DRIVE THE STAKE THROUGH HIS VAMPIRE HEART.

ITHE VAULT-KEEPER

THE CRYPT-KEEPER

THE OLD WIGHT

THAT'S IT! THAT'S IT! DRIVE THE STAKE THROUGH HIS VAMPIRE HEART.
MEM, HEM, HEM! WELL, GATHER ROUND, KIDDIES, FOR ANOTHER GRUESOME TALE FROM MY PRIVATE COLLECTION HERE IN THE VAULT OF HORROR! THIS ONE STEMS FROM THE EXCITING LIFE UNDER THE BIG TOP. YES, THE CIRCUS! FROM ITS PULSATING BEGINNING TO THE FINAL SHOCKING CLIMAX, I KNOW YOU'LL FIENDISHLY ENJOY THE STORY I CALL...

ABOUT FACE!

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, WE NOW PRESENT THE GREATEST LIVING WILD ANIMAL TRAINER IN THE WORLD! HER SENSATIONAL FEATS OF DARING MAKE BRAVE MEN TREMBLE! I GIVE YOU THE ONE AND ONLY

LYDIA ARMSTRONG!
Lydia Armstrong! "Beauty" and "Bravery" were synonymous with her name. And the audience was spellbound as she put the big cats through their faces!

C'mon, boy! up! up! Atta boy! easy, now easy.

She risked death again and again while she performed. And she climaxèd her act by lying flat on her back, unarmed, with her hands beneath her.


Slowly, the huss beast did her bidding. He stood over her supple form then bent his shaggy head at his command, his mouth open.

The crowd's thunderous applause rolled through the big top like thunder. Lydia Armstrong took several bows.

Then, while the audience gasped, she let the lion's jaw close about her face.

The beauteous Lydia turned too late!

Those who saw the sleek black panther crouch to spring and who cried out in warning could not be heard above the tumultuous ovation! The beauteous Lydia turned too late!

Over and over they rolled in the center of the cage as the panther clawed her body and tore viciously at her face! Bared fangs, Lydia fought valiantly.
Shreds of her flesh and clothing were strewn about the ring before her assistants finally subdued the blood-mad panther and carried Lydia out.

They rushed her to the hospital... but there was little the surgeons could do! She's been terribly ripped and torn... lucky if she lives!... her face! How. How horrible!

They rushed her to the hospital... but there was little the surgeons could do! She's been terribly ripped and torn... lucky if she lives!... her face! How. How horrible!

Stop! Don't you dare take a picture of me! Go away! Leave me alone!

Ouch! Okay, Miss Armstrong! Okay!

Lydia Armstrong retired from the world. Her maid and chauffeur were the only people she saw...

No one's ever seen her face. Poor thing! She'd so wealthy... and yet so lonely!

Heh, heh, well, Lydia lived! They had patched her body up till it was good as new but there was nothing they could do to fix her face. She wore a black veil to hide the hideous sight. And she brooded deeply. Heh, heh!

Ted... the world forgets. So does it. It must be awful to be in her position. I feel so sorry for her.

I think she's cracked up. Have you been the kind of books she'd collected?

Behind locked doors, Lydia pored over stacks of ancient books written in a strange language about witchcraft... it must be in one of these books! It must be! I hope I'm translating correctly.

...it must be in one of these books! It must be! I hope I'm translating correctly.

Heh, heh, well, Lydia lived! They had patched her body up till it was good as new but there was nothing they could do to fix her face. She wore a black veil to hide the hideous sight. And she brooded deeply. Heh, heh!
Late into the night she read, and often till the next morning. It's not here! Maybe that new set of books will have what I'm looking for!

When she wasn't cooped up in her room, her chauffeur would drive her through the surrounding countryside.

Beautiful day, isn't it, Miss Armstrong?

Yes, beautiful! Not ugly...not like my face!

You shouldn't talk like that, Miss Armstrong! Good looks aren't everything! Nobody likes to eat a rotten apple just because the skin is pretty! It's what's inside that counts!

You, you sound like you mean that, Steve!

I do mean it! To me, your face doesn't mean a thing! I like you and work for you because you...well, because you're a wonderful girl!

You...you're just saying that! I don't believe you!

You don't? All right...then I'll prove it!

To her surprise, Steve pulled to the side of the road and parked.

What? why did you stop? What are you going to do?

I'm just going to prove to you that I meant all those things I said! C'here!
He, he! Yes, Lydia very quickly fell in love with Steve! The months passed...

But Steve! How can you expect me to believe you love me? You've never even seen my face!

Can't you understand? I don't care what you look like! I love you for what you are!

This was a surprise! Steve never expected this to happen, but he readied himself with trembling hands. Lydia took the veil from her face!

But Steve! How can you expect me to believe you love me? You've never even seen my face!

I don't care what you look like! I love you for what you are!

If you mean that, Steve, then you won't mind proving it to me, will you?恩？哼，当然不！

Oh, Steve! My darling...

Every fibre and muscle in Steve's body shuddered at the twisted, ghastly sight that had been bared to his eyes... and only his iron will kept him from fainting.

