



The Rim of Morning: Two Tales of Cosmic Horror

William Sloane, Stephen King (Introduction)

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In the 1930s, William Sloane wrote two brilliant novels that gave a whole new meaning to cosmic horror. In *To Walk the Night*, Bark Jones and his college buddy Jerry Lister, a science whiz, head back to their alma mater to visit a cherished professor of astronomy. They discover his body, consumed by fire, in his laboratory, and an uncannily beautiful young widow in his house—but nothing compares to the revelation that Jerry and Bark encounter in the deserts of Arizona at the end of the book. In *The Edge of Running Water*, Julian Blair, a brilliant electrophysicist, has retired to a small town in remotest Maine after the death of his wife. His latest experiments threaten to shake up the town, not to mention the universe itself.

The Rim of Morning: Two Tales of Cosmic Horror Details

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Mike says

I had a lot of fun reading the first of these two novels, *To Walk the Night*, over the past week, during my annual bout of pseudo-bronchitis.

It begins in-media-res, with our narrator, Berkely “Bark” Jones, having just finished a drive to the home of his friend Jerry Lister’s father, off of Long Island Sound. He knows the house well, and in fact has a room there that is kept for him even when he’s away, because Jerry’s father, whom Bark calls “Dad”, basically adopted him as an adolescent, due to Bark’s parents being absent. Bark is there to explain to Mr. Lister, who is a scientist and a man of reason, why his son Jerry, after recently getting married, has committed suicide (hold your jokes). Naturally, it’s a long story.

The novel, most of which is composed of Bark’s monologue, delivered with occasional interruptions from Dr. Lister as they sit behind the house in the dark and Dr. Lister sips sherry, reads for a while like the Hardy Boys on acid. Bark and Jerry, in addition to being friends from adolescence, are recent graduates of the same northeastern university. They return to the university one weekend to attend a football game; afterwards, Jerry suggests they look in on an old professor who was his sort of mentor. Jerry was the only man in their year, Bark says, who took professor LeNormand’s class in Celestial Mechanics. LeNormand, we are given to understand, almost always works alone; has no interest in women, socializing or other such frivolities; and was recently embroiled in a controversy because he’d written a paper that his peers in the scientific community took shits on. What was the paper about? Oh, just refuting Einstein about something or other- Bark tried to read the paper, couldn’t understand it. When the two friends arrive at the professor’s laboratory, they find him dead. Not only is he dead, but it appears that a fire has burned out most of his upper body. Why hasn’t it burned the rest of him? Why not the chair they find his body sprawled over? Maybe he lit a cigarette or a pipe, accidentally put it in his shirt pocket, and...? No, doesn’t seem likely.

They report the death and give their statements to both the university president (who “puts” them “on (your) honor, as U. men”) and a detective Parsons, both of whom find the boys’ story (that there was no one else in the laboratory when they arrived, that LeNormand was dead when they found him) so unlikely that it is probably true. A couple of days later, Parsons asks them if they’d be willing to visit and speak with Professor LeNormand’s widow- maybe they can offer her some comfort. She’s asked for them specifically, after hearing that they found LeNormand’s body. But wait- Professor LeNormand was married? Jerry, who worked closely with LeNormand, can’t believe it. But it’s true- he’s been married for the past three months, although none of his colleagues at the university can remember having met the woman before that time. When Bark and Jerry do meet her, Bark finds her strange. How he finds, or found, her strange, is something that he struggles to articulate exactly to Dr. Lister.

William Sloane published *To Walk the Night*, the first of his two novels, in 1937, and a small part of my enjoyment of the book consisted of the great old-fashioned usage of language. Bark worries, for example, that he and Jerry will get into a “row.” Jerry tells him not to be a “damn fool.” Some readers may complain that the language is ‘dated’, but I loved reading it. And then there’s this sentence, which absolutely boggles my mind: “I’d been drinking so much that my hand trembled every time I picked up a glass, and several mornings I had to go to a barbershop rather than risk shaving myself.” Uh, is it really such an egregious

breach of decorum to not shave on one particular morning? So egregious that you would have to go...to the barbershop? I barely have time in the mornings to get coffee at McDonald's before work, never mind going to the barbershop. Chances are no one will even notice. And if you're really drinking that much, haven't you probably already stopped observing such social niceties? That sentence, more than anything, reminded me that I was reading about a different time.

