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 актуальность

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Our story opens in the only hotel in the small town of Leintz, Hungary. It is night... and to some of the guests it is an evening of quiet repose. But for one of them, it is a grim, horrid moment of vicious death.

HA! HA! HA! Well... you readers must have stout hearts to continue coming back for more of my gruesome tales! This time I have a real shocker for you! A story that will send vibrant chills of terror through you and rack your body with its suspense. This yarn, from my private collection is called...

WEREWOLF CONCERTO!
I'm checking out! Three deaths in three months is too much!

What kind of a hotel is this, anyway?

Please! Please... I beg you!

I'm not going to stay in this place and be murdered!

Neither am I!

But... but the police will catch the killer!

Sure! It's awful! I'm getting out!

Some all right, gentlemen... I can't blame you!

Yes... heh, heh, heh! Three murders in three months is enough to ruin any hotel.

Oh-h... this is terrible! The hotel is getting a bad reputation! If I don't do something soon, I'll be ruined!

But what can I do? What? I... eh?... wait! What's this?
MADEMOISELLE MICHELINE? THIS IS HUBERT ANTOINE, MANAGER OF THE FAMOUS VENEZIAN GARDENS HOTEL IN LEINTZ. I WISH TO OFFER YOU MY FINEST HOTEL SUITE TO USE DURING YOUR ENGAGEMENT IN BRAVO! I OFFER IT TO YOU...FREE!

YOU ARE TOO KIND, M'SIEU! I AM HAPPY TO ACCEPT!

JUST A MOMENT! WHAT'S GOING ON HERE? I DIDN'T ORDER ANY PIANO!

THIS IS MADEMOISELLE MICHELINE'S PERSONAL CONCERT PIANO! WHERE SHE GOES, THIS GOES, TOO!

MADEMOISELLE MICHELINE? PERSONAL PIANO? OH!... OH, OF COURSE! CERTAINLY! CERTAINLY! RIGHT THIS WAY!

THIS IS OUR FINEST SUITE! IT COVERS ONE ENTIRE FLOOR! I'LL HAVE THIS PIANO REMOVED SO YOU CAN SET HER'S IN ITS PLACE! ER...ANY IDEA WHEN THE MADEMOISELLE WILL ARRIVE?

PROBABLY TODAY. SHE DOESN'T LET THIS PIANO OUT OF HER SIGHT FOR LONG!

HA! HA! WITH MADEMOISELLE MICHELINE AS MY GUEST, THE TOURISTS WILL FIGHT TO GAIN ENTRANCE! HA! HA! I'M A GENIUS!

YES, HUBERT WAS PROUD OF HIMSELF, AND THAT NIGHT HE SLEPT BLISSFULLY! HOWEVER, THE FOLLOWING AFTERNOON, A LARGE TRUCK PULLED TO A STOP IN FRONT OF THE HOTEL!

I'D LIKE TO REM Em THIS PIANO SO YOU CAN SET HER'S IN ITS PLACE?
HUBERT WAS ECSTATIC WITH JOY! HE WAITED ALL DAY IN ANXIOUS ANTICIPATION... BUT MADEMOISELLE MICHELINE DIDN'T ARRIVE! LATE THAT EVENING...

NOT YET, EM? PERHAPS SHE'S NOT COMING UNTIL TOMORROW!

WHAT THE DEVIL! THAT... THAT GIRL STEPPING FROM THE ELEVATOR! IT'S MADEMOISELLE MICHELINE!

MADEMOISELLE MICHELINE? IT'S AN HONOR TO HAVE YOU AS OUR GUEST! I MUST APOLOGIZE FOR NOT BEING ON HAND TO GREET YOU! AH... WE DIDN'T SEE YOU CHECK IN....

WHAT THE DEVIL! HOLY SMOKES! WHEN DID SHE GO UP?

HUBERT WAS VERY HAPPY...

HONEST, MR. ANTOINE? I'VE BEEN ON DUTY ALL DAY, AND I SWEAR I DIDN'T TAKE HER UP! SOME- BODY RANG THE DOWN BUZZER ON HER PRIVATE FLOOR... AND THERE SHE WAS?

HEH, HEH! WELL ANYWAY, FRIENDS, WEEKS PASSED AND THE HOTEL BEGAN TO PROSPER AGAIN! HUBERT WAS VERY HAPPY! BUT LOVELY MADEMOISELLE MICHELINE INTRIGUED HIM...

Puzzling... Can't understand her. Never see her during the day... Says she practices at night... Yet no one has ever heard her practice... Maybe she's a phoney?

HEE! NEW clothes and personal belongings came, sir, but not her!

IDIOT! YOU SAID SHE DIDN'T ARRIVE! WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME SHE WAS HERE?!

But... But she didn't arrive! I mean, she didn't check in! See? The register hasn't been signed! Maybe the elevator boy...

Quite all right, M'sieu. It is of no consequence. I shall be out all evening. Please see that no one enters my room!

Idiot! You said she didn't arrive! Why didn't you tell me she was here?!
A crouched, furtive, figure prowled through the hotel halls and quietly entered one of the rooms... 

