

THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

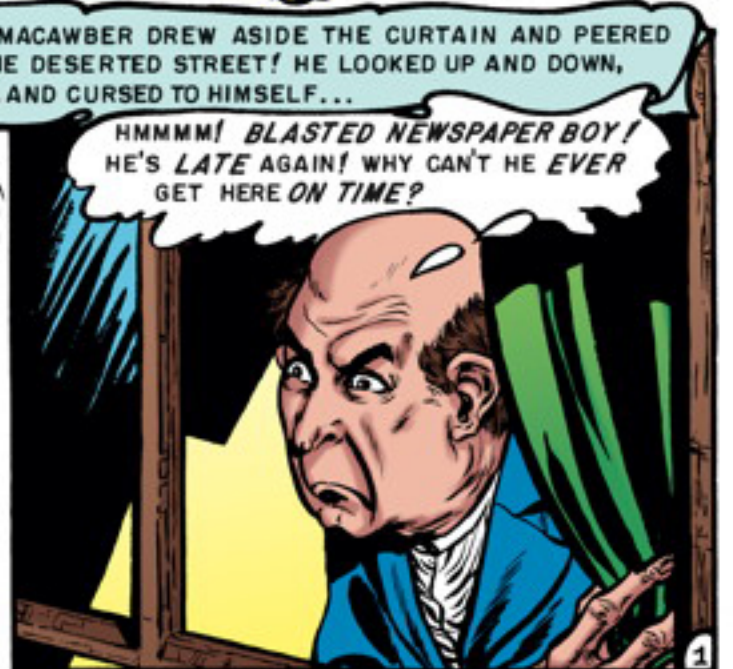
HEE, HEE! I SEE BY YOUR FLUSHED FACES THAT YOU'RE BACK FOR MORE *MORSELS OF MADNESS, CRAZILY CONCOCTED BY ME, THE OLD WITCH, MISTRESS OF THE HAUNT OF FEAR!* WELL, THE FIRE UNDER MY CAULDRON IS LIT, AND THE *REVOLTING RECIPE IS READY FOR RETCHING!* SO COME IN, DEAR FIENDS, AND SIT DOWN BESIDE ME! DON YOUR *DRIBBLE-CUPS*, KNOT YOUR NAPKINS ABOUT YOUR NECKS, AND I'LL DISH OUT ANOTHER OF MY *TASTY TALES OF TERROR!* I CALL THIS *MORBID MOUTHFUL...*

FOR THE
LOVE OF
DEATH!



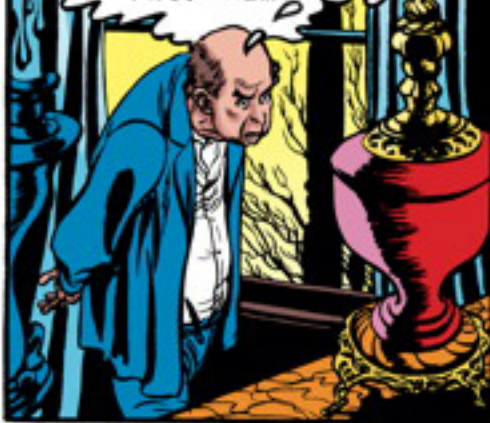
MORTON MACAWBER DREW ASIDE THE CURTAIN AND PEERED OUT AT THE DESERTED STREET! HE LOOKED UP AND DOWN, SCOWLED, AND CURSED TO HIMSELF...

HMMMM! *BLASTED NEWSPAPER BOY!* HE'S *LATE AGAIN!* WHY CAN'T HE *EVER* GET HERE *ON TIME?*



FOR THE NEXT FIFTEEN MINUTES, MORTON PACED THE FLOOR NERVOUSLY, WAITING FOR THE FAMILIAR SOUND OF THE NEWSPAPER LANDING ON THE FRONT PORCH...

NEXT TIME THAT BRAT COMES FOR HIS MONEY, I'LL TELL HIM A THING OR TWO! HE...



