TALES FROM THE CRYPT

NO. 32
OCT. - NOV.

FEATURING...

THE CRYPT-KEEPER
THE VAULT-KEEPER
THE OLD WITCH
HEE, HEE! E.C.'S SCIENCE-FICTION MAGS MUST BE PRETTY FIENDISH TO GIVE THESE TWO GHOULOOTS A CHARGE! LOOK AT 'EM!
HEH, HEH! Come in, fiends! Come into the Crypt of Terror! Once again we meet for our shivery session! Yes, it's your host in horror, the Crypt-Keeper, opening his mad-mag with a terrifying tale guaranteed to curl your hair and quindle your blood! Several issues back, I told you a yarn about a butcher which proved very popular! One avid fan even sent me a cleaver with complete directions for what he wanted me to do with it... but it didn't sink in! So I decided to tell you another story about a butcher... one that I'm sure will tickle your spare-ribs!

I call this meaty little morbid melodrama...

As the nauseous cannibal remarked on a particularly hot day...

"'Tain't the meat... it's the humanity!"

No one paid much attention to Zach gristle before World War II. He was just another small town butcher... but that was before the war suddenly. With the advent of meat rationing... red points... and ceiling prices... Zach gristle became very popular...

Howdy, Zach! Morning, Mr. Gristle! Morning, Zach! Morning, folks! On line early, I see!

I'M AWFULLY SORRY, MRS. VINKLE. I NEED THOSE POINTS IN ORDER TO BUY THE MEAT MYSELF. I COULDN'T DO THAT!

NO SIRLOIN STEAKS, MR. GRISTLE? SORRY, MR. FUDDY! I JUST SOLD THE LAST ONE TO MR. CUSPI- TORE! I COULD LET YOU HAVE A FEW PORK CHOPS!

OH, DEAR! I ONLY HAVE FORTY-ONE POINTS LEFT, MR. GRISTLE? CAN I... OWE THEM TO YOU?

SOMETIMES RATIONING WAS HARD ON MR. GRISTLE! THAT IS, UNTIL HE DISCOVERED AN INTERESTING FACT... IF I COULD GET A SIRLOIN STEAK, MR. GRISTLE, I'D... ER... PAY? WE'VE... SORT OF... FORGET ABOUT THE CEILING PRICE?

POOR MR. GRISTLE! HE TRIES SO HARD, AND HE'S SO HONEST!

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HE'S TRYING TO SELL ME SALAMI LEFT? I EXPECT ANOTHER SHIPMENT TOMORROW? BUT YOU'D BETTER BE ON LINE EARLY! FIRST COME, FIRST SERVED, YOU KNOW!

NO TELLING HOW LONG THIS WAR WILL LAST, ZACH! MIGHT AS WELL MAKE HAY WHILE THE SUN SHINES! THERE ARE A FEW OF US WHO'D BE WILLING TO PAY ENOUGH TO GET WHAT WE WANT!

SUIT YOURSELF, ZACH? YOU'RE ONE OF THEM, NOW? YOU COULD BE PRETTY WELL OFF IF YOU USED YOUR HEAD! THINK IT OVER!

I WILL, SIR! I'LL THINK IT OVER!
Junior: I'm not hungry! Seven-teen points!

You say something, Zach? Huh! Oh! No! I was just thinking, dear!

One thousand! Two thousand! Oh... pardon me! I was just counting my loot from the black market operation I was in during the war! Heh, heh! There was a shortage of caskets, y'know? I dug up an idea on how to cash in 'em up again? Heh, heh! As for Mr. Gristle... well... let's look in on his home life!

Mrs. Grundy: That's all I've got, Mr. Gristle!

Mr. Gristle: Thought it all over? And he made up his mind?

Mrs. Grundy: Why, Mr. Gristle! There isn't a decent piece of meat in your whole showcase, y'know!

Mr. Gristle: That's all I've got. Mrs. Grundy! Shortage, y'know!

But I waited on line for two hours! I'm the first customer you've had today!

Mrs. Grundy: That's all I've got. Mr. Gristle? I'm sorry!

But at night, shadowy figures would come to Mr. Gristle's store... Here's your steak, Mr. Vandercliff! Ten pounds!

And here's your thirty bucks, Mr. Gristle! Oh! I've got another customer for you! He wants steaks, too!

But I can't get anymore, Mr. Vandercliff! I don't get enough points! As it is, I'm giving the left-overs to the folks in town!

You could figure something out, Mr. Gristle! The folks in town pay points for their meat! Isn't there any meat that you can get without red points?
...and at the three-quarter marker, it's Fathead, by a fat head! And now... at the stretch... it's... it's... hold it! Fathead just stumbled! Looks like he busted his leg! Too bad! Now they'll have to shoot him! And he was such a good horse, too! Er... Mr. Gristle? You listening?

Junior! Eat your meat! I'm not hungry! Gee-yup! 'Specie me to eat like a horse!

Horse meat? You say something, Zach? Huh? Oh, no? I was just thinking, dear.

Yes! Mr. Gristle found the solution to his problems! He began buying horsemeat, and palming it off to his poor customers as the real thing. Thereby getting those precious red-points... 'Mmm, you have such a nice selection, how, Mr. Gristle?

Yes! What would you like, Mrs. Snerd? Some steak? Chops?

