NOTORIOUS 1950s EC COMICS!

TALES FROM THE CRYPT

FEATURING

THE CRYPT-KEEPER

THE VAULT-KEEPER

THE OLD WITCH

NO. 24
JUNE

25¢
3¢ CANADA
HEH, HEH! I SEE YOU'RE HUNGRY FOR HORROR AGAIN. WELL, REST ASSURED, YOUR APPETITE WILL BE SATISFIED. IN FACT, WHEN YOU'RE THROUGH WITH THIS PUTRID PERIODICAL, YOU WILL HAVE LOST YOUR APPETITE ENTIRELY. SO DON'T JUST STAND THERE GROULING. COME IN! WELCOME ONCE MORE TO THE CRYPT OF TERROR. THIS IS YOUR HOST IN NOWLS: YOUR HAUSEATING NARRATOR, THE CRYPT-KEEPER, READY TO CHILL YOUR SPINE AND CURdle YOUR BLOOD WITH THE SPINE-TINGLING TALE OF TERROR I CALL...

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The evening performance is over and the circus grounds are silent save for the flapping of canvas and the occasional snort of a caged animal. Overhead, a cold moon illuminates the midnight landscape. Suddenly a shadowy figure emerges from one of the darkened tents and glides quietly across the midway whispering...

ERIC?!

HERE, MARTA...
They embrace... warmly... passionately... hungry lips... holding close...

WHAT ABOUT CARL? HE IS ASLEEP.

WHAT ABOUT CARL? HE IS ASLEEP.

The man looks into the woman's eyes, grey-green in the moonlight.

But you said you can only read the thoughts in his mind. He wants you to read!

He taunts me, Eric. He has always taunted me with this power he has over me!

The woman peers into the shadows, straining to see, her heart racing. The man steps into the dim cold light, his arms extended.

Oh, Eric, darling...

My dearest...

The woman looks into the shadows, straining to see, her heart racing. The man steps into the dim cold light, his arms extended.

Why did you ever marry him, Marta?

It was a mistake, Eric. I mistook this freak of nature... this once in a lifetime occurrence... this ability of Carl's to project thoughts and mine to read them... for love!

We discovered this ability quite by accident many years ago. Carl immediately recognized its great value. Before I knew it, we'd teamed up as a mind-reading act, joined this traveling circus, and were married...

And you've been unhappy ever since...

The man shakes his head sadly, stroking the woman's soft flowing hair...

Why did you ever marry him, Marta?

It was a mistake, Eric. I mistook this freak of nature... this once in a lifetime occurrence... this ability of Carl's to project thoughts and mine to read them... for love!

Miserable! I know now that Carl never loved me. I was his subject... his thought-projection receiver... a piece of apparatus... nothing more... but now I know what real love is... now that I've met you...

He would never let you go... would he?

Never! If I go, his act goes. He'd never give me a divorce. There's no use my asking...

Then we will run away... join another circus. I have had many offers... an animal trainer is in great demand.

CARL IMMEDIATELY RECOGNIZED ITS GREAT VALUE. BEFORE I KNEW IT, WE'D TEAMED UP AS A MIND-READING ACT, JOINED THIS TRAVELING CIRCUS, AND WERE MARRIED...
The wind sighs across the circus grounds, whispers around the tent ropes, gasps against the canvas...carrying the sighs, the whispers, the gasps of the lovers in the shadows and in his tent, Carl stirs uneasily...opens his eyes...

Marta? Marta? Her bed! It is empty! Where could she be?

And at the end of the month when I get my check, we will leave...you and I...together...

Carl slips on a robe and comes out of his tent...into the whispering, sighing, gasping wind. His voice...and beyond the new animal trainer's tent...

Voices coming from the lovers in the shadows. His voice...and Marta's!

Carl moves through the moonlit night. His eyes burning like hot coals...listening...

...but let's not talk anymore, Eric, darling. Hold me close...

...and then, slowly, he returns to his tent once more. He has heard enough...

...she...she has fallen in love with him. She is leaving me...she...

Carl slips on a robe and comes out of his tent...

Out into the whispering, sighing, gasping wind...

Carl moves through the moonlit night. His eyes burning like hot coals...listening...

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...but let's not talk anymore, Eric, darling. Hold me close...

Carl moves through the moonlit night. His eyes burning like hot coals...listening...

The moonlight streams through the open tent-flap, falling across the print. Black letters on cold white...the local newspaper...

