

DARK ADVENTURE RADIO THEATRE

"THE HAUNTER OF THE DARK"

Written by

Stephen Woodworth

And

Sean Branney & Andrew Leman

Adapted from "The Hunter of the Dark"

By H.P. Lovecraft

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INTRODUCTION

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, Creighton Cobb. Today's episode: H.P. Lovecraft's "The Hunter of the Dark".

THEME MUSIC DIMINISHES AND EPISODE MUSIC BEGINS.

CREIGHTON COBB

For decades, an old Providence church has stood empty, silently looming in the city's skyline. As a young writer looks into the history of the abandoned church – and the cult that once resided there – an ancient horror stirs. Will he be able finally to solve a mystery shrouded in darkness, or has he merely paved the way to become its next victim?

MUSIC punctuation.

CREIGHTON COBB (CONT'D)

But first, a word from our sponsor.

A few piano notes from the BILE BEAN JINGLE.

CREIGHTON COBB (CONT'D)

Friends sometimes ask me why I am always sure to take Bile Beans before I go to bed. But the answer is so simple! Bile Beans at bedtime keep me healthy, bright-eyed and slim. Is it really possible to enjoy improved health just by ingesting Bile Beans daily? It is!

(MORE)

CREIGHTON COBB (CONT'D)

A secret vegetable ingredient learned from genuine Australian Aborigines give Bile Beans power to steady frayed nerves, disperse unwanted fat and purify and enrich the blood. I never skip a dose of these invigorating bedtime supplements - in fact, sometimes I'll take an extra Bile Bean before breakfast.

ANNOUNCER

All the best pharmacies stock Bile Beans - ask your druggist for them today!

CREIGHTON COBB

Stay healthy, bright eyed and slim with Bile Beans.

MUSIC TRANSITION.

CREIGHTON COBB (CONT'D)

And now, Dark Adventure Radio Theatre presents H.P. Lovecraft's "The Haunter of the Dark".

Lead in MUSIC sets an ominous tone.

CREIGHTON COBB (CONT'D)

Aspiring writer Robert Blake left his home in the middle west for a journey to Providence, Rhode Island to meet his literary idol, Philip Raymond. The master of weird fiction offered to tutor Blake in the art of crafting strange tales. The young man's journey concluded as he approached the home of his mentor...

THE FIRE

AN OLD-FASHIONED FIRE ENGINE roars past, its bell CLANGING, until it SCREECHES to a stop. The shouting of a FIREMAN in the background.

BLAKE

Good Lord! What's going on?

The CRACKLE OF FLAMES can be heard along with the FRANTIC ACTIVITY of the fire brigade. A FIREMAN holds back the crowd of MURMURING SPECTATORS.

FIREMAN

All right, people! Let's move along now. Stand back! Bring in that ladder! Monahan, could you move these people back?

OFFICER MONAHAN

You got it, Artie!
(to Blake)
Here now, young fellow! Where do you think you're going? Step back.

BLAKE

Officer, is that Number 10, Barnes Street?

OFFICER MONAHAN

Ah, it was.

BLAKE

But... I was supposed to stay there!

OFFICER MONAHAN

Then consider yourself lucky you didn't.

BLAKE

But what about the man who lived there? Philip Raymond! Is he all right?

OFFICER MONAHAN

You knew the occupant?

BLAKE

Yes, he's famous! I came to Providence to meet him!

OFFICER MONAHAN

Well I'm sorry to tell you, lad, but he didn't get out.

The GUSHING OF WATER.

BLAKE

What? No!

FIREMAN

Keep that water pumping, boys!

BLAKE

My god! How did it happen?

OFFICER MONAHAN

We don't--

The AMBULANCE SIREN starts up in the background.

OFFICER MONAHAN (CONT'D)

Look, I'm sorry about your friend,
but you'll have to step back.

The urbane voice of CLARK GAMWELL cuts in.

GAMWELL

It's all right officer, I've got
him.

FIREMAN

(shouting off)
Make way for that ambulance!

The AMBULANCE starts to move away and the fire HUBBUB dies
down a bit.

OFFICER MONAHAN

Across the street now, lads. Both
of you.

GAMWELL

Here, buddy, come with me. My
name's Gamwell. Clark Gamwell.

BLAKE

(stunned)
I'm... I'm Robert Blake.

GAMWELL

Glad to meet you. Here, those
suitcases look heavy. Give me that
valise. So, you knew Mr. Raymond?

BLAKE

We corresponded, and I was supposed
to stay here with him for some
weeks. We were... I can't believe
he's gone!

GAMWELL

Neither can I. I knew Raymond too.
Listen, I've got some rooms over on
College Street. Right behind the
Hay Library. I could let you sleep
on the couch if you need a roof
over your head.

BLAKE
No, I couldn't...

OFFICER MONAHAN
(off)
Nothing to see here! Move along!

GAMWELL
Sure you could. Anyway, we can't stay here.

Begin MUSIC TRANSITION.

BLAKE
That's very kind. What'd you say your name was?

GAMWELL
Clark Gamwell. Come on, it's this way.

GAMWELL'S APARTMENT

We hear the MUFFLED VOICES of Gamwell and Blake through the door as Gamwell OPENS it.

GAMWELL
...so you're a writer! Anything I might have read?

BLAKE
Nothing impressive - I had one published in *Astonishing Tales* last year.

GAMWELL
Oh that's a good one. Did some illustrations for them. But they take forever to pay.

He SHUTS the door. The THUMP of suitcases.

GAMWELL (CONT'D)
As you can see, I live the life of the true artist: furnished in Early Poverty. But the davenport is comfortable enough.

BLAKE
Definitely better than the park bench I'd end up on otherwise. I don't know how to thank you for taking me in.

GAMWELL

Least I could do for a fellow friend of the late, lamented Philip Raymond. Let's toast the poor devil. Brandy?

BLAKE

(hesitant)

Oh... I don't usually....

GAMWELL

No worries. I'll have yours, then.

We hear the CLINK of glass and decanter.

GAMWELL (CONT'D)

To the life of Philip Raymond. And to the death of Prohibition! May it rot in its grave.

BLAKE

These paintings! Your work?

GAMWELL

Yes, just a few things I've been working on. This room has wonderful light through that window.

BLAKE

They're amazing. Like landscapes of another world.

The SNAP of a cigarette case.

GAMWELL

Cigarette? They're Fleurs de Lys.

BLAKE

Uh...no, thank you.

GAMWELL

(putting a cigarette in his mouth)

Hmph! We really must find you a vice, Blake. Every man needs at least one.

He FLICKS his Zippo lighter, takes a LONG DRAW, and EXHALES.

GAMWELL (CONT'D)

So why'd you come to see Raymond?

BLAKE

I was supposed to help him with his research for a story, and I hoped to learn from him. As things stand, I won't even make train fare back to Wisconsin. I'm not sure what to do. How about you? If you don't mind my asking...

GAMWELL

Oh, you know Raymond, always into the outré. He'd seen some of my magazine drawings and contacted me about illustrating a new book he was working on. He claimed *this* horror story was supposedly true.

BLAKE

Yes, yes! He said the same thing to me! He said he'd uncovered a shocking chapter of local history. Did he tell you anything about it?

GAMWELL

No. You?

BLAKE

Only that it centered around an old, abandoned church someplace called Federal Hill.

GAMWELL

Really? Well I don't know about the church, but if you want a look at Federal Hill, see here.

FOOTSTEPS as Gamwell crosses the room, then the CLATTER of a CURTAIN BEING DRAWN.

MUSICAL PUNCTUATION AND BED.

CREIGHTON COBB

Gamwell drew the curtain of his westward window to reveal a splendid view of the lower town's outspread roofs and of the mystical sunset that flamed behind them.

(MORE)

CREIGHTON COBB (CONT'D)

Against the purple slopes of the distant countryside, some two miles away, rose the spectral hump of Federal Hill, bristling with huddled roofs and steeples whose remote outlines wavered mysteriously, taking fantastic forms as the smoke of the city swirled up and enmeshed them.

BLAKE

It's beautiful.

GAMWELL

And terrible. It used to be good old Yankees, then the Irish turned up. It's lousy with Italians now.

BLAKE

I feel as though I'm looking at a dream. Like it would vanish if I ever tried to go there.

GAMWELL

(chuckling)

Well, you sure talk like a writer. Here, you'll get a better look with my field glasses.

BLAKE

Thanks.

MUSICAL PUNCTUATION.

BLAKE (CONT'D)

Gamwell, that must be it. A great tower and tapering steeple, black against the sunset. Look!

GAMWELL

(scanning)

Yes. Hmmm. Cuts quite a figure. Looks like the kind of creepy old thing that would have floated Raymond's boat.

BLAKE

It makes me feel so.... What bizarre alien mysteries must be hidden there?

GAMWELL

(excited)

We should look into it.

(MORE)

GAMWELL (CONT'D)

Whatever story Raymond stumbled on is still out there. If we find it, we could do the book ourselves. You're words, I'm pictures.

BLAKE

(caught up in it all)
You...you really think so?

GAMWELL

Why not? Beats hitchhiking back to Milwaukee.

BLAKE

I'll say!

GAMWELL

Then it's a partnership! Cheers.

They CLINK glasses. Blake gasps as the brandy burns his throat.

BLAKE

(sputtering)
Oh my!

GAMWELL

(laughing)
Down the hatch! First thing tomorrow, we'll hit the morgue.

BLAKE

M-morgue?

GAMWELL

(chuckling)
At the *Providence Telegram*. No dead bodies, I promise!

MUSIC transition.

PROVIDENCE TELEGRAM NEWSPAPER MORGUE

The SHUFFLING OF PAPERS and the SCUFFING OF FEET as the septuagenarian clerk LANIGAN MARKHAM, moves about the office. A DOOR opens and closes.

GAMWELL

Excuse me. Is this the morgue?

END MUSIC TRANSITION. Markham does not answer.

BLAKE

Excuse us! Ma'am?

MARKHAM

(raspy and curt)

Miss.

BLAKE

Oh, *Miss.* I beg your pardon. Miss Markham, isn't it? Lanigan Markham? The newspaper office upstairs told us we'd find you down here...

MARKHAM

What do you want?

GAMWELL

(dryly)

Someone else.

MARKHAM

What?

BLAKE

Er...my friend and I are researching a book about an abandoned church on Federal Hill, and we hoped you might--

MARKHAM

Why can't you people leave that horrible place alone?

GAMWELL

What people? Someone else came here for the same information?

MARKHAM

Months ago. Shifty character, you ask me. Beady eyes and a button-down collar.

GAMWELL

Give you his name, by any chance?

