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WHICH WAY BOOKS "10"

INVASION OF THE BLACK SLIME AND OTHER TALES OF HORROR

R.G. Austin

Warning! Read at your own risk!
Terror lurks inside this book!



ILLUSTRATED BY JOSEPH A. SMITH

THE BLACK MOUND STARTS TO MOVE...

Then, as you sit there, one of the tentacles rises above the rest. And, in a burst of energy, it spurts a blast of black stuff directly at you. The sticky black slime is running down your face, your neck, your arms.

"Ahhh," says the leader. "It is pointing out that there is a stranger in our midst."

The horrid black slime is all over your body now, leaving sticky, slithering tracks wherever it goes.

*If you get up and run, turn to
page 22.*

*If you stay in the audience,
turn to page 25.*

**EITHER WAY—YOU'RE IN
FOR ADVENTURE GALORE!**

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R.G. Austin

ILLUSTRATED BY JOSEPH A. SMITH



**AN ARCHWAY PAPERBACK
PUBLISHED BY POCKET BOOKS • NEW YORK**

This novel is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events or locales or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

AN ARCHWAY PAPERBACK *Original*



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Attention!

Which Way Books must be read in a special way. DO NOT READ THE PAGES IN ORDER. If you do, the story will make no sense at all. Instead, follow the directions at the bottom of each page until you come to an ending. Only then should you return to the beginning and start over again, making different choices this time.

There are many possibilities for exciting adventures. Some of the endings are good; some of the endings are bad. If you meet a terrible fate, you can reverse it in your next story by making new choices.

Remember: Follow the directions carefully and have fun!

For ten wonderful days, you have been traveling across the country on your bicycle. Now you are biking to an old mining town called Silverlode.

The scenery is magnificent. You pass by rocky bluffs, occasionally stopping to explore caves and climb to the tops of mountains. Pine forests are abundant, and the air is crisp and clean. It is the best vacation you have ever had.

As you pedal along a winding road to the top of the highest mountain, you grow weary. Your legs are weak and the thin air of the high altitude makes it difficult for you to catch your breath.

Just as you reach the top, you see a boy resting next to his bike at the side of the road.

(continued on page 2)

You stop and climb off your bike, delighted to see another person.

After you introduce yourselves, you ask him where he is going.

"Anywhere but Silverlode," Chris answers.

"What do you mean? That's where I'm heading," you say. "I intend to spend a few days there."

"I wouldn't if I were you," Chris answers ominously. "The town has been invaded."



(continued on page 3)

"Invaded?" you ask.

"Three days ago," he explains, "I was exploring an old mine shaft about a mile from town. Something happened while I was deep inside. The people told me it was a huge sun flare. But I suspect it was more, for the blinding light was accompanied by an earth-shaking tremor that lasted two minutes.

"I saw and felt nothing because I was protected by the shaft. But weird things began to happen. It all started with the terrible black slime that began to bubble into town."

"Where did it come from?" you ask, fascinated.

(continued on page 4)

"Nobody knows, but the night after it appeared the animals howled until dawn. Then people began to behave in strange ways, making hissing noises and attacking each other. Yesterday, two people were murdered, but no one seemed to care.

"When I got upset, everyone thought I was crazy. It is as though their minds have been clouded. I was frightened by their behavior, so I decided to leave while I still could."

"But where will you go?" you ask.

(continued on page 5)

"In the next valley there is a house that belonged to my uncle, Harry Crispen. It's the only place I can go."

"Is your uncle a nice man?" you ask.

"Oh, he's been dead for ten years. He was very rich and he owned this crazy house. They say that weird things go on inside that empty house. Uncle Harry left a will that stipulated that the first person who could spend twenty-four hours there would inherit one million dollars."

"Wow!"

"Not so fast," the boy replies. "Five people have gone into the house, but no one has ever come out."

"Is your uncle's house in a town?" you ask.

"No. The nearest house is more than a mile away. It belongs to a doctor. They say he's crazy. Years ago, his only son was killed in a car accident. Shortly after that, he moved from Silverlode to this isolated house. No one has seen him since. He's probably just a lonely old man living out his life in solitude."

(continued on page 6)

Chris sits quietly for a moment and then asks suddenly, "Would you like to come with me to my uncle's house? If we make it, we can split the million dollars."

If you suspect that Chris is exaggerating about the black slime and want to continue on your trip as you had originally planned, turn to page 7.

If haunted houses and black slime do not appeal to you, and you would rather meet the doctor, turn to page 9.

If you like the idea of trying to get half a million dollars in just one day, go with the boy to his Uncle Harry's house on page 77.

You thank Chris for his invitation, but tell him that you wish to continue your journey as you had originally planned. Then you climb on your bicycle and head toward Silverlode.

When you reach the town, everything seems perfectly normal. *Maybe Chris has an overactive imagination*, you think. *There's nothing wrong here.*

You are hungry, and it is almost lunchtime. So you ride over to the local diner and order a hamburger and a milkshake. As you eat, you look around the diner. People are talking happily in their booths and at the counter. They are eating French fries, drinking sodas, munching hamburgers. There is only one thing that seems a little strange. *Everyone* is wearing dark glasses; you cannot see any eyes.

A fad, you think. *Sunglasses are IN in Silverlode.*

(continued on page 8)

After lunch, you check into your hotel room. You have been sleeping in sleeping bags on the hard ground for the past two weeks, and the bed looks so inviting that you lie down for a nap.

You are so exhausted that you sleep for the rest of the day. When you awaken, it is late afternoon.

You lie in bed, thinking about what you should do that evening.

If you decide to look around the town, turn to page 12.

If you would rather go to the movies, turn to page 20.

You pedal your bicycle to the valley where the doctor lives. You recognize the house from the description that Chris has given you.

It is quite an ordinary-looking white frame house that is two stories high. A white picket fence surrounds the yard and a path leads from the gate to the front door.

You enter the gate and walk up to the door. You ring the doorbell and hear the distant sound of a bell ringing. You wait, but nobody answers. You are tired and thirsty and so you walk around to the back of the house, hoping that the doctor will be there.

You knock on the back door and hear footsteps. Then the door is opened and you are greeted by a gray-haired man who has a kind, open face.

You explain to him that you have been traveling on your bike and that you are tired and weary, and you wonder if perhaps you could have a drink of water and something to eat. You wonder why the boy thought he might be crazy; he seems quite normal. In fact, he reminds you of your doctor back home.

(continued on page 10)

"Come in!" the man says. "How nice to have a visitor. I have been so busy with my experiments that I haven't had company in a very long time. I hope you'll stay awhile."

You walk in the door and find that you are standing in the kitchen.

You are so thirsty that you ask for a drink of water. As you speak you reach up to open the cabinet to the right of the sink. "I can help myself," you say politely.

"Don't open that!" the doctor cries. "I will get you a glass."



(continued on page 11)

He goes to a cabinet on the opposite side of the room and gets a glass. Then he fills it with water.

Just as you finish drinking, you hear a weird moan coming from another part of the house.

"What's that?" you ask.

"Just my cat," the doctor answers nervously. "I must go see about her. I'll be back in a minute."

As soon as the man is out of the room, you look at the forbidden cabinet.

If you wait for the doctor, turn to page 15.

If your curiosity gets the better of you and you have to open the cabinet to see what's inside, turn to page 21.

You decide that it might be interesting to take a little tour of the town. In order to look as though you belong, you slip on your sunglasses before you venture out onto the town square.

A crowd has gathered in the square, as if waiting for something to happen. But you see no signs of anything eventful, so you sit down by the fountain and watch the people.

Soon, it begins to get dark, and everyone starts to move toward the town hall. A person nudges you and says, "Come now. It's time."

You follow the crowd into the meeting hall and take a seat in the audience.

A man is standing on the stage in front of you. Next to him is a big mound covered with a canvas drop cloth. As the man waits, glancing at his watch, you think you see the drop cloth move. You assume that you are imagining things. You sit back in your chair and relax.

The man glances at his watch once more and then says, "It is dark outside. I can remove the cover now."

(continued on page 13)

An awed gasp of anticipation fills the hall. The man leans over and removes the covering from the mound.

Murmurs of appreciation rise from the audience. But you cannot understand why. All you can see is a black mound. It does not seem special to you.

But you change your mind quickly when the black mound starts to move. At first, it begins to sway back and forth, slowly. Then faster and faster it moves until it is a quivering mass. And then, from the center of the mound, a long tentacle begins to protrude. Then another. And another. The audience cheers in appreciation.

"What's it saying?" calls a woman from the audience.

