HEH, HEH! HELLO, AGAIN! THIS IS YOUR FRIENDLY STORYTELLER, THE VAULT-KEEPER, INVITING YOU TO JOIN ANOTHER SESSION OF GRUESOME GRUMBLINGS THAT EMANATE FROM MY VILE AND VICIOUS VAULT! SO PLOP YOURSELF DOWN ON THAT SATIN-COVERED COFFIN AND GET COMFY! DON'T MIND THE MOLD AND WORM-HOLES! IT'S SECOND-HAND, YOU KNOW! YOU, THERE! PUT DOWN THAT GUN! KILL YOUR MOTHER-IN-LAW LATER! AND YOU, WOMAN... STOP! YOUR SLEEPING HUSBAND DIDN'T WANT THAT CLOSE A SHAVE! AND YOU, YOU FIEND! LET THOSE MATCHES ALONE! YOUR LITTLE BROTHER'S TOES CAN WAIT! IN OTHER WORDS, DROP (DEAD, THAT IS!) EVERYTHING YOU'RE DOING, AND LISTEN... LISTEN WHILE I RECOUNT THE SORDID TALE ENTITLED...

SPLIT PERSONALITY!

THE CLICKING OF THE TELEPHONE CIAL STUTTERED SIBILANTLY IN THE SPARSELY-FURNISHED ROOM. EATING AROUND HIS CIGARETTE IN THE ALREADY OVERFLOWING ASH-TRAY AND SOFTLY BLEW SMOKE RINGS UNTIL HIS PARTY ANSWERED THEN, GLIB, HONEY-COATED WORDS DRIPPED FROM HIS LIPS, EXTOLLING THE VIRTUES OF THE FAKE CHARITY HE SUPPOSEDLY REPRESENTED. HE LISTENED A MOMENT, A SMILE CURLING HIS FACE... AND THEN SPOKE AGAIN, MORE WORDS HONEY-COATED.

WHY, YOU'RE MORE THAN GENEROUS, MRS GALVESTON! THE LITTLE KIDDIES NEED OUR AID SO BADLY! YES, JUST MAIL YOUR DONATION TO P.O. BOX 749, CHURCH STATION! YES! THE CHILDREN BLESS YOU.
Yep, Ed King was a charity racketeer... a con man. Out to milk the gullible! But he didn't rely on phone calls alone... he went from door to door also, on the theory that a buck in the pocket is worth a dozen promises over the phone.

Hang it all! No answer? Hate to pass up a private house, but I can't stay here all day.

Oh, no! Just eccentric! They never come out, and they won't let anyone in! Such a shame! Two young girls, with a few zillion bucks... and they're a couple of nerds! It's a shame!

Hang it all! Just my luck! Ten feet away from a fortune and I can't get it.

What's that?

Looks like the cat is afraid to move! Say! If that's one of the Blair sisters... maybe this is the break I need...

Dauntlessly, he began climbing the tree. Trees never used to be so difficult to climb when he was a boy! Seems they grew taller now. His knees were skinned and he was certain blisters were rapidly growing on his hands, but if his plan worked, anything was worth it...

Here, kitty, kitty! Nice kitty! Nice kitty, kitty!

Fear not, fair lady! I shall save your kitten!

O'here, you mangy! @#$%^! Cat, or I'll wring your neck!
For twenty minutes, Ed struggled mightily with the snarling, clawing cat, but finally, his face and hands scratched and bleeding, he majestically delivered the vicious little beast to its greatly relieved owners. The girls debated...

I think just this once, Amy, it would be proper if we allowed this man to enter! After all...

Well...perhaps you're right, Susan! He did rescue our cat...and he seems in need of some first-aid, so.

I trust your wounds feel better now, Mr. King...

Oh, indeed yes, my dear Miss Blair! Your soothing medications have eased the pain a great deal! And...if I may say so...the tea is delicious!

Naturally, Ed slyly moved the conversation around until...

Yes, Susan and I have equal say over our wealth! Half and half!

Share and share alike, you know! Ha! Ha! Ha!

Edwin, Amy and I think that...well, if you should care to return...you honor me, my dear? I accept?

He remained for several hours, exciting them with mythical tales of his heroic deeds, and complimenting them abundantly.

He returned many times and he sat there, sipping tea, relating stories, bestowing compliments. The twin sisters sat in open-mouthed wonder and admiration.

Oh, Amy! He's so gallant! So gentlemanly and so...so strong! He's such a 'man of the world'! And so respectable!

Susan, to dear you talk, one would think you were falling in love with him!

Why, Amy! I...I didn't mean that is, please don't...er...I mean...

Oh, stop getting flustered! It's all right! I understand now you feel about him! I feel the same way! He...he is wonderful, isn't he?
MEANWHILE, IN HIS HOTEL ROOM, THE KING, BENTLE HONEST, STRONG, BRAVE, NOBLE, RESPECTABLE MAN OF THE WORLD PACE THE SMALL FLOOR NERVOUSLY!

EVERYTHING'S GOING ALONG FINE! I'M SURE I CAN MARRY EITHER ONE OF THEM! ALL I HAVE TO DO IS PUT THE QUESTION UP AND YET THAT WILL ONLY GIVE ME HALF THEIR MONEY! THERE MUST BE SOME WAY FOR ME TO GET IT ALL!

HAH! IT!' TOO BAD THERE ISN'T TWO OF ME!

On his next visit, Edwin exploded the news of his "TWIN BROTHER".

A TWIN BROTHER? HOW GRAND! BUT WHY HAVEN'T WE MET HIM?

