HEH, HEH! WELL, IT'S TIME FOR ANOTHER FRIGHTENING TALE FROM THE VAULT OF HORROR! AS USUAL, I'M JUST DYING TO BEGIN, SO TURN OUT THE LIGHTS AND TAKE A DEEP BREATH! THE BLOOD-CURDLER I'M ABOUT TO TELL IS CERTAIN TO HAVE YOU ON THE EDGE OF YOUR SEAT, SHUDDERING IN ABSOLUTE TERROR! HANG ON TO YOUR NORMALITY, OR THIS ONE WILL REALLY HAVE YOU HANGING ON THE ROPE! I CALL IT...

WHIRLPOOL

HER MIND WAS WHIRLING AGAIN. THE THREE HORRID CREATURES TOWERED THREATENINGLY OVER HER, HOVERING IN A BLACK ABYSS, AND THEIR QUESTIONS ECHOED AND THUNDERED IN HER EARS, DROWNING HER CRIES AND SHRIEKS FOR HELP...

WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
WHO ARE YOU?
NAME? WHO?
WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
WHO ARE YOU?
WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
WHO?
She couldn't remember things! Who was she? What was she doing here? What was her name? A hundred questions... and she couldn't answer! She didn't know anymore. She didn't remember! Still, the vicious things tormented her! She cowered and turned her eyes from their leering faces! She swirled, floated, thrashed desperately in the nothingness to get away... to escape! And suddenly she saw the window and went crashing through it.

She ran down the deserted silent street, the clicking of her heels urging her to go faster, faster! They were after her, following with their cruel questions, their shrill, screaming voices...

She scrambled up the steps, stumbling and crying! She shouted and pleaded for someone to help her, clawed and pounded frantically on the door! They were almost upon her! She heard their screeching... and she pressed back into the shadows, up against the massive door... But suddenly there was an end and there was nowhere else to go! Another building barred her way! A building with no windows... just a door... Would she ever elude them? She pounded on doorways to gain entrance, she cried, she ran again... faster! And the street seemed almost endless... and through it!
She couldn't remember! She was sprawled on the floor, shaking her head, trying to clear the cobwebs! She was still crying, still trembling, but she had escaped those awful things! She felt the hand touch her...

...and dropped her into a cauldron of boiling water!

Searing pains engulfed her! Boiling water burned her mouth, scalded her throat every time she cried out, and she thrashed tortuously trying to climb out...

Suddenly, strong arms lifted her from the cauldron! Her flesh was beet-red and steam issued from her sopping body! She couldn't stand upright... her legs wouldn't hold her anymore...

She felt herself being lifted... then lowered. Through a dim, semi-conscious haze she felt the coolness surrounding her, completely covering her, slowly drawing the heat from her! It became cooler, and she opened her eyes, and then, it was cold! It was much too cold! She was surrounded by ice!

She screamed again and again! The hardening ice numbed her arms, her legs! She couldn't free herself, and as she cried convulsively, the tears froze and her vision glazed! She felt the painful tingling in her toes, heard the shrill, fiendish laughter fading... fading... mercifully, she fainted...
Why couldn't she remember anything? Who was she? Why were they torturing her? What did they want? Why didn't they leave her alone? A thousand questions and she couldn't answer. She opened her eyes... tried to move and couldn't!

There was a sharp pain! And there! And another! She saw a wicked old lady bending over her, chuckling! A long, needle-sharp hat-pin was in her hand and she was jabbing! Jabbing! Would there be an end to this? Would no one save her? Again she tried to scream... but only a strangled sob erupted...

The jabbing continued, she felt warm blood trickle... was that blood? And every part of her throbbed and ached. Her head was a whirlpool of torture...

...and the jabbing ceased! She opened her eyes. A tall, silent man was nearby, staring with angered eyes at the wicked old lady. He raised his arm... pointed his finger... and the lady hurriedly left the room.

But what did it matter? He had saved her, hadn't he? Wasn't he kind, gentle? Without a word, he helped her cross the room, lowered her easily into a chair! Rest! Blessed rest! She closed her eyes and leaned her head back against the chair...

Strong, tender hands caressed her hair and face. While grateful, happy tears spilled down her cheeks, he rested her head on his chest protectively and nodded in understanding. Yet, he did not speak...
She knew this wasn't just a nightmare! The pain, the terror had all been too real! If only she could remember how, or why, it started? She felt something clamp down on her wrists...tirely, she opened her eyes...and screamed?

She was strapped in an electric chair! Nearby, the silent man was grinning insanely. His every feature was contorted into a triumphant expression of maniacal glee! How he had fooled her! She pleaded and begged for salvation, until his hand gripped the lever...and pulled!

Blackness, painless, tortureless blackness. The emptiness becoming something, solidity! A floor? Yes! She was lying on a floor somewhere...and the ebony void became solid walls. Four solid walls, a ceiling and a floor...but no way out!

Thousands of volts slammed through her body, tearing and burning...destroying flesh, bone, tissue! Thousands of volts pulsating, coursing through every fiber of her being...making her torso surge and strain at the straps that held her?

She struggled to her feet and groped around the small room, feeling, tapping the walls? Was this the end? Was this death?

Wait! was her mind playing tricks on her? Was she seeing things? No! The room was getting smaller! Smaller!

Slowly, on all sides, the walls moved closer together! The ceiling lowered, and the sides narrowed. She stretched out her arms to keep them away.
It was no use! The walls closed further and she exerted all her strength! The pressure became more intense! She gasped for air, pushed and hammered the walls, screamed till the reverberations hurt her eardrums! And still the walls pressed closer! She could no longer stand upright! She slumped to one knee, crying, choking, feeling the immense pressure squeeze and crush her! Did a bone snap? Her head throbbed horribly, reeling and aching. And when she could stand no more...