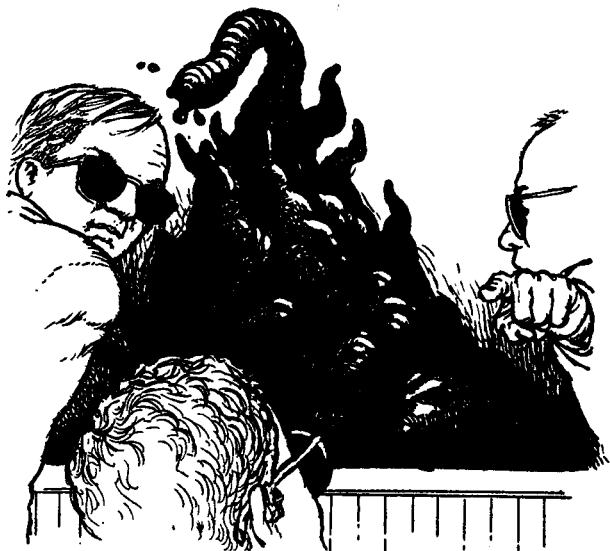
"I don't know," the leader says, his brow furrowed in concentration. "It's trying to tell us something."

Then, as you sit there, one of the tentacles rises above the rest. And, in a burst of energy, it spurts a blast of black muck directly at you. The sticky black slime is running down your face, your neck, your arms.

(continued on page 14)

"Ahhh," says the leader. "It is pointing out that there is a stranger in our midst."

The horrid black slime is all over your body now, leaving sticky, slithering tracks wherever it goes.



*If you get up and run, turn to
page 22.*

*If you stay in the audience, turn to
page 25.*

You decide that since you are accepting the doctor's hospitality, you should also honor the rules in his home.

You have been sitting there for only a few minutes when you hear a loud, rhythmic clumping noise in the hall outside the kitchen. Thinking that the noise has something to do with the doctor, you wait quietly. And you watch as the door opens.

But instead of the doctor, a huge and hideous man-monster enters the room. But it is not his monstrous body that most frightens you. It is not even the black stitches that seem to be holding him together.

(continued on page 16)

The worst part is that his face is covered with a gauzy shroud. There are two slits cut in the fabric for his eyes. As the monster breathes in, he sucks the gauze into his gaping mouth. When he breathes out, the gauze billows out. He breathes loudly as the gauze flutters in and out of his misshapen mouth.

You're terrified as the monster starts to walk clumsily toward you.



(continued on page 17)

His awkward gait is like that of a robot. He lifts each leg carefully, bending his knee before putting his foot forward.

As he comes closer, you shrink back in your chair. Your hands are sweaty. Your heart is pounding.



Turn to page 18.

Just as the monster reaches out to touch you, the doctor bursts through the door.

"Garth!" he yells. "How did you get out? Don't tell me you broke the chains again."

"W-wh-what is that?" you ask, so terrified that you can barely speak.

"Garth," the doctor answers brusquely, trying to grab the strange creature. But Garth is too strong for the doctor. The monster flings the doctor aside with his powerful arm.

"Stop that, Garth!" the doctor says, staggering back toward the monstrous man. "Come with me right now!" he orders in a stern, no-nonsense voice. The doctor's tone of voice seems to calm the monster. But instead of going with the doctor, Garth sits down in a chair next to you, still breathing loudly through his mouth, sucking the gauze in and out, in and out.

"Who is Garth?" you ask.

(continued on page 19)

There is tragedy in the doctor's voice when he answers you. "Garth is my son," he says. "The son I took from an automobile accident and made whole again. I have only his hands and face left to reconstruct. He also needs a heart. Just a few more dead bodies and my little boy will be able to join the human race once more."

You feel sick when you realize where the doctor has gotten the parts to re-create his son.

"But why don't you take him to the city?" you inquire. "You could get a plastic surgeon to fix him."

"Impossible!" the doctor says. "He is *my* creation. He is not to be worked on by others." And with that, the doctor grabs poor Garth and takes him from the room.

As you sit there, you can hear chains rattling and you know that Garth is being locked up. You decide that later, when the doctor is asleep, you are going to unchain Garth and take him to the city.

Turn to page 26.

The theater is small and old-fashioned, and you are pleased that it is showing one of your favorite old-time musicals.

The previews have just begun when you arrive. You buy a bag of popcorn and take a seat in the back of the theater.

You are thoroughly enjoying the movie when—in the middle of a terrific dance routine—the projector breaks and the film stops. The theater is pitch black and silent.

In a matter of seconds, a low and hostile hiss fills the theater. The hiss grows louder and louder until your head is spinning with the growing intensity of the reptilian-like noise.

You wait eagerly for the lights to go on. But instead, an eerie yellow glow fills the theater. You look around and discover that you are surrounded by angry, hissing people with yellow eyes that shine in the dark.

Turn to page 24.

You cannot resist. You tiptoe over to the cabinet and turn the knob. As the door opens, it creaks a little, but you do not think the noise is loud enough to be heard in other parts of the house.

For a moment, the contents of the cabinet look like a jumble of tubes and bottles. But when you realize what you are looking at, you gasp in horror!

Inside the cabinet is a series of jars. Each one is connected to other jars by glass tubes through which runs a deep red liquid.

The first bottle you examine is labeled "Eyes"; and inside, you can see at least a dozen eyeballs floating in the liquid, staring out at you. The jar next to it is labeled "Livers" and deep red chunks float in the liquid. There are "Hearts," and "Spleens," and "Adrenal Glands," and "Tongues," each in its separate container. The red liquid pulses through the glass tubes and the body parts move gently in their jars.

Turn to page 27.

You stand up to run, thankful that you are on the aisle in the back of the meeting hall. You hesitate for a moment, afraid you will look like a scaredy-cat.

Then you remember grandfather. He was a strong ox of a man, not afraid of anything. And he used to tell you, "There are some situations in life when the only wise course of action is to run like the dickens."

Well, this is one of them, you think, and you start to run.

(continued on page 23)

Several people try to grab you, but you manage to wriggle your way to the exit.

You plunge through the door into the cool night air and race across the square to the hotel. In no time, you are in your room.

You wash the slime off as quickly as you can and then grab your clothes and shove them into your duffel. You are grateful that you paid for your room in advance so you don't have to spend time checking out of the hotel.

Once you are outside, you unchain your bike, hop on it, and start pedaling away from this creepy town. You can't wait to get home again.

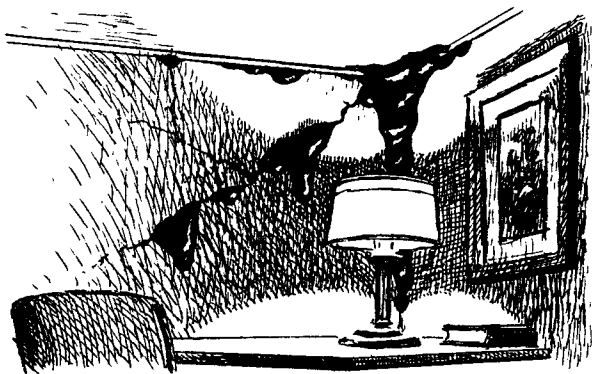
The End

If you are not ready to end your adventure here, you can go with Chris to his uncle's house. Turn to page 77.

You get up from your seat and squeeze past a row of hissing people. Then you start to run. You race back to the hotel and up the two flights of stairs to your room.

When you are inside, you bolt the door and then lie down on your bed, totally exhausted from the bizarre and frightening experience.

As you lie on your bed feeling safe at last, you smell something strange. You look around and discover a trickle of black goo oozing from one of the cracks in the wall.



If you think it is better to leave the stuff alone, turn to page 38.

If you think you should clean the slime off the wall, turn to page 41.

You sit there, the slimy gooey stuff trickling slowly down your back. Everyone is staring at you, and you are too embarrassed to run. So you wait, wondering what will happen next.

The leader looks out into the audience and points at you.

"That is the one who is chosen," he calls out in a deep resonant voice. "Come forward."

Trembling, you stand up, eager to see what it means to be chosen by the blob.

You walk down the aisle and up the steps of the stage.

"Come forward now and stand next to the blob," the leader directs you. You walk over to the pulsating black blob. Several people accompany you, holding your arms.

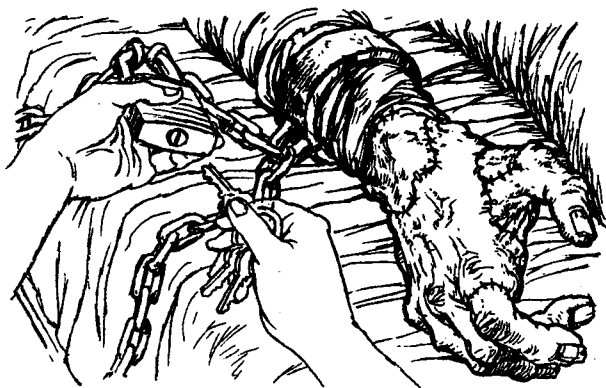
"You are the privileged one tonight," the leader says. "The blob has chosen, and he wants you." He pauses dramatically; then he adds, "Congratulations. It is the greatest honor, the purest sacrifice, the ultimate privilege to be fed to the blob."

The End

You accept the doctor's invitation to spend the night. And then, in the middle of the night—when you are certain that the doctor is asleep—you sneak downstairs to Garth's room.

