



Library podcast

Thrilling Tales, A Storytime for Grownups presents: “John Charrington's Wedding” E. Nesbit and “The Voice in the Night” by William Hope Hodgson

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[00:00:44] Good afternoon. Welcome to Thrilling Tales. My name is David, I'm a librarian here in the library. I work in the Reader Services Department up on three. So if you're looking for something good to read, come and see us. Thrilling Tales happens the first and third Monday of every month. This being October, we've actually got an extra one. So it'll be two weeks from now and then two weeks again, which is right up near Halloween. And for Halloween, we tend to do a lot of scarier stories. Got some new stories coming up later in the month by contemporary authors like Roddy Doyle, Neil Gaiman. But today, we've got a couple of old stories from about a century ago.

[00:01:21] The first is called “John Charrington’s Wedding” and it's by E. Nesbit.

[00:01:31] No one ever thought that May forced her would marry John Charrington, but he thought differently and things which John Charrington intended had a queer way of coming to pass. He asked her to marry him before he went up to Oxford. She laughed and refused him. He asked her again. Next time he came home again, she laughed, tossed her dainty blond head, and again refused a third time. He asked her. She said it was becoming a confirmed bad habit, and laughed at him more than ever. John was not the only man who wanted to marry her. She was the belle of our village, Kothari, and we were all in love with her more or less.

[00:02:13] Therefore, we were as much annoyed as surprised when John Charrington walked into our little local club. We held it in a loft over the Sadler's I remember, and invited us all to his wedding.

[00:02:26] Your wedding.

[00:02:27] You don't mean it. Who's the happy pair? Windsor to be John Charrington filled his pipe and lighted it before he replied.

[00:02:36] And then he said, I'm sorry to deprive you fellows of your only joke, but Miss Foster and I are to be married in September. You don't mean it?

[00:02:48] No. I said rising. I see. It's true. Lend me a pistol, someone or a first class fare to the other end of nowhere. Charrington as Bewitch, the only pretty girl in our 20 mile radius. Was it mesmerism or a love potion, Jack? Neither, sir, but a gift. You will never have perseverance and the best luck a man ever had in this world. The queer thing about it was that when we congratulated Miss Foster, she blushed and smiled and dimpled for all the world, as though she were in love with him, and had been in love with him all the time, upon my word. I think she had. Women are strange creatures. We were all asked to the wedding in Britain. Everyone who was anybody knew everybody else who was anyone. My sisters were, I truly believe, more interested in the truth so than the bride herself. And I was to be best man. Becoming marriage was much canvassed at afternoon tea tables and at our little club over the Sadler's. And the question was always asked. Does she care for him?

[00:03:56] I used to ask that question myself in the early days of their engagement, but after a certain evening in August, I never asked it again. I was coming home from the club through the churchyard. Our church is on a time grown hill and the turf about it is so thick and soft that one's footsteps are noiseless. I made no sound as I vaulted the low likeand wall and threaded my way between the tombstones. It was at the same instant that I heard John Charrington his voice and saw her. May was sitting on a low, flat gravestone. Her face turned towards the full splendour of the western sun. Its expression ended at once and forever. Any question of love for him? It was transfigured to a beauty. I should not have believed possible, even to that beautiful little face. John lay at her feet. And it was his voice that broke the stillness of the golden August evening.

[00:04:55] My dear, my dear, I believe I should come back from the dead. If you wanted me.

[00:05:02] I coughed at once to indicate my presence and passed on into the shadow fully enlightened.

[00:05:11] The wedding was to be early in September. Two days before I had to run up to town on business, the train was late. Of course. And as I stood grumbling with my watch in my hand, whom should I see? But John Charrington and Mae Forester, they were walking up and down the UN frequented end of the platform. ARM in arm looking into each other's eyes. Of course, I knew better than to hesitate a moment before burying myself in the booking office. And it was not till the train drew up at the platform that I obtrusive. Lee passed the pair with my Gladstone and took the corner in a first class smoking carriage.

[00:05:47] I did this with as good an air of not seeing them as I could assume. I pride myself on my discretion. But if John were travelling alone, I wanted his company. I had it. Hello, old man, came his cheery voice as he swung his bag into my carriage. Here is luck. I was expecting a dull journey.

