THE NEWSDEALERS OF AMERICA ARE SCREAMING...

STOPPIT!

BECAUSE, WITH JUST ONE DAY'S DISPLAY...

POOF!

THERE GOES PANIC!

SO IF YOU'RE SELF CONSCIOUS IN A B.O. (BUYING OUT) CROWD... IF PANIC GOES POOF! TOO QUICKLY WHERE YOU BROWSE... IF YOU'D RATHER NOT PERSPIRE TILL THE NEXT ISSUE COMES IN... THEN SUBSCRIBE! FILL OUT THE COUPON, ENCLOSE ONE DOLLAR FOR EIGHT (8) ISSUES, AND MAIL! JUST GIVE THE ENVELOPE A SLIGHT SQUEEZE, AND POOF!... SAY GOODBYE TO ORDER PROBLEMS! THE ONLY THING YOU'LL HAVE LEFT TO WORRY ABOUT THEN IS AN OFFENSIVE MAILMAN!

THE PANICKY EDITORS OF PANIC
R.C.O.M. 708
225 LAFAYETTE STREET
N.Y.C. 12, N.Y.

I ENCLOSE ONE DOLLAR ($1.00), PLEASE RUSH ME THE NEXT EIGHT DEODORIZED ISSUES OF PANIC. I WANT TO SAY 'POOF!' TO MY FRIENDS!

NAME ____________________________

ADDRESS __________________________

CITY ____________________________

STATE ___________
HEH, HEH! WELL, HERE WE GO AGAIN! IT'S TIME FOR ANOTHER GRUESOME WHIRLWIND OF TERROR? AH, YES! THE SADISTIC EVIL TRAPPED IN THE VOLUMINOUS CONFINES OF THE VAULT HAVE ONCE AGAIN BEEN UNLEASHED TO PLAGUE AND MISTIFY YOU! THE AWESOME MAGNITUDE OF THE POWERS OF DARKNESS WILL ONCE MORE... OH! PARDON ME FOR BEING SO RUDEN I NEGLECTED TO INTRODUCE MY COMPANION! HEH, HEH! FRIENDS, I WANT YOU TO MEET ORUSILLA... HOSTESS OF THE VAULT OF HORROR! YOU MAY RECALL SEEING HER BEFORE... SHE'S BEEN GLIDING IN AND OUT OF THIS PLACE FOR SOME TIME... I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE NICE TO HAVE HER STAND AROUND LOOKING BEAUTIFUL! HEH, HEH! ANYWAY... LET'S GET ON WITH THE HAIR-RAISER CALLED...

SURPRISE PARTY!
The car nosed through the deserted, rainy streets until its goal was sighted and it drew abreast of the town's only hotel. The driver shut the ignition and leaned back. He surveyed the streets the hotel...

HMP! This is a rinky-dink burg if ever I saw one!

An hour later he was pacing his room like a caged animal...

This hick town is enough to drive a guy nuts! It's only 9:30 and already the place is dead?

He drove away from the town, headed out on the main road toward Dalton's Corners, six miles distant...

Ah! I feel better already! I don't care what picture's playing, as long as I'm out of that hotel room.

The car knifed through the downpour for many minutes until its headlights picked out an object in the road ahead. Jerry Adams braked the car to a stop, read the word emblazoned on the sign...

'DETOUR!' Blast it! Guess I'll have to use that dirt road off to the right. There!
He slammed the car into gear, turned onto the side road. He went slowly, easing the car through the clusters of branches that draped from overhanging trees and scraped against the windows...

So dark! And this road is miserable!

The gutted, muddy road wound endlessly upward through dense fog banks, thick foliage, and as he progressed, Jerry found the road narrowing, the trees and leaves crowding in on both sides.

Blast it! A little further and this road will become a cow-path! I must have missed a turn-off!

Greatly annoyed, he switched off the ignition and stepped from the car. He buttoned his coat against the rain and started toward the house.

Miserable weather! At least I should be able to get directions at that house! Plenty of lights on!

The car cautiously moved through the ancient gate...up the estate road, overgrown with weeds, that finally petered out and dissolved into the undergrowth.

Looks like this is the end of the line! I'll have to hoof it the rest of the way, I guess!
He entered, he stood in the entrance hall, his wet clothes dripping, forming little puddles in the marble flooring. The butler dissolved among the people in the crowded ballroom and momentarily, a lovely young woman detached herself from them and glided graciously toward him.

He struggled nearer to the house, feeling the wetness seep through his clothes.

He drew close to the house and peered through the window. Looks like there's a party going on. A costume ball! Well, I'm in luck.

Relieved, he strode to the front door and rapped upon it vigorously. The door opened, spilling light, music and warmth upon him...

Good evening! I'm lost! I thought someone here.

He stopped talking. Wasn't this just what he had been looking for? Something exciting to while away the evening? Certainly! What could be better than a party... with women and liquor.

How do you do, sir? So nice of you to come!

It's quite all right, Alfred, take the gentleman's coat!

Relieved, he strode to the front door and rapped upon it vigorously. The door opened, spilling light, music and warmth upon him...

How do you do, sir? So nice of you to come!

Good evening! I'm lost! I thought someone here.

How do you do, sir? So nice of you to come!

Good evening! I'm lost! I thought someone here.

He gulped, hesitated, then turned to face the butler. He had been looking for something exciting to while away the evening. What could be better than a party... with women and liquor.

Oh, no, please! I only want to get directions. Really, it's not necessary to...

