FANTASTIC 1950s EC COMICS!

NO. 13
SEPT

SHOCK SUSPENSESTORIES

JOLTING TALES OF TENSION IN THE EC TRADITION!
She stood in the center of the sunlight-filled hospital room, smiling at him, her eyes filled with tears. She was a thing of radiant beauty, a Venus in modern dress. Somewhere, deep inside him, a memory stirred, almost came to life, then faded again. She was part of it, all right. Part of the past he couldn't remember. He stared at her through the narrow slits in the bandages that swathed his face, as the doctor closed the door behind him, leaving them alone, she whispered... 

You'll remember, darling. I'll make you remember. The doctor says it's temporary amnesia... that you can come out of it... anytime...

She crossed the room to his bed, took his hand in hers, pressed her soft red lips against them... I'm Gloria sweet. Gloria Anders! We were in love. Try to remember! You're Robert Sickles. We met six months ago. Only it was so impossible... I was married...

She nodded, looking around...

Yes, my husband was Charles Anders. He was the one who died in the accident... the accident that caused your amnesia. We killed him, Bob... you and I. We murdered Charles so that we could have his insurance... so that we could be together...

Killed him? I... I don't remember. My face... it was burned, they said.
She stroked his hair softly, cradling his head against her. She looked at him hungrily and he knew that he'd loved this woman. His heart told him something went wrong, dearest. But they say you'll be all right. I gave them pictures. They reconstructed your face with plastic surgery. I'd... I'd like that, Gloria. I... I... I... I just can't remember.

Robert Sickles.

He stared at himself in the little hand mirror Gloria'd fished from her bag. The doctor held up an assortment of photographs. The bandages unwound, like tapes from a child's maypole... around and around... until he could feel the sunlight on his face.

There we are... Oh, Doctor! It's perfect! Perfect! You can hardly tell he'd been in an accident. A mirror! Give me a mirror! Care to check against these, Mr. Sickles? Mrs. Anders supplied us with them.

I can see, Doctor, you did a fine job. It's just that... well... it's like seeing your face for the first time.

Of course... er... you'll see that he takes it easy for a while, Mrs. Anders.

Certainly, Doctor. Right? Bob, I'll wait outside till you're dressed.

Gloria went out into the hall. The doctor motioned to a closet.

You'll find all of your clothes in there, Mr. Sickles. Mrs. Anders had them sent over. You'll also find a box with the charred remains of your personal belongings. Your wallet, keys... that we found in your pockets... the suit you wore, of course was ruined.

Thanks, Doc. Er... this is all very embarrassing, but... well... just who is Mrs. Anders?
MR. ANDERS, THE MAN WHO DIED IN THE ACCIDENT, WAS A VERY CLOSE FRIEND OF YOURS, MR. SICKLE. HIS WIDOW, MRS. ANDERS, HAS BEEN MOST KIND. SHE IS VERY CONCERNED ABOUT YOU. YOU'RE VERY LUCKY!

Gloria was waiting for him in the hall. She led him out of the hospital and into the street to a waiting car.

I'm sure they were all going to kill him, Gloria? Nonsense! I've thought it all out. Now here's what you do. Make some excuse to have him drive you out to the club next week. Tell him your car is being repaired.

You say we killed him? Well, to be precise, you killed him. But let's not talk about that now, Bob.

Bob, it, honey? It's new. It's all yours. Charles's insurance money paid for it. Do you think you can drive it?

Just tell Charles's insurance where the money paid for it. 50... 60... You think you can drive it?

She snuggled up warmly against him, brushing her lips against his cheek.

It was the first time we'd met. We fell in love almost immediately. Charles never knew he was completely fooled. We saw each other often after that... every chance we could.

This is crazy, Gloria. What if someone should see me here? No one will see you, and Charles is out of town. Well, don't just stand there. Kiss me.

 Glory began. As she spoke, he tried to picture the scene... tried to recall it... tried to pull it from behind the black curtain that hung over his past...

You and Charles belonged to the same club. You were very good friends. About six months ago, Charles brought you home... for dinner...

That was the day I told you my plan...

