

Suaveal by Petitfar, Mar 2005

FAMOUS 1950s EC COMICS!

HERE ARE TALES THAT WILL USHER YOU INTO

THE HAUNT OF FEAR



NO. 21
NOV



250
345
CANADA



FEAR
FEAR
FEAR

FEATURING...



THE OLD WITCH



THE VAULT-KEEPER



THE CRYPT-KEEPER



THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

HEE, HEE! SO YOU GOT YOUR GRIMY PAWS ON A GRIMY OME AND NOW YOU'RE READY FOR ANOTHER GRIMY VISIT INTO THE GRIMY HAUNT OF FEAR. WELL, DON'T JUST STAND THERE LOOKIN' PALE AND SICKLY. COME IN AND FEEL PALE AND SICKLY WHILE I LAOLE OUT THE LATEST REEKING RECIPE FROM MY CRUDDY CAULDRON, YEP! IT'S YOUR SHIVER-CHEF, HOSTESS OF THE HAUNT OF FEAR, THE OLD WITCH, READY TO SERVE THE TASTY TALE OF TERROR ENTITLED...

AN OFF-COLOR HEIR



LAURA RAIS STOOD BEFORE THE IMPOSING PORTRAIT, THE TEARS STREAMING DOWN HER FACE, HER NERVOUS FINGERS TIGHTLY CLUTCHING THE BOTTLE AND THE SMALL WAD OF COTTON. SHE STARED IN HORROR AT THE SOMBER FACE ON THE OLD CANVAS WITH ITS DARK FOREBODING EYES AND ITS UNRULY WHITE BEARD...



I'VE GOT TO FIND OUT!
SOS... I'VE GOT TO...

LAURA LOOKED AROUND WILDLY. HER GLANCE FELL UPON THE COFFEE TABLE BEHIND HER. SHE BENT AND PLACED THE BOTTLE OF COLORLESS LIQUID AND THE WAD OF COTTON UPON IT AND DRAGGED IT TO THE FIREPLACE OVEN WHICH THE PORTRAIT HUNG...



GASP... GASP...

LAURA WAS FRIGHTENED. HER BREATH CAME IN SHORT CHOKING PANTS AND HER HEART BEAT MADLY IN HER HEAVING CHEST. SHE PICKED UP THE BOTTLE AND THE COTTON AND CLIMBED UP ONTO THE COFFEE TABLE...



SHE STOOD THERE, HESITANTLY, STARING AT THE PORTRAIT. THE BEARDED FACE STARED BACK AT HER WITH ANGRY EVIL EYES...



HER EYES FELL TO THE NEATLY ENGRAVED NAME-PLATE FASTENED TO THE BOTTOM OF THE PORTRAIT'S FRAME...

'BARON GILLES DE RAIS.' WHY DOES IT SOUND SO FAMILIAR? WHO IS IT? I'VE GOT TO FIND OUT!



THE FAMILIAR SMELL. IT BROUGHT BACK MEMORIES. THE CLUTTERED STUDIO IN GREENWICH VILLAGE IN NEW YORK. THE STRUGGLING YEARS OF STUDY AND HARD WORK AND LAURA'S FIRM DETERMINATION...

SOMEDAY I'LL BE A SUCCESSFUL PORTRAIT PAINTER. SOMEDAY I'LL BE FAMOUS!

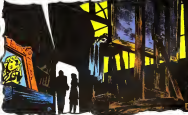


LAURA TIPPED THE BOTTLE AND POURED ITS CONTENTS UPON THE WAD OF COTTON. THE FAMILIAR SMELL OF THE COLORLESS LIQUID DRIFTED UPWARD...



THE MEMORIES OF LAURA'S PAST SWEEP BEFORE HER EYES. THE DAY *SILBERT RAIS* CAME TO HER STUDIO...

MY NAME IS RAIS, MISS HARBOR. *SILBERT RAIS*. I'M FROM LOUISIANA. I'VE COME TO NEW YORK TO HAVE MY PORTRAIT PAINTED. A MUTUAL FRIEND RECOMMENDED YOU...



LAURA REMEMBERED THE WEEKS THAT FOLLOWED... THOSE WONDERFUL WEEKS OF GILBERT POSING FOR HER, WHILE SHE MOULDED HIS LIKENESS IN OILS AND SPREAD IT UPON HER CANVAS...

THAT WILL BE ALL FOR TODAY, MR. RAIS. THE LIGHT IS FADING

I WAS WONDERING, MISS HARSH! MAY I TAKE YOU TO DINNER?

...THE BUSINESS ASSOCIATION THAT SOON BECAME MORE THAN JUST THAT. THOSE WONDERFUL DAYS OF PAINTING HIS PORTRAIT, AND THOSE WONDERFUL NIGHTS... DINING TOGETHER... DANCING TOGETHER... AND FALLING IN LOVE...

TOMORROW YOUR PORTRAIT WILL BE FINISHED, GILBERT... AND YOU WILL BE GOING SOUTH AGAIN.

COME WITH ME, LAURA, COME TO LOUISIANA WITH ME. BE MY WIFE...

GILBERT! ARE YOU PROPOSING?

I HAVE A HUGE MANSION DOWN IN THE LOUISIANA BAYOUS. LAURA, YOU'LL LOVE IT THERE. SAY YOU'LL MARRY ME!

LAURA REMEMBERED HOW SHE'D MADE UP HER MIND... THREW AWAY HER DREAMS OF A CAREER AS A PORTRAIT PAINTER... AND ACCEPTED GILBERT'S PROPOSAL OF MARRIAGE...

YES, GIL, DARLING, YES... I'LL MARRY YOU!

LAURA... SWEET...

...THE SIMPLE CEREMONY UNITING LAURA AND GILBERT RAIS... MAKING THEM ONE... MAKING THEM MAN AND WIFE...

...THE WONDEROUS AIRPLANE TRIP SOUTH... LOOKING DOWN AS THE COUNTRY SWEEP BY BELOW THEM LIKE SOME FAIRY CARPET...

HAPPY, DARLING?

DELIRIOUS, GIL...

AND THEN LAURA REMEMBERED THE SEEMINGLY UNENDING AUTO TRIP OUT OF NEW ORLEANS INTO THE SILENT MYSTERIOUS BAYOUS... THE MILES AND MILES THROUGH MOSS-LADEN CYPRESS TREES, TILL FINALLY...

WELL... THERE SHE IS, LAURA! 'TIFFANGES'! THE FAMILY PLANTATION HOUSE...

OH, GIL! IT'S... BEAUTIFUL!

LAURA REMEMBERED HOW SHE'D FELT WHEN SHE'D FIRST SEEN 'TIPFANGES! SHE REMEMBERED HOW SHE'D SHIVERED AS IT LOOMED UP BEFORE THEM, STARK WHITE AND DISMAL-LOOKING, WITH AN AIR OF MYSTERY ABOUT IT...

SHE REMEMBERED HOW GILBERT HAD SMILED AS THEY'D MOUNTED THE COLUMNED PORTICO...

YES. IT HAS **TWENTY-TWO ROOMS**, AND THEY'RE ALL YOURS TO DO WITH AS YOU LIKE...

IT'S...IT'S SO QUIET OUT HERE IN THE BAYOUS, GIL...WITH ONLY THE SOUND OF THE BIRDS AND THE MARSH ANIMALS...

THE HOUSE IS OVER **TWO HUNDRED YEARS OLD**, LAURA. MY ANCESTORS **BUILT IT** WHEN THEY CAME HERE FROM **FRANCE!**

IT'S...IT'S VERY **BIG**, GILBERT!

...HOW THE LOOK HAD COME INTO HIS EYES...

YES, THAT'S WHY I LOVE IT HERE. IT'S SO FAR FROM CIVILIZATION...

I'M...**GUILTY** OUT HERE, GILBERT. LET'S GO INSIDE!

LAURA REMEMBERED HOW THE SIGHT OF THE HUGE LIVING ROOM WITH ITS PRICELESS ANTIQUES HAD ALMOST TAKEN HER BREATH AWAY. SHE REMEMBERED HOW SHE'D FLITTED ABOUT LIKE A LITTLE CHILD TOUCHING EACH EXQUISITE PIECE OF FURNITURE, HER FEARS OUTSIDE FORGOTTEN...

OH, GIL! **EVERYTHING** IS SO... SO PERFECT!

I'M GLAD YOU **LIKE** IT, LAURA!

AND THEN SHE REMEMBERED HOW SHE'D STOPPED...STUNNED...AND THE FEARS RETURNED...AS SHE CAUGHT SIGHT OF THE PORTRAIT OVER THE FIRE-PLACE...

...THE PORTRAIT...THE FRIGHTENING FACE WITH ITS DARK EVIL EYES AND THE COARSE WHITE BEARD. THERE WAS SOMETHING ABOUT IT...

THERE WAS SOMETHING **STRANGE** ABOUT THAT OLD PORTRAIT...SOMETHING ABOUT THE FINELY-CRACKED CANVAS AND THE METICULOUSLY-PAINTED FACE AND THE COARSE WHITE BEARD...