Relieved, he strode to the front door and rapped upon it vigorously. The door opened, spilling light, music and warmth upon him...

Good evening! I'm lost! I thought someone here.

He gulped, hesitated, then turned to face the butler. He had been looking for something exciting to while away the evening. What could be better than a party... with women and liquor.

Oh, no, please! I only want to get directions. Really, it's not necessary to...

Relieved, he strode to the front door and rapped upon it vigorously. The door opened, spilling light, music and warmth upon him...

How do you do, sir? So nice of you to come!

It's quite all right, Alfred, take the gentleman's coat!

They stopped by the punch bowl and he watched her delicately fill a glass.

Well, ha, ha! On a night like this, a little nip certainly looks good!
He took the proffered glass and thanked her. As he sipped the drink, his gaze passed among the guests. He noted with displeasure that everyone seemed to be having a perfectly dull evening.

Wow! By their expressions, you’d think they’d all been eating sour lemons! Maybe I missed the boat this time.

Casually, he straightened his tie and made his way across the room.

I beg your pardon... why... if you wish!

To the strains of a waltz, they glided round the room. Jerry Adams was amazed.

Why... I’ve never danced with such a wonderful partner! You’re so... so light and graceful!

Thank you.

Indeed, he could barely sense her back beneath his fingers, so soft and pliable did she seem.

This house is extremely beautiful! It must be a great pleasure to live in it.

Yes... it is nice.

He wondered, as they whirled round and round, if she was always so quiet. She wasn’t angry... just... disinterested, he thought. It would take time...

This is a wonderful party! What... er... what time do you suppose it will end?

The same time it always ends... at midnight!

What a bunch of dead-beats! These hicks certainly never knew how to enjoy themselves, what with their strict morals and prim ways of living. Still... he’d heard a lot about country girls...
You'll have to forgive me. I'm not having a costume like everyone else. I hope you understand. I... it's just that I'm a stranger in town... Just arrived this evening... You see, I inherited some property hereabouts! I have to meet some lawyer in the morning to... You'll have to forgive my not having a costume like everyone else. I hope you understand. I... you'll have to forgive my not having a costume like everyone else. I hope you understand. I...

He was stymied. What was wrong with this girl, anyway? Little by little he became annoyed... Say, what's the matter with you? Cat got your tongue?

Eh... wouldn't you like to rest? This dancing can be tiring, heh... can't it? Shall we sit this one out?

And then the music settled into his brain... and he realized the orchestra had been playing the same waltz over and over, unceasingly, all evening!

I, I, Er, hesitate to say this... but... yes, that is the music getting monotonous... I mean, they play the same tune...
YOU SAID THE ORCHESTRA IS PLAYING THE SAME SONG THEY PLAYED WHEN IT HAPPENED! WHEN WHAT HAPPENED?

WHY... THE FIRE, OF COURSE!

He was becoming more than a little annoyed by this girl's behavior! Even the atmosphere of the party itself was more like a funeral than a gay event! He looked at his watch... ten minutes to twelve!

What fire?!

Oh, please excuse me! My fiance is coming! I fear I have been away from him too long?

SIR, I SHOULD LIKE TO INTRODUCE MY FIANCÉ, MR. ROGER WERTHAM! ROGER, THIS IS... OH, I'M SORRY, SIR! I DO NOT KNOW YOUR NAME!

My name? Oh, how stupid of me not to mention it! My name is Adams! Jerry Adams!

What fire?!

Oh, please excuse me! My fiance is coming! I fear I have been away from him too long!

Sir, I should like to introduce my fiancé, Mr. Roger WERTHAM! Roger, this is... oh, I'm sorry, sir! I do not know your name!

My name? Oh, how stupid of me not to mention it! My name is Adams! Jerry Adams!

He was becoming more than a little annoyed by this girl's behavior! Even the atmosphere of the party itself was more like a funeral than a gay event! He looked at his watch... ten minutes to twelve!
The dancing, the music, the talking... everything and everyone became motionless! Attention was riveted upon him, and the silence was deathly.

Did you say your name was Adams? Why... Yes! Yes! What's wrong? What's the matter? Why are you all staring at me like that?

You have reason to be surprised, Mr. Adams! We have been waiting for you... for such a long time! Why, it's been more than seventy years!

I'll try to explain! This party was my engagement party... back in 1884! I had to choose between two suitors... and I chose Roger! But the man whom I refused was very jealous!

When I announced my choice, my other suitor was furious! He set this house on fire! Everyone you see here was burned to death!

I'll try to explain! This party was my engagement party... back in 1884! I had to choose between two suitors... and I chose Roger! But the man whom I refused was very jealous!

Every year since then we come back to re-enact the events of that evening! For we cannot go to a peaceful rest until our deaths have been avenged!

They came at him in gleeful agitation, their faces leering at him fiendishly, their decomposed hands grasping toward him. He saw the rope... and realized the climax as they crowded upon him.

You see... the jealous suitor who caused our deaths was named Adams... your ancestor, whose property you were to inherit! And in his place, we must mete out justice... to you!

Heh, heh! If Adams knew it was going to be a neck-tie party, he would've stood in bed! But as it was, his apple got a good break. You know... Adams' apple? Heh! Well, stay tuned to this same channel... the Crypt-keeper is next in view! Heh, heh!

