

**Voluminous Episode 81 STRANGE STORIES**

Welcome to Voluminous. The Letters of HP. Lovecraft.

In addition to classic works of gothic horror fiction, HPL Wrote thousands of fascinating letters.

In each episode, we'll read and discuss one of them. I'm Sean Branney.

And I'm Andrew Leman. Together we run the HP. Lovecraft Historical Society.

Today, Sean, we have a couple of very special guests with us.

OOH, guests again. What's going on here?

Yes, again, a thrilling crossover podcast bonanza with Chad Fifer and Chris Lackey of strange studies of strange stories.

Good Lord.

We're the special guest.

You're this special guest. Okay, great. Well, great. Yeah, I'm a little disappointed.

I thought it was going to be somebody else here with that.

You were just asked odd to witness something magical. [...]No, it's on us.

Well, we are delighted to at long last have you gentlemen on our show.

This is a great crossover event.

I'm very excited to be a part of it. Thank you so much for having us.

Sure. We were tickled to be part of your podcast in an exciting discussion of the Black Abbot of Puthum. And now we move on to a letter from **HP. Lovecraft to Clark Ashton Smith**.

Continuing the Smithy and fun.

I'm looking forward to it. The story itself was a little bit of a snooze fest, I think we all  concluded in that episode.

Well, I would say snooze.

I wasn't falling asleep ever.

No, you weren't falling asleep while some demons built a wall behind you secretly.

Well, Sean's going to read the letter for us, and if we can all stay awake through that, then  we'll talk about it in a minute.

We definitely can.

Moonless Moor of Shagai at the tolling of the cracked bell in the dark tower.

**23 March 1936**.  Dear Clark Ashton. Well, I did survive the Arctic winter. Four degrees was the lowest here,  and there were long spells of days when it did not exceed 20 degrees, lest only in a  fragmentary way. 1936 is certainly proving one of my bad years so far.

All in with the grip. In late January, and before I had shaken it off, my aunt came down with a still worse attack which developed complications and which has now necessitated her sojourn at a hospital for a period that will probably vary between a fortnight and a month. Amidst all this upheaval, my usual program has gone completely to pieces. Revision jobs have had to be refused, and letters have gone not only unanswered, but in some cases, not that of the runes from Zoe Thik. Even unopened, everything has had to slide whilst I devoted myself to the mingled duties of nurse secretary, market man, butler and Aaronboy.

Now that my aunt is in hospital, I have a bit more time, but the accumulation of correspondence and other obligations is hopeless. If I get by without a nervous breakdown, I'll be doing damn well, though. After all, the situation is a lot worse for my aunt than it is for me. [...] The weather has now become quite vernal, temperatures above 60 degrees being fairly frequent. But I see we are behind Averoine in that respect.

The flood situation has affected some parts of the state, even Portugal on our northern border to some extent. But Providence is still dry land. So far, seaports are generally safe. This city has not been under water since 1815, and then it was an oceanic storm and tidal wave rather than a river flood. Only the downtown district could be flooded.

This ancient hill could only be devastated by a world destroying cataclysm. Hartford, only 65 or 70 miles from here, is in very bad shape with electric power gone, and under martial law, its papers have to be printed in neighboring cities, and the homeless have created an acute problem. Meanwhile, I'm awaiting with keen interest the lone exhibit of Hyperborian sculpture, which I presume SL, Belknap, Flong, Hsk, Young Melmouth and other megapolitan sorcerers are at present enjoying the list of titles sweats my appetite beyond measure, and I shall group them closely as you suggest when preparing to enjoy their malign and alien fascination. I hope I shan't delay sending them to RH Bay. As long as I delayed sending the Hyperborian snake eater, I could hardly bear to let it go.

But anyhow, he'll get them safely in the end. Needless to say, he will be second to none in his avid appreciation. It seems as though some others ought to see this galaxy of grotesque masterpieces young Morse, Sultan Malik, Miss Moore, Old Bill, Lumley Rhymel, et cetera. So that you might be thinking out a return route between now and the time that young Crang sends the assortment on, but I leave that to you. Morse may possibly see it during Sl's tenure, since he occasionally makes brief trips to New York.

