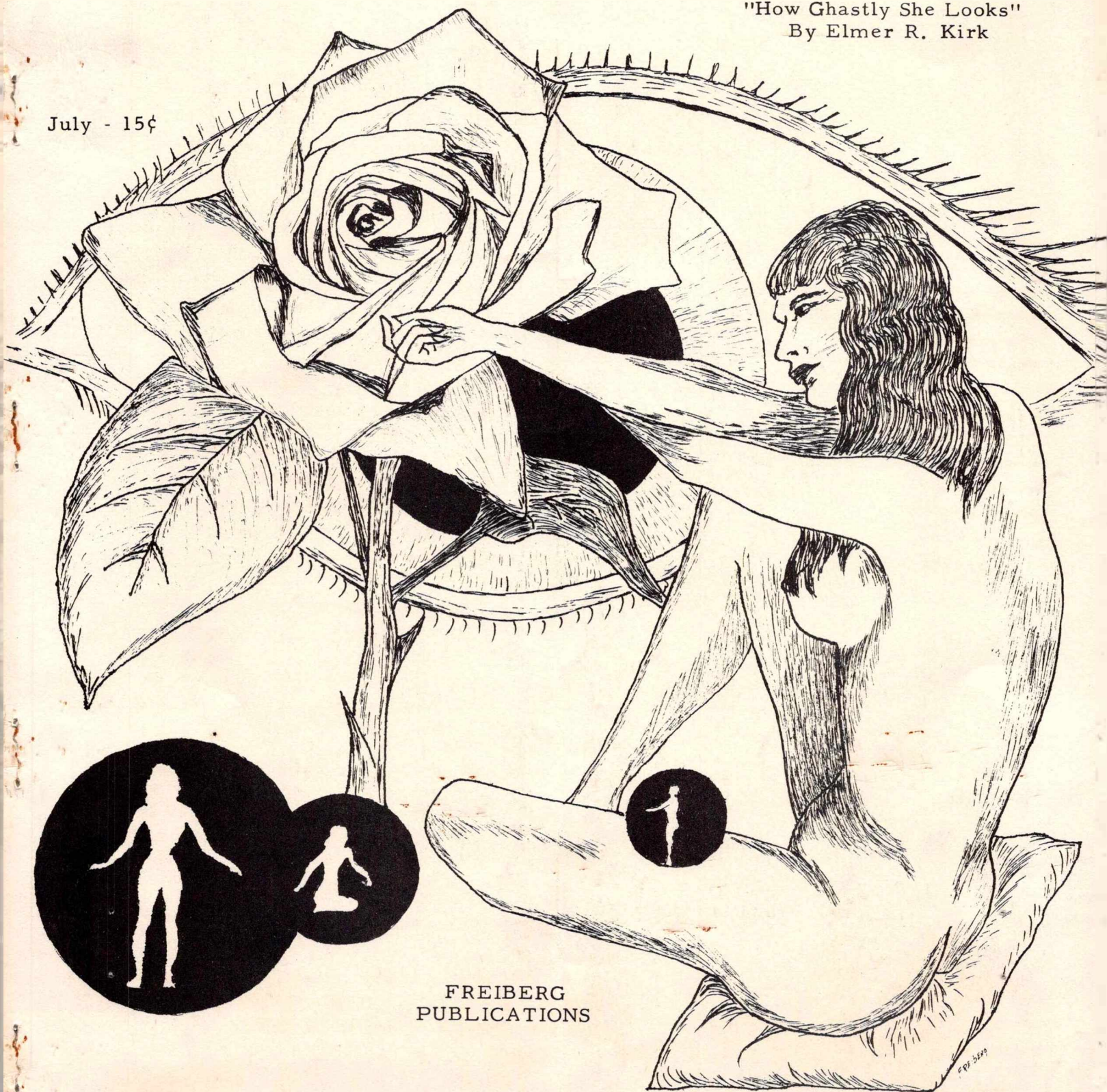


BREVIZINE

"The Secret Place"
By Robert Gene Warner

"How Ghastly She Looks"
By Elmer R. Kirk

July - 15¢



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE HIDING PLACE By Robert Gene Warner.....	3
THIS SAUCER BUSINESS By Dennis Murphy.....	7
HOW GHASTLY SHE LOOKS By Elmer R. Kirk.....	9
PROGRESS By George Brown.....	12
A COFFIN FOR MIKE By Howard Barton.....	14
BELOVED MOON By John G. Fletcher.....	17
<u>Special Feature:</u>	
THE BONE OF CONTENTION By The Readers.....	19

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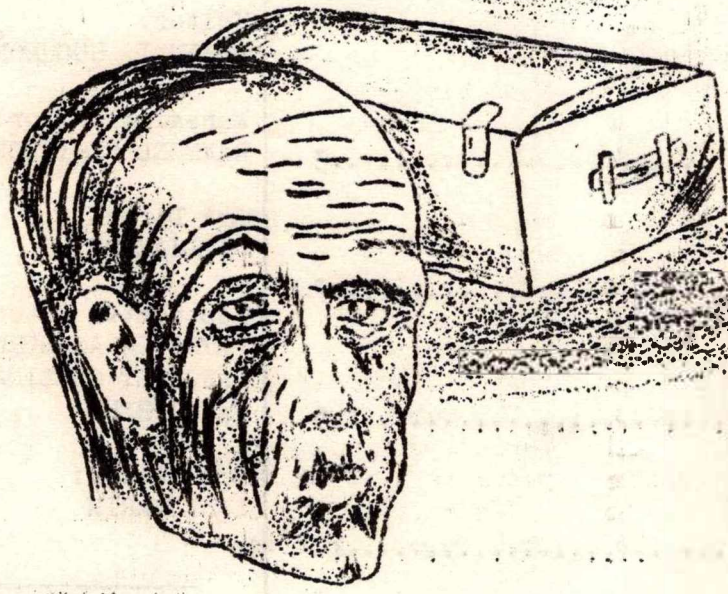
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HIDING PLACE

BY ROBERT GENE WARNER



Humans are a funny lot. When life is their oyster they're realistic, cynical. But let sorrow show its ugly head, and they can go half-cocked on any fantasy. Well, boys, everything isn't cut-and-dried... Not yet; it isn't! -EJH.

OF LATE, THE HOUSE (save for the memories) seemed so cold, so empty, like a great silent cavity. Of late, the wind seemed to blow so hollowly, to whisper so tonelessly at the eaves of the house as it passed in its late-evening flight to meet the falling dusk. And the sounds of the night, of late, as he lay between the crisp sheets of the bed--not thinking but anything in particular, but just letting the memories wash over him--were so distant, so very far away, so strangely withdrawn into the darkness that surrounded him like a velvet--like a velvet fog.

Since Maria's funeral he had kept himself indoors; most of his waking hours he had spent sitting in the front bedroom with the shades all drawn and the windows shut tightly to keep out most of the outside sound. He did nothing while he sat there, save gaze, with a mild unseeingness, through the dimness of the room at the picture of Maria on the opposite wall. And, quite often, as he gazed at the picture for a long while, he would begin to cry, very softly, and very quietly, not feeling the tears that formed in his eyes and traced moist paths down his cheeks.

The neighbors dropped in not infrequently, and he would go and sit with them in the living room while they offered their sympathies again and again (it had been three weeks since the funeral) and tried to make him feel better with their words. But it was seldom, if ever, that he really heard what they were saying to him...

