

Dark Adventure Radio Theatre

The Players

Sean Branney Dr. Muñoz, Dr. Quinlan
 Kacey Camp Mrs. Herrero, Miss Ruha, Mrs. Hegarty
 Matt Foyer M. Ernest Valdemar
 Andrew Leman Edwin, Dr. Dunham, Dr. Hull
 Jacob Andrew Lyle Mr. Lionel
 Barry Lynch Dr. Watkins, Ambrose
 John A. McKenna Repairman Johnny, Dr. Turnbull
 David Pavao Dr. Fenwick
 Kevin Stidham Machinist, Eugene Crowley
 Josh Thoenke Announcer
 Sarah van der Pol Sonia
 Time Winters Creighton Cobb

The Staff

Based on "Cool Air" and "The Picture in the House"
 by H. P. Lovecraft
 and "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar"
 by Edgar Allan Poe

Radio Adaptation by Sean Branney & Andrew Leman

Original Music by Reber Clark

Dark Adventure Theme by Troy Sterling Nies

Vocals Recorded at The Jungle Room, Glendale, California

Audio Engineering by Ben Soldate and Jeff Stone

Cover and Disc Illustrations by Darrell Tutchton

Prop Inserts by Andrew Leman and Sean Branney

Penmanship by Jay Stigdon

Thanks to Kevin Miller and David G. Cercone II

Produced by Sean Branney and Andrew Leman



"He groped his way out with face tightly bandaged, and I never saw his eyes again."

Above: The "Cool Air" illustration by Harry Ferman that accompanied the Weird Tales reprint of September, 1939.

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FOUR OUT OF FIVE HEAROLOGISTS AGREE

But first, a few words from our sponsor....

Maintaining good health has never been easy, and it is hardly surprising that people fall for crazy quackery like snake oil and radium salts, and submit themselves to ill-conceived treatments designed solely to benefit dubious doctors. The health insurance system in America today is horribly flawed, but it did not exist at all in Lovecraft's time. He and his family are proof that even good medicine in that era could be pretty horrifying. Prior to the development of insulin therapy in the early 1920s, for example, the only real treatment for diabetes was starvation. People would (and still often do) try virtually anything to avoid illness, death, and doctors, and this theme unites the tales in this anthology episode.

"Cool Air" was the last story Lovecraft wrote and set in New York City, finishing it just before his return to Providence in early 1926. After two years in cosmopolitan Manhattan, perhaps HPL had finally come to terms with his distaste for foreigners enough to refocus on his distaste for the cold. For whatever reason, "Cool Air" is by far the best of his three New York stories. The piece was first published in 1928, in issue No. 4 of *Tales of Magic and Mystery*. This extremely rare pulp magazine only existed for five months, and was edited by Walter Gibson, who was a friend of Houdini (and who developed *The Shadow*). Dr. Muñoz's boarding house was based on a building in Chelsea — just south of Hell's Kitchen — where a friend of Lovecraft's lived, and which is now a bed & breakfast. While the tale's climax calls to mind the soggy dissolution at the end of "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar", Lovecraft wrote to one of his friends that he took his inspiration from Arthur Machen's "The Novel of the White Powder", in which a character is similarly reduced to a liquidous state.

Lovecraft was also working on "Supernatural Horror in Literature" in New York, and in fact he was writing the chapter on Edgar Allan Poe at about the same time as he wrote "Cool Air". "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" was HPL's second-favorite Poe tale. It was published in December of 1845 simultaneously in two different journals of which Poe was the editor, and quickly reprinted in England. The manner in which it was presented led many people to take it for a genuine academic article rather than a work of fiction. (Horace Greeley, editor of the *New-York Daily Tribune*, ironically referred to another pseudo-medical practice, phrenology, when he wrote that "whoever

thought it a voracious recital must have the bump of Faith large, very large indeed".) Poe let the confusion go on for a while, but ultimately admitted the story was "a hoax". Poe's young wife, Virginia, was suffering from tuberculosis when he wrote the story, and it's entirely possible his graphic descriptions of Valdemar's gruesome situation were based on painful first-hand experience. Virginia died of the disease just over a year after the story was published. Tuberculosis can now be cured by six months of antibiotics, but in Poe's time it was often fatal. Also known as "consumption", it was linked back then with vampirism in popular imagination, because it could cause whole families to waste away.

"The Picture in the House" was written in December of 1920 and is one of HPL's most remarkable early works. It's also the first story to mention the Miskatonic Valley and Arkham, and begins his trend of using backwoods New England as the key locale in his tales of horror. The tale casts its Puritan settlers as the foundation of the region's woes. In a discussion of this story with his friend and fellow writer Robert E. Howard, HPL said, "Bunch together a group of people deliberately chosen for strong religious feelings, and you have a practical guarantee of dark morbidities expressed in crime, perversion, and insanity." Lovecraft had never actually seen a copy of *Regnum Congo* when he wrote the story, but he may have seen the detail of Plate XII itself which was reproduced in "On the Natural History of the Man-Like Apes" by Thomas Henry Huxley in 1863, the first book ever devoted to the subject of human evolution. The story's creepy old man has resorted to grisly extremes to prolong his own life, and is taken out by the same kind of lightning bolt that ends HPL's most favorite Poe story, "The Fall of the House of Usher".

All of us at HPLHS wish you health and long life free from all bad medicine, except ours. And Bile Beans.

—SB & AHL



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