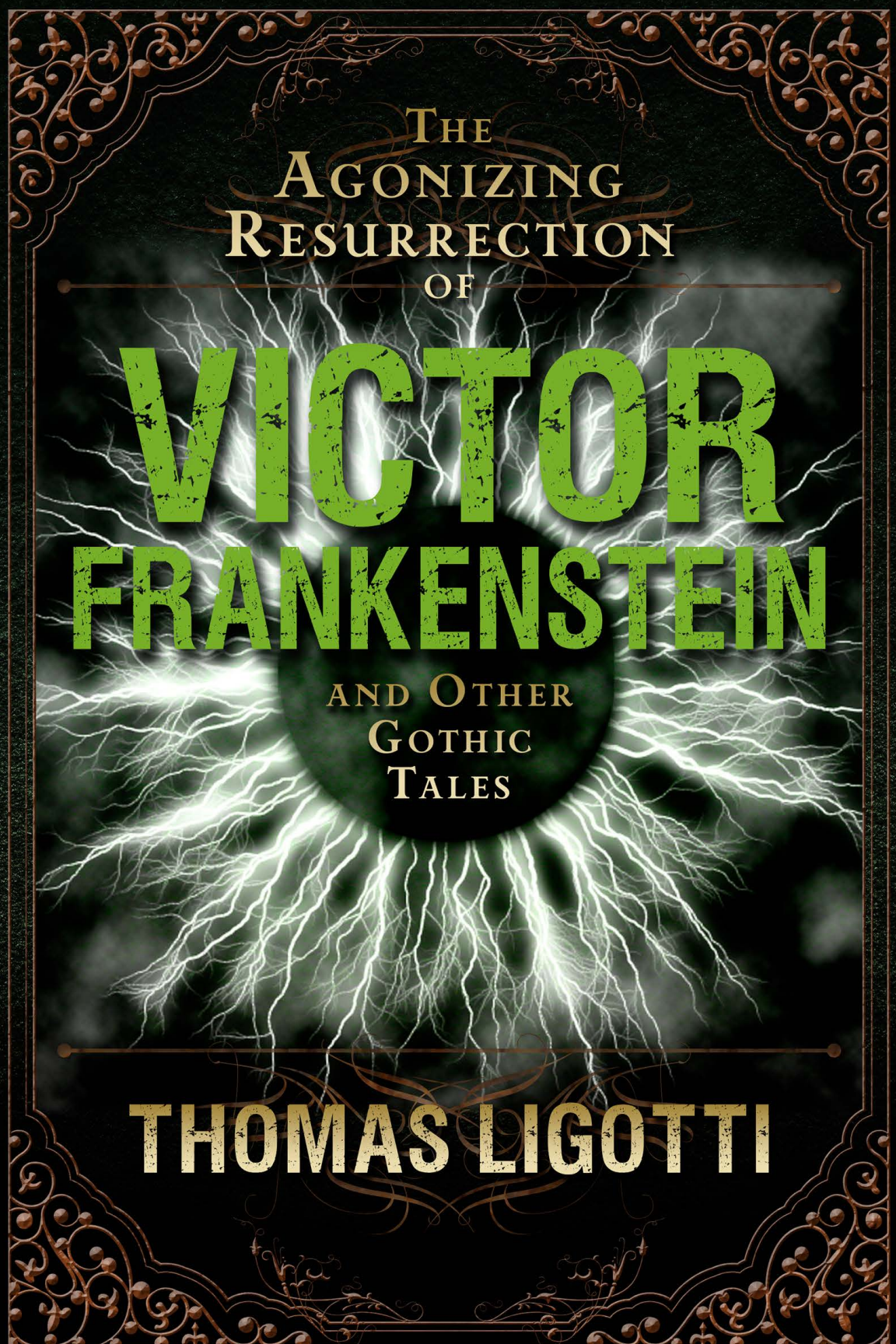
The Agonizing Resurrection of
Victor Frankenstein
and Other Gothic Tales
Thomas Ligotti

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THOMAS LIGOTTI

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Dedicated to Harry O. Morris
and to the memory of Christine Morris

Preface

In *The Island of Dr Moreau* by H.G. Wells, the mad scientist of the title is keen to transform the animals living in the region of his tropical hideaway into humans. More finely, he wishes to extract from them their bestial traits and implant in them an *ideal rationality*. Those animals who have been artificially evolved, although not nearly to the degree the doctor would like, speak of Moreau's laboratory as the House of Pain. This is a suitable designation for a place where unnatural and excruciating deeds are practiced. The name not only suggests the pain of the subjects as they have reason forced upon them, it betokens the pain of reason itself, a faculty every human animal came to possess in some measure when we were transfigured long ago in nature's laboratory—that House of Pain which remains our home to this day.

To a writer of horror stories, a creature whose business is the depiction of a variety of torturous encounters, the question may arise: Why not take Wells's story another step or two down the path of pain? At some point, this general concept becomes particularized. Perhaps a day arrives when Moreau believes he has hit the mark of creating a perfectly rational being. But to his dismay he ultimately discovers that he has left far too much of the irrational flowing through his subject's system. Once again Dr Moreau has failed in the worst way. By adding a new character, a fetching lab assistant, we are able to appreciate in full how monstrous the doctor's ideal truly is. What a pitiful specimen his latest experiment has produced. What illogical sentiment the erstwhile beast displays in the presence of the pretty lab assistant. And the doctor had such high hopes! Now the creature will require further adjustments in order to nudge its

nature closer to that untainted rationality that Moreau values above all else. Yes, that would provide an extra dose of pain, knowing that the beast will never meet the doctor's expectations, as we have not, and that its pain will end only with its death on the operating table.

And so the task has been executed. But once this revamping or disfigurement of Wells's original hair-raiser has been performed, the horror writer may begin to wonder how similar treatments might be applied to other well-known works of the genre. Is the literary artist any less curious or fixed upon an ideal than Dr Moreau? Maybe he will even throw in some of his own once-told tales, the intent being to make these, too, efforts in excessive pain, infinite and eternal pain beyond physical release.

This is how the present volume began and proceeded, with each new story being pushed onward in the direction of its unique and perverse apotheosis of pain. After Moreau, another overreaching scientist came to the author's mind: Victor Frankenstein, the consummate creator, which is to say, *recreator*. Like Moreau, Frankenstein was a criminal. What could be a worse offense against God and nature than to fabricate a blasphemous replica of a human being? In Frankenstein's case, the monster in question is a surprisingly sensitive and intelligent individual who is rejected by others simply by virtue of his hideous appearance. Was Frankenstein's fate in the original story really punishment enough for his crime, and could his creature's life be made even more heartrending? One might take the position that the pain that young Mary Shelley inflicted on each of them was sufficient as it was. But sometimes readers of horror tales are not sated by the tragic agonies offered up for their approval. And if there is a horror writer among them, the stakes may be raised to the very heights of scowling Gothic skies. This is not done purely for the sake of sadism, to give the screw another turn for the enjoyment of eliciting more screams from those upon the rack. It is done—it was done—as a means of vicarious self-flagellation, laying the whip most brutally across the backs of fictional characters as a distraction from each lash real life was putting to the writer at a specific time in his life. In the religious universe, hell exists as a place for others, not

as a fate for those who invented it. But figuratively speaking, we are all doomed to invent our own hells. And after becoming a resident of some pit, we look around for companions with whom to commiserate—parties to our pain, equals condemned for the same lapses or blunders, whether we intended to commit them or not.