He's been away but he's due to return soon! It never occurred to me to mention it before!

You see, my twin brother and I own some very important holdings in South Africa! The nature of the work demands that one of us be there at all times! He stays there for one month, and I replace him until the following month, and so on...

I must leave for South Africa tomorrow! In a few days, my brother will return here if I'm not being too forward, I'd like very much for him to meet you lovely girls!

Why, why, that would be fine!

I've written him so much about you two! He feels he knows you as well as I! You'll have no difficulty recognizing him, but still, I'll give him a letter of introduction!

Whatever you say, Edwin!

Yes! Whatever you say!

For the next few days, Edwin remained in his hotel room. Amy and Susan thought he was on his way to South Africa, but actually he was preparing for his "TWIN BROTHER'S" appearance!

Let's see! New luggage, new clothes! Better take a sun-lamp treatment to renew my tan! Supposed to be hot in South Africa!
Once again the two naive Blair sisters sat in admiration as Old Glue-Lips turned on the charm...

I feel I must say that you are both, indeed, everything Edwin said you were! I feel as if I've known you for years...

Oh, Alphonso! That's just what Edwin said! How nice!

Elo lounged about his room for a few more days, and made certain time and again that all was in readiness! At last, posing as his non-existent brother, he presented himself...

I hope I'm not overstepping my bounds. I am Alphonso King. My brother Edwin gave me this letter of introduction...

Isn't it grand? Alphonso and Edwin are so identical!

That... that makes one for each of us, doesn't it, Susan?

A month later, Edwin came back, and the time was ripe...

Amy... there comes a time in every man's life when he feels the need of female... er... companionship!

Oh, Edwin!

And so they were married. The minister from the little church around the corner performed the simple, quiet ceremony...

Edwin and Amy... I now pronounce man and wife!

In the days that followed, Amy learned the meaning of 'marital bliss' and she confided in Susan, who was becoming impatient...

Oh, Amy, do you think Alphonso... I mean... oh, you know what I want to say?

Yes, Susan, I know. My Edwin says he's sure Alphonso will ask for your hand as soon as he returns!

Again Edwin left for South Africa! He lolled about his hotel room, relaxing and enjoying himself...

Ha, ha! What a set-up! I can pull the wool over their eyes forever!
And about a week later, Alphonso returned...

Susan, there comes a time in every man's life when he feels the need of female... companionship!

Oh, Alphonso!

And so, they were married! The minister from the little church around the corner performed the simple, quiet ceremony...

Alphonso and Susan, I now pronounce you man and wife!

And in the days that followed, Susan learned the meaning of 'marital bliss' and then did the two sisters confide in one another...

Oh, Amy, I'm so happy! Alphonso is so kind... and gentle!

It's a shame both our husbands can never be with us at the same time, but...

Hem, hem, hem! Now hasn't Old Ed King worked into a terrific deal? Two namby-pamby innocents for wives, a train load of money, and a week's vacation from the little women every month, no questions asked!

WOW!

Months passed and the grand hoax continued, successfully!

But Ed was losing his sun-tan...

But, Edwin! Why buy a sun-lamp?

So I can keep the tan I have! I don't want to get a bad burn when I return to South Africa!

Edwin stretched out on his bathrobe and promptly fell asleep. Unknown to him, a sudden gust of wind lifted his bathrobe sash and very gently, accidentally, draped it across his sack...

But, Edwin? Your back...

Yes, a little too red! Overslept a little! Feels fine, though!

...so that on awakening, a wide strip of white was emblazoned there. He never guessed...

So that on awakening, a wide strip of white was emblazoned there. He never guessed. . .
Now when Alphonso returned on the next shift, Susan was naturally pleased. She was so happy to see him she didn't even think to make a remark about the nice, wide strip of white across his back.

But the following day, when she and Amy talked...

...it was so humorous, Amy! There was his broad back, tan and rippling with muscles... and that white strip!

Tee hee! I know just what you mean! Edwin had the same untanned strip across his back! It is quite comical! Haha!

Amy! It... it can't be true! It... it can't be!

But... but, Susan! If it is... I mean... that would mean...

But what a horrid thought! Oh, I'd be so ashamed! Amy, we must find out!

You're right, Susan! Now, I think I know how... listen!

The night before Alphonso was to leave for South Africa, Susan remained awake until his deep breathing assured her he was asleep. Then silently, she reached into her night-table and brought forth a small bottle of peroxide; she dabbed a few drops on the back of his head, causing the hair to bleach...

There! Now we'll see!
As usual, a week passed before Edwin came home! He entered happily, and as he turned his back to hang up his hat, Amy and Susan stared in horror at a small white patch of hair on the back of his head.

Amy! It's true! Edwin and Alphonso are the same man! What has he done to us? Merciful heavens! He's not a twin! We're ruined! He's soiled us for life!

The bloody axe stood in the hallway, leaning against the wall between the two bedrooms. And if you were to peek inside the closed bedroom doors, you would see Amy in her bed, caressing her side of Edwin, and Susan doing likewise with her side of him! For the very first time the two shy, innocent twins were able to enjoy the company of their husbands at the same time! For, in their unbalanced state, they had split him in two, right down the middle!

The End.
It was the seventh one inside of a month.

Seven women... murdered. They stood around the latest victim's awkwardly sprawled, chalk-white corpse...

Just like the other six, captain. Wounds all over her body. Those same doughnut-shaped wounds. Dead about twenty-four hours!

Here comes that blasted news-snooper, Hughes. As if I didn't have enough trouble!
Danny Hughes, crime reporter for the Morning Globe, elbowed his way through the gaping crowd held back by the uniformed policemen...

