IN THIS ISSUE:
E.C.'S ADAPTATION OF A STORY BY
RAY BRADBURY
AMERICA'S TOP HORROR WRITER!

FEATURING...

THE VAULT-KEEPER

THE CRYPT-KEEPER

THE OLD WITCH
HEN, HEN! THANK NADES, YOU'RE ON TIME. I HAVE BEEN EAGERLY AWAITING YOUR ARRIVAL... FOR AFTER MUCH SCROUNGING AROUND IN THE DEEPEST RECESSES OF THE VAULT, I DISCOVERED AN ANCIENT AND CRUMBLING VOLUME WHICH CONTAINED A CLASSIC TALE. I'M CERTAIN YOU WILL ENJOY THIS ONE, SO SETTLE YOUR SKELETON AND PREPARE FOR A TRULY MORBID AND IRONIC STORY ENTITLED...

EASEL KILL YA!

The miserable wretch wandered aimlessly through silent, foggy streets. Hissing raindrops pelted his uncovered head, ran down his face, mingling with tears. Towering street lamps formed his shadow into grotesque shapes on solemn buildings, painlessly elongated it to explore along the wet, shimmering pavement into the darkness...

Rainwater gurgled angrily in the gutter, reached out, caught, and carried everything it could with it into the sewer depths. The miserable wretch shuffled on, and once, an agonized sob erupted from his lips to be snatched away by the wind...
His footsteps carried him out on the bridge. He gripped the rail with trembling, whitened knuckles, stared unseeing into the blackness at the water he knew was somewhere below, and listened to the vicious whisperings of the rain...

He stood there for long minutes, thinking a million thoughts, seeing a million visions, recalling a million memories...

...but I'm only twenty-nine! Most people are just beginning to live at twenty-nine! Why am I trying to end it? Suicide? Is that the real solution? Why have they driven me to this?

A sparkling bubble of female laughter in a passing taxi, gone in an instant. He whirled at the sound...

A SPARKLING BUBBLE OF FEMALE LAUGHTER IN A PASSING TAXI, GONE IN AN INSTANT. HE WHIRLEO AT THE SOUND...

I'M AN ARTIST! I PAINT PICTURES! WHY DO YOU ALL HATE ME? (SOB) WHY CAN'T YOU GIVE ME A CHANCE? WHY? (SOB) WHY?!

GO AHEAD! LAUGH AT ME! EVERYONE LAUGHS AT ME! (SOB) WHY CAN'T SOMEONE UNDERSTAND HOW I FEEL?!

I HATE YOU! I WANT YOU TO SUFFER AS I HAVE! I WANT YOU TO FEEL THE PAIN I'VE FELT (SOB) I WANT YOU TO KNOW THE HUNGER... THE LONELINESS!

A SPARKLING BUBBLE OF FEMALE LAUGHTER IN A PASSING TAXI, GONE IN AN INSTANT. HE WHIRLEO AT THE SOUND...

SOB!

HE STUMBLED INTO THE ROADWAY ON WATERY LEGS...

GO AHEAD! LAUGH AT ME! EVERYONE LAUGHS AT ME! (SOB) WHY CAN'T SOMEONE UNDERSTAND HOW I FEEL?!

I'M AN ARTIST! I PAINT PICTURES! WHY DO YOU ALL HATE ME? (SOB) WHY CAN'T YOU GIVE ME A CHANCE? WHY? (SOB) WHY?!

GO AHEAD! LAUGH AT ME! EVERYONE LAUGHS AT ME! (SOB) WHY CAN'T SOMEONE UNDERSTAND HOW I FEEL?!

HE CRUMPLED TO HIS KNEES IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROAD, FIST RAISED SHAKILY IN OCELIANCE...

I HATE YOU! I WANT YOU TO SUFFER AS I HAVE! I WANT YOU TO FEEL THE PAIN I'VE FELT (SOB) I WANT YOU TO KNOW THE HUNGER... THE LONELINESS!


THE WOMAN TUMBLED FROM THE ACCORDIONED MACHINE, PLATINUM HAIR NOW TINTED RED, FLESH ONCE POWDER-WHITE NOW WINE-COLORED DELICATE, JEWELED FINGERS CLUTCHED HER FACE, CHANGED COLOR WITH THE STREAMING BLOOD THAT STAINED HER CLOTHES, RIPPEO TO THE GROUND AND FUSED, DISSOLVED WITH THE FROICKING GUTTER WATER. SHE TEETERED DRUNKENLY... AND FELL!
He ran, laughing, from the scene. It was good to know that others could feel pain, could suffer and die! It filled him with a deep satisfaction. He was overjoyed, elated, inspired! Babbling to himself, he climbed the rickety stairs to his room where he painted furiously, entranced, throughout the remainder of the night.

Some time later the artist spoke excitedly with a small, lecherous old man whose gimlet eyes ravaged the painting...

Then... you like it? You'll buy it?

It's magnificent! Heh! Profoundly filthy, yet magnificent! I'll give you a hundred dollars for it!

One hundred dollars is a lot of money to a pauper, but with rent to pay, clothes and paint to buy, and an empty belly to be filled, it doesn't last long...

...money's almost gone! Ho-hum! Guess I'd better knock off another sadistic painting for the old man!

But wait! They'd feel differently if I were a success. If I had money they wouldn't turn from me. They'd look up to me, smile at me. They'd want to talk to me, not run from my sight. And they'd gather 'round me and thrill just to touch my hand. They'd grovel at my feet and plead with me to cast them a glance... a word... all this if I had money.

One old man likes my work. One old man with a diseased mind liked the sinful, wicked picture inspired by the blood and pain I saw in that auto accident. And the rest of the world shuns me!

Some time after, the artist was sitting dumbly on his cot, staring with reddened eyes at the finished painting...

It's good, the best I've ever done... but the subject is so despicable! I know of only one person who would even look at such a picture... and like it!

Brushes in hand, he stood before the easel, straining for an idea. The greater part of a day went by, and still his canvas was blank...

It's no use! I thought I'd be able to turn out another picture with ease, but I can't! I've been fooling myself!

He slumped to his cot, letting the brushes slip from his fingers and clatter to the floor. He fought to hold back the tears of rage and resentment that welled up within him...

For a while I thought I was being recognized as an artist... as a person, a human being! But I was wrong.

One old man likes my work. One old man with a diseased mind liked the sinful, wicked picture inspired by the blood and pain I saw in that auto accident. And the rest of the world shuns me!
A black realization illuminated his face...

Money. I can get money... from the old man! He'll buy paintings from me if they're like the other one. And if I have to watch their blood spill and see their agony to get inspiration... all the better! I like to see other people in pain!