WHO...WHO'S THAT, GIL?

ONE OF MY ANCESTORS, LAURA...

'**BARON GILLES DE RAIS. 1684.**'

YOU DIDN'T KNOW THAT, DID YOU?

YOU DIDN'T KNOW MY ANCESTOR WAS A FRENCH BARON! NO, GIL! HOW...HOW THRILLING!



LAURA REMEMBERED THOSE FIRST FEW WEEKS AT "TIFFANES"...THE JOY OF BEING ALONE WITH GIL, HER NEW HUSBAND. AND THEN, ONE DAY...

GIL! YOU'RE PACKING! WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

IT TAKES MONEY TO REFURNISH A HOUSE LIKE THIS, DARLING. I'VE GOT TO MAKE A BUSINESS TRIP! CHECK MY INTERESTS!

HOW LONG WILL YOU BE GONE, GIL?

NOT LONG, DEAR. A FEW DAYS. YOU'LL HAVE LOTS TO DO. GO THROUGH THE HOUSE. OPEN UP ALL THE ROOMS. HERE ARE THE KEYS...

DECIDE HOW YOU WANT TO DECORATE EACH ROOM. THAT OUGHT TO KEEP YOU BUSY TILL I GET BACK.

ALL RIGHT, GIL. BUT HURRY, WON'T YOU. I... I HATE TO BE ALONE...

LAURA REMEMBERED HOW SHE'D WATCHED FROM THEIR BEDROOM WINDOW AS GIL WAVED AND DROVE OFF DOWN THE CYPRESS-LINED RAYOU ROAD...

... HOW THE SILENCE SEEMED TO CLOSE IN AROUND HER... AND HOW THAT STRANGE FEELING, THAT FEAR, SUDDENLY SEEMED TO GRIP HER. SHE'D STARED DOWN AT THE KEYS...

WELL... NO USE SITTING AROUND HOPING! MIGHT AS WELL EXPLORE MY NEW HOME!

LAURA REMEMBERED HOW SHE'D GONE FROM ROOM TO ROOM, UNLOCKING EACH DOOR, AND GASPING WITH PLEASANT SURPRISE...

HOW EXQUISITE. I WOULDN'T WANT TO CHANGE A THING IN THIS ROOM. NOT A STICK. IT'S... IT'S LOVELY.

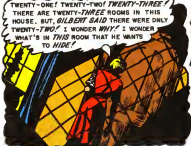
IN FACT... EVERY ROOM IS LOVELY...

... AND THEN, LAURA REMEMBERED HOW SHE'D COME TO THE ROOM AT THE END OF THE HALL ON THE VERY TOP FLOOR OF THE OLD MANORION...

THAT'S FUNNY. NONE OF THESE KEYS FIT THIS LOCK...

THE MYSTERIOUS ROOM AT THE END OF THE HALL ON THE TOP FLOOR. LAURA REMEMBERED THE FRUSTRATION AT NOT BEING ABLE TO UNLOCK THE DOOR... THE NATURAL CURIOSITY THAT GREW WITHIN HER...

TWENTY-ONE! TWENTY-TWO! TWENTY-THREE! THERE ARE TWENTY-THREE ROOMS IN THIS HOUSE. BUT, GILBERT SAID THERE WERE ONLY TWENTY-TWO! I WONDER WHY! I WONDER WHAT'S IN THIS ROOM THAT HE WANTS TO HIDE!



AND SHE REMEMBERED SULKING DOWN INTO THE LIVING-ROOM AND STARING UP AT THE PORTRAIT OF THE MAN WITH THE DARK FOREBODING EYES AND THE MATTED WHITE BEARD AND FEELING THAT CHILL ENCLOSE HER... MAKING HER SHIVER...

WHAT IS THERE ABOUT THAT PAINTING THAT SEEMS SO STRANGE? IS IT THE FACE? THE NAME? 'BARON GILLES DE RAIS.' IS THAT NAME FAMILIAR?



AND LAURA REMEMBERED HOW HER FEARS INCREASED... HOW HER LONELINESS MADE HER NERVOUS... AND THE SOUNDS AT NIGHT, KEEPING HER AWAKE, MAKING HER THINK... ABOUT THE ROOM WITHOUT A KEY... THE PAINTING...



...AND FINALLY, THE RELIEF WHEN GILBERT RETURNED...

OH, GILBERT. I... SOB... I MISSED YOU!

HOW ARE YOU, DARLING? WELL, DID YOU DECIDE ABOUT THE REDECORATING?



EVERYTHING IS PERFECT, GILBERT. I DON'T WANT TO CHANGE A THING! OH... ER... BUT THERE'S ONE ROOM I DON'T SEE. YOU DIDN'T GIVE ME THE KEY.

THAT ROOM IS NOT YOURS! THAT ROOM IS MINE! KEEP OUT OF IT!



LAURA REMEMBERED HOW GILBERT'S EYES GREW DARK LIKE THE EYES IN THE PORTRAIT...

BUT... WHY, GILBERT? WHAT ARE YOU HIDING?

NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS! JUST STAY AWAY FROM THAT ROOM. YOU CAN DO WHAT YOU LIKE WITH THE OTHERS, BUT STAY AWAY FROM THAT ONE.



AND LAURA REMEMBERED HOW THE NEXT MORNING, GILBERT DID NOT SHAVE...

BUT, YOU'RE SO SEEDY-LOOKING, GILBERT!

I'M GROWING A BEARD, LAURA. I REALLY HATE TO SHAVE. SO, UNTIL MY NEXT BUSINESS TRIP...



LAURA REMEMBERED HOW STRANGE EVERYTHING WAS AFTER THAT. HER NERVOUSNESS. HER CURIOSITY ABOUT THE ROOM. GILBERT'S BEARD, BLACK AND SILKY, GROWING THICKER EACH DAY, UNTIL...

I HAVE TO GO ON ANOTHER BUSINESS TRIP TOMORROW, LAURA.

OH?

THE ROOM. THE PORTRAIT, WHAT WAS THERE THAT BOTHERED LAURA? SHE REMEMBERED GOING THROUGH GILBERT'S POCKETS THAT NIGHT... AND FINDING THE KEY...

...THE KEY TO THE ROOM AT THE END OF THE HALL ON THE TOP FLOOR!

WHEN LAURA'D AWAKENED THE NEXT MORNING, GILBERT WAS GONE. SHE'D HURRIED TO THE BATHROOM, TORTURED WITH BITING CURIOSITY...

SHE'D STARED DOWN AT THE BOTTLE ON THE SINK...

LAURA'D LAUGHED. SO GILBERT WAS GETTING GREY AND HE WAS DYING HIS HAIR. SHE'D LAUGHED AT HIS BOYISHNESS. KEEPING SECRETS...

NOW I'LL SEE WHAT'S IN THAT ROOM. I... I...

WHAT'S THIS?
'BLACK DYE'!
'TINTS GREYING
HAIR BLACK'!
OH, NO!

THE POOR
DEAR...

SHE'D DRESSED QUICKLY AND RUSHED TO THE TOP FLOOR... TO THE DOOR AT THE END OF THE HALL, SHE'D INSERTED THE KEY NERVOUSLY... TURNED THE LATCH...

... AND SWUNG OPEN THE DOOR... AND SCREAMED...

E-E-E-E-E-E

SEVEN BODIES! SEVEN BODIES OF WOMEN, IN VARIOUS STAGES OF DECAY, THEIR THROATS SLIT, LAY BEFORE HER IN THAT HORRIBLE LITTLE ROOM AT THE END OF THE HALL...

SHE'D RUN, CRYING, FROM THE GORY SIGHT. AND THEN SHE'D THOUGHT OF THE BOTTLE OF BLACK DYE IN THE BATHROOM...

OF COURSE! THAT'S WHAT BOTHERED ME ABOUT THE PORTRAIT! THE COLOR...

LAURA STOOD UPON THE COFFEE TABLE BEFORE THE PORTRAIT, INHALING THE FUMES FROM THE TURPENTINE IN HER HAND...

THE COLOR OF THE BEARD! SO FRESH...SO GLEAN...SO UNYELLOWED WITH AGE. THAT'S WHAT BOTHERED ME!

SAVAGELY, LAURA SMEARED THE TURPENTINE-SOAKED WAD OF COTTON ACROSS THE PORTRAIT... SMEARING THE WHITE OF THE BEARD AWAY, DISSOLVING IT...REVEALING THE TRUE COLOR BENEATH...

BLUE! GOOD LORD! NOW I KNOW...

SHE SPUN AROUND. GILBERT STOOD THERE, GRINNING. THE TRUE COLOR OF HIS BEARD, TOO, HAD BEEN REMOVED. THE RAZOR GLISTENED IN HIS HAND...

YES, LAURA. **BARON GILLES DE RAIS** WAS THE ORIGINAL BLUEBEARD! AND I...EH, EH...AM CARRYING ON THE FAMILY TRADITION...

