THE VAULT OF HORROR

FEATURING:

THE OLD WITCH

THE VAULT-KEEPER

THE CRYPT-KEEPER
HEN, HEN! WELL, HERE WE ARE, ALL SET TO GO AGAIN! THIS IS YOUR VAULT-KEEPER USHERING YOU INTO THIS PARADISE OF PERIL, THIS INN OF INQUITY, THIS DEN OF DEVIL-WORSHIP. IN SHORT, THE VAULT OF HORROR! YOU KNOW BY NOW, TO COME PREPARED, DON'T YOU? DRUSILLA, MY HELP-MATE, HAS BEEN WAITING BREATHLESSLY FOR YOU, SO CURL UP IN A COZY ROT-UPHOLSTERED CASKET, PUSH ASIDE THE MABBOTY BONES, THE CHUNKS OF DECAYED FLESH AND RELAX! TAKE A DEEP BREATH AND GET SET FOR THE CHILL-PRODUCING TALE CALLED...

OLD MAN MOSE!
Neurolyed in his horse and brough the wagon to an abrupt halt. He gazed up at the golden hillside, at the figures hid saw. There were several boys taunting and stoning what seemed to be a covering old man who pleaded to be left alone...

"Hey! Hey, up there! Leave him alone!"

The boys held back. Neo Rosers turned to the munched, little man who still trembled.

"Come on, old timer! It's all right now... they won't hurt you any more!"

"Thank you. They... they always pick on me!"

Neo studied the man. He noticed his obvious ugliness, his dirty, ragged clothes, his sunken cheeks, and he saw the painful loneliness in the wide, tear-brimmed eyes...

"I ain't mean and wicked. I don't pray to the devil! It's just that I'm all alone, an' nobody likes me just 'cause I ain't nice to look at! I can't help it! I gotta live in the Black Church! It's the only place I got!"

"I understand. Old timer! Chon... you come along with me. I can give you a place to stay!"

They climbed atop the wagon and a short while later they came to a stop before Ned's home. His lovely wife came happily out to meet them.

"Belle, this is Mose. He's had a spell of hard luck and since we need a handyman around, I figured we could take him on, help him out!"

Of course, Neo. Hello, Mose! I hope you'll be happy with us! Come inside... Food's ready!"
Old Mose slipped into the Rogers' way of life as if he were one of the family. He worked hard, in the following days, to show his gratitude...and sometimes...

YES, Mose? MRS.... MRS. ROGERS..... THIS IS FOR YOU... I... I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT LIKE IT!

YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE, NOT HAVIN' ANYONE... NOT EVEN AN ENEMY TO TALK TO! IT'S AWFUL... JUST PLAIN AWFUL! SO MANY TIMES I WISHED I'D DIE, 'CAUSE I FELT SO DOWNRIGHT MISERABLE!

WHY, MOSE... THEY'RE BEAUTIFUL!

YOU... YOU AND MR. ROGERS HAVE BEEN SO GOOD TO ME AND ALL... I MEAN... I NEVER BEEN TREATED NICE BY ANYONE BEFORE! YOU MAKE ME FEEL SO GOOD INSIDE...

WHY, MOSE! HOW SWEET OF YOU!

IT'S THE TRUTH! I FEEL LIKE I BEEN REBORN LIKE SEEIN' THE SUN AFTER A HEAVY RAIN! I'M SO HAPPY...

YOU AND MR. ROGERS CHANGED ALL THAT... I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT I LOVE YOU BOTH... I LOVE YOU LIKE YOU WERE MY OWN FLESH AND BLOOD!

THANK YOU, MOSE... I THINK THAT'S THE NICEST THING I'VE EVER HEARD!

OLD MOSE LOWERED HIS HEAD. HE BRUSHED A BRIMY PAW BRUFFLY ACROSS HIS FACE TO Wipe THE TEARS... THEN HE TURNED AND WALKED OFF TO FINISH HIS CHORES...

HE'S SUCH A NICE OLD MAN... YES... A NICE OLD MAN

SEVERAL WEEKS LATER IT WAS NECESSARY FOR NEO TO GO TO TOWN. JUST BEFORE STARTING HOMeward AGAIN, HE ENTERED THE GENERAL STORE TO BUY SUPPLIES. A BUSY MURMURING BEGAN AS HE STRODE TO THE COUNTER...

YES, SIR? WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?

MY NAME IS ROGERS... NEO ROGERS... I'M NEW AROUND THESE PARTS... JUST GOT ME A PLACE UP THE MOUNTAIN. IF YOU DON'T MIND, I'D LIKE YOU TO FILL THIS ORDER!
The clerk set about filling the order as Ned stood waiting, feeling vaguely uncomfortable, knowing he was the subject of the whispers. Suddenly, someone stepped up behind him, tapped his shoulder.

"Hey, howdy? My name's Rogers..."

"I'm Jim Hannibal. Me an' the boys were just talking. Seein' as how you're new 'round here, we thought you ought to be told about Old Mose."

"Oh, howdy!"

"Well, we hear tell you got a round your place, workin' he's a bad one, Rogers! You oughta be careful! Why, he talks to the devil, even!"

"Well, I appreciate your kindness in telling me all this, but Mose has been just fine about everything. I'll judge him or how he acts with me."

