LEGENDARY 1950s EC COMICS!

HERE ARE TALES THAT WILL USHER YOU INTO

THE HAUNT OF FEAR

NO. 23
MAY

250
365
CANADA

FEATURING...

THE OLD WITCH

THE VAULT-KEEPER

THE CRYPT-KEEPER
HEE, HEE! SO YOU GOT YOUR GRIMY PAWS ON SOME OF YOUR OLD MAN'S DINES, BOUGHT MY MUCK-MAG, AND NOW YOU'RE HUNGRY FOR ANOTHER SLIME-SERVING FROM MY CAULDRON HERE IN THE HAUNT OF FEAR, EH? WELL, TUCK YOUR DROOL CUPS UNDER YOUR DOUBLE CHINS, KNOT YOUR NAPKINS AROUND YOUR NUBBY NECKS, AND YOUR DELIRIUM DIETICIAN, YOUR REEKING-RESTAURATEUR, YOUR MORBID-MENU-MAKER, THE OLD WITCH, WILL OISH OUT ANOTHER OF HER REVOLTING RECIPES. READY? GOOD! THEN HERE GOES WITH THE NAUSEATING NOVELETTE I CALL...

CREEP COURSE

STELLA'S FURNISHED ROOM WASN'T VERY FAR FROM THE UNIVERSITY. IN FACT, FROM HER FRONT WINDOW SHE COULD SEE THE TOWER OF MEMORIAL HALL RISING ABOVE THE ROOFTOPS. SHE'D HURRIED THE FEW BLOCKS FROM THE CAMPUS, FLUNG OPEN THE DOOR, TOSSED HER BOOKS ON A CHAIR, AND NOW SHE STOOD GAZING OUT OVER THE COLLEGE TOWN AND SMILING A TRIUMPHANT SMILE...

ANCIENT CIVILIZATION! YOU'RE ONE COURSE I WON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT ANY MORE.
Stella turned and grinned at her reflection in the full-length mirror on the closet door. She eyed her ballerina shoes, her full skirt, her tight-fitting sweater, and she shook her head...

Stella swung open the closet and unhooked her very best strapless from the rack...

...it's time to roll, hi, Stella out the big guns! say! where are you going?

It was Mitzi, Stella's roommate. She crossed the small room and fingered the evening gown

got a heavy date tonight, it isn't a blind date, i hope. I wouldn't fool around with any blind date these days!

Stella scoffed...

oh, cut it, mitzi. so a few students disappear from the campus. is that any reason to start ugly rumors about maniacs and murderers and stuff like that?!

I didn't start the rumors, Stella. I'm just repeating what I heard. Who's the guy?

Well... if you promise not to tell! it's... professor Finley!

Professor Finley?! the ancient civilization teacher?! are you out of your mind? why he's an old creep!

He may be an old creep, mitz, but if I don't pass 'ancient civilization', I don't graduate. and what I know about ancient civilization wouldn't fill a thimble.

Oh, I get it! Gonna vamp 'im, eh?

Gonna try! don't forget! not a word! I promised him I wouldn't tell a soul.

Well, have fun, Stella. I gotta run. the gang's over at Morrey's. we're gonna have a jam session. don't worry, your secret's safe with me...

Stella swung open the closet and unhooked her very best strapless from the rack...

...it's time to roll, hi, Stella out the big guns! say! where are you going?
Mitzi left and Stella stretched out on the bed. She smiled impishly...

Poor Professor Finley! If he only knew what he was letting himself in for!

It was going to be so simple. Stella’d planned it all so carefully. Ever since that first week... when they’d covered Egyptian culture... and she’d known she’d never be able to pass that course, what with Greece and Rome yet to come... she’d worked on Professor Finley... and this afternoon, she’d finally succeeded...

Oh, Miss Sharp! I’d like to see you after my lecture.

Of course, Professor.

She’d been so careful about her make-up... she’d worn her most flattering sweaters. She’d sat cross-legged in class till her muscles had ached, and he’d finally bitten...

You wanted to see me, Professor?

Last night I read your paper on the 'Fall of Rome.' Miss Sharp. Frankly, I’m a little worried about how much you’ve grasped from my lectures!

I... I’m a little worried myself, Professor. I’ve tried! Honestly, I’ve tried! But I just haven’t understood...

I thought I’d made the causes and effects quite clear, Miss Sharp. I feel terrible. Have I covered too much ground too fast for you?

Perhaps... if you reviewed it for me, Professor... say... some evening?

Perhaps... if you would be highly irregular, Miss Sharp? The faculty frowns on fraternization...

He’d bitten, all right. He’d sucked in the bait... hook, line, and sinker...

Oh! I... I see! Well... er... perhaps... if no one knew... if it was... say... our little secret... I mean... well... I’d like to help you, Miss Sharp! You’re a very nice... er... girl... cough...