And with the precious red-points, he'd purchase good meat which he'd sell at the black market. These steaks are going to cost you more money, Mr. Vandercliff! I'm taking big chances now! Five dollars a pound from here on!

Okay, okay! Now, listen! I need twenty pounds next time! I'm having a banquet! And my friend needs ten pounds! Can you get it for us?

Soon, the horsemeat wasn't enough! Mr. Gristle had to find other avenues of supply.

Look, Gristle! I'm supposed to sell this meat to zoos! It's too old for human consumption! Seen laying around the warehouse too long! Now, for a price.

No points! Gristle! I'll take it! But not a word, understand? Not a word to anyone.

No points, Gristle! I'm supposed to sell this meat to zoos! It's too old for human consumption! Seen laying around the warehouse too long! Now, for a price...
HEH, HEH! FIRST HORSEMEAT! NOW STALE MEAT! MR. GRISTLE CERTAINLY WAS SINKING LOWER AND LOWER! BUT NO ONE SUSPECTED NICE MR. GRISTLE WHEN A FEW PEOPLE... THE POORER PEOPLE IN TOWN... FELL SERIOUSLY ILL!

HOW'S YOUR HUSBAND TODAY, MRS. HORTON?

BETTER, THANKS? NOW, I AIN'T BEEN FEELIN' TOO GOOD!

BUT ONE NIGHT MR. GRISTLE ISN'T IN? HE'S OUT WALKING!

WELL JUST TELL 'IM HE CAN PICK UP ANOTHER LOAD OF THE BLOP!

THE... THE WHAT?


OH, Y-YES! I'LL TELL HIM?

TELL 'IM I GOT SOME HORSEMEAT FOR 'IM, TOO! 'BYE!

MRS. GRISTLE CLOSED THE DOOR AND STARED AT IT FOR A MINUTE! THEN SHE WENT OUT! SHE ARRIVED AT THE BUTCHER-SHOP A FEW MINUTES LATER...

HERE'S YOUR MEAT, MR. VANDERCLIFF!

THANKS, ZACH!

DON'T TAKE IT, MR. VANDERCLIFF! IT'S STALE... OLO! IT MAY BE HORSEMEAT!

SARAH! HEH, HEH! NOT THIS STUFF, MRS. GRISTLE! I PAY SIX BUCKS A POUND FOR THIS STUFF! ZACH'S REGULAR CUSTOMERS GET THE JUNK!

SIX DOLLARS! BLACK MARKET!
After Zach's customer leaves, you're selling meat on the black market. You're passing off horse meat and stale meat to your customers for red-points. We're going to be rich, Sarah!

I don't want that kind of money, Mr. Morton was terribly sick. Was it from your meat?

Probably, who cares? Anyway, I want the money. After the war I'm going to retire! I've socked away six grand already!

You've got to stop this! It's against the law!

Han! Ask Old Snork a man about his gasoline business! Find out about Finch's tire racket! Everybody's doing it! Why shouldn't I?

Yes! Mrs. Gristle was awful mad. But she couldn't talk Zach out of it. He was determined to make his pile... no matter who suffered. He got a deal for you, Gristle. Got some tainted meat! Real bad! No one'll know it, though! Got a process that covers it up. They won't find out till it's inside 'en! They'll feel pretty sad!

So Zach Gristle bought the spoiled meat and sold it to his customers. My sister-in-law is here from out of town! She's amazed that we can get all the meat we want! Heh? Just try to do my best, Mrs. Abagrombie! What'll it be?
HEH, HEH! DON'T TURN OVER THE PAGE TO SEE WHAT HAPPENS! YOU'LL GET TO IT, IT'S COMING. THE BEGINNING OF THE END COMMERCE TO START RIGHT NOW! ER, FLOWERS FOR MRS. ABACROMBIE? WHAT KIND? WHY LILLIES, OF COURSE! DEAD, Y'KNOW?

DID YOU HEAR MRS. ABACROMBIE JUST DIED? POISONED? THEY THINK HER SISTER-IN-LAW DID IT!

POISONED? THEY'RE PERFORMING AN AUTOPSY RIGHT NOW!

EXCUSE ME, MRS. GABBER! IF THAT'S ALL YOU WANT, I'D LIKE TO CLOSE UP!

PARK YOUR THINGS, SARAH! WE'RE LEAVING TOWN!

YOU'RE IN TROUBLE! THEY FOUND OUT! I...I WARNED YOU NOT TO SELL HORSEMEAT.

IT'S WORSE THAN THAT, SARAH! FOUR PEOPLE ARE DEAD ALREADY! I SOLD THEM TAINTED MEAT!

YOU... YOU WHAT?
S'Matter, Sarah? Can't you hear? He killed 'im! He sold 'em poisoned meat! Ah! Now it's sinking into that female brain! Ah! That's it! Get mad! Get good and mad! Heh... Heh...

You're a murderer!

I did it for us, Sarah! For you and me and... Junior!

Junior! He's eating at Herbie Horton's house!

Horton! She bought some of it!

At that moment, Junior staggered into the kitchen! He looked a little green around the gills...

I... I feel sick, Mommy. I... I Junior! Baby!

Gulp!

Little Junior collapsed on the kitchen floor.

He's dead, Zach! Dead! You killed him, too... Our son... Eh... Eh... our son.