Well, Captain! I see you boys are right on the job... after the killer has struck!

Oh, shut up, Hughes. Lay off, will you? We're going the best we can!

Yeah, and meanwhile, seven murders have been committed, and you haven't even come up with one suspect.

We've combed the docks. We've pulled in every suspicious-looking seaman we could get our hands on. We're up a blind alley...

The trouble with you cops is you get hold of one miserable clue and you won't let it go.

Look, Danny! Traces of sea brine were found on the clothes and skin of each victim...

...so who comes in contact with sea brine? Seamen! Dock workers!

Mermaids! Listen, captain! What about the blood? What about those wounds...

Hughes pointed to the several doughnut-shaped red welts that covered an arm projecting from the sheet that draped the latest victim...

The blood was drained from each of the victims/draped dry!

The blood was drained from each of the victims/their throats.

I'm telling you, vampires drain the blood from their victims' bodies. Those round red welts...

The killer obviously beats his victim with some sort of weapon. Danny! Look! Vampires don't exist, kid! They're legend. Fiction. Comic-book stuff.

All right, you stubborn fool! You keep blundering the way you have been and I'll keep lambasting you in my column until you get the murderer...

Besides? I did some research on vampires. Smart guys! They suck blood by piercing their victims first... with their fangs. They leave two neat puncture marks on their victims' throats... not doughnut-shaped wounds!
Ianny slammed down at his typewriter.

Danny Hughes pushed his way through the gathered morbidly curious, and sped back to the Globe Office.

Hey, Pat! Hey, you're working late tonight?

The chief told me to wait until you got back, so I could do a rewrite on the latest killing, Mr. Hughes!

Danny's typewriter began to chatter. Finally... Here you are, honey! Thanks!

Tch! Tch! You should learn to spell, Mr. Hughes!

He stood over her, inhaling her perfumed fragrance, watching her edit and correct his article... I'll drive you home tonight, Pat!

Okay, Pat! I'll have it for you in five minutes!

They're holding the presses for the new make-up, Mr. Hughes!

Pat finished, got up, and hurried off to the make-up department. Danny watched her go, eyeing her trim figure... Ready? Shall we go? Sure thing!

They pulled up before Pat's apartment house. Danny slid his arm around her...

Okay, Mr. Hughes! Th-thanks! But this is where I get out!

Don't be in such a hurry, honey! Let's talk.

He tried to hold her... she pushed him off, pulling his arms away... struggling...

Cut it out, Mr. Hughes! I'm not the type! Cripes! Guys like you are all arms! Please let me go... of me.

Okay, okay! You can't blame a guy for trying.
As Danny swung his car around the corner, he noticed the strange-looking figure, collar pulled up, hat-brim turned down, moving along the deserted street; he especially noticed the eyes, burning in the blackness of the shadowed face... Now there's a suspicious character! If I even saw one?

By the next morning, Danny's mood turned to apologize to Pat for his actions of the previous night...

EN. WHERE'S PAT? DUNNO, DANNY! SHE HASN'T SHOWN UP TODAY!

By ten-thirty, Danny started to wonder. Finally, he hurried to his car and sped cross-town to Pat's apartment...

SOMETHING'S WRONG! I CAN FEEL IT!

Police cars lined the street. An ambulance, not needed, was just pulling away as Danny drove up...

WHAT HAPPENED? ANOTHER MURDER!

It was Pat! She was dead! She lay in the lobby covered with the inevitable white sheet...

GOOD LORD? BUT LAST NIGHT... WHEN I LEFT HER... YOU GOT SOME EXPLAINING TO DO, DANNY! A LOT OF EXPLAINING? BETTER COME ALONG DOWN TO HEADQUARTERS!

They questioned him all day. Danny stuck to his story. They kept it up... into the night...

She was covered with those same red doughnut-shaped welts, Hughes. What did you hit her with?

I DIDN'T! I SWEAR IT! WHEN I LEFT HER, SHE WAS ALIVE!
SHUT UP, HUGHES! CAPTAIN. CAPTAIN! JUST GOT A CALL.

SOME DAME ON THE SOUTH SIDE WAS JUST ATTACKED IN A HALLWAY. SHE MANAGED TO GET AWAY. HER SCREAMING ATTRACTED PATROL MAN HENESSEY WHO WAS POUNDIN' A BEAT NEARBY. HE CHASED THE WOULD-BE KILLER DOWN TO THE WATERFRONT... AND LOST HIM!

YOU'RE IN ENOUGH OF A JAN. BLOOD DRAINED. LIKE THE OTHERS! BRINE LIKE A CLOTHES. LIKE VAMPIRE.

YOU'RE FREE TO GO.

YEAH! YEAH! YOU'RE FREE! WANT TO COME ALONG? I WANT TO QUESTION THE DAME! YOU CAN SIT IN! BUT YOU CAN'T PRINT WHAT SHE SAYS UNLESS I GIVE YOU THE OKAY!

AGREED! LET'S GO...

THE WOMAN WAS IN HER THIRTIES. SHE SOBBED OUT HER STORY.

I COULDN'T SEE HIS FACE! BUT I SAW THOSE BURNING EYES. HE HAD A HAT PULLED DOWN OVER HIS FACE... HIS COLLAR TURNED UP... AND HE WORE GLOVES. I REMEMBER, BECAUSE WHEN HE GRABBED ME, I TRIED TO SCREAM, BUT HE CLAMPED A GLOVED HAND OVER MY MOUTH!

