THE VAULT OF HORROR

OK, RALPH! RALPH! I MISS YOU SO! WHY DID YOU HAVE TO DIE? IF ONLY YOU COULD COME BACK TO ME!

FEATURING

THE VAULT-KEEPER

THE CRYPT-KEEPER

THE OLD WITCH
HEH, HEH! WELCOME TO THE VAULT OF HORROR! ONCE AGAIN I HAVE A CHILLING STORY TO SOOTHE YOUR PALPITATING HEARTS! IT'S FROM MY PRIVATE COLLECTION AND TAKES PLACE IN THE DEEP SOUTH! I THINK YOU'LL LIKE IT! I CALL THIS LITTLE SPINE-TINGLER SOUTHERN HOSPITALITY!

Abner Scanlon was a gigolo because he so disliked work and since he was so handsome... he preyed on rich women and used his wiles to slyly draw money from them...

Good thing I left New York. I could've married that dame, but she was too old even for me!
Posing as a wealthy New York publisher, he traveled to Georgia... and there, because his funds were low, he married a young girl from one of the South's richest clans.

Ah! I'm set for life! Beautiful and rich! I sure can pick 'em!

Heh! Abner didn't pat himself on the back for long. His wife was beautiful... but neither she nor her family had a dime!

Broke?! Broke?! What do you mean, you're broke?

But, darling, with all your money, I didn't think...

My money?!! I don't have any money! I thought you had money!

What does it matter if we love one another?

Stupid! Stupid! Stupid! I don't love you! I only married you because I thought you were rich!

You tricked me! Trickled me! Oh, what a sap I am!

Abner, please don't talk like that!

Our plantation has been losing money for years! But my family is a part of the South's heritage! We're a proud family! And we were brought up to be proud of our birthright, and to defend it! That's why we pretend to be wealthy when we are really

Bah! You tricked me!

Oh, Father... Aunt Martha... he doesn't love me! He only...

There, there, Claudia, child don't fret!

Ah, Nevah yet met a Yankee who wahn't a cad!
Heh, heh! That was a sad day for Abner, but things soon quieted down. Claudia's father and aunt never so much as breathed another southern-fried word about the incident. Instead, their lives seemed to be concerned mostly with the grand and glorious past of their ancestors.

Old poker face!! Why, suh, youah eyes are gazing upon one of the most famous men in American history! A noble upright and courageous man nevar lived. Why, he built this very plantation we live on!

Okay... okay!

A gentleman, suh! And one of the most brilliant generals in the war! He began a fine tradition and he upheld the dignity and honor of that tradition till the day he died. May he rest in peace!

Okay! Okay! I said okay!

Yes! And now we who are left must maintain the honor and nobility of that grand tradition, and must never besmirch the Jackson name, even if it means death!

Okay! Okay! Okay! Okay!
Abner was very unsatisfied with his lot. He hadn't married to help defend the Jackson honor... he had wed for money! And he soon found an easy way of getting it!

Claudia! The antique vase! It's missing!

Nightclubs, bars, restaurants. Wine, women, song... and he loved every precious minute!

And then it was the gay life for Abner Scanlon...

But soon his money was gone, and it was back to the plantation, and...

Oh, Abner! Abner, why did you do it?

Oh, the shame of it! Pawhing an heirloom that was handed down from grandfather!

And carousing about the town! Drinking! You, suh, have disgraced the name of Jackson!

Whasha matter? I wanna have a good time! Need money... thash all! Hooked a crummy ol' vase! Whasha gif?
IF GENERAL JACKSON WERE HERE, HE'D REPAY YOU FOR YOUR BLASPHEMY!

HE'D DEFEND THE JACKSON HONOR!

HE'D DRAW HIS SWORD, SUH, AND...

SHUT UP! I'M SICK OF LISTENING TO YOU RANT ABOUT THE DEAD-PAN JENK IN THAT PAINTING!

ABNER! YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE SAYING!

OH, YES I DO! HIM WITH HIS TWIRLY MUSTACHE AND FANCY SWORD! HA! I'LL SHOW YOU WHAT I THINK OF HIM!

SPLASH!

AWK!

OHHHHH! IT'S TOO MUCH! MY... MY HEART!

AUNT MARtha!

THE STRAIN HAS BEEN TOO GREAT! I'LL GET HER MEDICINE!

