



## The Weird Fiction Megapack: 25 Stories from Weird Tales

*Steve Rasnic Tem, Darrell Schweitzer, John Gregory Betancourt, H.P. Lovecraft, Robert E. Howard*

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The Weird Fiction Megapack collects both modern and classic stories from the classic pulp magazine, Weird Tales, with selections ranging throughout the 20th Century, but focusing mainly on the classic era of the 1930s. Included are works by many famous authors, such as H.P. Lovecraft, Robert E. Howard, Clark Ashton Smith, Manly Wade Wellman, E. Hoffmann Price, Tennessee Williams, and many more—with an emphasis on great but less-well-known stories that readers may not have encountered before. "To Become a Sorcerer," by Darrell Schweitzer (included here) was a finalist for the World Fantasy Award.

Included are:

BOY BLUE, by Steve Rasnic Tem

TAP DANCING, by John Gregory Betancourt

TO BECOME A SORCERER, by Darrell Schweitzer

THE GOLGOTHA DANCERS, by Manly Wade Wellman

THE DEATH OF ILALOTHA, by Clark Ashton Smith

THE SALEM HORROR, by Henry Kuttner

THE DISINTERMENT, by H.P. Lovecraft and D.W. Rime

THE SEA-WITCH, by Nictzin Dyalhis

VINE TERROR, by Howard Wandrei

THE PALE MAN, by Julius Long

WEREWOLF OF THE SAHARA, by G.G. Pendarves

TRAIN FOR FLUSHING, by Malcolm Jameson

THE DIARY OF PHILIP WESTERLY, by Paul Compton

MASK OF DEATH, by Paul Ernst

THE GIRL FROM SAMARCAND, by E. Hoffmann Price

THE MONKEY SPOONS, by Mary Elizabeth Counselman

THE VENGEANCE OF NITOCRIS, by Tennessee Williams

THE NINTH SKELETON, by Clark Ashton Smith

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THE CURSE OF YIG, by H.P. Lovecraft and Zealia Bishop

THE HAUNTER OF THE RING, by Robert E. Howard

THE MEDICI BOOTS, by Pearl Norton Swet

THE LOST DOOR, by Dorothy Quick

DOOM OF THE HOUSE OF DURYEA, by Earl Peirce, Jr.

IN THE DARK, by Ronal Kayser

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### **The Weird Fiction Megapack: 25 Stories from Weird Tales Details**

Date : Published January 14th 2014 by Wildside Press (first published January 1st 2014)

ISBN :

Author : Steve Rasnic Tem , Darrell Schweitzer , John Gregory Betancourt , H.P. Lovecraft , Robert E. Howard

Format : Kindle Edition 451 pages

Genre : Horror, Fantasy, Weird Fiction



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# From Reader Review The Weird Fiction Megapack: 25 Stories from Weird Tales for online ebook

## Nilah Simmons says

### Good book

I like to read short stories at bed time. Finishing the story doesn't keep me awake. Scary stories are the best.

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## Charl says

I like a little "weird" fiction now and then, but an entire collection of it is just too much for my taste.

Very Lovecraftian horror tales, if that's your kind of cake, go for it!

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## F.R. says

Not a bad collection, actually. It's a glimpse through the window of what it would have been like if you were an avid reader of *Weird Tales* magazine in the 1930s (and the 1940s and 1950s, tales from all three decades are on display here). Of course I'm sure what we have here is the crème de la crème. The magazine's publishers put out an edition once a month, so sometimes quality control was bound to slip. Without a doubt there will be stories that are lost and deserve to be lost, but I'm glad that these ones have been saved.

As usual, I've reviewed each story as I've come to it:

### **Blue Boy** by Steve Rasnic Tan

We begin with an impressive tale, made even more impressive by the fact that so many of its go-to elements for scares and chills are so damned familiar. Sinister dolls, darkened basements and empty old houses are such over-used horror tropes, that this story has to work hard from the start to stop itself being a 7,000 word cliché. Fortunately it gives itself such a strong (and desperate) emotional underpinning that the whole feels viscerally real and vividly scary.

