HERE ARE TALES THAT WILL USHER YOU INTO

THE HAUNT OF FEAR

FEATURING...

THE OLD WITCH

THE VAULT-KEEPER

THE CRYPT-KEEPER
ABOUT FACE

The 17th of September, 1866 was ominous and threatening, as if it were some dreadful warning of things to come. The overcast sky was pregnant with rain. Upstairs in her bed, Amy Lorimer writhed and moaned for she, too, was ready to bring forth a storm. Her husband, Jeff, paced the parlor floor anxiously. Finally pausing to light the gas jet and thereby dispel the gloom:

“Something’s wrong up there. I know it. I can feel it.”
He'd been waiting for the sound. Expecting it. Yet when it finally did come, Jeff stopped...startled. Then it came again...a soft...gentle baby cry. And Jeff smiled wearily...

it's...it's over. My firstborn...my baby is here...

He waited for Mrs. Emerson now. Fearing for Amy. The sweat rolled down his face. A few moments later, there was another...a different cry...

My God! what have they done to my child?

It was a raucous cry...vile sounding, Jeff thought. He staggered to the centerhall...clung to the newel post...

What's going on up there?

Then, both cries blended in a discordant cacophony. Jeff's jaw dropped, and an understanding lighted his face. With wonderment, he watched the grave-faced midwife descend the stairs wearily...

It's twins, isn't it? It's...Your wife is doing nicely, Mr. Emerson? Amy? Is she...what's wrong, Mrs. Emerson? Amy? Is she...TWIN GIRLS! Why? she's lovely! But the other one...where is she?

Then...the babies?? The twins??

HORRIBLE...choke...HORRIBLE!

It's twins, isn't it? It's...Your wife is doing nicely, Mr. Emerson? Amy? Is she...What's wrong, Mrs. Emerson? Amy? Is she...TWIN GIRLS! Why? she's lovely! But the other one...where is she?

Jeff flew up the stairs to his wife's beside...

Girls, Jeff! Twin girls! Why? She's lovely! But the other one...where is she?

You've got to promise me, Jeff...promise me you'll never try to see her?

But, Amy! She's my daughter too! I don't care what she looks like...

Promise, Jeff! Promise!
At first, Jeff longed to see his other child whom Amy had named Olga, but Amy kept the nursery doors locked, and Jeff soon accepted her will. Penelope, the pretty one, Jeff proudly wheeled through the park with Amy at his side.

As the years went by, Jeff Lorimer all but forgot there was another child hidden away from the world. Amy protected her secret well, standing guard outside the room Penny shared with Olga while Jeff kissed his lovely child good-night...

Penelope hurried to her own room, sobbing, and Jeff waited outside, pale and shaken, while Doctor Burrows was with Amy. Finally, the good doctor came out, looked sadly at the grief-stricken husband, and shook his head...

Penelope, wearing her new birthday bonnet, had just come in with her mother. As they started up the centerhall stairs...

Jeff, kneeling tearfully beside his dying wife, his voice was barely more than a whisper...

The sky was bleak and ominous the day they buried Amy Lorimer... almost the exact same kind of day she'd brought forth life into the world. Now her life was gone... laid to rest...
After the funeral, Jeff and his daughter made their sad lonely way home...

What about Olga, Penny? I'll take care of her, Daddy!

Penny! Olga is my daughter! I must see her! I must? I don't care what she looks like...

Please, Daddy! Don't! It's better this way! You could never stand her... and I couldn't bear to see Olga hurt.

How do you know? How do you know I couldn't stand to look upon her...

I know, Daddy! And Olga knows!

One day, when Penny went out to do some shopping, Jeff climbed the stairs to his daughter's room. He tried the knob...

Locked? Olga? Olga, open the door! It's your father!

No sound came from the room. Jeff listened to his own heart and his own heavy breathing and knew that this child who'd been locked away for so long was frightened... too frightened...

Don't be afraid, Olga! Open the door! I'm your own father! I... Oh, Penny!

You promised! You promised mother you'd never try to see Olga! You promised...

But I have a right to see her, Penny! I have a right... as a father...

It's your morbid curiosity... that's all it is! It isn't love!

Penny slammed the door and Jeff stood there, musing over her words. From within came the sounds of muffled voices... whispering...

Then the door opened, Jeff turned... and shrank back in revulsion...

Good... Lord... choke...

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Good... Lord... choke...
She stepped out...leering at him, she wore a black dress that showed green with age. It draped all about her feet and the sleeves hung beyond her fingertips. Jeff recognized it as an old one of Amy's. As was the ancient threadbare bonnet that framed her face. But that face, that repulsive, distorted hideous face defied description.

"You...choke...you...ame Olga?"

"Yes...I am Olga!"

Jeff backed off, his stomach roiling. Then he turned his back to hide his overwhelming disgust. Olga's words hissed at him...

I hate you! I hate everyone! Everyone but Penny! She doesn't care if I'm ugly!

I'm sorry, Penny! I'll...I'll try! I really will...

Olga slipped back into her room, and for the next few days remained there. And if the very thought of her made Jeff's flesh crawl, he at least found solace in walking and talking with Penelope...

Olga needs love... understanding... affection...

Olive needs love... understanding... affection...

Because they'll hate me...just as you hate me... for being ugly! It makes you sick to look at me, doesn't it, my father? Yes, I hate you...and all the people that will turn their heads, as you turn yours, so they won't have to see my face.

Olive needs love... understanding... affection...

