

Vivisection

by John Wyndham [as by J.W.B. Harris]

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PART I.: being the diary of EDWIN LUNST, Esq., B.A., OXON,
October 3rd.

I spoke to-day with Professor Langley upon the possibilities of Vivisection; but from remarks he made, I do not think he knows much of it. His ideas are too wild to be practical. However, he has asked me to stay with him at his house, in a wild part of Dartmoor, and offer him advice on his work.

October 5th, 10 p.m.

I arrived here after an interesting journey in the train from London. I entered into conversation with a man, whom it appears is an inhabitant of these parts. I mentioned that I was coming here, and he regarded me with a most peculiar look, as if I had committed a sin in doing so. My host received me very graciously; I have a comfortable room and have retired to bed early, being tired after my journey.

October 6th, 7 a.m.

I couldn't sleep well last night because of the yells and cries of animals; not plain, ordinary animals such as one hears at the Zoo, but mixed; there was one which sounded like a combination of a lion's roar and the bellowing of a bull and other curious noises. Suddenly arose a most frightful scream of pain,

the sound of a tortured soul. The wind rustled in the tree-tops and alone broke the silence. I rushed upon the landing; all was dark; but it was not so silent now; in the distance I could hear the trot of a pony, in the house. Nearer and nearer it came, until it began to ascend the stairs, but now I found the switch of the light and pressed it; I saw before me not a pony, but two beings with the hindquarters of a goat, and the top part bearing a strong resemblance to a man. They stood upright and glared at me, with their chins kept well in and their small pointed beards against their chests. One stretched forth a misshapen hand, like a monkey's, towards me; instinctively I turned off the light and tearing into my room, locked the door.

I lay shivering from fright, in my bed, listening for any sound of movement from the monsters outside, but I heard none, and composed myself, as best I could, for sleep. Once I heard a faint cry, but nothing else, and the rest of the night passed quietly.

10 p.m.

Who was ever in such a state? I feel as if I was living in a Chamber of horrors.

Of all strange places I was ever in, this is undoubtedly the strangest. As I came down this morning, I was confronted by a man-servant, who conducted me to the breakfast-room, where an excellent meal was laid out for me. Half way through, I suddenly remembered that I had left lying upon my dressing table, my watch and a case containing notes to the value of forty pounds. Not being willing to risk their safety in such a strange house, I rushed to my bedroom, burst in and stood amazed at what I saw; for making the bed, were not ordinary English housemaids, but two little creatures about four feet high, with black faces and curly hair; they each wore a light blue garment, which

hung right from their shoulders to the ground at their feet. They moved with short, stumpy motions and conversed in peculiarly throaty accents and, though I could not quite distinguish what they said, it sounded vaguely like English.

Returning downstairs, I finished my breakfast, and took up my paper. When I had been reading for some little time the man-servant came in to clear the table and brought a note from Professor Langley, whom it appeared was very busy, and asked me to entertain myself as I liked.

There is a beautiful garden, laid out in an old-fashioned style with a walled garden, about two hundred yards square.

As I walked over the velvety lawn, I thought I saw somebody or something move in the bordering trees, and advanced to investigate.

Out of the trees came a most ridiculous figure. It was about eight feet high and had very short legs in comparison with its body, on its head was an old straw hat, and its raiment consisted solely of an overall. "Hallo!" remarked this apparition in a peculiar voice, "what do you want?" To say I was scared, is to put it mildly. So dumbfounded was I that I could not say a word. The creature advanced, "Can you not speak?" it demanded, slowly; whereat I said, "Who are you, and where do you live?" For thought I, surely this is some lunatic, some freak of nature; but it merely said, "The Master," and turning, it ambled off through the trees.

I stared after it and then at the ground before me. I wondered what size its feet were, to be in proportion with the rest of its body, it must take at least

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The prints upon the ground were those of horses hooves; no others were visible.

Note: This is the only part of the story known to be published. It has been transcribed from Science Fiction Stories (Jul 1999) and is believed to now be in the public domain.