[00:06:05] Where are you off to? I asked. To old Ben Bridges, he answered, shutting the door and leaning out for a last word with his sweetheart. Why? Wish you wouldn't go, John. She was saying in a low, earnest voice. I feel certain something will happen. Do you think that I should let anything happen to keep me in the day after tomorrow? Our wedding day? Don't go!

[00:06:30] She answered, with a pleading intensity, which would have sent my Gladstone onto the platform, and me after it. But she wasn't speaking to me.

[00:06:39] John Charrington was made differently. He rarely changed his opinions, never his resolutions. He only stroked the little un-gloved hands that lay on the carriage door. I must go. The old boy's been awfully good to me, and now he's dying. I must go and see him. But I shall come home in time. You're sure to come? She spoke as the train moved. Nothing. She'll keep me, he answered, and we steamed out after he had seen the last of the little figure on the platform. He leaned back in his corner and kept silence for a minute. When he spoke, it was to explain to me that his godfather, whose air he was, was lying at Peace Marsh Place, some fifty miles away, and had sent for him, and John felt bound to go. I shall surely be back tomorrow, he said. Or if not the day after, in heaps of time.

[00:07:32] And suppose Mr. Bainbridge does die. Alive or dead? I mean, to be married on Thursday, John answered, lighting a cigar and unfolding the times.

[00:07:45] At Pease Mars Station, we said goodbye and he got out and I saw him ride off. I went to London where I stayed the night when I got home the next afternoon, a very wet one, by the way. My sister greeted me with Where's Mr. Charrington? Goodness knows, I answered testily. I thought you might have heard from him. She went on, as you're giving him away tomorrow. Well, isn't he back? I asked. But I had confidently expected to find him at home. No, Jeffrey. My sister Fanny always has a way of jumping to conclusions, especially such conclusions as were least favorable to her fellow creatures. He has not returned. And what is more, you may depend on it. He won't. You mark my words. There'll be no wedding tomorrow. My sister Fanny has a power of annoying me, which no other human being possesses. You mark my words, I retorted with asperity. You better give up making such a thundering idiot of yourself. There'll be more wedding tomorrow than you'll ever take the first part in the prophecy, which, by the way, came true. But though I could snarl confidently at my sister, I did not feel so comfortable when late that night, I, standing on the doorstep of John's house, heard that he had not returned.

[00:08:56] I went home gloomily through the rain. Next morning brought a brilliant blue sky, gold sun, and all such softness of air and beauty of cloud as go to make up a perfect day. I woke with a vague feeling of having gone to bed anxious, but with my shaving water came a note from John, which relieved my mind and set me up to the forester's with a light heart. May was in the garden. So I did not go up to the house, but turned aside on the turfed path. He's written to you, too. She said, without preliminary greeting. When I reached her side? Yes. I'm to meet him at the station at three and come straight to the church. Her face looked pale, but there was a brightness in her eyes and a tender

quiver about the mouth that spoke of renewed hopefulness and happiness. Mr. Banbridge begged him so to stay another night that he had not the heart to refuse. She went on. He is so kind.

[00:09:53] I wish she hadn't stayed.

[00:09:56] I was at the station at half past two. I felt rather annoyed with John. It seemed a sort of slight to the beautiful girl who loved him, that he should come, as it were, out of breath and with a dust of travel upon him to take her hand, which some of us would have given the best years of our lives to take. But when the 3 o'clock train glided in and glided out again, having brought no passengers to our little station, I was more than annoyed. There was no other train for thirty five minutes. I calculated that with much hurry, we might just get to the church in time for the ceremony. But what a fool to miss that first train. What other man could have done it? That thirty five minutes seemed a year as I wandered around the station reading the advertisements and the timetables and the company's bylaws and getting more and more angry with John Charrington. This confidence in his own power of getting everything he wanted the minute he wanted it was leading him too far. I hate waiting. Everybody does. But I believe I hate it more than anyone else.

[00:11:05] The three thirty five was late. Course.

