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H. P. Lovecraft



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The Silver Key

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"The Silver Key" is a short story written by H.P. Lovecraft in 1926, considered part of his Dreamlands series.

Randolph Carter discovers, at the age of 30, that he has gradually "lost the key to the gate of dreams." As he ages, he finds that his daily waking exposure to the more "practical", scientific ideas of man, has eventually eroded his ability to dream as he once did, and has made him regretfully subscribe more and more to the mundane beliefs of everyday, waking "real life". But still not certain which is truer, he sets out to determine whether the waking ideas of man are superior to his dreams.

The Silver Key Details

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From Reader Review The Silver Key for online ebook

Knjigoholi?arka says

"Srebrni klju?" je knjižica koja se sastoji iz tri pri?e: "Izjava Randolfa Kartera", "Srebrni klju?" i "Kroz kapije srebrnog klju?a". Zaplet je vrlo jednostavan (više-manje, kao i u svim Lavkraftovim knjigama) - Randolph Karter, misti?ar poreklom iz - gle ?uda - Arkama, pokušava da prona?e put do svojih izgubljenih snova iz detinjstva. Negde u kasnim godinama, to mu uspeva uz pomo? misti?nog srebrnog klju?a, tako da dobija ne samo pristup nekada davno sanjanim svetovima, ve? i mnogo širem i neverovatnijem znanju poreklom iz drugih dimenzija Kosmosa. Uglavnom, da vam ne spojlujem, Lavkraft osmišlja interesantan koncept Multiverzuma (ne toliko nau?ni, naravno, koliko okultan), kao i Vremena (ono nije linearno ve? prošlost, sadašnjost i budu?nost postoje istovremeno - možemo se kretati Vremenom ne samo "od napred ka nazad", ve? i obrnuto, kao i "levo-desno"... što je u principu i koncept koji je Kurt Vonegat izneo u nekoj svojoj knjizi, al' da me ubijete, ne se?am se kojoj... možda je malo prepisivao od ?a?e Lavkrafta).

Elem, ono što se mene više dojmilo u ovoj knjizi jeste bolno otvoren autobiografski portret autora kroz lik Randolfa Kartera:

Mnogo je ?itao o stvarima onakvim kakve jesu i razgovarao o tome sa isuviše mnogo ljudi. Dobronamerni filozofi u?ili su ga da istražuje logi?ne odnose stvari i da analizira procese koji mu uobli?avaju vlastite misli i snove. ?uda je nestalo i on je zaboravio da je sav život samo niz slika u mozgu, me?u kojima nema razlike izme?u onih koje ra?a stvarnost i onih koje ra?a unutrašnje, li?no sanjarenje, i da nema razloga da se jedne cene više od drugih. Stalnim navikavanjem utuвила mu se u glavu sujeverna pobožnost prema onome što opipljivo i fizi?ki postoji i potajna posramljenost što sam živi u snovima. (...) A kad nije uspeo da prona?e divote u stvarima ?iji zakoni su bili znani i merljivi, kazali su mu da mu nedostaje mašta i da je nezreo, zato što su mu se više dopadali prividi iz snova od privida našeg fizi?kog sveta.

Lavkraft po prirodi nije bio osoba s kojom biste se rado družili ili išli na pivo. Introvertan i sputan konzervativnim vaspitanjem svoje novoengleske porodice, posmatraju?i bolesti i smrt najbližih, bolešljiv, slab i mu?en košmarima još kao dete, Lavkraft se nigde nije ose?ao tako sigurno kao u svom rodnom Providensu. Bio je ksenofob, rasista, voleo je da izlazi iz ku?e tek posle sumraka i apsolutno mu je bilo nevažno što krcka i poslednje parice porodi?nog nasle?a dok polako umire u bedi. Sve ovo, kao i ve?ite pri?e o spaljivanju veštica iz Salema, terale su Lavkrafta na ve?ito preispitivanje mo?i pojedinca u ogromnom svetu mogu?nosti. Kao što i sam re?e:

Now all my tales are based on the fundamental premise that common human laws and interests and emotions have no validity or significance in the vast cosmos-at-large.