What's this? 'Bodies disinterred at local graveyard. turned to pieces as if attacked by wild beast.'
LATER, WHEN MARTA RETURNS FROM HER REHEARSAL AND CRAWLS BACK INTO BED, CARL PRETENOS HE IS ASLEEP.

ONLY AFTER MARTA HAS SLIPPED OFF INTO DEEP SLUMBER, DOES CARL STIR, AND RISE, AND GO OUT OF THE TENT.

AND CROSS DIRECTLY TO THE NEW ANIMAL TRAINER'S TENT WITH GUN IN HAND...

ERIC STUMMLES TO HIS FEET...

WHAT'S THE MEANING OF THIS, CARL? PUT DOWN THAT GUN. WE WERE GOING TO RUN OFF WITH MY WIFE, EH, ERIC? WELL, WE'LL SEE ABOUT THAT! MOVE!

CARL MOTIONS ERIC OUT OF THE TENT AND DOWN THE LONG SILENT MIDWAY TOWARD THE BIG-TOP...

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO, CARL? I, ERIC, I'M NOT GOING TO DO ANYTHING! YOUR LION WILL DO THE WORK!

THEY CROSS THE TANBARK FLOOR OF THE BIG TOP UNTIL THEY COME TO THE LION CAGE. THE TAWNY BEAST PACES BACK AND FORTH HUNGRILY...

MY LION? YES, ERIC. I'M GOING TO PUT YOU IN THE CAGE WITH HIM... WITHOUT YOUR WHIP... WITHOUT ANYTHING... JUST YOU AND YOUR LION!

WITHOUT MY WHIP? I'D BE HELPLESS-PARALYZED... UNABLE TO DEFEND MYSELF! FOR GOD'S SAKE, CARL! HAVE PITY!

PITY IS AN EMOTION BELONGING TO THE PITIFUL, ERIC GET IN.
She runs with the rest of them until they come to the lion trainer's cage...

**Carl's bed is empty!** Outside the tent, footsteps pound up the midway toward the big-top. Marta slips on a robe and bursts from the tent...

She screams his name twice, and then she just stands there, watching the beast lick at the slashed and shredded body until she has to turn away as the nausea sweeps over her...

...and then, sick, she returns to her tent and sits and waits, crying, until Carl comes in with that evil grin on his cold impassive face...

And then, the circus grounds echo with the blood-curdling shrieks of a man being torn to shreds by the razor sharp fangs of a blood-crazed beast.

Eric's anguished shrieks awaken Marta and she looks around wildly...

"Carl! What was that? Carl! Carl!"...
But there is no doubt in Marta's mind as to how Eric died. Carl's bed was empty when Eric's screams awakened her; the sheets were cold.

"I hate you! Hate you! You will get over it, Marta!"

The next day's performance is cancelled because of the tragedy. The tents are lowered; the circus prepares to move on.

Look out, Carl! Good Lord!

It happens suddenly... without warning. Carl is helping with the dismantling of the big-top when the main support topples.

The heavy pole crashes downward upon Carl, crushing him beneath its massive weight...

AAAAAAAH

And when the huge support is lifted, Carl lies deathly still... his glazed eyes staring...

He... he's dead. Two in a row! The circus is jinxed.

Somebody get his wife!

Marta is summoned. She stands impassively over her husband's body, shedding no tears, showing no sign of emotion...

It... it was an accident, Marta! The main support...

He... he will have to be buried before we can go on!

Marta's voice is cold... callous as she asks...

Somebody send for an undertaker..."
Marta looks down at the still form of her husband lying on the tanbark floor, and even though she reads his thoughts, she shows no signs of recognition...

Marta! Marta, I am alive! I'm not dead! Marta! Listen to me! Please! Try to hear what I am thinking! I'm paralyzed, Marta! I'm not dead! I'm paralyzed! I can see! I can hear! I can't move!

Oh, Marta! Thank you! Thank you! Yes, Ma'am?

Please don't embalm him. Bury him as he is. He would have wanted it that way!

Marta! Please! Save me! I'm alive! Marta! I'm alive! Paralyzed! Not dead! Paralyzed! Marta! Please.

Anything you say, Ma'am?

Marta! Marta?

Marta looks down into paralyzed eyes that can still see... Whispers into paralyzed ears that can still hear...

Good-bye, Carl!

Marta! Oh, God! Marta...

At the funeral, Marta stands, her face a granite mask, beside the yawning pit below Carl's coffin...

