THE VAULT OF HORROR

FEATURING...

THE VAULT-KEEPER

THE CRYPT-KEEPER

THE OLD WITCH

NO. 36  MAY  10¢
I dreamed I went to a fraternity smoker in my PANIC MAGAZINE!

Say, this gal has got it!

The second issue of PANIC!

Wotta cover!

Boy, I'd like to pore over this issue!

So go get your own copy!

I was uplifted from the depths of despair by this revealing experience! I laughed so hard I almost bust the binding! I was the center of attraction... the star. Everybody wanted to dance with me! I was rushed! So be popular like me! Wear PANIC! Run down and get into your copy at your local newsstand. If you're the shy type and would rather dress at home, then you can subscribe by filling out this coupon and mailing in:

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Hey, heh! Well, here I am again, kiddies, with another revolting yarn reeking with fear, oozing with suspense, crammed with tension, overflowing with mood, atmosphere, and sheer terror! Yes, here is a tale that seems to have everything! So pull up a grud-covered gravestone and I'll tell you the exciting story from the vault, called...

TWIN BILL!

Larry Bannister pressed back deeper into the corner until the wall-beam cut into his spine. He wiped with his coat-sleeve at the perspiration running down into his eyes. Tightened his grip on the Colt .38. His hands were slimy-wet inside his gloves, his lips felt swollen and parched to his flicking tongue. This was it! Only a few more minutes and it would be all over! Where were they? Why did they take so long?
He waited, surrounded by the silence, the darkness and he remembered how he had peered into this very room two ages-long weeks ago, watching a man and woman in the throes of passion, swearing their undying love and the woman was his wife!

He remembered how carefully she had tried to hide the fact that she had a lover, but he hadn't been fooled. Sharon wasn't been clever enough and as he had listened to their warm, melting murmurings, he chuckled viciously, fingering the trigger of his automatic...

She thought he had left on a business trip and, as an alibi for him, it was perfect! He remembered the frightened, guilty faces staring at him in the dim light.

Larry! What are you doing here? You didn't think I knew about you two, eh? You thought you were real clever, eh?

A gun could speak a strong language and they had known it! Quietly, almost defiantly, they had obeyed his every order, gathering all his wife's personal belongings. Anything that would leave a trace.

Why - why do we need these shovels? You'll find out soon enough, Sharon. You and your lover will both find out. Now we're going for a walk.

He remembered the questioning glance that had passed between them, their silent determination not to show him their fear.

Where are we going? Up! Up through the woods!

The elements all but ravaged the earth in their fury as the trio grimly struggled upward! One hour later they stopped.

This is far enough! All right, Larry! What's the idea? You didn't bring us up here for our health.

Just pick up those shovels and dig!
As the hours crawled by, the shovels sunk deeper and deeper into the sodden earth, and in the flashes of lightning, the two lovers labored heavily...

He remembered how they had talked, trying so desperately to maintain their bravery...

All right, that's enough! That's plenty deep enough! Listen here, Larry! I know you're sore about Sharon an' me! But we love each other!

Don't act dumb. You know what the score is, just as I do. I'm going to let you be together...in the grave you just finished digging!

Why, you crazy. That's what you think!

He had watched his wife's lover fall back, sprawl awkwardly in the pit. Sharon fell to his side, crying now, pleading for him to wake up. And he recalled how he had shoved the gun in his coat pocket, how he had snatched up the shovel and begun heaping the dirt on top of the two bodies...

He remembered that she hadn't ever tried to escape! She had remained motionless, her arms around her lover, crying hopelessly. Hadn't even tried to escape!

Meant for each other, eh? You'll be together forever! You near? I said forever!
In a while, he had risen wearily to his feet and started back to the lodge. His wrath had left him, and in its place crept a feeling of apprehension.

...and as he stumbled through the woods, there seemed to follow behind him on the wind, mournful wails that sent chills up his back and sped him faster away.

When his towering rage had subsided, he had slumped to his knees on the mound, his hands pressed deeply in the moist, black dirt. He shut his eyes, tried not to hear the muffled cries from beneath him.

His apprehension had turned to fear, and his fear almost to panic. He brushed frantically through the trees, jumped at every scurrying sound he heard above the angry thunderclashes, tripped and fell headlong time after time.

He had scurried downward almost blindly, and the dense blackness of the forest surrounded, enveloped, tried like a living thing to halt his escape. The lightning's fury slashed at him, the thunder cannonaded his ears, as he slammed again and again into trees veiled and all but invisible by the rain and the night.

And then, he had reached the lodge and the clearing! And with a cry in his throat he saw his car—the car that would take him away from this horrible madness.

He remembered how gratefully he had clambered into the car, slid behind the wheel and slammed the door! He remembered gulping great mouthfuls of air, pressing his chest to relieve the pounding pain, seeing in the deadly lightning flashes the hectic rivers streaming down the windshield! He fumbled the key into the ignition—pressed the starter... nothing!
He felt the panic setting in and he stomped the starter again, again! Again! Again and again!

"Oh, good god...the...the battery's dead!"

He had to get back to the city! In the shadows of the hunting lodge he saw their car! He could use their battery to get away! He raced over, threw up the hood.

"Ugh! I can't use this battery! It's not powerful enough!"

Desperately, he opened the car door and with a sigh of relief saw the car keys hanging limply in the ignition slot. He slid into the car...