They stared at one another for long, agonizing minutes! Droplets of sweat formed on his brow as Steve strained to keep his countenance passive! Then suddenly Lydia flung herself into his arms, sobbing hysterically for joy!

Oh, Steve! Steve, my darling!
IN LYDIA'S EYES, STEVE HAD PROVEN HIS LOVE FOR HER, AND SHE WAS VERY HAPPY. THEN ONE NIGHT SHE FINALLY FOUND WHAT SHE HAD BEEN SEARCHING FOR IN HER MANY BOOKS.

HERE IT IS! BUT...NOW THAT I KNOW STEVE LOVES ME, IT DOESN'T SEEM SO IMPORTANT.

THROUGH LONG WEARY HOURS SHE READ AND TRANSLATED THE WEIRD CRYPTIC PASSAGES, AND WHEN SHE HAD FINALLY FINISHED

BRR...JUST AS WELL THAT IT'S NOT IMPORTANT! I HAVEN'T THE NERVE FOR THIS.

IS ANYTHING WRONG, DEAR? YOU SEEM SO THOUGHTFUL AND QUIET LATELY!

IT'S NOTHING, LYDIA! I'VE JUST BEEN THINKING ABOUT THE FUTURE! I'VE BEEN WANTING TO SET MYSELF UP IN BUSINESS, BUT... WELL.

YOU SEE, DARLING... I WANT TO EARN ENOUGH MONEY SO YOU WON'T FEEL THAT YOU ARE SUPPORTING ME. I WANT YOU TO BE PROUD OF ME. ONLY IT TAKES MONEY TO GET STARTED.

OH... A LOT? I DON'T KNOW EXACTLY WHY?

I HAVE PLENTY OF MONEY! WHY NOT LET ME START YOU IN BUSINESS? YOU CAN PAY ME BACK LATER.

I KNOW, STEVE! HOW MUCH WILL YOU NEED?
SHE READ THE LETTER. CRUEL, VILE WORDS SHE ALWAYS FEARED HEARING ABOUT HER FACE SPANNING HER FROM ALMOST EVERY LINE. DERISIVE, SCORNFUL...

HE ONLY WANTED MY MONEY! (SOS) OH, HOW COULD HE BE SO WICKED? (SOS)

According to the book, I'll need two portraits—one of myself as I looked before the accident...and one of Steve! I guess these photographs will do!

Following directions, she filled a huge cauldron with weird liquids, and heated it till it bubbled with intense fury...

Then—everything's ready! This has to work! It has to.
Then she took both photos and dipped them into the seething blue... Fenvently whispering a black incantation, she waited a specific length of time...

And then withdrew the photographs.

Why! They're blank! And the cauldron has ceased to boil!

DID IT WORK? I MUST SEE! A MIRROR! OH, I'M SO NERVOUS I CAN HARDLY TAKE OFF MY VEIL!

Breathlessly she yanked the coverings from her face. A startled gasp escaped from her twitching lips...

IT WORKED! OH, I'M BEAUTIFUL AGAIN! THANK HEAVENS! OH, THANK HEAVENS.

And in Florida...

AAGGH! H-H-H! STEVE! YOUR FACE!

Heh, heh! I bet Steve's new girl friend was surprised. But in a way he was a bit two-faced, wasn't he? You might think that Lydia acted a little catty about the whole affair, but after all, she'd lived with cats for years! When she got her beauty back, she was pretty as a picture!

We want letters! Write to...

VAULT
RUSSELL COCHRAN
POB 449
WEST PLAINS MO 65786

...and read the vault keeper's corner in this issue. Heh! 'Bye for now!
As the last rays of the setting sun retreat before the advancing army of night, my story begins! Down in the dismal stale-smelling blackness of a cellar, lies a notting, cob-webbed coffin! Suddenly its rusted hinges scream in protest as the lid raises! A hollow-cheeked, white-skinned man sits up...

THE RELUCTANT VAMPIRE!
The saunt man climbs from the coffin... turns... and closes the lid carefully. Be safe from prying eyes, dear home, until the morning, when I will return!

Brushing off the bits of soil that cling to his shabby clothes, the weird figure climbs the rickety stairs that lead from his subterranean refuge. If I'm late again, I'll lose my job! Then... ugh! Back to killing!

Out of the abandoned ruins of a once proud loft building, he moves, down narrow, twisting streets... now deserted by the factory workers that throng them during the day... and that would be a shame... when this way is so much easier.

...on into the heart of the city! At the door way to an imposing building, the strange figure stops... smiles at the sign posted there... then enters...

Central City Blood Donor Center

Give a pint today!
Save a life tomorrow!
Open every night till nine P.M.

Ah! Two minutes to nine! I'm early!

He is greeted by an anxious, overweight man...

Ah! Mr. Drink! Thank heavens you're early! I have an appointment uptown! Good evening!

Mr. Drink unlocks the door marked 'blood bank', refrigerated, keep out' and goes in! On the shelves are rows of bottles filled with blood...