Release!

She lay gasping and trembling on the floor. A bright light invaded the room's darkness... And in its brilliance, a man stood in the open doorway.

She was in a room, warm and comfortable. Three nice men surrounded her, gave her soft words of consolation. They were friendly... She could trust them. She cried because it was all over...

They were so nice. She related her harrowing experiences. The tears of relief flowed down her face, and they listened attentively...

It was awful! (Sob!) They were all trying to kill me! The electric chair... boiling cauldron... the walls! It was awful! Awful!

There, there! We want to help you! Suppose you tell us all about it!

It's so wonderful not to be afraid! My mind is so clear now! For awhile I... (Sob) I thought I was going insane!

Of course! We understand!
Gradually, her crying ceased. She was not afraid anymore. She had no reason to be afraid now! Only one thing bothered her!

Why? Why did they all want to hurt me so? It's quite simple! I'll try to explain...

Why?

All this torture has been in your mind! It never really happened as you thought. Subconsciously, your mind twisted everyday occurrences into horrible tortures! You imagined that people were trying to kill you, when actually, they were trying to help you! For instance...

"You said you were put in an electric chair! Actually, one of our attendants was giving you electro-therapy. A form of shock treatment!"

"And the wicked old lady who jabbed you with a hat-pin while you were strapped to a table was only your abnormal interpretation of the nurse giving you a hypodermic injection while you were in a straight-jacket, necessitated by your display of violence!"

"The boiling cauldron and the ice were really nothing but hot and cold baths...another form of shock treatment!"

The Poe-like room whose walls closed upon you was only a padded cell, actually! Solitary confinement...because you had become so irrational! The walls didn't crush you...you only thought so, because the small room was so confining!

I don't believe you! You're lying to me! You're trying to hurt me! Oh, what am I doing here? Where am I?

You mean you still don't remember? My, dear...you're an inmate in an insane asylum!
Suddenly, the room grew dim, hazy...

Ohhh... I (sob) I remember! You're persecuting me!

The room faded away, and the three doctors seemed to hover in a gray mist growing darker...

Try hard, now! Tell us who you are!

Yes! Who are you? What's your name?

Her mind was whirling again. The three horrid creatures towered threateningly over her, hovering in a black abyss, and their questions echoed and thundered in her ears, drowning her cries and shrieks for help...

She couldn't remember things! Who was she? What was she doing here? What was her name? A hundred questions... and she couldn't answer! She didn't know anymore! She didn't remember!

Still the vicious things tormented her! She cowered and turned her eyes from their leering faces! She swirled, floated, thrashed desperately in the nothingness to get away... to escape! And suddenly she saw the window and went crashing through it...

Heh, heh, heh! Right back where we started, eh? Round and round she goes, and where she stops, who the devil cares? Of course, she never did go through any window! It was only her way of trying to escape from the fact that she was... deranged? Hope I made that painfully clear! Well... as usual, the crypt-keeper's clamoring for attention, so eyes right before he has a temper-tantrum, already! The End.
The faint wisp of smoke curled upward from the dancing fire and drifted lazily over the camp-sight. Alex slipped from the tent, the gleaming cleaver in his gloved hand. The perspiration painting his face glowed in the firelight. He grimaced. Stanley knelt before the flames, stirring the smoke-blackened pot. In a moment it would be all over. In a moment, Stanley would be dead and Alex's problem would be solved. He moved forward noiselessly, lifting the razor-sharp cleaver high over his head...

"The stew will be done in a minute, Alex. Smells delicious. Everything ready...?"

"Everything's ready, Stanley!"

Stanley stiffened as Alex's high-pitched voice exploded behind him. He whirled... too late. Alex brought the gleaming cleaver down with all his force.

"Alex! My God! Yaaa... ggh... u-ugh..."
CHOKE.

Oh, Lord... Lord...

There is now to drive back to the city and sneak into the apartment...

He traveled swiftly through the woods, finally reaching his car. The gun and the knapsack and his hunting clothes, including the shoes that had left tell-tale tracks around the camp, were carefully disposed of... Alex dumped them into a river on his way home...

There! Now to drive back to the city and sneak into the apartment...

The horror of it. The cleaver sticking upward. The blood curtailling down over the frozen surprised face. Alex turned away, covering his eyes. He would remember it always... the horror of it. Behind him, he heard Stanley's body slump to the dam ground...

The horrendous deed was done. Loathe to gaze upon the bloody remains of his former law partner, Alex moved into the tent, picked up his gun and the knapsack he'd packed previously and strode out of camp...

I'm rid of him for good. Everything is mine now. No one knows we were up here together. They'll think he was attacked by a maniac.

It was quiet in the woods that surrounded the hunters' campsite. Far away in the night, an owl hooted. Alex stared down at Stanley, crouching as if stunned... the cleaver sunk deep in his head... the handle jutting upward awkwardly...

Alex hesitated, a wave of nausea sweeping over him. Stanley just crouched there, as if frozen. Not standing, not falling... just staring at him with dead glassy eyes that seemed to burn with a flame of sudden understanding.

D-d-die! Die, already! Fall down and die!

Good Lord! It was quiet in the woods that surrounded the hunters' campsite. Far away in the night, an owl hooted. Alex stared down at Stanley, crouching as if stunned... the cleaver sunk deep in his head... the handle jutting upward awkwardly...

Alex arrived at his apartment building toward morning. He slipped back in the same way he'd left... through the cavernous catacomb-like cellar. When he reached his penthouse door, he quietly lifted the 'Do-not-disturb' sign from the knob...

Perfect! My alibi is perfect. I've been in my apartment since yesterday afternoon. I'd felt ill and didn't even go with Stanley on his hunting trip.

