



Dark Entries

Robert Aickman

[Download now](#)

[Read Online ➔](#)

Dark Entries

Robert Aickman

Dark Entries Robert Aickman

Robert Aickman (1914-1981) was the grandson of Richard Marsh, a leading Victorian novelist of the occult. Though his chief occupation in life was first as a conservationist of England's canals he eventually turned his talents to writing what he called 'strange stories.' *Dark Entries* (1964) was his first full collection, the debut in a body of work that would inspire Peter Straub to hail Aickman as 'this century's most profound writer of what we call horror stories.'

Dark Entries Details

Date : Published June 3rd 2014 by Faber & Faber Fiction (first published June 1964)

ISBN :

Author : Robert Aickman

Format : Kindle Edition 256 pages

Genre : Horror, Short Stories, Fiction, Fantasy, Weird Fiction

 [Download Dark Entries ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Dark Entries ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Dark Entries Robert Aickman

From Reader Review Dark Entries for online ebook

Char says

This was a strange, but interesting collection!

I've been hearing from a number of other readers I trust that Robert Aickman's stories are fantastic. I was recently presented with the opportunity to pick up a few of his collections for free, and I jumped at the chance. Since Dark Entries won the September Monthly Read poll at the Literary Horror group on Goodreads, I started this one first.

These are NOT horror stories. Some of them hardly even seem to be stories at all...they're more like windows that look briefly on to some strange portion of someone's life and then they move on. There is no clear plot or point usually, but I found myself thinking deeply about every one of these tales, wondering if there were some hidden meaning that I wasn't getting. There was one seemingly clear ghost story here, "The Waiting Room." (I wonder if it was decided that there needed to be one clear, straightforward story included with this collection just to give the reader a break from all the thinking?)

I think my favorite story in this collection was the last one, "Bind Your Hair". I'm still thinking about it. I'm still thinking about "Ringing the Changes" as well. Don't ask me why, because I don't know...but it's still turning round in my noggin just the same.

I'm a horror loving gal...and I cut my teeth on the short stories of King, Straub, Etchison, Bradbury, Rasnic Tem, and other greats. I loved those tales with all my heart and I still do. I can't compare my Aickman experience to these other authors. That's not to say that I didn't like this collection, because I did. It's to say that these stories aren't even in the same league as those others. It's apples and oranges and both of them taste just fine to me.

Recommend for fans of weirdness.!

Karl says

Robert Aickman is quite the writer. When he is good he is amazing. He has the ability to paint masterpieces with words. His characters can be extremely complex and humanly vulnerable.

The story I most enjoyed in "Dark Entries" (His second collection of stories following "We Are for the Dark: Six Ghost Stories") is the story called "The View" (Which was originally printed in his first collection "Six Ghost Stories"). The story concerns the protagonist a gentleman named Carfax a vulnerable and exhausted man who needs to get away from the hectic life in the city. He meets a beautiful woman on a sea voyage who invites him to stay with her in her home. As the story evolves we glimpse Carfax's voyage from imagined self doubt into the fringes of madness, yet hopelessly madly in love with his Femme Fatal. This is one great story.

Another story I rather enjoyed is the final story in the book entitled "Bind Your Hair" a quite bizarre and strange story.

The book also contains a couple of non exceptional ghost stories which are none the less well written. And a psychological haunted house story which begins the book called the "School Friend" which is more full of implications and innuendo than actual fright.

The original appearance of the stories is:

The book "We Are for the Dark: Six Ghost Stories", London: Jonathan Cape, 1951

"The Trains"

"The Insufficient Answer"

"The View"

The other three stories in the book are by Elizabeth Jane Howard

The book "Dark Entries: Curious and Macabre Ghost Stories", London: Collins, 1964

"The School Friend"

"Ringing the Changes"

"Choice of Weapons"

"The Waiting Room"

"Bind Your Hair"

The copy I read is a Faber and Faber edition published in 2014 with an introduction by Richard T. Kelly and an afterword by Ramsey Campbell which I also really enjoyed.

Arun Divakar says

A reviewer or a group of reviewers (I don't remember who specifically) called Robert Aickman a writer who has produced fantastic works in the horror genre. If 'Dark Entries' is any indicator, then Aickman is not a horror writer at all ! His prose is lush and the emotion that it switches on is unease, a very profound one at that too. The kind of unease that makes a clammy sweat break out, give you an itch behind your eyeballs and makes your head jerk up when the curtain by your window sways in the unseen wind. Ambling, slithering, slimy monstrosities do not crawl out of these pages, blood and gore are not splattered all over and yet you feel a sense of dread for no explicable reason whatsoever. Through five short stories, Aickman offers glimpses into the enigmatic labyrinth of the human mind. After two stories, I was totally in awe of Aickman's writing prowess.