You peek inside the door and see that Garth is chained to his bed. A key ring hangs by the door.

You take the keys and approach the sleeping figure. You try one key after another. Finally, you have unlocked everything except the shackles on his wrists.



If you think it would be wise to keep the shackles on Garth's wrists, turn to page 28.

If you free Garth completely, turn to page 31.

You feel sick and want to throw up; but you have enough sense to close the door quietly and sit down in a chair at the table. You think about running, but your knees are shaking too badly even to stand up.

Just as you think that you have recovered your senses, the doctor enters the room.

If you thank the doctor for the water and tell him you will be on your way now, turn to page 29.

If you try to learn why all the body parts are in the cabinet, turn to page 35.

You awaken Garth gently. But as soon as he opens his eyes, he is furious and tries to grab you. *It's a good thing I didn't give him all his freedom at once*, you think.

With gentle coaxing, you convince Garth to follow you. You tell him that you will help him, that you will take him to a hospital in order to make him whole.

You can feel Garth's reluctance, and you understand that Garth has never known anyone else but the doctor. This is his home.

Then you tell Garth that, once his medical treatments are completed, he will be able to return to this house.

You know that the journey will be long and difficult; you will have to go all the way to the city. But, as difficult as the journey will be, you can travel with the knowledge that you are helping to create a unique human life.

The End

You explain to the doctor that you must go, but the man protests.

"These mountains are dangerous at night. There are wild boars and bobcats. I would suggest strongly," he adds with a smile, "that you stay with me until morning."

You agree to stay and you enjoy a fine dinner with the doctor. He is good company and he tells you amusing stories.

"Have you any news from town?" he asks you when he is finished.

You tell him about the weird black slime. "Two people were murdered yesterday," you say.

"Really," says the doctor with a strange look in his eyes. "Most interesting. Yes, *most* interesting."

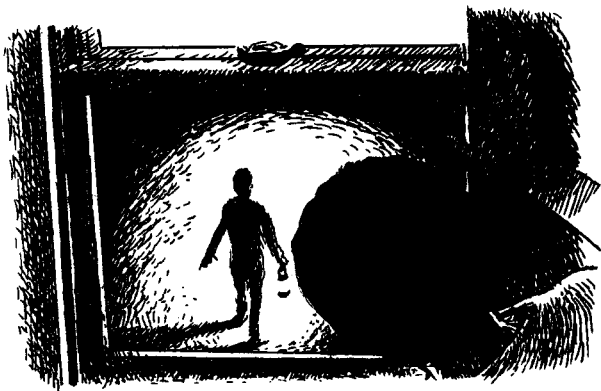
Strange reaction, you think. Maybe he is weird, as Chris said.

"Now," says the doctor, interrupting your thoughts. "Let me show you to your room."

(continued on page 30)

"This is the guest room," he says, as you enter a small room at the top of the house. "It is simple but clean, and it has a wonderful view of the mountains. The bathroom is next door," he says before leaving you. "Do not make a mistake and open the door across the hall. No one is allowed to enter there except me."

You nod and thank him. Then you get ready for bed. As you are lying in the dark, you hear the downstairs door open. You look out the window and see the doctor walking away from the house with a lantern in his hand.



If you follow the doctor, turn to page 32.

If you think this is your opportunity to explore the room across the hall, turn to page 42.

He should have all the freedom he can get, you think to yourself. And then you unlock the chains that bind Garth's wrists.

You wait for a moment and tap him on the shoulder. "Garth!" you whisper. "Wake up, Garth."

The huge man opens his eyes. When he sees you, he is angry at being awakened. Through the slits in the gauze, you can see his eyes flash with rage.

He does not understand freedom, you think. I should have considered that.

Garth reaches out and grabs you. Your understanding has come too late.

The End

You jump out of bed and run downstairs. Then you creep out the front door. You are just in time! The doctor is in a pickup truck, getting ready to drive away. You hop in the back and crouch down so he won't see you in the rear-view mirror.

After bouncing down long and bumpy roads, the truck finally stops. You are horrified to see that you are in the middle of a cemetery.

The doctor, carrying a shovel, walks over to a fresh grave. The dirt on top is in a large mound. He looks around to make certain that he is alone; then he begins to dig.

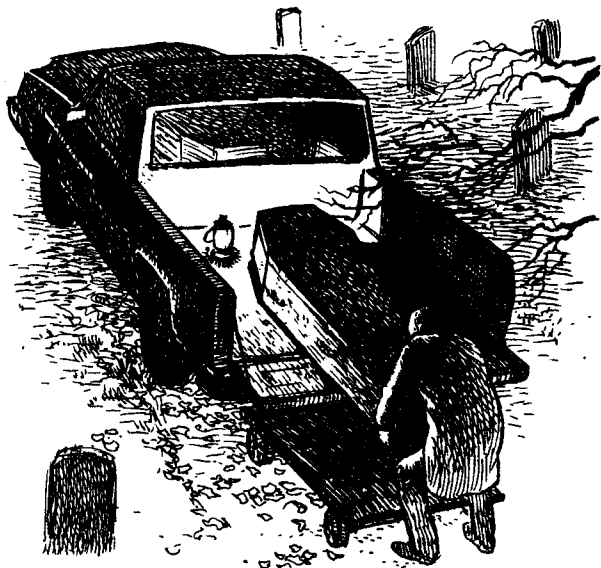
When he has exposed the coffin, the doctor returns to the truck. You see him coming and hop down and hide under the vehicle just in time. The doctor goes to the rear of the truck and pulls down a large, flat wagon, some ropes and a pulley system. He returns to the grave and disappears into the hole to attach the ropes to the coffin. Half an hour later, with an enormous effort, he finally manages to lift the coffin into the wagon and wheel it back to the truck.

(continued on page 34)



Then he climbs into the cab and turns on the motor.

You think it is your obligation to find out what this madman is doing, but you are terrified.



If you ride alongside the coffin, turn to page 57.

If you want nothing more to do with mad doctors and dead bodies, return to page 6 and make another choice.

You smile at the doctor when he returns. Then, when you are certain that your voice will work, you ask innocently, "Do you wear that white coat because you are a doctor?"

"Yes."

"What kind?"

"Research," he answers just a shade too pleasantly.

"What kind of research?" you persist.

"I am primarily concerned with organ transplants."

So that explains the contents of the cabinet, you think. It may be gross to look at but at least it has a noble purpose.

"That sounds fascinating," you say, interested now. "That's a very demanding specialty in medical research. How did you get started?"

"Well now," the doctor says, leaning back in his chair and lighting his pipe. The smoke makes circles over his head. "That's a long story. Almost ten years ago to this day," he begins, "my son was in a horrible automobile accident. He was just about your age. Maybe a little older."

(continued on page 36)

You can see tears form in his eyes, and you sense the sorrow this man must feel. He shakes his head sadly and then continues the story. "I gathered his dear little body up in my arms and brought him here to this place. And since then I have devoted my science, my knowledge and my life to reconstructing this dear child. He means everything to me."

"And have you succeeded?" you ask.

"Only partially. It has not been easy."

"Nothing ever is that is worthwhile," you add, in an effort to console him.

"Of course. You are right." He pauses then. "To create life out of death used to be impossible. But I have conquered that. I used what parts of him that I could. But, unfortunately, procuring human parts to fill in the gaps, so to speak, was not easy. And so sometimes I was forced to compromise. I was forced to temporarily implant the brain of a murderer in my dear child's skull. Now he must be kept chained to his bed, or I fear he will kill."

"How terrible!" you say sympathetically, imagining the consequences of such a compromise.

(continued on page 37)

"How kind you are," the man says to you, reaching over to touch you on your face and pat your head.

"It's hard not to sympathize," you say.

"I'm glad you feel that way, my child," the doctor responds with a sad smile on his face. "It won't be so hard for you then."

"What won't be?" you ask.

"Why, donating your brain as a replacement," the doctor says as he slips a pair of handcuffs over your wrists. "Come along now."



The End

You decide to ignore the black slime, hoping that it will dry up. You distract yourself by reading a book.

An hour later, when finally you look up again, you are horrified to see that the black slime has oozed into the room, creating jagged black veins up and down the walls. Soon, the gelatinous slime is pouring onto the floor like thousands of tiny black waterfalls.

You climb onto the bed, pull your legs up close to your body, and watch in terror as the black slime pours through the cracks and covers the floor. Then the light fixture in the ceiling begins to move back and forth and slime squeezes its way through the hole in the ceiling and drips down onto the bed.

