HERE ARE TALES THAT WILL USHER YOU INTO
THE HAUNT OF
FEAR

NO. 26
AUGUST
10¢

FEATURING...

THE OLD WITCH

THE VAULT-KEEPER

THE CRYPT-KEEPER
In the town of Gagdosky in the Heart of Soviet Russia, young Melvin Buztunen-Skowtrosky published a comic magazine.

So they came and smashed his four-color press...

...and hung poor Melvin the next morning!

Here in America, we can still publish comic magazines, newspapers, slicks, books and the Bible. We don't have to send them to a censor first. Not yet...

But there are some people in America who would like to censor... who would like to suppress comics. They say that they don't like comics for them. They don't like them for you!

These people say that comic books aren't as good for children as no comic books, or something like that. Some of these people are no-gooders. Some are do-gooders. Some are well-meaning, and some are just plain mean.

But we are concerned with an amazing revelation. After much searching of newspaper files, we've made an astounding discovery:

The group most anxious to destroy comics are the Communists!

Here's serious! No kiddin'! Here's read this:

The Communist) "Daily Worker" of July 13, 1953 bitterly attacked the role of:

"...so-called 'comics' in brutalizing American youth, the better to prepare them for military service in implementing our government's aims of world domination, and to accept the atrocities now being perpetrated by American soldiers and airmen in Korea under the flag of the United Nations."

This article also quoted Gershom Legman (who claims to be a ghost writer for Dr. Frederick Wertham, the author of a recent smear against comics published in "The Ladies Home Journal"). This Legman, in issue #3 of "Neurotica," published in Autumn 1948, wildly condemned comics, although admitting that:

"The child's natural character... must be distorted to fit civilization... fantasy violence will paralyze his resistance, divert his aggression to unreal enemies and frustrations, and in this way prevent him from rebelling against parents and teachers... this will siphon off his resistance against society, and prevent revolution."

So the next time some Joker gets up at a P.T.A. meeting, or starts jabbering about the "Naughty Comic Books" at your local candy store, give him the once-over. We're not saying he is a Communist; he may be innocent of the whole thing! He may be a dupe! He may not even read the "Daily Worker!" It's just that he's swallowed the red bait... hook, line, and sinker!

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HEE, HEE! WELCOME TO THE HAUNT OF FEAR, FIENOS. ENTER FOR THE ENTREE, SERVED UP BY YOUR CACKLING CREEPS COOK, THE OLD WITCH. THE FIRE UNDER MY PEW POT IS LIT... (I POURED A LITTLE ALCOHOL ON IT)... AND I HOPE YOU'RE READY TO BEGIN Masticating ANOTHER MORSEL OF MY MORbid MENU. THIS REVOLTING REPAST IS A FAVORITE FOUL FARE OF MINE... A MURDEROUS MEAL Topped OFF WITH A DERANGED DESSERT. I CALL THIS SLIME-STORY Slop SERVING:

MARriage Vow

"Till death do us part?" THOSE words ARE always RINGING IN YOUR MIND, AREN'T THEY, MARTIN SAUNDERS? THe SOLEmn words of the wedding CERemonY, NOT to be LIGHTLY or CARELESSLY THrown aside. BUT like any MARRIED man, YOU'd LIKE a bit of freedom now and then, WOULDN'T you? AN evening away FROM the hearTH, SO you STEAL to the closet, Furtively SLIP INTO YOUR COAT, AND silently TIP-TOE to the front DOOR... Only to hear her SHRILL voice...

AND just WHERE do YOU think YOU're GOING?... WHY... UH... just out for a breath of air, eva...
YOU LOOK AROUND. AT THE DUST-LADEN TABLES. THE COBWEBBED LAMPS. THE MILDEWED FURNITURE. AND THEN YOU LOOK AT HER... AT EVA... AT YOUR DARLING WIFE.

YOU'RE NOT GOING ANYWHERE, MARTIN! YOU'RE STAYING HERE WITH ME... AS IT SHOULD BE.

AND SO, LIKE THE PROVERBIAL HEN-PICKED HUSBAND, YOU OBEY MEAKLY. TAKING OFF YOUR COAT ONCE MORE... HANGING IT BACK UP IN THE CLOSET... AND COMING INTO THE FOUL-SMELLING MUSTY LIVING ROOM, TO SIT ONCE AGAIN THROUGH ANOTHER EVENING OF HORROR IN STORE SILENT RESIGNATION.

DON'T YOU LIKE MY COMPANY, MARTIN? DON'T YOU LOVE THESE COZY EVENINGS WE SPEND TOGETHER... JUST YOU AND ME... ALONE?

YOU SIT STIFFLY, IN QUIET REVULSION, TRYING TO IGNORE HER MOCKERY. BUT YOU JUMP LIKE A FRIGHTENED RABBIT AS SHE SCREAMS.

WELL? UH... YES, DEAR... I LOVE TO SPEND THESE... CHOKED. THESE EVENINGS WITH YOU!

HOW YOU LIE, MARTIN! YOU KNOW YOU'RE FIGHTING OFF THE NAUSEA THAT SWEEPS OVER YOU FROM THE CONTEMPT AND LOATHING YOU HAVE FOR THIS WOMAN YOU MARRIED ONLY A FEW SHORT YEARS AGO. SHE NEVER ATTEMPTS TO "PRETTY UP" FOR YOU. SHE ALWAYS LOOKS HER WORST FOR YOU... HER VERY WORST.

NOW TELL ME THAT YOU STILL LOVE ME, HONEY! SAY IT... SAY IT!

CAN YOU SAY IT, MARTIN? CAN YOU BRING YOURSELF TO MURMUR THOSE SWEET WORDS TO THIS DISGUSTING CREATURE WHOSE VERY APPEARANCE WOULD MAKE ANY NORMAL MAN BE SICK OR THE FLOOR? CAN YOU, MARTIN? OF COURSE YOU CAN! YOU MUST...

I...I... CHOKED... I STILL LOVE YOU, EVA... NO!

YOU HAVE TO VOMIT IT OUT, DON'T YOU, MARTIN? AND YOU KNOW WHAT'S COMING NEXT, TOO. IT'S THE RITUAL. IT HAPPENS EVERY NIGHT. SHE RUBS YOUR NOSE IN IT AND YOU SPINELESSLY TAKE IT.

AND I'M A VISION OF LOVELINESS! TELL ME THAT! SAY IT!

