HEH, HEH! THE DOORS TO THE VAULT OF HORROR ARE OPEN, FIENDS! WOHN'T YOU COME IN? I AM YOUR HOST, THE VAULT KEEPER, AND I REALLY HAVE A FOUL STORY FOR YOU! IT ACTUALLY SMELLS! BUT YOU'LL ENJOY IT... SO IF YOU WISH, PUT A CLOTHESPIN ON YOUR NOSE, OR DON YOUR GAS-MASK, AND I'LL BEGIN! HEH, HEH! WHEN I'M FINISHED, YOU'LL KNOW EXACTLY WHAT I MEAN... FOR EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU IS GOING TO 
LIVE THE TALE CALLED...

TILL DEATH...

You stand on the end of the pier, staring anxiously out over the glittering, restless waters of the Caribbean Sea. You wipe the perspiration from your face... and then, suddenly, your heart skips a beat! You see it! Just a dot on the horizon... a ship!
You've waited two years for this ship! For two long, back-breaking years you've sweated to build up your sugar plantation so that it would be fit for a woman to live on! And now the special day has arrived... for this ship is bringing you your future wife...

The ship slides into its berth and the gangplank is lowered! Tourists swarm onto the pier to be swallowed by the bustling dockside activity! And then... you see her...

Donna! Steve!

Your days of waiting are ended! The 'girl back home' has come to marry you... and many hours later, you arrive at your plantation deep in the jungle... deep in the jungle of Haiti...

Here we are, honey! A minister is waiting inside for us!

Oh, Steve! I'm so excited!

You're proud as a king! The minister performs a simple ceremony... and the feast begins! The natives chant and beat the drums... dancing, laughing, singing in their happiness...

You're here, Steve! The minister performs a simple ceremony... and the feast begins! The natives chant and beat the drums... dancing, laughing, singing in their happiness...

The next few months are pure bliss! Donna wakes you with a kiss each morning...

She prepares your meals and serves you faithfully lovingly by her presence she turns the brooding Voodoo island of Haiti into a beautiful isle of romance and love...

She's by your side constantly, showering you with her love and devotion! No matter where you go, she is by your side! Your happiness is complete...
But one day, as you stroll with her about the plantation, her steps falter. She grips your arm!

"Donna? What's the matter? You look so pale!"

"Darling, I... feel faint! Help me, Steve! Take me back... back to the house..."

Quickly, you lift her in your arms and carry her to the house. A runner is sent to fetch a doctor... but you know it won't do any good!

"Missy Donna got heap bad jungle fever, D'Wana Steve?"

"I... I know, Jedco! She's going to die! No one ever lives through it!"

Through the long, anxious hours of the night, you kneel beside her, praying fervently! In the morning, the runner returns with the doctor...

"I'm afraid it's too late! She's dead!"

"It's what I expected! It's always too late!"

The next day, you bury her! The long, chanting procession climbs to the top of a hill where the yawning grave waits! Through the trackless jungle, drums resound! The enchanted isle of romance has returned to its former evil self!

"Your life is empty now! Nights are filled with agonizing dreams of memories! There's no one to kiss you awake in the morning."

"Jedco tries hard to take her place? He serves your meals as she used to... he stays with you Always! It hurts Him to see you so sad..."

But it's not the same! Nothing is the same! It can never be the way it once was! Only Donna Nad cast the spell to change things..."
That night you drink heavily... you want to deaden your senses to the realities you dread? But in your subconscious, you hear the voodoo orums...

"Jebsco, I'd do anything to have her with me again. She was my whole life!"

"You get her back, you like Meggie keep her all time. Yes?"

"I'd never let her out of my sight. Jebsco, I'd keep her, and love her... forever!"

Unknown to you, your faithful servant Jebsco has removed your wife from her grave and carried her into the jungle! There, surrounded by the frenzied, chanting worshippers, a voodoo ritual is performed.

The whirling hysterical natives leap and dance through the flames, mesmerized by the ear-shattering thunder of the drums! Fan into the night the high priestess gyrates spasmodically before the corpse tied to a pole in the center of the fire ring...

And suddenly... Donna moves!

Immediately, her bonds are severed, her fingers and arms twitch, her head turns slowly, and her eyes are open, glassy and trance-like. She is a member of the living dead — a zombie!