THE DULL THUD OUTSIDE HALTED MR. MACAWBER'S RAVING! HE DARTED TO THE WINDOW AND PEERED OUT ANXIOUSLY! A SMALL BOY ON A BICYCLE PEDALED OFF DOWN THE STREET...

IT'S HIM! HE'S BEEN HERE! IT'S ABOUT TIME!



MORTON FLUNG OPEN THE FRONT DOOR AND RUSHED OUT TO THE FOLDED PAPER LYING ON THE WEATHERBEATEN PORCH...

PLEASE...PLEASE LET THERE BE ONE...PLEASE...



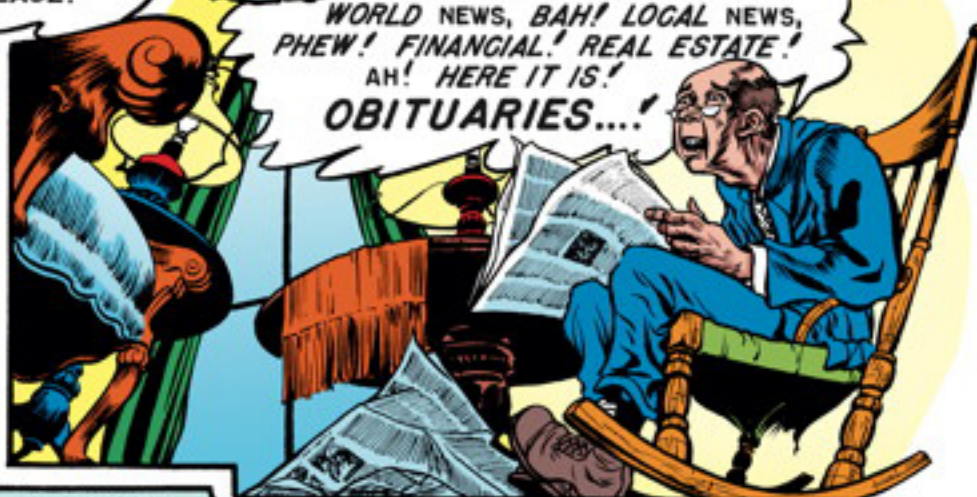
BACK INTO THE HOUSE THE WILD-EYED MAN SCURRIED, CLUTCHING THE PAPER TO HIS CHEST...

THERE WASN'T ONE YESTERDAY... OR THE DAY BEFORE! TWO WHOLE DAYS WITHOUT ONE! THERE HAS TO BE ONE TODAY! PLEASE!



FEVERISHLY, MR. MACAWBER UNFOLDED THE PAPER AND BEGAN FLINGING THE UNWANTED SECTIONS TO THE FLOOR...

WORLD NEWS, BAH! LOCAL NEWS, PHEW! FINANCIAL! REAL ESTATE! AH! HERE IT IS! OBITUARIES...!



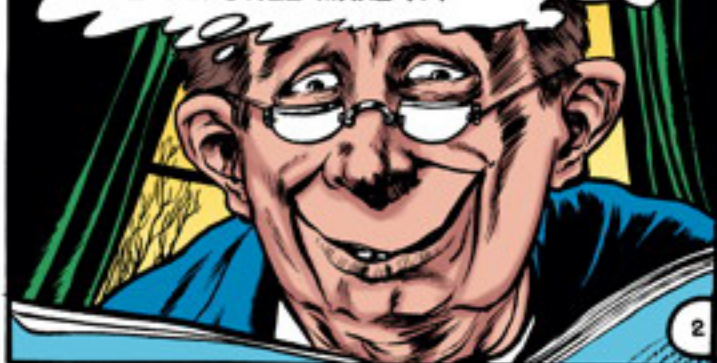
MORTON'S GLANCE SPED UP AND DOWN THE OBITUARY COLUMN! SUDDENLY, HIS SOMBER COUNTENANCE EXPLODED IN A LEERING GRIN...

THERE IS ONE! THERE'S A FUNERAL TODAY!



HAPPINESS...SHEER ECSTASY...SHOWED ON MORTON'S FACE AS HE READ THE DETAILS...