YOU'RE... YOU'RE A VISION OF LOVELINESS, EVA!

YOU'VE A PITIFUL FIGURE, MARTIN SAUNDERS. NO DECENT, SELF-RESPECTING HUMAN BEING WOULD LIVE WITH THIS CREATURE FOR ONE INSTANT. YET YOU SWALLOW YOUR PRIDE AND STAY... DAY AFTER DAY. YOU MAKE NO ATTEMPT TO LEAVE HER... RUN AWAY... FREE YOURSELF. WHY, MARTIN? WHAT HOLD DOES SHE HAVE ON YOU?

YOU SAY THE NICEST THINGS, MARTIN, DARLING! NOW... KISS ME!
No, Martin! It isn't money! You know that you'd ditch the millions tonight... this minute... and crawl a thousand miles on your hands and knees over broken glass if you could get away from her. But you can't...

MARTIN. Those words ensnare you like a steel vise. You're forced to swallow every bitter drop of this domestic swill and live on in a kind of purgatory with this filthy female who is your wedded wife... if only all this hadn't happened! If only she were still the same lovely girl I first met and...

There's one escape, isn't there, Martin? You can escape into the memories of your past, can't you? You can relive those moments when you first knew the ripeness of Eva...

Remember the wedding, Martin... and all of Eva's rich friends? Remember the minister's words... do you, Martin Saunders, take this woman...?

Oh, darling, I do love you! I love you more than anything on this earth... and I love you more than life, Eva... more than life itself.

Yes, Martin. Remember enchanting young Eva seven years ago... enchanting for both her beauty and her wealth. She fell for your smooth lines, didn't she? She fell for your husky murmurs of love... your practiced charm...

It was your cream come true, wasn't it, Martin? All of your wildest hopes and schemes had panned out. After the honeymoon, you set up housekeeping in Eva's town house, off Central Park. And you had such perplexing problems...
And Eva herself wasn't so hard to take back then in the beginning, was she Martin? She was warm and lovely... All woman... and eager to prove it to you... over and over again...

You look tired, darling! Come to bed!

Eva, you entrancing witch.

Yes, Martin! That was Eva then? But now? Listen to her rudely bursting your dream-bubble of the passionate past.

I said 'Your supper's ready!' Come and eat it! What are you thinking about?

 финансов, Eva! Nothing.

You shake your head, fighting down the gorge that rises in your throat. And you sit down to eat.

Finish every drop, dear! We must keep you strong and healthy and don't scrape the mold from the bread! Try it! It gives it taste.

You go on living in a house that even a "Tobacco Road family" would spurn in disgust. Watching the rats scamper across the litter-strewn floors of this once luxurious mansion.

She doesn't eat with you, does she, Martin? She just sits there... opposite you... watching...

So you go on, Martin Saunders... living in a house permeated with the foul fetid odor of rot and decay. Dank and damp and uncleaned for so long...

That smell... gag! That awful stench!
And yet you don't leave her, Martin. Why? Why? In the mirror, you're still young, handsome, magnetic. You could easily find yourself another woman... marry again... live happily, and yet you don't leave her. Why?

TILL DEATH DO US PART...

I've got to get out of here, Eva... just for a little while. If I don't, I'll... I'll...

You won't die if you don't! You won't die! And that's all we worry about, isn't it, Martin?

Why do those words chain you, Martin? Aren't they your answer? Don't you see? They could free you. Death! Why don't you kill her, Martin?

Kill her? If I only could, but I can't! I can't!

Are you a coward, Martin? Are you afraid to try? No, that isn't it. Think back... back to five years ago. You'd been married a year, and Eva had won off. Only her money was important to you then...

There, darling, I've done what you've asked. I've made out my new will leaving you all my money!

Don't put it that way, honey. It's just that, in order to avoid complications...

Remember the mad plan you'd gotten? You'd thought it out so carefully. It would be so easy to weaken the supports of her little balcony some time when she wasn't at home...

There! These wrought iron braces are ready to come loose at the least jarring!

You'd envisioned her stepping out onto the loosened balcony one night...

Oh, Martin. Come see the moon!
As she plunged downward toward the new spike fence you'd have conveniently erected.

You'd even seen it in your mind's eye so clearly... the bolt's coming loose... the sudden sagging...

Martin! Martin! Help!

You'd planned it all so carefully... even up to what you'd tell the police... it just collapsed! It was... sob... awful... awful! I was so helpless! I sob... I couldn't stop it! I couldn't do anything!

And you'd even imagined yourself looking down at the twitching impaled figure... and laughing...

Good-bye, Eva. Hello, Paris. London... wine... women... eh, eh, eh.

And you'd pictured how sympathetic they'd be... how they'd pat you on the back and say...

Sorry, Mr. Saunders! It's been an ordeal for you, we know!

Sorry to have had to ask you all these painful questions! A tragic loss.

And you'd be laughing inside at what you'd gained? You remember how you knew you'd have to be careful... concealing your glee... as they carried her mangled body out, pierced and torn by the fence spikes.

Loss? You'd be laughing inside at what you'd gained? After she's buried... and the will is probated... I reap, not weep!
Remember all that, Martin? Remember the planning, ordering the spike fence - its careful placement? Remember that morning, five years ago, when Eva went on a shopping tour and you were finally able to put your plans into operation?

There! These wrought iron braces are ready to come loose at the least jarring.

She ignores your pleas, she takes your hand in hers - her cold, slimy hand, and she leads you to the stairs. Her grip is strong - so strong.

Let me read a little while, Eva. Please! I'm not tired! Really!

Don't be stubborn, Martin! Come along!

If I never used to have trouble with you, Martin, not long ago?

I never used to have trouble with you, Martin, please... Eva... sob.

You sit on the bed and you hide your head in your hands. You can't stand this, can you, Martin? Every night, the ritual. You can hear her rustling her drag infested clothes.

Have pity, Eva...

But, darling! We're married! Remember?

You can hear them falling to the floor, whispering up a rank cloud of dust. And much as you try, you cannot help but look. You cannot stop yourself from looking at your wife's body...

Choke...

That's better, dear.

Hen voice startles you from your reverie. She stands over you grinning down at you with her stained, tarnished, decayed teeth. And you smell her fetid breath as she whispers:

It's time for bed, Martin! Not yet, Eva. Please, not yet.
You stare at her bloated, rotting flesh that even now falls away in tiny dried particles.

