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MIND OF MAN

CURIOUS STORIES

THE PLANETEER

LE VOMBITEUR

BAROQUE

STRANGE

QUEER

X

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## 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,

## 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 eveil 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.

### 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 spulchral 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.