Penelope...

If she looked like me, you could hold her and tell her you love her...

Perhaps? But it isn't just her face! There's an ugliness inside her, too, I feel it...

No! No! She's good! I know she's just afraid... She's bitter and twisted and angry at the world...

They have a right to be if she can't expect anything better from her own father...
When they got back from their walk, Jeff decided to take Penny's advice...

Bring Olga down with you, dear. No, Daddy! I'd rather you talk to her alone...

But Jeff had lied. He was ashamed. Ashamed of what the neighbors might think. Ashamed to have them see his disgusting-looking daughter. Ashamed because he felt that way as they left the house...

Am... Lorimer... And Penny! I... I... Good Lord!

This... This is my... My... My niece, from out of town, Williams!

Olga ran, sobbing, from her father. Jeff watched her scurry up the street. Watched a child vomit at the sight of her. Watched the mother standing with him at the curb look once again at his hideous offspring, then turn and retch herself...

Olga's hideous face brightened. You... you wouldn't be ashamed to take me?

Olga turned on her father, her face even more contorted with anger and hurt and despair...

You denied it? You denied I was your daughter? You are ashamed!

Olga turned on her father, her face even more contorted with anger and hurt and despair...

How could Amy and I have produced such a monstrosity!

But Jeff had lied. He was ashamed. Ashamed of what the neighbors might think. Ashamed to have them see his disgusting-looking daughter. Ashamed because he felt that way as they left the house...

Jeff turned and hurried back to the house. Olga went on, sending tremors of nausea through all who met her. Her eyes burning with hate for them. When some children in the street saw her, they screamed and turned to run. Olga tripped one of them...

You'll look uglier than me when I get through with you!

Olga ran, sobbing, from her father. Jeff watched her scurry up the street. Watched a child vomit at the sight of her. Watched the mother standing with him at the curb look once again at his hideous offspring, then turn and retch herself...

Go on! Tear out your insides, you filthy things...

You'll look uglier than me when I get through with you!
She sprang upon the fallen child, brutally clawing chunks of flesh from its face...

Attracted by the child's agonized screams, a passerby wrenched the hate-crazed girl from her victim...

You vicious little fiend...

But when the man saw Olga's face, he staggered back with a shudder...

Good Lord!

Olga ran home, then, and with her face flushed with excitement, she recounted her vile deeds to her shocked father...

My God, Olga! Didn't your mother teach you right from wrong?

It's good to hurt people! It's good to make them scream! I forget what I look like...

Get out of my sight, you ugly twisted monster. Go to your room!

I hope you die and they put you under dirt in a box! Then Penny and I will be happy together. We'll have this house for ourselves...

But when Olga was in bed that night, she wept bitter tears of self-pity...

If I was pretty like you, Penny, then everyone wouldn't hate me... Sob... Daddy wouldn't hate me... Sob... And I... Sob... wouldn't do mean things...

And Penelope... Beautiful Penelope... replied gently...

You're not ugly to me, Olga... and I could never hate you! You're my own flesh and blood! I love you!
As long as Olga is alive, Penny and I will always be tortured. She's evil... There's no telling what the little monster will do next...

Downstairs, Jeff wallowed in his own self-pity...

He took the revolver from the drawer...

Amy guarded the secret of the twins well! And the midwife is long dead. So no one knows of Olga save Penny and me! Penny... my only daughter... I'll do it for her...

The locked door to his daughter's room shattered under Jeff's assault. He stood there staring at Olga's hideous revolting surprised face...

Daddy! You... I'm going to kill you, Olga...

Don't, Daddy! Don't! I've got to, Penny... for you... and me...

Now we're free, Penny! Now we're... choke...

The shots echoed into the night. Olga's contorted features froze... she pitched forward... dead...

He raised the gun... and he heard Penny scream from the darkness beyond his monster-child...

The words surged in Jeff Lorimer's throat as he looked down at his "only" daughter's... Penny's... beautiful, peaceful, dead face with the hideous countenance of the creature he'd known as Olga growing out of the back of her head...

Good Lord!

So what's so bad? Most women are two-faced! As for Penny and Olga... well... they didn't know whether they were coming or going. Hee, hee! That's my entree portion of this morbid menu, creep. The vault-keeper awaits with his foul fare. I'll see you later with a grim fairy tale. In the meantime, pleasant screams. "Bye for now."
WELL, DUCK INTO THE MUCK OF THE VAULT OF HORROR HIDOTS AND... OOPS! ALMOST FORGOT MY "HEH, HEH", SO, HEH, HEH... THIS IS YOUR VAULT-KEEPER, FULL OF FLEAS, WITH A CHILLER-OILER FOR ITCH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU. COME IN AND FLOP DOWN ON THAT WATER-LOGGED CHAIR THERE AND I'LL RECITE A REVOLTING OPUS OF OLD NEW ENGLAND... AN EERIE EPISODE OF EARLY MASSACHUSETTS MAYHEM ENTITLED...

GAME WASHED OUT!

JOHN TALBOT WAS UNLIKE THE OTHERS OF HIS COLONY. THEY WERE A BEAK, COLD LOT... HIS PURITAN NEIGHBORS... BRIN AND HARD LIKE THE DISMAL NEW ENGLAND COUNTRYSIDE SURROUNDING THEIR LITTLE SETTLEMENT. YET WHAT MAN OF THAT COLONY WOULD NOT HAVE GIVEN A YEAR OF HIS LIFE OR HIS OWN RIGHT ARM TO BE HOLDING BECKY AMES CLOSE THAT NIGHT, AS JOHN WAS DOING, IN THE LIGHT FROM THE WARM GLOW OF THE HEARTH FIRE... IN THAT SNUG LITTLE CABIN... THAT CABIN BELONGING TO CALVIN AMES, BECKY'S HUSBAND...

