



The Dunwich Horror

H.P. Lovecraft, Len Goldberg (Illustrator)

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This edition reprints seven stories appearing in the 1963 Arkham House edition. The reprinted stories include:

"In the Vault";
"Pickman's Model";
"The Rats in the Walls";
"The Music of Erich Zann";
"The Haunter of the Dark";
"The Dunwich Horror";
and "The Thing on the Doorstep".

The Dunwich Horror Details

Date : Published 1963 by Lancer (first published April 1929)

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Author : H.P. Lovecraft , Len Goldberg (Illustrator)

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From Reader Review The Dunwich Horror for online ebook

Oleksandr says

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Dree says

Read on Serial Reader

I enjoyed this more than other Lovecraft stories I have read recently. Though "the horror" itself was not that well done, I found the horrors of the townspeople desperately locking themselves and their livestock in at night to be very real. Also, the mocking they endured from the local town when they reported problems--after being looked down on for years/decades because something was "off".

Though I don't much enjoy Lovecraft (I really prefer Poe), I do think his work would be great for middle schoolers. The reading level is fine, and I think they are young enough to find his ideas extra creepy. Kind of how Poe gave me nightmares at that age.

Bentley ★ Bookbastion.net says

I've been making an effort this year to broaden my horizons and read outside of my comfort zone. Part of that is to better acquaint myself with authors and works considered classic today. HP Lovecraft's collected works have always been high on my list of things to read so I threw myself into this one and ended up enjoying it so much I read the entire thing in the span of an evening.

As expected, the prose is definitely dense and might be considered a chore for some readers to try and wade through. One thing I really appreciated about this story was the lengths that Lovecraft went to in order to establish Dunwich as a setting. The story is a slow burn one, in which the darkened forests, hills and valleys of Dunwich become as much a character as any of the many various townspeople and their families that are introduced.

It takes a bit of investment, getting used to the characters and the landscape of Dunwich before the true meat of the scares start, but it's very much worth it. By establishing the elements of the world so clearly at the start of the story, Lovecraft grounds this particular tale within a localized environment that feels aged and real. It provides an important balance to the latter half of the story, as the usual cosmic horror elements are introduced and evil makes itself apparent.

Familiarizing myself with Lovecraft is sort of great fun, because in a lot of ways I can pick out the influence his writing has had on some of my favorite horror media today. Cosmic horror as a genre was born and thrived under Lovecraft's pen. He masterfully makes the great evils that befall his characters both otherworldly, and yet they feel terrifyingly real or possible, as though his very words tap into that same wellspring of darkness that he writes about.

There are certain aspects of this story that aren't socially acceptable today that rubbed me the wrong way, but I tend to take anything written outside our current political and social climates with a grain of salt. If you can look past those aspects, and don't mind slow-burn horror that intensifies as it goes along, this is a story that is sure to please.

5 out of 5 stars

Bob says

Essential Lovecraft, but unlike excruciating "At the Mountains of Madness", this one actually has a plot and it doesn't shy away to describe every morbid detail. Still, it suffers from constant description of fear and shock that protagonists are supposedly facing. As a result, writer's intention to shock is limited to its characters, failing to reach the reader. None the less, brief description of gothic New England bloodlines and the library scene are alone worthy of every minute. The latter is probably one of the key motifs for future Kings and Bakers or Carpenters and Cronenbergs.

Amy Mills says

Well-crafted tale, with the usual Lovecraft caveats (rural people degenerate, apparently, until they no longer count as human, even if they don't mate with elder gods). I read this after reading an alternate version casting Armitage as a villain. The original interpretation has the happier ending, notably.

Oddly I found myself wondering if this story was in any way foundational to *Pete's Dragon*. I mean, giant invisible creature stomping through town, wreaking havoc? Tone it down a notch or 20 to a kid's companion, and you get *Pete's Dragon*. Instead of masses of tentacles and eyes and mouths, you get "head of a camel", "neck of a crocodile", "both a fish and a mammal".