With the second group of stories herein, those featuring Dracula and the Wolfman, certain motifs began to emerge that came to be carried throughout the rest of the book. These figures cried out of loneliness, yearning, and the rites of romance gone horribly wrong. Rather than spoil these singular dramas, let us say no more about them in this prelude to an exhibition of pains that by all justice would shatter the world in which they transpire.

There are many stories that might have been reworked and included in this museum of ever-echoing groans and endlessly twisting grimaces. One of them deserves special mention because it just may serve as a key to all the others. The story is Franz Kafka's "In the Penal Colony," and its plot is this: A man is convicted of a crime unknown to him until he reads it as a legend that has been inscribed into his flesh by the pain-inflicting harrow of an uncanny machine. The strangest aspect of this narrative of strange characters, terrains, and devices is the expression of awe upon the condemned man's face as his crime is revealed upon his body by the piercing contraption. As the official of the penal colony who is in charge of the execution remarks: "Enlightenment comes to the most dull-witted…A moment that might tempt one to get under the harrow itself" (which the official does in the end, only to his grief). The enlightenment of Kafka's man on the machine need not be definitive, as it is in the original, but could be only the first in a series of enlightenments, each bringing into view a greater crime than the one before, and each a greater source of pain. As the harrow keeps writing, the flesh of the man shackled beneath it becomes a palimpsest upon which unimaginable crimes are written…until the greatest crime of all is disclosed. In the words of the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, who was an influence on Kafka, "We should regard every man first and foremost as a being who exists only as a

consequence of his culpability and whose life is an expiation of the crime of being born." Extending Schopenhauer's statement to make it a bit more chilling, as well as more accurate, we might specify our crime not as that of simply being born, but as being born into the House of Pain.

Three Scientists

One Thousand Painful Variations Performed Upon Diverse Creatures Undergoing the Treatment of Dr Moreau, Humanist

Dr Moreau is examining the manwolf strapped to the operating table. He has worked very hard on this one, tearing him by slow and torturous degrees away from his bestial origins.

Today Dr Moreau is curious. He sees the manwolf gazing at his pretty assistant. He first tries to read the truth in the manwolf's eyes but cannot. Now he must resort to an empirical test.

Very casually Dr Moreau loosens the straps binding the wrists and ankles of the manwolf and then, quietly, leaves the room. He waits a few moments in the hallway, anxious to allow them enough time. Finally, opening a thin crack in the door, he peeks inside with one eye.

Well, so much for that, he thinks, and suddenly steps into the room to confront his two subjects—the assistant: standing rigid with terror; the manwolf: down on one knee like a delirious knight before the menaced lady he would gladly save.

"Idiot!" screams Dr Moreau, knocking the manwolf's head a good forty-five degrees to one side with the back of his hand. "We've got a long way to go with these beasts," he tells his assistant. "It's for their own good!"

Then, with disgust, he takes a little gold key from his vest pocket and walks toward a huge door, behind which is a perplexing array of powerful drugs and instruments of unimaginable pain.

The Excruciating Final Days of Dr Henry Jekyll, Englishman

Dr Jekyll has been locked in his laboratory off a busy London bystreet for almost a week now, trying to find the formula that would destroy the insatiable Edward Hyde forever, or at least dissolve him into a few chemicals harmlessly suspended in one's system.

Late Sunday morning Dr Jekyll awakens on the floor and discovers, to his amazement, the shrunken form of Hyde stirring half-consciously beside him.

They are both a little groggy, and Dr Jekyll is the first to make it to his feet. For a moment they just stare at each other. Dr Jekyll can see that Hyde's ferocious being has been rendered innocuous and tame, the lingering effect, no doubt, of his debauched life.

"I have just the thing," says Dr Jekyll, cradling Hyde's head with one arm and forcing a beaker of bubbling fluid to his lips. Then Dr Jekyll backs away and watches Hyde being overtaken by wrenching convulsions from the poison he has unwittingly ingested.

Someone is now knocking at the laboratory door (the one that leads into the house). "Dr Jekyll, sir, there's a young lady here asking for Mr Hyde. What should I tell her?"

"Just a minute, Poole," answers Dr Jekyll, smoothing out his crumpled cravat and preparing to deliver the regrettable news that Hyde died days ago in an unfortunate accident of science. The man would drink anything he could get his hands on, and he knew nothing of chemistry!

But before seeing the young lady, Dr Jekyll wants to examine the corpse of his evil twin. *My God, this poor creature is practically*

immortal, he thinks as he drags the faintly gasping body of Edward Hyde toward the gaping and fiery incinerator.

The Agonizing Resurrection of Victor Frankenstein, Citizen of Geneva

Victor Frankenstein has died on board a ship caught in seas of ice near the North Pole. Subsequently, his body is sent back to his native Switzerland, where, however, there is no one to receive it. Everyone he ever knew has already died before him. His brother William, his friend Henry, his wife Elizabeth, and his father Alphonse Frankenstein, among others, are no more. A minor official in the Genevan civil service comes up with the suggestion to donate the corpse, still very well preserved, to the university at Ingolstadt, where the deceased distinguished himself in scientific studies.

Hans Hoffmann, a prodigy in comparative anatomy at the University of Ingolstadt, is conducting a series of experiments in his apartment. He has assembled, and is quite sure he can vivify, a human being from various body parts he has bought or stolen. To consummate his project, which to his knowledge has never been attempted and would certainly make him famous, he still needs a human brain. He has heard that the body of a former student at the university at Ingolstadt is preserved in the morgue of the medical school. It seems the man was a brilliant student. This would be the perfect brain, thinks Hans Hoffmann. Late one night he breaks into the morgue and helps himself.

"Well," says Hans Hoffmann on the spectacular evening when the creature first opens its eyes, "aren't you a beauty!" This is intended ironically, of course; the creature is quite hideous. What

Hans Hoffmann now notices is that his creation is gazing around the room, as if expecting to see someone who, for the moment, is absent.

"Oh ho," says the scientist, "I can see I'm going to have trouble with you. You'll be begging me one of these days to make you a companion, someone of your own kind. Well, look here," says Hans Hoffmann, holding a handful of entrails and part of a woman's face. "I've already tried to do it, perhaps a little half-heartedly, I admit. It's not the same, making a woman, and I don't have much use for them anyway."