I LOVE YOU, BECKY!

OH, JOHN... JOHN... YOU'RE SO RIN... SO STRONG...

YE'51, BECKY WAS DIFFERENT, TOO. SHE'D DEFIED STRICT LAWS TO FLIRT WITH JOHN, TO LURE HIM ON TILL HIS WHOLE BEING ACHED FOR HER. BUT NOT UNTIL THAT NIGHT HAD HIS CHANCE COME...

I HATE IT HERE IN MASSACHUSETTS, BECKY. I UNDERSTAND THAT IN THE VIRGINIA COLONY, EVERYTHING IS FRIENDLY... FREE. WE COULD GO THERE, YOU AND I!

I'D GO ANYWHERE WITH YOU, JOHN...
NO, JOHN! WE DARE NOT! THERE'S NO WAY OF KNOWING WHEN CALVIN WILL BE RETURNING FROM THE MEETING HOUSE!

WELL, AREN'T YOU GOING TO ASK ME ABOUT THE MEETING, PRISCILLA?

AND HOW THESE CONFOUNDED STIFFNECKS WOULD ENJOY DROSSIPING ABOUT US AFTER WE'D GONE!

THE COUNCIL WON'T FIND OUT UNLESS YOU TELL THEM, PRISCILLA!

I LOO! YOU WERE WITH THAT WICKED WOMAN... THAT MRS. AMES! YOU KNOW WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO YOU BOTH IF THE COUNCIL WERE TO FIND OUT ABOUT IT, JOHN?

I LOVE YOU, JOHN. TOO MUCH TO TOLERATE LETTING YOU GO TO ANOTHER WOMAN'S ARMS!

THE AMES' HOUSE WAS BUT A HUNGRY YANG FROM JOHN'S OWN CABIN, AND HE DID NOT NOTICE THAT HIS WIFE, PRISCILLA, WAS WATCHING FROM A WINDOW SHE'D BEEN EVERYTHING...

IT WOULD TRULY BE A PARADISE WITH BECKY IN THE VIRGINIA COLONY -- AND HOW THESE CONFOUNDED STIFFNECKS WOULD ENJOY DROSSIPING ABOUT US AFTER WE'D GONE!

PRISCILLA WAS LIKE THE REST... SO PROPER... SO GOLD... THOUGH IN PRIVATE, HER TEMPER COULD FLARE. JOHN FELT HER ANGER WHEN HE OBSERVED THE SEARCHING LOOK SHE GAVE HIM AS HE ENTERED THE CABIN AND REMOVED HIS CLOAK.

I WASN'T SLEEPS, CALVIN

STILL AWARE, REBECCA? YOU REALLY SHOULD BE IN BED...

THE COUNCIL WON'T FIND OUT UNLESS YOU TELL THEM, PRISCILLA!

JON TURNED TO THE FIRE TO AVOID HIS WIFE'S ACCUSING EYES... YET HE STILL FELT THEM ON HIS BACK... BURNING. HE TRIED TO BE CALM, STIRRING THE SMOULDERING ASHES WITH A POLE.

I LOVE YOU, JOHN. TOO MUCH TO TOLERATE LETTING YOU GO TO ANOTHER WOMAN'S ARMS!
Priscilla's implication aroused John's anger. He spun around, facing her, holding the poker menacingly... Priscilla never flinched...

You'd...you'd tell the council about Becky and me?

Yes, John... if I ever see her again... Oh, John.

No, John! No! I won't let you go! I'll never let you go...

It's no use, Priscilla! I love Becky! I'm going to take her away with me!

A word from Priscilla to the Puritan council was all that would be needed for Becky and John to be burned at the stake... or at best, hanged. John knew this... and flew into a violent rage... he pushed his wife from him and struck out savagely... with the poker...

You'll let me go... and you won't tell... Uhhhh... either!

I'll never let you go, John... OHHHHH...

Again and again, John brought the poker down furiously upon his wife's bloody head until she lay, not moving, on the cabin floor... for a long while he stood over her... breathing hard. Then the horror of what he'd done took hold of him and his only thought was of disposing of her body. He put on his cloak and hat, found a coil of rope, and lifted the bloody corpse in his arms.

He slipped from the rear door of the house and into the woods. I'll take her to the pond... it's deep... and they'll never find her there...

He cursed at the brambles that tore at his clothes as he made his way... and at the blackness of the right. At last, he reached the rocky ledge that hung over the deepest part of the pond...

He used the whole coil of rope to braid up his wife's body... then, he rolled Priscilla off the ledge...

...and watched her disappear into the murky depths below.
But as he was about to leave, he was dismayed to see his wife's corpse rise slowly back to the surface.

Stay down, woman! Ye gods, can't you do that one last thing for me?

Try as he would, John was unable to keep Priscilla's body down. At last he fished her out, found a good-sized boulder, and rolled it onto the rope except from her wrists, looped it around her ankles, and secured it to the boulder.

Then, he pushed the boulder into the pond... And it dragged Priscilla down after it...

Only some bubbles arose to the surface. Priscilla stayed down...