Anyway, Jerry and professor LeNormand's widow, Selena, fall in love. Or rather, they are drawn to each other in some occluded, sinister way that no one quite understands, and decide to get married. There are things about Selena that don't make sense to Bark, but he finds it hard to pinpoint specific examples. There's no smoking gun, and this is both part of *To Walk the Night*'s theme and Bark's (unnecessary) justification for telling this long story; maybe if he meticulously goes over every seemingly unrelated, picayune memory and event, things will start to add up. But he continually warns Dr. Lister, who is indescribably composed while staring into the darkness and sipping his sherry but who understandably wants the full story about the circumstances under which his son committed suicide, that it may be better not to put all the pieces together; Jerry, he warns, found the answer, and look what happened to him. Nevertheless, his story paints a picture of Selena that becomes eerie. Why is it that when she speaks, for example, she never seems to make an allusion or a reminiscence? How is it that she is educated and intellectually curious enough to be fascinated by ancient Arabic treatises on math, but won't discuss her past or where she received her education? How did she know to pull that emergency break in the car, right before a bus came out of nowhere and almost hit them? And then there is the strange story that detective Parsons shares with Bark, and him alone, some time after LeNormand's death. Parsons first confesses that he has no leads or suspects in the case. Then he tells Bark that earlier in the year, a family from South Carolina- a father, mother and daughter- was on vacation in New York. The daughter, Parsons explains to Bark, was an "idiot"- not the term we'd use today, naturally-named Luella Jamison. The parents left her alone in the car for a few minutes at a gas station, and when they returned she had disappeared. The disappearance, Parsons explains, took place only a couple of days before LeNormand and Selena got married. Just a coincidence, of course. But there's an old picture of Luella Jamison that Parsons shows Bark. The family didn't have anything recent, unfortunately. But even in an old picture, doesn't Luella Jamison look a little bit like...?

Bark's attempts to explain to Jerry why he thinks there's something not exactly right about Selena go about the way you'd expect your attempt to explain to a friend why you don't like his or her significant other would go- that is, poorly. After the wedding, Jerry and Selena decide to move to New Mexico for a year, so Jerry can work on his thesis without disruption. They live in an isolated house on the edge of a mesa, surrounded by desert; the closest town is called Los Palos. For a while, Bark doesn't hear from them. And then he receives a telegram from Jerry, asking him to come as soon as possible.

To Walk the Night reminds me of some of the other short, powerful novels/novellas I've read that have involved love triangles (to use the term loosely), and a couple of which also involve deserts: *The End of the Road* by John Barth, *Point Omega* by Don DeLillo, *The Sheltering Sky* by Paul Bowles and *The Quiet American* by Graham Greene. A comparison/contrast with Lovecraft is pretty much unavoidable, in part because the back of the book (and the physical book itself, by the way, published by the New York Review of Books, is fucking beautiful- just look at that cover) tells us that "In the 1930s, William Sloane wrote two brilliant novels that gave a whole new meaning to cosmic horror", and Lovecraft is the only author I associate with this term. The sentence suggests that the term had a meaning before these novels, which could be true...so what does it refer to? I don't know. But I've personally decided to take it to refer to something like this well-known quote from Lovecraft's 'The Call of Cthulu':

"The most merciful thing in the world, I think, is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents. We live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of infinity, and it was not meant that we

should voyage far. The sciences, each straining in its own direction, have hitherto harmed us little; but some day the piecing together of dissociated knowledge will open up such terrifying vistas of reality, and of our frightful position therein, that we shall either go mad from the revelation or flee from the light into the peace and safety of a new dark age."