Hans Hoffmann cannot tell whether or not the creature has understood these words. Nevertheless, it has an extremely desolate expression on its face (just possibly due to a few collapsed muscles). Now the creature is staggering around Hans Hoffmann's apartment, inadvertently breaking a number of objects. Finally, it stumbles out the door and into the streets of Ingolstadt. ("Good riddance!" shouts Hans Hoffmann.)

But as the creature wanders into the darkness, searching for a face it remembers from long ago, it is unaware that the only being in the entire universe who could possibly offer him any comfort has already incinerated himself on a furious pyre deep in the icy wasteland of the North Pole.

Two
Immortals

The Heart of Count Dracula, Descendant of Attila, Scourge of God

Count Dracula recalls how he was irresistibly drawn to Mina Harker (née Murray), the wife of a London real estate agent. Her husband had sold him a place called Carfax. This was a dilapidated structure next door to a noisy institution for the insane. Their incessant racket was not undisturbing to one who was, among other things, seeking peace. An inmate named Renfield was the worst offender.

One time the Harkers had Count Dracula over for the evening, and Jonathan (his agency's top man) asked him how he liked Carfax with regard to location, condition of the house and property, and just all around. "Ah, such architecture," said Count Dracula while gazing uncontrollably at Mina, "is truly frozen music."

Count Dracula is descended from the noble race of the Szekelys, a people of many bloodlines, all of them fierce and warlike. He fought for his country against the invading Turks. He survived wars, plagues, the hardships of an isolated dwelling in the Carpathian Mountains. And for centuries, at least five and maybe more, he has managed to perpetuate, with the aid of supernatural powers, his existence as a vampire. This existence came to an end in the late 1800s. "Why *her*?" Count Dracula often asked himself.

Why the entire ritual, when one really thinks about it. What does a being who can transform himself into a bat, a wolf, a wisp of smoke, anything at all, and who knows the secrets of the dead

(perhaps of death itself) want with this oily and overheated nourishment? Who would make such a stipulation for immortality! And, in the end, where did it get him? Lucy Westenra's soul was saved, Renfield's soul was never in any real danger…but Count Dracula, one of the true children of the night from which all things are born, has no soul. Now he has only this same insatiable thirst, though he is no longer free to alleviate it. "Why her? There were no others such as her." Now he has only this painful, perpetual awareness that he is doomed to wriggle beneath this infernal stake which those fools—Harker, Seward, Van Helsing, and the others—have stuck in his trembling heart. "Her fault, her fault." And now he hears voices, common voices, peasants from the countryside.

"Over here," one of them shouts, "in this broken-down convent or whatever it is. I think I've found something we can give those damned *dogs*. Good thing, too. Christ, I'm sick of their endless whining."

The Insufferable Salvation of Lawrence Talbot the Wolfman

According to ritual, the wolfman has just been shot with a silver bullet by the one who loved him, and whom he loved. He falls to the ground where a thick layer of autumn leaves absorbs much of the impact of his body. The woman is still pointing the revolver—using both hands—when the others in the hunting party arrive, summoned by the gunshots they heard.

A tall man in a tweed sportcoat puts his arms around the woman. "Don't worry, he can't harm you anymore," the tall man says to her. But the wolfman never even touched the woman to begin with. Literally.

Lawrence Talbot was the human name of the wolfman. He was in his late thirties, unemployed (with prospects), and unmarried. While traveling through Eastern Europe, hiking about forests much of the time, he was attacked by a large wolf and bitten once or twice. After being examined by a doctor, he didn't give the incident a great deal of thought…until the following month, when he saw the full moon through the diamond-paned windows of an English country house where he was a guest.

He had fallen in love with the daughter of the man who owned the house, and he was secretly intending to ask her to marry him. But after the first full moon opened his eyes to what he had become, he knew his life was over. He was a murderer, however involuntarily. Before the next full moon he made the woman promise that if anything should happen to him, well, his one wish was to be interred in the mausoleum on the grounds of her father's estate. "I promise,"

she said solemnly, though she understood neither the promise itself, nor the solemnity with which she uttered it.

Lawrence Talbot wanted to know he would still be close to this woman after his death. But he never imagined that he would also be able to hear her voice, and other voices, while unfortunately being unable to respond.

"Aren't we supposed to cut out its heart now?" asked one of the men in the hunting party. (Well, so what if they do? He loved her with every part of himself and would still be capable of sensing her presence on the frequent visits she would undoubtedly make to the mausoleum.) "No, nothing to do with the heart," says another. "I think we're supposed to burn up the whole thing right away, and then scatter the ashes."

"Yes, that's quite true," adds the tall man. "But what do you say?" he asks the woman. She is weeping, "I don't know, I don't know. What does it matter anymore?" (No, it does! The promise, the promise!)

Some of the men complain about how hard it is to turn up decent tinder in a forest where it had rained so much that autumn. Every leaf, every twig they find seems to be slick and damp, as if each one has been stained with some beast's oily slobber.

Leading Men

The Intolerable Lesson of the Phantom of the Opera

The phantom of the opera is a genius. Before he became the phantom of the opera he was a composer of only average talent, a talent that was taken advantage of by a greedy swindler who stole the young composer's music. He tried to get revenge on the villain, and in the process his face was severely disfigured by some chemicals which splashed into it and caught fire. Afterward he moved into the sewers directly beneath the opera house, and he also became a genius.

In the middle of the opera season the phantom kidnaps a rather mediocre soprano and devotes many weeks to training her voice down in the resonant caverns of the Paris sewer system. He tells the girl to sing from the heart, rapping his chest once or twice to make her aware she is singing from his heart too, and maybe other people's. This is the basic message of his instruction, though he still exasperates his student with hours and hours of scales, ear training, and so forth.

One day she gets fed up with all the agony this man is putting her through, and out of despair, not to mention curiosity, rips off the mask that hides his hideous face. She screams and faints. While she is passed out, the phantom takes this opportunity to return her to the upper world of the opera house. For whether she knows it or not, she is now a great singer.

When the girl regains consciousness from the terrible shock she experienced, her days with the phantom of the opera seem like no more than a vague dream. Later in the season she is starring in an

opera and gives a brilliant performance, which the phantom watches from an empty box near the stage. Over and over he raps his chest with satisfaction and a sadness so personal and deep as to be incomprehensible to anyone but himself.

After the opera is finished and the star is taking her bows, the phantom notices that one of the heavy walkways above the stage is loose and about to come plummeting down right on his student's lovely head. He leaps onto the boards, pushes her out of the way, and is himself thoroughly crushed by the falling wreckage.

The phantom of the opera is bleeding freely and behind his mask his eyes are drowning. "Who's that?" someone asks the girl whom the phantom of the opera taught to sing so well. "I'm sure I don't know!" she answers as her strange and tormented teacher dies.

But her words do not contain a hint of the inexplicable emotion she feels. Only now will she really be able to sing from the heart. But she realizes there is no music on earth worthy of her voice, and later that night her monstrously heavy heart takes her to the bottom of the Seine.

The phantom of the opera is a genius.

