

741.5 MURDER MYSTERIES

JULY 2026 - NO. 165

PLUS...SWAMP THING!
THE SPECTRE!

JOLTING TALES OF
TENSION
IN THE
 **TRADITION!**

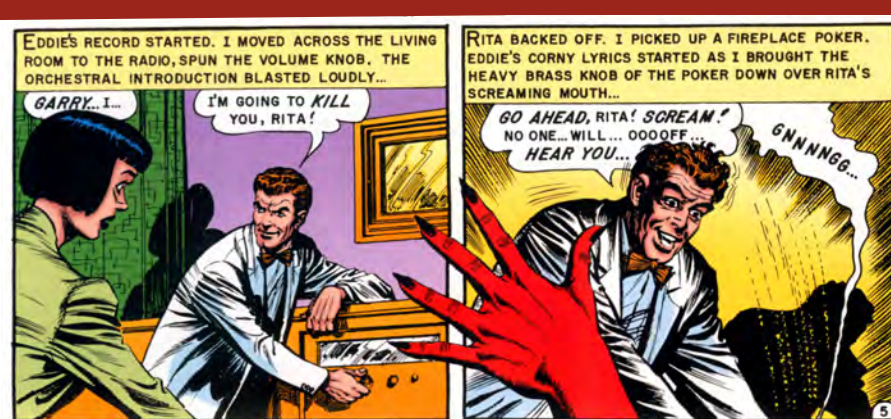
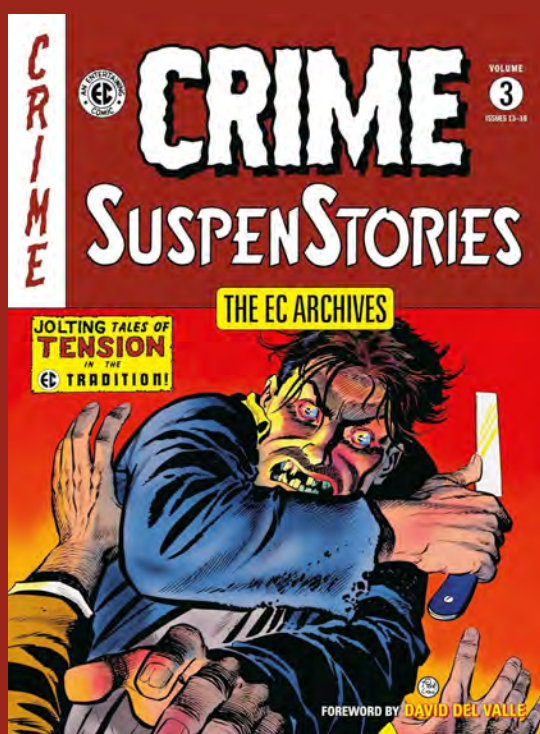


EC CRIME - ATLAS HORROR - DC MYSTERY

The Comics & Graphic Novel Bulletin of

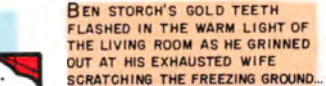


Lexington Public Library
Reading Is Just the Beginning!



Those souls who long for old-fashioned relationships, who pine for the halcyon days of marriage before no-fault divorce, who sigh that men were men and women were women...should read the final two collections of EC's *Crime Suspense Stories* from Dark Horse. Though some stories concern the usual "crime

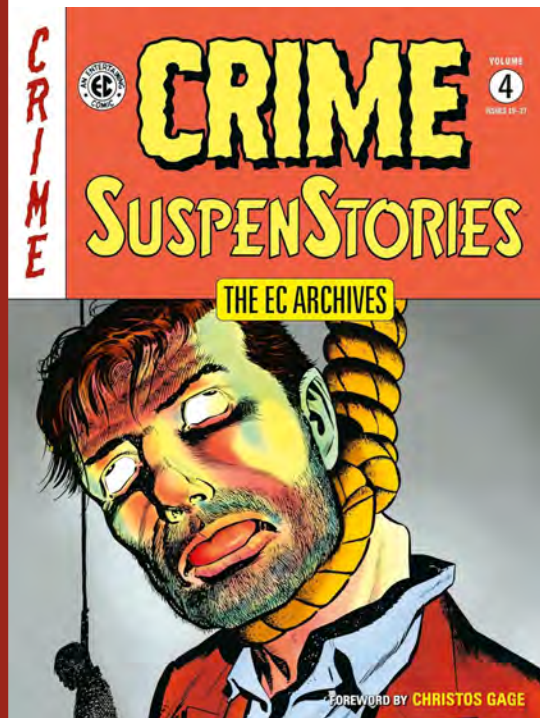
comics" subjects of heists, hoodlums and con men, most of them are morality plays about love gone horribly wrong. In the 1950s, marriage vows apparently ended "til murder do us part." As in real life, unwanted wives take the brunt of the violence (above), though the occasional femme turns fatale (right).