CHOKE...

AND SO, OUR TASTY TIDBIT ENDS, FENS, IN A...HEE, HEE...**CUTTING CLIMAX**. AND LIKE HER SEVEN PREDECESSORS, LAURA, TOO, ENDED UP IN THE LITTLE ROOM AT THE END OF THE HALL ON THE TOP FLOOR. AS FOR GILBERT, THE MODERN-DAY BLUEBEARD, HE'S TRAVELING AROUND THE COUNTRY AGAIN, LOOKING FOR NUMBER **NINE** FOR HIS COLLECTION. SO...IF A GUY WITH A **5 O'CLOCK BLUE SHADOW** PROPOSES, GIRLS, **BEWARE!** HE'S OUT FOR WHAT HE CAN **SLIT!** AND NOW...C.K. AWAITS. I'LL DIS YOU LATER...???

-THE END-

THE CRYPT OF TERROR

HEH, HEH! NOW THAT THE OLD HAG HAS BORED YOU WITH HER SISSY-SCREAM-SGOOPINGS, IT'S TIME FOR A REAL TERROR TALE. SO GREEP INTO THE CRYPT OF TERROR, CRUMBS, AND YOUR HOST IN NOWLS, THE CRYPT-KEEPER WILL GURDLE YOUR BLOOD AND SNIVER YOUR SPINE WITH ANOTHER GRILLER-DILLER FROM MY MOLDY COLLECTION. I CALL THIS EERIE ADVENTURE INTO THE NAUSEATING...

**DIG THAT CAT...
HE'S REAL GONE!**

ULRIC, THE UNDYING, BOWED STIFFLY TO THE CHEERING CROWD, AND STEPPED GINGERLY INTO THE SATIN-LINED CASKET THAT RESTED, SUSPENDED, OVER THE YAWNING TEN-FOOT-DEEP PIT. A HUSH FELL OVER THE GATHERING OF THE CURIOUS THAT HAD COME TO WITNESS ULRIC'S LATEST SKIRMISH WITH DEATH. A VOICE ECHOED OVER A LOUSPEAKER...

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, ULRIC, THE UNDYING, IS GETTING INTO THE COFFIN NOW. IN A MOMENT, ITS LID WILL BE SEALED AND IT WILL BE LOWERED INTO THE GRAVE...



ULRIC RECLINED IN THE COFFIN, THE LID WAS CLOSED, AND THE COFFIN WAS LOWERED INTO THE YAWNING EXCAVATION. THE VOICE COMING OVER THE P.A. SYSTEM RASPED ON, DESCRIBING THE ACTION FOR THOSE WHO COULD NOT SEE...

THE GRAVE DIGGERS ARE STEPPING FORWARD, FOLKS. THEY'RE SHOVELING THE EARTH BACK INTO THE GRAVE... COVERING THE COFFIN...



LYING IN THE DARKNESS, AMONG THE SATIN FOLDS THAT SURROUNDED HIM, **ULRIC**, THE DYING ONE, LAUGHED AS HE LISTENED TO THE VOICE FAR ABOVE HIM AND THE BOOMING SOUND OF THE EARTH STRIKING THE COFFIN-LID...

...EXPERTS CALCULATE THAT A MAN SEALED INTO THAT COFFIN WOULD SUFFOGATE WITHIN AN HOUR, FOLKS. **ULRIC** WILL REMAIN BURIED FOR THREE HOURS...

HEH, HEH... AND WHEN THEY DIG ME UP, THEY WILL EXAMINE ME, AND PRO-
NOUNCE ME DEAD...

...BUT I WILL **LIVE AGAIN**... RETURN FROM THE DEAD AGAIN AS I HAVE RETURNED FROM THE DEAD BEFORE. AND THIS... THIS WILL BE MY FAREWELL PERFORM-
MANCE. THIS WILL BE THE LAST TIME I WILL RETURN. IT IS THE LAST TIME I CAN RETURN...

'I REMEMBER HOW IT ALL BEGAN. HOW HE STOOD OVER ME AS I LAY DRUNK IN A DOORWAY ON SKID ROW... A DERELICT... A DOWN-AND-OUTER...

WHAT IS YOUR NAME?

NONE O' YER BUSINESS...

'...HOW HE BENT CLOSE TO ME... WHISPERING...'

HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE RICH?
RICHER THAN YOU EVER DREAMED...

O'WAN... SCREAM...
LE'ME BE...
LE'ME...

'...HOW HE FED ME COFFEE UNTIL HE SOBBERED ME UP... THEN TOLD ME HIS WILD STORY...'

MY NAME IS **DOCTOR EMIL MANFRED**. I AM READY TO ASTOUND THE WORLD WITH MY DISCOVERY... THE DISCOVERY THAT WILL MAKE US BOTH RICH...

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT, DOC?

I HAVE DISCOVERED HOW TO CHEAT DEATH, MY FRIEND... HOW TO DIE... AND THEN TO LIVE AGAIN... NOT JUST ONCE, BUT MANY TIMES!

DIE... AND LIVE AGAIN?
I DON'T GET IT!

YOU HAVE HEARD OF THE SUPERSTITION REGARDING THE COMMON ALLEY CAT? THE SUPERSTITION THAT A CAT HAS NINE LIVES? WELL, I HAVE DISCOVERED THE CAT'S SECRET, MY FRIEND.

WHAT? YOU MEAN...

100



YES! I CAN GIVE YOU THE MULTIPLE LIVES OF A CAT! I KNOW HOW! THINK WHAT THAT COULD MEAN!

GGGG LORD!



WITH A CAT'S ABILITY TO RETURN FROM THE DEAD TIME AND AGAIN, YOU COULD DEFTY DEATH... BECOME FAMOUS... GIVE EXHIBITIONS THAT WOULD MAKE US RICH...

HOW, DOC? HOW CAN YOU DO IT?



IT IS A SIMPLE MATTER, MY FRIEND. AN OPERATION... REMOVING A CERTAIN GLAND FROM A COMMON CAT AND PLACING IT IN YOUR BODY. ARE YOU WILLING?

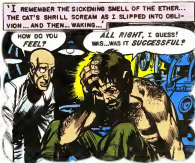
I DON'T KNOW...



I REMEMBER HOW I FINALLY CONSENTED TO THE OPERATION. I REMEMBER LYING IN DOCTOR MANFRED'S LABORATORY, UPON A WHITE TABLE... WATCHING THE CAT WE'D CAPTURED SQUIRM BESIDE ME...

ARE YOU READY?

READY, DOC...



I REMEMBER THE SICKENING SMELL OF THE ETHER... THE CAT'S SHRILL SCREAM AS I SLIPPED INTO OBIVION... AND THEN... WAKING...

HOW DO YOU FEEL?

ALL RIGHT, I GUESS! WAS... WAS IT SUCCESSFUL?



I REMEMBER HOW DOCTOR MANFRED NODDED AT THE STIFF SILENT FORM OF THE CAT ON THE OPERATING TABLE BESIDE ME...

THE OPERATION WAS A SUCCESS, MY FRIEND. YOU NOW HAVE THE MULTIPLE LIVES OF THAT POOR CAT...

HOW... HOW CAN I BE SURE?



...HOW DOCTOR MANFRED LIFTED THE GUN... POINTED IT AT MY CHEST...

A SHOT FROM THIS CLOSE RANGE IS CERTAIN DEATH, MY FRIEND!

NO! WAIT! NO...

'I REMEMBER THE EXPLOSION...THE SEARING PAIN AS THE BULLET ENTERED MY CHEST...TORE INTO MY HEART...'

GGNNNNNNNN...

'I REMEMBER THE BLACKNESS CLOSING IN AROUND ME...AND THEN LIFTING...'

WELCOME BACK TO LIFE...ULRIC!

ULRIC?!

ULRIC, THE UNDYING!
THAT'S WHAT WE WILL CALL YOU. YOU WERE KILLED BY THAT BULLET, ULRIC! BUT NOW YOU HAVE RETURNED...TO START ANOTHER LIFE!

THEN ONE OF THE LIVES WAS USED UP!

EXACTLY! BUT WE WILL WASTE NO MORE. FROM NOW ON, WE WILL MAKE EACH OF YOUR LIVES PAY...AND PAY WELL!

ULRIC, THE UNDYING! I LIKE IT! WHEN DO WE START...

'I REMEMBER THE FIRST SPECTACLE. I'D ANNOUNCED THAT I WOULD GO OVER NIAGARA FALLS...WITHOUT A BARREL...AND LIVE. I REMEMBER THE RUSHING NIAGARA RIVER, SWEEPING PAST THE CROWDS THAT LINED THE SHORE...SWEEPING ME TO THE BRINK AND OVER...'

THEY'RE HE GOES...

IT'LL KILL HIM... SURE!

THE FOOL!

'I REMEMBER THE MONTHS I SPENT RECOVERING... WAITING FOR BONES TO MEND...'