When they unlocked Zach Gristle's butcher shop the next morning, they found Mrs. Gristle standing behind the counter... staring into space! She wore a blood-smeared apron around her neck! Before her... in the meat showcase, Zach Gristle had been clumsily carved and laid out in the various trays...

Good Lord! Tainted meat? Tainted meat anyone?

All right, so you ain't hungry? You can window shop, can't you? Not interested, Eh? Maybe you'd be interested in attending a formal banquet given by the ghouls, zombies, werewolves, and vampires black-market-bodies syndicate in honor of Zach Gristle? He will be served. H'mm! Still not interested, Eh? How about going on to the vault-keeper then? He's not interesting, too! Got a boring story for you! Then I'll dig you later with another Creepy-Crypt Collector's Item!

ROPE IN!

THE DOOR TO THE WAGNER-ELLIS-SUCKLY AND MORGAN CONSTRUCTION COMPANY SWINGS OPEN AND THE STRANGER ENTERS! HE LOOKS AROUND AND THEN STEPS UP TO THE RECEPTION DESK...

YES, SIR? WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?

WILL YOU TELL MR. DONALD MORGAN TO STEP OUT HERE FOR A MOMENT? MY CREDENTIALS...
Donald Morgan comes out of his office...

He... He's from the Police Department, sir!

Oh? All right! I'll be right out!

Donald Morgan comes out of his office...

Yes? What is it? Mr. Morgan, you were in complete charge of the contract for the city hospital. Were you not?

The secretary looks down at the stranger's glittering badge. She switches on the office intercom and whispers...

Mr. Morgan! There's a... a gentleman out here... to see you!

Mr. Morgan! You have him wait, Miss Ballentine! I'm busy...

Mr. Morgan! You are under arrest!

Mr. Morgan! You are under arrest!

Mr. Morgan! You are under arrest!

There's no mistake, Mr. Morgan!

The upper floor of the hospital collapsed this morning! An investigation showed that the concrete used was substandard. Almost all sand! Better come along quietly!

I was! I handled the entire construction job myself! Why?

What? But... but there must be some mistake!

What's going on here?

What is the meaning of this?

Morgan! What does he want?

I want him for homicide. Morgan! Is this true?

What? No! No! There's been a mistake!
The only mistake was the one your partner made when he used too little concrete and too much sand in that hospital job he handled.

ELLIS... WAGNER BUCKLY! BELIEVE ME! I DIDN'T DO THIS! I... I BETTER COME ALONG QUIETLY, MR. MORGAN! LET'S GO!

Heh, heh! Looks like Mr. Ellis, Mr. Buckley, and Mr. Wagner are shocked over this latest turn of events, eh, kiddies? Look at 'em... chattering like a bunch of monkeys! They seem nice and respectable, eh. The kind that are appalled by dishonesty? Well, come on in and listen! You'll be shocked...

That's Buckley screaming, now. How did I know it would collapse? That mixture stood up in that school job Morgan handled last year...

What are you complaining about, Ellis? You got a nice fat chunk of the dough we saved!

I'm not complaining! Only they're on to us now!

So what! We've only substituted cheap materials on Morgan's jobs! He'll take the rap! He's trapped... trapped in a web of circumstantial evidence!

Heh, heh! Oh, dear! Our reputation!
WE HAVE YOUR HONOR. WE FIND THE DEFENDENT, DONALD MORGAN, GUILTY OF MANSLAUGHTER.

GENTLEMEN OF THE JURY? HAVE YOU REACHED A VERDICT?

WE HAVE, YOUR HONOR. WE FIND THE DEFENDENT, DONALD MORGAN, GUILTY OF MANSLAUGHTER.

NO!

YES, DONALD! YES! THE WEB IS TIGHT! IT'S BEEN WOVEN WELL! YOU'RE DONE FOR...

I'M INNOCENT! I TELL YOU... INNOCENT!

TOMORROW! WE'RE FLYING DOWN... IN THE COMPANY'S PRIVATE PLANE!

AND SO, THE NEXT DAY, A SMALL FOUR-SEATER TAKES OFF FROM THE AIRPORT JUST OUTSIDE THE CITY... ROUND FOR LA PAZ, CAPITOL OF BOLIVIA...

POOR MORGAN! HE ALWAYS LOVED TO FLY WITH US! TOO BAD HE HAD TO MISS THIS TRIP!

HEH, HEH! YES! TOO BAD!

WHEN DO WE LEAVE, WAGNER?

TOMORROW? WE'RE FLYING DOWN... IN THE COMPANY'S PRIVATE PLANE!

DO YOU REMEMBER THAT BOLIVIAN CONTRACT WE BID ON? THE POWER PLANT AND DAM? WELL... WE GOT IT!

WHAT? WHY? THAT'S ONLY A THIRD OF US TO SPLIT THE PROFIT, NOW!

AT THE OFFICES OF THE WAGNER, ELLIS, AND BUCKLY CONSTRUCTION COMPANY...

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HEH, HEH! YES! TOO BAD!
A week later, the construction company's plane is winging its way south over the Andes Mountains...

* We ought to reach La Paz before right-fall!
* Look at those mountains down there! Aren't they beautiful!

North of Lake Titicaca on the Peru-Bolivian border, the tiny plane runs into a storm.

* We're being blown off-course!
* These mountain storms are treacherous! We'll crash!

The storm lashes at the airplane, tossing it like a feather.