The tool that Aickman uses to terrific effect is the minor imbalances and hallucinations of the human mind. The neuroses that plague some of his characters are like tumours which grow slowly yet surely and become life threatening in the end. His short story 'Ringing the changes' is a fantastic piece of work. For a story that lasts approximately 40 pages, this is sheer dynamite. A strange place, even stranger people, noise that makes you want to tear your hair out looking for some peace and a realization that attempting to escape would be rather futile an endeavour are all captured grimly in this tale. This is a fine example of the craft involved when it comes to writing an unsettling tale for the horror is in watching on helplessly as things start spiralling out of control. The story is a tightrope walk between the real and the surreal and Aickman slips in and out of both these with consummate ease. Undoubtedly this is one of the tightest written short stories that I have read. Another such unsettling tale is 'Bind your hair'. This is the last story in the book and I am still wondering what to make out of it. At first, it is a tongue-in-cheek look at the horrors of living a weekend with your in-law's but all the while Aickman weaves a web of strangeness around the setting of the story. The Dinoysian experiences that Clarinda Hartley undergoes and bears witness to in the British countryside

are enough to shake her out of the mental turgidity of living with her over loving yet tepid fiancé and family. The strangeness of this story is bested only by 'Ringing the changes'. The other three tales are also no less stunning in execution. Aickman does not conform his stories to the three act structure but goes for taking an instance or occurrence in the lives of these characters and showing it to us in all its oddness and after stirring up our mind, he moves on to the next one. I am completely impressed, Mr. Aickman !

Ramsey Campbell writes in the afterword about Aickman's disdain for all horror writers and their incapability in coming up with plot lines that do not step out of the ordinary. Considering the skill that he possessed in the field of weird fiction, I can completely understand Mr. Aickman's POV on this too. Highly recommended !

Ctgt says

I've been on a real Aickman kick recently having just finished *The Wine-Dark Sea* I heard about a group read for this title and decided to join the discussion. This collection definitely had a "darker"(no pun intended) feel than *Wine-Dark* but I still wouldn't really call this horror. Weird, yes. Bizarre, absolutely. Loaded with subtext, without a doubt. I did enjoy this collection a bit more than *Wine-Dark* but that is directly related to all the discussion during the group read. I truly believe Aickman stories need to be kicked around amongst a group of readers.

I really loved *Ringing the Changes*, *The View* and *Bind Your Hair* with *The Waiting Room* being the weakest.

You live surrounded by the claims of other people: to your labour when they call it peace, your life when they call it war; to your celibacy when they call you a bachelor, your body when they call you a husband. They tell you where you shall live, what you shall do, and what thoughts are dangerous. Does not some modern Frenchman, exhausted by it all and very naturally, say, "Hell is other people?"

Brucifer says

This was the first of what I already know will be several excursions into the world of Robert Aickman, who--along with Ramsey Campbell--is almost universally acknowledged amongst critics as the finest writer of horror fiction of the latter half of the 20th century. Well, finally I took the plunge thanks to these nice new Faber & Faber paperback editions of his previously difficult-to-locate work, and I decided to start with his earliest solo collection. I have to agree that I'm mightily impressed with Aickman's subtle terrors and gorgeous prose style. He was a true original. The only writers of ghost/horror stories I could think of comparing him to as I read this collection were Edith Wharton and Henry James, who also approached the genre with subtlety and ambiguity, often not quite confirming that anything supernatural has actually occurred. The exception in this collection is "Ringing the Changes," which is overtly supernatural and is the most terrifying story here. But the more ambiguous stories are also well worth the time, even if they don't have you climbing the walls in terror. I was especially impressed with "The School Friend," "Bind Your Hair," and "The View," all of which are tales of psychological ambiguity melded with supernaturalism that end with what I can only guess is an Aickman trademark: the subtle twist, usually just a sentence or two, that

leaves the reader simultaneously perplexed, surprised, intrigued, and most importantly, unnerved. Some readers might be unsatisfied with the lack of clear endings in Aickman's stories (even "Ringing the Changes" leaves you with a lot of questions), but I felt this made the stories all the more effective. I had to take my star rating of this collection down a notch due to "Choice of Arms," a story with its moments but ultimately mediocre, and "The Waiting Room," which could have been more effective if Aickman had sustained the suspense longer (it's the shortest story in the collection; the rest are almost novella-length, which might explain why this story seems a bit slight). But in any case, highly recommended, and not just for genre fans. These stories should be read by anyone who appreciates good literature, whether "horror" (an arguable term here: Aickman used the terms "strange stories" to describe his work) or not.