"Oh, Lord, Eva! Won't you? I can't, darling!"

You stare at the gaping holes across her back where the fence spikes came through...

"I'm sorry, Eva! I'm sorry! Please! For God's sake! Go back! Go back! Please."

But that would mean leaving you, Martin, darling! And I can't do that.

And you know that you can never leave her, Martin Saunders! You know that if you ever tried, she would find you. She... or the police! Because, she'd go to them... and show them... so you stare at the woman you murdered five years ago... the woman who came back from her grave to live with you again... to live with you because she'd taken a vow... a vow she meant to keep!

Till death do us part, Martin! Remember? We both promised! That means till both of us die! Not just one! So you see, I can't leave you! Not yet! Now... come to bed!

Hee, hee! Now there's a gal that believes in living up to her promise... or dying up to it, to be more accurate. She's keeping her marriage vow even if she's not keeping very well, herself! Well, enough of this rot! The vault-keeper awaits with his fiendish pabulum. I'll be back later with another horror helping from my ghastly cauldron. Let me just leave you with this one thought. The motto of all good little ghouls: "Never put off till tomorrow what you can chew today!" 'Bye, now!"
HEH, HEH! AND NOW THAT YOU'VE DINED, LET'S DANCE! WALTZ INTO THE VAULT, CREEPS... THE VAULT OF HORROR WHERE YOUR REVAULTING RACONTEUR... THE VAULT-KEEPER... THAT'S ME... WILL ELECTRIFY YOU WITH A HIGH-VAULTAGE YOWL TARN, AND IT WON'T BE MY VAULT IF IT DOESN'T CURL YOUR HAIR! THIS HUNK OF HORROR HEAVINGS IS CALLED...

The Shadow Knows

WITH A SOFT THUD, THE LAST SHOVELFUL OF DIRT HAD BEEN PULLED UPON THE FRESH MOUND AND PATTED DOWN, HIDING THE COFFIN AND ITS STIFF WHITE OCCUPANT FROM THE SUNLIGHT FOREVER. THE SMALL SILENT GROUP OF FRIENDS HAD TURNED AWAY AND LEFT. THE FUNERAL WAS OVER. ONLY A MEMORY REMAINED OF WHAT HAD ONCE BEEN A LIVING BREATHING HUMAN BEING. ERIC COOPER STOOD ALONE, STARING AT HIS WIFE'S GRAVE. HIS LONG SHADOW, THROWN BY THE SETTING SUN, WAS A GRAVE IMAGE IN A PATHETIC POSE OF DEJECTION. HE WAS THE PERFECT PICTURE OF A GRIEF-STRICKEN HUSBAND IN A PAROXYSM OF DEEP MOURNING, EXCEPT FOR HIS THOUGHTS...

GOOD-BYE, MABEL! YOUR LIFE IS ENDED AND NINE IS JUST BEGINNING WITH JONDRA!

ERIC STOOD THERE, NOT MOURNING AT ALL. HE GLOATED. GLOATED OVER HIS MURDEROUS SECRET...

THEY THOUGHT IT WAS SUICIDE, MABEL! THEY ALL THINK THAT AND NOW I CAN MARRY JONDRA... RICH SWEET JONDRA AND IT WAS ALL SO EASY.
Sweet sounds seemed to fill the twilight air around Eric... like the tinkling and clinking of coins. They formed a background music as his thoughts raced into the past... a week ago... when he'd checked into the hotel in Dover on his route as a traveling salesman, and he'd dropped coins into the pay phone in the lobby...

**HELLO, BABY! GUESS WHO?**

**ERIC! DARLING! WHEN DID YOU GET IN? STAY THERE! I'LL BE RIGHT DOWN AND PICK YOU UP!**

Yes, he'd told Jondra he wasn't married! But he'd lied! And later that day, in his hotel room, Eric had cursed fate...

A MILLION BUCKS THROWN AT ME AND I CAN'T GRAB IT! WHY DO I HAVE TO BE MARRIED? IF I WERE FREE OF MABEL, I COULD TAKE JONORA AND HER DOLLAR AND LIVE ON EASY STREET. IF I WERE... FREE

The plan had shaped swiftly as he'd sorted through the steady faithful loving letters from Mabel that had followed him everywhere...

**THIS ONE IS IT: HER "SUICIDE NOTE"! I'LL CLIP OFF THE LAST TWO LINES HERE... AND WITH HER SIGNATURE... IT WILL BE PERFECT!**

Jondra'd been mad about Eric ever since they'd first met and he'd talked gloriously to her... feeding her his lines... breaking down her resistance. Eric had enjoyed the affair... perhaps more than the other girls in other towns. But he'd not known how serious Jondra was about him until that day a week ago when she'd picked him up in her Cadillac convertible and driven out to a quiet spot and said...

**ERIC! WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO ASK ME TO MARRY YOU?**

**Huh? I... Uh... you mean... you mean you would, Jondra?**

Eric's high-pressure sales technique had been as irresistible to himself as to others. He quickly sold himself on the idea...

I CAN'T LET A FORTUNE SLIP THROUGH MY FINGERS! If Mabel were to die... from... say... suicide... while I was on the road... who'd pin it on me?

So Eric had scissored off the loving beginning of the letter, and the remainder had become...

The pining of a neurotic lonely woman... feeling sorry for herself... taking the easy way out! The neighbors told me how unhappy she is when I'm on the road!
The rest had been relatively simple! First...the iron clad alibi...in that town so far away...

Yawn! My key please, and I've had a very hard day, John, so please don't let anything or anybody disturb me tonight! Wake me at nine in the morning!

Yawn. My key please...Yes sir, Mr. Cooper.

Letting himself into the house...silently...using his key.

The quick nerve punch that left no mark...knocking out his sleeping wife.

The climb down the fire-escape outside his window...into the deserted alley where he'd parked his car...

No one saw me drive it in. No one sees me leave! Perfect...

The high-speed dash from Dover to his home town...along roads he knew so well...avoiding traffic...and state troopers...got to make two hundred miles in a little over three hours. That means wide open all the way...

The home-made scaffold, the kitchen stool...the crudely made hangman's knot tied to the cellar beam...and carrying his wife's unconscious form down.

And finally, before the mad dash back...the suicide note placed conveniently where it would be found.

