

THE WEIRD WORLD OF

EERIE

PUBLICATIONS

**COMIC
GORE**

THAT WARPED
MILLIONS
OF YOUNG
MINDS!

BY
**MIKE
HOWLETT**

INTRODUCTION BY
**STEPHEN R.
BISSETTE**
OF
**SWAMP
THING**



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Feral House

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EERIE

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THEY PULLED THE CLUB OUT OF MY HAND **EEEEEE!** MY L-LEGS! BITTEN SO I CAN'T STAND UP! PAT! D-DON'T LEAVE ME TO THEM! **OHHHH!**

I'M COMING, DARLING! AS SOON AS I DRIVE THESE OTHERS AWAY! C-CAN'T FIGHT ALL OF THEM AT ONCE!

YEEEEEEEEE! THEY'VE GOT ME! EATING ME ALIVE! D-DON'T LET THEM! **AAAAAAAAAAAAA-**

FILTHY CREATURES! I'M COMING, PAT! BE THERE IN A MINUTE! KEEP ON FIGHTING!

SQUEEEEE-

SQUERRR-

BUT... YOU! BLOCKING ME OFF, KEEPING ME FROM GETTING TO LORNA! I'LL CLUB YOUR FIENDISH BRAINS OUT!

SQUEEEEE-

FINALLY... LORNA! GREAT SCOTT! WHERE IS SHE? N-NO! NOT UNDER THAT SQUIRMING HEAP! PLEASE DON'T LET LORNA BE IN THERE! **PLEASE!**

AND... **GAAAA-** IT-T IS! ALL THAT'S LEFT OF MY W-WIFE! THOSE BRUTES! PICKED HER POOR BONES CLEAN IN A MINUTE.

NO LONGER DOES PAT TRY TO ESCAPE! HE THROWS AND IS UNREADY, FACES THE BLACK HORDE THAT CREEPS TOWARD HIM...

IT DID NOT LAST VERY LONG! THE CREW OF THE DISTANT SHIP COULD NOT HEAR HIS CRIES AS THE LIVING FLESH WAS STRIPPED FROM HIS BONES! BUT IN THE END BY SOME STRANGE CHANCE, THE ANTS DRAGGED THE SKELETONS TOGETHER AND LEFT THEM IN DEATH AS THEY HAD BEEN IN LIFE! PERHAPS THEY KNEW...

C'MON, YOU MURDERING CREATURES! YOU'LL GET ME SURE, BUT I'LL MAKE JELLY OUT OF SOME OF YOU FIRST!



THE END



WEIRD SHIT

A CONTAGIOUS CONFESSIONAL

Introduction by Stephen R. Bissette

I ADMIT IT: *I am cursed.*

I have been cursed since childhood.

If you know what's good for you, *you'll stop reading right now.* You'll stop reading this, and you won't read another page of this book.

In fact, if you really care for your soul and well-being, *you'll destroy this book right now.*

You see, I bought the first issue of Myron Fass' *Weird* off the newsstand back in 1965.

Forgive me, please. What did I know? What *could* I have known? I was only 10 years old (I wouldn't turn 11 until 1966), and it was a tough decision to make—but in the end, I

bought that damned, cursed magazine and *brought it home.*

I brought it home and I brought it into the room I shared with my older brother Rick and *I let it infect me.*

Little did I know at the time that it was a disease, a malignancy, and that I was cursed.

Little did I know that buying *Weird's* first issue meant I would forever haunt the newsstands searching for another issue, and another, and *another*, and then the other Eerie Publications horror comics magazines.

Little did I know that I'd be irrevocably infected by something so truly insidious,

Opposite:
The story
that marked
Stephen
Bissette for-
ever... "Black
Death"!

Above: From
"Burn, Witch,
Burn"—art by
Walter Casadei

“The Skin
Rippers,”
Martha Barnes’
redraw of the
Ajax favorite
“Black Death”



mind-rotting and strangely non-contagious (anyone I ever showed these zines to simply waved them off, asking what I saw in them anyway).

Would I have still plunked down my 35 cents if I'd known what I was in for?

You bet your ass I would have.

Mind you, when I bought that first issue, I didn't know it was the first issue. Buying *Weird* #1 would have been a no-brainer, even in those pre-collector days. I bought any and all monster magazines' debut issues, if only to see what they might turn into. But the first issue of *Weird*, just like *Eerie*'s exquisite first issue, *wasn't a number one*. *Eerie*'s first issue—the first I saw and bought, the first listed in the back issue pages where you could mail-order what you'd missed—was *Eerie* #2, and that was a unsolved mystery that prompted sleepless nights for years.

I didn't lose any sleep over *Weird*'s first issue. The contents page said it was “Vol. 1, No. 10,” and all I could wonder was how much worse the earlier nine issues could have possibly been. I did wonder, later, how did I miss nine issues of something like this? But that didn't bother me; I figured if #10 looked as cheesy as it did, the earlier issues must have been so bad that Vincent's Pharmacy just wouldn't allow them on the newsstand.