You can stop them, Marta! There's still time. I know you can hear me. I know it! Please! I beg of you! Don't let them bury me alive!

And even though the soil is shoveled down upon the coffin, Carl's frantic thought waves still come through to her. To her, and only her, to Marta, who turns and walks away down the path leaving out of the cemetery...

Marta! Don't do this! Please! Save me! Please! Oh, Lord... make her save me.
The afternoon wanes. The night breeze comes up, whispering over the grave mounds. Six feet below, in his coffin, Carl concentrates as the precious oxygen slowly disappears.

MARTA! COME BACK! COME SAVE ME! I'LL DO ANYTHING! ANYTHING! HAVE PITY ON ME! HAVE PITY!

A shovel digs into the soft earth.

The digging continues, the shovel scooping away the soft earth. Finally the lid of the coffin swings back...

MARTA! DARLING! I OH, LORD... YOU'RE NOT MARTA!

And then as Carl lies helpless... paralyzed... like a lion-tamer without a whip... feeling the razor sharp teeth ripping and tearing at his flesh... unable to scream at the excruciating pain, he thinks of the newspaper lying in the moonlight... the newspaper that first gave him the idea of how to kill Eric.

Boobies disinterred at local grave yard... torn to pieces as if attacked by some wild beast! OH, LORD! They were wrong! This is no beast! IT'S A GHOUL!

And then as Carl lies helpless... paralyzed... like a lion-tamer without a whip... feeling the razor sharp teeth ripping and tearing at his flesh... unable to scream at the excruciating pain, he thinks of the newspaper lying in the moonlight... the newspaper that first gave him the idea of how to kill Eric.

The stars come out, white pin-points in a velvet shroud. A figure moves over the grave mounds.

I KNOW YOU ARE RECEIVING MY THOUGHTS, MARTA! I KNOW...

Yeah, yeah! YEP, KIDDIES! CARL ENDED UP JUST LIKE ERIC... BEING TORN TO BITS AND UNABLE TO DEFEAT HIMSELF. AS FOR MARTA... SHE READ CARL'S FINAL THOUGHTS, AND GOT QUITE A MENTAL PICTURE OF WHAT WAS GOING ON... JUST ONE MORE THOUGHT ON THIS WHOLE SUBJECT AS THE BOP CEMETERY FOREMAN KEEPS TELLING HIS WORK CREWS, 'DIG THAT CRAZY GRAVE!' WELL, Y'K AWAITS, SO 'BYE, NOW!
Our story begins during World War II. When the United States Marines were slowly and painfully inching across the South Pacific area, invading and battling for each bloody atoll, each Japanese-infested coral rock. One inky black starless night, a small boat moved silently toward the coral reef that ringed the peaceful lagoon of one of these Japanese-held islands. Inside two men crouched quietly studying the dancing fires on the shore across the placid lagoon.

Better drop the anchor, Phil. This is about as close in as we dare go without being seen.

Right, Larry.

The anchor slid over the small boat's side and dropped with a muffled splash into the black Pacific. Then, strangely, the two men began to undress.

While I'm clearing the steel netting, you start setting the demolition charges, Phil.
They stood almost naked in the Pacific night, muscles rippling. They bent and slid the weirdly shaped black rubber flippers onto their feet, pulled their rubber masks with the round glass windows over their faces...

...and went about their business... the business of clearing the way for the invasion of the following morning. The one named Larry glided downward, flicking on his lamp, searching out the treacherous propeller-shattering steel netting...

As Larry circled over the bed, studying the abnormally-large shelled sea creatures with their priceless globeo gems imbedded in their quivering meaty bodies, Phil glided toward him, staring wide-eyed...

Silently, the two members of the United States Navy's underwater demolition team... the Fabulous Frogmen... slid over the side of their small boat and into the choppy Pacific...

Well, take it easy, Phil!

See you in a while, Larry!

And then, suddenly, he saw... stretching away below him in the gloomy murky darkness... the oyster bed...
The two men surfaced beside their boat, gasping for breath... Did you see it, Phil? There gasp... There must be a fortune in pearls in that oyster bed! I'm going back... Gasp down... Don't be a fool, Larry! I've set the charges. C'mon! Let's get out of here!

Minutes later, the small boat was humming seaward. Behind, the demolition charges exploded in the placid lagoon signaling the mighty battle wagons offshore to begin their barrage. Larry swore above the din... We'll come back, Phil. After this crazy mess is over, we'll come back for those pearls, we'll be rich!