NO, CLAUDIA! THE MEDICINE WON'T HELP HER! NOTHING CAN HELP HER... NOW!

SHE'S DEAD!
HEH, HEH, HEH! WELL, AUNT MARTHA'S FUNERAL WAS A QUIET AFFAIR. CLAUDIA AND HER FATHER SAID NOTHING ABOUT WHAT HAD CAUSED AUNT MARTHA'S DEATH TO SAFEGUARD THE JACKSON REPUTATION? THEN SOME DAYS LATER...

JUMPIN' JEHOSOPHAT! THAT'S THE FRAME FROM GRANDFATHER'S PICTURE! THE PAINTING OF HIM IS GONE FROM THE WALL!

SO WHAT?!

I SHOVED THE PAINTING UP IN THE ATTIC, AND I'M GOING TO SELL THIS FRAME! SO WHAT?!

THIS TIME, SUH, YOU HAVE GONE TOO FAR! IF GRANDFATHER WERE HERE, HE'D DEFEND HIS HONOR... AND I, IN HIS STEAD, MUST DO LIKEWISE! SUH! I CHALLENGE YOU TO A DUEL!

"LUVVA PETE! THE OLD GUY'S DEAD!"
Fearing for her safety, and aware of the danger to the Jackson reputation, Claudia remained silent. After the burial, Abner's outlook brightened.

Abner? Where are you going?

To the attic! There's a lot of things up there that I can sell! Ha! Ha! And no one can stop me!

Ah! Let's see! Oh! There's the painting of Old 'Sourpuss Jackson'? Him and his fancy sword! Fmff! Bet it was never out of its sheath!

Wonder what I should sell first? There's a lot of antiques here that ought to bring a good price.

Say...

I think I'll sell this whole plantation! Yeah! Who can stop me? Ought to get quite a wad for this dump! Hmmm...

Sure! After I collect on this place, I'll get a quick divorce, and then... Eh? What's that noise?

Wha...? Alone in her room, Claudia suddenly stiffened as an agonizing scream pierced the morbid stillness of the house...

Heavens! That scream came from the attic!
Quickly, she flashed the light around the attic until it came to rest on the painting. She stepped back, stunned. For General Sebastian Cornelius Jackson seemed to be smiling... and his sword was gone. The scabbard in the painting was now empty!

Heh, heh! Well, hush mah mouth! If that's southern hospitality, I think I'll live in Canada! Poor Abner (and he was poor, wasn't he?) wouldn't believe that Southerners really do defend their honor, but he finally got it into his head! The old general made it a point to teach him! Heh! Heh well, I hope you enjoyed my tale! Now, if you feel like being bored, turn the page and read a story by that powder-puff, the crypt-keeper!
HERE'S A DELIGHTFUL TALE THAT I'M SURE WILL MAKE THE HAINS ON THE BACK OF YOUR NECK GNASH! IT'S A CHILLER-OILER SPECIFICALLY DESIGNED TO FREEZE THE BLOOD IN YOUR VEINS! FROM MY VAST COLLECTION OF TERROR-TALES THAT I KEEP HERE IN THE CRYPT, I'VE SELECTED... THE JELLYFISH!

NIGHT COVERS THE SLEEPING CITY! IT SHROUDS THE DARK STREETS AND DESERTED ALLEYS LIKE A VELVET BLANKET! HERE AND THERE A HOLE OF TWINKLING LIGHT MARKS THE BLACKNESS! ONE OF THESE LIGHTS SHINES FROM A WINDOW OF THE BUILDING MARKED "NORTON PHARMACEUTICAL SUPPLY CO." INSIDE, TWO MEN FACE EACH OTHER.

NO, CHARLES! I WON'T DO IT! IT'S CRIMINAL! YOU'RE NOTHING BUT A SPINELESS COWARD! HOWARD! YOU'VE GOT NO BACKBONE!
CALL ME ANYTHING YOU LIKE, CHARLES! I WILL NOT PERMIT SUCH AN OUTRAGE!

BUT WE CAN MAKE THOUSANDS, HOWARD! WE'LL BE RICH!

I DON'T CARE, CHARLES! YOU'RE PLAYING WITH HUMAN LIFE! I WILL NOT AGREE TO SUCH A FIENDISH PLOT!

