

FM

Friday Magazine

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HALLOW



An F.T. Resident Encounters a 'Spirit'

Brenda Plummer
Contributor



(Editor's Note: The following story is one of the odder I've seen in my days at the Nexus. A disclaimer, however: We don't know if the sources are telling the truth, and probably never will. Friday Magazine does not intend to imply that F.T.'s 8 North is haunted by any kind of apparition.)

His roommates called it a "kind of erotic episode of 'The Twilight Zone.'"

Alex (he requested his real name not be used) lived at Francisco Torres' 8 North, and believes he had some rather strange encounters with a rather sexual ghost for about two weeks last year, right around Halloween.

Farfetched as it seems, he insists it happened. "I know better. There's a spiritual presence walking the dorm," he said Monday over sandwiches at Subway.

Let's return to October 1986, late on a Monday night, when the "ghost" made her presence, shall we say, felt. Alex, a self-described borderline insomniac, drifted off to sleep.

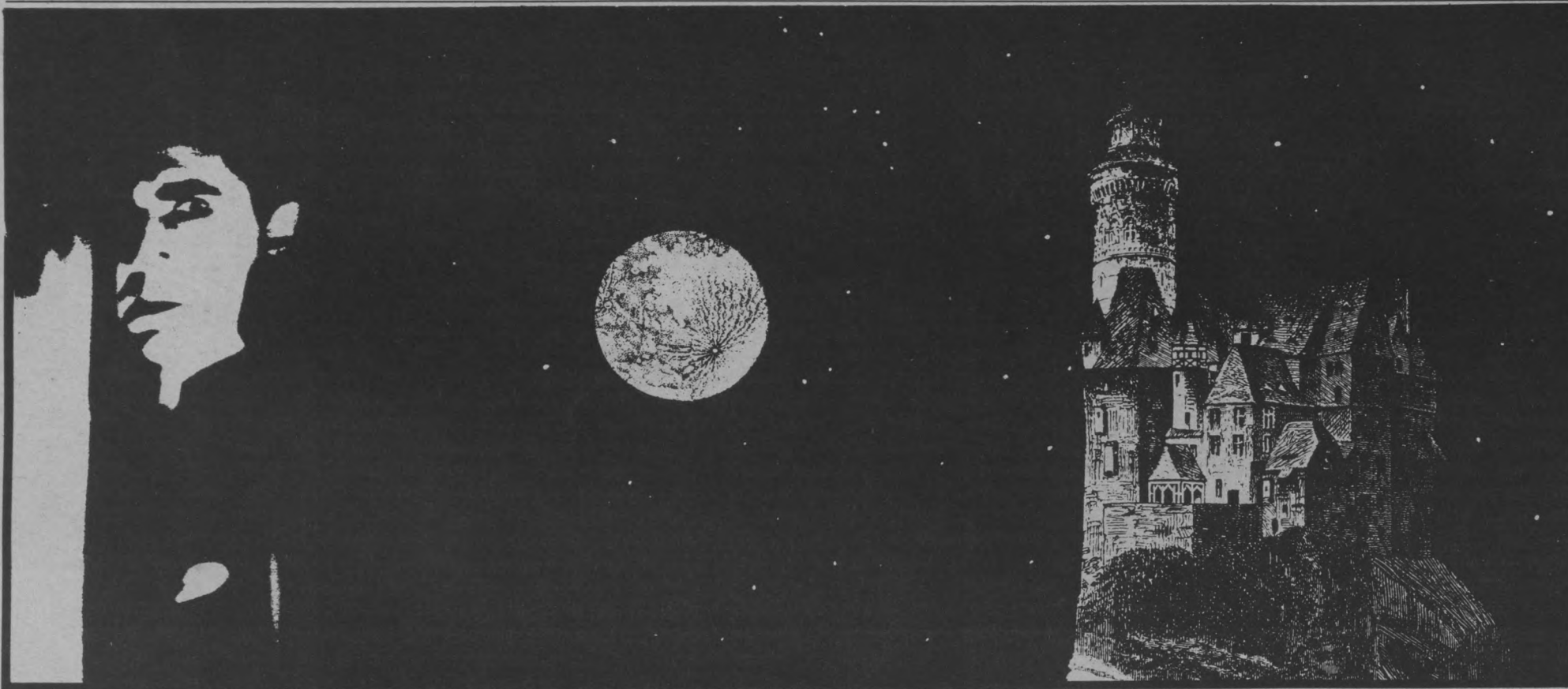
Then he felt a pressure on his chest. Drifting in and out of sleep, he didn't think much of the ever-increasing force that he said felt like a hand pushing down on him.