### **Tap Dancing** by John Gregory Betancourt

This tale of an elderly, injured tap-dancer encountering a ghostly presence lacks drama, horror and – most importantly for a collection so titled – weirdness.

### **To Become a Sorcerer** by Darrell Schweitzer

A long story which feels like a weird dream. It's both a quest through the underworld and the unconscious. There'll be some who'll no doubt be extremely irritated by it. Those who think its high fantasy trappings aren't substantive enough to allow its flights of fancy. Once upon a time (not so long ago) I'd have been one of them, but now I was gripped throughout. A well written, surreal and provoking tale.

### **The Golgotha Dancers** by Manly Wade Wellman

Each time I come across a 'The painting is alive/has something deeply sinister within its oils' story, I hope

and pray that it will do something exciting, something interesting, something that transcends the sheer mind-numbing corniness of its type. This one though is a particularly erroneous failure.

### **The Death of Ilalotha by Clark Ashton Smith**

High fantasy, funeral orgies, witches, vampires and a scary, jealous queen. Without a doubt a story that scores high on the weirdness front. (I particularly like the funeral orgies, and might drop the concept into conversation the next time I think a wake needs livening up.) It's an immediate tale, a gripping tale – one set in a strange world, but with real human emotions and fears.

### **The Salem Horror by Henry Kuttner**

The most Lovecraftian tale thus far – right down to the Necronomicon putting in an appearance. Clearly Kuttner knows that any yarn of witches returning from the dead in Salem is going to fall into a stinking, dank pit marked 'Cliché' and so ramps up the horror to compensate. Plus, a good friend of mine is named Michael Leigh, so it's nice to see him get work as an occultist in weird fiction.

### **The Disinterment by H.P. Lovecraft & D.W. Rimele**

Okay then, so *this* is the most Lovecraftian tale in the collection so far...

It'd got a good atmosphere and builds its horror effectively, but it does rather ludicrously ask the reader to accept that a man – even a man confined to a sick-bed – would never happen to look down at his own body.

### **The Sea-Witch by Nictzin Dyalhis**

Norse myths, and a god returned from ancient times to wreak a terrible revenge. I was hopeful, but thoroughly disappointed. It's horribly melodramatic, a bit boring and – in the narrator's unceasing focus on his fantastically nubile 'niece' – ever so creepy.

### **Vine Terror by Howard Wandrei**

"Vegetable vampires!"

I'm a total sucker for stories of sinister plants with minds of their own. And having recently had to slice apart a vine which had crawled four feet under our garage door, I was very much in the scare zone for this one. The fact that the above is a direct quote (exclamation mark included), suggests that the story understands the ludicrousness of its own premise. But even with the odd knowing aside, it still handles the material seriously enough to create a highly effective chiller.

### **The Pale Man by Julius Long**

I'm also a sucker for lonely men in hotel stories. This one is high on atmosphere, although the twist is more than a tad predictable.

### **Werewolf of the Sahara by G.G. Pendarves**

The best story thus far in this collection, and maybe the best horror story I've read in a long while. Part love story, (part love triangle story), part boy's own tale, part exotic adventure and – the most important element – definitely all you'd want from a werewolf tale. There's so much going on here. Even as the narrative moves straightforwardly from A to B to C, it manages to cram so much in and exceeds expectations on every level. True, we're in a Hollywood version of the Sahara here – any resemblance to any actual town or village is entirely coincidental – but that doesn't bother me. In fact I just wish it had been some great, scary 1940s Warner Bros film: the rugged Spencer Tracy as Dale, and the ever so beautiful Virginia Mayo as Merle, fighting danger on some studio back-lot desert. That would be guaranteed entertainment!

### **Train for Flushing by Malcolm Jameson**

A fun and in many ways silly yarn (you'd struggle to spot the scare factor here), this succeeds though entirely through good humour and charm. Two people find themselves trapped on a runaway train for decades – *that's DECADES!* – and start getting younger as the train takes them back in time. It's atypical of the rest of the collection, but actually a high-concept delight.

