



Great Tales of Terror and the Supernatural

Phyllis Fraser (Editor), Herbert A. Wise (Editor), John Collier (Contributor), Charles Collins (Contributor), Wilkie Collins (Contributor), Richard Connell (Contributor), A.E. Coppard (Contributor), F. Marion Crawford (Contributor), more... Walter de la Mare (Contributor), Charles Dickens (Contributor), Karen Blixen (Contributor), William Faulkner (Contributor), E.M. Forster (Contributor), Thomas Hardy (Contributor), Nathaniel Hawthorne (Contributor), Ernest Hemingway (Contributor), O. Henry (Contributor), Robert Smythe Hichens (Contributor), Geoffrey Household (Contributor), W.W. Jacobs (Contributor), Henry James (Contributor), M.R. James (Contributor), Conrad Aiken (Contributor), Rudyard Kipling (Contributor), J. Sheridan Le Fanu (Contributor), H.P. Lovecraft (Contributor), Arthur Machen (Contributor), Guy de Maupassant (Contributor), Richard Barham Middleton (Contributor), Fitz-James O'Brien (Contributor), Oliver Onions (Contributor), Edgar Allan Poe (Contributor), Michael Arlen (Contributor), Dorothy L. Sayers (Contributor), H.G. Wells (Contributor), Edith Wharton (Contributor), Edward Lucas White (Contributor), Alexander Woollcott (Contributor), Honoré de Balzac (Contributor), E.F. Benson (Contributor), Ambrose Bierce (Contributor), Algernon Blackwood (Contributor), Edward Bulwer-Lytton (Contributor), Saki (Contributor), Phyllis Cerf, Carl Stephenson (Contributor) ...less

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When this longtime Modern Library favorite--filled with fifty-two stories of heart-stopping suspense--was first published in 1944, one of its biggest fans was critic Edmund Wilson, who in **The New Yorker** applauded what he termed a sudden revival of the appetite for tales of horror. Represented in the anthology are such distinguished spell weavers as Edgar Allan Poe ("The Black Cat"), Wilkie Collins ("A Terribly Strange Bed"), Henry James ("Sir Edmund Orme"), Guy de Maupassant ("Was It a Dream?"), O. Henry ("The Furnished Room"), Rudyard Kipling ("They"), and H.G. Wells ("Pollock and the Porroh Man"). Included as well are such modern masters as Algernon Blackwood ("Ancient Sorceries"), Walter de la Mare ("Out of the Deep"), E.M. Forster ("The Celestial Omnibus"), Isak Dinesen ("The Sailor-Boys Tale"), H.P. Lovecraft ("The Dunwich Horror"), Dorothy L. Sayers ("Suspicion"), and Ernest Hemingway ("The Killers").

"There is not a story in this collection that does not have the breath of life, achieve the full suspension of disbelief that is so particularly important in [this] type of fiction," wrote the **Saturday Review**. With an introduction and notes by Phyllis Cerf Wagner and Herbert Wise.

Great Tales of Terror and the Supernatural Details

Date : Published October 18th 1994 by Modern Library (first published 1944)

ISBN : 9780679601289

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Format : Hardcover 1056 pages

Genre : Horror, Short Stories, Fiction, Anthologies, Classics, Gothic, Ghost Stories

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From Reader Review Great Tales of Terror and the Supernatural for online ebook

Shawn says

So, this came up in my to-read list and, yes, I do not actually own a copy of this classic collection. I've got my The Dark Descent and my Dark Forces and my Black Water: The Book of Fantastic Literature and Black Water 2: More Tales of the Fantastic and the recent, very nice American Fantastic Tales Boxed Set. Heck, I've even got a first edition of Summers' The Supernatural Omnibus (and I'm not a book collector in that way at all). This is one of those cornerstone anthologies and it's possible that if I ran across it in a used book store I may have declined a purchase simply due to the fact that I've read and own a copy of everything in it - EXCEPT eleven of the fifty-two stories.

Now, usually I would use this as an excuse to re-read all these classics and take the opportunity to present a formal review on Goodreads. But... this is a thick book (1079 pages) and, more importantly, it's an inter-library loan. So there was no way I was going to be able to read and review it all in time. Instead, I decided to simply read and review the eleven stories here.

There's a nicely succinct introduction that lays out the basic structure of the collection - the first half is Tales Of Terror (that is to say, "naturalistic"), the second is Tales Of The Supernatural (self-explanatory).

Thomas Hardy's "The Three Strangers" is less of a "terror tale" and more of an ironic suspense story, while also having the feel of a local legend or bit of folklore. Three strangers turn up at an isolated homestead on a stormy night when the farmer is celebrating the christening of his daughter... but this is not a religious allegory at all, and the tale turns on identification and mis-identification. I enjoyed it for the authentic and interesting portrayal of rural gatherings and the accepted rules of social etiquette of the time, but less as a supposed "scary" story.

The famed author of "The Monkey's Paw" (hands down one of the greatest scare stories ever written - and if you think you're too familiar with it to find it effective, go ahead a re-read it sometime soon. It's a masterpiece), W.W. Jacobs, only had fair-to-middling success with his other tales (although I did like "The Well", which I reviewed in Ghost Stories). Here we are given his piece "The Interruption", which is a tightly written tale in which a man succeeds at murdering his wife, only to realize that the overlooked housemaid now has much more power in the household. I dug it - like something from a later Alfred Hitchcock anthology.

"Pollock And The Porroh Man" is an H.G. Wells story that's long been on my "to be read" lists and, having now read it, I can see why. The "white man stumbles against tribal magic" story trope may be old hat by now (see also Kipling's "Mark Of The Beast", White's "Lukundoo", and endless pulp and EC comics stories, etc. etc.) but Wells does an amazing job here making it very exciting indeed. This may possibly be my favorite story of the 11 I read (or it at least ties with the Aiken piece). A British soldier is cursed by a tribal witch doctor and takes a nightmare plunge down into the classic scenario of flight, terror, rationalizing and anthropological reinforcement. It's brilliantly handled (Wells has such a great touch for detail like the character and dialogue of the Portuguese Jew, Pereia, or the initial "upside-down" look the witch-doctors casts backwards at the soldier, and how it resonates throughout the tale) and thoroughly entertaining and I wonder why no one has even made a short film of it (it's a very *visual* tale) - at least as far as I know of. Its placement in the book is an interesting and valid choice as well - and what a last line!

Wells appears again with "The Sea Raiders", a monster story in which he mixes a number of writing styles - scholarly science, journalistic distance and snappy, realistic action all feature in this recounting of mankind's first encounters with an aggressive new breed of cephalopod. Fun stuff.