LISTEN TO THIS, DOC. ULRIC DEFIES DEATH. SWIMS OVER FALLS AND LIVES! EARN'S THIRTY THOUSAND DOLLARS IN WAGERS AND ADMISSIONS!

WHAT THEY DON'T KNOW, ULRIC, IS THAT YOU DID DIE! THIS IS ANOTHER LIFE YOU ARE LIVING... YOUR THIRD. YOU HAVE USED TWO!

'I REMEMBER MY SECOND SPECTACLE. I'D ANNOUNCED I WOULD LEAP FROM A PLANE FLYING AT TWO THOUSAND FEET...WITHOUT A PARACHUTE...AND LIVE. I REMEMBER STEPPING INTO SPACE OVER THE FIELD WHERE THE CROWDS HAD GATHERED...'

GAZY IDIOT!

THIS TIME HE'S GONE TOO FAR...

ULRIC
THE UNDYING

'MORE MONTHS...WAITING FOR BROKEN BONES TO KNIT...
TORN FLESH TO HEAL...'

HOW MUCH DO WE MAKE
THIS TIME, DOC?

ALL TOLD...FIFTY-
SIX THOUSAND DOL-
LARS! HERE'S YOUR
SHARE. TWENTY-EIGHT
GRAND...



I'D TAKEN A SLUG IN MY CHEST, I'D GONE OVER NIAGARA
FALLS, AND I'D LEAPED FROM A PLANE FOR A TOTAL OF
EIGHTY-SIX GRAND. I'D USED UP THREE OF MY NINE
LIVES. I'D SUFFERED THE FEAR AND THE PAIN. BUT THE
DOC, WHO ONLY WATCHED, TOOK HALF THE DOUGH. SO I
MADE UP MY MIND...

ULRIC! SLOW DOWN!
YOU'RE DRIVING TOO
FAST!

I'M GOING TO MAKE AN
INVESTMENT, DOC! I'M
GOING TO INVEST MY FOURTH
LIFE FOR 100% OF OUR
PARTNERSHIP! I'LL STILL
HAVE FIVE LIVES LEFT!



'I REMEMBER THE DOC'S FACE AS I DROVE THE CAR
OFF THE CLIFF...THE HORROR UPON IT...AND THEN, AS
WE HIT, THE SUDDEN SMILE THAT SPREAD ACROSS IT...'



'DOC DIED INSTANTLY. I REVIVED. I WAS NOW IN MY FIFTH
LIFE. BUT I COULDN'T FORGET THAT SMILE. I COULDN'T
GET IT OUT OF MY MIND. AFTER I'D BEEN DISCHARGED
FROM THE HOSPITAL, I ANNOUNCED TO THE NEWSPAPERS...'

I WILL ALLOW MYSELF TO BE TIED
UP IN A SACK...WEIGHTED DOWN...
AND DROPPED INTO THE RIVER
FOR SIX HOURS. I AM WILLING TO
TAKE ALL BETS THAT IT WILL NOT
KILL ME...



'MY FIFTH LIFE LEFT ME IN THE
FORM OF TINY BUBBLES THAT ROSE
UPWARD TO THE SURFACE AS I LAY
IN THE MUD OF THE RIVER-BED...
TIED IN A GURLAP SACK...'



'BEFORE MY RIVER SPECTACLE,
DOC HAD TAKEN CARE OF MY REVI-
VALS...MY RETURNINGS. WHEN THEY
HAULED ME UP AND EXAMINED ME...'

HE'S
DEAD!

SEND HIM TO
THE MORGUE...



'...DOC WASN'T AROUND TO TAKE
MY "CORPSE" AWAY. LUCKILY, I
"CAME TO" IN MY SIXTH LIFE JUST
BEFORE THEY DRAINED THE BLOOD
FROM MY BODY...'

HEY!

WHAT THE...?
CHOKE...



ULRIC, THE UNDYING, GRINNED AS HE LAY AMONG THE SATIN FOLDS IN THE COFFIN, TEN FEET UNDER THE GROUND.

THAT'S WHY DOC SMILED JUST AS HE DIED! HE THOUGHT THEY'D EMBALM ME AND I'D BE FINISHED...UNABLE TO RETURN! WELL, I WAS LUCKY...AND THE NEXT TIME, I MADE ARRANGEMENTS...



I HIRED AN ATTENDANT...

AS SOON AS I'M DECLARED DEAD, BRING MY BODY BACK HERE AND PUT IT IN BED. I'LL COME AROUND AFTER A WHILE. UNDERSTAND, SAXTON?

YES, MR. ULRIC!



THEN, I CONSTRUCTED A REPLICA OF THE ELECTRIC CHAIR...AND I ALLOWED THEM TO SHOOT THE SAME AMOUNT OF VOLTAGE THROUGH MY BODY THAT ALL CONVICTED KILLERS GET...

MY SIXTH LIFE SLIPPED AWAY...WITH NEWSREEL CAMERAS GRINDING AND TELEVISION CAMERAS SCANNING THE SPECTACLE AS THEY ELECTROCUTED ME...



AND I REVIVED, IN MY SEVENTH LIFE, NINETY THOUSAND DOLLARS RICHER...

AS I SAT ON MY BED COUNTING MY LATEST BANKROLL, THE ATTENDANT I'D HIRED CAME IN WITH A KNIFE IN HIS HAND...

BUT I WAS THE FOOL! I STRUGGLED WITH HIM! THAT WAS A MISTAKE! I WASTED MY SEVENTH LIFE. SAXTON BROUGHT THE KNIFE DOWN INTO MY HEART...

HERE'S YOUR MONEY, ULRIC, FROM NEWSREEL...AND T.V. RIGHTS...AND ADMISSIONS...AND YOUR SIDE BETS...

THANK YOU!

GIVE ME THAT MONEY, MR. ULRIC.

DON'T BE A FOOL, SAXTON!



ULRIC, THE UNDYING GULPED AT THE LAST TRACES OF OXYGEN IN THE BURIED COFFIN...

SO THIS IS THE LAST TIME I CAN DIE AND... GASP... EXPECT TO RETURN! THIS IS MY EIGHTH LIFE... GASP! WHEN I REVIVE... GASP... I WILL BE IN MY NINTH LIFE! MY LAST LIFE! WITH FINAL AND... GASP... ETERNAL DEATH AT ITS END...

GASP! BUT...



...BUT I'M *RIGH*, NOW... THANKS TO THAT POOR CAT... THAT POOR CAT LYING DEAD ON THE TABLE NEXT TO ME!



ULRIC SIGHED... HIS HEAD REELING...

...THAT POOR CAT THAT DIED SO THAT I COULD HAVE ITS NINE... NINE... OH, MY LORD!



ULRIC, THE UNDYING, SCREAMED...

THAT CAT! IT DIED ONCE! I ONLY GOT EIGHT LIVES FROM IT! ONLY EIGHT! NO! NO! LET ME OUT OF HERE!



...AS THE LAST TRACE OF OXYGEN VANISHED FROM THE COFFIN BURIED SO DEEP...

THAT'S... CHOKED... WHY... THE... GASP... COUGH... DOG... LAUGHED!

EEE AAAGGHHHH!



UP ABOVE, THE LOUDSPEAKER DRONED ON...

HE'S BEEN DOWN THERE OVER AN HOUR, FOLKS. HIS OXYGEN IS GONE BY NOW...

HEY, ED! DID... DID YOU HEAR SOMETHING? A FAINT SCREAM?

HUH? AM I MUSTA BEEN A CAT YOU HEARD, PHIL...



HEH, HEH, AND THAT'S MY YELP-YARN, FIENDS. ULRIC COUNTED HIS NINE LIVES VERY CAREFULLY. TROUBLE WAS, HE ONLY HAD EIGHT TO PLAY WITH. POOR PUSSY USED UP ONE. WHEN THEY DUG UP ULRIC AT THE END OF THE THREE HOURS, HE WAS DEAD, ALL RIGHT. FOR GOOD, TOO! NOW I'LL TURN YOU BACK TO THE OLD WITCH FOR MORE MEOWS. AND LISTEN! HERE'S A TIP! MAKE LIKE YOU'RE READING HER COLUMN. IF YOU DON'T... HEH, HEH... YOU MAY ANSORA! 'BYE...



-THE END-



THE OLD WITCH'S NICHE

President and CEO—Stephen A. Geppi

Publisher—Russ Cochran

Dear sir,

I enjoyed the #20 edition of HAUNT OF FEAR. The tales from the 50s are greatly done. I have always been a fan of TALES FROM THE CRYPT and HAUNT. I look forward to the next issue. Keep up the great work. A fan,

Bobby Stopers

address unknown

Dear Old Witch,

I love EC comics. Your stories are great. I like how you 'feed' them to us. I liked "Sucker Bait". Please print my address.

Michelle Neuffer, age 9

100 W Chestnut
Chicago, IL 60610

Greetings, Old Witch,

I was wondering if you could discuss with the producers of the 1973 TALES FROM THE CRYPT about making a second sequel based on THE HAUNT OF FEAR. You could adopt a couple of stories from the comic book and make it real gory and pretty suspenseful. Let me know if you can. You're my favorite character. (Just how old are you?)