' Murder him, Gloria? Nonsense! I've thought it all out. Now here's what you do. Make some excuse to have him drive you out to the club next week. Tell him your car is being repaired.'
LITTLE WARY, BUT THEN, WHEN YOU SET TO THE TURN IN THE ROAD BY THE DEEP RAVINE... MAKE HIM STOP. KNOCK HIM UNCONSCIOUS. GET OUT... PUSH THE CAR OVER INTO THE RAVINE... AND THEN, TO DESTROY ANY EVIDENCE, SET FIRE TO THE CAR.

CHARLES CARRIES A HUGE INSURANCE POLICY, WITH DOUBLE INDEMNITY. WE'LL BE KILLING TWO BIRDS WITH ONE STONE. WE'LL BE RID OF HIM... AND... WE'LL BE RICH.

YOU WERE A LITTLE WARY, BUT I CONVINCED YOU... DARLING... IT COULD BE BABY... LIKE THIS ALWAYS... NOT JUST THESE FEW STOLEN MOMENTS... SAY YOU'LL DO IT!

Gloria shrugged...

THAT'S IT! YOU TOOK OVER FROM THERE! THE FOLLOWING WEEK, YOU CALLED... MADE THE APPOINTMENT... AND CHARLES LEFT TO DRIVE YOU OUT. THAT'S ALL I KNEW UNTIL I HEARD ABOUT THE WRECK AND LEARNED THAT YOU WERE IN IT, TOO!

I...I CAN'T SEEM TO RECALL. PERHAPS WHEN I SET FIRE TO THE CAR, THE GAS TANK...

HE SUDDENLY SHOUTED, HIS EYES WIDE...

THAT'S IT, GLORIA! I REMEMBER SOMETHING! I REMEMBER THE GAS TANK EXPLODING!

SEE, HONEY? SEE? IT'LL ALL COME BACK... SOON.

Gloria guided him to a justice of the peace. AND AFTER THE WEDDING CEREMONY, THEY DROVE ON TO A DESERTED CABIN, DEEP IN THE WOODS...

I RENTED THIS PLACE SO WE'D BE ALONE, AND YOU'D HAVE PEACE AND QUIET.

IT'S A LOVELY PLACE, GLORIA.

THAT EVENING, THEY SAT, CONTENTEDLY, BEFORE A ROARING FIRE.

YOU KNOW, GLORIA... WHEN I FIRST SAW YOU THIS MORNING, I KNEW I'D LOVED YOU BACK THEN... BACK IN MY PAST. I LOVE YOU NOW.

BOB, DARLING. IT WAS WORTH IT... ALL OF IT... JUST FOR THIS DAY OF ECSTASY... LET ALONE ALL OF THE YEARS... AHEAD...
He rose yawning...

I need a cigarette. That’s what I need.

Night settled around the cabin. He lay awake, listening to her quiet breathing, inhaling her soft perfume...

[Dialogue text]

He moved across the darkened room toward the dresser...

He flailed... the scatter-rug skidding out from under him. As he fell, he struck his head...

Gloria sat up, wide-eyed...

Bobby?! That you? Are you all right?

He stood over her bed, his hands tensed like huge claws...

I’m all right... now... GLORIA!

Bobby! I EEE...

The claws shot downward, gripping Gloria’s thin white neck, cutting off her shrill scream... cutting off her air... cutting off her life...
As if I was the audience at a play, I saw Charles, coming home from a business trip, unexpectedly... Letting himself into his house, hearing...

When you get to the turn in the road by the deep ravine... Make him stop... Knock him unconscious... Get out... Push the car over into the ravine...

_And I saw him answering the phone a week later._

Charlie? This is Bob Sickle, say... Sure, Bob? What is it? Could you do me a favor, Charlie?

_Charles carries a huge insurance policy with double indemnity. We'll be killing two birds with one stone._

I saw Gloria and Bob from afar... Like an onlooker peering through a window...

Charles carries a huge insurance policy with double indemnity. We'll be killing two birds with one stone.

I saw Gloria and Bob from afar... Like an onlooker peering through a window...

Charles carries a huge insurance policy with double indemnity. We'll be killing two birds with one stone.