A few seconds later, he felt pressure on his lips. He was being kissed by this presence. Alex tried to explain. "Nothing was there but yet there was a pressure against my face," he said as he pushed his hand up against his lips, pausing as he selected the right words. "There was no temperature to it.... It was unlike anything I've ever felt."

The morning after, Alex tried to explain to his roommates what had happened. "I was not asleep. I was awake," he insisted. Mark, his roommate of less than a month, laughed upon hearing the story, as did Jim, a suite-mate and friend of six years.

It didn't matter that he could tell the story with a completely straight face and

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Ghost Guest?

(Continued from p.1A)

in all sincerity. People listened to him with looks of disbelief.

The night of the first "visit," Alex made a pact with his roommates. He made them swear that if anything happened to any of them while they slept, they would tell each other in the morning. He went through the suite daring the ghost to show herself to one of them. "All right! If there's a ghost out there ... show yourself tonight! Come and get us!" he said.

Apparently, she did.

This time the ghost was more sexually aggressive in her actions. He awoke at 2 a.m. with semen on his sheets, which he attributes to the actions of the friendly ghost.

Mark was the first to hear of the visit. One of the first things he said in our interview was, "I believe him. I was there the morning after."

According to Mark, Alex looked shaken in the morning, but couldn't help but laugh as he tried to make Mark look at the sheets in his laundry bag.

Jim heard about the incident before breakfast. "He cornered me in the

"All right! If there's a ghost out there ... show yourself tonight! Come and get us!"

bathroom and was shaking me, saying, 'Jim, remember what I said last night? Remember what I said? You're never going to believe this.' Jim didn't, and told him, "Aw, shut up Alex. Your ghost is just your hand."

A few people on his hall listened to the story of the kiss and tried to add some spice to it. "Well, gosh, Alex, you know a couple of years ago a girl did jump off a balcony to commit suicide. It

might have been from 8 North," one recalled.

Rumors, all rumors. I couldn't find any evidence of a suicide. However, one woman supposedly jumped off and broke her leg a few years ago, according to a former R.A. at the residence hall.

But the jokes began. Graffiti appeared on the wall of their bathroom in the shape of a hand, labeled "Alex's Ghost."

That week Mark and Jim planned an elaborate practical joke. They convinced their friend Kathy to come in the middle of the night with white pancake makeup and pretend she was Alex's ghost. But even the best of plans go awry.

"We all got drunk and passed out," Mark explained.

The jokes continued throughout the year. Anytime something went wrong, anytime the toothpaste was missing, they would blame it on Alex's ghost. One night, about a week later, Alex, Mark, Jim and some friends were sitting in their room, playing guitar and

composing songs for fun. They began joking about the ghost. Alex warned them that "the ghost is gonna come and get one of you!"

Just then the front door slammed shut of its own accord, Mark recalled.

Graffiti appeared on the wall of their bathroom in the shape of a hand labeled "Alex's Ghost."

There were no windows open, no draft, nothing that would have made it shut — except an angry ghost, he added. They were all a little spooked.

But that was the last Alex heard from his spiritual femme fatale. It wasn't, however, the last he heard from his roommates. Even now, someone can innocently wave goodbye and one of them will yell, "It's the ghost!" as they go into convulsions of laughter.