That... er... that would be highly irregular, Miss Sharp? The faculty frowns on fraternization...

Oh, I wouldn’t tell a soul, Professor. Not a soul! This is so sweet of you! I... I could kiss you...

Ahem... yes... er... well then, shall we say... tonight... at eight... at my house? You’ll... er... make sure you’re not seen!
Stella yawned and stretched. She looked at her watch... "Golly! It's almost eight! I've got to hurry!"

Stella swirled through the door, moving lithely, trying to look very desirable...

Why, Miss Sharp! You're all dressed up!

Oh, this? It's just a little something I picked up for cocktails! Like it?

She watched his beady little eyes sweep over her. Yes, 'Ancient civilization' was one course she wasn't going to have to worry about...

It's... it's a very nice gown, Miss Sharp. You... you look very lovely?

Call me Stella, Professor!

All right... er... Stella, come... Come into the library!

Oh, what a lovely house! Everything is so... so... interesting!

Stella hid her real feelings. The inside of the house was worse than the outside. There were statues wherever one looked... marble busts of Roman emperors... full length poses of mighty Roman warriors... Roman poets, writers, mathematicians. Columns lined the walls, between which were hung paintings of ancient Roman scenes.

Do you find it interesting, Miss... er... Stella? Come! I'll show you something really interesting...

Professor Finley opened a small door at the end of the hall. He motioned Stella down the steps...

It's in the cellar! Come...

The cellar!! Lord! What I won't do to graduate!
Stella opened it.

Professor Finley pushed, Stella sprawled through.

"Open it, Stella!" said the professor.

"Sure, professor!"

The door slammed shut behind Stella. The lock snapped. Professor Finley's maniacal laugh echoed through...

"Professor, my God! What is this? Let me out!"

"Heh, heh, heh, heh, heh!"

Footsteps faded away up the cellar stairs. Stella screamed after them. Suddenly, Stella's blood froze. She heard the low-throated growl...

"Who... Who's there?"

"He's got another one!"

"You poor kid!"

Stella peered into the gloom. She seemed to be in some sort of huge room. There were other figures huddled together in the center of the floor...

"Who... Who are you?"

"He's mad! He trapped us the same way he trapped you! This is his Colosseum! See? See the cages...?"

At the other end of the cavernous cellar chamber, Stella could see the bars... and behind them, the burning yellow eyes and the gleaming teeth...

"He's got a lion back there... and a tiger... a gorilla! We're to be his 'Christian martyrs'!"

"Oh, no! No!"

At the bottom of the stairs was another door... a massive oak door...

"Open it, Stella!"

"Sure, professor!"

Stella descended the steps slowly, thinking to herself...

"All I have to do is throw my arms around him and kiss him and he's a dead duck! He won't dare flunk me. Poor Professor Finley!"

"I've always loved Romah Culture, Stella!"

At the other end of the cavernous cellar chamber, Stella could see the bars... and behind them, the burning yellow eyes and the gleaming teeth...
Stella's eyes were becoming accustomed to the darkness now. She could see the others... young girls like herself... shivering in the dank dampness. She recognized them. They were students... the students that had disappeared...

Suddenly the cellar reverberated with a recorded trumpet fanfare. The lights went on. Stella blinked. The sand floor of the cellar was stained red. In their cages, the animals roared, drooling hungrily... Stella blinked. The sand floor of the cellar was stained red. In their cages, the animals roared, drooling hungrily...

GREETINGS, MY BELOVED SUBJECTS! LOOK! GOOD LORD!

The lion snarled, the tiger padded toward them. The gorilla pounded his chest, waddling out of his cage. The cellar resounded with the hysterical shriekings of the helpless girls...

And as the shrieks and screams rose to a crescendo, harmonizing in a horror symphony with the roars of the blood-starved beasts, the maniac munched grapes and strummed his lyre and watched the ripping... the tearing... the very death scene his maniacal counterpart had watched nineteen centuries ago...
Stella screamed, Mitzi shook her again.

Golly! You were having a heck of a nightmare!

Stella clung to her roommate, sobbing...

It was awful, Mitzi! Awful! He was crazy! He thought he was Nero! He had a miniature Colosseum... and a lion... and a tiger... and a...

Who? What are you talking about?

Stella sat up, wide-eyed.

Huh! Oh, Mitzi, sob... Mitzi!

It's very simple. Mitzi suggested my dream to me when she told me not to go on any blind dates because of those disappearances... and I, in turn, in my dream, attributed them to Professor Finley... which, of course, is ridiculous.

She hurried down dark streets to Professor Finley's house...

Say, don't you have a date with him?

Oh... Golly! What time is it?

Quarter after eight!