"Sure, Mose is quiet 'bout folks wouldn't let him come near, that's why there ain't been no trouble lately! But you be careful, Mr. Rogers. One o' these days he's liable to bust loose!"

"As we started home, Anger shouldered in red's heart at the superstitious townspeople who had so unjustly wronged Old Mose!"

Such nonsense! Just 'cause his great grand-dad pshaw, better bet home! Looks like rain!"
The downpour had begun when Ned finally reached home.

"Ned! Where have you been? We expected you long ago!"

"Anything wrong, Mr. Rogers?"

"Sorry I'm late! I was trying to beat the rain, but I hit a rut that jolted my rifle off the wagon. It must have struck a rock. The stock's split! I have to get a new one!"

"Sure is a shame! A man needs his rifle in these parts!"

"Well, don't worry about it now, dear. Come on... Supper's ready!"

That night in bed, Ned tossed and turned restlessly. His mind filled with the things the town folk said.

"Blast it! All those words keep on agitating... keeping me awake! I know Mose isn't wicked! Still, he might have a grudge against every-boo!"

"Pshaw! What am I thinking? All those crazy thoughts! Mose is... what's that?"

"A noise! Someone's foolin' with the back door!"

"Hurry, he rose and donned his robe. Stealthily he peered over the bannister... someone was there!"

"It's Mose! Dad blast it! What's he been doing out this time o' night?"

"Mose! What're you doing? Where've you been?"

"Wha? Oh, Mr. Rogers! You surprised me! I didn't mean to wake you. I'm sorry. I... I was just out... for a walk!"

"I'm really sorry if I disturbed you, Mr. Rogers! I didn't mean to! Well well, I'll go to bed now. Good night, Mr. Rogers!"

"Oh, oh... good night, Mose!"

Mose, what're you doing? Where've you been?"

"I'm just a walk!"
The following afternoon, Ned Rogers had to go into town. He arrived at the General Store to be greeted by unusual excitement.

"There, he is!"

"Yeah! Ask him! He'll know!" Rogers? If you don't mind, we got things to talk about. Of course, of course! Erm, what is it?"

"Murder, that's what! There's been a rillin'! The Sheriff just found Silas Keene's body down near the creek. We figure you might know somethin' about it."

But... why, surely you don't think that I..."

"Why, we don't figure you had anything to do with it, but the killin' was done with a knife! And the throat was cut just like they used to when they sacrificed people in that devil's place! We ain't found the knife, but we got a good idea who has it."

"Old-timers hereabouts know how they used to use the knife! This was done the same way! Now we want to know about Mose!"

"Nose?"

"Sure! You want the killer caught, don't you? You're the only one who can give Old Mose an alibi! And if you can't... we're gonna lynch him!"

"What? Lynch him? But... but you're not certain..."

"We're certain enough! We got all the proof we need! We just want to hear you say the word to lynch it!"

"Yeah! Just say you don't know where he was last night, and we'll string him up!"

Beads of sweat covered Ned Rogers' forehead! His mind whirled and spun in a frenzy of conscience, duty, justice and safety! They pressed forward eagerly, waiting for his answer... waiting...

"Well, Rogers? What is it? Stop stalling!" "Yeah! Come on, answer!" "Old Mose. Old Mose was workin' right with me all night!"
The crowd suddenly drew back. He saw their surprised, disappointed faces and, offering feeble apologies and excuses, he backed from the store. The air cleared his muddled thoughts somewhat as he leaped onto the wagon and started home...

No. Rod Mose couldn't have done it. He just wouldn't. But he did look guilty. Maybe... maybe the townsfolk are right.

Sure! He hated people for the way they treated him! He wants revenge! He'd kill anybody and... and Belle's all alone with him!

The crowd suddenly drew back. He saw their surprised, disappointed faces and, offering feeble apologies and excuses, he backed from the store. The air cleared his muddled thoughts somewhat as he leaped onto the wagon and started home...

Why did I lie? Why didn't I tell them the truth that Mose was out last night? Killing?

Sure? I hated people for the way they treated him. I wants revenge! I'd kill anybody and... and Belle's all alone with him!

His whip cracked sharply and the stallion burst forward into a steady, frantic gallop.

He wouldn't hurt her! He just couldn't! I'd kill him! He... GIDDAP!

Before the rolling wagon came to a full stop, Ned was on the porch, racing into the house.

Belle? Belle! Where are you??

Belle!

With a snarl of maniacal rage, he hurled himself at the old man and bore him to the floor. His fists were hammer-like as he pummeled and ripped, pounded, bloodied and hacked with a vengeful pleasure.

He crouched over her still form, shocked, frightened and blazing mad! And then he sensed a movement in the doorway. He saw Mose standing breathlessly there, a wild look in his eyes. He saw the long, deep fingernail scratches on his face, the blood on his hands...

His mind saw the signs of battle, as he rushed from room to room, growing more panicky each minute! Suddenly...
He heard his wife moan. Quickly he was beside her, carrying her face and hair, pleading with her to be all right. The rage was spent...its place was filled with a terrible sorrow, a frightening guilt.

Selle...Selle...what has he done to you? Med...med...I hurt

He felt his wife's body so limp, watched the greyish-lavender pallor seep into her face and he knew she was dead. Tearfully, perplexed, he gazed over the battered form of old Mose, out through the door into the sunlight across the lawn under a bush his eyes caught the prison-gray uniformed body, bloody-smeared...dead! And in the convict's outstretched hand he saw the long, bloody knife that he now knew had killed Silas Keene! Through the open woodshed doors he saw the partly-finished, hand-carves gun stock!