HE MUST HAVE FOLLOWED ME. HE CAME UP BEHIND ME IN THE HALL. HE GRABBED MY WRIST AND HELD MY ARMS OUT... LIKE THIS...

WHAT DID HE LOOK LIKE?
He... he stank! It... like the oofs? it was a funny smell... like...

Yes! That's it! It was awful, awful! I managed to break away and scream, and the officer came. And... I guess I fainted. That's all...

They left her and drove back uptown...

Well, Hughes? What have you got to say now about your vampire? You heard her story?

I guess I was wrong, Captain! But something she said bothers me! I wish I could put my finger on it and those welts...

It was after midnight that Danny, not being able to sleep, drove downtown to the docks! He left his car and began to walk...

Wish I could think of what it was that dame said that bothers me!

Suddenly Danny saw him, moving along on rubbery legs, his collar turned up, his hat brim turned down, his eyes burning...

What the...? There he goes! It's him... the killer!

Danny darted after the swiftly moving gliding figure... keeping out of sight...

He's headed toward waterfront park! Lord, he looks strange. Doesn't seem to have a neck!

The loping figure crossed waterfront park toward a large stone structure...

He's going into the city aquarium!
The aquarium smelled of brine and the sea and places miles deep as Danny slid in through the door.

Huge glass tanks lined the walls about the aquarium. Exotic fishes from the four corners of the earth gaped out at Danny as he moved down before them.

This explains the brine on the clothes! He must hang out here!

He's around here somewhere! Hiding.

The aquarium smelled of brine and the sea and places miles deep as Danny slid in through the door.

Suddenly Danny saw it! The empty tank! The sign screamed at him. 'Octopus! Devil fish!' Good lord!

'The woman!' she said he grabbed her by each wrist and held her arms out... and then... my God... Then he clamped a hand over her mouth! That means...

Danny could hear Pat's voice... that night... as she struggled...

Cripes! Guys like you are all arms!

The wounds! The doughnut-shaped wounds! Gasp! The killer is... is...

A sound behind Danny made him spin around suddenly! It slithered toward him on its eight suction-cupped tentacles. Behind it, the slouched hat and the overcoat and the gloves lay in a heap on the floor...

AN OCTOPUS!

Before Danny Hughes could move, eight tentacles had wrapped around him, and hundreds of drawing-discs were sucking the warm blood from his struggling body!
He could hear the footsteps more distinctly now; there were several cops in pursuit, and they were closing in on him with each tick of the clock. He’d never be able to make it to the exit; he’d have to find a hiding place right here in the building. It was that... or 10 years in Dannemora for a second burglary conviction!

He could ditch the stuff, he supposed, but he had put too much time and effort into this job to throw away the priceless stones in a wave of hysteria. That bundle clutched in his hand would bring in 15 grand... it was worth the risk he was taking!

Walking swiftly, so as not to arouse the suspicion of the building guards, he found himself entering a vast circular room with huge glass enclosures dotting the high walls. It seemed, at first, as he crossed the enormous room, that he was in a glass bowl of some kind. No place to hide in here, he thought, conscious of the clicking heels coming down the corridor behind him. In another minute he might have to break into a sprint... then he was really finished! If there wasn’t a place of refuge in the next room, his goose was cooked...

A sudden movement behind one of the glass walls made him stop in his tracks. There were hordes of fish behind those walls... it must be the Aquarium section of the building! His eyes darted quickly from tank to tank; off to one side, separated from the other glass enclosures, was a pool into which he thought he might be able to drop unseen. The fish were
small, he noted as he raced toward it... there was plenty of green shrubbery floating in the tank. Enough to hide him until his pursuers departed.

Moving quickly, he slid in beside the tank, inched up the slick glass wall and let himself down into the water just as the two policemen ran into the room. Making himself as inconspicuous as possible amidst the clinging greenery, he drew a deep breath and ducked under the surface. Through the thick glass he saw the policemen hesitate in the center of the chamber, glance around uncertainly, then race on through the far door.

Sobbing for breath, his head cleared the surface and he gulped fresh air again. The coast was clear now! Almost playfully he slapped at several of the fish coming towards him. With dismay he felt a sharp pain in the calf of one leg... and, at that moment, he saw for the first time the sign painted on the front of the tank.

"PIRANHA!" the sign proclaimed. "Flesh-Eating Fish!"

They were around him, now, covering him like a shroud. Their needle-sharp teeth tore at his skin... their weight and slashing teeth engulfed and swirled around him in a wave of blind savagery. He screamed for help... dropped the bundle he had been so anxious to protect. Desperately he tried to fight back... to fight his way out of this refuge he had found. But their ferocity kept him captive there in the tank; he felt the skin of his arms and legs torn from his body... tasted blood on his lips, where the piranha had slashed at his face.

He saw circles of flame before him, knew that he was being torn to pieces... felt their deadly teeth tearing into his throat now... his chest being ripped open before the relentless attack...
Pardon us, V. K., old bean (half-baked, that is), but we'd like to personally answer the complaints we have been receiving from many of our readers about the presence of your and other E.C. mags from some newsstand! As we mentioned last issue, there are over 300 different comic mags being published. The wholesalers are jammed up, and the retailers simply cannot properly handle this impossible number of titles. Consequently, in desperation, many newsdealers are returning bundle after bundle of comic mags to their wholesalers UNOPENED! Some of these bundles contain said newsdealers' quotas of E.C. This makes it next to impossible for you to obtain your copy, and at the same time makes it next to impossible for us to sell magazines! Ask your newsdealer to make sure to display his quota of E.C. magazines. If he does not have any, ask him to order them from his wholesaler. If his wholesaler has them, there is no shortage of E.C. magazines—they are simply not getting proper display! O.K., V.K. It's all yours—Ed.

