HEH, HEH! WELCOME AGAIN TO THE VAULT OF HORROR, MY FRIENDS! IT SEEMS LIKE SUCH A LONG TIME SINCE WE LAST MET, SO JUST PULL UP A PILE OF SHRUNKEN HEADS AND SIT DOWN! DON'T BE ALARMED ABOUT ALL THE GHOSTS YOU SEE FLOATING NEAR THE CEILING... HERE IN THE VAULT WE LIKE TO KEEP OUR SPIRITS UP! HEH, HEH, HEH! NOW LET'S BEGIN OUR GHOULISH TALE CALLED...

TWO OF A KIND!

PIER 30... THE HUGE OCEAN LINER SAT SILENTLY IN THE FOGGY DARKNESS OF THE WATERFRONT, SOLEMNLY OVERLOOKING A GROUP OF NEWSPAPER PHOTOGRAPHERS HUDLED IN THE SHADOWS OF THE PIER.

CONFUND IT! SHE CAN'T STAY ABROAD FOREVER! IT'S TEN P.M. NOW! WE'VE BEEN WAITING ALL DAY, I GUESS WE CAN WAIT A BIT MORE.
Yes, Willow Dree was poison to photographers! Too many of them had had their cameras smashed for attempting to take her picture!

There isn’t a single photo of her in existence! The guy that does get her picture is in for a nice bonus!

Yeah! I guess Al Bolton of the Courier came closest. Remember?

Al Bolton had sworn to get a picture of Willow Dree, and after trailing her for days, finally clicked the shutter…

Triumphantly, he had returned to his editor, but when the negatives were developed…

You brainless idiot! Who do you think you’re kidding? You got a picture of her summer home… but that’s all!

Huh??

Yeah, I remember. Poor Al wasn’t the same after that! He gave up photography, didn’t he?

Sure did. Say here, Byron of the News!

The newsmen had missed the boat all right! For while they fumed and growled over their misfortune, Willow Dree was comfortably relaxing in her penthouse! The apartment, though luxurious, was conspicuous by its total absence of mirrors!

I just talked to the ship’s purser! She’s put one over on us again! She debarked about three hours ago… climbed down a rope ladder into a small boat on the other side of the ship!

Anything new on when Willow Dree is going to leave the ship?
A FEW NIGHTS LATER, SEVERAL MEN CALLED ON WILLOW...

I'VE READ THE PLAY, GENTLEMEN, AND I'M WILLING TO ACCEPT THE LEADING ROLE UNDER MY USUAL TERMS!

OH, NO! YOU MEAN...

EXACTLY! THERE ARE TO BE NO MATINEE PERFORMANCES! ONE SHOW A DAY... AND THAT WILL BE IN THE EVENING!

(SIGH!) AND I GUESS YOU WANT TO REHEARSE ONLY IN THE EVENING, AS USUAL?

YES! OTHERWISE, I WILL NOT TAKE THE ROLE! IS IT AGREED?

(SIGH!) AGREED!

THAT, AND HER RELUCTANCE TO BE PUBLICIZED, WAS WHY COLUMNISTS AND SHOW PEOPLE CALLED HER TEMPERAMENTAL! SOME EVENINGS LATER SHE WAS INTRODUCED TO HER CO-STAR, BRADBURY PHILLIPS...

I'VE BEEN WANTING TO MEET YOU FOR A GREAT MANY YEARS, MISS DREE!

PLEASE CALL ME 'WILLOW'! I'M HAPPY TO MEET YOU TOO... BRAD! I THINK WE'LL BE GOOD FRIENDS!

IN THE WEEKS OF REHEARSALS THAT FOLLOWED: BRAD AND WILLOW BECAME MORE THAN GOOD FRIENDS.

I'VE NEVER PLAYED OPPOSITE A LOVELIER WOMAN THAN YOU, WILLOW! WILL YOU HAVE DINNER WITH ME TONIGHT?

OH, BRAD, I'D LOVE TO... BUT AT MY APARTMENT!

WHEN THEY BEGAN SEEING EACH OTHER STEADILY, THE THEATRE AND NEWSPAPER WORLDS WERE HOPEFUL THAT AT LAST PERHAPS THERE WOULD BE A CHANGE IN HER...

MAYBE SHE'LL BREAK DOWN AND LET HER PICTURE BE TAKEN!

MAYBE SHE'LL BREAK DOWN AND LET HER PICTURE BE TAKEN!

WILLOW, THE SHOW'S ALL SET TO OPEN NEXT WEEK, AND WE'VE BEEN WORKING HARD! LET'S TAKE THE WEEKEND OFF AND GO SOMEWHERE TOGETHER!

OH, BRAD, HOW WONDERFUL! I'VE BEEN DYING TO TAKE A REST!
I KNOW A GOOD WINTER RESORT JUST A FEW HOURS DRIVE FROM HERE! I CAN PICK YOU UP TOMORROW MORNING, AND... NO, BRAD! PICK ME UP TOMORROW NIGHT! YOU FORGET I'M A NIGHT OWL WHO LIKES TO SLEEP ALL DAY!

