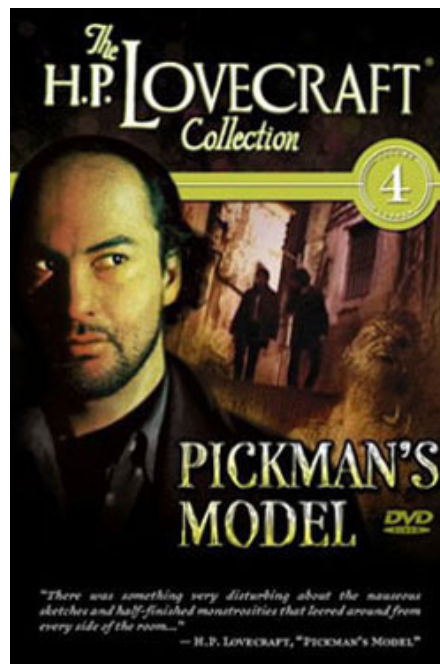




Pickman's Model

H.P. Lovecraft

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"Pickman's Model" is a short story by H. P. Lovecraft, written in September 1926 and first published in the October 1927 issue of *Weird Tales*.

The story revolves around a Bostonian painter named Richard Upton Pickman who creates horrifying images. His works are brilliantly executed, but so graphic that they result in his membership in the Boston Art Club being revoked and himself shunned by his fellow artists.

Pickman's Model Details

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From Reader Review Pickman's Model for online ebook

Jeff Cavadrio says

¡Ah, Lovecraft! Siempre nos sumerges en un ambiente de terror que termina en la locura de tus solitarios personajes, destruyes su humanidad y su cordura.

"El modelo de Pickman" Es un cuento corto fabuloso, al tener como principal premisa la pintura, está plagada de referencias estéticas y culturales. Se nota el basto conocimiento de Lovecraft al querer impresionar al lector con sus detalles estéticos.

"¡Fueron los rostros, Eliot, aquellos malditos rostros, que miraban de soslayo y parecían querer salirse ansiosamente del lienzo con un verdadero aliento vital!"}

"Lo que veíamos no era simplemente la interpretación de un artista; era el mismo pandemónium, nítidamente reproducido con la más absoluta objetividad."

Christopher says

According to wikipedia, 'An H. P. Lovecraft Encyclopedia dismisses the story as "relatively conventional"'.

If by that they mean "boring" and "nothing happens", then I suppose that is true. I was never sold on our narrator's fear and did not see the slightest reason for it until the last moment, by which time it was too late.

? Irena ? says

The narrator, Thurber, is telling his friend Elliot about the reason he 'dropped' Pickman when he admired him and his art so much. The rest is retelling of the last time he saw Pickman and his horrifying paintings.

Thurber starts with less important aspects of Pickman's art and behaviour, or at least the things that are already familiar to Elliot. Then the descriptions gradually become more and more sinister and horrifying only to end the story on the highest (for the story) note.

It doesn't matter if you know where Lovecraft is leading his reader to, it doesn't matter if after all those horror stories and books you've read so far not much can surprise you. The way the story ends is still creepy.

'It was a colossal and nameless blasphemy with glaring red eyes, and it held in body claws a thing that had been a man, gnawing at the head as a child nibbles at a stick of candy. Its position was a kind of crouch, and as one looked one felt that at any moment it might drop its prey and seek a juicier morsel.'

It is even more interesting to check all the artists mentioned in the story when Thurber compares them to Pickman's art.

Melora says

This one didn't do much for me. The ending was exactly what I expected, and it was... dull.

"The Thing on the Doorstep," my first Lovecraft, was more fun. Next up... "The Cats of Ulthar," "The Call of Cthulhu," "The Music of Erich Zann," "The Whisperer in Darkness," "The Shadow over Innsmouth."

Diana says

«Sin embargo, lo que infundía un pánico atroz no era el rostro canino con sus puntiagudas orejas, sus ojos inyectados en sangre, su nariz achatada y sus labios babeantes. No eran las escamosas garras, ni el peludo cuerpo, ni los semiaungulados pies, aunque cada una de aquellas características podían haber enloquecido a un hombre impresionable.