Right on schedule!
He'd left over immediately... The grief-stricken husband, at the inquest, the neighbors had added their evidence...

Poop! Mr. Cooper! It wasn't his fault! He had to earn a living on the road. But she was always so depressed when he was gone! Never smiled on anything! Always feelin' sorry for herself... Wein' alone!

And now the tinkling sound was the tinkling of gold in distant over. Jonna's gold. Waiting for him. Eric Cooper's thoughts returned to the present. He turned away from the grave, smiling. It was dark now. The moon had risen, casting its gold glow over the graveyard...

Go now I'm free. Free of Nabel. Free of any shadow of suspicion...

But Eric was wrong! For as he left Nabel's grave, he wasn't free of any shadow. There was his own... and one other...

Something bothered Eric as he crossed the grave-mounds and neared the cemetery gate. He had a queer uneasy feeling... as if... as if...

Somebody's following me! I can almost tell!... I... Good Lord! What's that?

He stood rooted to the spot, his scalp crawling... Two shadows and one... One is the shadow of a woman! It looks like... No! It can't be! She's buried! She's dead! She's six feet under! It's impossible! It—No! No!
He ran, then, in wild dread. He dared not look behind, he told himself that there could be no extra shadow rippling and dancing along with his own.

He reached the house... dashed in... slammed the door. He stood there in the darkness, breathing heavily. Finally, he switched on the light and poured himself a good stiff drink. Then...

No! Oh... Lord! Her shadow again! It's Mabel's... Mabel's shadow haunting me... hounding me from her grave! I've got to get away from here...

As the miles reeled off, Eric felt better. He scoffed at himself...

I probably imagined the whole thing? My nerves are all on edge from the strain of the last few days. I've got to forget about Mabel. Think of Jondra. And a million bucks!

But like the anxious lover, Jondra was early for her date that night. As she stepped from her Cadillac at the curb before the hotel...

At Dover, the next morning, with sunlight streaming into his hotel room, Eric happily phoned Jondra...

I must have been really a mess last night. Thinking about Mabel. Well, I'm all right now and... hello? Jondra, honey? I'm back! When can I see you?

Tonight, darling! I'll send off Mother's women's club and come to your room... at eight. And don't forget! I proposed... and you owe me an answer!

Jondra froze in jealous surprise as she studied the shadow moving lithe over the drawn shade of Eric's room...

It's only 7:30. I'll surprise Eric early. There's his window fifth floor... and his shadow, dressing... for... gasp!

Why that's not Eric's shadow! It's... it's a woman's! I... I'm early and... oh, the deceitful cheat! The two-timing... sob... sob.

As He...
Puzzled as 9 o'clock came and went... then nine... and no Jondra, Eric phoned her house and sat stunned by the furious voice that poured from the phone...

**How dare you call me, you... you philander! I was early tonight! I caught you! I saw that woman's shadow, the one you had in your room! Don't ever call me again! Click!**

He held her close, feeling her woman's warmth... one million bucks worth of warmth...

**And my answer is 'yes', darling! I'll marry you! Let's elope! We could drive up to Covington, where there's no wait. Just give me tonight to wind up my business.**

This time, there was no mistake. She'd gone up unannounced... and pushed open his hotel room door, and she'd seen the two shadows on the wall, Eric's and the woman's... embracing...

**Huh? Jondra? That you? This is a surprise. I... I... choke.**

**Eric looked around... helpless. The shadow was there. Mocking him, Mabel's shadow.**

**You! You're trying to queer me with Jondra! Mess up my marriage plans! My future! Well, you won't succeed, Mabel! I'll patch things up!**

**And the next morning, with the shadow gone, Jondra swallowed Eric's story...**

**Remember, honey! My room's five floors up! Anybody's shadow could be deceiving at that distance. It was my shadow you saw! I was dressing for our date! I swear it!**

**Oh, Eric darling! Jealousy tricked me! I'm sorry! Kiss me...**

**Eric had been careful to push off the wedding till morning. He sensed that Mabel's shadow shunned daylight. He wanted to play it safe. But Jondra was a woman and a woman is a suspicious creature. She was curious about Eric's 'business'. So she paid him a surprise visit that evening.**

**Eric, I choke!**

**Eric flew from the hotel room, crying hysterically. What she'd seen on the hotel-room wall had been proof enough for her. Eric had seen it too. He hurried after her. Mabel's shadow followed, tauntingly.**

**Jondra! Wait! I don't want your explanation! We're through, Eric! Good-bye!**
Eric staggered after Jondra’s roving car as it sped into the night. He wandered, dazed, unable to elude the shadow that clung to him. As Mabel had always clung to him.

"Let me alone, Mabel! Aren’t you satisfied? I’ve lost Jondra! What more do you want?"

Jondra stopped her car, sobbing as she shook her head. Had her eyes deceived her back then? In the hotel room where two lamps lit, casting Eric’s own double shadow on that wall? Was this all some jealous nightmare? She got out of the car, started running back toward the hotel. She never noticed the woman’s shadow rippling along after her own. Its clutching hands extended...

Eric! Eric... I’m coming.

Around the corner, the cop pounced on his lonesome seat listened, horrified. As the scream died away into the night in a choking gurgle. He stared at the shadows, magnified like velvet black giant phantoms on the warehouse wall... the shadow of the man bending over... and the shadow of the woman at his feet, in a death struggle...

Eric knelt, frozen, listening to the fading scream, and then he saw the shadows on the building face his and Mabel’s... and suddenly he began to run... wildly... confused... frightened... into the arms of the policeman just rounding the corner. Okay, bub! I saw it all! I saw you strangling her! Your shadows were a mile high on that.

I didn’t strangle anyone! It’s Mabel! She’s trying to punish me! It’s her shadow! Look! I killed somebody, where’s the body?

Hey, heh! And that’s my shady tale for this issue of the old Hag’s mag, kiddies. So next time you get that creepy feeling... make sure you’re not being shadowed! And now, I’ll cast you out of the vault and back to the old witch for a tour of her slop servings. I have enjoyed having you with me, as the firefly said when he backed into the electric fan... "I’ve been delighted!"" Bye, now!
With a crowbar, Tengard began to pry the freight door loose. Grunting aloud, he felt sweat skidding down the small of his back as his arms strained to crack the metal seal on the grimy railroad car. Slowly the steel lock began to creak...inch by inch it opened. Another thirty seconds...fifteen...five...