So, you see, I was there from the beginning, though at the time it was just another odd eruption on the racks in Vincent's Pharmacy in downtown Waterbury, Vermont. *Weird* Vol. 1, No. 10 blighted the racks during a season of many such eruptions: the monster magazines had been coming thick and fast since 1964, and it was tough to hold onto my pennies long enough to afford yet another magazine, particularly one my mother and father might consider suspect.

And this particular monster magazine was *mighty* suspect, especially to a discerning customer like yours truly.

And that was what made it so—needed.

It really looked like it sucked, and sucked in a *bad* way, like something I *shouldn't* take home with me, like a strange cocoon or a waterbug in a jar, a white pouch of spider eggs or a wasp's nest or a bare forked branch wrapped with tent caterpillar webbing (of course, I had brought all of those home at one time or another).

There were a lot of things that defined *Weird* as a “suck” horror comic magazine, especially when compared to the clearly superior *Creepy* and *Eerie*.

First of all, there was that absolutely crappy cover, painted (well, drawn and *partially* painted) by God-knows-who (or, to be more accurate, Myron-Fass-knows-who). It had none of the evocative conviction or power of the Frazetta *Creepy* and *Eerie* covers, which completely seduced the eye. It looked rough, rushed, unfinished.

Even at age 10, I didn’t think magazines could or would look like this. How could it have even reached the newsstand, much less cost money, looking like *this*?

Whoever did the *Weird* #10 cover either didn’t have time or didn’t care to finish the illustration. It showed a crudely watercolored outsized Frankenstein’s Monster staggering up a line drawing of a city street and sidewalk. The background, such as it was, was splashed with an amorphous blue and purple mess of color. The hapless citizens—stumbling in the street behind the monster, screaming in the foreground, and even the poor sap plunging to certain damage and/or death from the monster’s open hand—had been sketched in and inked, but they weren’t even rendered or colored. Well, OK, the one screaming guy in the foreground had a smear of darker blue/violet watercolor slobbered onto him. I remember thinking, “well, at least they stayed

inside the lines,” like it was a page from one of my younger sister’s coloring books.

Furthermore, there was an undefined splash of white (with yellow/tan lines on one side) erupting from the top of the monster’s left leg. Was it a shell detonating on the monster’s hip, fired from an off-panel cannon? A splash of water? His hip bursting with lightning-like energy? I was too young to have thought of this bizarre jizz-like explosion as representing the monster’s semen or ejaculate—that guesswork came (pun intended) later in life, when I stumbled on the issue amid my stash of better monster magazines.

On the other hand, *the cover got me to buy the magazine* (and as I tell my students at the Center for Cartoon Studies, that is ultimately the purpose of any comic book, magazine or book cover).

In 1966, 35 cents was a fair amount of swag for a kid to drop for such an ugly item—I could have gotten *three* color comic books and a candy bar at the same price. But I’d never seen anything like this magazine. You could see the pencil lines under the watercolor and ink lines—you could see how the cover had been drawn, even if it hadn’t been properly completed. There were drawing secrets here. This was a curious goldmine for an aspiring young cartoonist, requiring further scrutiny than I could possibly get away with in front of the magazine rack at Vincent’s Pharmacy—and then there was all that festered inside.

“Fangs of
Horror”—art
by Néstor
Olivera



In short, this was the *ugliest* comic I'd ever seen. I had never even *imagined* as repellent a comic as this.

And it wasn't just the art—the stories themselves looked dangerous. I didn't have time to read them right then and there, but their panel-to-bloody-panel narratives were demanding my full attention, ripe with the promise of the forbidden. These stories weren't like the ones in *Creepy* and *Eerie*—these were the most unsettling, hideous things I'd ever seen.

These were like the dead cow carcass we'd found the summer before, or the roadkill we'd come across during the springs and summer months, and have to poke at with sticks.

Not only that, but the ink came off on your fingers, like the nasty tabloid *National*

Enquirer newspapers I would find at my aunts' and uncles' houses. Damn, those were ugly things, those early 1960s issues of the *Enquirer* and its imitators: burnt corpses, decapitated car crash victims, dead people and mashed skulls and bullet-riddled criminals on the covers, worse photos inside.

Weird was like those—it even *felt* dirty. I would literally have to wash my hands after reading this comic! This was as close to “toxic” as any comic book I'd ever seen, and its arsenic allure was strangely irresistible.

Sick as it sounds, it was love at first sight.

The stories weren't that toxic, as it turned out. I read them without a single nightmare rippling through my sleep. Even flipping through the magazine today, I can see why they didn't really get to me—vampires, witches, flying decapitated heads and hoo-hah like that didn't really register with me, not then and not now.

There was just one story in *Weird* #10 that I enjoyed and even copied panels from. It was the wacko mummy story “The Terror of Akbar.” My later studious reading of any horror fiction I could lay my hands on proved this was pretty derivative stuff: short stories about mummy curses—and, yes, mummy eyes were so popular, there was even a silent movie about mummy's eyes, *Die Augen der Mumie Ma* (1918), directed by none other than Ernst Lubitsch and starring Pola Negri and Emil Jannings (!). At age 10, however, this



BUT EVEN THEN... **AAAAA—** AKBAR CAN SEE! AT LAST HE HAS HIS EYES! THE ANCIENT PROPHECY HAS BEEN FULFILLED!