Mose...last night was working in the woodshed, he didn't kill anyone! Didn't hurt me! (Gasping) He was trying...to help me...trying to protect me...protect...pro.

Belle!

It's all my fault! I should have known not to leave you alone with him! I should have listened to what they told me! I should have known when I caught him sneaking into the house last night...after he killed Silas Keene?

Med, you're wrong.

Mose...Mose was making a new gun stock for Mr. Rogers? He wanted Ned to be surprised! Well...Ned was surprised to find he'd killed the wrong man! Anyway, we hope you liked this tale taken from our vault of horror stock-PILE! And if you wondered what Ned did for a living, it's simple: he was a stock-broker! Heh, heh! See you later, eh?
HEH, HEH! SALUTATIONS, SCARE-SEEKERS! TROT RIGHT INTO THE CRYPT OF TERROR! ONCE AGAIN I BID YOU WELCOME TO THE MOROCCAN MARASS OF MATHEM. JUST LATCH ONTO A LIMP LILLY, CROSS YOUR HANDS ON YOUR CHESTS AND LIE DOWN, WHILE YOUR CRAFTY CRYPT-KEEPER ATTEMPTS TO CLOY YOUR BOTTOMLESS GELLIES WITH A STORY FILLED TO THE BRIM WITH BLOODSHED! I'VE NAMED THIS NOXIOUS LITTLE NOVELETTE, AN HARRO W ESCAPE!

THE SEA WAS PLAGED NOW, BUT WEED, CHURNED UP FROM THE TORMENTED BOTTOM, LAY ON THE SURFACE, AND BITS OF FLOTSAM DOTTED THE QUIET BLUE WATER, BEARING SILENT WITNESS TO THE SAVAGERY OF THE RECENT STORM. THEY COULD SEE NO SIGN OF LIFE ON THE CABIN CRUISER 'BEANTITCH' THAT DRIFTED WITH DEATHLIKE AWLESSNESS ON THE CALM ATLANTIC...
Captain Brady and Lieutenant Morton waited until their coastguard cutter sidled up to the drifting craft, then jumped lightly to its deck...

HELO! ANYBODY ABOARD?

LOOKS AS THOUGH THEY MIGHT'VE BEEN WASHED OVERBOARD IN THE STORM, SIR!

The two officers stepped confidently into the cruiser's cabin, then stopped, surprised at the sight that greeted them! There was a girl lying on one bunk, and on another there was the still, whitish figure of a man...

WHAT TH! BLAZES, CAPTAIN! THEY'RE DEAD!

I DON'T NEED YOU TO TELL ME THAT, MORTON!

The young lieutenant moved closer to examine the motionless body. As he did so, the mask-like face twitched...

WAIT, SIR! THE MAN'S ALIVE! HE JUST OPENED HIS EYES!

The captain approached the all-but lifeless man on the bunk who, with great effort, raised his arm and pointed to a locker.

YOU'RE DYING, (BRANDY... I'LL GET IT, SIR!

They propped him up in the bunk and revived him somewhat with the brandy. His blazed eyes sought to focus on the girl's body in the opposite bunk...

She's... She's Marsha Peyton... fiancée... gonna... be married next week... You mean you were going to be married... she's dead... mister?

The man sighed heavily, took a deep breath. He seemed to have gained some strength...

Marsha, and Bill and Lillian Thomas joined me on this cruise yesterday morning. Bill was to be my best man...

Hey, Kip! From the look of those clouds we're in for a whale of a storm! Let it blow, Bill! The seawitch can weather anything!
The storm was soon on us! I had challenged the elements and we had the works thrown at us! Great jagged forks of lightning ripped the blackness... Shattering thunder blasted our eardrums! The sea heaved and rolled and tossed us about like a bobbing cork...

It was more than I had bargained for. Marsha trembled in my arms, not knowing I was as frightened as she...

Oh, Kip, can't we make port? Sure, honey, sure! Don't worry, we'll make it, all right!

There was no let-up in the storm. The greater part of the afternoon went by before we noticed the shapes of land formations before us.

Must be an island! Better head for it! At least we'll be able to sit-out the storm!

There was no let-up in the storm. The greater part of the afternoon went by before we noticed the shapes of land formations before us.

The violent waves carried us by a natural breakwater of reefs and into a circle of calm. Through the overcast we saw a gloomy old castle perched high on the island...

I cut the engines. The 'Seawitch' drifted into a quiet cove where we dropped anchor and went ashore. It was then we heard a high-pitched wailing sound...

This place gives me the creeps! And that sound... Weirdest sound I ever heard! Let's see if anyone's at home in that castle!

The eerie sound grew to an ear-splitting shriek as we neared the castle. Huge black bats rose as a cloud from everywhere, renting the air with their cries...

Bats! That's where that noise is coming from! Heavens! Let's get out of here! We'll be safe enough inside!

The eerie sound grew to an ear-splitting shriek as we neared the castle. Huge black bats rose as a cloud from everywhere, renting the air with their cries...

We pushed open a heavy oak door and dashed into the castle. When our eyes became accustomed to the darkness we saw a bent, withered old man coming toward us. He spoke, and his words echoed hollowly in the enormous hall...