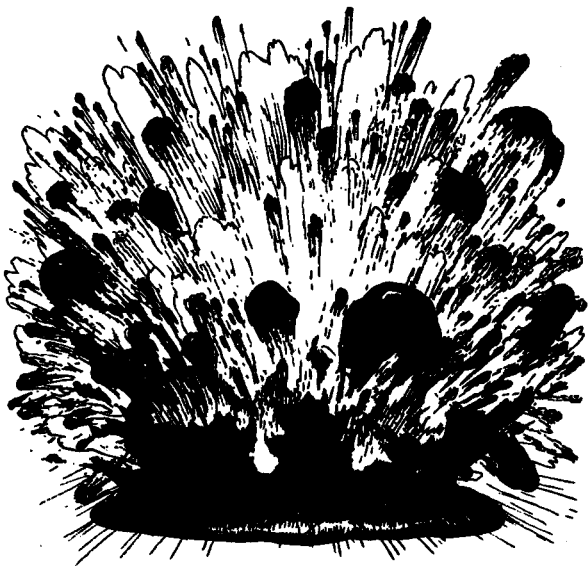
There is a terrible stench in the room that reminds you of garlic and ether. You feel sick and dizzy.

(continued on page 39)

Before your eyes, the rivers of black slime flow together until they have formed a giant blob in the middle of the floor. Then the blob begins to sway and move, as if it is suddenly a living thing. It pulsates and beats like a giant heart, faster and faster. Then it emits a low hum.

As the blob beats faster, the hum grows louder. Faster and faster, louder and louder.

You are going mad with the noise, crazed by the incessantly quivering blob, when suddenly, it explodes.



Turn to page 40.

Millions of tiny black fragments float through the room and fill the air with a nauseating smell. Then you notice that the tiny objects are not floating, they are flying! The room is filled with millions of gnat-like insects. They are swarming around your head.



*If you try to escape from the room,
turn to page 47.*

*If you scream at the top of your
lungs, turn to page 53.*

You dampen a towel and wipe the black slime off the wall. It cleans up easily. But two seconds later, the slime is back, heavier and stickier. You wipe it off again; again it reappears.

As you stand checking the wall, the slime suddenly squirts out of the crack and splatters onto your face; its slick sticky wetness drips down your cheeks. You run to the sink and wash your face, desperate to get the repulsive substance off.

When you feel clean again, you dry yourself and look in the mirror. You are so relieved to see that the slime has been cleaned off, you do not even notice your yellow eyes.

The End

You pick up a book of matches from the bedside table, just in case you need a source of light. And then you walk softly across your room and open the door.

The hall is silent and empty, and the forbidden door seems just like any other. By putting your ear to the door, you can barely make out a steady thumping sound coming from the other side of the door. It is as if there is someone inside playing a drum very softly. You cannot imagine who it could be.

You put your hand on the knob and turn it gently. Then you push the door open a crack. It is pitch-black inside.

You open the door wider and step inside. Then you strike a match and hold it before you. You discover that you are in a small entry hall. There is another door in front of you. When you listen at that door, the thumping becomes louder.

You hesitate a moment, wondering if you dare open the door. Your curiosity gets the best of you, and you put your hand on the knob.

(continued on page 43)

You open the next door. There is no light inside the second room. Only the sound of the thumping as it beats rhythmically on. *Thump, thump, thump.*

You walk into the room and strike a match. You can barely make out a large pulsating form about ten feet away.

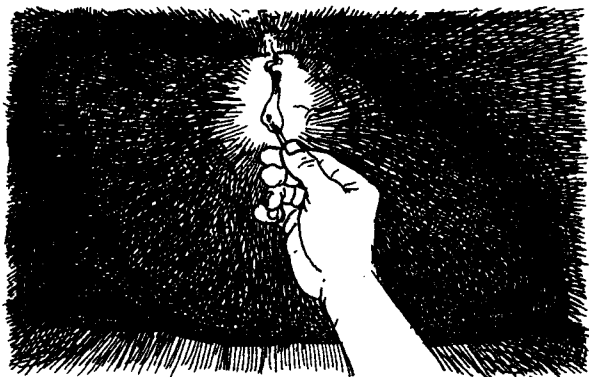
Thump, thump, thump.

You cannot imagine what it could be. Your match goes out. You walk closer and you light another match.

As you hold up the match you realize that this pounding mass is as big as a car.

Thump, thump, thump, it goes! *Thump, thump, thump!* It beats faster and louder as you approach.

With a scream of recognition, you realize what this undulating, jelly-like mass is—it is a giant, bodyless heart.



(continued on page 44)

At the same moment, the match you are holding burns your finger. With a cry of pain you throw up your hands. When you go to light another match, you realize that when you threw up your hands, you tossed away the pack of matches. You are trapped in darkness.

You crouch down on the floor, blindly crawling around, groping for the matches. Your hand desperately sweeps back and forth. You are terrified that you will touch the slimy, thumping heart.

You are frantically looking for the matches when, squish—the heart rolls over on top of you.

The End

You open the door and discover that you are in a light, airy room that is almost identical to your bedroom at home.

There is a sweet smell in the room, and you feel yourself growing very sleepy. You stumble to the bed and lie down. You close your eyes, and before you can count to ten, you are fast asleep.

When you awaken, it is almost dark. You can see shadows flitting around the room. You lie in bed, silent and totally alone.

You think you see something moving in the corner of the room. But you tell yourself that it is only your imagination playing tricks.

Then you see moving shapes in the closet. You pull the quilt up, making certain that every part of your body is covered. You can sense something inside the room, some evil malevolent presence.

You are frightened by the unknown, by the creatures lingering in the room. You look around, but there are no longer any moving shadows. Everything is still. Everything is silent. The only sound you hear is the beating of your own heart.

Turn to page 56.

You walk through the door and it slams behind you. Then you hear a bolt slipping into place on the other side of the door.

The room is so dim that you can barely see anything. But you hear a frantic rattling noise coming from someplace in front of you. You take a step. Your foot slips over the edge of something, and you fall to the ground. Your leg is dangling in space above a dark pit. Below you, the rattling noises grow more furious.

As your eyes adjust to the dim light, you see that except for a tiny ledge, the whole room is one big pit. At the bottom of the pit, you can see hundreds of writhing, squirming forms. The pit is filled with rattlesnakes!

On the far side of the room is a door. The ledge around the pit is less than a foot wide. And there is a narrow board suspended across the pit. You know you must get to the other side of the room to reach the door.

If you cross the snake pit on the board, turn to page 62.

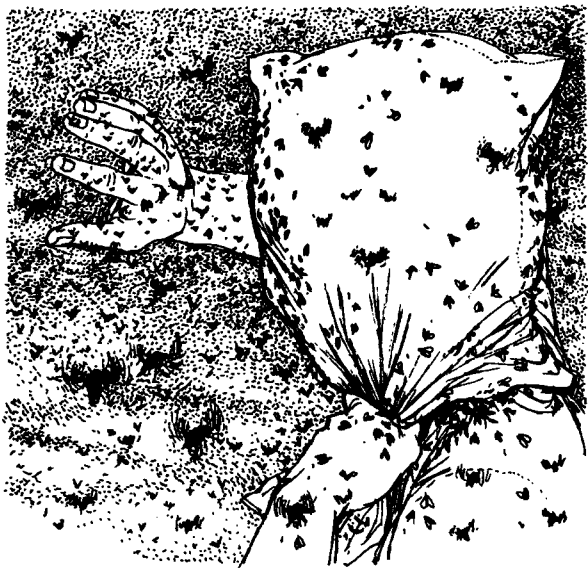
If you go around the ledge, turn to page 72.

You grab the pillow on your bed and take off the case. Then you slip it over your head for protection. Even though you cannot see, you know you can feel your way to the door.

You cannot see the insects now, but you can feel them swarming around you. They land on your arms and crawl up your shirt-sleeves. You can feel them beginning to make their way up the legs of your jeans. They are menacing you, attacking you, trying to prevent you from leaving. You raise your hands and press the pillowcase tightly around your neck; the thought of the little black bugs crawling onto your face, invading your nose and ears and mouth makes you want to vomit. You are already gagging from the smell.

(continued on page 48)

You know that your only hope is to get out of the room as quickly as possible, but you feel dizzy and cannot orient yourself to the room. You forget where the wall is, where the bed is. You are tempted to pull up the pillowcase for just a moment to get your bearings. You are not certain what direction to take to find the door.



(continued on page 49)

No, you think. They will attack me if I expose my face. So you put your hand out in front of you and take a step. You feel nothing. Then you take another step. Nothing. On the third step, you feel the wall.

Now move to the right, you tell yourself. That is the direction of the door.

You move slowly, carefully. Your shoes stick to the slime as you walk and you are suddenly afraid that the slime will move up your legs. But you keep on walking, the insects buzzing and bumping you as you go.

Finally, you feel the door frame and then the doorknob. As you turn it, the insects grow angry, as if they are trying to prevent your escape. But you are not deterred. You open the door and step out into the hall, swinging your arms wildly. The angry buzz of the insects grows louder as you hit them.

You know that you must be able to see in order to make your way down the steps. You take a deep breath, rip the case from your head, and start to run.

(continued on page 50)

The insects start after you, but you take the pillowcase and wave it in front of you, clearing a path.

You reach the end of the hall and start down the stairs two at a time. There are not so many insects now. They have flown off in different directions.

You make it down the first flight, the second flight. Then you run across the lobby and push your way through the revolving door.