The End.
HEH, HEH! GREETINGS, GHOULS! AH, THAT'S THE WAY... JUST SHOVE THE BODIES ASIDE AND MAKE YOURSELVES MISERABLE HERE IN THE CRYPT, WHILE THIS COLD-BLOODED CHARACTER, YOUR CANTANKEROUS CRYPT-KEEPER, READIES A SPINE-SPLITTING SAGA FROM MY FOUL FILES IN THE CRYPT OF TERROR. THIS MISERABLE MESS OF MORBIDITY IS THE NIGHTMARE OF A DELIRIOUS DREAMER WHO, POOR DEVIL, KEPT LOSING HIS HEAD OVER THE SAME WOMAN! I CALL THIS DOLDRUMS DIARY OF HEART-RENDING CONFUSION. TOLD BY EMIL IN HIS OWN WORDS... CHOP TALK!
"The people of Berlin had deserted the park that raw December day. The leafless, sleeping trees... The forsaken bird-nests... the hard, frozen earth laying like a dead woman awaiting a snowy shroud... All save Anna and I the privacy for a rendezvous."

"This is goodbye, Anna? Then let us have a farewell kiss!"

"I had this business before with Anna, she'd say we were through... but the next day she'd come crawling back to me! This time, however, there was a coldness, a finality in her voice... that I found hard to believe..."

"Anna, you don't mean it? You'll come back to me... like always?"

"No, Emil? I'm going to tell my husband everything! I'm going to beg his forgiveness! He loves me!"

"Don't talk like a fool! You could never give me up! You... ow!

"It's over! Can't you understand? We're through!"

"I don't know why or how I suddenly became so enraged! Before I realized what I was doing, I grabbed the scarf-ends and drew them tightly about her throat..."

"All right, Anna... then it's over!"

"A moment later she slumped to the ground... and still I twisted the scarf tighter even though I heard the heavy pounding of feet behind me..."

"Huge, powerful hands yanked me away from the limp body and spun me around! A great fist slammed against my head with the force of a sledgehammer!"

"What have you done to her? What have you done to my wife?"

"Dimly, I saw the man cradle Anna in his enormous arms. Vaguely, I realized that he was Heinrich... Anna's husband! Through the throbbing ache in my head, I heard her mournful sobs... and slowly, painfully, I tried to crawl away..."

"Anna... my Anna! Where have I failed you?"
"I had hardly gone fifteen feet when the great brute was upon me, pulling me up as if I were a rag-doll. I could see the hate deep in his tear-reddened eyes... the livid scar on his chin.

I could kill you, mister! I could snap your filthy neck with one hand... but there will be a worse way... I promise you!

I can hardly recall the frightful fantasy of my trial. Heinrich was there, staring at me! I tried not to look at him, but I felt his smouldering eyes on me every agonizing moment.

I recognized him at once by the big scar on his chin, and those hate-filled eyes that glared through the slots in his executioner's mask.

Heinrich... you... you are the executioner!

Heinrich slammed his calloused paw against my mouth. My lips became numb and swollen almost at once, and I could feel warm blood from where they were torn, trickling down my chin.

"Liar! My Anna is dead! I have nothing to live for now... nothing but to see you suffer and die!"

I had hardly gone fifteen feet when the great brute was upon me, pulling me up as if I were a rag-doll. I could see the hate deep in his tear-reddened eyes... the livid scar on his chin.

I could kill you, mister! I could snap your filthy neck with one hand... but there will be a worse way... I promise you!

"I was filled with relief when I at last received my sentence... and on a day convenient to the head warden, you, Emil Voigt, will be put to death.

"In my cell I thought of my death and it seemed unreal... it could never happen to me! Then, one day..."

"Emil Voigt! You have a visitor!"

I had to execute a man in a little while, so I can only spare a few minutes! Have you ever seen an execution, Voigt? Let me tell you how it goes!

"In my cell I thought of my death and it seemed unreal... it could never happen to me! Then, one day..."

"Emil Voigt! You have a visitor!"

No... no, I don't want to hear! Go away!

I recognized him at once by the big scar on his chin, and those hate-filled eyes that glared through the slots in his executioner's mask.

Heinrich... you... you are the executioner!

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"Liar! My Anna is dead! I have nothing to live for now... nothing but to see you suffer and die!"
Mentally, I tried to deafen myself, but his words burned into my brain. I fought not to look, yet I could not tear my eyes from the gleaming razored axe...

I spend the night before honing my axe so it will be over quickly for the doomed man. Unless it happens to be someone I don't like! Then I am happy to waste three or four strokes to prolong the agony!

...and as your head tumbles into the waiting basket, before the darkness closes in, you'll see your neck... gashingly raw flesh, splintered bone, the red blood gushing out...

STOP IT! STOP IT!

It is something for you to think about, Voigt! When your time comes, you'll know I'll only be thinking of Anna, and how lonely I am, and how good it will be to join her... after I have finished with you!

I fell upon my bunk in a coma-like sleep, exhausted by the horrendous experience to which Heinrich had subjected me...

I did not know how long I slept, but suddenly, through the mist of my unconscious, I heard his voice calling me... he called again, louder...

Come, Emil Voigt! Is it (gasp) now?

No! No! Please!

My insides quivered like cold jelly, and my legs were rubbery beneath me, but I was fiercely determined not to show him my fear. Not till I laid eyes on the bloodstained block... not till then did I weaken.

To the block, Emil Voigt!
"Heinrich brusquely shoved me down on my knees and adjusted my head on the block! I glanced up and saw the mighty swelling of his biceps as he raised the axe! It glinted in the sunlight."

