



Nightshade & Damnations

Gerald Kersh

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Nightshade & Damnations Details

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From Reader Review Nightshade & Damnations for online ebook

Matt Donaldson says

Great introduction to my favorite author's work. A true master of the short story.

Clint says

I'd never heard of this guy before I read this book, with an introduction slobbering all over him by Harlan Ellison, but all these stories were interesting and very, very odd.

Linda says

Not so much horror as stories of the fantastic. Many of these would have felt right at home on the Twilight Zone of old.

Ryan says

A great work that needs more attention. It reads fast, as the text flies by spry and poetic.

Riju Ganguly says

WHY THE **** HADN'T I READ ANYTHING WRITTEN BY GERALD KERSH UNTIL NOW?

OK. Now I'm feeling better. That sense of betterment is derived not only from the fact that I have somehow managed to get that feeling, which had been plaguing me ever since I had picked up the book, out in the open. I'm feeling better because I'm quite sure that many-many of you, esteemed readers, would be in the same boat, and I can only hope that my humble comments might succeed in motivating you to rectify the situation ASAP.

Valancourt Books has performed a seminal service to readers everywhere by publishing this slim-but-attractive collection. It contains the following:

- An introduction from Harlan Ellison, titled "Kersh, the Demon Prince", which had graced the 1968 edition, and remains totally valid even now in all its rants & ramblings. Then comes the stories, which are: -

1. The Queen of Pig Island
2. Frozen Beauty
3. The Brighton Monster
4. Men Without Bones
5. "Busto Is A Ghost, Too Mean to Give Us A Fright"
6. The Ape and the Mystery
7. The King Who Collected Clocks
8. Bone For Debunkers

9. A Lucky Day for the Boar
10. Voices in the Dust of Annan
11. Whatever Happened to Corporal Cuckoo?

If I try to summarise the stories, accompanied by my personal opinion with respect to each of them, the whole thing would be a travesty & mockery of the genius that was Kersh. He had, in his often poetic, often sharp, and rather hauntingly mocking prose, created worlds here. These worlds are dream-like in the sense that they are entirely recognisable, painful, joyous, fascinating, strange, and totally elusive when you try to capture them with your awake-yet-befuddled hands. These stories have generated tropes that have been encashed by Hollywood as well as all kinds of entertainers, literary or otherwise, without us ever knowing that it was Kersh who had gifted us with these concepts!

Better hurry, and grab a copy of this book, before you again forget, and deprive yourself of the pleasure of reading Kersh.

Mike says

These stories are pretty dated but there are a couple of good ones. But, for the most part, a boring collection.

Mitch Duckworth says

. . . Loaned to me by fellow writer and dear friend, Jack Mace, this remarkable anthology of 11 storeis by a brilliant writer, Gerald Kersh, unknown to me only a few years ago. Oh, perhaps I have encountered his name somewhere along the line, in one or more (then) obscures references to him by Harlan Ellison or Ray Bradbury, or any one of the writers I admire in an article or essay describing authors they admire. Nightshade & Damnation-11 Storeis of the Weird, the Unspeakable, the Bizarre since its publication in 1968 continues to surface in the ranks of the enthusiasts libraries, regularly attracting new raving fans.

With stories of this magnitude, picking favorites is a bit of a struggle, but inevitably, somehow, your favorites emerge. From this collection, my chosen include "The Queen of Pig Island," "Men Without Bones," "The King Who Collected Clocks," "Voices In The Dust of Annan," and, perhaps my very favorite, "Whatever Happened to Corporal Cuckoo?"

I am resolved to find my very own copy of this anthology; I will cherish it all my days.