The evening fog closed in around the hunched figure standing on the bridge. All evidence of the previous accident had long since been removed, but the artist waited for hours... hoping, praying that another accident would somehow miraculously occur...

He looked at the detour signs with their red lanterns, used to re-route traffic while the smashed auto had been cleared away. He looked at them standing oddly, innocently on the walk... and the hours slipped by...

He had to wait but a short while before he heard the humming of tires on moist pavement drawing rapidly near. The car rocketed out of the fog and with a screeching of brakes, swerved to avoid the signs! He laughed diabolically as it careened and crashed into the wall...

It was almost midnight when, in despair, he left the bridge to prowl the streets. Somewhere in the city there must be anguish and bloodshed. Why did they hide it from him? Why did they frustrate and torment him so? He must find inspiration...

At three a.m. he again trudged out on the bridge. The city had successfully hid its sins from him thus far, but he was not to be put off. He lifted the detour signs and set them in the road, angling them toward the barrier...

He raced to the wreckage and peered inside, laughing as he saw the broken bodies, flowing blood. He rejoiced in the moans and screams, laughed merrily and clapped his hands and laughed till his head spun in a whirlpool of sublime inspiration...
Morning, exhaustion, the finished painting, the old man cackling and giving him money... DELIRIUM...

**POSITIVELY FANTASTIC? NEH, NEH! SUCH SADISTIC LUST! YOU MUST PAINT MORE OF THESE FOR ME! I'LL PAY YOU WELL!**

Night, the fog-shrouded bridge. Confused, hateful emotions and the impatience of waiting. The decision to wait no longer for an accident. The sheer thrill of viciously beating a passerby...

**HIS ROOM. THE STRAW COT. FEELING AGAIN THE WARM BLOOD, HEARING AGAIN THE TERRIFIED CRIES, RELIVING THE ENTIRE EXPERIENCE... BUT PAINTING NOTHING! NOT CARING TO PAINT. JUST REVELING IN THE GLORIOUS SATISFACTION...**

Morning again... a blank canvas... and a realization.

**OH, GOD, I MUST BE INSANE! IS MY MIND SO TWISTED THAT I CAUSE BLOOD TO FLOW MERELY FOR THE THRILL I DERIVE FROM ITS SIGHT? AM I SO ENVIOUS OF THE WORLD THAT I REJOICE IN THEIR SUFERRING? WHEN IT INSPIRED A PAINTING, THERE WAS A PURPOSE... BUT NOW... NOW MY DEPRAVITY HAS REACHED ITS LOWEST DEPTHS! I'VE GOT TO STOP THIS MADNESS!**

He paced the small floor, animal-like, smoked endless chains of cigarettes, drank himself into a stupor, and still he felt the need for release... still he heard the old man's pleas for more pictures, felt the old man's money, dreamed of the things he could buy...

**FOR DAYS HE REMAINED IN HIS SHABBY ROOM TRYING TO STIFLE THE URGE TO HURT SOMEONE, TRYING TO FORGET THE SATISFACTION HE RECEIVED FROM PUNISHING THE WORLD AS THE WORLD HAD SO OFTEN PUNISHED HIM...**

At the height of his struggle, when his strength and determination were almost at the breaking point and he was discouraged and miserable beyond words, there was a knock on the door. He opened it, and there she was, smiling and beautiful, filling every corner of his barren room with a warm brilliance. It staggered him...

**HELLO!**
She had just moved in upstairs and needed his aid to complete some small task. He accepted gladly... and while he helped her, listened to her tenor voice, reveled in her melodious laugh, her radiant loveliness. Eyes unbelieving, he marveled at this wondrous creature who lessened his tensions, dispelled his hates, his fears... and for the first time in ages, he heard himself laugh...

That night he slept the sleep of the innocent, and dreamt the dreams of the peaceful. In the days that followed, he realized she liked his company and wanted to be with him. He painted her often. He painted other things, also... pleasant, soothing pictures...

But though he laughed quite easily now, there nestled within him the guilt and shame of his past. He longed to tell her of these things, to cleanse himself as she was clean...

So he confessed the horrible emotions, the vile deeds that once consumed his soul, blackened his heart and caused him to despise the goodness in life. She listened...

... I was so confused. I started out loving life, but with each failure I became embittered. I felt the world was deliberately trying to frustrate and wound me, so I fought back...

Perhaps it's merely that because a man has so many emotions inside him, anything that ignites them will cause them to explode. The more emotions there are inside and the longer they've been confined, the greater the explosion. And if they can't find escape in the right direction... they're bound to backfire...

Jealousy, for instance, and love are very close to one another. Only a fine line separates them. Jealousy is a form of hate... but, actually, it's only love, inverted!

It isn't easy to think clearly when you're so all alone. When you're down and out and everyone seems against you, it's only natural to fight back... even if your methods are perverted! But your mind has become so mixed up that any way out seems all right!

I guess that's been my problem. I had so much love within me that when the world shunned me and refused to accept it, I turned the love inside out... and it became hate!
There was a silence. Then, tenderly, she cupped his face in her hands and said the words that all his life, it seemed, he had been waiting to hear...

—I love you... I...I want to be your wife.

Early the next morning the artist waited for the girl. Today they were going to get their marriage license, but several hours went by and she didn't arrive, and with each passing minute he became more discouraged...

By mid-afternoon he was at his wit's-end. He stormed about his room in a frenzy...

She's left me! I told her the truth about myself and frightened her away! Oh God, what am I to do without her? What am I to do?

Late evening, the frustrated, tortuous sobbing, the urge stirring deep in his breast, growing much stronger, to hurt someone. The telegram from the hospital...

She...she's been injured... condition critical... calling for me... calling for me?

A mad race through the streets, tears streaking his face, her name trailing behind him on the rain drops, and then, whiteness, whiteness everywhere. Walls, rooms, clothing... and then, the doctor...

They brought her in last night... hit and run victim. She came out of her coma long enough to give us your name and address, but I'm afraid there's very little hope. Her condition is extremely serious.

How serious? How serious?! Can't something be done?! Anything?! Only a delicate and dangerous brain operation can save her. There's but one surgeon skillful enough to do it, and he wants $3,000 for the job! Obviously, you can't...
Three thousand dollars?! Might as well be a million... but he could get it! There was one way to get it... a painting for the old man. The artist went instinctively to the bridge...

Three thousand dollars? Might as well be a million! On... but he could get it? There was one way to get it... a painting for the old man. The artist went instinctively to the bridge...

The headlong dash back to the hospital through darkening streets, bubbling with the happy knowledge that at last he had defeated the world. Their final attempt to ruin him had failed. Or isn't he have the money? Joyfully, he rushed in.