The next morning... you are wakened with a kiss!
You stroll arm in arm, and the natives grin in their approval of your joy! You are supremely happy...

Once again the world about you is changed! Once more you feel alive and happy, content with everything and everyone! Life is beautiful!

Yes...supremely happy! For a few days! Because slowly you become aware of something... (sniff!) Phew! Donna, don't you think you ought to take a bath?

A bath helps...a little! But an hour later...

Phew! Donna, please? Take another bath?

Then with a shock, you realize...

My gosh! Baths won't stop her odor! She's dead! She's... she's starting to decay!

The sweltering days pass, and Donna's condition constantly gets worse! Her skin begins to rot and drop from her bones! You try to escape from her... but she remains with you...

Donna, please? Leave me alone just for a little while! Please! (choke?)

Her entire existence is you! She stays by your side day and night, clinging tightly to your arm and in the morning...

No! No! Don't kiss me! I'm awake! I'm awake!
Days pass into weeks! You’re nauseous all the time now, so you stop eating! The putrid odor spreads throughout the house and plantation... but the natives aren’t bothered! You are the only one affected... and you can’t stand it!

Get away from me, you filthy, rotten thing! Get away! Please! Please!!

It’s no use... bullets won’t stop her!

Cut you to pieces! Cut! Cut! I’ll get rid of you!

That won’t stop her, either! You only make her look worse!

... and strangling, hanging or drowning have no effect whatsoever...

Frustrated in your every attempt to escape the sickening sight and smell of your wife, you finally tie her with rope and shove her into the helicopter you use to scout your cane fields...

If I push her out over the jungle, maybe she’ll just break into pieces when she hits the ground! It’s got to work!
A DAY OR TWO GOES BY, AND YOU ARE BEGINNING TO FEEL MORE RELAXED. ALTHOUGH HER STENCH STILL IS IN THE HOUSE, YOUR RELIEF IS IMMENSE.

YOU FLY OVER THE DENSEST PART OF THE JUNGLE WITH A PRAYER ON YOUR LIPS, YOU OPEN THE DOOR... AND SHOVE WITH YOUR FOOT!

YOU WATCH THE BODY PLUNGE DOWN AND DISAPPEAR INTO THE FOLIAGE BELOW! THEN YOU TURN AND GO BACK TO THE PLANTATION THAT NIGHT YOU WAIT PATIENTLY.

SHE MUSTN'T COME BACK! SHE MUSTN'T!

A DAY OR TWO GOES BY, AND YOU ARE BEGINNING TO FEEL MORE RELAXED. ALTHOUGH HER STENCH STILL IS IN THE HOUSE, YOUR RELIEF IS IMMENSE.

I'M FREE OF HER! I'LL... BE ABLE TO EAT AGAIN SOON!

BY THE NEXT EVENING YOU'RE FEELING QUITE WELL! YOU ATE A MEAL TODAY... AND IT STAYED DOWN BUT JUST AS YOU'RE ABOUT TO RETIRE, JESCO ENTERS!

B'WANA! B'WANA STEVE! MISSY DONNA! SHE COME BACK!

YOU RACE MADLY OUT OF THE HOUSE? IT CAN'T BE TRUE! SHE CAN'T COME BACK! YOU STOP THERE, STUMBLING GROTESQUELY ACROSS THE COMPOUND TOWARD YOU, IS THE ROTTED REMAINS OF WHAT ONCE WAS YOUR WIFE! YOU FEEL SICK.

THE MEDICINE CHEST? YOUR HANDS FUMBLE IN YOUR FRANTIC HASTE, BUT YOU FIND WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR! IF YOU CAN'T DESTROY HER... YOU'VE GOT TO DESTROY YOURSELF! YOU OPEN THE BOTTLE MARKED 'POISON' AND DRINK!

YOU TURN SWIFTLY AND RACE PASS JESCO INTO THE HOUSE! IT'S THE END, NOW! YOU CAN'T TAKE ANY MORE? THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY LEFT!
The poison is strong! It acts quickly! You feel the burning in your throat... Your surroundings are going black... For a long while you float in a sea of darkness... And then, bit by bit, you hear the far away sound of thunder... The noise grows louder and clearer! You recognize it as the rumbling of drums! You feel a great heat... You twitch... and open your eyes...

You see a great wall of fire... and hear the mad, fanatic screaming of hundreds of natives! The drums pound through your head as you move your hand... A native leaps through the flames and slashes the ropes that bind you...

