

“LORE: A QUIANT AND CURIOUS VOLUME OF SELECTED STORIES” (Book Review)

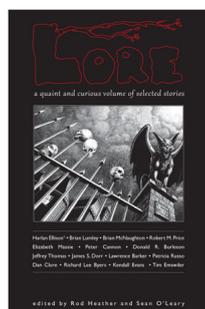
Written by Mister Smith

Thursday, 23 February 2012 17:34



Shall this witness confess something wicked? When I was assigned the task to retrieve and review the documents known as LORE: A QUIANT AND CURIOUS VOLUME OF SELECTED STORIES, I cringed. The grimace on my face had nothing to do with the manuscript itself, but rather, it had been an eternity since I had dissected any piece of literature.

It is perhaps for this very reason that LORE, edited by Rod Heather and Sean O’Leary, was placed in my care. At just a page shy of 200, even I should have been able to get through what many savants would consider a straightforward excursion. Undertaking this challenge didn’t come without a struggle, however, as I had to prepare myself for a daunting and tedious day of researching and comprehending the texts. Then something peculiar happened: Only two stories in, I found myself engrossed within the pages before me. Yarns of spinning mandalas and a girl stuck in a wall, a ghost rising from his grave to be greeted by a gypsy, a foul witch beating her ratlike servant as her young apprentice observes, a bloodied, escaped convict killing everyone in his way for care of a battery—what a “quaint and curious volume” indeed!



Stitching together various tales from the nine-issue run of the LORE digest, the book resists the temptation to compress as many stories as possible, and instead focuses on the best entries from 15 different authors. Rarely is a page wasted in this Lovecraft-inspired collection; a joy of the collection is that one isn’t sure what sort of Gothic account is going to be next. The cold and atmospheric what-is-waiting-below-is-ready-to-be-found tone of Harlan Ellison’s Bram Stoker

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Award-winning “Chatting With Anubis” is night and day to Brian McNaughton’s savage and brief “Vision” that immediately follows it. Likewise, the horrors of alien parasites controlling their host in hopes to return home in Brian Lumley’s “The Vehicle” couldn’t be much farther from the melancholy marriage of a neglected deaf woman lost in her husband’s antique collection in Jeffrey Thomas’ “Empathy”.

Make no mistake: Though very much unique and different, these reports of the extraordinary aren’t incompatible to one another. For example, James S. Dorr’s “The Galvanic” details the betrayal of a man who sold his body upfront for scientific research long before the time that would be his death, while Lawrence Barker’s “Rile Fouts and Dead Jake Sorrel” recalls a duel of fiddles between man and monster along with a dancing corpse who will help determine the winner. Though contrasting in tone, both works feel very much interconnected in this anthology of the occult. Could I appoint a single story from LORE to be a favorite? Of course not, that would be impractical! Each one contributes to the Gothic mythos with its own take on what horror can be.

I write this now in hopes that my own tale will be discovered and those persons who find it will be forewarned; those who dare to discover more can do so [here](#). I’m both afraid and pleased that having dabbled just once in the world of these selected stories; I may not be coming back.

I suppose that is, after all, the allure of LORE.

