

A Novelette of
Lovecraftian Horror



ENTOMOPHOBIA
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For my wife, Lorie.

*She puts up with so much from me, and supports me as I discover
these strange stories.*

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Chapter One

OK, Cats: Listen up. Sonny only got one chance to tell this, and once it's down on paper, I'm gonna put it away and go get blind drunk and stupid and find a chick and that'll be it. you'll find me in a back alley in the Bronzeville rolled for a five and my throat grinning a ragged red grin and you'll know I'll be glad to be rid of this pathetic vale of tears.

It starts after the war. I'd been bumming around the southwest, glad to be gone from the winters in Cleveland and happy to turn my stint in the merchant marine for a GI bill education. I was in California, soaking up the sun, catching some waves, dreaming about upping again and getting back to Singapore or Hawaii. Just call me Ishmael, as the man says, I needs to get to sea.

I'm hanging in this bar with Fat Doc Jimmy, only he isn't fat yet, and he isn't practicing yet. We call him Doc on account of his enrolling in Med school after serving in Italy and Greece. While the rest of us were glad to be alive and having fun and studying bonemanship and the chicks, good old Fat Doc was getting all serious and growing up. He has Bobbi Jo on his arm, and she wasn't the frigid bringdown she turned out to be, and between us is little quiet Chunk. Chunk, real name Charles Osbourne, looked about like Howdy Doody if you left him out in the rain for a month, and was about as talkative too. It was easy to forget he was there until you needed someone to rag on.

And me? I'm just Sonny. Working some construction, looking to get laid and high between gigs. I was a Seabee and could always find work so I always had too much spending money and not enough sense.

We're hanging out, listening to some colored wail away, treading that fine line between fading away and sticking out when who walks in but good old Boo Yage, looking for all the world like the mummified old pharaoh he was.

He sees us and waves and ambles over with the drunken just-shit-myself shuffle he had even when sober. The waitress sees him and I swear to God that a rye on the rocks is at the table before he is. A ragged old twenty appears on the table and is expertly palmed by the waitress.

“Beers Guys? Two rounds.”

Boo, real name Boo, was old money from somewhere deep south. He was older than the rest of us, had finished his degree from some Ivy before the war started and lit out to take a grand tour about the time the world exploded. He was a junky the likes of which you just don’t see anymore. Opium, Hashish, junk, weed, peyote, Benzylwatchamacalimide: you name it, he had it, smoked it, ate it, injected it or shoved it up his bum. About the time we started trickling into sunny SoCal, Boo was back in the states, getting invited to all the right parties and showing up at all the right soirées.

He was quite a few years older than the rest of us in that scene, but looked somewhere between forty and one-hundred and twenty. He weighed a good eighty pounds wet, and his hair was thinning and prematurely gray. His skin had an ashen, waxy look and I swear in my minds eye I see it covered with age spots, even though I know that can’t be right. Scabs and track marks maybe, weeping sores possibly. But not age spots, not then. Throughout it all, we thought he had the most amazing mind, and he held court over us all. We would listen to him spout off about this classical bit of something Greek or that obscure neo-renaissance poet, or some ritual of pre-war yachting society debauchery, and would just let it wash over us.

And that’s how it was with Boo. He’s just show up.

Bobbi Jo looks disgusted and I could tell she was getting ready to bolt. Fat Doc gripped her waist and tried to look relaxed.

“What’s Up Dad? Where you been?” Doc asked before pulling on the beer.

“Been to Peru.”

“Good whores?” Chunk asked, and I winced. We all knew Boo didn’t swing that way. Bobbi Jo stood up and excused herself. Fat

Doc made eye contact with me a pained expression and lit off after her.

“No, Noo...” drawled Boo. “ I Was... Looking for this.”

He reached into his jacket and pulled out a tinfoil packet.

“What’s that? Heroin?”

“No, It’s new. It’s Indian. I got it up on the plateau. The egg sacs of some jungle arachnid. Not a spider. Like a tick. They feed on vampire bats, who feed on iguanas, who eat the ticks.”

Chunk swallowed hard. “Sounds intense.”

“It is, Buddy. It is. It’s...New? No, It’s older. Older than us. That’s what makes it new.”

I reached over and palmed the packet from Boo. It was heavy, and you could squeeze it ever so slightly.

“What do you do?”

“You inject it. Heat it up so the eggs burst and the yolk comes out. Inject the yolk and relax.”

“Well, hell,” I said. “Can we do it here?”

“No,” Boo said. “ Better not. It’s pretty well relaxing. Better do it somewhere else.”

So Boo paid for our tabs and the three off us took off, looking for a place where we could shoot his new old stuff and get cozy. I had a two room flat out near the beach, so as usual it fell to me to guide our little drunken party down the strip, past the sailors getting rolled and the girls doing the rolling.