The Unspeakable Rebirth of the Phantom of the Wax Museum

The phantom of the wax museum is walking down the street with his new girlfriend. Even though he is wearing a benignly handsome face, which he designed himself, there remains something repellent and sinister in his appearance. "No decent girl would go out with him," mutters an old woman as the couple passes by.

The phantom of the wax museum was once a gentle and sensitive artist who worked very hard shaping beautiful lifelike representations of figures from history and from modern times. A prosperous craftsman with no head for finance, he was cheated by his business partner and left for dead in a burning studio, where his masterpieces in wax melted one by one into nothing.

He, however, escaped, though in a badly disfigured condition, and from that day on he was mentally deranged, a sadistic demon artist who every so often submerged young women in vats of boiling wax and afterward displayed them for profit to the unsuspecting patrons of his museum. "A genius!" the public exclaimed.

The phantom of the wax museum is about to press the button that will cause his new girlfriend, presently unconscious, to descend into one of those famous bubbling vats. But quite unexpectedly some plainclothes detectives burst into the room and stop him. They rescue the girl and corner her would-be killer at the top of the stairs, just above the eagerly gurgling vat.

Suddenly, in this moment of great stress, the phantom of the

wax museum sees a gentle and sensitive face in his mind's eye. He remembers now, he remembers who he was so long ago. In fact, he remembers precious little else. What was he doing and who were these people at the top of those stairs?

"I beg your pardon," he starts to say to the detectives, "could you please tell me—"

But the youngest of the detectives is a little quick to fire his gun, and the evil phantom of the wax museum goes over the rail, disappearing beneath the creamy surface of the furiously seething vat.

One of the older detectives stares down into the busy pool of wax and in a rare reflective moment says: "If there's any justice in this life, that monster'll boil for eternity. He killed at least five lovely girls!"

But at the moment of his death the fortunate phantom of the wax museum could remember only one girl: his beautiful Marie Antoinette, which he'd finished a few hours ago, or so it seemed, and which he knew he would never see again.

Gothic Heroines

The Perilous Legacy of Emily St. Aubert, Inheritress of Udolpho

Emily St. Aubert has had a very difficult life. When only a young woman she sees the death of both her parents: her mother, whom Emily finds out was not her real mother, and her wise father, whom Emily adored. "O Emily, O Emily," cries her boyfriend Valancourt when she is carted off by the menacing Montoni to the somewhat broken down but nonetheless imposing castle named Udolpho.

At Udolpho there are a multitude of secrets: secret passages, secret stairways, secret motives, secret murders, tracks of blood from secret persons, moans from secret chambers, from secret nightmares, Italian secrets, Italian love, Italian hate and revenge.

At one point Emily sees the wax replica of a corpse with a worm-eaten face which she takes to be real. And it might as well have been. Eventually Emily is rescued by Valancourt, delivered from Udolpho, and not long afterward the pair are married. But complications arise.

Emily and Valancourt seem made for each other. Both have been through quite a lot but neither has been poisoned by their sorrow, their suffering, or by months spent deep in the midst of vice. Their simple, everyday natures remain unharmed and intact.

At night, however, Valancourt lies awake in bed, eavesdropping on the things Emily whispers in her sleep: secret things. After a few weeks of this, Valancourt is looking very haggard. In a matter of

months he is hopelessly insane, and one day goes running off for parts unknown.

Emily now spends much of her time alone. To occupy herself she writes poems, as she has always done, atmospheric little pieces like "To Melancholy," "To the Bat," "To the Winds," and "Song of the Evening Hour."

Sometimes she cannot help asking herself if she was not deceived from the very start about the virtues of Valancourt. Why, he was no better nailed together than that crumbling old castle of Montoni's. That awful, terrible place.

What was its name again? Ah, yes…Udolpho.

The Irreproachable Statement of the Governess' as to the Affair at Bly

The governess is writing an account of her experiences at Bly, where she had charge of two parentless children named Flora and Miles. She was hired for the job by the children's uncle following a rather perfunctory interview at his office in Harley Street. Despite the brevity and formality of this encounter, however, the governess fell deeply in love with her employer. Or so it seemed to Mrs Grose, the housekeeper at Bly, when the governess told her about the meeting.

Among other things, the governess writes of her amazement at the two beautiful children and of her resolve to devote herself body and soul to their upbringing in hopes that someday her devotion would be appreciated by the man in Harley Street. At least so much we are led to believe.

The governess now writes of the horrors at Bly. These are dire events involving the ghosts of two former retainers, Miss Jessel and Peter Quint, whom the governess suspects are trying to possess the souls of the children and through them perpetuate the unholy romantic alliance they carried on in life. However, this situation is not spelled out in so many words. Due to her subtle and indirect prose style, it is often difficult to tell what the governess is claiming.

During her time at Bly, the governess writes, she saw the fiendish figures of Quint and Jessel standing outside windows and upon high ledges, lurking in the shadows at the foot of a stairway, and

poised unmoving across the serene waters of a pond on the expansive estate. But she conquers her terror of these visitations, she tells, because at all costs she must protect the children. They are innocents after all. No matter what debased acts they have been led into committing, so the governess says, they may still be saved and, under her ever-watchful supervision, be returned to a sinless state. Accordingly, she packs up Flora and sends her to London, because, as the governess asserts, "Bly has ceased to agree with her." Now it only remains to challenge Miles regarding some awful secret. The dead, however, are very tenacious and do not easily give up the pleasure of unexpectedly appearing at windows and preventing secrets from being told.

One overcast day, the governess confronts Miles and begins her interrogation of him. What wickedness had he committed, she wonders, if any? Staring at them through the paned windows of a pair of French doors is the evil-eyed Quint. The governess rushes over to defend Miles from being wholly possessed by this demonic apparition. Each of them now seems to be making a bid for the boy's soul, as far as can be gathered from the governess's oblique relation of this tense scene. Tragically, Miles's heart stops beating during the ensuing struggle, whatever its precise nature, and he falls dead into the arms of the young woman.

So concludes the governess's recounting of the dreadful incidents that she vows to have occurred at Bly. There is only one more thing to tell, another turn of the screw, so to speak, to tighten a loose element of the story. To wit, despite the catastrophic outcome of the governess's first appointment in her profession, she nevertheless manages to gain employment elsewhere. One might well wonder how she was able to carry on that occupation, given the trauma she had by all accounts endured at the very start of her career. It almost seems she kept to herself much of what happened, and left it for her readers to work out the whole of what really took place. And why shouldn't she?

For some doings are simply too foul and degenerate to be told without equivocation, if not outright prevarication. Those at the

inquest into the death of Miles could barely make sense of the governess's testimony, which probably contributed to their exculpation of her of any wrongdoing in the affair. Even though she told so much, she could never tell all of the evil in which she became entangled. At the very least, a disclosure of that kind might have prevented her from finding another position like the one she had at Bly, where she proved herself a trustworthy member of the household and appeared for all the world a generally decent individual—a mentally and morally sound person who could not imaginably be someone with designs of a nature that could ever result in the death of a child. To think otherwise would have been too much for the good citizens probing the case. Beguiling as the governess presented herself, it was not…NO, there was nothing…HOW could it be—as if such a thing…And that was the end of it. As Mrs Grose testified at the hearing into the affair at Bly: "An upright young lady, she was, to be sure. And so *attentive* of the children."