Jayaprakash Satyamurthy says

A few notes on each story in this pretty much perfect collection:

The School Friend: Aickman invests the theme of the ancestral home that holds dark secrets with a fresh menace and mystery. In contrast to this is the notion of friendship, surviving the vicissitudes of life and time and offering a measure of clemency.

Ringing The Changes: The atmosphere of slowly building oppression and the growing sense of dread kept me on the edge of my seat. What really makes the story are the little, weird details about the characters the couple meet in the hotel, adding to a sense of reality out of joint.

Choice Of Weapons: A man falls in love with a strange, seductive girl who lives in an eerie old house. She is lost in a dream of love, and so is he. Dreamy and startling. I picture Eva Green as the girl.

The Waiting Room: Very much a traditional ghost story but masterfully framed for maximum disorientation.

The View: A beautiful, sad fable about a man who is pixilated by a magical woman in a magical house, and then lives on, literally older and sadder. There is such a powerful aura of romantic longing and desolation around this story.

Bind Your Hair: A woman visits her fiance's family. She discovers a strange, yet oddly magical cult centered around a remarkable misfit, but rejects it with a firmness that seems like a displacement of her reaction to her fiance's family. A beautiful balance between mundane and weird elements, both equally unsettling to the protagonist.

Quirkyreader says

All I can say is oh my! This book contains a bunch of good creepers. Especially "Ringing The Changes".

No wonder Roald Dahl picked Aickman's stories to be in different anthologies.

Try and find a copy of this one.

Florina says

Well, I certainly have new material for my nightmares.

Perhaps the best aspect of these short stories are not the plots in themselves, but the writing. Truly, Aickman strikes fear through his prose, not his events. His sentences are so elegant, so chilling, so clear yet so confusing, that you will find yourself thinking it must be some shortcoming of yours that you did not read between the lines. In actuality, that's the warranted effect.

Any action seems to exist solely to complement the writing and in this case, it works. You are afraid but have no idea why you are afraid and that is true marksmanship. Of course there are some twists and turns and you'll find ghosts and corpses and madmen and beasts strewn across the stories, but they are not the essence of your fear. Robert Aickman seems to have discovered that good horror comes from no horror at all, merely the allusion of it.

Tristram says

“When you live entirely among madmen, it is difficult to know how sane you are.”

Dark Entries was my first encounter with the “strange” stories written by Robert Aickman, and it was an immediate bull’s eye experience with me, partly because of the moods and situations the author deftly conjures up, partly because of his remarkably unerring use of language. Last year, I tried reading Ligotti, and after a handful of stories decided to give up on him because the florid and overstrung style of that author sounded to me like an awkward imitation of Poe and more often than not was at variance with the situation described in the stories. I was also sadly underwhelmed by William Hope Hodgson’s *The House on the Borderland* last December, and that’s why I did not expect too much when I started this little book a few days ago. But even if I had entered the read with higher expectations, I would hardly have been disappointed because Aickman is incredible when it comes to using language in surprising and effective ways, combining precision and imagination – e.g. when he coins a phrase like “the boundless sequacity of love” –, and leaving you at a loss as to what has precedence for him, the exploration of the language or the mood he thereby creates. His horrors are often indirectly hinted at but still very forceful for all that, and in *Dark Entries*, I found a collection of short stories that would unsettle me in a very lasting way even when I read them in broad daylight, something that often impairs the effect of weird or horror stories. Not so in Aickman’s case because this author could probably also show you the terrors that lie hidden beneath a thin surface of sunlight and birds’ songs.

Here is a short overview of the individual stories:

1) The School Friend *****

The tale of “an ever-open mouth of a house”, which gets hold of a middle-aged woman, plunging her into madness and tapping her vitality, told by her former school friend who learns that it may not be too wise an idea to pry too closely into other people’s life. It may be that the narrator’s friend is a victim of domestic abuse but it may also be that the house is possessed by an evil force that tries to feed on her.

2) Ringing the Changes *****

This was my personal favourite in this collection, an unusual zombie story in which a dance with the dead allows a young wife a glimpse into something that is more alive than anything her husband might offer her will ever be.