Mr. Drink watches as Mr. Cross stamps from the Blood Donor Center and locks the door. Then he picks up the ring of keys, the clock, and the badge cap...

What a cinch! A night watchman in a blood bank!

The perfect job for a vampire.
HEH, HEH! YES, KIDdIES! IT'S JUST AS YOU SUSPECTED! MR. DRINK IS A VAMPIRE! A LAZY VAMPIRE! UNTIL THE IDEA OF GETTING A JOB IN A BLOOD BANK OCCURRED TO MR. DRINK, HE HAD TO GO ABOUT GETTING HIS BLOOD IN THE USUAL WAY... BY KILLING PEOPLE! BUT THIS IS MUCH EASIER... AND SO MUCH LESS DISTASTEFUL...

After Mr. Drink has satisfied his appetite...

Now to change the records of the day's donations?

Mr. Drink unlocks the door to the office where the records are kept and... The record books! They're not here!

FEAR CLUTCHES AT MR. DRINK'S VAMPIRE HEART...

What'll I do? They'll find out that blood is missing if I don't change the records! They'll accuse me... and I'll be exposed!

Mr. Drink rushes from the blood donor center... carrying a small black bag...

I've got to replace the blood I've taken!

Or a dark deserted street, Mr. Drink waits in the shadows of a doorway...

Someone... is coming!

The night is filled with the screams of a dying man, as the blood is drained from his body!

AAAAGH!
The next night, when Mr. Drink comes to his job at the Blood Donor Center, there is an unusual meeting taking place...

Mr. Cross clears his throat, and a hush falls over the gathering... Ladies and gentlemen, I have called this meeting to announce that unless this center takes in twice the amount of blood it has been taking in the home office is going to close us up. Our equipment will be sent to another center where it will be put to better use!

What's going on, Sally? It's past closing time.

Mr. Cross has called a meeting of the staff. Mr. Drink! He has an announcement.

Right! But the amount taken in at this center does not justify the expense of keeping it open! That is the purpose of this meeting... to discuss ways and means of increasing donations so we can remain open!

So, that night, Mr. Drink goes out again with the little black bag... I'll just take a little for myself! The rest, I'll put in the blood bank and change the records. I mustn't let them close down.

Mr. Drink listens intently! Mr. Drink is frightened! If they close the center, he'll be out of a job...

And then Mr. Drink has a desperate plan! A plan to keep the center operating...

And so, again, Mr. Drink waits in a deserted section of the city for a victim...
And once more, the night is pierced by the scream of a dying soul...

Then Mr. Drink returns to the Blood-Donor Center and...

Shut there! There are eight more pints they didn't count on!

Then he changes the records...

Let's see... seven pints... plus eight... is fifteen? Hmmm! That's more than double!

The next day, while Mr. Drink sleeps soundly in his coffin...

Come in, Sally! I've just been reading the papers! Isn't it horrible?

What... Mr. Cross?

Why, the murders! Two in a row! The blood was drained from the victims' bodies! They say it's the work of... Sally! You look sick!

That night Mr. Drink searches the city for another victim...

Duh! How I hate this! But... it's got to be this way for a while if I don't want to do this all the time...

...And again the Blood-Bank has several extra donations...

Eight pints today... plus my nine makes seventeen! We're improving!
The police are baffled...
That's the fifth murder in a week, and every one of the victims drained of their blood! I tell you there's a vampire loose...

The home office is amazed...
Actually doubled their previous records! The director, there, deserves a medal!

The army is pleased...
For his patriotic work in increasing Mr. Center's blood intake by one hundred percent, the army authorizes that Mr. Christopher Cross be awarded...

And so...
Look, Sally! They sent it to me—a medal... for patriotic and unselfish effort in...

Mr. Cross! There's been another murder... and...

Well, child? What is it? Speak up!

Two nights ago, before I went home, I checked the day's donations. There were five pints! The next morning when I checked again, there were fourteen.

You mean... the vampire that has been killing those poor people and draining their blood, rrirr're it here!

Rut, Mr. Drink! The night watchman would have... Mr. Drink! The vampire! This morning I followed him 'home.' He... he lives in a... rash... coffin...
HASPALE LEADS THE DETECTIVES TO THE NEXT PLACE OF MR. DRINK.

HE'S IN THERE!

OPEN THE LID, ED! I'M READY...

WAIT!
Russ, I have to say that I am a bit surprised at Dave Hall's statement in VAULT #6 that nobody "can imagine what in the world ["The Raven"] is supposed to be about." I would suggest reading Poe's own essay "The Philosophy of Composition" (1846). However, some students of the master think that the explanation given is a little disingenuous, along the lines of "The Bollon Hoax:"

It is interesting that Dave goes back to ancient Rome to find a source for the poem. Try the article "The Raven and the Revan" by Joseph Jones in AMERICAN LITERATURE Volume 51 (1840). I still have my handwritten notes on that one from my academic days. There is also a piece titled "The Raven, The Parrot, and The Pigeon" in the small press publication FANTASY MACABRE #11 (1985) "Sweeney among the Nightingales" by T.S. Eliot, now that one nobody can figure out.