The rasping voice coming at him from down the tracks made Tengard whirl in surprise. Past the lines of freight cars jammed into the smoky yard he saw the bulky man lunging forward: something in the beefy face and the flat-footed wobble sent a spasm of fear trembling through Tengard.

"Watcha doin' with that lock, bum?" the rasping voice demanded as it shuffled nearer. "Drop that lousy crowbar before I wrap it around your skull!"

The puffing face was close now, its beady eyes glowing out from under bushy brows. The beefy man began to snarl again, as his band stabbed for his shoulder holster. Tengard gulped air, like a drowning man...then gripped the crowbar and slashed out violently.

The railroad detective went down with a scream of pain and a gush of dark red blood. Tengard's eyes popped wide and a nervous wheeze giggled from his trembling lips. He stepped forward and crashed downward with the dripping crowbar; the agonized wail stopped immediately. The enemy was dead.

Tengard heard excited voices and running feet. Glancing around wildly, he spotted an uncovered freight car. Dropping the crowbar, he fled down the tracks. Then, digging his fingers against the metal skin, he swung up the side of the car and dropped with a groan onto a jagged pile of coal.

The steps were coming closer now; the voices echoed through the yard as they searched for the dead man. Tengard shook the frightened perspiration from his eyes, knotted his fists to stop the convulsive trembling of his body, and began to burrow like a frenzied animal. The knife edges tore at his flesh and shredded his clothing; the black dust swathed his eyes and clogged his gaping mouth. But the feet were pounding by now...Tengard crouched and held his breath. He'd escaped!

Suddenly, the train lurched forward, lumbering ponderously as if its wheels were square. Tengard started to claw his way out of the coal pile, when the train jolted to an unexpected stop. The coal began to shift furiously on the floor of the car, and his feet shot out from under him. With a roar, the coal began to crash out of the car, down through a rusty chute which had just opened. With a screech of terror, Tengard felt himself being sucked downwards...down the chute...down with the crashing avalanche.

It was hot...so searing hot that the breath was smashed from him. And bright...the explosion of color blinded him and he shrieked in pain. The skin began to flake off his writhing body like scales from a dead fish. His lungs puffed up until they seemed to be jamming up into the raw wound of his throat; he felt himself floating in a hideous vapor. And all around him was a thunderous roar...and a ghastly heat...a shimmering, agonizing, torturing heat...

All the railroad firemen found, when they cleaned the roundhouse furnace the next day, were a few puzzling slivers of charred bone.
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ROOM 706
225 LAFAYETTE STREET
NEW YORK, 12, N.Y.

So here's my 50c! So I could've joined for half the price a couple of months back! So now I get a bulletin subscription. So who says I want it. So I'm a sucker. So put me down and send me the stuff the kid's wearing and the bulletin I don't want but I'm paying for...

NAME:
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* (NO 25c MEMBERSHIP WILL BE ACCEPTED AFTER JUNE 1, 1954)
THE OLD WITCH'S NICHE

Hee, hee! I don't know how you do it, but you do it!
Newsmakers for additions to E.C.'s Horror 1st Parade keep pouring in. These latest horror-turns were suggested by Bob Ringenberg, Cheviot, Ohio; Eddie Erler, Indianapolis, Ind.; Bill Allin, Honolulu, Hawaii; Nick Anderson, Newark, N. J.; Leonzae Bear, N. Y., Fred Costello, Chicago, Ill.; Naugatuck Nancy, Laurelton, N. Y.; Paul Anderson, Sioux Falls, S. D.; Joe Lagere, Lynn, Mass.; and Paul Gamba, North Bergen, N. J.:

ARE YOU LOOKING FOR A SLIT-HEART
LIVER, COME BACK TO ME
OH, BLIND PAPA!
SANTA'S CRAZY
FROM THE SPINE CAME THE CREPE
WITH MY EYES LAYED OPEN I'M SCREAMING
MANY SLIMES
BREAK MY HAND (I'M A STRANGER IN PARADISE)
FEW MINE PAPA
WHIP THESE HANDS
SAY, SEE BLOOD!
GIVE ME FIVE MAGGOTS MORE
WHALING, WHALING, OVER THE BODY MAINED
Ooze THAT'S KNOCKING AT MY DOOR
WHEN THE BLOOD HITS YOUR EYE
FROM A PUTRID OLD GUY
(THAT'S A MURDER)
YOU SAW ME CHOKING ON AN APPLE
LI'L LIZA'S PAIN
I'M SLITTING THE TOP OFF OF EARL

And now for some PUTRID POETRY penned by Arnie Zeller of N.Y.C.:

It was just a little over two years ago
That I started reading the thing.
At that time I thought, of course,
It would just be a passing fling.

"I can throw it away," I said to myself,
"At any time I please!"
But time went on, and I found myself
Like a rat, attracted to cheese.
This fascination, I thought, is bound to wear out
How long can it keep me attracted?
But curiosity urged me on and on
To each story I reacted.

I was trapped like the rat attracted to cheese
Like the addict (when without it, in pain)
These volumes of gore are the things that please
You see, E.C. HAS DRIVEN ME SANE!

And this gem by Frank Dupre, also of N.Y.C.:

When I was one and twenty
I heard a wise man say,
"Go up and down the main drag,
From the alleys keep away!
But I was one and twenty
And stubborn as a mule
Now I am two and twenty...
In the stomach of a ghoul!

AnneLovett of Baltimore, Md. is responsible for this:

She vampred her way through N.Y. State
She vampred from Maine to New Hampshire
And all the men used to dig her stuff
Till they found that she was a vampire

Stanley Goldman of Kansas City, Mo. submits this sonnet:

There once was a ghoul who lived in a bin
His favorite dish was dead human skin
He went out every night seeking some prey
So he wouldn't be hungry the very next day.
One night, as usual, he was out on the street,
Waiting for someone he could nibble and eat.
When he saw a figure he thought he could rally,
He chased the poor soul into a one exit alley.
But when he looked at the face, he began to perspire '
'Cause now he was trapped — by a thirsty vampire.