At dawn the next morning, the assault boats stormed the quiet lagoon, and propellers churned blood into the waters above the oyster bed...

The beachhead was secured. The demolition team's work was done. Larry and Phil were shipped elsewhere to other islands, with other lagoons...

They say this atom bomb wiped out a whole city, Phil. Maybe the Japs'll surrender now. Then... C'mon! Stop dreamin' about those pearls! Now get busy!

V-J day! Peace! It came suddenly... After the second A-bomb was dropped, the Japanese signed an unconditional surrender and the war was over.

San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge came up out of the mist one morning. The troopership slipped beneath it and nosed in towards a pier where banjos played and children cheered and women sobbed happily...

They came down the gangplank together, side by side, Larry and Phil. But the girl that waited with tear-stained cheeks had eyes for only one of them...
Larry tried to hide the jealous anger... the hurt that he felt. Gladys's preference had come as a great shock to him...

I wanted to tell you, Larry! But... well, I...

Phil hao war again. It had always been like that ever since their college days. They'd both come out for the swim team...

That's good time, son! Er... what did you say your name was?

Larry? Larry Miles!

Larry's done his best, but Phil... Phil had done just a wee bit better.

Congratulations, boy! That beats Miles's time by eight tenths! Er...

The name's Phil Cannon, coach!

Larry and Phil hao become fast friends in college, but there was always that rivalry between them...

Come on, Larry! Let's go, Phil!

Miles is great, and Cannon is better. We've got some swim team this year.

Not only in the pool... but also on the campus...

Hey, you two! I want you to come to Gladys's party! Gladys, meet our two swim champs... Larry Miles and Phil Cannon.

Very nice! Sorry, Larry! Miss Hardy already has a date with me.

Where Gladys had come into their lives, the rivalry between the two boys had increased. They both fell in love with her...

Gladys, you know how I feel about you! Say yes!... and I'll buy you the biggest engagement ring in the store.

Larry! I... I like you... but... well, I just can't make up my mind.

So long, baby!

Write! I will! Good-bye, boys! Take care!
And now they were back from the war, standing on a jammed pier full of returned sailors and soldiers and happy loved ones, and Phil had won again... But when, Phil? I mean, what about our business out there in the Pacific? We're going to be married, Larry! It'll be a lovely place to take Gladys on our honeymoon, Larry. Oh, sure! Sure! Well, congratulations, you two! Discharge! Civilian clothes again! Freedom from regimentation... discipline! They were all Larry's now and a secret, too! A million dollar secret! Just one thing, one thing wasn't his, yet! Gladys... I picked up these surplus flippers and masks, Phil. I thought we'd try them out tonight. Look, Feller! I'm getting married tomorrow! Have a hearty! Larry convinced Phil that after he was married there'd be no chance to try out their equipment, and Phil reluctantly agreed they drove out to a lonely beach... I picked this spot because it's so much like that lagoon, Phil! Yeah! It is! Well, let's go! Larry! What the...? It's going to be such a pity, Phil. A good swimmer like you drowning! Larry had planned it all so carefully with Phil dead, Gladys! The secret of the pearled bed... Everything would be his... And Larry came out of the water alone with a grim smile on his face and the story he'd tell Gladys so clear in his mind... They struggled wildly, there in the foaming surf of that lonely California beach. Larry held Phil's throat in a vice-like grip, until Phil's body went limp and life left it and it slipped from Larry's grasp and sank beneath the ocean waves...
Gladys listened to Larry as he sobbed out the story of how they'd gone swimming. He and Phil, and Phil had gone down, and...

"And before I could get to him, he went down for good, he... he must have gotten a cramp. I... I tried to dive for him, but The Undertow...

"I'll be back in three months, Gladys. Perhaps, by then, you will have gotten over this, and maybe I... you and I..."

It would take time Larry decided. Time for Gladys to forget Phil... in the meanwhile, he would go to the South Pacific... to the tiny atoll with its fabulous oyster bed... and make his fortune...

"I'll never stop loving him, Larry! Somewhere."

The trip to the atoll was long, but Larry didn't mind it. Once on board, he lost no time in making friends...

"Baby, you're the most gorgeous doll on this ship! I... I gasp..."

"Well, go on... don't just leave me hanging!"

Were his eyes deceiving him? Was the foam and the spray and the churning water beside the ship playing tricks on him, or did he actually see the bloated white body...?