Conrad Aiken's "Mr. Arcularis" is a personal favorite of mine but I've never read his justifiably acclaimed "Silent Snow, Secret Snow" until encountering it here (although I do remember the adaptation of it on Rod Serling's NIGHT GALLERY, narrated by Orson Welles). A deceptively simple story (in his mind a young boy begins to withdraw from the world behind an imaginary layer of snowfall) that has been widely interpreted (analogies of sensitivity, creativity, escapism, adolescence, even deafness) but I believe the introduction to the story gives the most likely reading - the onset of mental illness (possibly schizophrenia or autism) or obsession in a young mind, the drawing further and further away from the real world and deeper and deeper into imagination, the fascination with repetition and a calm, controllable environment. It's a fascinating, at times lyrical piece.

Next up is Ernest Hemingway's "The Killers" - a stripped-down noir piece (without the hysterical trappings of, say, Cornell Woolrich) that has echoes forwards in time to, for example, Cronenberg's A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE. We get a simple setting (a small town diner) and two threatening thugs come to deliver a message. It's all clipped, small phrases and repetition because it's Hemingway, but the best part of it (outside of the thug's mannerisms) is that the target of the threat, when finally warned, is resigned to his fate. In that, it's very much like Woolrich, the unknown and unknowable human machinations of fate that grind away behind the facade of society, waiting to chew up people who step over lines.

"Back For Christmas" - by another personal favorite writer, John Collier, is familiar to me as it was adapted a number of times on old radio dramas (SUSPENSE, etc.). That's understandable as it's a slick, whittled down murder story - not a mystery or even much of a crime story, like the Jacobs piece earlier it's more in the line of an ironic ending ALFRED HITCHCOCK PRESENTS episode - not a "whodunnit" but a "willhegetawaywithit?" Another slight but fun read.

Moving into the "Supernatural" portion of the book, I'll always look forward to an unread Henry James ghost story as I consider "The Jolly Corner" an absolute masterpiece of his work in the area. The editors bemoan their inability to include The Turn of the Screw due to length and so here present "Sir Edmund Orme". It's kind of bracing to come from Hemingway into James so quickly - they have completely opposite styles and approaches (exterior versus interior) and yet both are masters of their chosen mode. James' dense style builds an entire culture around the characters through specific word choice, phrasing and detail of action - it's heady stuff. "Orme" is a ghost story but not a horror story, a very "proper" ghost story, actually, about a very proper and well-behaved ghost who exists more as a "sins of the parent visited on the children" than any actual malevolent force. I wonder if all those DOWNTON ABBEY fans realize there's worlds of manners and courting and great reading awaiting them in James?

Rudyard Kipling's "The Return Of Imray" (sometimes presented as "The Recrudescence Of Imray") is another India-set ghost story - this time dealing with a mysterious disappearance from and a bothersome poltergeist in a bungalow. It's fairly straight-ahead, plot-wise, but I liked the very practical military characters and their handling of the disturbance.

Walter de la Mare is another very subtle writer who rewards close reading and "Out Of The Deep" is an enjoyable story but somewhat hard to crack, as the author sometimes surrenders narrative clarity to British upper-class colloquialisms of the time. The basic plot is simple - a young wastrel inherits the home of the deceased family who rescued him as a child. He has a morbid fear of the attic bedroom where he once slept, and of the various pull-ropes used to summon servants. As there are no servants left in the house, at least at

night, he's very surprised when his deliberate attempt to overcome his fear and pull the bell rope does actually summon... someone... and then something. I enjoyed it but, as I said, I'm not entirely sure I grasped the psychological detail due to the playful language at times - with de la Mare, a single word in a short line could turn the whole meaning of a paragraph on end. I'll have to see if there's any secondary analysis on the web somewhere.

And finally, "The Sailor-Boy's Tale" by Isak Dinesen is a fable-like story of a good deed, an accidental murder and debt repaid by a Norwegian witch. It flows along lightly, with some wonderful scene setting in a port town and some blunt dialogue on the part of the witch. Entertaining.

And that's it. I'll have to say that the "terror tale" first section seems to me to be a more muddled definitional slough than the second "supernatural" one - how does one distinguish mystery from crime from conte cruel, for example? I know how *I* distinguish them, but lumping all these types into a "terror" category seems a bit of a hard swallow. Still, this is a classic volume and deserves to be on any fans' shelf simply for the vast variety and opportunity it contains.

Werner says

As the above description notes, the tales in this anthology (by 27 19th and 20th century authors, mostly British or American --Edgar Allan Poe, H. G. Wells, M. R. James, Rudyard Kipling, Guy de Maupassant, H. P. Lovecraft, E. F. Benson, and Algernon Blackwood are each represented twice) depict both naturalistic and supernatural themes; the two are separated into two distinct sections: 20 "Tales of [naturally-caused] Terror," and 32 "Tales of the Supernatural" [which are not necessarily terrifying in intent, though they usually are]. (Which are which, of course, can be a matter of editorial opinion; I would have placed Wells' "Pollock and the Pooroh Man" in the latter section, for instance, and both Lovecraft stories in the former.) When I first read the book a couple of years ago, I'd read only the supernatural section (since that interested me the most); but I recently decided to read the whole thing in order to review it here, and the first section proved fully worth the read as well! The plot arcs of the stories run the gamut from tragedies, through tales of evil punished, to happy endings; the tone is usually dark and serious, but a few are actually dryly humorous.

Some of the naturalistic terrors are science-fictional in nature; murder and madness are of course staples, in many and varied permutations; and Carl Stephenson's "Leiningen Versus the Ants" is one of the greatest tales of the "man vs. nature," theme ever penned, and evokes a genuine terror from it that remains suspenseful right down to the end. And some of these stories offer serious thought content: "The Most Dangerous Game," for instance, forces the reader to confront the question, does human life have intrinsic value as *human* life? (Connell, in defiance of much modern philosophy, answers with an unequivocal "Yes!")

Ghost stories are the staple of the supernatural section; but E. F. Benson's "Mrs. Amworth" is an outstanding vampire story (and one of those which features the theory that the vampire is not actually the deceased person, but an evil spirit that inhabits the deceased person's body), and such themes as demons, African tribal magic, and shape-shifting sorcery make an appearance, too. (Blackwood's "Ancient Sorceries" posits reincarnation, and "The Great God Pan" is an exercise in existential horror; but neither of these ideas are very common in this book.) Besides those mentioned in the above description, some of the best stories here include Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's "Green Tea," Oliver Onions' "The Beckoning Fair One," and F. Marion Crawford's "The Screaming Skull."

Sharon Barrow Wilfong says

This was a good book. The first half were stories of high suspense and the second half, scary tales involving the supernatural.