Glad RHB sent you the Cthulhu sketch, and I'll later take great interest and pride in seeing the materialized image from the story. Meanwhile, the new titles capture my imagination, especially Renaissance as described. These things will surely be a fine for the archaeologists of the future, and I wish them luck in guessing at the civilization which evolved them. But I surely am sorry that the market for icons did not prove permanent. It certainly looks as if the weaver of pure fantasy be it in literature, painting, sculpture, whatnot were faded to ply his art on a dominantly, non remunerative basis.

Unless, as you suggest, he happened to get the right kind of publicity and super salesmanship. Glad you've seen the new Herm volume, which is certainly the most welcome event in a long time. The format in general does the poems justice, and most will agree that the addition was well worth waiting for. I've tried to boost the sale by enclosing one of the circulars to each of my almost innumerable correspondence.

I thought you'd find those dold drawings worth seeing.What a pity the artist has to waste his talents and grinding out routine illustrations for The Pulse.

By the way, if you haven't started the volume back to number 66 and there's not the least hurry, you might change the route and send it to Kanig instead. Hck has never seen it, but would like to very much. Speaking of drawings, that Mayan Bat God is fascinating and goes with much gratitude and appreciation into my select album of clerkish tonia.

I appreciated that postcard of the old bank at Coloma, which surely looks like some jungle grown shrine in deserted Comorium.

According to the map from the journal's Gold Show issue, coloma is only a short distance southeast of Auburn. Is it still inhabited, or does it form a ghost town, housing only the beasts of the wild and the specters of other days?

Glad you've seen the printed version of The Mountains of Madness. I'm certainly pleased with the illustrations, so much so that I can forgive occasional misprints such as Paleocene for paleogeon. I now have the final installment and shall dismantle two sets of copies.

I have three. In order to extract and assemble the story, of which I have no typed copy, I shall correct the misprints from the rough drafts, which I shall then give to RH. Bay. Meanwhile, Hillbilly Crawford is a figure, and on print and Insmouth as a booklet, as well as using it in Marvel Tales.

I've read one set of proofs and I'm expecting another. Hillbilly hopes to get some illustrations by derlous gifted friend Utpetel, whose occasional work in WT you've possibly seen.

Whether the thing will ever really materialize remains to be seen. I'm skeptical of Hillbilly's bungling projects, though the fellow is undoubtedly the epitome of well meaningness.

Oh, yes. And I've learned that the shadow out of time will appear complete in the June. Astounding

speaking of the pulps, here's something which may be old news, but which ought to potentially be good news for you.

Hugo the Rat has sold wonder stories to the Margulis Group, standard Publications, 22 west 48th Street, New York City, which is just as reliable financially as the Rat. As unreliable. [...] Pay is one cent a word on acceptance, and Belnap is loud in his praise of the treatments accorded him by the other magazine to this group. Apparently this revives a market which had become, in a financial sense, dead. I hope you'll try some stories on Marguelis, who has just asked me to submit some stuff, although I have nothing suitable on hand.

He claimed that he wants really good material, not necessarily of the formula pattern, and any length up to 10,000 words will be considered.My advice is go to it. Which reminds me that I'm glad to hear of your fictional plans, especially concerning De Sadoque Oracculo. I have long been curious about the doings in Averoniaor Reggio Avoronum in Roman times, for it is well known that the Averonis were a tribe apart and feared by the rest of the Gauls, who bequeathed their gallow Roman descendants a dark and dubious heritage. Have we not the disturbing lines of VALERIUStravirus to make us ponder and tremble?

There are buried ruins in Avaroine

which would be well, not to disturb.

Let us pray to the mild small gods of Pagina

that no spade will ever uncover them.