Professor Finley! He had those three girls that disappeared from the campus in his cellar! And I...

Professor Finley? That old creep! He wouldn't hurt a fly! It sure was a dream, baby!

But, it was so real! His whole house was gone in Roman! Statues everywhere! Busts! Paintings of Roman scenes. It was awful!

Professor Finley! That old creep! He wouldn't hurt a fly! It sure was a dream, baby!

Say, don't you have a date with him?

Oh... Golly! What time is it?

Quarter after eight!

Stella leaped from the bed...

Dream or no dream... I'm going to get that sheepskin! See you...

Good luck, honey...
Professor Finley's house wasn't at all as Stella had dreamed it. There was no doorknocker. Instead, soft chimes sang from within as she touched the sutton...

**STELLA SWINLED THROUGH THE DOOR. THIS WAS NO DREAM NOW! THIS WAS IT!**

**WHY, MISS SHARP? YOU'RE ALL DRESSED UP!**

**OH, THIS?? IT'S JUST A LITTLE SOMETHING I PICKED UP FOR COCKTAILS LIKE IT?**

She watched his steady little eyes sweep over her, yes, 'Ancient Civilization' was one course...

**COME WITH ME, MISS SHARP! WE'LL GET STARTED...**

**CALL ME STELLA, PROFESSOR!**

Professor Finley led Stella down a long hall to a huge door. He swung it open...

**WELL, THANK GODDESS, PROFESSOR! I WOULD HAVE DIED IF I SAW ANY ROMAN STATUES OR PAINTINGS OR THE LIKE...**

**OH NO, MISS SHARP... EN... STELLA! ROMAN CIVILIZATION NEVER REALLY INTERESTED ME...**

The lock snapped behind them. Stella looked around, relieved. The walls bore weird inscriptions and strange drawings. At one end of the room stood three... Three... Stella gasped...

**MUMMY CASES? THREE OF THEM!**

**YES, STELLA! EGYPTIAN CULTURE IS MY FORTE! I AM PARTICULARLY intéressED IN THE BURIAL PRACTICES OF THE ANCIENT EGYPTIANS...**

**STELLA BACKED OFF. PROFESSOR FINLEY OPENED A CABINET AND DREW FORTH AN EGYPTIAN PRIEST'S MANTLE. HE DROPPED HIS ROBE, PLACED THE MANTLE ON HIS HEAD, AND CAME TOWARD HER... THE YARDS AND YARDS OF BURIAL GAUZE TRAILING BEHIND HIM...**

**IT'S AN INTERESTING PROCESS, STELLA... MUMMIFICATION...**

**NO! NO! CHoke...**

**HEE, HEE! WELL, KIDDEES, THAT ABOUT WRAPS IT UP... FOR STELLA, THAT IS. PROFESSOR FINLEY HAS FOUR MUMMY CASES NOW, AND THERE ARE FOUR GIRLS MISSING FROM THE CAMPUS. STRANGE THING ABOUT ANCIENT CIVILIZATION' STUDENTS. THEY EITHER FLUNK OUT, DROP OUT, OR... HEE, HEE... DIE OUT. NOW, THE VAULT-KEEPER AWAITS WITH HIS GORY STORY! I'LL SEE YOU LATER WITH ANOTHER OF MY GRIM FAIRY TALES, INCIDENTALLY, IF YOU HAVEN'T JOINED THE E.C. FAN-ADDICT CLUB... WHY FIGHT IT? IT'S BIGGER THAN BOTH OF US! DIG YOU LATER!**
HEH, HEH! NOW IT'S MY TURN TO SHIVER YOUR TIMBERS. YEP, IT'S YOUR HOST IN THE VAULT OF HORROR, THE VAULT-KEEPER, READY TO PRESENT ANOTHER PIECE OF PUTRID PROSE FROM MY CREEPY COLLECTION OF TERROR-TOMES. THIS SCREAM-SELECTION OUGHT TO CHILL YOUR WATERY BLOOD! I CALL IT...

NO SILVER ATOLL!

WHEN WE BOARDED THE TRANS-PACIFIC AIRLINER IN SAN FRANCISCO, CLARK AND I WERE PERFECT STRANGERS. HE CHOSE THE SEAT BESIDE ME AND WE BEGAN TO TALK. BY HAWAII, WE WERE FRIENDS. BY WAKE ISLAND, WE WERE MORE THAN FRIENDS. BY GUAM, I WAS IN LOVE AND KNEW IT. AND WHEN THE ENGINE CAUGHT FIRE SOMEWHERE SOUTH-EAST OF THE PHILIPPINES, THE ONLY TERROR... THE ONLY FEAR I HAD... WAS NOW THAT I'D FOUND CLARK, I WAS GOING TO LOSE HIM...