Era la técnica, Elliot: la maldita, la impía, la desnaturalizada técnica. Hasta entonces no había visto plasmado en una tela un aliento vital tan positivamente real. El monstruo estaba allí —miraba ferozmente y roía, roía y miraba ferozmente—, y supe que sólo una suspensión de las leyes de la Naturaleza podía haberle permitido a un hombre pintar una cosa como aquélla sin un modelo... sin haberse asomado a un mundo infrahumano poblado por seres de pesadilla».

ESTE-CUENTO-ME-FASCINÓ.

En serio, Lovecraft me está impresionando.

«Lo que veíamos no era la simple interpretación de un artista, sino el propio infierno, reproducido con inflexible objetividad. Pickman no era un imaginativo ni un romántico: se limitaba a reflejar un mundo de horror que él veía en toda su plenitud. Dios sabe dónde había captado las sacrílegas formas que aparecían en sus cuadros; pero, cualquiera que fuese la fuente de sus imágenes, una cosa era evidente: Pickman, en concepción y en ejecución, era un realista meticoloso y casi científico».

Gray says

Having become interested in Caitlin R. Kiernan's "sequel", 'Pickman's Other Model', I decided to reread Lovecraft's original. It's a short, well-written story about an artist with a penchant for unconventional subject matter. This weird tale builds up the suspense gradually, a common trope of H.P., and gives you the ending you were expecting all along. Atmospheric, creepy, slightly racist Lovecraft fare.

"It was the faces, Eliot, those accursed faces, that leered and slavered out of the canvas with the very breath of life!"

Althea Ann says

A re-read.

When someone speaks of an artist's model, the first thing that probably leaps to mind is an attractive woman.

But when an artist specializes in painting the weird, the grotesque and the macabre, the feminine form is likely not what he's seeking out. When the artist in this story invites a fan to see his secret studio, in the depths of Boston's North End slums, what is revealed has implications for the whole city.

Glenn Russell says

"The madness and monstrosity lay in the figures in the foreground—for Pickman's morbid art was preëminently one of daemonic portraiture. These figures were seldom completely human, but often approached humanity in varying degree. Most of the bodies, while roughly bipedal, had a forward slumping, and a vaguely canine cast. The texture of the majority was a kind of unpleasant rubberiness. Ugh!"

As authors like Honoré de Balzac and Guy du Maupassant knew very well, a frame story, that is, a story within a story, can be an extraordinarily effective literary technique to heighten the drama and suspense of an otherwise memorable tale.

We encounter such a frame story in H.P. Lovecraft's *Pickman's Model*, a harrowing yarn about an artist and his diabolical art. Written in 1926, the tale's narrator, Thurber, a Bostonian gentleman and art connoisseur, speaks of the paintings and drawings of artist Pickman in ways that anticipate how many modern artists employ graphics and digital technology to create their own dark worlds of horror and terror.

We join Thurber and his chum Elliot as the two men share an intimate evening over drinks and coffee. Both men have a keen interest in art and thereupon Thurber relates his last strange meeting with artist Pickman.

Right from the outset there's a strong sense of foreboding and unease when Thurber tells how, after encountering the paintings and sketches and other mysterious events in Pickman's hidden cellar studio, he's lucky to be sane at all. Not only that, after such a traumatic, gut-wrenching, agonizing episode, Thurber neither knows nor cares what ever happened to his onetime friend, an inspired artist to be sure, but a creature he knows not be he human or non-human.

It all begins the night Pickman invites Thurber the gentleman art lover to his special studio in the slums of Boston's North End, a locale, he confides, not without its dark, disturbing histories, dwellings and streets soaked in the macabre and past horrors, miles away from well-to-do neighborhoods, much better suited for the more recent style of ingenious work he has been moved to fashion. Ah, the importance location and atmosphere have for an artist's studio - we hear echoes of the magic contained in certain Paris garrets and flats as detailed in Honoré de Balzac's *The Unknown Masterpiece*.