Ah, visitors! Welcome to Harrow Island! Please forgive us for barging in... There were so many bats outside...

The eerie sound grew to an ear-splitting shriek as we neared the castle. Huge black bats rose as a cloud from everywhere, renting the air with their cries...
At length he took out his watch, grinned evilly and looked at us... He only replied was a cackling laugh that bent chillb through me. We followed him to a huge dining hall where he served us an excellent meal. But he did not eat. He sat studying each of us with his beady, glittering eyes.

"At length he took out his watch, grinned evilly and looked at us...

Sometime later our host led us up a winding stone stairway to our rooms. The amber glow from his lantern flickered weakly on the walls, and Marscha clung to me...

Once in my room I fell asleep quickly. I don't know how long I slept but I suddenly woke hearing terrifying cries! Two voices... the hoarse yell of a man, the shrill scream of a woman...

"You're just tired and nervous, honey! We'll go to sleep now and get an early start in the morning.

"Once in my room I fell asleep quickly. I don't know how long I slept but I suddenly woke hearing terrifying cries! Two voices... the hoarse yell of a man, the shrill scream of a woman...

"What th... that's Bill's voice! And Lillian's!

"I could see several open earth-filled coffins... Bill and Lillian, now silent, lay still and white on the stone floor, with a sinister group clustered about them, draining their life blood! Vampires!..."
I thought only of Marsha's safety and my own! I raced up to her room, burst through the door! Harrow was there bending over Marsha, his long vampire fangs near her pulsing throat! She shrank back, livid with fright! I smashed the wooden chair against a wall, picked up a length of its splintered leg... a stake! As the aged vampire came lunging toward me, I drove the wooden stake deep into his heart.

Harrow whirled with startled squeal! I smashed the wooden chair against a wall, picked up a length of its splintered leg... a stake! As the aged vampire came lunging toward me, I drove the wooden stake deep into his heart.

Together we ran frantically to the boat! Several bloodthirsty vampires reached the water's edge seconds after I started the engines and made toward the cove entrance...

It's all right, darling... we're safe now!

I'm sorry about Bill and Lillian! I was too late to help them! They'd already been bitten! That... that means they were infected... I choked! They're vampires now...

I turned instinctively, then recoiled as Marsha came toward me with long drooling fangs bared... her flesh ashen, bloodless...

Marsha! You? A vampire! Harrow... he got to you before I killed him!

Kip Fowler sank back, whispered a few more words, then lay still and white. Captain Grady looked down at Marsha Peyton's body...

You'll never get a jury to believe that story, Fowler! It looks like murder to me!

He'll never be tried for it, Captain! He's dead!

The captain's face hardened, their heavy breathing in the sudden deathly silence sounded in rhythm to the lapping of the water against the boat. Throwing off a shudder, Lieutenant Morton spoke nervously...

Captain Grady... what if he was telling the truth? You see what he looks like... so pale as though he had been almost completely drained of blood...

You mean by this girl? Poppycock, Morton! She's dead! Feel her face... cold as ice!
The lieutenant quickly fashioned a stake from a deck chair. He kneeled beside the girl, clutching the stake in his hand... poised above her heart...

I didn't think you were serious, lieutenant! Come on, let's get out of here. It's late, and there's a fog rolling in!

He must have put them there with a nail or something. After she died, but if you believed him, Morton, go whittle a stake! You can't kill her any deadier than she is!

Grimly, obviously unnerved, the two officers started to go above deck. A pale yellow moon blimmered wanly in the heavy night mist...

Don't you see, captain? A vampire needs blood to stay alive! She must have been getting it from him! That's why.

Hold it, Morton! Remember, Fowler said a vampire's bite was...infectious!

Both men whirled in terrified realization, but too late! Kip Fowler was on them, his glistening fangs snapping eagerly, spittle running from his lips...

The hard-bitten captain blanched as Morton plunged the stake viciously into Marsha's heart! Immediately, her flesh withered, turned a greyish-green, took on the look of a long dead mummy there was a sudden stench of decomposition...great scott!

That's right, sir! I'm not talking about her! For Pete's sake, don't you see? If she bit him, then he's...

Heh, heh! Oh, but that kip was a shrewd one! He didn't want to be married anyway! If any of you girls would like, to have a couple of rather pale coast guardsmen just send me the top of your head with your blood type specified and we'll take care of the rest! Heh! Any hoo-hah, this is your loving li'l crypt-keeper reminding you that I'll see you next in the second issue of my new mag, 'The Crypt of Terror!' Bye!
A SPECIAL EDITORIAL

THIS IS AN APPEAL FOR ACTION!

THE PROBLEM: Comics are under fire. Horror and crime comics in particular. Due to the efforts of various "do-gooders" and "do-gooder" groups, a large segment of the public is being led to believe that certain comic magazines cause juvenile delinquency, warp the minds of America's youth, and affect the development of the personalities of those who read them. Among these "do-gooders" are psychiatrists who have made a lucrative career of attacking comic magazines, certain publishing companies who do not publish comics and who would benefit by their demise, many groups of adults who would like to blame their lack of ability as responsible parents on comic magazines instead of on themselves, and various assorted headline hunters. These people are misinformed. They complain to local police officials, to local magazine retailers, to local wholesalers, and to their congressman. They complain and complain and threaten and threaten. Eventually, everyone gets frightened. The newsdealer gets frightened. He removes the books from display. The wholesaler gets frightened. He refuses shipments. The congressman gets frightened. November is coming! They start an investigation. This wave of hysteria has seriously threatened the very existence of the whole comic magazine industry.