CLARK! LOOK! GODDAMN IT! ATTENTION ALL PASSENGERS! FASTEN YOUR SEAT BELTS! FASTEN YOUR SEAT BELTS! WE'RE GOING DOWN...


D-DARLING! I-I'M F-FRIGHTENED... EVERYTHING WILL BE ALL RIGHT, RUTH! YOU'LL SEE...
The Pacific came up to meet us, blue and vast and rolling, and the moments before we hit were eternities. Then, the sudden shock! The spray exploding upward around us! The hissing of the flaming engine as the sea water enveloped it...

Then, the utter screaming confusion, as we realized we were sinking. Someone opened the escape hatch and we poured out onto the wing. Miss Kirby, the stewardess, remembered to salvage the medical kit, and the pilot, Captain Miller, managed to inflate two life rafts.

Quickly! Get into the rafts. She's sinking fast. Look, Captain Miller! Land! An island!

The plane went down nose first in a matter of minutes. I shuddered as I watched the tail section sink slowly beneath the choppy Pacific...

What island is that, Captain?

I don't know! There are hundreds of islands in this area... many uncharted!

After we'd cleared a campsite, Captain Miller called us all together...

Now, I don't know how long we're going to be here... it may be a week... it may be six months. Eventually, we'll be rescued. This is near the shipping lanes. In any case, our survival depends on everyone's cooperation!

There is plenty of fruit growing on the island, and plenty of fish in the lagoon so we won't starve. We've got one gun, one box of shells, and a medical kit. With all the driftwood around, we can build a signal pyre, and if a plane or a ship comes by, we'll be able to light it to attract attention. So, all in all, our situation could be a lot worse...

So there we were, eleven human beings marooned on an uninhabited tropical island. That first night, as Clark and I sat beside each other and listened to the squealing tropical birds off in the dense overgrowth, I noticed...

What's wrong, Clark? You look worried.

I... I am, Ruth. We've... we've got to be rescued soon. We've just got to.
A week went by. No plane or ship came near our island, and strange things began to happen. 

One of our party was a thief...  

He's only taken dimes and quarters and half-dollars!  

All my dimes and quarters are gone... stolen!  

MY RING WAS STOLEN LAST NIGHT. I DEMAND ITS RETURN.  

I DON'T KNOW WHO THE GUILTY PARTY IS, MR. KUBLESKI, BUT I'LL DO MY BEST TO FIND OUT.  

I CAN'T UNDERSTAND IT, CAPTAIN! MY BELT-BUCKLE WAS OF LITTLE VALUE. WHO WOULD WANT TO STEAL A BELT-BUCKLE?  

I have no alternative but to post a watch. Two of us at a time will stand guard while the others sleep. This petty thievery must be stopped...  

I had plenty of change. I remember! Now... I've only a penny and two nickels.  

THE THIEF, WHOEVER HE OR SHE WAS, HAD RIFLED THROUGH EVERYONE'S CLOTHES... PROBABLY WHILE WE SLEPT. BUT THE CURIOUS THING WAS...  

IT SEEMS I/OUR THIEF IS ONLY INTERESTED IN STEALING SILVER! BUT WHY?  

I HAVE NO ALTERNATIVE BUT TO POST A WATCH. TWO OF US AT A TIME WILL STAND GUARD WHILE THE OTHERS SLEEP. THIS PETTY THIEVERY MUST BE STOPPED...  

I''LL FLIP A COIN TO SEE WHO... WHO... THAT'S FUNNY! I WAS SURE I HAD SOME CHANGE. ANYBODY GOT A QUARTER?  

I DON'T KNOW WHO THE GUILTY PARTY IS, MR. KUBLESKI, BUT I'LL DO MY BEST TO FIND OUT.  

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THE THIEF, WHOEVER HE OR SHE WAS, HAD RIFLED THROUGH EVERYONE'S CLOTHES... PROBABLY WHILE WE SLEPT. BUT THE CURIOUS THING WAS...  

It seems our thief is only interested in stealing silver! But why?  

THE STEWARDESS GASPED.  

MR. DAWSON, WHAT WAS YOUR BELT BUCKLE MADE OF?  

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WE FOUND OUT WHY! ONE NIGHT AT THE END OF THE SECOND WEEK, I WAS AWAKENED TO THE BLOOD-CURDLING SOUND OF SOMEONE SHRIEKING IN PAIN...
The scream had awakened the whole camp. It had come from up the beach. We all scrambled toward the spot. The moon cast an eerie greenish glow on everything. He was lying face downward on the blood-stained sand...

Mr. Howard! Choke... He's been torn to shreds... as if he'd been attacked by a wild beast...

We stared at each other... ashen faces in the pale moonlight. Captain Miller's voice was cold, expressionless...

But there are no wild beasts on this island! Only us...