Cheer Up! I.V. Halloween Could be Worse ... Nah

Craig Weinberg
Contributor

As the pumpkin season is upon us, I am getting ready to go down to my local grocery store to stock up for the trick-or-treaters. No, not candy ... a 30-pound bag of fresh apples and a 50-pack of double-edged razor blades.

I'm just kidding, Halloween evokes too many tender memories for me — the pillow cases full of candy, the spooky jack-o'-lanterns, the vomit-encrusted gutter gratings, the skull-cracking national guardsmen citing half-naked girls for minor in possession, the stench of 60,000 alcohol-saturated bodies ... it warms the cockles of my liver just thinking about it.

It's always jolly when our little community (already the most densely populated area west of the Mississippi, so I've heard) gets to enjoy the company of a few tens of thousands of our fun-loving neighbors for the weekend. Being that this is the first time Halloween has arrived on a Saturday in six years, there is sure to be the largest crowd on record

in attendance. Barring the possibility of rain, earthquake, economic collapse, nuclear war or police efforts, the influx of Halloween '87 will certainly be scary, if not terrifying.

An added bonus unique to this year: a new, easy-to-enforce alcohol policy. This year, the police are required to cite everyone carrying an open container of alcohol. Gee, do you think that any of the 60,000— visitors will attempt to violate this policy? Do you think any hostility may arise when a bunch of cops who don't live here meet up with a bunch of equally foreign Lager-enlightened yuppie maggots? Why should we bother with any Palm Springs-style mayhem? With this many people, we might have a coup d'état.

Have you picked out your costume yet? I hope you chose a comfy one 'cause this year, Isla Vista is disguised as a heap of burning ruins and you don't want to be caught out in the cold ... cold chemical spray, that is. When our pals from the Irrational Guard bust out the industrial strength tear gas, I want to be wearing my Halloween mask real snug.

I'm sure The Duke's wacky warriors will be unfashionably prompt to this weekend bash.

I hope it's in poor taste to mention that the hottest costumes for this Halloween may be a post-mastectomy Nancy accompanied by a post-Wall

I think it's only fitting that in these times of safe and effective parent-approved fun, a truly frightening Halloween party can still be found.

Street Ron, or else maybe a blood-drenched Merrill Lynch bull. It's a little hard to deal with our own slice of Halloween when the real pagan blood-feast is happening daily.

With all the festive T-shirts for sale, I was hoping to find a morning-after-Halloween shirt. Maybe a picture of a contorted, writhing body recovering on a bottle-strewn beach with

authoritative-looking heads stuck on spears in the distance, with the caption "University of California's Satanically Brutal Halloween Party 1987."

Most kidding aside, the way to avoid problems this Hallow's Eve is to leave D.P. to the tourists. This is especially important if you are planning on consuming any ancient Mayan Halloween treats (psilocybin cubensis). A drug-induced inflammation of the soul is tricky enough without an extra 60 billion watts of human confusion coursing through the icy waters of your emotional environment. Since most will have difficulty in retaining any kind of sanity this Saturday night, do exercise some party precautions (i.e., do not snort an eight-ball of crystal meth, do not operate any heavy machinery after taking throat-scorching gravity bong of neon-green skunk and definitely don't rape and loot on an empty stomach).

I'm sorry if I've painted a grim picture of this weekend's festivities, but I think it's only fitting that in these times of safe and effective parent-approved fun, a truly frightening Halloween party can still be found. It's just like when you were little, only the zombies and goblins are real. This is a one-of-a-kind, human-stamped type party where the cuts and bruises don't come out of a supermarket makeup kit. There's even a chance that after many years of experience, the local law will pull off a nicely supervised event. I'm all for having a good time, but I'll have to admit I'd be perversely let down if I don't see this one make national news ... unfortunately, a bunch of college-age students having a good time and cooperating with local authorities is unlikely to make any headlines.