3) Choice of Weapons **

An extremely grotesque story, seeming more like a feverish nightmare than anything else. There is a mysterious young woman in love with a strange man appearing to her in a mirror, and a rather high-strung, fickle protagonist who falls for her at first sight. The ending of the story remains a riddle to me, as much as the strange workings of the seemingly benevolent Dr. Bermuda, who pretends to help our protagonist in his love affair.

4) The Waiting Room ***

A train passenger who has to spend the night in a waiting room connects with the dead and finds that there seems to be an unspoken assumption of understanding between him and them.

5) The View *****

My second favourite story, dealing with Carfax, a convalescent young man, who accepts a young woman's invitation to her house which is situated on an island. They pass the days indulging in conversations about arts, or playing the piano and the protagonist finally falls in love with the woman, who embodies a philosophy of egotistical aestheticism, mirrored in a statement like this:

"You live surrounded by the claims of other people: to your labour when they call it peace, your life when they call it war; to your celibacy when they call you a bachelor, your body when they call you a husband. They tell you where you shall live, what you shall do, and what thoughts are dangerous."

Carfax soon embraces her point of view as well as the fact that the island constantly seems to change, and they spend the time in dual solipsism, but one day he awakes to make a terrible observation – one that seems to betoken a rarely-told truth on a life spent on and in itself.

6) Bind Your Hair *****

A young fiancée spends her first weekend in the country with the family of her betrothed. Although she finds them all basically nice, she also senses that their life is a tad too commonplace and passive for her. There is, however, an alternative of how to spend one's time in the country offered to her.

All these stories venture as much into the fog of unacknowledged wishes and fears in the human psyche as into haunted houses or forlorn graveyards, and this is what makes their perusal a spine-chilling experience even before dusk because they deal in terrors and dangers that lurk within every single one of us and that we cannot avoid by simply not going into the cellar.

Tristan says

My, what a puzzling, yet wondrous experience reading Aickman is. Now it's finally become clear to me why I've seen him so often being talked about in such hushed, reverential tones. This Brit was an absolute master craftsman of the "strange tale", as he himself defined the nature of his work.

The one thing to be appreciated the most about these tales (this collection, astonishingly his debut, consists of 6), is undoubtedly the prose. It's rather gorgeous. Timeless, in fact. See, I have a sneaking suspicion that

Aickman never cared about plotting at all. Not really. Naturally there must be a plot in order for there to be a story, but in almost every case it mostly consists of a rather basic premise, with some modest twists and turns thrown in. For a riveting, fast moving plot, Aickman ain't your man.

His primary obsessions are mood, nuance, the steady unfolding of an inner psychological drama. There are no satisfying pay offs to be found at the end. His world is an oblique, unreal and insecure one, populated by neurotics and lost souls. Threat is perceived, yet very often not actualised. That is the essence of Aickman.

Faber & Faber has thus far republished 4 - thankfully, inexpensive- collections of Aickman's work. Previously, the only way to obtain Aickman other than secondhand was through the lovingly produced hardcovers of Tartarus Press, which are admittedly pricey. Fantastic publisher, but perhaps not the best route to take by way of an introduction. For those interested, I'd suggest going for these first. My utmost and highest recommendation.

Simon says

Normally when I review one of Robert Aickman's collections, I ramble on about his masterful craftsmanship of strange tales, his lush and supple prose, talking much about the author's style in general. But I'm not going to do that this time. Let's face it, if you're thinking of picking this book up you are already a hardened fan. Unless you're extraordinarily lucky to discover this tucked away out the back of some dusty old second-hand store, you're paying a lot of money for one of these fine but expensive Tartarus Press editions.

This collection contains only six stories, one of which I've read before ("Bind Your Hair") and an introduction by Dr Glen Cavaliero. One reason I picked this up, other than getting hold of several stories not included in the relatively cheaper and more readily available collections, was to get to read the legendary "Ringing the Changes". I noticed that many Aickman fans had cited this as their favourite and after reading it I can see why. One of his more outright terrifying stories. I loved it.

But Aickman rarely writes stories that are conventional horror. Usually they are more strange, only hinting at something more horrific under the surface. "The School Friend" is like this. We experience the story through the eyes of a female protagonist who sees her old friend change inexplicably as she moves back into her family home. "Choice of Weapons" is completely *outré* as we follow a man who falls in love with a woman at first sight whilst on a date with another and then the consequences of his obsession unfold. "The Waiting Room" is the least interesting, still worth reading but definitely one of his minor stories.