"What is it, Larry? There! In the water! I... no! It can't be! I must be seeing things!"

And was the foul odor of the sea and decay and rotting flesh that seared his nostrils when he opened his cabin door that night just Larry's imagination?

"And was it the sea, or did he actually hear that laughter... that rippling blood-curdling laughter coming in from the murky fog beyond the ship the night he strolled the deck alone..."

Who... who's out there?
The ship docked at Tahiti and Larry lost no time in hiring a plane to take him south to the atoll.
Can you land this crate in a lagoon? I can drop it on a gne, mister!

On that plane trip south... Skimming low over the blue Pacific... was Larry crazy, or did he see it again - there just below him. That ashen, pulpy, bloated form... s'it, mister. Cannon? Air sick? Choke. A little, I guess.

The atoll came up. A pearl against a blue satin sea-lining. Guarding its own pearl treasure. Larry cast his fears from his mind when he saw it...

There it is! Land in that lagoon!

The atoll came up, a pearl against a blue satin sea-lining, guarding its own pearl treasure. Larry cast his fears from his mind when he saw it...

Tiny fish scattered before him as Larry shot downward. He passed the old rusted nettings, the sunken assault boats, the waterlogged blasted pilings, and then he saw it. The Oyster Bed. He swam toward it eagerly...

The tiny seaplane came down gently and sat bobbing quietly in the blue lagoon as Larry unpacked his gear, removed the flippers and the rubber glass-windowed mask, and began to undress.

Hey! What's going on? You going to dive for something? Yep! There's an oyster bed in this lagoon, with pearls the size of your fist. And I'm going to get me a few.

Larry was so busy wrenching the largest oyster he could find from the sandy bottom that he never noticed the putrid, slimy, white form drift toward him. And when its bloated arms closed around his neck, and the rotted face grinned at him, it was too late...

Heh, heh! Yep, kiddies! That's my yarn. The pilot of the seaplane waited around for Larry to come up for several hours. Finally, he shrugged, went through Larry's pants, extracted the money from his wallet, tossed the rest of Larry's gear into the lagoon, and took off. And you'll take off when you read the next Vault-Keeper yarn! Heh. Heh! Now I'll turn you back to C.K. I'll see you next in my mag, the Vault of Horror! Bye! E.C., that is!
Mildred Jackson flung open the door of her house and squealed with joy. He stood on the paint-starved front porch, dressed resplendently in his captain's uniform, his face bronzed from forty years at sea, his eyes cold and squinting, his mouth grim, his two suitcases beside him.

"Ezra! Ezra! Why didn't you write me? You were coming to visit?" Oh, Ezra... it's so good to see you again.

"Hello, Millie. Got a place for yer old sea dog brother to bunk down for a spell?"

Milly led Ezra into the parlor...

There's always room for you here, Ezra. You know... just a spell, Millie. Just till I decide what I'm goin' to do next. Y' see... they took away my ship. They retired me.

Retired... oh, Ezra, I'm so sorry.

Yep, my sailin' days are over, Millie. I'm a land-lubber, now. Well, where do I stow my gear?
That was how Ezra Jackson came to live with his sister Mildred. At first, Mildy was very happy to have him. After all, she was an old maid, and Ezra was company. But as time went on, Ezra began to do strange things.

One night, Mildy was roused out of a sound sleep by heavy paws shaking her roughly.

WHA... WHAT'S WRONG, EZRA? WHAT IS IT?

GET UP, YOU LAZY SWAB, YOU'RE LATE FOR YOUR WATCH, AND IF YOU EVER DO THIS AGAIN, I'LL HAVE YOU THROWN IN THE BRIG.

It was obvious to poor Mildy that her older brother was ill... mentally ill. The shock of being retired had been too much for him. His mind had snapped, he fancied himself at sea again... the house, his ship... and she, his crew...

YOU CALL THIS CLEAN?! I WANT THIS DECK SCRUBBED TILL I CAN SEE MY REFLECTION! UNDERSTAND?!

I said what are you looking at with your spy-glass? Huh?

N-nothing, Mildy! I was just watching that ship on the horizon!

I Ship, but Ezra! this is Kansas! There aren't any ships on the horizon. There isn't any water... for hundreds of miles!

Shiip, but ezra! This is Kansas! There aren't any ships on the horizon. There isn't any water... for hundreds of miles!

From that night on, Mildy was forced to “stand watch” she had to move through the halls of the old house from two a.m. to dawn, carrying a lantern and shouting.