You look back and see hundreds of tiny insects trapped in one of the revolving door compartments.

Out on the street, people are wandering around in aimless circles. They are clearly looking for someone or something. The glow of their yellow eyes casts an ominous light on the square.

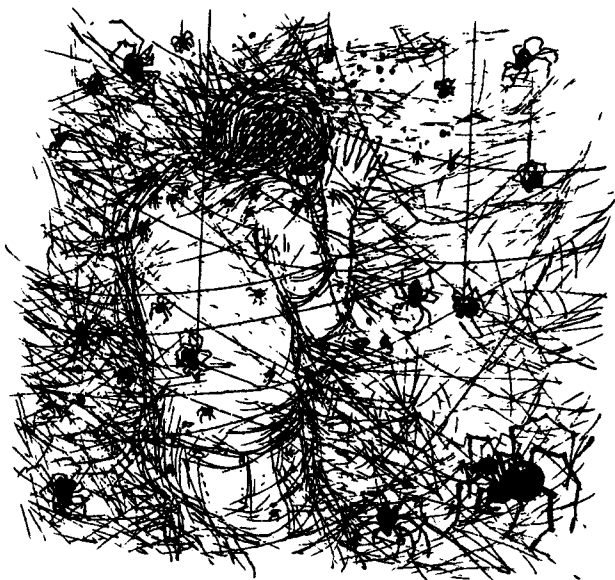
Suddenly, someone taps you on the shoulder. "Come with me," says a woman's voice.

If you go with the woman, turn to page 58.

If you refuse to go, turn to page 61.

You walk through the door and immediately it slams behind you. The light is dim and you feel something sticky on your face. You reach out with your hands and discover that the room is filled with spiderwebs and spiders. Little black spiders crawl all over you, covering your face and hands and legs.

You squirm in anguish, desperately looking for a way to escape.



(continued on page 52)

On the other side of the room, you see two doors.

You run across the room, the spiders creeping in your hair, crawling up your arms and legs.

You stop and listen.

Behind the door to the left, you can hear what sounds like running water. You picture a shower in your mind, a way of washing off the spiders and cobwebs.

Behind the door to the right, you hear strange tinkling sounds, as if someone is playing an unusual musical instrument.

If you go to the sound of the running water, turn to page 63.

If you go to the sound of the strange musical instrument, turn to page 100.

You open your mouth to scream, but all that comes out is a weak, croaking sound.

You try again. This time you emit a long, low groan.

It's now or never, you think. You take a breath, and scream at the top of your lungs, your mouth open wide to magnify the sound.

You do not see the insects coalesce into a shimmering black ball and fly toward you. You only feel them as they swarm into your mouth.

At first, you cough and gag; a choking sensation fills your throat. Then your stomach begins twitching as though thousands of tiny firecrackers are popping inside of you. Then you feel nothing. You open your mouth to scream, but all you can do is hiss. You do not even know that your eyes are beginning to turn yellow.

The End

You walk through the door and, to your surprise, find that you are in a beautiful sunlit room. In the corner is a fountain in which goldfish swim. Around the water, lush plants grow.

Across the room is a table on which there is a pen and a piece of paper.

You go to the table and discover that there is a note written on the paper.

To whom it may concern:

You have come far in this madhouse of mine. And now I must apologize. It was all a trick at first, a delicious ruse I planned—with mechanical ghosts and false spiderwebs. But somewhere along the way, the forces of darkness arrived and I found that they had invaded the house and taken over.

I lost control of this joke of mine. Even I can no longer find my way out.

There are two exits from this room. One, I think, will lead to freedom; the other, to doom. And so I leave this note behind before I make my choice.

I will not tell you which door I am choosing. For if I make the wrong choice, I do not want to be responsible for your death.

(continued on page 55)

I can only wish you well and wish you wisdom in your choice.

I leave, too, in this envelope, one million dollars. If you manage to escape this dark hole of evil spirits, then the money may in some way compensate you for your trials. If you make the wrong choice, the money will do you no good.

Good luck and farewell.

Harry Crispen

Next to the table are two doors. If you choose the door on the right, turn to page 64.

If you choose the door on the left, turn to page 108.

You wonder how long you can lie there without moving. You wonder how you will ever get out of there. But you see nothing and hear nothing and you finally decide that it is just your old fear of the dark that is tormenting you.

You remember that fear, remember how you believed that there were creatures in the dark lurking under your bed at night and that you must always sleep with your legs curled up. You start to pull your legs up from the end of the bed. But it is too late. A hand, clawed and clammy, reaches out from the dark and grabs your ankle.



The End

Even though you are shaking with fear and revulsion, you climb into the back of the truck and lie down next to the coffin. As the truck bounces down the dirt road, you can hear the body within the coffin roll from side to side.

As soon as the truck stops, you jump off and hurry into the house and up to your room. You listen as the doctor enters. The door opens and closes. You can hear his footsteps. They are heavy and slow, as if he is carrying a tremendous weight. *The body*, you think. Then there is silence.

You wonder if the doctor has taken the body to the basement.

If you go downstairs and look for an entrance to the basement, turn to page 74.

If you decide to go to sleep now and explore in the morning, turn to page 109.

You turn to look at the woman who is speaking. To your relief, you see that her eyes are blue.

"Before we do anything," the woman says, "put this on."

She hands you a gauze surgical mask and you tie it behind your head so that it covers your nostrils and mouth.

"That is how they get inside you," the woman explains. "Through your nose and mouth."

"The insects?" you ask.

"Yes," she answers. "The insects born of the slime." Then she adds, "Come. We can talk later. We must hurry or they will come after us."

You follow the woman as she leads you away from the town square. You go down alleys and streets, and always she looks behind to see if you are being followed.

Finally, she stops at a gate set into a high brick wall. The woman knocks three times. The gate is opened by a child.

(continued on page 59)

You cross a courtyard and move quickly inside the house. There is a group of people waiting.

"Good work, Felice. One more rescue." Every one of the people in the room has clear eyes.

"How many of you are there?" you ask.

"There used to be over three hundred. Now we have only eighty left," Felice says sadly. "The yellow-eyed people are a formidable enemy."

"Have they taken over the entire town?" you ask.

"Everything and everyone. I do not know how much longer we can survive if we do not discover why this is happening."

"Why don't you just leave?" you ask. "Or call in the government."

"Because these people are our friends and relatives. We are afraid that if we notify the authorities, they will do something terrible to our people. Besides, the telephone lines have been cut, and CB radios don't work in such high mountains; so we are trying to solve the problem ourselves."

(continued on page 60)

"What progress have you made?" you ask.

"We know that the only people not affected by the blast are those who were in basements or other very protected places at the time of the sun flare. We also know that the insects are after those of us who were unaffected by the flare. The insects come from the slime; and the slime comes from somewhere in the forest."

"Where?" you ask.

"None of us wants to risk traveling into the forest to find out," Felice says. "So we have been working on a solution in our basement laboratory."

If you feel that the only way to solve the slime problem is to go into the forest, turn to page 65.

If you would rather seek a scientific solution in the basement, turn to page 68.

You are paralyzed with fear. You cannot even turn around to see who is speaking. You just stand there, unable to move.

In seconds, the figure behind you withdraws.

As you watch the yellow-eyed people in the square, they continue to wander. Then a man across the town square notices you standing there. He motions to the woman next to him, and she motions to someone else. Soon, everyone is staring at you. And then something strange happens. The people form a huge circle around you, all the beady yellow eyes focusing their light on you. You are hypnotized by the eerie light, mesmerized by a strange power.

Soon, you hear a soft hissing sound. It is gentle at first. But when the circle begins to close in on you, the people hiss louder and begin to make grotesque clawing motions in your direction.

You look around. But there is not one break in the circle. There is no escape.

Turn to page 70.

You crouch at the edge of the pit and put your hands on the board, testing your weight. You think it will hold you, so slowly you inch your way out. You can feel the board buckle slightly as you crawl farther toward the center. Every time you move, the board sways up and down.

Inch by terrifying inch, you crawl. The snakes writhe beneath you, waiting for their victim. You make it to the center and then crawl past the point of no return. The board is swaying dangerously now. The snakes rattle. You crawl faster, but that makes the board vibrate even more. It is moving; you can feel it slipping loose from the edge.

Then you feel yourself falling, plunging into darkness—into the snake pit!



The End

You open the door and find yourself in bright sunlight. In front of you is a lovely waterfall that runs with crystal-clear water.

You run to it and splash the icy water on your face, drinking deeply from the pool beneath the waterfall.

You wipe the water from your eyes and see that there is an envelope tied to a tree branch. The envelope has your name on it.

You open it and discover a cashier's check made out to you. It is for one million dollars.

The End

You stand for a long time in front of the doors. Finally, you open the door on the right and walk into the room beyond. The door closes and locks behind you.

It is a cool room, made of marble. The sun shines down from a skylight and there is total silence inside.

On the wall at the far side of the room is a series of squares. And as you approach closer, you realize that they are sealed doors of some kind that have been built right into the marble.