Yes, everything was fine. Guests continued to arrive and the future looked bright. It seemed that people had forgotten about the gory murders... until one night...

AAGGH-HHH!

Ridiculous! Too well known to be a phoney! Never seems to eat... not in the hotel anyway! Strange girl... can't figure her...

Heh, heh, heh! Yep, it happened again! The same way as the others... with the victim brutally torn and ripped to pieces! And what a commotion that caused! In no time at all, guests and employees streamed from the hotel!

I'm not staying here any longer! The police say a werewolf is what killed those people? Yeah! I won't stay in this place either!

I'm going, too! ...I wouldn't be found dead in this joint!
My wife and I are checking out! If there's a werewolf around, we'll vacation elsewhere!

I...I understand, sir...

Everyone's gone! Everyone? Even all my employees have left? I'm...I'm ruined!

Poor Hubert! But what could he expect? Not many people appreciate being murdered! Mh, mh! Well, as before, weeks passed, and Hubert was alone in the hotel... except for one other person!

Mademoiselle Micheline! It is so good of you to remain! I am sorry I cannot give you better service, but...

Do not apologize, M'sieu! I know you cannot get anyone to work here. They are all afraid!

Yes! Yes! You're right! You're so understanding! Shall I take you to your suite?

No, thank you, M'sieu. I have learned to operate the elevator myself! Good night!

Ach! I'm a nervous wreck? Wish I could get a decent night's rest! I...I feel so strange all of a sudden...

Feel like... like... oh, no! Not again... I... I can't fight it! I have to give in... have to...
HA! HA! HA! SURPRISED? HEH, HEH! YES, EVERY MONTH, ON THE NIGHT OF THE FULL MOON, HUBERT ANTONE BECAME TRANSFORMED INTO A SNARLING SAVAGE WEREWOLF! AND, AS ALWAYS, THERE WAS BUT ONE THING IN HIS MIND...HE MUST FIND A VICTIM!

NO ONE HERE! NEED TO FIND SOMEONE! NO ONE HERE... WAIT! THERE IS SOMEONE! MADEMOISELLE MICHELINE!

...IN HER SUITE! THAT'S WHERE SHE IS... IN HER SUITE! I KNOW SHE'S THERE!

Can't find her! Where is she? I KNOW SHE'S HERE! WHERE? WHERE?

Searches every room! Not here! No one else around! I need a victim! BLAST IT! WHERE IS SHE?!

UNDEPENDABLE WOMAN! I'M GOING CRAZY! I'VE GOT TO FIND HER!

BLAST IT! BLAST IT!
WHAT THE DEVIL?? HER PIANO...IT DIDN'T MAKE ANY NOISE WHEN I HIT THE KEYS??

SOMETHING COCKEYED... NO MUSIC!

GLUNK!

GLUNK GLUNK!

WHAT THE...? NO STRINGS IN IT! NO STRINGS! ONLY...ONLY DIRT!

DIRT?? WHY IN THE WORLD WOULD SHE KEEP DIRT IN HER PIANO...UNLESS... UNLESS...

GOOD LORD! I KNOW WHY! AND I KNOW WHY NO ONE EVER HEARD HER PRACTICE... AND WHY SHE NEVER EATS!

OF COURSE! IT'S ALL CLEAR NOW! THAT'S WHY NO ONE SEES HER DURING THE DAY... ONLY AT NIGHT! BECAUSE... BECAUSE SHE SLEEPS ALL DAY...HERE IN THIS PIANO! SHE'S...SHE'S A...

HEH, HEH, HEH! NOW THERE WAS A STIRRING FINALE THAT I THOUGHT WAS IN GOOD TASTE! MADEMOISELLE MICHELINE REALLY ENDED HER SOLO WITH A HOT LICK, DIDN'T SHE? WELL, AFTER THAT, YOU CAN BE SURE NO ONE WAS BOTHERED BY WEREWOLVES! HOWEVER THEY DID HAVE SOME RUN-INS WITH A VAMPIRE! HEH! HEH! BUT READ ON, FRIENDS! THERE ARE MORE CHILLS AWAITING YOU!

VAMPIRE!

- THE END -
HERE IS A CHILLING TALE CONCERNING A MISERLY OLD UNDERTAKER AND THE HORROR OF HIS FITTING PUNISHMENT

My story begins on a dark and dismal November night! Outside a darkened house stands a raddledly clothed figure...

This is the house, the sign says. 'Ezra Flint, town undertaker? I'll knock.' The heavy knocker on the battered door is lifted, and the booming sound echoes and re-echoes through the dark corridors inside the house. Soon, the door creaks slowly open.

Yes? It is I, Uncle Ezra? It is 3... Stanley! Your sister's boy!
WHAT DO YOU WANT? LET ME COME IN. IT IS COLD AND I AM CHILLED TO THE BONE.

THE WRINKLED OLD MAN MOVES ASIDE AND THE TATTERED FIGURE OF THE YOUTH STEPS INSIDE...

LORD, UHOLE! IT IS AS COLD IN HERE AS IT IS OUT THERE! HOW CAN I WORK, COAL, COAL COSTS MONEY! WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE?

