

R7
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THE NIGHT BEFORE.

A Play for Radio

by

Donald Erickson

ANNOUNCER

MUSIC

FROM THE BALLAD : "THE SONG OF FRANKS." (ED McCURDY)

NARRATOR

The town of Frank, Alberta, nineteen hundred and three.

.....It is five o'clock of a late April afternoon and already the sun has passed behind the crags of Turtle mountain, leaving the town in shadow.....

....The gasoline lamps are lit in the houses.... the smell of cooking rises in the blue airthe sound of women calling their children in for supper and of men stomping up to the porches of their homes.....The beginning of Spring in the Rockies.....

OLIVE PAGET

(CALLING OUT) Hello, Mr. Blaney, you're back late from the mine !

BILL BLANEY

Oh, hello, Mrs. Paget !..... Just getting slow I guess.

OLIVE

It's time you quit that work underground, Mr. Blaney.

BILL

I might as well work as sit on my bumper, Mrs. Paget.

OLIVE

Nice this evenin'.

BILL

Sure is mind if I sit on your step for a moment.

(HE SITS WITH A GROAN OF SATISFACTION)

OLIVE

Sure you wouldn't like to come inside. It's a cold wind blowin' down the pass.

BILL

Why -- we're just lucky we ain't havin' snow. In 1873 I went through here to the Cariboo country and I remember two feet fell in one night. June 12th. Never forget it.

OLIVE

You've seen a lot of this country, Mr. Blaney.

BILL

Well ... on and off ... Mrs. Paget. It was over in the Cariboo I made my fortune though. (HE LAUGHS) ...Look

what it's done for me. Hard work and whiskey.

OLIVE

Brrr. It's cold.

BILL

I'll be shovin' off. --- How's your husband likin' the mine ?

OLIVE

He don't like it, Mr. Blaney.

(PAUSE)

BILL

I'm sorry, Mrs. Paget It takes gettin' used to. Hell, I'm not used to it yet and I've sweated all my life. Of course, I wasn't brought up in the coal shafts. It was always a shack in the mountains for me, panning gold out of the creeks. That's the life !. Of course, when you're expectin' a young family it's different. Those dollars have got to keep comin' in, don't they ?
....Well, so long, Mrs. Paget. Nice to have a break on the long journey home.....

MUSIC

BRIDGE TO

NARRATOR

Jim Jackson, the rancher, was talking to the new minister in town, Reverend Robert McCoy..... (FADE)

JACKSON

It's goin' to be great news to my wife to know our church is goin' up in town. She misses that more than anything else, Reverend.

McCOY

It's pleasant to think there are people missing it, Mr. Jackson. . I'll make a point of coming around and visiting your wife. I'd like to meet her.

JACKSON

Do that, Reverend. She don't forget her scripture. It's kind of hard for her in a town like this.

McCOY

Oh ?

JACKSON

It could do with some religion.

McCOY

There isn't a town or a person that couldn't, Mr. Jackson.

JACKSON

That's right, Reverend. But being full of miners and the like -- tends to make it rowdy. This whole town's happened in the last two years, y'know. Why, I recall it, because

my youngest, Jimmy, was just a month old and it was forest then. We came here a year before that -- just got nicely started --- mind you, I don't say I'm not glad for it. But you know how it is, Reverend. One day they find old Turtle Mountain has coal in her and before you know it there's a railway here and a town, and ... people to fill'er up. ...Some of these miners are hard drinkin' men, Reverend.

McCOY I would expect so, Mr. Jackson.

JACKSON Mind you, there's a lot would disagree with me but --- well, we're glad you've come. Remember now, the wife will be lookin' forward to seein' you, Reverend.

McCOY I won't forget -- and it's nice to meet you, too, Mr. Jackson.

