

Upstairs

LAWRENCE WATT-EVANS

=====

LAWRENCE WATT-EVANS WAS BORN AND RAISED in Massachusetts, but after sojourns in Pennsylvania and Kentucky he is now firmly settled in the Maryland suburbs of Washington, D.C. He is a full-time writer of horror, fantasy, and science fiction, with more than two dozen novels and a hundred short stories to his credit, as well as articles, comic books, poetry, etc.

In 1988 he was nominated for a Nebula and won the Hugo Award and the *Asimov's* Readers' Poll Award for his story "Why I left Harry's All-Night Hamburgers". He served two years as president of the Horror Writers Association (1994-1996), and his most recent novels are *Touched by the Gods* and *Dragon Weather*.

=====

THEY'RE so DAMN LOUD UP THERE. Yelling and fighting, and then that thumping - I guess it must be folk dances or something.

They could show a little consideration, couldn't they? And then there was the time they left the water running and it leaked through the bathroom ceiling and damn near flooded the place, and of course it was the weekend and we couldn't get hold of the landlord until Monday - no, Tuesday, it was a long weekend! And there was wet plaster falling all over the sink and the floor. And stains everywhere.

I tell you, if we could find a decent apartment we'd have been out of this rathole years ago.

And they won't talk to us when we see them in the halls, when I shout at them they just walk right on by like they didn't even hear me. I went up there once to complain, but they wouldn't answer the door.

Maybe they were busy; I think their refrigerator must have broken down or something, because even with the door closed I could smell something rotten.

They can't be very clean.

Anyway, tonight was the last straw, more yelling, and singing this awful high-pitched song, like something the Arabs sing in one of those old movies, and then thumping about and I swear I heard the furniture breaking.

"I've had enough," Jack said, and I agreed and said he should call the cops, and he said no, he'd settle it himself, and he went up there.

There was more yelling then, and banging, but then it stopped. I guess he talked some sense into them.

I wish he'd get back, though. There's something dripping through the ceiling again.

It's not water, though, it must be paint.

It's bright red.