See? See, doctor? (Gasp) All the money? You can save her now, (Gasp) can't you? You can save her for me?

The miserable wretch sat huddled on the bench in the dark corridor, littering the floor around his feet was a green confusion, useless and forgotten. He sat there, tears streaming down his cheeks, tiny, pitiful sobs racking his body. He sat there, staring blankly at the wall, listening to the clock overhead relentlessly tick away the seconds... and then she would be dead.

Heh, heh! Care for a game of bridge, anyone? You be the dummy! By doing those paintings, the artist gave his girl the brush off! Oi! I know is, nobody better go walking on that bridge late at night! Heh, heh! Well, I see the Crypt-Keeper is chomping at the bit, so I'll leave before he starts chomping me! He's got a peachy story for you, so until next time drop dead!
HEH, HEH. AND NOW IT'S YOUR CRYPT-KEEPER'S TURN TO CURdle YOUR BLOOD. CRAWL INTO THE CRYPT OF TERROR, CRUMBS, PLOP DOWN ON THAT TREE STUMP THERE, HELP YOURSELF TO SOME FRUIT, AND WHILE YOU'RE MUNCHING, I'LL NARRATE THE NAUSEATING NOVELETTE I CALL...

A PEACH OF A PLOT!

IT'S HER, ALL RIGHT, LIEUTENANT. WHAT'S LEFT OF HER, THAT IS! AFTER SEVEN YEARS... IT AIN'T VERY MUCH!

SKULL'S SHATTERED. LOOKS LIKE HE BLUDGEONED HER TO DEATH...

OKAY, BOYS. GET HER OWN TOWN FOR A COMPLETE AUTOPSY. CAREFUL OF THAT TREE NOW. THAT GOES TOO!


I ALWAYS KNEW YOU MURDERED HER, LANE. I ALWAYS KNEW IT. I WOULD HAVE GOTTEN AWAY WITH IT IF IT WEREN'T FOR... FOR...
The detective interrupted him.

"If it weren't for peaches, eh, Lane? You would have gotten away with murder if it weren't for peaches.

It's crazy, a thing like this can't happen.

Ah, but it did, Lane, and you'll burn because it happened. You planned on murdering Sarah, didn't you? You planned it from the very beginning! Care to tell me the whole thing now?

I... I have nothing to say.

Then I'll tell you, Lane. Seven years is a long time. Long enough to do a lot of searching and asking, looking for pieces to a picture-puzzle, and laying each piece in...where it fits. Tonight, I found the final pieces to the puzzle. Tonight, the picture is complete. So, I'll tell you.

You met Sarah Brandon at a cocktail party in 1945. She was rich and lovely and you wanted money. You started working on her, until finally...

"Oh, Mike, darling. We'll be so happy. We'll live at my country place and...

Now wait a minute, Sarah. Oh, I intend to support you. After all, I want to marry you because I love you, not because of your money...

She believed you, didn't she, Lane? She really believed that you loved her and not her money, so you were married. But after the honeymoon, you did come out here to live...to Sarah's country home...

Only till I get located, honey! I'm a little flat, now.

I understand, Mike.

And then you waited. You waited until people began to talk...

There goes that Michael Lane in his wife's flashy car. Married her for her money, that's what he did!

You'd think a man would have a little pride and try to earn his own money!

'And then you waited, you waited until people began to talk...'

'But not you, Lane! You hao plans. Big plans. And you wanted people to talk like that. You didn't even try to get a job...to earn your own keep. But Sarah didn't care. She loved you too much. She didn't mind your living off her income...'

... and you don't mind what people are saying?

Of course I don't mind, darling. I won't mind if you never go to work. I like you being near me all day long..."
It was FRUSTRATING, wasn't it, Lane? You wanted Sarah to mind. It was part of the Scheme. You even began taking Advantage... trying to ANTAGONIZE her.

But, Mike. You can use my car whenever you want to. Why do we need two...

I want my own, Sarah! I don't want to have to ASK you all the time...

And finally she broke down. Finally...she blew up, and though you tried to act hurt, secretly you were glad...

A new car? Your own apartment in town! More clothes than you could possibly need! Is it true, Mike? Is it true what they're all saying?

'I wanted what she wanted to hear, wasn't it, Lane? Suddenly she was in your arms and you were holding her quivering body and hating her and saying the things you had to say...

You'd timed it perfectly, eh, Lane? The servants had gone for the day by the time Sarah had finished packing...

'I'm...leaving, Mike. I'm going to get a divorce.'

You're a little fool, Sarah. How could you believe that of me?

'You...never wanted...me! You never loved me!'

The dough, baby! I loved the dough!

Then...then it's no use going on...so...like...this!

There's the door!

Sarah!

'She blew up. And though you tried to act hurt, secretly you were glad.'

Sarah!

'Oh, Mike. Mike, tell me it isn't true.'

Of course it isn't true. Darling. I married you because I loved you. You'll see. I'll make it up. Tomorrow, I'll look for a job. Really...
"That last night was fun, wasn't it, Lane? Making love to her, and waiting... waiting to catch her off guard!"

I'm so ashamed, Mike! I'm sorry about those things I said.

"I'm the one that's sorry, honey!"

"And then you found your opportunity! Remember, Lane? She was sitting in the living room munching on some fruit. The blinds were drawn. It was late at night..."

"Remember the gurgling sound that she made and the peach juice dribbling out of her mouth and her eyes bulging and her face turning blue as you beat her to death? Remember, Lane?"

"Remember the peach, Lane? She had a mouthful when you struck her with the poker... Gggghhhhh..."

"Remember how you carried her limp body out of the house and buried it out in the back garden..."

"Then, you burned her suitcase... the one she'd packed in the fireplace..."

...and cleaned up. Remember how you scooped up the half-chewed mouthful of peach from the rug where it had fallen from her lips and threw it away together with the uneaten half of the peach...?"

"Then, you burned her suitcase... the one she'd packed in the fireplace..."

I'm so ashamed, Mike! I'm sorry about those things I said.

"Hungry, Sarah? A little..."

"And then you found your opportunity! Remember, Lane? She was sitting in the living room munching on some fruit. The blinds were drawn. It was late at night..."

"Remember the peach, Lane? She had a mouthful when you struck her with the poker... Gggghhhhh..."

"Remember how you carried her limp body out of the house and buried it out in the back garden..."

"Then, you burned her suitcase... the one she'd packed in the fireplace..."

I'm so ashamed, Mike! I'm sorry about those things I said.

"Hungry, Sarah? A little..."
WELL, YES. WE DID HAVE AN ARGUMENT LAST NIGHT. SHE ACCUSED ME OF MARRYING HER FOR HER MONEY!

