

NAXOS
AudioBooks

Ambrose Bierce • B. M. Croker • F. Marion Crawford • J. S. Le Fanu

The Moonlit Road

and other stories

Read by **Read by Jonathan Keeble** and **Clare Anderson**
with **Garrick Hagon** and **Kate Harper**

CLASSIC
FICTION



NA249412D

An Account of Some Strange Disturbances in Aungier Street by J. S. Le Fanu

read by Jonathan Keeble

- | | | |
|---|--|-------|
| 1 | New lodgings in Aungier Street, Dublin... | 6:28 |
| 2 | My would-be sceptical companion had his troubles too... | 3:37 |
| 3 | I was sitting by the bedroom fire...when I heard a step... | 10:15 |
| 4 | Tom's experiences... | 11:35 |
| 5 | Our handmaid explains... | 3:27 |

That Damned Thing by Ambrose Bierce

read by Jonathan Keeble

- | | | |
|---|--|------|
| 6 | One does not always eat at the table... | 5:54 |
| 7 | What may happen in a field of wild oats... | 5:43 |
| 8 | A man though naked may be in rags... | 3:16 |
| 9 | An explanation from the tomb... | 5:05 |

The Moonlit Road by Ambrose Bierce

read by Jonathan Keeble, Garrick Hagon, Kate Harper

- | | | |
|----|--|------|
| 10 | Statement of Joel Hetman Jr | 6:10 |
| 11 | Statement of Caspar Grattan | 8:33 |
| 12 | Statement of the late Julia Hetman, through the medium Bayrolles | 9:35 |

The Upper Berth by F. Marion Crawford

read by Jonathan Keeble

- | | | |
|----|---|-------|
| 13 | Somebody called for cigars... | 3:57 |
| 14 | Passages across the Atlantic... | 10:32 |
| 15 | I went to bed late... | 10:55 |
| 16 | The captain was one of those splendidly tough and cheerful specimens... | 9:13 |

To Let by B.M. Croker

read by Clare Anderson

- | | | |
|----|---|-------|
| 17 | I arrive in India | 10:18 |
| 18 | A warning from Mrs Starkey | 8:31 |
| 19 | Dreadful weather – thunderstorms accompanied by torrents... | 13:27 |

Total time: 2:26:22

Cover picture: Pavilion and Greenhouse for a Gothic Mansion, Humphry Repton.

Courtesy: The Bridgeman Art Library, London.

Ambrose Bierce • B. M. Croker
E. Marion Crawford • J. S. Le Fanu

The Moonlit Road and other stories

The ghost story came of age in the mid-nineteenth century when large numbers were churned-out for the magazine market, in much the same way as detective stories. As with the detective story, the sheer quantity meant that the quality was rather variable but also ensured the rapid evolution of the form. To work well a good ghost story has to have real characters and believable situations, only then will the introduction of the supernatural element achieve its full impact. Nothing falls flatter than a failed ghost story and failure usually results from the author concentrating so hard on the horror that construction of a satisfactory base on which to build is neglected.

No such problems here. These stories date from the mid to late nineteenth century and therefore show the form in

its full flood. Their styles may vary but none of them rush the important task of building a stage before allowing a ghost to walk upon it.

To Let by Bithia Mary Croker dates from the 1890s and in addition to being a rather effective frightener also offers an insight into Anglo-Indian manners of the time. It is the setting and the feeling for detail which save the tale from becoming commonplace and which divert one's attention from some rather stilted dialogue. The description of the lights below the verandah is particularly effective.

The Upper Berth by F. Marion Crawford is a well-known story, better-known than its author. Particularly effective is the contrast between the opening of the story, a cosy, sociable evening during which a participant begins

to recount an uncanny experience, and the sheer horror of the events he goes on to describe. Though Crawford was writing before MR James, this contrast was a tool that James managed to bring to perfection in his work.

Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu was, like so many excellent writers of English, born in Dublin. Intelligent and cultured like their author, his stories are among the very best of their type and I would rate **An Account of Some Strange Disturbances in Aungier Street** as perhaps his most effective; the title alone is enough to produce a thrill of anticipation. I read this story when I was eleven and suffered a sleepless night as a result.

The stories described so far emerged from the educated, comfortable middle rank of English society, and largely reflected a world of scholarly pursuits, the Empire, the Church. The final two stories, and their author, are very different.

Ambrose Bierce was born in Ohio in 1842 into a family with a tendency towards eccentricity (a brother ran away with the circus, a sister was

allegedly consumed by cannibals). After a courageous time in the Civil War he became a successful and feared journalist on the West Coast; by all accounts he also became a thoroughly cantankerous and unpleasant individual. His end, in 1913, was as strange as his life. He went to Mexico and disappeared completely.

Bierce's ghost stories are not among the best-written but they are unusual and distinctly 'modern' in their definition of what constitutes a 'ghost'. They enjoy a popularity today that eluded them during Bierce's lifetime, perhaps because the late-twentieth century reader is more prepared to accept his psychological approach to the genre. The stories resist neat classification, no conclusions are offered. Whatever the true nature of the entity in **The Damned Thing**, Bierce offers no tidy answer. One of the protagonists offers his theory but it is no more than that and you are left with the feeling that perhaps the entity wanders the earth to this day and that Bierce merely recorded one episode of its existence.

The Moonlit Road offers an approach to the supernatural that must

have seemed entirely new when it was written. The emotion we are left with at the end is not horror or fear but despair, a despair that will not disperse when the cock crows. Bierce deserves his reputation for being one of the first to take the ghost story out of the Victorian country house and base it in the human psyche. The twentieth century ghost story was to develop very differently after his example.