LISTEN, YOU JELLY-FISH! I'M THE BUSINESS MANAGER OF THIS COMPANY! WHAT I SAY GOES!

CHARLES! YOU CAN CALL ME A SPINELESS JELLY-FISH... YOU CAN CALL ME A COWARD WITH NO BACK-BONE... YOU CAN CALL ME ANYTHING YOU LIKE! I WILL NOT LET YOU DILUTE OUR INSULIN OUTPUT TO MEET THIS ORDER AND THAT'S FINAL! NOW, I'M LATE FOR MY TRAIN! I'LL BE OUT OF TOWN FOR THE NEXT FEW DAYS!

ONLY SO FAR AS BUSINESS MATTERS ARE CONCERNED! WHEN IT COMES TO DRUG PRODUCTION, I HAVE THE FINAL WORD! AND I SAY... NO!

LOOK, HOWARD! THIS IS AN ORDER FOR ONE MILLION HYPODERMIC INSERTS OF INSULIN! WE CAN ONLY MANUFACTURE FIVE-HUNDRED THOUSAND OF SUCH UNITS IN THE TIME ALLOWED! NOW, IF WE JUST DILUTE EACH CAPSULE ONE HALF... WE CAN MEET THIS ORDER!

HOWARD NORTON, BIOCHEMIST IN CHARGE OF DRUG PRODUCTION FOR THE NORTON PHARMACEUTICAL SUPPLY COMPANY, TURNS FROM HIS BROTHER, CHARLES, AND STORMS OUT OF THE OFFICE. CHARLES, THE BUSINESS MANAGER OF THE CONCERN, SINKS WEARILY INTO A CHAIR. A TWENTY-FIVE THOUSAND DOLLAR ORDER... THROWN OUT THE WINDOW BECAUSE MY BROTHER IS A WEAKLING.

WELL, I DON'T LET THAT KIND OF MONEY GO SO EASILY! NOT ME! I'M NO JELLY-FISH! HOWARD NEEDN'T FIND OUT! I'LL DO IT WITHOUT HIS CONSENT! I'LL JUST FORGE HIS NAME TO THIS PRODUCTION ORDER AND START SHIPPING IMMEDIATELY! WHEN HOWARD RETURNS, THE ORDER WILL HAVE BEEN FILLED.
AND SO, WITHOUT HOWARD KNO
ing it, Charles Norton begins
the shipments of diluted
insulin! *You Know what insulin
is, kiooes? People suffering
from diabetes have to take
it or else they pass out.
Maybe even die!

WHAT IS IT, DOCTOR?
HE'S IN A COMA!
ARE YOU SURE
HE TOOK HIS
INSULIN TOOT?
MRS. BREEKE?

POSITIVE, DOCTOR?
I GAVE IT TO HIM
MYSELF!

STRANGE!
LET ME
SEE HIS
INSULIN
SUPPLY!

ALL OVER THE COUNTRY, THINGS BEGIN TO HAPPEN
HE JUST COLLAPSED... WANT THEE ON
THE SIDEWALK!
SOMEONE SET
A DOCTOR!
DON'T BOTHER!
THIS GUY'S
DEAD!

PEOPLE TAKING NORTON INSULIN FOR DIABETES
BEGIN TO DROP LIKE FLIES...

...BUT SHE DID! SHE
TOOK IT EVERY DAY!
JUST AS YOU PRESCRIBED!

AND THEN IT IS DISCOVERED
NO! IT CAN'T BE! THIS INSULIN
HAS BEEN DILUTED! IT'S...
IT'S PRATICALLY WORTHLESS IN THIS
CONCENTRATION!

IN A FEW DAYS
I'M FROM THE GOVERNMENT,
PUN FOODS AND DRUGS
ADMINISTRATION! WHO IS
RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DRUG
PRODUCTION OF THIS COMPANY?

WHY, MY BROTHER
HOWARD IS BIOCHEMIST
IN CHARGE! I'M JUST
THE BUSINESS MAN-
AGER!
The trial is swift! The evidence against Howard is undeniable! He had been in charge; he had signed the production order. He must be guilty! Howard remains silent throughout the proceedings... resigned...

And so I say to you, ladies and gentlemen of the jury, Charles was right! He called me spineless... jellyfish! Well, maybe I am! I must be! If I weren't, I'd fight this. This frame-up!