Alex smiled. It had all been so simple. He slipped the key into the lock and turned it quietly. The door swung open. Alex stepped in. The dawn light was just beginning to filter through the huge French doors leading out onto the balcony...

Now to get undressed and ring down for breakfast. I'll... I'll... huh? Someone's out there... on the balcony! I... I...
There was a pounding on the front door. Alex spun around, a voice drifted through...

You all right, Mr. Melton?

I'm...I'm fine, Sammy. I...I was having a bad dream. I...I just woke up. Er...will you have my breakfast sent up...

The figure stood in the center of the bedroom floor...its glassy eyes staring out from the blood-covered face...the cleaver sticking awkwardly out from its rent skull...

No! No! I won't look! I won't!

When he opened his eyes, the figure on the balcony was gone. Alex stared out at where it had been...sick...trembling...

It...it's all my imagination! Stanley's dead! He's back upstate...deep in the woods. I'm seeing things...

There was a pounding on the front door. Alex spun around, a voice drifted through...

You all right, Mr. Melton?

I'm...I'm fine, Sammy. I...I was having a bad dream. I...I just woke up. Er...will you have my breakfast sent up...

Alex listened to the footsteps of the houseporter fading away down the hall. He hurried toward the bedroom...

Got to get into my pajamas...quickly! Got to...oh, lordo...no!

The figure stood in the center of the bedroom floor...its glassy eyes staring out from the blood-covered face...the cleaver sticking awkwardly out from its rent skull...

No! No! I won't look! I won't!

Alex covered his eyes, shutting out the horrible sight, and when he opened them again, the figure was gone...

Th—that's better! I...I've got to pull myself together. My nerves are shot...
Alex undressed quickly and slipped into his pajamas. He'd just finished buttoning them when the knock on the door announced Sammy's return...

"Breakfast, Mr. Melton," Alex said, his eyes shut, "Okay, Sammy! Just one minute!"

I said, what's matter, Mr. Melton?"

N-nothing, Sammy! Nothing! Just wheel it over there to the couch, eh?"

Oh, gooL no! Not again!"

The figure stood behind Sammy, grinning... its eyes wide and burning. Its head tilted crazily as if the cleaver imbedded there was too heavy. Alex closed his eyes, turning away.

"What the..." Gasp.

S'Matter, Mr. Melton!"

After the house-porter left, Alex sat down and stared at the unappetizing food. There was no hunger in him... no desire to eat. He'd only ordered the food to establish his alibi. He retched and looked away...

Alex jammed his eyes shut. When he opened them, the apparition was gone...

I've got to have a drink! I'm a nervous wreck!

It's all in my mind! I keep seeing what isn't there! I keep..."
He shut his eyes again, shutting out the awful sight...

I won't look! I won't. You can't make me!

He clamped the eye shut again, with his eyes shut, he couldn't see the horrible sight. With his eyes shut, he was free of it. He waited...

After a while, I'll settle down. It'll go away. A drink. I need a drink.

He turned with shut eyes to the bar and feeling for a glass, a bottle, knocking them over, spilling, smashing. Finally, in desperation, he opened his eyes. The figure was behind the bar now...

Smirking at him...

He opened his eyes. The figure grinned at him stupidly bloody... The shining cleaver wedged deep in its skull...

Oh, god! Go away! Leave me alone!
It was torture for him, trying to move about with shut eyes, trying to find his cigarettes, a match...trying to satisfy his cravings. He couldn’t help opening his eyes. And when he did, the figure was always there. Finally...

"A blindfold! I'll fool him. I'll show him I can beat him there!"

He felt the cigarette urn pitch over, drop to the floor. He went to his hands and knees, feeling for them, cursing, reaching, not finding one. Finally he tore the blindfold from his eyes...

"Y-yaaahhhghhh!"

He got to his feet, stumbled toward the kitchen. The figure stood before him, barring his way...

"I'll show you!"

Wherever he looked...the figure...he rummaged through kitchen drawers...

"You can't make me see you..."

He found what he was looking for...lifted it in a white-knuckled trembling fist...

...if...if I'm blind!

He sat with the blindfold over his eyes...sat all morning and into the afternoon. Sammy came and went, Alex refusing lunch. He staggered around the apartment...

"Where're those blasted cigarettes?"

He sat with the blindfold over his eyes...sat all morning and into the afternoon. Sammy came and went, Alex refusing lunch. He staggered around the apartment...

"Where're those blasted cigarettes?"

The figure was there, lying on the floor, grinning up at him...

"No! No! I'll show you!"

The figure was there, lying on the floor, grinning up at him...

"No! No! I'll show you!"

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"You can't make me see you..."

He found what he was looking for...lifted it in a white-knuckled trembling fist...

"...if...if I'm blind!"
The pain. The screaming unbearable pain of plunging the ice pick... first into one eye, then into the other... and the welcome darkness that followed. Sammy's face blanched white when he saw Alex kneeling on the kitchen floor... blood pouring down his cheeks like crimson tears.

Alex must have fainted after that... swallowed up into his self-imposed darkness... he floated in it... hearing the faint scream of a distant siren... the muttering of subdued voices... the sound of a motor... the sweet smell of anesthetic...

And then, an eternity later, he felt hands touching him, moving about his blind eyes... unwrapping bandages... there... there we are! no! no!

He could see again. God, they had made him see. They had repaired his stabbed and bleeding eyes and he could make out the figure before him... dim, hazy, swaying... with a gleaming object sticking out of the center of its head...

Oh, Lord... no!

Stanley! He would always see Stanley. There would be no escape! Never! Here... here in this hospital room, Stanley was staring at him... the meat-cleaver shining in the rent skull. Alex leaped from the bed. Wait! There's another way. Stanley! Another way...