The teenage vampire
age 15

Savannah, GA

It's been my thinking the Amicus EC-titled film came along too late in that period's horror cycle to make it to a third film. Thus depriving the world of me on celluloid!

—OW

Russ,

The story "Terror Train" in HAUNT 20 (page 7, panel 6), is that Mr. Feldstein or another member of the EC gang sticking his head out from behind the curtains on the train?

People have said they can hear a sound emanating from me every month when I go to pick up the new ECs. Thum-Thump! Thum-Thump! Thum-Thump!

David DeLano

Kensington, CT

All told, it could be almost anyone in that "Terror Train" berth, typical Feldstein hick or urbanite, male or female—but it ain't Ali.

—OW

*A bonus
Poem=*

—OW

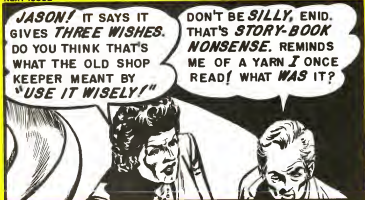
PLANE HORROR

He went down in a plane,
And he wanted to sue.
(I think he deserves it, don't you?)
So get your bones in motion!
Now you know what to do!
Even though you're dead you can take it with you!

Frank X. Mattson

Spring City, PA

NEXT ISSUE



**JASON! IT SAYS IT
GIVES *THREE WISHES*.
DO YOU THINK THAT'S
WHAT THE OLD SHOP
KEEPER MEANT BY
"*USE IT WISELY!*"**

**DON'T BE *SILLY*, ENID.
THAT'S *STORY-BOOK
NONSENSE*. REMINDS
ME OF A YARN *I* ONCE
READ! WHAT *WAS* IT?**

Dear Old Witch,

Re. issue 19: In the Army, standard issue P-28 is the sort of can-opener one finds on a Swiss army knife. P-31 is the current Baskin-Robbins ice cream flavors menu. So I am pleased to learn that P-32 is a radioactive isotope used to flush out fraternal vampires (assuming one is not so foolish as to leave the only copy of the explanation with the offending undead brother, as was done here ["Sucker Bart!"]).

In "Lover, Come Back to Me!", it would take a misconception to break the cycle.

In "Double-Header!", I knew there would be trouble when King Irving tell for the scullery maid. Bad things always result when there's sculleryduggery afoot!

Toward the ending of "Foul Play!", I balked at the ending.

Issue 20 featured twice-told tales, with the usual excellent EC twist on familiar themes.

"Thump Fun!" retells Poe's story "The Tell-Tale Heart," only here the thumping is not merely psychosomatic. But the policeman's fundraiser turned out to be a real *downer* for Marvin (and, in the graveyard, his murdered brothers).

Since "Terror Train" originally came out in 1950, does its reprint in this reprint of a 1953 issue make it a reprint, a meta-reprint, or a hyper-reprint?

"Bloody Sure" is an entertaining twist on the vampire theme, both for the Wild West setting and for the surprise ending.

In "Hyde and Go Shriek!", the con man and the schemer succumb to the unexpected success of their treachery. Although we never learn if Myron's transformation is permanent, he sure could use one! Please Print Address.

Bob Gorby

1353 Sunny LN
Camarillo, CA 93012

NEXT ISSUE



A bonus essay -

SUPERNATURAL TERROR

When I was about 8 years old someone started a rumor that a man without a head was roaming the woods around where we lived. One day I walked through some woods up a dirt road that dead-ended at a railroad track that was high up on a hill. When I turned to return home I saw a person far away up the dirt road. I was sure that he had no head, and my terror was supreme. Then the Man Without a Head went into the woods, and I managed to get home somehow.

I can just imagine the terror of the people who lived hundreds of years ago. To them, a werewolf was a real thing. And the thought of a vampire could keep an entire village huddled in their cottages once the sun went down. A witch could fill the crops and take over a person's mind and drive him crazy. A voodoo curse could cause a person to die a slow and horrible death.

I can imagine if EC horror comics were around way-back-then. A villager with wild, uncombed hair, looking like a Jack Davis character, would be squatting down looking at a TALES FROM THE CRYPT. His bulging eyes would be absolutely serious. Though unable to read (like me as a little kid), he would be desperately searching the pictures to find a defense against the unspeakable terrors that plagued his life. These comics books would be his consolation and his hope. I can understand him. I was him. I am him. And the ECs made it all seem so much less terrible.

Rich Jaeger

Honolulu, HI

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

BACK ISSUES: CRYPT #1, SOLD OUT; FRONT #1-4, \$2 each; PANIC #1-3, \$2.50 each; all others up thru issue #3, \$1.50 each; CRYPT, W SCI & SHOCK #4-16, and VAULT, W FAN, 2FIST, HAUNT and CRIME #4-15, \$2 each. All others, \$2.50 each (latest issues: CRYPT, W SCI, VAULT, W FAN, 2FIST, HAUNT & CRIME are up to 21; FRONT to 10 and PANIC to 3).

Don't forget the entire 71-issue run of WEIRD SCIENCE-FANTASY/INCREDIBLE SCIENCE FICTION (#1-3, \$1.50 each; #4-15, \$2 each) and the 18 issues of SHOCK SUSPENSESTORIES (#1-3, \$1.50 each; #4-15, \$2.00 each; #16-18, \$2.50 each).

Add \$3 per order (\$10 outside US) for S&H.

We want MORE letters! Write to:

HAUNT
GEMSTONE
POB 459
WEST PLAINS MO 65775

THIS COMIC REPRINTS HAUNT OF FEAR #21 (SEP/OCT 1953)

COVER by Graham Ingels

"An Off-Color Heir"

"Dig That Cat...He's Real Gone!"

"Corker!"

"The High Cost of Dying!"

Graham Ingels

Jack Davis

Jack Kernen/Bill Elder

Reed Crandall

We welcome letters of comment. We cannot promise to acknowledge, publish or answer letters. We will for clarity, accuracy and length. We automatically withhold street address and city state unless you clearly state you wish them published. Pseudonyms may be used if you provide us with your authentic name and address. We attempt to acknowledge publication of letters to us so we need your address on the individual letter.

IT'S NOT FAIR,
I'M STRANDED
HERE IN THE WILD,
LOTS OF FOOD
AND WATER...
BUT NO EC COMICS!!



Grant Smith, Stamford, CT, held a pity party, but nobody came! Not now that my (and other GhouLunetice who shall be nameless) old comics are being reprinted, at popular prices! A mood piece which puts me in the mood to do another CRYPT-KEEPER'S PAGE OF...

FINE ARTS #50

ETERNITY

Opaque shadows, nightly cast,
Upon my dwelling as I sleep fast.
Wind and rain and sleet let come,
While I slumber cold and numb.
Waxen moon in velvet sky,
Illuminating all that die.
Lunar light, cold and bright,
Bathe me in my bed of night.
Eternal, endless, sleeping still,
Here I dwell - and always will.



Barry "Edgar A" McCollum

Alton, IL

A bit of rhyme described by the author as "POE-etry." I've attempted to reproduce his customized return address label, too! Is it true Barry flipped when introduced to an Illinois woman named "Anabella Lee Nore?" -CK



Paul O'Leary, Needham, MA, had the good grace to send me this drawing of yours truly about to chow down on a hot dog (beka at 350°, that'll make Fido hot!). Reminds me of our mail carrier, who was bitten by a mixed breed last week. "I think he was pert chow," said he. Evidently, the bowser thought the same of him! -CK



Last month I ran a bit of computer art, so now I'll run multiple bylaw. According to Drew Walpers, St. Louis, MO, he did it free-hand (the only compu-art I care to run) in Paintbrush with his mouse, address unknown.

-CK

Send your contribs (not returnable, not too long, not too big, legible double-spaced text &/or bold black art. Weeding...we edit) to:

THE CRYPT-KEEPER'S PAGE OF FINE ARTS

GEMSTONE
POB 469
WEST PLAINS MO 65775

We welcome contributions. We cannot promise to return, acknowledge or publish contributions. We will, for clarity, accuracy and size. We automatically withhold street address and do not unless you clearly state you wish them published. We attempt to acknowledge contributions, to do so we need your address on the individual contribution.

HERE'S A HORROR YARN THAT'S A

CORKER!



THE MAN AND THE WOMAN STOOD UPON THE STOOP OF THE OLD SNOWSTONE HOUSE BEFORE THE HUGE SLAB FRONT DOOR WITH ITS INTRICATE BLACK WROUGHT-IRON BRILL WORK. THE WOMAN LIFTED A NERVOUS FINGER TOWARD THE BELL. THE MAN CAUGHT HER HAND IN A FINAL PLEA...

FOR GOD'S SAKE, JANET. FORGET THIS INSANE IDEA ABOUT EVIL SPIRITS AND WITCHCRAFT AND THE DOGULT. NO PHONY SWAMI CAN HELP YOU. COME BACK TO THE OFFICE... WITH ME...