Doug Arellanes
Editor, Friday Magazine



It's 2 p.m. Tuesday, and Phelps 1440 is lit by candlelight. Ethereal music plays in the background, and four students sit silently at a table in the front of the room, waiting to begin an oral presentation.

The mood is expectant as the class waits for Dr. Larry Rickels to walk into the room. He walks in, removes his stylish brown topcoat, and sits down. With a smirk, he tells the class, "I suppose this is the right atmosphere to tell you about your midterm grades."

Another typical day for Rickels' German 182, "Vampirism and Beyond," which analyzes classic horror fiction such as Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, and more recent works such as Anne Rice's *Interview With The Vampire*. In it, Rickels discusses the works using Freudian psychoanalysis, which may sound like overkill, but actually turns out to be quite useful in understanding not only why the stories are frightening, but also the authors' often tragic lives.

Larry Rickels was born Dec. 2, 1954 in Cherokee, Iowa, and spent most of his childhood in Philadelphia. He did undergraduate work at the University of Pennsylvania and the Free University of Berlin, and graduate work at Princeton.

Rickels taught for a year in West Germany before coming to UCSB seven years ago. This is the first year he has taught the vampirism course, which has its roots in another course on German film he teaches entitled "Loving the Dead."

His book, *Aberations of Mourning*, coming in December from Wayne State University Press, argues that impedance to the mourning process is the condition of becoming a writer, and analyzes several literary works from the German Enlightenment to the modern era.

With his background, Rickels seemed to me to be the ideal interview subject for this Halloween issue. After talking with him for about an hour Wednesday, I was quite convinced, as I am sure readers will be. What follows is a transcript of that interview.

FM: What started you on this journey of sorts towards a topic of study that would seem to many to be rather morbid?

Rickels: I guess it begins with an interest in Freudian psychoanalysis, and the impression I have, which is the basis for all my research, that the issue of mourning is the most vulnerable point of articulation in psychoanalytic theory. So this is what I've pursued throughout, and vampirism, haunting, all these morbid manifestations are frequent analogies for mourning and aberrant mourning in psychoanalysis.

On the sidelines of that proper pursuit, I necessarily acquired all this marginal knowledge, and I figured, 'Why not switch perspectives a little bit, in the usual move of seeing the marginal as somehow more central than it had seemed to be, and address vampirism within psychoanalysis more directly?' In the course we're doing right now I allow vampirism and the technical media and psychoanalysis to occupy interchangeable places; one isn't necessarily marginal with respect to the other; they converge in one thought experiment.

FM: Why do people find these stories of vampirism, of ghosts, of the undead, so frightening?

Rickels: When there's an element of dread that they provoke, that dread always holds the place of a fascination as well. We have a double relation to these stories: We're attracted to them at the same (we are) repelled. If that strong an attraction or reaction is really there, then I think psychoanalysis would explain it in terms of the blood bond that is being recycled here. The vampiric blood bond doubles as our first relationship, the blood relationship with mother, which is then replaced in our own development by the more abstract relationship to the father and to the name of the father and all that represents.

Thus in *A Footnote to Civilization and its Discontents*, Chapter 4, Freud suggests that in the same way the first deities had been mother-goddesses, who had been central figures in fertility and death cults. These mother-goddesses and cults were replaced at every turn, as civilizations progressed, by the monotheisms, or the father-gods. What