"This is my only chance! I'll have to bring a new battery back before I can get my car out of here!"

Two weeks had passed before he had a chance to return to the lodge! He had driven back tonight, in the borrowed car. A brand new twelve-volt battery sitting patiently on the floor...

"Two weeks! No one's found my car or them! If someone had, I certainly would have heard of it by this time! Grrr! I thought those missing persons cops would never stop asking me questions!"

He had made good time tonight! It had been only a little after midnight when he braked the car beside the lodge and got out. It had been so... so quiet! So deathly still! Save for the rustling of leaves and an occasional threatening growl of thunder, he couldn't hear a sound.

This place gives me the willies! I better get some work on that battery!"
It hadn't taken long to install the new battery in his car, but the noises he made while doing so seemed to echo for miles in the unearthly silence. He had wiped the lover's car of all his fingerprints, had made certain there were no clues.

I'd feel better if I could have gotten this car out of here two weeks ago, but it doesn't matter! I'm all set now!

Blast it! Blast it! I can't leave the car here any longer! There must be a way! There must be!

Wait! I've still got a chance! One last, lousy chance!

He had started to tremble then. He knew that after two weeks, the bodies would have decayed. He hadn't liked the idea one bit.

He had slipped quickly behind the wheel, glanced furtively around while his hands searched through his pockets for the ignition key nervously at first, then frantically... then desperately!

No! Oh no! How could I be so stupid!! I forgot to bring the car keys!!

He remembered how a million horrible thoughts had flitted through his mind, how the stench from the yawning pit convulsed his stomach! Vaguely, he recalled snatching up the purse, stuttering and mumbling meaningless, unintelligible sounds, gropping through the purse...

Ah! Here they are! I found them!

The sky had become more threatening as he climbed laboriously upward. He prayed it would not storm, a cloudburst like the last one would shatter his courage completely! He was working only on sheer nerve now! An eternity ended as he stared down at the grave.

Good Lord! It's empty!
He had dug into his coat, yanked out his automatic, and he remembered the courage that had given him. He turned, started back to the lodge. It began to rain.

He couldn't have been found! I would've been told! There's only one road to the lodge and I would have seen anyone... no! They're alive! They must have dug their way out right after I left! And they've been waiting here...

The misty drizzle had gradually become a heavy rain... and as the rain became more intense, his bravado faded! He turned to look back! Silhouetted against the sky, he saw the two of them...

Good Lord! They're behind me! I can't let them get me out here!

He had reached the lodge clearing in a fit of terror! His stumpy legs carried him weakly to his car. He flung open the door, stumbled tiredly on the seat while his trembling hands had opened the glove compartment and grabbed the flashlight there...

Heh, Neh! Now let them come for me! I'm ready! I'm ready for them now!

There had been a powerful .38 in his hand, but somehow it seemed ineffectual... almost useless! He had no concrete reasons, but his mounting fear was reason enough.

Again the sharp panic engulfed him, and he ran! He wanted to reach the lodge... to meet them without the disadvantage of the trees and the blasted rain! He had run faster... faster...

The misty drizzle had become a heavy rain... and as the rain became more intense, his bravado faded! He turned to look back! Silhouetted against the sky, he saw the two of them...

He had walked swiftly through the tall wet grass to the lodge. He had climbed the wooden steps to the wooden porch. He had opened the wooden door and stepped into the warm, dry pitch-blackness! He closed the door. He grooped his way across the room to a corner... and waited...

He had dug into his coat, yanked out his automatic, and he remembered the courage that had given him. He turned, started back to the lodge. It began to rain.

Sure! They knew I had to come back for my car, so they waited for me! They want to get even! They're probably back at the lodge now! Well, this time I'll make sure they're dead!
He had waited and listened to the rain whispering to the leaves and the blades of grass. Until he heard the unmistakable shuffling, rustling sound of their footsteps outside ...

Now he pressed back deeper into the corner, tightened the grip on his .38. This was it! Only a few more minutes! He heard them mounting the steps to the porch...

He swiped at the perspiration with his coat sleeve. Long minutes passed, and then the door creaked slowly open! An unbearable, nauseating stench pervaded the room.

He gripped his automatic tighter still to control the shaking hand. In the inky blackness he heard their steps moving toward him across the room... closer! closer! and the horrid, pungent odor grew stronger, gagging him, and his entire body was convulsed with violent shivers and his nerves were splitting from the strain...

Okay! okay! I know you're there!

In a savage, desperate frenzy, he raised his gun, blasted the monstrosity with a staccato of lead... saw the shells rip and tear through, shattering bone into fragments, decayed, maggoty flesh into smithereens! But it didn't stort... it came groping toward him, closer and closer...

He snapped on the flash-light!!

And then his gun clattered harmlessy to the floor and he screamed hysterically! The two-headed rotting thing enveloped him in an embrace of death and the agonizing, all-consuming fires of death flooded his body! It was then, as his life left him, that he remembered it was he who had promised Sharon and her lover they would be together forever!

Heh, heh! well I wish I could tell you in detail just what Sharon and her lover did to Larry, but after all... how revolting can one get? Larry should have known he could never have won! everybody knows two heads are better than one! well, end of this love-making! the crypt-keeper is getting bored.