But Howard doesn't fight! And when the jury finds him guilty...

I sentence you, Howard Norton, to not less than ten nor more than twenty years in the federal penitentiary at Leavenworth, Kansas!
Yes, the Judge sentences Howard Norton to from ten to twenty years. That's a long time. Time for a man to think... to plan... to grow bitter...

So he said I had no backbone, eh? Well... we'll see! We'll see!

Hey, Norton! The warden wants to see you!

You wanted to see me, warden?

Yes, Norton! Sit down!

I've been looking over your record. You're a bio-chemist. And a good one at that! We could use a man like you in the prison hospital laboratory! Want the job?

W... why... yes, sir!

Then the job is yours! Now remember, Norton! You're on your honor! No diluting of drugs, eh?

No, sir! You can depend on me, sir!

Are so, Howard Norton goes to work in the prison hospital laboratory! In spare moments he begins to experiment...

Hey, Norton! Why aren't you down in the recreation hall? They've got a good movie, tonight!

I'd rather stay here, guard! I'm... I'm working or something!

Yes! Ten years is a long time! Plenty of time for a man to find what he's looking for...

Ugh! This chow is awful! Say, Norton! Are you nuts? What are you putting those bones in your pocket for?

I need them for an experiment! I'm working on!

One day, after eight long years...

At last! I've succeeded! So I've got no backbone, eh, Charles? So I'm just a jellyfish, eh? We'll see! We'll see!
AND SO, AFTER TEN YEARS OF GOOD BEHAVIOR, HOWARD NORTON IS PARoled...
FREE... AT LAST!

A FEW NIGHTS LATER, AS CHARLES NORTON IS SITTING IN HIS LUXURIOUS HOME...
YES, COLLINS?
IT'S YOUR BROTHER, SIR! HE'S OUTSIDE! HE WANTS TO SEE YOU!

HOWARD... OUT OF PRISON? SEND HIM AWAY! I DON'T WANT TO SEE HIM! I...
CHARLES! IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME!

HOW ARE YOU, HOWARD?

AS WELL AS CAN BE EXPECTED, CHARLES! HOW'S BUSINESS? YOU LOOK QUITE PROSPEROUS!

Y-YES! THAT INSULIN ORDER WAS JUST WHAT WE NEEDED! AFTER THE SCANDAL, I SWITCHED TO PLASTIC! MADE QUITE A LOT OF MONEY!

I WONDER IF YOU COULD FIND A PLACE FOR ME, CHARLES? I'M ASKING YOU TO FORGIVE ME FOR THE TROUBLE I CAUSED YOU!

STILL THE SPINELESS JELLY FISH, EH, HOWARD? APOLOGIZING WHEN YOU KNOW I FRAMED YOU! ALL RIGHT! I FORGIVE YOU! YOU CAN START IN THE MORNING!

THANK YOU, CHARLES! THANK YOU!

COME! WE'LL DRINK TO OUR REUNION! NO HARD FEELINGS!

NO HARD FEELINGS, CHARLES!
As Charles pours the drink, Howard takes a small white pill from his pocket and drops it into Charles' glass while his head is turned.

Yes! There's plenty for both of us, Howard!

Charles swallows the drink swiftly...

You always called me a spineless jelly-fish with rod backbone, didn't you, Charles?

That's what you are, Howard! While I was in prison, I had a chance to do some experiments.

The glass falls to the floor and shatters!

Charles grasps the table for support; his body goes limp...

It dissolves calcium and phosphorous salts! You know... what bones are made of!

Uuuggnnn!

Suddenly, the rigidity leaves Charles' body and he collapses to the floor... a mass of flesh...

Gllagh! Now, I am not the spineless, back-boneless one, Charles! You are!

Howard gazes at the mound of quivering flesh before him! His thoughts go back to the days when he was a child, at the beach, when he would accidentally crush a slimy jelly-fish under his bare foot! He shudders... glistens his fists and...

Now you are a jelly-fish, Charles!

Heh, heh! Well, that's my little offering for your contemplation, dear reader! Yes, there were no hard feelings anymore! In fact, after Howard had removed his shoes and socks, Charles felt quite soft to him! Howard wasted no time! Besides, it was getting late! He had to step on it! 'Bye now! See you in my own book, Tales from the Crypt. I'll return you now to my fellow ghoulunatic, the vault-keeper!
Kathy stood in the back yard near the wood-pile and looked at the world through tear-filled eyes. He had hit her again. Her mean old stepfather had hit her again...