MUSIC BRIDGE TO

NARRATOR The Reverend Mr. Robert McCoy turned then and went up the street towards his little dwelling which stood next to where the new church was being built. Before going inside he stopped, and took a deep breath. It was the kind of weather he loved -- a keen little wind blew down the valley and it had in it the smell of Spring in the Rockies. In this place, surely, he thought, he could find his life again.... perhaps even, face the torment and terror of it. His glance fell on the towering form of Turtle Mountain, massed against the stars, mute and huge in the silence of its depths, ~~and making an illegible sound, 19933921999~~
~~1993391993~~ ~~disly perceived, against the sky, the mountain~~.
~~Here, to him, was the mystery and terror of the Spring.~~

For a moment he thought he heard it rumbling in its fastnesses.

MUSIC BRIDGE

NARRATOR Sarah Holmes, in her cabin further up the slope, thought she heard the mountain, too

SARAH What's that....?

TERENCE GIBBS (IMPATIENTLY) Just a slide up the mountain. Look, are you going to answer me or not ?

SARAH You're worried how the town's talking, are you ?

TERRY The town can talk how it pleases. You know it aint
that, Sarah !

SARAH (WEARILY) Well then what is it ?

TERRY It's McKeen ! You've been seeing him lately !

SARAH I see ! (SHE LAUGHS) Now, look, Terry, you had a bad
shift. Just take it easy, will you ?

TERRY Have you been seeing him, Sarah ?

SARAH The thought of any other man in my life is just too much
for you to bear, isn't it, Terry ? Is that why you don't
like my parties ?

TERRY You can have all the parties you want. I don't give a
damn.

SARAH Oh, yes you do. Terry, you might as well learn that there
have been a lot of men in my life. You aren't the first
by a long shot. And you won't be the last, either.

TERRY To think you was a school teacher once ! You've sure
made a mess of your life, Sarah.

SARAH It's important to you, is it, Terry ?

TERRY Rumin' a roadhouse for miners !

SARAH What's wrong with that ? Are you ashamed of me ?

TERRY The way you behave -- yes ! I don't give a damn about your
parties but when you start foolin'.....

SARAH (CALMLY, DECISIVELY) Stop shouting at me. I didn't
know you had any proprietary rights in my life but since
you think you do let me tell you, Terry, that you don't
own me, the world doesn't own me, nobody owns me . I'm a
older than you are and perhaps you only need to grow up
a little to understand, but whether you ever understand
or not, remember what I said. I chose my way of life
and I'm sticking to it and I'm not asking anybody to
approve of it --- only to let me be. Alright ?....
..(PAUSE)..... Now, let's get the place ready for the boys.

MUSIC BRIDGE TO

NARRATOR Bill Blaney had finished his supper of baked beans and white bread with lots of butter on it, and was doing up the dishes when Jack Keenan, a single miner like himself, stepped over smoking his pipe.

JACK I heard some rumbling back in the mountains a while ago. I guess the snow will be off the hills before long.

BILL Hope so, Jack. Can't seem to get the cold out of my bones.

JACK It's time you were quittin' work, Bill.

BILL All of a sudden everybody's tellin' me to quit work !

JACK Well why not ? You must have enough now to take care of yourself. A few more years for me and I know I'm through.

BILL The only thing is I don't feel like quittin'. It's funny. All my life I looked forward to the years of leisure I'd spend near the end of it. And now it's here I don't want it.

JACK There are other things for a man of your age to do besides mine coal.

BILL Up here, Jack ? What else can you do but split kindling, and gossip.

JACK Well...I know what you mean. Now they're talkin' about takin' action to close down Sarah Holmes' place.

BILL I'm kind of sorry for that woman, Jack. She's been chased out of more towns than we've been in -- and all because she's single and not afraid to make hay while the sun shines.

JACK If you don't stick to the rules you get slapped. That's the way it is.

BILL I think life is slappin' her all the time and there's no need to grind the knuckles in.

JACK Well.....you may be right....but it's the way things are.

BILL And they're all wrong, too. I'm just old enough to know it. The whole damn set-up is wrong. When people get the righteous look in the eye -- look out -- there's bound to be

trouble. And you know what it comes down to, Jack.: People just can't stomach one another.