[00:11:09] Drive to the church, I said, as someone shut the door. Mr. Charrington has not come by this train.

[00:11:16] I ground my pipe between my teeth and stamped with in-patients as I flung myself into the carriage that I had brought for John. Anxiety now replaced anger. What had become of the man? Could he have been taken suddenly ill? I'd never known him to have a days illness in his life.

[00:11:34] Even so, he might have telegraphed some awful accident. Must have happened to him. The thought that he had played her false? Never. No, not for a moment. Entered my head. It was five minutes to 4:00. As we drew up at the churchyard gate, a double row of eager onlookers lined the path from lich gate to porch. I sprang from the carriage and passed up between them. Our gardener had a good front place near the door. I stopped. Are they waiting still, Byles? I asked simply to gain time, for of course I knew that they were by the waiting crowds. Attentive attitude. Waiting, sir. Oh, no, sir. Why? It must be over by now.

[00:12:20] Over then, Mr. Charrington come to the minute, sir.

[00:12:26] You must've missed me somehow. If I say sir, lowering his voice, I never seen Mr. John the least bit. So for about my opinion and he's he's been drinking pretty free. His clothes is all dusty and his face like a sheet. I tell you, I don't like the looks of him at all. And the folks inside are saying all sorts of things. You see, something's gone very wrong with Mr. John. And he's tried liquor and he looked like a ghost in any way with his eyes straight before him and never a look or word. And none of us him. That was always such a gentleman.

[00:13:00] I've never heard Byles make so long as speech.

[00:13:03] The crowd in the churchyard we're talking in whispers and getting ready rice and slippers to throw at the bride and bridegroom. The ringers were ready with their hands on the ropes to ring out the merry peal as the bride and bridegroom should come out.

[00:13:18] A murmur from the church announced them. Out they came. Byles was right. John Charrington did not look himself. There was dust on his coat. His hair was disarray singed. He seemed to have been in some room, for there was a black mark above his eyebrow. He was definitely pale, but his pallor was not greater than that of the bride who might have been carved in ivory. Dress, veil. Orange blossoms, face and all. As they passed out, the wringers stooped. There were six of them. And then on the ears, expecting the gay wedding peal came the slow, funereal tolling of the passing bell. A thrill of horror at so foolish a jest from the ringers passed through us all. But the ringers themselves dropped the ropes and fled like rabbits out into the sunlight. The bride shuddered, and gray shadows came about her mouth. But the bridegroom led her on down the path where the people stood with the handfuls of rice, with the handfuls whenever thrown, and the wedding bells never rang in vain. The ringers were urged to remedy their mistake. They protested that many whispered expletives that they would see themselves further first in a hush, like the hush in the chamber of death. The bridal pair passed into their carriage and its doors slammed behind them. Then the tongues were loosed.

[00:14:46] A Babel of anger, Wunder conjecture from the guests and the spectators. If I'd seen his condition, sir, had old forced to dhimmi. As we drove off, I would have stretched him on the floor of the church, sir. By heaven I would, before I'd have let him marry my daughter. And he put his head out the window. Drive like hell! He cried to the coachman. Don't spare the horses.

[00:15:06] He was obeyed. We passed the bride's carriage full bore to look at it. An old forester turned his head away and swore we reached home before it. We stood in the doorway in the blazing afternoon sun in about half a minute. We heard wheels crunching the gravel. When the carriage stopped in front of the steps, old four-string I ran down. Great heavens. The carriage is empty. And yet I had the door open in a minute.

[00:15:35] And this is what I saw. No sign of John Charrington and of me.

[00:15:41] His wife, only a huddled heap of white satin lying half on the floor of the carriage and half on the seat.

[00:15:50] I drove straight here, sir, said the coachman is the bride's father, lifted her out, and I've swear no one got out of this carriage. We carried her into the house in her bridal dress and drew back her veil.

[00:16:04] I saw her face. Shall I ever forget it? White.

[00:16:09] White and drawn with agony and horror. Bearing such a look of terror as I have never seen since, except in dreams. And her hair, her radiant blonde hair.