On the subject of zombies, the classic work is "The Magic Island" by William Seabrook (1928). More recent and probably more authoritative is "The Serpent and the Rainbow" by Harvard ethnobotanist Wade Davis (1985). The movie of the same name (1988), directed by Wes Craven, is loosely based on the book. Davis followed up with "Peasage of Darkness-The Ethnobotany of the Haitian Zombie" (The best fictional collection (in fact the only) I have seen is "Stories of the Walking Dead" (1985), one of the many anthologies edited by Peter Hasling.

And since no one else has mentioned it, "The Grave Wager" in VAULT #6 is adapted from the short piece "A Watcher by the Dead" by Ambrose Bierce (1842-1914?), another American writer of weird tales well worth reading.

Finally, I thought that I was seeing things when I read "Till Death Do Us Part" drawn by Vic Carabetta in CURSE OF THE WEIRD #3. I was, too, a lot of Johnny Craig artwork. Marvel admitted the Wally Wood swipe but not the Craig. Imagine mixing atomic bombs, murderous bookkeepers and voodoo. Even the title sounded familiar.

Mark A. Bernstein Jersey City, NJ

Ethnobotanist? You're just making that up! —VK

Dear VK, CW, VK, and Russ,

CK and CW told us how they were born. But I want to see how VK was born so if you can please reprint that issue I will be very thankfl. Also, how can I get another form to have a 8 issue subscription?

Chazmond Peacock Brooklyn, NY

You may call me Chazzie

And you can call me—Mr. The Vault-Keeper, Sir! Heh, heh! Joe! Mudding!

As I will be called upon to mention for eternity, I guess, EC never printed an origin story for me.

You need no special form to subscribe, merely money! Write the specifics (name, address, what you want) an any old death certificate or scrap of shroud and send it in.

Dear Vault-Keeper, I am 10 years old. I think your comics are so exciting I read them in the dark with a flashlight! I just got done reading "The Mask of Horror" in VAULT 7. It was real scary. I've always wondered why the Crypt-Keeper gets his own show when you don't. That slinks. Your stories are way better. I like X-MEN books but your stories are the best. Could you pretty please write back. If you do you'd be cooler than cool.

Matthew Smith Ullas, NY

I'm so cool, M&M's won't melt in my mouth. But I can't hardly write back.

Remember, you get four complete stories in an EC comic, but the X-Men go on forever and ever and ever.... —VK

Dear Vault-Keeper, Hi! I am 10 years old. I have been a big fan since I was 6. I've been collecting CRYPT, VAULT and HAUNT. I have all of them except for CRYPT #1. I never had a chance to get it.

Stephen Leopold Gardner, NY

Au contraire, mon ami! You can still get a copy of any of our back issues of anything. Check the end of this column for the info on back issues 52-pagers.

Mark A. Bernstein Jersey City, NJ

You mention stories from several back issues. All back issues are available; see the note at the end of this column.

Dear Vault-Keeper, Is Mrs. Thaumaturge your twin sister in VAULT 8? Daddy Lost His Head! it certainly looks like it.

I come from England, and in England we don't get the HBO television series "Tales from the Crypt" if you could please tell me if I could buy the HBO series on video I would be most grateful. One magazine said that some of the series are available to buy already, and that CK, CW and VK are soon to be made into figures. Is this true? I hope so.

Oliver Wingham Surrey, ENGLAND

Mrs. Thaumaturge (look it up) has one of those Roman noses--It's roman down towards her chin! Now, which Ghoulamata does that remind you of? Hm?

The figure they are taking of making me into is: ? How do you pronounce it? Ask J! We don't know the specifics on availability of HBO "Tales from the Crypt" videos; clue us in, hip-Grip.

Dear Vault-Keeper, Did you know that you rule? Those clowns The Crypt-Keeper and The Old Witch [have told] how they were born, but can you tell me how you were born? You've been...
keeping it a secret for a long time. Isn't it about time you tell somebody before it's too late?

I like your stories very much, but the Crypt-Keeper keeps stealing them.

Bryan Kortle

North Beach, MD

I rule, and the anonymous editor rules the borders! It's been so long since I "originated," I'm not sure I remember it right, myself! —VK

Dear VK,

I think your comics are cool. Can you write a comic about zombies? I have been begging my dad to take me to the comic store to buy more VAULT comics.

Adam Zace

Downers Grove, IL

No true zombies (as opposed to mere re-animated corpses—except no substitutes!) in the immediate future, the CH has some pseudo-vooces in CRYPT 10 soon-to-come.