NO, PETER. YOU'VE HAD YOUR CHANCE. WE'VE GOTTEN NOWHERE WITH PSYCHIATRY. YOU'VE PROBED INTO MY PAST AND MY SUBCONSCIOUS AND YOU HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO HELP ME. THE SWAMI IS MY ONLY CHANCE, NOW...

THE MAN LOOKED INTO THE WOMAN'S EYES...

DARLING, THE ONLY ONE THAT CAN HELP YOU IS YOURSELF. ONCE YOU REALIZE THAT I LOVE YOU AND THERE'S NOTHING FOR YOU TO BE ASHAMED OF, YOU WON'T WANT TO GO... TO DO WHAT YOU'VE TRIED TO DO SO MANY TIMES...

WE'VE BEEN ALL THROUGH THIS, PETER. PLEASE! LET ME GO...



THE WOMAN PRESSED THE BELL. FOOTSTEPS ECHOED WITHIN. A FIGURE IN AN EMBROIDERED SATIN ROBE WEARING A BEJEWELLED TURBAN PEERED THROUGH THE IRON-GRILLED DOOR... SWUNG IT OPEN...

YES? WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?

YOU MAY NOT REMEMBER ME, SWAMI. MY NAME IS JANET DALY. THIS IS MY FIANCEE, DOCTOR PETER RAYMOND. I USED TO ATTEND YOUR SEANCES... YEARS AGO...



KAREN ELDER



PETER INTERRUPTED JANET'S STORY...

SHE...SHE WAS LIKE AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT PERSON. SHE WAS SUDDENLY INTERESTED ONLY IN PLEASURE...GOOD-TIMES...WILDNESS. I TRIED TO TALK TO HER...

...AND WHEN PETER OBJECTED...I EVEN REJECTED HIM. I STARTED GOING OUT WITH OTHER MEN...



...AND THEN...JUST LIKE THAT...ONE MORNING, I WOKED UP TIRED AND SAD AND SOBER AND MOROSE AND I DIDN'T WANT ANY MORE GOOD TIMES. I WANTED TO DIE...

PETER...SOB...CAN YOU COME OVER QUICKLY? I'M...I'M SICK! I...I...HURRY...PLEASE...

OF COURSE, JANET! I'LL BE RIGHT THERE!



PETER BEGAN AGAIN...

WHEN I GOT TO JANET'S PLACE, I FOUND HER STANDING IN THE KITCHEN WITH A KNIFE IN HER HANDS...

I WAS GOING TO KILL MYSELF, SWAMI. I WANTED TO SLIT MY THROAT. IF IT WEREN'T FOR PETER, I'D...I'D...



JANET PUT HER HEAD IN HER HANDS. PETER CONTINUED...

SHE'S ATTEMPTED TO KILL HERSELF SEVERAL TIMES SINCE THEN. I'VE TRIED TO HELP HER BUT SHE REFUSES TO BE HELPED. I'VE EVEN TRIED PSYCHO-THERAPY...TO GET AT THE BASIC CAUSE OF THIS COMPULSION FOR SELF-DESTRUCTION...

IT ISN'T IN MY MIND, SWAMI. I KNOW IT. THERE'S SOMETHING INSIDE OF ME...FORCING ME TO TRY TO DESTROY MYSELF. THAT'S WHY I'VE COME TO YOU!



SHE TALKS WILDLY. SHE TALKS OF DEMONS AND WITCHERY AND NON-SENSE LIKE THAT!

IT ISN'T NON-SENSE, DOCTOR. I'M BE-WITCHED, SWAMI. RAYMOND! I KNOW IT!

THERE'S A VOICE INSIDE OF ME. IT KEEPS TELLING ME, 'KILL YOURSELF...DESTROY YOURSELF...' SOB, SOB...

YOUR FUDGE IS POSSESSED BY A LAMIA, DOCTOR RAYMOND...

A...A WHAT?

A LAMIA...AN EVIL SPIRIT...AN ESSENCE OF POLLUTION AND DEGRADATION...A SUPER-NATURAL MALFEASANT...IN OTHER WORDS, A DEVIL...



PETER SCOFFED...

RIDICULOUS. THERE'S NO SUCH THING! IT DOESN'T EXIST!

AH, BUT YOU'RE WRONG, DOCTOR RAYMOND. THE LAMIA EXISTS... IN MANY FORMS...



LAMIAS ARE SPIRITS OF EVIL. THEY ARE THE CAUSES OF ALL WICKEDNESS IN THE WORLD. ONCE A LAMIA ENTERS A BODY... IT POSSESSES IT... DRIVES IT INTO EVIL!



JANET'S PROBLEM IS MEN-TAL. I WILL NOT LISTEN TO SUCH NONSENSE...

BUT... ALAS... THE LAMIA IS A FICKLE SPIRIT! IT SOON TIRES OF THE BODY IT HAS POSSESSED! IT SEEKS TO ESCAPE IT! BUT ONCE A LAMIA IS INSIDE A BODY... IT CANNOT ESCAPE! IT IS TRAPPED! IT'S ONLY ESCAPE LIES IN THE BODY'S DESTRUCTION.



THAT'S WHY I WANT TO KILL MYSELF! DON'T YOU SEE, PETER?

JANET! I WILL NOT LISTEN TO ANY MORE OF THIS... THIS DRIVEL...



THE BODY IS LIKE A BOTTLE, IN WHICH THE LAMIA, LIKE A GENIE FROM THE ARABIAN NIGHTS, IS CORKED. AND LIKE A BOTTLE, THE BODY MUST BE SMASHED OR BROKEN OR RENT IN ORDER FOR THE LAMIA TO ESCAPE...



THINK OF THE LAMIA-POSSESSED PEOPLE THAT LEAP FROM TALL BUILDINGS AND SPLATTER THEMSELVES UPON THE CONCRETE. THINK OF THE ACCIDENT-PRONE PEOPLE THAT SMASH THEIR CARS AND THEIR BODIES INTO TREES, INTO OTHER CARS, AND INTO BRICK WALLS...



THINK OF THE LAMIA-POSSESSED WHO LIFT GUNS TO THEIR TEMPLES... KNIVES TO THEIR BREASTS... RAZORS TO THEIR WRISTS...

PEOPLE WHO ARE ACCIDENT-PRONE OR HAVE SUICIDAL TENDENCIES ARE TRYING TO PUNISH THEMSELVES BECAUSE OF SOME GUILT-COMPLEX... SOMETHING THEY ARE ASHAMED OF...



NO! IT IS NOT THE LAMIA, DOCTOR...

...IT ESCAPES THROUGH THE BULLET HOLE... THE SLASHED WRIST... THE SLIT THROAT... THE ACCIDENT-LACERATED BODY. IT ESCAPES BECAUSE IT IS BORED. IT ESCAPES AND ENTERS ANOTHER BODY...



COME ON, JANET! YOU'RE GOING HOME!

WAIT, PETER! WAIT! MIAMI, CAN YOU HELP ME? CAN YOU TAKE MY LAMIA FROM ME BEFORE IT DESTROYS ME?



IT IS ALL ACCORDING TO THE TYPE OF LAMIA THAT POSSESSES YOU MISS DAILY THERE ARE WAYS, BUT THEY ARE COSTLY...

HA!

PETER SNATCHED JANET'S HAND, PULLING HER FROM THE ROOM...

HA! THERE! YOU SEE! PETER! IT WILL BE COSTLY! THAT'S ALL HE'S INTERESTED IN! MONEY! YOU'RE GETTING OUT OF HERE!

PETER! PLEASE! NO! SOB... NO!

THE SWAMI CALLED AFTER JANET...

SIX MONTHS AGO, MISS DALY! THINK! WHAT VIOLENT DEATH DID YOU WITNESS SIX MONTHS AGO? WHEN COULD THE LAMIA HAVE ENTERED YOUR BODY? WHAT DID YOU SEE? WHAT DEATH WERE YOU NEAR?

PETER HESITATED. THERE WAS A MOMENT OF SILENCE. JANET GASPED...

OF COURSE! I WAS SENT UPSTATE TO THE PRISON... TO COVER A HANGING... FOR THE PAPER!

A HANGING, MISS DALY? NO! I HARDLY THINK SO...

YOU SEE, A HANGING DOESN'T RUPTURE THE BODY... DOESN'T 'OPEN' A 'DOOR' FOR THE LAMIA TO ESCAPE...

THIS... CHOKED... THIS HANGING DID! THE CONVICTED KILLER WAS A HUGE MAN... OVERWEIGHT...

...WHEN THE TRAP SPRUNG, HIS BODY PLUNGED DOWNWARD, AND THE ROPE... TORE HIS HEAD OFF...

THE SWAMI TURNED WHITE...

A... A DECAPITATION LAMIA.

NO! OH, LORD...

JANET! FOR GOD'S SAKE... STOP THIS AND COME...