EEEEEEEEE— OUT OF AKBAR'S WAY, FOOLS! I WILL KILL ANY WHO INTERFERE! STAND ASIDE!

A STARTLED POLICEMAN SUMMONS HELP...



TWEEETTTE
TWEETTTE
TWEETTTE



NO, A TOMB OF SOME SORT! THE FOOLS WILL NEVER FIND AKBAR IN THE DARKNESS OF A TOMB! I— (CHUCKLE)— KNOW MUCH OF TOMBS!

WHAT IS IT?
OJUNNO, BUT IT'S DANGEROUS! DON'T TAKE ANY CHANCES!



HEY, YOU — **YOWWWW—** I AM AKRAR, FOOL! GUARD YOUR TOMB ENTRANCE, BUT DO NOT TRY TO STOP ME! I AM A HIGH PRIEST!



SUDDENLY THE GROTESQUE THING SLIPS AND FALLS...

EEBEYAAA— I FALL! MY EYES— GONE AGAIN! MY EYES!



MY EYES! WHERE ARE THEY! I MUST HAVE MY EYES! HELP—HELP—SOMEONE HELP ME FIND MY EYES! **YAAAAA—** AGAIN I AM BLIND!

"The Headless
Ones"—art
by Enrique
Cristóbal



was all new to me. It was bleakly funny how the mummy's disembodied eyes moved on their own, how the eyeless mummy (splotches of black ink dripping from his jaws and hollow sockets) went stalking his eyes, and how—once he got 'em back in his skull—he stupidly fell on a subway platform (which he mistook for a tomb) and sent his orbs rolling onto the tracks, where he was crushed by an oncoming train. This was dumb, dumb, dumb stuff. Still, I loved the story; as an adult, I gleefully reprinted a few choice panels in *Taboo 1*.

It was the *next* couple of issues of *Weird* that started to get to me. With the exception of the messy lead pen, ink and wash story about Frankenstein's Monster in *Weird* #10 (the only new material in the issue, as it turns out, credited to "Elwood & Burgos," as in associate editor Roger Elwood and editor Carl Burgos)

and the inside-front-cover single-pagers (most likely by the same writer/artist team), most of the stories had the same relentlessly bleak tenor, tone and look.

• • •

I had no idea I was in fact enjoying my first exposure to pre-code horror comics material from the early 1950s. *Weird* and its successors—more about those in a few paragraphs—were composed primarily of reprinted, ink-splattered output from Jerry Iger Studios originally published between 1950 to 1954 in Ajax-Farrell comics *Fantastic Fears*, *Voodoo*, *Haunted Thrills* and *Strange Fantasy*.

Like all kids who read comics, I had no idea at the time where this stuff came from. I hadn't a clue who or what was behind *Weird*—I only knew that I was cursed, and doomed to stupidly buy and read *Weird* as long as it existed.

I've since learned how this all fits together, and you're about to read the inside scoop (Mike Howlett will walk you through the whole checkered story—unless you took my advice right from the beginning and *stopped reading* this and better yet *destroyed this accursed tome! But you haven't, have you? Have you???* You fool! FOOL!!!).

I have also since tracked down and compiled a modest collection of those pre-

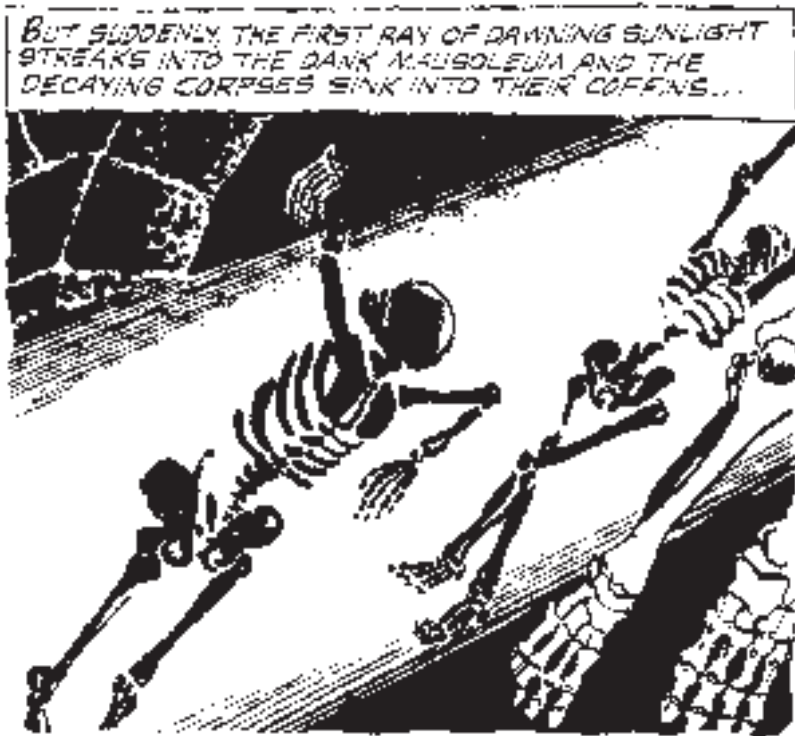
code Ajax-Farrell titles. It turned out that Eerie Publications was helmed by magazine mogul Myron Fass, who himself drew plenty of pre-code stories and covers, and Robert W. Farrell, another veteran of the pre-code and post-code comics industry.