Dumbly, you take a step forward... and a great roar fills your ears! You walk through the circle of leaping flames... and feel nothing! Then, Jebco and the High Priestess confront you...

Is good! Bwana Steve, him say be with Missy Donna all time!

A dim realization dawns upon you! You didn't feel pain when you walked through the fire! You felt nothing then... You feel nothing now! You're a zombie! One of the living dead! And, as Jebco said, you'll be with Donna for all time now... Forever! Look out! Here she comes...

Heh, heh! Ain't that something? Steve had rotten luck, didn't he? I guess Donna Donna know about lifeboat! But now that Steve's a zombie, at least she has a deadboy! Heh, heh, heh! Oh, I'm really fired up, eh? Whataya mean, I'm just a drum bell?! Well, C.K.'s gettin' impatient, so I'll pass you along to him! See you later!
HER, HERM! ONCE I SAW A SAW-MILL! AND I ADDED ANOTHER BLOOD-CURDLING TALE OF TERROR TO MY FABULOUS COLLECTION HERE IN THE CRYPT! SO COME IN, FIENDS! COME SIT BESIDE YOUR HORROR- HOST, THE CRYPT-KEEPER! I'LL TELL IT TO YOU... IF YOU WOODEN MIND/I CALL THIS SPINE-TINGLING YARN... THE CHIPS ARE DOWN!

Sigmund Darby leaned over and snapped on the intercom in response to the instrument's impatient buzzing! Behind him stood his partners, Averill Henning and Gilbert Field...

Yes, Miss Forbes? What is it? Colonel Turner is here to see you, Mr. Darby!
Now you've met the players in our little game of chance, friends! Partners in a saw-mill! Look! See how their stakes in life stack up equally! This one is Sigmund Darby's! The one in the middle... Averill Hennings! And the one on the right... Gilbert Field's...

Come in, Colonel! Sit down! These are my associates, Mr. Hennings and Mr. Field!

How do, Colonel? A pleasure, Colonel! The pleasure is ours, Sir! Gentlemen! Your saw-mill has been chosen by the Army for a highly secret government contract! We know your record! We know what you can do! I have here the specifications of what the Army needs!

Colonel Turner spread a blueprint out on Sigmund Darby's desk! The three partners stared at it for a moment. Then...

Why, this looks like nothing more than a thin wooden disc, Colonel!

Exactly, Mr. Hennings! That's all it is! Wafers thin!

And this is the highly secret product!

IT IS! LET ME EXPLAIN! I cannot tell you what we will use them for, but the Army will need sixty thousand of these discs per month! They must be exactly as specified... twenty-seven inches in diameter and three sixteenths of an inch thick!

That is correct, Mr. Field! They must be made of oak, and entirely flawless! We will reject all that do not meet the specifications! The contract reads that upon delivery, we will pay one dollar and seventy-five cents each for the discs!

As soon as we've designed and built the machinery...

Perfect, good day, gentlemen! Good day, Colonel! Good day, Sir! Good day, Sir!

HOW CAN WE TURN THEM OUT, FIELD? YOU'RE THE ENGINEER? SIXTY THOUSAND A MONTH! THAT'S MORE THAN TWO THOUSAND PER PRODUCTION DAY!

I'LL THINK OF SOMETHING, GENTLEMEN, GIVE ME TIME!

COULD WE CUT DOWN OAK TIMBER INTO QUARTER INCH PLANKS AND OUT THE DISCS FROM THAT? WE COULD! BUT IT WOULD BE COSTLY, AND TAKE TOO LONG! NO! WE'VE GOT TO THINK OF A BETTER METHOD.

GENTLEMEN, WE HAVEN'T HAD LUNCH YET! SHALL WE...

HO, HENH! LET'S HAVE OUR LUNCH SENT IN TODAY! WE'VE GOT A LOT OF FIGURING TO DO!

OH, LORD! I HATE SANDWICHES!

SANDWICHES! WHAT ABOUT SANDWICHES, FIELD? THAT'S IT?

SANDWICHES! BREAD SLICES! THE WOODEN DISCS ARE LIKE BREAD SLICES! HOW DO THEY SLICE BREAD?

WHY, WITH A KNIFE? NO! NO! I MEAN WHOLE LOAVES! NOW DO THEY SLICE WHOLE LOAVES?