IT IS MY MOTHER. SHE IS DEAD. I HAVE COME TO LIVE WITH YOU.

WHAT? BUT... I CAN'T AFFORD IT. YOU'LL HAVE TO BE CLOTHED... FED...

I'LL WORK UHOLE! I'LL PAY FOR MY KEEP! I CAN CUT WOOD FOR THE FIRE... HELP YOU IN THE SHOP...

NNNN! VERY WELL. BUT REMEMBER! NO WORK, NO FOOD!

AND THAT IS HOW STANLEY CAME TO LIVE WITH OLD EZRA. THE YOUNG UNDERTAKER...

AND AFTER YOU FINISH CLEANING THE SHOP YOU CAN HELP ME BAND PAPER THIS COFFIN!

EZRA WAS HANDSOME BOY. HE WORKED HIM WITHOUT A LET-UP. EZRA WAS CHEAP AND MISERLY AND STANLEY LEARNED MANY HORRIBLE THINGS ABOUT HIM...

WAIT, YOU FOOL! DON'T RAIL DOWN THE COFFIN, YET!

BUT, THE FAMILY HAVE ALL SEEN THE BODY! THE FUNERALS PROCESSION WILL BE HERE SOON...

THE GOLD! WE HAVEN'T REMOVED THE GOLD FROM HIS TEETH YET! IF YOU ARE SO DUMB TO BE MY CHARGE, STANLEY, YOU MIGHT AS WELL LEARN EVERYTHING THERE IS TO KNOW!

REMOVE THE GOLD FROM HIS TEETH?
The idea was revolting to Stanley, but... at his uncle's insistence... the gold was removed...

Good! This ought to bring five dollars at the jewelers! Now you can nail down the coffin, Stanley!

The old man was tight! Money was his master! He never missed an opportunity to save and pinch a penny when the chance came...

But uncle! I really do need a new pair of shoes!

You'll wait! There'll be somebody dying soon, and you can take them from the body!

That's the way he was! But Stanley could not leave him! He had no other relatives... only this miserly cheap old man...

Stanley! Come down! There's been a death!

Stanley was sent to the bereaved family of the departed soul, to take the order for the coffin...

You're sure these measurements are correct, Stanley? Remember! Lumber costs money! I don't want to make a coffin larger than I have to!

They are correct, uncle?

When the coffin was finished, a member of the dead man's family came to see it...

But... this is a pine coffin! Didn't you order a pine coffin?

Stanley? Come down! Here! At once!

Why, no! I ordered oak!

I... I am sorry, sir! I will make an oak one at once!

After the mourners left...
STUPID! STUPID! WE HAVE WORKED IN VAIN! THEY ORDERED AN OAK COFFIN!

I'LL TEACH YOU TO TAKE THE ORDER CORRECTLY FROM NOW ON!

BUT, UNCLE! I TOLD YOU OAK...

GRABBING A HAMMER, THE MADDENED UNCLE STRUCK POOR STANLEY ACROSS HIS BACK...

STUPID! STUPID!

STANLEY WENT DOWN WRETHING IN PAIN! THEN HE FAINTED! HE WAS UNCONSCIOUS FOR SEVERAL HOURS! WHEN HE CAME TO...

IT'S ABOUT TIME YOU CAME AROUND! HURRY! WE HAVE WORK TO DO!

MY LEGS! I CAN'T MOVE MY LEGS!

STOP YOUR FOOLING, YOU IDIOT! WE MUST FINISH THE OAK COFFIN BY TOMORROW!

...DOCTOR... GET ME A DOCTOR! I... I'M PARALYZED!

RELENTANTLY, WICEROY OLD EZRA SENT FOR THE DOCTOR...

WELL, DOCTOR? HOW IS HE?

WE'LL NEVER BEABLE TO WALK AGAIN! HIS LEGS ARE USELESS! HIS SPINE HAS BEEN INJURED! HOW ONU IT HAPPEN?

HE... HE FELL! DOWN THE STAIRS!

TOO BAD! WE'LL HAVE TO STAY IN BED FOR A FEW WEEKS... AND THEN... IT'LL BE CRUTCHES FOR THE REST OF HIS LIFE!
Several weeks went by and Stanley began to move about on his crutches.

"What good are you now? You can't work! All you'll do is cost me money!"

The weeks went by and Stanley began to move about on his crutches.

"What good are you now? You can't work! All you'll do is cost me money!"

"Too bad, Uncle! You should have thought about that before you hit my back with that hammer!"

As the months went by, Old Ezra managed to finish the oak coffin in time for the funeral. But the pine coffin... what could he do with that?

"I'll save it! I may be able to use it on another body..."

And so one dark night as Stanley hobbled up the stairs on his crutches...

"Let me by, Uncle! I... I..."

And so one dark night as Stanley hobbled up the stairs on his crutches...

"Let me by, Uncle! I... I..."

They called it an accidental death, and Ezra began to make preparations for the funeral...

"You see, Stanley? Your mistake isn't all wasted! It's your coffin now! Huh?"