I SEE. WELL, WE'LL TRY TO TRACE HER, MR. LANE. DON'T WORRY! I'M SURE SHE'S ALL RIGHT.

THAT WAS WHEN I GOT SUSPICIOUS, LANE! WHEN A WIFE WALKS OUT ON HER HUSBAND, SHE'S USUALLY EASY TO TRACE. A TRAIN RESERVATION. A PLANE TICKET. SOMETHING...

YOUR WIFE JUST SEEMS TO HAVE DISAPPEARED, MR. LANE.

SOMETHING'S HAPPENED TO HER. I KNOW IT. OH, LORO... IF SHE COMMITTED SUICIDE...

REMEMBER HOW I CAME TO YOU...

I THINK YOU MURDERED HER, LANE! IF IT'S THE LAST THING I DO, I'LL PROVE IT.

YOU'RE CRAZY, DOLAN! I'D LIKE TO SEE YOU TRY.

YOU CALLED US THE NEXT DAY. YOU REPORTED THAT YOUR WIFE WAS MISSING, AND I CAME OVER...

SOME OF HER CLOTHES ARE GONE, LIEUTENANT DOLAN. DO YOU THINK SHE'S LEFT ME?

O00 YOU AND YOUR WIFE GET ALONG, MR. LANE? ANY ARGUMENTS?

PEOPLE WHO PLAN ON SUICIDE DON'T PACK BAGS, LANE! I STARTED ASKING QUESTIONS. THE SERVANTS...

YES, THEY ARGUED THAT NIGHT! SHE THREATENED TO LEAVE!

HE ADMITTED HE DIDN'T LOVE HER. THAT IT WAS HER MONEY...

I SEE. WELL... THANKS...

YOU GOT A LITTLE WORRIED, DI0N'T YOU, LANE? YOU DECIDED TO TAKE A LITTLE TRIP. WERE THINGS GETTING TOO HOT FOR YOU...?

I JUST THOUGHT I'D LET YOU KNOW. I HAVE TO GO TO EUROPE... ON BUSINESS. IF YOU FIND MY WIFE, GET IN TOUCH WITH ME, WON'T YOU?

SURE, MR. LANE! SURE!
"You stayed away, didn’t you, Lane? You stayed away for seven years. You figured you’d come back and your wife would be legally dead and her fortune would be yours. But I didn’t give up, Lane. I kept plugging."

Hmmmm, perhaps he buried her here in the garden. It’s so overgrown here, I couldn’t know where to begin. I’d have to dig the whole place up!

The years passed and the green shoot became a stalk.

...Then a young tree...

...Growing stronger with each passing summer...

...Until, last week... It bore fruit... A peach...

I’d heard you were coming home to claim Sarah’s fortune. Today, when you arrived, I was waiting..."

Well! Lieutenant Dolan, welcoming me home I see! Never found my wife, eh? Too bad!

No, Lane, you were too clever. I still say you murdered her, but I can’t prove it.

You let your country place go to ruin! You didn’t want anybody tending the garden, digging around. So no one noticed the green shoot pop through the ground over Sarah’s grave...

I know he murdered her! I know it! If I could only find out what he did with her body. If I only knew where to look!

You were triumphant, weren’t you, Lane? You invited me in. You gloated. And then, you spotted the tree...

...You know, Dolan! Seven years? Her fortune is mine... How... L... I...

What is it, Lane? What do you see?
YOU TRIED TO COVER UP YOUR SHOCK AT SEEING THE PEACH TREE GROWING OUT OF SARAH'S GRAVE. YOU MADE A FEEBLE EXPLANATION...

IT'S... IT'S JUST... THAT THE GARDEN IS SO NEGLIGEO.

YES. IT IS A SHAME. IS THAT A YOUNG PEACH TREE, LANE?

YOU WERE PRETTY GOOD AT COMPOSING YOURSELF, LANE. I LIKED THE WAY YOU STRODE OVER TO THE TREE... SMILING...

WELL! SO IT IS! I'D ALMOST FORGOTTEN I'D PLANTED IT! LOOK! IT'S BORNE FRUIT.

I DIDN'T KNOW YOU LIKED PEACHES, LANE! I KNOW YOUR WIFE DID. IT'S... IT'S JUST... THAT THE GARDEN IS SO NEGLECTED.

A YOUNG PEACH TREE, LANE?

... AND HOW THE SICKLY RED LIQUID SPLATTERED OUT, OVER YOUR FACE, INTO YOUR MOUTH, SAGGING YOU WITH ITS SALTY RICHNESS, COVERING YOUR SHIRT WITH A CRIMSON SMEAR...

GOOD LORD! CHOKED...

BLOOD!

... AND HOW HAPPILY YOU PLUCKED THE PEACH FROM ITS UMB...

ME? I LOVE PEACHES!

... AND SANK YOUR TEETH INTO ITS PULPY SUCCULENT MEAT...

... AND HOW THE SICKLY RED LIQUID SPLATTERED OUT, OVER YOUR FACE, INTO YOUR MOUTH, SAGGING YOU WITH ITS SALTY RICHNESS, COVERING YOUR SHIRT WITH A CRIMSON SMEAR...

GOOD LORD! CHOKED...

BLOOD!

THEY WERE LIFTING THE FOUL-SMELLING, DECAYED CORPSE AND CARRYING IT OFF. MICHAEL RETCHED, LOOKING DOWN AT HIS BLOOD-SOAKED SHIRT. LIEUTENANT DOLAN SMILED...

YES, LANE! IT WAS BLOOD. HUMAN BLOOD! SO I KNEW WHERE TO LOOK. I KNEW THEN WHERE SARAH WAS BURIED.

THINGS LIKE THIS DON'T HAPPEN... CHOKED...

HEH, HEH. NOW WASN'T THAT A JUICY PEACH OF A YARN, KIOOIES? OF COURSE IT WAS A BLOODY SHAME THAT MIKE PITTED OFF MORE THAN HE COULD CHEW.

BY THE WAY? I'VE TAKEN SOME CUTTINGS FROM THE TREE GROWING FROM SARAH'S CHEST. I'M GOING INTO THE NURSERY BUSINESS, LANDSCAPING VAMPIRE GARDENS! NOW, I'LL TURN YOU BACK TO THE VAULT-KEEPER! 'BYE!
Dear Vault-Keeper,

I do hope that when you come to reprint VAULT OF HORROR #32 (your #21) in a few month’s time, you will use the uncensored cover, and not the [censored] version!

In case you still haven’t received an answer I believe that the old movie about which you inquired in issue #18 may be the 1942 Universal film NIGHT MONSTER, starring Ralph Morgan as a legless man who fashions temporary “artificial” limbs through the use of his psychic powers.