Voyaging too far beyond the placid island of ignorance turns out to be, in a way, what killed LeNormand as well. I think it's interesting that this novel was published, as I mentioned, in 1937, not long before the atomic bomb was created and subsequently used, and not long after they split the atom for the first time. It's also interesting that the novel's eerie denouement comes in the desert of New Mexico, near a town called Los Palos. From what I can tell, there is no such town in New Mexico. There is however a place called Los Alamos, which is where they had the Manhattan Project; but not until 1942. In *The Edge of Running Water*, Sloane's other novel, a scientist in a small town in Maine is rumored among the locals to be working on 'some kind of death ray'; according to Wikipedia, a 'death ray' is also one of the rumors that people believed about what was being worked on in Los Alamos; again, however, *The Edge of Running Water* was published in 1939. Strange.

But the aspect of the Lovecraft quote that I think is equally relevant with regards to *To Walk the Night* is the part about the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents being the most merciful thing in the world; this is reflected in the narrator's reluctance to do just that, for fear of some dreadful knowledge. Stephen King tells us in the introduction (which you should wait to read until after you've finished the novel) that Sloane once met Carl Jung, and was surprised to discover that Jung had read *To Walk the Night*, in an earlier form as a play, and liked it. I remember reading one of Jung's case studies, in which he described a patient who had a disturbing recurring dream. It was a dream in which the patient would be alone in a completely dark room with unknown boundaries, and, in the course of looking for the way out, would find a crying baby, its face smeared with feces. Creepy dream, I've always remembered it. Anyway, I also remember that Jung's take on it was that it suggested a 'latent psychosis', and he advised the patient to discontinue psychoanalysis. The implication being that it would be better for this patient not to learn to deeply about himself. I don't know if this is standard psychological practice, but it's a pretty frightening idea.

One major difference between Sloane and Lovecraft is that Sloane is just in my opinion a much better writer. He creates memorable characters, good dialogue, and *To Walk the Night* has some beautiful descriptions of the southwest:

"If you are used to the little landscapes of Long Island, of New Jersey, even of upstate New York, it takes quite a while to realize the real size of Western scenery. The southernmost peak of the range across the valley was probably as far from where I sat as New York is from Philadelphia. And there was scarcely a thing to catch the eye between me and it...The ridges, the sharp, unweathered angles of the rocks, the wild, jumbled rise and fall of the land gave me a sense of isolation. Man was a stranger to this sort of country; it belonged on some airless planet circling sunward of the earth."

Which is pretty much exactly what a close friend once told me about that area of the country.

I also enjoyed the second novel, *The Edge of Running Water*, but not as much. Stephen King disagrees with me. It's about an aging electrophysicist whose wife dies. He can't get over it, and tries to invent a machine that will enable him to communicate with the dead, which is clearly a bad idea. The story's kind of maudlin.

I wouldn't have been surprised to read that William Sloane went on to write more novels, or maybe episodes of *The Twilight Zone*. He worked as an editor, and apparently managed the university press at my alma mater, but it sounds like he never wrote anything else after these two novels. I wonder why.

the gift says

290216: two short books from the 1930s i have never heard of, intro by stephen king, but the phrase 'cosmic horror' makes me think of hp lovecraft- whom i like sometimes, but this work is entirely too sane, direct, clear, and nowhere near as stylistically cyclopean... actually like king... so, good but not great...

Jessica Woodbury says

What a great find and a spectacular set of old-school horror novels. These are masterfully done and make me genuinely sad that Sloane didn't write more.

These books are real genre mashups, with bits of noir and mystery thrown in. Excellently atmospheric, with both centering on scientists in search of something they probably shouldn't find.

If you don't read horror or think you don't like it or it's too scary, you'll be surprised at these books. Recommended for fans of Shirley Jackson.

