



The White Ship

H.P. Lovecraft

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"The White Ship" is a short story written by H.P. Lovecraft. It was first published in The United Amateur (Volume 19) #2, November 1919.

A lighthouse keeper named Basil Elton engages upon a peculiar fantasy in which a bearded man piloting a mystical white ship is found sailing upon a bridge of moonlight. Elton joins the bearded man on this ship, and together they explore a mystical chain of islands unlike anything that can be found on Earth.

The White Ship Details

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From Reader Review The White Ship for online ebook

Sarah says

You'd think that this would be a horror story, given that it's by Lovecraft, but surprisingly, it's not. Apparently he wrote a series of related "Dream Sequence" stories that are related mainly because the main plot point involves dreams. This is one of these, and I really liked it. It had touches of Dunsany and (of course) Poe and really succeeded in blending those together.

John Edwards says

I've been into Lovecraft for a while but just recently got into the work of Lord Dunsany. This reads more like a Dunsany tale than a Lovecraft tale but that doesn't hinder me from loving this story. If Dunsany had written this it would also be my favorite of his work, but it just so happens Lovecraft wrote it. Surely out of pure admiration and inspiration for Dunsany and there's nothing wrong with that.

Jason Koivu says

The White Ship is mostly just description of a mystical voyage on a strange ship with a strange old man, but it is interesting for the fact that it's actually a fantasy and not the typical Lovecraftian horror. A nice departure and an interesting visual trip, but not a terribly exciting story.

Amy (Other Amy) says

The children of mankind are never satisfied. I actually like this one. It does remind me of something, but what exactly is not coming to me (besides the goose that laid the golden egg).

(Moved 2015 review to the individual work Sept. 2017 to make room to review the collection under its own entry.)

Javier Muñoz says

Un hombre que custodiaba un faro, al igual que su padre y su abuelo anteriormente. Se ve de pronto en un viaje onírico por unos parajes etéreos. Junto a un viejo de barba blanca, y siguiendo a un pájaro azul, pasan por la isla de los sueños, misterios, placeres, hasta llegar a descansar a la tierra de la imaginación. Luego de haber encontrado la tierra perfecta, el héroe quiso ir donde nadie había ido, osea, a la Tierra de la Fantasía, el cual era un viaje sin retorno.

La Imaginación es la imagen creada de la fantasía. No solo le bastó disfrutar la imagen, quiso ir donde nacía

todo, hacia los Dioses.

? Irena ? says

A dream cycle story featuring a curious lighthouse keeper Basil Elton who boards the white ship with an unnamed bearded man. It takes him far away to the Dreamlands where nobody ages. His curiosity makes him restless and he starts another journey against the bearded man's warnings. The ship takes him back to where he boarded moments earlier only to find that his lighthouse beacon failed the first time in history.

Netanella says

Sometimes at twilight the grey vapours of the horizon have parted to grant me glimpses of the ways beyond; and sometimes at night the deep waters of the sea have grown clear and phosphorescent, to grant me glimpses of the ways beneath. And these glimpses have been as often of the ways that were and the ways that might be, as of the ways that are; for ocean is more ancient than the mountains, and freighted with the memories and the dreams Time.

The White Ship is a trippy little story from Lovecraft's early years. In it, a lighthouse keeper sets sail on a white ship for faraway shores, but his yearning for more causes an end to his fantastic voyage.

Sarah Thom says

My first Lovecraft story, and I loved it! I definitely see some similarities in the writing of contemporary authors Stephen King, Clive Barker, and even C.S. Lewis. I'm excited to dig into more of his writing!

Joshua Shioshita says

If you like The Dream Quest of Unknown Kadath, then you'll probably dig this story. If you didn't like Kadath, then you probably won't get into this one either. More fantasy than horror, more dream than terror. If that's your bag then give it a read.

Joselyn Moreno Burke says

super intersting

Monika says

betyg och recension kommer senare

Nathanael Bennett says

It's odd that *The White Ship*, currently one of my favorite pieces from Lovecraft, does not fully adopt the Lovecraftian style of writing. Nonetheless the level of atmospheric mastery, beauty, and (for lack of better description) humanity in this story is undeniable.

Mika Harjula says

Not much for a horror story but such a beautiful description of a sailor's eye-view on the nature and its environment. Magnificent.