WE BELIEVE: Your editors sincerely believe that the claim of these crusaders that comics are bad for children is nonsense. If we, in the slightest way, thought that horror comics, crime comics, or any other kind of comics were harmful to our readers, we would cease publishing them and direct our efforts toward something else.

And we're not alone in our belief. For example, Dr. David Abrahamsen, eminent criminologist, in his book, "Who Are The Gutfly?" says, "Comic books do not lead to crime, although they have been widely blamed for it. In my experience as a psychiatrist, I cannot remember having seen one boy or girl who has committed a crime, or who became neurotic or psychotic because he or she read comic books." A group led by Dr. Freda Kemn, Mental Health Chairman of the I.1. Congress of the P.T.A., decided that living room violence has "a decided beneficial effect on young minds." Dr. Robert Felix, director of the National Institute of Mental Health, said that horror comic books do not originate criminal behavior in children in a way, the horror comics may, do some good. Children may use fantasy, as stimulated by the "comics" as a means of working our natural feelings of aggressiveness.

We also believe that a large portion of our total readership of horror and crime comics is made up of adults. We believe that those who oppose comics are a small minority. Yet this minority is causing the hysteria. The voice of the majority - you who buy comics, read them, enjoy them, and are not harmed by them - has not been heard.

WHAT YOU MUST DO. Unless you act now, the pressure from this minority may force comics from the American scene. It is members of this minority who threaten the local retailers, who threaten the local wholesalers, who have written letters to the Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency (now investigating the comic industry).

IT IS TIME THAT THE MAJORITY'S VOICE BE HEARD!

It is time that the Senate Subcommittee hears from YOU - each and every one of you!

If you agree that comics are harmless entertainment, write a letter or a postcard TODAY to

The Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency
United States Senate
Washington 25, D.C.

and in your own words, tell them so. Make it a nice, polite letter! In the case of you youngsters, it would be more effective if you could get your parents to write for you, or perhaps add a P.S. to your letter, as the Senate Subcommittee may not have much respect for the opinions of minors.

Of course, if you or your parents disagree with us, and believe that comics ARE bad, let your sentiments be known on that too! The important thing is that the Subcommittee hear from actual comic book readers and/or their parents, rather than from people who never read a comic magazine in their lives, but simply want to destroy them.

It is also important that your local newsdealer be encouraged to continue carrying, displaying, and selling all kinds of comics. Speak to him. Have him speak to his wholesaler.

Wherever you can, let your voice and the voices of your parents be raised to protest over the campaign against comics.

But first right now, please write that letter to the Senate Subcommittee.

Sincerely,

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(for the whole E.C. Gang)
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HEH! YOU’LL ENJOY THIS ONE! BLOOD FLOWS LIKE A TORRENT IN THIS GRUESOME TALE ABOUT THE PIT!

There was a raw chill in the night air, but the fight fans' blood boiled in their wild-eyed excitement. They stood encircling the gore-splattered pit, screaming as frenzied cock sank knife-sharp spur into savage opponent...
Unmindful of the shrieking of the bloodthirsty FIGHT fans, UNDER THE 6LARIN6 FLOODLIGHTS, THE CONTESTANTS PECKED AND GASHED UNTIL ONE TORN COCK... 

Nearby, feu johnson puckered his troubled brow SYMPATHETICALLY SMOOTHING THE FEATHERS I OTHER PLUMP BIRDS. 

Not far away there was another PIT, AND IN IT, GOAOED BY THE SHRIEKS OF A FRENZIED AUDIENCE, TWO VICIOUS DOGS CIRCLED... AND THE BLACK NIGHT WAS WET WITH GLORIOUS CREAM AS ONE SHRAMER OF PRECIZED BLOOD-LACED FLESH MAGNAE SEEMED MAD IN THE DUNGEON... 

Swiftly the stronger dog sank his foam-wet fangs INTO THE OTHER'S THROAT, RIPPPED IT OUT, AND THEN STOOD PANTING, SNIFING AT THE NOW DECEASED OPONENT...
The two new googs were released into the pit, amid the renewed bursts of frantic glee. Aaron and Beatrice returned to the cages, continuing the argument that had been going on for months now...

You love dogs! I love money! But you're too dumb to earn a livin' any other way! The dogfights are our bread and butter!

And at that moment in the Johnson's arena...

I don't mean to snore, Aaron, but Lila made me come! How'd you draw in such a big crowd?

I'll get you a new refrigerator, only quit houndin' me!

Felix walked the quarter-mile to the Scott's where there was a tremendous crowd to see the carnage. He met Aaron near the dog pits. There was no animosity between them...

And at the cages, counting the money.

You call that a livin'? Listen, if we quit, all our business goes to the Johnsons! You think I could stand havin' that witch Lordo it over me? You know she just had her whole dump done over? Can we afford that?

No, we can't. 'cause I just spent three hundred bucks on a new refrigerator!

In the next few nights, business got slower and slower at the Johnson pits. At last, only a handful of spectators struggled in to see the blood-letting...

I tell you it's just the weather, Lila! It's too cold!

Don't argue with me, Felix! I just found out about it myself, an hour ago...but then it was too late!