### **The Diary of Philip Westerly by Paul Compton**

Much like 'The Golgotha Dancers', and its 'The painting is alive/has something deeply sinister within its oils' conceit from earlier in this collection; 'the 'My reflection has taken on a life of its own' tale is one of those hoary old horror clichés. (And one of those hoary old horror clichés which reminds me too much of Groucho and Chico to ever really be scary). However Jameson manages as good a job as possible without doing anything original: leaning as he does on the insanity of its central character, rather than the concept itself.

### **Mask of Death by Paul Ernst**

Well, this is very interesting. An episode in a saga I've never heard of before, featuring a hero and a villain who are equally strangers to me, by a writer I'm totally unfamiliar with.

The gorgeously named, Ascott Keane keeps up the pretence of an insouciant playboy, whilst actually working as a detective of the supernatural. Think Bruce Wayne meets Carnacki. His main nemesis goes by the equally brilliant title, Doctor Satan – and yes it is a little on the comical side that Doctor Satan actually dresses as, well, Satan. Here the two find themselves pitched against each other in a glamorous casino, where frozen in time guests and a hypnotised actress show that Doctor Satan is once again up to his nefarious schemes.

Okay, the prose is a tad prosaic, but I confess to being intrigued by this. I loved the casino setting, I loved the charm of Ascott Keane and I liked the simplicity of good vs evil so clearly and simply defined. Apparently Ernst wrote numerous of these tales (as well as all twenty four 'Avenger' novels – something else I'm unfamiliar with). I really must track some more down.

### **The Girl From Samarcand by E. Hoffmann Price**

Well, it's the tale of a white hunter seeking oriental treasures in the exotic Far East, so it's dated – and that's before we get to the bit about it being acceptable for wives to have the occasional black eye. Occasionally a story like this is fun, as it's a window into a long ago world, a peek at forgotten tastes. This one however is written too poorly to get you over its limitations.

### **The Monkey Spoons by Mary Elizabeth Counselman**

A hunchback antique dealer sells some ancient and cursed items (monkey spoons, if you hadn't guessed) to some unsuspecting fools. Such a set-up would have reeked of cliché even when it was written in the Forties. This one does make the antiques dealer kinder than in other versions, but beyond that it doesn't even strain to do something more interesting with its subject matter.

### **The Vengeance of Nitocris by Tennessee Williams**

One doesn't expect to see the name Tennessee Williams in a collection like this, although – let's be fair – young, struggling, unknown writers are happy to be published anywhere. We have here an Ancient Egyptian grand guignol (with a deeply jarring anachronistic reference to the Pied Piper of Hamlin). Without a doubt it's well written, if leaning really heavily on the melodramatic. Although you look at the occasional dialogue, both so banal and so over-blown, and think "*Tennessee Williams wrote this!?*"

### **The Ninth Skeleton by Clark Ashton Smith**

A slender tale of a man getting lost in an ancient graveyard. It builds its terror effectively, but lacks the necessary pay-off to be truly successful

### **Bimini by Bassett Morgan**

I'm not entirely convinced that a famed arctic explorer would almost immediately accept a quest from an eccentric stranger who claims to be hundreds of years old – no matter how much money is offered. But then, I suppose, if it wasn't for that rather rash decision we wouldn't have a story.

It's a spin on Rider Haggard's 'She', but with an aurora borealis backdrop. There are the bare bones of a good tale here, but the action bits aren't exciting enough, the scary bits aren't chilling enough and the whole is never as gripping as it needs to be.

### **The Curse of Yig by H.P. Lovecraft and Zealia Bishop**

There's an ancient evil and a degree of racism, so we're definitely in Lovecraft territory here. In this instance though, having a collaborator seems to have made him more accessible, to have rendered his somewhat obtuse prise into a style clearer and more manageable. It's a tale of ancient snake gods, a man with crippling ophiphobia and a terrible fate which can never be avoided.

And it's one of the best in this collection.

### **The Haunter of the Ring by Robert E. Howard**

Robert E. Howard is a writer I always think I should know more about, should read more of – and this tale certainly whets the appetite. A kind of cross between an adventurers in a big city type tale, and a H.P. Lovecraft' contending with ancient evil. It has in short the derring-do of a 1930s movie serial, but building to a chilling ending. An impressive tale then, and fortunately I have more Howard lined up elsewhere...

