

THE ACOLYTE

AN AMATEUR MAGAZINE OF FANTASY AND THE SUPERNATURAL

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Clarkston, Washington

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Vol. II, No. 1 Fall - 1943 Whole No. 5

THE ACOLYTE IS DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF THE LATE
H. P. LOVECRAFT BY A SINCERE ACOLYTE.

Cover: Howard Wandrei

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The Acolyte is published quarterly; the next issue will appear Dec. 15.
Subscription: 25¢ for four issues, or by exchange with other amateur
publications. Canadian subscriptions should be sent to Harold Wakefield,
177 Beaconsfield Ave., Toronto 3, Ontario--others to FTL as above. This
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EDITORIALLY SPEAKING.

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THE ACOLYTE STARTS ITS SECOND YEAR with this issue, but aside from a few
extra pages, I'm making no particular effort to celebrate. Fancy anni-
versary issues are all right for fanzines which come out more frequent-
ly, but it would be silly to make a great to-do over a mere four issues.
However, if The Acolyte is able to continue for that long, I guarantee

PROSE PASTELS

by Clark Ashton Smith

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7. THE FORBIDDEN FOREST

The child Natha lived with his father and mother in a little house not far from the verge of the great jungle. Every day he could see the ancient trees that were taller than ebony or mahogany, and the gleaming of enormous orchids upon their matted creepers. His parents had told him that he must never venture within the jungle, for the beauty of the high palms and hanging flowers concealed a host of dreadful perils, and venomous serpents and dire monsters dwelt among them. But Natha thought that nothing in the world could be so beautiful as the jungle; and it lured him evermore with the mystery of its infinitude, with its manifold and silent and fantastic loveliness; and he dreamt that the flowers would be fairer still, and the trees more high and stately, if he could see them near at hand. And the child Natha grew to love the jungle with a strange and fearful love.

One day, when his parents had gone on a brief journey, and had given him many parting admonitions to avoid the perilous wood, Natha left the little house, and crossed the open fields in which he was permitted to play, and drew near to the forbidden forest. His tiny heart began to beat like a drum, when the monstrous palms and liana-laden trees loomed above him. But their shadows were so cool and green and deep, and he saw so many blossoms, so many pretted ferns and lovely-shapen leaves, and so many butterflies that vanished or emerged among them, and so many saffron and scarlet and azure birds that flew away with strange cries in the emerald gloom, that he soon lost all memory of his parents' warning, and wandered further and further, following the butterflies and the birds.

And Natha was very happy for awhile, and he found a million things to puzzle or fascinate or please his childish mind; and he plucked many flowers, only to drop them when he found others that were larger or brighter. And he loved the rich, inebriating perfumes of the flowers, and he loved their pale and amber and opalescent hues.

Now, after a time, Natha became tired, and he thought of his little home and his mother's care with a sudden longing. And he tried to retrace his way through the deep jungle; but he had wandered far in the emerald gloom, and all things were different and unfamiliar, and he could not find the route by which he had come. Instead, he soon lost himself among trees that were vaster and darker than any he had yet seen; and around him were pallid blossoms broad as moons, that poured forth a heavy wave of overpowering lethal fragrance. And Natha was a little frightened now; but as he wandered on, the scent of the flowers began to make him drowsy. And the trees grew darker and taller still, and the blossoms were huge and bright as rising suns, and he seemed to drown in their perfume as in a voluptuous tide. And Natha was no longer frightened when he fell among the blossoms; and their faces receded and faded above him as he sank down to everlasting sleep.

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