I saw Charles let himself out, quietly, as... 

Darling... It could be like this always... Not just these few stolen moments. Say you'll do it!

_Then I saw why._

You're... You're stopping, Charles! What's... Wrong?

Surprised, Bob? I knew you would be. We haven't reached the turn, yet, have we? Get out! This is a gun!
I saw it all, as though I were watching a TV show. I saw Charles force Bob out of the car, and demand...

Oh, don't worry, Bob, she won't live long either. And after I kill her, I'm going to give myself up to the police.

I heard their angry words... I overheard your plans to kill me, Bob... yours and my loving wife's. Well, I am going to die... she'll think! Only it will be you... with my identification...

He victim became the victor. I saw Charles drag Bob's unconscious body back into the car...

I saw the car drive to the edge of the ravine... saw Charles get out...

... saw the car go over and over with Bob's body inside, dressed in Charles's clothes, with Charles's identification...
He sat with his head bowed under the brilliant overhead light. They stood around him, back in the shadows...the detectives...the doctor...

I saw it all, in that flash, when I struck my head, and my memory returned...

So you killed her!

Yes, what GLORIA didn't know, and what YOU didn't know, and what I didn't know... until I struck my head... was...

...BOB SICKLES died in that burning car. I killed him! Since you found my identification on his body, you naturally thought it was me. And...

...and since you found Bob Sickles' identification on my burned body, you naturally thought I was Bob Sickles. When you contacted my wife, she bought his photographs and the Doc gave me his face! But I think, as I was killing her, GLORIA realized I was really her husband, CHARLES ANDERS!

THE END
A last faint whisp of smoke curled upward from the blackened and charred cross that still stood grotesquely upon the singed lawn as they brought the body out. Old Doc Falk, the coroner who had driven over from the county seat to sign the death certificate, watched as the draped stretcher was moved through the gaping silent crowd to the morgue wagon. He shook his head. He looked up at the grim faced man standing beside him.

"There'll have to be an investigation, Sid., before I can make my report. I'll have to know about... about that burned cross. I'll have to be sure it wasn't murder!"

"It wasn't murder, Doc. Henry Williams shot himself! I... I didn't expect it to go this far. I only wanted him to move away!"

You wanted him to move away, Sid? Why? I thought you two were such good friends. Shucks, when I was appointed coroner and moved over to the county seat, you and Henry were like...

I found out a few things since then, Doc. Things I didn't like. Things that made a difference...

The morgue wagon meshed gears and roared off. The crowd began to break up. Doc Falk studied the grim faced man beside him.

"You better tell me about it, Sid. It'll all come out at the inquest, anyway!"

"Well, Doc. It all began when Jed Martin put his house up for sale. Jed lives over there... across the street..."
Jeo'o had the place on the market for a few months when a rumor started. Ella, my wife, heard it from Mrs. Morgan and she told me.

That's right, and he's considering it, too! They offered him a good price...

We can't let that happen, Ella. We just can't...

That night, I went next door to see Henry. I told him the news. Did you hear about Jed Martin, Henry? He's had an offer to buy his place. Why, that's swell! He's been anxious to sell.

Swell! It's bad, Henry. We've got to talk him out of accepting it! He's had an offer from a Negro family.

Oh, well, what's wrong with that?

What's wrong? Well, for crying out loud, Henry! If a Negro family moves into the neighborhood, there'll be others following, and pretty soon...

But, there are others, Sid!

...the real estate values will drop to nothing and...

Huh? Did you say there are others?

DIDN'T YOU KNOW THAT I'M PART NEGRO, SID?

You...you...aw, quit the clowning, Henry! I'm serious! If we let a Negro family...

I'm not clowning, Sid! My grandmother was a Negro! So you see, I'm part Negro...

Why...why didn't you ever tell me? I mean, I never...

Why...why didn't you ever tell me because I didn't think it was important, Sid!
The crowd had gone off into the silent darkness, now. Sid and Old Doc Falk stood alone before the empty house with the burned cross on the front lawn...

Later that night, I told Ella... That was a rotten trick, Ella... Him living here all these years and never telling us!