OKAY, BEAUTIFUL! ANYTHING YOU SAY! I'VE BEEN WANTING TO BE ALONE WITH YOU, AWAY FROM PEOPLE, FOR A LONG TIME!

OH, BRAD.

HEH, HEH! SOUNDS LIKE A LOT OF BODGEY MUSH. EH? WELL, DON'T BE IMPATIENT! THE GOOD PART IS JUST BEGINNING! EVERYONE THINKS POOR WILLOW IS TEMPERAMENTAL... BUT YOU AND I KNOW THE REASON WHY SHE REFUSES TO HAVE HER PICTURE TAKEN, HATES MIRRORS, AND SLEEPS ALL DAY. WILLOW IS A VAMPIRE!

THAT'S WHY SHE SO READILY ACCEPTED BRAD'S IDEA OF THE WEEKEND VACATION! EVEN THOUGH SHE LIKES HIM VERY MUCH, SHE WANTS TO GET HIM ALONE SO SHE CAN FEAST? HEH! HEH! BUT THAT'S ONLY HALF OF IT! YOU SEE, BRAD SUGGESTED THE IDEA FOR THE VERY SAME REASON! CRAWL, NOT A VAMPIRE! NO, HE'S A GHOUL! HEH, HEH, HEH!

Well, the next night, the two friends were at the ski lodge...

Look at that moon! Isn't it beautiful?

Yes! It does! Something to you, doesn't it?

Yes... It does! Say! There's a small cabin around the other side of the mountain, up near the top! It's quite a hike, but once we get there, we'd be... completely alone?

... I'd like that...

A short time later, two figures set out from the ski lodge and slowly trudged through the deep, moonlit snow up and around the side of the mountain...
It was no easy journey! They plodded on, step after step... and Brad found his thoughts of Willow giving him trouble...

And Willow? She was having difficulties with her heart, just as Brad was...

He's been so wonderful! I don't know whatever made me think I wanted to kill him? I... I think I'm falling in love with him!

And then, suddenly, without any warning, a raging, blinding snowstorm swooped down on them...

Willow! Hold my hand tightly! We've got to keep close together!

For several hours they struggled through the blizzard, stumbling and falling again and again in the deep banks of snow... trying desperately to reach the cabin and safety...

(Gasps) There, Willow! There's the cabin! I can... (Gasps) I can see it!

Another half hour passed before they finally entered the cabin and threw themselves on the bunks... exhausted! It was almost dawn...

For a moment you startled me!

I... I couldn't hear you breathing! You... you looked dead! But I can see you're all right! I was so worried...

Brad... I'm frightened!

Darling...
Brad... the storm! Has it stopped yet?

I don't think so, Willow. It doesn't sound like it. I'll open the door and...

Brad yanked open the cabin door. A wall of white, reaching higher than the ceiling, met his eyes...

Good Lord! Brad! We're snowbound!

There was nothing to do but wait, and hope that someone would realize where they were and form a rescue party...

You sleep here, Willow. It's warmer. I'll sleep right in the next room.

The nights passed...

Lord, I'm hungry! I'm getting stomach cramps! But I won't touch Willow! I'd die rather than harm her!

... And another night passed...

I'd give anything for someone's blood right now! My body craves it so much! If only someone else were with me instead of Brad! I'll never hurt him!

... And another night...

I can't stand it anymore! If only it would stop snowing!

They've got to rescue us soon! I... I can't go on like this! (Pant!) Why... why don't they come dig us out?
But the following evening...

Brad... I'm... I'm too weak to stand! I... what... what happened... your arm?

I had a little accident! Fell down! Just... just a sprain! Don't worry, honey!

But you, Willow! You look so pale! You'd better stay in bed!

You... you're right! I do feel weak! Perhaps I should be in bed!

I'll be in the next room, kitten! Just call if you want me!

I... I love you, Willow...

Love... you, Brad!

Brad returned to his room and slumped on the edge of his bed, trying desperately to suppress the overwhelming urge that was consuming him.

The next night Brad awoke from his sleep and hurried to Willow's side...

Willow... Willow, are you awake?

Willow stared weakly up at him...

Brad... you... (gasp!) You're hurt! Good Lord! What...? (gasp!) What happened?

Brad looked away, trying to avoid her questioning eyes...

Oh...er... nothing, honey! Don't worry! Is there anything I can do to make you comfortable?

N-no, Brad! I'll... be all right!

I'm... I'm too weak to stand.

What happened...?
A week passed. Willow remained in her bed, growing steadily paler and weaker. Then, the tons of snow lying on the roof proved too much of a strain on the small cabin's structure.

With an ear splitting crack, the roof splintered and collapsed directly above Willow! A huge, stake-like fragment hurtled down...

CR-RUNCH!

Hearing the thunderous roar and Willow's petrified scream of agony from the next room, Brad lunged from his bed and dragged himself to her bedside...

WILLLOW!

Several days later, a rescue party arrived and removed the drifts of snow from the door! They stepped inside...

There they are! Good Lord!

The rescuers stared in horrified fascination at the gruesome sight their eyes beheld! The woman lay in her bed, a wooden stake protruding upright from her chest, her flesh as deathly white as the snow surrounding her. The man, or what was left of him, was sprawled grotesquely on the floor, his hand grasping hers in a death-grip! For in order to spare each other, Willow had drained her own blood... and Brad had eaten most of his own flesh...