"It was dull, that blade, and the blow badly aimed. I could hear him laugh, through my agony, as he brought the axe down again and again... and I woke up from the sound of my own screams!"

"Heinrich brusquely shoved me down on my knees and adjusted my head on the block! I glanced up and saw the mighty swelling of his biceps as he raised the axe! It glinted in the sunlight."

"It was dull, that blade, and the blow badly aimed. I could hear him laugh, through my agony, as he brought the axe down again and again... and I woke up from the sound of my own screams!"

"Ooohh... I've... I've been dreaming!"

"I was frightened. The nightmare had clearly foretold the agonies I would endure at Heinrich's hands, and I was possessed with dread."

"Had I known I would dream again, I would never have slept that night."

"Come, Emil Voigt!"

"He seized my chains and dragged me, struggling and screaming, through the corridor of the damned..."

"I wanted and kicked every step of the way! Two assistants were needed to hold my head down to the chopping block. Even after the first blow of the dull blade..."

"Again I awoke screaming! Sweat beaded my skin and the back of my neck ached! Trembling, I tried to light a cigarette."

"A dream? A blasted dream! It's driving me crazy! Why don't they get it over with?"
"I lived in an hysterical delirium, hardly knowing when I was conscious, being aware only of how I was led to the block time and again! I was too numb to feel fear. I could only feel the terrible blows, the crushing of bones, the chock of the axe in my flesh..."

Inside I ached from the torment of my repeated dreams. I longed for death... sweet unknowing, unfeeling death..."

"I prayed for death! I welcomed it with open arms for I knew it was the only means of escaping this torture..."

"And then at last, it was time... come, Emil Voigt! At last! It will be over soon!"

"I walked to death with a smile. I was happy knowing this was the real thing! Heinrich saw my joy, and he scowled at me in speechless fury."

"It was something I had not counted on or hoped for... Heinrich lost his temper! He brought the great axe down with all his might! One quick, sharp pain... and it was over!"

"You lose, Heinrich! You can't hurt me anymore! In a few moments, I'll be free of you!"

"THOK!"
"Do you think one does not know when he has crossed the barrier? I knew. I knew Heinrich lifted my head from the basket, and that he was infuriated because he could hurt me no more."

"It was too easy, Voigt! Too easy, do you hear?"

"I knew when they sewed my head back onto my body, and when they carted me off in an old wagon, when they buried me in an unmarked grave. I knew when Heinrich emptied the poison down his bull-like throat..."

"I'm coming, Anna! I'm coming!"

"It was a call I could not resist. I rose to answer it... and faced him... Heinrich, my executioner..."

"Come, Emil Voigt! No! (Gasping) No! No!"

"And then I heard the voice, the same voice, the terrible, haunting voice I had heard so often..."

"Come, Emil Voigt!"

"And I realized now that I was to spend an eternity paying, over and over again without end, for Anna's murder..."

"Heh, heh! A wee bit on the gory side, eh, kiddies? You've got to admit that Emil had a head for business... heh... monkey business! Well, if you're still in the mood for morbidity, stick around. V.K.'s ready with more, so toodle-boo for now!"

"The End"
As far back as he could remember, Milton Canasta had hated his miserly old Aunt. For, while the impoverished nephew scabbled for pennies to feed himself, ancient Aunt Bridget was busily squandering the once-fabled Canasta fortune. Her collection of antique jewelry, for instance, had cost enough to keep Milton in cakes and ale for the rest of his life!

The idea that the collection was still growing infuriated Milton: before long every last dollar would be gone, converted into baubles long since turned green with age... into bracelets which were ancient before the time of the Crusades. A half-million dollars buried away for this junk, and Aunt Bridget couldn’t even see the hideous junk! What good was the most bizarre curio collection this side of the moon, Milton Canasta thought bitterly, to a woman who was BLIND?

He heard footsteps outside, on the graveled walk, and moved toward the window. Down on the terrace the old witch was strolling, guiding herself by touching gnarled shrubs and decaying tree trunks whose precise location she had long ago memorized. And as he watched with hate-filled eyes, a thought came to Milton Canasta’s mind. He was alone here in the treasure room: why shouldn’t he cram his pockets with golden amulets and fabulous necklaces? He could walk past Aunt Bridget, then, without the slightest risk of detection!

Feverishly, Milton grabbed up fistfuls of the priceless stuff and dropped it into the pockets of his tattered coat. With a snicker, he started out of the room; before he reached the doorway a plan for final triumph over hateful Aunt Bridget struck him. His hand plunged into his pocket and withdrew an ancient ring... one on which was the carved image of a crouled snake. With a whinny of delight he slipped the ring over the third finger of his right hand. It was no sooner in place than he heard the thrum of heels. Aunt Bridget clicked into the room, her withered hands using the walls as guide-lines. Under her very eyes Milton would walk off with her collection!

"Got to run along now, Aunty," Milton said. His Aunt’s right hand shot out, fingers extended. Milton stared, then recalled that this contemptible relative prided herself on the firmness of her handclasp. Milton’s own hand slowly swung forward: their fingers locked in a steely grip. For a moment Milton thought he experienced a pinprick of pain in one of his fingers, but he shrugged off the notion. He quickly stepped past Bridget Canasta and moved toward the door.