Early the next morning, John joined Percy Blair on a turkey hunt. In the late afternoon, as they returned to the settlement with a number of plump birds, they noticed a group of the colonists huddled outside John's cabin.

What do you suppose is wrong, John?

I don't know, Percy! I can't imagine!

John put on a splendid show of concern, rushing into the house, then out again, wearing the bravest expression he could force upon his face...

She is gone! We'll help you hunt for her, John. Every man in the colony!

They beat through the surrounding woods calling Priscilla's name. John trembled as they wandered toward the pond, but he was immensely relieved to see that Priscilla's body had stayed down... And to hear Percy Blair's knowing comment...

She can't have drowned in there! Bodies float, you know...

Becky Ames and her husband were among those who greeted John so solemnly as he approached...

...and I was worried lest she be sick in there, John... So I went in... Priscilla was nowhere about! We haven't seen her all day!

But that's absurd! I left her this morning and she was pleased that I promised to sag her some turkeys...

They beat through the surrounding woods calling Priscilla's name. John trembled as they wandered toward the pond, but he was immensely relieved to see that Priscilla's body had stayed down... And to hear Percy Blair's knowing comment...

That's right! Come! Let us look further...
The search was finally abandoned at nightfall, and later, neighbors came to reassure John, though there was almost an unspoken understanding among them that Priscilla would never return. The Ames were there, too, and John observed that Becky's lips curled in a small smile...

The savages have surely gotten my wife, Calvin. Else we would have found her...

You're mad, John. We'd be seen. Followed. It would mean the gallows if we were caught...

Don't you love me enough to take that risk, Becky? I can't go on living here, and I won't leave without you!

Becky hesitated. John took her in his arms, attempting to make up her mind with the touch of his lips on her...

You do love me, don't you, Becky? Oh, I do... I do... Oh, John...

Then suddenly she broke from his embrace, her face flushed and angry. She slapped him with all of her strength...

Get out of this house, John Talbot! Oh, that you'd dare...

Calvin was brave while the others pinned John's arms. He swung out, cutting across John's mouth, splitting his lip open...

He forced his way in here... sob... Calvin! Thank heavens you came in time!

Had Calvin come aloft, John would have killed him and carried Becky off, but there were others outside and a moment later, they dragged him from the house...

He forced himself on my wife! She wanted me, you fool!

Hear him lie? We'll see if the council believes your lies...
A meeting of the council was called at once, and while Calvin Ames blustered out his complaint and Becky stared at John Srazenly, seven grim coun-
glemen sat behind their long table, sopping up his every word eagerly...

AFTER CONFERING IN WHISPERED
HASTE WITH HIS COLLEAGUES, THE
COUNCIL PRESIDENT ANNOUNCED:
JOHN TALSOT! WE FIND YOU
GUilty OF
ARTICLE ONE,
SECTION FOUR
OF OUR CODE... PUNISHABLE BY
THREE DUCKINGS ON THE STOOL.

JOHN WAS SOUND FAST AND LED TO
THE DUCKING STOOL. HE SEARCHED
FOR BECKY'S FACE AMONG THE
CROWD OF DILLOKERS AS HE WAS
PUSHED INTO THE CHAIR...

HE TOOK A DEEP BREATH. THEN... THE DUCKING POND!
OH, LORD! HE'D FORGOTTEN! HE SCREAMED AS HE HIT
THE WATER...

THE CHAIR AT THE END OF THE LONG BEAM WAS SE-
SAWED HIGH OVER THE HEADS OF THE CROWD... HIGH
OVER BEAUTIFUL DESIREABLE BECKY. JOHN LOOKED
DOWN... DOWN AT THE RIPPLING SURFACE OF THE
DUCKING POND...

HE COULD ONLY STAND THERE... TOO STUNNED TO SPEAK
THIS... THIS SCOUNDREL WAS CRUSHING MY WIFE
IN HIS ARMS, FONGING HIS LIPS AGAINST HER.

YES, YES! AND THEN...? WHAT?! DUCKINGS! HE OUGHT
YOKE HORSE-WHIPPED TILL HIS FLESH HANGS
FROM HIS SONES...

WE MARRY THOSE WHO DARE.
THAT WAS MY PRIDE... THE FEARSOME BECKY.

WE MARRY THOSE WHO DARE.
THAT WAS MY PRIDE... THE FEARSOME BECKY.

AND HOW ASPER AND STUPIDIFIED WITH FrustrA-
TION AND DISAPPOINTMENT THEY WERE AT CALVIN'S
INDIGNANT REPLY...

WHY, HE KISSED MY WIFE! I CAUGHT HIM
DOING IT! ISN'T THAT ENOUGH?

JUST... KISSED...

SHE WAS THERE AND HER EYES TOLD
HIM THAT SHE WAS SORRY... THAT SHE
DID LOVE HIM... THAT SHE'D ACTED
WISELY UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES.
HE SMILED KNOWINGLY. THERE'D BE
OTHER DAYS... AND BETTER OPPOR-
TUNITIES...

RAISE...
His screams of protest had exhausted his air supply and he'd
some down with no breath left
in his lungs. Each agonized sec-
on was an hour. His head
pounded...his heart thumped...his
brain reeled, as they held
him down. And then...then he
saw Priscilla, floating
lazily...

Had he really seen her? Or was it some mad nightmare??
Lights flashed. He felt himself
slipping into unconsciousness.
And then he was being raised...high...out of the water. He
sucked in precious air...then
shrieked...

Stop! No more! Please! Hang
me! Anything...