Arnold Zalesin and Allan Rosen of Detroit, Mich. send things up with:

Mary had a little lamb
She liked it, oh so well
She fed it a box of T & T
And blew it straight to a lot of squishy, putrid slimy pieces

Subscriptions: One buck for eight issues; manila envelopes. Eep, hie! Keep sending in nonsense like the above... makes this column easy to write! Address for stuff:

The Old Witch
Room 706, Dept. 26
225 Lafayette St.
NYC 12, NY
They'd been madly in love, Janet Grover and Leon Payne. Their passion had been wild... burning... tempestuous. The situation had been perfect for their tryst, with Janet's husband so very far away. Yet, now, sitting upon the sofa before the open French doors with the wind outside murmuring through the trees and the soft moonlight filtering down into the semi-darkened room, the lovers stare at each other in growing crawling horror. Their hearts freeze in sudden dread. Their stomachs heave in sudden loathing...

**Janet! Oh, Lord! What's happened to us?**

**N-No! Don't touch me! Oh, Leon! It's ruined! It's impossible! Our love...choke...impossible!**

Janet Grover's face is a mask of revulsion as she draws away, shuddering, avoiding the caressing hands and words of endearment she'd so eagerly sought before...

He... he must have found out Abel! My husband! He must have known! He did this!

**Leon Payne's face is twisted into an expression of helpless fury. He stares in disgust at this creature beside him...**

**We... we thought we were safe! We thought we were putting something over on Abel, and all the time... all the time, he... gags...**
Bitter tears well up in Janet's eyes...spilling down her cheeks. She sobs quietly over this insurmountable barrier that has been brutally placed between them. A barrier so great that no love, no matter how strong, could ever climb it. She shakes her head.

But we were so careful! So clever! We were sure he was fooled! Where did we fail, Leon? Where?

I...I don't know!

Bitter tears well up in Janet's eyes...spilling down her cheeks. She sobs quietly over this insurmountable barrier that has been brutally placed between them. A barrier so great that no love, no matter how strong, could ever climb it. She shakes her head.

But we were so careful! So clever! We were sure he was fooled! Where did we fail, Leon? Where?

I...I don't know!

And even when no calls came for Abel...even when he was able to enjoy one of those rare evenings of freedom at home, Janet would end up in a 'medical widowhood'.

If you want me, I'll be in my laboratory, dear. Can't let an idle evening go to waste. Got to put it to good use working on that new anesthetic of mine...

Yes, Abel...

Thus, Janet had spent long lonely evenings in her big, empty house alone...neglected...ignored...growing more and more desperate, while Abel hurried off on calls or puttered below in his cellar laboratory till all hours...
I‘LL DO SOMETHING, Abel. Don‘t worry...

Of course. dear! That‘s a wonderful idea! Why don‘t you visit Alice...or your mother...or take in the show at the Bijou?

I‘ll do something, Abel. Don‘t worry...

Of course, dear! That‘s a wonderful idea! Why don‘t you visit Alice...or your mother...or take in the show at the Bijou?

And so it begun. Janet had wanted to do something, all right. She‘d wanted to do something about a void that had come into her life. A longing...a desperation...a hunger that needed to be satisfied...

Yes, ma’am! A...a whiskey sour, please!

And so it begun. Janet had wanted to do something, all right. She‘d wanted to do something about a void that had come into her life. A longing...a desperation...a hunger that needed to be satisfied...

Oh, darling. you‘d better go! Abel will be home soon!

I‘m crazy for coming here, Janet! This is insane!

And she‘d found a way to fill that empty void in her lonely life. She‘d found it that very first night in that little roadside spot outside of town. She‘d found someone else as desperate as she. Leon...

She‘s cold...unfeeling...lacking in passion...at least as far as I‘m concerned, any way! So now you know!

We‘re both looking for something, aren‘t we, Leon? The same thing!

Yes, insane! The whole mad affair was insane, and yet it couldn‘t be stopped. Can you stop an avalanche once it starts to thunder wildly down a mountainside? Can you stop a waterfall from pouring steamily over a cliff? Leon? Come over? He‘s downstairs in his laboratory! I‘ve got to see you!

You‘re out of your mind, Janet!

It‘s all right, my sweet! He goes down there like this for hours. I can always tell when he’s about to come up! The light goes off in the lab. You can see it on the garden wall! Come over! It‘s perfectly safe!

I don‘t like it! Still, I do want to see you! I can‘t say no!
And so, while Abel Grover'd explored the Mysteries of Medical Science in his Cellar Laboratory...

If it were possible to freeze the body functions... suspend them for a long period via some new anesthetic... why, the most difficult, the almost impossible of Surgical operations could be performed! And this formula may be the key...

It'd been so easy to fool Abel... unglandular Abel. He was too unromantic... too logical... too unemotional to suspect Janet of anything as base as her having a desire to be loved...

Enjoy the tv programs tonight, dear? Hope you weren't too lonely!

No, Abel. I wasn't too lonely tonight!

When did Abel Grover find out? Well, let's see! It was on one of those nights when he was working in his cellar laboratory and brazen Janet and Leon were upstairs... on the couch... in each others arms... but always conscious of the light...

It's getting late!

He's still down there!

Janet and Leon had explored the sweeter Mysteries of Human Emotion...

The light! It's gone off! Hurry through the garden.

Oh darling... sweet...

And yet, now, on that very same couch where Janet and Leon had so often sat and watched the laboratory light cast upon the bared wall, Janet's primitive desire to be loved has suddenly vanished. She looks at Leon's face and turns away in disgust...

Don't touch me, Leon! Don't even come near me. I couldn't bear it!

Oh, Lord! I'll go mad! Stark raving mad! When did he find out?

It was the night Abel had just completed a modern surgical miracle using his newly developed anesthetic. He'd rushed upstairs to tell Janet the good news and he'd neglected to turn off his lab light...

JANET WILL BE SO PROUD WHEN I... TELL HER...

Oh, hold me, Leon! Hold me close!

Basy!
Dr. Abel Grover stood in the shadowed doorway to the terrace room, and his eager words had choked into a gagged silence as he'd watched them... His loving wife and the other man... no! no... sor... no! it can't be! she couldn't do this to me!

He'd hung back, not revealing himself, listening to their lovers' words... their heavy breathing, the sounds of their passionate embrace and I—i thought she loved me! she choke... darling, what can I do? divorce her? free her? leave her? no! no! that would be too easy, i've got to hurt her! hurt her as she's hurt me! but how...

A calmness had come over Dr. Grover then, and a kind of peace. he'd looked at the results of his latest miraculous surgery, performed on laboratory animals with the aid of his new anesthetic, and he'd known what he had to do...