Hey, let's write a brand-new zombie tale! I've already got a title: "Ain't Got Nothin' Zombie!". —VK

Dear Vault-Keeper,

I recently became an EC fan when I got VAULT #6. It was really good. I loved Graham Ingels' art in "Dying to Loose Weight". The only story that wasn't quite as scary as the rest was "The Mask of Horror". —David Lowery

Irving, TX

These stories are in VAULT T. The scariest thing about "Mask" is the pledging of mutual 'wants' after a single evening's acquaintance! Maybe that's how he got into his crummy marriage in the first place! —VK

Dear Vault-Keeper,

Wow! VAULT #7 is truly a masterpiece. Every story was great, but my favorite was "Sink-Hole". When Shirley hit Aldous with that frying pan! I winced from the blow! In fact, my head still hurts whenever I look at that story.

VAULT is my favorite comic book now. I can hardly stand the wait between issues! Thanks a million for sharing your fetid fables with us. Vault-Keeper! Your devoted fan,

Jim Davis

Pullman WA

"KLANG!" —VK

Dear VK,

Just got some back issues in the mail and I gotta say VAULT 6 was the best! "Horror on the Moon!" and "Baby: It's a Cold Inside!" were by far my favorites. I have all the 64-page reprints and I plan on buying all the 32-pagers also.

Your mag is my favorite among the horror comics but I also like the others. Got a drawing here to hang in your vault! Keep up the gory work!

Nathan Little

Montgomery, AL

Sometimes I hang the art, sometimes I hang the artist. This time, you were lucky. For future reference, what's your seller size? —VK

NATHAN'S DRAWING

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

BACK ISSUES: CRYPT #1 (subject to availability), 86 each. All others up thru issue 48, $1.50 each. Issues #4 and up, $2 each. Add $6 per order ($10 outside US) for S&H.

We want MORE letter writers to:
VAULT

RUSSELL COCHRAN
POB 409
WEST PLAINS MO 65775

THIS COMIC REPRINTS

VAULT OF HORROR "#20" (98, AUG/SEP 51)

COVER by Johnny Craig

"About Face!"

Johnny Craig

"The Reluctant Vampire!"

Jack Davis

"Grandma's Ghost!"

Jack Carmen

"Revenge of the Nuts!"

Graham Ingels

For questions or comments, please send e-mail to...

Wendy Burlatton

Brentwood, NY

Marly Ellis

Blacksburg, VA

Bruce Low

Hillsdale, NJ

George B. Key

Alhambra, CA

Johnny Craig

Craig Lowery

IL

Martin Pitz

Nashville, TN

Mike Sick

Tall City, FL

Dave Savara

Aberdeen, WA

Fred de Varde

Ottawa, PQ

Ken Varde

CANADA

We also heard from:

The editor of this comic reserves the right to edit and condense all letters.

We welcome letters of opinion. We cannot guarantee that all letters will be published.

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AN OLD friend of ours sat for this moody monster pie from the pen (ballpoint?) of Jessica Beebe, St. Louis, MO. And that’s how I start off this special coming-of-age edition of THE CRYPT-KEEPER’S PAGE OF...

FINE ARTS #21

AN EXTRATERRESTRIAL etching from the spacy stylus of Sammy Stewart of Fairfield, IL. Or, as Sammy says:
Here (is a) drawing of UFO occupants. I am illustrating a UFO book. The art of Wally Wood has always been my ideal.

Wally Wood didn’t do a tremendous number of EC horror stories, but I forgive him because his SF was so good!

—CK

“VAULT-KEEPER RULES!!!” says Matthew Smith, Utica, NY, of the sinister countenance above. Maybe this is what the video version of Ol’ VK would look like if the TV guys had decided to do “Tales from the Vault.” Below, what the TV guys would look like so deliciously depicted by William Pearson, Rutland, VT!

“HUDGE’ THANKS to Arton, Groton, NY for this thin-piece, a guy who’s head was too big for the panel! Are you sure you didn’t swipe this from the cover of the October 1965 issue of DC’s MYSTERY ADJACENT TO SPACE?

—CK

Send your contributions (not returnable, not too long, not too big, legible doublespaced text &/or bold black art. Warning...we edit) to:

THE CRYPT-KEEPER’S
PAGE OF FINE ARTS

RUSS COCHRAN
P.O. Box 465
West Plains, MO 65775

We encourage contributions. We cannot promise to return, acknowledge or publish contributions. We can’t afford to shake hands and eat. We encourage without press additions or bias against you. Don’t send us your original artwork. We reserve the right to exclude contributions. No we want you address on the individual contribution.
Here's a chilling tale about little Peggy and her...

GRANDMA'S GHOST!!

Peggy sat bolt upright in her bed and stared into the darkness! It came again... an unmistakable cry of pain!

AAAAAAH! Help me!

GRANDMA!

Peggy swept her dovey aside and pushed her tiny feet into the furry slippers that stood at attention beneath her bed...

IT'S GRANDMA! She's having another attack!
Out of her gayly decorated room... down the long elaborately furnished corridor into her grandmother's bedroom, the terrified little girl rushed...

Peggy scurried about her grandmother's room, trying to keep herself from crying, as she searched for the little amber-colored glass bottle with the yellow caps... I... I can't find it, Granny! I can't! I'll go get Uncle Lawrence.

