



The Terrible Old Man and The Secret Cave

H. P. Lovecraft

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"The Terrible Old Man" and "The Secret Cave" are short stories by American horror fiction writer H. P. Lovecraft. Howard Phillips Lovecraft (August 20, 1890 – March 15, 1937) — known as H.P. Lovecraft — was an American author who achieved posthumous fame through his influential works of horror fiction. Virtually unknown and only published in pulp magazines before he died in poverty, he is now regarded as one of the most significant 20th-century authors in his genre. Lovecraft was born in Providence, Rhode Island, where he spent most of his life. His father was confined to a mental institution when Lovecraft was three years old. His grandfather, a wealthy businessman, enjoyed storytelling and was an early influence. Intellectually precocious but sensitive, Lovecraft began composing rudimentary horror tales by the age of eight, but suffered from overwhelming feelings of anxiety. He encountered problems with classmates in school, and was kept at home by his highly strung and overbearing mother for illnesses that may have been psychosomatic. In high school, Lovecraft was able to better connect with his peers and form friendships. He also involved neighborhood children in elaborate make-believe projects, only regretfully ceasing the activity at seventeen years old. Despite leaving school in 1908 without graduating — he found mathematics particularly difficult — Lovecraft had developed a formidable knowledge of his favored subjects, such as history, linguistics, chemistry, and astronomy. Although he seems to have had some social life, attending meetings of a club for local young men, Lovecraft, in early adulthood, was established in a reclusive 'nightbird' lifestyle without occupation or pursuit of romantic adventures. In 1913 his conduct of a long running controversy in the letters page of a story magazine led to his being invited to participate in an amateur journalism association. Encouraged, he started circulating his stories; he was 31 at the time of his first publication in a professional magazine. Lovecraft contracted a marriage to an older woman he had met at an association conference. By age 34, he was a regular contributor to newly founded *Weird Tales* magazine; he turned down an offer of the editorship. Lovecraft returned to Providence from New York in 1926, and over the next nine months he produced some of his most celebrated tales including "The Call of Cthulhu", canonical to the Cthulhu Mythos. Never able to support himself from earnings as author and editor, Lovecraft saw commercial success increasingly elude him in this latter period, partly because he lacked the confidence and drive to promote himself. He subsisted in progressively straitened circumstances in his last years; an inheritance was completely spent by the time he died at the age of 46.

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