MARKHAM

Rayburn? Something like that.

GAMWELL

Can you show us which articles he looked at?

MARKHAM

Not worth my time, and not worth yours, if you're smart.

BLAKE

Well, can you tell us what the stories were about?

MARKHAM

The church. The riots. That cult. Same stuff they've been saying for years. Didn't do Rayburn no good, and it won't do you none either.

GAMWELL

We'll be the judge of that. Show us your files!

BLAKE

(sweetly)

Please...Miss Markham. We just want the truth.

MARKHAM

Humph! Very well. But don't expect me to lift a finger to help you. And you'd best put every scrap of paper right back where you found it, because I ain't cleaning up after you! This way.

GAMWELL

(quietly to Blake)

What is her problem?

Begin MUSIC TRANSITION. FOOTSTEPS as she leads them into the filing room...

CREIGHTON COBB

After consulting a well-thumbed card catalog, Blake and Gamwell pored over old scrapbooks filled with crumbling news clippings from decades gone by....

BLAKE

Gamwell, look here. Forty years ago there were riots over that church.

A HEAVY BOOK SLIDES along a table.

GAMWELL

(reads)

"Cult Church Spared Demolition--
Catholic Immigrants Riot in
Protest." Typical I-talians!
Anarchists and gangsters. Wouldn't
be surprised if Sacco and Vanzetti
were in the crowd.

BLAKE

Well...not back in '93. Hm, it says
they drove out this religious sect
that had been occupying the
sanctuary - the Church of Starry
Wisdom. Even though the cult
evidently disbanded, the Italians
said the sect had "defiled" the
property with their blasphemous
rites.

GAMWELL

Superstitious foreigners...

BLAKE

(enthused)

This has got to be what Mr. Raymond
wanted to write about.

GAMWELL

Well, Markham looks like she's old
as sin - probably witnessed the
whole thing. I wonder if the fellow
who wrote this article is still
around, too. What's his name?

BLAKE

Uh...Lillibridge. Edwin M.
Lillibridge.

GAMWELL

See if the crone knows him.

BLAKE

I'm not--

GAMWELL

Go on, she likes you better.

The SCRAPE OF A CHAIR and FOOTSTEPS.

BLAKE

Pardon me! Miss Markham?

MARKHAM

Yes! What do you want?

BLAKE

Do you know a *Telegram* reporter by the name of Lillibridge?

MARKHAM

(very surprised)

What? Why?

BLAKE

He seems to have written a lot about the church.

MARKHAM

(her tone softens)

Of course. Ed was... a good man, but always stirring up trouble. Reporters...

GAMWELL

Do you know where we might find him?

MARKHAM

(a painful, unspoken tale)

No. He... left. A long time ago.

GAMWELL

1893, by any chance?

MARKHAM

You don't know the first thing about it. A couple of jackanapes. People died at that church, you know.

GAMWELL

(disbelieving her)

Did they? Who?

MARKHAM

My brother, for one! A lot of people were caught up in that--

BLAKE

What?

MARKHAM

Never you mind! Let them rest in peace!

BLAKE

Please, Miss Markham. We're sorry, but do you know what happened to Mr. Lillibridge? Where he might have--

MARKHAM

I said no! It's time for you two to leave.

BLAKE

Here, let me put away these scrapbooks--

MARKHAM

Never mind! I'll do it. Just get out!

MUSICAL STING AND TRANSITION.

CREIGHTON COBB

With their curiosity about the church thoroughly whetted, Blake and Gamwell took their inquiry to the city's hall of records....

HALL OF RECORDS

Voices ECHO in the cavernous marble space. HEATH MCKERROW is a 35 year old persnickety civil servant.

MCKERROW

...if it were up to me, the city would just tear it down, but I'm just a lowly paper pusher and the last thing my superiors want is my opinion. They don't even like to talk about that church. I could get into trouble just for letting you look at these records... here you go, knock yourselves out.

GAMWELL

Thanks, buddy.

BLAKE

Wait, am I understanding this right? The church is owned by a trust of some kind?

MCKERROW

Exactly. They've saved it from the wrecking ball. Don't ask me why.

BLAKE

And who's this "Hillyard and Herald" mentioned here?

MCKERROW

That's the law firm that manages the trust. Robert Herald has been a high-priced lawyer in this city for years. I think he's retired now, but he still oversees the trust personally.

GAMWELL

Maybe he's the man we should be talking to.

MCKERROW

(shuddering)

Lawyers. Good luck. If you want my advice you'll just leave it alone. Everyone else does.

GAMWELL

But why?

MCKERROW

(hushed)

If you believe the Catholics, it's evil. Downright Satanic.

GAMWELL

I know what you mean. I was raised Catholic myself. I got over it.

MCKERROW

Ha. To be fair, nobody who was here back in those days has anything good to say about the group that was in there.

BLAKE

You mean the Starry Wisdom?

MCKERROW

Right, that's them. When my father was a boy, everybody was terrified of them. Some outlaw cult doing black magic. Led by a man named Enoch Bowen.

BLAKE

Enoch Bowen?

GAMWELL
 (less impressed)
 What happened to this terrible
 sect?

MCKERROW
 Townsfolk ran 'em off. Decades ago.
 At least that's what they say.

GAMWELL
 I'll bet this lawyer, Herald, knows
 all about it.

BEGIN MUSIC TRANSITION.

MCKERROW
 If anyone does, it would be him.

DISTANT FOOTSTEPS and VOICES approach. The HURRIED SHUFFLING
 OF PAPERS as McKerrrow takes back the records.

MCKERROW (CONT'D)
 (changing his tune)
 I told you, we don't have any
 information about the place.

BLAKE
 What?

GAMWELL
 (picking up the clue)
 Can't blame us for asking.

BLAKE
 Thanks for your help, Mr. McKerrrow.

MCKERROW
 Don't thank me. I've done nothing
 to help you.

MUSICAL PUNCTUATION.

CREIGHTON COBB
 A campaign of calls, letters and
 telegrams to Mr. Herald eventually
 won a response. The aging lawyer
 finally agreed to see Blake and
 Gamwell in his elegant home in the
 Blackstone neighborhood.

THE HOME OF RANDALL HERALD

A Victrola plays CLASSICAL MUSIC in the background.

Herald is in his 70s, with a New England dialect.

HERALD

(terse)

Now look, if you're here to argue about proprietorship, I'm afraid you're wasting your time. Mr. Bowen purchased the church from the diocese quite legally, and the conservatorship is airtight. In *perpetuity*.

(chuckles)

I made sure of that.

BLAKE

Mr. Herald, we don't dispute the Trust's ownership. All we want to know is more about Enoch Bowen and the Church of Starry Wisdom.

HERALD

Hmm, no one's ever asked me for that before. Well, Bowen was...

(grasping for adequate words)

a fascinating man.

GAMWELL

How so?

HERALD

A bit, er, *eccentric*, as you might imagine, but absolutely fascinating. Blind, you know - always wore dark glasses.

GAMWELL

How did Bowen come to *buy* the church? I thought Catholics would die before they'd hand over one of their holy places to a bunch of heathens.

HERALD

Ha! I like you. But even the Papists have to bend the knee to economic reality. The church was originally consecrated as Our Lady of Consolation in 1816, replacing a wood-frame chapel that was ruined in the Great Gale of 1815.

(MORE)

HERALD (CONT'D)

At that time, most of the Catholics in Providence were French-Canadian, but after the Civil War, the Canucks all drifted over to the parish in Woonsocket. With no tithes to fill its collection plates, Our Lady of Consolation became a liability to the diocese and they had to cut their losses.

BLAKE

But then came the Italians.

HERALD

Lord, yes! Federal Hill is overrun with them these days.

BLAKE

And they want the church back. We read they rioted in 1893.

HERALD

Oh no, they didn't want it *back*, they wanted it destroyed! They couldn't abide Bowen and his followers "tainting" their tabernacle. But I shut them up! We can't have a bunch of foreigners coming over here and telling us how and where we can worship. That's why there's a First Amendment! Never forget, young man, that Providence was founded as a haven for religious freedom.

GAMWELL

And what did you think of Starry Wisdom? Was it really demon worship?

HERALD

Pah! Superstitious nonsense. All of it.

BLAKE

So what *did* Bowen preach?

Herald hesitates.

HERALD

Well... you have to understand, Spiritualism was all the rage at the time. Seances, Table-rapping and all that rot.

(MORE)

HERALD (CONT'D)
 Starry Wisdom's beliefs were
unconventional, I suppose, but no
 more so than many sects.

GAMWELL
 (treading lightly)
 Beliefs? Were you a member?

Herald becomes disconcerted as he remembers.

HERALD
 I never really attended any of
 their rites myself, of course. The
 few times I listened to Bowen, he
 spoke in riddles and paradoxes.
 "Light is darkness, darkness is
 light." That kind of thing. Heh-
 heh! I couldn't make heads or tails
 of it myself. But that was none of
 my concern anyway. The Constitution
 says people can believe whatever
 they want, so I defended his
 rights.

BLAKE
 What happened to Bowen and his
 followers?

MUSICAL PUNCTUATION begins OMINOUS TRANSITION.

HERALD
 (after a pause)
 If I knew, young Mr. Blake, I
 wouldn't tell you. An attorney must
 jealously preserve the
 confidentiality of his clients.

BLAKE
 Well, newspaper reports said that
 they were despised. They were run
 out of town.

HERALD
 Do you believe everything you read
 in the papers, lad?

GAMWELL
 If they had so much trouble here
 with that church, why didn't he
 just move his congregation
 somewhere else?

HERALD

(pensive)

Well I can tell you this much, I posed the same question to Enoch Bowen.

BLAKE

And?

HERALD

His answer was cryptic as always. He said, "There are some things that can't be moved."

Foreboding transition MUSIC swells.

CREIGHTON COBB

Blake and Gamwell tried to make sense of the rumors, evasions and half-answers they'd found. A sense of unease and restlessness gripped them and stalled the progress of their planned novel. Many a spring afternoon would find either or both of them gazing out Gamwell's westward window at the distant hill and the black, frowning steeple shunned by the birds. As spring wore on, Gamwell decided the time had come for more field research. Blake followed him through the downtown streets and the bleak, decayed squares beyond, and they came finally upon the ascending avenue of century-worn steps and bleak-paned windows which led to the dim streets near the ancient church.

FEDERAL HILL

TRANSITION MUSIC crossfades into LIGHT STREET NOISE, with a few CHILDREN PLAYING and ADULTS SPEAKING ITALIAN.

GAMWELL

Damn it, another wrong turn! I could have sworn it would be up this alley.

BLAKE

I swear it's like the neighborhood is shifting around us. Let's ask that shopkeeper.