'ABNER P. WIGGINBOTTOM, BELOVED HUSBAND AND FATHER, PASSED AWAY'...SO AND SO...SUCH AND SUCH...OH! HERE! 'SERVICES WILL BE HELD AT THE TERMINAL FUNERAL PARLOR AT 1.P.M. TODAY!' LET'S SEE! IT'S 12:15 NOW! I CAN STILL MAKE IT!



MORTON WHISTLED A CHEERFUL LITTLE TUNE AS HE DRESSED HURRIEDLY IN HIS BLACK SUIT! IT WAS JUST 1 P.M. WHEN HE ARRIVED AT THE TERMINAL FUNERAL PARLOR! HE JOINED THE LINE OF MOURNERS THAT WERE PASSING BEFORE THE OPEN CASKET...



WHAT AN EXQUISITE COFFIN!
HOW NICE THE DECEASED LOOKS!
MY...A SATIN LINING!

AFTER PAYING HIS RESPECTS TO THE DEAD MR. WIGGINBOTTOM, MORTON TOOK A SEAT AT THE REAR OF THE CHAPEL AND AWAITED THE SERVICES...



TOO BAD MR. WIGGINBOTTOM CANNOT APPRECIATE THE DIGNITY HE NOW ENJOYS! IT'S SUCH A SHAME THAT ONE HAS TO DIE TO BE TREATED WITH SUCH ADORATION AND REVERENTIAL REGARD! PROBABLY, WHILE HE WAS ALIVE, HIS LOVED ONES HUMILIATED HIM!



A TEAR STOLE OUT OF THE CORNER OF ONE OF MR. MACAWBER'S EYES AND DRIBBLED DOWN HIS CHEEK AS HE LISTENED TO MR. WIGGINBOTTOM'S FUNERAL ORATION...

... BUT HE LEAVES BEHIND THE WARMTH, THE LOVE, THE KINDNESS HE SO UNSELFISHLY GAVE TO ALL WHO CROSSED HIS PATH OF LIFE! IN CONCLUSION...

ABNER SOUNDS LIKE HE WAS SUCH A GOOD MAN!



AFTER THE FUNERAL SERVICES, MORTON FOLLOWED A SMALL GROUP TO ONE OF THE WAITING CARS! ALL THE WAY TO THE CEMETERY HE STUDIED THE OTHER SOBBING PASSENGERS...

NOW THAT HE'S DEAD, THEY MOURN HIM! THEIR TEARS FALL FOR HIM...



WHEN THE FUNERAL PROCESSION REACHED THE CEMETERY, MORTON FOLLOWED THE OTHERS TO THE OPEN YAWNING GRAVE...

THIS IS THE ONE TIME IN A PERSON'S EXISTENCE WHEN HIS EVILS ARE FORGOTTEN AND HIS VIRTUES ARE EXTOLLED...EULOGIZED!



AS THE COFFIN WAS LOWERED SLOWLY INTO THE BLACK PIT, MR. MACAWBER REFLECTED...

IF ONLY MAN WOULD TREAT HIS FELLOW MAN WITH THIS RESPECT AND LOVE ALL THROUGH HIS LIFE-TIME INSTEAD OF AFTER HE IS DEAD!



THEN THE RICH BLACK SOIL RESOUNDED ON THE COFFIN-LID AS THE GRAVE WAS FILLED! MORTON MACAWBER SMILED SADLY...

THAT IS WHY I COME TO EVERY FUNERAL I CAN! BECAUSE HERE, AT LEAST, I CAN WATCH A PERSON BEING TREATED WITH THE DIGNITY HE NEVER ENJOYED WHILE HE LIVED!



AFTER THE GRAVE WAS COVERED AND THE OTHER MOURNERS HAD DEPARTED, MR. MACAWBER STROLLED AMONG THE GRAVESTONES, READING THE INSCRIPTIONS AND THE EPITAPHS ETCHED IN THEM...