THE SWAMI SMORE...

DOCTOR RAYMOND! THIS IS SERIOUS! THE DECAPITATION LAMIA IS IMPOSSIBLE TO REMOVE. IT WILL ONLY EXIT THROUGH THE 'NECK OF THE BOTTLE'... BY UNGORKING IT!

JANET! COME BACK!

JANET SWUNG OPEN THE HUGE GRILL-DOOR AND STUMBLED DOWN THE STEPS OF THE OLD BROWN-STONE HOUSE...

JANET!



PETER TORE AFTER HER AS SHE RAN WILDLY UP THE BLOCK...

BLASTED SWAMI!...
FILLING HER SICK
MIND WITH SUCH
ROT...



THE SUBWAY KIDSK LOOMED UP BEFORE THE WIDE-EYED TERRORIZED WOMAN...

JANET! NO! STOP HER!
SOMEONE...



SHE DARTED DOWN THE STEPS...INTO THE ROARING DARKNESS...PETER CLOSE BEHIND HER...

JANET! COME BACK!
NO! NO!



THE STATION WAS ALMOST DESERTED. LIGHTS SWEEP DOWN THE GLEAMING STEEL RAILS...INTO THE EMPTY STATION. A TRAIN WAS COMING. JANET FLAILED AT THE PLATFORM EDGE. HER SCREAM ECHOED OFF TILED WALLS AS SHE FELL...



PETER WATCHED, HORRIFIED, AS THE KNIFE-LIKE WHEELS OF THE SUBWAY TRAIN PASSED OVER JANET'S NECK, SEVERING HER HEAD FROM HER BODY...

OH...
GOD...



...LIKE AN *UNCORKING*...LIKE AN *OPENING* OF A BOTTLE OF BURGUNDY...THE RED WINE FOUNTAINING. AND THEN THE MIST RISING... AND COMING TOWARD PETER...

JANET! MY... SOB...
MY... JANET...



...AND THEN THE SUDDEN STRANGE FEELING DEEP INSIDE PETER. THE GIDDYNESS AND DELIGHT... BURSTING OUT INTO LAUGHTER...



...AND THE BEGINNING OF AN IDIOTIC EVIL ENJOYMENT THAT WOULD ONLY END IN BOREDOM AND THE *UNCORKING* ONCE AGAIN...

THE VAULT OF HORROR!

HEH, HEH! IT'S SO NICE TO SEE YOUR *PUTRID PUSSES* AGAIN, *GREEPS*, PEERING INTO *THE VAULT*. WELL, YOUR *HAPPY HOST IN HOWLS*, *THE VAULT-KEEPER* (THAT'S ME, IN THE *LIVID FLESH*) IS READY TO RELATE ANOTHER *REVOLTING TALE* FROM MY *APPETIZING ASSORTMENT*. SO, *COME IN...* CURL UP ON THAT *DISSECTION TABLE* THERE, AND I'LL *BEGIN THE SCREAM-STORY* I CALL...

The *HIGH COST* of DYING!

OUR STORY BEGINS IN PARIS ON A SWelterING SUMMER NIGHT IN 1867. A CART RATTLES THROUGH DESERTED COBBLE-STONED STREETS...PAST DARKENED STORES AND SHUTTERED HOUSES...DOWN WINDING ALLEYS ALIVE WITH SCAMPERING GREY SHADOWS...AND FINALLY UP ONTO ONE OF THE COUNTLESS BRIDGES THAT SPAN THE RIVER *SEINE*. THE SHASSILY DRESSED FIGURE, PULLING THE NOISY CART, GASPS AND STRAINS AS HE LABORS UP THE INCLINE OF THE BRIDGE TOWARD ITS CENTER. HIS TORN AND SHREDDED SHIRT IS WET WITH PERSPIRATION, AND HIS GRIMY FACE IS STREAKED BY THE TEARS THAT FILL HIS EYES AND OVERFLOW THEIR LIDS...



R. CRAMPALL

HIS NAME IS HENRI COURSET. HE STOPS NOW, RESTING... WIPING HIS WET EYES WITH THE BACK OF HIS HUGE HAND. HE TURNS AND GLANCES BEHIND HIM...AT THE CART...AT THE BODY LYING UPON IT, WRAPPED IN SURLAP, LYING STILL AND SILENT AND NEVERMORE TO MOVE OR LAUGH OR TALK OR CRY, AS NOW HENRY IS CRYING...



FOR A WHILE, HENRI STARES DOWN AT THE MUDDY FOG-BLANKETED RIVER, SHAKING HIS HEAD, HATING HIMSELF FOR THIS...THIS HORRIBLE THING THAT HE IS DOING...



BUT SOMETIMES A MAN IS FORCED TO DO THINGS THAT ARE HATEFUL AND REVOLTING TO HIM. SOMETIMES, HE CANNOT HELP HIMSELF. HENRI STARES DOWN AT THE SLOW MURKY RIVER AND NODS...



THE RIVER BELOW THE BRIDGE FLOWS ON, LIKE TIME... CEASELESSLY, UNENDING... NEVER COMING BACK, GOING DOWNSTREAM INTO THE PAST... LOST FOREVER. HENRI GAZES DOWNSTREAM INTO THE FOG... INTO THE PAST. AND HE SEES HIMSELF WAKING THAT MORNING TO THE CHILDREN'S HYSTERICAL CRIES...



HENRI SEES IT ALL SO CLEARLY... HIS HUNGRY CHILDREN, PALE AND WAN AND RAGGED... SOBBERING...



AND HE REMEMBERS HOW HE HAD LEAPED FROM HIS STRAW COT AND RUSHED TO HIS WIFE'S SIDE... TO SUZETTE... BEAUTIFUL, SILENT SUZETTE...



HE REMEMBERS SENDING THE BOY, PIERRE...



HE REMEMBERS DOCTOR LE DUCART COMING TO THE SQUALID CELLAR-APARTMENT AND PUTTING DOWN HIS LITTLE SLACK BAG AND TAKING SUZETTE'S LIMP WHITE HAND IN HIS AND SHAKING HIS HEAD...



HENRI REMEMBERS DOCTOR LE DUCART LOOKING AT HIM...

COULDN'T YOU AFFORD TO BUY FOOD, COURBET?

WE...WE HAVE NO MONEY! I...I HAVE NOT HAD WORK FOR SOME TIME...



SUZETTE...SHE... SHE GAVE HER SHARE TO THE CHILDREN!

HMM! A PITY! WELL... BETTER TAKE CARE OF THE FUNERAL RIGHT AWAY, COURBET! REMEMBER THE NEW ORDINANCE!



NEW...ORDINANCE? WHICH ONE IS THAT? THERE ARE SO MANY THESE DAYS!

THE COMMISSIONER OF HEALTH'S LATEST DECREE. ALL BODIES MUST BE BURIED WITHIN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS AFTER DEATH. YOU HAVE UNTIL TOMORROW MORNING. GOOD-DAY!



AND HENRI REMEMBERS GOING TO THE UNDERTAKER PARLOR AND INQUIRING...

WELL, LET US SEE. THERE IS THE PLOT... AND THE COFFIN... AND CARTAGE...

THE CHEAPEST I CAN MAKE IT IS FIFTY-FIVE FRANGS, M'SIEU COURBET!

FIFTY... FIVE... GULP...



ANYTHING WRONG, COURBET?

I...I DO NOT HAVE FIFTY-FIVE FRANGS NOW, M'SIEU GREVIARD. IF I COULD OWE IT TO YOU...



M'SIEU GREVIARD, THE UNDERTAKER, SHOOK HIS HEAD.

NO, NO! M'SIEU COURBET! I DO NOT DO BUSINESS THAT WAY. NO MONEY! NO FUNERAL! WHAT IF YOU NEVER PAID ME? WHAT COULD I DO? SO DIG UP THE BODY!?

I WOULD PAY YOU! I SWEAR IT!



SORRY, M'SIEU! FIFTY-FIVE FRANGS IS THE PRICE! AND REMEMBER... THE COMMISSIONER OF HEALTH'S DECREE. TWENTY-FOUR HOURS...

YES! YES! I WILL REMEMBER!



THE RIVER BELOW SWEEPS SLOWLY BY... AS THE PAST DAY'S EVENTS SWEEP SLOWLY BY. HENRI STARES INTO THE MURKY DEPTHS AND SEES HIS HOPELESS VAIN ATTEMPTS TO RAISE THE MONEY...



BUT YOU ARE MY LIFE-LONG FRIEND, LOUIS! MY WIFE IS DEAD. I MUST BURY HER...

I AM SORRY, HENRI. TIMES ARE BAD, JOBS ARE SCARCE. I HAVEN'T ENOUGH TO FEED MY OWN FAMILY... NO LESS BURY ONE OF YOURS...

... FINALLY GOING BACK TO THE HOVEL THAT SERVED AS THEIR HOME, AND SEEING THE CHILDREN'S HUNGRY FACES AND HIS WIFE'S SILENT STILL BODY...