VILLAINS—L-R: Crandall, Ingels, Crandall



KILLERS—Top-bottom: Kamen, Evans, Craig, Kamen, Krigstein



By 1953, EC's head writer Al Feldstein was joined by the sardonic Carl Wessler and comics vets like Jack Oleck and Otto Binder. New artists had joined EC. George Evans brought a homely naturalism to his low-key tales of mayhem and mania. Reed Crandall drew the most gorgeous gore. And B. Krigstein introduced a modernist sensibility to classic

themes of romance and revenge. Meanwhile, EC mainstay Johnny Craig turned out one shockingly strong cover after another before turning the lead position over to a jazzed-up Jack Kamen. Add Graham Ingel's Old Witch and adaptations of Ray Bradbury thrillers, and you're in hard-boiled heaven. Go to lexpublib.org to cop some CRIME!

WHEN SHE RETURNED, SHE CARRIED A PACKAGE. SHE HURRIED TO HER ROOM, BEING CAREFUL NOT TO DISTURB STANLEY WHEN SHE PASSED HIS CLOSED DOOR...

WHEN HE RETURNED, HE CARRIED A PACKAGE. HE HURRIED TO THE GARAGE, BEING CAREFUL NOT TO DISTURB MOLLY WHEN HE PASSED HER SHADED WINDOW...

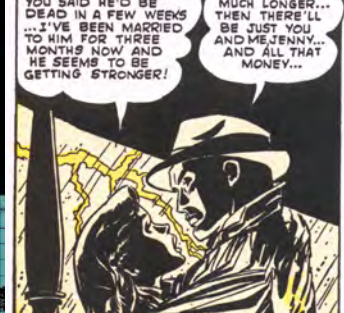


Culled from the years 1969-1970, *The Devil's Doorway* is a lovely introduction to the stories that thrilled and chilled a generation. Most were scripted by hungry young writers like Gerry Conway and Steve Skeates. The art was split between journeymen like Jack Sparling and George Tuska (center), former fen Bernie Wrightson and Ralph Reese, and old hands once again finding the fun, especially Jerry Grandanetti, Alex Toth (above) and Gil Kane, seen right about to murder his boss, Orlando. Find the *Finest* in DC Horror at Central and Marksbury.

House of Mystery...House of Secrets...Tales of The Unexpected...all had been created during the horror boom of the early 1950s. The Silver Age saw them featuring minor superhero strips like Eclispa, Automan and Dial H for H-E-R-O.

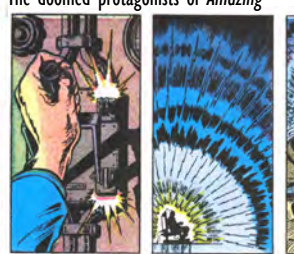


Come 1968, former EC artist Joe Orlando midwived the birth of DC's own "new trend" of horror comics, complete with hosts such as brothers Cain and Abel (above), as well as Mildred, Mordred and Cynthia, co-hosts of the new title, *The Witching Hour* (far left).



The latest in the Fantagraphics series reprinting pre-Marvel comics combines two genre-deforming outliers. *Amazing Detective Cases* borrowed its title and focus from Martin Goodman's long-running true crime rag before getting spooky 11 issues in. *Men's Adventures* began as a companion to *Man Comics*, both in the vein of virile, violent "sweat mags" like *Stag* and *MALE*. Both soon became war books, but then *Men's Adventure* hopped on the horror bandwagon. Oddly, the new stories showed the influence of the old. The doomed protagonists of *Amazing*

Detective were the murderous adulterers (left, in a lovely lightning-limbed panel by Fred [Airboy] Kida), gangsters and thrill killers typical of so-called "dick books." *MA* featured sailors, soldiers and great white hunter-types running afoul of supernatural justice, as in "Gorilla Man!" (right—the actual origin of the *Agents of Atlas* character). Led by editor Stan Lee and his love for the four-panel build-up (below), the *Atlas Bullpen* cranked out rough-hewn terror tales, with exceptional work by Bill Everett (below left), Russ Heath and, yes, Bernie Krigstein!