I tako, u zbirci pri?a "Srebrni klju?" eksplicitnost ovih Lavkraftovih omiljenih tema eskalira. Ne samo što daje autorov dirljiv autoportret, ve? u sceni prometejskog darivanja van-zemaljskog znanja Randolphu Karteru, prikazuje ?ovekovu nespremnost da prihvati sopstvenu bezna?ajnost u odnosu na neotkrivene mogu?nosti sveta i sopstvenog uma:

Nema te smrti, tog prokletstva, te agonije koja može pobuditi onakvo sveporažavaju?e bezna?e koje nastaje kada se izgubi identitet. Utopiti se u ništavilo samo je smireni zaborav; ali biti svestan vlastitog postojanja, pa ipak znati da više nismo jedno odre?eno bi?e razli?ito od ostalih, da više nemamo vlastito ja, to je bezimni vrhunac agonije i užasa.

Pre nekoliko dana umro je Hari Din Stenton. U dokumentarcu "Partly Fiction" Dejvid Lin? ga pita: "How would you describe yourself?" "As nothing. There is no self." "And how would you like to be remembered?"

"It doesn't matter." Evo ne znam zašto sam ovo napisala, ali neka se na?e. Jer, sasvim je mogu?e živeti odgovoran život, a ne shvatati sebe previše ozbiljno. Na kraju krajeva, sve je ništavilo i svi smo tako mali pred tajnama Kosmosa i njegovim skrivenim znanjima.

Orient says

A Buddy Read - research with and awesome GR friend **Craig** into Lovecraft :)

A nice short story with a bit of historical spices :)

Maybe a

An definitely a mysterious key!!! :)

A.N. Mignan says

The usual Lovecraft story really, except that for once, instead of visions of the deep past, one gets the gift of prophecy. This was a nice little addition to the complex realm invented by this prolific author.

Amy Mills says

Surprisingly upbeat for Lovecraft. Existential dread? Just open the forbidden box of your forefathers and find the silver key! Goes a bit overboard describing the ennui before getting the plot moving.

Kati Steinke says

I would have enjoyed the second part a lot more if the first part hadn't felt so much like "NOBODY UNDERSTANDS MY UNIQUE AND COMPELLING TALE OF WOE. Also, everyone sucks."

Laura says

Voy a dejar en claro que no soy una persona a la que le guste analizar todo o filosofar sobre la vida. Cuando elijo un libro quiero sumergirme en un mundo nuevo y seguir las aventuras emocionantes del protagonista, no quiero releer varias veces cada párrafo para entender que me quiso decir. En las primeras hojas Carter compara el mundo real con el mundo de los sueños y filosofa al respecto. Probablemente haya habido

significados ocultos pero yo me quedé solo con lo que es evidente y seguí adelante, porque no tengo ganas de analizar nada u,u (Por suerte existe el Club de Lectura y seguro Monse se va a poder explayar al respecto de una forma mucho más amena e interesante!). Luego de la quinta página más o menos se nos presenta recién la trama de este cuento, y no estuvo mal, pero ya el principio me dejó mal predispuesta y lo leí rápido para sacármelo de encima.

? Irena ? says

Randolph Carter lost his connection to the dream world. All those practical ideas and science from the real world almost destroyed his ability to dream at all. So, he sets out to find out which is superior.

Oleksandr says

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Lindsay says

I found this a rather lovely, gentle and comforting fairy tale of a story as Lovecraft goes. Man is young and dreams of fantastic and beautiful things to rise above the utilitarianism of every-day life. Man grows up and gets bogged down in the sadness of the real world. Man gets old and recaptures the dreams of his youth, becoming ever more absorbed until death when he reaches the unity with dreams he has longed for.

The standalone story is a little too short to convey much depth, but read in conjunction with his other dream-cycle works in particular I think it is valuable in the way it fleshes out his ideas and philosophy.

Ebster Davis says

"[They] could not escape from the delusion that life has a meaning apart from that which men dream into it; and could not lay aside the crude notion of ethics and obligations beyond those of beauty, even when all Nature shrieked of its unconsciousness and impersonal unmorality in the light of their scientific discoveries. Warped and bigoted with preconceived illusions of justice, freedom, and consistency, they cast off the old lore and the old ways with the old beliefs; nor ever stopped to think that that lore and those ways were the sole makers of their present thoughts and judgments, and the sole guides and standards in a meaningless universe without fixed aims or stable points of reference."

Carter's exestential musings made me feel like banging my head against the wall.

He basically realizes how meaningless the whole of existance is, and tries to invent meaning by retreating into the only thing he has left that gratifies him: his dreams.