Heh, heh! Wasn't that a pathetic love affair? Willow was a suckler for Brad... and Brad ate himself up alive over Willow! A really self-sacrificing couple, wouldn't you say? You know that old expression... 'The corpse of true love'? Heh, heh! Well, now it's time to go on to that sickening crypt-keeper! Don't be too bored... I'll see you later in the book!
The Crypt of Terror

Thank you, V.K., for eight pages of sheer... stark... nothing! If that's a horror story, I'll eat my coffin! Why, I'll bet you couldn't make a nude native of New Guinea shiver at the North Pole with that yarn! Nen, nen! Yee! It's me, fiends! The Crypt-Keeper... ready to really come across with the durdles! So creep into the crypt, grab your dhow, an' let's dance! Don't matter if you don't feel like it! I'll keep you hoppin' with the terror-tale I call...

Graft in Concrete!

Godfrey Hornsby, president of the Hornsby Construction Company and member of the town council, puffed nervously on his cigar as he paced the floor of the library in Mayor John Applegate's luxurious mansion. Finally the door of the library opened and the mayor appeared...

Well, Hornsby! I'm sorry I kept you waiting, but I'm giving a dinner party! What can be so important that wouldn't wait for the Council meeting tomorrow morning?
YOU MEAN THE ROAD CONTRACT, DON'T YOU, HORNSBY?

EXACTLY, MAYOR! I WANT THAT CONTRACT!

IT'S NOT UP TO ME, HORNSBY! THE VOTE OF THE COUNCIL WILL DECIDE WHO GETS THE JOB!

YOU CAN SWING IT IF YOU WANT TO, MAYOR!

I MIGHT! BUT I'M NOT GOING TO! I KNOW YOUR PLANS! YOU WANT THE ROAD TO RUN THROUGH THAT PARCEL OF LAND YOU OWN SOUTH OF TOWN!

AND I WANT MY CONSTRUCTION COMPANY TO GET THE CONTRACT, TOO!

I'M SORRY, HORNSBY! I WILL NOT BE A PART OF ANY DIRTY DEALS INVOLVING THE TOWN'S MONEY!

I THINK YOU WILL, MAYOR! AFTER ALL, THIS IS NOTHING NEW TO YOU!

YOU'D BETTER EXPLAIN YOURSELF, HORNSBY! I DON'T LIKE WHAT YOU'RE INFERRING!

I'M TALKING ABOUT THE NEW SCHOOL THEY'RE PUTTING UP, APPLEGATE! I KNOW ALL ABOUT THE KICKBACK YOU'RE GETTING ON THE PRICE THE TOWN PAID FOR THE LAND!

WHAT IN BLAZES ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, HORNSBY?

I'M TALKING ABOUT THIS AGREEMENT! HERE'S A PHOTOSTATIC COPY! LOOK FAMILIAR, MAYOR? WHAT IF THE REST OF THE COUNCIL SAW THIS?

THIS... THIS IS BLACKMAIL, HORNBSBY!

COME NOW, MAYOR APPLEGATE! LET'S JUST SAY THAT WE'VE COME TO AN UNDERSTANDING! TOMORROW, AT THE COUNCIL MEETING, YOU'LL SEE THAT I GET THE ROAD CONTRACT... AND OVER MY PROPOSED ROUTE...
HEH, HEH! WELL, KIDDIES! IT'S JUST LIKE THEY SAY! 'ALL'S FAIR...
IN LOVE AND POLITICS!' SO GODFREY HORNSBY LAID HIS
CARDS ON THE TABLE AND MAYOR APPLEGATE COULDN'T
TOP 'EM! THE NEXT DAY, AT THE COUNCIL MEETING...

NOW, JUST ONE MINUTE, MAYOR APPLEGATE! IF,
AS YOU SAY, WE DO GRANT THIS CONTRACT
TO OUR FELLOW COUNCIL MEMBER, MR. HORNSBY,
AM I TO UNDERSTAND THAT THE ROAD WILL THEN FOLLOW HIS
PROPOSED ROUTE?

THE CONTRACT WOULD MEAN THAT,
MR. WILLIAMS!

BUT ISN'T IT RATHER OBVIOUS THAT THE ROUTE IS LAID OUT
SO AS TO INCLUDE HIS OWN PROPER-
TY HOLDINGS?

MR. WILLIAMS? I SEEM TO RECALL A
SIMILAR SITUATION LAST
YEAR... WHEN THE COUNCIL
WAS VOTING ON A NEW PLAY-
GROUND FOR THE PARK.

LOOK HERE, MAYOR
APPLEGATE! I DON'T
SEE NOW THAT HAS ANT BEARING ON THE
PRESENT CASE!

PERHAPS THE REST OF THE
COUNCIL WOULD LIKE TO
HEAR WHERE THE EQUIPMENT
FOR THE PLAYGROUND CAME
FROM, MR. WILLIAMS?

