself in the woods on the southwest slope.

CROFT
And this "monster" got away?

CALLUM
I assume the lightning spooked it
or... it did something. I don't
really know. But I was relieved to
emerge from that stygian passage.

CROFT
I'm sure.

CALLUM
I came here as quickly as I could.

CROFT
Why's that? To confess to the
murder of Arthur Monroe?

CALLUM
What? No! To get your help! There's
a monstrous thing out there...
people have died!

CROFT
Right.

DUCLAIR
Will you excuse us a minute?

The cops OPEN THE DOOR and STEP OUTSIDE into the hall.

CROFT
So, clearly he's a lunatic.

DUCLAIR
No argument there. No judge would
admit that statement. But I think
he's on to something. And it seems
Callum was the last one to see
Bennett, Tobey and now Monroe.

CROFT
Yeah, still, I don't know that
we've got a case. We should get
Monroe's body to the Medical
Examiner.

DUCLAIR
Let's take Callum back to Maple
Cone and the Martense place. We
pick up evidence and see if he
incriminates himself.

CROFT

At the rate he's going, I don't
imagine that'll take too long.

MUSIC leads us back to Maple Cone.

25

RETURN TO MAPLE CONE

25

Fade up on Mama Munnee showing them where Monroe died.

MAMA MUNNEE

Yup, I were making a fire about
here and that other fella looked
out the window for a spell. Mr.
Nick went to get him but he were
already dead.

CROFT

Great. Thanks a lot.
(quiet to Duclair)
She's corroborated everything he
said. That's a shock.

DUCLAIR

Yeah. And if it wasn't Callum, who
the hell killed Arthur Monroe?

MOSES MUNNEE

I seed the specter that night.

CROFT

What's that, Mr. Munnee?

MOSES MUNNEE

I seed him all clawed like climbing
down from a tree near sundown day
befor yestidy.

CALLUM

Sundown, the day before yesterday.
That's about when I saw the thing.
Before I came out of the tunnel!

DUCLAIR

The thing? Moses, you saw a
creature here?

MOSES MUNNEE

Yup. I come out a-lookin' fer Marj,
but it were stormin' so bad I
crawled unner the hog shed on
'tother side of the village. Foller
me, I'll show ye.

MUSIC. He leads them outside of the shack and across the ruins of Maple Cone.

MOSES MUNNEE (CONT'D)

See I were over here and that there's the tree where I seen the thing a climbin' down inta that there shack.

DUCLAIR

The burned one?

MOSES MUNNEE

'Tweren't burned 'til a set it alight.

DUCLAIR

So you burned this "creature".

MOSES MUNNEE

Yap. I herd it a hollerin'.

DUCLAIR

Do me a favor, wait here, would you? Come on, Croft.

MUSIC. FOOTSTEPS. WOOD BEING OVERTURNED.

CROFT

I don't see anything here. The old man was probably out of his mind on moonshine.

DUCLAIR

(shaken)

Wait, look at this.

SCRAPE OF WOOD. MUSIC HIT!

DUCLAIR (CONT'D)

Looks like a burned carcass alright.

CROFT

Son of a... It was big. As big as a-

CALLUM

Look at those hands, detective. Looks more like claws than fingers.

CROFT

What the hell?

DUCLAIR

Beats me.

CALLUM

Don't you see? If Moses saw this thing here, while at the same time I saw something in that tunnel...

CROFT

(not liking the
implication)

There could be more things like this.

CALLUM

Yes! Don't you see, that explains it! That's why I was left when Bennett and Tobey were taken. I thought it had passed me over, but they came one from each side! There's more than one!

DUCLAIR

Could be more tunnels too. Look down there, towards the valley. You see it?

CROFT

No. What are you...

DUCLAIR

Look at the contours on the ground. See 'em. There's ridges, they make a little bit of a shadow.

CROFT

Oh, yeah! I see what you mean. All twisty like tentacles.

DUCLAIR

What if those are made by burrows under the ground?

CALLUM

(mind snapping)

My God! Molehills... the damned place must be honeycombed...

DUCLAIR

Looks like they all lead back toward-

CROFT

The Martense place.

OMINOUS MUSICAL HIT and transition to...

26

THE MANSION

26

Inside the Martense mansion, BRISK FOOTSTEPS as Callum leads the cops upstairs.

CALLUM

(manic)

Here it is. This was the bedroom of Jan Martense. This is the room where I spent the night with Tobey and Bennett. See, the bed's still there where we pushed it into the corner.

DUCLAIR

It's a hell of a big fireplace. It's not impossible that somebody could shimmy up it. Or down...

CROFT

Yeah. So how about you show us this tunnel, out by the grave.

CALLUM

Yes, yes, follow me!

MUSIC. THUNDER RUMBLES and WIND BLOWS.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

See? This is Jan's grave. This is where he was interred after his murder.

CROFT

I thought you said you dug a tunnel here.

CALLUM

I did!

CROFT

Doesn't look like it.

