

H. P. Lovecraft

The Evil Clergyman



Howard Phillips Lovecraft

The Evil Clergyman

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The short story is actually an excerpt from a letter Lovecraft wrote. It begins in the attic of an ancient house. The narrator's companion refers to the former owner of the house and the presumably violent end that befell him. He advises the narrator not to stay after dark or touch anything, especially the small object on a table, which the companion seems to fear considerably.

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The Evil Clergyman

by H.P. Lovecraft

The Evil Clergyman

“Yes, he lived here – but I don’t advise your doing anything. Your curiosity makes you irresponsible. We never come here at night, and it’s only because of his will that we keep it this way. You know what he did. That abominable society took charge at last, and we don’t know where he is buried. There was no way the law or anything else could reach the society.

“I hope you won’t stay till after dark. And I beg of you to let that thing on the table – the thing that looks like a match-box – alone. We don’t know what it is, but we suspect it has something to do with what he did. We even avoid looking at it very steadily.”

After a time the man left me alone in the attic room. It was very dingy and dusty, and only primitively furnished, but it had a neatness which showed it was not a slum-denizen’s quarters. There were shelves full of theological and classical books, and another bookcase containing treatises on magic – Paracelsus, Albertus Magnus, Trithemius, Hermes Trismegistus, Borellus, and others in a strange alphabet whose titles I could not decipher. The furniture was very plain. There was a door, but it led only into a closet. The only egress was the aperture in the floor up to which the crude, steep staircase led. The windows were of bull’s-eye pattern, and the black oak beams bespoke unbelievable antiquity. Plainly, this house was of the Old World. I seemed to know where I was, but cannot recall what I then knew. Certainly the town was not London. My impression is of a small seaport.

The small object on the table fascinated me intensely. I seemed to know what to do with it, for I drew a pocket electric light – or what looked like one – out of my pocket and nervously tested its flashes. The light was not white but violet, and seemed less like true light than like some radioactive bombardment. I recall that I did not regard it as a common flashlight – indeed, I had a common flashlight in another pocket.

It was getting dark, and the ancient roofs and chimney-pots outside looked very queer through the bull’s-eye window-panes. Finally I summoned up courage and propped the small object up on the table against a book – then turned the rays of the peculiar violet light upon it. The light seemed now to be more like a rain of hail or small violet particles than like a continuous beam. As the particles struck the glassy surface at the center of the strange device, they seemed to produce a crackling noise like the sputtering of a vacuum tube through which sparks are passed. The dark glassy surface displayed a pinkish glow, and a vague white shape seemed to be taking form at its center. Then I noticed that I was not alone in the room – and put the ray – projector back in my pocket.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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