Alyssen Bills
Vancouver, WA

Heh, heh! You’ll have to wait just 3 months to see the UNCensored version. Meantime, you’ve little doubt hit the nail on the head with NIGHT MONSTER. Thanks! The anonymous editor has decided to shoot for the moon and exk the readers...

What’s the title of the movie in which a brash young newspaperman or policeman decides to impress the daughter of the mad scientist with his knowledge of radium by sitting in the scientist’s homemade electric chair (or monster-making machine, or something) and trying to tune in a station? Only a surprise interruption saves him. Thanks in advance. -ED] —VK

I am your biggest fan Are you and The Crypt-Keeper friends (same for The Old Witch, too)? I didn’t know you had comics until I read VAULT, now I’m your biggest fan

Matt Williams, age 9

In VAULT #19 (#30) I can in the story “Practical Choke” recognize a youthful Bill Gaines posing as one of the medical students. I can gather that one of the others must be Al Feldstein, but who is the third? Does one of your obnoxious editors know, or does one of the readers?

Claus Simonsen
Samsoe, DENMARK

My thinking is that you’ve pegged Gaines, but the tail one was surely Johnny Craig and the light haired one was maybe artist George Evans. Any votes to the contrary? —VK

I can begin this letter only with the most outstanding THANK YOU! Having been an EC FanAddict for over 40 years, nothing could please me more than having these magnificent magazines back.

I first became acquainted with [them] back at the middle fifties, when, paradoxically they were coming to a regretful end. VALOR and PIRACY were being published in their Spanish editions, and I’ll never forget how I got hooked by those masterful illustrated tales of adventure in old ages and the sea. Some years later, in 1963, I wrote to a Mexican publisher about the horror magazines of his back in the ‘50s (translations of the MARVEL horror stuff, and others), and the man was kind enough to send me a whole package of EC comics translated into Spanish. I can tell you how outraged I became when I learned, some time afterwards, all about the Code, and the rest of infamous deeds which sent the Golden Age, and EC at its midst, directly to hell.

The problem is I’m getting the magazines through somebody who charges me almost twice the price ($30 for each volume) Not being exactly a RICHIE RICH fellow, I’d like to find out if you could think of some way to get the volumes at a lower cost.

Carlos M. Federici
Montevideo, URUGUAY

Review our ads for back issues, our low cover price, and reasonable shipping charges may save you money! —VK

I must say I enjoyed Craig’s cover for VAULT #9. The juxtaposition of the severed arm hanging from the strap with an everyday scene of tired commuters only heightens the horror. Especially clever was the placement of the “Bi-Mo” ad, offering relief for upset stomachs, displayed prominently behind the row of nauseated passengers.

“Split Personality” is as fine a piece of ‘hack-work’ as I’ve ever seen!

It seemed blatantly obvious by page 2 an octopus was the culprit of “Who Doughnut?” But, it was great the way small clues were dropped throughout “guys like you are all arms!” the circles on the captain’s tie, giving the appearance of a tentacle, etc. I can’t remember another story with so many innocent victims–the killer being an animal (I hesitate to say “dumb animal!” how many octopi do you know of who’ve mastered the art of disguise?) seeming doesn’t violate EC’s moral code of always punishing the guilty.

Barry McCollum
Alton, IL

I am writing to say how great the EC reprints are. My favorite story is “Strictly from Hunger” (VAULT #16). I was wondering if you will ever reprint all of the old issues of MAD?

Jimmy Lambert
Bridgewater, NJ

As noted in these pages before, the rights to MAD are a separate property from the other ECs, a separate deal would have to be struck —VK

VAULT #19 was a real treat. Since I had never read it before, it was like getting a new EC Johnny Craig’s handy cover really grabbed me.

All the stories are good, but my favorite is “Notes to You!” Ambrose Baldwin reminded me somewhat of Ambrose Bierce (also called “Bitter Bierce”) who was something of a poison pen writer himself before vanishing forever at the end of 1913. Bierce served with distinction in the Civil War and wrote some great horror tales afterwards.
I especially enjoyed the choice of reading material displayed in Mr. Popkin’s candy store (page 6, panel 2) – it shows he is a man of rare taste. Too bad such Mom and Pop-type stores seem to have gone the way of old Ambrose Bierce. Please print my address.

David C. Dalin
204 N 7th
Tacoma, WA 98403

Mom and Pop were replaced by Joe Fan

I was going through my basement and I found an original 50s EC horror comic. The cover was missing, and I managed to know what number it was, it contained the story “Sink-Hole!” All the stories were cool.

And “witch” comic contain these stories “And All Through the House,” “Came the Dawn,” “Mournin’ Mess” and “Split Personality”? Those were my favorite on HBO’s “Tales from the Crypt,” and I wanted to read them. Please print my address.

Jake Wagner
203 Carter RD
Pars, TX 78242

You found an old copy of VAULT 18 (our #7, available as a back issue). The stories you name are in: “House,” VAULT 35 (in RCP VAULT 4, will be our #24); “Cama,” SHOCK 9 (available); “Mournin’,” CRYPT 38 (will be #22) and “Split,” VAULT 30 (our #19, available).

This is my first letter so please don’t chop up this letter! I was wondering what RCP stands for (since I’ve been collecting for a while I probably should know what it stands for but I don’t)

They should have given you the TV job instead of CK. I’m 11 years old and I would like a pen pal, please print my full address.

Ryan Higgins
5841 Abbott AV
Edina, MN 55410

RCP stands for RUSS COCHRAN PUBLISHER, and was office shorthand for the company Russ started with. We use it now to mean Russ’ line of 64-page EC comics reprints, which are still available as back issues.

I won’t chop your letter up, but here comes Ed with his hatchet. Watch out!

In VAULT #18 you printed my letter where I requested that you reprint all of the EC horror stories from the Pre-Trend, CRIME, SHOCK, W FAN #2, etc., put into additional issues of the 3 horror comics.

I don’t know what it was about those old horror comics, but they had a magic. And I’m sure that they have not turned any of us into aX-murderers. It may just be a gentle way of preparing us for real life. But let’s continue the “real thing” for as long as possible. Your friend,

Rick Jaeger
Honolulu, HI

We reprinted all the inside front covers, house ads and letters pages and Johnson Smith ads in the hardback EC LIBRARY, my set will shortly be back in print! Write and request ordering info!

Nope, no aX murderers here, Ed the editor does have a little hatchet, though.