Robert W. Farrell's career arc began with the birth of the pamphlet-format four-color comic books in the 1930s, as a writer for Iger Studios, a partner with comics publisher Victor Fox, and a full-fledged publisher (Superior, Farrell, Four Star, Ajax, etc.). Myron Fass labored among the freelance comic book artist pool from 1948 until 1955, grinding out readable but unexceptional covers and stories in all genres: Westerns, romance, jungle, espionage, action, crime and horror comics. I've stumbled onto Fass' signature in comics from a plethora of publishers, primarily among the likes of Toby, Gleason and Trojan, but occasionally popping up in Atlas (later better known as Marvel Comics); he was at best a journeyman, at worst a hack.

I've never read an account of how Fass and Farrell met; it's likely that Fass at some point worked for Farrell during his freelancing as a cartoonist. Suffice to say that sometime after 1955 Fass made the leap into editing, packaging and eventually publishing his own magazines, beginning with the *MAD* imitation *Lunatick* (published by Whitestone Publishing) and saucy sex rags like *Foto-Rama*. Somewhere before the '60s, Fass and Farrell

joined forces; by then, Fass had already packaged and published the cheesy faux-monster magazines *Shock Tales* (1959). Only after I was working professionally in the comics industry myself did I hear or read anything about Fass. I was later told by one of the artists who contributed to Fass' *Heavy Metal* knockoff *Gasm* that Fass ruled over his Manhattan office bullpen with a loaded .44 Magnum jammed into his pants. Before the end of the 1990s, the most comprehensive article I'd ever found about Fass was "I, Myron" by Mark Jacobson in *The Village Voice* (October 23, 1978), which confirmed the Magnum reign of terror and revealed much about Fass' empire, sadly without discussing at all the infamous horror comics Fass continued to publish.

However they came together, however it all happened, it's obvious Farrell and Fass reveled in the horror comics, and always sought a way to bring their small ocean of horrors back to market. While most publishers fled the genre after the imposition of the Comics Code Authority at the end of 1954, Farrell and Fass soldiered on, with Farrell reprinting heavily censored Code-approved versions of his horror story backlog in 1957–58 as *Strange*, *Dark Shadows*, *Strange Journey* and *Midnight*. Those are barely readable; once packager Russ Jones, editor Archie Goodwin and publisher Jim Warren showed the way anew with the successful launch of *Creepy* and *Eerie*, Fass



“Tombstone for a Ghoul”—art by Antonio Reynoso

and Farrell repackaged uncensored, sloppily-toned and gored-up versions of the venerable Iger Studios file material for *Weird*.

The times had changed. Instead of toning down the art, Farrell, Fass, Myron’s brother Irving Fass (art director) and editor Carl Burgos (creator of Atlas/Marvel’s original Golden Age *Human Torch*, among other chestnuts) spiked the horror quotient by slashing white-out drool and thick, black ink blots of gore onto stats of the pre-code art, making it more tactile and grotesque than it had been in its original four-color form. Farrell listed his own name as publisher on the contents page bylines of the earliest issues of *Weird*, but he soon moved on.

I should also mention Myron Fass and Carl Burgos also collaborated in 1965–66 on their own original four-color comics. Under

the company name of M.F. Enterprises (the same imprint behind Fass’ crap 1959 monster magazine *Shock Tales*, among others), Fass, Burgos and writer Roger Elwood packaged and published six ill-fated issues of their own take on *Captain Marvel* (1966–67). In their incarnation, Captain Marvel was a superhero whose rather ghoulish power was the ability to make his head and limbs separate from his torso and fly to their target (“Split!”); it was arguably the strangest and least appealing of all 1960s superheroes in a crowded field jam-packed with unappealing contenders. Fass also published a short-lived *Archie* teen comic book knockoff by vet cartoonist Bob Powell entitled *Henry Brewster* (also published under the suggestive title *Jumbo Size Henry*). I’d read the first issue of the Elwood/Burgos *Captain Marvel* at my Duxbury classmate Jeff Parker’s house, but had no desire to seek it out for myself. Once was enough.

Obviously, most American kids felt the same way.

All Fass’ four-color comics folded—only the black-and-white horror Eerie Publications horror comics zines thrived and survived.

It had to have been the curse that kept them going, and kept idiots like me buying and reading them...

• • •

Crude as almost all these Eerie Publications stories were and remain, in their blunt, thuddingly literal cruelty there was an aesthetic perfectly attuned to the times. Though these were stories essentially a decade old, they were perfectly timed for rebirth: we were ready for them in the 1960s. After all, our President had been assassinated, and then his alleged assassin was assassinated right before our eyes, on television (and if we missed it, that video was played and replayed until we would never, ever forget it). We were living in a cruel new decade of civil rights protests and violence, the escalation of the Vietnam War and rumblings from a new youth movement that seemed positively tribal in nature.