I don't know! He said he didn't think it was important! But it is important, Ella, with him living here, and Jed Martin thinking of selling his place to colored folks... Why, why, the neighborhood's gonna change! Our kids will be playin' with colored kids and... and.

At first, I was shocked, Sid... Bewildered! Imagine! My own neighbor, my friend with negro blood in his veins...

Later that night, it o... Ella... That was a rotten trick, Ella... Him living here all these years and never telling us!

Then I got angry, Sid... I'm not going to let that happen, Ella. I put a lot of money and work and sweat into this place. I'm not going to see it go down the drain. This is our home. In a decent neighborhood! Nobody's going to ruin it for us! Nobody!

I went to see Jed Martin. There's a rumor around that you might sell your place to a negro family, Jed! I hope it isn't true!

I did get an offer, Sid... But I wouldn't do that to you and the rest of the folks! No, I'm not sellin'. Not to them... Not if folks round here don't want me to!

With Jed taken care of, I started brooding about Henry Williams, my part-negro next door neighbor...

What's wrong, Sid? I'm thinking about the Williams's. Ella. I'm thinking about us living next to a family with negro blood. I'm thinking about maybe it'd be better if they moved away!

Move away? But, how will you make them do that, Sid, if they don't want to?

They'll want to, Ella... When I'm through, you'll see!
Little flecks of white ash fell away from the crude charred cross standing on the singed lawn. Sid stared at it as he spoke...

So I started my campaign, Doc. I was going to get rid of Henry Williams and his family, no matter what...

I warned my kids...

...so if I catch either one of you playing with the Williams kid, I'll tan your hides.

Yes, Poppa!

I spoke to people...

...of course, if you want to deal with colored folks, that's okay with me, only I'll take my business elsewhere!

I understand, Sid! Negro blood, eh? Thanks...

I had a fence put up between Henry's property and mine...

Sid, I'd like to talk to you!

I got nothing to say to you, Henry!

And I waited, but Henry didn't take the hint, I guess. I watched his kid, playing by himself, spurned by the other kids...

And I watched his grocery orders come from stores that didn't mind dealing with his kind...

'And so I made a phone call. I called Henry Williams' employer...

Yes, Mr. Williams. I won't give you my name, Mr. Harley, but here's a tip! Of course, if your firm doesn't mind employing Negroes, it won't matter! Did you know that Mr. Williams has Negro blood?
And that night, I watched from my window as Henry Williams came home with his beverage pay in his pocket and no job to go to the next day.

And then Sarah. Mrs. Williams got sick, and Henry went to the bank to borrow money so she could have proper medical care. Only I'd spoken to Mr. Walters at the bank. I'd warned him...

Sorry, Mr. Williams, you're not a very good credit risk. I'd like to help you, only I understand, Mr. Walters!

But Henry still didn't sell. He sent his kid off to live with relatives and locked himself up in his house...

So tonight, earlier, I put the cross on Henry's lawn, and lit it. I watched it flare up...

I saw Henry's face at the window, staring out at the dancing flames! Can you imagine? Even though he had Negro blood in his veins, his face was ashen white...

After Sarah died, I watched them carry the wicker out to the waiting hearse. I heard the pitiful sobbing of Henry's kid. And I felt no compassion...

He'll have to sell, now...

But Henry still didn't sell. He sent his kid off to live with relatives and locked himself up in his house...

The stubborn...
THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS NEGRO BLOOD, SIR. ALL HUMAN BLOOD IS THE SAME, WHETHER IT IS THE BLOOD OF AN ORIENTAL, OR AN AFRICAN, OR AN EUROPEAN. EXCEPT FOR ONE MEDICAL DIFFERENCE... THE BLOOD TYPE. BUT WHITE, NEGRO, MONGOL, ALL RACES OF MAN HAVE ALL THE BLOOD TYPES...

I REMEMBER ONCE, WHEN I FIRST STARTED PRACTICING MEDICINE, I WAS CALLED OUT TO A FARM. THE FARMER'S LITTLE BOY HAD BEEN BADLY HURT BY A THRESHER. HE'D ALMOST SEVERED HIS ARM. BY THE TIME I GOT THERE...