In the middle of each square, a name is engraved in the stone. You move down the row and you find Harry Crispen's name. Next to it is a square with your name on it.

You cannot figure out what this place is. Some of the squares have small vases of dead, dusty flowers attached to them.

Finally, you realize that you are standing in a tomb, and the marble door with your name on it is your grave. It has already been prepared for you.

The End

You tell the people who are still untouched that you will go into the forest to search for the origin of the slime. They inform you that every evening, at dusk, the insects appear in town, and every morning, at sunrise, they fly back to the forest.

You spend a tense night in the safe house; and then, just before sunrise, you get up and leave the house. You walk briskly to the edge of town and wait in an old shack, just as Felice has instructed you to do.

Soon, you hear a faint hissing noise. It grows louder and louder until the source of the sound is directly overhead. Only after it passes do you venture out of the shack.

(continued on page 66)

About fifty yards ahead of you, a massive dark cloud is swirling in the air, moving in circular patterns toward the trees beyond. *There must be billions of insects in that mass, you think.*

You follow the insects into the trees. Soon you find yourself running to keep up with them as they go deeper and deeper into the woods.

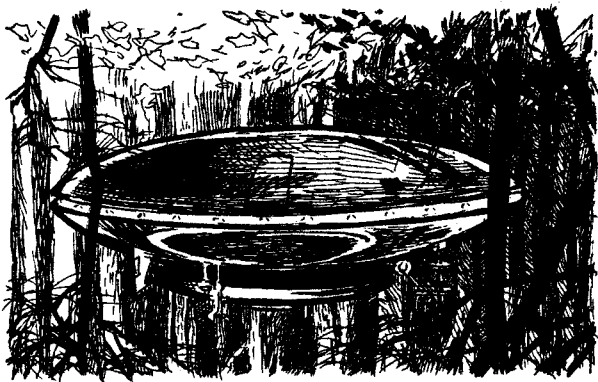
You are exhausted when finally the insect cloud begins to fly higher. It travels in a spiral pattern until it reaches some unknown limit. And then it begins to dive directly down.

(continued on page 67)

With incredible speed, the entire swarm dives and disappears into the trees. You wait a few minutes to see if the insects reappear. They do not; so you begin to creep toward the spot where they dived.

You crawl on your belly as you grow close, terrified that you may be seen. Finally, you take cover behind a bush and peer through the branches. There, before you, is a metallic saucer-shaped disk.

The source of the power! you think.



If you decide that the smartest thing to do is to run back to town and tell Felice and her friends about the saucer, turn to page 69.

If you stay and observe the saucer, turn to page 75.

Felice takes you to the basement, where there are three people hovering over a panel of knobs and dials. On the table is a box the size of a loaf of bread.

A woman reaches over and adjusts a knob on the control panel. And then the box on the table begins to quiver.

"You're close," says a man. "Try it just a little higher."

As the woman adjusts the knob once again, Felice explains to you that there is black slime inside the container. And that these people are working with high-frequency waves in order to try to break up the molecular structure of the slime. Once they discover what frequency to use, they can then use it to destroy the rest of the slime.

"But I don't hear a thing," you say.

"Of course not," Felice answers. "The human ear cannot hear these sounds. The pitch is too high for us to register it in our brains."

As you watch, the pitch is adjusted again. Then, before your eyes, you see the box begin to quiver faster and faster until it is suddenly vaporized, disappearing in a poof of smoke.

A cheer rises from the group. They have achieved their goal. Soon, all the slime will be destroyed and Silverlode will be saved.

The End

You turn to run, and then you see, five feet in front of you, a wall of black slime coming straight at you.

You know that you have only seconds to get out of the way.



*If you climb the tree next to you,
turn to page 101.*

*If you run in the other direction,
turn to page 114.*

Closer and closer they come, clawing, hissing; their eyes make bizarre patterns of light in the darkness.

You want to scream *No!*, to tell them that you have done nothing, that you are innocent. But you feel the power of their craving, the strength of their will.

There are hundreds of them closing in, clawing at you with grasping hands, their piercing yellow eyes driving you mad. You are helpless.

They are only a step away now. You can smell their foul breath as they hiss. You can see the craven madness in their eyes.

A man reaches out to get you. Then another and another.

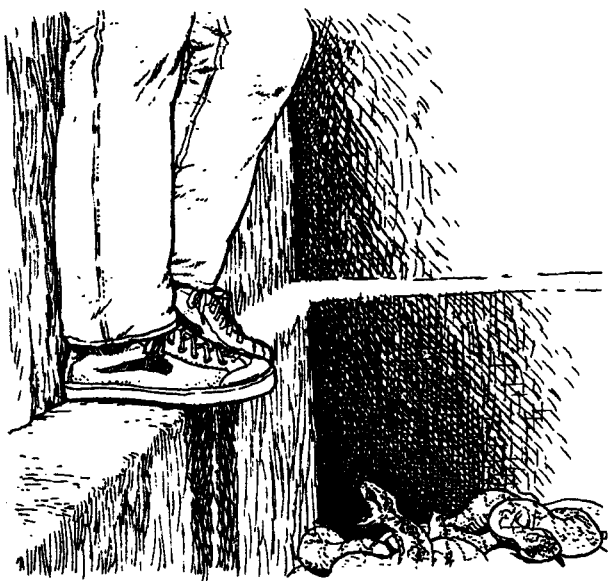
You are theirs.

The End



You move around to the ledge, then you start to crawl out on it. But you realize that you will not be able to crawl. The ledge is too narrow.

You stand up and, with your back to the wall, you slide sideways onto the ledge. You place your back and hands against the wall. The ledge is just wide enough for your feet and you realize that if you lose your balance just the slightest bit, you will fall into the pit of writhing, eager snakes below.



(continued on page 73)

Finally, you make it to the corner. Your next step is the most dangerous of all. You turn your body and place your foot against the other wall. Then you shift your weight.

You teeter for a desperate moment, then regain your balance. Refusing to look down, afraid that the sight of hundreds of squirming snakes will cause you to fall, you take slow step after slow step until you reach the door. You have done it! You have successfully maneuvered your way around the rattlesnake pit.

You open the door and step into the bright sunlight. On a table in front of you is an envelope. Inside, there is a cashier's check made out in your name for one million dollars!

The End

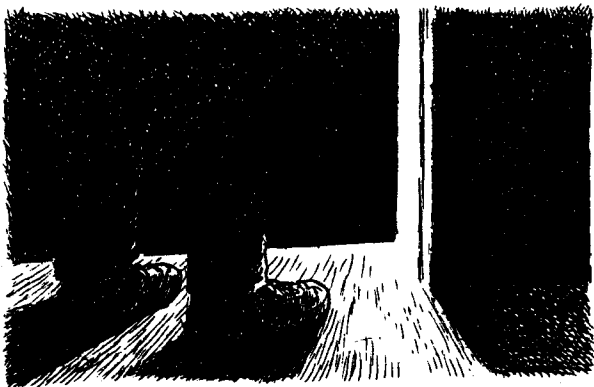
You creep out of bed and open the door to the hall. Everything is quiet, and you tiptoe barefoot down the stairs. Then you search for a door that looks as if it would lead to the basement.

You walk carefully down a long dark hallway toward the kitchen. Just before the entrance to the kitchen, you see a door with a light shining out from under it.

That must be where the doctor went, you think.

You take hold of the knob and turn it gently. Your heart races as you open the door just a tiny crack. Then you peek inside.

"Hush now," the doctor says gently. "It won't be long now. Hands are difficult."



Turn to page 106.

You stay on the ground, hidden by the bush, awed by the fact that you are actually looking at an alien craft. You look around for signs of a creature from outer space, but you see nothing. Instead, all you hear is the steady hissing of the insects inside the ship.

You are so involved in your surveillance that it takes you several minutes to realize that a new sound has joined in with the hissing of the insects. It is a very low rumble and crackle. Then you smell the garlic and ether of the black slime.

You look behind you. A river of black gelatinous slime, stinking and sticky, is coming for you! It shines with a sick greenish cast and, as it moves through the underbrush, twigs and branches snap at its passing. The slime seems to have a life of its own, an intelligence that is directing it toward you.

Horried, you stand up and look around. Ten feet away is a tree that you can climb.

(continued on page 76)

You run for the tree. A branch is above your head, and the slime is right behind you. You jump and catch hold of the branch.

For a moment, you think you have saved yourself. But the branch is so thick that you cannot get a firm grip on it. You are hanging precariously, your fingers slipping.

Faced with the prospect of dropping into the slime, you are frantic. Two feet below you, the slime is bubbling, congealing, waiting for you.

With all your might, you try to swing up onto the branch, away from the fate that awaits you below.

You feel your hands slipping. You cannot hold on any longer. Then you drop.

The End

You like the idea of getting half a million dollars, so you agree to go with Chris to his uncle's house.