ANEM... COUGH! I... ER
SEE NOW THAT THE
ROUTE IS THE BEST
AND THAT IT IS ONLY
BY SHEER COINCIDENCE
THAT IT PASSES MR.
HORNSBY'S PROPERTY? I'LL CAST MY VOTE... AYE.

THANK YOU, MR. WILLIAMS! ANY OTHER
OBJECTIONS?

WHAT ABOUT THE
CEMETERY, MR.
HORNSBY?

WHAT ARE YOU
GOING TO DO ABOUT
THAT?

CEMETERY, CEMETERY?
WHAT CEMETERY,
MR. BARLOW?

MR. BARLOW, THE ONE
WHAT CEMETERY
I AM THE PRESIDENT
OF! YOUR ROUTE WILL
HAVE TO PASS THROUGH IT!

MR. BARLOW!
MY ROUTE DOESN'T PASS THROUGH CRAGMoor!
IT DOES NOW, HORNSBY!

HEH, HEH! THAT IS... IF YOU WANT ME TO VOTE
AYE!

BUT WHAT ABOUT
THE BODIES,
BARLOW?
EXACTLY! I DON'T KNOW WHAT HORNBY WAS ON YOU, MAYOR, BUT AS FOR ME... IF YOU WANT MY VOTE... THE ROAD GOES THROUGH CRAGMOOR! HE'S GOT US, HORNBY! YOU WIN! IT'S A DEAL! THE ROUTE HITS CRAGMOOR! ALL IN FAVOR OF ACCEPTING HORNBY CONSTRUCTION COMPANY'S BID FOR THE PROPOSED TOWN ROAD, SIGNIFY BY SAYING 'AYE'!

NEXT WEEK, MR. BARLOW! GOT THOSE GRAVES RELOCATED? THAT'S WHAT I CAME TO SEE YOU ABOUT, HORNBY! WHERE CAN WE TALK... IN PRIVATE?

HEH, HEH! AND SO THESE HONEST, CONSCIENTIOUS SERVANTS OF THE PEOPLE AWARDED GODFREY HORNBY THE ROAD CONTRACT! SOON... CONSTRUCTION BEGAN...

WHY, HELLO, MR. BARLOW! YEP! LOOKS GOOD, HORNBY! YOU'LL BE REACHING CRAGMOOR SOON, EH?

HORNBY LED BARLOW TO THE CONSTRUCTION SHACK! HE CLOSED THE DOOR BEHIND THEM...

OKAY, BARLOW! WHAT'S THE PITCH?

IT'S NOT SIX FEET, IF THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE DRIVING AT, HORNBY! NOW... I HAVE A PROPOSITION FOR YOU! OF COURSE... THIS WILL JUST BE BETWEEN YOU AND ME! NOW, WHEN THE ROAD...
Heh, heh! Yes, you clever little fiends! Mr. Barlow's scheme is just that! Why go to the trouble of digging up thirty-two graves and transferring the coffins to a different part of Cragmoor Cemetery, when so much money could be saved by just relocating the monuments? After all, who's gonna know? The corpses? Heh... heh...

All right, Barlow! That's a deal! But you'd better make that five hundred!

One of my bull-dozer could slip... Barlow!

Okay! Okay! Five hundred!

Five hundred is pretty steep, Hornsby!

Mr. Barlow's scheme is just that. Why go to the trouble of digging up thirty-two graves and transferring the coffins to a different part of Cragmoor Cemetery, when so much money could be saved by just relocating the monuments? After all, who's gonna know? The corpses? Heh... heh...

All right, Williams! That's how I feel, Hornsby! Shall we make it... say... two thousand? But not one cent more!

Williams! Two thousand! But not one cent more!

Williams! Two thousand! But not one cent more!

I knew we'd see things eye to eye, Mr. Hornsby! Here's my pen...

And so, the town road neared completion! It wound through Cragmoor Cemetery and on through Hornsby's own property! One night...

Mr. Williams! And to what do I owe the honor of this visit?

Forget the slush, Hornsby! I'm here for my cut of this pie! Either that... or I talk!

You're forgetting Mayor Applegate's information on that playground equipment contract, aren't you, Williams?

I'll take my changes, Hornsby! If I go down, I'll drag you with me!

So that's how you feel, eh?

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I'll take my changes, Hornsby! If I go down, I'll drag you with me!
One Night in the Middle of August, A Black Limousine Purred Along the Recently Completed New Town Road...

Godfrey Hornsby Sat Behind the Wheel! Mayor Applegate Was at His Side! Mr. Williams and Mr. Barlow Lounged in the Comfortable Rear Seat...

Mr. Williams and Mr. Barlow Lounged in the Comfortable Rear Seat.

One Night in the Middle of August, A Black Limousine Purred Along the Recently Completed New Town Road...

You'll Clear This Equipment Away Before I Cut the Tape Tomorrow... Eh, Hornsby?

Don't You Worry, Mayor Applegate! That Steam Roller Is Going to Be Picked Up First Thing Tomorrow Morning!

Certainly Is a Smooth Road, Mr. Hornsby!

This Is the Part That Runs Through Dragmoor, Mr. Barlow! I Was Especially Careful About This Area...Heh, Heh!

Suddenly, the car's headlights fell upon something in the road ahead...

Good Lord!

Look Out, Hornsby!