[00:16:23] I tell you, it was white like snow. As we stood, her father and I half mad with the horror and mystery of it. A boy came up the avenue, a telegraph boy. They brought the orange envelope to me. I tore it open. Mr. Charrington was thrown from the dog cart on his way to the station at 1:30, killed on the spot.

[00:16:52] And he was married to May Foster in our parish church at half past three in the presence of half the parish.

[00:17:02] I shall be married. Dead or alive. What had passed in that carriage on the Homer Drive? No one knows. No one will ever know before.

[00:17:13] A week was over. They laid her beside her husband in our little churchyard on the time covered hill, the churchyard where they'd kept their love trysts and thus was accomplished.

[00:17:26] John Charrington is wedding.

[00:17:35] Little old timey go story now. Another old timey story. This one is by a writer named William Hope Hodgson, who wrote weird tales and also nautical stories and sometimes the two together and it's called "The Voice in the Night".

[00:17:53] It was a dark, starless night. We were becalmed in the northern Pacific.

[00:18:00] Our exact position, I do not know for the sun had been hidden during the course of a weary, breathless week by a thin haze which had seemed to float above us, above the height of our mastsheads at Willes, descending and shrouding the surrounding sea with there being no wind. We had steadied the tiller, and I was the only man on deck. The crew, consisting of two men and a boy, were sleeping forward in their den, while will my friend and the master of our little craft was aft in his bunk.

[00:18:28] Suddenly, from out of the surrounding darkness, there came a hail scooter. Oh, a. The cry was so unexpected that I gave no immediate answer because of my surprise. It came again a voice curiously throaty and inhuman. Calling from somewhere upon the dark sea away on our port broadside. Schooner. Oh, hi. Hello. I sung out, having gathered my wits somewhat. Who are you? What do you want? You need not be afraid, answered the queer voice, having probably noticed some trace of confusion in my tone. I am only an old man.

[00:19:14] The pause sounded oddly, but it was only afterwards that it came back to me with any significance.

[00:19:21] Why don't you come alongside then? I queried, somewhat snappish Lee, for I liked not his hinting at my having been a trifle shaken.

[00:19:29] I can't. It wouldn't be safe.

[00:19:33] The voice broke off, and there was silence. What do you mean? I asked. Growing more and more astonished. Why not safe? Where are you? I listened for a moment, but there came no answer. And then a sudden indefinite suspicion of I know not what coming to me. I stepped swiftly to the pinnacle, and took out the lighted lamp. At the same time I knocked on the deck with my heel to waken will. Then I was back at the side, throwing the yellow funnel of light out into the silent immensity beyond our rail. And as I did so, I heard a slight muffled cry. And then the sound of a splash, as though someone had dipped or as abruptly it. I cannot say that I saw anything with certainty save. It seemed to me that with the first flash of the light, there had been something upon the waters where now there was nothing. Hello there, I called. What foolery is this? But there came only the indistinct sounds of a boat being pulled away into the night. Then I heard Will's voice from the direction of the aft scuttle. What's up, George? Come here. Well, I said, what is it? He asked, coming across the deck. I told him the queer thing that had happened. He put several questions, and then after a moment's silence, he raised his hands to his lips and hailed boat. Ahoy!

[00:20:48] This time there was a reply.

[00:20:51] Put away the light. Damned if I will, I muttered, but we'll told me to do is the voice bad? And I shoved it down under the bulwarks. Come nearer, he said. And the or strokes continued. And then when apparently some half dozen fathoms distant, they again ceased. Come alongside, exclaimed. Well, there's nothing to be frightened above aboard here. Promise that you will not show the light. What's that to do with you, I burst out that you're so infernally afraid of the light. We'll put his hand on my shoulder. Shut up a minute, old man! He said in a low voice. Let me tackle him. He lent more over the rail. See here, mister, he said. This is a pretty queer business. You coming upon us like this right out in the middle of the blessed Pacific. How are we to know what sort of hanky panky you're up to? You say there's only one of you. How are we to know unless we get a squint at you? What's your objection to the light anyway?

[00:21:49] The voice came sounding extremely hopeless and pathetic. I'm sorry. I would not have troubled you, only I am hungry. And so is she.