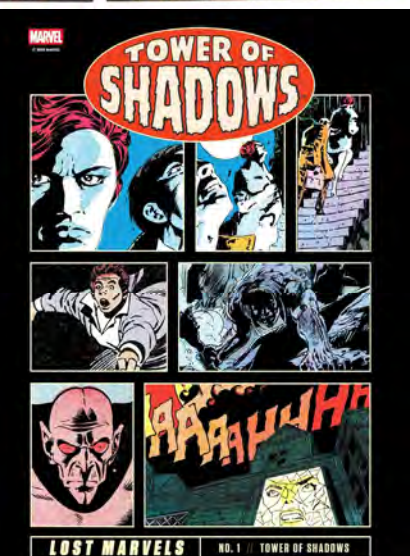


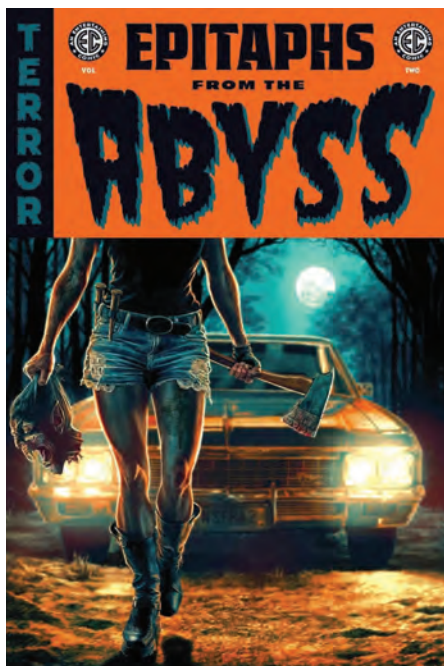
Find AMAZING DETECTIVE CASES + MEN'S ADVENTURES @ CENTRAL * MARKSBURY * NORTHSIDE

LOST MARVELS is a series from Fantagraphics reprinting work from the Bronze Age of Comics. The inaugural volume is dedicated to *Tower of Shadows*, Marvel's first attempt to exploit the "mystery" genre.



The results were uneven. The early issues imitated DC's imitations of EC, complete with a "horror host," but featured some interesting work (left). Later issues put the artists in charge (right), and played with layout and visual effects. But eventually *Tower* and its sibling *Chamber of Darkness* focused on the new genre on the block, sword & sorcery.





The Spectre is one of Ye Editor's favorite DC characters. I even have the glow-in-the-dark action figure! The Grim Guardian was created in 1940 by Superman's co-daddy, **Jerry Siegel**. He was one of DC's greatest also-rans, always so near to getting his own title. Yet he was one of the first casualties of the postwar extinction of costumed characters. When superheroes regained popularity in the 1960s, most of the new stars were re-made, re-modeled takes on Golden Age greats like the Flash and Green Lantern. But by the mid-Sixties, the old guard had been re-introduced to new readers in the "Crisis" crossovers with the Justice Society in the pages of *Justice League of America*. JSA stalwarts such as Starman and Black Canary were given a new lease on life. So was the Spectre. He got the usual howdy-do in *Showcase* before getting his solo title in 1967. *The Spectre* became an study in the cultural and artistic forces shaking up DC in the late Silver Age. Written by DC warhorse **Gardner Fox**, the initial stories were



MEANWHILE

It was pretty ballsy for indie publisher Oni Press, best known for the *Scott Pilgrim* series, to revive the Entertaining Comics imprint. It was even ballsier to eschew pure revivalism and replace iconic books from the 1950s like *Vault of Horror* and *Weird Science* with brand new titles like *Cruel Universe* and *Epitaphs from the Abyss*.

Upcoming comics *Tortured Hearts* and *Cruel Kingdom* explore genres the original EC crew had abandoned (romance) or never experienced (epic fantasy). Candidly, despite their attempt to replicate the Leroy lettering that was such an EC signifier, the works in these anthologies are more reminiscent of the short, snappy stories typical of DC and Warren — heck, Charlton, even— than the dense, radio-influenced ebb and flow of EC plots. And, in keeping with contemporary sensibilities, the new stuff's gory as \$#@! Horror hounds will find new wine in old skins via lexpublib.org!