Hornsby! Hornsby! Barlow! Did You See It? Did You See That...Choke.

What... What Happened?

Barlow! This Is Where the Graves Are!

Look!

Suddenly, the August Night Was Filled with a Rumbling! The Road Began to Crack and Crumble

Shut Up, You Fool! I... I... Yaaaah!

Roro!
Slowly, they began to emerge from beneath the newly completed highway! They tottered and stumbled, moving awkwardly...

The putrid odor of thirty-two decaying corpses burned the trapped councilmen's nostrils...

Let's get out of here!

I can't open the door! It's jammed!

Oh, Lord! Help us!

We're trapped! And they're coming...

EEEEAAA!

The next morning, the wrecked limousine was discovered at the roadside! But there was no one inside...

That's funny! It's Mr. Hornsby's car!

Wonder if 'n he's hurt? He ain't showed up at the opening ceremony! In fact... no one of the town council has...

WELL! Let's get that steam roller and this wreck out of here!

Yeah! The townsfolk'll be drivin' through... Soon as the mayor cuts the tape!

The mayor ain't gonna cut the tape, Jeb! G'mere!

No! The mayor won't cut any tape! Nor will the rest of the council be present at the road's opening ceremony! For Mayor Applegate, Mr. Barlow, Mr. Williams, and Mr. Hornsby have been flattened by the steamroller and neatly inset into the road's fresh new pavement...

Gulp! Choke! Good Lord!

Heh, heh! Well, the occupants of Cragmoor's violated graves certainly took some concrete steps toward revenge, eh, kiddies? I hope the end to my little terror-tale didn't fall flat! As for those four councilmen... Well, I wouldn't feel sorry for them if I were you! After all, this is the first time they've been on the level in years! Now, I'll return you to the vault-keeper! Bye! Pleasant screams!
The crowd was hushed and apprehensive as Jacques Carigot climbed the steps to the Guillotine. The mob gathered on the cobblestones below leaned breathlessly forward, as if at a signal, slowly the condemned man turned and grinned down at them. Slowly he winked, as if at an uproarious jest.

"Even at his own execution," a fat man in a leather apron wheezed to his neighbor, "he is able to smile and maintain his reputation as Jacques the Joker!"

"He is laughing at Paris... at US!" his tall companion rasped. "These fools come to admire his brazen courage, completely ignoring the fact that 20 innocent people have died at his hands! The sooner the Guillotine blade cuts off his devilish head, the safer we'll all be!"

"He's a devil, all right!" the fat man agreed grudgingly. "But such wit! Imagine... an original and highly humorous verse pinned to each of his victims! He may be the deadliest killer to ever walk the streets of France, but who can deny that he deserves to be called the JOKER?"

The Chief Jailer stood slightly below the platform, his eyes never leaving the face of the man who was about to die. What kind of depraved maniac can he be? he thought to himself. Life... death... everything is a source of mirth to him! Even his last request was totally different from those I usually receive the eve of execution! A fine least... a visit from a close friend... THOSE are invariably the last desire. But not for Monsieur Carigot! HE asks for a bottle of purple ink and a pen! But I knew too much about his penchant for ironic humor not to see through his stunt. He poisons himself by swallowing the ink or stabs himself with the pen and the Guillotine is cheated. And he has made his last and most sensational joke!

Despite the revulsion he felt over the man's ghoulish deeds, the Chief Jailer marveled at the enigmatic smile tugging at the corners of Carigot's mouth. Even now he is probably waiting for the poison to take effect, the jailer thought. But his last joke will never be staged, because I had enough presence of mind to substitute a harmless vegetable dye for the ink and a rubber-nibbed point for the pen he wanted.

The high scarlet which the prisoner wore tightly wrapped around his throat deeply angered the Executioner. Even at this moment, the officer thought, this jester thinks perhaps he will escape by hiding inside the scarf some hard object which will blunt the blade when it falls! A last big joke, he hopes!

The Executioner forced Carigot to his knees, placed the man's head in the hollowed-out place directly below the poised blade that was overhead. Then, suddenly, the officer yanked the scarf loose, exposing Monsieur Carigot's bare throat. Nothing clattered to the platform, to the Executioner's dismay. His eyes widened and he stared in disbelief at his victim's neck. A succession of crude dashes completely circled the condemned man's throat and, below the line of purple dots, were the carefully lettered words:

PLEASE CUT ALONG DOTTED LINE!
THANK YOU... THE JOKER!
Your name is Zachary Boxer! You’re an undertaker! You’re standing before the apartment door, checking its number with the phone call request you’d received half an hour ago! The voice on the other end had sounded shaky... tearful! You’d known that it’d meant only one thing! Business! Now you’re knocking... and the same voice is asking...

Who... who is it?

It’s the undertaker that you called!

Oh, yes! Come in! Quickly! But... don’t turn on the light!

I... I... yes, sir!
The light beaming in from the hallway knifes into the pitch-black apartment! You step inside...hesitantly! A heavy odor of incense hangs in the air...

I'm sorry! I can't see you!

I don't want you to see me! Listen to my story! Then...if you still want the job...