Peggy, her eyes filling with tears, pulled the familiar strings that lit Grandma's night-table lamp... Murray, dear, give me two and some water. They're not here, Grandma.

They must be there! They muS t be! Look for them.

Peggy edges toward her grandmother's bed. The old woman whimpered in pain, but as the sobbing child drew near, she managed a weak smile... I'm going to have to go away, Peggy, dear. I may never see you again. Don't leave me, Granny! Don't leave me with Uncle Lawrence and Aunt Helen! Take me with you.

I can't child! I don't want to go, but I must... gasp. Sigh. Granny, Granny! Wake up, Granny!

Peggy turned from her grandmother's chalk-white face and tip-toed from the room. 'Grandma is asleep,' she thought. She looked into her aunt and uncle's room as she passed. It stood on the dresser among her aunt's perfume bottles... The bottle of pills! Grandma's pills!
NO sound came from the waken face of the old woman. She was... very dead. Percy didn’t know; she was too young to understand. She couldn’t understand why they put Grammy in a black box either, or why they buried her deep in the soft earth of the cemetery and, most of all, she couldn’t understand why her grandma’s pill bottle happened to be in her aunt and uncle’s room.

Perry clutched the pills in her tiny hands as she ran back to her grandmother’s room. She shook her roughly.

‘Wake up, Grammy! Wake up! I found the pills! Aunt Helen had them in her room! Wake up! Can’t you hear me?’

After the funeral, Perry’s aunt and uncle drank a toast. ‘Well, Larry, the old man’s doing will be ours soon.’

But Aunt Helen and Uncle Larry were in for a shock. ‘And I, Mabel Britt, leave my entire fortune to my granddaughter, Perry Britt. To be turned over to her when she reaches twenty years of age.’

Perry missed her grandma very much. She longed for affection. Her aunt Helen and Uncle Larry didn’t give it to her; they seemed to resent her.

‘It’ll be easy with the brat out of the way, mean...the fortune will be ours!’

Exactly! Where is she? She’s with that cursed gardener again.

‘Yer! Perry had found a substitute for her departed grandmother. Alex Bates, the family gardener... no, the oh, Alex, you’re so funny! Tell me more!’

‘Little Sam, you little slut...’

‘Heck...’
ALEX BATES WAS JUST WHAT PEGGY NEEDED. PEGGY'S PARENTS HAD DIED WHEN SHE WAS AN INFANT. SHE COULDN'T COME TO SEE HIM AS OFTEN AS SHE WANTED.

YOU STAY AWAY FROM THAT DIRTY OLD MAN! I DON'T WANT YOU TO SEE HIM ANY MORE!

BUT... BUT GRANDMA SAYS HE'S A FINE MAN. SHE SAYS HE...

GRANDMA SAYS? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

PEGGY! IT'S PAST YOUR DINNER TIME! WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?

TO SEE ALEX! I... I LIKE HIM! I ATE AT HIS PLACE!

WHY, I'M TALKING ABOUT GRANDMA LAST NIGHT WHEN SHE CAME TO SEE ME.

BY YOUR GRANDMOTHER IS DEAD? DO YOU UNDERSTAND?

OH, YES! GRANDMA TOLD ME! SHE SAID I...

PEGGY! GO UP TO YOUR ROOM! THIS INSTANT!

"EGGY SHRUGGED HER LITTLE SHOULDERS AND HURRIED UPSTAIRS WHEN SHE WAS GONE.

"IT'S THAT GARDENER! HE'S FILLED HER HEAD WITH FANTASTIC NOTIONS!

THE NEXT DAY, AUNT HELEN AND UNCLE LAWRENCE TOOK PEGGY ON A PICNIC... UP TO LOOKOUT BLUFFS.

"OH, AUNT HELEN! THIS IS SO MUCH FUN! WHY DON'T WE DO THIS MORE?

COME, PEGGY! I WANT TO SHOW YOU A LOVELY VIEW!

UNCLE LARRY LED PEGGY TO THE EDGE OF THE CLIFF FROM WHICH LOOKOUT BLUFFS DERIVED ITS NAME...

SEE, PEGGY? YOU CAN ALMOST MAKE OUT OUR HOUSE... WAY DOWN THERE?

I... I SEE IT, UNCLE LARRY! I SEE IT!
Larry’s eyes were wild and bulging as he gritted his teeth and moved up behind Peggy.

"Just one little shove! Just one!"

Peggy turned as if someone had called her! She moved toward an invisible something that beckoned to her...

"Oh, Granny! You came on our picnic, too?"

Uncle Larry’s lunge had been a split second too late! He pushed forward out over the edge of the cliff and hurled downward toward the jagged rocks... Four-hundred feet below...

They buried what was left of Uncle Larry in the grave next to Peggy’s Grandma. No one listened to Peggy when she told what had happened! No one understood about her grandmother. No one... except Alex Bates...

...and then Grandma called me. She reached out her hand and I went to her! And Uncle Larry screamed as he fell!

Yes! Aunt Helen had made up her mind! She would go through with the original plan! She would do away with sweet, frail Peggy...