There had been one morning, not many days after the funeral, that a Mrs. Richburg from the next block (whom he was sure he had never seen up until that time) had come in to talk with him. And as she had sat there in the old platform rocker Maria had always sat in, when evening fell, to darn his socks or perhaps to do a minor piece of embroidery, talking to him about how well he was bearing his grief, he had looked at her suddenly, in a certain way--and it had seemed that in that moment Maria was sitting there again.... Sitting there alive and smiling and talking to him. His body had tightened up: inside--or had it relaxed inside? And, half rising from his chair, he had murmured, "Maria..." But then, Maria had dissolved,

rapidly, like a lump of sugar melts away when water is dropped on it; and Mrs. Richburg had been there in Maria's place, looking up at him strangely. She had asked, "Is there anything wrong, Mr. Zaharias?" And, sitting down again and shaking his head slowly, sadly, he had replied, almost in a whisper, "No. No, I...I am very sorry..."

The people had been very kind, and he appreciated their kindness very deeply; but he wished that they would leave him alone for a little longer. He wanted to be alone, there with the emptiness, to let the loneliness fall about him like a soft, slow autumn rain. He wanted, more than anything else, to be left alone to sit in the dim bedroom, with the large and silent house surrounding him, still clinging with a stubborn tenacity to all its memories.

The house was, truly, like a great recording machine; all through the years it had carefully, meticulously, recorded all the sounds he and Maria had made together in the house, and had stored them away in its large and high-ceilinged rooms to be played back later. And now was later.

He had but to sit very still in the chair and close his eyes and tilt his head back, slightly...and all the memories would return, making him re-live again that which would never be again; except in memory. His memory, only.

Since the funeral he hadn't had to worry about cleaning the house, or preparing his meals; Mrs. Cooper, who lived just across the street, came every morning before he awakened and cleaned the house, working all around him, silently and efficiently, and never once disturbing his sleep. Then, a little later in the day, after he had gotten out of bed, she would return and prepare him something to eat and bring it into the bedroom, where he would always be, sitting there, very still in the chair, breathing the memories, as though in a deep trance. Some days he would speak to her, and she would respond with brief conversation; but when he said nothing, she simply set the food tray on the table beside his chair and left the room, coming and going almost as a shadow. All this she had done without pay; he had insisted several times that she accept pay for what she was doing, but she wouldn't hear of it.

And others, almost every morning, would bring food and put it in the kitchen; and he would usually manage to eat a little of it before they left, just to show them that he did appreciate their kindness. Yes,

the people were very thoughtful. But if only the ones of them who came and sat for long minutes, talking to him of things he would prefer to think of alone--- if only they would understand how he felt.

Quite often during the day, especially during the late afternoon when school had turned out for the day, the sound of children's voices and laughter would drift in to him, finding its way, somehow, into the stillness of the room; and he would find himself thinking of the children that he and Maria had always wanted, but had never been able to have. The golden-haired girl with eyes of blue as the summer sky, they planned on calling Celia, and the tousled-haired boy whose name would have been Daniel, because Maria's grandfather had been named that; and Maria had promised her grandfather emphatically that their first son would have his name.

The house would play him a recording of Maria's voice. A recording made twenty years before!

"Jonathon, do you know what Dr. Rogers said today? He said---he said that we're going to have a baby! I can call you Daddy, now! Doesn't it seem silly! So wonderful and so silly---calling you, Daddy!"

In the silence of the room, he remembered that.

Remembered---too very well---that only a scant three weeks afterward Maria had announced to him the coming of their baby, the train wreck had occurred while she was making the trip to visit her mother. Remembered, miraculously, that Maria had escaped death in the mangled wreckage.

She had returned home from the hospital only two weeks after the accident, completely well again. All the minor injuries she had sustained in the accident had healed fully---all save one (and it was no minor injury): She would not have the baby. She would not---could not---ever have a child. Never.

It was like re-opening a freshly-healed wound, remembering those things.

On this particular afternoon, he had been sitting quietly in the bedroom, with his eyes closed, not thinking of anything in particular, but of many things at random---and he remembered, of a sudden, the trunk that was upstairs in the attic. He opened his eyes and leaned forward in the chair, gripping the arms of it tightly and thinking: "Why didn't I think of it sooner? Why not sooner?"

The trunk, the one Maria's mother had

given her when he and Maria had been married. The trunk that was many, many years old, and that had been handed down, from mother to firstborn daughter, for a great many generations. The voice played him another of its recordings of Maria's mellow voice:

"This trunk," Maria had said to him the day it had been brought to the house, "is a very old and very unusual one."

"Oh?" The house played back his response to his wife's statement. "And what's so unusual about it, except that it is a very old trunk?" he had asked gaily.

Maria had then opened the trunk to let the trunk-smell of it rise up and touch their nostrils. And there had been, in the smell, a mingling of many things--the slightly pungent, unmistakable, odor of mothballs; the smell of fine silk things; the aroma of sweet perfumes; just the hint of paper scent, where, perhaps, some one had, long ago, placed a packet of blue-ribbon-tied love letters. And there were other smells intermingled in the fragrance of the trunk. Many more which they could not identify. They had stood there for a long while, inhaling the treasures of the empty-yet-filled-to-overflowing trunk and, as sometimes happens in a pleasant dream, time had stood still for them as they sniffed at the smells and sorted them out, breathing them in and out of their lungs, carefully savoring them.

"Somewhere in the trunk," Maria had finally said, turning to him, "is a secret place that is the doorway to...."

Seeing that she did not know exactly how to say what she wanted to say, he had remained silent for a moment; then he had prompted, "To where? To a childhood fair-lyland, perhaps, or to the land of dreams, or to---where?"

"To--to reunion."

"Reunion?" He had shrugged his shoulder laughing his quiet laugh.

"Let me try and explain. If I were to die, then I would go to another place; my soul would, I mean. But I would leave you behind, here. This trunk would be your doorway to my world. All you would have to do would be to climb into the trunk and close the lid and go to sleep. When you awakened, you would be with me. Forever."

His only response had been: "What a story! Who on earth told you that?"

"It has been passed down, like the trunk, from mother to firstborn daughter for I don't know how long."

"And do you believe it?"

"Yes," she had said, simply, closing the trunk lid.

That conversation, that incident, came back to him so suddenly, so clearly, so loudly, as though someone had turned up the volume on a radio. Yes, Maria had believed. And he had made a joke of it.... "How would I find the secret place? Why, I would have to fold myself up like an accordion to be able to stuff myself in enough to shut the lid!"

He remembered, remembered all of it... well! And sitting there remembering it, he grew tense. He thought, gripping the arms of the chair tightly: "Could--could it be true? Oh, God, could it really be true that the trunk does have a secret place? A secret doorway?" He half rose from the chair. "Is - is it true?!..."

Outside, in the lazy late-Spring afternoon, children were playing their eternal games of leap-frog and London Bridge and hide-and-seek and the other hundred games they played. They were tossing their shrill voices high into the air as they would toss rubber balls; and floating weightlessly, strange miniature beings, out across the greens of the lawns. Outside, children were romping and playing; it was truly Spring.

He drew a sharp, involuntary breath realizing of a sudden that, miraculously, it was Spring there in the tightly closed room also. He rose from the chair, hurried to the window, and the effort set his heart pounding in his chest. He stood looking out into the cool-green day, inhaling the fresh-sweet air that blew against his face and watching the children make merry on the lawns. It was good to be standing there, feeling the soft breeze, smelling the smells of that particular time of the year.