AH, MATILDA! WHAT A FUNERAL YOU HAD! BEAUTIFUL! JUST BEAUTIFUL! AND YOU, FENWICK! TOO BAD YOU COULDN'T APPRECIATE THE SPLENDOR OF YOUR FINAL RITES! AND YOU, ALDIOUS...FANNY...ABNER...

'FENWICK APPLEBY!' AH! I REMEMBER HIS FUNERAL! IT WAS SO STATELY! AND... 'MATILDA NICKELBURY!' THERE WAS A FINAL HOMAGE!



TOO BAD ALL OF YOU COULDN'T EXPERIENCE THE DIGNITY AND SOLEMNITY YOU RECEIVED!

AS FOR MYSELF... I AM ALONE IN THE WORLD! MY FUNERAL WILL NEVER HAVE SUCH POMP... SUCH LAVISHNESS AS YOURS HAD! OH... IF IT WERE ONLY POSSIBLE FOR ME TO ENJOY IT... JUST ONCE...

...GULP... BUT... WHY NOT?



MORTON MACAWBER WALKED ALL THE WAY HOME FROM THE CEMETERY THAT NIGHT... FORMULATING HIS PLANS...

PHINEAS WINKLESON! HE'S THE RICHEST MAN IN TOWN! HIS FUNERAL WOULD REALLY BE SOMETHING!

AND I'D KNOW HOW IT FEELS... EVERY MOMENT OF IT! THE LYING IN STATE... THE FUNERAL ORATION, THE SOLEMN RIDE IN THE FLOWER-BEDECKED HEARSE... THE LOWERING OF THE COFFIN INTO THE GRAVE... EVERYTHING! IT WOULD BE HAPPENING TO ME!



HEE, HEE! *NUTTY AS A FRUIT-CAKE*, THIS MORTY-BOY, EH, KIDDIES! DID *YOU* EVER WANT TO KNOW HOW IT FEELS TO BE THE *STAR ATTRACTION AT A FUNERAL*? WELL! IT TAKES *ALL KINDS OF PEOPLE!* LET'S GO ON AND SEE WHAT *MORBID MACAWBER* HAS IN MIND!

THAT NIGHT, MORTON CUT THE OBITUARY NOTICE OF THE FUNERAL HE'D ATTENDED THAT DAY FROM THE NEWSPAPER AND PASTED IT IN HIS SCRAPBOOK...

HMMM! NUMBER TWO HUNDRED AND NINE! NOT BAD...FOR ONLY TWO YEARS...

YEP! THIS CREEP'S BEEN WATCHIN' THE 'OBITS' AND ATTENDING FUNERALS FOR TWO YEARS! *NOW* HE'S SET ON *SEEING* HOW IT ACTUALLY *FEELS*... INSTEAD OF JUST *WATCHIN'*! AFTER FINISHING THE SCRAP-BOOK-PASTING, MORTON WENT INTO THE KITCHEN...

I'LL HAVE TO *FOREGO* THE *OPEN-COFFIN CEREMONY* FOR THE SAKE OF *SAFETY!* THIS *KNIFE* WILL DO *NIGELY!*



LATER THAT NIGHT, MORTON CROUCHED IN THE BUSHES OUTSIDE THE WINKLESON MANSION...

OLD PHINEAS *ALWAYS* TAKES HIS *CONSTITUTIONAL* BEFORE RETIRING! I'VE SEEN HIM SO *MANY* TIMES! AH! HERE HE COMES *NOW!*

OLD PHINEAS CERTAINLY WAS SURPRISED WHEN MORTY SPRANG FROM THE BUSHES! WHY, YOU COULD HAVE KNOCKED HIM OVER WITH A *FEATHER!* MORTY USED THE *KNIFE*...



IN FACT HE USED IT A GREAT DEAL! HE PRACTICALLY DEFAÇED PHINEAS...

SORRY...MR. WINKLESON... BUT I MUST MAKE *SURE* YOUR FAMILY REQUESTS A *CLOSED-COFFIN CEREMONY*...