[00:22:01] The voice died away in the sound of oars dipping irregularly, was born to us, stop sung out. Well, I don't want to drive you away. Come back. We'll keep the light hidden if you don't like it.

[00:22:11] He turned to me. It's a damned queer rig this. But I think there's nothing to be afraid of. There was a question in his tone, and I replied, No, I think the poor devils been wrecked around here and gone crazy. Sound of the owners drew nearer, shoved that plan back in the pinnacle Sedwill. And he leaned over the rail and listened. The dipping of the oars ceased some dozen yards distant. Won't

you come alongside now? Asked Will, in an even voice. The lamp is put back in the barnacle. I cannot, replied the voice. I dare not come nearer. I dare not even pay you for it. The provisions.

[00:22:49] Oh, that's all right, said well and hesitated, you're welcome to as much grub as you can take.

[00:22:54] Again, he hesitated. You are very good! Exclaimed the voice. May God, who understands everything, reward you. It broke off huskily. And the lady said, well, abruptly, is she?

[00:23:10] I have left her behind on the island. Came the voice. What island? I cut in. I know not its name. Returned the voice. I would take. God! It began, and checked itself as suddenly.

[00:23:26] Could we not send a boat for her? Asked Will at this point. No, said the voice, with extraordinary emphasis. My God! No. There was a moment's pause. And then it added in a tone which seemed merited reproach. It was because of our wa'n't, I ventured, because her agony tortured me. I am a forgetful brute, exclaimed. We'll just wait a minute. Whoever you are, I'll bring you up something at once. In a couple of minutes he was back again. His arms were full of various edibles. He paused at the rail. Can't you come alongside for them? He asked. No, I dare not, replied the voice. And it seemed to me that in its tones, I detected a note of stifled craving, as though the owner hushed a mortal desire.

[00:24:12] It came to me then, in a flash, that the poor old creature out there in the darkness was suffering from actual need of that which will held in his arms. And yet, because of some unintelligible dread refrain from dashing to the side of our little schooner and receiving it, and with the lightning like conviction, there came the knowledge that the invisible was not mad, but sanely, facing some intolerable horror. Damn it!

[00:24:38] Well, I said, full of many feelings over which predominated a vast sympathy. Get a box. We must float the stuff off to him in it. And this we did, propelling it away from the vessel, out into the darkness by means of a boat hook. In a minute. A slight cry from the invisible came to us, and we knew that he had secured the box. A little later he called out a farewell to us, and so hurtful, a blessing that I'm sure we were the better for it. Then, without more to do, we heard the PLI of or is across the darkness. Pretty soon off remarked will wait, I replied. I think somehow he'll come back. He must have been badly needing that food. And the lady said, Well, queerest thing I've ever tumbled across since I've been fishing. Yes, I said, and fell to pondering. And so the time slipped away. An hour and another, and still will stayed with me, for the queer adventure had knocked all desire for sleep out of him.

[00:25:42] The third hour was three parts through when we heard, again, the sound of doors across the silent ocean. Listen, Sedwill, he's coming just as I thought I muttered, the dipping of the oars grew nearer and I noted that the strokes were firmer and longer. The food had been needed. They came to a stop, a little distance off the broad side, and the voice came again to us through the darkness. Schooner Ahoy! That you asked. Well? Yes, replied the voice. I left you suddenly. But there was great

need. The lady question, will. The lady is grateful now on Earth. She will be more grateful soon and in heaven. We began to make some reply, but became confused and broke off short. The voice continued, We she and I have talked. As we shared the result of God's tenderness and yours, it stopped and there was a full minute's silence. And then it came again. We have spoken together upon that which which has befallen us.

[00:26:54] We had thought to go out without telling any of the terror which has come into our lives.

[00:27:01] She is with me and believing that tonight's happenings are under a special ruling, and that it is God's wish that we should tell to you all that we have suffered since since s said Will softly, since the sinking of the albatross.

[00:27:20] Oh, I exclaimed in voluntarily. She left Newcastle for Fresco some six months ago, and hasn't been heard of since. Yes. And said the voice. But some few degrees to the north of the line. She was caught in a terrible storm and dismissed it.

