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The Tomb (Complete Works) (Volume 1)

H. P. Lovecraft

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This is one of Lovecraft's first short stories, now published as a stand alone book all toghether with a basic biography and a quick abstract. "The Tomb" is a short story by H. P. Lovecraft written in June 1917 and first published in the March 1922 issue of The Vagrant. It is the first work of fiction that Lovecraft wrote as an adult. The Tomb" tells of Jervas Dudley, a self-confessed day-dreamer. While still a child, he discovers the entrance to a mausoleum, belonging to the family Hyde, whose nearby family mansion had burnt down many years previously. The entrance to the mausoleum is padlocked and slightly ajar. Jervas attempts to break the padlock, but is unable. Dispirited, he takes to sleeping beside the tomb. Eventually, inspired by reading Plutarch's Lives, Dudley decides to patiently wait until it is his time to gain entrance to the tomb. One night, several years later, Jervas falls asleep once more beside the mausoleum. He awakes suddenly in the late afternoon, and believes that a light has been latterly extinguished from inside the tomb. Taking leave, he returns to his home, where he goes directly to the attic, to a rotten chest, and therein finds the key to the tomb. Once inside the mausoleum, Jervas discovers an empty coffin with the name of "Jervas" upon the plate. He begins, so he believes, to sleep in the empty coffin each night. He also develops a fear of thunder and fire, and is aware that he is being spied upon by one of his neighbours. One night, against his better judgement, Jervas sets out for the tomb on an overcast night, a night threatening to storm. As he approaches the tomb, he sees the Hyde mansion restored to its former state; there is a party in progress, which he joins, abandoning his former quietude for blasphemous hedonism. During the party, lightning strikes the mansion, and it burns. Jervas loses consciousness, having imagined himself being burnt to ashes in the blaze…

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