GAMWELL

Good luck.

FOOTSTEPS as the boys approach a man SWEEPING HIS DOORSTEP.

BLAKE

Excuse me, sir? We're looking for
the old church. Can you tell us
which way?

GUIDO

(friendly)
Scusa?

BLAKE

The great big stone church? With
the tall tower?

GUIDO

Scusa. Non capisco. No English.

GAMWELL

He probably wants you to buy
something....

BLAKE

(louder)
The church! Of the Starry Wisdom?

GUIDO

(frightened)
Gesù Cristo. Non so nulla.

BLAKE

Please, can you--

GUIDO

Dimenticalo! Il sole sta regolando!

BLAKE

I don't--

GUIDO

No! No! The sun goes down! Go home!

The DOOR OF THE SHOP SLAMS SHUT, with the BELL RINGING
INSIDE.

GAMWELL

Come on, Blake. Let's try up this
way.

MUSICAL PUNCTUATION and BED.

CREIGHTON COBB

As Blake and Gamwell climbed higher, suddenly a black spire stood out against the early evening sky on their left. They plunged toward it through the squalid, unpaved lanes that climbed from the avenue. Twice more they lost their way, but somehow dared not ask any of the patriarchs or housewives who sat on their doorsteps, or any of the children who shouted and played in the mud of the shadowy lanes.

Presently they stood in a windswept open square, quaintly cobblestoned, with a high bank wall on the farther side. There, upon the wide, iron-railed, weed-grown plateau which the wall supported – a separate, lesser world raised fully six feet above the surrounding streets – there stood a grim, titan bulk whose identity was beyond dispute.

OUTSIDE THE CHURCH OF STARRY WISDOM

LIGHT WIND. DISTANT STREET SOUNDS, including PLAYING CHILDREN. ITALIAN MUMBLING.

GAMWELL

It's practically falling apart.

BLAKE

Look there, those stone buttresses fallen into the weeds. Or maybe... are those old headstones? It's a graveyard.

GAMWELL

I'm amazed the windows still have glass. You'd think these immigrant hooligans would have broken them all by now.

An INDISTINCT MUTTERING (Bardazzi) and a HEAVY, DRAGGING GAIT grows louder and nearer.

CREIGHTON COBB

As Blake and Gamwell beheld the decrepit and tightly closed building, a disheveled elderly man emerged from around the corner of the stone wall and hobbled toward them.

GAMWELL

Talk about falling apart, look here at this old wreck...

As the man nears, his words become more distinct. In his 80s, he speaks with feverish rapidity and an Italian accent.

BARDAZZI

In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti! Sub tuum praesidium confugimus, sancta Dei Genetrix; nostras deprecationes ne despicias in necessitatibus nostris, sed a periculis cunctis libera nos semper, Virgo gloriosa et benedicta...

Bardazzi's VOICE TRAILS OFF as he passes without acknowledging them.

GAMWELL

Disgusting! What do these people have against bathing? Here, c'mon.
(pause)
Blake. What's with you?

BLAKE

It's easy to see why that steeple would give people the creeps. I'm getting a chill just looking at it.

GAMWELL

Yeah, well you'd better pull yourself together.

BLAKE

Why?

GAMWELL

We're going in.

BLAKE

What?

GAMWELL

We've come this far. Time to go in.

BLAKE

In the church? Are you mad?

GAMWELL

There are some missing bars on the fence over there. We can squeeze through.

BLAKE

But the neighbors! We'll be spotted!

GAMWELL

The locals hate this place, they won't care.

BLAKE

What about Mr. Herald...shouldn't we--

GAMWELL

Better to beg forgiveness than ask permission, I always say. You know you want to. Here, I'll give you a leg up on this foundation wall.

MUSIC BED BEGINS. Gamwell GRUNTS and Blake STRAINS and eventually hefts himself on top of the low wall.

BLAKE

Thanks! Now, take my hand.

More STRAINING as Blake helps pull Gamwell after him.

ITALIAN WOMAN

(shouting in distance)

Bambini! Vieni dentro!

The DISTANT HAPPY SHOUTING of Italian children playing stops suddenly and turns to distant CRIES OF COMPLAINT.

ITALIAN WOMAN (CONT'D)

Immediamente! Presto! Presto!

FOOTSTEPS in the street as the woman takes the children indoors. WINDOWS AND DOORS SLAM SHUT in the neighborhood.

GAMWELL

What did I tell you? They won't bother us. Come on, let's find a way in!

CREIGHTON COBB

The gap in the rusted fence was easy to pass through, and before long Blake and Gamwell began a circuit of the building in quest of some penetrable opening. A yawning and unprotected cellar window in the rear furnished the needed aperture....

THE CHURCH OF STARRY WISDOM

The acoustics are HOLLOW and ECHOING as Blake and Gamwell in turn DROP DOWN into the church's cellar. Shards of glass CRUNCH under their feet.

BLAKE

I can't believe we're doing this.

GAMWELL

Come now! Where's your sense of adventure? We must be the first ones inside this place in the twentieth century.

BLAKE

Maybe not. Look over there - the dust's been swept away.

GAMWELL

Hmm. A caretaker, perhaps? A lazy one - the place is still a mess.

BLAKE

No, it looks more like something was dragged across the floor.

GAMWELL

Must be clearing out some of the junk. Nothing much to see down here. C'mon, let's go upstairs.

MUSIC CONTINUES. Their FOOTSTEPS echo in the stairwell.

BLAKE

Do you notice anything... strange?

GAMWELL

Strange? Besides the fact we're in what appears to literally be a god forsaken church?

BLAKE

There's something off about this place, but I can't put my finger on it...

The ACOUSTICS CHANGE as they emerge into the open space of the church's sanctuary.

GAMWELL

I'd call *that* strange.

BLAKE

(gasping)

Is that an Egyptian...?

GAMWELL

It's a giant ankh. Where the crucifix ought to be. Small wonder the Catholics wanted to burn them at the stake.

BLAKE

And those hieroglyphs etched into the gold - they look different than the ones at the museum. What do you suppose they say?

GAMWELL

I'm afraid I left the Rosetta Stone in my other trousers.

BLAKE

If it wasn't so blasted dim in here, I'd copy them into my notebook.

GAMWELL

Here - I wanted an excuse for a smoke anyway.

He TAKES A CIGARETTE from his case, lights it with a FLICK of his Zippo, and PUFFS as he holds the flame up.

BLAKE

Remarkable! Hold it closer, will you?

Blake SCRIBBLES on his note pad until Gamwell's lighter CLICKS off. Gamwell SQUAWKS.

GAMWELL

Ouch! Sorry. This Zippo gets too hot to hold on to.

BLAKE

That's all right. I've got a bit of light through the windows now.

GAMWELL

Funny, from outside you can't tell they're stained glass. So dirty it's hard to tell what the designs are.

BLAKE

Some kind of saints?

GAMWELL

I've seen some scary saints, but these are something else....

He FLICKS the lighter again.

BLAKE

Say, what's that over there?

FOOTSTEPS.

GAMWELL

A little room, a library, by the looks of it. Shelves from floor to ceiling. Take a look - some of the books look ancient.

BLAKE

Here! Bring the flame closer.
The Pnakotic Fragments. De Vermis Mysteriis by Ludvig Prinn. *Liber Ivonis*. And the *Unaussprechlichen Kulten* of Von Junzt!

GAMWELL

Open that one. You'll probably find a picture of this place!

BLAKE

Good god, the Spanish version of the *Necronomicon* itself! Why, this rivals the Special Collection up at Miskatonic!

GAMWELL

No wonder Raymond wanted to write about Starry Wisdom. Given his obsession with forbidden knowledge, he probably wanted to join them.

BLAKE

Gamwell, look at this ledger. These are the same symbols that are etched on the ankh. If the hieroglyphs are a cipher, this might be the key. How's that for a Rosetta Stone?

Gamwell WINCES and the ZIPPO clicks off again.

GAMWELL

Then bring it with you. I've gotta conserve lighter fluid if we're going to see the rest of this place.

Their FOOTSTEPS ECHO as they cross the church.

GAMWELL (CONT'D)

It looks like whatever they dragged through the dust they took up this circular staircase over here.

BLAKE

Are you sure we should go up there?

GAMWELL

Why not? It's probably just an old belfry.

BLAKE

I don't know. Something's wrong...

GAMWELL

I swear, you're getting as jumpy as the Italians! Come on. We've been looking at this steeple from across town for months. We have to see what's inside.

MUSICAL PUNCTUATION. FOOTSTEPS ON CREAKING WOOD as they begin to climb.

CREIGHTON COBB

Their ascent was a choking experience, for dust lay thick, while the spiders had done their worst in this constricted place. The staircase was a spiral with high, narrow wooden treads, but it led to no bell tower.

(MORE)

CREIGHTON COBB (CONT'D)
 For when they reached the top of
 the stairs they found a dimly
 lighted chamber clearly devoted to
 a very different purpose....

MUSIC SWELL.

BLAKE
 My god. What is this place?

GAMWELL
 Must be some sort of ritual space.

BLAKE
 Is that some kind of altar?

GAMWELL
 That pillar? Maybe. It's got those
 symbols carved into it.

BLAKE
 Surrounded by chairs...

FOOTSTEPS as they go further in.

BLAKE (CONT'D)
 Gamwell, did you see these statues
 lining the walls?

GAMWELL
 Yeah. Seven. One behind each chair.

BLAKE
 What are they made of?

The sound of SCRAPING and CRUMBLING PIECES.

GAMWELL
 It's... plaster. Painted black.

BLAKE
 They look kind of like those heads
 from Easter Island.

GAMWELL
 Yes, and they're all staring at
 that thing sitting on top of the
 pillar.

BLAKE
 What is it? I think it's glowing.

GAMWELL

C'mon now... My god, I think it *is* glowing.

MUSICAL PUNCTUATION. FOOTSTEPS APPROACH.

CREIGHTON COBB

On the curiously angled pillar rested a small metal casket of peculiarly asymmetrical form; its hinged lid thrown back, and its interior holding what looked to be a dust-shrouded irregularly spherical object some four inches through. Blake lifted the box and tried to clear the dust away....

The sound of BLOWING and the FLAPPING OF A HANDKERCHIEF.

BLAKE

(coughing)

Gamwell, it's exquisite. Look at these bas-reliefs on the outside.

GAMWELL

Is that gold?

BLAKE

I think so. These figures! They're so life like...

GAMWELL

Not like any life I've ever seen. Is that some kind of crystal in the center?

BLAKE

Or some kind of faceted gemstone. Look how it's held suspended by these metal arms. It's the stone that's glowing.

