



A Walking Tour of the Shambles

By Neil Gaiman, Gene Wolfe

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Gene Wolfe and Neil Gaiman invite you to tour the Shambles, that historic old Chicago neighborhood which miraculously survived the Great Fire of 1871. ("Ya can't burn Hell." as one local politician laughingly remarked.) Uniquely Chicago, the Shambles offers an array of delights for the intrepid sightseer: Cereal House with its Terribly Strange Bed (be sure to fill out the "next of kin" form if you stay the night: a quaint touch adding to the fun of an overnight visit); the House of Clocks boasts a collection of 20,000 time pieces -- make sure you arrive on the hour, for an unforgettable moment; the historic H.H. Holmes' House with the bars on his children's windows still intact; Saunders Park, a soothing respite from the city streets (if one is careful), with its gardens, statuary, ornamental lake and the infamous Petting Zoo (a favorite with children, but it's best not to bring your own); plus many more intriguing sights . . .

In the finest tradition of Charles Addams and Edward Gorey, our trustworthy guides Gene Wolfe and Neil Gaiman reveal the secrets of the Shambles, finding the best places to eat, (and where not to accept food under any circumstances), where to begin your walking tour, and when to run.

The Shambles has been called a place of dark magic and deadly menace. Many will insist there is no such place. Most pray it does not exist. Certainly, a spot not to be missed by any avid sightseer.

Come along . . . walk lively, now. The inhabitants of the Shambles are dying to meet you.

This lovely edition of *A Walking Tour of the Shambles* sports a cover by Gahan Wilson, America's reigning King of Whimsical Terrors, plus interior illustrations of Shambles' locales by Randy Broecker and Earl Geier, two daring Chicagoans.

Third Printing: 2009

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Editorial Review

Review

Our final short book this month is not a story, it is a travel guide. It gets in here for two very obvious reasons: firstly it is a fictional travel guide, and secondly it is by two of my favorite writers: Neil Gaiman and Gene Wolfe. I mean, what a pairing!

A Walking Tour of The Shambles is purportedly volume #16 in the Little Walks for Sightseers series. But the publishers preface states that the volume is out of print in the original series, and is suspected of having been suppressed by the Chicago Tourist Commission and the International Brotherhood of Meatworkers. Furthermore, the publishers say, Mr. Gaiman and Mr. Wolfe, both of whom have wives and families that they are very fond of and would not wish to see come to harm, now deny all knowledge of the book.

The Shambles, it seems, is an ancient part of Chicago that was spared by the Great Fire and is now home to all sorts of strange people and is shunned by fearful members of the Chicago Police Department. It is, without doubt, the sort of place that tourists interested in living to see the next dawn should avoid, but it is a place that anyone with a taste for seriously black humor will love reading about. --*Emerald City #26*

Should you ever find yourself inside the borders of the Shambles, be warned. Walk as quickly as you can, without stopping, looking around too much or speaking to any of the odd inhabitants of the place until you obtain a copy of this indispensable guide. In it, you will discover the best defensive maneuvers against a crocodile, how to avoid being attacked by the denizens of the House of Clocks, and how to keep yourself from being robbed, poisoned or otherwise incapacitated and sold as a treat to fellow unfortunates.

Actually, I'm only joking about the very last part. Just because there's a place called Abattoir Alley, or that there's a barber shop oddly reminiscent of good old Sweeney Todd's doesn't mean you should fear for your life. Really.

Gene Wolfe and Neil Gaiman teamed up to create this humorously creepy look into The Shambles for a recent (April 2002) World Horror Convention. Now available to the general public, *A Walking Tour of the Shambles* provides some wonderfully pleasant, light reading that manages to give you a tiny bit of a chill now and then. The styles of these two wonderful writers blend so well that you can't tell who is writing which bit, and the tone of the helpful, ever cheerful guidebook writer is wonderfully atmospheric. I loved many of the pieces of advice, such as "In general, distrust anyone you meet whose teeth are sharper than your own." Come to think of it, such things could be applied to any sightseeing adventure.