Hmmmph! No newsdealer would give a 'sen proper display! Well, space's a-wastin' so let's get right into the mail!

Dear Vault-Keeper, I read your books while eating and love them! They help my digestion! So don't let those cowards whose letters you published in the Dec. issue get you down! Boys are supposed to be braver than girls! I've always heard!—Audrey Abernathy Kingston, Tenn

My favorite time for reading is when I eat a mid afternoon snack! I ate a sandwich while reading the best of the best horror magazines—yours! "Till Death was a real stomach-tuner, but it didn't bother me!—Hazel Wilson

P.S. Fifteen minutes later, I take back what I said above. A sick friend--H.W.

...Things must be pretty peaceful around E.C. lately! No one criticized you in your last letter page!—George Satin

Big Stone Gap, Va.

...I think your books are disgusting. I know this will not be printed because you are afraid of the truth, but I still say that I would never lower myself to reading your low-type literature—Gary Schooley

San Francisco, Calif

Things haven't changed a bit around E.C. George!

Dear V.K.

I would like to trade E.C. mags with other readers. I got enough extras of your mags to trade. Mention it, huh?

Paul George
203 S. Stewart St.
Blairsville, Pa.

We started on E.C. Fan Club in 1951. Since that time, we are proud to say that our club has grown quite large. We have in collection practically all

the mags E.C. has published. We'd like to get in touch with other E.C. fan clubs—Michael Fecker

1100 Grand Concource
Bronx 55, N.Y.

I must write you this letter to tell you that your E.C. magazines have made for me and you many new friends and E.C. fans. People I hardly know, having discovered E.C., come to my house to read my back issues and catch up on what they've missed! I've nothing else in my house but good old E.C.!!—Frank Ray Stonebury

435 Flushing Ave.
Brooklyn, N.Y.

You're the President of a fan club and you don't know it, Frank!

Dear V.K.,

I can't tell you how thrilled I was to hear that you're going to adapt some stories by one of my favorite authors, Ray Bradbury. (By the way, your latest issue was the epitome of regularness. I've never enjoyed rereading more!)—Carol Plum.

Richmond, N.Y.

Adapting stories by Bradbury, just about the best, will lift your now unsurpassable magazines to even greater heights!—Bill Lean

Cincinnati, Ohio

Thanks to Ronnie Baumgardner of Bloomington, Ill., "Just Another Ghoul" of McCock, Nebraska, Richard Larsen of North Bergen, N.J., Bobby Lones of Ashland, Ky., Harriet Shies of Jersey City, Howie Robertson of Savannah, Ga., and Joe Keogh of Ontario, Canada, for the follow additions to my horror hit parade:

TAKES TWO TO STRANGLE
COIZING DOWN MY LIVER
GHOUL DAYS (RETCHING & WRITHING & HORROR COMICS)
AS SLIME GOES BY
EMBAIL YOURSELF (IT'S GREATER THAN TO STINK)
I'M IN THE MOOD FOR BLOOD
HAS ANY GHOUL SEEN MY BODY?
I GET IDEAS (HEE, HEE, HEH!)
I WENT STALKING DOWN BY THE RIVER
TWO CREEPY PEOPLE

Before closing, the big news you've been waiting for. The third annual TALES OF TERROR, E.C.'s anthology of horror and Suspense Stories, is now ready! Again it contains 16 complete yarns, 129 pages, and the price is still only 25c. If you can't find it on the newsstand that hides your E.C. mags, you're either not studying, or you're after brand new to still want it, just dig up two bills, place a care not to disturb the crease in his busy pants... lick off the crud, perfume it a little, and "search" it to me at the below address. Subscriptions still 25c for a four year's supply, six sick issues, Manila envelopes... same address as for mail (and female), which is

The Vault-Keeper
Room 706, Dept. 30
225 Lafayette St.
N.Y. C. 12, N.Y.
HERE'S A GAY TALE OF TINGLING TERROR. I CALL THIS LAUGH RIOT...

PRACTICAL CHOKE!

IT WAS A MORNING IN MID-JULY, IT WAS HOT AND STICKY AND THE CROWDED SUBWAY TRAIN SMELLED OF SWEAT. THERE WERE THREE OF THEM, MEDICAL STUDENTS, FROM AN UPTOWN UNIVERSITY. THEY HUNG ON THE SWAYING SUBWAY STRAPS, WHISPERING AMONG THEMSELVES...

THE TRAIN SPEED ON TOWARD CONEY ISLAND. AT EACH STOP MORE PEOPLE, DISGUSTED WITH THE SWELTERING CITY HEAT AND LONGING FOR A PLUNGE INTO THE COOLING SURF, JAMMED THEIR WAY INTO THE BEACH-BOUND SUBWAY CAR. THE STRAPS WERE ALL OCCUPIED WITH HANGERS-ON, SWINGING BACK AND FORTH.

SOME OF THEM WILL GO ON TO THE END OF THE LINE. WE'LL GET OUT THE STOP BEFORE...

BRIGHTON BEACH! NEXT STOP... CONEY ISLAND!

C'MON, FELLERS...
The train pulled into the Brighton Beach station, the doors swung open. People started pushing toward them.

EXCUSE ME! GETTING OUT! PARDON ME...

Those who had been standing scrambled for seats. The straps, once jammed with hands, now were almost entirely unused. Only one clenched-fist hang-on remained, clinging...

The doors slammed, the train began to move...

The car was emptying fast! The three medical students stood on the platform, peering back into the train at the remaining riders...watching their faces...

