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The House On The Borderland



Synopsis

While on a fishing trip two men discover the ruins of an old house perched on the very edge of a cliff. In the ruins they discover an old manuscript that seems to suggest the house was once involved in something super natural, and horrific.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Combine H. P. Lovecraft, Julio Cortazar (his story "House Taken Over" may have been inspired by this book) and the siege mentality of "Straw Dogs," and you have "The House on Borderland."

Written before World War I, this book ranks right up there with Poe's only novel, "The Narrative of A. Gordon Pym" as one of the seminal contributions to the genre of science-fiction (before there was such a term) and horror. The narrative of an elderly widower -- told in the form of a manuscript found in the ruins of the house -- is compelling. The "action" tends to sag a bit in the middle of the novel as the narrator's mind/spirit embarks on a nightmarish "out of body" journey where he floats as a passive "witness" to an unexplained dimension of time and space, where the house also exists, and he seemingly observes the death of the solar system. However, the narrator's recounting of his mounting dread and helplessness as the story builds to its frightening climax is remarkable. You're left with many questions, none of them satisfactorily explained. But that's the mystery of the house and the manuscript -- some things just have ragged edges. I'm amazed no one has seen fit to adapt this to film.7/29/2007: THIN PLACES. [Since I can't write another review of the same book under rules, I'll add to this one.] A few days ago, I read that there is a concept in Celtic mythology (now incorporated into Celtic Christianity) known as "thin places." These are reputed to be places in

Ireland (and other parts of the British Isles) where two worlds conjoin, almost like a portal from this world to another, allowing us to be in the presence of the divine -- in Christian culture, the presence Holy Spirit, even Jesus Himself.

This novel derives most of its genuinely creepy effect from all of the unanswered questions that will flow through your brain for days after you read it...who built that damn house? What exactly is it made out of? How is the "Recluse" able to have visions of the far future just by residing in the mansion? Does somebody (or some thing) WANT the protagonist to have these visions? If so, why? What is the significance of the violent, besieging swine-men and how can they exist in the "real world" of the 1900s and billions of years in the future (when the Earth is a frozen and dead sphere in a darkened solar system) at the same time? Who (or what?) created the swine-men? What do the gigantic statues of the ancient and evil mythological gods of Earth legend (Set, Kali, etc.) glimpsed in the "amphitheatre" have to do with the story? Hodgson (to his credit and to incredible effect) never gives the reader obvious answers to these questions in this skillfully crafted tale of terror that makes full use of mankind's fear of the unknown. To be sure, Hodgson knew all of the answers, but he wanted us to have fun (for the rest of our lives, no doubt) trying to figure out exactly what he was getting at. Hodgson was an author of startling originality, and "House..." is far more frightening than any other work penned by any of his contemporaries (Stoker, Wells, James, and numerous others) and it's easy to see why Lovecraft admired him so much...so why don't more horror and sci-fi fans know who he is? I'm clueless, so somebody please fill me in.

Is William Hope Hodgson's "The House on the Borderland" the creepiest, eeriest story ever written? It is sometimes described that way, although I cannot confirm it because I have yet to read every creepy or eerie story ever written. I have read a fair amount of H.P. Lovecraft, some Robert E. Howard, and many modern mass-market horror novels. Hodgson probably ranks somewhere in between those two regions. Written in the early part of the 20th century, this author's novel is an attempt to blend together horror, science fiction, and fantasy. Unfortunately, Hodgson later died in WWI, forever silencing a splendid talent. Without a doubt, Hodgson influenced later horror and fantasy authors with this jaunt through the spectral reaches of space and time. The story begins when two men make a fishing expedition into the hinterlands of Ireland. Near a tiny hamlet called Kraighthen, the two encounter some of the strange local people who speak an unknown language. Further strangeness ensues when they realize that much of this area does not appear on any map. The two men explore the surrounding area, stumbling over an old garden near a yawning abyss.

Then they discover the ruins of a large house on an outcropping of rock. While exploring these remains, one of the men discovers a damaged manuscript in the wreckage. Taking the book with them, the two travelers head back to camp, but not before experiencing some serious reservations about the area. A bubbling lake nearby scares them, as does unsettling sounds coming from somewhere in the vicinity. After hightailing it back to camp, they begin to read this mysterious journal.

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