Release.

And again he was plunged down
to the floating, swaying, pulpy-
faceted corpse that drifted over
him now...its arms reaching up-
ward...looping over him...over
his head...

Glugg...

Anon...

Again he was plunged down
into the murky depths of the pool.
When the water stopped churning
and the bubbles ran crazily
upward to the surface, he could see Priscilla's body, its wrists
bound tightly, the rope coiling
down around its ankles, then
off into the dark depths to the
boulder...it was closer to him
now, twisting, turning, bobbing...

And when the ducking stool was
up, it's...he must've...he's...won't
empty...fallen...still worry?
off? Down...He'll
there! Kick to
the
surface! It's happened
before...

Below the surface of the pond, John Talbot writhed in the
loop formed around his neck by his dead wife's arms and
bound wrists. And in that horrible moment before the water
rushed into his tortured lungs, her soft, slimy face touched
his and her sightless eyes stared and he could almost hear
her grinning mouth whisper...

I'll never let you go, John...

Heh, heh! A real clinging vine, this
Priscilla, eh, kiddies? Well, she sure
held her man finally! As the fairy
tales end...they lived happily ever
under! And talking about fairy
tales, the old witch is waiting with a
grim one, so I'll turn you back to
her. Don't forget to buy "Tales From the
Crypt"...now on
sale...E.C.'s next
creeps comic. I'll
close with,
as the Mexican
biologists say, "Adios
amebas!"
This'd be a real cooky of a job, Bootsy Dolin snickered as he turned the knob of a door lettered FEDERAL BAKING CO., CASHIER'S OFFICE. There was a fat payroll here waiting to be gobbled up . . . this heist job'd he as easy as eating macaroons!

Bootsy stepped into the cashier's office: the room's only occupant was an elderly woman absorbed in working at a desk. He quickly crossed the room, then tapped the desk until the old woman looked up in surprise. Bootsy leered back at her, removed a revolver from his pocket and hefted it in his hand.

It went even easier than he'd anticipated. Except for a choked gasp of alarm, the old cashier followed Bootsy's script exactly. While he watched with disdain, she opened a big floor safe and removed a tray piled high with handed hills. Bootsy filled his coat and pants pockets carefully, then waved the remaining banknotes aside. Backing out of the room, his gun still zeroed in on the trembling old lady, he growled: "Gimme ten minutes, sister . . . then you can cackle as much as you like! Turn in an alarm before that . . ." his voice lowered to a sinister whisper . . . "and all the dough in the world won't he enough to pay your plastic surgery hill when I get finished putting your face through the grinder!"

Then he was gone, moving swiftly down the corridor toward the exit near his parked car. He hadn't gone more than ten yards when he heard the alarm clanging raucously. He gulped, turned into another corridor, tried to retrace his steps to the cashier's office . . . and realized that he had lost his way.

Whinnning with fear, he darted into a vast room filled with clouds of flour dust and the unmistakable odor of baking. He heard the sound of feet pounding down the corridor behind him, and the muffled noise of shouting. That stupid old dame, he moaned, looking about desperately for a place to hide. Off to one side was a whole row of small doors, slightly above floor level. Probably storage cabinets, he thought, racing forward and flinging the nearest door wide. I can duck out a sight in one of these cubbyholes . . . until the heat dies down! He chuckled as he squeezed into the tiny chamber and closed the door behind him. I'm a smart cooky, he gloated. That's why I'm able to grab off this easy dough!

In the darkness Bootsy was aware that he had stepped into a chamber rapidly filling with something soft and fluffy and yielding . . . had stepped into a wad of haking dough. Suddenly, a heavy plate began to descend from the ceiling, pressing down relentlessly on his head and shoulders. As he crouched in terror, attempting to scramble back to the door, Bootsy saw that the floor was perforated with curious holes. Some looked like stars, others resembled crescents and chlongs . . .

Bootsy screamed in agony, but it was already too late. The heavy metal ceiling was grinding down upon him, squeezing him against the grated floor . . . smashing his flesh downward and pulverizing his bones . . . thrusting his body murderously against the perforations.

As his body was torn to shreds by the awesome weight from above, Bootsy knew where he had sought refuge. He'd been trapped in a cooky press . . . but this batch was destined to become a gory blood pudding!
Once upon a time, long, long ago, huddled on a bed in a cabin high in the mountains, a king lay stiffly, rigidly, not daring to move, not daring hardly to breathe, not daring to do anything except wait, and listen, and know that if he heard it again... that if it started again, that maddening sound... that his mind would surely snap and he'd rave and rant and finally fling himself from the cliff outside down into the final silent peace called death...

And as the king lay there in that quiet dismal far-away cabin... far from the sounds of his kingdom... he thought about how it had been before this... before he'd crave utter and complete silence. He thought about the princess Genevieve... pretty little Genevieve...

Daddy! My cat!
I... I...

More wine! More food!
Come, musicians... play!
Jesters... dance! And you... you, little wench!
Come here!

The queen, Genevieve's mother, had died with her birth, but the infant had not replaced the emptiness that had been left in the king's heart. So the king had surrounded himself with song and merriment and a court of beautiful, laughing women... to help him forget...

The king is... hot-blooded this day...
I'm always hot-blooded with you, Morganna

Na na! Daddy, my cat... it's caught in the ivy vine...
The din of self-indulgence had echoed through the palace as the princess Genevieve had shrugged and turned at her father’s indifference and climbed the long winding tower steps, the tears streaming from her eyes...