### **The Medici Boots by Pearl Norton Swet**

Having read about cursed death spoons and a cursed ring in recent tales of this collection, I thought the tale of a pair of cursed, soft leather boots might be (ahem) a step too far. Some absurdist Monty Python sketch that was abandoned at the last instant. The prose is almost painfully bland, so it's not the best written story on display, but in its final dinner party scene it almost pulls off its dodgy concept.

### **The Lost Door by Dorothy Quick**

There's no denying the gleeful madness of this tale. A young man inherits an estate from a father who always refused to meet him. He and his friend head to France to claim the estate and discover that all the servants dress like they're in service to Seventeenth Century French aristocrats.

Oh, and these servants have never actually left the estate.

Oh, and the young man and his friend both have to dress up and actually pretend to be Seventeenth Century French aristocrats.

Oh, and they can't leave either.

Oh, and there's a ghost.

That last part seems almost common place compared to the rest of it, as this is a deliriously weird and intriguing tale, which maybe isn't as scary as it could be, but in its own way is quite brilliant.

### **Doom of the House of Duryea by Earl Peirce, Jr.**

Without a doubt the scariest, most atmospheric, absolute best tale in this collection so far – which given how near we are to the end, probably means we have ourselves a winner! A father and son meet for the first time in twenty years. In their past was a terrible crime of which the father was accused, but there's clearly more to this case – and more on their minds – than a simple, straightforward murder.

What I loved about it is that it builds a sense of dread, all whilst eschewing melodrama. It's an understated story, one that knows that pyrotechnics will go whizz and bang, but you can terrify people more with silence.

### **In the Dark by Ronald Kayser**

And to finish we have a guilt-ridden ghost story. It's a slender tale, with a twist that doesn't quite work (even

M. Night Shyamalan would raise his eyebrows and wonder if it could have been done better), but for all its flaws, there's no denying it's gripping.

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## **Patrick.G.P says**

Great collection of Weird Fiction tales from classics by H.P.Lovecraft to more obscure works by Earl Pierce Jr.

I will comment briefly on what I thought were the stand-out tales in this collection;

**BOY BLUE**, by Steve Rasnic Tem

Really amazing short story, Immediately drew me into it with a heavy atmosphere of dread and some deeply disturbing imagery.

**TO BECOME A SORCERER**, by Darrell Schweitzer

Beautiful, dreamlike atmosphere of a young boy's journey through a mystical world filled with magic and horror. Loved this one!

**THE GOLGOTHA DANCERS**, by Manly Wade Wellman

Excellent tale of a creepy museum painting that comes to life. A bit too pulpy perhaps with the climax, but a great read nonetheless.

**THE DISINTERMENT**, by H.P. Lovecraft and D.W. Rimele

Great gothic horror by H.P.Lovecraft!

**TRAIN FOR FLUSHING**, by Malcolm Jameson

I liked this one for the sheer weirdness of it.

**THE NINTH SKELETON**, by Clark Ashton Smith

The atmosphere was truly otherworldly in this, and I loved the Poe-like quality it had.

**THE CURSE OF YIG**, by H.P. Lovecraft and Zealia Bishop

Another classic by Lovecraft, about the hideous curse of the snake god Yig. Love the climax in this.

**THE HAUNTER OF THE RING**, by Robert E. Howard

Great little tale about a murderous wife under the control of evil forces. Pulpy and fun.

**THE LOST DOOR**, by Dorothy Quick

Nice gothic tale with good atmosphere. Maybe not the most original, but I'm as sucker for Gothic tales.

**DOOM OF THE HOUSE OF DURYEA**, by Earl Peirce, Jr.

The best surprise in this collection, I made a separate review for this.

Overall, a tremendous value for 99 cents on kindle, a no-brainer if you are into Weird fiction!

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**David Henry says****Tatty yy**

Fer to get to work in progress is the first one I t t Tbilisi t to be in b

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**chris gerals says****Decent selection**

Fairly decent selection in this volume. There's some strong entries, a couple clunkers, but overall enjoyable. It wasn't a waste of time.

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**Kamil Kopacewicz says**

I highly recommend this megapack - because it is cheap and contains many great stories. Most of them are far from 5 star artistic extravaganza, but they are at least decent.

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