Possibly RH. Bay has mentioned the call he had last month from the gifted author of Shambleau. It is unfortunate that the visit had to have so melancholy a background on fortn. As you may be aware, the Florida tour of Miss Mourner mother was to lessen the shock caused by the accidental death of Miss Em's fiance on February 13.The young right arm of Crang liked the Moors very much and hopes that they will repeat thet rip under less immediately sad circumstances next summer, as they have some intention of doing.

Glad the Californian duly reached you and that you have liked the article on interplanetary fiction. Hope you'll soon be turning out some space yarns free from the characteristic defects noted here.

Under separate cover is another current amateur journal of lesser size but vastly higher average quality the causally of our anti weared friend Edkins. In his review of the Goblin Tower, he points out some genuine weak spots, but is obviously callous towards the mass defect of some of the weird poems such as Night Trees and the White People.

These two papers, as well as The Dragonfly, surely indicate that amateur dumb is on the upgrade and is a circumstance which impels me to enclose an application blank in the hope that you may wish to jump into the Napa arena.

Bringing Edkins back was quite a triumph, of which I feel distinctly proud. The depleted Kat is heartened by the advent of a new jet black and battles guard veteran who seems to be running for the presidency. Meanwhile, Mr.Perkins and Lord Minto are fast growing up into eligible adul thood.

Johnny has already had a fight with a new comer. Glad to hear of Samitha's immutability.

The worst news comes from the slope of Mount Caf, where Nimrod's absence from the Peacock Palace seems likely to become permanent. Weeks have fled without word of the warlike wanderer. I appreciated the picture of Ching and wish I might meet the gentleman in person.

Thanks extremely for that page of fantastical social cartoons. Most of them contain some powerful trokes of imagination, and that bad conscience really displays Macabre genius.

A genius doubly remarkable because of the artist's youth. This drawing has, as you point out, a distinctly Golem like atmosphere.

Got the March WT but have so far only read the Black Abbot. This is tremendously fascinating, full of a malign sense of hidden horror and eon old charnel secrets. I doubt if anything else in the issue can approach it. Well, now I await the idler with impatient expectancy. Hope the gang in New York are duly appreciating them

yours by the Green Flame

Hpl

Ps: I'll let you know with much appreciation when I'm ready to borrow to givery yoggoth the unread volumes piled before me.

[Time: 13mn 26 s]

That's great. All right.Andrew, why don't you kick it off by telling us what led you to choose this particular letter.

Well, we chose the letter because we have long wanted to do a crossover with Chris and Chad, and we talked years ago about how to schedule it and finding a letter that talked about a specific story. We've always been on the hunt for such a letter. And when Chris and Chad said they were going to do marches for Draculas on their show, as they traditionally do, we looked for a letter in which Lovecraft talks to someone who's written a vampire story. And that's how we settled on the Black Abbot of Puthuum. So this letter was chosen because Lovecraft specifically mentions that particular Clark Ashton Smith story.

Superb.

Well, as we dive into this, Clark Ashton Smith is an interesting and a really major figure in the so called Lovecraft Circle. And I think it's a fair bit or it's a reasonable assertion to say that Smith is one of Lovecraft's best friends at this point in his life.

Yeah. Even though they never met in person, but they had been corresponding for a very long time, and they really were you can tell that they really feel themselves to be colleagues and friends. This letter has a very chatty it's a lot of shop talk about being a writer for The Pulse. And, you know, clearly Lovecraft considered Clark Ashton Smith unlike some of his other correspondents, to whom he's very, you know, didactic and condescending. Clearly he regards Smith as an equal and a guy that he can share his concerns about being a pulp writer.

Yeah, I found this a really interesting foil to coming on the heels of a long letter to Robert E.Howard where they go it's a very intellectual discussion, and they both have a lot of factual assertions they need to make to each other. And here it was so refreshing to have two guys who are pals who are having a four page exchange instead of a 40 pages exchange. And Lovecraft really is just kind of this is going on with this guy and talking about his friends and what's up? And hey, I saw your story here, and that kind of sums it up. He doesn't need to recapitulate the history of the Byzantine Empire or some other highly academic topic that tends to show up in some of those Robert E. Howard letters.

