

[...] shortly after moving to Suffolk, Wyn, retired on grounds of ill health from a career in the software industry, began to comb the beach at Dunwich. She wasn't sure what she was looking for but in a strange way felt in conversation with the doleful rhythms of the waves eroding the cliffs of this once mighty port. Mostly her findings consisted of no more than a trivial detritus jettisoned from the shipping lanes of the North Sea. Occasionally she would discover a more titillating memoir of some weekend seafarer: once she found a discarded cigarette lighter from a brothel in Holland. She like to imagine this cargo to be the assets of some reckless subconscious removal company, the tangible salvage of a neurotic past, washed upon the rippled beach of her cerebellum.

Towards the end of August that year, however, Wyn started to notice changes in the composition of the seaweed among which she would often search for an entangled relic. It seemed to have taken on a more sinewy texture. At first she attributed these changes to the affects of a little reported oil spill from a forgotten tanker – the ghost galleon of Amoco Cadiz. But, over the following days, as the seaweed continued to inundate the beach, she saw that these new fronds contained none of the familiar gas filled bladders of common kelp. On closer inspection, Wyn realised this was no exotic hybrid of algae and petrochemical, but in fact spools of slimy cellulose acetate – more exactly, magnetic recording tape. Excited by this discovery, as she sat in the rotting remains of a rowing boat, back near the beach hut, drying her booty over the sides, Wyn fantasised about the contents of the tape. Might these contain the lost hymns and bells of Dunwich's sunken monasteries? Or could these reels have come from somewhere altogether more ancient: the record shops of Atlantis, the occult sound libraries of HP Lovecraft's Cthulhian mythos.

In the nearby fisherman's cottage she had rented for her recuperation, Wyn set about reassembling the morass of tapes. She purchased a second hand reel to reel recorder from an Internet auction site, fashioning a rudimentary splicing apparatus from two blocks of drift wood and a disposable razor blade. To her surprise the contents of the recordings were in relatively healthy condition. Indeed it seemed that the tape came from a single composition and though no ethno-musicologist she recognised a calypso like quality to the reconstructed song. The discernible musical idiom of the piece was given an edge by its arrangement and ornamentation. Offset against the lilting South Sea melody, there was an electro-acoustic hollowness to the production. More disquieting yet, barely audible in the background of the recording, Wyn was sure she hear could the nervous chatter of a Geiger counter. This anomaly, presumably an artefact, gave the piece an oblique aesthetic – as if it were the lofi radiophonic theme to a post-atomic thriller filmed on location at Bikini Atoll.

Buoyed by the success of this initial operation, she returned to the beach to collect further samples. This time she found the foam inundated with a brood of nematode-like celluloid tape. Some exhibits were still attached to their partially intact plastic spools. Like exoskeletons of a strange crustacean species, Wyn felt a sense of unease as she gutted the magnetic tape from their broken housing. It was as if some ancient submarine creature was reconstituting itself from her unconscious memory. Perhaps her sonic extrapolations had reawakened an evolved specimen of her earlier invertebrate sample? Revolted and yet intoxicated by this notion, Wyn, in a state of agitated impatience, became desperate to extract the latest sounds from these new discoveries. Neglecting to properly dry out the

tape, Wyn carelessly hacked at the damp cellulose, the blade of her knife sliding out of control and cutting her right index finger at the knuckle. spurts of watery blood oozed over the clutch of material in her hand. The salt stung considerably as she washed the wound in the spawn of ocean spray.

Back in the rotting boat, sucking on her still bleeding knuckle, Wyn was enveloped by a feeling of foolishness. The cut would require a couple of sutures to stem the flow of blood and heal properly. The meaninglessness of her endeavour would only be exacerbated by her turning up at casualty to waste the resources of some overburdened A&E nurse – and for what purpose, the extraction of these tapes based on her fantasy of discovery of some mysterious sound library. It was around this time that Wyn also began to sense and worry that someone was overseeing her baleful adventure. A couple of times in the boat, she had turned around quickly hoping to catch the presence of a watcher on the cliff face. By nature hypersensitive, Wyn had a tendency to invent fictional plots in which she would be at the centre of some grand conspiracy. These delusions would grow as she isolated herself within a self mythologizing quest. Clearly the sharp focus of the previous days in the desolate cottage had only served to heighten Wyn's paranoia [...]

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### Footnotes

1. What was I, before I became this rather meagre room? The aimless wanderings, the cat's cradle of seaweed entangling my calm. It should be tucked behind the ageing skin, behind the spools of slimy memory.
2. I set about reassembling fronds from the cut that would grow.
3. The reel to reel recorders were still attached to their memories. They filled me with the ocean's static.
4. (see figure 3) Here are some electro-acousticians clearly in a state of mental distress.
5. Excited by this discovery, I sat in the brothel, my mouth filled with a seafarer's smile.
6. I wandered back to the beach to collect more condoms filled with thick black ink.
7. If someone had been watching, the seaweed would have moved from the mantle, and out of the french window.
8. Clearing the sucking sound on my bleeding knuckle, I made a rudimentary wound.
9. I was sure I could hear the babble and hiss of the waves from inside my sleep.
10. When I wake, I check the arrangement of the room. It is over the workshop. I must wash my wound again.
11. I spent my time in the lost hymns and bells of Dunwich.
12. And once a leather stiletto with towering heels inscribed with the word Amundsem.
13. This type of thing was popular in the 1970s. Now, I am down to the knuckle, spurting watery paranoia.
14. I remember the limp of a man who had lost his shoe.
15. Over every edge, over every surface.
16. I have wandered back to the beach and collected more samples.
17. I have a tendency to invent paperbacks, that only the ocean would swallow.
18. Stirring from a post-atomic radiophonic theme, shocked by my own fragments.
19. A fisherwoman's knife will not be found in a library.
20. No bandages over my arms.
21. Sounds oozed over us, the fronds have slipped inside.