* It's getting dark! I can hardly see!
* Look-out! That mountain-top!

The mountain-top looms up before the plane! Wagner struggles with the controls.

* I can't get any altitude! We'll have to try going around!

The three men in the plane strain their eyes, trying to pierce the gathering gloom. Suddenly, as a bolt of lightning flashes...

* We're flying between two mountains! Get up higher! Get up higher!
* I can't! I can't!

The shock throws the three men forward! For a moment, the tiny plane vibrates crazily...

* What happened? We hit something?
* But, but we didn't crash!

Wagner peers out of the window as the lightning flashes once more, he screams...

* We're still between those two mountains! We're just hanging in mid-air!
* What? You're right?
Soon, the storm subsides! Ellis takes a flashlight and opens the plane door...

Ellis climbs from the tint craft...onto the cable-like structure...

But Ellis does not listen! He starts down the cable network! Soon, only the glow of his flashlight can be seen.

Suddenly the flashlight-glow blanks out, and the night is filled with a blood-gurbling shriek of horror...

From inside their plane, Wagner and Buckly stare into the darkness...

As dawn breaks over the Andes, Wagner and Buckly behold a strange and terrifying sight! Their tiny plane hangs entwined in the strange cable-network, halfway between the sheer sides of two mountains and high over the valley floor...

Buckly moves out over the cable network! Wagner hangs pack a sensation of terror crawling down his spine.

G'moh, Wagner! You can't stay there till you starve! I... I don't know! I... I... oh, my lord...
THING DARTS DOWN THE NETWORK FROM BEYOND THE MOUNTAIN RIDGE! ITS EIGHT HUGE SPINY LEGS CARRY IT AT A BREATHTAKING SPEED! WAGNER SCREAMS...

BUCKLY! LOOK OUT! IT'S A GIANT SPIDER!

BUCKLY'S HYSTERICAL SHRIEKS OF PAIN FINALLY SUBSIDE! THE HUGE SPIDER TURNS AND MOVES TOWARD THE PLANE...

NOW...NOW, IT...IT'S COMING TO GET ME!

THE GIANT SPIDER CROUCHES OVER THE TINY PLANE... WAITING FOR ITS TERRIFIED OCCUPANT TO EMERGE! IT WAITS PATIENTLY... HOUR AFTER HOUR...

...I'M TRAPPED! TRAPPED!
IT'S JUST SITTING THERE... WAITING FOR ME...

BACK IN THE UNITED STATES, THE WARDEN AND THE DOCTOR STARE DOWN AT DONALD MORGAN! HE SITS IN THE CORNER OF HIS CELL... MUTTERING...

HE'S BEYOND HOPE, WARDEN! A COMPLETE MENTAL BREAKDOWN!

WHILE HIGH IN THE ANDES, MORGAN'S EX-BUSINESS ASSOCIATE IS SUFFERING THE SAME FATE! HE, TOO, IS OUT OF HIS MIND...

EH...EH... EH... SPIDER... EH WAITING... EH... FOR ME... EH... EH

HEH, HEH! YEP! SO AFTER WAGNER, ELLIS AND BUCKLY TRAPPED MORGAN IN A WEB OF EVIDENCE, THEY WERE TRAPPED IN ONE THEMSELVES... A REAL WEB; THAT IS! I SUPPOSE YOU'RE WONDERING IF A SPIDER LIKE THAT REALLY EXISTS? WELL, NEXT TIME YOU SEE A LOCAL SPIDER, ASK IT IF IT EVER HEARD OF THE SOUTH AMERICAN MOUNTAIN CRAWLER! IT'LL PROBABLY CURL UP AND DIE AT THE MERE MENTION OF ITS NAME!

BYE, NOW!
Ramsey squeezed the trigger and felt the pistol buck violently in his hand. The young native guide in front of him spun around and crashed headlong into the heavy foliage.

"I don't need him any longer," Ramsey muttered as he slipped his gun back into its holster and stepped around the body sprawled beside the crude trail. "Now that he's revealed the hiding place of his peoples' treasure, I can go the rest of the way myself. As soon as I crack open the tomb where these superstitious, savages buried their loot, a fortune in diamonds and rubies is mine!"

3 hours later... 3 gruelling hours of incessant hacking through the matted underbrush... Ramsey staggered into a grassy clearing. Before him, rising grey and ominous as the guide had predicted, towered the mountain where the treasure of Mol-okko Island was hidden. A half-million dollars, intended as a sacrifice to primitive gods, was sealed up in those rocks!

The fatigue of the long trek from the coast... the painful lunging over razor-backed ridges and through evilly-sucking swamps... was forgotten by Ramsey in that moment of ecstasy. Here... somewhere along the base of this craggy mountain... was the secret entrance to a sacrificial chamber which housed a king's ransom!

The sun had begun fading when Ramsey found the cryptic designs carved into the stone. A warning, the
guide had whispered, that doom awaited anyone who dared invade the sanctity of the mountain! The only one who's perished because of that fool curse, Ramsey sneered, was the guide, himself!

In a few minutes he had jammed a dozen sticks of dynamite into fissures beside the sealed entrance. From a distance, protected by a huge boulder, Ramsey heard the shattering blast and saw tons of rock shower in every direction. When the dust had settled he raced toward the gating hole now revealed in the mountain's side... even from this distance he could see the glimmer of precious stones within the tomb. It was all his...