"Where have you been? I... I went to see Alex!"

But, in her black mourning clothes, Peggy’s Aunt Helen understood only one thing...

Now that Larry’s out of the way, the money will be mine... all mine!

Yes! Aunt Helen had made up her mind! She would go through with the original plan! She would do away with sweet, frail Peggy...

"Aunt Helen! What are you going to do to me?"

Aunt Helen snatched Peggy’s arm and pulled her roughly to the cellar. Her plan was simple: the furnace would... leave no trace! She shoved the struggling child toward it...

"Aunt Helen! You little brat!"

You’ll see...
Suddenly, aunt Helen's grip on Peggy's arm relaxed. Peggy turned, following her aunt's terrified gaze.

"Grandma? Oh, Grandma... You're just in time!"

"Oh, my... God!"

Aunt Helen backed away. The blood drained from her face. Her eyes were wide in horror...

"No... No... No!"

The flames licked at her back as she cowered towards the furnace's yawning doorway...

Aunt Helen staggered away. Peggy's aunt's shrieking died in a choking rattle. She listened intently and then left the cellar. She made her way slowly to the garden's cottage. Alex listened to her incredible story...

"And then Grandma said she was going away... for good... That you'd take care of me from now on!"

"Heh, heh... well, that's it, kiddies! Peggy's happy now with nice old Alex Bates! They spend many a pleasant evening together discussing Uncle Larry... whose plan fell through and Aunt Helen, whose idea ended up too hot for her... and now, I'll turn you over to my guest... Ghoulimatic. The old witch!"

Peggy watched as her aunt's boot was lifted and thrust into the consuming flames.

The small frail child stood quietly as her aunt's shriek echoed in a choking rattle! She listened intently and then left the cellar. She made her way slowly to the garden's cottage. Alex listened to her incredible story...

"And then Grandma said she was going away for good... That you'd take care of me from now on!"

"Heh, heh... well, that's it, kiddies! Peggy's happy now with nice old Alex Bates! They spend many a pleasant evening together discussing Uncle Larry... whose plan fell through and Aunt Helen, whose idea ended up too hot for her... and now, I'll turn you over to my guest... Ghoulimatic. The old witch!"
HEE, HEE! I SEE BY YOUR LEERING FACES THAT YOU ARE EAGERLY AWAITING ANOTHER OF MY DELICIOUS HORROR-SERVINGS! WELL, YOU WON'T BE DISAPPOINTED! THE FIRE IS LEAPING AND CRACKLING AROUND MY CAULDRON, AND ITS EVIL SMOKE IS BUBBLING AND STEAMING! SO COME CLOSER, WHERE YOU CAN INHALE THE FOUL-SMELLING AROMAS ... AND YOUR HOSTESS, THE OLD WITCH, MISTRESS OF THE HAUNT OF FEAR, WILL DISH OUT A TASTY TALE OF TERROR CALLED,

REVENGE IS THE NUTS!


HA-HA-HA-HA!

AAAAAAAAAAAHHH!
Inside the moldy stone walls, in one wing of the asylum, was the office of Lytham Blackpool... the doctor in charge of Croydon. At his desk sat an unwelcome visitor.

Good grief, Blackpool! What was that...that horrible scream? Do not be alarmed, Mr. Aldershot! It was only one of the patients probably having a nightmare.

Meanwhile, upstairs in Lytham Blackpool's office, it is this letter that has brought me to Croydon. Doctor Blackpool, a relative of one of the patients here sent it to me! Its contents shocked me!

Yes! The writer's son is an inmate of Croydon! He told his mother of the inhuman treatment of the patients of this institution. She writes of whipping... unsanitary conditions... just a moment, Mr. Aldershot!

I don't know whether you believe in these radically new ideas about the treatment of the insane or not! I, for one, as head of this institution, follow the accepted... Thod!

An insane person is possessed of the devil, or evil spirits that control his mind and body! Only by inflicting severe pain upon the patient can we drive these evil demons from his body and thereby cure him!

You're right. It's cruel to do that to those poor souls. Insanity is a sickness!

This interview is at an end! Good day!
After Mr. Aldershot left, Doctor Blackpool made his way down the stone steps that led to the dungeons of Croydon. He motioned to the guard to unlock a door! Inside, a young man lay prostrate on the stone floor... sobbing...

I hope you've learned your lesson, Moulton! Next time your dear mother visits you, don't complain to me about how we treat you.

Doctor Blackpool watched as Mr. Aldershot strode angrily out of his office.

You haven't heard the end of this, Blackpool! I'll take this letter to the newspapers... they'll expose you and your... your... institution!

After Mr. Aldershot left, Doctor Blackpool made his way down the stone steps that led to the dungeons of Croydon. He motioned to the guard to unlock a door! Inside, a young man lay prostrate on the stone floor... sobbing...

I hope you've learned your lesson, Moulton! Next time your dear mother visits you... don't complain to me about how we treat you.

Doctor Blackpool turned and left the dark cell.