Included in this edition, although not in the original edition, is "The View", which actually originally appeared in his first collection that he contributed to jointly with Elizabeth Jane Howard, *We Are For The Dark*. This version is one that Aickman had apparently slightly re-written. A great story though exploring the tension between the forces for change and stasis in Aickman's own oblique way.

All in all, another fine collection but then I am increasingly of the opinion that it would be extremely difficult to put a collection of stories by this author together and for it not to be outstanding.

mark monday says

such curiously precise sentences, so exact, so perfectly constructed. they tell you everything and nothing. it's the meaning between those words, the implications of what is not being said that disturbs. those slippery places, those half-conscious spaces. admire Aickman for his perfect prose and his marvelous subtlety and his dry, dry wit. but love him for what he doesn't tell you, for taking you to a place where your mind must operate on a different level, someplace new and vague and troubling. he paints a picture of the night sky: the clouds and the treetops and the moon, all the stars in all of their strange remoteness. it is up to you to turn them into something, to make of them constellations - and other shapes.

I was surprised and a bit saddened to see two excellent reviews of this book insist that it is not horror. *Dark Entries* is horror at its most profound. horror doesn't simply scare; it inspires dread and a certain kind of chilliness, a creeping sort of understanding that the mind often resists. he provides a story that will read like a dream and he provides a meaning that he will only hint at; it is up to the reader to connect the two, to turn the oblique and the opaque into something that has its own logic. nightmare logic. Aickman is one of the absolute masters of the horror genre.

Dark Entries is Aickman's first solo collection. perhaps this early in his career he was more invested in creating horrors that were at least somewhat tangible and familiar. *somewhat*.

Ringing the Changes has a town that embraces the undead, and a couple that becomes trapped there. it has a suspenseful and eventually hair-raising narrative. but it is not about the undead; it is about the distance between two lovers, the distance that becomes apparent when contrasting the new and the old. a younger woman sees things her way, and rushes forward; she may quail in fear but she will dance with the dead. an older man sees his age, his ineffectuality; he will try to cross a gap and he will fail, impotent.

The Waiting Room has a traveler stranded in a train station, home to ghosts who were buried beneath. it is a ghost story and it is not a ghost story. it is about loneliness, a man as an island, a man alone and unconsciously yearning for a community, for support in his lonely world. he sleeps, and lives a brief dream of a happiness he has never had. he barely recognizes his own desperate need.

Bind Your Hair has a woman engaged to a man, and visiting his perfectly nice relatives in the country. a loving home that feels increasingly like a comfy trap, a soft and pillowy place where she may lose herself. it has a country village where people gather in the evenings, their clean strong limbs bared to the moon... for what purpose? it has two children, a peremptory guide and a savage biter. our heroine can barely resist them. bind your hair; bind away all that is you and become one of us.

Choose Your Weapons has a young man fall madly and inexplicably in love with an inexplicable, possibly mad young woman. it has hypnotism and a doctor who may know all. it has a crumbling house and a woman with two faces and a servant who grows younger. it has empty spaces at the heart of it, the gap between love and the reality of living, the excruciating smallness of minds that are obsessed by small things - things like money, class, a name, an appearance, poverty, wealth. can love ever be stronger than such small things when one part of the pair values the latter over the former? *Choose Your Weapons* has one of the most nightmarish narratives I've seen in an Aickman story, as well as one of the most startlingly, beautifully abrupt endings.

The School Friend has a writer returning to her hometown and finding her friend much changed, living in a

perhaps haunted house that is notable for its drabness, its prosaic and dusty blandness. a school friend, once uniquely intelligent and idiosyncratic, turning drab, prosaic, dusty, and bland. the heroine slowly explores the house and the discomfort slowly increases. the horror seeps in from the frame until the whole picture is submerged. what's it all about? the meaning is hidden between the sentences, implicit never explicit, a teasing game for the author, a puzzle for the reader to work out. here are the clues: two independent women; sexuality and gendered roles; childbirth and parenthood; a descent into the horrible mundane and an ascent - maybe - into the terrible unknown. my favorite story in the collection.

Nikki says

This collection of stories mostly did not creep me out, despite the accolades of being a great horror writer. But they were certainly strange stories, as Aickman himself preferred to call them. There's a great atmosphere in some of them, and his writing is careful and precise. Somebody else described the atmosphere in some of the stories as "reality out of joint", and that's definitely true — for these characters, ostensibly belonging to our normal world, something jolts out of place and everything is made strange by it. Even some quite mundane details can become more threatening in that atmosphere.