JACK Well....maybe.

BILL The fact is : they just can't stomach themselves.

JACK Blame old Adam and Eve, Bill. There's the root of it.

BILL The root of it, Jack, is right between your eyes.

MUSIC UP. DOWN EG.

NARRATOR The valley was in complete darkness, now, and shadows crept over the slopes of the mountains opposite the town, spilled into the sky, and the moon appeared.

MUSIC UP. BRIDGE TO

NARRATOR At the McKeen's household, the oldest of the three children, Harry, was sitting at the base of the old grandfather clock, listlessly watching the arm swing ~~3333333333~~ back and forth.

SOUND TICK TOCK TICK TOCK (FADE EG)

CATHARINE McKEEN Terry, come away from there ! So I said to her, you can keep your opinions to yourself. I'm not very interested in your opinions, Mrs. Bushell, even if they are only reserved for my ears.Why, she's told the whole town ! I'd just like to know what she says about us. That kind hasn't a good word for anybody but themselves.

RALPH McKEEN Um.

CATHARINE Terry, it's time for your bed ! And every other day she's got some new thing to tell me about her daughter. And they're all lies, you know ! She told me her daughter was going to marry one of the biggest men in Toronto -- a chaine store owner -- and then I find out they aren't even engaged. -- And here she thinks I am a snob !
.....^{Terry}~~Harry~~, will you come here !

RALPH Dear.....

CATHARINE But, really, dear, I don't think I can stand it much longer.

The people here are awful --- awful !. ...So vulgar and mean.

RALPH Why, not long ago you were saying how kind and considerate they were.

CATHARINE ^{Terry} ~~Harry~~, did you hear me ! Come this instant !!Well, you have to live next to people to find out what they're really like. -- Oh, my dear, I don't know how you stand it -- running that little store --after -- after --- what you've been.

RALPH We've got to make the best of it, that's all, Catharine ! Why make it any worse !.

CATHARINE (STARTING TO CRY) I can't help it -- I can't help it. You had so much -- so much promise, Ralph.

RALPH Forget it. That's all over now.

CATHARINE No. It isn't. We've got to face it, Ralph. I know what they're whispering about us. You can't blind yourself to it, Ralph.

RALPH Oh --- God ! !

CATHARINE They're saying that you had to leave Toronto, Ralph.

RALPH Please, Catharine.....

CATHARINE They're saying you were mixed up in a fraud.

RALPH We've gone over all this --- all of it before -- a hundred times --- and I don't want to hear any more of it --

CATHARINE How can you stay here and take it ! After what we've been, Ralph, how can you ! And from people like these ---

RALPH (CHOKING) Catharine --- I'm going out. I can't stay here and listen to you !

CATHARINE You're always walking out on me. You just don't want to talk to me anymore -- I know it's unpleasant, but we've got to face it. Alright then, go ! Go !

....(VICIOUSLY).... Terry ! Come here at once ! Do you hear -- come at once !!

SOUND TICK TOCK TICK TOCK TICK. THE DOOR SLAMS. McKEEN SIGHS DEEPLY AND WALKS UP THE ROAD.

NARRATOR Mr. McKeen walked slowly up ~~3333~~ the street, past the stables, past his own store, past the home of the new minister, the Reverend McCoy, who sat inside hunched over a single light reading from St. Luke.....

McCOY (READING) QUIETLY "And the devil said unto him, If thou~~st~~ be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread." "And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone....."

NARRATOR The lamp fluttered in the darkness -- for a wind stirred on the mountainside -- but the minister did not notice it. He saw only the shape of Jesus walking alone in a wilderness of rubble, and the night around him.....

MUSIC VERY FAINT IN THE DISTANCE A GUITARIST PLAYING

SOUND TOGETHER WITH DISTANT LAUGHING AND HOOTING --

NARRATOR ...While at Sarah Holmes a party was in progress....