"Good Lord! I never thought! He... he's too tall! He doesn't fit!... I won't make another coffin to fit him! That would cost money!... I know! I know what to do!"

And as the months went by, Old Ezra Flint grew more and more sullen. Then, one night... While staring at the unused pine coffin... he got an idea...
The funeral was held on a grey, rainy day! Few people came...

Maybe it's all for the best, Ezra! After all... He was an incurable...

Such a short coffin for so tall a boy?

That night... as Ezra sat before a dying fire... there came a thumping at the door... as if someone were... kicking it...

What... who... who's there?

Slowly, Ezra opened the door and looked out...

Why, there's no one here! I... I...

Tren his glance fell upon the ground! There, at the doorstep, lay a foot...

Stanley's foot!

Quickly, Ezra snatched the foot from where it lay and rushed into the house with it...

Someone knows! Someone knows what I've done!

Frantically he tossed the bloody appendage into the smouldering coals...

Someone's trying to frighten me... play a trick! I... I...
Again it came...that horrible thump-thump...as if someone were kicking the door...

...again? I'll go see...

There on the step before the door lay another severed foot...

Who could it be? Who is trying to torture me?

Again...the wicked, miserly old man stooped, picked up the ghastly limb, brought it inside, and hurled it into the fire...

Someone who hates me...someone who knows how I made Stanley fit into that pine coffin...

And then...the doorknocker boomed...

Now...now he is knocking!

There's someone out there! I can see his shadow!

Yes?

No! No! It can't be...
THE VAULT-KEEPER'S CORNER

Dear EC Publisher,

My name is Roland Hopper and I read every EC comic I can get my hands on. You said you were selling EC sets. I am sure these would not sell for the same price [as a comic], but I am interested in buying anyway, so would you send me a price list?

I also read you were going to put out a [32-pg] series of EC. It probably wouldn't get to Florida because the ones I have got in the northern states. If so, could you please send me a price list for it, too?

My favorite EC is VAULT. The stories of the Vault-Keeper, The Crypt-Keeper and The Old Witch are so lifelike and chilling I like them all. I have two [earlier reprints] 64-pg GLAD HAUNT #1 and the 64-pg RCP HAUNT #1 I bought all my ECs at $20 apiece and well worth it and more. If you could send me a price list I would meet up with the Vault-Keeper himself or herself to get them.

Roland Hopper
Ponce de Leon, FL

Yes, we are selling complete sets of the EC Library (hardbacks) and individual volumes! If you bought original ECs for $20 each, you will be amused to know that is our price for a typical! VOLUME (usually six comics)!! You or any EC fan can get a price list from us at the address at the end of the letter column.

For your reference, I am the Vault-Keeper HIMSELF (Thanks for asking! Hurrah!)

—VK

Dear VK and OW,

I love your comics. I'd like to know which of your comics are gorier and show more blood. I'm going to order an EC Library boxed set, but I like the stories that involve gore or zombies. Are the boxed sets' stories in color? Any chance that the Vault-Keeper or the Old Witch can get TV shows of their own?

Rudy Garza, age 13
Owings Mills, MD

In the boxed sets (EC Library), the stories are in black & white—and you've never seen the linework so clear—but the covers are in color. I haven't done a blood-count, but since each GhouLunatic appears in each horror title you can't go wrong!

NEXT ISSUE?

S.R.N. - THE OLD GUY WAS RIGHT! IT IS FREEZING IN HERE! CAN'T BE MORE THAN TWENTY DEGREES!

COME IN! COME IN! I'M HURRYING UP! DON'T JUST STAND THERE! CLOSE THE DOOR!

Death Notices

So far, Witchie and I have trouble appearing on closed circuit security cameras!

—VK

Dear VK,

I love all of your comics. I have to ask you and CK. Why does CK always talk about the Crypt of Terror, like at the beginning [of a story] he says "Welcome back to the Crypt of Terror."?

VK, I have all of your RCP comics 1-5 and also your Gladestone #1.

Rich True
Omaha NE

Why, The Crypt-Keeper LIVES in the Crypt of Terror! And a rat, no-class dump it is, too! I live in the Vault of Horror, and The Witch lives in that big pot, I guess.

Hey, Rich, why not get the REST of the RCP and Gladestone 64-pgers? See our ad in this comic. —VK

Dear VK,

I just bought [Vault #3]. I loved it. Now I'm hooked. Could I get your autograph? I drew a picture, hope you like it.

Tanner Smith
FT Smith AR

I knew those fishhooks in my comics would work! I like your picture—who is that, Billy Barty as "Jason?"

—VK

Dear Vault-Keeper,

I love your stories. [You're] the best of all the storytellers I like the Crypt-Keeper but the Old Witch is rather boring. I have more VAULT than HAUNT or CRYPT. I make my own comics a lot. As a matter of fact I asked Russ Cochran to publish some of my comics. He said that they were just duplicates of the original.

Chris Kappou
Newark DE

Yes! I am the best! Homer himself was a piker next to me! Russ was right to point out any duplication of someone else's work. The best way to learn to write & draw comics is to learn to write & draw PERIOD, then come up with your own comics or produce what someone will hire you to do.