Panagiotis says

Το βιβλίο το ?πιασα με μια μεγ?λη προσμον? ?στερα απ? κ?ποια σχετικ? κριτικ?. Επαν?κδοση εν?ς διαμαντιο? της δεκαετ?ας του '30, παραγνωρισμ?νο, που ?ρχεται τ?ρα να διεκδικ?σει το μερ?διο της αναγν?ρισης που του αξ?ζει. Τ?τοιες υποσχ?σεις ρ?χνουν και τον πιο δ?σπιστο βιβλι?φιλο. Και ?ταν μια υπ?σχεση που τελικ? καλ?φθηκε και με το παραπ?νω.

Στις δ?οι ιστορ?ες τους τ?μου θα δι?βαζα μια μ?ξη επιστημονικ?ς φαντασ?ας με τρ?μο. ?νας συνδυασμ?ς που, δεδομ?νης της εποχ?ς, παραπ?μπει στον κοσμικ? τρ?μο (cosmic horror) του Λ?βκραφτ. Στην πρ?τη ιστορ?α ο πρωταγωνιστ?ς αφηγε?ται ?να αλλ?κοτο ατ?χημα εν?ς ιδιοφυο?ς καθηγητ? αστροφυσικ?ς (?να περιστατικ? που πολλο? θα παραπ?μπει σε φαιν?μενο αυτοαν?φλεξη). Μια γυνα?κα μπα?νει αν?μεσα σε εκε?νον και τον εξ?σου χαρισματικ?, μαθηματικ? φ?λο του, καθ?ς προσπαθο?ν να ξεδιαλ?νουν ?να α?νιγμα που πα?ρνει διαστ?σεις κοσμικ?ς φρ?κης. Η οπο?α γυνα?κα φα?νεται να μην ?χει τ?ποτα κοιν? με τον δικ? μας κ?σμο, με εμφανε?ς ελλε?ψεις κοινωνικοπο?ησης και μια αντ?ληψη που αγγ?ζει τα ?ρια του υπερφυσικο?. Στην δε?τερη ιστορ?α ο ?ρωας θα μιλ?σει για τις μ?ρες που ?ζησε σε ?να σπ?τι, στην Αμερικ?νικη επαρχ?α, ?που ο σαλεμ?νος απ? τον θ?νατο της γυνα?κας του ηλεκτροφυσικ?ς φ?λος του, ?χει κ?νει μια ανακ?λυψη π?ρα απ? τα σ?νορα της δικ?ς μας πραγματικ?τητας, β?ζοντας σε ρ?σκο την ανθρωπ?τητα.

Κ?ποιος που ?χει διαβ?σει παλι? Αμερικ?νικη λογοτεχν?α φανταστικ?, θα αναφων?σει "Λαβκραφτ". Και θα π?σει ?ξω κατ? πολ?. Γιατ? ο Σλ?αν δεν ακολουθε? την πεπατημ?νη. Δεν ακολουθε? συμβ?σεις, δεν γρ?φει μ?σα στα στεν? ?ρια του ε?δους. Η ποι?τητα της γραφ?ς του ε?ναι εξ?φθαλμα καλ? - ε?ναι εξαιρετικ?. Και κ?νει τον Λ?βκραφτ να φαντ?ζει τ?σο ?τεχνος και παιδικ?ς, αφελ?ς. Τον αγαπ?ω ?μως τον Λ?βκραφτ, και ε?ναι ?να σοκ να βλ?πω ?ναν συγκαιριν? του να κ?νει το ?διο, μεταφ?ροντας σε ?λλη κλ?ση πια αυτ? την γραφ?. Αν θ?λω να ε?μαι επιεικ?ς,