It was really humanizing to read this and right at the beginning, this also being March, that he was sick in the winter and that it made him get behind on his correspondence and all of the little things and that he's been so busy as a nurse secretary, market man, Aaron Boy butler. I mean, these are just such regular old I've got so much to do. I didn't have time to be sick. My correspondence is piling up. And at the very end of the letter, when he says yoggoth, the unread volumes piled before me. It was highly relatable and it was a letter to a good friend. It felt that way despite all of the in jokiness and the mummy names that they're using with the character.

He mentions that his aunt is in the hospital, and that is his Aunt Annie. And I don't know whether Lovecraft knew it when you wrote this letter or not, but Annie had breast cancer at the time and later underwent a mastectomy. So the illness that put her in the hospital was really very serious.

Yeah. She spent two full weeks at this point in time in the hospital and then had to go from the hospital to a recovery home for two more weeks after that before she actually was able to truly come home again. And I think there is something I think you're right, Chad, that seeing this in the spring of 1936 and hearing Lovecraft not feeling well and realizing he's only got a year to live, and even with her cancer, his aunt is going to outlive him by four years. Yeah. That there is something kind of poignant in there.

Yeah. When I read it, obviously I noticed the date that was the first thing at the top of the letter, and it was like, oh, man, he's going to be dead in a year. And it makes it very poignant and sad that this is one of his end correspondence that he's going to have with Clark Ashton Smith. And obviously he doesn't know that he's going to die. And does he know that he's ill?

I mean, he says that he's ill here, but is that with this cancer or is that some other kind of just illness from that? Do you know?

I don't think he knew yet that he was mortally ill, that this was cancer. I think the illness he's talking about in this letter is a more run of the mill, just kind of under the weather, spring cold type thing.

I believe it was late in 1936 that he drafted that letter of instructions of what to do upon his death. So it seems to be that when the winter of 1936 was coming on was when Howard at least was starting to nurture those thoughts of, I may be so unwell that I should make plans for my own demise.

I thought it was a little creepy even that at the opening of this letter, he's bragging about the safety of Providence. For somebody who said, I am Providence graves tone to be saying, I'm not too worried about flooding because this ancient hill could be in undated only by a world destroying cataclysm. So this is a fortress. There's some braggadocio there. Providence can't be hurt. And it's a little I don't know, it seems a little eerie that, well, he's a year away from dying himself. Providence can fall.

The floods that they're talking about in this letter were very severe. It was a massive flood that really wiped out a lot of New England and left countless people homeless and so much property damage. So for him to be a little bragging about how providence has escaped this flood that devastated lots of other parts of New England is remarkable.

Well, I think he's actually making I've read it anyway. As a geographical distinction of the hill, which is the high ground in town. And that's where he lives and where his people are. And as Andrew is referring to the great gale of 1815, as they called it, because the term hurricane wasn't really in popular usage for that sort of thing yet. But on September the 23rd of 1815, the storm surge came roaring up near Gansa Bay and, as Andrew said, destroyed more than 500 houses along and the low lying parts of downtown and houses along the bay were absolutely submerged. But the high ground of College Hill and Federal Hill, the water didn't go up that high.

So he's feeling indestructible up there.

He went through a lot of floods because, of course, there was another huge flood in Vermont in 1927 that was the inspiration for the whisper of Darkness. And then this spring flood of 1936, the one that he's mentioning in this letter. And as Sean said, the great gale of 1815. So Lovecraft was no stranger to cataclysmic floods. No.

Now he talks about seeing these pictures of sculptures that Clark Ashton Smith has done, and you've sent those over to us. Are those going to be available on the website?