[00:27:39] When the day came, it was found that she was leaking badly and presently it falling to calm. The sailors took to the boats, leaving, leaving a young lady, my fiancée and myself upon the wreck. We were below gathering together a few of our belongings when they left. They were entirely calloused through fear, and when we came out upon the deck we saw them only as small shapes of far off upon the horizon. Yet we did not despair, but set to work and constructed a small raft. Upon this we put such few matters as it would hold, including a quantity of water and some ship's biscuit. Then the vessel being very deep in the water, we got ourselves on the raft and pushed off.

[00:28:24] For four days, we drifted through a strange haze until on the evening of the fourth day, there grew upon our ears the murmur of breakers at a distance. Gradually it became plainer and somewhat. After midnight it appeared to sound upon either hand at no very great space. The raft was raised upon a swell several times, and then we were in smooth water, and the noise of the breakers was behind. When the morning came, we found that we were in a sort of a great lagoon. But of this we noticed little at the time for close before us. Through the end shrouding mist loomed. The hull of a large sailing vessel with one accord. We fell upon our knees and thanked God for all. We thought that here was an end to our perils. We had much to learn.

[00:29:16] The raft drew near to the ship and we shouted on them to take us aboard. But none answered. Presently, the raft touched against the side of the vessel and seeing a rope hanging downwards, I seized it and began to climb. Yet I had much ado to make my way up because of a kind of a gray likeness fungus which had seized upon the rope and which blotched the side of the ship lividity. I reached the rail and clambered over it onto the deck. And here I saw that the decks were covered in great patches with grey masses. Some of them rising into nodules several feet in height. But at the time I thought less of this matter than of the possibility of there being people aboard the ship. I shouted, but none answered. Then I went to the door of the poop deck. I opened it and peered in. There was a great smell of staleness so that I knew in a moment that nothing living was within, and with the knowledge I shut the door quickly for. I felt suddenly lonely. I went back to the side

where I had scrambled up. My my sweetheart was still sitting quietly upon the raft and seeing me look down. She called up to know whether there were any aboard the ship.

[00:30:26] I replied that the vessel had the appearance of having been long deserted, but that if she would wait a little, I would see whether there was anything in the shape of a ladder by which she could ascend to the deck. And then we would make search through the vessel together a little later. I found a rope sidelight her. This I carried across. In a minute afterwards she was beside me. Together we explored the cabins and departments in the after part of the ship, but nowhere was there any sign of life here and there. Within the cabins themselves. We came across odd patches of that queer fungus. But this, as my sweetheart said, could be cleansed away in the end, having assured ourselves that the after portion of the vessel was empty, we picked our ways to the boughs between the ugly grey nodules of that strange growth. And here we made a further search which told us that there was indeed none aboard but ourselves. It is being now beyond any doubt. We returned to the stern of the ship and proceeded to make ourselves as comfortable as possible. Together we cleared out and cleaned two of the cabins, and after that I made examination where there was anything eatable in the ship.

[00:31:36] This, I soon found, was so, and thanked God in my heart for his goodness. In addition to this, I discovered the whereabouts of the fresh water pump, and having fixed it. I found the water drinkable, though somewhat unpleasant to the taste for several days. We stayed aboard the ship without attempting to get to the shore. We were busily engaged in making the place habitable. It even thus early, we became aware that our lot was even less to be desired than might have been imagined. For though, as a first step, we scraped away at the odd patches of growth that studied the floors and walls of the cabins and saloon. Yet they returned almost to their original size. Within the space of 24 hours, which not only discouraged us, but gave us a feeling of vague unease. Still, we would not admit to ourselves that we were beaten. So we set to work afresh, and not only scraped away the fungus, but soaked the places where it had been with carbolic a can full of which I'd found in the pantry. Yet by the end of the week, the growth had returned in full strength, and in addition, it had spread to other places as though our touching it had allowed germs from it to travel elsewhere.