HE'S LOST A LOT OF BLOOD! HE NEEDS A TRANSFUSION... IMMEDIATELY!

HERE! I'LL GIVE IT TO HIM...

I CHECKED THE FATHER'S BLOOD, BUT IT WAS THE WRONG TYPE. THEN I CHECKED THE MOTHER'S...

NEITHER OF YOU HAVE THE RIGHT BLOOD TYPE. MINE ISN'T RIGHT, EITHER. AND IF YOUR BOY DOESN'T GET A TRANSFUSION FAST... HE'LL DIE...

GEORGE! COME IN HERE!

GEORGE WAS THE FARMER'S HIRED HAND. HE WAS A HUGE MAN... STRONG AND MUSCULAR. GEORGE WAS A NEGRO...

CHECK HIS TYPE, DOC!

ROLLOP YOUR SLEEVE, GEORGE!

GEORGE WASTHE SAME TYPE AS THE BOY'S...

GEORGE! WILL YOU DO IT? WILL YOU GIVE MY SON THE BLOOD HE NEEDS?

HE'LL DIE IF YOU DON'T, GEORGE, PLEASE...
The other half of the cross-arm dropped to the ground, stirring up little flakes of ash...

The Negro saved the boy's life, Sid. He gave the boy over a quart of blood! Don't preach to me, Doc.

Roll up your sleeve, Sid!

Huh? Why?

Roll up your sleeve!

Look, Doc... I... oh, well!

Roll up your sleeve, Sid!

The tall man with the grim face rolled up his sleeve. Old Doc Falk took his arm and led him to the street lamp...

Hmmm! I did a pretty good job, even if I do say so myself!

You?

The country coroner pointed to the thin white line circling Sid's muscular forearm...

That's the scar the threshing machine left on your arm, Sid, when you almost severed it over twenty-five years ago.

I?? Then the boy...

You were that boy, Sid! George's blood saved your life. Negro blood, pumped into your veins, snatched you from the jaws of death!

Oh, God...

The coroner shook his head and walked away. Sid just stood there, the tears streaming down his cheeks...

Oh God... job... what have I done...?

And on the singed lawn, the charred upright, the remains of the burned cross, collapsed into a pile of ash and carbon...
The psychiatrist's office was dimly lit and the traffic noises outside were almost inaudible. Joey lay on the soft leather couch trembling, his voice only a hoarse whisper. The psychiatrist sat beside him, a pad and pencil in hand...

I... I got me a gun, Doc. I couldn't stand it any more. I was going to kill myself. And then I figured maybe you could help me. Maybe you could change me back the way I was. Make me normal again!

I'll do my best, Mr. Berksant. Now, relax and try to remember when all... all this started. When did you first notice these... these changes?

Joey Berksant, number one contender for the middleweight championship, sighed. He lay back on the divan staring up at the shadowy ceiling...

It... it was right after my last fight. You... you must have heard about it. I fought Manny Williams... in the Garden...

Yeah, Doc. Manny died. I killed him. It was in the eighth round. I'd been lodging my left jab pretty regularly and Manny'd gotten glassy-eyed and groggy. He opened up and I caught him with a right cross to the head...
'And that's when Manny's wife came into the dressing room. She was white as a ghost and her eyes were filled with tears. She just stared at me...

You...you didn't have to kill him! You saw he was out on his feet. You didn't have to hit him so hard.

MRS. WILLIAMS!

I...
It was the next morning when I got up that I first noticed my hands. They'd changed during the night. They'd contorted and shranked and grown ugly and twisted...

Good Lord! What's happening to me?

When I went down to the gym that afternoon, I kept my hands hidden... stuffed in my pockets. I didn't want anybody else to see how hideous they'd become...

S'matter, Joey? You look down-in-the-dumps. Don't feel bad about Williams, kid. It could've happened to anybody.

Thanks, Benny!

But when I got home that night, and I looked at my hands again, they'd grown worse! They looked... they looked like...

...like the hands of a beast!

And later, when I was undressing, I saw my feet... Oh, god! My feet, too? What's doing this to me?