Actually not all the stories were scary or suspenseful. Some of the suspenseful stories, are more accurately described as horror stories, like "A Rose for Emily" by William Faulkner or Geoffrey Household's "Taboo". And of course it would not be a complete analogy without some Edgar Allan Poe.

One of the most suspenseful stories is by Carl Stephenson titled, "Leiningen and the Ants", where a group of Europeans and Native South Americans try to stop a siege of local, giant killer ants.

The section of the supernatural has a couple of stories by well-known writers of ghost stories, like M.R. James, Algernon Blackwood and F. Marion Crawford. But also by classic writers like Saki, Isak Dineson, E.M. Forester, Walter de la Mare and also the father of the weird, H.P. Lovecraft.

The book was published in 1944 and gives a brief biography of the authors, most of whom were still living at the time of the book's publication.

Randolph says

If you never read another horror anthology, if you even hate horror, you should read this one anthology just to make sure you round out your literary background. The one essential classic anthology that has NEVER been bettered since it was first published. Cannot really be compared to anything else.

If you are a horror buff, then you owe it to yourself to read this to find out where it all came from and what the best can be.

Juushika says

Review: Murderous spouses, ancient curses, talking corpses, seductive ghosts—over a thousand pages long, presenting 52 stories from 33 authors, this collection is massive and dated, halfway a historical fragment and halfway a resource, fascinating but deep enough to drown in. It's so vast that it's almost impossible to review: no single opinion can reflect so many stories. There are a few classics here, just as many minor offerings from famous authors, and plenty of forgettable selections. Half the joy is simply seeing what's included, because not all of these authors or stories would be considered genre now—and as such, this collection is a fascinating snapshot of the creation of canon and genre. The exclusions are also telling: there's only one vampire story because "these stories all tend to be very much alike" (760), and only three female authors (which seems to be a fault of the general climate more than the book's enthusiastic editors).

As pleasure reading is concerned, the introduction recommends slow going and I concur. Volumes like this are longterm bedside companions; try to hurry through them, and the stories become so many bricks in a wall. Classic horror has a different pace from modern horror, often finding an uneasy balance between

atmospheric subtlety and heavy-handed themes such that it both bores and batters. But then along will come a story like Hawthorne's "Rappaccini's Daughter" with its haunting, insidious beauty, or Lovecraft's superbly crafted imaginings of the unknown, or even Blackwood's tales, deeply flawed but rewarding patience with fantastic atmosphere. There are also authors and stories which helped create the genre but are now forgotten, and pleasant surprises such as Benson's skin-crawling "Caterpillars." There's more emphasis on action than modern readers may expect, and a sprinkling of gallows humor. There are too many duds to recommend it to a casual reader, and the selections are too arbitrary to make it the only classic horror anthology you own, but *Great Tales* is often fascinating and occasionally great fun. It's an enjoyable, if random, overview for fans of the genre, and I loved it. To my surprise, the anthology is still in print—so if you stumble upon it, I well recommend you pick it up and read a few tales.

Kimberly says

I first read this book years ago, but I've since read through the majority of the stories several times each. A great collection--the old-time, atmospheric tales are my personal favorites!! A great book to have on your shelves. :)

Rita says

Great Tales of Terror and the Supernatural: This book had many, many weak stories in it that I'd just as soon not have to Wade through. There were a few goodies, though, and I note them here.

La Grande Breteche, Honore de Balzac

4 ?

Shades of "The Cask of Amontillado" EAP

The Black Cat, EAP

4 ?

An alcoholic takes out the black mood of his debauchery on his pets and his sweet-tempered wife. But there's always the KARMIC court, where the court of humans would fail.

The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar, EAP

4 ?

A hypnotist tries the experiment of putting a man who is dying into a trance, minutes before his death. Truly gross.

A Terribly Strange Bed, Wilkie Collins

3 ?

I have never been into gambling; I'm too poor to give my money away. This story is about an Englishman who goes to a mero-mero french gambling house and wins big. To celebrate, he gets drunk. We all know that nothing good can happen next.

The Three Strangers, Thomas Hardy

3 ?

A case of mistaken identity. When you throw a party, you can often expect to have gate-crashers, and these

are usually the most thirsty and hungry of the guests.

Pollock and the Porroh Man, H.G.Wells

4 ?

A racist in Sierra Leone has an argument with a Porroh Man, with a deadly conclusion. Hallucinations take over the racist's world.

Sredni Vashtar, Saki

4 ?

A boy orphan has a wicked cousin for a guardian. His only friends in the world are a ferret and a hen, in a toolshed in the garden. Wicked cousin takes away his hen. When wicked cousin would take away the ferret, too, Sredni Vashtar grants the victim his wish.

Back for Christmas, John Collier

4 ?

How appropriate that the author is named Collier. An English doctor with an over-managing wife, is to lecture for three months in the U.S. Before they left, the doctor had been excavating a hole for a wine cellar, but his wife promised all their friends "We'll be back by Christmas." The hole wasn't for wine.

Taboo, Geoffrey Household

3 ?

I like this story for the subject matter. It's about a werewolf, in a small village in Eastern Europe. But I don't care for stories about werewolves.

Was it a Dream?, Guy de Maupassant

3 ?

Someone You knew died. You know that person was a total asshole, but the obituary tells another story. Did you ever wonder if the dead feel like correcting those epitaphs?

Afterward, Edith Wharton

4 ?

People who are wealthy often get that way by stepping on someone else, or many other people. They don't like to be reminded of who they hurt in order to live their lavish "I'm important" lifestyle. But there're forces keeping track of such hurts, that our limited senses can't sense, until "afterward."

The Monkey's Paw, W.W.Jacobs

4 ?

Somebody in India cut off a Monkey's hand. A spell was put on it to grant 3 humans 3 wishes. The first man to utilize the wishes, used the 3rd one to wish for death. An old English couple are the 3rd, and last, humans to benefit from the Monkey's dismemberment.

How Love Came to Professor Guildea, Robert Hichens

4 ?

A scientist and a priest strike up an unlikely friendship. The priest is all about love of mankind, while the professor feels loathe at the thought of someone or something loving him. Something comes to love the professor as if in answer to his profess.

Lukundoo, Edward Lucas White

5 ?

White explorers are traveling through parts of Africa, searching out pygmies (!?) when they are visited by a member of another white explorers group whose leader is sick. He asks them to return with him to help his chief. His chief is sick with something like carbuncles. Lukundoo means witchcraft. A truly creepy story.

Caterpillars, E.F.Benson

5 ?

When I was a kid, I thought cancer was contagious. In this story, it is.