A deep rumble made him stop in his tracks. The ground began to tremble wildly... far above, the mountaintop was disintegrating before his eyes! Flames leaped madly toward the clouds... hissing black lava gushed torrentially down upon him...

Before Ramsey, in his terror, could flee across the grassy clearing, the searing liquid was upon him. Like fiery tar it bubbled around his legs, searing the tortured skin and tearing it loose in raw shreds. Pain stabbed instantly through his body, from head to toe... he felt stifling heat filling his agonized lungs, choking his breath in his throat.

The treasure... a thought flickered through his brain as he felt himself dissolving in that blanketing sea of molten lava... buried in the side of a VOLCANIC MOUNTAIN! Dynamite... activated it...

The scorching lava rolled on, and in its midst Ramsey's body turned molten hot... simmered and spit like meat broiled in a blast-furnace...
So, now you know! So maybe my two idiot editors won't be commandeering large portions of my column any more to make some ridiculous announcement about E.C.'s latest money grabbing effort! A couple of pages back, you probably saw the cover of the first issue of the most recent addition to the E.C. trash heap: 'MAD,' they call it! You'd be MAD if you bought it! Of all the nauseating things, this new mag is actually FUNNY...choke! How disgusting can one get? When I reluctantly agreed to he myself up with this miserable outfit, and allowed my Tales from the Crypt to be published in the form of comic magazines, I never in my goriest nightmares dreamed that I would be in any way associated with funny-type magazines! Imagine a "comic" being COMIC! (But C.K. there's a HORROR story in "MAD"! —ed.) Who tells it? Does V.K. tell it? Does O.W. tell it? DO I TELL IT? WHO TELLS IT? (Harvey Kurtzman tells it! — ed) THERE! THAT'S WHAT I MEAN! What does that WAR MONGER know about HORROR? Where does ROW, KA BLAMMM, WHOOSH Kurtzman come off writing horror stories? (But this is different, C.K. This is a FUNNY horror story! Why, we nearly died! — ed) NEARLY, eh? (That's the joke.) And anyway, who ever heard of a FUNNY HORROR story? (But C.K.) "Your boy, Jack Davis, drew it! — ed) THERE! THAT'S WHAT I MEAN! What does...WHO? (Jack Davis! — ed; JACk sob; DAVIS? MY sob? BOY? (There, there, C.K! No tears! — ed) How could he do this to me? (Simple! We offered him money! — ed.) RUINING HIM THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE DOING. RUINING HIM! DEAD BODIES AREN'T GOOD ENOUGH! PICKLED WEREWOLF KNuckles AREN'T GOOD ENOUGH! VAMPIRE GHOULASH (HUNGARIAN STYLE) ISN'T GOOD ENOUGH! You have to spoil him with MONEY? (You do business your way, we'll do business our way! — ed.) I QUIT! (Now, how? The CONTRACT? Remember? — ed.) Hmmmph! (That's better! Now go on with your column! — ed) Ah, yes! The column! Well, let's look at some mail:

Dear Crypt-Keeper,

I suppose by now you've discovered the mistake you made on Tales from the Crypt No. 30, and have received hundreds of corrective letters. But in case you haven't, you should that the gold seekers sailed round the Cape of Good Hope which is in Africa, when you obviously meant Cape Horn in South America.

E. Kauanugb
N. Bergen, N.J.

In your first story, I found a big mistake! He said, "the hungry critter's taken shelter (this) round the Cape of Good Hope an' beaten us..." Of course the fact that the Cape of Good Hope is in Africa shouldn't matter much except that they would have landed in India. Most of them didn't go around Cape Horn anyway. They went to the isthmus of Panama, crossed on foot to the other side, and got a boat which was waiting for them.

Jamaal Siddon
Yonkers, N.Y.

In 'Ghastly Prophecy' you wrote that the gold seekers went around the Cape of Good Hope. This hardly seems possible since Cape Hope is at the northern tip of Africa. Was this a misprint or a geographical error?

David A.V. Vandeneede
Dubuque, Iowa

All right, already! So I made a mistake! So what! want I should know geography? Besides, my idiot editors should have caught the mistake! (So WE should have geography! —ed) (I know geography! —Harvey Kurtzman) WAR MONGER!

Dear Crypt-Keeper,

I probably wouldn't think of your horror stories reaching their long tentacles across the Atlantic to scare characters like me over here in England. May I take this opportunity to say that your art, horror and terror stories I've ever read. Let's hope that your little ambassadors of horror (your magazines) keep managing to crawl their ghastly way over here, if only to keep me screaming.

Alan Creasey
London, England

Blimey! 'E's off is bloody rocked, by Jove, and all that sort of stuff. It's been bully earring from you, Al, old boy!

Dear Crypt-Keeper,

Your stories are the most repellent, the most disgusting stories I have ever read. When I read your magazine, I get sick to my stomach. I am not alone in this opinion. All my friends think the same thing. Keep up the good work.

Mervin Gilbert
Westport, Conn.

My friends think so too, Marvel.

Dear C.K.

I would be most pleased if you would send me the set of photographs. I am decided to send it all, and that's the quickest way I know. Enclosed is the fearful fee required.

Gratefully
Robert Hummert
San Francisco, Cal.