Wait! They see it! Huh, huh! It'll kill 'em!

On the platform, the three medical students howled with glee, pointing...

BOO! LORD!

Look at the face on that old bag! What a riot!

How! Get a load of the expression on that guy's face!

In the recently vacated subway car, those who remained did have expressions of varied emotions on their faces... Some were pale... Some chalk-white... Some green... Some turned away. The entire car was staring at the remaining arm, hanging on the strap...

Indeed, inside the recently vacated subway car, those who remained did have expressions of varied emotions on their faces. Some were pale... Some chalk-white... Some green... Some turned away. The entire car was staring at the remaining arm, hanging on the strap...
Someone lifted the folded newspaper. A blank sand mound stared back at him.

Hey, Mister! How can you breathe? Gimme a hand, here!

He y, Mister! Hey! Better wake up!

Hey, Mister! Tide's comin' in! Let's move!

Hey, Mister! Tide's comin' in! Better move!

The three medical students picked up their beach bags and pushed back...away from the incoming surf...back into the crowd that overflowed the sand.

No response. A hush seemed to fall over the immediate area, all eyes turned, there was a distant tittering.

Mister! Wake up, Mister! Hey! Can you hear me? Maybe...maybe he's deaf!

Hey! Mister! Hey! Better wake up!

Say! The tide is coming in! Better wake that guy up!

They watched from the safety and shelter of the crowd as someone approached the soundly sleeping figure.

Someone else knelt to grab the prostrate form's less! They came away from the mound of sand...with no body attached...

The napping bather was oblivious to the students' warnings. He slept on. The three of them melted into the crowd...

Good Lord! Gasp! Choke!
They moved along the boardwalk... the three of them... the tears streaming from their eyes as they laughed.

Did you see the expression on the dame when her boyfriend pulled... hee... hee...

...and he stood there... holding the legs... haw... haw... starin' at them... heh... heh...

One of the boys pointed to the inevitable caro with the two holes it wherein the heads of the exaggerated pair of figures painted upon it should have been.

Hello, boys! Want a gag picture taken? How about it, fellers? Swell!

How about one of you two standin' behind that? Good idea! Anything you like, boys!

There was much laughter and a crowd began to gather. The photographer ducked under his hood, focusing on the faces peering out from the openings.

Ready? Ready! Shoot...

Okay! You can come out now...

The face didn't move! The photographer went over and rapped the gurd. For a moment the head swayed... then pitched outward...

Good lord!
By the time they reached the campus, their discussion had become serious.

By the time they reached the campus, their discussion had become serious.

The subway train sped them back uptown. They sat, red-faced and teary-eyed, the three beach bags, now empty of their gory contents, parked at their feet.

I... I... heh, heh... I think I'm gonna laugh so hard since my choke...

The only thing to do is dispose of the rest of it...

O'onn! Let's see if we can sneak into the lab?

The medical building of the university was locked. It was a Saturday during summer session. It was to be expected...

The three medical students darted up a side-street, gleefully giggling...

What a riot! Did you see his face? I'm dyin'!

Now what? Someone's bound to check those corpses!

They'll find one of them with its head and an arm and its less gone...

Let's have the key you swiped!

Here! The watchman's across at the library! I saw him...
The slab rolled out of the wall revealing the partially dismembered corpse. They set to work, finishing the job.

They moved down the silent halls...

They rolled up into small segments and took them out in our beach bags!

We'll chop what's left up into small segments and take them out in our beach bags!

Maybe, we can think of some more gags!

Oh, no! I couldn't roll it out!

Hurry!

You know, this guy here wasn't an unidentified! He willed his body to medical research...

Well, he won't mind if we've used him for very medical jokes!

As they crowded about the body, wielding their scalpsels hastily, they never noticed the coiled-up intestines slither from the beach bag behind them...

What'll we do with the bags of what's left?

Bury 'em somewhere! Maybe put a few rocks in 'em and throw 'em in the river!

You hear something?

Good Lord! It's...it's a snake!

No! Oh, my God...

The slimy sucking sound of the intestines sliding across the marble floor made the three gag-loving students spin around...

The slimy sucking sound of the intestines sliding across the marble floor made the three gag-loving students spin around...

On a hunch, the police, investigating the cases reported the previous day, checked with the university. When they got to the refrigerated room where the corpses were kept, they found the three medical students. Their faces blue, their eyes bulging from their sockets, their tongues hanging from their wide open mouths...the long strand of intestine wrapped tightly around each of their necks...

Choke...

Which is exactly what they did, Officer! Thank you for your intelligent comment! And as for you readers...well, if any of you are in med-schools, don't get any ideas! Remember what happens to med students who use parts of bodies as gags? They gag, all right...until they drop dead! Now, if you've got the guts, go on to the old witch for the wind up to my huck-mag!
HEE, HEE! WELL, SALT MY SLOP-STEW AND SLING ME A SLUG, IF IT ISN'T MY TURN TO ENTERTAIN YOU.

OKAY! THE CRUD IN THE CAULDRON IS CRAWLING, WHICH MEANS ITS REEKING-RIFE, OR DONE TO PERFECTION IN CULINARY CHATTER (GET THAT)! SO, HOP INTO THE HAUNT, HORRORS, THE HAUNT OF FEAR... AND YOUR SCREAM-SCULLION, THE OLD WITCH, WILL POP A PUTRID PORTION OF PROSE INTO YOUR YELPING TAPS. I CALL THIS TASTE OF TERROR...

NOTES TO YOU!