He never made it. For the agony in his hand increased to the point wherein his eyes turned watery and he found it almost impossible to breathe. He staggered, turning unbelieving eyes down upon his hand. The finger which wore the snake ring was already puffy and violent-red. Milton gasped and began to sag toward the floor; the pain in his finger had now spread to his shoulder and, along veins and arteries screaming in frightful anguish, to the rest of his writhing body. The ring, he thought in panic, it must’ve been loaded with POISON! I’ve read about horrors like this... a needle jammed into the flesh of the ring-wearer, and the pressure of a firm handshake releases deadly...

But Milton Canasta was unable to continue with his intriguing theory. For by now his body had ceased to thrash spasmodically, inasmuch as it was growing cold and rigid. And his eyeballs were staring straight ahead, wide and incredibly criss-crossed with ruptured blood vessels. Sightless, of course.
Do you hear people faintly snickering behind your back as you ride the train to school or work? Examine the situation! Have you forgotten your pants? Is the comic book you are reading one of the kind with the loud, garish covers? No wonder people laugh! Do you want to look like an idiot reading comic books all your life?... If you don't, then listen to this!

**MAD** comic book has a new cover design that makes it look like high-class literature! Buy the latest issue of **MAD**, then you can look like an idiot reading high-class literature!... Buy **MAD** at your newsstand... or subscribe!

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THE VAULT-KEEPER’S CORNER

Heh, heh! I’m gonna start this column with some high-class PERVERTED POETRY. How about this one, submitted by John Wychoff of Palo Alto, Calif.

Mary was a little ghoul
Her father killed her dead
Now Mary’s on the dinner table
Between two hunks of bread

And then there’s the contribution of G.R.D. of Alta Vista, Kansas:

I tried to kill my mother-in-law...
Bashed in her head with a club,
Sawed her in half with a razor-sharp sword,
And boiled her remains in a tub
I beat her with my blackjack,
I stabbed her with my knife,
I threw her head-first downstairs
But she jumped back full of life!

So I bought me a weird comic book,
T’was called “The Vault of Horror,”
I took it home to her last night
And placed it down before ‘er.
She took one look... her eyes bulged out
Her face turned pasty-white...
“The Vault of Horror” did the trick,
She died all right... from fright!

Now some PULSATING POGRAMS beamed in by Larry Hauch of Alton, Ill., and Aldo Beto of Brooklyn, N.Y.

DEATH OF RILEY
MARTIN VEIN, PRIVATE BLOOD-VESSEL
STRIKE IT DEAD
BREAK THE BLOOD-BANK
STOP THE BREATHING
I LOVE LYMPH
COCAINE, FRAN, AND AGONY

Bob Burg of Long Island, N.Y. keeps MORBID MOVIES going with:

KILL ME KATE
SNOW WHITE AND
THE SEVERED DWARFS
LOUSE OF WAX
HOW TO BURY A MILLIONAIRE
GENTLEMEN BEHEAD BLONDES

In the LURID LYRICS division, to the tune of “My Bonnie,” Pete Oliphant, Pres. of F.C. Fan-Addict Club Chapter 46, Washington, D.C., suggests:

My Bonnie looked into a gas tank
To see what its contents might be
By dropping a match thereinto...
Oh bring back my Bonnie to me!

E. Nelson Bridwell of Oklahoma City was so inspired by Mike Reynolds’ parody of “Take Me Out to the Ball Game” that he sent one in too:

Stake me out on the aot-hill
Stake me out in the sun,
Smear me with honey and leave me there –
’Twn’t be long till my bones are stripped bare.
For they chomp, chomp, chomp, little ants do
Until they’ve eaten their fill...
And there’s one, two, three million ants
In the old aint hill!

Enough of that droll! Let’s have a couple letters:

Dear V.K.,
I’m a high-school senior, and I was prompted to write when I noticed how few girls’ names appeared in your letter columns. I just want to tell you that at least ONE girl thinks your mag is tops (And then too, you’re such a handsome devil, you just make my flesh crawl!) If my letter is printed, please use only my initials!

L.P.
Parmersville, Calif.

But of course dear! Think I’d print your WHOLE name, and risk the CRYPT-KEEPER reading my tone? If I can sneak away from Drusilla (see page 11!), I’ll be right out to sunny California so we can... chat?

Please congratulate Johnny Craig and Ghastly Ingels for E.C.’s most heart-warming story “Blue Button Eyes...” in issue 35
Richie Bocklet
Ridgewood, N.Y.

No. They’ll want money!

And speaking of money... how about some commercials? They’re still pushing the 3-D mags! They got so many 3-D mags cluttering up the E.C. offices, it shouldn’t happen to a rival publisher! And that’s the trouble! It didn’t happen to them! Anyway... if you have not yet read THREE DIMENSIONAL TALES FROM THE CRYPT OR THREE DIMENSIONAL E.C. CLASSICS why bother! But if you insist on bothering, SPECIAL PRICE 15c each... two for 30¢! And, while ordering, stick in an extra buck for a subscription to MY mag... eight issues manila envelopes! The address for all this stuff is:
The Vault-Keeper
Room 706, Dept. 37
225 Lafayette Street
N.Y.C., 12, N.Y.
HERE IS A TALE ABOUT A CARETAKER, AND ODDLY ENOUGH, IT'S CALLED...

TAKE CARE

JEFFERSON BATES, LEGAL TRUSTEE OF THE HUGE MANSION, SNORTED AT THE THICK LAYER OF DUST, THE NUMEROUS SPIDER WEBS, LISTENED IN DISGUST TO THE SCUTTLING RATS BETWEEN THE WALLS, AND CONTINUED DOWN THE BLOOMY HALLWAY...