Right? Right!
Everyone in the tiny European village of Blumstadt knew they were coming. A week ago Eric Holbein had traveled to the city on business—and two days later had sent word that he had married! In the town square people huddled together whispering of the ignoble manner in which he had treated Alicia Gruenwald, to whom he had been betrothed since childhood. The town was utterly astashed at the scandal...

Oh, Eric! I'm so afraid! Now don't you worry, Helena! They're sure to love you. Come... let's go in.
They entered the house. In the living room they faced a hostile trio... His mother, his ex-fiancee, and her mother!

Mother, I want Eric, how could you do such a thing? Have you no heart? No decency? Do you realize the shame and disgrace you've caused by marrying this... this hussy?!

HORSESE! HOW CAN YOU LOVE A PERSON LIKE HER?!

You must be out of your mind!

Alicia, Eric's ex-fiancee, spoke...

I... I bear you no grudge, Eric. I didn't want to be here today, but my father insisted. It hurts me to have lost you... but I wish you and Helena all the happiness I had hoped for!

Sigh...

Oh, Alicia, I promise you I'll be a good wife to Eric! Thank you for being so understanding!

Oh, Alicia, I'll be waiting!

(Sob)

That night, in their room, Helena cried bitterly...

I'm leaving now, you horrid little snip! But if you think I'm going to let you get away with making a fool of me, you're wrong! I'm going to get even with you! I'm going to make you pay!

Oh, Eric! I'm so miserable! They hate me! They're all against me! I love you, but I should never have married you! I shouldn't have come here at all!

They'll get used to it, Helena! Just wait and see!
THE TOWN HUMMED WITH MALICIOUS Gossip! EVERY-ONE KNEW THAT ERIC'S MOTHER WOULD HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH HELENA, BUT IT WAS ONLY THE BEGINNING! A WEEK LATER ERIC'S MOTHER SUDDENLY DIED IN GREAT AGONY.

HELENA WAS TOO ILL TO ATTEND THE FUNERAL, BUT THE TOWNSPEOPLE ASSEMBLED THERE IN DROVES...

I HEARD SHE WAS TOO SICK TO COME! PHAH! SHE BROUGHT DEATH TO A WONDERFUL WOMAN! SHE ISN'T HERE BECAUSE SHE'S JUST A PAGAN, HEARTLESS GIRL, IF YOU ASK ME!

THE TOWNSPEOPLE ASSEMBLED THERE IN DROVES, ONE KNEW THAT ERIC'S MOTHER WOULD HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH HELENA, BUT IT WAS ONLY THE BEGINNING.

1 WEEK LATER ERIC'S MOTHER SUDDENLY DIED IN GREAT AGONY.

I HEARD SHE WAS "TYPHUS" SHE BROUGHT DEATH TO A WONDERFUL WOMAN! SHE'S JUST A PAGAN, HEARTLESS GIRL, IF YOU ASK ME!

IN THE DAYS THAT FOLLOWED, THE RUMORS SPREAD AND GREW MORE INTENSE WITH EACH REPETITION...

YA' MEAN SHE DELIBERATELY KILLED ERIC'S MOTHER? OF COURSE! BUT THEY CAN'T PROVE IT! SHE'S A MEAN ONE, SHE IS!

AND ONE MORNING, HER EYES STILL RED FROM TEARS, HELENA WAS VISITED BY MEMBERS OF THE TOWN'S CHURCH GROUP...

OH, IT'S SO KIND OF YOU TO VISIT! I... IF YOU DON'T MIND, THIS IS NOT A SOCIAL CALL! WE ARE HERE ONLY BECAUSE IT IS OUR DUTY!

YOUR... DUTY? YES! IN VIEW OF ALL THE SCANDALOUS EVENTS THAT HAVE CENTERED AROUND YOU SINCE YOUR ARRIVAL HERE, WE FEEL THAT WE MUST ASK YOU NOT TO ATTEND OUR MEETINGS!

OH, BUT... PLEASE! IF YOU'LL ONLY LISTEN TO ME.

THIS IS NOTHING PERSONAL, YOU UNDERSTAND, BUT TO INSURE THE MORAL CHARACTER OF OUR LITTLE CHILDREN, IT IS A NECESSITY!

GOOD DAY!

TO HELENA, THE TENDER, COMFORTING WORDS OF HER HUSBAND WERE HER ONLY SOULACE. SHE WAS ALL SO HELPLESS TO STEM THE RISING TIDE OF HATE THAT WAS MUSHROOMING! IT WAS BUT A FEW DAYS LATER THAT THE CHURCH LEADER LAPSED INTO A COMA...

SHE WON'T WAKE UP! SHE SLEEPS LIKE THE DEAD!

EVER SINCE ERIC BROUGHT THAT WOMAN HERE, THERE'S BEEN NOTHING BUT TROUBLE! SHE CAUSED THIS!
The unknown cause of the churchwoman's coma gave rise to fantastic stories by the superstitious... and Alicia's mother eagerly did her share of it...

There's something very strange and evil about that woman, mark my words! Everyone who has crossed her path has suffered dreadfully! It's as if an evil spirit were at work!

The way Eric is blind to what's going on, you'd be sure we had a spell cast on him! That's the only reason I can see for his having married her instead of my poor, broken-hearted Alicia! And as soon as she came here... pffft! Eric's mother died!