After recently receiving six of your annuals in the mail, I wanted to write to let you know how utterly delighted (and totally deranged) I was with them (CRYPT, VAULT, and

HAUNT, issues 1-5 and 6-10). These annuals are top quality and neatly bound, and I highly recommend them to your sinister subscribers.

In CRYPT #4, you responded to a letter regarding the classic horror flick, TALES FROM THE CRYPT (1972), with a brief synopsis about the origins of these tales in your comics. I was hoping that you might do the same for the equally gruesome VAULT OF HORROR (1973), reissued as TALES FROM THE CRYPT, PART II, another film adaptation of EC comics. One of my favorites, “Drawn And Quartered,” a dastardly tale about an artist’s voodoo revenge, first appeared in CRYPT #10. The other 4 tales portrayed bloodthirsty vampires (Midnight Mess), a neat freak’s frightful fate (“The Neat Job”), a macabre magician’s trick (“This Trick’ll Kill You”), and a treacherous tale of grisly graveyard retribution (“Bargain In Death”).

Joe Grottenrath II
Alexandria, VA

Thanks for the rundown. Now, if Ed will just put that hatchet down... say, Joe, how would you suggest I handle this guy?

Good ideal I’ll act on this suggestion immediately... chop-chop!

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

BACK ISSUES: CRYPT #1, sold out, FRONT #1-4, $2 each; all others up thru issue #3, $1.50 each. CRYPT, W SCI & SHOCK #4-16, and VAULT, W FAN, ZFIST, HAUNT and CRIME #4-15, $2 each. All others, $2.50 each. (Latest issues: CRYPT, W SCI, VAULT, W FAN and ZFIST are up to #20, HAUNT and CRIME are up to 19, FRONT to 8 and PANIC to 2.)

Don’t forget the entire 11-issue run of WEIRO SCIENCE-FANTASY/INCREDIBLE SCIENCE FICTION (issues #1-3, $1.50 each, #4-11, $2 each) and the 19 issues of SHOCK SUSPENSTORES (issues #1-3, $1.50 each, #4-15, $2.00 each, #16-18, $2.50 each).

Add $5 per order ($10 outside US) for S&H.

We want letters! Write to
VAULT
GEMSTONE
POB 469
WEST PLAINS MO 65775

THIS COMIC REPRINTS
VAULT OF HORROR #31 (1953)
COVER by Johnny Craig
“Easel Kill Ye!” Johnny Craig
“Peach of e Plot!” Jack Davis
“The Lake” art by Joe Orlando
“One Good Turn...” Graham ingels
The esoteric essays of Richard Jaeger, Honolulu, HI, are little works of literary art, so I'm running his latest here in my "Fine Arts" page.

MONEY OR MYSTERY?

Mystery is a deep thing. Very deep. It is a distinct flavor in your life. It is seeing through wonder-filled eyes. But you must choose between money and mystery. You cannot have both.

You may have the entire set of the original ECs, all in pristine mint condition. They are all in acid-free holders. You never remove them. Fingerprints would lower their value.

You may be able to get a million dollars for them now. When you're 80 you may get a billion. And you'll have missed it all.

You'll have missed the spirit of EC. You'll have chosen the money world over the magic world. Let's say that you are old enough to have bought the original HAUNT #1 in 1950. If you take the pristine mint copy that you now have out of the plastic holder, you can fold it in your hand as you did in 1950.

You will be back in 1950 again, when you were a wonder-filled child. You can gently touch the cover. You will notice that wonderful smell that came out of that giant box of comic books that your friend up the block had. And if you get a little bit of water on it and it starts to shrivel up, then it will begin to look like the ECs that I had as a kid. The three hosts called them rags, but these rags were the world to me.

Later you can put the comic back in the plastic envelope. All through the next weary day at work you can dream about that special time later at night when the ECs will once more leave their holders and actually be in your hands again. You will be in that dream-state once more, and it will be so good for your health.

The eight-year-olds of today are now buying Russ' reprints. 40 years from now these will be their "real-thing" to them incomparably more valuable than the originals of the 50s.

Richard Jaeger
Honolulu, HI

Substitute the phrase CRYPT OF TERROR #1 in the above and you've got a sentiment both true and beautiful. (But, what did make your friend smell like a giant box of comics? Eau de Libre Comique?) —CK
HERE IS MY ADAPTATION OF RAY BRADBURY'S...

The Lake

IT WAS SEPTEMBER... IN THE LAST DAYS WHEN THINGS ARE GETTING SAD FOR NO REASON, THE BEACH WAS LONG AND LONELY. ALL OF THE HOT DOG STANDS WERE BOARDED UP WITH STRIPS OF GOLDEN PLANKING, SEALING IN THE MUSTARD, ONION, MEAT ODORS OF THE LONG, JOYFUL SUMMER. IT WAS LIKE NAILING SUMMER INTO A SERIES OF COFFINS. THE WIND HAD COME AND TOUCHED THE SAND, BLOWING AWAY ALL OF THE MILLION FOOTPRINTS OF JULY AND AUGUST. I WAS ALONE. I CALLED HER NAME. A DOZEN TIMES I CALLED IT.

EVERYONE ELSE WAS IN SCHOOL, I WAS NOT. TOMORROW, I WOULD BE ON MY WAY WEST ON A TRAIN. I HAD COME TO THE BEACH FOR ONE LAST BRIEF MOMENT. I WENT DOWN TO THE WATER AND LET IT COOL UP TO MY STOMACH. ALWAYS BEFORE, WITH THE CROWD, I HADN'T DARED TO LOOK, TO COME TO THIS SPOT AND SEARCH AROUND IN THE WATER AND CALL HER NAME. BUT NOW...

Funny, but you really expect answers to your calling when you are young. You feel that whatever you may think can be real, and sometimes, that is not so wrong. I thought of Tally, swimming out into the water... Last...
Tally, with her pigtails trailing, blonde. She was laughing, and the sun was on her small twelve year old shoulders...

I thought of the water settling quiet... of the lifeguard leaping into it... of Tally's mother screaming... "My baby!"

Tally never came out. The lifeguard tried to persuade her to come out, but she did not. He came back with only bits of water-weed in his big-knuckled fingers...

Tally was gone. She would not sit across from me at school any longer, or chase indoor balls on the brick streets on summer nights. She had gone out too far and the lake would not let her return. And now in the lonely autumn when the sky was huge and the water was huge and the beach was so very long, I had come down for the last time, alone... "Tally! Come back, Tally!"

I was only twelve. But I know how much I loved her. It was that love that comes before all significance of body and morals. It was a love that was made of warm long days together at the beach...