WE... WE HAVE EATEN NOTHING ALL DAY, PAPA!

WE... WE'RE... SOB... HUNGRY, PAPA!

AND I... I HAVEN'T THE MONEY TO BURY YOUR POOR DEAD MAMA, NO LESS... CHOKO... NO LESS FEED YOU...

... THE SUDDEN HEAVY KNOCKING ON THE FRONT DOOR...



WHO... WHO'S THERE?

OPEN UP... IN THE NAME OF THE COMMISSIONER OF HEALTH...

... THE OFFICER, LOOMING IN THE DOORWAY... HIS EVIL EYES FLASHING... HIS GRIM MOUTH SMILING...

YOU ARE HENRI COURSET...

YES! THAT IS ME...

THE COMMISSIONER OF HEALTH HAS RECEIVED WORD FROM YOUR DOCTOR THAT YOUR WIFE PASSED AWAY THIS MORNING...

YES... THAT... THAT IS TRUE...



IT IS MY DUTY TO INFORM YOU THAT IN ACCORDANCE WITH ORDINANCE 4885, IF SHE IS NOT PROPERLY BURIED BY A LICENSED UNDERTAKER BY TOMORROW MORNING, HER BODY WILL BE REMOVED FROM THE PREMISES AND TURNED OVER TO THE PARIS CONSERVATORY OF MEDICINE...

THE... THE CONSERVATORY OF MEDICINE?

... FOR THE EDIFICATION AND EXPERIMENTATION OF MEDICAL STUDENTS ENROLLED THERE, BY ORDER OF THE COMMISSIONER OF HEALTH, CITY OF PARIS, JULY 13, 1867...

NO! NO! OH, LORD...



THE OFFICER LEERED AT HENRI...

DO YOU KNOW WHAT *THAT* MEANS, M'SIEU COURSET? IT MEANS THAT IF YOU CAN'T AFFORD TO *BURY* YOUR WIFE, HER *BODY* IS TURNED OVER TO *MEDICAL STUDENTS* FOR *DISSECTION!*

IT ISN'T *FAIR!* OH, *GOD!* IT ISN'T *FAIR.* THERE ISN'T ENOUGH *TIME!*

HE SNEERED...

DO YOU KNOW WHAT *MEDICAL STUDENTS* DO TO *BODIES*, M'SIEU COURSET? THEY TAKE *SHARP LITTLE SCALPELS*...AND THEY CUT THEM *OPEN* AND TAKE OUT THE *INSIDES* AND CUT THEM *OPEN*...

PIECE BY PIECE... INCH BY INCH... THEY PROBE AND SLICE AND CUT AND STUDY AND CUT SOME MORE...



...AND DO YOU KNOW *WHY* THE COMMISSIONER OF HEALTH *ISSUED* THIS DECREE, M'SIEU COURSET. *NOT* IN THE INTERESTS OF THE CITY'S *HEALTH!* HE GETS *SEVENTY-FIVE FRANGS* FOR EACH *BODY*... FROM THE *CONSERVATORY*... WHICH HE *POCKETS!*

STOP IT! STOP IT! HAVE PITY!

THE OFFICER LOOKED AROUND. HE LOOKED AT SUZETTE'S STILL WHITE FORM...

SHE IS *YOUNG* AND *PRETTY*. THE *MEDICAL STUDENTS* WILL *ESPECIALLY WELCOME* HER *BODY*. SO I SUGGEST YOU *RAISE* THE *MONEY*, M'SIEU... *QUICKLY. BURY HER!*

I...CHOKED... I *CAN-NOT!* I *HAVE TRIED!* I *CANNOT* EVEN BUY *FOOD* FOR THE *CHILDREN!*



THE OFFICER LOOKED AT THE POVERTY AND SQUALOR... AT THE PALE, THIN STARVING CHILDREN WHO STARED AT HIM WITH WIDE FRIGHTENED EYES...

THERE DON'T BE A *FOOL*, COURSET. *TAKE* HER TO THE *CONSERVATORY YOURSELF. TONIGHT!* *LIE* YOUR *OWN* *POCKETS* WITH THE *SEVENTY-FIVE FRANGS* AT LEAST YOU WILL BE ABLE TO *FEED* YOUR *CHILDREN*...

KNOWING WHAT THEY WILL DO TO SUZETTE... SOB. NOW CAN I?

THE OFFICER TURNED TO GO. HE SHRUGGED...

SHE IS DEAD, M'SIEU. SHE WILL NEVER KNOW! GOOD-EVENING! TILL TOMORROW... THEN...

TILL TOMORROW...



HENRI STARES DOWN AT THE RIVER. HE THINKS OF THE MEDICAL STUDENTS...GATHERED AROUND THE BODY...THEIR SHINING SCALPES IN THEIR UPLAISED HANDS...THEIR GRINNING FACES...



AND THEN HE LOOKS AT THE BODY WRAPPED IN BURLAP LYING ON THE OLD CART, AND HE KNOWS THAT WHAT HE IS DOING IS RIGHT...



FOOTSTEPS APPROACH IN ANSWER TO HENRI'S FRANTIC KNOCK. THE DOOR SWINGS OPEN. A FACE PEERS OUT...



THE DOOR SWINGS WIDE, A SHAFT OF LIGHT KNIFES INTO THE FOGGY SUMMER NIGHT, FALLING ACROSS THE BURLAP-WRAPPED FORM...



AND THEN HE THINKS OF THE CHILDREN...MARIE AND PIERRE...THEIR BLOATED STOMACHS CRYING FOR FOOD...THEIR BONY FINGERS SEARCHING FOR CRUMBS IN THE FLOORBOARD CRACKS...



THE CART RUMBLES DOWN AND OFF THE BRIDGE, THE STIFF BODY BOUNCING UPON IT...



...RUMBLES ON THROUGH COBBLE-STONED STREETS, DOWN WINING ALLEYS, TOWARD THE PARIS CONSERVATORY OF MEDICINE...

THE OLD MAN HOBBLES OUT INTO THE NIGHT...OUT TO THE CART...LIFTS THE BURLAP COVER AND PEEPS AT THE STILL WHITE FACE...



EARLY THE NEXT MORNING, PIERRE AND MARIE ATE HEARTILY...THE FIRST GOOD FOOD THEY'D HAD IN MONTHS...



SLOWLY, CHILDREN! SLOWLY!

YES, PAPA!

AND THEY DRESSED IN THEIR NEW CLOTHES...THE CLOTHES HENRI HAD BOUGHT WITH PART OF THE SEVENTY-FIVE FRANCS...

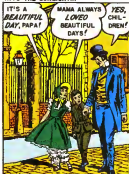


THIS IS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL DRESS IN THE WHOLE WORLD, PAPA!

AND THIS... THE HANDSOMEST SUIT!

YES, CHILDREN!

...AND, TOGETHER, THEY WALKED OUT INTO THE SUNLIGHT...



IT'S A BEAUTIFUL DAY, PAPA!

MAMA ALWAYS LOVED BEAUTIFUL DAYS!

YES, CHILDREN!

AT EXACTLY THAT MOMENT, IN THE PARIS CONSERVATORY OF MEDICINE, EAGER CURIOUS PROSPECTIVE DOCTORS CUT AND SLICED AND PROBED THE NEW BODY THAT HAD ARRIVED THAT NIGHT...



AND LATER, JUST OUTSIDE PARIS, HENRI AND THE CHILDREN STOOD BEFORE THE Gaping OPEN GRAVE, WATCHING THE COFFIN BEING LOWERED SLOWLY INTO IT...



MAMA ALWAYS SAID SHE WANTED TO BE BURIED ON A BEAUTIFUL DAY...

GOOD-BYE... MAMA...

GOOD-BYE, SUZETTE...

WHILE AT THAT PRECISE MOMENT, THE DEAN OF THE PARIS CONSERVATORY OF MEDICINE, ON HIS DAILY TOUR OF THE ANATOMY CLASSES, STOPPED BEFORE THE NEWLY PURCHASED BODY THAT NOW LAY COMPLETELY DISSECTED...AND SHRIEKED...



MON DIEU! IT IS THE COMMISSIONER OF HEALTH!

HEH, HEH! YEP! THAT'S MY YELP-YARN, FIENDS! HENRI TOOK A WALK THAT NIGHT TO TRY AND DECIDE WHAT TO DO... AND THE SOLUTION, SHALL WE SAY, DROPPED INTO HIS LAP OF COURSE, HE HAD TO COAX THE COMMISSIONER TO DROP (DEAD, THAT IS) BY... WELL... I'LL SPARE YOU THE BORY DETAILS. JUST USE YOUR LIL' OL' IMAGINATIONS. AND NOW IT'S TIME TO CLOSE THE DOOR OF THE VAULT TILL NEXT WE MEET, WHICH WILL BE IN THE CRYPT-KEEPER'S MAG... TALES FROM THE CRYPT, TILL THEN... AS THE UNDERTAKERS SAY... 'HAVE A NICE MOURNING!'



THE END...