Θα πω πως εκεί που ο Λ?βκραφτ ?χει μια φορτωμ?νη, Γοτθικ? γραφ?, φορτωμ?νη επ?θετα, σχεδ?ν νευρικ?ς να γ?νει φρικιαστικ?ς, ο Σλ?αν γρ?φει με μια ποι?τητα που θυμ?ζει μια μ?ξη καλ?ν Βρεταν?ν με ολ?γη απ? την ευθ?τητα Αμερικ?νικης hard boiled noire, τ?που Τσ?ντλερ: σαρκαστικ?ς, διεισδυτικ?ς, ελ?σσεται στον χ?ρο και τα πρ?σωπα με μια εξαιρετικ? φιν?τσα. Ο κ?σμος του κ?νει σεξ, διασκεδ?ζει, ανταλλ?σσει απολαυστικ? πρ?γματα, δ?χως να γ?νεται επιτηδευμ?νος. Βασικ?, απογει?νει την φανταστικ? λογοτεχν?α σε ?να επ?πεδο που δεν ?χω ξαναδε?. ?χει χιο?μορ, κινε?ται με χ?ρη και οξυδ?ρκεια στον κ?σμο. Οι δι?λογοι ε?ναι σ?γχρονοι. Νομ?ζεις πως δεν διαβ?ζεις ?να βιβλ?ο γραμμ?νο 80 χρ?νια πριν, ?λλα ?να βιβλ?ο γραμμ?νο τ?ρα, σ?μερα. Και ?χι μ?νο λ?γω ?φους, αλλ? γιατ? οι αναφορ?ς που γ?νονται σε εκε?νη την εποχ? ?χουν την πρωτοτυπ?α να μην μεταφ?ρουν τον πεπαλαιωμ?νο, ασπρ?μαυρο κ?σμο, αλλ? μια ζωνταν? πραγματικ?τητα, που θαρρε?ς πως θα απλ?σεις το χ?ρι και θα την πι?σεις. Κ?νει ?λες τις σημεριν?ς προσπ?θειες να μεταφ?ρουν μια αλλοτιν? Αμερικ? γραφικ?ς.

Η δι?γησ? του δεν ακολουθε? καν?νες παρ? μ?νο αυτ? της καλ? γραφ?ς. ?χει δε ?ναν απαλ?, προσωπικ? τ?νο: μπολιασμ?νη, διακριτικ?, με μια αναλυτικ? σκ?ψη που προσωπικ? με ενθουσι?ζει. Οι χαρακτ?ρες ε?ναι ?ξυπνοι και οι δι?λογοι ως επι? το πλε?στον ?χουν τον ορθολογισμ? που ?χω βρει στον Τζιν Γουλφ και λατρε?ω. Φα?νεται προσεκτικ?ς ?νθρωπος και οι σκ?ψεις του αποτυπ?νονται στο χαρτ? με τον ρυθμ? που επιβ?λλει ?να θετικ? μυαλ?.

Ο Σλ?αν ?ταν γνωστ?ς συντ?κτης λογοτεχνικ?ν περιοδικ?ν και επιμελητ?ς ανθολογ?ν επιστημονικ?ς φαντασ?ας. Παρ?λληλα σ?στησε κι ?ναν δικ? του εκδοτικ? ο?κο. Μ?νο αυτ? τα δ?ο συγγραφικ? δε?γματα ?χει δ?σει, τα οπο?α ?γραψε στον ελε?θερ? του χρ?νο, τα Σαββατοκ?ριακα. Πρ?κειται απ? τις λ?γες φορ?ς που ?χω νι?σει πως ?νας συγγραφ?ας σταμ?τησε πρ?ωρα, με τερ?στιες υποσχ?σεις. Δεν ξ?ρω αν θα γιν?ταν τ?σο δι?σημος ?σο φα?νεται. Αυτ? ε?ναι συγκυρ?ες. Αλλ? θα ?δινε ?ργα τα οπο?α ακ?μα θα στ?κονταν σε μια κορυφ? ποι?τητα και εκλεκτο? ?φους, ?πως το?το εδ?. Κρ?μα που ο χ?ρος δεν ?ρπαξε τ?τοιες ευκαιρ?ες και ?μεινα στην πλειοψηφ?α σε ?να εμβρυικ? στ?διο, να αναμασ? στερε?τυπα απ? γραφι?δες μ?τριους.

Michael says

These are dark literary works that truly transcend genre. I was amazed by how well they've held up--they hardly seem dated at all.