All night I tossed and turned... feeling myself changing... feeling my body... my face... growing more and more hideous with each passing night moment.

Mrs. Williams cursed me! She made me turn into a twisted savage animal! She wished it on me!

In the morning, when I got up, I carefully avoided the mirrors around my place. I didn't want to see the hideous malformed monster I'd changed into. I got some sheets and covered them...

Sob... what am I going to do?
I STAYED IN ALL THAT DAY AND THE NEXT, ALONE, NOT EVEN ANSWERING THE TELEPHONE WHEN IT RANG, AND AS THE HOURS PASSED, AND I KNEW I WAS BECOMING MORE AND MORE MISSHAPEN AND HORRIBLE, I GREW PANICKY.

MY GUN! WHERE'S MY GUN?

I FOUND THE GUN IN A BUREAU DRAWER. IT WAS LOADED. I WAS GOING TO KILL MYSELF, DOC. I FELT IT WAS THE ONLY WAY OUT, AND THEN I THOUGHT OF YOU. I THOUGHT YOU COULD HELP ME. SO I CALLED...

YES, THIS IS DOCTOR COLEMAN! CAN I HELP YOU?

CAN I COME UP AND SEE YOU, DOC? IT'S... IT'S VERY IMPORTANT. IT'S... A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH!

I DON'T!! BUT MY HANDS... LOOK AT THEM! THEY'RE UGLY. MISSHAPEN... AND MY FEET...

YOU'RE WRONG, MR. BERKANT! YOU'RE PERFECTLY NORMAL-LookING! THERE ARE NO DISTORTIONS IN YOUR BODY... YOUR FACE...

SO THAT'S MY STORY, DOC. NOW YOU KNOW WHY I LOOK LIKE THIS... HIDEOUS... MISSHAPEN... A TWISTED MONSTER!

BUT THAT'S JUST IT, MR. BERKANT! YOU DON'T LOOK LIKE THAT AT ALL!

I DON'T!!! BUT MY HANDS... LOOK AT THEM! THEY'RE UGLY. MISSHAPEN... AND MY FEET...

YOU'RE WRONG, MR. BERKANT! YOU'RE PERFECTLY NORMAL-LookING! THERE ARE NO DISTORTIONS IN YOUR BODY... YOUR FACE...

THE DISTORTIONS ARE IN YOUR MIND! YOU THINK YOU ARE PHYSICALLY MALFORMED BECAUSE YOU ARE SUFFERING FROM A QUILT-COMPLEX CONNECTED WITH MR. WILLIAMS' DEATH AND HIS WIFE'S ACCUSATIONS...

YOU MEAN WHEN SHE CALLED ME A TWISTED UGLY BEAST...?

EXACTLY! YOUR SUBCONSCIOUS MIND, FAUGHT WITH Guilty Feelings, Accepted Her Angry Description Of You And Has Made Your Conscious Mind Believe It!

THEN I'M NOT REALLY UGLY... HIDEOUS? I Haven'T CHANGED?
Joey closed the door to the psychiatrist's apartment and stood alone in the deserted street, inhaling the fresh cool night air...

He started across the street, his footsteps echoing into the silent clear evening...

Suddenly, Joey stopped. He could see it in front of the store window, its silver surface reflecting the street lamp onto the sidewalk in a rectangle of soft yellow light...

A... a mirror!
C'MON, BERSANT! LET'S RICK THAT SUBCONSCIOUS SQUARE IN THE KISSEN!

SEE, JOEY? JUST LIKE THE DOC SAID! PERFECTLY NORMAL-

CHOKE... THE DOC! THE DOC LIED!

THE POLICEMAN STOOD BEFORE THE FLOWING SURFACE OF THE MIRROR, GRIMACING DOWN AT THE LIFELESS BODY ON THE SIDEWALK.

WHAT HAPPENED?

I DON'T KNOW, OFFICER. ONE MINUTE HE IS WALKING BY MY STORE, THE NEXT MINUTE, HE IS DEAD!

BUSINESS IS BAD ENOUGH! I EVEN BOUGHT THAT TRICK MIRROR FROM AN AMUSEMENT PARK TO ATTRACT ATTENTION, AND NOW, THIS...