Yes? Yes, that's so!

Yes! How else can you explain the goings-on since she came here? Only a witch can cast spells! Only someone who conjures up evil spirits can cause people to sleep like the dead!

She communes with the devil! By heaven, there are moments when I fear for my life! We're doomed! A witch be among us!

A witch! Lord, a mercy!

...and then the leader of our church group! You know what happened to her! And it was right after she visited that woman! I tell you that woman has a strange power... the power of a witch!

It was but a short time later that Alicia's mother and her terrified friends were crossing the town square. Suddenly they stopped, trembling! They saw Helena standing before a shop window on the other side of the square, and suddenly she turned. For a moment her gaze rested on Alicia's mother...

...who promptly staggered and fell dead!
Deathly frightened, Helena ran swiftly away, the shouts ringing in her ears... A witch! She's the Devil's own! She did it! We saw her do it! She's a witch!!

The townfolks' mutterings grew in anger and fear! Every ill fortune, however small or ridiculous, was attributed to Helena, and childish fancies became horrible facts!

Yes sir! I seen it with my own eyes! Three children... flyin' over my barn!

It isn't safe to be on the streets, not with her roamin' around! I tell you, somethin' oughta be done!

. . . told her I wouldn't allow her in my store! Next thing you know, my store burned to the ground!

The entire town was present at the burial of Alicia's mother, and as everyone knelt in prayer, Alicia suddenly looked skyward and screamed! What's the matter, child? I see her! She's comin' for me! She wants to kill me!

The witch! I see the witch! Aaggh! My heart!

Glory be! The witch is tryin' to kill her!

Oo something? The pain! She's tryin' to tear my heart out! Aaaaggh!

Oo something, you idiots! Don't just stand there!

We got to put an end to this! Kill the witch! Burn her! Burn the witch!

The fury of the mob flared and spread like wildfire! Torches were lit, and amid the screaming frenzy of the marching people, shouts were heard that heralded Helena's doom!

The townfolks' mutterings grew in anger and fear! Every ill fortune, however small or ridiculous, was attributed to Helena, and childish fancies became horrible facts!

Deathly frightened, Helena ran swiftly away, the shouts ringing in her ears...
As the hectic mob drew close, Helena was almost hysterical with fear...

Eric? They've gone crazy! Don't let them get me, Eric! You know I didn't do anything! Eric! Don't let them get me!

Don't worry, Helena! I'll protect you!

And then the mob crashed into the house, filling the rooms, wrecking furniture, starting fires, throwing her to the wall...

Ahha! How we have proof! This is how you tried to kill Alicia! This is why she was screaming and crying! Alicia gave Eric that doll years ago! It's supposed to have pins in it! It's a pin-cushion!

Get out of my house! Get...

Can't you see! Alicia was angry because I married Eric! She's trying to get even! She was only faking! Just pretending to be dying!

Liar! Kill the witch! Burn her!!

Eric! Help me! Kill her! Burn her! Eric!
She felt herself dragged, screaming and clawing, to the town square! The angry roar of the mob flooded her ears and her entire body ached from countless blows! Fleetingly, she saw the huge fire...

Stop it! (sob!) We'll not stop now till your body be ashes!

Rega flexis mur!!

HEH, HEH! Witch all goes to show, you can't be sure of nothing! Yes, Helena really was a genuine witch, but she shouldn't have been so active! Casting all those spells nearly spelled her doom! Heh! And poor Eric... he got the shot end of it, didn't he? Well, K.K.'s awaiting, so till next time!
The drop from the high stone wall jarred Scott right down to his toes, his boots crunching noisily in the snow as he began to run. For a hundred yards he zigzagged erratically, to avoid detection, in case he'd been seen. At last he reached a grove of ice-bent trees and stopped to catch his breath. He turned quickly, his mitten hands thrashing at his arms and shoulders to keep the circulation moving. For a moment his eyes roved from one end of the huge stone wall to the other. From deep in his throat a softly whispering—triumph. The rock-pile no one ever bustled out of; they'd never hustle me back into that lazy cooler!*

A sudden chill made Scott's body tremble violently. He sat once, to show his contempt for Cragmore, then began to crunch across the frozen ground toward the Lake. The way he'd figured it, back there in the cooler, this was the best time to try a break-out. A little cold, perhaps, but when else could he cross the Lake which completely surrounded the island on which the prison stood? The first cold snap, he'd been telling himself, and the Lake would freeze over solid. The time had come...it must be close to zero right now!

He was crossing the dirty grey ice, warily watching the dark patches which meant water far below the surface, when he heard the alarm. They'd be searching the Lake for him in another minute. Scott realized, not enough time to reach the opposite shore. He was cornered, unless unless...

Almost directly in front of him he saw a jagged hole cut in the thick ice, probably by a farmer doing some illegal fishing. Carefully, inch by inch, Scott lowered himself through the hole into the frigid water. He heard the first crash of footsteps just as he disappeared completely into the gaping hole and ducked out of sight under the heavy cover of ice shrouding the Lake.

It was painfully cold, with water up to his chin and only a few inches of air between the water line and the ice sheet overhead...but it was his only chance. Then the crash of feet came closer, right toward him it seemed, and Scott dove deep and paddled frantically to get away from the hole. For a full minute he swam blindly underwater, then, when he thought his head would burst from the pressure, he slid upward and drew a deep breath in the tiny corridor of air between the water and the ice. Five minutes he wasted in silence, listening intently. When he was sure his pursuers had gone, he began searching for the hole in the ice, so that he could climb out and get to the opposite shore.