Loners

The Unnatural Persecution, by a Vampire, of Mr Jacob J.

A young schoolteacher, who writes a little poetry on the side, is coming home to the boardinghouse where he lives on the top floor. A red-haired girl, one of his pupils, runs up to him just as he steps onto the old boardinghouse stairway.

"Have you heard about the vampire, Mr Jacob?" she asks him, squinting in the bright afternoon sunlight. The girl goes on to describe the vampire and its activities as they in turn have been related to her. "Of course, I know all that," replies Mr Jacob. "Well, see you tomorrow," he says, crushing a cigarette underfoot. (He doesn't like his students to see him smoking if he can help it.)

That night Mr Jacob can't sleep. He knows this business with the vampire is just nonsense, but in the middle of the night certain things can get on your nerves that normally you wouldn't think twice about. He drags himself out of bed and opens the only window in his room. How quiet everything is at this hour. Somehow it seems as if he's just noticed this for the first time.

The next day the reports about the vampire are verified by several honest and reliable persons. There are eye-witness accounts of a floating figure with blood dripping from its mouth. In addition, the body of a man from out of town was found that morning in his hotel room—drained of blood. Mr Jacob, along with many others, concurs that he felt something strange was up the last few days… something, well, something he couldn't exactly put his finger on.

Tonight Mr Jacob is taking no chances. He sits by the sole window in his room hour after hour with a large crucifix across his lap.

Every little while he forgets himself and dozes off, but each time he manages to startle his mind back to alertness with just one thought about the vampire.

As the days go by, the situation worsens. Many more bodies are found drained of blood. Mr Jacob hasn't had a decent rest since this terrible season of death began. All night long he sits gazing deep into the darkness beyond that idiotic little window. And he's smoking too much. One day he coughs up some blood into his hand—right in the middle of a grammar lesson!

Due to the inherent limits of the human will, Mr Jacob falls sound asleep one night by the window. Maybe he is only dreaming when he hears these little taps on the glass, but it seems so real. *"No,"* he screams, leaping from the chair and knocking the crucifix to the floor. He is shivering violently, as if some icy wind has rushed into the room and is tearing its way straight through him. But there is no wind. Outside the window all is quiet and dead.

The next day there is good news. The vampire has moved on, everyone is safe once more. Mr Jacob opens his window for the first time in weeks on a radiant morning in early spring. Children are singing for joy in the street. He suddenly closes the window and turns back toward his little room.

For Mr Jacob knows that everyone is suffering from a false sense of security. He stays on his guard. Night upon night he waits by the window, thinking one day the vampire will return…But for some reason she never does.

Late that summer nobody in town is surprised to hear that one evening Mr Jacob lost his balance and fell onto the street far below. He'd started drinking heavily, poor man. An unfortunate mishap… and just as the autumn semester was to begin!

The Superb Companion of André de V., Anti-Pygmalion

Tonight, as he stands smoking a cigarette and staring out his window upon a hazy avenue, M. André de V. has accomplished the supreme feat of the romantic dreamer. From only the slightest experience with a real woman—Mlle. LeMieux, the pursuit of whom would have been a futility—he has fashioned an ideal one of his imagination.

She is seated in a corner of the room: wise, beautiful, and content, she is the perfect complement to her creator's temper and the unflawed realization of his unspeakably complex prerequisites. He smiles at her and she smiles back, faultlessly reflecting both the kind and degree of sentiment in the original smile. This and similar experiments have helped M. André de V. pass a great deal of time recently.

Later that night a letter is delivered to the room of M. André de V. He pours himself a brandy, lights his last cigarette (he forgot to buy some that afternoon), and slits the envelope with a sharp, silvery letter-opener. *Dear André* (the letter begins):

> *There's some rather sad news tonight. Mlle. LeMieux has finally succumbed to her illness. (Were you even aware she was sick?) As she was among our circle of acquaintances, I thought you would want to be notified.*
>
> *P.S. How's your new play coming along?*

M. André de V. reads the letter about a dozen times, until the

message really sinks in. Then, still holding the letter in his hand, he returns to his position at the window. Without turning toward the phantasm in the corner, he says to it: "Go away! Please go away. There's not much point anymore."

But the beautiful specter does not disappear as commanded. Having already sensed its maker's unspoken desire, she takes the sharp letter-opener from where he left it on the table and buries it deep in the back of his soft neck.

Shut-Ins

The Ever-Vigilant Guardians of Secluded Estates

A young man with a sparse mustache is sitting in a large chair in the innermost chamber of his large house, where all his life he has lived in magnificent solitude off the fortunes made by his ancestors. For him, simply drifting among rooms of dreamy half-lights kills the better part of any given day.

Tonight, however, he is disturbed by certain mental images he is not used to experiencing: brightly lit places, crowds of people, and soft laughter. "Well, what do you think of that," he says aloud.

Now an old servant walks into the room, and the young man watches him as he sets down a drink in a glass of finely carved crystal. The young man hasn't asked for this refreshment but he takes a few sips anyway, just out of pure courtesy to the thoughtful old domestic.

The servant stands by, and the young man keeps an eye on him. When the servant bends down to collect the empty glass, the young man detects a slightly sour odor. And for some reason he is horrified by the sight of the servant's gaunt face.

"I think I'll go out tonight," says the young man as he makes a deliberately impulsive bound to his feet. "Where will you go?" asks the servant in a quiet voice. "That's no business of yours, now is it?" answers the young man. "Where will you go?" the servant repeats, a total lack of expression on his face.

"Insolent old fool," thinks the young man as he steps into the next room. But the next room is exactly like the one he has just left. And seated in a chair before him is a young man with a sparse

mustache, a servant by his side. Both of these figures stare at him, as if for the first time. Then he returns to the other room, only now remembering—if just for a brief, lucid moment—that he had in fact asked his servant to fetch the glass of poison that sent him to this hell of dreamy half-lights.

The Scream: From 1800 to the Present

Near the close of the eighteenth century, William B. is approaching his destination of a saloon on Boston's waterfront. As he passes through a narrow alleyway someone jumps him from behind and wraps a length of thin but strong rope around his neck.

While he is being choked to death he looks up and can see the moon over the tall shops and houses lining the alley. He knows he is going to die and cannot believe the injustice of it on almost every level: that he should die so young, that he should die before he'd had a drink that night, that he should die without realizing a single one of the marvelous dreams which had sustained his life in the first place.