WITH A SLICING MACHINE! A SERIES OF KNIVES VIBRATING AT HIGH SPEEDS CUTS THE WHOLE LOAF INTO SLICES...

YES! AND A SERIES OF STRONG BUT PAPER-THIN SAW BLADES, SPACED THREE-SIXTEENTHS OF AN INCH APART, COULD CUT AN OAK COLUMN... TURNED DOWN TO TWENTY-SEVEN INCHES IN DIAMETER... INTO DISCS EXACTLY THE SIZE WE NEED!

FIELD! YOU'VE GOT IT! YOU'VE GOT IT!
YES, DEAR READER! GILBERT FIELD DID HAVE IT! NOTICE NOW... NOW THAT THEIR BIGGEST PROBLEM IS SOLVED, HOW OUR THREE PLAYERS IN THE GAME OF LIFE HAVE ADDED TO THEIR ORIGINAL STAKES! THE STACKS ARE HIGHER... BUT EQUAL! LET'S LOOK IN ON THE D.H.F. SAW-MILL ABOUT ONE MONTH LATER...

A SWITCH WAS THROWN! MORE THAN FIVE HUNDRED SAW BLADES WITH TINY RAZOR-SHARP TEETH BEGAN TO VIBRATE...

IT'S WORKING, FIELD! IT'S CUTTING THROUGH THE COLUMN AS IF IT WERE CLAY...

GENTLEMEN! THE MACHINE IS A SUCCESS! OUR GOVERNMENT CONTRACT WILL BE MET WITH EASE!

A SWITCH WAS THROWN! MORE THAN FIVE HUNDRED SAW BLADES WITH TINY RAZOR-SHARP TEETH BEGAN TO VIBRATE...

IT'S WORKING, FIELD! IT'S CUTTING THROUGH THE COLUMN AS IF IT WERE CLAY...

GENTLEMEN! THE MACHINE IS A SUCCESS! OUR GOVERNMENT CONTRACT WILL BE MET WITH EASE!
HEH! HEH! OUR PLAYERS' FOR- 
TUNES CONTINUE TO PILE UP. 
EH, FIENDS? LOOK HOW THEY'VE 
GROWN! GROWN EQUALLY! 
BUT NOW... NOW GREED SITS 
DOWN AT THE GAME! LISTEN 
TO DARBY AND HENNING... 
AND GREED...

SIXTY THOUSAND 
DISCS AT ONE 
DOLLAR AND SEVENTY 
FIVE CENTS EACH 
IS $105,000 
PER MONTH. 
HENNING... 
$1,280,000 
PER YEAR!

OUR PROFIT AFTER 
TAXES AND COSTS 
WILL PROBABLY 
BE CLOSE TO 
$200,000!

$200,000 
SPLIT THREE 
WAYS OUTS 
THE PIE 
DOWN, 
HENNING!

ARE YOU 
SUGGESTING A 
TWO-WAY SPLIT, 
DARBY?

I AM! AND I HAVE 
A PLAN!

ALL RIGHT, DARBY! 
SPILL IT!

THAT NIGHT, AT THE D.H.F. SAW-MILL...

WELL, GENTLEMEN! WE 
TOPPED OUR QUOTA 
TODAY! SHALL WE 
CLOSE UP?

HOW ABOUT 
A GAME OF 
POKER, FIELD?

GOOD IDEA, 
DARBY! WE 
HAVEN'T 
PLAYED 
CARDS IN 
MONTHS!

POKER! WHY, I 
WOULDN'T MIND 
A FEW HANDS!

GOOD! GET 
THE CARDS 
FROM MY DESK, 
HENNING!

HERE YOU 
ARE! ER... 
LET'S MAKE 
THE POT 
INTERESTING... 
SAY TEN 
AND TWENTY?

THE GAME BEGAN SOON, DILBERT FIELD WAS LOSING 
STEADILY...

THAT'S ONE THOUSAND 
YOU OWE THE BANK, 
FIELD?

LET'S DOUBLE THE 
ANTE, DARBY! GIVE ME 
A CHANCE TO RECOUP 
MY LOSSES!
HEH! HEH! SEE, NOW, DEAR READERS, HOW OUR PLAYERS' STAKES ARE CHANGING? DARBY'S AND HENNING'S PILES GROW HIGHER, WHILE POOR FIELD'S BEGINS TO DIMINISH! AND THE GAME OF LIFE GOES ON...