The Beckoning Fair One, Oliver Onions

3 ?

An author is working on a second book, due in October, when he feels the urge to move residence to a flat in a house. There is a mesmerizing effect in the house that causes him to cease working on his novel, and become a recluse. Moreover, his woman friend, trying to look after him, is mysteriously attacked if she tries to enter the house.

The Celestial Omnibus, E.M.Forster

5 ?

In a suburb of London, there lived a little, neglected boy. Though he was surrounded with luxury, he was starved. One day, he discovered an Omnibus route that travelled to Heaven.

This story is a lesson to the people who will take themselves so seriously, caring only for how they can impress their fellow human beings, who look down on those who appear simple and uneducated to their "venerable" selves. This story's lesson is that a simple life, but one that finds heaven in every leaf, every flower, is the true, and blessed life.

The writing in this story is lovely, and conveys a magical feeling.

The Ghost Ship, Richard Middleton

4 ?

A village in England is full of ghosts, and the villagers and the ghosts exist together peacefully. But in 1897, a huge storm blows up, and a Ghost Ship, by its strength, is blown 50 miles from Sea, into the landlord's of the Inn turnip field. The captain is most amiable, when the landlord and the narrator go to complain about ruining the turnips, and gives the landlord's wife a gold brooch, by way of paying for her crushed turnips. The captain, though, for all his amiability, has a bad influence on the young ghosts of the town.

A light-hearted, amusing story from an author who suffered so badly from depression that he chloroformed himself to death at the age of 29. :-)

The Sailor-boy's Tale, Isak Dineson

4 ?

This story has a moral to it: Be kind to animals and insects; not just humans. With our limited senses, we don't have the knowledge to know that they are so much more important than humans.

The Rats in the Walls, The Dunwich Horror, H.P.Lovecraft

3 ?

I can't really explain HPL's appeal to me. You read his stories, and sometimes they seem so hokey. But I remember our limited human senses, and I think about Lovecraft, writing in his study, or wherever, and of his striving to explain and explore a world of beings beyond our senses. My favorite is "The Mountains of Madness."

Genie says

Beautiful words, not very gory. It makes you realize the difference between schlock writers and true artists who can convey a mood with a few well chosen phrases. I loved it - one of the few books I won't lend out to friends. I can't afford to lose it! I've also ordered books by some of the best authors in the anthology.

Joe says

A previous reviewer called this collection a beast and they were right. This collection of terror/supernatural stories is over 1000 pages. I read the vast majority of them but I'll be honest, it one of them began to bore me or was just flat out bad, I would just cut my losses and move on. I had a long journey ahead of me and couldn't get hung up on duds.

It's a very strong collection of (relatively) short scary stories. As with all anthologies, there were some strong and some weak but the good definitely far outweighed the bad here.

That being said, if you do want to read this book you will need to start and stop it many times. I think I about 5 different novels while I was reading this. You can only read so many scary stories in a row before your mind rejects the input you're trying to give it. And so, without further ado, here are some highlights (and low lights) of this collection:

La Grande Breteche by Balzac: Classic cheated lover revenge tale. "The best tales are told at a certain hour."

The Black Cat by Edgar Allan Poe: Very enjoyable. Poe is the master of having an insane, murderous 1st person protagonist who speaks and acts as if their craziness is the most normal thing in the world. Poe justice at its best.

The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar by Edgar Allan Poe: Meh. Poe clearly didn't understand hypnosis but was quite freaked out by it all the same.

A Terribly Strange Bed by Wilkie Collins: The story starts out promising enough with a young man finding himself on a great lucky streak in a gambling house of ill repute but the ending leaves much to be desired. But I will grant the story this...it does contain a terribly strange bed so here's to truth in advertising.

The Three Strangers by Thomas Hardy: A fantastic tale of a remote country party during a storm. The modern reader will see many of the twists coming but not all of them. Very disturbing. Very satisfying.

The Interruption by W.W. Jacobs: A man kills his wife and then his maid attempts to blackmail him over it. He attempts to even the score in a very dangerous way...

The Sea Raiders: KILLER OCTUPI!!!! SAVE YOURSELVES!!!

Sredni Vashtar by Saki: A fascinating tale! A young boy creates a fantasy world in which he worships his quasi-wild pet Ferret as a god. Truly unlike anything I've ever read. Incredibly dark and wonderful story.

Moonlight Sonata by Alexander Woollcott: This one felt like a camp fire story. Very brief but it has one of those great scary story endings. Would have liked to see this fleshed out.

Silent Snow, Secret Snow by Conrad Aiken: Macabre story of a 12 year old boy becoming schizophrenic. The way the author writes the boy's thoughts make the story feel so real as the boy's life becomes increasingly less so. He is slowly transforming into...something/someone...different. "At whatever cost to himself, whatever pain to others..."

Suspicion by Dorothy L. Sayers: I read my first Sayers earlier this year. She's primarily known for her Lord Peter Wimsey stories. This is a great who-dun-it revolving around British cuisine, hired help, and some well placed poison. Good stuff.

The Most Dangerous Game by Richard Connell: One of my favorite short stories growing up. A man is hunted on an island by a crazy General. A tense thriller that is a must read.

Leiningen Versus The Ants by Carl Stephenson: A fantastic man vs. nature horror story. A cocky plantation owner in South America thinks he can outwit a 20 mile long/wide swarm of man-eating ants. The amount of strategy and back and forth between he and the ants is every bit as engrossing as any military battle I've ever read about. This was honestly the movie "Zulu" but with ants. I wasn't surprised to find out this was made into a movie with Charlton Heston (which I now HAVE to see). A truly wonderful story and a highlight of the book.

The Gentleman from America by Michael Arlen: This one was EXTREMELY overwritten. Yeesh, 20 words where one would do. Also, it was clear that Michael Arlen has never even met an American and was definitely not able to write in the voice of an American. That being said, the set up was interesting...the classic spend a night in a haunted house story and I always like a story in which multiple characters are driven to madness but come on Arlen...write what you know, buddy!

A Rose for Emily by William Faulkner: Man, after reading a story like this, I have to take back some of the mean things I said about Faulkner after reading "The Sound and The Fury." (Some of the things, but not all of the things.) This was a great tale that shows how one unfortunate effect of "Southern Hospitality" is that it may inadvertently allow something dark and horrible to exist just below the surface...something that isn't confronted until it is too late. A great read. More like this and I'll stop using "Faulkner" as an insult.

The Killers by Ernest Hemingway: I've read a lot of Hemingway over the years but nothing recently. It was good to be back, although I wouldn't really characterize this as "horror" or "terror." I suppose it is horrible knowing that organized crime exists and if such an organization decides to kill you, you're eventually going to die. A short, sad story in the classic Hemingway style.