JUDSON SLACK REREAD THE LETTER FOUR TIMES. HE JUST COULDN'T BELIEVE IT. THE LETTER WAS FROM 'AN ANONYMOUS FRIEND'. IT WAS ONE OF THOSE SHOCKING LETTERS, FILLED WITH THINGS ONE CARES NOT TO READ ABOUT ONE'S OWN WIFE. IT READ...

'DEAR MR. SLACK,

SINCE I CANNOT SIT IDLY BY AND SEE YOU MADE A FOOL OF, I AM WRITING THIS NOTE TO INFORM YOU THAT YOUR WIFE, ELEANOR, IS CARRYING ON AN ILLICIT LOVE AFFAIR WITH ANDREW COOKSON. I SAW THEM TOGETHER LAST NIGHT, THE 25TH, IN HIS PARKED CAR... SOB... IN A... SOB...

'CROPROMISING...', CHOKE... OH... NO!

NO! ELEANOR...
JUDSON SLACK TRIED TO GO BACK TO HIS OFFICE WORK, BUT COULDN'T! HE MADE A PHONE CALL AND THEN CROSSED HOME.

JUDSON? WHY YOU WERE OUT SO EARLY? YOU SAID YOU WENT TO PLAY CARDS! YOU LIED, DIDN'T YOU?

JUDSON SLACK SLAMMED THE DOOR AND STAMPED DOWN THE WALK. FROM THE HOUSE, HE COULD HEAR HIS WIFE'S PITIFUL SOBBING. HE FLUNG OPEN THE CAR DOOR ANGRILY, SWUNG IT SHUT, AND SPED AWAY.

THE NEXT MORNING JUDSON CAME HOME FOR HIS CLOTHES. HE FOUND ELEANOR SPRAWLED ON THE FLOOR, A REVOLVER IN ONE HAND, A SMALL PACKAGE IN THE OTHER. SHE'D BEEN DEAD FOR SOME TIME. THE TAG ON THE PACKAGE WAS SHORT AND SWEET.

WHAT WAS THAT? SOUNDED LIKE A BACKFIRE! HMMPH! GOT TO HAVE MY CARBURETOR CLEANED ONE OF THESE DAYS!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY! CHOKED DARLING... FROM YOUR LOVING WIFE THEN... THEN... ELEANOR! MY GOD! WHAT HAVE I DONE TO YOU?

JUDSON? HOW COULD YOU SAY SUCH A THING? HOW COULD YOU BELIEVE SUCH A THING ABOUT ME? I THOUGHT YOU LOVED ME! SOR...

JUDSON, WAIT! DON'T LEAVE ME! I LIED ABOUT PLAYING CARDS LAST NIGHT! I ADMIT IT! BUT I DIEDN'T SEE ANDREW COORSON! I WANTED IT TO BE A SURPRISE! I...I WENT SHOPPING LAST NIGHT. FOR YOUR BIRTHDAY PRESENT HAH! A LIKELY STORY! PRETTY GOOD, BUT NO DICE! I GOT PROOF! THEN WHERE DID YOU GO? I HAPPEN TO KNOW THAT YOU WERE OUT WITH HIM... PARKED DOWN BY THE RIVER IN HIS CAR?

JUDSON! WHY YOU WERE OUT LAST NIGHT? YOU SAID YOU WENT TO PLAY CARDS! YOU LIED, DIDN'T YOU?

YOU LIED! I CHECKED... WITH YOUR SABBY GIRL FRIEND! SHE SAID YOU DIDN'T COME OVER LAST NIGHT! YOU SAW ANDREW COORSON LAST NIGHT, DIDN'T YOU?

ANDREW COORSON! NO! I DIDN'T...

N-NO! I DON'T GO TO PLAY CARDS!

...WITH YOUR SABBY GIRL FRIEND! SHE SAID YOU DIDN'T COME OVER LAST NIGHT! YOU SAW ANDREW COORSON LAST NIGHT, DIDN'T YOU?

WHY YOU WERE OUT SO EARLY? I LAST NIGHT? YOU SAID YOU WENT TO PLAY CARDS! YOU LIED, DIDN'T YOU?

WHAT WAS THAT? SOUNDED LIKE A BACKFIRE! HMMPH! GOT TO HAVE MY CARBURETOR CLEANED ONE OF THESE DAYS!
Morton Cox read the letter with mixed emotions of hurt and anger. It was a painful letter to read. It was a shocking awakening, hard to believe Simon Pitter, his most trusted employee...

The letter was signed 'an anonymous friend.' Horton Cox made several phone calls, then he went into Simon Pitter's little office...

And I trusted you! Next year I was going to retire you with a lifetime pension! I thought you were a loyal employee! And you did this to me!

Mr. Cox made several phone calls. Then he went into Simon Pitter's little office...

Is the person you are seeking, the one who stole the ten thousand dollars from your safe last month. Since the robbery, he has deposited a large amount of money in his account at the bank, bought a new car, and...

The letter was signed 'an anonymous friend.' Horton Cox made several phone calls. Then he went into Simon Pitter's little office...

Mr. Cox left Simon blubbering like a baby and stormed back into his office. He reached for the phone. Suddenly, there was a scream...

Mr. Pitter, I don't...

Mr. Cox left Simon blubbering like a baby and stormed back into his office. He reached for the phone. Suddenly, there was a scream...

Mr. Pitter, I don't...

Mr. Cox shook his head sadly and went downstairs. When the police came...
Averill Minton looked out of his bank office at the crowds that lined up before each teller’s cage. What’s going on out there, Fields? Looks like almost everybody in town’s out there! They’re all withdrawing their money, Mr. Minton? closing their accounts!