WE'D BETTER QUIT, FIELD! YOU OWE US EACH TEN THOUSAND!

NO! NO! I'VE GOT TO WIN IT BACK! LET'S CONTINUE PLAYING!

AND THEN SEVERAL HOURS LATER...

GENTLEMEN! I AM BROKE! I OWE YOU ALL I AM WORTH! I HAVE ONLY MY SHARE IN THE MILL LEFT!

ONE HAND, FIELD! ALL THAT WE'VE WON OR YOUR SHARE?

I DON'T KNOW!

IT'S YOUR ONLY CHANCE TO GET IT ALL BACK, FIELD!

ALL OR NOTHING!

ALL RIGHT! ALL RIGHT! ONE HAND! ALL... OR NOTHING!

DEAL THE CARDS, DARBY!

HERE GOES!

THE PAYOFF HAND WAS DEALT: CARDS WERE DISCARDED, AND THEN

TWO PAIR, GENTLEMEN!

SORRY, FIELD! THREE TENS!

DILBERT FIELD Rose FROM HIS SEAT AND WENT INTO HIS OWN OFFICE! HENNING AND DARBY GRINNED AT EACH OTHER.

IT WORKED, DARBY! A TWO-WAY SPLIT!

I TOLD YOU SO...

BLAMM
It was the night that both Darby and Henning were working late at the saw-mill! No one heard the ear-splitting shrieks that echoed into the night as the strange vibrating sound began...

"YAAAAAAAAAAAAA!
EEEEECH!
"

But Ed never noticed the microscopic cuts that ran horizontally across Sigmond's and Averill's bodies! Not until he touched them did the dead partners spill out over the blood-stained floor...

"GOOD LORD!"

For you see, friends; when a pile of chips gets too high, it spills over... SMOOSH... like these... Averill's and Sigmond's. Yes! Poor Dilbert's rotted corpse put MIGHT and AVERY through his nice machine! Of course, Colonel Turner rejected those discs! Heh, Heh, Heh... What did the Army want with wafer-thin twenty-seven-inch wooden discs? Oh, come now! You've heard of the flying saucers! These were built to scale! Heh, Heh, Heh... BYE, NOW! This is your crypt-keeper, saying... next time you meet your local undertaker, ask him if he's got any empty boxes!
THE

DEFILER

From Tabou on the French Ivory Coast to Takarodi on the Gold Coast, the drums sent the news of Trader Trask's coming! Trader Trask, the most unscrupulous hawker ever to prey upon the western coast of Africa, Trader Trask, the man who placed a beguiling tongue and some cheap whisky on the block to cheat the ignorant natives of their gold, ivory, timber, and raw rubber. Whether he gave them a few yards of cotton cloth for their copra or a low grade of tobacco in exchange for their cocoa and hides, he always came away with a great profit.

Trask's packet had been tied up at the wharf at Takarodi for but two days when the hold was already three-quarters filled with the fruits of his business transactions. Upon his arrival, Trask had made his way through the bazaar where the native shops were set up. He cursed fiercely as his pith-helmet was knocked off his head by the jostling African merchants and farmers who jammed over their wares like money-conscious monkeys.

The sun helmet rolled into a stall which was covered with a bamboo canopy. It wheeled around once and fell flat on top of some hand-carved ivory figurines that were arranged neatly on a bright red velvet cloth. Behind the display sat an Arab with a great hooked nose. The Arab leaned over and retrieved the trader's hat.

As Trask wrenched it from the obliging hand, he noticed the beautifully wrought silver pendant that swung from a chain about the Arab's neck. Trask asked to see it closely. Reluctantly, the latter fastened the chain and handed it over. The hot sun ran around the little figures that embellished its outer circumference with the visions and divine revelations of Mohammed. In the center of the pendant, a blood-red ruby blinked coyly at Trask.

Trask turned the treasure over in his palm. On its flat-surfaced back were some strange characters. Nor in Arabic! He knew Arabic!

The longer he was mesmerized by the talisman, the more he would possess it! He offered the owner a most exaggerated sum for it abandoning all the cunning that marked his former trading tactics. The Arab was obdurate. Would not sell! He plucked the jewel-studded object from Trask and snapped it about his neck again!

Trask had gone away in dismal defeat. All night long he schemed in the cabin of his steamer.