—VK

Dear Vault-Keeper,

I've just read VAULT #4 and was thoroughly engrossed in its creepy contents, which I lapped up like a bowl of Blood Soup in a Vampire Restaurant! Tasty! I like the front cover very much with its excellent Johnny Craig drawing, very effective when combined with the lurid yellow-on-blue lettering. It's nice to see that the Vault-Keeper the Crypt-Keeper and the Old Witch are back in town.

I especially like "Terror in the Swamp!", drawn by Al
Dear EC Fans & The Vault-Keeper,

I got something to tell you guys. I just moved from West Virginia to Pennsylvania, and when I arrived I went right over to the comic book store to pick up some ECs. When I got there I couldn’t find them, so I had to wait for the clerk to get off the phone with his girlfriend or something. When he did, I asked for EC, he thought I said DC and took me over to the BATMANs, I said, “No, EC, like ‘Taies from the Crypt’!” Then he took me over to the bottom of the shelf and all the way in the back was one copy of VAULT #4. Then he really surprised me by saying, “I always thought EC was a dead little” right away said, “No Way! I love the EC line, I think they’re a lot more interesting than the super hero comics.” Then he surprised me for a second time by saying, “Really? I’ll have to try one sometime” EC = Dead Title? No Way!! A dead-dicated reader.

Chris Kurpiel

Much as I like zombies, Marvel (or DC) Zombies have a lot to learn. And I’m proud of my fans, like you, Chris, will act as omniscient ombudsmen and learn ‘em for me.

—VK

My Darling Vault-Keeper,

My love letter to CK was printed in SHOCK #3. His reply?

“Take a number! Could he have been any more insulting? He’d better watch out. You know the saying, ‘Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned’” (Especially one with a new meat grinder)

Now that he has shown his true colors, I realize that you are the only decaying corpse for me. So what do you say? Care to join me for a graveyard stroll? (I’m sure you will after you find what’s left of CK.

Cemetery life can get so boring. My neighbors are such stiffs! I would love to have anyone, dead or alive, human or non—write me at one of my favorite “haunts” (address below)

Suzanne Haws
RT 3 Box 36
Milford, OK 74354

Another trail who’s seen the light? Maybe I’ll swing the ol’ hearse past your cemetery gates some pm and give you a break (I always was a bug hit with the tomatoes ‘cause I know how to treat ‘em, and I KNOW that what women like is a man can’t have changed since the 50’s). I bet a girl with a meat grinder is a great little cook!

The only date CK can get is Friday the 13th!

—VK

Dear Vault-Keeper,

VAULT #4 was the best so far! “Horror House” was almost exactly like “House of Horror” from HAUNT #1. We found out nothing. And since Johnny Craig writes what he draws, he must have written “Horror House!” And since “Horror House” is exactly the same as “House of Horror,” Johnny must have written the unimaginative “House of Horror” in the same issue (HAUNT #1) as the imaginative “The Wall.”

I don’t understand.

Another thing I don’t understand is why did the comics have such weak plots in the early 50s, but became scarier and more CRUEL (like “Buried Alive!”) my favorite story in VAULT #4 in the mid 50s.

Even though I didn’t like the storyline for “House of Horror,” I loved the amazing and startling drawing of the woman who had seen the ghosts!

I like VAULT #4’s “Terror in the Swamp” better than “The Thing in the Swamp” because you saw the two young men being eaten. GOOD WORK!

Oliver Buckel

Alto, PA

Like you are almost always right in assuming a Craig-drawn story is from a Craig-written script, we are almost certain “House of Horror” was a Feldstein script. And “House of Horror” is typical of the differences between the early stuff and the later stuff. It simply took me a while to train the talented but work-a-day EC stable to be the horror comic geniuses they became! Up till them, NOBODY had got it right!

—VK

When I read Al Feldstein’s “Terror in The Swamp” in VAULT #4, I thought it seemed familiar. Looking through my collection, I found the same story in HAUNT #1, called “The Thing in The Swamp”! What’s the deal? Why did Feldstein and EC run the same story twice in one year with only minor variations? It’s debatable whether the more explicit ending improves the story any, but I think the original ending is better since it allows you to use your imagination

—VK

The motivation for re-running “Swamp!” is lost in the mists of time, but I shut for MY version that after a 6-pg appetizer in “Swamp!” It’d be cheating not to show the MAIN COURSE!

—VK

NEXT ISSUE

Nothing was said! The butler stiffened... His face was ghostly paler... and dead of sweat stood out on his brow. He was in deadly fear, but he remained by the bed, staring fixedly at the wall from which the sounds came! With each howl, the tension mounted...
Dear VK,

As I was reading "Terror in the Swamp!" in VAULT #4, the story seemed to be familiar. I looked through back issues and saw that the story had been in HAUNT #1. The title and the splash page had been changed, but it was a classic tale that I had read. I'm glad to see it in VAULT.

—VK

If Balzac [VAULT #4 loc0] is unhappy now, wait until January 1995! That is when CRYPT begins a run of solid issues and the end of the series. I'm sure that the issues will be great. There is a lot of potential in the series and I hope that it will continue.