THE STOREKEEPER SHOOK HIS HEAD.

... AND TORE THE LOADED GUN FROM HIS POCKET, PLACED IT AGAINST HIS TEMPLE, AND FIRED...
Harry cowered against the rough concrete pillar that supported the weather-beaten boards overhead, sucking in the warm summer air in great gulps, trying to catch his breath. They were after him, and soon they’d be searching down here, down in the damp sand beneath the boardwalk...se arching for the killer. Harry looked wildly around, where to hide? Where to run? And then he saw the shimmering mass of almost naked humanity that jammed the sunny beach.

Sure! They’ll be looking for a guy in a t-shirt and dungarees. If I were out in that crowd in a bathing suit they’d never find me...

Harry pulled his t-shirt over his head and stepped out of his dungarees...

I’ll bury my clothes here and come back for them later...

Harry kicked off his shoes and tugged off his socks. Then he knelt and scooped a hole in the damp cool sand...

Lucky thing I wore my thunks under my blue jeans...
Harry grinned. He picked an open spot, between the laughing, perspiring groups of bathing-suit-clad people and sat down. Yes, he was free of Cora. She wasn't going to tie him down. She wasn't going to force him into a shotgun marriage. Cora was dead.

Women! They're all the same. Everything's nosy... all fun... and then they start trying to grab on and hold... then they start talking about marriage.

Yes, Cora was just like all the rest. Right away they feel you owe 'em something. Right away they feel they own you. Harry remembered this morning... how Cora'd phoned him...

Harry thought about Cora. How they'd met... how he'd taken her out... the good times they'd had together... the Saturday afternoons... the nights... and then, how Cora'd started...

When are we going to get married, Harry?

Harry! I've got to see you! It's important!

Okay, baby! How about the beach? I'll pick you up!

He'd dressed in his trunks, putting his clothes on over them, and he'd gone to Cora's house...

Ready, baby? Come inside, Harry! I want to talk to you!

He'd gone into her room nervously... her room that had held such fond memories.

What's up, baby? When are we getting married, Harry?

Again, the same routine. Always clawing, always trying to grab a hold, to tie down, to smother...

I told you, baby! Not for a while. When I've made you've got to marry me, Harry! Right now! Today!
They'd ridden down on the bus, hardly talking. Once he'd glanced at her and seen her eyes overflow with tears. And he'd gritted his teeth... trapped! conned!... sob...

And then she'd told him. And Harry's blood had froze in his veins. He'd been trapped. His mind had whirled. He'd thought fast, and then he'd come up with the answer...

Sure, honey. Sure. We'll get married. But we can't today! The license bureau is closed. It's Saturday.

They'd gotten off the bus and started through the amusement park. The hurdy-gurdy music had echoed into the hot noon air. Stinky, cheap. Everything was cheap. Everything was phony. Harry'd hated it all.

Now, I'll be tied down to a crummy apartment, punching a time-clock, sweatin' t'pay bills, and stayin' in every night with a bawlin' brat...

Of course! If Cora were dead, he'd be free again. Free to run wild again. And this time, he'd be careful. He grabbed Cora's hand...

Of course! If Cora were dead, he'd be free again. Free to run wild again. And this time, he'd be careful. He grabbed Cora's hand...

Harry! What are you staring at? You, Cora!
He'd pulled her to the ticket booth. She'd begged him...pleaded.

No, Harry. Please. I'm scared. Have pity, Harry!

The ticket-seller'd grinned at Harry. Fellers were always dragging their girls onto the roller-coaster. And girls were always screaming they were scared. It was one big game.

Harry? No. Let me go! Harry!

Yeah. One big game. Only to Harry, this was a game of life or death. Life, being free. Death, being married to Cora...

Harry! No! Let me go! Harry!

Atta boy, feller. Maybe you'll be glad you came off it, I wish!

Harry remembered how...as they'd reached the top of the incline, when all eyes were staring ahead in fascination and fright down into the steel retwoked canyon into which they were starting to plunge...how he'd hit Cora with all of his strength.