Along the way, Chris tells you about Uncle Harry. "He was a musician," he says. "But he made his fortune because he was also a mechanical genius and an inventor. When Uncle Harry died, he bequeathed in his will one million dollars to whoever could stay in the house for twenty-four hours."

"But how do we prove we have stayed there?" you ask.

"In his will, Uncle Harry says that the check will be waiting for the winner. And he was a man of his word."

"It doesn't sound so tough, then."

"Well . . ." Chris says, "I should remind you that five people have entered that house in the ten years since Uncle Harry died. Not one of them has been heard from again."

"Then why are you doing it?"

"Because I have this suspicion," Chris says, "that Uncle Harry used his genius to create a house that would scare people. He was very good at that."

(continued on page 78)

"You mean it's all a trick?" you ask.

"Yes . . . except for . . ."

"The disappearances," you add.

"Right."

"Then I guess it's time to set the record straight," you say as you bike along the road.

It is dusk when you arrive. The house is a long, rambling structure, barely visible through overgrown shrubs and vines that seem to smother the building, cutting off air, blocking out light.

As you and Chris squeeze your way through the gnarled branches, you feel like an intruder entering hostile territory. When you finally reach the house, your arms and legs are covered with long red scratches.

You climb the first step onto the porch and the decayed wood crumbles under your weight. There is a squeaking noise and then something scurries past you, crawling over your foot. *A rat!* you think, wondering how many more might be inside.

(continued on page 79)

There are three more steps leading up to the porch. But they are all decayed, so you stretch your leg up onto the porch and roll your body across the splintering, rotting boards. Slowly, you stand up and pick your way to the door. Chris follows you.

You grasp the handle of the door and turn the knob. It is slimy and your hand slips.

As you are wiping the knob with your shirt, you notice a shiny black object on your hand.



(continued on page 80)

"What's that?" Chris asks.

You look. "Oh no . . ." you moan with disgust. "It's a leech!" You grab the blood-sucking creature, pull it off your hand, then fling it into the bushes. A shiver of repulsion travels down your spine.

As you reach for the doorknob again, a long, unearthly moan fills the air. At first you think it is the sound of the wind, but a second moan follows. The eerie sound is clearly coming from inside the house. Your body grows cold and clammy and your hands begin to sweat.

Suddenly, something grabs you from behind. You start to scream, then turn to defend yourself. But it is only Chris. He is clutching your arm in terror.

"I'm not going," he says. "No amount of money is worth going in there. Come on. Let's get away while we can."

As Chris speaks, a third moan, louder and longer than the others, comes through the door. You do not know if it is a sound of warning or the cry of someone in terrible agony.

(continued on page 81)

"I'm getting out of here right now!" Chris says. "Are you coming with me?"

You pause a moment. "No," you whisper.

"Well, if you're crazy enough to stay, take these matches. Those windows are all painted black. There's no light inside. You're going to need some light."

You take the matches and watch as Chris scrambles over the porch and disappears into the foliage. You stop, wondering if you have made the right decision. Then you try the door once more and it opens, but just a crack. You push hard. But you can feel something—some unknown force—pushing back. Something from the inside is forcing the door shut.

(continued on page 82)

You stop to reconsider your decision. There is still time for you to leave with Chris; but before you decide, read this page carefully.

The next seventeen pages are different from the rest of the book. There are no choices. If you decide to stay, you must read these pages in one sitting. You may not stop to get a snack or go to the bathroom. You may not talk on the phone or have a conversation with anybody.

If you cannot give full attention to the pages, do not read them now; for in order to fully appreciate the occurrences in Uncle Harry's house, you must not be interrupted.

Consider your decision carefully. This is your last chance to get out. Once you enter the house, there is no shortcut out of there. Your chance to win the million dollars will come only after you have finished the adventures on the next pages.

If you want to run after Chris, make another choice on page 6.

If you choose to stay, continue on page 83.

You shove harder on the door, overpowering whatever or whoever is pushing against you. Slowly, the door creaks open and you step inside. You light a match and look around. There is no one there. You even check behind the door. *The force pushing against me was nothing but rusty hinges*, you tell yourself.

As your match is about to burn out, you see a candle lying on a table near the door. You pick it up and light it; but as soon as it is lit, it goes out. You try again. A cold breeze sweeps past you, blowing out the candle again. You light the candle one more time. It remains lit.

You hold up the candle and see that you are in a dank, dusty hallway. Cobwebs drape the corners and hang over your head. You can see black spiders scurrying along the webs when you step close.

There is an ornate mirror hanging on one wall. On the floor in front of it, there is a table. And in a bowl on the table, fresh and fragrant, is a bouquet of roses.

(continued on page 84)

They are beautiful. *But who put them here? you wonder. How did these fresh flowers find their way into this decaying house?*

As you are turning around to explore more of the house, you catch a glimpse of something in the mirror. In the wavering light of the candle you see your face, and the face of someone else behind you.

You whirl around, ready to catch whoever is there. But the hallway is empty.

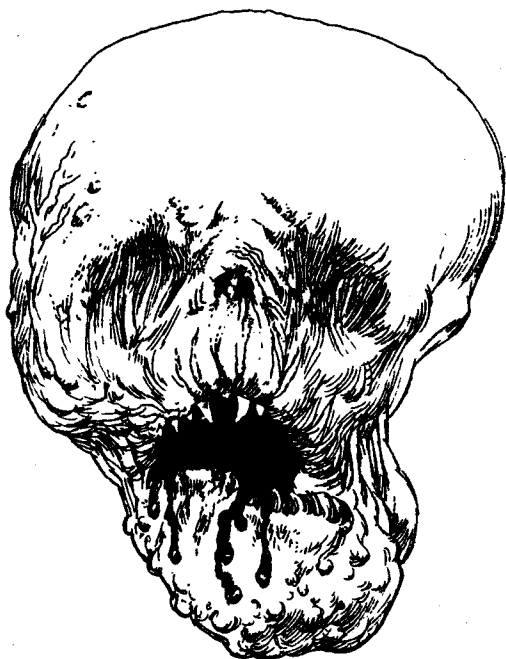
Terrified, you turn back to the mirror. The face is still there. You can see it more clearly now.

It is the hideous face of a monster. Its mouth is a raw, gaping hole and blood oozes from its lips. Its nose seems eaten away, for there are only two holes in the middle of its face. Its chin is warty and twisted and its eyes . . . its eyes are empty black sockets.

(continued on page 85)

You want to scream, to shriek in terror at the top of your lungs. But you cannot make a sound.

"Ahh . . . ahhh," you say. But it is a squeaky little sound. You cannot control your voice. You do not know if this is a reflection of something in the room that you cannot see, or if the face is inside the mirror.



(continued on page 86)

You look at the grotesque image. It is too hideous, too awful to bear; so you pick up the bowl of roses and fling it into the glass. The mirror shatters into hundreds of shards. But there is no sound of breaking glass. There is only silence and the sickly-sweet smell of decaying roses.

The floor is covered with pieces of mirror, and there are still a few jagged shards clinging to the frame. And now, from every broken piece of mirror, that hideous face is staring at you and laughing. Hundreds of identical grotesque faces, mocking you, laughing at your efforts.

Strange music fills the air. Soft at first, then louder. It is relentless and terrifying.

(continued on page 88)



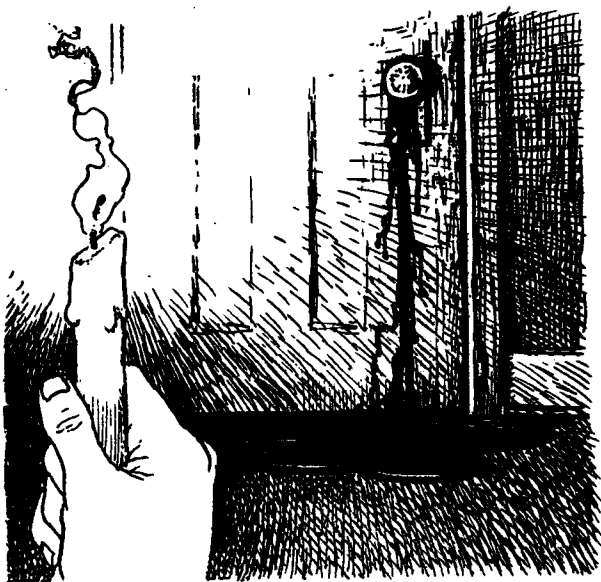
The awful cacophony assaults your ears, hurting them. The music grows even louder. All you can think about now is getting out of there.

You run to the front door and turn the knob, but the door won't budge. You are locked in, trapped. You squeeze the knob harder. It is slippery, and you pull your hand back, looking for leeches. But instead, you can see that your hand is covered with blood. You watch as the blood drips onto the carpet.

(continued on page 89)

You feel no pain, nothing to indicate that you have injured your hand; but the blood continues to drip in small splatters on the carpet. You can hear it dripping, as if it were a leaking faucet. Plop, plop, plop. The blood drips relentlessly.

You look at the doorknob, and you see that the brass knob is bleeding. There is a big puddle of blood on the floor beneath the knob. It shines and shimmers black in the flickering light.