Back for Christmas by John Collier: A dark, comedic piece. Another well worn trope: Husband kills wife and attempts to get away scot-free. Great ending with writing every bit as tense as it is funny.

Taboo by Geoffrey Household: A great werewolf story with a terrifically disturbing ending. I thought I saw the twist but I was way off and most satisfying of all, the author didn't cheat. All the information you need is right there in front of you the whole time. Good stuff.

The Haunters and the Haunted or The House and the Brain by Edward Bulwer-Lytton: Creepy haunted house story with a suitably strange ending. Had a Shirley Jackson feel to it.

Rappaccini's Daughter by Nathaniel Hawthorne: Evil botanist has a beautiful daughter with a deadly secret. (Spoiler alert: It has something to do with botany. Shh!) The only other work I've ever read by Hawthorne was, of course, The Scarlet Letter. I read this story (and that one for that matter) as one large sexually repressed metaphor. Man, was this guy repressed! He was the Stephanie Meyer of his day in that regard. Pretty decent story all around.

Green Tea by Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu: In the process of writing a religious book on metaphysics, a religious scholar focuses too much, and yes, drinks too much green tea, and begins to see a shadow spirit monkey with glowing red eyes that only he can see. Quite unsettling but I read this as more of a xenophobic metaphor than anything else. Reminded me of Lovecraft in that everyone were constantly going completely mad at the drop of a hat.

What was it? by Fitz-James O'Brien: Invisible demon monster! Everybody run!

Sir Edmund Orme by Henry James: The second work I've read by James (the first being "The Turn of the Screw") Holy crap, does this guy over right. The editor says this guy is the opposite of Hemminway's minimalist style and, uh, yeah, I totally agree. What's frustrating is this is an interesting story. A mysterious figure haunts a young lady and her suitor can only see it after he falls in love with her. Interesting stuff, but could have been much, much shorter.

The Horla or Modern Ghosts by Guy De Maupassant: This one was great. It was told in a journal style and appears at first to be another haunted house story but eventually shows itself to be much more. It asks a question frequently not asked in these type of stories, namely, if these horrible monsters really existed, why wouldn't they try and take over the world and if they decided to, could we stop them? Some great quotes in this one: "Certainly solitude is dangerous for active minds. We need men who can think and can talk, around us. When we are alone for a long time, we people space with phantoms."

"Still, it is very foolish to make merry on a set date, by Government decree. People are like a flock of sheep, now steadily patient, now in ferocious revolt. Say to it: "Amuse yourself," and it amuses itself. Say to it: "Go and fight with your neighbor," and it goes and fights. Say to it: "Vote for the Emperor," and it votes for the Emperor; then say to it: "Vote for the Republic," and it votes for the Republic. Those who direct it are stupid, too; but instead of obeying men they obey principles, a course which can only be foolish, ineffective, and false, for the very reason that principles are ideas which are considered as certain and unchangeable, whereas in this world one is certain of nothing, since light is an illusion and noise is deception."

Was it a dream? by Guy De Maupassant: I'm really digging on this author. It's like reading a horror story written by Oscar Wilde. This story is super short but levels the reader like a punch in the gut. A guy loses his girlfriend and after she has been buried, he spends the night in the graveyard. When the witching hour arrives, all the corpses rise from their graves and write their true epitaph on their own tombstones and let's just say the truth is less than flattering. The climax of the story is what is written on his beloved's and I'll be honest, it completely leveled me. Very effective and heartbreaking storytelling.

The Screaming Skull by F. Marion Crawford: This may be the best name of any short story I've read since H.P. Lovecraft's "The Rats in the Walls" (which is also included in this anthology). Super spooky story written as a conversation from the protagonist to his friend explaining the strange goings on at his house and the terrible curse he bears. This story is really an example of the slow boil. Crawford slowly walks you down the path and you don't realize how invested and terrified you are until it's too late. Great setting of tone and mood.

The Furnished Room by O. Henry: I'd never read any thing by O. Henry before. I mostly just knew there was a candy named that and not much else. This one was more sad than scary. Two star crossed lovers unknowingly share the same shabby furnished room and it ends in about the most downtrodden way you could imagine.

Oh, Whistle, and I'll Come To You, My Lad by M.R. James: A very good story. Tourist finds a stranger whistle on the beach with an inscription that he can't read. The mystery of just what is going on here and the reveal is superbly done and terrifying.

Afterward by Edith Wharton: A young couple moves into a very old house that is said to be haunted. The catch is, you see a ghost and don't know until much later that it was, in fact, a ghost you saw. With this information, my radar was ready for any suspicious characters so I mostly guessed the ending but it was still a great story of spooky goings-on and justice done from beyond the grave.

The Monkey's Paw by W.W. Jacobs: A classic that I (and I'm sure everybody else) read back in grade school. I almost skipped this one but am so glad I didn't. We all know the story...a family has a monkey's paw that grants 3 wishes but always in horrible ways that they can't anticipate. But I thought I had remembered the family being bad and "deserving" what they got. On the contrary, they seemed very sweet and innocent and that makes the horrible, bleak ending all the more devastating. If you haven't picked this one up since childhood, it's definitely work a second look.

The Great God Pan by Arthur Machen: This story was one of the big reasons I even picked up this collection. H.P. Lovecraft always referred to him as a major influence and after reading this I can definitely believe it. All the classic Lovecraft touches are there: Horrible things that cannot be described, fear of the unknown, knowledge of the ancient and/or unknown proving fatal or driving characters to madness, xenophobic undertones...you know, Lovecraft.

This story was magnificent and absolutely lived up to it's reputation as one of the scariest stories of all time. But it had more than scares, it had great characterization, dialogue and a complex and complicated structure that reminded me of a Tarantino movie. I honestly don't know whether I enjoyed it more for the beauty of the writing or for the deep psychological scares which stick with the reader long after the book has been placed back on the nightstand. High, high, recommend.

How Love Came to Professor Guildea by Robert Hichens: A great slow burn story. An unlikely friendship develops between a priest and a professor. They are a charming odd couple that is beautifully fleshed out with realistic dialogue and naturalistic pacing. We learn the professor doesn't want to love anyone or anything and would appreciate if the world treated him likewise. One night something takes a liking to our dear professor...something that won't take no for an answer for increasingly disturbing reasons. This story uses an interesting device I've never seen employed before: A parrot can see...something...something that no one else can see. The parrot begins to mimic the physical and verbal characteristics of this entity with very creepy results.