Depressed, Felix returned home...

So that's how it is, eh? Bea Scott pulled a fast one! Okay...she threw four dogs in the pit? Tomorrow we put in six cocks at once...and attach blades! I'll draw 'em all up!
When the word got about town, the sporting folk came in droves, and they got their money's worth, too! Six gamecocks, with long, razor-sharp blades clamped above their natural spurs, cut one another to ribbons in a mad flurry of blood and feathers...

Felix stood back with Lila, who grinned and greedily counted the money gained through the admission gate...

Look at em' yellin' their lungs out enjoyin' the agony of their innocent creatures!

Look at the money! A hundred and ten bucks! You can thank me for it! Why, if it wasn't for me thinkin' of these cockfights, you'd still be slin' gas in that grease joint!

At least I wouldn't be feelin' rattly inside... so ashamed of myself!

You try givin' up, and I'll make you feel more than rattly! I'm goin' to get ahead of Bea Scott... and I'm goin' to stay ahead!

The following day, both women accidently met at Baldwin's dress shop. They glared, but didn't speak...

It's the latest from Paris, Mrs. Scott! Sixty dollars is little enough to pay for a dress like this!

I want the exact same dress you just sold that woman! The same? Why, yes ma'am... of course!

Nd sooner had Beatrice left than a sly, spiteful smile spread across Lila Johnson's face...

I'll take it. Just charge it to my account!

Meanwhile, Bea Scott was in the local pool hall, talking with a group of the sportsmen present...

... and I'd appreciate it if you gents would tell the rest of your friends!

A dozen dogs together in the pit! Wow! Don't worry, honey, we'll all be there!

The shop-girl waded through the racks and picked out the identical dress. Triumphantly, Lila counted the sixty dollars...

It's strange to find a woman who likes to wear the same dress another woman has!

This is a special dress, dearie... for a special occasion!

I want the exact same dress you just sold that woman! The same? Why, yes ma'am... of course!
That night the air was filled with an insane symphony of screeching humans, and howling, growling brutes. Hot flesh littered the scarlet-soaked pit. Bea Scott listened to the vile uproar with joy in her heart, but the sound only made Aaron shudder with revulsion...

"HA, HA! LET'S SEE THAT TRAMP LILA BEAT THIS! I CAN'T STAND IT ANYMORE, BEA! WHERE WILL THIS HORRIBLE THING END? WHERE WILL IT END?"

"Fha. Ha? Let's see that tramp Lila beat this! Can't stand it anymore, Bea! Where will this horrible thing end? Where will it end?"

"I'll get bigger and better, Aaron! You'll get cats tomorrow! Big tomcats! And you'll throw them in with the dogs! Then we'll see action... wilder, bloodier action! That'll make Lila Johnson wish she'd never been born!"

The fights were nearing an end when Bea heard a familiar voice. Lila, wearing the newness, crept by her as though she were not even there...

"I'm so glad you like my new frock, Felix, dear! It's just the thing to wear to a dogfight! You? Just a minute, you!"

"I believe this is what you usually charge! You're rotten (choke) stinking..."

Lila still didn't look at her. She merely dropped the admission price at Bea Scott's feet and strolled blithely towards the pit...

"Nothin' can be done! You don't care, you stupid, lazy coward! I'll show you... and that skank Lila, too!"

"Stop it, Bea! stop it!"

Bea flew into a frenzied rage! She ran to her husband, and when he tried to calm her, she pummeled him...

"My new dress! She deliberately got the same one... to wear to a dogfight? You don't care... let her make a fool of me! Make me look cheap!"

"Oh! Cut it out, Bea! There's nothin' that can be done! I'll buy you another new dress!"

She purpled with rage, trembled violently, trying to claw at Aaron's face.

"My new dress! She deliberately got the same one... to wear to a dogfight? You don't care... let her make a fool of me! Make me look cheap!"
He held her back as long as he could, but she broke loose, looking for her avowed enemy. By then the fight had ended, and Lila was staggering fan behind the departing crowd...

There's that slow now you'll see what can be done! Sea! Go easy, Bea!

Felix could feel the quivering of his wife's body, the ominous ring to her voice. Both shrews fought to get free, but the husbands' eyes met and there was an unspoken understanding as they nodded...

The suddenness of Bea's attack did not take Lila by surprise. The two women flailed away at each other until their husbands forcibly pulled them apart...

Take your paws off me, Aaron! I'm not finished with her!

A moment later, Felix and Aaron stood by the pit's edge, their arms about each other's shoulders, and they chanted heartily with bleat...

...for in the pit, stepping on the eviscerated carcasses of a dozen dogs, two battlers clawed deep gouges in each other's flesh, ripped hair from heads, sank teeth deep and tore out chunks of raw meat! They raged and thrashed viciously till they no longer resembled persons. Until at last they were nothing more than two human animals shredding one another in a conflict from which their could be no survivor!

Heh, heh! Well, doggone! There's a couple of striking beauties for you! Y'know... I hear that Aaron and Felix, those woebegone widowers, are running a home for poverty-stricken pups and decrepit game-cocks! And now that they've no wives to hound them, they go around crowing all day long! Heh, well, when you gotta crow, you gotta crow, so a goodBYE-MO6000-BYE to you for now!
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The gun bucked in his hand and Storch saw the old man slump to the ground in a spreading pool of blood. A sharp pain in his shoulder made Storch stagger backwards, a gasp of surprise escaping from his throat. His hand leaped to his shoulder; he winced in agony and saw the gory trickle spreading between his fingers and staining his palm.