[00:32:47] On the seventh morning, my sweetheart woke to find a small patch of it growing on her pillow close to her face. At that, she came to me. So soon as she could get her garments upon her, I was in the galley at the time, lighting the fire for breakfast. Come here, John, she said, and led me aft. And when I saw the thing upon her pillow, I shuddered. And then there we agreed to go right out of the ship and see whether we could not fear to make ourselves more comfortable ashore. Hurriedly, we gathered together our few belongings, and even among these I found that the fungus had been at work for one of her shawls, had a little lump of it growing near one edge. I threw the whole thing over the side without saying anything to her. The raft was still alongside, but it was too clumsy to guide, and I lowered down a small boat that hung across the stern, and in this we made our way to the shore.

[00:33:42] Yet as we drew near to it, I became gradually aware that here the vile fungus which had driven us from the ship was growing riot in places. It rose into horrible, fantastic mounds, which

seemed almost to quiver as with a quiet life. When the wind blew across them odd places, it appeared as grotesque, stunted trees seemed extraordinarily kinked and gnarled. The whole quaking. Vilely at times. At first. Seemed to us that there was no single portion of the surrounding shore, which was not hidden beneath the masses of the hideous lichen. Yet in this I found we were mistaken for somewhat later coasting along the shore at a little distance, we described a smooth white patch of what appeared to be a fine sand.

[00:34:33] And there we landed. It was not sand. What it was, I do not know. All that I have observed is that.

[00:34:41] Upon it, the fungus will not grow, while everywhere else save where the sand like earth wanders oddly pathways amid the grey desolation of the lake. And there is nothing but that loathsome grayness. It is difficult to make you understand how cheered we were to find one place that was absolutely free from the growth. And here we deposited our belongings, and then we went back to the ship for such things as it seemed to us we should need. Among other matters. I managed to bring ashore with me one of the ships sails, and with which I constructed two small tents, which, though exceedingly rough shaped, serve the purpose for which they were intended.

[00:35:24] And in these we lived and stored our various necessities, and thus, for a matter of some four weeks, all went smoothly and without particular unhappiness. Indeed, I may say, with much of happiness for which we were together. It was on the thumb of her right hand that the growth first showed it was only a small circular spot, much like a little grey mole. Oh my God. How the fear leapt to my heart when she showed me the place. We cleansed it between us washing it with carbolic and water. In the morning of the following day, she showed her hand to me again. The grey warty thing had returned for a little while. We looked at one another in silence, and then still wordless.

[00:36:19] We started again to remove it. In the midst of the operation, she spoke suddenly. What stand up on the side of your face to hear? Her voice was sharp with anxiety. I put my hand up to feel they're under the hair by your era, a little to the front a bit.

[00:36:36] And my finger rested upon the place. And I knew.

[00:36:42] Let us get your thumb done first, I said. And she submitted only because she was afraid to touch me until it was cleansed. I finished washing and disinfecting her thumb and then she turned to my face after it was finished.

[00:36:56] We sat together and talked to while of many things, for there had come into our lives. Sudden, very terrible thoughts, and we were all at once afraid of something worse than death. We spoke of loading the boat with provisions and water and making our way out onto the sea. We weren't helpless for many causes. And the growth had attacked us already. We decided to stay. God would do with us. What was his will? We would wait a month, two months, three months passed, and the places grew somewhat, and there had come others. Yet we fought so strenuously with the fear that

its headway was but slow. Comparatively speaking, we have now given up all thought or hope of leaving the island.

[00:37:45] We had realized that it would be allowable to go among healthy humans with the thing from which we were suffering. With this determination and knowledge in our minds, we knew that we should have to husband our food and water, for we did not know at that time, but that we should possibly live for many years. But we had no idea then how little food there was left of which to take care. It was a week later that I made the discovery that all the other bread tanks which I had supposed full were empty, and that beyond our tins of vegetables and meat and some other matters, we had nothing on which to depend but the bread in the tank, which I'd already opened. After learning this, I stirred myself to do what I could and I set to work at fishing in the open sea. Here, at times I caught our fish, but so infrequently that they proved with little help in keeping us from the hunger which threatened.

[00:38:34] It seemed to me that our deaths would likely come by hunger, and not by the growth of the thing which had seized upon our bodies. We were in this state of mind when the fourth month wore out. Then I made a very horrible discovery. One morning, a little before midday, I came off from the ship with a portion of the biscuits which were left in the mouth of her tent. I saw my sweetheart sitting, eating something.