So that's my yarn, kiddies. Alex finally got rid of Stanley for good... by getting rid of himself. Ditto. Anybody want to buy a splattered corpse? There's one outside city hospital... no? How about one with a cleaver in its head? Upstate, near a camping site, there's... no? Hmph! Cheap skates! Well... this is C.K., turning you back to V.K., OK?
Dear Vault-Keeper,

I love your comics, they're Da Bomb! You see, my dad told me there was a CRYPT comic book. I got excited! Then one day I went to Atomic Comics and my brother found [some]

A few days later I found VAULT 17 and bought it. I love you and Crypt-Keeper. I hate Old Witch, she's stupid. I also got a CRYPT comic, but your's is better. Remember, you're Da Bomb!

Horror Man Mike
Phoenix, AZ

My name is Alex Gley. I am a very big fan of "Notorious 1950's EC Comics," with THE VAULT OF HORROR and TALES FROM THE CRYPT and "The Witch's Cauldron." I am making this letter because I was wondering if you (VAULT) could send me a free copy of VAULT vol. 1. Thank you

Alex Gley, 18
Elmhurst, IL

The softcover 'ennui!' for $8.95 made from these comics, or the $20 hardback archive-like books shot directly from the original art? Either way—no freebies! A ghoul's gotta eat! —VK

Dear VK,

I'd never read VAULT 20 before. "Easiest Kill Yal" held me in a spell of morbid fascination. The demented deeds of the angry artist can hardly be condoned, yet there is something strangely compelling in the self-realization he undergoes after meeting his beautiful upstairs neighbor. His introspection has a familiar ring of truth to which we can all relate in some small way. Indeed, there is a fine line between love and hate. They aren't so much opposites as they are but two manifestations of human passion.

Far and away my favorite story in this issue is Bradbury's "The Lake." Being a hopeless romantic in a world of sad realities and senseless tragedies, I was very moved by this story (I could try to describe the degree, but I'm sure you'd think I was exaggerating). Oh, and Orlando's et is enchanting "The Lake" instantly ranks as one of my all time favorite EC stories.

Rick Olson
Minneapolis, MN

Dear Vault-Keeper,

I love your comics! My Mom loves them too! I think The CK sucks! His show has most of your stories on them! My favorite story is "Mask of Horror" Do you read Steven King? I do. Hey could you give me an autograph.

Rusty Kelley
Austin, TX

Aha! First the butter, then the squeeze! Yes, I read King, end occasionally even decode his texts. But I don't have any extra King autographs lying about. Did you know King is actually MY fan? Sure, you did! —VK

Dear Vault-Keeper,

Re: Issue 19, I nitpick below, not unmindful that (having worked under publication deadlines myself) EC churned out material of unprecedented and unsurpassed quality.

"Split Personality" gets into astrophysics (worm-holes mentioned in your intro) and linguistics. Albeit the linguistic allusion is incorrect: telephone clicks aren't sibilent (sounds like S and Z, for which the sound stream does not completely stop), they are clicks (the articulation of which necessitates a complete stoppage of the sound stream), such are found in some African languages (e.g. the songs of Meriam Makibo in the 1970s).

In "Who Donut?", an octopus' suckers don't ingest, they merely suck as do the holes in this story. Nor do they scar the victim, indeed, on fellow cephalopod the squid only the suckers on the two long reaching tentacles (as opposed to the eight grasping tentacles) can inflict scars. Octopi have no reaching tentacles, hence, no way to inflict tentacle scars.

NEXT ISSUE

Well, I'll be burned...
in "Practical Choke!", revenge is predicated on the intestinal fortitude of the unidentified victim. This tale is the disembodiment of humor (and vice versa).

"Notes To You!" featured playful language throughout, from alliteration run riot in the Old Witch's intro to the final puns. I found myself wondering who could've written the letters—perhaps The Billionaire?

Re: Issue #20: Odd the first car crash in "Easel Kill Ya!" because the suicidal, unnamed artist is kneeling in the middle of the rain-slickened road? In WEIRO SCIENCE, this story could've gotten going well if he was also the driver of the car, and fatally flattened his drenched doppleganger an route to his contemplated suicide, entitling the resulting painting "Don't Tread On Me".

As a side-interest, I started a list of words that have the most repetitions of each letter, with separate categories for dictionary entries and literary constructs (e.g., as found in an EC comic). As the peach-chewing wife says "Gggghhhh" when the poker c Dobber her, she ties 'giggling' (also 4 Gs) and surpasses 'heathenish' (3 Hs). And, as The Old Witch concludes the issue with "S-S-S-S-S-S-S-S" (7 Ss), she surpasses 'assesses' (5 Ss). Keep up the good work!

Through No Vault of My Own (Vault to be Alone),
Bob Gorby                   Camarillo, CA

Remember, that was a mechanical rotary dial, not the toylike beep-beep button ubiquitous today!

You are obviously unfamiliar with the peculiar crossbreed octobotapus; half vampire bat, half octopus, half clotheshorse. That's three halves! He's so big, he can wear an overcoat! —VK

Hello, Again!

Time to review VAULT '9 Magnificent Johnny Craig horror cover: A+!

"Split Personality!" had excellent artwork by Craig and writing by ? tell us! Susan and Amy did kill a guilty 'honey-tongued' @ 'x?m conniving con-man, but he already had a bleached spot on the back of his head (page 7—panel 1) before Susan dabbed a few drops of peroxide on Edwin's hair that night.

"Who Oughtnut?": Oscar the octopus (I thought it was Calvin calamari).

You mention in your ad in 'Previews' magazine about the characters being familiar in the story "Practical Choke!", one looks like Bill Gaines. Who are the other two guys?