He seemed to have lost it completely, the jagged entrance to this watery hideout. He thrashed around in ever more hysterical circles, but the hole had somehow vanished without trace. His fists grew raw and bloody from his frenzied attempts to punch a new hole in the ice, but still there was no way out of his freezing prison.

Fiery pin-points of pain began to stab at his flesh in a thousand parts of his body, his arms and legs seemed curiously numb and useless. His last scream of horror echoed dully through the narrow corridor of subzero air just a second before his brain seemed to explode into a riot of white cold screeches. Then a strange feeling of tranquility took possession of him, for a moment he felt warm and drowsy. Though his lips were still with frost he managed to smile feebly before he started slowly to slide under the water.

They'll never take me back to the cooler, he thought as his body drifted downwards through the freezing water.

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THE VAULT-KEEPER’S CORNER

Reh, Reh! What a laugh! Just saw the proofs of that two page spread on my idiot editor Gaines in the March issue of the new “vest-pocket” size photo magazine, TOPS. What’s got me shaking is the photo they got of him! What a lot slab! Rest of the issue seems entertaining enough though; some real cute pin-ups!

Well enough of this chit-chat lotta mail

Dear Vault-Keeper,

Ever since the early months of 1958, E.C. publications have been the very best obtainable. This was due to the wonderful writing, editing, and artwork in each and every E.C. mag. And during those years, all of the editors, artists, and writers have received their share of “publicity” in the mags themselves. Not only in the readers’ columns, but in the stories as well! The readers used to be able to write in and vote for their favorite story, which always gave the artists a chance for their names to be mentioned. ALL seem to have shared in the advancing and improving of E.C. during the four years of ‘New Trend’ mags.

But now let me get to the real point of my letter. There is an artist-writer on your staff who seems to get no credit at all. He writes his own scripts for the leads in the ‘Vault of Horror’ and ‘Crime SuspenStories’ in addition to doing his artwork. Of course I’m referring to Johnny Craig. But he seems to be in exactly the same position as he was 4 years ago. Lead story cover, lead story, cover. This boy is top-notch, and I hope that in the near future he’ll get the recognition he really deserves.

Bill Spicer
Los Angeles, Calif.

ALL RIGHT! ALL RIGHT! I hope you’re satisfied! This crumb Craig is now my EDITOR a demotion if I ever saw one! And now he not only draws the cover and lead story but writes all four!

I enjoy reading your comics so much that I feel I must write and tell you in this country it’s so hard to get American comics that when I do get one, I prize it highly. I have managed to obtain six of your grand E.C. comics and I would not sell them for a pound. Will you please get me a pen pal?

Malcolm Biggs
65 Swiss Drive
Ashton Vale Bristol
England

You see how lucky you are to be Americans you ungrateful brats? You can get all the E.C. mags ya want! Poor Malcolm is STARVED for good literature! Go on America, we want more of these gems, please! (Please sign your name that I may know to whom I’m writing. If owned by a firm, company, or other union of each individual member, must be given.) L.L. Wm. M. Gaines, 720 Lafayette St., New York 12. N.Y.

3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, a more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other

4. Paragraphs 2 and 3 include, in cases where of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary such trustee is acting; also the statements in the to the circumstances and conditions under which the books of the company as trustees, hold stock as owner.

5. The average number of copies of each issue or otherwise, to paid subscribers during the 12 mon-

6. (Sign)

Sworn to and S

THE VAULT-KEEPER

no other horror books except E.C. Is to quote him I have tried other horror books, but they irritated my skin. But when I tried yours with the ten day test, I found yours to be THE book for me! Not only high quality paper, but the only one containing 100% chlorophyll! They’re the greatest since the invention of the Sears and Roebuck catalog. How about that?

Jack Laws
San Antonio, Texas

I would like to say that your comics are the most entertaining and relaxing comics put out. My Dad used to take all my E.C.s and burn them, then one day he happened to read one and now he uses them to get one of the new E.C.s that are received at the newsstand.

Dave DeChaine
Pismo Beach, Calif.

Hmmmmmmmm!

What’s all the rubarb about your E.C. comics? So what if they are the best—must you make a point of it? Cut out all the lus, What cares? I’m only 17 now, but I’ll probably be reading them when I’m 50.

Vera Bernard
N.Y.C.

Just keep reading them and you won’t live to be 90!

I picked up a horror comic the other day (I didn’t buy it just thumbed through all to see how it compared with E.C., since they used “SuspenStories” in their title. I had the sourdest art work and plots that I had ever seen. They also copied two of their stories from one of the stories in “Haunt of Fear” and one in “Vault of Horror” No. 25. It was even a sorry imitation. I have been saving E.C.s for 2 years and I know every little perfectly but one of those imitations bored me completely because it used almost every word on an E.C. cover! It’s a crime!

Larry Hawkins
Midwest City, Okla.

Unfortunately it isn’t a crime, Larry. I just unethically

As the wise Englishman said, “It’s better that E.C. than E.C. don’t E.C.

Art Walker
Binghamton, N.Y.