How did that spill into our homes? It was on the TV news every night. We couldn't escape it.

It also changed everything in the pop culture. If you were a kid, the first rumbles were the gory full-color *Mars Attacks* and *Civil War* bubblegum cards. If you were a kid like me, you also had convinced your parents it was OK to stay up late at night to watch 1930s and 1940s horror movies on television, and you kept your eye on the newspaper ads for a whole new breed of horror movie. Only a couple of years before the debut of *Weird*, low-budget horrors like Joseph Green's risible *The Brain That Wouldn't Die*, James Landis' harrowing *The Sadist* and the collaboration of skin producer David Friedman and Florida

huckster Herschell Gordon Lewis on *Blood Feast* heralded a new era in horror. The first of a rough new breed were upon us, sans a handy label to aid in either their marketing or banishment. Like Fass and Farrell, cheapjack filmmakers like Green, Landis, Friedman and Lewis were at heart hucksters hoping to turn a quick buck, pulling out the stops to show mayhem on the big screen that was a new and novel extreme in 1962–63. It worked, and the bloodgates were open, never to be closed.

For the most part, kids were initially sheltered from such cinematic atrocities, though I vividly recall the ads in the newspaper for all these films and the ache to see what I was not permitted to. The first of this forbidden breed I would get to see with my own eyes was *2000 Maniacs*, and it fried me. I had accidentally been exposed to *2000 Maniacs* at a drive-in during a family out-of-state trip the same



"A Shape of Evil"—art by Cirilo Muñoz

year *Weird* hit the newsstands, a traumatic experience that marked me as deeply as did the 1966 issues of *Weird*. Next up was *The Brain That Wouldn't Die*, dumped into syndication by American-International Pictures in a movie package our local Channel 22 would play and replay on Saturday afternoons, with the gore AIP had cut for its theatrical release in 1962 inexplicably restored. *The Brain That Wouldn't Die* absolutely anticipated *Weird* and the entire Eerie Publications aesthetic: it was even a refugee of the 1950s itself, having been made in 1959 and shelved, unreleased, until AIP finally picked it up and trimmed it a bit for wide drive-in, nabe (neighborhood theater) and grindhouse play in 1962.

I wouldn't catch up with *Blood Feast* (at a Manhattan midnight movie revival) until the end of the 1970s or *The Sadist* until the 1980s, but I have since found newspaper photos of a town parade in downtown Brattleboro, Vermont, in which a local beauty waves from the top of a flower-covered vehicle, the Paramount Theater marquee visible behind her promoting the double-feature of *The Sadist* and *Tower of London*. Much as parents, theater owners and even good ol' Forrest J. Ackerman in the letters pages of *Famous Monsters of Filmland* did their best to spare us or steer us away from these horrors, we still encountered them.

The curse was manifesting, reaching critical mass, and there was no escape.

"No escape" was the operative term: there was no escape from the bloody images *2000 Maniacs* burned into my brainpan, no escape from the addictive reruns of *The Brain That Wouldn't Die*, and I have to say the grisliest fare in *Weird* similarly branded me, too.

• • •

If I had to cite just one Eerie Publication story that forever marked me, it would be "Black Death" in *Weird* #12 (October 1966). I had no idea it was a reprint when I read it at the tender age of 11, nor would have that mattered a whit: it was one of the bleakest horror stories I'd ever read up to that point in my life, and it troubled me for days.

"Love, they say is like dying a little! So if two lovers must die, what better way than to die together, hand in hand?" So begins the tale of a shipwrecked honeymooning couple, stranded on a remote isle. Its beaches sport odd cone-shaped sand formations, the surrounding sand peppered with unidentifiable claw prints. By page three, the cause of the claw tracks and denizens of the sand cones are revealed: they are ravenous lion-sized ants, and the couple is on the menu. They fight valiantly, but they are eventually overwhelmed: she is dragged away and picked clean to the bone, while he beats as many of the insects to death as he can before he, too, is reduced to a skeleton. "But in the end, by some strange chance, the ants

dragged the skeletons together and left them in death as they had been in life! Perhaps they knew...”

I kept revisiting the story, trying to sort out why it was so disturbing, why it struck such a deep nerve. It was badly written and the art was competent at best (the mewling ants were ungainly lumps with minuscule heads and what appeared to be broken sticks for legs), but every time I reread it, my unease only mounted. It didn't matter that these people were good people who loved one another: there was no escape, no exit, no salvation or redemption. They fought hard; utterly devoted to one another to the bitter end, but *the ants got 'em*. They died horribly, eaten alive, leaving the ants to feed another day—and the last shot of their skeletons side by side (hers, of course, still sporting her complete head of hair) only made things worse, as if the ants knew they were young and virile and in love and fucking ate 'em anyways. I loved it, though I knew I shouldn't.

OK, it's lame stuff. But I tell you, this stupid little comic story affected me. It still bothers me when I just think about it.