The next morning, he walked briskly through the bazaar with a small pig under his arm. Reaching the ivy-crowned stall, he yanked the sacred pendant from the startled merchant's neck. Quickly he ripped open the underside of the squealing piglet, with a knife and thrust the pendant into the red-running gash!

The Arab recoiled in horror at the significance of the contumacious act! To the followers of Mohammed, the swine are unclean, the very embodiment of the devil! Now that the talisman had touched sinful flesh, he could no longer own it! Trader Trask extracted the violated treasure, threw the bleeding piglet at the glaring, hate-breathing merchant, and strode off.

The next morning, Trask's native servant found him in his 'bunk'. His belly ripped open, the slain piglet stuffed into the gap.

Once more, the pendant reposed on the Arab's chest... like a bright star against his sky-blue burnoose!

The writing on the back of the pendant was in Sanskrit.

The same dwells in him who would this
Moon of Mohammed defile
To cast away sacrilege, amount with a
larger pig's buflf!"
THE VAULT-KEEPER'S
GRIM FAIRY TALE!

HER, HER! IN THE LAST ISSUE OF THE VAULT
OF HORROR, THE OLD WITCH TOLD YOU FIENDS
A GRIM FAIRY TALE! THEN, IN HER OWN MAG,
THE HAUNT OF FEAR, SHE TOLD YOU A SECOND!
THEN THE CRYPT-KEEPER SWiped THE IDEA, AND
HE TOLD YOU ONE IN HIS MAG, TALES FROM
THE CRYPT! SO, I'M NOBODY'S FOOL! I KNOW
A GOOD THING! HERE'S MY GRIM FAIRY TALE,
I CALL THIS CHILDISH-CHILLER...

FOR HOW THE BELL TOLLS!

ONCE UPON A TIME, LONG LONG AGO, FAR FAR
AWAY, THERE WAS A KINGDOM...

AND IN THIS KINGDOM, THERE WAS A CASTLE...
And in this castle, there was a belfry...

And in this belfry, there was a bell...

The bell in this belfry in this castle was the pride and joy of the king and queen of this kingdom...

Every time that there was a holiday or an important state function in this kingdom far, far away, the king would order the royal bell-ringer to ring the bell...

Ring the bell! Yes, your majesty!

Are you watching, royal apprentice?

I am watching, royal bell-ringer!

For thirty-four years... thirty-four long years... the royal bell-ringer’s apprentice had been watching the royal bell-ringer ring the royal bell...

Golly, yes! Gee! Someday I’d like to ring the bell... someday!

Hello, Sonny! Do you like to watch me ring the bell?

Gee!

Well! How would you like to become my apprentice, Sonny? After all, I can’t live forever! And when I’m too old, you would become the royal bell-ringer and ring the bell!
The tears passed. The royal bell-ringer grew old.
The royal bell-ringer's apprentice grew up.
At every state function or royal holiday, he'd watch as the royal bell-ringer rang the bell.
You watching, I'm watching, Sonny? Someday, I'll ring that bell.

The royal bell-ringer drew older and older! The royal bell-ringer's apprentice drew older and older too! But the royal bell-ringer never seemed to grow too old to ring the bell.
And the royal bell-ringer's apprentice grew more and more envious...

You watching, Son? I'm watching, old man! You're getting feeble, old man! Soon you will not be able to ring the bell! Then I will!

But the royal bell-ringer's apprentice ran out of patience after thirty-four years! So, when the king announced...

Royal bell-ringer! Tomorrow is the queen's birthday! I want you to ring the bell... ring it all day long!

But after the king left...

You are old, royal bell-ringer! You will not have the strength to ring the bell all day long. Besides, I have waited thirty-four years to ring the bell.

I know, apprentice. But as long as I have strength in my hands, I will ring the bell.
The royal bell-ringer's apprentice became terribly angry! His eyes bulged in their sockets.

I want to ring the bell! You are the apprentice! Always I watch you ring the bell!

I want to ring the bell! You are supposed to watch!

And if you could not ring the bell, then I would... Apprentice! Put down that axe!

I want to ring the bell!

The royal bell-ringer's apprentice looked down at the royal bell-ringer whose hands he'd severed.

Tomorrow... All day long... I will ring the bell...

Suddenly the door flew open! The king stood there! The last spark of life seemed from the old royal bell-ringer and ran out onto the crimson floor...