"Could it be true?" he asked of the breeze. And it seemed that the breeze whispered back in reply, "Yes."

He reached out and touched the window sill. He leaned forward and breathed the spring air slowly, and for a long while. Sunshine fell like warm fingers upon his face. He closed his eyes and stood there, swaying slightly.

"Yes. Yes! Yes, it could be true!"

He turned from the window, trembling, feeling a great a glowing joy rising in his chest to dispell the grief that had accumulated there in the past three weeks. He felt himself, and heard himself, humming softly! My God, how long had it been since he had done that! He couldn't

even recall the name of the song he was humming. But that didn't matter. That didn't matter at all!

He left the room, almost running. He left the door ajar behind him. And he listened for the briefest instant to the sounds of spring which drifted into the house. Listened, yet really did not hear them at all.

"Maria, I'm coming! Oh, dear God, please let it be true!"

Then he was at the foot of the stairs leading up into the attic. He stood there for a long while, it seemed, his foot resting lightly on the first step, his hand touching the railing. He ascended the steps, then, two at a time, not looking back not wanting to look back. He thought, for a moment, "I'll go up, but I'll never come back down again. I'll go up, climb into the trunk and go to sleep. When I awaken, all this will be gone. And Maria will be standing at my shoulder, shaking me lightly and saying, like she used to say, 'Get up, Sleepyhead,' and I'll get up."

He was at the top of the stairs, then, raising his arms above his head to heave up the covering to the attic. He felt his hands touch the panel, felt himself pushing it up--and it seemed as light as a feather

...Then, without quite fully realizing it, he was in the dark and musty attic, standing with his back to the stairway and trying to see through the darkness.

He stood there in the darkness for long minutes, letting his eyes grow accustomed to the velvet atmosphere of the attic. But he needed no light to be able to find the trunk; he himself had carried it up into the attic and placed it in a corner, to be all but forgotten by both he and Maria. Up until now...

As he moved toward the corner in which the trunk sat, the drifting, disturbed dust of the attic got into his nostrils; and he paused for a moment to sneeze, and to listen to the almost audible tripping beat of his heart. It is true! It is true!!

And suddenly, he was kneeling in the dust of the attic floor, reaching out to touch the rounded edges of the trunk lid, feeling it very carefully, caressing it as though it were precious gold in the hands of a miser. But it was much--oh, very, very much more than gold to him.

Fumbling the lid catch open, he lifted the lid of the trunk and leaned forward to smell the trunk-smells that arose to his nostrils. It was the same smells which he and Maria had inhaled more than twenty years before--the same dozens of mingled sm-

ells, some describable, some indescribable...

Almost hesitantly, he put his hand in the trunk and moved it around, stirring the air therein, but feeling nothing at all. But then--he felt a very slight drift of warm air against his hand. It had come from--somewhere--inside the trunk!

He was breathing heavily as he thrust both his hands into the trunk, moving them about, trying to find where the warm breath of air originated.

He rose to his feet, stood for a long while in the silent darkness of the attic; then, humming softly to himself, he climbed onto and in the trunk. He pulled his legs up, until his knees touched his chin, then reached up to pull down the lid of the trunk.

He was cramped in the trunk, stuffed in like so many old clothes. He felt as though someone had mistaken him for an accordion and had picked him up and squashed him together. It was pitch-black inside--and the fragrances seemed to clog his nostrils. But he gave little thought to this; his thoughts were of Maria. And of a reunion...

From afar, the house played back to him, again, its recording of Maria's voice:

"...And all you would have to do would be climb into the trunk and close the lid and go to sleep. When you awakened, you would be with me. For ever..."

He yawned a huge yawn, which pushed him tightly against the sides of the trunk... "I am getting sleepy," he murmured, yawning again. The blackness about him seemed to deepen. He imagined himself lying in bed beside Maria, as they used to do one hot summer night. They would lie quietly for a long while; then, if they were unable to sleep, they would talk in whispers until they became sleepy. Finally, they would cease talking and lie for a while longer, listening to the sounds of the night insects.

Very, very far off, he thought quietly, it is Spring. Very, very far away I can still hear children shouting, and the sounds of the old house gently settling. These are good sounds, and I'm glad it is these sounds I am hearing.

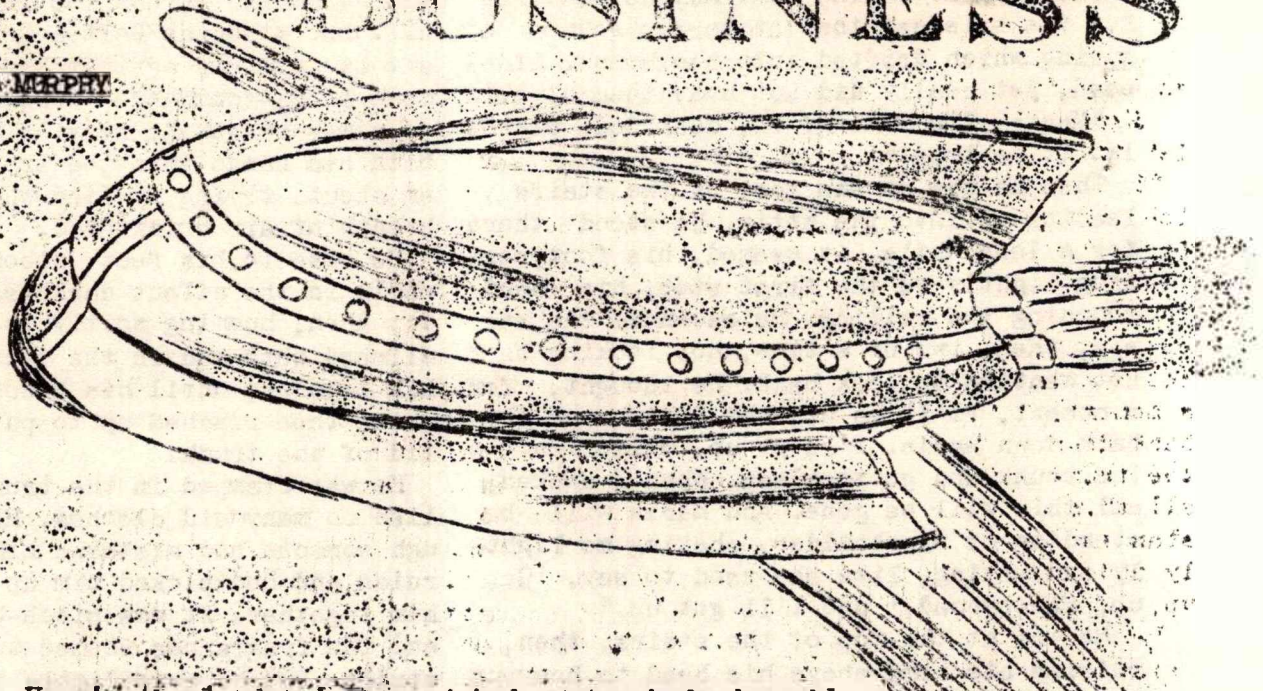
And then, the sounds of the Spring day melted away. He yawned again, shut his eyes and very quickly went to sleep.

...Toward a peacefully pleasant reunion. Somewhere, not so distant!

-The End.