Why doesn't he like me? Why? I try to do everything he tells me.

**Inside the house, Martin Blackson watched his eight year old stepdaughter with hate in his eyes.**

Look at her... standing there, sniveling like a baby! Little brat...

I hate her... don't you, Martin?
Martin spun around at the sound of Ethel's voice...

I heard you beating Kathy! I couldn't stand it!

What are you doing out of bed?

I know you still love him! I know you never loved me... that you only married me for security!

But why... why take it out on Kathy?

Why shouldn't I be? You don't fool me, Ethel! I know you still love him! I know you never loved me... that you only married me for security!

Outside, Kathy dried her eyes with a tiny clenched fist! The squeak of Mrs. Thaumaturge's rocker drifted across the still afternoon air! Old, crotchetty Mrs. Thaumaturge! Kathy was afraid of Mrs. Thaumaturge... her wrinkled skin... her stringy hair... her toothless grin through a crack in the board fence. Kathy peeked at the old woman...

Don't peer at me through fences, child! If you want to get a good look, come on over!

Her stepfather had warned her about Mrs. Thaumaturge! He'd called her a witch! Once, he had told her... I'll call over Mrs. Thaumaturge! She's a witch! She'll take you away! She'll bake you... in her oven!

No, Daddy! No! Please!

I thought I told you to get the wood, now...

Yes, Daddy!

Yes, Daddy!
Mrs. Blackson was a very sick woman. Kathy had listened behind the door the day the doctor had warned her mother. "Stay in bed, Mrs. Blackson! I understand, Doctor!"

Any undue excitement, anxiety might prove fatal!

Kathy's eyes filled with tears. They ran down her cheeks, washing crooked white trails in the black smudges. Kathy flung herself on her knees and lay her head on her mother's heaving chest.

"Oh, Mommy! Mommy! Please, don't die... don't die and leave me..."

Kathy gasped, "Please, hurry... call the doctor... hurry..."

When Kathy came back to the house with the doctor, her mother was dead...

I'm sorry, Martin! There was nothing I could do!

Of course, Doctor!

Mommy... gone... sob... sob.

After she had carried the heavy logs into the house, Kathy rushed upstairs to her mother's room. Mother was the only one who loved Kathy. She had no other friends, and she could hardly even remember her real daddy now... Call... the doctor... Kathy! I... I've... had... another attack!

After the funeral, Kathy's stepfather seemed to treat her even more cruelly than before! She was all alone! Her stepfather would go off to work and leave her to shift for herself! Of course, there were things to do... the floors, the washing, dusting, mopping, carrying wood... Kathy? That you by the woodpile?

Y-yes, Mrs. Thauaturge...

Come over, Bear? I have something for you. Something... for me?
At first Kathy was afraid to go but loneliness is even more frightening for an eight-year-old. So... Candy! For me!

Kathy and Mrs. Thaumaturge became very friendly in the next few weeks. Kathy poured out her heart to the old woman, and felt relieved! She would visit Mrs. Thaumaturge every day...

What are you making, Mrs. Thaumaturge? Something, child! Something special! A surprise... for you!

Kathy was happy again! At least she received some affection! Not like in the evenings when her stepfather came home from work... You didn't wash the windows, Daddy! I was watching Mrs. Thaumaturge cooking.

I told you to stay away from that old crone. Didn't I? She's bad! She's a witch!

She's rot! She's not! She's my friend!

Well, you stay away from her or I'll thrash you within an inch of your life... Yes, Daddy...

The next day, when Kathy went out in the backyard for the wood... Kathy, child! I've been waiting for you! I have your surprise finished!

Daddy says I mustn't go near you anymore. Daddy said he'll whip me if I do!

Old Mrs. Thaumaturge thrust her gnarled arm over the board fence... A doll!
Kathy had never had a doll, she held it lovingly in her tiny hands. "It's candy! Oh, no! I'd never eat it! Never! I'll love it always!"

Kathy giggled as she studied the doll. "Yes"... "Does..." "Doesn't it? A little..."

