

THE RATS IN THE WALLS

BY H. P. LOVECRAFT



IN JULY, 1923, I MOVED INTO THE RESTORED EXHAM PRIORY. THE ANCIENT ESTATE HAD BEEN IN THE DE LA POER FAMILY FOR A TIME MEASURED IN CENTURIES.



I AM THE LAST OF THE DELAPORES. THE NEIGHBORING COMMUNITIES WILL BE RELIEVED UNDOUBTEDLY, WHEN THE DELAPORES ARE GONE FOREVER.



THE PEOPLE HAVE LONG HATED AND FEARED MY FAMILY THOUGH MY ANCESTORS HAD QUIT THE AREA MANY GENERATIONS AGO. I HADN'T LEARNED OF THE STRANGE CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING WALTER DE LA POER'S FLIGHT TO AMERICA. IT WAS THEN HE CHANGED THE SPELLING TO DELAPORE.

My forebear related nothing of his clouded past to his children or grandchildren. It was my son, when in England as an army aviator, who discovered the existence of Exham Priory through his British friend, Captain Edward Norrys. It seems that the ruined estate had fallen into the hands of the Norrys family. My son, Alfred, wrote of it often.



His homecoming was not a happy one. The war had severely maimed him, I cared for my boy for 2 years while he died slowly.



With no family left, I resolved to buy and restore the ancient edifice. Norrys took an interest and helped me in my endeavors.

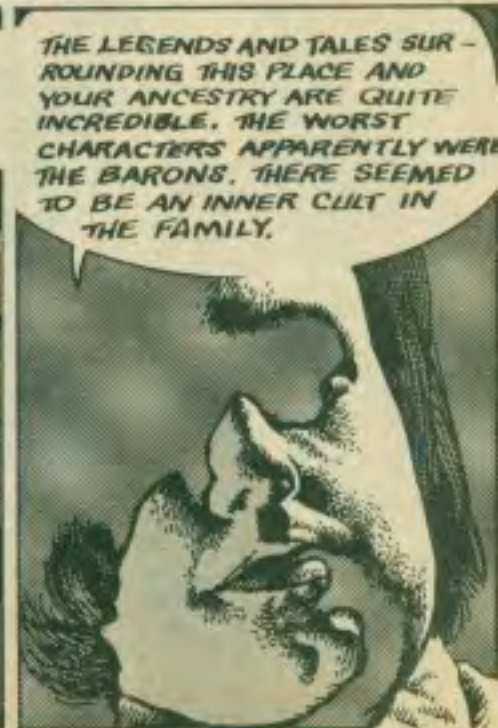


-YES, ACCORDING TO MOST ACCOUNTS, THE PRIORY IS BUILT ON THE SITE OF A PREHISTORIC DRUIDICAL TEMPLE.



IT IS AN ODD MIXTURE OF ARCHITECTURE; GOTHIC TOWERS RESTING ON A SAXON SUB-STRUCTURE WHOSE FOUNDATIONS IN TURN ARE OF A STILL EARLIER BLEND OF ORDERS.

ROMAN... EVEN DRUIDIC OR NATIVE CYMRIC.