SAUCER BUSINESS

BY DENNIS MURPHY



Here's the lowdown! Unvarnished, untouched; damnably authentic! No speculations, no "little men from Mars", but the truth on America's greatest unsolved mystery; the Flying Saucer. Let Dennis Murphy, the man who has, in all probability, seen more 'disks' than anyone else on this world. In other words, just the facts, ma'm...! E.J.H.

To the Editors of "Brevizine":

I have just finished writing an article for you regarding the Saucers, and am enclosing it. The descriptions are accurate in every detail, that is one thing I make sure of when telling, or writing, of the Saucers. I am watching for them nightly at every possible chance. There are other Saucer fans in this state, but rather scattered...

Seems every time anyone offers a theory regarding these Saucers, they sort of get their nose tweaked by the disbelievers.... Well, so goes it, eh? I'm giving my own theories in the article, and there are bound to be some of your readers who will vouch for the same theories, and some who will grin a wee bit over it all.

They can ridicule my theories all they wish, because I could be very wrong, you know. But, the saucer descriptions are accurate!

-DM.

--End of Prolouge.

WHEN THE REPORTS of "Flying Saucers" and unidentified aerial objects first hit the news, I was among the doubters--that still existant but ever decreasing clique who attribute Saucer sightings to being mirages; reflected light; distant planes, meteors, and so on...

The adage "seeing is believing" applied to me in the summer of 1952, and I changed my membership from the "Doubter's League" to the "Yes-I-Seen-'Em League."

My first sighting of a Saucer was late one evening in the latter part of July, 1952. It was an orange-red disk sailing slowly southwest from a point nearly overhead. It seemed to be spinning, as the spark-trail danced out from it, rather than in a straight-back teiling...

At the same time, I actually heard the sound it made, a steady sizzling. Then it seemed to burst, with a distinct snap... Several sparks floated down, and went out. Since that first sighting, I have seen

so many saucers that I cannot describe each one here in detail. All I can do is give a short account of the most outstanding sightings.

I've seen them moving slowly, in horizontal course, close to the horizon, like a plate set on edge against the sky. The slower they move, the less trailing they have behind them.

I've seen the Saucers fly across the sky in a manner very similar to a 4th of July skyrocket, with the same sparkling tail, and at times, the same sound.

I've seen them suddenly veer off course with unbelievable speed, as though attempting to trace a "v" against the sky!

The eeriest sighting I've made occurred in 1953, the latter part of May. The sky was completely overcast by a thin strata of clouds. Low, near the southern horizon, I saw a bright, oval light. Suddenly it seemed to "flutter", then it moved in my direction. As it drew closer, it became rounder in shape, and I realized it was just above the clouds, but shining through them enough to light the ground beneath it as it approached. When it got overhead, it revealed an outer ring of bright light, and the "core" was solid light. It moved slowly, then suddenly tipped upward, and vanished.

A few months later, in the early part of August, I saw the same specimen, again! And, as before, the sky was overcast by clouds. This time, the light was directly overhead, and motionless. I had a flashlight with me, and turned the beam up toward the Saucer. When I did, the Saucer executed a very erratic sort of zig-zag motion, then flew east and vanished among the clouds...

COULD THE BEINGS operating that Saucer, with all the brilliance of their craft, still see an ordinary flashlight Heaven-knows-how-many-feet below them? Yet, to all evidences, they did see the light, and, after a wild reeling overhead to acknowledge it, took off!

I've got my share of ridicule for my oral reports of Flying Saucers, and it is not uncommon for someone to walk up to me and say, "See any more Flyin' Saucers lately?"

I'll go along with the theory that these strange craft are interplanetary! What else can I think, when all nations on Earth deny having any part in their creation and existence?

In my thinking, they are propelled by some sort of cosmic energy, not yet harnessed by the people of Earth.

Also, due to the increase of sightings, that they must have established some sort of base, or stopping-off place somewhere, in outer space. A place where marking had not yet even ventured! Perhaps the Moon?? Could be....!

When our own earthmade rocket makes its initial journey to the Moon and back, we may have the answer to a lot more things than to the comic question, "Is the Moon made of green cheese?"!

I believe the first man-made rocket to the Moon will be sent up unmanned, but under robot or radar control. It will contain instruments that will automatically gather necessary data during its journey. I may again be laughed at for all I have said in this article, but though the latter part of it is just theory, the descriptions of "our visiting delegates from outer space; the Saucers", are just as accurate as my meager wording will permit me to make them.

Now I must stop writing, as the sky is clear tonight, meaning that I can bundle up against the chill air, and stand outside awhile and look up at the star-splattered sky, and wait for that movement of light which may mean another sighting of "them Saucers!"...

For, there are many, many things between Heaven and Earth that are not within our power of comprehension to grasp...

How did that old saying go? Doubters??

The fact that Herry Houdini never came back from the dead to rejoin his wife, doesn't mean a thing! There's a woman in North Carolina who claims her dead husband is back and wants to get in bed with her!

- Contributed by G.C.Hawkes.

HOW GHASTLY SHE LOOKS

BY ELMER R. KIRK



The golden days are over. Prostitution isn't the business it once was. Of course, the same as any other once-lucrative venture, the old employees are still around; needing only encouragement. That's what we want to talk to you about. At least, Elmer R. Kirk does....

I STATIONED MYSELF near the front of skidrow's most famous corner drug store, next door to a gin mill, and watched the dregs of humanity pass by, ever on the alert for the scarlet witch . . .

Brook College was putting on its annual mid-season fantasy stage play and was desperately in need of a female weird character--some old crone who spoke no lines, but who could or would do acting in the horror-pantamorphic. As instructor of journalism and acting play director, it fell to my lot to produce an outside actress to do the part, so I used unorthodox methods of scouting for a real-life witch.

Act II of the play, Meet The Devil, Please, briefly stated, was set in a cemetery, with weird symbols used instead of the usual tombstones. A bloated red-nosed drunk, holding a whisky bottle, portrayed a drunkard's grave. A masked robber, gun in hand, symbolized a bank bandit's body.

The God of War, clutching silver dollars in his greedy hands, depicted the war monger's tomb, and so on down the line of symbolic gravestones to the one marking a rich perverted playboy's final resting place.

Over the playboy's grave was to be a scarlet witch in bordello costume; an old broken-down prostitute holding a red light in one hand and beckoning with the other, dissipation and disease written all over her pock-marked face. It was for this real-life character that I must find a female counterpart.

Now, the college dean, Professor Jordan, admired plays in metaphor but this part, he insisted, was too didactic and, if I did insist on using the scarlet witch, I could not, under any circumstances, use an undergraduate to play the part. "Use an outside character or this play is out," he said flatly. And, as everyone knows, when a faculty president

renders an ultimatum; that's that.

The public do-gooders and uplift societies had long been bringing pressure to bear upon the low-ebb of school moral and it was for this reason that an allegorical school drama was being staged.

So I, not knowing the evil consequences hid myself down to skidrow's Jasmine Street to seek out a female bit-player for the scarlet witch in Act II, Meet The Devil. Please.

If you ever have stood on a corner of Jasmine Street late at night and looked into the wicked faces of passerby, you have missed one of the greatest thrills in the study of humanities. The sneak-thief, the underworld cut-throat, the tin horn gambler, the street walker, all parade in a weird fantasma before your very eyes---real and dripping with unadulterated iniquity. Some are bent and old with past horrors etched deep in their hard lined faces. Others are young and pasty-faced, pallored with sex perversion and dope addiction. The ex-con and thug. All my stage characters were here in terrible reality--but I was searching for only one....