Interview with the Vampire Professor

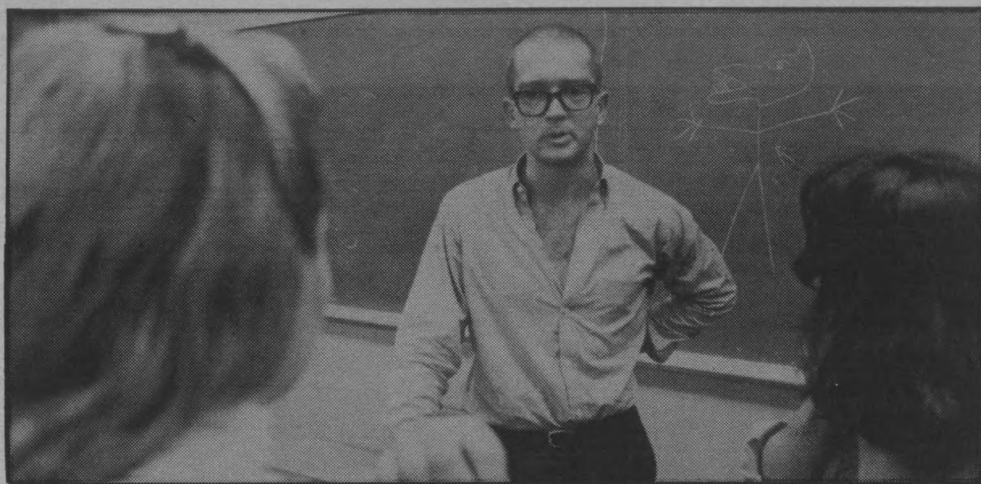
happens then in the case of anything that is discarded, the discarded goddesses necessarily return, and according to the logic of the repressed, they return in garbled form and hence, Freud concludes, all these demons and hobgoblins and so on ... are in fact the return of these ancient mother-goddesses.

FM: When you talked about the blood bond, I couldn't help but think about AIDS.

Rickels: Well, you know the vampire has

pírism. But surely the way we're receiving AIDS, for example ... is phantasmic, these new radical measures that people want to take in order to keep AIDS in some other place. I think increasingly, and one has to watch out for this of course, it will take on forms that will be comparable in status and feel and character, to vampirism and allegations of vampirism in the past.

FM: Has the study of vampirism been taken seriously by the academic community? Are writings on these



Prof. Larry Rickels discusses vampires with students after class.

always been announced by the plague, in fact it was often assumed in 17th century accounts, that a vampire's bite had been the beginning of a plague. There was always some vampire corpse, some undead corpse that would have to be staked before the (plague would end). So, yes, what was called the vampire's bite is now called a virus, and we're still finding words for something that is uncontrollable. It has everything to do with blood.

FM: Do you see authors coming to grips with this? I haven't read Anne Rice's books yet, does she deal with fears of AIDS?

Rickels: I don't think so yet. Anne Rice's third piece in the (vampire) trilogy is coming out. Maybe she will address it. It's perhaps addressed by implication in the second novel, but I don't know of an all-out treatment.

FM: With a new plague coming upon us, do you think fears of vampirism will rise as well?

Rickels: I don't know if it will take the form of another, clearly discernible vam-

pirism taken seriously?

Rickels: I'm pretty well acquainted with that literature, and I would say no. There is a history to the academy's relationship to vampirism. In the 18th century, when vampirism was first coming to be defined, and vampire epidemics were being sighted and chronicled in eastern Europe. In western Europe, countless treatises were being written on vampirism, in German and French universities. Their main focus was not only the vampirism as such erupting in the east, but also the journalistic coverage of it in the west. These stories of outbreaks of vampirism were being constantly printed and reprinted at the journalistic level. And so, the university was kind of called in, in the usual ghostbusting mode, to determine the validity of these reports.

Later on, I guess in the early part of this century, Montague Summers, for example, and other figures began to chronicle vampirism. I don't know to what extent they were within the university, but I would say that as the technical media beginning with the end

of the 19th century became so prominent, the interest in the occult increases.

There's always been something uncanny about the beginning of every new technical medium, it always has called for comparison with the occult. In fact, some were even first used in occult settings. Right now, if vampirology is taken seriously or conducted seriously, the research in this area would always have to be within a certain theoretical frame. In my case it would be psychoanalysis.

This rapport between the occult and the technical media, which begins with the end of the 19th century continues to this day. The terms shift. Obviously the telephone is not uncanny as it has been before, and the various contours of the death cult shared by the occult and the technical media are always shifted. We always refer to people in seances as 'mediums,' and now in California how do we refer to mediums? We call them 'channels.' We're still tuning in both telecommunications and communications with the dead.