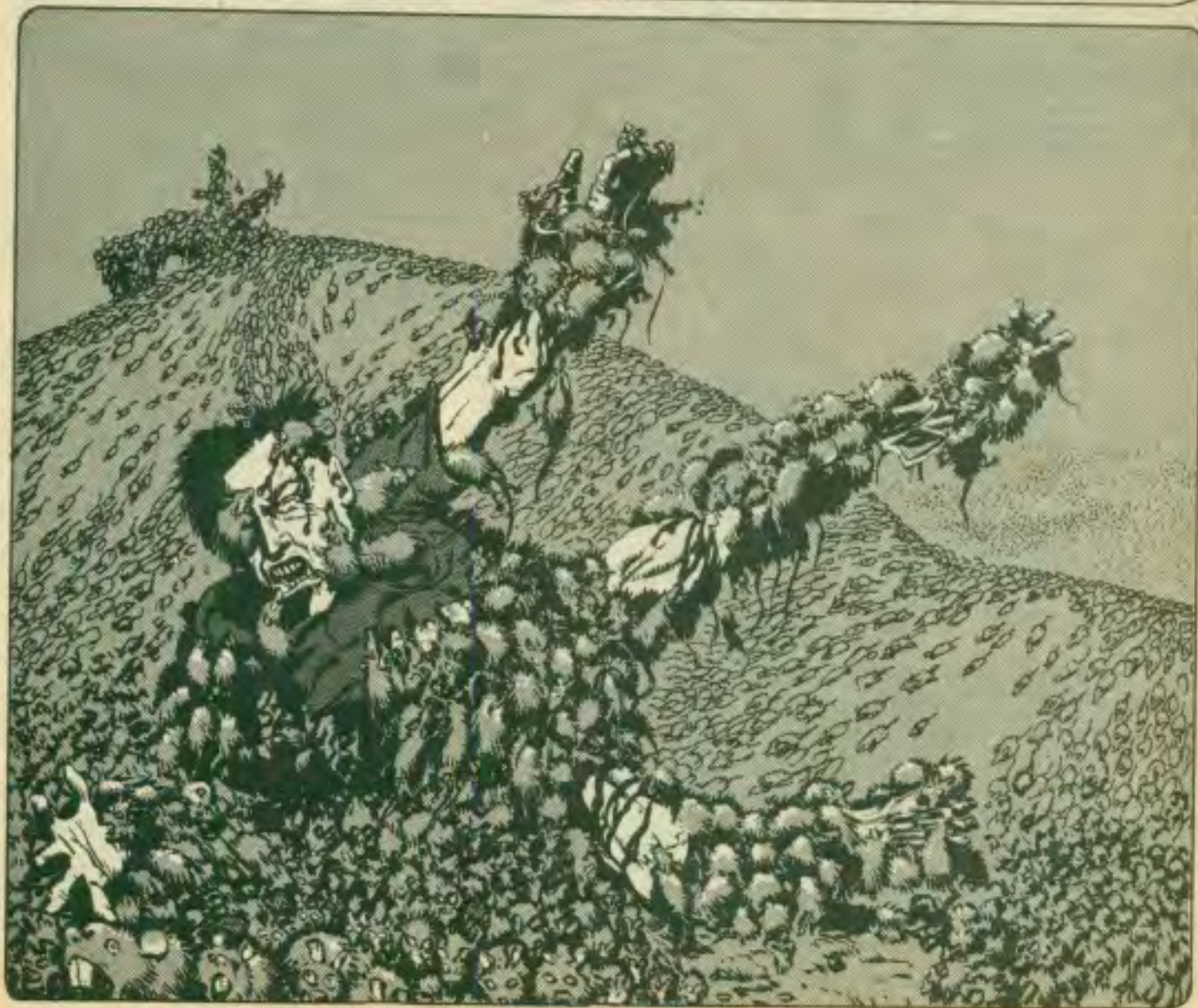


THE LEGENDS AND TALES SURROUNDING THIS PLACE AND YOUR ANCESTRY ARE QUITE INCREDIBLE. THE WORST CHARACTERS APPARENTLY WERE THE BARONS. THERE SEEMED TO BE AN INNER CULT IN THE FAMILY.

GHASTLY, GRISLY BALLADS AND STORIES SURVIVE IN GUARDED WHISPERS. THERE WAS A MARY DE LA POER, WHO SHORTLY AFTER HER MARRIAGE TO THE EARL OF SHREWSFIELD... WAS KILLED BY HER BRIDEGROOM. THE SLAYER WAS ABSOLVED AND EVEN BLESSED BY A PRIEST WHEN THE VICTIMS HEATHEN HABITS WERE REVEALED. THERE WAS MENTION OF A SQUEALING WHITE THING ON WHICH SIR JOHN CLAVES HORSE HAD TROD... AND OF A SERVANT WHO WENT RAVING MAD AT WHAT HE SAW IN THE PRIORY IN FULL DAYLIGHT.