A EC fan's dream come true is the comic book display in Mr. Popkin's candy store in the compelling story "Notes To You!" by Ghastly.

VOH #20, "The Lake"; Tally: Rest In Peace.
David Gellario                Kensington, CT

In "Split," don't confuse the back with the top of the head! Could be embarrassing! ("Remember, friend, as you pass by...") —VK

I wrote to you previously about the "Vault of Horror" movie, prompted by a letter which appeared in your CRYPT #4... regards to the "Tales From The Crypt" flick. But after rereading the letter, I wanted to point out an error in your response.

It is true that the following EC comic adaptations appeared in the "Tales From The Crypt" film (1972): Reflection Of Death, Poetic Justice, A Wish You Were Here, and Blind Alleys. But, the first segment was not Collection Completed as you suggested, it was And All Through The House" (a grim Yuletide fable in which an escaped homicidal mental patient does a Santa Claus costume, and stalks Joan Collins in her house, moments after she has slaughtered her hubby). Just thought that you and your readers might want to know in which issue does this jolly little Christmas tale appear?

Incidentally, both the "Crypt" and "Vault" movies are superior to the HBO series, in that they capture the subtle but gruesome flavor of the classic EC comics. If you don't believe me, just watch Peter Cushing's poignant portrayal of the garbageman in "Poetic Justice," inspired by Graham Ingels' ghastly masterpiece (HAUNT #2).

I just received Volume 3 (issues 11-15) of your CRYPTO, VAULT, and HAUNT annuals in the mail. "Bargain In Oedath!" (CRYPT #12) was a truly grrrrrishly tale (featured in the "Vault Of Horror" flick). Keep up the GHOL work, and tell The Old Witch that I want to jump her decrepit old moldering BONES! Frightfully yours,

Joe Grotenrath II             Alexandria, VA

I think I've since corrected The Crypt Keeper's (not Russ') feeble memory and listed full, correct contents for both Amicus films. The Santa fand will be in our VAULT 24. Are you and The Old Witch playing checkers by mail? —VK

NEXT ISSUE

AGNES TRIED TO DISCOURAGE MR. HORTON...

PLEASE, MR. HORTON, DON'T TORTURE YOURSELF. REMEMBER HER AS SHE WAS. NOT... NOT LIKE THIS...

I MUST SEE HER...
And now, purloined letters from the desk of The Crypt-Keeper (he was in the rumpus room watching a video of his HBO show, so I took the liberty!):

In CRYPT #18, Julia Ross exposed the fact that a few EC writers occasionally borrowed from authors, such as F. Marion Crawford. Although I cannot verify this additional info, I believe F. Marion Crawford's story, "For the Blood is Life," is also an EC tale. If memory serves me correctly the inspiration became a VAULT tale, "A Bloody Undertaking!". Both stories have suspected vampire activity as well as suspicious characters (the suspected vampires). Only at the end of each story does the reader discover the vampires' true identities, a result of the innocents' horrid fate!

Elise Radke
Gilbert, AZ

CK has only one book on his shelf (and he hasn't finished coloring it yet), so I'll have to rely on my readers to confirm or deny. "Undertaking" appears in my VAULT 13.

-VK

Do you hate Vault-Keeper? I hate him. What issue is "The Third Little Pig" in? If you know, can you send me that.

My fav stories are "Attacks of Horror," "None But the Lonely Heart" and "By the Fright of the Silvery Moon!" My favorite TV episodes are "The Third Little Pig" and the one where a [7] stays at this guy's house, the guy kills him, chops off his legs, puts him in the coffin and then at the guy sees him with crutches and no feet, and he hits the guy with a crow bar. That's what one called? Your friend,

Adem Rothra

Ho, ho! Now, I can but Adam on my 'needs professional help' list! According to Myron James, "The Third Pig" (correct title) was never an EC story, but an EC original. The other episode you synonymize could be called "A Typical Day in the Crypt." The other is likely "The Ain't Got No Body!" VAULT 17.

-VK

While vacationing on a tropical beach resort in Malaysia my video camera, wallet and other valuable items were stolen. As you can tell from the police report I naturally listed among the stolen items my most prized possessions - my comic books: 1. CRYPT. 2. VAULT

Unfortunately the thief is still on the prowl and the spoils were never recovered, but what really gets my gruesome goat is that since comics are so difficult to buy here I never had the chance to read the October issues!!

I guess I'll just have to wait until next year when I visit my brother in Nashville, to read those comics. You see, my brother also loves your currant tales as much as me (if not more) and has turned a room in his house into a shrine to your comics You (y'all) may remember his hauntingly, built-ugly face - you printed his letter and photo of his very own baseball card over 2 years ago Your friend on the other side of the world,

James P. Bowers
Section E-1 Petaling Jaya
Q-B-D Tiara Damansara Apts.
Malaysia 46400

You know, The Old Witch vacationed in Asia last year, end came back with tanned nose and toes and sand in her sandals. Do you supposa...

-VK

JAMES' FLIMSY

(Fol D-3-An 25)

BALALI POLIS

Sips are yambu report.

Waktu dan haribulan report on Sept. 25, 1976
Nama James, Jock Bowers 023769324
Jalanan aina perempuan MALE umur 29
keturunan American bahasa English
pekerjaan tennis Coach tingkat tinggal

OST-D Tunku Damauna Apts. P. #33
pandikus ku.