FM: So the New Age movement is another manifestation of the same kind of thing?

Rickels: You know, I'm not that familiar with the New Age movement. You would have to explain it to me. I know I sometimes have people from that movement in my classes, but I don't quite get it.

FM: I'm sort of unclear on it myself, but Shirley MacLaine talks about rebirth and past lives, being able to get in touch with her past beings through various means, including channelers. She believes that she at one time was some kind of French royalty, I think. There's another woman who believes she is the reincarnation of an Egyptian warrior prince.

Rickels: Obviously the range of haunting, the range of our rapport with the dead, and there's always been a rapport with the afterlife, is going to reach as far as our senses extend. What are technical media if not extensions of our senses? Whenever the senses are extended again, they invite another kind of phantom rebound. These figures Shirley MacLaine talks to are, you know, as old as the hills. There's no new development there, but they come from newer parts of our sensorium, which is always being expanded.

The other thing is, why is California the site of most of these manifestations? For one thing, this is the place where the culture industry has replaced all culture, where culture is only the envelope around a technical medium.

FM: Culture industry meaning...

Rickels: Film, television and so on. California is the primal habitat of the technical media. So of course, we would be in the best position to receive phantoms. Good phantoms, like Shirley MacLaine's, but also the bad ones.

That is where this issue of child abuse comes in.... This is really how we're being haunted now, all over America, but particularly in California. These images on milk cartons, on postcards and so on, these shadowy images, already ghostly images of missing children, where do these ghosts come from? Childhood appears to be in a state of ghostly disappearance.

FM: Let's talk about Halloween for a bit. For a lot of people around here it has a definitely scary aspect to it, in terms of sexual assault.

Rickels: Right. Throughout the country the abuse of children haunts Halloween. There's this fear that in the middle of it, there will be a razor blade in the apple the child will eat. That's what's scary, I think. The missing child.

Here in I.V. I think, this whole thing has sort of revved up according to a scheme of immaturity that allows even somewhat older people to engage in fantastic morbid celebrations that have really to do with childhood and the fears associated with childhood. But it's very unusual that older children should engage in Halloween. I didn't encounter this on the East Coast.

Vampires Prowling?

From the Weekly World News

Aworried professor says desperate vampires will go trick or treating in the United States and Europe this Halloween.

"They could knock on any door, maybe even yours," warned vampirologist Professor Vasily Ferenc. "This threat is real and should be taken seriously by the local police authorities."

Professor Ferenc, 74, has spent the last 50 years of his life trying to find a cure for the dread virus that causes vampirism, so far without success.

"My sources tell me that there are 6,000 active vampires in North America and twice that number in Europe," the silver-haired expert said.

"Now, thanks to the AIDS crisis, they have entirely changed their habits. It used to be they preyed on prostitutes and helpless bums, but AIDS has ended all that. The vampires saw too many of their brethren die from the disease."

"Now they seek a wholesome blood supply, from the veins of decent families like yours and mine where the risk of contracting AIDS is minimal. What

better time to prowl the darkness than Halloween night, where their stark white faces and yellow fangs will go unnoticed among the throngs of trick or treaters?"

Professor Ferenc, whose book, *A Treatise on Eastern European Vampirism from 1810 to 1890*, is still the most respected work on vampirism, continued: "I will be in Austria this Halloween where I know the exact location of a vampire attack, and I will have assistants in several other countries."

"But I'm afraid the United States must go unprotected."

"Please make sure your children trick or treat with adult supervision. Please make sure your house is well lighted and if possible tie some garlic to your front door. Please keep looking over your shoulder in dark, tree-lined streets."

"And finally, please don't open your door unless the trick or treaters are known to you. If you are in any doubt at all about the identity of your trick or treaters, keep your door locked. If you let a pale stranger into your home, be warned: He could be one of the undead..."

'Hell to Live With' Will Continue Next Issue