He'd been hit by a lucky shot. He had to get out of this frontier town before they strung him up for killing Quint Barlow. While he could still move he had to get as far away as possible... hide out till nightfall, then slip across the border to safety.

Storch lunged across the dusty street, flung himself onto his mangy horse and brutally dug his spurs into the animal's flesh. In a spume of dirt the grimy buildings were left behind... Storch clattered through the outskirts of Fent- manonville before the alarm had even sounded and a posse could be organized.

It would be a necktie party for sure, Storch thought grimly. Hanging on desperately with his good arm, he hunched far over the horse's shaggy mane and bit his lips to keep from crying out. They hated him here on the plains... nobody'd ever listen if he pleaded that Quint Barlow had slapped leather first. Ever since he'd slugged that Brindle boy these sodbusters had it in for him... shooting a man like Barlow meant a boothill burial for a maverick like Storch if they ever got their bloodsucking hands on him. That's what they were, where a maverick like Storch was involved: ferocious bloodsuckers out to drain the life fluid from a man who had the guts to stand up to 'em!

His strength was fading fast. The shoulder throbbed violently and spasms of nausea were welling up in his throat. He couldn't stand another minute of this hurtling over the jagged terrain; he had to rest for awhile... had to hide in the fields long enough to pry the stinging bullet from his tortured flesh.

The long swath of waving grain was just what he needed. Stumbling painfully from the animal's back, he scurried deep into the wheatfield, crumpling low so they couldn't spot him among the surrounding hills. With a grimace of pain, Storch sprawled headlong between the towering rows of grain. He'd be safe here till nightfall, then he'd be able to slither across the border. He'd just rest here for a moment... after he'd caught his breath he'd cut that cursed bullet from his flesh.

How long he lay in groggy sleep he never discovered. He was shocked back to wakefulness by the eerie whirring sound that filled the plains. Glancing aloft, he saw that the sun had been obscured by an undulating cloud which moved onward with relentless fury. He sat upright, his nerves tense and a flutter of fear knotting his stomach. And then he saw what was hovering ominously overhead.

The first thick wave of locusts descended on the field before he could scramble weakly to his feet. The swarm of insects settled like a deadly pall over the stalks of grain; their slaty bodies clotted his hair and made his skin crawl in terror. He tried to shake them off... to rise and run in horror... but they enveloped him like a living, writhing shroud. He screamed in fear... but already the sound of gnawing was enveloping his consciousness. They murdered everything in their path, Storch knew as he tried to squirm free... the grain blackened with their bodies and the ground became oozy with the gorging, rapacious creatures.

Storch sank to the ground, and the locusts buried him in an instant. They slashed at his flesh as if he was a doomed stalk of wheat... a thousand stabs of agony made his body shudder. The blood poured from his pierced flesh... his skin was torn loose by cruel pincers.

Long before the cloud of bloodsuckers rose from the desolate field, in a whining, scraping crescendo, Storch's bones had been picked clean.
HEE HEE! So you've finally reached the Haunt of Fear, eh? Well, hop right into my humble hut, 'cause I've really got a hunk of bunk boiling for you in that crazy cauldron of mine! MMM.MMMBOY! That stench? Oh, the funnicator was here... Seems there were some fleas left over from V.A.'s putrid piece about the poohces! HEE! Anyhow, peoples, this delicious ditty took six degenerations of the famous Frankenstein family to develop, so let's have a bit of quiet while I open my big black book to the chapter on blobs and commence the wretched story, as told by Dr. Emr. Frankenstein himself...

ASHES TO ASHES!

This moss-covered heap cloistered in Wurttemberg's Black Forest is my home, my laboratory as it has been for the Frankenstein family for some one hundred and forty years. True, it is bleak... yes, even unpleasant... but here we have had the utmost seclusion our great experiment has demanded.
What I record here in my diary, I do with a heavy heart, for in it lies the futile toil of six generations, and my own bitter disappointment.

I suppose I should start by saying that I am Emil Frankenstein, the only living descendant of that equally unfortunate scientist who created the infamous monster.

He started with what I can only call a mass of putrescence dug by his own hands from a morbid swamp, blended with waste dredged from an abandoned cesspool. Here he began, in this very same lab, at the first step of human creation.

There would be no glory for him, he knew, but he labored arduously over the incubation of the shapeless, lifeless blob of muck! He was past the age of seventy when he and his son first noticed the slightest pulsations that signified its life.

From then on the dedication to the development of the slowly writhing gelatinous mass was handed down from parent to child. Through the years the helpless embryonic blob was chemically feco, kept warm...

Slowly, ever so slowly, each succeeding generation worked with untiring efforts to nourish and cultivate the living thing that now had evolved lungs in addition to its heart.

It was his son who, in 1821, desiring to justify his father's belief that man can create man, evolved the theory that mankind developed from the lowest forms of decayed matter.
Filmy, jellyfish arms and legs had formed when my father assumed the responsibility, and it was he who brought about the greatest development. The creature had formed a head and a mouth.

But though my father's joy was great and his hopes high, he knew he would not live to see the final maturing of the family's creation. But in my lifetime...