GAMWELL

Yeah, I wouldn't touch it if I were you.

Blake becomes abstracted.

BLAKE

It's... beautiful.

A HIGH-PITCHED, WAVERING HUM, like the ringing of tinnitus, swells in volume.

Below that, barely intelligible, are the low bass intonations of CHANTING VOICES. The sounds are DISTANT, DREAM-LIKE.

CHANTING VOICES

Iä Azathoth! Kether-Ob cf'tagn!
N'gah K'thuun iä! Y'ai 'Ngah Yog
Sothoth! Iä Nyarlathotep!

BLAKE

Do... do you hear that?

GAMWELL

Hear what?

BLAKE

The voices.

GAMWELL

Voices?

BLAKE

The chanting...you *must* hear it!

GAMWELL

Blake, I don't hear a thing.

Gamwell FLICKS his Zippo again, SHUFFLING FEET as he looks around.

GAMWELL (CONT'D)

Wait a minute. What's that? Is that
a shoe over there?

FOOTSTEPS cross the room as Gamwell goes stereo left. Blake remains mesmerized by the crystal stereo right. The CHANTING VOICES rise in volume, and Blake begins to MUMBLE the chant in unison.

BLAKE

(softly)
Iä Azathoth...Iä Azathoth...

GAMWELL

Good God! Blake...

BLAKE

(not paying attention to
Gamwell)
Figures... not human...

GAMWELL

(not paying attention to
Blake)
It's a body!

BLAKE
Endless leagues of.... Towers....

GAMWELL
There's nothing left but bones and
a few shreds of suit. He must have
been here for decades!

BLAKE
Walls... under the sea...

GAMWELL
The bones look charred. Almost like
they've been... dissolved. What
happened to you?

BLAKE
Black... space.

Gamwell DIGS under the fragments of the tattered suit coat.

GAMWELL
A reporter's badge? Oh god, it's--

BLAKE
(increasingly panicked)
Infinite gulfs of... Something
within... A stirring...
Consciousness! And will!

GAMWELL
Blake... It's Lillibridge!

BLAKE
(louder)
Iä Azathoth! Iä Azathoth!

GAMWELL
(shouting)
Blake? Blake! Put it down!

FOOTSTEPS as Gamwell DARTS OVER to Blake and GRABS THE BOX.
The SNAP OF THE LID SHUTTING and the THUNK of it set down on
the pillar. Both voices now center. The chanting VOICES,
tinnitus HUM and MUSIC ABRUPTLY CEASE.

BLAKE
Gamwell, it... sees--

GAMWELL
Get a hold of yourself! That's
Lillibridge's body in the corner.
He must have--

A vague RUSTLING stirs in the steeple above them.

BLAKE

What is that?

GAMWELL

It's in the steeple above us. Maybe the rats finally woke up.

More CREEPY NOISES from above. They are NOT RATS.

GAMWELL (CONT'D)

(not at all sure)

Or maybe it's bats...

BLAKE

(increasingly coherent)

Lillibridge? My god, Gamwell, what happened here?

GAMWELL

Miss Markham was wrong. He didn't leave town. He's been right here the whole time! Look, I have his notebook.

BLAKE

But Gamwell, I felt it. A presence. Through the crystal.

GAMWELL

What do--

Something HUGE and HEAVY drops onto the floor above them.

BLAKE

Oh my god!

A RUSH OF AIR, as from an oncoming subway train, sweeps over them. A dull ROAR emanates from the stairwell leading up to the spire, and something THUDS and BUMPS.

GAMWELL

Okay, let's go.

MUSIC. URGENT FOOTSTEPS.

BLAKE

It's behind us!

The FLICK of Gamwell's Zippo. Another STRANGE NOISE.

GAMWELL

I can't see...

BLAKE
The darkness!

GAMWELL
Run!

CREIGHTON COBB
The two men stumbled down the circular staircase and retreated through the darkened church as quickly as they could.

They CRASH into some decaying pews.

GAMWELL
Aaah!

BLAKE
Don't stop! We've got to get out!

GAMWELL
It's pitch black in here! The sun's gone down!

Gamwell FLICKS the Zippo. Another STRANGE NOISE. Blake and Gamwell CHARGE down the cement stairs into the basement.

BLAKE
Can you see it? The dark!

GAMWELL
Come on, Blake! Downstairs!

Blake SPRINTS toward the window, while Gamwell lingers by the stairwell. He FLICKS his Zippo once, twice, thrice...with no luck.

BLAKE
It's coming!

GAMWELL
Damn it! It's running dry!

He FLICKS once more, CRYING OUT as the sudden flame burns his thumb. The lighter CLATTERS to the floor.

GAMWELL (CONT'D)
Aaaah! My lighter! Get out that window!

BLAKE
(straining)
I can't pull myself up!

GAMWELL
Move! I'll haul you up!

Gamwell CHARGES FORWARD, SCRABBLES up the wall and out the window...

BLAKE
It's coming for me!

'NEATH THE HALO OF A STREETLAMP

GAMWELL
Blake! Grab my hand!

A ROAR and RUSH OF AIR pour from the broken window as Gamwell tries to yank Blake to safety.

BLAKE
Aaah! I'm stuck!

Gamwell GRUNTS and TUGS harder, to no avail.

CREIGHTON COBB
Gamwell struggled to pull Blake through the narrow window, when suddenly a dirty, wizened hand reached down to help him. It was the strange elderly man they had seen earlier.

BARDAZZI
Give me your other hand! Quickly!
Now... pull!

Gamwell and Bardazzi STRAIN with their combined weight, and all three men let out a CRY OF RELIEF as Blake SLIPS FREE of the window. They SCRAMBLE to get to their feet. Another STRANGE NOISE from within the church.

BARDAZZI (CONT'D)
To the streetlamp! Run!

The three men LAND HARD on the pavement as they jump from the foundation wall onto the sidewalk below. They PANT with exertion. A GENTLE WIND blows. Maybe some CRICKETS.

BARDAZZI (CONT'D)
We should be safe here. The light will keep it away.

BLAKE

(winded)

I don't know who you are, but...
thank you! You're my savior.

BARDAZZI

You are not saved yet, my son. You
saw the darkness, yes?

GAMWELL

Look here, what do you mean...?

BLAKE

Yes. Yes, I saw it.

BARDAZZI

And did *it* see you?

A tense pause.

BLAKE

Yes. I think it did.

BARDAZZI

(whispers)

Jesu Christi!

GAMWELL

Listen, you! What are you talking
about? We gave ourselves a good
scare is all. It was--

Rather than answer, Bardazzi raises his voice in prayer.

BARDAZZI

*In nómine Pátris, et Fílii, et
Spirítus Sancti. Amen!*

BLAKE

Please, sir! Tell us. What was it?
What did you mean I'm not saved?

BARDAZZI

*Exsúrgat Deus et dissipéntur
inimíci ejus: et fúgiant qui
odérunt eum a fácie ejus!*

GAMWELL

Leave him, Blake! I've heard enough
prayers in my life. Besides, he's
obviously a looney.

As Blake and Gamwell HURRY AWAY, Bardazzi's voice rises to a
shout behind them. MUSIC TRANSITION.

BARDAZZI

(loud)

*Sicut déficit fumus defíciant;
sicut fluit cera a fácie ignis, sic
péreant peccatóres a fácie Dei!*

CREIGHTON COBB

Thoroughly rattled, the young men made their way back up College Hill to Gamwell's flat for a much needed recovery.

RECOVERY

The DOOR opens.

GAMWELL

Home at last! My friend, if you ever wanted to start drinking, now would be the time. Seriously, it might help.

BLAKE

No thanks. All I want to do is sleep, but I don't think I can.

Glass and decanter CLINK.

GAMWELL

And all I want to do is smoke. Damn lighter! Maybe I have some matches somewhere...

He SHUFFLES around.

BLAKE

(muttering)

The old man... he *knew*...

GAMWELL

Ah! Here we are.

He puts a cigarette in his mouth, STRIKES a match.

BLAKE

(muttering)

Not safe... The Haunter...

GAMWELL

What was that? Say, are you sure you're okay? Didn't hit your head or anything, did you?

BLAKE

No...I'm fine. Shaken up, is all.

Gamwell EXHALES smoke languidly.

GAMWELL

Don't let your imagination run away with you. You'll wind up as crazy as that old hobo.

BLAKE

But... those noises. There was something in that steeple. You heard it too!

GAMWELL

It was probably the wind shaking those decaying shutters. It's a creaky old building. We're lucky it didn't fall down on us.

BLAKE

But I saw--

GAMWELL

(a bit sharply)

Blake, monsters and spooks are for stories and paintings. Not real life. Philip Raymond knew that.

BLAKE

Hmmm, and then he started investigating this church.

GAMWELL

All right, let's keep investigating, and you'll see what I mean. You still have that ledger with those symbols?

BLAKE

(hesitant)

Yes.

GAMWELL

Give it here. I'd like to try to work it out. I think it'll be fun.

Some RUSTLING as Blake hands over one book and Gamwell produces another.

GAMWELL (CONT'D)

And for you, something a little
more mundane, to calm your nerves.
Lillibridge's notebook.

BLAKE

(remembering)

Oh god, Lillibridge! We've got to
tell the police about him.

GAMWELL

Well, he's been up there for over
forty years. He's not going
anywhere. Here.

The FLIPPING OF PAGES. The CLINKING OF GLASSWARE.

BLAKE

Poor devil.

(flipping through pages)

At least he was pretty organized.
Miss Markham was right, he was a
good reporter. Let's see here...
Hey, Gamwell listen to this:

(reading)

"Prof Enoch Bowen home from Egypt
May 1871 - buys old Lady of
Consolation Church in July - his
archaeological work & studies in
occult well known."

MORE FLIPPING PAGES.

BLAKE (CONT'D)

"1873 - three disappearances -
first mention of... Shining
Trapezohedron." That must be that
stone on their altar. Hmm. He says
there were unexplained
disappearances, and lurid rumors of
blood sacrifices pointed toward the
church for years, but nothing could
ever be proved.

GAMWELL

See? No proof. Just stories.

TRANSITION MUSIC BEGINS.

BLAKE

The size of his congregation grew,
and so did the rumors.

(MORE)

BLAKE (CONT'D)

Pressure mounted on local officials to take action against the Church of Starry Wisdom despite the lack of evidence against them. Then, look, in 1893 everything came to a head.

Sound of an ANGRY MOB OF YESTERYEAR begins to grow in the background.

BLAKE (CONT'D)

Lillibridge was there! Here, listen to this. "Italian neighbors confronted S. W. today in the street in front of the church. They shouted...."