I'm sure a lot of people who are disenchanted with reality could cling to this story, because he articulates some really deep stuff here, but I'm more unsettled by what he unveiled: namely that he has some pretty antisocial tendencies...so much so that he is untouched by things like suffering of his fellow creatures in WWI.

commence head-pounding now

There...now I feel much better!

sinéad says

lasting beauty comes only in dream

Katie says

Never let anyone else tell you what to think, lest you lose your own key to the gate of dreams.

Ahmad Sharabiani says

The Silver Key, H.P. Lovecraft

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Lucia says

Leído para el Club de Lectura

Para la segunda entrega del Club de Lectura le tocó a Gloria elegir el libro, y se decidió por una selección de cuentos de Lovecraft.

No fue la gran cosa, me da la sensación de que se disfruta más si uno leyó (y le gustaron) las historias anteriores relacionadas a Randolph Carter. Se sintió como un prelude a otra historia, como una especie de prólogo, más que como una historia en sí misma.

Monse says

[Pasamos de la filosofía del protagonista, a que este nos recuerde tiempos de su niñez para terminar suponiendo que Randolph logró ir al "mundo de los sueños" a ser, quizás, el rey de otro mundo. ¿Pero capaz

Baal Of says

..the blind cosmos grinds aimlessly on from nothing to something and from something back to nothing again, neither heeding nor knowing the wishes or existence of the minds that flicker for a second now and then in the darkness.M

This idea runs through almost every story Lovecraft writes, and this one hammers the point home incessantly. Layer on top of that the arrogant ennui of Randolph Carter, with his smug disapproval of all the humans who are just not up to his intellectual standards, as they muck about in the backwaters of science and philosophy. His constant refrain of how they just can't understand his brilliance and he is so alone could be interpreted as a kind of teenage diary from the comic void.

David Sarkies says

Home is Never Enough

7 January 2017

This is actually two short stories, though the second one pretty much follows on from where the first ends (and the first is much, much shorter than the second). Anyway, once again we meet up with Rudolph Carter, and this time he is looking for a special key. Apparently he lost it, which is a little confusing because it seems that he never actually had it in the first place (it turns out that the key is the key to his childhood wonder). Well, maybe he at one stage in his life knew where it was, but has forgotten where it was hidden so he has to spend some time trying to dig it up.

When we last left him he had been on this huge dream quest through this fantastic (and rather horrific) realm looking for a magnificent city, though at the end of that quest he does a Dorothy and realises that there truly is no place like home. Well, maybe that didn't really work out all that well for him because he is now looking for a key that will enable him to physically pass through into these alternate dimensions as opposed to simply relying on his ability to dream himself there. In a way it is like coming back from a really long holiday, collapsing on your own bed, in your own house, and breathing a sigh of relief that you no longer have to live out of a suitcase. In fact, you make a promise never to have such a trip again, that is until six months later when you suddenly realise that you always wanted to go to Budapest, and start planning (and saving) for your next trip.

Well, that seems to be the case with Mr Rudolph Carter, except that he isn't going to Budapest, he is travelling the dimensions, something that this mysterious silver key allows you to do. The problem is that the rest of the world basically thinks that he is dead, which is normally what people think when you disappear without a trace. It is even worse when you actually own property because all of a sudden a lot of people come out of the woodwork wanting a piece of the pie. Okay, from what I gathered, Rudolph didn't have any immediate family, but that didn't mean that there were people there that either were, or claimed to be, distant relatives. Since nobody has heard anything of him in ages, the assumption is that he is dead, and that it is time to divide up his property.

One thing we learn from this story is that during the witch trials at Salem, a lot of them basically left and set up their own community, at a place that happens to be Arkham. As a thought I wonder if there is a

connection between Arkham Asylum in the Batman universe, and H.P. Lovecraft's Arkham. I suspect there is some influence there, though I'm not sure if I could consider Batman to be all that Lovecraftian. Though I still remember being in a comic shop when I was a teenager and I saw a comic about Arkham Asylum, and the owner politely explained that it had nothing to do with H.P. Lovecraft because it was Batman. I immediately returned the comic to the shelf.

I have to admit though that this wasn't one of my favourite stories, though there did happen to be an awesome twist at the end which saved it from all of the esoteric waffling that Lovecraft seemed to delve into during the first part of the second story. It was interesting, but seemed to be little different to the other short stories starring Rudolph Carter. However, the catch was that this seemed to be much, much more like a dream than the Dream Quest of Unknown Kadath. Oh, I should mention that the second short story is called Through the Gate of the Silver Key.

Oh, and somebody also gets scared to death at the end, but I've come to expect that from Lovecraft.