LOUDER, YOU BLITHELING IDIOT! LOUDER!

EIGHT BELLS AND ALL'S WELL!

Don't "Ezraz" me! It's "yes, captain Jackson!" remember that! Now, get to work, you bilge rat!

Y-yes, captain, Jackson.
Milly had seen a school teacher in her younger years. She'd worked hard and managed to save a small amount of money. She'd used part of it to buy the house she now lived in. The rest, she'd invested wisely, and she'd been able to live comfortably. But with Ezra's arrival, her meager income was not enough.

Phaaah! You call this food? You dare to feed this slop to your captain? You ought to be strung up and given ten lashes.

I understand one thing, you galley pig. Either the food improves, or it's inons for you. And it's "captain Jackson"! Y'hear?

So Milly was forced to earn extra money to augment the small income she derived from her investments. She had to take in washing...

Where in blazes are you, you sloppy sea cook? I'm in the cellar. Captain. I'm doing the ship's laundry!

Ezra came down the cellar stairs, screaming...

You're "below" you dumb landlubber. Not "in the cellar" "below"!

You're "below", you dumb landlubber. Not "in the cellar" "below"!

Ezra stood in the center of the cellar floor, staring about him with wide gleaming eyes...

Perfect! Perfect! Just the place for my quarters, here. You send for the ship's carpenters... the ship fitters...

Avast, gentlemen! Remember, humor him! He's quite harmless...

Oh, course, we understand, miss Jackson!
Ezra stormed about in the cellar, shouting out his orders...

CAPTAIN JACKSON: Put ocean scenes behind the port holes. Hang ship's lanterns around. Put in a bunk a galley a head make everything authentic. This is my ship!

YES, CAPTAIN!


YES, MR. JACKSON

And poor Milly withdrew her life's savings from her investments to pay for the nonsense.

4,990... 5,000 dollars. Thaik you, ma'am. I hope your brother is happy with the job we did!

STAND BY TO CAST OFF. ENGINE ROOM, FULL SPEED ASTRERN. ALL HANDS, MAN YOUR STATIONS...ON THE DOUBLE!

Milly came "below" carrying her laundry basket filled with the wash she'd been taking in.

What in blazes are you doing down here with that? I've got to do the ship's laundry. Captain, I've...

You'll do the laundry on deck. You scullion beggar. Get out of my quarters...

Ezra struck out savagely...
Poor Milly would escape, every chance she could get, and lock herself in the upstairs bathroom in order to do the wash in the tub. And as she scrubbed, she would listen to Ezra's ranting and raving.

With her investments wiped out and the income from them gone, Milly had to take in more wash than she could handle in order to meet expenses, and Ezra's abuse became worse and worse.

One hot summer's day, Ezra stood at the open port hole, shouting out at the sea-scape scene beyond..."Ahoy! Ahoy there! Ship ahoy! Hold fast, stand by!"

While upstairs, directly overhead in the bathroom, Milly panted over a load of wash...

Suddenly Milly clutched at the excruciating pain in her chest, toppling over...

And as her heart failed and her life faded with it, the boiling water overflowed the tub, pooling about her prostrate body, sinking through the bathroom floor...
In his cellar ship's quarters, Captain Jackson listen as the water, leaking down from the over-flowing bathtub above, filled the space between the false mahogany paneled walls and the foundation of the house.

Stormy sea tonight. Batten down the hatches. We're in for a blow.

Suddenly, the water began to pour through the open port holes...

All hands! All hands! We're taking on water! Man the bilge pumps. Secure the bulwarks...

The cellar filled with steam. Captain Jackson staggered to the port holes, slammed them shut. The pressure of the water crumbled the paneled walls...

Abandon ship! We're sinking!

Slowly the water rose in the cellar, boiling, scalding, blistering Ezra's aged body. But he stubbornly stood fast...

Abandon ship! The captain must remain...

...Until the ribind hot water reached his chin...his neck...poured into his mouth and stewed his tongue...his throat...his lungs...

Glugg... Glugg...