Kathy's mother watched Kathy dance happily across the yard and into the house with her prize.

"It's candy, Kathy. Delicious." "Oh, thank you, Mrs. Thaumaturge!"

That afternoon, Kathy played with her doll. She lost track of the time. Suddenly, she heard the door open downstairs.

"Daddy's home. And I didn't finish my chores!"

Kathy hid the doll, and went downstairs. Her stepfather was furious. He raved and ranted... whipped her... and then...

"Go to your room! You'll do without supper tonight for this!"

But, Daddy... I'm hungry..."

Kathy went to her room. The gnawing pains of hunger clawed at her little stomach. She heard her father go out into the woodshed. She heard the singing of the big round saw as it spun... faster, faster! It was safe! Daddy was cutting wood! She got out the candy doll... caressed it lovingly...

"Just one little bite... just a little one! It won't spoil you..."

Suddenly, the night air was shattered by an ear-splitting scream...
The hand... the left hand... The doll... the same hand as the one he had accidently amputated... was missing.

Give it to me! Give it to me! Quickly! It's evil...

Walter stumbled toward Kathy, gasping for breath! She backed away, hugging the doll to her chest...

HD! It's mine! It's not evil! It's only candy! See?

Mrs. Thaumatunge smiled as she gazed at the headless candy doll in Kathy's hand...

Mrs. Thaumatunge! Come see! The strangest thing just happened to Daddy!

Kathy turned and walked out of her stepfather's room! She went downstairs, across the back yard, and up Mrs. Thaumatunge's porch steps! As she opened the door, she gulped down the last of the caramel head...

Kathy raised the doll to her mouth, and swiftly bit its head off! It was tasty caramel! She stared at her father wide-eyed... while she chewed. See... it's only candy! Daddy...

Walter, heh! What a delicious finish for a story, eh, dear reader? It certainly was a mouthful to swallow... for Cathy, that is! Oh, by the way... if you're wondering what happened to Cathy after her stepfather died, rest easy! Old Mrs. Thaumatunge adopted her! Night now, she's giving Kathy flying lessons... on a broom! And how, I'll turn you even to that olden sorcerer-pilot, the Old Witch!
THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

Hee, hee! So that nursery tale the vault-keeper just told you was supposed to be a horror story, eh? Hmmph! I'm sure you were all bored to death. Now if you really want a good horror tale, not a children's fairy tale... come in! Come into the haunt of fear! I am the old witch. My cauldron is filled to the brim with an evil brew. Its contents are bubbling and steaming. So sit down on that bed of nails over there and I'll dish out a pointed tale... a tale I call...

REUNION!

My story begins just outside a small mid-western town. It is night; the moon hangs low in the spring sky. Its reflection shimmers on the waters of a placid lake. Under a gnarled oak tree, a woman stands sobbing quietly, gazing out over the still water. Oh, why... why... why did it have to happen?
Lillian was young when she married Waldo Ansley! Probably too young! Nineteen! Waldo was thirty-three at the time! Lillian was infatuated with this distinguished-looking older man and Waldo's ego didn't suffer at having a nineteen-year-old bimbo in love with him, so of course, Lillian! I'm asking you to marry me!

Do you mean it, Waldo?

It was the third time in a month that Waldo had done this! Lillian was distressed! Waldo's age was showing...

Tired! You're always tired! You're well, I'm young! I want to have fun... enjoy myself while I can!

Lillian went! She went to the dance alone! But she wasn't alone long! Soon she was dancing with young, handsome Nogen Kane.

Where have you been all my life, beautiful?

Looking for you, handsome!

Oh, at first it was all in fun! But soon, talk got more serious, too serious.

I've got to see you again, Lillian! I've got to! I'm in love with you!

Roger! You mustn't! You mustn't talk like that! I can't see you again! It's... impossible!

But somehow, the impossible was accomplished! As Waldo complained more, Lillian saw Roger more and more...

Lillian dearest! You've got to ask Waldo for a divorce! I want to marry you!

Oh, darling! Yes! Yes! I realize, now! I never loved him! It's you I love... you!
Poor Lillian! With Waldo helpless, and Roger beckoning, she was in an awful quandary! What to do? What to do? And then Lillian realized there was only one thing to do.

**HE'S MY HUSBAND, ROGER!**

He needs me! I can't leave him... not now!