Then one of us is the wild beast! Mr. Kubleski! What do you mean?

In the portion of Europe where I come from, there is a belief that certain human beings, when the moon is full, crave the flesh of other humans. We call them werewolves!

You...you mean that one of us is a werewolf, Mr. Kubleski?

... and it is also believed that the only way to kill a werewolf is to shoot it with a silver bullet!

A silver... good Lord! The missing coins... the ring... the belt buckle... all silver!

I shivered in the tropical night. Clark came up behind me and slipped his arm around my shoulder...

You mean that unless we can manufacture a silver bullet, we cannot kill this... this thing, Mr. Kubleski?

That is correct, Clark. No lead bullet will kill a werewolf! Only... silver...

The werewolf knew he... or she... was in trouble when we crashed. He knew that the full moon would rise within two weeks. He knew he would have to strike. So, he stole everything made of silver that we had...

I looked at the faces around me as Mr. Kubleski spoke. Captain Miller... Mr. Dawson... Miss Kirby... Mr. Ansen... Mrs. Ames... Mr. Ames... who was it? Who?

And now, even if his identity is learned, we will not be able to destroy him!
In the days and weeks that followed, I scarcely left Clark's side. I was frightened and he was the only one I could turn to...

Clark! Next week is the full moon again! What will we do? What if it strikes again!

I'll protect you, honey! Don't worry!

And then, it happened again. Four weeks after the first murder, on the night of the full moon, a horrible shriek echoed across our Tropic Island...

EEEEEEOOHH!

And when we got to miss Kirby's lean-to, we found her pale white body torn and shredded and streaked red with blood...

Choke...

The werewolf has struck again!

Captain Miller shouted...

All right! We'll find out who it is! Who's missing? Quickly! Look around! Who isn't here?

Don't bother looking, Captain! It is too late! Once the werewolf's hunger for human flesh is sated, he returns once more to his normal self.

Mr. Kubleski looked around...

He is no doubt right here among us at the present moment!

Are there any tests, Mr. Kubleski... any ways of telling who is a werewolf?

During the period preceding the rise of the full moon, there are very few, Clark! Werewolves are mortally afraid of garlic. In the old country, many peasants still hang garlic on their doors at full moon time. As the full moon rises, the werewolves' eyes turn red. A pentagram is seen on the palm of his intended victim. His eyebrows merge... his face grows hairy... his teeth lengthen...

And then, at exactly the moment of the full moon, the transformation is complete. He is, in fact, a veritable human wolf.

Lord! Where can we get enough silver to fashion a silver bullet? We've got to destroy this god-awful creature...
With Miss Kirby's death, I became guardian of the medical kit. Although my training consisted only of a short nurse's aide course during the war, I nevertheless managed to patch up the various cuts and bruises suffered by the members of our party...

Clark came on the run. I pointed to the rotted crate... laughing...

**YOU WANTED SOMETHING ELSE...**
Beside fish and fruit, darling! Well, here you are...

Clark recoiled in horror. He walked away...

**CHOKING...**

...very funny!

Clark, honey! I was only joking! Please don't be angry...

One day I was walking down along the beach when I noticed a crate that had washed ashore. I read the faded stencil marking...

U.S. Army... Quartermaster Corps... Field Rations...

I waved to Clark who was up at the camp...

**CLARK! COME HERE! QUICK!**

He walked on up to camp, never once looking back. I kicked at the crate furiously...

**OH, Blast you! Why did you pick this beach to wash up...**

On... gasp...

The rotted crate fell apart. The cans rolled out over the sand. I picked one up. The stamped letters denoting its contents was still legible...

**GOOD LORD! CANNED SALAMI! SALAMI! Has... Choke... Garlic in it!**

He walked on up to camp, never once looking back. I kicked at the crate furiously...
I didn't want to believe it. I prayed I was wrong. Clark... the werewolf! How could it be? I loved Clark. I wanted to marry him when all this was over. I had to be sure. I went back to my lean-to...

There's a calendar somewhere! I know it! I saw it! I... I remember! The medical kit!

I opened the medical kit. I studied the calendar. Tonight... tonight was to be the full moon. I started to close the medical kit, when something caught my eye...

Of course! How stupid of me not to have thought of this before!

That night I went to Clark's lean-to. He looked up at me sadly...

Why did you have to find out? We could have been so happy together... now...

I know, Clark! Look! My palm! The pentagram! You're going to kill me!

...And I plunged the hypodermic needle into his chest... Agh!

The moonlight streamed in upon his face as he changed... as his eyebrows merged... exactly...

...As his eyes turned red and his teeth lengthened and his hair grew out of his face... I have to!

...And he snarled and sprang at me, slobbering...