Lukundoo by Edward Lucas White: This one has a healthy dose of the dynamic duo often seen in turn of the century literature: Colonialism and Racism. Two of the most awkward "ism's" to read. If you can get past those, this is actually a fairly entertaining and short story about the search for African Pygmies...no, not those Pygmies...really, really tiny ones. Like, disturbingly tiny. This was has some Cronenbergian physical horror in the mix. Not for the squeamish.

Caterpillars by E.F. Benson: A story that suffers from hindsight. It begins with our protagonist noticing

strange Caterpillars in strange places in a creepy mansion. The big twist is that these Caterpillars...cause cancer!!! Clearly written during that sweet spot of time after we discovered cancer but before we had the foggiest idea about what caused it. Laughable ending to an otherwise short and ominous tale.

Mrs. Amworth by E.F. Benson: Very good vampire story. No surprises to anyone who has ever read a story like this but there is something to be said for something done right. It hits every beat and doesn't disappoint. If you need a short story that encapsulates the essence of what a true vampire story is...you can't do better.

Ancient Sorceries by Algernon Blackwood: I really wanted to like this more than I did. I've read a few short stories by him before and was impressed. This one read like a much less subtle version of Lovecraft's "The Shadow Over Innsmouth." The protagonist randomly gets off a train in France and ends up (cats) in a strange village (they're all cats) where strange things begin happening (CATS! CATS! DO YOU GET THAT THEY ARE CAT PEOPLE YET!!!) It's honestly about that subtle. There are some good spots but not enough to justify the longer length.

Confession by Algernon Blackwood: A very interesting psychological tale. The main character begins the story wandering London in dense fog and is completely lost. We find out that he has shell shock from being in war and it's never clear how much of the fog is real and how much is in his head. Our guy ends up at a strange house, sees something he shouldn't and wanders back into the fog. But something has followed him...

The Celestial Omnibus by E.M. Forster: An interesting premise that ends disappointingly. A small dark alley has a mysterious handmade sign saying "To Heaven." Our protagonist is a little boy who goes exploring and finds an old Omnibus (horse drawn carriage) that promises to take him to a distant land but warns he must buy his return ticket now or else he can't come back. It's all suitably creepy but the payoff doesn't deliver. I say we just have Stephen King re-write an ending.

The Ghost Ship by Richard Middleton: A funny little tale about a small English village who is overrun with ghosts precisely because they don't mind having them about. Enjoyable and silly. The lightness of the tale stands in stark contrast to the fact that the author later committed suicide. Overrun with ghosts indeed...

The collection finishes out with a one-two punch of H.P. Lovecraft: "The Rats in the Walls" and "The Dunwich Horror." These are two of my all time favorite Lovecraft stories and I've previously reviewed them.

Well, if you've managed to read this whole review, you see what I mean about this collection being a beast. However, it's well worth the effort but by all means you must be patient and don't try to read everything all at once. So just remember, inside horror stories, you sprint. When reading a huge collection of them, you jog and take many breaks.

Simon Workman says

A fantastic (in multiple senses) collection of horror, both supernatural and psychological. This Modern Library anthology is a classic for a reason; and while not every story is five stars, a surprisingly high number of them are. I like how this isn't all ghost stories, but has a good mix of different takes on horror, terror, the supernatural, and the mysterious. It stretches from the early/mid-nineteenth century (Balzac, Poe, Hawthorne) to its original publication date (1944), and includes some essential stories by the likes of Algernon Blackwood ("Ancient Sorceries" and "Confession"), M.R. James ("Casting the Runes" and "Oh, Whistle, and I'll Come to You, My Lad"), Arthur Machen ("The Great God Pan"), H.P. Lovecraft ("The Rats

in the Walls" and "The Dunwich Horror"), and dozens of others. Highly recommended.

Jonathan Janz says

Why have only about 1,200 people added this one?

Folks, Great Tales of Terror and the Supernatural is essential reading for any horror, suspense, thriller, or mystery fan. There are several stories in here that would, by themselves, would make the purchase price a steal. I could talk about the real shiners in this collection, but I'll instead rattle off some of the writers I encountered here for the first time back in my early twenties:

Algernon Blackwood
M.R. James
E.F. Benson
Oliver Onions
Saki
Arthur Machen
John Collier
Wilkie Collins

And these are just the ones that were previously unfamiliar to me. Add to that amazing list writers like Poe, Lovecraft, Hemingway, Faulkner...do I need to go on? Great Tales of Terror and the Supernatural is one of the finest collections of all time. Buy it now!

P.S. My very favorites are "The Great God Pan," "Casting the Runes," and "Confession."

Zach says

Basically a collection of the acknowledged classics of the ghost and/or thriller genres. A more classics-oriented approach (or mainstream, one might even say) than the VanderMeer's *The Weird*, but that makes the two of them excellent companions. Arranged, supposedly, into a natural and a supernatural section, and since I greatly prefer supernatural to non-supernatural horror, it gets most of the filler out of the way in the beginning. Some of the choices are rather inexplicable - "Pollock and the Porroh Man" can be read either way, but is near the beginning of the book, while Saki's "The Window" is explicitly not a supernatural story, but that's where the editors put it.

Almost entirely English/American with the exceptions of De Maupassant and Dinesen, I believe, and the gender balance is sadly tilted in the usual direction.

La Grande Bretèche • (1832) • Honoré de Balzac

The one where a "haunted house" is created not by ghosts, but by the memory of some unpleasantries involving a cheating wife and her would-be lover being walled into a closet by the husband - very proto-Poe. Framed by a man staying in the town's inn after the death, years later, of the wife in question. 3/5

The Black Cat • (1843) • Edgar Allan Poe

The one where an alcoholic tortures his cat to death, which gets revenge from beyond the grave by tricking him into murdering his wife and then revealing the fact that he sealed her up in a wall - shades of "La Grande Breteche," but also of "The Tell-Tale Heart" (and every other Poe story that involves premature burial). Framed as the confession of the murderer. If this story is not supernatural, it is predicated on a lot of bizarre and unlikely coincidences. 2/5

The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar • (1845) • Edgar Allan Poe

The one where mesmerism is used to forestall the moment of death; giving us the first grey area - now, what is mesmerism but supernaturalism, but does science fiction, proven untrue, pass into fantasy, or would that be ahistorical? 3/5

A Terribly Strange Bed • (1852) • Wilkie Collins

The one where a man, after a night of debauchery, stays the night in the gambling den where he just won a fortune, only to nearly be murdered by means of a terribly strange bed. The scheme didn't make much sense, but the story was written well enough and the scene with the attempted suffocation was suitably jarring. 3/5

The Boarded Window • (1889) • Ambrose Bierce

The one where an American frontiersman keeps one window boarded up after the death of his wife - either from disease or a panther attack, it's an Ambrose story, so the unreliable narration never makes it clear. Short and bitter. 5/5