Then it happened. The thing, the subhuman scarlet witch appeared. She came walking down Jasmine Street, appearing young at a distance, yet looking very old and bent with many evil deeds of the flash. Like all women of the street, she was over-rouged. She looked all of sixty years, but was, perhaps, under thirty.

"Howdy, madam," I winked and raised my eyebrows. "How would you like to make twenty-five dollars?"

"For twenty-five bucks," she answered, "I'd make anything--even you. Follow me."

"No, not that," I said. "Have a drink with me," --I nodded toward the tavern next door-- "and I'll explain my proposition to you."

"Have it your own way, big boy," she smiled and her upper plate dropped showing toothless gums. She led me inside to a rear booth where we sat facing each other. "What's the pitch--you're not plainclothes, I hope?"

"No," I said, watching a cute little kooch dancer do her floor show number in a vari-colored spotlight circle. "I need a bit-player for a stage show that I manage and it just so happens that you fill the bill exactly. Twenty-five bucks for an evening's work, no lines to memorize and no question's asked."

"Brother, you are watering your horse in the right trough," she answered. "And it

just so happens that I am an ex-chorus girl..." At this point in our conversation we stopped talking for a moment to watch the cute little kooch dancer do her final bump, sans G-string.

"Did you see that?" my beer guzzling woman of the night smiled, wiping the foam and lipstick off her dirty mouth...

"Yeah, I saw it--and I've seen a lot better," I said honestly. I looked into the scarlet witch's face while the swirling colored lights played havoc with her horrible features. "You're perfect for the part. Will you take it?"

"Sure--but I always collect in advance...."

"Not this time, sister," I objected... "But here's a five spot tip to seal the bargain. Meet me, dressed as you are, six o'clock, stage door at Brook College auditorium, one week from tonight--got it?"

Her eyeballs bugged as she raked the pancake make-up off one side of her face with her fingernails. The pale color from the lights made her pock-mocked face look hideous. She spit out her upper plate into a handkerchief and drew in her cheeks while fantastic lights danced in her horror-stricken eyes. "Brook College," she screeched, and then slumped in to the booth fixing me with a hypnotic, compelling, stare.

God, I thought, how ghastly she looks!

At that moment a hand rested heavily on my shoulder. I turned and gazed into more staring eyes, smirking eyes that told me that I was about to become a victim of some unknown tragedy. The crooked mouth, underneath hateful eyes, was forming words. "My wife," the vile mouth sneered, "what are you doing with her, Professor Girding?"

My subconscious mind told me instantly that I had been recognized and that, if I wasn't careful, I would be the victim of an underworld dodge so old it smelled...

"Don't try to pull that old gag on me," I said, standing to my feet and pulling his hand from my shoulder. Then I saw the hands tighten into fists.

I let go a short left jab right in his guts and, as he started to fold, I came straight up from the floor with an upper cut smack in his teeth. That did it. He crumpled. I stooped over and pulled again out of his shoulder holster as he staggered to his feet gasping for breath. He was spitting blood and teeth all over the floor...

"If you ever bother me again, I'll knock you so flat on your goddamn fanny you'll never be able to get up," I said, shoving the gun across the bar to the bartender on my way out. I could hear the scarlet witch crying in her beer as I closed the door...

All the following week, during rehearsal for Meet The Devil, Please, I wondered about my gun-toting friend of Jasmine Street. I also wondered who the real-life scarlet-witch might be and whether or not she would show up on time for her part in the production.

To circumvent such absenteeism on her part, I prepared secretly to masquerade my person as a stand-in for that part. In this way the play would be sure to go on.

Three hours before curtain time, I called the dean's office to make sure that Professor Jordan would be on stage for the opening address. His secretary informed me politely that the Brook College dean had not been in his office for several days.

She was, she explained, quite anxious about his personal welfare since his office work was far behind schedule. He had called her once from his bachelor's apartment, stating that he had an appointment "at a doctor's office." She had been unable to get in touch with him since that time...

"Thanks, Cora, for the information," I said over the telephone. "Lock the office and bring me the key backstage before the show starts."

I called a taxi and headed straight for Jasmine Street. I got out in front of the drug store and went directly into the tavern next door. The barkeep recognized me immediately, uncorked a frothy bottle of "Bud" and shoved it toward me. It was now close to six in the evening, so business was not rushing in the tavern.

"Thanks, pal," the tavernkeeper said, "for getting out of here the other night, when you should."

"That's OK," I explained. "I never look for trouble and never, under any circumstances, run from it, either. Say, by the way, who was that dame I was with--the ghastly looking one?" I tried not to appear overanxious about her identity.

"Oh, her," he said. "You can't forget all about that no good bitch--she was buried this afternoon. Died a couple of days ago!"

"Thanks," I tossed him a dollar bill.

"You can buy her boy friend a drink with that when he comes in, and tell him it is on me." I rubbed my sore knuckles and wal-

ked out. I could hear him laughing.

I hailed another cab, went to a downtown cafe for my evening meal and then walked to Brook College campus. It was not quite dark but the walk lights were on, leading to the auditorium so I slipped in silence around the back way. I could tell by the early crowd that the play was going to be a sell-out.

Cora Duncan, the dean's secretary, was waiting for me just inside the stage door with the office key extended in her hand.

"Thanks, Cora," I said. "Heard from Professor Jordan yet?"

"No. But some lady called up just before I closed the office and left word that she would be here in time for her part, as the scarlet witch..."

"Oh, n-no, no," I stuttered. "That just can't be. You must be mistaken about that Cora. Are you sure?"

Cora raised her eyebrows like a newshawk on the scent of a scoop. "The lady," she winked, "said to tell you not to forget Jasmine Street."

"You can forget it," I said, handing her a pasteboard comp for the reserved section. "I'm the scarlet witch, but don't tell anyone."

I went into my dressing room and carefully made up as the witch for Act II. The curtain had just rung down on Act I when fantastic thoughts flooded my mind. If the bartender on Jasmine Street was right, and I was inclined to believe him, who but her husband knew that she was to play the part? That is, if she had told him about it before she died...if she had a husband...if Cora wasn't just kidding. Then, on the other hand, Cora could only know what she had been told over the telephone.

As I rushed on stage to take my position as the lurid female grave symbol, I stopped suddenly in my tracks.

The Jasmine Street wench was standing as a symbolic headstone beside a grave, dressed in sheer brothel gown, her face a mass of putrid sores, her crooked mouth smiling a terrifying grin toward me...no upper teeth...

"God, I thought, how ghastly HE looks..."

I called at the Brook College dean's office early the next morning. The door was locked so I let myself in with the key that Cora had given me the night before.

He sat slumped over his desk---dead. He was spouting blood like a spigot all over the floor.

PROGRESS

BY GEORGE BROWN



Mankind has reached the ultimate in scientific discoveries. Anybody knows that. After all, what's left?

DICK BENNER GLANCED at the electric clock on the wall. He rubbed his wet hands together nervously and pushed his glasses on his nose. He picked up his pencil and tried to steady it as he placed the final figures and lines on the world's great blueprint, the first building plans on the first space ship.

"Sally," he called, "how's about a little coffee?" He smiled as he heard the bed springs screech as she rose from the bed in the next room. She stopped in front of the door and tied the belt of her robe. She looked at him with tired blue eyes and brushed her twisted golden hair back from her shoulders with a sweep of her hand.

"How's it coming?" she inquired, holding back a yawn with her hand. Her pale lips spread into a smile.