Yea verily!

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Name
THE DEN WAS QUIET. THE FRAGRANT DOOR OF OPIUM FLOATED TO THE CEILING AND LIKE A HEAVY CURTAIN IT DEADENED THE CHINATOWN STREET NOISES, PUSHED THEM FURTHER AND FURTHER AWAY TO THE REALM OF THE UNREAL... AND THE SMOKERS LAY MOTIONLESS, REVELING IN THEIR OWN FANTASTICAL WORLD OF DREAMS. LISTEN NOW AS CHEN CHU YANG TELLS YOU HIS STORY IN HIS OWN WORDS. IT'S ENTITLED...

PIPE-DREAM

MY NAME IS CHEN CHU YANG AND IT IS WITH MUCH SORROW IN MY HEART THAT I TELL YOU THIS TALE. BUT WITHIN ME, A SMALL VOICE SAYS THAT IT MUST BE TOLD... AND SO BE IT.

PLEASE DO NOT THINK ILL OF ME FOR FREQUENTING SUCH A PLACE AS THIS, BUT INSTEAD, BE KINDLY AND... AND UNDERSTANDING, FOR MY GRIEF IS GREAT. I HAVE SEEN VISITING HERE FOR MANY YEARS. IT IS MY ONLY SOULACE... AND FOR A KINDLY OLD MAN SUCH AS I WITH BUT FEW YEARS TO WAIT, IT IS HARMLESS ENOUGH. IS IT NOT?

IT WOULD BE A GREAT FALSEHOOD TO SAY THAT I AM OF STRONG CHARACTER. I HAVE NEVER SEEN THAT IT IS ONLY HERE, IN THIS ROOM OF DREAMS THAT I BECOME STRONG AND IMPORTANT. (SIGN)
"My story goes back perhaps a dozen summers, my wife was a good woman... A strong woman, she bore the burden that I was too weak to carry.

Is it not a most beautiful afternoon, wife? I think I shall walk in the park. It is good for my soul.

Yes, husband. But do be careful!

Never before that day had my dreams concerned my good wife. But I was filled to overflowing with love for her. And it was beyond my control..."

"I dreamed of her wondrous faith and devotion to myself and our children. And for no reason, I dreamed of the sadness that would be mine, were she to die."

"In great detail I dreamed the birds would not sing, and the flowers would bow their fragrant heads to join me in my sorrow."

"Ah! It had indeed been a sad dream, but it had made me keenly aware that I was a fortunate man. A very fortunate man to possess such a treasure! And I had returned home with a lightness of heart that was most pleasing, but it proved to be a black day... For the first of my great sorrows had fallen..."

"Had I not reason to grieve? What was to become of us? I was aware of my duty to my two children, oh yes! And by the beard of my sire, I vowed that day to begin anew..."

"My children, it is with much joy that I speak of this! I go today to seek a position in the world of business!"

"Oh, my father! The wind blows cruel! Mother has died!"

"My children, it is with much joy that I speak of this! I go today to seek a position in the world of business!

"Oh, father! The wind blows cruel! Mother has died!"

"Such a good woman, never can I recall a word of complaint from her. Even though she knew it was not to the park I walked, but to this house of dreams. I remember well how I chided myself that black day... Until my brain was lulled."
"An, but it is sad. My so honorable intentions faded like smoke before the wind. And were it not for the efforts of my son, we would not have had food in our mouths, nor even a roof above our heads."

"But again, my gladness was short-lived. The war was calling for men... and my son was no exception."

Here, my father, is money with which to pay the rent! Ah, my son! Greatly blessed am I, a weak old man, to have fathered one who provides as you!

But I have been drafted, father! Who, now, will care for you and my sister?

Surely there is no cause for you to worry! I, now, will uphold the duty which for so long I have shirked!

"That night I visited this place. In my heart I cried for my son who would leave us... and so did I cry in my smoke dreams."

I saw in my dreams the anguish through which he must pass, the haunting fear which I knew would crowd his every hour...

I saw the face of the enemy! I felt the impact of shells exploding, saw the great bloodshed."

And I dreamed my only son would die."

"(Sigh) The hour was late when I arrived home. I had pledged myself to care for my daughter in my son's absence. This time, surely, I would not fail! Yet I was greeted with but another great sorrow...

No! No, this cannot be! My son dead?!

That's right, sir? Had an auto accident on the way home from his going-away party!"
"The gods were surely punishing me for my lack of honor! Amenos would have to be made by my humble being to atone for the misfortunes I have caused. At all costs I had to protect and cherish the welfare of my treasured daughter..."

"But he is not for you, my child! He is not a good man... he is all wickedness!"

"You are so wrong, father! He loves me! Is that not proof enough of his good heart?"

"Ah... now my brightest jewel has been taken from me! I wish gladness forever, my daughter. May your joy increase a thousand fold!"

"Thank you, my father! This is indeed the happiest moment in my life. I shall have no regrets!"

"But she had regrets. In the span of six months there were many..."

"Oh, my father! It is unbearable! I am but a slave to him! He treats me as I were a stranger, and never even does he have a smile or a kind word for me! Whatever small I do?

"There is nothing you must do, my child. It is too late. You have a husband and you must remain with him!"

"But, father! He is cruel! See? These bruises? He has struck me many times!