On God! Stop! Stop! He's going to kill me! Please! Stop it!
And Harry remembered how he'd pushed her from the car as it hurtled downward...

...how her body'd bounced against the girders, twisting and turning as it fell to the pavement far below...

...how he'd gone into his act, screaming at the top of his lungs all the way into she fell out! My girl fell out!

...how the car had finally glided to rest, and the roars and screaming had subsided, and only his voice echoed loud and clear.

Harry remembered the faces staring at him. DEAD?

My girl fell out! Find her! Find her!

She's dead, buddy! We found her.

Angry faces... moving toward him...

Ah, it was an accident! I swear! She said he'd kill her! I heard it!

ME, TOO!

Grab him! There he goes! After him! He's a killer!

So Harry'd run. He'd run wildly through the amusement area down toward the boardwalk...

SOMEBODY CALL A COP! He dragged her on that ride.
Harry looked up. Shriek voices shocked him out of his reverie. A laughing group of girls were spreading their blanket beside him...

Harry looked them over. Mmm. Nice stuff. Any other time, he'd concentrate on that kind. But now... He glanced toward the boardwalk. His heart stopped...

Heed Lord!

Two cops were there, where he'd hidden his clothes. They had his T-shirt, dungarees, and shoes in their hands. They were scanning the jammed beach...

Car keys! Harry turned. He eyed the dames. There were five of them, laughing, giggling. If he could tie up with them... They could drive him home. One of them looked his way and he smiled...

Hi! Mind if I join you?

Sure, handsome! Bea!

They whispered among themselves, giggling. Harry grinned. They were pushovers, just like Coral'd been. All dames were pushovers.

C'mon over, good lookin'!

Harry balked. But they had the car. They were his salvation...

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The sun came out when you girls came along! Up to now, it's been pretty dull.

C'mon over, good lookin'!

Harry balked. But they had the car. They were his salvation...

Aw, it's all right, girls. He's lonesome.

C'mon over, good lookin'!

Harry turned. He eyed the dames. There were five of them, laughing, giggling. If he could tie up with them, they could drive him home. One of them looked his way and he smiled...

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The sun came out when you girls came along! Up to now, it's been pretty dull.

C'mon over, good lookin'!

Harry balked. But they had the car. They were his salvation...

Aw, c'mon, big boy! Let's go!

Harry turned. He eyed the dames. There were five of them, laughing, giggling. If he could tie up with them, they could drive him home. One of them looked his way and he smiled...

Hi! Mind if I join you?

Sure, handsome! Bea!

They whispered among themselves, giggling. Harry grinned. They were pushovers, just like Coral'd been. All dames were pushovers. Harry'd had plenty of experience. He'd developed quite a way with dames...

The sun came out when you girls came along! Up to now, it's been pretty dull.
They grabbed him by his arms, his shoulders, his wrists. They turned and pushed and pulled him down to the water...

Really, girls. I don't feel like it!

They pulled him and pushed him, giggling, gasping, chattering, shouting. He screamed as the water lapped his chest...

I can't swim! C'mon, I swear it! Johnny! Don't please! Be a sport!

The surf lapped at his ankles. Harry shivered. He tried to explain... but they only laughed, tightening their holds, squealing, shrieking...

I... I... to tell you the truth. I can't swim. Girls.

Push, mmm! Pull, sue! He's real all muscles!

The water was over his head now. His feet hung, to be pointed, searching for something to stand on. They clung to him, keeping him up...

I can't swim! Okay, muscle-man! Let's see you do your stuff.

Look, kids! Take me back! I can't swim. Isn't that the Fellers are here? Let's go! Hi! Hello! Wait! Don't leave me!

Back on the beach, by the girl's blanket, five boys waved a greeting...

The Fellers are here! Let's go! Hi! Wait! Don't leave me!

The girls struck off for shore, waving at their dates, laughing, squealing, never hearing Harry's anguished cries as he thrashed about...

Hi, Jimmy! Hi, Arny! I got the car with me, Melvin!

I... I... can't swim! Help! Help...

And they never even turned around to see the water pouring into Harry's mouth, his stomach, his lungs. They never even saw him go down for the last time...

The end.