—VK

Dear Mr. Cochran,

I love the line of EC reprints. I started reading them when they first came out and have not stopped! The colors are as vivid and the original artwork is reproduced in such clarity! Amazing! I am one of several devoted readers at my local comic shop here in Pittchburg, Massachusetts. Please keep up the great work. Rasil!

The secret behind the success lies in the books' ability to transcend time. These stories are so popular now, you will be able to publish many more issues to come!

George P. McNamara

30 Jacob Street

Dear VK,

How come you, CW and OW always talk about each other and call each other knothole and things like that? Also, how did you get the idea to do horror stories?

Chad Dewall

Englewood, CO

I don't know what those two goons Ghoulunatics are up to, but I call a spade a spade and a knothole a knothole! I know they're knotholes! Cause all the crap they produce Woodpeckers don't know whether to fill or go fly when they see 'em!

—VK

Dear Vault-Keeper,

I just love VAULT. It has the best stories! "The Dead Will Return!", "And All Through the House!", "Voodoo Vengeance!", "Miscalculation!", and "Beauty Real!" are all the issues of CRYPT. My friends love them, too. I wish I could get involved with making these EC comics, because I have a few creepy stories up my sleeve, too! I hope to write to you again. I'm eleven years old.

Audrey Sheehan

Reading, MA

Let's see, this means I can look for your next letter in 2004. Meanwhile, let those creepy stories creep out of your sleeve, down your hand, and come some more. The best way to become a writer is to write—inecessantly!

—VK

Also available this month are WEIRD FANTASY and TWO-FISTED TALES. Watch out for HAUNT, WEIRD SCIENCE-FANTASY and CRIME next month! Don't forget CRYPT, WEIRD SCIENCE and SHOCK. Buy them at your local comic book shop or SUBSCRIBE (see our ad in this comic)!

BACK ISSUES: CRYPT #1, $3 each. All others up to issue #6, $1 each. Issues #4 and up, $2 each. Add $4 per order ($18 outside US) for S&H.

We want letters! Write to:

VAULT

RUSE COCHRAN

POB 409

WEST PLAINS, MO 65775

NEXT ISSUE

THE WEREWOLF

THE...AAGH...

Dear VK,

Conclude this, Warren: In 1996 we may be sold out of ALL the 84-pagers, and people will be trying to handle their precious collectibles—they'll just have to rely on our chronological 32-pagers for reading! We'll get 'em coming and going (I hope!) in EC's defense, they only re-run maybe four stories; 'd hate to try and count how many Atlas, etc. recycled during the 50's!

—VK

You know wood is the same artist!

Delzanto Sylvain

Paris, FRANCE

Dear Mr. Cochran,

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George P. McNamara

Leominster, MA
Here is a ghastly yarn designed to terrorize you! I call it...

THE GRAVE WAGER

My story starts on the midway of an amusement park. Three men stood fascinated before a cesticulating tanker...

He's fooling? No! This is Pirro, the wax-man. See how Pirro resembles a wax figure...

...And inside, ladies and gentlemen. You'll see the greatest array of wax-figure tableaux ever assembled under one roof! Famous murders, historic horrors... all for ten cents.

Come, Roger... Paul! Let's go in!

Surely? I'm game!
The Three Men... Rosen Kane, Paul Bond, and Clyde Lake... paid their admissions into the wax museum!

That phony guy certainly looked like wax... and these wax figures in here look almost alive!

Ugh! What a horrible scene! Come let us leave!

Yes! The figures of the victims look like actual corpses!

What's wrong, Paul... Clyde? Weak stomachs?

And you, no doubt, have a strong stomach?

Well, the sight of a corpse never bothered me!

It would if you were alone with it!

Nonsense! It wouldn't bother me one bit!

I have twenty dollars in my wallet that says you wouldn't spend a night alone with a corpse!

I'd do it for fifty!

What say, Clyde? Shall we make it fifty together?

All right? I'll bet!

Now, you're both betting me fifty dollars that I won't spend a night alone in a room with a corpse, right?

Right!

Okay! It's a bet! Only there's one small detail! Where do we get the corpse?

Huh?

Oh!
WHAT SAY WE DIG ONE UP? ROB A GRAVE? SAY THIS IS TURNING INTO FUN!

OH, STOP IT, ROBEN! YOU'RE JUST PUTTING ON AN ACT!

NO, I'M NOT! I'M SERIOUS!

WELL, I DON'T THINK THAT ROBBING A GRAVE IS FUN... BUT I'LL AGREE TO IT IF YOU BOTH WANT TO...

GOOD! TONIGHT!

THAT NIGHT, AT THE APPOINTED HOUR, THE SHADOWS OF THREE MEN FELL ACROSS WEATHER-BEATEN TOMBSTONES...

HERE'S A FRESH GRAVE!

START DIGGING! DON'T GIVE ORDERS!

SLOWLY, AN EVEN WIDERING BLACK PIT APPEARED THEN...

I'VE STRUCK THE COFFIN!

HERE'S A GROW BAR!

I'LL UNFOLD THE SHEET!

THE COFFIN WAS PRIED OPEN...