COME, COME, MR. DENCH! THIS WAY!

YES, SIR!
Albrecht Dench, the newly-hired caretaker, shuffled slowly behind Mr. Bates, his eyes warily scanning the dreary surroundings.

"Tch! Looks to me like there ain't been any work done on this house in fifty years! And you're right! But actually the place has only been unoccupied for a few months!"

Pardon my saying so, Mr. Bates, sir... but this house like to give a body the shakes! I agree. It is a strange place! Heaven only knows how old it is, and I'm told it's honeycombed with secret panels and passages! And for some reason it was built with a bell tower!

"The companion was named Dregg! Rudolph Dregg! He did all the buying of supplies, and nursed Avery for many years."

"Rudolph, you idiot! Blow out all those candles! You're wasting them!"

"The rest of the story is only supposition, but it seems that Rudolph was quite envious of Avery and was only waiting for him to die, for he expected to inherit all of Avery's wealth."

"All right, Avery!" I've told you often enough that burning so many candles is just a waste! Why can't you remember?

"As I say, this is only supposition. No one knows what really happened, but they say that one night, Rudolph lost his patience..."

"Eh? That you, Rudolph? Rudolph, is that you? Confound it, light a candle, will you?"
The townspeople heard the steeple-bell ringing all night long, and the following day they investigated. They found Avery hanged...swaying to and fro on the bell rope...

"That's quite a story, Mr. Bates! Oh...this here my room?"

"Oh...no, of course not! Is that there the same rope what hung him?"

"Oh yes! That's the bell rope! An odd case...never did solve it, you know!"

"Never solved it? I thought you said his companion did it!"

"Everyone thought so! But when they read old Avery's will, there was no mention at all of Rudolph...so they claimed he had no motive!"

"To make a long story short, the state just couldn't prove that Rudolph killed Avery and finally he was acquitted for lack of evidence!"

"But it was right after the trial that Rudolph disappeared! And no one has the slightest idea what happened to him! All this took place, as I said, several months ago!"

"And since the legal firm I represent wishes to sell this house, numerous repairs must first be done! Your job is to take care of the place in general!"

"I see, Mr. Bates!"
Mr. Dench listened to the steps gradually fading down the corridors to the front of the old house. He heard the front door slam shut, and suddenly he felt very much... too much... alone.

For the next few hours, Mr. Dench prowled the huge house, familiarizing himself with it, jumping at the sound of every scuttling rat...

Exploring nervously the dank, musty cellar, the many black, gloomy stairwells brushing aside the cobwebs that seemed to cover all...

... and in spite of himself he ran blindly in the echoing halls, down clattering stairs to the main hall, the rear corridor... his room.

He huddled close to the candle, grateful for its meager light, and studied his surroundings. He couldn't take his eyes from the bell-rope that ran up through a gaping hole in the ceiling.

**Danced if' n I like this house?**

**If I don't stop this shakin', I'll never get this blasted candle lit!**

Queer place? Why they want a bell for anyway? Must be colder'n a hound's tooth here durin' the winter!
In compliance with his orders, Mr. Oench forced himself to make a tour of the old mansion before going to bed. He roamed through the halls, his heart fluttering because of his growing fear.

"There go them sounds! Danged! Sure feel a lot better if that murderer were locked up 'stead of runnin' l'dose somewhere!"

He moved quietly to the unused kitchen, opened the pantry door.

"Pshaw! Stuff and nonsense! A good hot cup of java will fix my head to thinkin' right. Landamighty! Somedne's been pilferin' my grub!"

"Ain't no rats stealin' bread and beans an' coffee! This house is hidin' more'n just me in it and I don't like it at all!"

"He reached the end of the hall, turned the corner, and as he passed the stairs, he glanced up. Landamighty! I knew it! I knew it! This house is spooked!"

Terrified, he ran back to his room, slammed the door behind him and locked it! Gasping for air, he staggered to his bed, fumblingly lighted the candle.

"I'm through! Tomorrow I quit! I don't need no job bad enough to make my heart stop tickin'! Nosireebob!"

He sat close to the glowing candle, listening to the clumpings and scurrings. And as he sat, he realized with a shock that the sounds had changed.

"Doggone! Sounds sounds kinda like footsteps kinda an' they're comin' this way!"
He listened intently, hoping that his ears were deceiving him, praying that the pain in his chest would cease. The shuffling steps crept closer, till he heard them stop, just outside his door.

He waited, staring breathlessly at the door, and then he heard the unmistakable sound of a key in the lock, the squeaking turning of the knob, and the door creaked slowly open. Instantly, a severe draft rushed through the room.

"Landamighty! The candle's goin' out!"

Blackness engulfed him! He tried to find matches but only knocked over the candle; he stopped... the footsteps were moving toward him.

He felt a cold clamminess near him! The steps were directly beside him, moving closer, and as his immense terror constricted his heart, he screamed.

A searing, agonizing pain shot through his chest. He clutched at his heart, gasping, trembling; his head swam, and dimly, through the whirlpool, he sensed the footsteps continuing away.

The monotonous tolling of the bell aroused the townspeople the following morning. Greatly excited, highly curious, they banded together to investigate. They found the new caretaker lying on his bed, dead of a heart attack. In the room's corner the missing companion was hanging limply from the bell-rope; and beneath him sprawled grotesquely on the floor, was the rotted, stinking corpse of the former owner, Avery.