In his final moments he would have settled for the small satisfaction of releasing a scream to relieve somewhat the purely physical anguish of being strangled to death. But his murderer, an expert waylayer, is pulling the rope too tight and not a sound is able to escape from William B.'s throat. Later that night a pack of huge wharf rats nibbles the body before it is discovered by some local prostitutes.

The spirits of murder victims are notorious avengers. They are well-known for lingering in the human world and "walking the earth" in search of their slayers. Suppose, however, the spirit has no idea what its murderer looks like? The spirit could haunt the scene of violence and perhaps nearby areas, hoping to pick up some gossip, a chance lead; but beyond this there isn't much that can be done.

The spirit has such a marvelous revenge planned: to let loose its terrible scream, now an instrument of supernatural ferocity and

horror, into the face of its murderer, killing him in one of the worst ways imaginable. But the strangler is never found. Eventually the passing years exceed the longest possible human life span. The murderer has undoubtedly been dead for some time. And how many years still remain to the spirit, haunted by its unfulfilled quest for vengeance!

The spirit happens to settle in a secluded but very pleasant-looking home, where undisturbed and undisturbing it watches the generations come and go. Always, though, the spirit feels the suppressed scream it carries inside and the hopelessness of finding someone for whom this scream of his would mean something.

The spirit has a lot of time to think and wonder why he has never met others in a state similar to his. This would be some compensation. But the idea, like the passing generations, comes and goes and is never pursued very diligently. His mind hasn't really been clear at all since those last lucid moments of dying.

Toward the end of the twentieth century the spirit begins paying midnight visits to a beautiful and apparently lonely girl who lives in the house of well-preserved seclusion. It seems she has fallen in love with the apparition that keeps her company in the dark hours of her solitude.

The spirit is now thankful for its fate, realizing that it is his anguished and imprisoned scream sustaining his presence. While he has the scream within him he can stay on earth and be seen. He now holds it inside like something extremely precious.

One night the spirit is keeping his appointment by the girl's bedside when he sees it's all been a mistake: the girl is neither lonely nor in love with him, though she is more beautiful than ever. And someone else is lying next to her in the bed.

This is both a torment and a relief for the spirit. Finally he has a reason to let go of his terrible scream, finally it will mean something. It would annihilate the both of them while they slept.

"Did you hear something?" the man sleepily asks the girl. "Just barely," she replies with her eyes still closed. "Go back to sleep," whispers the man. "It was probably nothing."

And it was nothing. For the spirit now suffers the horrific revelation that after so many years the scream itself has died its own death, and has left him not only utterly alone, but also completely imperceptible behind his private wall of eternity.

A Poe Anthology

The Transparent Alias of William Wilson, Sportsman and Scoundrel

William Wilson has a namesake who looks exactly like him, walks like him, and is his equal in any game of wits. They first meet at Dr Bransby's school for boys, in England. There Wilson's namesake is constantly thwarting his designs, challenging his superior status among their peers, and on the whole making things difficult for him. Hounded beyond all human endurance, William Wilson one night takes leave of the school, aborting his academic career but at least ridding himself of his obnoxious twin.

Later on, however, Wilson's namesake intrudes upon his life at the most inopportune times: to put a damper on his debauched parties at Eton by reminding him that immoderate drinking and late hours are bad for the soul; to expose his cheating at cards at Oxford; and overall to meddle in his nefarious affairs in most of the major cities of Europe (including, of all places, Moscow).

Eventually there is a showdown with swords between the two William Wilsons, and William Wilson, the original, wins. Before he dies, the bloodied namesake utters the awesome pronouncement that William Wilson has killed only himself, not to mention all hopes of ever becoming a sane and decent individual. Of course Wilson realizes that his twin was right all along, and soon after this regrettable duel he sits down to write the tragic story of his life as an apology and perhaps a warning to others.

While he's writing, there's a knock at the door. At first Wilson

doesn't bother to answer it *(write, Wilson, write)*, but the knocking is so persistent that he finally does. Standing in the doorway, dripping wet from the storm outside and suddenly illumined by a flash of lightning, is William Wilson's namesake, back from the dead.

"May I come in?" he asks. Wilson steps aside in amazement and allows the gory twin to enter. He has some trouble scrounging up a chair for his guest (the house was rented cheap and isn't much on furnishings), though at last he turns up a small unvarnished stool, which the other Wilson checks for splinters before sitting down.

"I've found out a few things since the last time we saw each other," Wilson's namesake begins. "You'll recall that I was always admonishing you to change your ways and so on and so forth? Well, I know now that my efforts were actually quite pointless. There was nothing I could do or you could do or anyone else could do."

"No," protests Wilson. "It was my own will," he insists, "and nothing else which condemned me." "I'm afraid you are wrong, so wrong," continues Wilson's exasperated namesake, shaking his blood-stained head. "It's not just you, it's everyone. You're just a little fish, my friend. You think *you* were out to get yourself, you think *you* were perverse. I don't want to play the alarmist, but I've been some places and seen some things and believe me there's nothing *but* perversity. The machinery of this place operates entirely on the principle of friction, my friend." "I've lost the hope of heaven," interjects William Wilson. "Heaven, forget heaven," replies the namesake. "Heaven will be when the big, brainless William Wilson has torn everything up so bad that it'll have to suck the whole mess back in and start over. The point I want to make here is that now that we know what we're up against, maybe we can make our peace and perhaps be of some comfort to each other. This is a really unique opportunity. Maybe—"

But William Wilson will not hear any more of this insanity. He's already suffered enough at the hands of his twin. Taking up his sword, Wilson attacks the specter and savagely hacks him to bits. ("There's my peace with you!" he shouts.) Then he goes around feeding the hunks of flesh to the dogs in the neighborhood, all the

while admiring the simple hunger of the devouring beasts.

William Wilson soon afterward starves to death, for when he returns home he finds that the thought of what he's done won't let him stop laughing long enough to take any nourishment, or even a drink of water.

The Worthy Inmate of the Will of the Lady Ligeia

The lady Ligeia is a woman of great beauty—dark hair, high forehead, striking eyes—and also great learning. Her husband, a man of only average looks and accomplishments, shares in her studies of occult wisdom, and to him it sometimes seems that he and his wife are treading on the bounds of forbidden knowledge.

From the very beginning there was perhaps something extraordinary about their marriage pact. (For instance, Ligeia kept her last name a secret from her mate, and he never pressed the issue, never questioned this arrangement.) When the lady Ligeia is dying from an unknown disorder, her husband still doesn't understand what she sees in him. He feels unworthy of her love, which is incomprehensibly intense; he feels it is entirely unmerited.

When living, the lady Ligeia often spoke of the will to conquer death, the will to survive its terrible, seemingly inevitable victory. Ligeia's husband always affirmed her sentiments, however little he understood them. Being an average sensual man, after his wife's death he begins a new life with Lady Rowena Trevanion, of Tremaine, a blue-eyed blond woman from a distinguished English family. However, not long into his second marriage he shuts himself away in a secluded room of bizarre décor: nightmarish colors, garish appointments, and weird, restless tapestries. There he recklessly jeopardizes his mental balance with drugs and strange dreams. His physical well-being doesn't sustain any serious damage (he's as fit as he ever was), but his second wife's health, like her predecessor's, suddenly and inexplicably seems to be declining.