WHEN MR. MACAWBER LEFT MR. WINKLESON, THERE WAS NO DOUBT ABOUT *THAT!* EVEN AN *EXPERT* UNDERTAKER DIDN'T STAND A CHANCE...

EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE...



THE NEXT DAY, MORTON READ OF MR. WINKLE-BOTTOM'S UNTIMELY DEMISE IN THE NEWSPAPER! THE OBITUARY COLUMN CARRIED THE INFORMATION HE NEEDED...



MORTON PROCEEDED WITH FURTHER ARRANGEMENTS...

I'LL PAY YOU *FIFTY DOLLARS*, AMOS! ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS STAY OUTSIDE THE FUNERAL PARLOR... FOLLOW THE PROCESSION... SEE WHERE THEY BURY OLD PHINEAS... AND COME AND *DIG HIM UP*...

DIG HIM UP? I DUNNO! *FIFTY DOLLARS*, HUH? THAT *SURE* IS A *LOT OF MONEY!*



YOU DON'T HAVE TO *OPEN* THE COFFIN, AMOS! JUST *UNCOVER* IT!

GO NNA ROB THE *GOLD* FROM HIS TEETH, EH, MR. MACAWBER?



NOTHING LIKE *THAT!*

OKAY! OKAY! DON'T GET SORE!



YOU WON'T *FAIL* ME NOW, AMOS?

DON'T WORRY, MR. MACAWBER! I'LL DO IT!

LATE THAT NIGHT, MORTON PRIED OPEN THE REAR WINDOW OF THE APODOSIS FUNERAL PARLOR...



THERE! THAT WAS *EASY!*

AFTER SOME INVESTIGATING, MORTON FOUND OLD PHINEAS'S COFFIN...



AH! *HERE* YOU ARE, MR. WINKLESON! COME NOW! I'M TAKING *YOUR PLACE!* YOU'LL NEVER MISS ANYTHING... AND YOUR FUNERAL WILL MEAN *SO MUCH TO ME!*

MORTON LIFTED MR. WINKLESON'S BODY FROM THE CASKET AND CARRIED IT TO THE CELLAR...



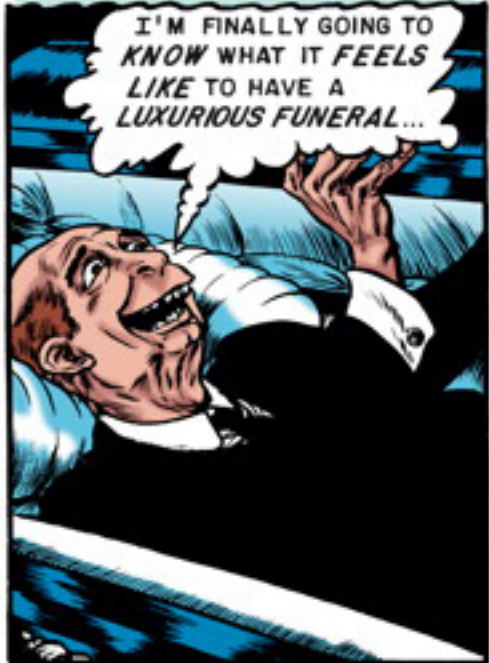
BY THE TIME THEY DISCOVER YOUR BODY DOWN HERE IT WILL BE TOO LATE!

HIDING THE BODY CAREFULLY AMIDST THE CELLAR'S TRASH, MORTON RETURNED UPSTAIRS...



WHAT A BEAUTIFUL COFFIN! SATIN-LINED! BRASS HANDLES!

MORTON CLIMBED INTO THE COFFIN AND CLOSED THE LID...



I'M FINALLY GOING TO KNOW WHAT IT FEELS LIKE TO HAVE A LUXURIOUS FUNERAL...

MORTON LAY IN PHINEAS'S CASKET ALL THAT NIGHT AND THROUGH THE MORNING, DRINKING IN THE SOLEMNITY OF THE SITUATION! HE REVELED IN ITS PLUSH INTERIOR, LISTENING TO THE SOBBING AS THE MOURNERS BEGAN TO FILE IN TOWARDS NOON...