That entire issue of *Weird* was an ungainly gem, from the carnivorous flower story that opened the issue (“The Blood Blossom”) to the concluding pair of ghost stories, one featuring a headless walking corpse (“Nightmare”) and the other a *Gaslight*-like tale of a husband driving his wife insane only to be haunted



It's a "Bloody Head," with art by Oscar Stepancich

by her vengeful spectre (“Rest in Peril”). The scaly, drooling demon of “Fanged Terror” was pretty cool, and the “Swamp Haunt” story was cool.

But best of all was “Heads of Horror,” wherein a physicist avenges himself on his adulterous wife and her lover by *shrinking their heads* while they still live, turning them into freakish beings. On the final page, the pea-headed couple turned the tables, tying the scientist up in his lab and shrinking *his* head before seeing through an improvised suicide pact (“Goodbye! We’re going to kill ourselves! I advise you do the same!”); by the time the cops arrive, he’s a gibbering idiot, consigned in the final page to a freak-show cage.

• • •

None of these were *good* horror comics stories, but they sure were nasty, nihilistic, sexist, misanthropic and to the point. This was bare-boned exploitation in its rawest form, recycling past atrocities without a hint of remorse.

“House of
Blood”—art
by Rubèn
Marchionne



These were also precursors to the modern horror movies and literature to come. The first time I felt in a movie theater the way I had in my bedroom when I first read “Black Death” was when I saw *Night of the Living Dead* on the big screen.

There was no escape. No exit.

And knowing the young couple in the truck really loved each other only made it worse, as if the zombies knew they were young and virile and in love and they fucking ate ‘em anyways.

Just like those goddamned ants.

Now, I’m not saying *Weird* was as good as *Night of the Living Dead*—if anything,

Weird was closest to the lurid, sexist bargain-basement lunacy of *The Brain That Wouldn’t Die*—but I am saying *Weird* and its clammy “the world’s gone to shit” brand of horror was one of the few pop harbingers of what was just around the corner. Myron Fass and his shoddily printed pre-code reprints groomed and prepared cursed readers like me for where George Romero took us all in 1968 and after.

The curse reached critical mass, and the entire world looked at times like those smeary black-and-gray panels and pages.

• • •

I've held on to the first eight issues of *Weird* over the years, though I'm not sure why. I would occasionally purge my collection of entire runs of the Eerie Publications titles, but I kept those first *Weird* issues through thick and thin. The magazine never got any better, just more repugnant as Fass, Burgos and Fass kept cranking it out on a roughly bimonthly schedule.

The covers became loopier and gorier, looking more and more like carny freak show posters or hand-painted African movie posters for grindhouse shockers that never existed. They mashed monsters together into nonsensical tableaux of werewolves staking vampires (Vol. 2, No. 3, June 1967) and fishmen and hunchbacks tearing clothing off screaming women while badly-foreshortened male vampires hovered overhead (Vol. 2, No. 6, April 1968).

Weird lasted until 1980, as best I can tell (I never saw a new issue after that year). *Weird* had been published for 15 years, and throughout that run it never let up: it was shamelessly, unapologetically dismal and despairing to its final issue.

Some sources claim there was an earlier Eerie Publications experiment with reprinting pre-code horror comics in black-and-white magazine form. The one-shot *Tales of Terror* #1 was cover-dated Summer 1964; according to our steadfast Virgil in this tour of Fass' Inferno, Mike Howlett, that one-shot wasn't published by Fass at all; it was a Charlton



"Terror Tunnel"—art by Domingo Mandrafina

one-shot. In hindsight, it's likely there was *something* being put together by Fass and Farrell in the summer/fall of 1965 that they intended to publish as *Eerie* #1. That pending title had prompted publisher James Warren and editor Archie Goodwin to package and print overnight a few hundred copies of an ashcan-format *Eerie* #1 to secure the title as their own. It was a scam on Warren's part—they had only placed copies in select Manhattan news and magazine vendors to sway the decisive meeting with a key distributor in their favor—but it worked. Warren couldn't prevent Fass and Farrell from naming their imprint Eerie Publications, though.

What I believe now, though there's no way to confirm it, is that what was published as *Weird* Vol. 1 No. 10 was Fass' and Farrell's intended *Eerie* magazine. That might even explain the unfinished cover painting, rushed through production in a race to beat their competitor to the pitch. It doesn't matter—we'll never really know, will we?

This page:
 "The Metal
 Replacements"—
 art by Oswal

Opposite:
 You can make
 your very own
 Weird Horror
 Mask, courtesy
 of Chic Stone!