He sees Lady Rowena suffer a series of relapses and recoveries, until to his eyes she has at last wasted away altogether, and dies in that secluded and fantastically renovated chamber. Her lifeless form lies before him, but all he can think about is his first wife, his lost love, Ligeia.

By design, that strange room he built for himself is perfect for dreaming in, and now he is dreaming quite strenuously, dreaming with every ounce of his will about his first wife, the lady Ligeia. He also takes an immoderate amount of opium as an aid to his dreaming. At the same time the corpse of his second wife, Lady Rowena, seems to be exhibiting incredible signs of revived life—color in the face, faint pulsing of the heart—which then disappear, only to reappear after a brief interval. This occurs off and on throughout the night and culminates in the supernatural resurrection not of Lady Rowena, but of the lady Ligeia, whom the widower of both ladies has dreamed back to life, supplying the body of his second wife to accommodate the first.

But the resurrection is an illusory one. Lady Rowena is, in fact, not dead; nor is the lady Ligeia alive. For all his efforts, their husband hadn't dreamed either of them anywhere but has succeeded only in dreaming himself out of one world and into another. Through this exercise of will he has finally merited the love of the dark woman whose raven hair is now spreading from the shadows of her shroud. He has willed himself into her domain, from which no one ever escapes and which is the very source of the will itself.

And now they are both locked forever in the formless phantasmagoria from which emanates innumerable echoes of each gory and passionate throb of the Heart Divine. Best of all, Ligeia has her husband back.

"Oh Rowena, Rowena," he screams. But nobody—never mind the blond, blue-eyed widow—can hear him now.

The Interminable Residence of the Friends of the House of Usher

A man of average height and features has just managed to escape the House of Usher only seconds before it collapses full force deep into the murky waters of the adjacent tarn. The man runs under a nearby tree, seeking refuge from the violent storm which began and consummated that evening's catastrophe. Once there, however, he looks up and notes that the tree is leafless. (Its limp branches are flowing freely in the wind and even its roots, unearthed, are waving around.)

The man of average height and features was spending a few days at the House of Usher at the invitation of a friend and former classmate, Roderick, who along with his twin sister, Madeline, owned the house and a fair amount of surrounding property, including a graveyard.

Roderick immediately impressed his childhood friend as a very sick man. Only the softest sounds, the dimmest light, and a generally immobile routine could be tolerated by his morbidly keen senses and nervous system.

Still, the two friends managed to keep themselves entertained by reading rare books of occult lore, and sometimes Roderick would play, however quietly, unusual melodies on his guitar. Roderick also tries to explain some unusual theories which lately have obsessed his supersubtle mind, theories about his relationship to the house and to his twin sister. But at the time Roderick's friend doesn't really

understand all this.

The visitor at the House of Usher is at first appalled by the desolate countryside, the unwholesome appearance of the tarn, and the shocking, if not dangerous, condition of the house itself. After a while, though, these striking abnormalities cease to affect him the way they once did. When Roderick announces that Madeline has died, he helps the bereaved brother inter the deceased twin without asking any questions. (She had a rosy flush on her face!) Life at the House of Usher is then carried on as usual by its two remaining residents.

This state of affairs begins to decay when one night there's a storm which upsets Roderick to the point of hysteria. His housemate tries to calm him down by reading from a storybook. But Roderick is inconsolable and now claims that the two of them locked Madeline in the family crypt while she was still alive. His friend is unnerved by this outburst. He had no idea things were so bad. This was madness!

Even worse, Roderick is proved to be telling the truth when his sister staggers into the room, falls upon her twin, and they both end up in a lifeless heap on the floor. The man of average height and features barely manages to get out of the house before that too goes down. He stares at the empty lot where the House of Usher used to be, and then he turns away to seek a haven far removed from the site of this terrible ordeal.

But before he can take a single step he realizes that there is no longer any place he can go, no longer anyone who will have him. Oh, the books, the shadows, and the horrible entombment of that poor girl. How did he ever get into this one! While the Ushers were effortlessly delivered to their doom by the hereditary freaks and weaknesses of their family, he came to the house, and stayed, of his own free will, and by the same will, without asking a single question, he too must now be consumed by the tarn whose diseased waters await his embrace.

The Works and Death of H. P. Lovecraft

The Fabulous Alienation of the Outsider, Being of No Fixed Abode

The outsider lifts his shadow-wearied eyes and gazes about the moldy chamber where, to his knowledge, he has always lived. He has no recollection of who he is or how he came to dwell so far removed from others of his kind who, he reasons, must exist, perhaps in that world above which he vividly recalls, though he glimpsed it only once and long ago.

One night the outsider emerges from his underground domain and, guided solely by the glowing moon he has never really seen before, scrambles down a dark road, searching for friendly lights and, he hopes, friendly faces.

Eventually he comes upon a large, festively illuminated house. At first he peeks shyly through the windows at the partiers inside; but soon his unbearable longing for the society of others, along with a barely evolved sense of etiquette, liberate him from all hesitancies. Locating an unlocked door, he crashes the affair.

Inside the house—a structure of gorgeous Georgian décor—everyone screams and flees at the first sight of the outsider. After only a few seconds of recognition and companionship, this recluse by default is once again left to keep his own company. That is to say, he has been abandoned to the company of that untimely horror which initially set those gay and fine-looking people so indecorously on their heels. "What was it?" he asks himself, posing the question over and over with seemingly infinite repetition before finally collecting

his wits and squinting a little to one side. "What was it?" he asks for the hundredth time add one or two. "It was you," answers the mirror. "It was you."

Now it is the outsider's turn to make his getaway from that hideous living corpse of unholy and unwholesome familiarity, that thing which had imperfectly decomposed in its subterranean unresting place. He seeks refuge in a chaotic dreamworld where no one really notices the dead and no one even looks twice at the disgusting.

Eventually, however, he tires of this deranged, though unhostile, dimension of alienage. His heart more pulverized than simply broken, he decides to return to the subhumous envelope from which he never should have strayed, there to reclaim his birthright of sloth, amnesia, and darkness. A period of time passes, indefinite for the outsider though decisive for the balance of the world's population.

For reasons unknown, the outsider once more drags his bulky frame earthward. Arriving exhausted in the superterranean realm, he finds himself standing, badly, in neither darkness nor daylight, but some morbid transitional phase between the two. A senile sun throbs with deadly dimness, and every living thing on the face of the land has been choked by desolation and by an equivocal gloom which has perhaps already lasted millennia, if not longer. The outsider, a thing of the dead, has managed to outlive all those others whom, either from madness or mere loss of memory, he would willingly seek out to escape a personal void that seems to have existed prior to astronomy.