Averill Minton read the letter. It was signed ‘an anonymous friend,’ it said...

‘Dear Depositor,

The President of the Town Bank, Averill Minton, has been embezzling bank funds. Any day now, the police will discover it, and your life’s savings will be lost...’

Mr. Minton paled. ‘Not all of them, good Lord! They’ll bust the bank... I’ll be ruined!’

Stop them, Bert. Tell them it isn’t true! How could they suddenly have lost their faith in me?

I tried, Mr. Minton. I really tried. They’re frightened!

I tried, Mr. Minton. Honestly tried to gain my fellow townspeople’s confidence. Now, with only the word of a poison-pen letter, they forsake me, turn against me!

I knew you don’t want to take any chances! But... why worry about your money? We’re insured! Why not give old man Minton a chance?

That’s right! Our deposits are federally insured. Why not give old man Minton a chance?

Look! A gasp!

But it was too late! In his office, Averill Minton slumped across his desk, the letter-opener sticking out of his chest.
Ambrose Baldwin was an old, bitter man. Nobody liked Ambrose Baldwin, especially Mr. Popkin, the candy-store man. Ambrose was always especially nasty to Mr. Popkin.

Mr. Popkin made the kids their malteos, and then finally turned to Mr. Baldwin... You're lucky you're the only candy store in town! I wouldn't come here at all.

Give me a bottle of ink! Here! Take it... with my compliments as a parting gift! Don't bother coming back to my store! I don't need you and your so-called business.

Once inside his house, the old man sat down at his table, took a pen and the new bottle of ink, and began to write:

Let's see... dear County Commissioner of Public Health, the candy store in our town, owned by Mr. Popkin, is a disgrace and a threat to the health of this community...

Meanwhile, in Mr. Popkin's spic-and-span store...

If I could only get my hands on that poison-pen-letter writer, I'd... I'd...

Who can it be? Who would want to do such a thing? How can we find out...?
Two men walked into the store. One stopped to talk to Mr. Popkin. The other nosed around.

Mr. Popkin received an anonymous letter about your store. That it was filthy... rodent infested... that you sold wormy candy... had cockroaches...

Mr. Judson Slack, Mr. Horton Cox, and Mr. Bert Fields sat in a booth, out of sight.

My my, Elly, killed herself. Sob... because I believed what that liar said!

My old friend... my most trusted employee... Simon... his heart pitter... he too... was broken... because I believed... when they all believed those lies.

Mr. Judson Slack, Mr. Horton Cox, and Mr. Fields sat in a booth, out of sight.

"My, my... Elly Kilroe... Young Mr. Tate... himself... sob... my most trusted Minton... because I believed... I'm sorry!"

Mr. Popkin said, "My store? But... who could have written such terrible things about my store?"

Mr. Popkin said, "We received an anonymous letter about your store. That it was filthy... rodent infested... that you sold wormy candy... had cockroaches..."

They went out. Mr. Popkin watched them go. Bert Field called from the booth.

"Somebody that was no play a joke, joke, gentlemen? That was another of those poison pen letters? Another pack of malicious lies?"

I have the letter right here, Mr. Popkin! See for yourself!

But... but... this is a blank piece of paper!

Huh? Let's see! Say that's funny? Hmph! Must've been some sort of gag, Mr. Popkin! I'm sorry!

This place is clean, commissioner. Let's go!

They went out. Mr. Popkin watched them go. Bert Field called from the booth.

"Somebody that was no play a joke, joke, gentlemen? That was another of those poison pen letters? Another pack of malicious lies?"

It was meant to be deadly serious! It was meant to harm me like those other letters he wrote! Yesterday, Ambrose Baldwin came in. We argued. He's such a sour old man, I thought a joke would cheer him up...

So I gave him a bottle of disappearing ink... that letter was written by Ambrose Baldwin!

That's why the letter was blank, eh? The ink disappeared.

So he's the one who's responsible for those lies! But why? Why did he do it?"
Judson Slack gasped. "Fifteen years ago! I took Eleanor away from him! We were both in love with her, but she picked me! He's carried a grudge all this time!"

Horton Cox snapped his fingers. "Good Lord! Fifteen years ago, he and Simon Pitter applied for the same job. I chose Simon. He must've hated Simon for it ever since..."

Bert Fields nodded. "Yes! I remember now! Mr. Minton turned him down when he applied for a loan. He didn't have the collateral needed. Mr. Minton always wanted to protect his depositors. It was fifteen years ago, at least."

Ambrose Baldwin looked up to see three men standing over him. "Slack! Cox! Fields! Why, why have you sneaked in like this?"

"Everything you wrote was a lie, Ambrose! You've written your last poison-pen letter... your last lie..."

Ambrose was held down while each man in his turn filled his fountain pen with the solution of lye they'd brought, stabbed it into the bitter old man's body, and emptied it into his bloodstream. "Now it's we who have the poison-pens, Ambrose... we who are filling you with lye..."

Again and again each of the men repeated the action until Ambrose's screams stopped. Then, they watched as Ambrose's body began to blacken, steam and bubble, and finally reduce to a foul-smelling, foaming pool of putrescence, dissolved by the poison from within..."
CALLING SPACE POLICE, COME IN ON YOUR WALKIE TALKIE
ROGER!

GEE THIS WALKIE TALKIE IS LIKE A REAL TELEPHONE ARE YOU REALLY IN THE BASEMENT SURE SIS, AND THE WIRE COMES WITH THE SET

THIS WAS A KEEN IDEA TO HOOK UP OUR WALKIE TALKIES BETWEEN THE HOUSES

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