It was made of the humming quiet days of droning education at the school, and all the long autumn days of the years past when I had carried her books home from school...
I CALLED HER NAME FOR THE LAST TIME. I SHIVERED. I FELT WATER ON MY FACE AND DID NOT KNOW HOW IT GOT THERE. THE WAVES HAD NOT SPLASHED THAT HIGH...

TALLY...SOB...

Turning, I retreated to the land and stood there for half an hour, hoping for one glimpse, one sign, one little bit of Tally to remember. Then, I knelt and built a sand castle, shaping it fine, building it as Tally and I had often built so many of them...

But this time, I only built half a sand castle. Then I got up...

TALLY, IF YOU HEAR ME, COME IN AND BUILD THE REST.

After a while, the water came in...

BLENDOING THE SAND-CASTLE, MASHING IT DOWN, LITTLE BY LITTLE, INTO THE ORIGINAL SMOOTHNESS...

Silently I walked along the shore. Far away, a merry-go-round jangled faintly... but it was only the wind...

The next day I went away on the train. A train has poor memory. It soon puts all behind it. It forgets the corn lands and rivers of childhood, the bridges, the lakes, the valleys, the cottages, the hurts and the joys. It spreads them out behind and they drop back of the horizon...

I LENGTHENED MY BONES, PUT FLESH ON THEM, CHANGED MY YOUNG MIND FOR AN OLDER ONE, THREW AWAY CLOTHES AS THEY NO LONGER FITTED, SHIFTED FROM GRAMMAR TO HIGH SCHOOL, TO COLLEGE BOOKS, TO LAW BOOKS...
And then there was a young woman... Margaret... in Sacramento. I knew her for a time, and we were married...

Lake Bluff, population 10,000, came up over the sky. Margaret looked so handsome in her fine new clothes. She watched me as I felt my old world gather me back into its living. She held my arm as the train slid into Bluff Station, and our baggage was escorted out...

Lake Bluff, population 10,000, came up over the sky. Margaret looked so handsome in her fine new clothes. She watched me as I felt my old world gather me back into its living. She held my arm as the train slid into Bluff Station, and our baggage was escorted out...

And we came back... back to Lake Bluff... for our honeymoon. Like a memory, a train works both ways. A train can bring rushing back all those things you left behind so many years before...

We stayed on two weeks in all, revisiting all the places together. The days were happy. I thought I loved Margaret well. At least I thought I did. It was on one of the last days that we walked down by the shore...

I had that feeling again of wanting to be alone. But I could not force myself to speak of this to Margaret...

It was late in the day. The beach was almost deserted. The lifeguard boat pulled up on the shore. The lifeguard stepped out of it, slowly, with something in his arms...

I froze there. I held my breath and I felt small... only twelve years old, very little, very infinitesimal and afraid...

Stay here, Margaret! But... why?
He nodded... TENT YEARS, I'd say. There haven't been any children drowned here this year. There were TWELVE children drowned here since 1842, but we recovered all of them before a few hours had passed. All except one, I remember. This body here, why it must be ten years in the water...

The lifeguard kept looking at me for a long time and he couldn't speak. He put the grey sack down on the sand, and the water whispered wet up around it and went back...

I waited... FUNNY, FUNNIEST THING I ever saw. She's been dead. A long time.

I stared at the sack. The wind was loud...

Open it... The way I know it's a little girl is because she's still wearing a locket. There's nothing much else to tell by...

I better not. It's... it's not very pleasant...

NURRY, MAN! Open it!
Then, perhaps he saw the way my face must have looked. He fumbled with the sack, opening it only part way. It was enough. There was only the sky and the wind and the water and autumn coming on. I looked down at her there...

I thought...

People grow. I have grown, but she has not changed. She is still small. Death does not permit growth or change. She still has golden hair. She will be forever young and I will love her forever, oh God, I will love her forever.

And then... I knew

I'll... help you finish it, Tally...

I did. I built the rest of it up very slowly, then arose...

Just like Tally and I used to build them. She half... and I half. I looked at it. I knelt beside it and I saw the little prints of feet coming in from the lake and going out to the lake again and not ever returning...

... and turned away and walked off, so as not to watch it crumble in the waves. The way all things crumble. I walked back up the beach to where a strange woman named Margaret waited for me, smiling...
The last four months have been wonderful months for Jennifer. Things had changed. Eagerly she would rush home each night to tell Edwin, her husband, of her latest exploit. And Edwin would lie there, listening to Jennifer, while she described her recent accomplishment. Poor dear Edwin. Bedridden Edwin. Paralyzed for the last eight years. Yes, things had changed for Edwin and Jennifer.

It's Jennifer, Edwin, dear! I'm home!

Jennifer stood in the hall, shivering from the bleak winter cold that gripped the outside world in its icy fist. Carefully, she removed her threadbare coat and hung it in the closet... Oh, I've had such a wonderful day, Edwin, dear. Wait till I tell you!
Jennifer toddled down the hall to the bedroom door. She opened it a crack and peered in. Edwin lay, silent, in the huge antique double bed...

\[\text{JUST LET ME FIX MYSELF SOME TEA, MY DARLING. THEN I'LL COME TO BED AND TELL YOU ALL ABOUT IT.}\]

The teapot stood in its usual place on the old stove. Jennifer lit the gas and put out a cup and saucer, humming softly. She raised her voice so Edwin could hear her...

\[\text{MAKING PEOPLE HAPPY CAN GIVE ONE SUCH A FEELING OF ACCOMPLISHMENT AND SATISFACTION, EDWIN.}\]

She sat demurely at the spotless table, sipping the warm brew...

\[\text{OH, EDWIN. I'M SO GLAD I FOUND THAT PEOPLE NEED ME. IT'S SO NICE TO KNOW YOU'RE NEEDED. IT'S SO NICE TO KNOW YOU CAN DO THINGS FOR PEOPLE.}\]

Jennifer lit the gas and put out a cup and saucer, humming softly. She raised her voice so Edwin could hear her...

\[\text{I'LL BE WITH YOU IN A MINUTE, DARLING. SOON AS I WASH UP AND GET INTO MY GOWN...}\]

Jenny drained the teacup dry and washed it in the sink and put it away. Then she refilled the pot and put it back on the stove...

\[\text{I'LL BE WITH YOU IN A MINUTE, DARLING. SOON AS I WASH UP AND GET INTO MY GOWN...}\]

The water splashed loudly in the sink. Jenny sang softly as she washed and wiped and combed and creamed and did all the things that women do in preparation for bed...

\[\text{THERE, NOW I'M READY. I WASN'T TOO LONG, WAS I, EDWIN? I HURRIED AS FAST AS I COULD, DEAR EDWIN. IS IT AwFUL BEING LEFT ALONE ALL DAY?}\]

She was beside him now, between cool sheets, snuggling up to him, stroking his hair, kissing him...

\[\text{IT WAS SO WONDERFUL TODAY, EDWIN. I MET HIM NEAR THE RIVER. HE LIVED IN AN OLD SHACK. YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN HIM, EDWIN! HE WAS SO UNHAPPY. HE TOLD ME ALL ABOUT IT...}\]

His name was Bertram. I called him Bert. He told me how, once upon a time, he'd been rich... very rich...

\[\text{BUT THEN I LOST IT ALL, JENNY! THE CRASH, YOU KNOW. AND I LOST MY FRIENDS, TOO. AND MY WIFE. AND I WAS TOO OLD TO START ALL OVER AGAIN...}\]

Poor Bert. You must be very unhappy!