So... does that make *Pete Wilbur*? And it's his *adopted* family that are the, er, problematic beings? I'm probably analyzing this too much.

Shawn Mooney says

The only thing I was afraid of was that the shitty-shitty-SHITTY prose might make me vomit.

Amy (Other Amy) says

It is always a relief to get clear of the place, and to follow the narrow road around the base of the hills and across the level country beyond till it rejoins the Aylesbury pike. Afterward one sometimes learns that one has been through Dunwich.

I'm a bit torn on this one. The first sections are interminably long and full of everything Lovecraft does that annoys me. The last few sections are actually quite entertaining. Can't really skip the first part and expect to

enjoy the last part though. Two stars.

Fiona Murphy McCormack says

Very....foeted. HP loved his repetition. The build up of the character in the beginning, while obviously uncomfortably racist in depiction, sounded interesting initially. I liked the set up of this little town, seemed kind of Night Vale to me. But Horror genre is just not my thing at all no matter how much I try to get into it. I got lost in the lack of the explanation of the lore, which I'm sure relates to his other Weird Tales and if you like Necronomicon that's probably great. But I'm guessing this isn't the place to start with Lovecraft, and since I'm a dog person, he's not so much for me.

I wanted to find out who the father was, I wanted to know the backstory of Lavina and the grandfather. Also the heck was that twin ending?

Bill Kerwin says

I love first time reads, but I love re-reads even more, for with each re-reading, I learn more about the work, and more about myself too.

The first time I read "The Dunwich Horror," I was twelve. "Dunwich" scared the hell out of me, and I loved it, but it was also satisfying in other ways, ways that reminded me of the books I already knew. For example, it started out with the birth of a boy whose father's origin was a mystery, and the first part of the story followed this boy (Wilbur Whateley) as he attempted--through occult books and spells--to learn more about his origins and destiny (boy's adventures--minus the occult part--often begin in this way), and though the story's second part took a dark turn, it ended with an exciting chase across open country, and--even better--*the triumph of good over evil!* (I found this satisfying, for--in spite of my new love for horror—I still liked it better when the good guys won.)

A generation passed, and I read "Dunwich" again, this time finding it one of the least satisfying of Lovecraft's tales. The revelation of what Wilbur *looked like under his clothes* was just as terrifying as ever, but what happened afterward seemed like one long dreary anti-climax. The chase was corny, like something out of a boy's novel, uncalled for in classic horror fiction.

Another generation passed, and a few days ago I read "The Dunwich Horror" again, and discovering it to be as delightful as when I first encountered it.

I have been thinking lately about what makes Lovecraft such a great horror writer. There was the *mythos* of course, and his remarkable sense of place, but there was something else, an aspect I had only recently begun to appreciate: the great number of narrative genres and themes he manipulated in order to vary his one constant, terrible concern.

"Rats in the Walls" (old fashioned gothic), "The Call of Cthulhu" (one mystery revealed through multiple viewpoints), "The Shadow Over Innsmouth" (a stranger explores a strange town), "The Outsider" (Poe-style soliloquy), "The Quest of Iranon" (Dunsanian fantasy), "The Case of Charles Dexter Ward" (amateur detective), "The Color out of Space" (interstellar phenomena) "The Whisperer in Darkness" (interstellar travel), "At the Mountains of Madness" (account of a scientific expedition), and "The Shadow Out of Time"

(psychic time-travel). That is a list—by no means an exhaustive one—to indicate his astonishing variety.

This time, more than fifty years after my first reading of “The Dunwich Horror,” I marveled at the skill with which Lovecraft manipulated the tired tropes of the boy’s adventure tale, making the fatherless boy Wilbur himself the first sign of horror, and using the last exciting chase to eradicate the even greater horror the boy wished to manifest.

“The Dunwich Horror” isn’t—as I formerly believed--a good horror story marred with a corny ending, No, it is something stranger: a boy’s adventure gone mad, a tale that takes the fantasy of marvelous parentage, turns it upside down, and crushes it before your eyes. *And then still sends you home with a happy ending.*

Skylar Phelps says

Unbelievably, this is my first by Lovecraft, and I have been so excited to read his work for some time. Now that it’s fall time, it’s Lovecraft time!