...caught in the ivy vine outside the tower window, daddy! Please help me rescue her, daddy! Daddy? My cat! Daddy...?

And so, the princess Genevieve had hung there, crying for help, until her tiny fingers had weakened and grown tired and lost their hold on the twisting vines... and she'd plunged downward... shrieking...

Then, suddenly, a strange silence had fallen upon the castle as the echoes of a plunging dying shriek had faded away. The king had stood up... his mouth quivering... his eyes wide...

What... what was that?

But the king had not heard his little daughter’s cries. Her childish screams had not been able to penetrate the merriment and cavorting noise that reverberated through the throne room...

More wine! Play! Sing! Louder! Louder!

It’s the princess, sire! She’s fallen from the tower window! She’s... dead!
The king had not heard his daughter's plea... her cries for help. The king had been surrounded with ear-splitting noise. And now, the noise... and his daughter... had both died away.

The king had ordered the orchestras disbanded... the jesters stilled... the laughing ladies of the court away. The king had wanted silence, now... a silence of mourning.

The conscience-stricken king had grown more and more sensitive to noise as time had gone by. A dreadful silence had come upon the palace. The servants, wary of incurring the king's wrath, had been forced to move about the marble halls in their stocking feet. A nervous care was taken to see that no unnecessary sound was made, or else...

The people of the kingdom were not happy that their glorious bell could no longer sing out. But what could they do? The king had ordered silence... and the king was the king!

And so, months had passed, the mourning period had ended for the people of the kingdom. Once more, church bells had tolled and oxcarts had rumbled and the people had gone about their business. But for the king, the mourning period had not ended. It would never end. Each sound that reached the king's ears brought with it the echo of a girl's shriek of death.

After the princess's death, the king had ordered the orchestras disbanded... the jesters stilled... the laughing ladies of the court away. The king had wanted silence, now... a silence of mourning.

She had been surrounded with ear-splitting noise. And now, the noise... and his daughter... had both died away.

So, months had passed, the mourning period had ended for the people of the kingdom. Once more, church bells had tolled and oxcarts had rumbled and the people had gone about their business. But for the king, the mourning period had not ended. It would never end. Each sound that reached the king's ears brought with it the echo of a girl's shriek of death.

But even with the dead stillness surrounding him in the palace, the king had not been satisfied. In the town far below, the tolling of the church bell had grated upon his acutely sensitive ears...

What is that hammering and clanging down there? It is the blacksmith, sire. He is tempering the horsehoes...

Then the king called his royal prime minister... issue an order! There will be no noise! I want silence, do you hear? Silence! Anyone who dares defy me will be thrown in irons!
Carpenters were forced to give up the trade because their sawing and nailing irritated their king. Building was halted...

"My roof leaked! I had to..."
"Come with us! It's the dungeon for you!"

Finally, the sound-sensitive king had looked out over his silent kingdom from his silent palace and no one in relieved approval. Now all was quiet, now all was still. And then he'd heard the babble...like mice in walls. The chattering...the distant sounds of voices...

Talking was outlawed. The people had taken to whispering. Anyone who accidentally talked in a normal voice was immediately carted off and his tongue cut out. The king'd looked out over his silent kingdom from his silent palace and he'd nodded. And then he'd heard the hissing...the sibilant murmurs...like wind-blown leaves...

And so, all whispering had been banished from the kingdom. The people had taken to writing communication between themselves. Everyone carried implements with them, and the king'd looked out and he'd heard the scratching and scraping...the rubbing of chalk on slate...like summer rain...

Now the people of the kingdom could do nothing but sit and stare at each other. And the king'd looked out over his silent kingdom, and he'd heard the faint sighs...the sucking in and expelling out of air from their lungs...like spring breezes...

"ORDER THEM TO STOP WHISPERING!"
"Yes, sire."

"ORDER THEM TO STOP BREATHING!"
"But your majesty...!"

"ORDER THEM TO STOP WRITING!"
"Yes, your majesty!"
AND THE SILENCE HAD GONE FAR ENOUGH!

THE PRIME-MINISTER HAD SHUFFLED OFF ON PADDLED FEET AND THE KING HAD STOOD IN THE SILENCE AND LISTENED, WAITING FOR THE SOUNDS OF THE BREATHING THAT DRIFTED UP TO HIM FROM THE KINGDOM BELOW TO STOP. BUT INSTEAD, HE'D HEARD A STIRRING...

THEY'RE TALKING! THEY'RE WHISPERING AGAIN!

THE THUNDER HAD BEEN SO LOUD, IT DROWNED OUT THE SHRIEKS OF THE KING. THE THUNDER HAD BEEN A THOUSAND ANGRY VOICES... A THOUSAND PAIRS OF ANGRY FEET... THE CARPENTERS... THE BLACKSMITHS... THE MERCHANTS... AND LEADING THEM, A CRAFTSMAN NAMED MASON HIGGINS. MASON HIGGINS HAD CLUTCHED A SMALL BOX IN HIS HAND...

SILENCE! SILENCE, YOU FOOLS! GO BACK! GO BACK AND KEEP QUIET!

THE THUNDERING PEOPLE HAD STORMED THE PALACE AND OVERPOWERED THE GUARDS AND STAMPEDED THROUGH THE MARBLE HALLS AND FOUND THE KING...