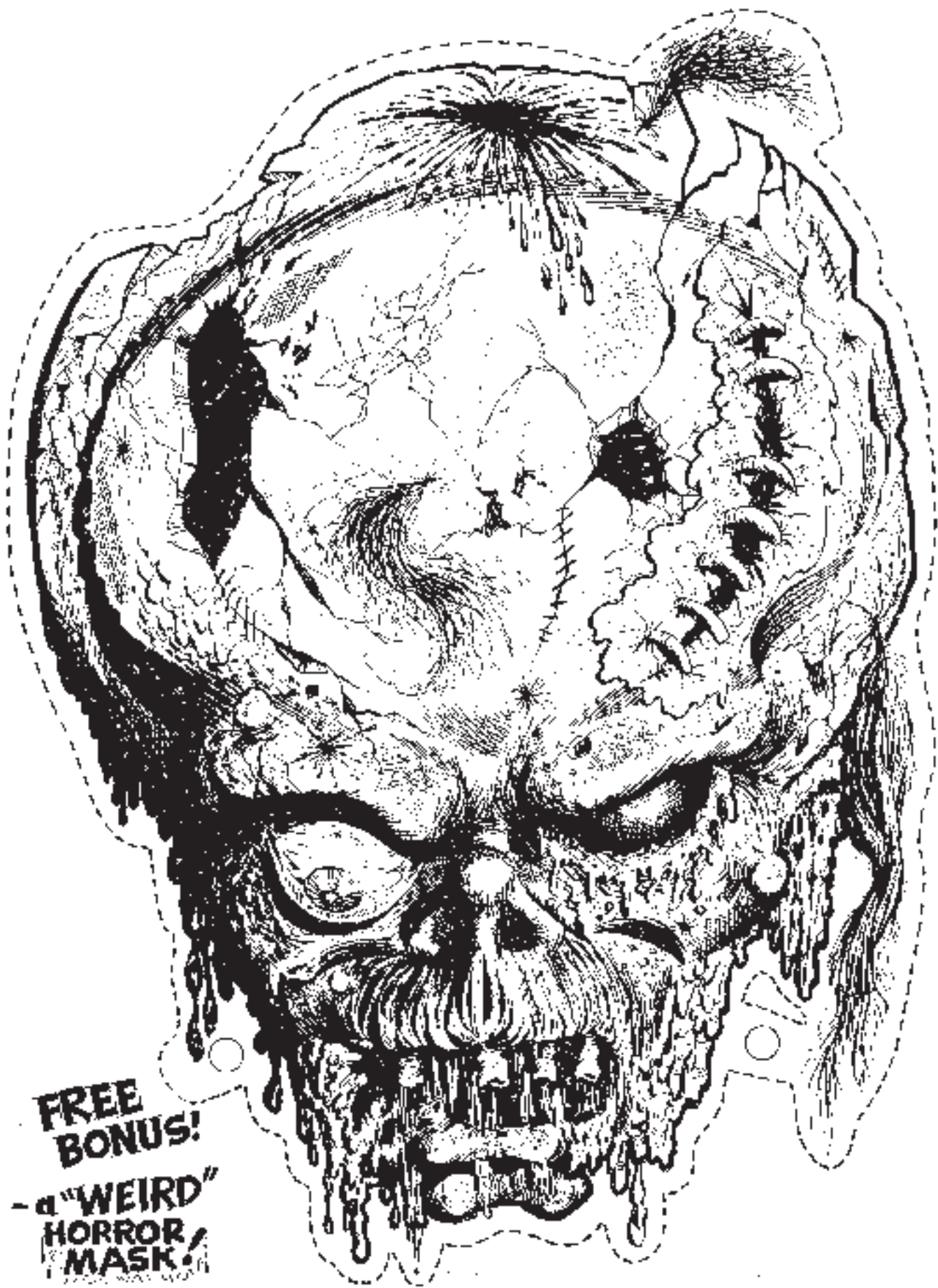


Once *Weird* hit the stands and was apparently a success (obviously, I couldn't have been the only infected individual), Fass and Farrell kept grinding out the same hash under other titles. The plethora of Eerie Publications companion titles were, if anything, even grottier fare: *Witches' Tales*, *Tales of Voodoo*, *Tales from the Tomb*, *Terror Tales*, *Tales from the Crypt* (yep, they were that shameless; William Gaines clamped down on that too-close-for-comfort titular rip-off), the 1977 giant special *Classic Horror Tales* and the abysmal science-fiction/horror hybrids *Strange Galaxy* and *Weird Worlds*. If anything, the covers only got wilder, woollier and more outlandishly insane. Vampires eating werewolves while ghouls ripped bloody eyes out of screaming Mimis were *de rigueur*;

the intrusion of science-fiction imagery into the Gothic grand guignol tableaux had begun way back in 1966 (with *Weird* Vol. 2, No. 1, December 1966, featuring a ray gun being held to the head of a bloodied robot in the foreground while an amphibian man carried an unconscious belle in the background), but was in complete overdrive in the 1970s. My all-time favorite remains the cover to *Weird Worlds* Vol. 2, No. 2 (April 1971), in which what appears to be a multi-limbed super-jumbo primate screaming in the void of space is either trying to hold together an exploding planet, or is actually pulling apart or (more likely) humping the planet, causing it to erupt with its super-Kong orgasm. Like I say, it's hard to tell what might really be going on. But man oh man, *what a cover*.

New artwork began to surface amid the blotchy reprint pages around 1970, though they weren't a noticeable improvement, it must be said. I've traced many to being redrawn pre-code comics scripts, for that matter: Fass was still essentially recycling old material. Eventually, the market was exhausted, and Eerie Publications ceased to exist.

After Eerie Publications vanished from the stands, Modern Day Periodicals continued packaging similar material as *Weird Vampire Tales* and *Terrors of Dracula*. New titles, but it was the same old shit. Only the publishing firm's name had changed, and maybe the street address.