Sejat 19/1 46500(023)377237 Ext. 1046
Adrian kite

Waktu kumbar from 12-12 45pm at The Imperial
Resort. Left my black bag, valued to the
Chair and went for in walk to Club medal
After returning about an hour later I noticed
my black bag was gone, but my sandals & trouser
remained. Contents of black bag:

1. Sharp video comem
2. A taping changer, battery, 2 video tapes

2. Wallet
A $200 - dm
B. Credit cards (2 visas)
C. Master 47m card
D. Drivers license (Clown) usual

3. House key + 25s

4. A Loose band
A. Keys from the crypt
B. Vault of horrid.

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

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WEST PLAINS MO 65775

THIS COMIC REPRINTS
VAULT OF HORROR #32 (#21, AUG/SEP 53)
CDVER by Johnny Craig
"Whirlpool"
"Out of His Head"
"An Ample Sample"
"Funereal Disease"

Johnny Craig
Jack Davis
George Evans
Graham Ingalls

We welcome letters of comment or suggestions. We cannot promise to acknowledge, publish or answer letters. We edit for clarity and brevity. We automatically withhold street address and zip code unless you clearly state you wish them published. We attempt to acknowledge publication of letters to do so we need your address on the individual letter.
HERE'S A SWEET TERROR-TALE WITH AN APPETIZING WIND-UP!

Irwin slammed the front door of his house with a grunt of satisfaction and stepped out into the teeming downpour that plummeted earthward from the black heavens overhead. The raindrops splashed concentric rings in the rapidly forming puddles, waterfalled off the bowed-leaved shrubbery, and streamed down Irwin's face, creating the illusion that he was crying... as if tears were overflowing from his eyes. Actually, if you looked closely at Irwin, you couldn't really tell, he carried a saw and hammer in his hands...

Irwin crossed the front lawn and sloshed up the steps to the protection of the porch of the house next door. He rang the bell...

WHY, IRWIN? YOU'RE SOAKING WET! YOU OUGHT TO HAVE TO RETURN THOSE THINGS TONIGHT.

I WANTED TO, BERT! I'VE FINISHED. CARE TO SEE WHAT I MADE...?
Irwin's neighbor hesitated...

Irwin turned away so that Bert wouldn't see that the droplets running down his cheeks were real tears, this time...

Irwin's voice was full of the sadness of long-ago memories and old souvenirs packed away in dusty boxes in dark attics. It was touched with the sadness of lost youth and a fading summer, when leaves dry and fall from greying trees...

Irwin's voice was full of the sadness of long-ago memories and old souvenirs packed away in dusty boxes in dark attics. It was touched with the sadness of lost youth and a fading summer, when leaves dry and fall from greying trees...

Irwin turned to go. Bert put out his hand, touching Irwin's arm...

Irwin sighed and sat back in his chair. His face seemed to cloud up dark, and his eyes had a far-away look about them...

Irwin pointed at the sky...
'And I remember the delightful three-day honeymoon we spent at Atlantic City. It took almost all of my savings...'

'I love it here, Irwin. Too bad we have to go back tomorrow, Hannah, honey.'

'Maybe I never should have gotten married on so little money, Bert. Maybe I should have waited. The little I had left went for the first month's rent for the house next door...'

'Like it, Hannah? It's very nice, Irwin.'

'I was making thirty a week back then, Bert. Of course, in those days, a couple could get along on that... if they spent it wisely. But Hannah developed a vice a short time after we were married. Candy!...'

'Maybe it was all my fault, Bert. Maybe the candy Hanna craved was a substitute for a craving of hers that I, as her husband, couldn't satisfy. Anyway, she kept buying it. Box after box...'

'Hannah! Another box of candy? But you just bought one three days ago.'

'Look, Irwin. Isn't this a wonderful idea? It's a Whiteman sample-box!'

'The more I objected, the more candy Hannah odevoured. That's how she got so fat, Bert. Eating candy...'

'Hannah, I... need some socks. My old ones are falling apart. I put some money in this sugar bowl. What happened to it?'

'See? There's a diagram on the box-cover. It tells you what kind of candy each one is...'

'But Hannah! It's so expensive!'
'IT GOT SO BAD, HANNAH BEGAN TAKING MONEY THAT WE NEEDED FOR NECESSITIES, AND SPENT IT ON HER BLASTED CANDY...'

'ANOTHER WHITEMAN SAMPLE-BOX. THAT'S THE THIRD THIS WEEK!' THEY'RE MY FAVORITE!

'YOU DON'T KNOW THE ANGUISH I WENT THROUGH, BERT. HANNAH GAINED MORE AND MORE WEIGHT. REMEMBER WHEN YOU MOVED IN?'

'THE NAME'S BERT... IRWIN'S MY NAME. AND THAT'S MY WIFE, HANNAH...'

'YOU NEVER KNEW THAT HANNAH HAD ONCE BEEN THIN AND ATTRACTIVE, DID YOU BERT? I NEVER TOLD YOU. I WAS TOO ASHAMED...'

'HAVE ONE, BERT. JUST PICK OUT WHAT YOU LIKE FROM THE DIAGRAM. NO THANKS. HANNAH. I'M ON A DIET. NICE HAVING YOU AS OUR NEW NEIGHBOR, BERT.'

'DID YOU KNOW I WORE THE SAME SHABBY OVERCOAT FOR SEVEN YEARS, BERT, BECAUSE I COULDN'T AFFORD TO BUY A NEW ONE?'

'HANNAH! YOU'VE GOT TO STOP THIS. YOU'RE SPENDING ALMOST TEN DOLLARS A WEEK ON CANDY!' I LIKE IT! WHAT ELSE HAVE I GOT IN LIFE?

'I NEED A NEW OVERCOAT, HANNAH. WINTER'S COMING ON, AND THERE'S NO WARMTH LEFT IN MINE!'

'SAVE UP OUT OF YOUR LUNCH MONEY, BUSTER. I TAKE CARE OF MY NEEDS OUT OF MY ALLOWANCE. YOU TAKE CARE OF YOUR NEEDS OUT OF YOURS!'