HERE HE IS! GET HIM! HIGGINS! THE BOX!... 'OH, LORD! THE NOISE!'
So, once upon a time, a king lay stiffly, rigidly, on a bed in a cabin high in the mountains where his people had exiled him. He lay, not daring to move... not daring to breathe... not daring to do anything but wait, and listen, and know that if he'd hear that sound again... just once... he'd go out of his mind...

It wouldn't happen as long as he lay still. It wouldn't happen as long as he wouldn't move. The king knew that. He'd suffered hours of torture time and time again during his brief exile. He'd born up under the maddening sound until it'd stopped... and he'd found out! He'd found out that if he moved, it would start again...

So he lay stiffly... like stone... like silent stone... and he watched the spider... the silent spider on the ceiling... spinning its silent web...

And he watched the web lengthen... and the spider drop, inch by inch, lower and lower, until it hung just above his face, and still he did not move...

He just prayed. He prayed that the spider in the silent, silent cabin would silently climb back up its silent silken thread, instead of... instead of... oh, lord! The spider was coming closer... closer... closer to the king's face...

And then it touched him and he shuddered and screamed and swung at the spider and the silence was destroyed. That sound, that maddening sound began again! That incessant maddening tick-tock... tick-tock... tick-tock... the sound that was driving him out of his mind...

...no! no! no!

The metronome time-piece Mason Higgins had labored over, ever so quietly, after they'd made him close his shop and stop his clocks... the metronome time-piece that wound up automatically at the slightest slightest movement and took hours to run down...

YAAAAAAAAAHH!

The metronome time-piece they'd sewn inside the king before they'd gone back to their normal noisy routines, living happily ever after... while the king went off the deep end... off the cliff!

The End.
HEH, HEH! AND NOW THAT THOSE OTHER TWO GHOULUNATICS HAVE CURLED YOUR BLOOD, IT'S TIME FOR ME TO CHURN IT WITH ANOTHER LOATHSOME LURID LITERARY PIECE FROM THE CRYPT OF TERROR.

YEP, IT'S YOUR CHAIRMAN OF CHEERFUL CHILLS... YOUR CRYPT-KEEPER... READY TO READ ANOTHER REVOLTING RIOT. THIS TENSE TERROR-TALE IS TOLD BY AN OLD SHACK. IT'S SORT OF A HOUSE DICK-TATION. SO HERE GOES WITH:

SWAMPED

TO ANY STRANGER FOOLHARDOY AND CARELESS ENOUGH TO WANDER THIS DEEP INTO THE FOREBODING AND TREACHEROUS OKFENOKEE SWAMP, I WOULD APPEAR AS NOTHING MORE THAN A WEATHERBEATEN ROTTING OLD ABANDONED SHACK, STANDING ANGULAR AND LONELY IN THE DANK DIM DAYLIGHT BENEATH MOSS-HUNG CYPRUS TREES IN THE CENTER OF THIS SHIMMERING MUC-CLEARING...

BUT I AM FAR FROM THAT! FOR WITHIN MY WORM-INFESTED WALLEYS WHERE SPIDERS SPIN THEIR SILKEN WEBS AND WAIT FOR UNSUSPECTING VICTIMS TO TRAP THEMSELVES... WHERE RATS AND CRAWLING THINGS SCURRY OVER MILDEWED CRACKING FLOORBOARDS... I NESTLE A HORRENDOUS CREATURE TO MY PINE BOSOM...
...A CHEATUNE IN HUMAN FORM, AND YET OF SUCH NOESCRIBABLE REVULSION AND LOATHSOMENESS THAT EVEN THE FLIES AVOID HIM AND THE EVER-THIRSTY SWAMP MOSQUITOES REFUSE TO LIGHT UPON HIS SICKENING FLESH AND BUCK UPON HIS CONTAMINATED BLOOD.

...CROSSES MY ALGAE-SCREENED FLOOR PLANKS WITH DRAUGGED FEET, HEAVY WITH WEAKNESS AND SAPPED STRENGTH...

...AND STEPS DOWN INTO THE THICK, HOT, WET SWAMP NIGHT, YEARNING, TORTURED...PRAYING THAT THIS TIME, THIS TIME HIS HUNGER WILL BE SATISFIED.

My CRUDE PORCH WIPES UNDER HIS WEIGHT AS HE SHUFFLES TO THE LADDER...EASES DOWN...DOWN TO THE FLAT-BOTTOMED BOAT LASHED TO ONE OF MY MOSSY-SLICK SUPPORTING STILTS...TO THE BOAT RESTING ON THE GLIMMERING MUDD...

Then, idiotically as it may appear, my hermit-charge...my horrid secret...begins to row. He rows across the shimmering mud clearing, pushing back great gobs of glittering wet sand, skimming his boat toward the grassy bank beyond...

Carefully he ties the boat to an overhanging limb and climbs onto the dry mound. He turns once to gush at me as I stand lonely and polluted and ashamed, then ducks off into the dark mysterious OKEFENOKEE SWAMP...
This is the way it is each night. This is the way it has been ever since I came into being...ever since that day, an eternity ago, when my hermit-charge dragged his boat to this open spot in the swamp and rowed out and laboriously drove long poles deep down into the mud...

He was then as he is now...foul-smelling and hideous...and yet, as I took shape upon my stilt-legs, I did not hate him. He was my creator and my master. He had formed me out of logs and planks and rusty nails and cast-off stove pipings and a thousand other salvaged items. He was my maker and my father and I loved him for breathing life into me...

When I was done, he'd sat inside me and I'd nestled him and I'd felt happy and complete...