The humor is very well done, dead-pan and slightly off-hand, never going for the easy jokes. The cover is drawn by Gahan Wilson, with appropriately creepy interior pen and ink drawings by Randy Broecker and Earl Geier. I really enjoyed some of the drawings, which were just like the writing -- clever, the horror hidden just slightly so that you often discover it out of the corner of your eye. From first page to last, they take every opportunity possible to create the atmosphere of a guide book (check out the list of books that Gaiman and Wolfe also wrote -- I'd love to read *I Was a Werewolf for the CIA.*)

Along with a useful appendix of books for further information and a list of questions and answers (such as "Do I still have all my credit cards?") and a list of several... umm... interesting recipes (dandelion and road kill salad, anyone?), I feel *A Walking Tour of the Shambles* is dead essential for anyone needing to risk their lives by going to the Shambles, or for someone who is trying to decide whether to date a member of the meat

worker's union, or to anyone who is a fan of the off-kilter humor of Charles Addams or Edward Gorey. By the way, there actually is a website at PreserveUsFromTheHouseOfClocks.com and, according to Books in Print and other such reliable sources, none of the books attributed to the authors in the book exist on this plane of reality. Drat. --Cindy Lynn Spear, *SF Site*

American Fantasy's publication of *A Walking Tour of the Shambles* by Gene Wolfe and Neil Gaiman is the most hilarious small offering I've seen since Kim Newman's *Quetzalcon Programme Booklet* (designed by Michael Marshall Smith and published by Stephen Jones.) *Quetzalcon* was produced in conjunction with the 1997 World Fantasy Convention and American Fantasy brought the whimsical *Walking Tour* out for World Horror 2002 in Chicago.

The authors take the reader on a visit to a very odd historic Chicago neighborhood, the Shambles, a place Fodor would fear to tread. Despite the fact that more rational types claim the area doesn't exist, Msrs. Wolfe and Gaiman provide a thorough guide to a neighborhood where both Sweeney Todd and the Addams family would feel right at home. They're chock-full of handy advice of what not to miss as well as what to avoid at all costs on your excursion into the eerie environs. Written with punnish glee and an eye for the most demented details of travel tomes (even to the inclusion of recipes and "Further Reading"), this one is a little gem. With illustrations by Randy Broecker and Earl Geier and a cover by the incomparably weird Gahan Wilson, it's all done up in a well-designed tradepaper. Do buy a copy, but first promise not to divulge the existence of #16 or the whereabouts of anyone involved with it to any law enforcement agencies, the Chicago Tourist Commission, or the Brotherhood of Meatworkers. Otherwise there's no hope we'll ever see *Little Walks for Sightseers* #17 or possibly anything else other than the bottom of Lake Michigan. --Paula Guran, *Cemetery Dance Magazine*, #40

About the Author

Neil Gaiman is the author of the Award-winning *THE GRAVEYARD BOOK*, *AMERICAN GODS* and *SANDMAN* comic series. He's written just about everything (except a musical comedy--we think--but we wouldn't put it past him), including novels, short stories, children's books, stage plays, television shows (including a BBC mini-series), radio dramas, and much more. His other books include *THE DANGEROUS ALPHABET CORALINE*, *NEVERWHERE*, *ANGELS & VISITATIONS*, *STARDUST*, and *SMOKE AND MIRRORS*. Gaiman is certainly one of the most popular and acclaimed authors of Fantastic literature today.

Gene Wolfe has been acclaimed as "sf's greatest novelist" (*WASHINGTON POST*). His novels include: *AN EVIL GUEST*, *PIRATE FREEDOM*, *THE KNIGHT*, *THE WIZARD*, and many others. He's also a prolific author of short fiction, with the collections *STRANGE BIRDS*, *THE BEST OF GENE WOLFE* and others.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Rosa Johnson:

A Walking Tour of the Shambles can be one of your basic books that are good idea. Most of us recommend that straight away because this e-book has good vocabulary which could increase your knowledge in language, easy to understand, bit entertaining but nevertheless delivering the information. The article writer giving his/her effort to get every word into pleasure arrangement in writing *A Walking Tour of the Shambles* but doesn't forget the main place, giving the reader the hottest and also based confirm resource data that maybe you can be one among it. This great information can certainly drawn you into completely new stage of crucial imagining.

Cleveland Bolton:

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