StoryTellerShannon says

A man tells tale of his times in faraway dream lands and his many wondrous experiences.

This is more of a wistful fantasy tale than a horror one and influenced by Dunsany.

OVERALL GRADE: B minus.

Gray says

First published in 1919, this is the second story in Lovecraft's **Dream Cycle**. It tells the tale of Basil Elton, a lighthouse keeper who speaks of "the secret lore of ocean." When the moon is full, he witnesses a White Ship which "glides smoothly and silently across the sea". On this ship is a "bearded and robed" man who signals Basil to join him. Together, they explore a group of mystical islands ending in a search for Cathuria, the Land of Hope.

This is a dream-like short story which explores themes of loneliness, yearning, exploration, fantasy and danger. It is quite unlike the weird, cosmic horror of the Cthulhu mythos stories. There are moments of darkness in here, but the atmosphere is closer to a fantasy tale. Some of the prose is quite beautiful:

"(He) told me of the land of Zar, where dwell all the dreams and thoughts of beauty that come to men once and then are forgotten."

"we walked to the verdant shore on a golden bridge of moonbeams."

I enjoyed this one. The next story in the Dream Cycle is *The Doom That Came to Sarnath* (1919).

“Polaris” (1918)
“The White Ship” (1919)
“The Doom That Came to Sarnath” (1919)
“The Cats of Ulthar” (1920)
“Celephaïs” (1920)
“Ex Oblivione” (1920)
“The Quest of Iranon” (1921)
“The Other Gods” (1921)
“What the Moon Brings” (1922)
“The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath” (1926)
“The Silver Key” (1926)
“The Strange High House in the Mist” (1926)
“Through the Gates of the Silver Key” (1932)

*(These tales are considered to be the core Dream Cycle stories. Wikipedia lists a further ten.)

Oleksandr says

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Melissafountain says

I listened to this story and am currently going through the other six stories on an audiobook on youtube. I like this story because it's lucid and dreamlike and unexpected. I only wish the story could've gone on longer

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JZSho...>

Eliza says

There is nothing more captivating than the gorgeous, lyrical voice enclosed in the ominous tales of H.P. Lovecraft. He creates for you the most beautiful and terrible places to dream of in your mind's eye, only to snatch them abruptly away, leaving you behind on an empty shoreline to contemplate numerous hidden meanings, and wonder about things bigger than yourself. Absolutely beautiful.

Bill Kerwin says

First published in *The United Amateur* (November 1919), “The White Ship” is the earliest example of Lovecraft’s Dunsanian dream fantasies, the most accomplished and developed of which is *The Dream Quest of Unknown Kadath*.

In this story, lighthouse keeper Basil Elton dreams of a white ship that carries him to various marvelous cities, the narrative ends with the lighthouse keeper’s rude awakening. The accounts of the cities are interesting in themselves, but the structure of the tale seems to cry out for some progression of moods or symbols, in these urban descriptions, but I—except for a few whispers of allegory—I have failed to detect any of that. Consequently, “The White Ship” is notable for what Lovecraft began here, not what he achieved. The story just doesn’t seem to go anywhere very important.

Here’s an excerpt, to give you a good example of Lovecraft’s early style (and the closest “The White Ship” gets to an interesting allegory):

Then came we to a pleasant coast gay with blossoms of every hue, where as far inland as we could see basked lovely groves and radiant arbours beneath a meridian sun. From bowers beyond our view came bursts of song and snatches of lyric harmony, interspersed with faint laughter so delicious that I urged the rowers onward in my eagerness to reach the scene. And the bearded man spoke no word, but watched me as we approached the lily-lined shore. Suddenly a wind blowing from over the flowery meadows and leafy woods brought a scent at which I trembled. The wind grew stronger, and the air was filled with the lethal, charnel odour of plague-stricken towns and uncovered cemeteries. And as we sailed madly away from that damnable coast the bearded man spoke at last, saying: “This is Xura, the Land of Pleasures Unattained.”

Michael Sorbello says

Enjoyable for the mystical descriptions of fantasy lands encounter on the voyage of a mysterious ship. The imagery and dreamlike sense of adventure is reminiscent to the Chronicles of Narnia in some aspects.