The light beaming in from the hallway illuminates a chair! You shut the door...and as the darkness closes in, you stumble toward it! You sit down as the nervous voice continues...

I know this is out of the ordinary...but so is my need for you! Will you bear with me?

Please tell me what you want. Sir! I'm very busy these days!

'It began over two years ago! I'd been having headaches, indigestion...periods of elation and depression! I'd gone to see a doctor I knew...

Well...you've examined me. Doctor! Can you tell me what's wrong?

I'm sorry, Mr.—! I can find nothing wrong with you...physically!

Let me begin at the beginning, Mr. Boxer! I will not tell you my name, as I'd rather not disclose my identity! After you hear my story, you may refuse to accept my offer...

You emphasize the word physical, Doctor! Do you infer...?

There are many disturbances that are not physical in nature, Mr.—! Their cause lies with the patient's mental condition!

Are you suggesting that I'm...

I suggest, Mr.—, that you visit a competent psychiatrist! He may be able to help you!

You're uncomfortable now, Zachary. Aren't you? The stranger lying in the darkness is admitting some frightening facts about himself! You'd like to get up and leave, wouldn't you? But you're afraid...

At first I was insulted, but later on, I did see a psychiatrist...
I spent many hours with him, telling him about myself! He listened... taking notes! One day, he announced...

Mr. —! According to all the things you've told me, I am forced to come to the conclusion that you are suffering from a mild form of dementia praecox... or... schizophrenia! Your periods of elation and depression signify a split-personality!

So I began visiting my psychiatrist regularly! But mean-while, these spells I'd been experiencing became more pronounced! I'd wake from sound sleeps with strange desires...

Got to... go out! Got to... have fun!

During these spells, I'd visit places I'd never've dreamed of going during my normal periods... what's a guy like you doin' in a place like this, Handsome? You look like a gentleman?

Jus' out for a good time, baby!

The point is... I didn't need the money! I was well off, had a good income! What I was doing was purely evil for evil's sake! I was like two different people! In my normal periods, I was moral, decent, respectable... You buzzed, Mr. —?

But in these spells, when my other side... my evil side... took over, I was black, dirty, the worst type of person...

Please... sob! Please don't... sob... hit me again! P-please...

Take a letter, Miss Jones! To A.C. Bunton Co.! Gentlemen! As of...

Please... sob! Please don't... sob... hit me again! P-please...

Next time... Gasp... I'll kill you!

At first there was no harm in what I was doing! But soon the thrills I'd seek during these spells became more perverse...

This is a stick-up, mister! Put up your hands! D... don't shoot! P-please!
Things got worse! Each time my other personality took over, I sunk lower and lower. Once, I woke up in a filthy celler! I didn’t know how I’d gotten there... What had happened? My clothes were torn and dirty, and I smelled from alcohol and cheap perfume? My head felt like... I’ve got... a lump back there? I... I must have been sluged and... and my wallet’s gone!

Meanwhile, my psychiatrist was doing his best. I told him about each of these sorties into evil I’d experienced...

You must refuse to give in to these tidal waves that sweep over you!

I can’t, doctor! I’ve tried... but I just can’t control myself!

Oooww! I’ve got... a lump back there! I... I must have been sluged and... and my wallet’s gone!

These fits of evil came more and more often as time went on! They even began to happen during the day... in the office...

What’s it, Helen? What happened in there?

Sob... sob! He buzzed... sob... for me! I... I... sob... sob! He... he’s horrible! I... I never want to see him again!

And then it happened! I’d gone to visit my psychiatrist at our usual appointment time. No one was in the waiting room when I came in! He didn’t even look up...

Well... good afternoon, Mr. — come in! Now are you feeling today?

I... I feel fine, doctor! Just fine!

I don’t even remember what happened! All I know is the next thing I can recall is standing over his mutilated body... Good Lord!

I ran from his office feeling loathsome and disgusted with myself! This time I’d gone too far! I knew, if they caught up with me, I’d end up in a mental institution... Got to get out of the country!

That night, I hopped a plane to Haiti...

I’ll stay there till this thing blows over... Good Lord! I’ve got to get out of the country!
It was while I was in Haiti that I learned about Voodoo...

'Incredible!' ‘So I went to see an old Voodoo witch doctor! I tried to explain what I wanted...'

Half of me is evil. Half is gooo. I want you to destroy the evil half!

'I’ll pay! I’ll pay anything you ask! Anything!' ‘I’ll pay two hundred dollars?' 'You pay anything? You pay two hundred dollars?' ‘ANYTHING!'

Simple, Ghum! These Native Devils fashion a doll in the form of someone they hate! They make some mumbo-jumbo... stick a few pins in the doll, and poof! the guy they hate is dead!

'Anything? I’ll give you five hundred dollars.' ‘I try!' you sit down! You wait!

The old Voodoo native began to mould a small grotesque doll from wads of clay he'd fish from a boiling pot. Then he took cuttings from my hair... clippings from my nails... bits of my skin... and imbedded them in my image! He held it up for me to see...

'This... you?' ‘By George, it looks like me!' ‘Next, the old man took some black goo from a pot and painted one half of the doll black! The other half, he painted pure white...'