The townspeople were greatly excited. It was Avery and his companion—murderer having a rat-race? Heh, heh? (The companion lost.) Anyway, if you don't have a subscription to this mag, send a buck (cash) to me! You'll find the address somewhere, so don't be so lazy! It's good reading, heh?"
THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

MEE, MEE! I DON'T KNOW WHY I'M LAUGHING! I REALLY SHOULD BE BAWLING OVER THIS FOUL FARE I'M READY TO SERVE YOU SLOP-LOVING SLOBS! IT'S THE MOST PITYFUL, PULING, PUTRESCENCE I EVER THREW UP TO YOU. STIRRED WITH SICKENING SADNESS, STEWED WITH A NAUSEATING NIAGRA OF TEARS, SEASONED WITH PITY PEPPER TO A POLLUTED DELICACY AND GARNISHED WITH SYMPATHY SLIME! OF COURSE, THIS TALE ALSO HAS IRONY FOR YOUR BLOOD, YOU KNOW! SO, SPOONS READY, FINGERS AT NOSES... NOW Gobble UP THIS GRUESOME GARBAGE I CALL...

OH! HENRY!
You sit there, Detective Lieutenant Lionel Hart, your face twisted, your mind seething... staring at the ten dollar bill in your hand! You stare at your now useless money and you think back to when it all started.

It was just one month ago, Lionel Hart, that you prowled your beat as a plainclothesman, covering the Midtown Section. It had been a good day... you caught a pickpocket red-handed! All right, you! Let's have that wallet you just lifted! Listen, you got me all wrong!

You never did take any stuff from those grifters, Hart? That's why your fellow officers called you 'Hard Hart'! You taught them respect for the law... resisting arrest, hah! Filthy beggars! That's what they deserved! You had to protect society! You had to uphold the law! It was your duty!

C'mon, punk! I'm runnin' you in.

And if things got slow, there was always the ragged moochers, the miserable, downtrodden wretches you arrested for vagrancy in your zeal to carry out the law to its final letter. C'mon, you drunken bums! On your feet! C'mon! You can sleep it off in a jail cell!

It gave you a sense of power to be an officer of the law, didn't it, Hart? You swaggered down the street looking for trouble...

Yes, it had been a most satisfying day! But the best was yet to come... for as you passed the little grocery store, you happened to glance in and you saw the little old lady nervously stuffing a loaf of bread into her shopping bag... hmph! Acting suspicious? I'll just wait and see!
You watched her closely, Hart!
You saw the storekeeper turn
to wait on a customer, saw the
little lady hurry from the
place...

Not so fast, lady! You're
under arrest!

But you said, "Oh, please!
I was going to pay!"

You had her sized up, all right.
Just a sneaky lady who made a
practice of leeching! You called
her bluff, didn't you, Hart?

Okay! Then
Pay the man!

"Er... I..."

Er well...
"It. It seems
dear me! Oh, dear me!"

You had to admit it was a dilly of a story, Hart...
And you'd listened to some of the best!

You understand, don't you, officer? My Henry
he's helpless! I have to feed him! He needs
food or he'll die! He'll starve to death! I,
I had to bring him... something!

The stories they made up out of thin air to
cover their rotten crimes made you boil! You
snarled to shut her up, but who should step in
but the robbed storekeeper himself!

Wait! Don't arrest her!
If she needs the food
that badly, why...

What? Don't tell
me you fell for that
sob story! She's
just trying to worm
her way free!

Look... it's only a
dollar's worth of
stuff! I won't
press charges!

Well, I will! I saw her
steal it! I caught her!
No crook is going to make
a fool of me!

Please, officer! I... I know it
looks bad! But I'm not a thief!
This is the first time I ever took
any thing! Honestly! I was
desperate! My husband is sick!
He's home now, waiting for me!
OFFICER, PLEASE! PERHAPS IT WAS WRONG OF ME TO DO WHAT I DID, BUT I HAD NO OTHER WAY! PLEASE! I MUST HAVE FOOD FOR HENRY! TRY TO UNDERSTAND! I'M TELLING YOU THE TRUTH!

HOTTHING DOING! YOU BROKE THE LAW!

COULDN'T YOU LEND ME THE DOLLAR TO PAY FOR THIS FOOD? I BEG OF YOU! I'LL DO ANYTHING YOU ASK. ANYTHING! IT'S ONLY A DOLLAR! PLEASE! (SOB!)

COME ON, SISTER! TELL IT TO THE JUDGE!

YOU REMEMBER HOW SHE SABOLED ALL THE WAY TO THE STATIONHOUSE. HOW THE SERGEANT DREW YOU ASIDE... LOOK, LIEUTENANT? SHE'S A SWEET OLD DAME! COULDN'T WE JUST...

HO! I SAID BOOK HER FOR SHOP-LIFTING!

THE SERGEANT HAD BOOKED HER.

I'LL SEE THAT THE JUDGE SLAPS YOU WITH SIXTY DAYS! OH NO—NO! MY POOR HENRY! HE'LL STARVE!


YOU WERE SICK OF LISTENING TO HER LYING DRIVEL, WEREN'T YOU? YOU WERE GLAD WHEN YOU FINALLY REACHED HER CELL. WHEN THE JAILER OPENED IT....