...And the pentagram! The palm! Captain Miller came and looked at Clark's dead body lying in the moonlight and then he stared at me questioningly as I handed him the empty hypodermic I'd filled with silver nitrate from the bottle I'd found in the medical kit...

It... it worked... sob... like a silver bullet! You can tell... sob... Mr. Kubleski...

Good lord!

Captain Miller came and looked at Clark's dead body lying in the moonlight and then he stared at me questioningly as I handed him the empty hypodermic I'd filled with silver nitrate from the bottle I'd found in the medical kit...

Heh, heh, that's Ruthy's yarn. Kiddles, exactly as she told it to me. How come she met me, you ask? So who did you think rescued her and the other crumbs? Natch! Me! You see, I was taking a little cruise this summer on my ghost ship and well, that's another story! I'll save it till some other time. Now it's time to close up the vault of horror for this issue of O.W.'s Mag and turn you back to her. So, 'Bye now... and... as the undertaker said when he painted his coffin cart red, "This is a hearse of a different color!"
Hansel and Gretel!

Here's the latest in my fairy tale debunking campaign, kiddies. This is the real scoop...the true facts behind the nauseating nonsense that you've read as...

Y see, actually, the woodcutter and his wife and two kids weren't so bad off. They weren't so poor that they couldn't buy food like in the versions you've read. In fact, the old man was doing all right. What with the housing boom and the $15 back from the crusades, the real trouble was...

Good lord, wifey! Them kids! They're eating again.

That's all they do is eat! Eat, eat! Eat! You'll have to increase my allowance. I just can't manage with them eating like that!

Stop with the 'increase my allowance' routine! I'm hanging over my whole pay bag now. Why, I still owe a few ducats on my new axe. Every time the collector comes, I got to ducat....

...and there's an installment due on the new wash tub. Oh, what will we do?

You shut up and eat!

No! Don't eat! Talk! Don't eat! Talk! Say something!

Hansel! Our parents seem to be in disagreement as to... chomp...what our behavior... slurp...should be!

Crazy mixed up... chomp... parents!
The picture, kiddies? Actually these two brats were eating their folks out of house and home. So one night...

The last straw? Ditch 'em. So...I haven't seen them. We'd had a good steak in years...I'll set eat steak, even. Later, when everyone was asleep, Hansel tip-toed outside and gathered up some white pebbles...get the picture, kiddies? Actually these two brats were eating their folks out of house and home. So one night...

On the other side of the flimsy wall of their pre-fab woodcutter's cabin, Hansel and Gretel listened...

Ditch us, Hans. Don't get dispepsia, sis. I'll think of something. Pass me the Worstershi, the Worcester...the Worshi, the ketchup!

I'm no fool. I passed my junior forester's merit badge test! I'm clever! I'm...I'm hungry!

Later, when everyone was asleep, Hansel tip-toed outside and gathered up some white pebbles...

Come, kiddies! Follow me! We will go deep into the woods. We will have a picnic. We will...

Notice, sister! As we proceed into the impenetrable...the...the...the thick forest, I keep dropping pebbles!

Finally, deep in the forest, the woodcutter turned...

Well! This is it! The finish! The pay-off! You two are through...done...washed up! It's the end of the line...

Father's been reading Mickey Spillane! Chomp...Chomp...me too! Va-va-voom!

And they, without a word, the woodcutter dashed off, leaving his two children stranded...

Is he gone...chomp? He's...chomp...real gone!
Later that night, when the moon came up and the shiny pebbles that Hansel had dropped glittered like newly minted subway tokens, the children retraced their steps.

We're almost home, Hansel! Yes, I can hear the wild cheering and hysterical laughing!

Mmmm! Wow! We're starved! Pass the Worcestershire! The Worstersh! The wortrash! The ketchup!

That night, the woodcutter and his wife plotted... We've got to try it again, wifey! And this time, we've got to do the job right.

Okay! Okay! Now pass me that bone. It's my turn to gnaw on it.

Yum! Yum! Yum! Mashed potatoes! Andrew...

Surprise!

And so, the next morning, the woodcutter again led his darlings into the Impenetrable... The woods...

Today we will observe the habits and habitats of the yellow-bellied Sapsucker... A birder of the woodpecker family noted for its distinctive plumage...

Cut the corn, yeah? We're hungry!

The woodcutter turned...

The string's run out! Your time is up! Er... go, already! Yeah! We're hungry!

The woodcutter dashed off leaving the two children deep in the forest... (Heh, heh... thought I'd say Impenetrable... Impenetrable... Thick, eh?)...

The woodcutter turned... The string's run out! Your time is up! Er... go, already! Yeah! We're hungry!

Come, Hansel. Share my crust of bread since you have torn up yours into tiny crumbs to leave a trail for us to follow back home!