He'd set his plan in motion. now, all he'd had to do was wait. when Janet went out, he'd returned to the house and hidden in his laboratory. he'd heard them come back, together...

And so he was able to face Janet the next day without any sign of emotion...

... and as they'd sat on the couch, tasting the first sweet tantalizing moments of their tryst... he'd come out of his laboratory, tip-toed silently up behind them... and...

Perfectly sure! we don't have to watch for silly cellar lights or anything! he's far away! we don't have to be afraid, now!

and as they'd sat on the couch, tasting the first sweet tantalizing moments of their tryst... he'd come out of his laboratory, tip-toed silently up behind them... and...
And when it was done, he'd kept them under the anesthetic, feeding them intravenously until the healing process had been completed. Another day and we'll be ready...

And then he'd carried them up again, one by one, to the self-same couch where he'd first surprised them, and he'd laughed...

And now... when you come to... it will be as though you were never unconscious. You won't ever know that a week has passed...

Yes, they'd been madly in love, Janet Grover and Leon Payne, but now that love is gone. Janet stares at Leon in loathing and disgust—his head sewn so neatly to what had once been her own body. And Leon stares at lovely Janet's face, and down to her neck where her head meets the body that had once been his, and is it any wonder they whisper...

It's no good, Leon! It's ruined! How... how could I ever want you? I know, Janet. Choke. I know!

Hee... hee! Now there's a switch, eh, creep? They sure lost their heads over each other, those two. At least Doc Grover made sure of it. Where's Doctor Grover these nights, you ask? Oh, he's at large! He's mad, you know! Stark raving! Goes around painting mustaches on ladies' faces in subway posters. As for Janet and Leon... Well... who knows? And talking about nose, I'll sign off like a famous big-nosed comedian. "Good night, Miss Jorgansen. Whichever you are."
Salutations, slobs! It's final slot-slop in this icky-icky issue of the old witch's misery-magazine, with li'l old me, the crypt-keeper, windin' it up. After all the dreary dregs you've drooled down so far, I'll try to leave a good taste in your mouth...good and gruesome, that is! So let's go north for this tale of terror I call.

COMES THE DAWN!

Overhead, ice-blue stars sparkled like diamonds in the arctic sky, gleaming down over the white wasteland that stretched away from the cabin interminably in all directions. The frigid night wind blew raw and chill, but it could not discourage the hideous thing that yowled and snarled and tried to claw its way into the cabin. Its hunger, its thirst still unsated, as it slavered and strove ferociously to get into the shack, to seize Jack Bolton, to sink its drooling fangs into his white throat, the man within laughed. He laughed at the fiendish inhuman monster who hungered for his blood just a few inches of wood away. Heh, heh, heh

Yes, Jack Bolton laughed. It was funny, in a gruesome way, taunting a vampire. He laughed, too, at the two things lying out there in the cold snow—the two blue-white, dried-out bodies that had been drained of their vital fluids...
NO THREE-WAY SPLIT NOW! THE RICHEST URANIUM STRIKE IN ALASKA — AND IT'S ALL MINE!

AS FOR SAM AND OLAF... WELL, I'LL TELL THE AUTHORITIES THE TRUTH — UP TO A POINT! HOW POOR GUYS... THEY WERE KILLED BY... SO HELP ME... A VAMPIRE. I CAN SHOW THEM THE BLOOD-DRAINED BODIES... AND KALAK, OUR ESKIMO GUIDE, WILL BACK ME UP ABOUT THERE BEING AVAMPIRE!

OLAF... AND HIM? PARTNERS? THEY'D POOLED THEIR SLIM FUNDS AND FINANCED A GAMBLE... A PROSPECTING JAUNT BY AIR... OVER THE ROOF OF THE WORLD. OLAF SUNDERSERSEN'D HANDLED THE MAPS. HE'D ALWAYS HAD AN UNCANNY KNACK FOR SMELLY OUT PAY-DIRT...

JACK BELTED BACK, ENJOYING THE DANCING FLAMES, IGNORING THE SCRATCHING AND HOWLING SOUNDS BEYOND THE WINDOW-LESS CABIN. HE THOUGHT ABOUT THAT MORNING WHEN ALL THIS HAD BEGUN. THEY'D WINGED NORTH FROM NOME IN THEIR HIRED PLANE... ACROSS THE BLEAK ARCTIC SNOW-DESERTS...

I GOT A HUNCH ABOUT THE CHANUK HILLS, SAM? OKAY, OLAF. WE'LL GIVE THEM A LISTEN.

SAM WAYNE' HARDLED THE "CHATTER-BOX"... THE GEIGER COUNTER. YES, THERE WERE MODERN PROSPECTORS, USING MODERN TOOLS...

SAM AND OLAF... I TURNED AWAY AND UNFOLDED THE MAP.

ANY SPECIAL REASON, OLAF?

I GAVE THEM A LISTEN."

THE ONLY THING I WON'T TELL THE AUTHORITIES IS THAT I PURPOSELY FREED THE VAMPIRE... AND THAT OLAF AND SAM WERE LOCKED OUT OF THE CABIN WHEN IT CAME.

JACK LEANED BACK, ENJOYING THE DANCING FLAMES, IGNORING THE SCRATCHING AND HOWLING SOUNDS BEYOND THE WINDOW-LESS CABIN. HE THOUGHT ABOUT THAT MORNING WHEN ALL THIS HAD BEGUN. THEY'D WINGED NORTH FROM NOME IN THEIR HIRED PLANE... ACROSS THE BLEAK ARCTIC SNOW-DESERTS...

SUNDERSERSEN'D HANDLED THE MAPS. HE'D ALWAYS HAD AN UNCANNY KNACK FOR SMELLING OUT PAY-DIRT...
And he, Jack Bolton, had flown the crate. And it was no breeze trying to keep a steady low altitude over those wind-swept barren wastes.

Chanuk Hills... Dead ahead! Hang on! It's gonna be a rough ride.

Jack had skimmed as low as he'd dared over the snow hills and ice peaks in order to give the Geiger counter a chance to pick up any signs of radio-activity. He'd crossed and criss-crossed the vast, practically unexplored mountain range for almost an hour. When...

Hey! Hey! Listen! She's going wild!

Chanuk Hills... Dead ahead! Hang on! It's gonna be a rough ride...