For any of you other grateful ingrates who are looking for a way out, be advised that five bez seven autographed photographic reproductions of V.K., O.W., and myself are still available, and will be for some time! So there's no rush! Mail your quarter in anything! Few banded copies of Tales of Terror kicking around too. Likewise two hits! Subscriptions...full year...six issues...six bids...75c in coin of the realm to you unhep heads! Sesp complaints, compliments, picture orders, T. of T. orders, subscription orders and short orders (make mine on reel?) to:

The Crypt-Keeper
Room 706, Dept. 32
225 Lafayette St.
N.Y.C. 12, N.Y.
READ OF THE STARK HORROR
TWO MEN FOUND IN A GAME OF
CUTTING CARDS!

This story is probably the most horrible, blood-curdling tale you will ever read. It concerns two professional gamblers... Gus Forney and Lou Crebis. Gamblers like Gus and Lou... are in a class by themselves! Gambling is their life! The wager the bet... is their blood! But Gus Forney and Lou Crebis hated each other... hated each other like poison... There isn't enough room in this whole world for both of us, Lou! I mean there isn't enough room in this whole world for both of us, Lou! And I'm willing to gamble to see who leaves it! I'm not leaving, Gus! So, goodbye... get on your horse... You're bluffing, Gus! Okay, you're on. Shall we draw? High card wins! The loser dies! The choice of method is his!
Loud fingered the face down cards, running through them! Then he spun one over...

"Age? Too bad, Gus! I still draw! There are three aces left in that deck!"

Gus shuffled the cards and spread them out, face down on the table...

"Go ahead, pick!" "Okay, I'll pick...er..."

"Why, you lucky @*#$!! Ah, heh, heh! Ace, Lou! Shall we draw again?"

"No! I got a simpler method! Get your revolver! I challenge you to a game of Russian Roulette!"

"Okay, Lou. You're on."

Gus stared down at the cards fanned out before him! The odds were sixteen to one against his picking one of the three remaining aces! He spun a card over...

"Why, you lucky @*#$!!"

"Heh, heh! Ace, Lou! Shall we draw again?"

"Okay, I'll pick...er..."

"Why, you lucky @*#$!!"

"Heh, heh! Age, Lou! Shall we draw again?"

"Okay, Gus! I'll spin the chamber..."

"Okay with me, Gus! I'll spin the chamber..."

"Loud to the six-shot revolver and twirled the chamber...

"There she's stopped! Right spinning! Now remember, give it to the other. Till she goes off!"

"Loud to the revolver! He lifted the barrel to his temple! The odds were five to one..."

Gus took his revolver from the drawer and removed all but one bullet from its six chambers...

"We go in sequence... alternating! I'll go first!"

"Okay with me, Gus! I'll spin the chamber..."
**Gus handed the gun to Lou! Lou placed the muzzle against his head! Odds now... four to one.**

**Gus took the gun! Heads of perspiration began to pop out on the two ganglers' faces! Gus pointed the revolver! Odds... three to one.**

**Lou took the gun! There were three shots left now! One of them had that bullet! Odds... two to one.**

**Lou sighed in relief and mopped his brow! Gus's hand shook a little as he raised the gun! He hesitated! It was even money, now! His finger twitched... then closed...**

**Gus grinned! Lou stared at the gun! The odds had run out! The bullet was left! Gus handed the weapon over...**

**Heh, heh! Too bad, Lou!**

**Choke!**
Lou lifted the gun and steeled himself for the death blow as the bullet came crashing into his brain. He squeezed the trigger...

CLUNK!

A... a dud. Why, you dirty s---.

You knew it all the time! That’s why you wanted to go first! You thought I’d crawl...

Don’t be an idiot, Lou! You twirled the chamber. How did I know it would come up last?

You can’t talk your way out of this one. Gus! No matter when it came up, you had a sure thing!

Are you accusing me... Gus Forney, heart-stopping gambler? I’m an honest gambler and I’d never have found you out. But I never welsh when I lose!

Okay, cherub. If you’re such a big-shot gambler, then you’ll accept my challenge!

Okay, you crum you’re on!

Nobody calls Gus Forney a cheater. Cherub... I challenge you to a game of chop-poker!

To a finish! Call your doctor! I’ll get mine!
THEN, FIENDS, BEGAN THE MOST HORRIBLE CARD GAME IN THE HISTORY OF MODERN GAMBLING! YOU'VE HEARD OF STRIP POKER? WELL, CHOP POKER IS ALMOST LIKE THAT! ONLY INSTEAD OF LOSING AN ARTICLE OF CLOTHING... YOU LOSE A LIMB! CHOP POKER HAD BEEN PLAYED BEFORE... IT WAS TOLD... BUT ONLY ONE HAND AT A TIME? NEVER... TO A FINISH!

They sat at the green felt-covered table beneath the glaring lamp! The meat cleaver sparkled between them! Gus dealt the cards...

I'LL TAKE TWO!

I'LL TAKE THREE!

I GOT THREE TENS, LOU!

SORRY, GUS! THREE LADIES!

Lou picked up the cleaver and stood over Gus...

WHICH ONE, GUS?

THE PINKY, CHOKED LOU!

It was like a fiendish duel! The doctors were the seconds! Time was taken out while Gus's second sourced him! The bandage was blotched red when they began again...

YOUR DEAL, LOU!

Gut!

Gus stretched out his hand! His personal doctor moved forward into the light! Lou raised the cleaver and brought it down...