Who did? Think I'm a fool? I passed my birder study merit badge test! Why let the birds eat it? Chomp... Chomp...
And so, Hansel and Gretel were really lost this time. But do you think they cared? Do you think they worried? You're darn right they did! After all, in a few hours, they got...you guessed it...

...Hungry! I'm starved, Hansel!

Me too! I could eat a horse! I...I...look!

It stood before them in the clearing. The tiny cottage! Gretel ran toward it, slobbering...

Gretel! Come back! Don't! Stop! I said 'horse'...hot 'house'!

Chomp...chomp...p-toodee!

...so naturally the little old pensioned widow who lived there asked...

Nibbling, nibbling...like a mouse, who's that nibbling at my house?

Aw, shut up, y'old bat!

I'm not kidding! She was no witch! Listen! I ought to know a witch when I see one. This old lady was a sweet little old thing...

My lan! Children! Gang-o! One are you hungry? Way! Side, come inside.

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Y'see, kiddies? Y'see how the truth can be distorted? This wasn't any candy house like in the versions you've read. It was a good substantial brick, fieldstone, and clapboard cottage...with four rooms and one and one-half baths...sixty by a hundred...$2,000 down...balance at five percent, twenty years...deals for G.I.'s! Only 'cause Hansel said he could eat a horse...Gretel misunderstood him.

See? Huh? See? Huh?

So this little old lady, kind-hearted soul that she was, listened to Hansel and Gretel's story...

This little old lady, kind-hearted soul that she was, listened to Hansel and Gretel's story...

And since Mama and Papa...chomp...couldn't afford to buy us food...they left us in the woods to die...chomp...because they couldn't bear to see us...slurp...suffer!

You two little darlings can stay here! I'll feed you! I'll take care of you! I'll buy you pretty clothes...toys...candy...soda...malted milk...

...and fell for it...halk, line, and sinker...

Hansel! This old bat must be loaded! Just shut up and play along!
This little old lady begged them brats to stay with her...

Please say 'yes!' I've been so lonely since my husband died last year and left me with all this useless wealth...

Showed them her jewels... her gold...

Useless, I say... because what good is money if it can't buy happiness?

It can buy meat... Hans! Nice thick fresh meat, Hans! - Rich, useless, I say...

Why not bake one now, Gramma?

Granma? You got a deal?

Yeah! We accept!

Oh... you've made me so happy! If... if I knew you were comin' I've baked a cake!

Boinnings!

But as soon as the little old lady was gone, Hansel and Gretel rushed to her treasure chest...

Man! Dig this cool ice! All we oo is get rid of the old bag and it's all ours! Now here's the plan!

You stay here, and I'll go get the firewood! Stay right here, now...

We're not budgin', Granny! No! We're settin' but OOF!
So you see, kiddies, this little old lady wasn't setting ready to roast the brats alive! All she was doing was setting the fire started in the oven to bake a cake in celebration of Hansel and Gretel's coming to live with her.

There we are... A nice roaring fire! Now!

...And listened to her burn to a crisp... She gone yet... Chomp? Real... Chomp... Gone!

Then they took all of the poor old lady's jewels... Some haul! Think of the food this will buy!

And went home to their loving mother and father's cabin and told them the fantastic story that you've believed...

And that's it. To save ourselves from being roasted alive, we pushed her into the oven. And then we found these...

Good Lord! Jewels! Gold!

Welcome home, darlings!

Believe up to now, that is! Now of course you know the true story of Hansel and Gretel. Eh? Well, that's the name of this department! Next time, I'll tell you... Er... Well... Let's just wait and see what my idiot editors dream up. Now, I'll turn you over to the crypt-keeper who will wind up my reek rag with a tale from his crypt of terror. 'Bye, now! And as the bob construction man said when he found the goat in the cement machine, "Dig that crazy mixed-up hole!"
HEH, HEH! AND NOW IT'S TIME FOR ME, YOUR CRYPT-KEEPER, TO WIND UP THE OLD BAG'S MAG. SO, SINCE YOU'VE BEEN TUCKED AWAY WITH A LITTLE FAIRY TALE... PREPARE YOURSELF FOR A NIGHTMARE FROM ME! COME... COME WITH ME TO THE LAND OF THE OKEFENOKEE... SOUTH... SOUTH OF SOUTH... WHERE VARMINT PITS AGAINST MAN, AND ONLY THE WITTIEST SURVIVE. OUR HERO WILL BE THE WITTIEST, EVEN THOUGH HE'S JUST HALF-SO. THIS TALE, I CALL... 

COUNTRY CLUBBING!

Far off, the swamps echoed with the blood-curdling yelps of blood hounds. For on this dark night, the chain gang was searching for one escaped convict... 

GOTTA STOP... REST... EAT... HUNGRY! HUNGRY!
As if in answer to his wild, breathless babbling, a light breaks through the darkness...