I am not necessarily a major horror fan but I have a fascination for the weird; for the munching, crunching things in the walls; the squirming, slithering things that slink in the dark pools of the mind. I do enjoy being scared but for me the most bewitching things are the ones that make little, if any sense. Things that defy reality and exist even though they shouldn’t and even if they only lurk in the imagination.

With that said about me, I thought The Dunwich Horror was fabulous! I loved the tone of the story, I loved the flowery prose, I liked the weirdness, and I absolutely loved the tentacles! I feel like I’ve only dipped my toes into the Lovecraft pool of cosmic weirdness and I can’t wait for more!

Book Wyrm says

One of Lovecraft's greatest.

A slow, insidious horror story covering the life of a demonic and hyper intelligent child. This is one of the mythos tales done very right, with great atmosphere and the unnerving feeling that something is simply 'wrong'. You're not quite sure what, you're not truly sure why, there's just this uncomfortable, slowly creeping sensation that something larger, more threatening and important than a supernaturally fast growing, psychotic child is at play. The minimal but vivid use of body horror is perfect and the end reveal is genuinely unsettling.

Gold star, Lovecraft, even if you are a distinctly classist bastard here.

Logan Paul says

The village of Dunwich has always had legends and myths surrounding it. Perhaps it's simply its setting, in the dark marshlands and hills of northern Massachusetts. Many who would dare visit would always be assaulted mentally by the loud ominous noises coming from beneath the nearby hills and mountains. The townsfolk are a superstitious bunch, who keep to themselves, forming a tight and guarded community. The roads smell foul, animals are sick, and plants wilt, if they even grow at all. But what caused this desolation? Why, the Dunwich Horror may be the cause.

Among the denizens of this strange little settlement is an old family named the Whateleys. Old Man Whateley, and his pale, albino counterpart, give birth to a child under strange means. The baby is deformed and almost goatlike, and grew unnaturally quickly, both physically as well as mentally. By the age of three or four, having the average size and intelligence of a 15 year old. Witchcraft was common amongst the Whateleys, and many people feared them for that very reason. They seemed to be up to something in the upstairs room of the family home, and the albino mother seemed distressed. Strange happenings around the farm cause many in the town to be suspicious. Wilbur and the old man had brought something through to the physical world from the timeless voids outside the universe, and it's connection to the Outer God "Yog-Sothoth" only increases its tenebrous nature. The librarian from the Miskatonic University in Arkham, Henry Armitage suspects something afoot in Dunwich, and takes great interest in Wilbur's affairs. He may be one of the only people capable of deciphering the mystery of the horrors to come, as he alone is the only one willing to delve into the pages of blasphemous grimoires and esoteric texts.

In many cases, the story can get quite bland. In particular, scenes that demand the characters to speak in an accent. It is at times hard to read, making these parts rather tedious. This story is quite long (longer than other Lovecraft stories), and Lovecraft seems to try to extend the scenes as long as possible. The great battle at the end however is highly dramatic, and expresses the very feelings and vibes that first drew me into reading his stories. This story is unique among other Lovecraft, in that the ending is carried out differently. I would advise to reader to stop and process each bit of information carefully, as much of the conclusion is misleading.

Of course, I would also like to point out the usage of the Necronomicon. This book is a central motif in many Lovecraft stories, and it is the most present object that binds all his stories together into the mythos (the "Yog-Sothoth"). This shows us that this is technically related to other Lovecraft stories such as "The Call of Cthulhu". In this case the book is used both by Wilbur and Henry Armitage for research purposes.

Orient says

A Lovecrafty BR with my great GR friend Craig. Viva la Cthulhu and his kin ????