CROSSFADE TO FLASHBACK.

FIGHTING IN THE STREETS - 1893

Decades earlier an ANGRY CROWD GRUMBLES outside the Church of Starry Wisdom.

ITALIAN MAN

Servants of Satan!

ITALIAN WOMAN

Baby killers!

The familiar accent of a YOUNG FATHER BARDAZZI rises above the rest.

YOUNG BARDAZZI

Accursed of God!

Cult member CLAYTON MUNN stands to denounce them.

MUNN

We are peaceful, law-abiding citizens exercising our right to worship as we choose! You're the ones invading our nation and trying to take over. May the Darkness take you all!

The Italians YELL louder than ever in response, and there's the SCUFFLE of men about to come to fisticuffs. POLICE CHIEF BENSON shouts at the crowd through a megaphone.

CHIEF BENSON

Order! Order! Pipe down, or it's the paddy wagon for the lot of you!

(MORE)

CHIEF BENSON (CONT'D)
 Mayor Doyle has an announcement,
 and you'd better listen if you know
 what's good for you! Mister Mayor?

MAYOR DOYLE nervously addresses the throng.

MAYOR DOYLE
 (clearing his throat)
 Thank you, Chief Benson. My fellow
 citizens of Providence--

MUNN
 They *aren't* citizens! WE are the
 citizens!

The Italians ROAR in response.

CHIEF BENSON
 Mr. Munn, please!
 (through megaphone)
 Enough! I'm warning you! Mr. Mayor -
 continue.

MAYOR DOYLE
 I... I understand that our fine
 Catholic community feels a special
 attachment to this church due to
 its past association with their
 faith--

YOUNG BARDAZZI
 They profane our sacred--

CHEERS of agreement from the Italians.

MAYOR DOYLE
 (raising his voice)
 --but...*but* Mr. Bowen and his
 followers purchased the property,
 fair and square, and they have
 every right to practice their
 religion as they see fit.

The Italians BOO and CATCALL. Cultists CHEER.

MAYOR DOYLE (CONT'D)
 Please! Please! Now, I've discussed
 your concerns with the local
 diocese, and am pleased to announce
 that we intend to help them
 establish a *brand new* church in
 another location! Bishop Matthew
 Harkins himself is here to tell you
 about it. Bishop Harkins?

BISHOP MATTHEW HARKINS joins the Mayor in trying to pacify the protestors.

BISHOP HARKINS

My brothers and sisters in Christ!
Let us not allow grievances of the
past to sow hatred and discord in
our fair city. What Mayor Doyle
told you is true: we shall soon
have a new house of God you can--

YOUNG BARDAZZI

This church has been blasphemed,
infested with evil spirits. It must
be torn down, and--

The Italians CHEER their approval.

BISHOP HARKINS

Father Bardazzi! No more! You've
been warned about inciting this
rabble. Please! Peace, my brothers
and sisters--

MUNN

If you want a Catholic church, go
back to Italy, you crazy wops!

The Italians ROAR and SURGE toward Munn.

ITALIAN GOON

Bastardo! I show you!

LILLIBRIDGE

(stepping in to protect
Munn)

Easy now, friends! Man's just
speaking his mind. It's a free
country, isn't it? Freedom of
speech, freedom of religion...
freedom of the press. So let's all
live and let live, okay?

CHIEF BENSON

Amen to that!

(through megaphone)

You heard what the man said. Now go
exercise your right to peaceably
assemble *somewhere else* - all of
you, or I'll acquaint you with the
business end of me nightstick! Move
along!

The Italians GRUMBLE but start to disperse.

MUNN

Whew! Think they would have turned me into Italian sausage. Thanks for stopping 'em, Mister...?

LILLIBRIDGE

Ed Lillibridge, Providence Telegram.

MUNN

Clayton Munn. Pleased to meet you.

LILLIBRIDGE

Likewise. I take it you're a member of the Church of the Starry Wisdom?

MUNN

And proud of it!

LILLIBRIDGE

It's pretty obvious what the Italians think of your church, but I think the public needs to hear both sides. Would you like to give me Starry Wisdom's point of view?

MUNN

Would I? You bet!

LILLIBRIDGE

Can I buy you a drink? Unless it's against your religion...

MUNN

Wouldn't belong to any religion that was against that!

They both laugh. MUSIC transition.

LILLIBRIDGE

Come on. To Donovan's Tavern!

DONOVAN'S TAVERN - 1893

The pub is filled with the LOW MURMUR of conversations and the CLINK of glasses.

LILLIBRIDGE

Barman! Two beers.

BARTENDER

Right away, sir.

LILLIBRIDGE

So pardon my ignorance, Mr. Munn,
but just what the hell *is* Starry
Wisdom?

MUNN

It's the great truth of the
universe. All this - everything you
see around you - all just
illusions. Dancing lights on the
cave wall.

LILLIBRIDGE

And what *is* real?

MUNN

The cave. The *dark*.

LILLIBRIDGE

That's what he teaches you. The guy
who owns the church...whatshisname.
Bowen?

MUNN

Master Bowen. The Dark Hierophant.

LILLIBRIDGE

Hmmm. And how did he find this
truth?

MUNN

He brought it back from Egypt. The
sacred object. The Shining--

BARTENDER

Gentlemen - your drinks.

GLASSES CLUNK and COINS SLAP on the bar.

LILLIBRIDGE

Keep the change.
(to Munn)
You were saying?

MUNN

I shouldn't... I mean I really
can't discuss it. Our faith has
certain... secrets.

LILLIBRIDGE

Those wouldn't include human
sacrifices, would they?

MUNN
 (taken aback)
 I beg your pardon?

LILLIBRIDGE
 No, of course. There's a girl who works at my paper, Lanigan Markham. Her brother joined your... group, and she hasn't heard from him since. She's worried. She's a nice girl, but she has some wild ideas.

MUNN
 Maybe he doesn't have anything to say.

LILLIBRIDGE
 (with humor)
 So I can let her know he wasn't some kind of sacrifice?

MUNN
 (chuckling)
 Every religion demands some form of sacrifice, Mr. Lillibridge. Cheers!

He SWIGS his beer.

LILLIBRIDGE
 You're lucky you all seem to have friends in high places at City Hall. The neighborhood's pretty upset. That bishop today could barely even control his own priest. Aren't you worried the Italians might take matters into their own hands?

MUNN
 It won't matter. Master Bowen foretold the time of our salvation is nigh. Besides, the Italians would certainly regret destroying that church.

LILLIBRIDGE
 Why is that?

MUNN
 You'll see. Someday.

LILLIBRIDGE
 Why not today?

MUNN

(after a pause, gravely)
There are lessons that, once
learned, cannot be forgotten. Are
you prepared for that, Mr.
Lillibridge?

LILLIBRIDGE

I'll take my chances.

MUNN

Very well. But I recommend that you
finish your drink before we go...

Ominous MUSIC transition.

THE CHURCH OF STARRY WISDOM - 1893

The massive wooden front door GROANS.

MUNN

Enter the Temple of Starry Wisdom.
You will not leave the same man.

Ed's leather-soled shoes create squeaky ECHOES as he walks
across the polished stone floor.

The DOOR CLOSES with a THUD of disconcerting finality.

LILLIBRIDGE

(a reverential whisper)
Jesus, Munn! Don't you people
believe in lamps or candles or
something? I can barely see my hand
in front of my face.

MUNN

Everyone walks in darkness, Mr.
Lillibridge. We in Starry Wisdom
merely choose to embrace that fact.
Come - the Dark Hierophant awaits
you.

As their FOOTSTEPS ECHO, a CHORUS OF MALE VOICES sings a
monkish, Gregorian-style chant whose HARMONIES RESOUND.

CHANTING VOICES

Iä Azathoth! Kether-Ob cf'tagn!
N'gah K'thuun iä! Y'ai 'Ngah Yog
Sothoth! Iä Nyarlathotep!

LILLIBRIDGE

That's some choir you've got here.

MUNN
Shhh. There he is.

FOOTSTEPS SCUFFLE TO A HALT.

LILLIBRIDGE
(whispers)
That's Enoch Bowen? In front of the altar?

MUNN
It is.

LILLIBRIDGE
Is he...asleep?

MUNN
No. His eyes have been sewn shut.

LILLIBRIDGE
What? Why?

ENOCH BOWEN himself replies. His resonant voice is warm, paternal, wry with amusement.

BOWEN
To improve my vision. Only those with sight are truly blind. Azathoth, dweller in eternal night, is blind, yet sees all. Please...come closer!

HESITANT FOOTSTEPS. The CHANTING CHOIR continues to sing softly in the background.

LILLIBRIDGE
Mr. Bowen. Ed Lillibridge, Providence Telegram.

BOWEN
(chuckles)
Young man, your identity has no meaning to me. We are all one, and all nothing.

LILLIBRIDGE
In that case... perhaps you wouldn't mind giving me a statement. What do you see - if you'll pardon the expression - for the future of your sect, given the community's opposition?

BOWEN

Our sect has no future. But neither does the community.

LILLIBRIDGE

Is that a threat?

BOWEN

Not at all. Simply a statement of fact. Even the Bible concedes the cosmos began with darkness, and it shall end the same way. So shall we all.

LILLIBRIDGE

And you... embrace that?

BOWEN

There is nothing better than oblivion, since in oblivion there is no wish unfulfilled. We had it before we were born, yet did not complain. Shall we whine because we know it will return? It is Elysium enough for me, at any rate.

LILLIBRIDGE

Then why go through all this? Why stir up all this trouble?

BOWEN

To prepare mankind for the inevitable. They should welcome, not fear, the darkness that will consume them. And you, Mr. Lillibridge, shall be my prophet!

LILLIBRIDGE

That's a bigger commitment than I came for...

BOWEN

And yet your role has been preordained. Your presence here ensures that the captive blackness will one day be freed to extinguish the duplicitous light from the universe. What a privilege you've been granted!

LILLIBRIDGE

Pardon me if I seem ungrateful.

The chanting voices abruptly STOP SINGING.

BOWEN

Alas! The hour grows late, and
you'd best be going.

LILLIBRIDGE

Just a few more questions...

There is a HEAVY THUD above them, and A STRANGE ROARING
WHOOSH.

LILLIBRIDGE (CONT'D)

What the hell was that?

BOWEN

(after a pause)

Do you know why churches have
steeples, Mr. Lillibridge?

LILLIBRIDGE

(uneasy)

Yes, so that the cross on top can
be seen for miles around. It's
advertising.

BOWEN

No. They're to remind us of the
primal urge, and bring us closer to
the infinite. They pierce the sky,
and let the divine come through.