When I was done, he'd sat inside me and I'd nestled him and I'd felt happy and complete...

Then he'd cut the trap door in my floor boards and fastened it with rusted hinges and he'd grinned down at the shimmering mud below me and I'd felt a tremor run through me...

And then it'd begun those nightly sojourns into the mysterious swamp beyond my clearing-world...

One night he'd come back dragging something...something bulky and soft and limp. He'd dumped it into his flat-boat and skimmed to me, and I'd heard his maniacal laugh for the first time and seen him drooling spittle and shaking with eager anticipation...

He'd brought back a body...a body of a hunter who'd been camping nearby. I'd felt suddenly cold as he'd carried it inside me and dropped it upon my floor and savagely ripped its clothes away. And then I'd realized...I'd realized in revulsion and dread as he'd begun to feast upon the dead flesh...

...that my maker...my master...my hermit-charge was a ghoul...
My beams groaned and my stuel'd creaked and I'd settled an inch or two into the mud below me as I'd witnessed the disgusting scene... saw him slash and snarl and munch like an idiot-child... stripping the bones clean... devouring the cold raw flesh...

And then I'd heard the voice... an angry voice... shouting loudly... and another hunter's appeared on the grassy mound at the edge of the mud-flat cleaning...

All right, you! I know you're in there! C'we out or I'll come in and get you...

My hideous creator'd stiffened suddenly... looked around wildly... then relaxed as though he'd forgotten for a moment, then he'd gone to the door... he'd gone to the door...

What'd you do with Eddie? Where is he? So help me, if you've harmed him... and he'd gained as the other hunter'd started toward me... stepping out into the shimmering mud...

What the?... and sinking down... down into the bucking, wet, swirling mire...

Oh, Lord...

Slowly down... down into the

Quicksand! Yaaaaaaaaaggh... ch... cr...
I'd shuddered as the slime had swallowed him up, rising to his chest, his neck, his shoulders, pouring into his mouth, cuttings off his screams in a grating choking cough, then closing over him. Now I knew why I'd been built over this quicksand bog. Now I knew the reason, but there was another reason too... as I soon learned...

Heh, heh...

I'd been born of scraps and salvage and cast-offs by a creature that society had cast off. I was the home of a ghoul... a safe home... a practical home... protecting him from harm by a surrounding bog of quicksand... and helping him to rid himself of the evidences of his fiendish work by a trap door in my base-flooring. I was his silent cohort... his life-less wooden collaborator. And I was helpless. Could I stop his nightly prowling?...

Could I stop his hunger-driven, flesh-maddened attacks?... Could I stop him from bringing the cold and white and stiff corpses back to me?... Could I stop the ghoul... my maker... my creator had turned in glistening satisfaction and had waddled back inside me... back to the partially devoured corpse that lay upon my floorboards, and when he'd finished... when he'd satisfied his craving... when the flesh was gone and all that was left were bones and quivering in-wards, he'd opened the trap door...

Heh, heh,...
Could I stop him from dumping the gruesome remains of his disgusting indulgences through the trap-door down into the evidence-swallowing quagmire?... No! For I was nothing but planks and logs and rusted nails... A lifeless thing that could only stand and wait and see. I could do nothing. Nothing! And so I'd stood beneath the moss-hung cypress trees and I'd nestled my vile secret...

While below me, around my stilt legs, the quagmire shimmered and eddied. I felt the bodies of the dead who stumbled into it and the bones of those who were dumped into it brush against my wooden feet.

I felt a million years of decomposition and decay caress my lifeless legs... the same decomposition and decay that caressed the legs of the once-mighty dinosaurs eons upon eons ago...

The same slime and muck that oozed upon a newly born planet and gave birth to its first life...

And now... now I feel a stirring beneath the shimmering quicksand surface... a shuddering... a mixing and a melting and a combining. I feel a thousand body-parts... long-since decomposed and rotted and reduced to jellied nothingness... fuse together...
My hermit charge sits within my cobwebbed walls, staring stupidly, licking his cracked and foul-smelling lips, dribbling intermittently, and waiting for the sun to sink behind the hanging cypress trees to the west...

While below... below my green flooring spotted with dried gore... the quicksand pool pulsates and throbs... a living thing... a mass of navaged remains and lurid wholes... fused into one... reaching... reaching upward and outward and around my stilt legs...

I have waited for this day. I have waited an eternity for this moment... for something to happen that would free me from the degrading shameful career that had been forced upon me. I welcome the straining upon my stilt legs... the cracking and splintering... the heaving of the weight of me resting upon them...

I welcome their final collapse... and then my thundering collapse... my creaking, whining plunge down into the bucking, gulping, living, quivering pool... trapping my loathsome charge within me...

I welcome my destruction and my freedom. And I welcome my hideous secret's final destruction, too... as the pulsating pool that had once been his protector and the concealer of his crimes now devours him, stripping the flesh from his bones as he had once done to others... to those who now were part of this avenging dog...

Heh, heh! Well, that's my SLIME-SELECTION for this issue of O.W.'s REEK-RAG! Irving (for that was the shacks' name) just bogged down after that. Never wrote another Yelp-Yarn for my Creeps Collection. Rotten shame, I say! Had an interesting story style! A little wooden... but... well... I guess Irving was just a one-story shack. Well, we'll all see you next in my mag, "Tales from the Crypt," and don't forget my new pen-periodical, "The Crypt of Terror," containing more of the same nauseating nonsense like this stuff here. Bye, now...