I'm not in a wild hurry to read more of Aickman's work, but I wouldn't say no, either — maybe I'll pick up more of it from the library, and give his novels a try.

Originally posted here.

Andy says

This collection is a good deal shorter than the other Aickman collections out there. It's about half the length of "The Unsettled Dust," "Cold Hand in Mine" or "The Wine-Dark Sea" -- especially when you take out the Introduction and "Robert Aickman Remembered" (interesting as those may be.)

Two of the stories ("The Waiting Room" and "The View") are of lesser quality than Aickman's average. But I think both this, and the shorter length are made up for by the other four stories, all of which are excellent, three of which are among my personal favorites.

The School Friend - I thought this was a masterpiece, a truly frightening haunted house story with Aickman's vague, somewhat open-ended implications at their creepy best. This belongs in the top 5 of 30~ Aickman stories I've read thus far. After a woman's old school friend has an accident, she is asked to look after the house she recently inherited from her strange father. There she uncovers some very odd things.

Ringing the Changes - Very weird story, less subtle than Aickman's other's I would say, but no less interesting, atmospheric or fascinating. The first half builds a good mood, the second half is very strange. A couple on honeymoon stays in a small town that tolls its church bells all night, a local reveals they are trying to wake the dead.

Choice of Weapons - I really liked this one, the end left me a bit at sea, the last paragraph in particular REALLY throws one for a loop. But overall I thought this was an excellent story with a very shadowy,

almost "haunted house" atmosphere to it. A man becomes suddenly obsessed with a woman he sees in a restaurant, he goes after her, contending for her love with a quite sinister figure.

The Waiting Room - Probably the most "conventional" Aickman story I've ever read, brief and without as much vague, open-endedness one is used to. Not a bad ghost story. A man stranded at the end of the line stays in an old waiting room, and witnesses more than a few apparitions.

The View - This was surprisingly straight forward for Aickman. It's a sad story with a good ending to it, but I felt this one dragged a bit in the middle. I would put this in the bottom five stories I've read by him. An artist in need of a rest stays in a woman's estate on an island where time seems to pass strangely.

Bind Your Hair - Another weird one I liked a lot, this one's creepy, even a little scary with several memorable moments and images. Definitely one of the better Aickman stories, it's subtle, but goes beyond his more subtle stories, with a more direct, horror story ending like "Ringing the Changes." A girl goes with her fiance to the country to meet her family. While there she meets a strange local woman who lives near a maze where queasy Pagan rituals are held.

Bill Kerwin says

This first collection of Robert Aickman's "strange stories"—the term the author preferred to "supernatural," "horror", or "terror"—contains pieces which are perhaps more conventional than many of the four dozen or so tales that comprise his body of work, but they are equally well-written and equally disturbing, and that is saying a lot. Aickman is one of the modern masters—perhaps *the* modern master—of the weird tale, and, for fans of the genre new to Aickman, this collection is a good place to start.

Aickman's stories succeed because each is model of design, a model undermined and enriched by deliberate *lacunae*. His prose, mellifluous and precise, provides a frame within which he creates a palpable setting, the sort of world which—however fantastic—a reader feels he can navigate and depend upon. Then, without warning, chasms loom: rifts in space, gaps in time, shifts of tone—each without an explanation. Suddenly, this creepy-comfortable mansion of a story threatens us with great holes in the floor, and we have no choice but to negotiate around the holes or plunge into them. Either way, we immerse ourselves in the strange.

The six stories here are all good, yet each differs greatly from the others: "The School Friend" (grammar school girlfriends reunite after years, and the old house of the returning woman suggests disturbing revelations), "Ringing the Changes" (a May-December couple in a small seaside village encounter their own mortality ... and the risen dead), "Choice of Weapons" (an extraordinarily nightmarish account of love at first sight, involving a beautiful eccentric woman, a suburban London house of Ancient Egyptian design, and what may (or may not) be a duel), "The Waiting Room" (a lonely traveler communes with the dead who lie beneath the train station floor), "The View" (a convalescent middle-aged Foreign Service Officer accompanies a Circe-like woman to an isle off the English coast), and "Bind Your Hair" (an engaged young woman visits her husband's family in the country and encounters a bizarre country ritual).

The volume also includes a helpful introduction by Richard T. Kelly, and an appreciative afterward about this prickly, often disagreeable man by fellow writer and friend Ramsey Campbell.