I KNOW YOU DON'T BELIEVE ME! BUT GO WHERE WE live... THE OLD SHACK ON STONE STREET... ACROSS THE TRACKS... YOU'LL FIND HIM THERE... WAITING FOR ME! DON'T LET HIM STARVE! GO AND HELP HIM! (SOB)

THE CELL DOOR CLANGED SHUT AND YOU TURNED AWAY coldly, LIONEL HART! YOU IGNORED HER BUPPLICATING HAND STRETCHED OUT TO YOU.

PLEASE! FOR THE SAKE OF AN OLD WOMAN! WILL YOU HELP MY POOR HENRY? OH PLEASE! PLEASE!

CUT IT OUT, SISTER! I'LL SEE YOU IN COURT?
You left her then, Hart, to be thrown in a steel cell. Your job was done! You didn't bother to check up on her obvious lies... If you believed everything they told you, the jail would be empty! You never gave a thought to her misery and anguish...

And then you heard how she had been released in one month for good behavior. How do you like that? She'll be back to shoplifting in no time!

You decided to see her... to warn her that you'd be keeping an eye on her, that she'd best go straight!

BET she gave me a phony. No, there's the shack... just like she said!

Hmn. Door open? She was freed this afternoon... should be here soon. I'll wait inside... snoop around a bit! Never can tell...

You entered the orab little hovel, and in the wan light you tried to peer through the darkness of the room... you opened a bureau drawer...

Hmpf! Nothing valuable here! Guess she was telling the truth about being poor, anyway!

You swung open the creaky door, Hart! You saw little in the dim moonlight... but then suddenly you stiffened in shock!

What's that wheel... two... two wheels? Oh, no!
Why did your eyes bulge, lieutenant? What did you see that sent a smashing shock-wave through your brain? What ripped a moaning gasp from your lips, turned your muscles to water and made your heart thud against your ribs like a wild thing?

No... no! It can't be!

But it was the one thing you didn't expect or want to see! The proof that the old lady had not lied! The proof sitting in the wheelchair... not moving... so very silent... so very, very still...

HENRY!

For the first time in your life, you cringed... you whimpered... starkly, it faced you... and you had to spill it from your lips before it strangled you!

I killed him!

His sightless eyes accused you! In one sickening moment you saw this paralyzed old man... all alone... waiting for the one person who could come back and save him!

And I... I put her... behind bars!

You didn't have to feel for his pulse, Hart. That had been gone a long time! You could tell... the condition of the body... the foul, sickening stench...

...died... helpless! Right in... in the chair!

Then you heard the sound behind you... the soft step! You whirled... and there was the little old lady back from prison! What would she say?

Why... hello, lieutenant! How nice to find you here... keeping Henry company!

Didn't she know? Couldn't she guess? You stood in dumb panic as she bustled over to the... the thing in the wheelchair... bent down and kissed the cold cheek.

Hello, Henry dear! Did you think I'd never come back... in time to feed you?
HERE, madam Please take it... Please!

Oh, I won't need that. Henry's taken care of already? Won't you have some tea, Lieutenant? It's all I can offer you... thank you!

Ah, en poon Henry? I heard her speak again & swiftly! With that warm, friendly smile. I saw you waiting for me here. It came to me! All the way home, I was thinking... what can I feed poor Henry? He'll be so hungry? Starved, you might say after a whole month? But when I saw you waiting for me here, it came to me. It was so simple! So very simple!

All the way home, I was thinking... what can I feed poor Henry? He'll be so hungry? Starved, you might say after a whole month? But when I saw you waiting for me here, it came to me. It was so simple! So very simple!

Why, yes. Yes, thank you?

All the way home, I was thinking... what can I feed poor Henry? He'll be so hungry? Starved, you might say after a whole month? But when I saw you waiting for me here, it came to me. It was so simple! So very simple!

She spoke as if she had been gone only an hour. As if she had returned quickly with the food I needed. A month ago?

You gulped down the bitter cup. You helped down the bitter cup. You only an hour as if she had returned quickly with the food you needed. A month ago?

But why were your arms so stiff, suddenly? Why did your muscles seem to freeze? And then you purred Henry? I heard her speak again & swiftly! With that warm, friendly smile. I saw you waiting for me here. It came to me! All the way home, I was thinking... what can I feed poor Henry? He'll be so hungry? Starved, you might say after a whole month? But when I saw you waiting for me here, it came to me. It was so simple! So very simple!

She spoke as if she had been gone only an hour. As if she had returned quickly with the food I needed. A month ago?

You gulped down the bitter cup. You helped down the bitter cup. You only an hour as if she had returned quickly with the food you needed. A month ago?

So you sit there, detective-Lieutenant Lionel Hart, your face twisted... with pain? Your mind seething with anguish. Your muscles paralyzed first! You see, I poisoned you. Lieutenant. In the tea. At six o'clock... with pain. You see, I poisoned you. Lieutenant. In the tea. At six o'clock... with pain. Your muscles paralyzed first! You see, I poisoned you. Lieutenant. In the tea. At six o'clock... with pain. Your muscles paralyzed first!

She was crazy! But you had to make amends, you knew. To make amends you drew a ten dollar bill from your wallet. Now I must feed poor Henry?

Oh, Henry! How wasn't that sweet? Of the old lady to forgive all and have him for dinner, anyway. But how hard ended up in the soup. Not to mention the entrée and all the fixings! Dessert? Anyone? Hey?

Don't turn green... turn the page? This is the end of the book, isn't it? Well, till next time, then...
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