"Fine, just fine," Dick said running his hands over the surface of the blueprint.

"I'm sorry I got you up," he said, not looking up as he ruled a line. "But I must finish this tonight."

"Why?" Sally asked from the kitchen.

"Because I promised J. C. Hicks I'd have it for him by the end of the month." Dick leaned back and stretched his short arms toward the ceiling. "And this is the last

day."

Sally returned to the living room and adjusted his desk lamp so that it wouldn't shine directly into his eyes. "I don't mind getting up," she said. "It's you I'm worried about. You haven't been away from that drawing board in almost two days."

"I know honey, but the world is waiting for this. I can't hold up progress." Dick put his hand on hers. "I can take it hon."

Sally smiled. "I guess you're right, the world has waited a long time for this..."

"I knew you'd understand." Dick sighed the aroma of fresh coffee filled his nostrils. "Make it black, hon," he called.

"Without cream?" she asked.

"Yes, black, I'm about to go to sleep."

Dick ran his pencil through his black hair. He had come to a hard part. The part which would tax every last drop of know-how he possessed. Once that was done, the rest would be just a matter of checking over the whole drawing. He had it figured out at one time in his mind, just how much fuel they would need to get out of the earth's pull, how much it wo-

uld take to land the ship on the moon and how much it would require to take off again and then how much it would take to land back on earth. He wrinkled his brow, as he dug deeply into the dark pits of his mind.

Sally sat his coffee in front of him and went quietly into the bedroom.

He picked up his coffee and sipped it gently. He thought of Sally. He was very proud of Sally. She never nagged him because his work almost always kept them at home. Dick promised himself that as soon as the plans were in the hand of J.C. Hicks, he would take a vacation and take Sally out for a good time.

As though the hand of fate was guiding his pencil, he proceeded to map out the size, the capacity and their places on the ship, of the fuel tank. As he drew, his mind became blank of all other thoughts, and as the sun began to peek over the distant hills, he laid his pencil aside and rubbed his eyes. He took a drink of his cold coffee and gathered his plans together. Then one by one, he went over them. Checking to make sure that everything was correct. They couldn't be off a fraction of an inch.

Then as he finished checking, he could hear the snap and crackle of eggs frying; bacon bursting.

"Good morning, dear," Sally said, kissing his forehead. She placed a fresh cup of coffee in front of him and returned to the kitchen.

Dick looked at his wife. Her hair was combed out neatly and her sweet fragrance filled him.

He picked up the all important fuel problem and checked over it, then doublechecked it. He smiled and was pleased that it worked out so easily.

Then, for the first time in almost two days he rose from the desk. His back and legs ached so, he thought he'd fall over.

He walked around the room several times to let the blood get back into his legs.

"Finished?" asked Sally from the kitchen door.

"Finished."

She ran over to him and threw her arms around him. The tears streamed down her cheeks. "Dick, I'm so proud of you."

Sally smiled and hooked her arm in his and lead him to the kitchen. Dick sat down at the small wooden table and Sally took his eggs off the gas stove and Dick took his toast from the pop-it toaster.

Sally looked out of the window and smiled as the cars went by. "Someday, soon there'll be no cars like these we have. Isn't that so, Dick?"

"Yep, someday all you'll hear of is space travel."

"Thanks to you," Sally said.

Dick smiled, "That's progress."

"Progress, it's wonderful," said Sally "Nothing will ever stop it, will it?"

"Nothing," said Dick looking out the window. "After many years our dreams of space travel will become a reality." He looked at Sally. "This date will go down in history."

"And so will your name," Sally added.

"How's it sound?" Dick said. "Richard Benner finished the plans for the worlds first space ship on August the first, the year of our Lord, 2053."

"Sounds fine."

"I never thought I'd make it. Lucky for us the secret of eternal life was discovered back in 1975 or we never would have seen the day when space would be conquered."

Sally yawned, her gentle lips pursed into a seductive smile. Once more she turned toward the window. "It's a beautiful morning, Dick."

"...You know, Sally, human nature never changes, even through progress..."

"Let's go back to bed," she whispered.

GOD, HOW CHASTLY SHE LOOKS

Continued from Page 11

His eyes stared vacantly toward me and his crooked mouth was open...no front teeth. I had knocked most of them out in a beer-garden brawl on Jasmine Street the week before.

"You must have loved her terribly," I said to the dead man. "Thanks for playing her part so nicely last night." I closed the door behind me, using my handkerchief to rub the prints off the door knob. . .

BY HOWARD BARTON

A Coffin For Mike



Personally, we've always been fascinated by superstitions. Of course, there are others who won't come within a country-mile of one. Now you take Big Mike Conley, up until a little while ago he wasn't afraid of man or beast. That is, you understand, prior to this story! -EJH

"BUT, LOOK, Mr. Bollen, we just want to rent a coffin for the evening--we'll bring it back," Big Mike Conley said to the undertaker. "Honest, we'll take good care of it and do no damage at all--won't we, Jake?" Big Mike turned to his companion who nodded vigorously.

"Sure, pal, and we'll get it back by midnight," Jake promised.

"Well, it's not ethical. I have never had a request like that before, but I suppose that if it's for use at a masquerade party I could do it--for twenty dollars, in advance," the diminutive embalmer agreed. "But you will have to take one of the cheap black ones and return it before morning..."

"Fine," Big Mike said. "Just so I get a coffin."

Big Mike and Jake loaded their weird possession into their panel truck which was parked at the side of the mortuary, climbed in and drove off toward Big Mike's place.

"I'm not a bit superstitious," Jake nodded, casting a nervous look toward the ca-

sket. "But--but..."

"I've invited all the gang--what a party!" Big Mike laughed as he arranged wreaths of flowers about the coffin.

THE ROOM WAS quiet and cold. Candles by the window flickered, sending dark shadows to the ceiling and about the wall. The dank odor of the dead permeated the air, mixed with the delicate perfume of roses and carnations.

"Br-r," Jake shivered, surveying the result of their handiwork. "This looks to natural--too much like a funeral. Maybe we better give it up. Of course, I'm not superstitious--but..."

A tall wreath of flowers plopped to the floor. Jake jumped and grabbed Big Mike pushing him toward the door. Big Mike pushed him away and set the flowers straight again.

"Look, Mike," he said, "party or no party, I quit--something's going to happen!"

"Can that stuff," Big Mike said, "and come on upstairs. I got to dress like a corpse. The gang will soon be here for the party."

"Okay, okay," Jake conceded, following Big Mike to his room, "but I still don't like it--of course, I'm not superstitious..."

Big Mike put faint touches of rouge to each cheek and powdered his face with white talcum. He dressed himself in a black suit and faced Jake. "Jake," he whispered "how do you like my shroud?"

"You can go plumb straight to hell, for all of me--I still got a hunch something is going to happen..."

"Look, here's the setup," Big Mike instructed, "when you bring the gang in to see my last remains" --he winked-- "have them line up at the door and file past my bier, single file--and no talking. I might laugh and scare someone to death. Some fun eh?"

"Sure, sure --but..."

"Come on, snap out of it, pal. This is goin' to be a fine party," Big Mike smiled.

Big Mike and Jake crept into the death chamber silently. Big Mike removed the lid from the coffin and climbed inside. He lay on his back, his head looking up from the satin pillow. He placed his left arm across his chest and closed his eyes as if in death. "Don't I make a beautiful corpse?" he whispered in a somber monotone.