AND MOST VIVID OF ALL WAS THE EPIC OF THE RATS — THE SCAMPERING ARMY OF OBSCENE VERMIN WHICH BURST FORTH FROM THE CASTLE, THREE MONTHS AFTER YOUR ANCESTOR DESERTED THE COUNTRY. THE FILTHY RAVENOUS ARMY DEVoured FOWL, CATS, DOGS, HOGS, ... EVEN TWO HAPLESS HUMANS.





TELL ME OF WALTER DE LA POER. WHY DID HE FLEE TO AMERICA?

THE ACCOUNTS ARE RATHER CIRCUMSTANTIAL ON THAT. HE WAS ACCUSED OF KILLING HIS ENTIRE HOUSEHOLD WITH THE AID OF FOUR SERVANTS... THIS HAPPENED AFTER A SHOCKING DISCOVERY WHICH CHANGED HIS WHOLE DEMEANOR.

THE NATURE OF THIS DISCOVERY WAS NEVER BROUGHT TO LIGHT... WELL I MUST GO NOW DELAPORE. I HOPE YOU'LL INVITE ME OVER AGAIN SOON.



NIGAMAN!
WHAT'S THE MATTER?
SETTLE DOWN!



—YES SIR, ALL THE CATS WERE AMAZINGLY RESTLESS LAST NIGHT... AS IF EXCITED BY THE ODOR OF RATS!

PECULIAR! THERE HASN'T BEEN RATS IN EXHAM FOR 300 YEARS... SET SOME TRAPS!





RATS!!
MILLIONS
OF THEM!



NOTHING HERE... THE
TRAPS ARE SPRUNG!...
COME NIGAMAN WE'LL
EXPLORE THE OTHER
ROOMS

RRROURRR
FST!



LORD!
THEY'RE BEHIND
THE PANELING!

SKITTER
THUMP
SQUEEK
SQUEEK
SQUEEK
SQUEEK



THE NOISE! THEY'RE
TRAVELING DOWNWARD
INTO THE SUBCELLAR!

THUMPITY
RATTLE
SQUEEK

TWITTER
TWITTLE

SQUEEK
SQUEEK
SQUEEK



SIR! ALL THE CATS ARE
IN A SNARLING PANIC!
THEY'VE RUN TO THE SUB-
CELLAR DOOR!

THE RATS!
DON'T YOU
HEAR THEM?



RATS?... WE HEARD
NOTHING BUT THE CATS
SIR.



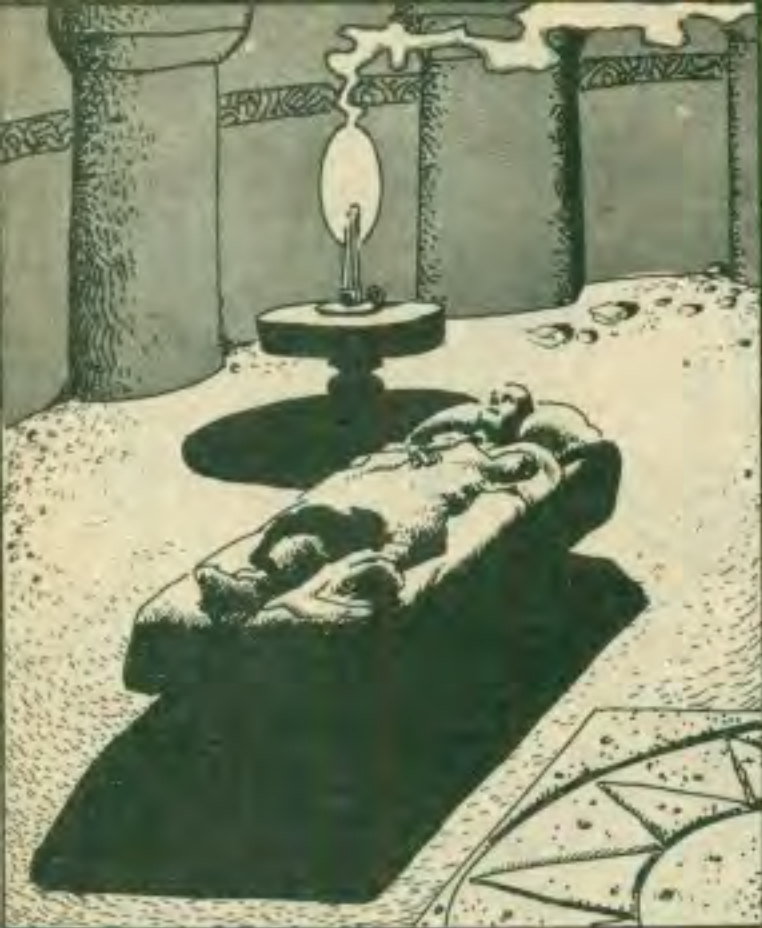
-IT WAS AWFUL LAST NIGHT.
COULD YOU COME AND SPEND
TONIGHT HERE NORRYS? I
MUST DISCOVER THE CAUSE
OF THIS MANIFESTATION!