LOU DEALT THE CARDS! THEY DISCARDED... THEN...

I GOT TWO PAIR, GUS! KING'S AND SIKES!

MY GAME, LOU! THREE FOURS!

ZOK!

DING! DING!

AAARRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR
Gus picked up the cleaver in his good hand. Lou's second moved into the lamplight...

Which one, Lou? The...the pinky...Gus!

Lou stretched out his left hand. Gus took careful aim...

Uuuunghhh!

Again time was taken out while Lou's second serviced him. Soon the cards were shuffled once more.

Let's go, Gus! You deal!

Out, I'm, Lou!

Huh, huh? Yep, kids! That's how the game was played! It continued like that...far into the night...as each hand was played and won...

Again time was taken out while Lou's second serviced him. Soon the cards were shuffled once more.

Let's go, Gus! You deal!

Out, I'm, Lou!

What? You don't believe me? Well, let's look in on this hospital room! Lou and Gus are in there...still gambling.

Go ahead! It's your move!

So pass the chewing gum! I want to jump you!

But Lou and Gus never did play chop poker to a finish! Oh, yes! They played all night and into the next day! But they had to quit towards evening! Seems that neither of them could deal the cards!
For a moment, the crowd under the big-top sat deathly silent. Then, from the bargeboard, a drum began to roll... Its ominous staccato of anticipation growing louder and louder! In the center of the ring, the huge elephant lifted a massive foreleg! The scantily clad woman reclined on the tanbark floor! The elephant trainer barked orders! The ringmaster announced... and how, ladies and gentlemen, for the most death-defying feat ever presented under the big-top...
The girl stared up at the huge hoof: it was directly over her face! The trainer barked an order: the Goliath lowered its upraised foreleg! the drumroll thundered...

Eight thousand pounds... ladies and gentlemen! one slip... and it means certain death! watch.

The elephant hoof touched the woman's nose! a cymbal crashed.

The trainer and the girl bowed again and again! the crowd cheered.

The elephant act was over: the circus band struck up a happy march, and the clowns swept out across the arena! the trainer and the girl disappeared through the exit-way.

Emma was good! i have tonight, milo! her trained her foot was steady! well, Rene, didn't you think they applauded more than usual, tonight?

The couple moved across the circus grounds to a trailer: the letters painted upon it were big and impressive: 'milo, world's greatest elephant trainer!'

hOW would you like to ride into town tonight, milo?

not tonight, Rene! i'm tired.

The inside of the trailer was crowded and messy! colorful costumes lay strewn about! books and magazines sprawled on every available surface.

not tonight! not tonight! that's all i hear! well, i'm not staying around night after night... not in this dump!

i'm not stopping you from going into town, Rene...
THE WOMAN SLIPPED OUT OF HER SCANTY COSTUME AND INTO A STREET-DRESS. THEN DIVORCE ME, RENÉ! OH, NO! NOT THAT? EASY, BIG BOY! YOU'RE STUCK WITH ME! I'D NEVER GIVE YOU A DIVORCE WITHOUT A FIGHT! IT'D COST YOU PLenty... OKAY, RENÉ? OKAY! WE'VE BEEN ALL THROUGH THIS BEFORE!

RENÉ SLAMMED THE DOOR OF THE TRAILER IN ANGER AS SHE LEFT. FROM BEYOND, IN THE SHADOWS, A FIGURE WATCHED HER ENTER THE CAR...


LEETA, DARLING! OH, MILO! THEY CLUTCHED TO EACH OTHER FOR A FEW MOMENTS! THEN... DID YOU TELL HER ABOUT US? NO! IT'S NO USE. SHE'D NEVER GIVE ME A DIVORCE! I KNOW WE'LL HAVE TO RUN AWAY!

LEETA LOOKED AT MILO! A FLASH OF EVIL GLISTENED IN HER TEMPESTUOUS EYES. WHAT... WHAT IF THERE WERE A TERRIBLE ACCIDENT? WHAT IF RENÉ WERE KILLED? LEETA! WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?

EMMA COULD SLIP, MY DARLING! DON'T YOU SEE HOW EASY IT COULD BE? NO! EMMA WOULD NOT SLIP! SHE'S WELL TRAINED! SHE WOULD NOT PUT HER FOOT DOWN UNTIL I SIGNALLED HER.
AND IF YOU DID SIGNAL HER? IT... IT WOULD BE MURDER, LEETA!

EXACTLY, MY DARLING! AND NO ONE WOULD EVER KNOW! YOU COULD ACT SHOCKED... BLAME IT ON EMMA... CLAIM THAT SHE DISOBEYED YOU...

I'D HAVE TO HAVE HER SHOT!

YOU COULD TRAIN ANOTHER, MY DARLING! NEW WIFE... NEW ELEPHANT... A WHOLE NEW LIFE FOR YOU...

I I DON'T KNOW! I JUST DON'T KNOW...

Leeta's eyes burned, her face darkened...

IT'S THAT, OR ME? MILO! I'M NOT CUT OUT FOR THIS... THIS SECRET MEETING NONSENSE? I WANT YOU...ALL THE TIME... OR NOT AT ALL!

THAT'S IT! I WANT IT OVER, LEETA! PLEASE!

Leeta smiled, she pursed her lips... running her hand through Milo's hair...

OF COURSE, MY DARLING! TILL TOMORROW NIGHT'S PERFORMANCE! IF IT DOESN'T HAPPEN THEN...