A month later my father died and I at once took up where he left off. Within three years the semi-human creature was taking chemical food by mouth.

I fully realized the immense importance of the responsibility now resting heavily on my shoulders, and deep into the night I would study and pore over the voluminous notebooks that had been handed down to me.

Before I passed my twenties I realized that the full development to a human being could be achieved within thirty years! I took not even time to marry, and spent all but a few hours a day at my labors, or making notes.

The nostril openings have formed, as have the eye sockets. X-rays show the internal organs to be normal and functioning perfectly.

I was fifty years of age when that enormously important day came! I was at last satisfied that what six generations had sacrificed for was now complete. How well I recall that I was drenched with sweat as I reached into the incubator...

It came forth, bawling like any newborn infant—a perfect human child, created from raw slime!

Here it is at last, my ancestors! I feel you near, now near me. Rejoice, with me in our masterpiece!
I jotted down the child's new name, wrapped the dead infant in a blanket and left the hospital. I buried the child as decently as possible, then returned home. That night, I added one more note to the time-yellowed pages of my old notebook.

The next day I brought the infant to a hospital at Stuttgart to ask a doctor's advice. When two nurses unwittingly solved my dilemma, I can't remove the baby's body from the nursery till I get Dr. Koehn's orders.

The poor mother! She wanted that child so badly.

I closed the black forest mouse and moved to the city of Stuttgart, the better to observe the growth of my ancestor's dream creature. For twenty years I secretly watched, eavesdropped, spied. Not long ago, I did not follow you here, Riker! For me you do not exist, except when you arrive my fiancée?

Your fiancée, then Louisa has accepted you.

I stepped in, then, chuckling to myself, for only I knew how important one of those young men was to me.

Pfah! I hardly think Louisa is quite the snob that you are, Heinrich Goedl!

Pfah! You are nothing but a dirty social climber!

You snobbish swine! Someday you'll get what's coming to you!

Gentlemen! Gentlemen, please! May I offer a suggestion?
I could not help hearing the cause of your dispute... a young lady, no? Well, then, let her decide... what right have you to interfere? Ha! so you are afraid to face her with me!

At that, Heinrich yielded, and under the pretext of seeing there would be no fight, I went with them to the Koenig mansion. If the girl is as lovely as her home, then I understand why you're both so eager to marry her...

Indeed, Louisa Koenig was lovely. Forgive me, Miss Koenig... but I have only prevented bloodshed between these two friends of yours by convincing them you could settle their argument!

I know what it is, sir! I may as well face it now as later!

I remained in the foyer, while Heinrich and Karl went with her into the drawing room. I could hear the well-poised young lady get right to heart of the matter...

Karl, you're a fine man. I think very highly of you!

But... but you do not love me... is that it?

The front door slammed viciously behind him, for a while I stood there in the silence, but then I again heard the voice of Louisa, now addressing Heinrich:

It's you that I choose to be my husband, Heinrich! It's you that I love!

You've made me very happy, my darling, and I shall try to make you as happy, always, as I am now.

When they returned to where I stood in the foyer, they were holding hands, both smiled happily...

I don't know you, sir... and yet I feel as though I've known you all my life... like a good friend. Certainly you have earned the right to come to our engagement party!

I shall be most delighted, Heinrich!
And so I was there the next week to hear the DUO announce their engagement when I met LOUISA'S aristocratic mother and the family's distinguished friends. I realized Karl would not have fit in... 

I understand that you're responsible for this great occasion, Herr Frankenstein!

Oh, I think your daughter would eventually have made the same choice! I'm glad to be able to share a little of their happiness!

But that happiness was not to be long-lived a moment later, Karl Riker pushed his way in! He was drunk and angry.

Get outta my way, Lemme in! Wha... it's Karl! Look out! He's got a gun!

Karl burst through the throng to face HEINRICH and LOUISA, with a profane expletive he raised his gun to fire! HEINRICH leaped!

I'm gonna kill you, Heinrich! You'll never marry LOUISA!

THE impact of HEINRICH'S body jolted KARL, disturbing his aim as the gun blasted.

Louie, shrill screams and hoarse shouts emanated from the mass of confused, frightened guests! I shouldered my way through them to find HEINRICH and KARL both staring dumbly down at the limp body of LOUISA that rapidly deteriorated into a greenish-black blob of vile, stinking decay! A hundred, fifty years work... shot!

HEE, HEE! Going, going, GUNK! That's all LOUISA was... BOOEEY, BOOEEY GUNK! KARL wasn't charged with MURDER 'CAUSE nobody could prove there was ANY body! HEE! HEINRICH wound up in a rathouse, and EMIL FRANKENSTEIN is in a grave Row... and their booby blob of GUNK! As for me, I've got to be GUNK now, so I'll see you again in my mag, 'THE Haunt of Fear!' till then, away we (Goo!}

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Hey, sugar. Why see here, don't you quit that human skeleton and get a real man!

See here, you better shut up or I'll...

You'll what—oh, Joe, when are you going to grow up and be a man?

Doggone! I'm fed up with being a weakling—I'll get Charles Atlas's free book and find out what he can do for me!

Golly, Atlas builds muscles fast! Just watch my smoke now!

One nano is as good as two when you're an Atlas champ!

There goes the bell—Joe, you're wonderful.

Out of the way—small fry, make way for a man!

Oh, Joe, you're more than that—you're a ne-man now!

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