Absolutely, they will. We have to say a big thanks to Dan Pratt. I know that he's a great listener of your show and he's been so helpful to us, doing some research for us. He found a lot of photos of these little sculptures that Clark Ashton Smith was doing at this time. And apparently they were all fairly small, most of them not more than a few inches high. And Smith sculpted them out of soft stone, like soap stone and stuff. And apparently he packed them up in crates and shipped them around. Well, he sold them in Auburn, California, where he lived. And then he also would ship them around to his friends and offer them for sale, kind of like a mail order. He'd ship the sculptures around. If you liked one, you'd buy it and then you'd ship the remaining ones on to the next person. But, yeah, he did lots of little soap stone sculptures of creepy little figures. And they all do have a kind of Easter Islandy kind of

yeah, there's a primal a lot of them are heads or the heads are very dominant in the figurines. They're interesting.

Yeah, they are fascinating. And they're not realistic at all. They're very stylized. And some of them really do have this feel of antiquity and primitive culture that I'm sure appealed to Lovecraft and a lot of those other guys.

Well, I think it's so cool that Lovecraft and Smith and their circle are shipping pieces of art round to each other to have a look. We sort of did things like that pre Internet where we would send video tapes around to each other. You didn't really know what you were going to see on that videotape and you said something it was less wholesome than what they're doing here. But I love that this interaction opens with Clark Ashton thanking him for the loan of the Hersey Dolt production. I looked at those illustrations, those deco impressionistic horror illustrations, and those are really cool.

Yeah. This artist named William Melia Adult William Elliott.

Yeah. There was this guy, he was a pulp editor named Harold Hersey. And he was described as being of tremendous energy, but little talent. I saw that as well. That made me laugh. Imagine that being the first line. So this pulp editor, Harold Brainerd Hersey, had written this collection of poems. You can call them poems. They're creepy. Necrophilia. Oh, no. Pedophilia. They're creepy poems. This collection of poems was privately printed. If you subscribed to the publication, you could get a copy. But these poems were not for sale on the shelves at your local bookstore because they were creepy. And Hersey had hired this pulp artist named Dold to do these illustrations and everybody agreed that the illustrations were way better than the poem. And it was published in this book called Night. And apparently someone in Lovecraft circle was a subscriber to this Dold Hersey production. And they were passing it around to each other to check out these creepy poems and these awesome drawings. But the drawings are great and we'll put at least some of them up and a couple of the poems on the web page for this episode. So you can see some of these really great Dold drawings for yourself.

It is interesting to wonder what Lovecraft would have made. When you see the drawings, it's clear that he would have liked them and why he would have liked them. But what he would have made of the poems. The British fellow he was one would think that would have made him very uncomfortable. Right.

Yeah. It's very beloved dead kind of vibe. It's icky.

So they put a flip I'm only reading this for the pictures,

not only icky in their subject matter, but they're just terribly written. They're terrible.

Yeah.And not creepy in a fun way, but creepy in a creepy way.

Now, one of the other things I liked about this letter is that Clark Ashton Smith talks about at the mountains, abandoned and reading it and seeing it in print.Which kind of paints where we're at in Lovecraft's life at this particular time. And that's something that he's seen and talked about.

Yeah. That story was finally published in three separate issues of the Astounding stories and the third one had just come out. So finally the entire story and it was illustrated. And Lovecraft really liked the illustrations that were in Astounding so much so that he was able to forgive all the typographical errors that they made in the actual story.

Yeah, I found it. It's like an art project for him because he doesn't have a typed copy of it.

So he's got three copies of these installments and he's going to extract and assemble the full story using them. And then he'll make the corrections and then he'll send all that to Robert H. Barlow so Barlow can prepare a properly typed, error free version.

When you look at the journey and the hoops he has to go through just to get a type script of his own story, it's so easy for us to take for granted. Living in a time where anything you write has a permanent digital copy that's easy to change, easy to modify, easy to make new hard copies of, easy to send to Chris in the UK with just in seconds, where it's like just getting a copy of his own dang story back was weeks of work for multiple people. It really does drive home what astonishing change the process of writing is and how technology has changed how we write nowadays.