"You give me the creeps--you should drop dead," Jake growled. He turned at the door, closed and locked it.

THE MASQUERADE PARTY had been in progress for about ten minutes when Little Miss Muffet said to the Devil, "Wh-which one is Big Mike Conley, our host?"

"Oh, him," the Devil gritted from the corner of his mouth and pointed with his pitchfork. "Big Mike's in that there room--dead!"

"Pat--pat," the witch said to the skeleton, "Big Mike's in that room, wrapped in the loving arms of death."

And so it went from the lips of one masquerader to another; the clown told the hobo, the hobo informed the queen and the queen told the king, "Big Mike's in that room--dead!"

Finally the tense moment arrived. Everyone laughed and slipped off their masks. Jake, the devil, snapped off all the lights, but one dim one. "Ladies and gentlemen," he motioned toward the closed door, "our host, Big Mike, is in that room wrapped in a sleep that has got no end. Now, go in single file an' if you can't stand to look at no corpse--don't go..."

The flute player piped a weird funeral dirge, mockingly, as the procession started toward the phantom chamber of death.

Suddenly, there came a horror-stricken shriek from beside Big Mike's casket. Little Miss Muffet had taken one hurried look at the body in the coffin and darted, screaming, from the room. Each in their turn, had done likewise. They had fled the party in mad panic.

"Mike," Jake yelled, the last to enter the deserted chamber of death, "Mike, you fool, you overdone it--they all went home--I told you..."

He froze stiff in his shoes. Fright paralyzed every muscle in his body. He was looking directly into the face of a real corpse; a bullet hole drilled neatly between its staring eyes, wide open and fixed in death.

"Y--you--you ain't Mike," he breathed, slowly gaining a fraction of composure. He turned his head and tried to move his legs. His feet felt like so much lead.

"Glug--glug," there was a slight noise as if someone was moving in a far shadowy corner of the room. "Glug--glug," it went.

Jake, with forced effort, moved toward the sound. "Mike, Mike," he screamed, "it is you--who tied you up?" He hurriedly untied Mike's hands and feet, removed a blindfold from his eyes and a gag from his mouth...

"Th--that's better." Big Mike rubbed his sore and stiff limbs. "Say where's all the gang gone to, anyway?"

"Never mind the gang--just take a look in that there coffin," Jake nodded. "There's a dead man in it!"

"What else you expect in a coffin?" Mike mirrored his disbelief. "Say---you're not tryin' to kid me, are you?"

Jake watched Big Mike as he slowly made his way toward the coffin. "Ye gads, he's deader'n a mackerel--Murdered!"

"I told you so--now what we gonna do?" Mike dry-washed his hands in despair. "I dunno--I dunno," he said.

"Let's t-take him b-back to the undertaker where we got that there coffin. W-we can shove him inside the door an' run like hell--look, pal, how'd you get all tied up like that, anyway?"

"Ole King Cole come in that open window and slugged me when my eyes were closed, that's all I know."

"I'm not superstitious--but..."

"Yeah, I know," Big Mike shrugged, "you ain't superstitious er nuthin'---but we

can't palm that stiff off on the undertaker, either. Think again, pal. We got to get rid of it--quick."

"I'm quittin' you cold, Mike, as of now. I'm not super..."

"Look," Big Mike stopped him with a heavy hand, "we're going to take that corpse out to that little country graveyard, east of town, bury it and get the coffin back to the funeral home quick as we can. Now grab hold an' let's get going--fast!"

"B--but..."

"Yeah, I know you ain't, not a bit, but we can't afford to tangle with the law on no murder rap, either."

"Okay, okay, but I'm quittin' you cold, if I ever get out of this."

They placed the coffin with its contents into their truck and made their way out of town, heading east.

They had just entered the drab cemetery gate when Jake commented, "I'm not sure but I think we're being followed."

Mike stopped the truck. A police car pulled up beside them and skidded to a stop. The county sheriff got out, his hand on his holster. "What kind of joke you tryin' to pull?" he demanded.

"Just havin' some fun," Big Mike bluffed. "Honest, Sheriff, that's all. We'll go on back home, if you say."

"Now, looky here a minute--what you guys got inside that truck?" the sheriff's tone was brusque. "Officer Riley," he nodded toward one of his deputies in the police car, "have a look inside."

"Look, Sheriff," Mike begged, "we kind-a just borrowed it from ole man Bollen, for a joke, honest. We did--we'll take it back!"

The sheriff grinned, thinking of the pranks he had once played as a youngster. "You guys orta be out tippin' over shanties instead of stealin' coffins. I'll put Riley in there with you and we'll all go back to the funeral home."

"I'm not superstitious--b-but..."

"Shut up--I'm thinking!" Big Mike cautioned Jake.

"Now, no funny stuff, boys," the deputy grunted, getting into the trunk, "get going..."

When they arrived at the funeral parlor, Mr. Bollen opened the door for them to enter with their gruesome burden. "Why, hello Sheriff, I haven't seen you since last week--How come the police escort?"

"Open up that coffin, Mr. Bollen," the sheriff placed a heavy hand on Big Mike's shoulder. "They carried that thing like it had rocks in it."

The little undertaker lifted the lid of the casket and stepped back in astonishment. "Wow," he said, "where did you get that dead body. It looks like murder..."

"That's all I wanted to know!" The sheriff's tone was sharp. "Come along."

"Wait," Mr. Bollen held up his hand for them to stop, "I believe that I can identify the body for you, sheriff. That is the body of the bandit that held this place up, last week. I'm sure. I remember faces well. But I do not know how these two fellows" --he pointed to Big Mike and Jake-- "got the body. I rented a casket out for a witch party earlier in the evening."

"We can explain..." Big Mike spoke up.

"Sure, sure -- down at headquarters," the sheriff said.

BIG MIKE AND JAKE told their stories to the officers over and over again, so many times, without deviation, that the sheriff finally said, "Well, boys, maybe so, but we'll check on the members of your party and again with Mr. Bollen tomorrow and if everything adds up just like you say, well, we'll wait and see. In the meantime you get free bed and board..."

"Thanks," Big Mike winked at Jake.

"Who'd you say tied you up?" the sheriff asked as he turned the key on Mike's cell door.

"Ole King Cole," Big Mike sighed.

"Oh, he did, did he?" the sheriff muttered, wondering about a certain telephone call he had had earlier in the day.

THE NEXT AFTERNOON Big Mike and Jake confronted the sheriff again. "I reckon you two guys can go now -- but don't ever get yourself a coffin, Mike," the sheriff commented.

"Who was that stiff in the coffin?" Big Mike was confused.

"Our fingerprint files show that it was Pinkey Podesk, better known as the Weasel. He was wanted in about every state in the union for armed robbery," the constable explained. "The mug prints match."

"I'm not superstitious, b-but how come you follow us in the first place?" Jake was feeling much better now.

"Someone called me on the telephone 'n told me to stake out your joint," the sheriff answered.

"Did he say who he was?" Jake inquired.

"Yeah--Ole King Cole," the sheriff smiled. "But he didn't fool me none. He was really Benny the Gyp, a partner to the Weasel. We picked Benny up at the Weasel

BELOVED

-17

MOON

BY JOHN G. FLETCHER



All your life you foster but one dream.
It can be achieved. But, mister, it takes guts!

SAMUEL LOOKED up at the moon.
Someday, he thought, someday I'll be on your face. Someday I'll go to your deepest crater and spit down it. I'll kick up the dust all over you. Backside, and all.
Samuel walked silently away.