LILLIBRIDGE

But what--

BOWEN

When you return, Mr. Lillibridge,
look to the steeple.

OMINOUS MUSIC transitions back to the present.

GAMWELL'S APARTMENT

BLAKE

Lillibridge never saw Enoch Bowen,
Clayton Munn, or any of the Starry
Wisdom cultists again. He says
maybe the Mayor pressured them to
leave, perhaps struck some kind of
back-room bargain to preserve the
church in the Bowen Trust in
exchange for their departure.

(MORE)

BLAKE (CONT'D)

Nobody at City Hall would confirm his theory, though, and gossip began circulating that some or all of the church members may have been the victims of foul play. They were all gone.

GAMWELL

The whole congregation? That'd be some pretty foul play. Did he find anything?

BLAKE

The last entry says he's going back to the church itself for clues to their disappearance.

GAMWELL

And we know how *that* turned out. Maybe the damned Italians got him, too.

BLAKE

You know that wasn't it. Something else is going on here. Something terrible. The darkness...

GAMWELL

Not *that* again!

BLAKE

You *saw* it, Gamwell! We both did.

GAMWELL

No one can *see* darkness, Blake. That's why they call it that!

BLAKE

Well, *I* did! And here it is again, in poor Ed Lillibridge's notes: Enoch Bowen himself saying Starry Wisdom worshipped this "darkness."

GAMWELL

OK, so maybe it's connected. But what does it all mean? What *is* the "darkness"?

BLAKE

I can't tell you... yet. But I think I know who can.

GAMWELL

Who? Oh, you can't mean--

BLAKE

The derelict who saved me. Yes. He knows the darkness.

(under his breath, as if speaking in tongues)
Ygnaiih...ygnaiih...Azathoth...

GAMWELL

Sorry, what did you say?

BLAKE

Uh... the hobo. We must find him. Before it's too late.

Grave MUSIC transition.

CREIGHTON COBB

The next day, Gamwell accompanied the very nervous Blake to Federal Hill in search of the strange old man....

THE EXPOSITION OF OFFICER MONAHAN

The avenue bustles with the STREET SOUNDS of daytime business.

BLAKE

It's no use, Gamwell. We've been around this block half a dozen times already, and no one even knows who we're talking about.

GAMWELL

They don't know? Or won't say? Wait, there's a beat cop over there. Let's see if he knows the guy. *Officer!*

Gamwell JOGS A FEW STEPS to catch up to the policeman, OFFICER MONAHAN. Blake hastens to join them.

GAMWELL (CONT'D)

Officer!

OFFICER MONAHAN

You lads aren't from round here - how can I help you?

GAMWELL

My friend here, he thinks a vagrant may have stolen his wallet, and we wondered if you knew the man.

(MORE)

GAMWELL (CONT'D)

Italian, elderly, long hair and beard, always muttering to himself--

OFFICER MONAHAN

I know the very one, sir. Been on this beat longer than I have. Mad as a hatter, but harmless enough. He's usually within a stone's throw of this old church. Never heard of him committing no crime. Strange he's not around today.

GAMWELL

What can you tell us about him? Do you know where he lives?

OFFICER MONAHAN

Lives? Wherever he can rest his head, I imagine.

GAMWELL

What's his story, do you know?

OFFICER MONAHAN

The fella was a priest at one time.

BLAKE

Priest?

OFFICER MONAHAN

Ay, back when I was a lad. Never saw him preach, of course, I mean - my kin and I, we went up to St. Mary's, don't you know - but this fella, this was his church, right here. He buried near half his family in that there churchyard before the place got sold off. Fair broke his heart when them cultists took over. Raised such a ruckus, the diocese defrocked him, and he's been a lost soul ever since.

BLAKE

Do you remember his name?

OFFICER MONAHAN

Ah, I can't. Them foreign names all sound alike. But rest assured, young sir, he'll come back around and I'll ask about that wallet of yours... Wait, I remember you.

BLAKE

You do?

OFFICER MONAHAN

The fire up on College Hill. You were all wide eyed, had bags like you'd just come from the station.

BLAKE

Um, that's right.

GAMWELL

Quite a memory.

OFFICER MONAHAN

All part of the job. A word of advice - you boys will be safer back on college hill. Best to keep with your own kind.

BLAKE

Thank you... officer.

OFFICER MONAHAN

Good day to you!

Monahan WHISTLES A TUNE as his FOOTSTEPS RETREAT.

NONNA - CONTINUOUS

GAMWELL

Well, we know everything about your hobo but who he is and where to find him.

BLAKE

Damn it!

GAMWELL

Steady on! We'll find him in time--

BLAKE

(restraining a sob)
I don't have time!

GAMWELL

Blake, what's wrong?

BLAKE

It's... my head...

GAMWELL

Does it hurt?

BLAKE

No... it's not pain. It's... my thoughts are not my own. I see things. Hear things. It's trying to make me *do* things...

GAMWELL

What is?

Before Blake can answer, they are interrupted by the aged, Italian-accented voice of THE NONNA.

NONNA

Mi scusi. I hear you talk to policeman. You say you see Father Bardazzi?

GAMWELL

Father Bardazzi? Old guy, long white hair, mumbles in Latin?

NONNA

Si, si! You see him? I worry!

BLAKE

We're worried, too. That's why we're trying to find him. Do you know where he is?

NONNA

No - today. But he never take no wallet. He is good man. Our guardian angel. He keep us safe from the evil.

GAMWELL

What evil?

NONNA

There! The demon in the church.

BLAKE

We, too, fear the evil. We hoped Father Bardazzi could help us. If you see him, could you have him call on us? Number 13, College Street.

NONNA

If I see, I tell him. I fear bad thing happen to him. He is gone all day. This is not his way.

BLAKE
 (heaving)
 Aaaah!

GAMWELL
 Blake, what's wrong?

BLAKE
Y'bthnk...h'ehye...h'yuh, h'yuh!
Ngh'aaaaaaa!

NONNA
 (gasping)
Nel nome del Padre, e del Figlio, e dello Spirito Santo! The evil! The evil eye is upon you!

GAMWELL
 Please - he needs help!

NONNA
 Evil! The evil eye! God have mercy on you!

She HURRIES OFF.

BLAKE
Ygnaiiiiiiiih!

GAMWELL
 Blake! *Blake!* Get hold of yourself. C'mon now.

BLAKE
 Yes! Yes.
 (groans, swallows hard)
 I'm - I'm all right now.

MUSIC transition begins.

GAMWELL
 That's debatable. Let's get out of here.

CREIGHTON COBB
 That evening, back in Gamwell's rooms, the artist looked in on his distressed friend...

GAMWELL'S APARTMENT

Blake stirs awake, RUSTLING his sheets.

GAMWELL

You've been asleep for hours. How are you doing?

BLAKE

Better, but still...strange. I keep...*remembering* things. At least, that's how it feels. Except they're things I've never known before.

GAMWELL

Well, I've made some supper for us. We'll have you right as rain in no time!

DISTANT THUNDER peals outside.

GAMWELL (CONT'D)

Speaking of rain... sounds like there's a storm brewing out there. C'mon...

As Blake recovers himself, his sense of urgency returns.

BLAKE

We need to go back out there! That Father Bardazzi - he must be the same priest Edwin Lillibridge mentioned in his notes! I'm sure of it.

GAMWELL

Relax! We're not going anywhere in this weather. Anyway, you don't want to miss this meal.

The SCRAPE and CLINK of utensils on china. The CLUNK of plates on a small wooden dining table.

GAMWELL (CONT'D)

I can't claim to be a gourmet chef, but I think you'll like it.

BLAKE

Spaghetti? I thought you hated Italians.

GAMWELL

I don't... well, yes but I have to admit the food is wonderful. Import the pasta, deport the people, that's what I say. Tuck in!

Gamwell EATS enthusiastically. The CLUNK OF A FORK on the table. Blake SIGHS.

GAMWELL (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. Don't you like it? Here, put some more cheese on it.

BLAKE

No, I'm sure it's delicious. Sorry, it's just... my head...

GAMWELL

Say... while you were asleep, I took a crack at that cipher in the ledger book we took from the church.

BLAKE

What's it say?

Gamwell FLIPS PAGES in the open ledger on the table.

GAMWELL

(still eating)

Well, at first, I got nowhere. Most of the symbols seem to be astrological or alchemical in nature - some of it even looked like Aklo - but I couldn't find any pattern in them that matched up with the most common English letter combinations. I noticed many of the texts in the church's library were historical, so I started trying the classical languages. You'll never guess what some of it was!

BLAKE

(weakly)

Greek? Latin?

GAMWELL

Not simply Latin. The devious dogs also used a Tironian shorthand that I haven't seen since my classics courses in university. Once I latched onto that, I started looking for repeating combinations of symbols that might correlate to what we know of the Starry Wisdom sect: the Tironian abbreviation for "darkness," for example.

(beat)

Or the word for "haunter."

BLAKE
 (shaken)
 Haunter?

GAMWELL
 That is what you said the other day, isn't it? I misheard it at the time, but now I'm certain. Because the most frequent word combination in the cryptogram is "obsessor tenebris". The Haunter of the Dark.

A THUNDERCLAP outside punctuates the name.

BLAKE
 And what does it say about this Haunter of the Dark?

GAMWELL
 Let's see... "look into the dark stone's light, and the Haunter of the Dark shall rise like a fountain of ash", I think it says, "from the depths of Ultimate Chaos-"

BLAKE
 --at whose center sprawls the blind idiot god Azathoth, Lord of All Things, encircled by his flopping horde of mindless and amorphous dancers, and lulled by the thin monotonous piping of a demonic flute held in nameless paws.

GAMWELL
 (disturbed)
 It... sounds like you've heard this before.

CREEPY MUSIC BED begins.

BLAKE
 Go on.

GAMWELL
 Well, it says that this thing, the Haunter, holds forth "a key to all the paradoxes and arcana of the worlds we know." In return for this knowledge, it demands monstrous sacrifices. The stone, the Shining Trapezohedron was evidently fashioned some place called "Yuggoth"...

Blake drones as if reciting an unholy catechism. A soft BED OF WEIRD MUSIC underscores it.

BLAKE

...before the Old Ones brought it to earth. There it was treasured by the great crinoids of Antarctica, who placed it in its sacred reliquary. Salvaged from the ruins of the Old Ones' Cyclopean city, it was peered at, aeons later, in Lemuria by the first human beings. It crossed strange lands and stranger seas, and sank with Atlantis. Then a Minoan fisherman meshed it in his net, and later the Pharaoh Nephren-Ka built around it a temple with a windowless crypt, and did that which caused his name to be stricken from all monuments and records. Then it slept in the ruins of that evil fane which the priests and the new Pharaoh destroyed, till Enoch Bowen's spade once more brought it forth to curse mankind.