SOUND/MUSIC UP. HOLD EG. THE GUITARIST IS PLAYING A SAD BALLAD.

VOICE Come on, Buck ! Liven her up !

MUSIC THE GUITARIST ACCORDINGLY HITS IT UP, A LIVELY TUNE WHICH GALVANIZES THE PARTY.

SOUND CLAPPING IN TIME TO MUSIC? SHOUTS. LAUGHTER. BG.

SARAH Another one, Jim, comin' right up !

~~FRANCIS~~ ^{Harry} GIBBS (DRUNK) It's a grand world : a lovely gran' worl' an' this's a gran' part of it. Know that, Tom ?

TOM Yeh, that's right, ^{Harry} ~~Terry~~ boy, and you're a grand fella, too. Meh heh.

~~TERRY~~ ^{Harry} I'm goin' to make mysel' a fortune, know that, Tom ? I'm gonna inves' my moneys in a coal mine, an' come out rich.

TOM This's the place, and you're the man to do it, boy .

~~TERRY~~ ^{Harry} You betcha life. An' know what ? --I'm gonna take Sarah out of here -- I'm gonna set 'er up -- to be a gran' lady of high society.

TOM

Good for you, Terry.

~~TERRY~~ *Harry*

Lord and Lady ~~George~~ ^{Harold} Gibbs, thass what we'll be -- Knights
o' the Gutter !

TOM

Hoh hoh. You're rich already, kid ; a few more ~~33333333~~
boilermakers and you'll have a share in Paradise.

~~TERRY~~ *Harry*

Sarah ! Sarah ! Come over here !

TOM

Now, take it easy, Terry.

~~TERRY~~ *Harry*

Sarah, know what I'm gonna do -- I was just tellin' Jim here --
I'm gonna set you up to be a grand lady...

SARAH

I'm a grand lady now, ~~Terry~~ *Harry*

~~TERRY~~ *Harry*

A Lady of the Gutter ! A strumpet from....

TOM

Okay, ~~Terry~~ ^{*Harry*}, okay.

SARAH

(AS ~~TERRY'S~~ ^{*Harry's*} TALK DEGENERATES TO A MUTTER) Just keep him as
quiet as you can, will you, Jim ? I don't want the place
wrecked.

~~TERRY~~ *Harry*

I heard you ! Sarah, you're goin' straight to hell -- you
were made for it. Let go me, Tom, leggo !

TOM

You just sit down, ~~Terry~~ *Harry*

~~TERRY~~ *Harry*

Alright.

TOM

Here -- I'll pour you another one.

TERRY

I'm no good -- no good -- no good---

MUSIC

UP. DOWN AND AT A DISTANCE.

NARRATOR

Mr. McKeen stood outside Sarah Holmes', listening to the
music and the laughter. It seemed to him that it was from
another life he heard those sounds -- from somewhere afar
off -- twenty-five years ago when he was very young.
...But the years had pressed him down until there was no
joy left ~~in~~ in him, and now, not even love.... The bitterness
of it ! The bitterness of his struggle to succeed ! And all
false ! all for nothing ! He knew now how little he had

ever wanted success, how he hated it ! He wondered how it was that it took a man a lifetime to know how to live !He walked up the path to Sarah's place, and opened the door, and stepped inside.

SOUND/MUSIC

UP FURIOUSLY. DOWN GRADUALLY. BRIDGE TO

NARRATOR

Olive Paget finished the sleeve of the sweater she was knitting for Mike, her husband, and held it up to inspect it.

In a few hours Mike would return. In a way, it was better, she thought, the night shift. She found that she had more time with him.

OLIVE

HUMMING A LITTLE TUNE. OUT.

NARRATOR

If only her husband liked it here ! She did. It was pleasant to her, the people were kind -- she liked the long valley, the wild flowers that grew on the mountain slopes in summer, even the sight of Turtle Mountain so close over their heads. She was sure, that in time, Mike would get used to the work, and everything would be fine.