Lady luck had not only shelled out the jackpot, but she'd also made everything convenient for them. The Eskimo village had not been many miles off and a frozen lake had made a perfect landing place...

Okay, Kalak! You got yourself a deal. You guide us to the three peaks and we'll pay your price!

And then they'd found the crude wooden box frozen solid in the ice...

When they'd reached the area, Sam's Geiger counter had really gone wild.

Listen to it! Listen! There's more gold in fission form here than King Midas ever dreamed about.

And then they'd heard Kalak's scream... and seen the look in his eyes...

No! Stop! Leave it be! Leave it be! Do not free the vampire!

Hey, Jack! Circle t'around...
Kalak's spine-tingling words had hissed from bloodless lips set in a frightened face...

Sure, Kalak! We can rid your village of this thing once and for all! No! No! MUSH!

Kalak had looked at the darkening sky and mushed off screaming...

Hey! Come back, you idiot! Blast him! We'll never find our way back to the village in the dark!

But fate had once more been kind to them, for, a few hundred yards off, they'd found the old abandoned trapper's cabin...

Look! What luck! We can stay there till morning!

Look! What luck! We can stay there till morning!

But Jack had gotten other ideas about the vampire lying in its ice-bound coffin out in the gathering dusk...

Three-way split, huh? What about a one-way split... all mine! I could put that bloodsucker out there to good use. All I have to do is wait for Sam and Olaf to fall asleep.

It'd been a cheerless windowless one-roomed affair, old and dilapidated and drafty, but there'd been a fireplace inside and some wood, and they'd gotten a fire started...

Tomorrow morning, we'll go back to the village, fly to Nome, and stake our claim...

And so, hours later, with night blanketing that northern ice world, Jack had gathered armfuls of firewood from the supply in the old cabin and stealthily crept into the night...

Both of 'em are sound asleep. Now's my chance...
Near the cabin Bolton'd paused and looked back, wanting to be sure. He'd seen the last bit of ice puddle away...& heard the sharp ominous creak echo through the crisp cold night air...The lid! It's opening! It...choke...

There! Now to light it!

Ne'he'sunn, stumbling over the remaining distance to the cabin, screaming...

Olaf! Sam! Oh, Lord! Olaf! Sam!

He'd carried the wood to the spot where the ancient coffin lay frozen in its ice-grave. Soon he'd brought out enough to complete a circle around the eerie container with its trapped occupant...

I'd better start back...

Good Lord! I've got to hurry...

So soon he'd brought out enough to complete a circle around the eerie container with its trapped occupant...

The dry logs had roared up. He'd carried the wood to the spot where the ancient coffin lay frozen in its ice-grave. Soon he'd brought out enough to complete a circle around the eerie container with its trapped occupant...

Into a hungry fire that cast its heat onto the ice...Melting it slowly...freezing the coffin...

Creak

And then he'd seen the ancient terror of this Northland in all its malevolence rise up, rapacious to satisfy its foul lust so long denied fulfillment by its icy prison...

What's goin' on? What's wrong, Look! Jack?

Good Lord! I've got to hurry...

And just as he'd planned, while Olaf and Sam had staked at the hideous thing now coming towards them, Jack had slipped into the cabin and slid the bolt shut...

They'd come from the cabin...sleepy-eyed...shocked from their peaceful slumber by Jack's screams...

Jack, Jack, open the door! For God's sake! Jack...
Boltono heard it all. Those blood-curdling sounds would be forever ingrained in his memory. First, the feverish hammering on the cabin door... the hysterical pleading... "Jack! Please? No! No! Keep away!

The sickening sucking sounds as the thing feasted upon Sam’s life-fluid. The choking sigh as Olaf’s retched and fainted..."

Boltono tried to stuff the wall chinks to stop the echoes of death from reaching his ears, but still they came. Sam’s last bubbling moan, Olaf’s grunt as he’d come to his scream as the vampire’s turned upon him...

Then the silence, the awful silence. And the quiet heavy breathing of the thing outside. Jack had finally gathered enough nerve to peer through one of the chinks between the logs, and he’d seen his ex-partners’ bodies lying still and white in the snow..."

He’d watched in horror as the thing had turned, sensing the further presence of blood. Its period of entrapment had been long... its hunger great. Its two victims had only partially satisfied its hunger. It’d started toward the cabin, drooling...

Boltono listened, shivering, as the fanged member of the living dead had clawed and scratched and screamed in frustration at the weatherbeaten logs... the stone barred door. Finally, Jack’d laughed... a nervous hollow frightened laugh..."

And soon, his laugh had become a taunting laugh as the hours passed and the night grew old...
For this was exactly as Jack had planned it. He...safe and sound in the snug little cabin...and the vampire outside...scratching, clawing, feverishly trying to get in before dawn sneaked the eastern sky with its cold light...

One way or the other, I get rid of it. Either it gets back into it's coffin before dawn and I get it with a stake...

Bolton couldn't understand it. The sun would be coming up any minute, yet the vampire'd made no move to return to its coffin. Was it going to let dawn, its slayer, trap it and destroy it? A faded yellow sheaf of papers pinned to the wall caught Jack's eye...

Hmm. This calendar's a few years old, but it'll give me an idea of just when the sun rises around these parts...this time of...of...

Oh, Lord! I forgot! I forgot the most important thing...

Bolton scampened about wildly...feering into the empty dusty cupboards, the bare drawers...the barren storage compartments of the long-ago occupied cabin and he screamed at nobody in particular...

If I stay here, I'll starve to death! There isn't a drop of food in the place! And I can't make it back to the Eskimoid village! The vampire's out there...waiting for me! What choice have I got? That thing's going to keep waiting...waiting...because...

Bolton looked again at the faded yellow calendar. He stared at the gleaming eyes burning in at him through the wall chink. He whimpered softly...

Because dawn up here at this latitude...this time of year...doesn't come for another week!

Heh, heh...well, kids...that's my cool tale for this issue of the OLD BAR MAG. What would you have done if you were in Jack Bolton's place? Stay and starve or go out and feed a starving vampire? Think about it for a few minutes. Finished? Feel sick? Well, you can have it if you want! It's time to close the Crypt anyway. In fact, it's time to close D.W.'s PUTRID PERIODICAL. We'll all see you next in my mag, TALES FROM THE CRYPT, in the meanwhile, a bit of advice. If you haven't joined the E.O. FAN-ADDICT CLUB...well... 'bye!
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