Jon Recluse says

This omnibus edition, contains the short novels *To Walk The Night* (1937) and *The Edge of Running Water* (1939), the only long fiction output of forgotten author William Sloane (1906-1974). The reissue of these novels is long overdue, and cause for celebration.

Despite their age, these stories are a breath of fresh air...remarkable works that casually ignore genre boundaries, allowing the stories to go where they must, moving from mystery, to science fiction, to horror with subtle ease.

From the mysterious burning death of a college professor in *To Walk The Night*, to a widower's attempt to contact his late wife via an electric "seance" machine in *The Edge of Running Water*, Sloane tells his tales rationally, in a clear and concise prose style that is refreshingly accessible and vastly more chilling, with the kind of snappy, smart dialogue that has become so rare in fiction these days, just the right dash of humor and

pacing that is damn near pitch perfect.

The only downside is that these are the only novels Sloane ever wrote. Truly a shame.

Highest possible recommendation for all fans of engaging, well written fiction.

Trivia Tidbit: *The Edge of Running Water* was adapted into the Boris Karloff film *The Devil Commands* (Columbia Pictures, 1941)

ashley c says

Simple, effective storytelling, cosmic horror, crisp prose.

4.5 stars. Two simple stories told with intent to ignite an existential fear in readers. Similar to the likes of Jeff VanderMeer and James Smythe, Sloane combines a number of genres, not letting the story to be too focused on one, but rather allows the story to go where it naturally goes. These are stories with a very focused plot, circling around the experiences of a few individuals.

Again, like the two authors, Sloane does not give you the satisfaction of knowing everything. It's the foundation for cosmic horror - the fear that you're encountering something much bigger than you and forever out of your very human grasp of understanding.

DeAnna Knippling says

Math from beyond the stars and radio signals from beyond death feature in these two pulp cosmic novels from Mr. Sloane.

Excellent, literately written. Lovecraft slowed down, but made human--an excellent tradeoff. I'm not sure why these books haven't been made into movies yet. They're both filled with magnificent settings, relateable characters, and nice plot twists.

Daniel Polansky says

Pre-war horror seems to have needed to be, essentially, less horrifying than its modern version. That is to say that you're much more likely (as in these) to have a story framed around something more uncanny than violent or terrifying. These two short novels are skillfully constructed, the writing is definitely a notch above most of Sloane's contemporaries (damning with faint praise) but probably most readers will find the underlying revelations, not to put too fine a point on it, not that scary? It's an interesting counterpoint to Lovecraft, for instance, whose prose is pretty squalid but whose nightmares were so horrifying that they somehow managed to compensate for his lack of professional competence. These are better in all regards, except for not having enough sting. Then again, the sting is the point of a horror story, isn't it? Still, it holds

up better than 90% of horror fiction of its time. Keep.

David Peak says

Both of the novels included here, "To Walk the Night" and "The Edge of Running Water," are mostly fun and expertly constructed, with an emphasis on narrative voice and building a sense of mystery. I personally found the structure and pacing of the former to be more engaging, whereas the style and atmosphere of the latter were somewhat more successful. The cosmic elements at play in both stories are pretty corny in a retro kind of way (unhinged genius professors and complicated machinery all come into play), and never come anywhere near to the sort of malevolent awe created by...well...Lovecraft (I know, I know, Lovecraft Lovecraft, but it's hard not to think of him when these books are being packaged so explicitly as "cosmic horror"). All that being said, context is important to keep in mind here, and these books are both clearly important to the progression of the genre, so I'm happy I've read them.

Khashayar Mohammadi says

I absolutely adore Sloane's storytelling. I've always been a huge fan of retrograde narration in Horror, and this book does it better than most. **HOWEVER**, in my personal opinion, the endings seemed to diverge from the general theme of "Cosmic Horror". If it wasn't for the last 5% of each story, this book could have been my favorite work of Horror.