This possibility is now, of course, as defunct as the planet itself. With all biology in tatters, the outsider will never again hear the consoling gasps of those who shunned him and in whose eyes and hearts he achieved a certain tangible identity, however loathsome. Without the others he simply cannot go on being himself—The Outsider—for there is no longer anyone to be outside of. In no time at all he is overwhelmed by this atrocious paradox of fate.

In the midst of this revelation, a feeling begins to well up in the outsider, an incalculable sorrow deep inside. From the center of his being (which now is the center of all being that remains in existence)

he summons a suicidal outburst of pain whose force shatters his rotting shape into innumerable fragments. Catastrophically enough, this antic, designed to conclude universal genocide, gives off such energy that the distant sun is revived by a transfusion of warmth and light.

And each fragment of the outsider cast far across the earth now absorbs the warmth and catches the light, reflecting the future life and festivals of a resurrected race of beings: ones who will remain forever ignorant of their origins but for whom the sight of a surface of cold, unyielding glass will always hold profound and unexplainable terrors.

The Blasphemous Enlightenment of Professor Francis Wayland Thurston of Boston, Providence, and the Human Race

In the late 1920s Professor Thurston is putting a few final touches to a manuscript he intends no other person ever to lay eyes on, so that no one else will have to suffer unnecessarily in the way he has this past year or so. When it's all done with, he just sits in silence for a few moments in the library of his Boston home (summer sunlight wandering over the oak walls), and then he breaks down and weeps like a lost soul for the better part of the day, letting up later that evening.

Professor Thurston is the nephew of George Gammell Angell, also a professor (at Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island), whose archaeological and anthropological unearthings led him, and after his death led his nephew, to some disturbing conclusions concerning the nature and fate of human life, with implications universal even in their least astounding aspects.

The two professors discovered, positively, that throughout the world there exist savage cults which practice strange rites: degenerate Eskimos in the Arctic, degenerate Caucasians in New England seaport towns, and degenerate Indians and mulattoes in the Louisiana swamps not far from Tulane University, New Orleans. They also

discovered that the primary aim of these cults is to await and welcome the return of ante-prehistoric monstrosities which will unseat the human race, overrun the earth, and generally have their way with our world.

These beings are as detestably inhuman as humanly imaginable, though no more so. From the common individual's viewpoint their nature is one of supreme evil and insanity, notwithstanding that the creatures themselves are indifferent to, if not totally unaware of, such mundane categories of value.

From the beginning of time they have held a certain attraction for persons interested in pursuing an existence of utter chaos and mayhem; that is, one of complete liberation at all conceivable levels.

After learning the designs these beings have on our planet, Professor Thurston just assumes he will be murdered to keep him quiet on the subject, as his uncle and others have been. (And to think that at one point in his investigation he was planning to publish his findings in the journal of the American Archaeological Society!) All he can do now is wait.

For some reason, however, the followers of the Great Old Ones (as the extraterrestrial entities are referred to) never follow through, and Professor Thurston appears to escape assassination, at least for an indefinite period of time. But this is of little comfort, because knowing what he knows, Professor Thurston is the most miserable being on earth. He grieves for his lost dream of life, and even the skies of spring and flowers of summer are a horror to his eyes. It goes without saying that he now finds even the simplest daily task a joyless requisite for survival, and no more.

After months of boredom and a personal devastation far worse than any worldwide apocalypse could possibly be, he decides to return to his old job at the university. Not that he believes any longer in the hollow conclusions of his once beloved anthropology, but at least it would give him a way to occupy himself, to lose himself. Still, he continues to be profoundly despondent, and his looks degenerate beyond polite comment.

"What's wrong, Professor Thurston?" a student asks him one day

after class. The professor glances up at the girl. After only the briefest gaze into her eyes he can see that she really cares. "Amazing," he thinks. Of course there is no way he could tell her what is really wrong, but they do talk for a while and later take a walk across the campus on a clear autumn afternoon. They begin to see each other secretly off campus, and with graduation day behind them they finally get married, their ceremony solemn and discreet.

The couple honeymoons at a picturesque little town on the seacoast of Massachusetts. To all appearances, several sublime days pass without one ripple of grief. One day, as he and his bride watch the sun descend into a perfectly unwrinkled ocean, Professor Thurston almost manages to rationalize into nonexistence his dreadful knowledge. After all, he tells himself, there still exists precious human feeling and human beauty (e.g., the quaint little town) created by human hands. These things have been perennially threatened by disorder and oblivion. Anyway, all of it was bound to end somehow, at some time. What difference did it make when the world was lost, or to whom?

But Professor Thurston cannot sustain these consoling thoughts for long. All during their honeymoon he snaps pictures of his smiling wife. He loves her dearly, but her innocence is tearing him apart. How long can he conceal the terrible things he knows about the world? Even after he takes a picture, this wonderful girl just keeps smiling at him! How long can he live with this new pain?

The problem continues to obsess him (to the future detriment, he fears, of his marriage). Then, on the last night of the honeymoon, everything is resolved.

He awakens in darkness from a strange dream he cannot recall. Outside the window of the bedroom it sounds as though the whole town is in an ambivalent uproar—hysterical voices blending festival and catastrophe. And there are weirdly colored lights quivering upon the bedroom wall. Professor Thurston's wife is also awake, and she says to her husband: "The new masters have come in the night to their chosen city. Have you dreamed of them?" There passes a moment of silence. Then, at last, Professor Thurston answers his

wife with the long, abandoned howl of a madman or a beast, for he too has dreamed the new dream and, without his conscious knowledge or consent, has embraced the new world.

And now nothing can hurt him as he has been so cruelly hurt in the past. Nothing will ever again cause him that pain he suffered so long, an intolerable anguish from which he could never have found release in any other way.

The Premature Death of H. P. Lovecraft, Oldest Man in New England

H. P. Lovecraft, the last great writer of supernatural horror tales, has just died of stomach cancer at the age of forty-six in a Providence, Rhode Island, hospital. He died alone and with no particular expression on his face. Upon the nightstand next to his bed are a few books and many handwritten pages in which Lovecraft recorded the sensations of his dying. (These notes are later lost, to the dismay of scholars.)

Two nurses come to look in on the gentleman in the private room and are the first to discover that he has, not unexpectedly, passed away. They have already seen death many times in their nursing careers, though they're still quite young, and neither is alarmed. They know nothing can be done for the dead man. One of them says: "Open a window, it's stuffy in here." "Sure is," replies the other. A crisp mid-March breeze freshens the room.

"Well, there's no more that can be done for him," comments the first nurse. Then she asks: "Do you remember if he had a wife or anybody that visited him?" The other nurse shakes her head negatively, then adds: "Are you kidding! He's not exactly the husband type. I mean, just take a look at *that face*."

The first nurse nods positively. She makes a humorous remark about the deceased and then both nurses leave the room smiling.

But apparently neither of them noticed the fantastic and frightening thing which occurred right before their eyes: H.P. Lovecraft,

for only the shortest-lived moment, had ever so faintly smiled back at them.