Hee, hee! Yep, kiddies that's my morbid marine offering. Ezra finally ended up in hot water! This is the first case on record, by the way, of a captain going down with his ship in the middle of a Kansas prairie...in a cellar...and now, I'll turn you over to the old witch, who is waiting to wind up my reel. Rag! Remember! If you're a fan...and an addict...you're an E.C. Fan-addict! Ahem! Bye, now!
HEE, HEE! AND NOW IT'S MORBID-MEAL-TIME. WELCOME TO THE HAUNT OF FEAR, CREEPS. THIS IS YOUR REVOLTING RESTAURATEUR, THE OLD WITCH, READY TO SLING SLIME... AND WIND UP C.K.'S MUCK-MAG FOR THIS IDIOTIC ISSUE. CARE FOR SOME SEAFOOD? WELL, HERE'S A TASTY TERROR TID-BIT TO TURN YOUR STOMACH. I CALL THIS SLOP-SERVING...

HALF-BAKED!

Calvin dugan stood in the spotless kitchen of The Sea Shell Restaurant, staring in morbid fascination at the squirming, blue-green, spiny-legged clawed creatures that scratched dryly around at the bottom of the butter tub. Cautiously, he reached in and pulled one of them from the tub, holding it up. He laughed sadistically.

YOU'RE NEXT, YOU DISGUSTING THING. NOW, NOW! DON'T STRUGGLE! IT'S NO USE! HEH, HEH!

Calvin reached for a knife. He placed the struggling lobster, belly up on the huge wooden kitchen table and grinned down at it.

FIRST, WE SPLIT YOU OPEN... FROM HEAD TO TAIL... LIKE SO...
Calvin moved the thrashing split lobster onto a rack and slid it into the stove, below the licking blue flames of the broiler...

And now, we broil you alive. We listen to you hiss and pop until you turn orange-red and you stop your squirming.

"Heh, heh. How I wish that I had some sensitive instrument so that I could hear your blood-curdling shrieks, little ugly monster."

Calvin stared into the stove at the broiling lobster. His eyes glinted almost maniacally as he watched its struggling abate.

"Oeao, already, blast it!"

Calvin grinned. "I must lower the flame so that the next one will die slower!"

Behind Calvin, the Sea Shell Restaurant's chef shook his head as he watched his employer.

"Why do you take such sadistic delight in killing those poor lobsters, Mr. Dugan?"

"Perhaps... to a lobster, it is you who are ugly, Mr. Dugan."

Calvin's face grew grim as he turned to his chef.

"I hate ugly and horrible creatures! Horrible creatures should die horribly!"

A lobster is a living thing, Mr. Dugan. No living thing should be made to suffer.

A lobster is hideous... ugly! It deserves to suffer, John. Its own ugliness merits an ugly death...

Perhaps... to a lobster, it is you who are ugly, Mr. Dugan.

The lobster squirmed. Calvin forced the knife blade against its soft-shelled underside and, with a slight sawing motion, crunched it through the lobster, now practically severed in half, still wriggled its spiney legs and waved its huge claws awkwardly.

"Heh, heh. How I wish that I had some sensitive instrument so that I could hear your blood-curdling shrieks, little ugly monster."

"A lobster is a living thing, Mr. Dugan. No living thing should be made to suffer."

"Perhaps... to a lobster, it is you who are ugly, Mr. Dugan."

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"A lobster is a living thing, Mr. Dugan. No living thing should be made to suffer.
Meanwhile, at that very moment, a few miles up the seacoast from the Sea Shell Restaurant, a fisherman guided his inboard over the tossing ocean swells to a cork float from which flew a tattered flag. The last one. If there is nothing in this one, we will have no money for food!

The fisherman pulled up beside the bobbing marker and pulled it into his sea skiff. Slowly, tediously, he hauled in the dripping line that was fastened to the cork float...

I cannot understand it. All along the coast, other lobster fishermen are finding two, maybe three lobsters in each of their pots. For two weeks now, I have not found one.

Finally, the lobster trap surfaced, and the foul scent of the fish head, placed within it as bait, seared the fisherman's nostrils...

Empty! All empty! Not one lobster in any of my pots.

The fisherman entered his dingy shack and sat down wearily...

Perhaps tomorrow, Ambrose.

TOMORROW, TOMORROW... WE HAVE SAID THAT FOR TWO WEEKS!

The child began to cry...

Poppah... sorr... I am hungry. I will make the boy some fish, Ambrose.

Fish! The boy needs milk, Lucy. Lobsters could buy him milk. Lobsters bring a good price, but I cannot catch them! My pots lie empty!

The fisherman entered his dingy shack and sat down wearily...
THE SEA SHELL RESTAURANT WAS NOTED FOR ITS BROILED LOBSTER PEOPLE CAME FROM MILES AROUND TO FEAST ON THE SUCCULENT WHITE MEAT DIPPED IN BUTTER SAUCE. CALVIN DUGAN DID A THRIVING BUSINESS.