CREEPY MUSIC ends in a CRACK OF THUNDER and the increasingly heavy PATTERN OF RAIN against the window.

GAMWELL

How do you know all this?

BLAKE

It's like I dreamed it...but not exactly. It just came to me, like it had been in my mind the whole time. I saw Yuggoth: Endless leagues of desert lined with carved, sky-reaching monoliths. Towers and walls in nighted depths under the sea, and processions of robed, hooded figures whose outlines weren't human. Then there were vortices of space where wisps of black mist floated before thin shimmerings of cold purple haze. And beyond everything else, an infinite gulf of darkness.

Pause.

GAMWELL

Blake... um, I think we should get you to an alienist.

BLAKE

I'm not mad. It's true.

GAMWELL

For your sake, I hope you've flipped your lid. Because if what you're saying is true--

BLAKE

It *is* true. Ever since we went into that church, I've had the feeling that something was watching me. No...that something was watching *through* me.

GAMWELL

If everything you've said is right, there's only one way you could have gained such knowledge. That crystal in the box really was the Shining Trapezohedron. Which means--

BLAKE

--there really is a Hunter of the Dark. And it's going to demand its sacrifice of *me*, just as it did from Enoch Bowen and the Church of Starry Wisdom.

THUNDER peals again, louder than before, joined by an insistent POUNDING on the apartment door.

GAMWELL

Who the devil can that be?

He CROSSES the room and OPENS the door.

GAMWELL (CONT'D)

You!

BARDAZZI

Si. You need God's help, and I have come.

BLAKE

You are Father Bardazzi?

BARDAZZI

I am Bardazzi. I am no longer a priest, but I serve the Lord.

GAMWELL

You're dressed like a priest...

BARDAZZI

I have not worn these robes for more than thirty years. But tonight I have need of God's armor. May I come in?

BLAKE

Gamwell, let him in!

GAMWELL

Very well.

FOOTSTEPS. THE DOOR SHUTS.

BARDAZZI

There! Young man! You are the one with the evil eye upon you.

GAMWELL

You superstitious simpleton, it's not--

BARDAZZI

Silenzio!

BLAKE

(weakly)

Yes. I am the one with the evil eye.

BARDAZZI

In the church. You looked into the eye, did you not?

GAMWELL

Eye? Do you mean--

BARDAZZI

This!

CREIGHTON COBB

From beneath his robes, the old priest produced the strange metal box from the steeple of the Starry Wisdom church and held it toward Blake. Slowly the priest opened the box to reveal the glowing stone within.

MUSIC STING

BLAKE
 (gasping)
 The Shining Trapezohedron!

BARDAZZI
 When you entered that forbidden
 place, you awoke a terrible demon,
 and now it wants out.

BLAKE
 I... we didn't mean to.

BARDAZZI
 When you did this, I saw that one
 could enter that cursed place in
 the daylight and survive. I went in
 and found the source of its unholy
 power.

GAMWELL
 Then why, in God's name, did you
 bring it *here*?

BARDAZZI
 Your friend is marked by Satan. He
 has looked upon the stone and
 allowed the darkness to possess
 him. His only hope of salvation is
 to gaze upon the stone again and
 cast out the evil spirit. Devo
 eseguire **l'esorcismo**.

THUNDERCLAP.

BLAKE
 (scared)
 What?

BARDAZZI
 I must perform the exorcism.

GAMWELL
 I never heard such a load of
 rubbish--

BLAKE
 Gamwell! Please. I want to.

GAMWELL
 What did I tell you about this guy?

BLAKE

Ever since I first saw it, I've been afraid to look at the Trapezohedron again. And yet, at the same time, I've been craving it, been tempted to go back into the church myself just to stare into it...

BARDAZZI

You see! His soul cries for release from the demon. Here-- look into the eye of the darkness!

GAMWELL

No! Wait--

MUSICAL PUNCTUATION.

BLAKE

God have mercy! Ahhh - the darkness!

A THUNDERCLAP. AN ELECTRICAL BUZZ and FLICKER.

CREIGHTON COBB

As Blake gazed into the luminous crystal, the electric lights in the apartment began to flicker.

BARDAZZI

Look! See how the stone glows - the light of Satan.

GAMWELL

Blake! Blake, are you all right?

BLAKE

I remember Yuggoth, and more distant Shaggai, and the ultimate void of the black planets... The long, winging flight through the void...cannot cross the universe of light...sent through horrible abysses of radiance...

BARDAZZI

The demon, it speaks. *Compello te obliquoque, Obsessor Tenebris, ómnis satánic potéstas, ómnis infernális adversáarii, ómnis légio, ómnis congregátio et sécta diabólica, ad hoc homine, eradicáre et effugáre a Dei Ecclésia, ab animábus ad imáginem Dei cónditis ac pretióso divíni Ágni sáanguine redéemptis!*

GAMWELL

(overlapping)

What are you doing to him,
Bardazzi? What are you saying?
That's not Catholic....

As Bardazzi chants, Blake's voice takes on a darker tone, a new menace.

BLAKE

(dark and menacing)

Darkness never dies - it waits. Was
it not an avatar of Nyarlathotep,
who in antique and shadowy Khem
even took the form of man?

(monstrously)

Yn'hyl Kata'a Lohath Gorgemoth!

GAMWELL

(fearful)

Blake! *Blake!*

BARDAZZI

It is no use. I am too late!

The box SLAPS SHUT. FOOTSTEPS toward the door.

GAMWELL

Wait! Where are you going?
Bardazzi!

THE DOOR OPENS. FOOTSTEPS RUN OUT.

GAMWELL (CONT'D)

Blake, listen to me! You have to
hang on. You are Robert Blake. Say
it!

BLAKE

(struggling)

I...am Robert Blake.

GAMWELL

That's it! Keep repeating it until
I get back.

Gamwell RUSHES OUT the apartment door.

GAMWELL (CONT'D)

(yelling)

Bardazzi!

BLAKE

I...am Robert Harrison Blake of
Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I am on this
planet. I am Robert Harrison Blake!
I am Robert Harrison Blake...

His voice is lost in SWELLING THUNDER, PELTING RAIN, and
URGENT, CHILLING MUSIC.

BRIDGE OVER TROUBLED WATER

CREIGHTON COBB

Gamwell ran out into the empty
streets of the pouring night. He
ran through the rain, looking for
any sign of the old man. As he
neared the Providence river, a
flash of lightning revealed the
silhouette of the robed priest
leaning against the railing of a
disused railroad bridge.

GAMWELL

Bardazzi!

Gamwell RUNS after him. The river CRASHES and CHURNS. RAIN
and THUNDER.

BARDAZZI

(very tired)

*Sáncte Michael Archángele, defénde
nos in proélio, cóntra nequítiam et
insídias diáboli ésto præsídium.
Ímperet ílli Déus, súpplíces
deprecámur: tuque, prínceps militiæ
cæléstis, Sátanam aliósque spíritus
málignos, qui ad perditiónem
animárum pervagántur in mún-do,
divína virtúte, in inférnum
destrúde!*

GAMWELL
 (shouting over the rain)
Bardazzi! Stop!

BARDAZZI
 Stay back! The demon is in the church, and for the sake of all that is holy, it must be cast forth from this place.

GAMWELL
 What are you going to do?

BARDAZZI
 God's will. I cast this to the sea. No man shall look upon this evil thing and the evil shall look upon no man.

GAMWELL
 But what about Blake? What if we need that thing to free him from--

BARDAZZI
 For him there is no hope. The evil has seen him and he belongs to it now. Like Bowen and the Starry Wisdom, he can only feed the darkness.

GAMWELL
 What do you mean?

BARDAZZI
 It was a cult of death. Suicide. They gave their lives to the darkness.

GAMWELL
 (stunned)
 Good god.

BARDAZZI
 For your friend, death will be a blessing.

GAMWELL
 No! There *has* to be a way to stop it.

BARDAZZI
 We cannot escape our sins, my son. Your friend must atone, as must I.
 (MORE)

BARDAZZI (CONT'D)

I can go no further. You must hear
my final confession--

MUSIC BED begins.

GAMWELL

Final confession? Wait a minute--

BARDAZZI

Listen! The writer, Philip Raymond.
You knew him, yes?

GAMWELL

Yes. What about him?

BARDAZZI

It was I who lit the fire that
killed him.

GAMWELL

You? My god why?

BARDAZZI

I feared he would awake the demon.
He came to write of the Starry
Wisdom, of Enoch Bowen, of a past
best forgotten. I could not allow
him to spread this sacrilege to the
world, and so I had to destroy the
knowledge - to burn it in the
purifying fire. To vanquish the
darkness with the burning light of
the Almighty. Light is the only
thing keeping it at bay!

GAMWELL

You killed an innocent man!

BARDAZZI

No one who has touched the darkness
is innocent.

GAMWELL

That's murder. You'll pay for this!

BARDAZZI

We shall all pay for our sins. But
you and your friend, my son, gave
me the courage, after all these
years, to go into the church at
last and face the evil. I thank
you. Now I must do this one last
thing...

He steps to the edge over the raging waters.

GAMWELL

Father, please! Step back from the edge. You don't need to do this.

BARDAZZI

My son, would you deny me God's peace? Forgive me. You cannot imagine the terrors I have endured my entire life. I have seen the dark universe yawning where the black planets roll without aim: where they roll in their horror unheeded, without knowledge or luster or name. *Jesu Christi* - have mercy on my soul!

MUSICAL PUNCTUATION. RUSHING FOOTSTEPS.

GAMWELL

(screaming)

No! Bardazzi!

Only a faint SPLASH, far below him, comes in answer.

GAMWELL (CONT'D)

Oh my god!

For a moment, there is nothing but the sound of WIND and RAIN, and Gamwell's labored breathing. Then a deafening THUNDERCLAP.

CREIGHTON COBB

The tortured old priest had vanished into the swollen river, dragged down by his waterlogged vestments. Gamwell looked around for help, but saw nothing but a new horror....

GAMWELL

(muttering)

Dear God, the lightning...

CREIGHTON COBB

As lightning flashed, street lamps flickered off and windows went dim all across the city. The old town was plunged into darkness.

GAMWELL

The church! There'll be nothing left to keep the Haunter inside!

His footsteps SPLASH through the streaming runoff. The MUSIC mounts toward a climactic crescendo.

CANDLELIGHT VIGIL

CREIGHTON COBB

On Federal Hill anxious residents hurried into the streets. Rain-soaked knots of men and women filled the square and alleys around the evil church carrying umbrella-shaded candles, electric flashlights, oil lanterns, crucifixes, and rosaries.