The Three Strangers • (1883) • Thomas Hardy

The one where a rural party is interrupted by the staggered arrival of the titular gentlemen, one of whom is an escaped convict. A slight tinge of suspense, but certainly no terror. 3/5

The Interruption • (1925) • W. W. Jacobs

The one where a man has murdered his wife (but not any of those others where a man has murdered his wife), and is then blackmailed by the servant into increasing her lot in life. I was entirely sympathetic to the servant, although I don't think I was supposed to be. 2/5

Pollock and the Porroh Man • (1895) • H. G. Wells

The one where a white British colonialist runs afoul of a shaman in Africa, has him killed, and pays the price - whether this is a supernatural price or a psychological one is explicitly unclear. Could be read productively in tandem with "Lukundu" or the works of Henry S. Whitehead in terms of the supernatural costs of colonialism. Perhaps Richard Matheson's much-later "Prey" could be thrown into the mix too. 4/5

The Sea Raiders • (1896) • H. G. Wells

The one where monstrous octopi devour a bunch of pleasure-seekers on the English shore. Nothing more, nothing less, but what more could you need? 4/5

Sredni Vashtar • (1911) • Saki

The one where a lonely boy keeps and worships a ferret in the back yard, who eventually gets revenge on the boy's abusive caretaker - supernaturally, or naturally? Shades of Pollock. I enjoyed this one more here than in *The Weird*, which seems to ring true for my second readings of most old Weird tales. 4/5

Moonlight Sonata • (1931) • Alexander Woollcott

The one where a visitor to a supposedly-haunted castle thinks he saw a ghost, but it was really just a much more mundane monstrosity. 2/5

Silent Snow, Secret Snow • (1932) • Conrad Aiken

The one where Conrad Aiken proves once again to be a master of a very melancholic and beautiful descent into uncertainty and the surreal, this time via the story of a boy who sees and hears encroaching snow where no one else does. 5/5

Suspicion • (1933) • Dorothy L. Sayers

The one where a domestic has been poisoning her employers, and our protagonist begins to feel mighty suspicious about his new cook... 2/5

Most Dangerous Game • (1924) • Richard Edward Connell

The one where a man hunts another man. A famous story, for no reason at all that I can tell. 1/5

Leiningen Versus the Ants • (1938) • Carl Stephenson

The one where a colonialist defends his Brazilian plantation against a ravenous horde of army ants. Not particularly interesting, and frightfully patronizing toward the Brazilians ("The ants were indeed mighty, but not so mighty as the boss"), but at least it was better than the previous story. 2/5

The Gentleman from America • (1924) • Michael Arlen

The one where two British knaves trick an American caricature (a hilarious American caricature!) into thinking he was being attacked by ghosts. Things don't work out well for any of them. I actually really enjoyed this one. 4/5

A Rose for Emily • (1930) • William Faulkner

The one where Southern gentility is a mask for something rather gruesome. One of the all-time greats, of course. 5/5

The Killers • (1927) • shortstory by Ernest Hemingway

The one where some killers threaten an ex-boxer in a small town. Even as the non-supernatural stories go, this was not terrifying or even really tense at all. 1/5

Back for Christmas • (1939) • shortstory by John Collier

The one where a man murders his meddling wife and finds that her meddling extends from beyond the grave. Ho hum. I expected more from Collier. 2/5

Taboo • (1939) • Geoffrey Household

The one where a town is convinced they have a werewolf problem. It turns out they have a cannibal problem, which is even worse. 5/5

The Haunters and the Haunted: or, The House and the Brain • (1859) • Edward Bulwer-Lytton

The one where Bulwer-Lytton makes painfully clear he doesn't know when to stop: we go from rather excellent haunted house story, to bizarre pseudo-scientific explanation of said haunting, to downright inexplicable wizard's revenge story. This is the first of the supernatural stories, although it is kind of the epitome of the use of fringe science to explain its supernatural activity. 2/5

Rappaccini's Daughter • (1844) • Nathaniel Hawthorne

The one where a young man in an archaic Italy falls for the poisonous daughter of his scholarly neighbor. Often reprinted, but justifiably so. 4/5

The Trial for Murder • (1865) • Charles Dickens

The one where a murder victim gets justice by tampering with the jury. 2/5

Green Tea • (1869) • Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu

The one where a scholar is driven to madness and suicide by the stalking of a demonic monkey, perhaps a hallucination created by his consumption of green tea. Another classic (to be fair, most of the stories in this book are considered classics of the field), but another that just never really coheres for me. A large part of this might be my inability to take a demonic monkey seriously. 2/5

What Was It? • (1859) • Fitz-James O'Brien

The one where an invisible monster attacks a man in bed in the middle of the night. Another often-reprinted classic, this one has never done all that much for me, although I do appreciate the inability of modernity to preserve or make anything of the monster. 3/5

Sir Edmund Orme • (1891) • Henry James

The one where a young man can see the ghost of his girlfriend's mother's dead boyfriend. Said ghost is not menacing, just kind of despondently present sometimes. Doesn't amount to much of anything. 2/5

The Horla, or Modern Ghosts • (1886) • Guy de Maupassant

The one where a man is haunted by some sort of invisible, malevolent entity from beyond the stars - or else he's just insane. Pre-Lovecraft Lovecraft. 4/5

Was It a Dream? • (1910) • Guy de Maupassant

The one where a grieving widower sees the dead rise up from their graves to correct the banalities written on their tombstones. Short, simple, excellent. 5/5

The Screaming Skull • (1908) • F. Marion Crawford

The one where an aging sea captain has to live with the skull of his dead friend's dead wife. The skull blames him for her death. Written, unusually, as the sea captain's half of a conversation, with his conversant's responses omitted. Also in the *The Weird* but, as always, I enjoyed this more the second time. 5/5

The Furnished Room • (1904) • O. Henry

The one where a man, searching for his missing girlfriend, commits suicide, only for the reader to discover that the girlfriend had killed herself in the same room shortly before. Incoherent and pointless. 1/5

Casting the Runes • (1911) • M. R. James

The one where I have read it often enough recently and didn't have the desire to read it again right now.