[00:39:01] What is it, my dear? I called. As I leapt ashore. Yet on hearing my voice, she seemed confused and turning slyly through something towards the edge of the little clearing.

[00:39:09] It fell short and a vague suspicion, having arisen within me. I walked across and picked it up. It was a piece of the gray fungus. As I went to her with it in my hand, she turned deadly pale and then a rose red. I felt strangely dazed and frightened. Gradually, as she calmed, I got from her the news that she had traded on the preceding day and and liked it.

[00:39:39] I got her to promise on her knees not to touch it again.

[00:39:42] However great our hunger after she had promised, she told me that the desire for it had come suddenly, and that until the moment of desire, she'd experienced nothing towards it. But the most extreme repulsion. Later in the day, feeling strangely restless and much shaken with the thing which I had discovered. I made my way along one of the twisted paths formed by the white sand like substance, which led among the Phung goy growth I had once before ventured along there, but to no great distance, this time being involved in perplexing thought.

[00:40:15] I went much further than hitherto. And suddenly I was called to myself by a queer horse sound on my left turn and quickly I saw that there was movement among an extraordinarily shaped mass of fungus close to my elbow.

[00:40:34] It was swaying uneasily, as though it possessed life of its own. Abruptly, as I stared at, the thought came to me that the thing had a grotesque resemblance to the figure of a distorted human

creature. Even as the fancy flashed into my brain, there was a slight sickening noise of tearing. And I saw that one of the branch, like arms, was detaching itself from the surrounding grey masses and coming towards me. The head of the thing, a shapeless gray ball inclined in my direction. I stood stupidly, and the vile arm brushed across my face. I gave out a frightened cry, and I ran back a few paces. There was a Swedish taste upon my lips where the thing had touched me. I licked them and was immediately filled with an inhuman desire. I turned and seized a mass of the fungus, and then more and more, I was insatiable.

[00:41:42] In the midst of devouring the remembrance of the morning's discovery swept into my mazarin brain. I dashed the fragment I held to the ground, and then utterly wretched and feeling a dreadful guillotine as I made my way back to the little encampment. I think she knew by some marvelous intuition which love must have given so soon as she set eyes on me. Her quiet sympathy made it easier for me, and I told her of my sudden weakness. Yet admitted to mentioned the extraordinary thing which had gone before.

[00:42:18] I desire to spare her all unnecessary terror, but for myself I had added an intolerable knowledge to breed an incessant terror in my brain, for I doubted not that I had seen the end of one of those men who had come to the island, in the ship, in the lagoon, and in that monstrous ending I had seen our own. Thereafter, we kept from the abominable food, though the desire for it had entered into our blood. Yet our drear punishment was upon us for day by day with monstrous rapidity. The fungi growth took hold of our poor bodies. Nothing we could do would check it materially. And so and so we who had been human became it matters less each day.

[00:43:12] Only when we had been man and made.

[00:43:18] And day by day, the fight is more dreadful to withstand the hunger lust for the terrible Lycan. A week ago we ate the last of the biscuit. And since that time, I've caught three fish. I was out here fishing tonight when your schooner drifted upon me out of the mist. I held you. You know the rest.

[00:43:41] And may God out of his great heart. Bless you for your goodness to. To a couple of poor outcast souls. There was a dip of the oar or another, and then the voice came again. And for the last time, sounding through the slight surrounding mist, ghostly and mournful. God bless you. Goodbye. Goodbye. We shouted together. I glanced about me, I became aware that the dawn was upon us. The sun flung a stray beam across the hidden sea, pierced the mist dully, and lit up the receding boat with a gloomy fire. INDISTINCTLY I saw something nodding between the orders. I thought of a sponge. A great gray knotting sponge. The oars continued to ply. They were gray, as was the boat. And my eyes searched a moment vainly for the conjunction of hand, and or my gaze flashed back to the head. It nodded forward as the oars went backward for the stroke, and the oars were dipped. The boat shot out of the patch of light, and the thing went nodding into the mist.

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