OUTSIDE THE FUNERAL PARLOR, AMOS WAITED PATIENTLY FOR THE SERVICES TO TAKE PLACE...



THEY'RE CRYING... FOR ME!



CRAZY OLD MACAWBER! OH, WELL! FIFTY BUCKS IS FIFTY BUCKS!

INSIDE MORTON LISTENED TO THE SCRATCHING ON THE COFFIN LID AS THE FLORAL WREATHS WERE PLACED UPON IT...

THE COFFIN WAS ROLLED INTO THE CHAPEL! MORTON LISTENED TO THE GLIDING WHEELS... THE ORGAN MUSIC... THE WHIMPERING MOURNERS...



AH... WHAT EXOTIC AROMAS! FLOWERS... FOR ME!



THE SERVICES ARE ABOUT TO BEGIN! SERVICES... FOR ME!

SOON THE SOLEMN VOICE OF THE ORATOR WAS HEARD, FILLING THE CHAPEL! MORTON DRANK IN THE WORDS...THRILLED AT THE HOMAGE PAID TO THE DECEASED...



...AND WHEN A MURDERER'S KNIFE TOOK THIS BELOVED MAN FROM HIS DEVOTED FAMILY, IT TOOK FROM THEM GREAT JOY AND HAPPINESS...

THE FUNERAL EULOGY DRONED ON, EXTOLLING THE DECEASED PHINEAS WINKLESON...AND MORTON GRINNED IN HIS COFFIN! AT LAST HE WAS EXPERIENCING THE DIGNITY AND ADORATION GIVEN TO A DEPARTED! AT LAST HE WAS ENJOYING A FUNERAL FROM THE *DEAD* MAN'S POINT OF VIEW...



...AND WITH THESE FINAL WORDS, THE SERVICES ARE AT AN END! THOSE WHO WISH TO...

AH! NOW I WILL BE CARRIED TO THE HEARSE! I WILL KNOW HOW IT FEELS TO BE LIFTED BY PALL-BEARERS...

MORTON LISTENED TO THE SHUFFLING OF FEET AS THE PALL-BEARERS MOVED TOWARD THE COFFIN...



THOSE WHO WISH TO *LEAVE* MAY DO SO AT THIS TIME!

MORTON DID NOT *HEAR* THE STRANGE REQUEST! HE WAS TOO ENTHRALLED WITH THE RAPTURE OF BEING BORN ALOFT BY MANY STRONG HANDS...



AND NOW...IN RESPECT TO THE DEPARTED ONE'S *DESIRES* AND *INSTRUCTIONS*, WE COMMIT HIS LAST REMAINS...

NOR DID MORTON MACAWBER HEAR THE DRAPES AT ONE END OF THE CHAPEL DRAW OPEN AND THE HUGE IRON DOOR SWING WIDE! ALL HE KNEW WAS HIS COFFIN WAS MOVING FORWARD...WITH DIGNITY...WITH SOLEMNITY...



...WE *COMMIT* HIS LAST REMAINS TO THE *CONSUMING FIRES* OF THE *CREMATORY*!

HEE, HEE! THAT'S A *HOT* ONE, EH, KIDDIES? BY THE TIME MORTY-BOY REALIZED WHAT WAS *HAPPENING*, HE WAS *PRETTY BURNED UP*! THE ROARING FIRE AND 'ADORING' SOBS OF REMORSE FROM THE MOURNERS *DROWNED OUT* HIS SCREAMS! SO MORTY FOUND OUT WHAT IT *FELT* LIKE TO ENJOY ONE'S OWN FUNERAL! IT...GAVE HIM A *WARM FEELING*...*THROUGH AND THROUGH*!



BY THE WAY! AMOS FINALLY *GAVE UP WAITING* FOR HIS FIFTY-BUCK DEAL AFTER A COUPLE OF HOURS! BUT THE *VAULT-KEEPER WON'T*...SO I'LL TURN YOU OVER TO HIM FOR HIS *TERROR TID-BIT*! SEE YOU LATER!

-THE END-