Oh, Whistle, and I'll Come to You, My Lad • (1904) • M. R. James

The one where a historian uncovers an antiquarian whistle that would have been better left covered. Much, much better than "Casting the Runes" - effectively mysterious and suffused with dread, whereas "Casting" hangs mostly on the rather cartoonish villain. 5/5

Afterward • (1910) • Edith Wharton

The one where the ghostly presence in a haunted house makes itself known only long after the fact. Like the James, this is a rather staid and bloodless (in both ways) ghost story, but the narrative foreshadowing is excellent, and the protagonist's hopelessness is captured exceedingly well. 5/5

The Monkey's Paw • (1902) • W. W. Jacobs

The one where... well, you know. 5/5

The Great God Pan • (1894) • Arthur Machen

The one where a scientist seeking to expand the human mind sends his test subject through the veil (to “see the Great God Pan”), leaving her mindless and pregnant. Her daughter later wreaks havoc throughout London and the world, drawing her husband(s) into an orgiastic and heretical lifestyle that leads to their suicides. A disappointment next to Machen’s beautiful and otherworldly “The White People.” More fixated on the unveiling of cosmic horror than are most of the works here, which buys it a few points in my book, although what Machen does with the aftermath here interests me very little. 2/5

How Love Came to Professor Guildea • (1897) • Robert Hichens

The one where a resolutely unemotional man of science becomes haunted by a mewling invisible thing that wants only to love him. Includes an incredibly creepy scene involving a parrot. The narrator/protagonist, Guildea’s best friend and a man of God, watches this all unfold with great sadness for the inability of the rational mind to cope with emotion/the supernatural. One of the best. 5/5

The Return of Imray • (1891) • Rudyard Kipling

The one where a British colonialist runs afoul of his primitive, superstitious Indian servant, who then runs afoul of a snake. 1/5

"They" • (1904) • Rudyard Kipling

The one where a motorist finds, by accident, an isolated house where children always seem to be playing just out of the corner of his eye. Much of it is implicit rather than explicit, which I like, but it’s also a bit on the twee side, which I don’t. 3/5

Lukundoo • (1907) • Edward Lucas White

The one where a British colonialist runs afoul of an African shaman, who runs afoul of nothing. 5/5

Caterpillars • (1912) • E. F. Benson

The one where spectral caterpillar/crabs stand in for cancer contagion. 4/5

Mrs. Amworth • (1922) • E. F. Benson

The one where the titular vampire is dispatched. I read this expecting some sort of twist or surprise, to no avail but, as it goes, it worked well enough. I guess it is unusual for the vampire to be a kind of suburban housewife type? 3/5

Ancient Sorceries] • (1908) • novelette by Algernon Blackwood

The one where an Englishman gets off a train at a mysterious French village, only to find that this idyllic community is masking a darker reality. The foreshadowing is a bit heavy-handed

Confession • (1921) • Algernon Blackwood and Wilfred Wilson

The one where a gentleman strolling through a foggy afternoon in London is distracted by a ghostly woman who leads him into a house where her husband confesses to having killed her. All rather nightmarish and surreal. Seems rather urban for a Blackwood story, so you have to wonder how much he had to do with it. 3/5

The Open Window • (1911) • Saki

The one where a man visits a country estate, where the young daughter of the house tells him a ghost story, tricking him into believing it’s true. This one is explicitly not supernatural, and also not really much of a

story. 2/5

The Beckoning Fair One • (1911) • Oliver Onions

The one where an author moves to a new house and either falls under the spell of a ghost or just loses his mind. A bit too much happened off-screen for it to be entirely satisfying. 4/5

Out of the Deep • (1923) • Walter de la Mare

The one where a young man comes back to the dreaded house of his childhood to live out his final days. Some spectral visitations involving ghostly servants take place. Against what I just said about the Onions, just enough happens off-screen to make it entirely satisfying. Definitely asks to be re-read. 5/5

Adam and Eve and Pinch Me • (1921) • A. E. Coppard

The one where a man seems to have become a ghost, intangible and invisible to his wife, servant, and three children. Off to a great start, things get derailed when he wakes from his dream and remembers he has only two children - but his wife, previously unbeknownst to him, is pregnant. 2/5

The Celestial Omnibus • (1908) • E. M. Forster

The one where a boy takes a taxi carriage from the end of an alleyway to a magical kingdom of literary figures. When a spoilsport adult later accompanies him, he falls to his death. The worst kind of sentimental tripe. 1/5

The Ghost Ship • (1912) • Richard Middleton

The one where a ghostly ship washes up in an English village and proceeds to ruin the morals of all the local boys. Light-hearted, whimsical, utterly uninteresting. 1/5

The Sailor-Boy's Tale • (1942) • Karen Blixen [as by Isak Dinesen]

The one where a sailor boy saves a bird, murders a drinking companion, and is saved in turn. The murder is oddly glossed over, but I suppose that works with the mythic/unworldly tones of the story, which reminded me a bit of Valente's *Orphan's Tales*. 4/5

The Rats in the Walls • (1924) • H. P. Lovecraft

The one where a typically stuffy Lovecraft protagonist moves from New England to Old England to restore the ancestral estate, much to the distress of the locals. Once moved in, the noise of the titular creatures draws him underground, where he makes a gruesome (although relatively small-fry for Lovecraft!) discovery. Perhaps the quintessential Lovecraft story - creepy, well-plotted, and marred even more explicitly than usual by racism. 3/5

The Dunwich Horror • (1929) • H. P. Lovecraft

The one where a miscegenetic monster terrorizes Dunwich until it's defeated by a band of hearty academics. I've never understood the anthologization of this one over any number of other Lovecraft stories - it overstays its welcome, the ending makes it a bizarre outlier, and it doesn't do anything that Lovecraft doesn't do better elsewhere. 2/5

Dan Porter says

Lots of good authors and great stories, but this book confirmed for me that Lovecraft is still the best when it comes to horror.

Lark Benobi says

This anthology was my favorite book of all time from the age of 10 until the age of 12. I spent the weekend re-reading it. There are many favorite stories here that almost everyone has heard of and read: The Most Dangerous Game, Leiningen Versus the Ants, Shredni Vashtar, The Open Window, The Monkey's Paw.. Many here are still widely read because they were anthologized here first.

For the most part the stories still thrilled me. Even so I could not get over how many of them used the framing device of a bunch of white Englishmen at the club who are just lighting their cigars and settling down to hear one man's hair-raising yarn...or something very close to it. A few are culturally offensive, relying on witch-doctor tropes and colonial points of view that jar, but mostly their frame of reference is stiff-upper-lippish, rather than unreadably inappropriate. I still love them all albeit nostalgically at times rather than for their currency.

Lissa says

I actually have an original, 1944 edition that was passed down to me by my father when I was just entering into my teens. Many of the great classic authors grace these pages, from Faulkner, Hemingway, Hawthorne, Dickens, and Forster to Poe, Wells, and Kipling, among many others. My only disappointment is that I can no longer read through the book without worrying that I will break the binding! Perhaps I should be looking for a newer copy...