Her eyes were bright. She kissed him...
Oh, I was, Jenny! I was VERY UNHAPPY!

I'd like to make you happy again, Bert.

Oh, that's all right, Jenny! It was a long time ago. I've gotten you happy over it and... Jenny! What... what are you doing with that knife...

I'm going to make you happy again, Bert!

No! No, Jenny! My God! I am happy. Now! I've gotten used to this! I... Jenny! Keep away...

Jenny sighed and smiled, her eyes filled with tears. She stroked Edwin's cheek...

So I stabbed him, my darling! Oh, Edwin! You should have seen his face. So calm. So serene. He lay there on the floor with that knife in his chest... smiling!

'I made someone happy today, Edwin. Are you proud of me? Remember Grace? Grace was her name, wasn't it? She was crying when I met her. I told you about Grace, Edwin, remember?...

Something wrong, my dear? Can I help you? Sob... Sob... leave me alone! Please! Go away!

Come, my dear. Let's take a walk! You'll tell me all about it!

Really... sob. All I want is to be left alone... sob...

And that's the story, Jenny! He walked out on me. Left me flat, without a dime. And I trusted him... believed in him...

You poor, dear girl! He's made you so wretched. I want to do something for you.
"Poor Sidney. Remember me telling you about Sidney, Edwin? Poor boy. He was seven, at the most. Crying his eyes out, poor little tyke...

"What is it, child? I sob... I ran away from home. Ah! Now... sob... Now I'm lawst..."

"The rock lying on the deserted path in the park made everything so easy. I brought it down on Grace's skull again and again until she smiled as the blood gurgled from her lips..."

"Now, Grace... now you're happy!"

"And Sidney, poor Sidney. Remember me telling you about Sidney, Edwin? Poor boy. He was seven at the most. Crying his eyes out, poor little tyke..."

"What is it, child? Are you lost? What's the matter, little one?"

"He was so unhappy, Edwin. So sad. And so eager for comfort. When I took him into the alley, he stopped crying...

"Where are we going, Aunt Jenny? Trust me, Sidney. I'm going to make you happy again..."

"He looked so sweet as I closed my fingers around his small white throat, Edwin. So at peace with the world as he slipped from my grasp and fell to the alley pavement, dead...

"There, my child. There. Now you won't ever cry again!"

"These last four months have been so wonderful for me, Edwin. So wonderful making people happy... rescuing them from their misery and despair..."


"Can anyone be more wretched... more sad than a blind man, Edwin? I had to help him. I had to..."

"All of them? Oh, bless you, lady! Bless you!"

"Now you can stop for the day, you poor dear. Come, give me your hand..."
"One minute, sainess ans misery, the next minute, peace and contentment. So easy to lead him to the street... to guide him off the curb... into the path of the truck...

I'll take you home. Th-thank you lady. You're so... kind...

The squealing brakes, like peals of laughter. The only thing I regret was not being able to see him happy at last... having to leave the scene...

Another soul, lifted from the depths of despair to the glorious joy of death...

'How can people go through life without a mission, Edwin? I used to think my mission was caring for you... making you comfortable after you became paralyzed...

Oh, Edwin! You're in pain! I can tell! Your eyes...

But that was before I found my real purpose in life... that was before the old woman on the pier...

I sit here, day after day, and I wait. I know he'll never come home to me... but I wait anyway...

'Remember her, Edwin? She wore a gold star. She was so sad...

He was a wonderful boy, Jenny. A good boy... with his whole life ahead of him. He...

Don't be unhappy, Thelma. I hate to see people unhappy...

'How she floundered in the water. How she screamed. And how serene and content she looked as she went down for the last time, the murky river pouring into her lungs through her smiling lips...'
'And suddenly, on that day four months ago, I knew. I knew how to make you happy, so I went into the kitchen and I made your favorite. Hot chocolate...'

'I'll be finished soon, Edwin...

Jenny lay beside Edwin in the huge antique bed. She whispered softly, stroking his cheek...

I could see the tears filling your staring eyes. I could see all the sadness and despair overflowing your eyelids and trickling down your cheeks...

Don't cry, Edwin! Don't be sad. I can't stand to see you unhappiness.

THE HEAVY POUNDING ON THE FRONT DOOR ECHOED THROUGH THE HOUSE, JENNY KISSED EDWIN AND SLID OUT OF BED...

I'll be right back, Edwin. I'll see who it is and be right back...

THEM HELD OUT TO HER. SHE GLANCED OVER HER SHOULDER DOWN THE HALL...

Well...All right. You can come in for a minute, but please...keep your voices down. My husband's in the bedroom...

We just want to ask you a few questions.
Jenny closed the door behind them. They looked around. One of them grimaced...

Something's wrong here, Steve!

Take a look, Phil!

Wait! Where are you going?

Stop! You can't go in there! Edwin's in there! You'll disturb him! You'll make him unhappy!

Go ahead, Phil! I got her...

Yeah...

The one named Phil turned into the bedroom, Jenny screamed...

Stay out of there! Leave him alone! I made him happy four months ago. Don't spoil it!

Choke...

Good Lord! C'mon, Steve! C'mere! Man! Let's take a look! He won't be happy anymore!

The one named Steve pushed Jenny to the bedroom. He stared in.

Jenny grinned...

He...he's still happy! Oh... thank goodness. I thought you'd spoil it!

Edwin lay on the huge antique bed. The flesh of his face was beginning to fall away revealing whitened grinning teeth. What the detectives had noticed was the foul odor of decay that sprang from his long-dead body...

I made him happy four months ago when I put cyanide in his hot chocolate!

Hee, hee! That's it, creeps. That's my foul fare for this issue. They took poor Jenny away and put her in a padded cell where she can't make anybody happy anymore. But she tries. The keepers have a devil of a time with her, and now it's time to put out the fire beneath my cauldron and close the vault-keeper's mag for this issue. We'll all see you next in my mag, The Haunt of Fear. Bye, now!

S-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s...