OLIVE

HUMMING HER LITTLE TUNE. FADE.

NARRATOR

Out on their ranch the Jackson's had gone to bed, but still lay awake, talking....

JIM JACKSON

We're goin' to break even this year, Debbie. With a little luck we'll break even.

DEBORAH

Oh, Jim, it's so good.

JACKSON

The valley's alright. There were times I wondered about it.

DEB

I've come to like it, Jim. Our youngest born here, and now we're doing so well.

JACKSON

It's a queer thing, Deb, we used to own some of the best ranch country anywhere, and yet we never could make anything out of it. Hardly scraped through. We start here & from scratch and before you know it we've got a real ranch.

DEB

Did the Minister say when he was goin' to call, Jim ?

JIM

No, but he will, never fear.

JACKSON

It's good havin' a minister here, and a church.

JIM Makes it feel like home, don't it, Deb ?

DEB There was somethin' my Mother always said, Jim : you just
 can't tear up your roots without hurting somethin'.

JIM Well, she was right, too. Good night, Debbie. We got a
 big day ahead of us and we're goin' to need all the sleep we
 can get.

DEB Goodnight, Jim.

MUSIC QUIET. SUBLUED.

NARRATOR The town was going to sleep. Olive Paget had put away her
 knitting, and was dozing by the fire, because she did not
 like to go to bed until her husband returned.

 The Reverend Mr. McCoy lay in the darkness of his room,
 the cool mountain air fanning him, making him drowsy in the
 warmth of his bed, and yet he could not sleep.

 Bill Blaney, sitting on the side of his bed, pulled off
 his socks and stared at his swollen feet with his face
 screwed up in a mixture of disgust and sympathy.

 ...Everyone in the town, alone in the private world of their
 thoughts, expectant, waiting, looking for something : the next
 drink, the next pay check, the next crop, the next meal, the
 next day. Each person in the room of his thoughts, blaming
 the weather, or other people, or the world, or the stars,
 for what was wrong, or else hopeful, waiting, a little afraid
 that what they hoped for would not help, and only a few
 able to enjoy the moment in a knitted sleeve, the breeze
 coming down the valley with the smell of melting snow in it,
 and the sounds of streams on the mountainside, or
 music and young laughter.....

 Mr. McKeen sat in Sarah's front room, flushed with pleasure,
 not knowing quite what to do with it, watching it like
 a small boy would, the extra large coin he had found in the
 gutter, and which was now in the palm of his hand.....

SOUND MUSIC AND PARTYING. HOLD BG.

SARAH Tom, -- come over here a moment.

TOM Yeah, Sarah ?

SARAH There's going to be trouble if we're not careful. ^{Harry} Terry has the notion I've been playing around with our friend, McKeen there. -- You'll have to watch ^{Harry} Terry. I'm going over to McKeen and talk to him.

TOM I wouldn't do that, Sarah. You're just asking for trouble.

SARAH Maybe I am but I told ^{Harry} Terry today he's not going to tell me who to see, or what to do, and this is a good time to make it clear to him

TOM (DOUBTFULL) Alright, Sarah, suit yourself.

SARAH Don't worry, Tom. I think I know ^{Harry} Terry pretty well and I don't think he's going to do a thing.

MUSIC UP

SARAH Hello, Mr. McKeen. Welcome to Sarah Holmes' establishment. Is there anything I can bring you in the way of refreshment?

McKEEN Just a Scotch and water, Sarah. Make it thick, will you ?

SARAH Coming right up.

MUSIC THE GUITARIST STARTS A NEW MELODY.

SARAH Here we are, Mr. McKeen.

McKEEN I think it will help, Sarah.

SARAH It should. Mind if I join you ?

McKEEN I'd be honoured.

SARAH It's a long time since we've had a gentleman like you in our midst.

McKEEN Here's to you, Sarah.

SARAH Thank you.