Then, with a voice rattling with anxiety, Thurber alludes to how Pickman shared a sampling of his latest art and aesthetic theories along with speculations of a decidedly philosophical nature, such concepts and formulae "wild enough to qualify him for the Danvers asylum." Cause for any levelheaded art lover to panic – not only is he in the company of a superb painter but an artist who in all likelihood happens to be a madman.

H.P. Lovecraft draws on the longstanding tradition of romanticism - genuine artistic creation inextricably linked to madness, far distant from even the vaguest sniff of a conventional or humdrum mindset. And, as fans of the author have come to appreciate, Lovecraft takes such madness to the furthest extremes of terror.

To underline Thurber's shock and alarm, his disgust and repugnance, when he finally takes a gander at

Pickman's new art, we come upon this revealing line: "Gad, I wouldn't be alive if I'd ever seen what that man—if he was a man—saw!"

One of the things I love about this Lovecraft story is the fact that it is just that, a story – the manner in which the drawings and paintings are described leaves much room for a reader's imagination; we can fill all the artist's canvases and papers with creatures of our own devising – for myself, I envisioned hordes of diabolical, ghastly creatures crawling out of Hieronymus Bosch hell realms to fill modernistic science fiction landscapes. Thus, I can appreciate Thurber's widemouthed reaction in the above illustration.

"That nauseous wizard had waked the fires of hell in pigment, and his brush had been a nightmare-spawning wand." Tell it like it is, Thurber! Is it any wonder at this point our narrator asks Eliot to pass the decanter so he can take another swig of liquor. With Pickman the artist and Pickman the man (or non-human, perhaps), we are as far removed from a Sunday painter as possible. I'm with Pickman and Thurber – such art will not be exhibited on the wall of a respectable art gallery hosting a lady's tea.

But in any case, we have seen in our mind's eye the work of an artist who defies all boundaries of sanity, an artist who can inspire us to expand our vision in unique ways so we are better postured to fuse our imagination with not only his art but also the wider spectrum of H.P. Lovecraft's literary artistry. Hold on there, Mr. Reviewer! Is it possible for a fictional character to so empower an author's audience? I myself see no reason why not.

Can it get darker and deadlier? Yes, it most certainly can, since, after all, this is H.P. Lovecraft. Finally, Thurber comes upon a depiction of this unforgettable creature: "It was a colossal and nameless blasphemy with glaring red eyes, and it held in bony claws a thing that had been a man, gnawing at the head as a child nibbles at a stick of candy. Its position was a kind of crouch, and as one looked one felt that at any moment it might drop its present prey and seek a juicier morsel."

How could an artist's mind travel down into horrifyingly ghoulish, morbid psychic tunnels? What does it take for a creator to trek through unspeakable, insane territories such that he can string together concatenations of vision and imagination that breathe life into such a creature? To find out where all this hair-raising art leads, take a deep breath and read the story for yourself.

Link to the complete story, *Pickman's Model* by H.P. Lovecraft: <http://www.hplovecraft.com/writings/t...>

"Well, I should say that the really weird artist has a kind of vision which makes models, or summons up what amounts to actual scenes from the spectral world he lives in."

- H.P. Lovecraft, *Pickman's Model*

Sara says

i think the reason for the story take 2 , the end .
i felt like she is incomplete .

Baal Of says

One shouldn't judge the creature for taking on some extra work as a life model. Paying for college can be

tough. My favorite things about this story is that Fallout 4 has a location called Pickman Gallery, which had an awesome little sub-plot.

Quirkyreader says

This was a very creepy story.

John Gorman says

Standard Lovecraft. I feel like at a certain point, all his stories start to sound the same. Strange religions that raise forgotten demons that are so horrible they will drive a man insane, blah blah blah. It's good, but it's nothing different than most of what he's written. I enjoyed the first few books and stories I read by him much more because I was surprised more.

Lyn says

Cthulu and Woody Allen walk through New York's Central Park and discuss H.P. Lovecraft's novella Pickman's Model.

Woody: I mean, it's art, it's about an artist and his inspirations and what he sees and observed, so what if it's ghoulish and murky.

Cthulhu: But don't you think the subject matter is too dark?

Woody: What are you kidding me, dark? It's H.P. Lovecraft, readers know what's coming, it's like ordering Thai take out, and you know it's spicy, right?