UBR! HE LOOKS A LITTLE BLUEN THAN THOSE WAX FIGURES!

LIFT HIM OUT!

PUT HIM ON THE SHEET!

AND THEN WE'LL WRAP HIM UP!

TREMENDY FINISHED: THE THREE MEN CARRIED THEIR GRIESE: PRIZE, WRAPPED IN A SHEET, FROM THE GRAVEYARD...

UNTIL TOMORROW NIGHT, GENTLER!

YES, ROBEN! AT MY PLACE! WE'LL HAVE EVERYTHING ARRANGED!
The two men with the sheeted corpse stood watching as Roger disappeared down the road. "What?"

Come, Clyde! Help me carry the body back into the cemetery!"

"We're going to put the body back into the grave..."

"But theigger!"

I have a much better plan! And we don't need a body!"

What is your plan, Paul?"

As the two men, in the darkness of the cemetery night, Paul explained his plan..."

You remember that phony guy... the hax man?"

He will be our corpse..."

Oh, how I get it! And tomorrow night, when Roger is alone with him..."

Right! We'll have PIRRO take a little cockyness out of him!"

Now, I say this is going to be fun!"

The two men... their job of replacing the stolen corpse completed... bantered off across the cemetery! Their laughter drifted back... echoes from headstone to headstone..."
The next evening an hour or so before Roger was due to show up,

"This is Mr. Pirro Clyde! I've explained my plan to him..."

...and you agree to it? For fifty dollars, I'll do anything!

And so, made up to resemble a corpse, Pirro was covered with a sheet and placed in a room with no windows! Soon after Roger arrived...

All right, Roger! There's the corpse we dug up last night... and here's a candle!

Remember, Roger! If you leave this room, you forfeit your bet...

But, after a few hours, Roger began to feel uneasy! He closed the book...

H-H-H-H-H! Those stories give me the creeps! I think I'll try to get some sleep! I... I...
As dawn was breaking, Paul and Clyde made their way to the room...

The door is closed! Do you think he'll be there?

I hope not! I expected to pay Mr. Pirro with the fifty dollars that Roger bet us!

Look, Clyde! Roger... he... he...

He's sitting in the corner whimpering like a scared puppy! And his hair has turned snow white!

What have we done, Clyde? Pirro! He... he's dead! Roger is a raving maniac! And we... we are murderers!

Lord help us, Paul!
THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

So! HEE, HEE! WE MEET AGAIN! WELCOME! WELCOME, HORROR FANS!
THE FIRE UNDER MY CAULDRON IS LIT... AND EVEN NOW, MY EVIL
GUEW IS BURLING AND BUBBLING! THIS TIME, I HAVE COOKED
UP A DELIGHTFULLY CHILLING LITTLE MORSEL WHICH I TRUST
WILL WARM YOUR COLI HEARTS! COME CLOSER NOW, AND GAZE INTO
THE STEAMING CONTENTS OF MY CAULDRON, AS MY STORY UNFOLDS.
I CALL THIS SPINE-TINGLING TALE
ESCAPE!

See, now, a dismal prison yard! Over
in one corner, in the grey shadow of a
looming cell block, a small band of
GREY-CLAD CONVICTS STAND BEFORE A TRUCK
Piled High With Bricks...

All right, you guys! Get
busy and start unloading
those bricks! And make
it snappy!
Reluctantly, one of the members of the Grey-Clad group rolls his wheelbarrow up to the truck...

Hain' if the boys back in the city could see you now, Luger...

Pete Luger has once seen the hing of a nation-wide crime syndicate...

Creep, huh? Don't be surprised if you get a pick-axe in your skull one of these days, Luger!

And so, the day passed... and the bricks were all unloaded and stacked neatly beside the cell block...

Wheeh! I'm beat...

'C'mon, Luger! Yuh soil yuh lilly-white hands?

Okay, men! Line up!

The ragged group, their shirts soaked with sweat, lined up for the march back to their cells...

Another crack line that, bone-head, and you'll be chewin' one of those bricks...

Hey, look! A hearse!

The door opened, and a simple pine box was carried out...

What's that place?

The prison morgue!

Some yardbird musta croaked!

They take him into town and bury the poor Joe in 'Potter's Field'...

Unless his family wants him...

... and whose would?
The next day, there was another truck... and another pile of bricks to be unloaded.

Gasp... My back is killin' me! What's all these bricks... building, I guess? For, anyway?

Then they'll be carryin' me outta here in a pine box, just like they did with that poor Joe, yesterday.

Indeed, Pete Lugen was makin' plans! Plans to escape from the walls that imprisoned him.

Look, Lugen! He's workin' like a beaver.

Look, Lugen! Another hearse! For Connelly? He got the juice last week.

That night, as Pete Lugen, one time big-shot, lay on his prison cot... oww! Another day of unloading those bricks will kill me!

"He's thinkin' about somethin' I seen that look when I was workin' for him! He's makin' plans!

It's terrific! What a way to break out of this dump! Get carried out in a pine box..."
Again, a plain pine box was carried out the small door, and lifted into the black carrier of the dead... YEP! CONNOLLY’S BORN TO ‘POTTER’S FIELD’!