Yeah, I can see how he would be discouraged by some of this as well. I mean, that paragraph where he's talking about sticking all three installments together in order to get the full typed version of the story, plus Innsmouth might be printed as a booklet. Maybe Shadow at a Time is maybe coming up in the June astounding it's all like, maybe this is happening and it seems like he's got a lot going on, but I could see how he would be easily discouraged by the work that goes into it.

Well, this guy, Hillbilly Crawford, who he talks about is a figurine on print. And Innsmouth as a booklet, this kid, William Crawford, was pretty flaky, but he did pull it off. The very months that Lovecraft wrote this letter, the Shadow Over Innsmouth was published in book form. And it's the only Lovecraft story that was ever published in book form in Lovecraft's life time. And he did get Frank Utt Patel to do the illustrations and that book is now one of the prizes of any Lovecraft collector. I was looking on LW Curry's website and you can get one of Lovecraft's own personal copies of this book is currently available for $25,000 from LW Curry.

Yeah. Also, I think you were talking about his frustration, Chad, and I think that is something you really feel, because he also did I have a number of occasions where he got nibbles from publishers saying, oh, we should put together a collection of your stories, and they always fall apart and they don't come together. And his confidence and his confidence in Crawford is low. There was the w Paul Cook version of the Shunt house. It was just it never quite worked out. His friends and colleagues didn't really have the resources and he didn't have the popularity to make it a viable commercial enterprise on any of these. So I think late in his life, there really was a lot of sort of weariness about the notion of professional publishing projects.

Yeah, because these are giant. I mean, you look at that and it's for a Lovecraft fan that's Mountains of Madness and the Shadow of Her Innsmouth and the Shadow out of time. These are colossal stories, just gigantic feats of imagination. And he talks about all three of them in a paragraph where really he's on the inside of it, and it's just hard to get it done. And that's really humanizing. That one paragraph right there just shows how that can often be the case, that doing the work that is required to get this stuff done ends up kind of ruining it for the artist.

Who's Hugo the Rat ?

Hugo The rat was Hugo Gernsback. He's the guy that the Hugo awards are named for.

He was a publisher and editor of science fiction pulp magazines, and Lovecraft called him Hugo the Rat because he was so terrible at paying his artist. Lovecraft did not have a lot of respect for Hugo the Rat, but he was a foundational figure in the creation of science fiction as a genre.

Oh, I was excited to see the mention of CL Moore and the Shambleau story, which is something we covered on the old HP. Lovecraft literary podcast. And it's a story that we really liked. I've got a collection of the CL Moore Northwest Smith stories.

Well, earlier in this letter, in the long list of goofy nicknames that Lovecraft mentions SL, Bell, NAPLAN, and then there's one Hck. That's Henry Cutner whose initials were Hck. And although they hadn't met yet, Henry Cuttner was going to go on to become the husband of CL Moore.

Oh, they weren't married at this point.

They weren't married. In fact, they had yet to meet.

Do you know for a fact that that's not Herman Charles Koenig Hck?

I guess I don't know that for a fact. Maybe I'm just presuming that's one of the downfalls of all these wacky nicknames and initials. You could never be entirely sure you know who he's talking about.

While we're on that, were you able to sus out, because of the term, the young right arm of Crang? He refers to Crang on the previous page. Who's Crang?

I'm pretty sure that's Barlow. That was my theory, too. I was pretty sure it was Barlow, but I could never find anything that made me sure it was Barlow.

Why Crang? Why does he call him Crang?

I honestly don't have any good answer for that, Chris.

Some inside jokes that they've got between each other.

Yeah, I think I might start calling you Crang from this point on just because

I need a nickname.

Crang it is. Young right arm of crank.

He also talks about Valeria Trevirus, who wrote this book. And I think Valerius Trevirus is a pseudonym for Lovecraft himself, because he talks about he says, oh, I'm glad to hear of your fictional plans, especially concerning Desadoqua Oraculo, I've been long curious about the doings in Averonia or Reggio Avarona in Roman times. So I think he knew that Smith was not nearly as productive as a writer as he used to be. And he was always trying to cajole him along to write more stuff. So I think he's trying to make a game out of it, make it fun and spur him to create more stuff set in Avaroine or all this other stuff. And I think this little poem attributed to Valerius Trevirus was actually written by Lovecraft himself as a way to stoke Smith's interest in his own fictional universe.