Black is evil! White is gooo. I... I see!' ‘Five hundred dollars, please! I destroy evil half!' Suddenly the old man picked up a long needle and jabbed it into the black half of the Voodoo doll! He grinned at me... an idiotic, toothless grin...
You start from your seat, Zachary Boxer! The form on the daybed is sitting up...

That's my story, Mr. Boxer! Now... you know everything!

I don't understand, sir? Why do you send for me? I'm an undertaker.

I know, Mr. Boxer!

You watch as the figure in the gloom begins to untie his dressing gown! You strain your eyes, trying to make out his features...

That is why I sent for you, Mr. Boxer! The old voodoo chief did his job well!

The figure before you drops his robe to the floor! A strange odor drifts toward you... not the odor of incense...

Yes! He cured me! He killed the evil half of my split-personality! It's dead! KILLED IT FOR GOOD!

That... that smell!

But soon after, a strange thing began to happen, Mr. Boxer! That's why I sent for you...

Turn on the light! This has gone far enough!

For a moment, the light blinds you! Then you see him! He stands before you clothed only in shorts! And half of his body...

Yes, Mr. Boxer! Half of my body is dead, too! It's decaying! I can't stand the smell! I sent for you, because I want you to EMBALM IT!

Good lord!

You know that odor! It's familiar to you, Zachary! But you can't place it! The incense scent pollutes it...

But soon after, a strange thing began to happen, Mr. Boxer! That's why I sent for you...

Turn on the light! This has gone far enough!

For a moment, the light blinds you! Then you see him! He stands before you clothed only in shorts! And half of his body...

Yes, Mr. Boxer! Half of my body is dead, too! It's decaying! I can't stand the smell! I sent for you, because I want you to EMBALM IT!

Good lord!

Heh, heh! Yip! That's my story, dolls! Poor Mr. Blanks' really had a split-personality... right down the middle of him! The old voodoo creep took him serious! As for Mr. Boxer, that's the first half-way job he ever tackled! As he snickers, 'Half a corpse is better than none... in my racket!' Oh... if you want photos of me and the other soulnatics, head my column! It tells all about that racket!
HEE! HEE! WELCOME TO THE HAUNT OF FEAR, KIDDIES! YEP... IT'S YOUR CREEPS-COOKER-UPPER, THE OLD WITCH! I'VE GOT THE FIRE UNDER MY CAULDRON LIT, AND ITS EVIL BREW IS BUBBLING AND STEAMING! COME ON IN! WE'LL HAVE A REGULAR OLD-FASHIONED FISH-FRY! YEP! MY STORY THIS TIME CONCERNS FISH... POOR FISH THAT GET CAUGHT! I CALL THIS PORTION OF PUTRID PALPITATIONS DISHED FROM MY DISGUSTING DELVINGS INTO THE DELIRIOUS...

HOOK, LINE, AND STINKER!


HEM! HEM! THAT LITTLE DEVIL SURE WAS CLEVER BERNICE! ALMOST GOT AWAY TOO BUT I LANDED HIM! GAVE ME A TOUGH FIGHT, THOUGH...

I KNOW, STANLEY! YOU... SIGH... TOLD ME...
Stanley turned from the mounted fish and studied the face of the forty-year-old woman seated before him...

Stanley patted the unhappy woman's heaving shoulder...

S'matter, Bernice? You angry 'bout somethin'?

No, Stanley! I...I...sob...I'm not angry!

Bernice, you'll see!

I'm tired of waiting! We're getting old.

IT WON'T BE long now, Bernice! You'll see!

But...sob, I can't go on like this! Fifteen years!

STANLEY?

I'M TIRED OF WAITING!/ WE'RE GETTING OLD/ MOUNTED FISH AND STUDIED THE FACE OF THE FORTY-YEAR-OLD WOMAN SEATED BEFORE HIM...

S'MATTER, BER NIC E? YOU ANGR Y 'BOUT SOMETHIN'?

NO, STANLEY! I...I...sob...I'M NOT ANGRY!

AW, BERNICE! DON'T START THAT ALL OVER AGAIN!

STANLEY?

BERNICE? DON'T START THAT ALL OVER AGAIN!

STANLEY?

BERNICE? DON'T START THAT ALL OVER AGAIN!

BERNICE?

DON'T START THAT ALL OVER AGAIN?

BUT...SOB, I CAN'T GO ON LIKE THIS! FIFTEEN YEARS!

STANLEY?

BERNICE?

DON'T START THAT ALL OVER AGAIN?

BUT...SOB, I CAN'T GO ON LIKE THIS! FIFTEEN YEARS!

STANLEY?

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STANLEY?

BERNICE?

DON'T START THAT ALL OVER AGAIN?

BUT...SOB, I CAN'T GO ON LIKE THIS! FIFTEEN YEARS!
THIS WILL BE YOUR HOME SOMEDAY!

G'DAY-NIGHT, BERNICE! SEE YOU MONDAY!

BERNICE CLOSED THE DOOR BEHIND STANLEY AND LOCKED IT! THEN SHE TURNED TO THE PLAQUES HANGING AROUND THE LIVING-ROOM...PLAQUES WITH FISH MOUNTED UPON THEM...