What a nice read with monsters! :) I liked this story a lot, the pace was quicker, the writing more engaging, the info about the main plotline - gripping. Dark family secrets, creepy cult, monsters, MONSTERS, suspense, ancient mystery, juicy fighting, other universes. Omg, the only flaw is that this story is too short! Btw, there are some movies! :)

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0065669/>

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1226752/>

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1733465/>

Timo says

Note this is a review only of the Dunwich Horror, I haven't read the rest in this collection (I've been reading

them all off the wonderful HPLovecraft.com, which has the pdfs for them all for free).

The Dunwich Horror is pretty ok. Lovecraft is not known for his dialogue, and the Dunwich Horror is unfortunately full of it. It is an interesting enough story to pull you along pretty quickly though, and I was genuinely curious to see how it resolved. Not as good as some of his other novellas (I'm still waiting to find a work of his I like as much as The Mountains of Madness).

Jorge Rosas says

I couldn't stop reading it! It was a very good story with a lot of suspense and psychological horror.

Mike MacDee says

Easily one of Lovecraft's best. Many of his works involve a lot of buildup for very little payoff, but this one constantly raises the stakes and the weirdness, lacing it all with a thick atmosphere that really makes the degenerate backwater of Dunwich come alive. The reader gets a better sense of involvement than in Call of Cthulhu: both are written in an investigative journalism style (forgiving the dense gothic prose HP loved so well), but whereas Cthulhu leaves the reader feeling far removed from the events described, Dunwich somehow manages to feel more like an event in progress, and feels more intense as a result. The actual horror doesn't kick off until the second half, and manages to predict classic creature features involving giant monsters running amok in human civilization. Many of HP's "big reveals" are telegraphed pages in advance like always, but the overall experience is a great one and leaves you with a broad collection of unsettling images and ideas. Great spooky fun, and definitely worth reading more than once.

Nida says

It's difficult pushing through the first half of the book but gets quite interesting pretty soon.

Sarah says

Just notes to myself

Wasn't my thing.

So far it feels like a more poetic Bram Stoker.

"It is vowed that the birds are phsykopomps lying in wait for the soulods of the dying, and that they time their eerie cries in unison with the sufferer's struggling breath. If they can catch the feeling soul when it leaves the body, they instantly flutter away chittering in daemoniac laughter; but if they fail, they subside gradually into a disappointed silence."

Is Wilbur half human half goat??

On his deathbed, Old Whately tells his grandson to make more space in the house and to read from pg 751 and light a match "to the prison."

Wilbur might've killed his mother, or sacrificed her to the monster he's growing.

He makes the space inside his house larger in order to make room for the growing beast he and his grandfather made.

He tries to steal the book he needs in order to do the spell to "open the door" but get killed by the guard dog and melts away.

Wilbur has scaly skin like a snack, tentacles coming from his abdomen, and below his waist covered in thick black fur. On each hip he had an eye, and a mouth instead of a tail. His feet were pads, neither hooves or claws. He changed color as he breathed. He had yellow blood.

As he dies, he chants.

The invisible monster busts out of the house and terrorizes the town killing people and animals. The librarians hear about it, and figure out how to use magic to make it visible in order to kill it. The monster turns out to be his twin brother, but he looked more like their father.

Andrew Pixton says

One of his earliest and best. Even the racism is reduced to disdain for rural folk. Of the ones I'd read before, this one I remembered best because it has an actual plot all throughout. Virtually no worldbuilding or exposition. I hadn't thought of Lavinia as a rape victim/abused woman, but now it's clear. It's also unique in that here, the humans not only find hope but win, if temporarily. There's also a dichotomy, good guys vs bad guys. That's not to say that Yog-Sothoth, the Old One of the story, has any ethical binary but the humans do. I don't think it destroys Lovecraft's theme of moral nihilism and cosmic horror, it only makes sense that humans might occasionally fit that mold and even win. In the overall sea of works, the opposite happens.

Jason MacDee says

The Horror itself was interesting, though the relating of its story was meh. Occasionally engaging, but mostly boring. As usual with Lovecraft, the mythos he creates is astounding. But you must suffer through the telling to get at it. And at no point will you be afraid. I enjoyed the addition of more phonetic speech for the characters. It added realism and variety.