Kersh was born in England, quit school before taking a degree, and continued his education in a series of jobs---salesman, baker, fish-and-chips cook, nighclub bouncer, freelance newspaper journalist---while writing his first two novels. The publication of is third novel, NIGHT AND THE CITY, in 1937 put him on the map and marked him as among the front ranks of young British writers. Twenty novels later, he created what he considered his masterpiece, FOWLER'S END, which is widely regarded as one of the outstanding novels of the 20th century. Throughout his career he wrote a number of distinguished short stories; many if not most in this anthology were printed first in the US by THE SATURDAY EVENING POST, PLAYBOY, ESQUIRE, and ON AN ODD NOTE among others.

Kersh fought with the Coldstream Guards in WWII and after traveling extensively, settled in America and gained citizenship (circa 1960) and from about that time lived quietly in Cragsmoor, in a remote section of the Shawangunk Mountains in New York State.

John Higgins says

Kersh is an impossibly stylish writer, incapable of a bum note in any line. His stories are often shaggy dog ones with Kersh himself introducing them and framing them, like a Mephistophelean Edgar Wallace. But what a lot of fun and what fine, imaginative, beautifully told stories they are. "Busto is a ghost, too mean to give a fright" is full of Dickensian colour, which is to say rot and filth and stench, peopled with roaring Titans. "Men without Bones" and "Voices in the dust of Annan" are H G Wells grotesques. "The Brighton Monster" is a sci-fi period piece about nuclear war and wrestling. "Whatever happened to Corporal Cuckoo", a wonderful story, lies somewhere between early Italo Calvino and late Alan Moore. If any of this sounds good to you then I heartily recommend these stories.

Peter says

Gerald Kersh wrote to make a living and these eleven stories – originally published between 1938 and 1962 – are for the most part potboilers. Many of them follow the sort of formula in which the narrator meets a chum who settles back in his armchair, lights his pipe, and says "Did I ever tell you the queer tale of the marmoset who played Mozart?" And then we get the queer tale...and that's it.

But Kersh, for all his hack work, was an intermittently good writer capable of surprising you, both with the quality of his prose and with the originality of his ideas. Unfortunately neither is much in evidence in this collection. "Men Without Bones" is a typical example – a routine queer tale about (you guessed) men without bones, not enlivened by a gaumless twist ending. Yet the introductory setting – an encounter whilst loading a banana boat at night – is wonderful and exudes tropical menace, sadly not fulfilled.

The best of the stories is "Busto Is A Ghost, Too Mean To Give Us A Fright", a study of a surly slum landlord which includes some memorable lines:

"Time is more than a healer. It is a painter and decorator, a gilder and a glorifier."

"I wrote a novel [that] was so sordid it made publishers' readers scratch themselves."

"I don't know...there are men whom one hates until a certain moment when one sees, through a chink in their armor, the writhing of something nailed down and in torment."

Great stuff. Pity there wasn't more of this and less of the boneless men.

Debra says

Stephen King recommended book. Listed in Danse Macabre as being "important to the genre we have been discussing."

Justin Howe says

A collection of short stories from the 1940s and 1950s, somewhat pulpy, but it's a testament to Kersh's style and POV that he has aged better than most.

I'd heard Kersh's name for a while now and knew his work from Jules Dassin's "Night & the City" before I knew who he was. I definitely recommend this book.

Ericpegnam Pegnam says

Uneven but some very interesting...some real shaggy dog stories marginal stuff plus it has a cover by Leo and Diane Dillon.

Chris says

Great collection of stories. Not a clunker in the bunch. Glad I sought this book out. Thanks to Harlan Ellison. My favorites were "Busto Is A Ghost, Too Mean To Give Us A Fright", "Voices In The Dust Of Annan" and "Whatever Happened To Corporal Cuckoo?".

j_ay says

The Queen of Pig Island *****
Frozen Beauty *****o
The Brighton Monster
Men Without Bones
"Busto is a Ghost, Too Mean to Give Us a Fright!"
The Ape and the Mystery
The King Who Collected Clocks
Bone for Debinkers
A Lucky Day for the Boar
Voices in the Dust Annan
Whatever Happened to Corporal Cuckoo?