A SHACK! THEY'LL HAVE FOOD!

I'LL KILL 'EM... KILL 'EM DEAD! STUPID ROTTEN PEOPLE OUGHTA BE DEAD FOR JUST LIVIN' IN THIS SMELLY HOG SLOP!

THIS HERE CYPRESS STICK'LL MAKE ME A GOOD CLUB!... BEAT THEIR BRAINS OUT!... BEAT 'EM OUT DEAD!

WOMAN!...

GIMME THET...

...THERE FOOD!

I'M HUNGRY!

The convict quivered and convulsed with the excitement of food at last! Food... All for him and no one else... HIM ALONE!

... Alone?
It stood huge and ugly. It was a man... the dead woman's man. His face would scare the wits out of any striped skunk...

...and it did!

Ow! Noooo!

Owww! Help!

It's th' devil hisself! I ain't ready fer ya yet! Ya gotta ketch me! Lemme outa here!

Git away! Don't touch me! I... I didn't mean to hit her! I wuz hungry... honest!

Back out into the darkness and the swamps he ran. Even the hounds would be better for him than this ghoulish-looking monster...

Heh! Heh! I can out-legs him... the stumblin' idiot!

...yet he still followed... with the club!
His wild running brought him back onto the path of the baying blood hounds... their throats sore and eager for a swallow of flesh...

HAROOOOOO

"My legs! Can't move 'em! I'm exhausted! No! No! It's quicksand!"

Gotta pull up! I'll pull up this tree... climb it so dogs can't get me!

At last! No muddy earth nor oawg kin eat me!

AEEE! It's a rat! It's got me! Help!

It's a filthy possum! I'll fling ya to the dawgs!

While they catcha, I'm skedaddlin'!

...yet he still followed with the club!
IF THET CRAZY CRITTER THINKS HE'S GONNA KETCH ME, HE BETTER GET A BOAT, 'CAUSE I'M TRAVLIN' ON WATER FROM HERE OUT!

THE CONVICT WADED INTO THE BLACK SWAMP WATER AFTER A FLOATING LOG THAT WOULD CARRY HIM TO FREEDOM...

CAN'T SEE TOO WELL! THIS LOG'LL DO!

WITH CRAZED STRENGTH, THE CONVICT GRABBED A DANGLING VINE AND CLIMBED TO SAFETY...

GATOR BAIT, I AIN'T GONNA BE!

SNOP!

...YET HE STILL FOLLOWED WITH THE CLUB!
As he untangled himself from the vines that twisted around his arms and legs, one vine began to slowly move...

**SNACK!**

True! It was a snake... a long, brown and yellow cottonmouth snake. And it sank its teeth into the convict, ejecting its stored up venom...

You did it! You bit me! You sw! K-k I'll teach ya!

In his fit of fear and anger, he beat the reptile to death...

I'll kill ya! Kill ya! Kill ya!

Suddenly, the swamp answered back to him with a wild hum of gnats and mosquitoes... followed by pursuing bats, flapping and frightening the convict deeper into the swamp...

He ran wild. Fear, now, had control of his criminal brain. Only instinct kept him fighting to escape the murdered woman's man...

...yez' he still followed with the club!
The Okefenokee had now sapped all of his energy. He couldn't go on. This was it...

He's gonna get me... get me like I got his wife!

I'm sorry! I didn't mean to hurt her! Let me live! I don't wanta die! Don't use th' club!

Stay away! Keep away! Don't kill me! It'll be murder! You'll be a murderer!

Help! Please help!

Uh... here's ya club, Mistuh! Ya forgot an left it way back at muh house!

I... Eh, eh... I forgot my... Eh, Eh... club. Isn't that... Eh, Eh... funny? I... Eh, Eh... forgot my... Eh, Eh, Eh, Eh, Eh...

I... Eh, Eh... I forgot my... Eh, Eh... club. Isn't that... Eh, Eh... funny? I... Eh, Eh... forgot my... Eh, Eh, Eh, Eh, Eh...

Uh... here's ya club, Mistuh! Ya forgot an left it way back at muh house!

I... Eh, Eh... I forgot my... Eh, Eh... club. Isn't that... Eh, Eh... funny? I... Eh, Eh... forgot my... Eh, Eh, Eh, Eh...

And so we leave our convict friend... jibbering away... a raving maniac deep in the Okefenokee. Something just... shall we say... snapped, when the big slob practiced his Southern Okey Hospitality... which is: always return things that ain't rightfully yours. Well, that about winds up O.W.'s Morbid Mag, which is rightfully yourn. We'll all see you next in my mag, Tales From the Crypt! Oh, by the way, did you forget about the E.C. Fan-Addict Club? No? Hmmm! That's too bad! Bye, now... E.C., that is!
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