McKEEN Let me correct you, Sarah. I was a gentleman once. But it never suited me very well. In fact, Sarah, trying to be a gentleman, I mean a successful gentleman, is one of the unhappiest jobs in the world.

McKEEN You're still a gentleman. I recognize it, Mr. McKeen. It sticks out a mile because it's so rare. It doesn't

have anything to do with the clothes you wear or even your manners. Let's say it's the manner of your manners. Are they real or are they worn like a fashionable suit.

McKEEN Let's say, then, Sarah, that I'm a broken down and worn out gentleman who wants to forget what he should be --- and learn the taste of things all over again. Know what I mean?

SARAH I believe I do, Mr. McKeen.

McKEEN Yes, you would. You don't waste time thinking about what should be, do you? -- only about what is. Am I right?

SARAH It's sometimes sad, Mr. McKeen, to have to think that way.

McKEEN We understand one another, don't we, Sarah, and we don't have to say a thing.

SARAH Maybe we're the same kind of people, Mr. McKeen. If we are I'm sorry for you. You must have had a hell of a life.

McKEEN I have.

SARAH Well then here's to you, Mr. McKeen. Drink deep and enjoy yourself. You must need it after all these years. I'll bring you another glass.

MUSIC UP

SARAH I see ^{Harry}~~Terry~~ is under control, Tom.

TOM Funniest thing I ever saw. He watched you talkin' to McKeen there and I thought for sure someone was goin' to die. Then, he reached for his glass, gulped it off, and went out like a light.

SARAH Good for him. He's got some sense, after all. Thanks Tom.

TOM No trouble at all, Sarah.

SARAH Hey, Buck, a little more music. The evening's fresh and we're just beginning to enjoy ourselves.

BUCK Comin' right up, Sarah.

MUSIC THE GUITARIST PLAYS A LIVELY TUNE

SARAH Now, Mr. McKeen, let's celebrate!

MUSIC UP. AN INTERVAL WHICH GRADUALLY FADES TO STRING SHIMMER.

NARRATOR The moon had passed behind Turtle Mountain as the night wore on.....

Jack Keenan swore in his sleep, and Bill Blaney, with a bottle of hot water at his feet, on an Ontario farm. He was climbing up a ladder attached to the side of the barn..... (FADE)

SOUND FADE IN CHILDREN'S SHOUTS.

CHILDREN Hey ! Hey ! Look out, Bill ! Look out ! The Fenians are coming, the Fenians are coming ! Help ! Help !

BILLY Oooooooh !

NARRATOR And down from the ladder he fell fifteen feet straight to the ground.

BILLY (GAINING CONSCIOUSNESS) Father ?

FATHER Ye-e-e-s, it's your Father, Billy. How you feelin' ?

BILLY I got a awful headache.

FATHER (CHUCKLING) well.... so would anybody, Billy, who dove head first into the ground. Now that was a crazy thing to do !

BILLY (FRIGHTENED ALL OVER AGAIN) Have the Fenians gone, Father ? Don't let them come, they're not coming are they ? The Fenians won't catch me, will they, Father ?

FATHER No no no no. You go to sleep now. Everything's fine.

BILLY What are Fenians , Father ?

NARRATOR Then the hot water bottle fell away from his feet and Bill Blaney had to grope for it, cursing, and when he got it back in place, he dreamed that the school teacher was caning him again, and when he was finished he stood him up and said :

TEACHER William, I'm afraid you'll never come to much good.
William, I'm afraid.....

MUSIC WEDDING MUSIC VERY SOFT BG.

NARRATOR And Olive Paget asleep by the fire which was down to two gleaming coals, saw herself in her shimmering bridal gown, moving up the aisles between the rows of people, all of them smiling upon her, and the young man who was waiting for her at the altar, turning to give her a furtive, happy glance

before she joined him and they stood forever in
the glowing candle light hand in hand.

MUSIC

DIES OUT.