Er... how do you get assigned to the prison morgue, Ed?

ARE YOU KIDDIN’? NOBODY wants that job! All you have to do is volunteer? WHY?

OH, NOTHING! I was just wondering!

The next day, Pete Luger volunteered for the job of morgue-attendant at the prison morgue...

All right, bookin’ you report to the brick pile! Luger, here. Wants your job!

He can have it! I’d rather unload bricks, anytime!

And so, Pete Luger had taken the first step in his intricate plan to escape from state prison... Yes! Look at those poor suckers breaking their backs on that brick pile, while I sit here with some harmless stiffs...

And they don’t even know what they’re making! That’s the payoff!

A week went by! Then, one day, unless he gets a last minute reprieve, Luger, that greyson guy gets the chair tonight...

Right? You’ll keep him in the morgue here for one week! If no one claims the body...

I know! Out he goes!
GET SOME TOOLS FROM CARPENTRY AND GET BUSY ON A COFFIN!

OKAY, GUARD! RIGHT AWAY!

THAT NIGHT, LUGER SCRIBBLED A HASTY NOTE TO THE BOYS ON THE OUTSIDE...COME VISIT ME. I'M LONELY.

PETE

ON THE FOLLOWING VISITING DAY, PETE, LUGER'S OLD LIEUTENANT PAI A CALL...WHAT'S UP, PETE? I'M BREAKIN' OUT! I GOT A PLAN... AND YOU GUYS GOTA HELP!

EVER WARY OF THE GUARDS THAT FACED THE VISITING ROOM, PETE UNFOLDED HIS PLAN...

...AND WHEN THE HEARSE PULLS OUT OF THE PRISON YARD, YOU TRAIL IT! AT A SAFE SPOT... TAKE OVER! I'LL BE IN THE COFFIN...

IN THE COFFIN!

YEAH! DON'T ASK QUESTIONS! JUST FOLLOW MY INSTRUCTIONS! TOMORROW! KEEP A SHARP WATCH FOR THE HEARSE...

OKAY, LUGER! TIME'S UP!

PETE LUGER WENT BACK TO THE MORGUE AND BAZED OUT OF THE WINDOW... HMMM! THEY'VE ALMOST COMPLETED WHATEVER IT IS THEY'RE BUILDING! LOOKS LIKE A CHIMNEY!

SUCKERS! HAULIN' THOSE BRICKS WHILE I SIT AROUND HERE! AND TOMORROW... HAH... I GET OUT!
THE NEXT DAY...

GET GREYSOR INTO HIS COFFIN, LUsher! TWO MEN WILL BE HERE TO PICK HIM UP AT TWO O'CLOCK SHARP!

O.K., GUARDS! TWO O'CLOCK!

PETE MOVED THE CRUDELY MADE COFFIN INTO THE CENTER OF THE ROOM.

THEY'LL NEVER FIND WHAT'S LEFT OF GREYSOR.

AND THEN... HE CLIMBED IN...

WHAT A PLAN! BRILLIANT!

BRILLIANT!

AT TWO O'CLOCK, TWO CONVICTS ENTERED...

HEY, Lusher! WE... HE AIN'T AROUND!

MUSTA WENT TO CHOW! WELl! Grab an end!

WAIT! LOOK! THE COFFIN.

S'MATTER! IT AIN'T NAILED DOWN!

WHAT A PLAN? BRILLIANT?
Quickly, the convict reached for the hammer and nails... Leave it to Luger to leave a job unfinished... The crum!

Okay, Jake! Let's go! Grab an end! Ohly a few more minutes... Then... Freedom!

Y'know, I always wondered what that was we were buildin' with those bricks...

Yeah! So did I!

The heavy iron door slammed shut! The roar of the flames muffled Luger's frenzied cries...

A crematorium! Who'da thunk it? Yeah! I never figured it...

Heh... Heh? Well, kiddies? Neither did Pete Luger! He was sure he had a hot idea! I'll bet he's all burned up about it now, though! Well, it only goes to show... don't count your bricks before the building is made... or it might backfire, hee-hee... As it did on poor Peter! I hope my little tale for this issue scorched you! I'll try to have another heart-warmer next issue! Bye, now... and don't forget to write to the Vault-Keeper and let him know what you think of... ahem... our book... hee, hee!

Address your letters to... the Vault-Keeper, Russ Cochran, POS 443, West Plains, MO 65775.
YOU SAY YOU DON'T GET OUT MUCH?

YOU SAY IT'S A 45-MINUTE BUS TRIP, WITH A TRANSFER, TO THE COMIC BOOK SHOP? YOU SAY IT'S A HARRIRED 30-MINUTE DRIVE ON THE EXPRESSWAY TO THE MALL, AND THEN A 30-MINUTE MERRY-GO-ROUND RIDE TO FIND A PARKING PLACE? YOU SAY YOUR TOWN DOESN'T EVEN HAVE A COMIC BOOK SHOP OR BOOKSTORE? IS THAT WHAT'S TROUBLING YOU, BUNKY? WELL, THEN, YOU SHOULD

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