'BECAUSE I COULDN'T WASH SHIRTS WITH FRAYED COLLARS... TIES THAT WOULDN'T DRY-CLEAN... WORN-OUT SHOES. I SAVED THE EXTRA FIVE DOLLARS I GOT EACH WEEK AND HID IT FROM HER...'
She found the money, Bert. Today, while I was at work, she found it.

"Twenty-five dollars, twenty-five dollars that I was saving for clothes...clothes I need badly, and she spent it all of it!"

She bought four five-pound Whiteman sample-boxes, Bert. Four of them.

Hannah! How could you? I'm set for two weeks, Irwin!

Bert shivered, he felt suddenly frightened. The fear swept over him, turning his stomach into a tight knot of apprehension...

That's... that's blood on your shirt, Irwin. Uh-huh.

Irwin stared out at the wet streets. The rain had stopped.

I murdered her, Bert! Hannah! I murdered her!
Irwin stood up...
The rain's stopped, Bert, you promised you'd come see what I made...

Irwin walked to the door. Bert hesitated...then followed...
It's a box, Bert. A big box! A sample-box!

They walked in silence across the wet grass. Irwin flung open the front door...
See? Choke...

It was a sample-box, all right. Just like the White Man sample-boxes Hannah had loved so dearly. Only this box was too huge to hold candy. This box was just right for the gory samples I'd odio holol. And the diagram cruelly scrawled on the inside of its open cover identified and denoted the exact location of each segment of Hannah's dismembered and dissected body...

Chopped Nut
Brain & eyeball mix
Lower leg duo (top layer)
Stuffed lungs (beneath)
Upper arm duo
Liquid centers
Tootsies (double)
Sour bowels
Forearm fudge combin'
Lady fingers
Sweet heart special
Neck-a-lozenge

Heh, heh. And that's my sweet-story for this issue, kiddies. Irwin's in a padded cell now, picking the buttons off the padding and popping them into his mouth, and with each one, he screams 'Caramel!' But the guards just peer in through the little glass window in the door, make sure he's not choking to death, and shake their heads. They never saw a guy so crazy over candy! Now the old witch awaits with her gruesome gruel. I can smell it from here, so... oorops, ha-ten-shun! Hold...nose! Eyes...right!
On nights when the wind swept over the Fairchild estate and screamed through the trees and whistled around the luxurious main-house... when its chill crept into his aged brittle bones, warning him of his approaching inevitable death... Old Jasper Milliken would sit in his sparsely furnished gardener's cottage and count the neat stack of wrinkled bills that he'd saved throughout his life...

4950... 4960... 4970... only thirty dollars more to go, and Mr. Fairchild owes me more than that already...

But on one particular night, while Old Jasper, the gardener, smiled and sighed and fondled and admired his savings, and thought about the lifelong dream his money would finally fulfill, his employer, Niles Fairchild, sat at his desk in the huge book-lined library in the main house and listened to the sad voice of his personal accountant, Tom Kelton...

That's the story, Niles. You're mortgaged to the hilt! They've all refused you more credit until you pay what you owe! You're facing bankruptcy... a jail sentence... and I can't help you with another dime!
I DON'T KNOW, NILES! I JUST DON'T KNOW! IT'S PRISON AND RUIN FOR ME.

$5,000 COULD SWING IT! YOU COULD ESTABLISH CREDIT ONCE MORE... FILL THAT GOVERNMENT ORDER... AND YOU'D BE IN BUSINESS AGAIN?

TOM, I KNOW YOU'RE IN THIS FOR ABOUT $15,000... BUT... COULDN'T YOU POSSIBLY?

NOT A ONE, NILES! I HAVEN'T GOT IT! I'D LOVE TO HELP! LORD KNOWS, I'D LIKE TO RECoup WHAT I'VE SUNK INTO THIS DEAL... BUT I'M BROKE! FLAT BROKE!

WHERE, TOM? WHERE CAN I RAISE $5,000? I'VE TAPPED EVERY SOURCE I HAVE!

I DON'T KNOW, NILES! I JUST DON'T KNOW! THEN IT'S PRISON AND RUIN FOR ME.

THE ACCOUNTANT, TOM KELTON, NODDED...

THAT'S ABOUT THE SIZE OF IT, NILES. AND FIFTEEN GRAND OF MY DOUGH GOES DOWN THE DRAIN. ISN'T THERE ANYBODY?

TOM? ANYBODY YOU KNOW WHO COULD LEND YOU FIVE GRAND?

WHAT CAN I DO? WHO CAN I TURN TO WHO WOULD LEND ME $5,000?

NO ONE, TOM! NOT A SOUL!

IT WAS ON THAT ONE PARTICULAR NIGHT THAT NILES FAIRCHILD, FACING THE SHAME OF A BUSINESS FAILURE AND A JAIL TERM, WANDERED OUT ONTO HIS WIND-SWEPT GROUNDS AND ABSENTLY APPROACHED THE FAINTLY-LIT GARDENER'S COTTAGE...

WHAT CAN I DO? WHO CAN I TURN TO WHO WOULD LEND ME $5,000?


JUST A MINUTE! WHO... WHO IS IT?

IT'S ME, JASPER! MR. FAIRCHILD!
The old man swung the door wide. Mr. Fairchild smiled down at him...

I came to talk to you about the wages I owe you, Jasper! May I come in?

Of course, Mr. Fairchild. Please come in...

I'm... I'm in a bit of trouble, Jasper. Financial trouble! I won't go into it because it's a little too complicated for you to understand, but... Well... I can't pay you this month!

Can't pay me, Mr. Fairchild? But...

In fact, Jasper, I face bankruptcy... ruin... and a possible jail sentence if I don't raise $5,000 within the next few days...