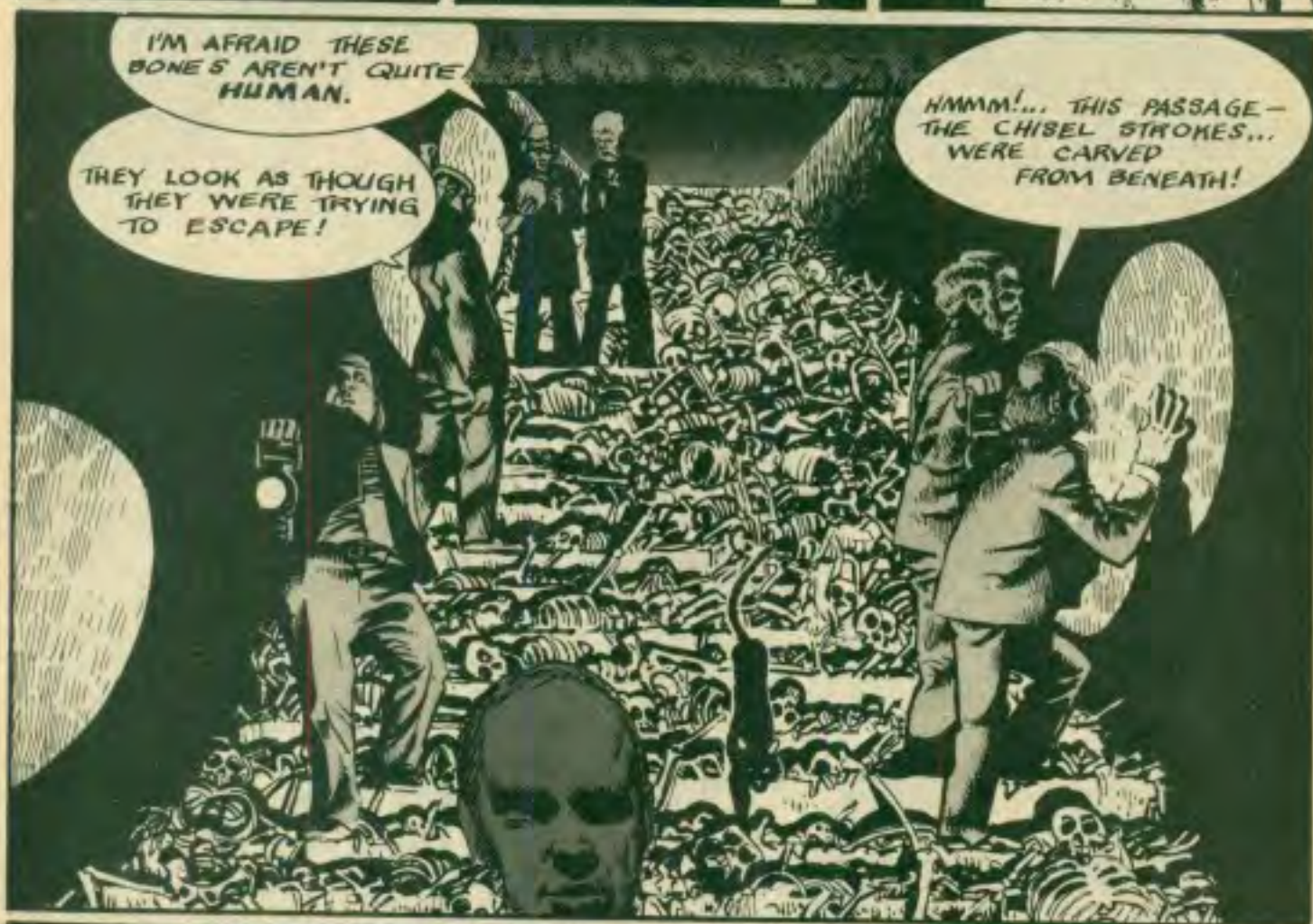


THIS VAULT, THE LOWEST
ROOM IN THE PRIORY, WAS
BUILT BY ROMAN HANDS...
PASSING THE NIGHT DOWN
HERE, WE WONT MISS YOUR
RATS... IF THEY APPEAR.

THESE INSCRIPTIONS-
"ATYS..." THOSE HIDEOUS
EASTERN RITES.

AEC VS PONTIFI ATYS







AMAZING! SOME OF THESE CREATURES -CHOKE- DESCENDED AS QUADRUPEDS ONLY THROUGH THE LAST 20 OR 30 GENERATIONS



THEY WERE APPARENTLY KEPT IN THESE STONE PENS-- BUT BROKE LOOSE DRIVEN BY HUNGER OR FEAR!



THESE MARKINGS DESCRIBE A RITUAL ... LORD!! ... THEY ... ATE ...



GRAND KOFF IT'S AN ENGLISH BUTCHER SHOP... BUT...



THESE BONES ARE HUMAN



N NO... NOOOO!
IT'S...



THE DE LA FOER CREST,
...ONE OF MY ANCESTORS
STOPPED BY THE DAGGER
OF WALTER DE LA FOER.



WHAT LIES IN THESE
BLACK PITS?!!



THE RATS—
THEY'RE RETURNING! **THE RATS!**