Leeta, baby...

THE NEXT EVENING, MILO AND RENÉ STOOD IN THE ENTRANCE WAY TO THE BIG-TOP, AWAITING THEIR CUE... MUSIC! EMMA TRUMPETED SOFTLY! SHE SEEMED TO SENSE THAT SOMETHING WAS WRONG.

THERE, THERE, GIRL! EMMA! SHE'S ALL RIGHT... SEEMS NERVOUS TONIGHT. C'MON! THERE'S OUR CUE!

THE FANFARE SILENCED THE CROWD! THE RINGMASTER INTRODUCED THE ACT AS THE SPOT-LIGHT SWUNG TO THE BOWING PERFORMERS...

AND NOW... MILO... THE GREATEST ELEPHANT TRAINER IN THE WORLD AND HIS WONDER-ELEPHANT, EMMA, ASSISTED BY THAT DEATH-DEFYING BEAUTY... RENÉ...
The drum began its anxious roll once more; Milo barked an order and Emma lifted her foot. As the symbol crashed, Milo shouted at Emma; René screamed.

For a moment, Emma's gigantic hoof touched René's white face! The drum roll reached its crescendo...

Emma trumpeted shrilly; she reared up... snorting! For a moment, the stunned audience was shocked by the gory sight! Then someone shrieked... pandemonium broke loose! Milo barked, 'Milo, roll on horseback! Somebody do something! Emma's gone mad!' Two guards rushed forward; they fired at the red-eyed pachyderm... emptying their guns into her tough hide! The crowd screamed and shouted as it broke for the exits...

The thunder of the rolling drum grew louder and louder; Emma's hoof hung menacingly above René's white face! Milo barked an order and the huge foot lowered slowly.

The drum began its anxious roll once more; Milo barked an order and Emma lifted her foot. As the symbol crashed, Milo shouted at Emma; René screamed.

The drum roll reached its crescendo...
They led Milo to the exit-way. He was sobbing softly. But that night—far from the circus grounds...He and Leeta laughed together...

Emma swayed and toppled over on her side. Dead!
The circus band blared in discord, attempting to restore order. The ring-master rushed to Milo as he stared down at Rene's crushed remains in utter revulsion...

Don't...don't look at her, Milo! It...it's horrible! Rehe! Sob. Rene!

I told you, Milo! I told you it would be!

It was so simple. Darling! So simple!

Rene was so simple. I told you, darling!

Emma swayed and toppled over on her side. Dead!
The circus band blared in discord, attempting to restore order. The ring-master rushed to Milo as he stared down at Rene's crushed remains in utter revulsion...

I didn't take long for Milo to train a new elephant to take Emma's place! Within a year the act was again thrilling audiences...

Milo...with his wonder-elephant, Bessie, assisted by that death-defying beauty...Leeta!

The cue fanfare blared. The spot-light swung to the entrance-way to pick them up! A distant shrill trumpeting sounded...

Steady, Bessie! Gasp! That wasn't Bessie, Milo!

The circus returned to the town where the horrible "accident" had happened one year previously! The night of the opening performance, Milo and Leeta stood beside Bessie, awaiting their cue...

I'll be glad when this week is over and think we leave this berg! About Rene is buried here! and Emma...
The low rumbling that echoed into the night did not come from the bandstand where a clown darted across the arena...screaming...

I saw them...MILO! I saw them! What is it?

It burst through the exit-way across the tangle floor! It trumpeted shrilly! The stench filled the big-top! Its rotting hide fell away in slimy clods as it moved! Here and there, whitened bones protruded through its maggot-covered flesh! Perched on the remains of its head sat the decayed figure of a woman, urging it on...

EMMA...AND RENÉ!

It lumbered toward the horrified trainer and his new wife...the thing on its head pointing wildy...

It was too late for Milo to move...too late to run! The thing was upon him...lifting him in its foul-smelling, decomposing trunk! Leeta was caught beneath one of its huge rotted hoofs...

EEEEEEEE...AAAAAAAAAA...

Milo was flung to the tangle with the force of a twenty-story fall! Leeta was crushed flat.

Then, as the screams subsided and death came to Milo and Leeta, the huge thing and the human-thing upon it seemed to just fall away into a pile of putrescent slime...

PEANUTS...POPCORN...PUTRESCENT SLIME! HEY, LADY, BUY YER BRAT A BAG OF PUTRESCENT SLIME! HEY, HEY! YEP! THAT'S H'TALE, KIDDIES! RENÉ AND EMMA got their revenge, and Milo and Leeta got theirs too! By the way, I'm selling COTTONCANDY! Got a whole trunkful! HEE, HEE! WHAT ROTTON-TASTING STUFF! BYE, NOW. WE'LL ALL SEE YOU NEXT IN THE VAULT-KEEPER'S MAG, THE VAULT OF HORROR.
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Aren't YOU as SICK and Tired as I was of being SKINNY?

CHICKEN-CHESTED
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NARROW-SHOULDERED
SHORT-WINDED
WEAK, HALF-LIVE
JEERED, BULLIED

Then do as I did...
MAIL THE COUPON BELOW

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World's Greatest Builder of HE-MEN

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- TIMES WORK OPERATIONS
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- TIMES PULSE READS
- TIMES MEASURES FOR DISTANCES

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