$5000. That's a lot of money!

Lend it to me, Jasper! I beg of you! I know you have it. I saw you counting it! Please lend it to me!

No! No!

It can save me, Jasper! You'll get it back... all of it... I swear it!

No! I've saved all my life to get that money! I won't give it up now. I'm old! I'll be needing it soon!

For what? What would an old man want with that kind of money?

A funeral, Mr. Fairchild! A dignified funeral... with flowers and a silver gasket and pall-bearers and a sermon and organ music. I've saved all my life for my funeral...

My god, man! What good is a big funeral to you... after you're dead?

You don't understand, Mr. Fairchild! You couldn't! But I remember my father's funeral... and my mother's funeral...
Old Jasper went to the window, he pointed out into the howling night...

My Father was gardener here before me. He never had any money, never could save any, when my mother died, she was buried out there...

Far across the Fairchild estate, the wind tossed leaves against a stately marble edifice... The Fairchild family crypt... then spun around, and skipped over the shabby graves in the simple little cemetery beside it...

Out there... in your private Potter's field, your servants' cemetery.

Old Jasper's voice was sad... like a child who'd cried too loud and too long...

I remember how they came to this cottage and lifted her from the bed and dumped her into a pine box and hauled it out there and dropped it into the yawning hole and filled it up and it was all over. Simple. Quick. Nothing.

And I remember how I stood there, and watched them shovel the soft earth upon my mother's coffin and how I swore that I would never let it happen to my father when his time came...

'I was twelve years old then. I started to save. When I was eighteen, I'd run enough errands and did enough odd jobs to amass the 'huge' sum of one hundred and six dollars. And this my father found one night...

And so he, too, was put in a plain pine box, and dropped in a hole out there, and covered up, with no pomp... no care. Only the sobbing of an eighteen year old son.'
Your father was good enough to give me my father's job. I became the gardener. And one day your father died, you were only a boy. What a funeral he had. The coffin, lying in state, the flowers...

...The hundreds of people coming to the house, passing the coffin, and shedding tears upon it...

...And the sermon, his eulogy, the organ music, the dignity and glorious solemnity of it all.

...I've saved, Mr. Fairchild. I've saved for a decent funeral of my own and I won't give it up, not to you, not to anybody! No, Mr. Fairchild. I won't lend you my money. I won't...

I understand, Jasper. I'm... Sorry...

It was much later on that particular night that two figures moved across the Fairchild estate grounds to the Gardener's cottage. Two figures, that whispered softly...

No one knows he has the money. He's old, it will look like a heart attack...

And we'll be off the hook. You'll be able to straighten things out and I'll be able to recoup my $15,000.

The pillow came crashing down on old Jasper's face, snuffing out the air...snuffing out his life. He's... Dead! I've got the money. Let's go...

My father was good enough to give me my father's job. I became the gardener. And one day your father died, you were only a boy. What a funeral he had. The coffin, lying in state, the flowers...

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And so, like his father and mother before him, his death certificate signed by a disinterested doctor that had been hastily summoned, Old Joseph was placed in a simple pine box, carried out to the servant-plot, and buried without flowers, without music, without pomp or dignity. And Niles Fairchild and Tom Kelton stood by, smiling.

Outside the Fairchild mansion, out in the dismal unpretentious servant-cemetery, below the sparsely-grassed mounds, something stirred...pushing upward...crumbling the surface of it's recently tamped-down grave...

Niles Fairchild closed the door behind Tom Kelton and returned to the library. As he opened the door, the stench of rotted flesh and grave-slime seared his nostrils...

Inside, the two men drank, Tom Kelton turned to go...good-night, Niles. Night, Tom.

The thing stumbled across the lawns, tottering in the wind, lifting its maggot-covered head, listening...See you in the morning. Sure thing...

Inside, the days that followed, Niles Fairchild was able to reestablish his credit, fill the government order, and start the long climb back up the financial success-ladder. One night, months later...

That's it, Niles...the first black-inked entry! You're all clear! I came over tonight to show it to you! I knew you'd be thrilled.

I am, Tom. Thanks. How about a drink...in celebration.

Niles Fairchild saw it...saw the crawling decaying corpse...saw the bits of dead flesh falling away...the whitened bone protruding through...

The thing moved from the shadows into the light. Niles Fairchild saw it...saw the crawling decaying corpse...saw the bits of dead flesh falling away...the whitened bone protruding through...

No! No! Oh, Lord...

...and Niles Fairchild screamed...
The police, summoned by the servants, found the beaten bloody body of Niles Fairchild lying on the library floor.

**Mr. Kelton saw him last...**

**Mr. Kelton did it...**

Tom Kelton was arrested. He had no defense. He'd been there. He didn't know about the little grave out in the servant-cemetery that had opened and closed that night.

The thing tottered across the grounds... into the house... to the solid silver coffin... pushed open the lid...

...and carried the body of Niles Fairchild back to the servant-cemetery... to the open grave... and dropped it in.

The next day, the mourners gathered. The flowers filled the mansion-room with their sweet scent. The organ music drifted through the house. The eulogy was spoken. The pall-bearers lifted the solid silver coffin. The remains of Old Jasper Milliken, gardener, were carried out and laid to rest in the marble crypt...

The same little grave that opened once more the night before Niles Fairchild's close coffin funeral services were held... opened, yawning to erupt the thing...

Hee, hee! So Jasper got the funeral he'd always wanted. He was so happy he didn't even mind that every time they mentioned the dear departed, they referred to him as Niles. As for Tom Kelton... well, he's still going accounting work... a-counting with chalk-marks on his cell wall the days left till he has to sit in the hot-seat. Hee, hee. 'Bye, now. We'll all see you next in my mag. The haunt of fear!
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