Randolph says

Two rather obscure sf novellas by William Sloane. *To Walk the Night* is the better of the two. We're never sure who or what Selena is and Sloane wisely leaves things vague. There are hints but never any surety. The creepiness relies heavily on this ambiguity and it works for the most part. The main thing that holds the piece back is some clumsy plotting as if Sloane had this good idea but wasn't quite sure how to completely flesh it out. Sloane wastes opportunities to layer the eeriness more completely and the whole thing just doesn't move forward like it should. Sloane does leave some room for sympathy with the Selena-being which gives the story a complexity that most of these kind of stories of otherworldly possession don't have.

The Edge of Running Water has some potential but Sloane wastes it in a plodding middle meant to gradually increase the suspense but is really only treading water most of the time. There is a clumsy romance between an older man and a younger woman that seems to partake of some fantasy Sloane wanted to include but it just distracts and is embarrassing at times. It does nothing for the story.

The creepy medium, Mrs. Walters, is the only three dimensional character and the author relies mostly on some clunky stereotypes to flesh out the rest of the cast. The "mad scientist" Julian, obsessed with speaking to his dead wife, isn't even interesting and consists mostly of stock mannerisms.

The most notable feature of the story is Julian's stumbling onto a black hole generator in his efforts to contact his dead wife, which is way ahead of its time for 1936. I suspect that this was the seed of the novella but Sloane just uses a formula to flesh the rest out. The most compelling moment is certainly when the protagonist stares into the "nothingness" that is the black hole itself.

Both novellas have their moments but are just too full of mediocrity otherwise to stand out in the end.

J.M. Hushour says

Oh, man, these are just terrific, spooky tales that are better than Lovecraft! Where Lovecraft is ponderous and idiotically repetitive in his language, Sloane is succinct and simple, letting the horror slowly unfold in an almost banal or casual manner. And there is much horror to be had in these two novels (his only two novels). I must warn the reader, though: these two stories are of the old school and what I mean by that is there are no venomous lesbian werewolves, covetous transgender succubi with English degrees, or any kind of beautiful teenage messiahs born to a human father and a leprechaun mother.

Instead, in the first selection, you get a locked-room mystery, in an observatory, no less, involving an astronomer, a strange and sourceless white fire and his creepy beautiful wife. In the second selection, you get a physicist determined to break down the barrier between the living and the dead through his experiments in rural Maine.

I can't recommend these enough.

Daniel says

A short take:

These two books rocked me. In both, Sloane leverages a standard plot and spins a creepy--and creeping--story that draws you towards a single moment of revelation that truly horrifies. In the last decade, or so, I've read a large number of horror novels, and few of them amount to even half the stature that Sloane achieves in these novels.

One element that I loved is how Sloane combines the mundane with the uneasy. In each novel, a principle character is aware that something fundamentally wrong is happening within his life, yet he continues to eat, shop and deal with heartfelt matters. The horrific element is not the "star" of the story; it is the splinter in what would otherwise be a normal life.

If Sloane had wrote other books, I would hunt them down; that said, these two books, alone, constitute a remarkable legacy.

More thoughts:

For all of my praise, it occurs to me, now, that I was probably in the perfect mood and mindset to read these books. I could see other fans of weird fiction picking these up and finding the slow-burn dull and the reveals trifling. To recommend these books, I would have to know a reader's tastes well.

James says

the fact these two stories were written in 1937 and 1939 makes this book, which collects the two, all the more incredible... the first story, 'To Walk The Night', holds its unspoken and horrible sense of dread all the

way through... i loved this story, with its otherworldly undertones from the beginning... Sloane is quite the writer for this time period, and i haven't read many stories that hold my attention and emotions so well without resorting to explicitness or extravagance... 'The Edge Of Running Water' is an altogether different tale, it speeds along with a sense of unstoppable but benign forcefulness... the tale threw me until i finished the story, then it kinda slammed into me with a feeling of awe for how well Sloane carried off the tale... echoes of 'The Twilight Zone', 'Tales From The Darkside', Laird Barron, Ambrose Bierce, ghosts, and a strong feeling of dreadful otherness...