"It is of no consequence, you are a girl of China, and my daughter. You must do nothing to bring a disgrace upon us! You have taken a vow to be with the man of your choice. You cannot retract the path you yourself have made!"

"I had watched, tears wetting my cheeks, as she had slowly walked from me, to return to her master. Did it not seem unfair that one so young, so fair, should suffer so? It was then that I knew I had to assert myself to relieve my daughter of her misery..."

"True, it will be a difficult task. But there is no other course that, with honor, you could take! I grieve deeply, but it still does not change you can only be free when he is dead!

("Sigh) Yes, my father! Your words are wise and true! I must do nothing! I must resign myself to my fate!"
"Surely something had to be done! The gods had given me this chance so that I might redeem myself! But what could I, a weak old man, do? In my worry, I had visited this room of enchantment, and as the aromatic vapors stupefied my senses, my imagination was given its freedom..."

"In my dream I argued importantly with Her Mate. I saw the vicious eyes, the lips curled in wrath, and I was not afraid..."

"...for I had the lion's heart! And when to his surprise, he saw his words were useless, we struggled mightily..."

"...and His youthful strength was put to its greatest test! In the fury there suddenly appeared in my hand a huge axe with which I struck him a heavy blow..."

"I shudder now to recall how he had fallen to the floor, gushing red, and how, in my anger, I smote him a dozen more times till there was but little left of him for one to view..."

"Beyond doubt, he was dead. And my heart rejoiced to know that my daughter's shackles had been severed, that she was free as the stars that once again sparkled like gems in her eyes! All this I had accomplished... And I was a hero..."
"When I returned from the nebulous world, I was greatly agitated, to be sure, it was an excellent day-dream, but suddenly my two great sorrows occurred to me! And I recalled that before the death of my wife, I had dreamed her dead!"

"And I recalled that before the death of my only son... I had dreamed him dead! Could my dreams possibly be more than mere fancies? Could the great gods work in such a manner to awaken me to my true self? You can easily see my excitement! I had to know if I were right? With much haste I hurried to my daughter..."

"And, lo! When I arrived, there were policemen and crowds all bustling and excited."

"My daughter, you cry! Tell me what has transpired here?

My husband has been killed, my father! I do not know by whom!"

"Surely then, you should be joyful! No one grieves at the passing of a wicked soul... and you are free! And I have at last emerged to find the success and importance that destiny had planned for me!"

"Ah, yes... That was many years ago. Why am I here, you ask? Where is the success and importance I was to receive, you ask? (Sigh) Never shall I obtain that glory!

Yes, my father..."

"It is only here in this place that I smoke and find consolation! You and I know that it was my dream that caused my daughter's man to die... yet the police would not believe her innocent! She was put to death for his murder!"

"(Sigh) Ah, well... It is time for another dream... is it not?"

"Heh, heh! Guess Chen Chiu Yang was one of those people who never do anything right! But who can say... maybe dreams can come true, eh? But if that's so, Marilyn Monroe is gonna be one busy girl! Well, the old witch is now awaiting you with her scruffy slop, so, 'bye!"

"The End"
THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

Nee, hee, hee! Well, K.K. has served the main course, and now you should be ready for the dessert! Your hungry bellies have become bloated, consuming the horror and gore in the preceding tales. But yet there is room for more! Just one more tantalizing, scrumptious tid-bit... The frosting on the cake, so to speak! And here it is, my fellow gourmets, the story called...

TWO-TIMED!

It was shortly after the turn of the century... 1900! The wooden frame house nestled cozily in the center of a myriad of trees, quietly sleeping under the watchful, winking stars.

But inside, on his bed, ten year old Dickie tossed restless, straining to hear the familiar sound.

And suddenly he heard it...
The clip-clopping of the horse and buggy stopped in front of the house... and puzzled, he heard it start up again and move off down the road...

That's funny! I was sure that was mom and dad coming home! Who else could it have been?

Their house was desolately far from any neighbors, and as he huddled in thought, he heard unfamiliar angry voices from outside. He couldn't make out the words...

HOLY COW! Somebody's having an awful argument out there!

Quietly, he invaded the shadows of the trees, moved cautiously toward the shouting voices...

Golly! It's a man and a woman! And they're fighting!

In the dimness he watched the man viciously bludgeoning the woman... too entranced by the horror he was witnessing to cry out...

He saw the woman slump to the ground, her screams turning to muffled, anguished sobs... and then without reason, the man suddenly turned and saw the boy...

Oh, golly! Oh, golly, golly! He sees me! I gotta get out of here!

He wanted to run... he wanted to scream for help, but he couldn't! His feet were rooted to the ground as strongly as the trees surrounding him! The man was on him in an instant, his powerful hands digging gruffly into his arms...

Help!
The man's hands snapped cruelly around the boy's neck, exerting a tremendous pressure that made his blood spasm through his head, forcing his eyes to bulge grotesquely from their sockets.

And as suddenly as it had started, it ended! The man released his grasp, and the boy, mind swirling blackly, crumpled slowly to the ground.

The boy remained, sprawled on the soft earth, a throbbing pain in his brain, and before he dropped off into a black void he heard the shot!

Blam!

He awoke to find his parents bending worriedly over him...

Are you all right, son? When we didn't find you in bed, we called Constable Phye! What happened?

He told them as best he could, frightened and tearful, and they listened, when he had finished...

