

11. The Whisperer

Ben Jarvison had had this room the last
Few Weeks before his aged mind gave way;
The agent shook his head, and couldn't say
Why the old actor had declined so fast.
He'd seemed all right when he moved in, but
then

He took to drinking hard, and often spoke
Of certain shadows and the elder folk,
And things undreamed by sane and sober men.
I heard a voice there on the second night,
That whispered named in the sepulchral gloom
Of midnight, and a shadow in the room
Was gone when I switched on the single light.
Later, I sought those whom the whispering
shadow named,
And found them vanished, their effects
unclaimed.

12. The Crawler

The papers spoke of gangdom's vengeful hand,
Or tie-ups with a foreign enemy,
When four men who had vanished secretly
At last were found, hanged in a grisly band
In an upper room of the old Strickland place.
None of the writeups mentioned the odd fact
That ten years' dust therein had been untracked,
Or that the slayer left behind no trace.
I heard from a patrolman who'd been there
That sounds, as of a crawling thing, were heard
The night they found the dead men, and a stair
Had creaked beneath a nameless shape that
blurred.

None of the four had seemed aware of doom,
But all'd complained of rats inside their room.

not so big as a splacknuck

P H A N T A S P H E R E

phantagraph-in-vanguard

Edited and Published by Donald A. Wollheim
at 98-50 67th Avenue, Forest Hills, N.Y.
The Vanguard Amateur Press Association

Vol. 1 No. 2

May, 1945

SEVEN SONNETS

BY ROBERT W. LOWNDES

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"ANNALS OF ARKYA"

6. The Viola

It was an instrument no mortal hand
Dare touch, they said, and crossed them-
selves; a spell
Of evil lay upon it. One would tell
How Yarish found it in an attic, and
Relate in whispers of the prodigies
Befalling his last concert: shadows left
Their proper place to dance, and folks,
bereft,
Engaged in lewd and hellish revelries.
I took the shunned viola from its place,
To play a long-forgotten melody
And found myself lost in a reverie
That swept my fingers into bows and chords
Undreamed. But this recalled their warning
words:
The counterpoint that issued out of space!

ANNALS OF ARKYA

By Robert W. Lowndes

7. The Pool

Degenerate, blind slaves of luxury,
I saw the people of the citadel
Succumb to every vice and lechery,
And seek the olden lore but for a spell
To find untried and new obscenity.
Alone, within a silent woodland dell,
I waited only for the certainty
That Doom would sound at last its leaden
knell.

Then shyly to my long-neglected side,
A youth and maiden came when stars were
bright

And swam together in the summer night;
My waters clasped them, searched them
eagerly,

And ere they turned back homeward happily,
I knew that dreams of Arkya had not died.

8. The Street

He thought he knew the city thoroughly,
And never needed maps to find his way;
Yet here beyond this rusted gateway lay
A street whose very name was mystery.
He could not read the letters on the sign;
They seemed to blur before his eyes and
change,

And, as he watched, three men, in no way
strange,

Walked by him, through the gate, in single
line.

He saw them clearly in the fogless night;
He saw their shadows, heard their footsteps
beat.

Yet as he followed down the curious street,
Abruptly there was no one else in sight.

Afterwards he often came this way,
But never could he find the street by day.

9. The Council

John Peters wasn't the inventive sort,
And certainly not one to dream a tale
Fantastic as the story he told Hale,
The super, when he gave his last report.
The other man was sick in bed that night,
So Peters filled in--there would be few
calls;

The place was nearly empty--in the halls,
Solitary bulbs gave fitful light.
He got a signal from the nineteenth floor
Which hadn't had a rent for half a year;
He'd taken no one there all day, and fear
Of thieves beset him as he swung aside the
door.

The manner of the seven men was mild,
But Peters couldn't stand the way they smiled.

10. The House

It had been built in Sixteen Sixty-Two,
The townsfolk claimed, though none believed
them. How

Could any place so ancient never show
antiquity, but always look brand new?
The furnishings were modern, and the paint
Was clean and bright. Upon the windowsills
Were potted marigolds and daffodils,
Which hardly gave the look of evel taint.
They told me no one ever stayed their long,
And there were those who vanished overnight.
The walls did feel strange, though, and
there were strong

Air-currents from them. But I took to flight
When, in a hidden closet space, I found
White, human bones piled in a horrid mound.