Yeah, it was really interesting. So these are the Avaroine this is prehistory of Avaroine when it was run by the Roman Empire, right? Yeah. And he said you should really investigate that. None of it exists.

Yeah, he makes it sound like this awesome scholarly project, which is something that we do here at HPLHS all the time. We're just about to drop this new Miskatonic monograph full of this wonderful blend of total nonsense and real archeology, and Lovecraft is clearly sitting here urging Smith to do the same thing with his own fictional worlds, really build out the Smithos and bring in real Roman history into it.

Well, he also says you should submit. Right? I don't have anything for this magazine group. For the Margue Lee group. So you should submit. That is obviously someone he really likes, Clark Ashton Smith. Because to have an opportunity come up for you to publish and you don't have something, you can turn to somebody else and say, this might be good for you. You're generally not going to do that. You're going to hold on an opportunity unless you go. his person deserves to be published, deserves to be seen more. So it's just such a friendly, like, please take this opportunity because I can.

Yeah. He's really going to bat for his friends and hoping that they can continue. And in general, Lovecraft's really good about that.

We've talked to him about some of the uglier sides of him that, again, popped up in some of these Robert Howard letters. But with so many of his friends, he really is truly and sincerely nurturing and finds kind things to say about people's creative efforts and tries to help his friends get published and find different opportunities where they might find some success,

He says. Glad The Californian duly reached you and that you liked the article on interplanetary fiction. The Californian was an amateur journal published by his colleague, Hyman. Brodovsky, who was an officer in the various national amateur press associations. And he published this magazine called The Californian that he published was considered to be really outstanding among the other various amateur journals that really had high literary standards and good print quality, and the issues were big and beefy and full of good stuff. And Lovecraft contributed a bunch of articles to The California, including this article about interplanetary fiction. He originally had written an article for Hillbilly Crawford. Crawford was going to put it in. He published a magazine of sort of a fanzine called Marvel Tales, and Lovecraft had written this article about what makes a good interplanetary story, and Crawford ended up not ever using it. So Lovecraft repurposed it and sent it to Burdovsky, who published it in The California. And it's Lovecraft basically saying a really good interplanetary story shouldn't be any fun at all, and it should just be about how awesome it is to be on another planet. It should be all about atmosphere and it shouldn't have any action because that would be unrealistic.

Well, you know, so at the end of the story, when he says, so far, I've read only the black abbot. This is tremendously fascinating. Full of malign sense of hidden horror and charnel secrets. To me now, based on what you just said, maybe I'm wrong, but to me, when he says the story is fascinating, it feels like what he's saying is the world seemed full of interesting things. He's not saying that the story was good. There were elements.

I read it the same way. I'm not sure he actually liked it. But is carefully finding ways to be polite and constructive where I just can't imagine that Lovecraft didn't roll his eyes when he read the black abbot.

I think so, because otherwise he would have said the discoveries in that story were quite amazing. No, he says it was full of a malign set of hidden horror, meaning there was stuff in there I didn't o see, but I could sense it was there.

I like the vampire girl.

Yeah. I couldn't figure out who the vampire was.

Well, and sticking with the human side of HPL, that comes through in this letter, too. The fact that he has to give a whole paragraph about what the neighborhood cats are up to just made me laugh. Little Mr.Fuzzy Kins. And this one's doing that. And there's a new cat in town,

Mr.Perkins and Lord Minto. And not just his neighborhood cats, but E Hoffman prices cats and even Clark Ashton Smith's cats. Lovecraft is clearly keeping tabs on all the cats in all of his friends lives.

Wow, man. Because I had no idea what that paragraph was about, authors or the children I was going to ask about. Who is Lord Minto?