**FREE
BONUS!**
- a "WEIRD"
HORROR
MASK.

... CUT ALONG DOTTED LINES, PUNCH THRU HOLES and ATTACH ELASTIC!



“Satan’s Dead Demons”—art by Alberto Macagno

I bought the last issue I ever saw from the Eerie Publications horror stable in a little country store in Saxton’s River, Vermont. I couldn’t help myself—I was *still* cursed.

I was with a couple of my friends, and one of them said, “Why are you buying that weird shit?”

“Ya, those zines always did suck,” my other pal said.

“I don’t know, I just love ‘em,” I said, and I meant it.

I *still* don’t know.

I *do* love ‘em.

That’s the curse.

• • •

For decades, Eerie Publications were easily found at flea markets and occasionally at comic conventions for bargain-basement blowout prices. Nobody gave a royal rat’s ass about them; they were the lowest of the low.

By the 1990s, the once-mighty and unstoppable Myron Fass publishing empire was dwindling, and I lost track of all this weird shit. I stopped seeing Fass’ wonky UFO magazines on the stands and racks, though I was told he was still at it, publishing gun magazines and the like.

Then I saw one of my favorite DVD packagers, Something Weird Video, include random galleries of old Eerie cover art as bonus items on their DVDs. Something was shifting in the pop firmament, something was changing. Magazine and fanzine articles began to appear on both sides of the Atlantic, trying to make sense of the Eerie Publications legacy. Somebody was starting to pay attention to *Weird* and its abominable kith and kin, *because*, not in spite, of their gory excesses, rank depravity and splattery kitsch madness.

I read somewhere that Myron Fass had passed away (indeed, he had, on September 14th, 2006, at the age of 80).

I’d outlived both Fass and *Weird*.

I was at last *free*, *free* from the curse!

Or so I thought.

Then I met Mike Howlett in 2008.

Then I was asked to write this introduction.

I pulled my old collection out of the boxes, and gingerly looked at those unbelievably cheesy cover paintings.

I began re-reading “Black Death”...

• • •

Heaven help you if you’ve read this far. *I warned you!*

I told you to stop reading right from the beginning—to destroy this viral contagion, this curse between two covers, but no, you dolt, you swine, you dumb-as-a-bag-of-hammers shit-for-brains, you ignored my advice and kept on reading, didn’t you? Didn’t you??? I warned you, and you didn’t listen!!!!

Because, see, when Mike Howlett first mentioned to me he was doing this book, I realized something that was both terrifying and a great relief:

Maybe the curse had always been a contagion; maybe I just lived amid circles of people who had a natural immunity to the contagion (they call it “good taste”).

Or maybe the curse is that we who are cursed are doomed to *spread* the curse.

Maybe the curse we are afflicted with spreads in a unique way.

Rather than just *showing* people Eerie Publications, which they could easily dismiss or ignore or shun (as others have all my life thus far), maybe those of us who are cursed have to *write about them*.

We have to make them sound alluring and interesting, perhaps even valuable or culturally important.

Convinced Mike was onto something, I agreed to write this introduction—and now *you are cursed*, and Mike and I are *free! Free of the curse!! Because now it is yours!!!*

Believe me when I tell you that once you lay eyes on the contents of this book, you, too, will be marked for life.

There’s no washing the ink from your fingers.

There’s no un-branding your brain.

You are cursed, I tell you, *cursed!!!!!!* ✖

—Stephen R. Bissette,
Mountains of Madness, VT



A text illustration from “Space Rot”—art by Ezra Jackson

TOLD IN NEW CHILLING PICTO-FICTION

pdc

WEIRD

MAY
1969
35¢

IN THIS ISSUE:

**MONSTER
MILL**

**THE EMPTY
COFFIN**

PLUS OTHER
TALES OF
SHOCK
TERROR
SUSPENSE





MY TAKE ON EERIE PUBS

Foreword by Mike Howlett

I HAVE TO BE completely honest here...

As a kid in the early 1970s, Eerie Publications weren't exactly my first choice for horror comic entertainment. I did buy them on occasion, but often as a last resort. I had my priorities; I was a bit of a snob.

Warren and Skywald magazines topped my shopping list. No big surprise there. DC's four-color "mystery" comics were also a weekly staple. After that, I'd turn to Marvel's horror reprint titles or Charlton's ghost comics, both of which glutted the comic rack. If there was

nothing else and I still hadn't scratched my itch, I'd grab an Eerie Pub.

Truthfully, I sometimes couldn't tell if I'd purchased something new or not. Eerie's habit of recycling stories and cobbling together previously used cover art confused my already addled pre-teen brain. Once in hand, however, the Pubs always delivered the gory goods, even if they did sometimes seem a bit familiar.

Sadly, my most vivid childhood memory of an Eerie Publications magazine was trading

Opposite:
My favorite
Eerie Pubs
cover—*Weird*
V3 #2 (May
1969), art by
Chic Stone.

Above:
"Yeech"—art
by Carl Burgos

sample content of The Weird World of Eerie Publications: Comic Gore That Warped Millions of Young Minds

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