What, what is the meaning of this? It means, your majesty, that I am no longer the royal bell-ringer's apprentice! I am the royal bell-ringer!
YOU... YOU KILLED HIM!

TOMORROW... ON THE QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY... I WILL RING THE BELL... ALL DAY LONG!

YOU KILLED HIM FOR THAT? BECAUSE YOU WANTED TO RING THE BELL?

I WAITED THIRTY-FOUR YEARS FOR MY CHANCE! THIRTY-FOUR LONG YEARS! BUT HE DID NOT DIE!

...SO YOU KILLED HIM!

AND NOW, I'LL HAVE MY CHANCE!

I AM SORRY. ROYAL BELL-RINGER'S APPRENTICE...

ROYAL BELL-RINGER, IF YOU DON'T MIND, YOUR MAJESTY!

I AM SORRY, ROYAL BELL-RINGER! YOU WILL NOT GET YOUR CHARGE! YOU HAVE COMMITTED MURDER! YOU MUST BE PUNISHED... PUT TO DEATH.

NO! NO! I WANT TO RING THE BELL!

YOU MUST BE PUT TO DEATH FOR YOUR CRIME!

GUARDS!

NO! NO! LET ME RING THE BELL TOMORROW! PLEASE! AFTER THAT, YOU CAN DO WHAT YOU LIKE! BUT PLEASE... TOMORROW

LET ME RING THE BELL! I HAVE WAITED... SOB FOR THIRTY-FOUR... SOB... YEARS! LET ME RING IT!

ROYAL BELL-RINGER! YOU ARE GUILTY OF MURDER! YOU MUST BE PUT TO DEATH! TAKE HIM AWAY, GUARDS.

SOB... SOB...

LET'S ME RING IT.
Early the next morning...in the kingdom far away...the bell began to ring! It rang loud and clear...

It was the Queen's birthday! The sharp clangs of the bell echoed from the castle...

All morning, the bell tolled! The clean rings...drifting from the belfry...

BONG-BONG-BONG-BUNG

Toward noon, the tolling bell seemed quieter...softer...

Toward afternoon, the bell's tones were muffled...

- BUMM

BLUMM-SLUMM

And toward evening, only a faint liquid splash resounded against the bell! For the new royal bell-ringer had indeed rung the bell! He, or what was left of his battered book, hung inside the bell...USSIDE DOWN...a blood-soaked gas tied around his mashed head...

SPLATT!

And that's all I can say to all the kiddies! I hope it struck a chord with you...a spinal chord! So the apprentice's life-long ambition was fulfilled that day! Well, that's what you get when you use your head! Why the gas you ask? Well, the King felt that an instrumental was more in order that day...without a vocal refrain! After all, that everybody lived happily ever after...and now...the old witch awaits! Smell 'er p' er cauldron, that is!

THE END...
HMMPH! First, the Crypt-Keeper steals my 'Grim Fairy Tale' idea! Now, that old geezer, the Vault-Keeper! A new twist. A new gimmick. A good thing ain't safe these days! Before you know it, somebody swipes it! Those old ghouls and critters are as bad as those rival publishers! My idiot editors scream about it! HMMPH! Hee, hee! Yep! It's me, kiddies! Your hostess in the Haunt of Fear. The Old Witch! Got my fire lit? Got my cauldron steaming? Got a tasty tale of terror for you! Hungry? Good! Sit down, and I'll feed you the putrid portion of prose I call...

We ain't got no body!
The thing moved toward him. Norton backed away firing again and again at the stiff body before him...

Weh, weh! See, Norton? See? Bullets won't stop me! I told you...

The six shots boomed through the apartment! Then the dull clacks resounded, as Norton's revolver hammer struck the empty shell-cases again...

Now your gun is empty, Norton! You are helpless! Please, Henry! Have pity! Please...

Norton stared at the six bullet holes that had been torn through the thing's body! The hoarse voice droned on! The room began to spin! The whistle of a train resounded... far away...

Remember, Norton? Remember the trip we'd decided to take? We were going upstate... for a rest! We were going to do some fishing!

'Remember the limited... rushing over the shining rails? And how you and Charlie and Sidney decided...'

Are you sure, Norton? Are you sure Henry named you as beneficiary?

Positive! Twenty thousand dollars with double indemnity!