I won't make you, Lillian! But, well, you know how much I love you! It would be better then, if I went away!

**AND SO, ROGER AND LILLIAN PARTED! THEY CLIMBED TO EACH OTHER, THERE BY THE LAKE, AND VOWED THEIR LOVE, AND PROMISED TO MEET EACH OTHER IN FIVE YEARS IN THAT VERY SPOT.**

Good-bye, darling. I love you!

Good-bye, Lillian! I'll be back... in five years! I love you, too, dearest.

And Lillian went back to her invalid husband, Waldo! She dared for him... day and night... week in and week out... for five long years! Poor Lillian... tomorrow right? Tomorrow right Roger comes back? Tomorrow right by the lake... Lillian! Please... turn me over...
The next night they were there, under the gnarled oak tree by the lake, in each other's arms...

Oh, Roger... Nogen...

Five years, five long years...

How... how's Waldo, Lillian?

All night! No better! No worse!

Then, you still won't...

No, Roger! I can't! He needs me! But, please... don't talk!

Make up for those five long years! Kiss me...

Lillian... Darling!

Such a sweet scene! Such deep love! But soon... soon it was almost over...

I've got to go, Lillian! My train...

Come back again, Roger? In five years...

In five years... I'll be back! I promise!

Please... just one more kiss! It has to last so long...

And then he was gone... and Lillian was alone once more... alone with Waldo... with nothing to look forward to... nothing for five long years...

Look at me! Nursing an invalid husband... at twenty-five...

Lillian... Please... a drink of water...

Lillian...
The years dragged on: one...two...three...four...five years went by, and then, once more, Lillian and Roger were together...

Darling... Lillian...

And Waldo? Like always! But let's not talk, darling!

A few ecstatic hours of happiness, and then...

I've...got to be going, Lillian?

A FEW ECSTATIC HOURS OF HAPPINESS, AND THEN...

SO SOON... SO SOON

Rog er begged her

Lillian! You're thirty! You're getting old... We're both getting old in years. I...

No, Roger! I won't leave him! He's helpless... And I'm his wife! Come back, darling... Come back!

All right, Lillian! I'll come back again in five years...

Promise me, Roger! Promise me you'll come! You're all I... live for!

It was over! Roger went away again! And once more the years began to crawl by: one...two... but then...

Is he very bad, Doctor?

His heart muscles are going! He's...dying, Lillian! I... I'm sorry!

Yes, Waldo died! And Lillian was free...

Ashes to ashes! Dust to dust...
Lillian waited a reasonable amount of time after Waldo’s death. But two years! I can’t wait for Roger for two years! I must find him.

Where to look? Roger had never told where he lived. Lillian had no idea where to go! Then she went to an old friend of Roger’s...

Roger Kane? Why, don’t you know?

Know what?

Suddenly, a two snaps in the bushes behind Lillian! A hoarse, almost unintelligible voice calls her name...

Who... Who’s there?

Lillian? Is that... you?

Who’s there?

She screams! Her terrified shriek echoes across the lake! Roger cannot understand! He moves toward her... It’s me, Lillian! Don’t cry out! Don’t you recognize me?

Yaaaaaah!

Roger stands before her! His decayed and rotted body carries the putrid odor of death...

I... I came back, Lillian! I promised...

Keep away! Keep away!
Suddenly, the screaming stops! Lillian sobs quietly, staring at the decomposed face so close to hers... There? Roger? That's better? Isn't it? Poor Lillian! She recognizes Roger, now! She sees him clearly... Not the ugly, rotting hulk before her... but as he was... long ago... Roger darling! It's you! Yes, Lillian! It is me!

The shock has been too much for Lillian! She has gone completely out of her mind! She is stark raving mad.

Oh, Roger dearest, we're together now. For always! Kiss me.

The night drags on, and dawn rises over the lake! Under the old gnarled oak are two bodies... one, a smiling lady, recently deceased. The other, a putrid, decayed, grinning gentleman, long dead.

Hee, hee! I hope you enjoyed this embracing yarn! Dear Roger certainly kept his promise, didn't he? He came back in five years as he said he would, even if he had to dig himself up out of a grave to do it! And Lillian? Well, Lillian was crazy to see him, wasn't she? 'Bye now!' see you in my own book... 'The Haunt of Fear.'