CALLUM

No, it was here. The passage must have caved in. It was right here and then the burrow, it extended off to the northeast.

DISTANT THUNDER.

CROFT

We should get outta here before the weather gets any worse.

CALLUM

The cellar! Martense built a large cellar for protection from the storms. If there's another entrance to the tunnels, I'd wager it would be from the cellar.

Transition MUSIC.

27

THE CELLAR

27

Their footsteps ECHO as they enter the expansive cellar.

CROFT

Sheesh... this is some cellar.

CALLUM

This way. That column, that's the main chimney.

DUCLAIR

(hushed)

Croft, look at this. In the dirt.

CROFT

Footprints. What the hell made those?

DUCLAIR

And look... a tunnel's been dug into the ground here. Going down.

CALLUM

See? I told you there would be another entrance to the tunnels.

CROFT

More prints. I ain't going down there. Christ, this is nuts.

CALLUM

No, I say we call the specter forth. Get it to come to us.

DUCLAIR

I think specter's the wrong word. That burned body up in the village, that was no specter - it's some kind of animal.

(MORE)

DUCLAIR (CONT'D)

There could still be a couple of them. We should come back with some traps.

CALLUM

You have weapons, right? Let us call it forth and we'll see what emerges?

CROFT

What if we just stake out the entrance. We move across the cellar and wait and see if anything comes out.

CALLUM

(crazy and loud)

Jan Martense! Show yourself to us!

THUNDER! The storm's INTENSIFYING.

DUCLAIR

NO!

CROFT

Callum! Shut up!

CALLUM

I know of your unjust murder at the hands of your kin. We are here to set your soul to rest so that you may finally be at peace.

There's a faint SCURRYING sound and OMINOUS CHATTERING.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

Jan Martense!

More SCURRYING.

DUCLAIR

Callum, get away from the tunnel!

The SCURRYING becomes a ROAR as a multitude of nightmarish beasts stream out of the opening, grabbing Callum in their monstrous claws. He SCREAMS piteously. Croft screams too. GUNFIRE! Thunder! MUSICAL CLIMAX. Mad SHOUTING that crossfades to...

CAPTAIN MURRAY

I read your final report, Duclair.
I can see I chose the right man for
the job.

DUCLAIR

Thank you, sir.

CAPTAIN MURRAY

Any trouble with the dynamite?

DUCLAIR

No sir, I learned how to set a
charge in Flanders. There's not a
trace of the Martense mansion left.
And Tempest Mountain isn't much of
a mountain anymore.

CAPTAIN MURRAY

Well done. Pity about Croft.

DUCLAIR

Yes, sir.

CAPTAIN MURRAY

(feeling him out)

I was just over to see him. It's
funny, he said it wasn't a den of
wolves.

DUCLAIR

No?

CAPTAIN MURRAY

No. He said they were more like
apes. Deformed hairy devils, he
said.

DUCLAIR

Did he? What else did he tell you,
sir?

CAPTAIN MURRAY

I'm sorry?

DUCLAIR

Did he mention how many there were?

CAPTAIN MURRAY

He said there were hundreds.

DUCLAIR

Did he tell you how they tore
Callum to ribbons?

(MORE)

DUCLAIR (CONT'D)

How they ate him while he was still screaming? How they attacked each other? Did he tell you how one of the last stragglers to emerge from that hellish pit turned and ate one of the others?

CAPTAIN MURRAY

Trooper...

DUCLAIR

How others snapped up what it left and ate with slavering relish?

CAPTAIN MURRAY

Duclair, maybe you--

DUCLAIR

Did he tell you they were the very embodiment of all the snarling chaos and grinning fear that lurk behind life?

Brief pause.

CAPTAIN MURRAY

He told me about their eyes. They all had the same eyes: one blue, the other brown.

DUCLAIR

Yes. Well, that's why he's in the insane asylum now.

(pause)

It was a den of wolves.

CAPTAIN MURRAY

As, uh, stated in your report. I'll sign off on it.

DUCLAIR

Thank you, sir.

CAPTAIN MURRAY

You look tired, Duclair. Get some sleep.

DUCLAIR

I'll try, sir. I'll try.

MUSIC FINALE.

LESTER MAYHEW

You have been listening to "The Lurking Fear", brought to you by our sponsor, Beemis Brothers Rifles, the fun family firearm that makes pest control a delight for you, your wife and kids!

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

ANNOUNCER

"The Lurking Fear" was adapted for radio and produced by Sean Branney and Andrew Leman. Based on the story by H.P. Lovecraft. Original music by Troy Sterling Nies. The Dark Adventure Ensemble featured: Sean Branney, Kacey Camp, Ken Clement, Will Chris, Michael Feldman, Matt Foyer, Andrew Leman, Jacob Lyle, Johnny McKenna, Kevin Stidham, and Sara van der Pol. Tune in next week for "The Absent-Minded Cannibal", a thrilling tale of accidental adventures in the Amazon.

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Radio STATIC and fade out.