NARRATOR

But the Reverend Mr. McCoy could not sleep. His bed was small and hard and he found himself getting peevish with it, and with the night that lay heavily upon him, so that he found it hard to breathe and he sat up with surprise, his hands searching for the window beside him. He could find it nowhere, and he jumped to his feet expecting the floor to give way beneath him. There was a table on the other side of the room and he crept to it on his hands and knees, until he had bumped into it and groped for the lamp and thematches beside it....

When he had lit the lamp, he sat on a chair with his head in his hands.it was alright....it was alright.... the night had turned black...that was all, he said over and over to himself as he prayed to the dark.....

MUSIC

A FAINT STRING SHIMMER

NARR

There was no sound anywhere in the night, although a cat under the Jackson's porch, yawned and stretched its paws. ...And Jim Jackson turned in his sleep..... AND DREAMT THAT HE WAS riding with the boys for a wild time in his old Saskatchewan town....

MUSIC

GAY, SQUARE DANCE. HOE DOWN. FADE THROUGH

BILL

Uncork that bottle again, Reg, and pass her over.

REG

Hey, Jim ! Do you think Sue will be waitin' for you tonight, Jim ?

JIM

You're damn right she is.

REG

You aimin' to marry her ?

(REG AND BILL LAUGH)

JIM

As a matter of fact, I am !

There's a gal worth any dozen of the others.

BILL Waal, if that's the case you better brace yourself up a bit,
Jim. Here's the bottle. Help yourself.

JIM No, I don't want any.

REG I believe that man is in love with Susan Sarah Clara Jones.
(REG AND BILL LAUGH AGAIN.)

BILL Are you goin' to ask her tonight, Jim ?

REG You better take a drink to set yourself, Jim, for askin' her.

BILL What if she says no, Jim ?

REG Better have just one little drink, Jim.

BILL No girl wants to say yes to a sourpuss, Jim.

JIM Just one then -- only because I'm tired to death of listenin'
to the two of you !

(THE OTHERS LAUGH AND CHEER.)

REG Wheeee !

SOUND REG AND BILL START TO SING A ROWDY SONG, INTERSPERSED WITH
REG SHOUTING : "HAVE ANOTHER ONE? JIM. THAT'S A BOY! "
LAUGHING AND SINGING -- ALL FADE)

JACKSON (IN HIS SLEEP) ...Susan Sarah Clara Jones.....

NARRATOR And Mrs. McKeen in another room in another part of the town
dreamt that she and her husband were dancing in a great palace room
and all the eyes of the multitude were on her swirling beauty
....and her husband would not let her dance with any other man....

MUSIC A GHOSTLY VIENNESE WALTZ UP AND FADE TO VERY LOW DRUM ROLL
TO ~~9339333~~ WISPS OF MUSIC EG....

NARRATOR The mountain, in the early morning, locked coldly down
on the little town hugged into its side. Huge coils of mist had
spread along its peaks, and sprung in plumes high into the
pre-dawn sky.....

MUSIC STRINGS SHIMMERING.

NARRATOR It was still dark when McKeen moved slowly down the road
to his own home -- and all the town slept. Indeed, it seemed

to him that all the world was in a deep unconsciousness,
and that he was the only wakeful member left. He and
the mountain, which loomed above him in spires that
pointed through holes in the mist to the flecks of stars....

(PAUSE)

There is that in the pre-dawn which has the taste of
pre-existence : a rawness in the earth and in the air,
that has no shape or life. No wind exists -- no sound ----
but only far and away -- the moving darkness, like the
shadow of some giant's mind in sleep.

McKeen felt it, ancient in his bones, and would have fled the
rising terror..... but he could not.

Instead, he opened the door to his home, and stood inside,
and waited, as all the sleepers of the town were waiting
--- for the dawn.

SOUND

OF THE GRANDFATHER CLOCK : TICK TOCK TICK TOCK : RISING
LOUDER AND LOUDER. THEN OUT.

MUSIC

END WITH DISTANT BALLAD OF FRANKS.