Cthulhu: Sure, they know it's Lovecraft, but I mean an artist who produces occultist art can be a little, shall we say disconcerting for most viewers. I mean, death and destruction, it's a lot for a person of today's reading tastes.

Woody: I'm not afraid of death; I just don't want to be there when it happens.

Cthulhu: But don't you think that Pickman's Model, with a subject artist who paints pictures of ghoulish, otherworldly subjects is too much?

Woody: Too much? My therapist bill is too much, we're talking about a short story here, a short story that a reader is going to be ready for. OK, when someone picks up a Lovecraft story, don't you think they know what they're getting into, I mean, no disrespect, but look at you, Great Cthulhu, with the tentacles and the flowing robes, you're, I mean, you know, you're very majestic, in a dark and creepy sort of way. No offense.

Cthulhu: None taken.

Woody: But don't you think there was an absence of sex in Pickman's Model? I mean, it was about an artist's model and when I think of an artist's model, I think of sex.

Cthulhu: Sex in Pickman's Model? Woody, are you insane? His model was some kind of demon. That's, I don't know, that's perverse, don't you think?

Woody: Is sex dirty? Only when it's being done right.

Cthulhu: That's funny, but don't you think that in Pickman's Model, you had more going on than dirty, perverse sex? I mean, there is an artist who is mesmerized by devilish images.

Woody: Sex is the most fun you can have without laughing.

Cthulhu: Ok, but what do you think was Lovecraft's central theme in Pickman's Model? And you can't tell me it was sex. Was he trying to talk about the meaning of life and how dark it can be, outside of conventional mores and cultural norms?

Woody: I feel that life is divided into the horrible and the miserable. That's the two categories. The horrible are like, I don't know, terminal cases, you know, and blind people, crippled. I don't know how they get through life. It's amazing to me. And the miserable is everyone else. So you should be thankful that you're miserable, because that's very lucky, to be miserable.

Cthulhu: But that's terrible! Don't you think that Lovecraft was on to more than that, was he considering the immortal? I mean, isn't that a part of art, to create and thus become the immortal?

Woody: I don't want to achieve immortality through my work; I want to achieve immortality through not dying. I don't want to live on in the hearts of my countrymen; I want to live on in my apartment.

Cthulhu: Well, OK, I see your point, but I just feel that Lovecraft, especially in Pickman's Model was searching for more than just a cheap, pulp thrill, I think he was suggesting more. Maybe he was onto some great philosophy, that art imitates life or that life suggests death, something more.

Woody: I took a test in Existentialism. I left all the answers blank and got 100.

Godzilla says

The ending twist is visible from space, but that doesn't detract from the story.

Lovecraft evokes a dark and mysterious setting, with the character of Pickman painted with particular relish.

Whilst it's never going to set you screaming, it's a deeply unsettling tale, although tame by modern standards, Lovecraft leaves you to imagine your own worst horrors and give yourself sleepless nights.

Oliver Holm says

"It was a colossal and nameless blasphemy with glaring red eyes, and it held in bony claws a thing that had been a man, gnawing at the head as a child nibbles at a stick of candy. Its position was a kind of crouch, and as one looked one felt that at any moment it might drop its present prey and seek a juicier morsel."

At the beginning of November last year, I went to the Museo Nacional del Prado in Madrid for the first time. My personal highlights of the guided tour were the entire mesmerizing Bosch room and Francisco de Goya's nightmare-inducing masterpiece "Saturn Devouring One of His Sons" (titled so posthumously by others). This oil-based grotesquery is one of Goya's 14 so-called Black Paintings, all of which he painted directly onto the walls of his two-story residence, as a haunted, embittered, death-fearing septuagenarian. Seeing it 'live', perusing the grisly-gory details, again made me think of "Pickman's Model" – and vice versa. What did Goya see that made him render in frenzied brush strokes a monstrosity so loathsome, so vile? No one will ever know. As for Richard Upton Pickman ... why, just read the story! "Pickman's Model" is one of Lovecraft's most interestingly structured, centred around a progressively more inebriated one-way dialogue between the narrator and some unnamed acquaintance, punctuated by ad-lib cogitations on 'real art & artistry' and – towards the end of it – nervous summaries of choice paintings in Pickman's gloomy, faraway workshop/gallery. As for that lollipop-slurping abomination profiled in the excerpt above, it deserves a badass cameo in a big-screen movie. Or a starring role. In a trilogy. Wait, make that a five-season TV production.