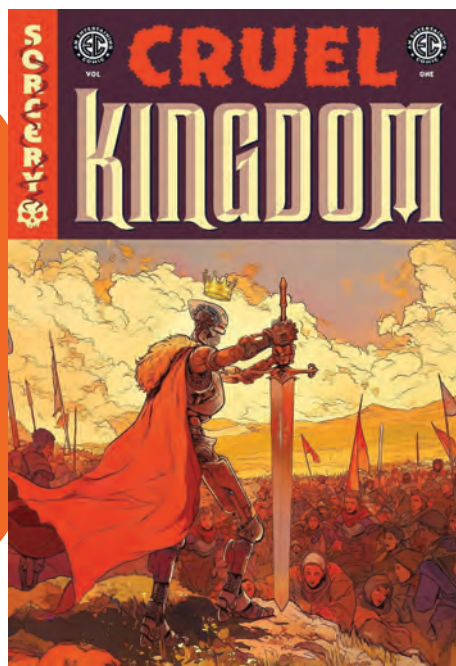


Just as **Berni Wrightson** was the heir to "Ghastly" **Graham Ingels**, so was **Kelley Jones** the heir to **Berni Wrightson**. So it was dang near pre-ordained **Jones** would end up working with writer **Len Wein** on the character **Wein** and **Wrightson** created, **SWAMP THING**. In their extended team-up, **Matt Cable** returns with a cure for the curse of the Swamp Thing. The cure works, and **Alec Holland** is no longer Swamp Thing! **Matt Cable** is! And he had plans. BIG plans! **Jones** has a blast bringing to freaky, fleshy life the likes of the Spectre, **Zatanna** and the **Phantom Stranger**. DC's most famous mage plays a huge part in our next item. In fact, a good chunk of the second DC Black Label collection of *Swamp Thing* by **Rick Veitch** is taken up by early issues of *Hellblazer* starring **John Constantine**.

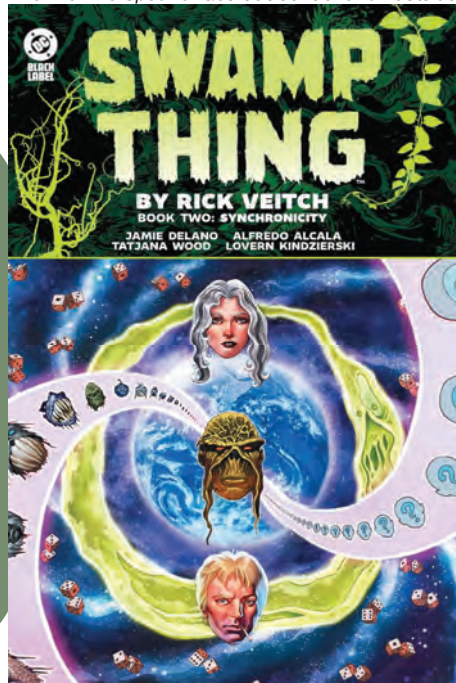
This extended pre-Vertigo crossover involves rival gangs representing Heaven and Hell trying to foment the birth of a new Messiah. Working closely — very closely — **Swamp Thing** and **Constantine** beat 'em all to the punch, thanks to the hard work of **Abby Arcane**!

Go to lexpublib.org for this DC horror classic!

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drawn by the great **Murphy Anderson**, whose slick, solid art was the standard for the early Silver Age. In *Spectre* #2, **Neal Adams** changed everything. On the verge of becoming DC's Next Big Thing, **Adams** transformed **Fox's** scripts into psychedelic showdowns obviously meant to compete with Marvel's *Doctor Strange*. His dynamic layouts featured big panels packed with rampant physicality and manic emotion, best shown in the story he wrote, "Stop That Kid Before He Wrecks the World!" Mystery maven **Jerry Grandanetti** continued in that spirit, drawing some of the trippiest comics this side of *Zap*. Too heavy for the kids, I guess: *The Spectre* failed, joining DC's mystery line before getting the axe. Five years later, *The Spectre* got a new series in the aging *Adventure Comics*. Featuring the sinister yet suave art of **Jim Aparo**, these controversial tales of crime and punishment came on like a cross between *Bullitt* and *Tales from the Crypt* due to writer **Michael Fleischer's** unflinching expression of *The Wrath of the Spectre*! Get it at Central and Eastside!



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