THE LOBSTER WAS ESPECIALLY TASTY TODAY, MR. DUGAN, THANK YOU. MR. WINE'S GOOD EVENING COME AGAIN.

AFTER A WHILE, CALVIN LEFT THE RESTAURANT. HE LOCKED UP CAREFULLY. BUT HE DID NOT GET INTO HIS CAR. INSTEAD, HE WALKED DOWN TO THE BEACH.

HE MOVED DOWN THE BEACH TO WHERE A SEA SKIFF WAS MOORED. UNTYING IT, CALVIN PUSHED THE CRAFT INTO THE ONCOMING BREAKERS.

THE INBOARD MOTOR COUGHED AND SPUTTERED, THEN BEGAN TO HUM EVENLY. CALVIN GUIDED THE SKIFF OUT INTO THE OPEN SEA.

A FEW MILES OUT HE PULLED UP BESIDE A BOBBINO MARKER FROM WHICH A TATTERED FLAG FLAPPED.
Ambrose, the lobster fisherman, paced the floor of his dingy shack. Lucy, his wife, watched him with sad eyes.

Ambrose stopped pacing. He listened. Far away, over the roar of the surf pounding the nearby beach, Ambrose heard a sound. A dull humming sound.

Ambrose pointed out to sea. Out to the distant tossing swells. Someone's out there. Ambrose! Wait! That's why my lobster pots are always empty. Someone is stealing my lobsters.

Ambrose was out of the door of his weather beaten shack in a flash. I'll get him, Lucy! I'll get him!

Suddenly Calvin looked up. Scarcely one hundred yards away, another sea skiff glided toward him silently.

It's the lobster fisherman. He must have rowed out. That's why I didn't hear him. I've got to get out of here!

Calvin struggled with his inboard, trying to start it. The other sea skiff pulled alongside. The fisherman in it glared at him with burning eyes.

So! No wonder Mr. Dugan hasn't bothered to stop by lately to see if I have any lobsters to sell. He knew!
**Ambrose snarled.**

- YOU UGLY THIEF!
- PAY ME?! NEVER!
- DON'T BE A FOOL, AMBROSE!
- I'LL PAY FOR YOU TO THE JAIL, WHERE YOU BELONG!
- I'M GOING TO REPORT YOU TO THE POLICE!
- I'LL PAY YOU IN JAIL, WHERE YOU BELONG!
- I'LL PAY YOU IN JAIL FOR YOU.
- THEY'LL THROW YOU IN JAIL, WHERE YOU BELONG!
- I'LL PAY YOU IN JAIL FOR YOU. JAIL...
- I'LL PAY YOU IN JAIL, WHERE YOU BELONG!
- I'LL PAY YOU IN JAIL FOR YOU. JAIL...
- YOU FORCED ME TO DO THIS, AMBROSE!

**Ambrose screamed.**

- YOU HIDEOUS MONSTER!
- MY CHILD HAS GONE WITHOUT MILK AND MEAT AND CLOTHES BECAUSE OF YOU!
- THE KNIFE BLADE IN CALVIN O'GAR'S HAND GLINTED IN THE MOONLIGHT.
- NOW, I'LL HAVE TO KILL YOU, AMBROSE, TO KEEP YOU FROM TALKING.
- THEN, CALVIN LASHED AMBROSE INTO HIS SEA SKIFF.
- AMBROSE'S SHRIEK ECHOED ACROSS THE HEAVING WATER AS CALVIN PLUNGED THE KNIFE INTO HIS WRITHING BODY AGAIN AND AGAIN.
- ... AND CHOPPED A HOLE IN THE FLOORBOARDS, LETTING THE SEA WATER IN.
He'd started home, roaring down the coast road at breakneck speed... when the blow-out occurred.

He lay there, pinned, squirming, his body almost split in two, as the overturned car caught fire and the flames licked at him... and he screamed and shrieked and was broiled alive...

"Hee, hee! That's my story, kiddies! Calvin ended up like the lobsters he'd been stealing. When I came upon his burning car, he was just about done. I was so mad there wasn't a drop of butter sauce around! And talking about sauce, you'd better hurry up and join us E.C. Fan-Addicts! But remember, membership is limited to 25,000,000 people. So don't lose out! Get back issues of our perverted periodicals and write to the Creep-keeper and let him know what you think of our book... for details, read C.K.'s column!"