

The Damned Thing: The Damned Thing

By Ambrose Bierce

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Classic Ghost Stories - The Damned Thing by Ambrose Bierce "The Damned Thing" is a short story written by Ambrose Bierce. It first appeared in Tales from New York Town Topics on December 7, 1893. This story focuses on how the human race takes their views of nature for granted, and how there may be things in the natural world that the human eye cannot see or the human ear cannot hear. "The Damned Thing" is written in four parts, each with a comical subtitle. The story begins in Hugh Morgan's cabin, where local men have gathered around the battered corpse of Hugh Morgan to hold an inquest concerning his death. William Harker, a witness to the death, enters and is sworn in by the coroner to relate the circumstances. William reads a prepared statement about a hunting and fishing outing undertaken with Morgan. He and Morgan encountered a series of disturbances that Morgan referred to as "that damned thing". During the last encounter, Morgan fired his gun in fear, then fell to the ground and cried out in mortal agony. Harker saw his companion moving violently and erratically, while shouting and making disturbing cries. He thought Morgan was having convulsions because he didn't appear to be under attack. By the time Harker reached Morgan, Morgan was dead. The coroner states that Morgan's diary contains no evidence in the matter of his death. A juror implies that Harker's testimony is symptomatic of insanity, and Harker leaves the inquest in anger. The jury concludes that Morgan was killed by a mountain lion. The story becomes epistolary in nature, detailing entries from Morgan's diary in which he claims to have experienced things in the natural world that cannot be seen or heard, such as "the damned thing".

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Editorial Review

About the Author
Ambrose Bierce was an American editorialist, journalist, short story writer, fabulist, and satirist.

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