THEY'LL EAT ANOTHER DE LA FOER;
BECAUSE DE LA FOER EATS FORBIDDEN THINGS!
THERE'S A PIG THING! EAT!!



IS IT EDWARD NORRYS' FAT FACE
ON THAT FLINGUS THING? HE LIVED; BUT
MY BOY DIED! SHALL A NORRYS HOLD
THE LANDS OF A DE LA FOER?

CURSE YOU!!



'SBLOOD, THOU
STINKARD,...
WOLDE YE SWYNK
ME THILKE WYS?...



MAGNA MATER!
... ATYS... DIA
AGHAIDS 'S—



AGUS BAS DUNACH
ORT! DHONAS'S
DHOLAS ORT, AGUS
LEAT-SA!...



UNGL... UNGL...
RR LH... CHCH...



IT'S DELAPORE!
... AND NORRYS
—GOD DAMN!

HE
HE
HE
HE
HE!

THE FOOLS! NOW THEY'VE
BLOWN UP EXHAM PRIORY,
TAKEN NIGAMAN FROM ME...
THEY ACCUSE ME OF A
HIDEOUS THING,... BUT IT WASN'T
ME... IT WAS THE RATS... THE
RATS NEVER LET ME SLEEP
... THE DAEMON RATS BECKON
ME DOWN TO GREATER HORRORS
... THE RATS... THE RATS
IN THE WALLS.



THE END

ADAPTED BY GORE 1972