THE SHIP GLISTENED in the bright noonday sun. The air was full of the busy hum of workmen welding and loading, hammering and soldering.

THE FIELD WAS cleared. Cameras were set up. Time was counted in seconds and suspense hung heavy around the world.
A flash! A tearing, ripping noise, that seemed to rip sanity to bits.

SILENCE. The field was a charred mess of metal from the stands; the grass was black as death.
But the ship was gone, gone to Samuel's dream.

THREE MEN SAT in the ship. Three men with the fate of millions of dollars of materials balanced on their shoulders. Three puny men with the universe in their midst.
And one man, Samuel, with the fate of the men in his hands.

TWO DAYS, THE ship stayed in outer space. Two days all the bits of Hell lay outside the curved metal walls.

THEN FINALLY, a tug, weight returned, three men strapped themselves to their couches, rockets blasted, faces strained, and a huge metal needle landed with a shudder!

SAMUEL STIRRED THE dust with his feet; the moon hated him for it.

SAMUEL SPIT IN THE deepest crater, just to show his contempt, and the living ball of the moon reddened with anger and hatred.

Samuel kicked and kicked till he could kick no more.

Samuel spit till his mouth puckered dry.

And the moon could only hate back.

SAMUEL WALKED TO the edge of a deep crater and stared down into its yawning hole. Its dismal abyss of blackness.

HE STIFFENED, slipped, the moon swallowed him up, caring not what he was, but who he was...

The ship thundered back to Earth. Roared back to the crowds.
All remarked what a shame it was that such a good man should lose his life.....

....and not return to his doting crowd;
not return from his dream-world....
His beloved moon! up in the heavens...so far...so very far...

A COFFIN FOR MIKE (Continued from Page 16)
BY HOWARD BARTON

hideout this morning. He gave you boys a clean bill-of-health and you can thank him for that. He confessed shooting the Weasel over a split on the take from Mr. Bollen's funeral home. Then he crashed your masquerade party as Old King Cole and put the Weasel's dead body in Mike's coffin. He nearly got away with it, too. But, like all crooks, he made one little mistake..."

"What was that?" Jake asked.

"He used the telephone and the moniker, Old King Cole, just once too often-- and murder is never a joke. Say, I wonder now if you boys are friends of Benny, the gyp? After all, he did attend your weird funeral party..."

"Never heard of him--or the Weasel, either," Big Mike lied.

"I--I'm not superstitious--b-but let's git out of here..."

"Look, Jake, I'll never get myself another coffin so long as---so long as--- I live!" Big Mike swore.

A loud burst of laughter echoed throughout the building...

CONTENTION

WHAT ABOUT IT, ELMER?

Sirs:

...I enjoyed all of the March issue, and particularly the story by Elmer Kirk. However, I object to the fact that many of his fiction pieces show "mountaineers" as hillbillies. Many people are lead to believe that education has never entered the back-hills. It has. I haven't seen moonshine for...weeks!

Leonard Latenstein

Montpelier, Vermont.

POWER OF A STORY

Sirs:

I don't remember when a story has moved me more deeply than "Rainsong" by Robert G. Warner. In my opinion it ranks as an emotional-masterpiece; delving into a warped mind. I don't mind letting you know, that if I could write that well I'd be much more than a housewife! My congratulations to Mr. Warner!

Mrs. G. L. Czarwuski

Long Island, N. Y.

THAT MAN WITH A GRIPE

Sirs:

...By the same token, I didn't like any of the stories presented in the May Brevizine, and I do not see how you can call four poorly plotted, badly written murder stories, fantasy. I suggest that you fire or shoot Bill Reins and get some artwork for your magazine. Incidentally, the name is Gerald A. Steward, not Gerard M. Steward. Or perhaps you would find my psuedonym easier to grasp.

Gerald A. Steward

Ontario, Canada.

MURDER WILL OUT!

Sirs:

Concerning "Spring Flood" in a recent issue of Brevizine, I find it hard to realize the sadistic tendencies some of the characters in your plots take. On the drop of a pin murder, mayhem, or violence is done. Is this what the enjoyment of reading has come to?

Frank H. Crone

Salt Lake City, Utah.

* Editor's Note: Without the murder what would be the story-plot?

WE'RE COVERED IN FULL

Sirs:

That impressionistic cover on the May issue of Brevizine was abstract art in its finest form. The delicacy and finesse with which your artist handled the cover has given him a new "fan."

Shirley Faulkes

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

* Editor's Note: All bouquets for the artwork go to Mr. Reins and Mr. Marin. They're are favorites, too!

SNEAK PREVIEW

OF "THE BOTTOMLESS PIT"; A NEW NOVELETTE BY ELMER KIRK

The girl extinguished the lantern. Pitch-blind darkness surrounded them--utter darkness reflecting nothing. She leaned close to him and the feel of her warm lips against his ear as she whispered caused the hackles on the back of his neck to rise.

"That," she murmured, "is the Bottomless Pit..."

Dan straightened, trying to overcome his emotions. "What is your name?" he asked in an undertone.

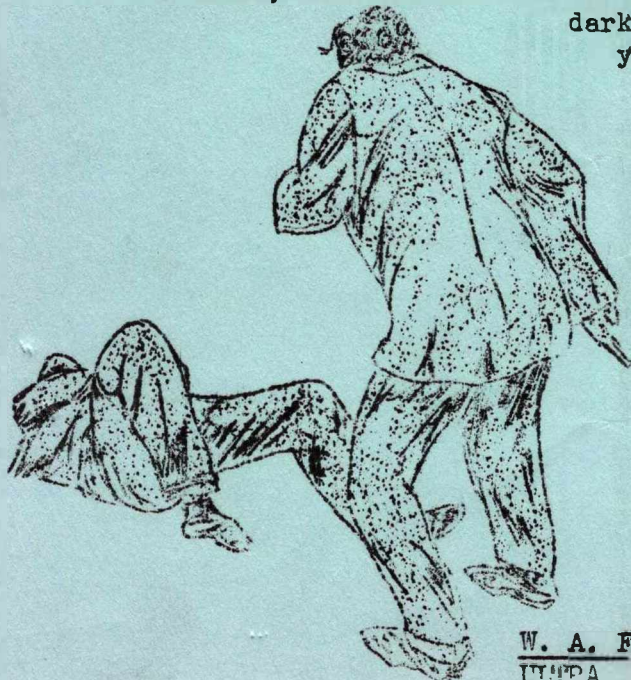
"Millie," she answered. Then in the cold dank darkness she continued: "Twenty years ago, a young girl was tempted by her lover at this very spot. The girl, rather than to yield to her own Edonic temptations, pushed her lover aside and plunged into the black void of that Bottomless Pit..."

Dan put his arm around Millie's neck, drew her closely and kissed her tenderly.

"Thank you," was all she said.

His eyes became adjusted to the dark.

He looked her over, up-and-down, appraisingly. Her hair was raven-black, short-bobbed and set with a delicate rose over to one side. Her dark eyes held that look of magic that compels youth to abandon all logic and reason. Her cheeks were pale-pink and without makeup. She wore a bright yellow sweater, dark green slacks. They were in style.



DON'T FAIL TO READ THIS FANTASTIC
ADVENTURE OF INTRIGUE AS ONE MAN
BRAVES A WORLD OF THE WEIRD. BE
SURE TO READ THE EXCITING SEPTEMBER
ISSUE OF - - -

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