It is generally estimated by his biographers that Lovecraft wrote approximately 100,000 letters in his lifetime – a staggering epistolary feat by any comparison. One of many dearest pen pals was his fellow writer-of-the-weird Clark Ashton Smith, whose flabby creations in sculpture and painting Lovecraft paid tribute to by namedropping them in a number of his stories, including "Pickman's Model".

Orient says

A spooky BR with **Craig** and Lovecraft as our entertainer.

I read it last night. A peculiar story. I drifted a couple of times in the beginning! It's quite bad as the story is short :D But, I must admit that this a bit creepy story worked for me in a way, the atmosphere was quite well created. I guess I had a stronger feeling just because it reminded me of Slade's Saxon (Ghoul) in a way. The main character felt like an odd person, too. But I prefer Slade's version more, it was way more believable! :)

You should be! :D

'Cole L. *Bookwyrm Babe, Voyeur of Covers, Caresser of Spines, Unashamed Smut Slut, the Always Sleepy Wyrm of the Stacks, and Drinker of Tea and Wine* says

Chilling.
Artistic.
Fantastic.

Also, too short.

Lindsay says

I particularly liked this one, as his urban nightmare type stories go.

"Upstanding, level-headed narrator makes dodgy friend who turns out to be spiralling down into a dark and mysterious lifestyle, giving narrator a glimpse of the horrors that lie on the other side before inevitable demise of said friend. Narrator is reduced to nervous wreck by what he has seen."

This could describe any number of Lovecraft's stories, but it continues to prove an excellent premise to draw out the vast array of weird and wonderful ideas he had.

At first I thought this would turn into 'Lovecraft does Dorian Gray', like *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* is 'Lovecraft does The Wizard of Oz', but no - that would not be open-ended enough for this author.

Bill Kerwin says

First published in *Weird Tales* (October 1927), "Pickman's Model"--although perhaps a little too pat and slick to rank among Lovecraft's best—is not only remarkably effective as a piece of terror but also presents one of the clearest articulations of Lovecraft's aesthetics that may be discovered in the tales themselves, asserting the paradox that the creation of otherworldly terror requires, above all, a realist's eye and an expert's knack for bringing the most unreal things into breathing, believable life.

Thurber, the narrator of our tale, describes to his friend Eliot the story of the painter Richard Upton Pickman, a man ostracized from good society because of the controversial and appalling images that he has chosen to commit to canvas. These perverse, fantastical images have been seen by his friends as evidence of mental derangement. Thurber, however tells us, that the figures on these figures are not fantasy images at all, but rather *studies from life*.

It was a colossal and nameless blasphemy with glaring red eyes, and it held in bony claws a thing that had been a man, gnawing at the head as a child nibbles at a stick of candy. Its position was a kind of crouch, and as one looked one felt that at any moment it might drop its present prey and seek a juicier morsel. But damn it all, it wasn't even the fiendish subject that made it such an immortal fountain-head of all panic—not that, nor the dog face with its pointed ears, bloodshot eyes, flat nose, and drooling lips. It wasn't the scaly claws nor the mould-caked body nor the half-hooved feet—none of these, though any one of them might well have driven an excitable man to madness.

It was the technique, Eliot—the cursed, the impious, the unnatural technique! As I am a living being, I never elsewhere saw the actual breath of life so fused into a canvas. The monster was there—it glared and gnawed and gnawed and glared—and I knew that only a suspension of Nature's laws could ever let a man paint a thing like that without a model—without some glimpse of the nether world which no mortal unsold to the Fiend has ever had.

David says

Very formulaic, and the ending of the story can be seen from miles away. The imagery is good, granted, but this one seems to follow his usual formula a little too closely. I hope his style evolves as I continue to read through his collected works.