That means forty thousand to split three ways. Over thirteen grand each.

Hmmm! He's coming down the corridor...

Let's go!
'Remember, Norton? Remember how the three of you met me in the train corridor...

Hello, fellows! O'Non, Henry! We're going into the club car... Play some gin rummy!'
'A month passed, but they didn't turn up. Did they? And because of the identification on my torso, the insurance company paid off! Remember,' you said. Here is your check, Mr. Bowin! Forty thousand dollars! Thank you, sir!'

'When the drunk that happened by... while the store-window mannikin was being stolen... told his story, the police laughed at him...'

'I shaw it, I tell yew the mannikin was movin' by itself! Nobody was carryin' it! I shaw it! Heh, heh! Yeah, Mac! Stewed to the gills, eh, Flaggerty!'

'And it didn't occur to you that there was any tie-up between my death and the department store theft...'

'But Sidney was surprised that Sunday night. Wasn't he, when he opened his door in answer to the anxious knock?...'

'Hello, Sidney! Yes? Who...? Gasp. Henry!'
'Yes, Norton! Sidney was very surprised...

No! No! It can't be! We buried your body!

My body, Sidney! My body!

And so were the police surprised when they found Sidney's body... or what was left of him...

Torn to pieces! Like some wild animal attacked him!

All right! Let's clean up the place, boys!

'A witness who volunteered information told a weird story...

I was goin' into the elevator. When this guy come out, he walked funny... jerky-like! And his face... it was white... white like a ghost. Could you identify him, Mr. Norton?'

Charlie came to you, didn't he, Norton? He was frightened! And you laughed at him...

'It's Henry! I tell you! You're nervous, Charlie! You need a rest! Why don't you go away for a few days?

But you didn't laugh long, did you, Norton? That night as Charlie was packing...


'Charlie stared at my face, Norton! He didn't want to believe what he saw! But he had to! It was me! All right! Oh... a little putrid, perhaps! Starting to decay, yes! But me...

No! No! Henry! It can't be! Yes, Charlie! You're you! You're dead! Dead! Right! I am dead!

But you didn't laugh long, did you, Norton? That night as Charlie was packing...


'But you didn't laugh long, did you, Norton? That night as Charlie was packing...


'He screamed so, Norton! You should have heard him...

Aaargh!
Another one torn to pieces! There must be a maniac loose.

Look, Captain! Pieces of colored paper! Flesh and colored! What do you make of it?

S. Norton? We stole that thing looming over him...

No, Henry! Papier mâché mannikin! My hands and feet and head! We stole it! We needed it! We had to be able to get around... without attracting any attention... so we could do what we had to do!

Suddenly, Norton stiffened! His eyes bulged in their sockets! The color drained from his face...

Henry! No! Oh Lord...

Norton stared...his blood-shot eyes following Henry's hands...

No! No!

Eeeeeeeeee...!!!

Norton's hysterical shriek attracted the neighbors who phoned for the police! When they arrived, they found...

Torn to pieces... like the other two.

Followed them as they drew near... finally closing about his pulsating throat...

A papier mâché mannikin!

With no hands or feet... and no head!
Meanwhile, far across town, a severed hand, rotting and decayed, scrambled up the wrought iron gate and tripped the latch. Hurry! Hurry! We have work to do!

The cemetery gate swung open, the hand scrambled down and returned to the hoarse-voiced head. Quickly! I will look for the grave! Carry me! Carry me!

Hurry! Dig! Dig!

The hole grew larger! The feet tapped impatiently! The head urged the hands on! The hollow sound of a fist striking a coffin echoed into the night.

You've reached it. Smash a hole... Smash a hole! Don't forget. Make it large enough!

And so, Henry Godwin's hands returned to their proper places at Henry's wrists! His feet snuggled close once more to his rotted ankles! And on his rotted shoulders, his head finally closed its burning eyes... And the rotted lips curled in a slight smile.

Hee, hee! Yep! Henry was together again, kiddies! The Police never did figure out how an armless, footless, headless mannikin could tear anybody apart, and to this day, the mystery remains unsolved! But Charlie knows... and Sidney knows... and Norton knows... and now you know... don't we? Oh, by the way! I was talking to Henry's head... Just the other day! I was thinking about taking another trip... and its traveling companions! Be on the lookout for them, won't you? And goodnight... I'll all see you next in my mag, The Haunt of Fear!