Mr.Perkins and Lord Minto are the neighborhood cats.

The cat reference.The cat. He's created this imaginary fraternity of cats which he's named Kappa Alpha Tau. And so those are all the cats are the members of Kappa Alpha Tau.

And there are re

are you for real? So this comes up

K-A-T comes up when he says he says the worst news comes from the slope of Mount Calf, where Nimrod's absence from the Peacock Palace seems likely to become permanent. He just means that E Hoffman Prices cat has gotten lost and no one knows it.

So if you made a show and it was a bad out, a fraternal society, if it was like a fraternity or sorority and it was all cats and it was called Kat, you could call that HP. Lovecraft.

You sure could.

I feel like that's Sleeping on something very valuable.

Yeah, we're already marketing the television rights, Chad. Don't be trying to muscle in on our turf. We got top people out there.

Fair enough. I want the top people involved. I don't want my own hat.

No, we're going to have the team that brought you the movie Cats.

That was pretty horrific.

He also mentions right after that, he says, thanks for that page of fantastic social cartoons. And then he describes them bad conscious, really displays macabre genius. And I asked Dan Pratt if he could help me find those never dreaming in a million years that anyone would be able to find them. And darn it if he didn't figure it out. Almost immediately. It was this whole beautiful page of cartoons that were published in the San Francisco newspaper. And he sent me the thing. We'll put that up on the Web page, too. So you can actually see these fantastic social cartoons that Lovecraft is mentioning. And this one bad conscience that was drawn by this Austrian girl named Ross with a bitter lick she was a teenager. And it's a really great I mean, you only see it in this newspaper half tone version, but it is a great cartoon. And she was an interesting person. Yeah. Dan Pratt really knocked it out of the park with that research task.I never see those.

So it really does display something like Macabre genius.

It does. It is a very creepy German 1930s style. It definitely has that golem like atmosphere that he mentions in the letter. That's good to hear because I was worried hat maybe he just describes everything this way. I read Beverly Circle and found it full redolent of luxurious evil. Clifford

He doesn't find the neighborhood cats full of redolent evils.

Strong feelings towards Marmaduke.

Yeah, the Cats and Jammer kids are something else entirely. Well, they have cats in their name. That's true. Oh, yes.

Well, Chris and Chad, what a delight to have you on Voluminous and to share your thoughts on a little letter between Lovecraft and Clark. Asher Smith, thanks for having us on your show.

It was eye opening to see how you guys make a podcast because you've been doing it so much longer than we have. We trimmed end of comfort to know that you make it up as you go the same way we do.

Oh, it's a mess.It doesn't sound like Way in the end, but yeah, we're a little bit like Hpl up there where we're just like, oh, we got to do this. It's always fun while we're doing it, but getting it all together, you think, this is never going to work out.

I've always been such a fan of everything you guys do, and it's a treat to have you on our show. So thanks for dropping by.

Well, thanks for having us. And thanks for sharing the letter with us because I don't get enough of a chance to read this stuff and it brings you closer to this guy. We were the HP. Lovecraft literary podcast for a very long time, so it's great that we've finally been able to talk to you guys on your show.

Absolutely.

Thank you so much, Andrew and Sean.

Sure. Our pleasure.

So, our thanks today to Chris Lackey and Chad Piper. And we also want to offer our thanks to our friends over at Hippocampus Press for their letters of HP. Lovecraft and Clark Ashton Smith. That's Downward. No, I always do that. Downward. Spire. Dawnward. Spire.Lonely Hill. That's the title of that collection of letters.

You can learn more about [them@hippocampuspress.com](mailto:them@hippocampuspress.com).

If you've enjoyed today's episode, we'd love to hear from you via email at [voluminous@hplhs.org](mailto:voluminous@hplhs.org). And tell your friends, post a review or a rating or send them a good old fashioned letter.

I'm your obedient servant, Seaaaan Brannie,

and I'm cordially and respectfully yours Androuus Lemooon.

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