I...I HATE YOU! EACH ONE OF YOU! I HATE YOU FOR TAKING HIM AWAY FROM ME!

EVERY TIME STANLEY WOULD GO ON A FISHING TRIP, HE'D BRING HOME A MOUNTED TROPHY! AND HE'D BE SO PROUD...

YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN THE FIGHT HE PUT UP, BERNICE! TOOK ME HALF AN HOUR TO LAND 'IM! ALMOST GOT AWAY, TOO! ISN'T HE A BEAUTY?

BERNICE DESPISED THE MOUNTED FISH STANLEY WOULD BRING! BUT WHAT COULD SHE DO? HE LIVED IN A SMALL FURNISHED ROOM! HE COULDN'T KEEP THEM THERE...

MRS. FLINTPEACH, MY LAHOLADY, WOULD BLOW A FUSE IF I HUNG THEM ON HER WALL, BERNICE!

DH, I DON'T MIND KEEPING THEM FOR YOU, STANLEY! AFTER ALL...YOU WILL BE LIVING HERE WHEN WE'RE...WHEN WE'RE...

BERNICE TURNED OUT THE LIGHTS AND TIP-TOED UPSTAIRS TO HER LONELY BED! SHE SIGHED AS SHE CREPT BENEATH THE COLD SHEETS...

DH, DEAR! I WONDER WHAT I'LL DO TOMORROW! WEEK ENDS ARE SO LONELY NOW...NOW THAT STANLEY GOES...SO...FISHING...SO...
That Monday morning...

Good morning, Stanley! Mornin', Bernice! Thought I'd drop in for breakfast!

Coffee's almost ready! Did you... Did you have any luck?

Humph! Oh, yeah! Caught a beauty! It's being mounted! I'll bring it over tonight!

I could pick it up for you, Stanley!

Oh, that's all right, Bernice! Mmm! Coffee's good this morning!

That night...

Isn't it a beauty, Bernice? Biggest perch I ever landed!

It... it's lovely, dear! Where... where are you going to hang it? We're running out of room!

Here's a spot!

Stanley! Have you decided about us? I mean when?

Soon, Bernice! I thought maybe this weekend we could drive upstate and stop off at a justice-of-the-peace! It would be so...

Uh-uh! Not this weekend, Bernice! I'm going fishing again this weekend!

Oh... I see!
Towards evening, as Bernice was cutting across a field, laden down with flowers she’d picked, she heard voices up ahead of her. They were coming from behind a haystack... sounds like someone enjoying a picnic over there! Well, I won’t disturb them! I’ll just... Giggle... Giggle! That’s enough, you... you... oh... just one more, Emma!

Bernice’s blood froze in her veins! She stiffened! The man’s voice! The man sounded like... Gasp... Stanley!

A faint breeze stirred lazily across the field carrying the smell of new-mown hay with it! Bernice listened... when are you going to marry me, Stanley dear?

Soon, Emma! Very soon, now!

Bernice edged closer! She couldn’t believe her ears... did you tell her yet, Stanley? Did you tell her about us?

Not yet. Money! I will!

Where do you tell her you go on week-ends, Stanley?

Tell her I go fishing!

Giggle! And she believes you?

Of course! I bring her a mounted fish... as proof! And I tell her how I caught it! Of course she believes me!
Bernice had to cover her mouth to keep from screaming. She turned to run as... But let’s not talk about her, Emma. Ouch! The weekend’s almost half over! Let’s not waste any of its precious moments!

Bernice scrambled across the field and through the woods... Stanley... and another woman! He lied to me! Ne... he told me he was fishing, and all the time he was seeing her!

She arrived home bruised and torn. Gasping for breath...

What will I do? I’m losing him!

Losing him!

Bernice spent the rest of the week-end crying her heart out! She kept thinking of Stanley... and that woman...

... and... Bob... I... suppose... Bob... he’ll bring me... another mounted... fish... to... Bob... hang up with... Bob... the rest... of them...

And Bernice was right! On Monday night...

Good evening, Bernice!

Look!

Good evening, Stanley! Come... come in...

Look at this one! One of the boys up at the lake told me it was the biggest rainbow he’d ever seen come out of those waters...

What lake, Stanley?

Lake Chippawa. Where I always go! Had this baby eight for almost an hour...

You’ve had me going too, Stanley! For a long time...

I spent the rest of the week-end crying her heart out! She kept thinking of Stanley...
When Bernice's maid came the next morning, she found the middle-aged woman standing before a huge plaque hanging above the fireplace! The early morning light gleamed on the blood-stained figure mounted upon it! Bernice's voice was slightly high-pitched and shaky as she chuckled...

EEE... He was a clever little devil! Almost got away, too! But I landed him! EEE... I gave me a tough fight, though! EEE, EEE!

FIFTEEN... EEE, EEE... YEARS...

Hee, hee! Poor Stanley was finally caught! As for Bernice... well, they put her away in a padded cell! All day long she just sits... and sits... and sits! But nothing bites on the hairpin she dangles down the sink drain! I guess Stanley will be the only poor fish she ever hooked! ’Bye, now! We'll all see you next in my mad-mag, THE HAUNT OF FEAR!
THE VAULT KEEPER