Notes by David Blake



Jonathan Keeble's theatre work includes leading roles at Manchester's Royal Exchange, Coventry, Liverpool, Exeter, Lancaster and West Yorkshire Playhouse. TV includes *People Like Us*, *The Two of Us* and *Deptford Graffiti*. Jonathan has featured in over 250 radio plays for the BBC and was a member of the Radio Drama Company. For Naxos Audiobooks he has recorded *Black Beauty*, *Classic Chilling Tales*, *Macbeth* and *Oedipus the King*.



Clare Anderson trained at The Arts Educational London Schools. Theatre work includes Rosalind in *As You Like It* and Katherine in *The Taming of the Shrew* at Riverside Studios, and on the Edinburgh fringe. She also played the lead in a revival of Clare Booth Luce's *The Women* at Battersea Arts Centre, London and toured the UK with Commedia dell'Arte players.



Garrick Hagon has appeared in many films including *Batman*, *Star Wars*, *Cry Freedom*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Fatherland*. His television credits include *A Perfect Spy*, *The Nightmare Years*, *Henry V*, *The Chief* and *Love Hurts*. On London's West End he played Chris Keller in *All My Sons*, and he is a frequent story reader for the BBC. He also reads *The Sea-Wolf*, *The Call of the Wild*, *Classic American Poetry* and *Huckleberry Finn* for Naxos AudioBooks.



Kate Harper is a founder member of the Magic Theatre of San Francisco, Kate Harper has appeared on the stage in the UK and the USA with credits that include *Lost in Yonkers* and *Fatal Attraction*. TV appearances include *Inspector Morse* and *Poirot*. Film appearances include *Batman* and *Stiff Upper Lips*

**The music on this recording is taken from
the NAXOS and MARCO POLO catalogues**

An Account of Some Strange Disturbances in Aungier Street by J. S. Le Fanu
BABADJANIAN SONATA FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO 8.225030
Ani Kavafian, violin, Avo Kuyumjian, piano

That Damned Thing by Ambrose Bierce
RIMSKY-KORSAKOV ON THE TOMB 8.553789
Moscow Symphony Orchestra, Igor Golovschin

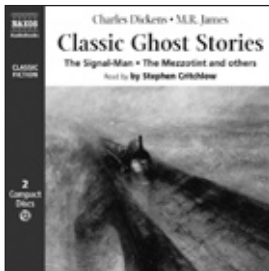
The Moonlit Road by Ambrose Bierce
RIMSKY-KORSAKOV NIGHT ON MOUNT TRIGLAV 8.553789
Moscow Symphony Orchestra, Igor Golovschin

The Upper Berth by F. Marion Crawford
NORBY CORTEGE 8.224064
Aalborg Symphony Orchestra, Owain Arwel Hughes

To Let by B.M. Croker
Sulochana Brahaspati, voice, Sultan Khan, sarangi, Anindo Chatterjee, tabla. NI 5305
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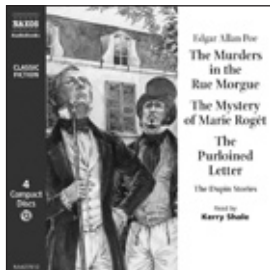
Music programming by Nicolas Soames

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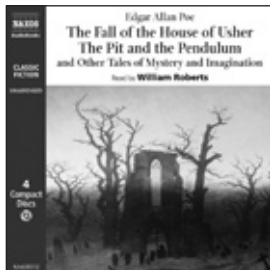


Classic Ghost Stories

(Dickens and James) ISBN: 9789626344590
read by Stephen Critchlow

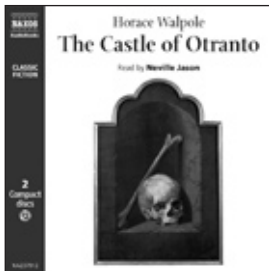


The Murders in the Rue Morgue
(Poe) ISBN: 9789626342763
read by Kerry Shale

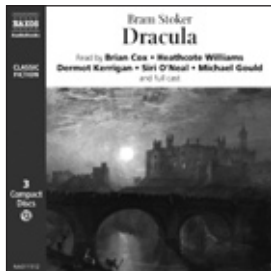


**The Fall of the House of Usher
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ISBN: 9789626342831
read by William Roberts

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(Walpole) ISBN: 9789626343791
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Dracula
(Stoker) ISBN: 978962634115
read by Brian Cox,
Heathcote Williams and cast



Frankenstein
(Shelley) ISBN: 9789626340035
read by Daniel Philpott,
Jonathan Oliver and Chris Larkin

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Total time
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Ambrose Bierce • B. M. Croker • F. Marion Crawford • J. S. Le Fanu

The Moonlit Road

and other stories

**An Account of Some Strange Disturbances in Aungier Street
That Damned Thing • The Moonlit Road • The Upper Berth • To Let**

Read by **Read by Jonathan Keeble** and **Clare Anderson**
with **Garrick Hagon** and **Kate Harper**

Five fine ghost stories in the classic 19th century tradition. Why is the house in a small but peaceful hill station in Victorian India, difficult to let? And what disturbs the sleep in the house in Aungier Street, Dublin? Who or what opens the port hole in mid-Atlantic? And what actually happened on the Moonlit Road, or in a corn field in the American mid-West? Some of the answers are here.

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