All right, guard! You can take him back to the ward!

Yes, Doctor!

As Doctor Blackpool's footsteps faded away...

C'mon, Moulton! The Doc says you can go back to the ward!

I... I can't move!

I said... come on!

I said... p-please... have pity...

Roughly, the guard pushed and shoved the pain-wracked body of Thomas Moulton up the grey-stone steps and down the corridor to the ward! Unlocking the door, the guard hurled him in... where he went sprawling...

IT... IT'S THOMAS!

Blackpool's had him lashed!

A mild, sad-faced, grey-haired old man bent and comforted the writhing lad. The other inmates gathered around...

Why did he do it, Tom? Why did he have you whipped?

I... I complained... to my mother... about... how... we're treated... here...

The guard pulled the lash-scarred young man to his feet! He screamed in pain... owww!
Beyond the group of gathered inmates stood a monstrous man! He stared dumbly at them—his face blank and expressionless.

How did I find out that you complained, Tom? My mother wrote to an old friend who wrote to Blackpool for an appointment to discuss the matter.

The young man clutched at the grey-haired old man's tattered clothes... why do you stay here, Mister Fortney? You are not insane! Why don't you make your family take you out?

They don't want to, son! They pay Doctor Blackpool to keep me here.

At that moment, Doctor Blackpool entered the bare ward. Get up, Fortney! Leave him alone! Why do you stay here, Mister Fortney? You are not insane! Why don't you make your family take you out?

I'm only trying to comfort him, you...

The huge, ovoid-faced inmate who had been staring blankly at the brutal scene suddenly moved forward! His eyes were wide now, his mouth twisted in an angry snarl... no, Olaf! no! I'm not hurt... keep away, you overgrown guards! guards!

Olaf smashed at the doctor with a huge fist and savagely smashed the others into the doctor's screaming face.

Guards! Stop, Olaf! stop!

Stop, Olaf! stop!

Three guards burst into the ward and finally dragged the snarling Olaf from the covering doctor... put him... put him in chains! I'll... I'll deal with him later!

Yes, sir!
The old man shook his head.

"No! The doctor wouldn't do that! It would mean money out of his pocket! For every inmate in Croydon, the government gives Doctor Blackpool a sum of money..."

"Don't they give him the money anymore?"

Meanwhile Olaf was chained to a ring embedded in the floor of a large dungeon room. The chain permitted him to move in a circle about the ring. I'll teach you to hit me, you ape!"

Olaf's screams of pain could be heard by the inmates of the ward.

Poor Olaf! He's being whipped!

If he ever gets his hands on Blackpool now, he'll tear him to pieces!

But Doctor Blackpool was very careful to stand just outside of the confines of the circle that Olaf could move in... this is just the beginning, Olaf! Just the beginning..."
Yes, kiddies! It was just the beginning! Each day Doctor Blackpool visited Olaf. To tease him, taunt him... Hungry, Olaf? I'll wager you'd like this food, wouldn't you? Here... have some.

Doctor Blackwell put the tray of food just outside of Olaf's reach.

What's the matter, Olaf? Don't you want it? Aren't you hungry? Ha, ha, ha, ha...

Summer passed, and winter came to Croydon! Cold, cold winter! The inmates shivered in their scant rags.

The fire's died out? He's too cheap to provide heat!

Doctor Blackwell continued to mistreat poor Olaf.

Well, Olaf? Thirsty? Here's a pitcher of water for you!

As Olaf reached eagerly for the water, his parched lips quivering... Oh, dear! That was clumsy of me!

And while Olaf fell to his knees to sip up the spilled water from the smashed pitcher...

Drink it, Olaf. Drink it like an animal... the animal you are!

In the ward, old mild, grey-haired Mr. Fortney pleaded with the other inmates.

He must be punished! Doctor Blackpool must be punished for this.
The door to Olaf's room was unlocked, and anxious hands shoved Doctor Blackpool in.

"Look, Olaf! Look what we've brought you!"

"No! No! Not that..."

The grim-faced inmates carried the struggling, shrieking doctor down the grey-stone steps that led to the dungeon rooms.

"Let me go! Let me go!"

"Hurry! Down here!"

The smiling, laughing, chattering inmates stood around the large room in a circle and watched as Olaf wreaked his vengeance upon the hysterical doctor! Each time that Blackpool slipped from Olaf's immense tearing hands, the eager inmates pushed him back...

"And so I leave the happy circle of maniacs at Greydon... all of whom seem to be having a ripping good time... and bring my story to its inevitable end. I hope you were mad about poor Doctor Blackpool's punishment even more, milo... old Mr. Fortney went crazy over it... and you'd be crazy not to fill in your EC comics collections with our back issues. For details... read the Vault Keeper's Corner."

"Bye now."

Bye now. The end.
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GLAD CRYPT</th>
<th>GLAD VAULT</th>
<th>GLAD WEIRD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1: CRYPT 33 (1962)</td>
<td>#1: VAULT 34 (1959)</td>
<td>#1: W SCIENCE 1 (1953)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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