Unbelievable? Not with those bruises on his neck! And that smoke! Smell it?

Yes! The ground is all scorched! But what? There's not a trace of anything!

This certainly is strange! I hope you find the man who did this! Our boy was almost killed!

Oh, we'll find him, ma'am! I'll start an investigation right away!
But his own murder was one thing he would never allow. Secretly he made his own plans to kill her first.

One night when his wife thought he would be working late—sure he wanted to get rid of my husband, honey. But you'll have to get me the gun. Why that cheap little she wants to kill me? Terrific! C'mon, let's go for a drive! We have plans to make, remember?

As soon as he was out of sight, he hid the buggy in a clump of trees and doubled back to the house just in time to see his wife meet her lover.

He took a shovel, a lead pipe and a can of kerosene from the cellar, brought them outside and stashed them deep in the trees...

There! Everything's ready! As long as nothing happens to throw me off schedule, I'm safe. Well... can't do anything now except wait!

He watched as they snuggled together in the buggy, waited till they had driven out of sight before he entered the house and made his way to the cellar...

He's gone, sweetheart? Isn't it wonderful? He'll be home in a few days, darling! Take good care of yourself! Boo-dy-dear, I'll miss you!

But his own murder was one thing he would never allow. Secretly he made his own plans to kill her first.

Let's see... 7:30, leave house? 8:30, return to house? 9:00, get all things in readiness... Hmm... Yes, I'm all set!

As soon as he was out of sight, he hid the buggy in a clump of trees and doubled back to the house just in time to see his wife meet her lover.

Sure! I want to get rid of my husband, honey. But you'll have to get me the gun. Why that cheap little she wants to kill me? Terrific! C'mon, let's go for a drive! We have plans to make, remember?

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He watched as they snuggled together in the buggy, waited till they had driven out of sight before he entered the house and made his way to the cellar...

They probably won't be back for a while, but I can't take any chances! Where's that shovel?
Several hours passed before he heard the buggy pull to a stop...

TOM! Yes, it's me, you dirty double-crosser!

Moments later, the buggy rattled away and his wife began the walk to the house. It was then he stepped from the trees to confront her...

What? What do you mean? I... I thought...

I know what you thought! You thought I'd still be in the city!

Tom? I'd still be in the city?

Ah! They're back! Look at her kiss him good-night!

Several hours passed before he heard the buggy pull to a stop...

Moments later, the buggy rattled away and his wife began the walk to the house. It was then he stepped from the trees to confront her...

TOM! Yes, it's me, you dirty double-crosser!

No, no, of course not! I... I thought... I'm going to make you pay for what you've done!

You filthy pig! Get your dirty hands off of me!

She slumped to the ground; he snatched up the lead pipe, and in a desperate fury pounded and beat her...

Cheat! Lying two-timer!

Suddenly, without reason, he turned. There in the darkness he saw a boy, eyes wide with fright, immobile with horror... watching!

Great blazes! The kid saw everything!
In an instant he was upon the boy! His hands snapped cruelly around the boy's neck, exerting tremendous pressure that made the blood slam through the youngster's head, forced the eyes to bulge grotesquely from their sockets.

Then suddenly, a glimmer of remembrance and recognition flashed across the man's face! He stopped. His fingers lessened their grip.

Good Lord! I recognize him! He's me when I was a boy! He's me fifteen years ago!

His grasp relaxed and the boy slumped slowly to the ground.

Swiftly, he rushed to his wife, searched her pockets until...

Aha! I've found it! The gun! Now she can't shoot me! Ha ha! Ha ha ha ha ha!

Fifteen years ago when I saw this happen... there was a shot! That means...

Chuckling to himself, he struck a match, dropped it on the kerosene soaked body! With a roar of flame it ignited.

Ha ha! A premonition! Let's see you shoot me now, baby! Ha ha ha ha! Shoot me now!

He stumbled to the kerosene, spilled it over the inert form of his wife, floating...

A premonition, that's what it was, and it saved my life!

Blam!
Finally the flames were out and the constable sat crouching by the charred, dying man...

Sorry I couldn't get here a bit sooner, boy. Maybe none o' this would've happened if I had.

But (gasp) I didn't know—either until tonight (gasp) how... how did you?

Well... it all started with a scrap of paper. Just a scrap that I happened to find by your body that night fifteen years ago! It got me to wondering... because it had today's date on it!

Hee, hee! Don't ask me! You figure it out! Poor Tom thought he could change the course of destiny, but he found out the hard way that you can't foul the fickle finger of fate! Anyway, until we meet again in my mag, The Haunt of Fear, this is the old witch saying 'bye. Don't forget to keep your spirits up!
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it I can add SOLID MUSCLE to your biceps—yes, on each arm—a double-
quick time! Only 15 minutes a day—right in your own home—all the time
I ask of you! And there’s no cost if I fail.

I can broaden your shoulders, strengthen your back, develop your whole
muscular system INSIDE and OUTSIDE! I can add inches to your chest,
give you a vise-like grip, make those legs of yours lithe and powerful.
I can shoot new strength into your oldbackbone, every single inner
organ, help you cram your body so full of pep, vigor and red-blooded
vitality that you won’t feel there’s even “standing room” left for
weakness and that lazy feeling! Before I get through with you I’ll
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