Rain PATTERS on umbrellas. THUNDER and RAIN continue in the background. CREAKING WOOD.

ITALIANS

*O Gesù, perdona le nostre colpe,
preservaci dal fuoco dell'inferno,
porta in cielo tutte le anime,
specialmente le più bisognose della
vostra misericordia! Amen!*

OFFICER MONAHAN

Clear the streets! Go on you, go back to your homes!

NONNA

We no can go. We stay here! Our light keeps demon away.

GUIDO

Il diavolo teme la luce!

OFFICER MONAHAN

The linemen will have the lights back on soon. But not if you're blocking the streets!

NONNA

No, you do not understand. The demon! If it get out, it--

OFFICER MONAHAN

(to himself)

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, these superstitious...

(loud)

Go home. Leave the streets!

(grabbing Nonna roughly)

(MORE)

OFFICER MONAHAN (CONT'D)
C'mon, lady. Don't make me drag
you.

NONNA
No! We need more light! Let go--

GAMWELL
(in the distance)
Officer! Officer!

NONNA
Him! He knows. This one has see the
darkness!

SPLASHING FOOTSTEPS as Gamwell runs up to them.

OFFICER MONAHAN
Look, sir. Go back home. Everyone
just needs to--

GAMWELL
(gasping for breath)
Officer Monahan, isn't it?

OFFICER MONAHAN
Aye... I remember you. You and your
friend--

GAMWELL
Yes, my friend... Robert Blake. I'm
afraid something... someone is
trying to kill him. Please... come
with me!

OFFICER MONAHAN
Kill him, you say? What's all this
about?

GAMWELL
No time to explain. Tell you on the
way. Please, we need to hurry!

OFFICER MONAHAN
Lead the way!

RUNNING FOOTSTEPS as they depart. The thunder quiets, and the
chorus of Italians abruptly falls into an awed silence. With
only the whisper of RAIN in the background, another sound
quavers over the throng.

GUIDO
Gesù Cristo!

NONNA

Protegge e ci salva!

High above them, something begins to THUMP against the wood of the steeple, which starts to CRACK.

CREIGHTON COBB

It started with a definite swelling of the dull fumbling sounds inside the black tower. There had for some time been a vague exhalation of strange, evil odors from the church, and this had now become emphatic and offensive.

A RUSH OF WIND. SPLINTERING WOOD. THE CRASH OF A HEAVY OBJECT IN THE YARD. THE ITALIANS CRY OUT IN ABJECT TERROR.

CREIGHTON COBB (CONT'D)

A sudden wet gust extinguished many of the candles and lanterns, and the remains of one of the upper windows crashed down in the yard beneath the frowning easterly facade.

NONNA

God have mercy! It is breaking out!

The ITALIANS GASP IN DISGUST AND TERROR. We HEAR THE SOUNDS Cobb describes.

CREIGHTON COBB

An utterly unbearable foetor welled forth from the unseen heights, choking and sickening the trembling watchers. At the same time the air trembled with a vibration as of flapping wings, and a sudden east-blowing wind more violent than any previous blast snatched off the hats and wrenched the dripping umbrellas of the crowd. Nothing definite could be seen in the candleless night, though some upward-looking spectators thought they glimpsed a great spreading blur of denser blackness against the inky sky - something like a formless cloud of smoke that shot with meteor-like speed toward College Hill to the east.

A high SCREECH splits the air.

HELP IS ON THE WAY

FOOTSTEPS race up to the door.

GAMWELL

(panting)

He's in here. Blake, are you all right?

They hear a MUFFLED CRY, and Gamwell frantically TRIES TO OPEN the door.

OFFICER MONAHAN

Is it locked?

GAMWELL

No, I have the key. There's something blocking the door.

Gamwell RAMS THE DOOR with his shoulder. We hear the SCRAPE OF WOOD and the RATTLE OF CHINA. Gamwell manages to nudge the door open a crack, enough so that Blake's panicked voice becomes intelligible.

BLAKE

No light! Yet I can see everything with a monstrous sense that is not sight. Light is dark and dark is light...

OFFICER MONAHAN

What's he saying?

GAMWELL

Blake! Blake, can you hear me? Let us in!

BLAKE

I am Robert Blake... but I see the steeple in the dark. Can hear the thing stirring and fumbling in the tower. I am it and it is I - I want to get out... must get out and unify the forces... It knows where I am!

OFFICER MONAHAN

Doesn't sound like someone's trying to kill him. Sounds like he's gone mad.

GAMWELL

He needs our help. Help me ram the door!

Gamwell and Monahan GRUNT and HEAVE THEIR COMBINED WEIGHT against the door. Wood SCRAPES, china RATTLES. A cup falls and SHATTERS. But the door barely budges.

GAMWELL (CONT'D)

Blake!

BLAKE

(panic rising)

Iä...ngai...ygg... I see it! Coming here - hell-wind - titan blur - black wings. Yog-Sothoth save me! The three-lobed burning eye!

(screaming)

Aaaaaah!

GAMWELL

Again, Monahan! One...two...three!

Gamwell and Monahan THRUST THEIR WEIGHT against the door, and we hear the china sideboard TOPPLE and CRASH...

...just as another ear-splitting THUNDERCLAP peals. But melded with the deep bass of the thunder's crack is a high-pitched SQUALL, as of a pterodactyl.

OFFICER MONAHAN

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph! That one was right on top of us. Wonder it didn't blow the house down.

GAMWELL

Here, help me get this open...*Blake!*

The SCRAPE OF HEAVY FURNITURE AGAINST WOOD. Broken china CRUNCHES under their shoes as they step inside.

GAMWELL (CONT'D)

Turn on your torch! Look, by the window!

HURRIED FOOTSTEPS.

GAMWELL (CONT'D)

Blake! Are you all right?

The CLICK of a flashlight. MUSICAL PUNCTUATION.

OFFICER MONAHAN

Saints preserve us!

GAMWELL
 (devastated and horrified)
 Blake! No, Blake....

CREIGHTON COBB
 The rigid body sat bolt upright at
 the desk by the window, and when
 the policeman saw the glassy,
 bulging eyes, he turned away.

OFFICER MONAHAN
 Dear God... ach, the poor lad.

GAMWELL
 (muttering)
 You were right. The Darkness....

OFFICER MONAHAN
 Must have been the lightning. A
 bolt must've struck him dead where
 he sat.

GAMWELL
 It wasn't lightning. It was
 absolute terror.

OFFICER MONAHAN
 Terror? He was alone. You saw
 yourself - the door was barricaded
 from inside. No one could--

GAMWELL
 It wasn't a man. It was the
 Haunter. The Haunter of the Dark.
 And it's still out there.

OFFICER MONAHAN
 Ah, I know you've had a terrible
 shock but--

GAMWELL
 (muttering)
*In nomine Patris, et Filii, et
 Spiritus Sancti!*

OFFICER MONAHAN
 Amen. Prayer's a comfort at times
 like these.

MUSIC TRANSITION BEGINS.

GAMWELL

(louder)

*...Sub tuum praesidium confugimus,
sancta Dei Genetrix... sed a
periculis cunctis libera nos
semper...*

OFFICER MONAHAN

Where are you going? Mr. Gamwell!

Gamwell's voice recedes as he WALKS AWAY and the DOOR CLOSES behind him.

CREIGHTON COBB

Shortly afterward the Medical Examiner, Dr. Ambrose Dexter, investigated the death of Robert Blake, and reported his findings to the Providence police...

PROVIDENCE POLICE STATION

OFFICE HUBBUB in the background. A DOOR CLOSES.

DR. DEXTER

Officers, the cause of Mr. Blake's death was electrical shock, or nervous tension induced by electrical discharge.

OFFICER MONAHAN

Didn't I tell you, Sergeant Kelly? Lightning it was!

SGT. KELLY

From outside? Through an intact window, Doctor?

DR. DEXTER

It is true that the window he faced was unbroken, but Nature has shown herself capable of many freakish performances.

SGT. KELLY

And what about the expression on his face? I've seen the pictures.

DR. DEXTER

It was a disturbing rictus, but hardly surprising considering his abnormal imagination and unbalanced emotions.

SGT. KELLY

Abnormal?

OFFICER MONAHAN

You bet, Sergeant. I mean, Blake was a writer, after all. Spooky stories. You should have seen the paintings and crazy books and papers in his pal Gamwell's flat. Those two were barking mad.

SGT. KELLY

Ah yes, what about Gamwell? He still hasn't recovered, eh, Monahan?

OFFICER MONAHAN

No, Sergeant Kelly, sir, he's wandering my beat as we speak. Just keeps circling that old Starry Wisdom church and mumbling prayers to himself. Every time I ask him about it, he tells me that someone's got to protect the neighborhood from the demon - just like that priest, Bardazzi, used to do.

SGT. KELLY

Well, keep an eye on the poor devil. Might have to lock him up for his own good. Speaking of the priest, what about that floater we pulled from the bay?

OFFICER MONAHAN

Aye, sir, that was him washed up near Conimicut Point.

SGT. KELLY

Poor old fella. I don't suppose anyone'll claim his body?

OFFICER MONAHAN

Doubt it, sir. This was odd though, on the way to the apartment that night Gamwell said Bardazzi jumped off the bridge with a metal box in his arms. Claimed it had a "magic stone" in it or some such.

SGT. KELLY

Oh, for Pete's sake. Was there a box with the priest's effects, Dr. Dexter?

DR. DEXTER

Oh, there was a box, all right. A fancy metal thing. I had to pry it out of his hands.

OFFICER MONAHAN

The corpse clutched it to his chest as if he meant to carry it to Hell himself. But when we opened it, well, you tell him, Doc.

CHILLING CLOSING MUSIC BEGINS.

DR. DEXTER

Yes, there was... nothing inside.

MUSIC CONCLUSION and the sound of RUSHING WIND and the ECHOING SQUALL of the Haunter.

CONCLUSION

CREIGHTON COBB

You've been listening to "The Haunter of the Dark", brought to you by our sponsor, Bile Beans! Stay healthy, bright-eyed and slim - take Bile Beans every night!

I'm Creighton Cobb. 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 Haunter of the Dark" was adapted for radio by Stephen Woodworth and Sean Branney and Andrew Lemman, and produced by Sean Branney and Andrew Lemman. Based on the story by H.P. Lovecraft. Original music by Reber Clark. The Dark Adventure Ensemble featured: splendid actors. Tune in next week for "A Stab in the Black", a tale of swordplay, madness and unchained desire.

(MORE)

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

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Radio STATIC and fade out.