(continued on page 90)

The floor is slimy with blood, and you have to move carefully or you will slip.

Holding the candle carefully, you go through the first door that you see, hoping that you can get out of the house through a window. You find yourself in a living room. All the windows are tightly closed and there is not a breath of air inside; but the lace curtains billow as if they are blowing in the breeze. And the rocking chair in the corner, dusty and empty, rocks back and forth as if someone has just gotten up.

There are ghosts in here and I can't see them! you think. *They're all around me!*

You lunge for a window and try to force it open. It will not budge. Then you balance on one foot and kick at the glass. It will not break.

Frantic, you look around, trying to find a way out. As your light passes a painting on the wall, you stop. It is a portrait of an old woman. And she is staring at you!

(continued on page 91)

You walk to the center of the room; the eyes follow you. You move to the left. You move to the right. Still, the eyes follow you. Wherever you go in the room, whatever you do, the black, beady eyes of the woman follow you.

While you stare at the painting, a hint of a smile spreads on the woman's lips. It is as if she is laughing at you, taunting you.



(continued on page 92)

As you gaze at the picture, another image begins to take shape. It is the nightmarish face of the hollow-eyed monster in the mirror.

And, as his face appears, he and the woman join in crazed laughter. You crouch on the floor. The laughter grows louder, more relentless.

Then—suddenly—the room is silent.

(continued on page 93)

It is the silence of nothingness. And when you look up, the picture frame is empty.

As you sit crouched on the floor, a breeze passes, putting out your candle; you are plunged into total darkness. You feel something brush your face. It is a cold, clammy touch. You feel a chill moving through your body.

They've come out of the picture to get me!
you think.

(continued on page 94)

With a shriek, you flail your arms, striking out wildly, desperately against the bodiless creatures.

You crawl across the room in the dark until you find the door to the hallway. As soon as you are standing, you light the candle once more. You hear laughter behind you, tormenting you, mocking your frantic efforts to escape.

You dash up the stairs and the laughter follows you like a shadow, like a nightmare come to life.

(continued on page 95)

At the top of the stairs, you run through the first door you see, desperately trying to escape the laughter. As you run, you feel things grasping at you, creatures touching you. When you go through the door, you are relieved to see that the room is lit by scores of candles. You no longer have to struggle in the dark.

You look around and see a long table at the end of the room. There is something on it. You step closer and your heart stops beating when you see what it is.

On the table, wrapped up in filthy, soiled strips of cloth, lies a mummy. You jump back in horror, screaming as the mummy begins to rise from the table.

(continued on page 96)

Up it moves, slowly and methodically. You cannot believe this is happening to you. The mummy seems to be lifted by an unknown force that is guiding it to an upright position.

You feel your heart pounding; your head spins in terror and disbelief. *It's all in my imagination, you tell yourself. This is not really happening to me. This is a horrible trick, a prank that only seems like a nightmare.*

You cannot stand it another second. You feel yourself growing faint, and you know that you are losing consciousness.

(continued on page 98)



You slump against a wall, and the wall gives way. You have inadvertently fallen against a secret panel.

You feel yourself plunging into darkness, down into a bottomless pit. You bump hard against something, and then you slide faster and faster in a spiral until you suddenly hit bottom.

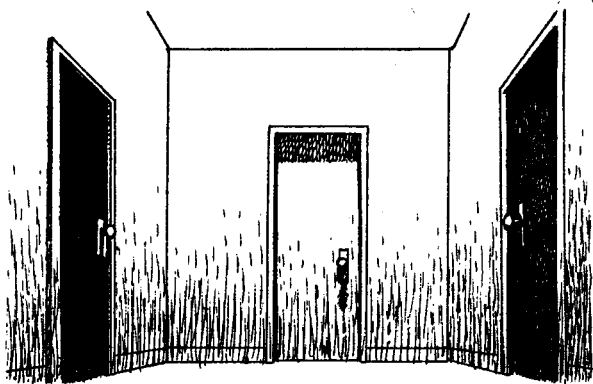
You stand up and try to grope your way along a path in the darkness. There are openings and tunnels and more openings. You do not know which turns to take. You are trapped in a pitch-black maze.

You take another step and feel the ground beneath your feet give way once more. And you plummet through a dark tunnel until—
thud!

(continued on page 99)

You are afraid to open your eyes, afraid of what new horror awaits you. But instead of darkness and terror, you discover that you are in a brightly lit room.

The room is square, and on each wall is a door, every one a different color. You look above you, but the trapdoor through which you came is closed. You know that the only way out is through one of the four doors.



If you choose to go through the red door, turn to page 45.

If you choose to go through the black door, turn to page 46.

If you choose to go through the blue door, turn to page 51.

If you choose to go through the yellow door, turn to page 54.

You listen to the music and then you open the door. As soon as you step inside the room, the door slams and locks behind you.

Dim sunlight filters from a barred open window, high above the ground. A weak light falls on the floor.

What you see makes you gasp in horror. There are five separate piles of bones. The chains that once bound them rattle musically in the breeze, and you know that the hideous noise is what you earlier thought was some kind of music.

These must be the remains of the five people who came in search of the million dollars, you think. You are trapped with them now.

You wonder what awful monster chained them there. And you know that soon you will find out.



The End

You climb the tree. The slime surrounds the trunk, and you know that any moment the black pulsating blob will start to move up the tree.

As you crouch in the crook of the trunk, you know that you have no choice.



Turn to page 104.

Although you know you are taking a great risk, your curiosity forces you to volunteer for the job.

You climb carefully up the metal ramp that extends from a hatch in the side of the ship. When you are at the top, you take a deep breath and step inside. And there you are confronted with a wondrous sight.

A splendid golden glow illuminates each part of the ship, bathing everything in a gentle light. The source of this light is a tiny pebble about the size of a raisin.

As you watch, the pebble begins to pulsate, shining its brilliance onto every part of the ship. Above the pebble is a map of the universe, and you realize that this ship has come from outside your galaxy. You consider the possibility that this is not a hostile ship; that on this unknown planet, trillions of light-years away, the black slime may have been considered harmless. You are sorry that it was necessary to destroy the slime and you wish that there was a way to communicate with the unknown creatures who sent the space probe.

(continued on page 103)

Suddenly, the ship begins to shake. Something strange is happening and you know that you must get off immediately.

I wonder if it's going home? you think, wishing you could send them a message. As you rush out of the ship, you toss the hat you are wearing into the interior. *At least they'll know someone was in there,* you think.

When you reach the edge of the clearing, a strange glow envelops the ship. Before your eyes, the saucer grows brighter and brighter until it finally disappears in its own light.

Only then do you realize that the message you have sent to another galaxy was a strange one indeed. Painted on the front of your hat was a picture of E.T.

The End

Slowly and carefully, you make your way to the longest branch. Below, the slime is moving relentlessly toward you.

You inch carefully out along the branch. It bends under your weight and you are panicked at the thought that the branch might break and drop you into the inky mass.

You crouch, ready to jump. When most of the slime is on the tree, you spring forward and catch hold of a thin branch beneath you. You swing back and forth, gaining momentum with every back-and-forth move. Then you let go, sailing over the noxious slime. You land with a thud and run for your life.

(continued on page 105)

When you glance back at the slime, you discover that it is no longer chasing you. It has returned to protect the spacecraft.

You return to the safe house and tell the untouched survivors what you have discovered. And then, together, you devise a plan.

If you decide to fly a helicopter to the site of the alien craft and drop dynamite onto it, turn to page 117.

If you want to attack the slime rather than the craft, turn to page 118.

Just as you reach the place where you can see what is happening, you step on a creaking board.

Startled, the doctor whirls toward you. But not before you discover that he is standing over a surgical table, performing an operation.

"How dare you intrude on my experiment!" the doctor screams at you. And before you can do anything, the man grabs you and pulls you over to the operating table.



(continued on page 107)

He holds you in an iron grip as he speaks to the gauze-covered man lying on the table.

"Do not worry, my son," he says with a demented grin. "I have promised you a living heart, and now I have found one."

The End

You walk through the door on the left. It leads into a long, winding tunnel, and you cannot see the end.

You turn to go back the way you came, but the door has been locked. You have no choice except to go forward.

The tunnel is dimly lit at first, and you can just make out where you are going. But as you travel farther, it grows dark. Soon, you cannot see a thing and you are forced to feel your way along the slimy, dank walls. You hear rats scuttling along the stone floor and other creatures slither over your feet. It stinks of decay, and you feel more and more certain as you travel that you have made the wrong choice.

After a while, you feel the ground moving upward, until finally you come to a ladder at a dead end of the tunnel. You climb up the ladder and push hard on the ceiling above you.

A trapdoor begins to open a crack, and sunlight and fresh air pour into the tunnel.

Quickly, you crawl outside. You are standing on a hill. The sky is bright and clear, and you are free.

You also have one million dollars in your pocket.

The End

You lie in bed, trying to go to sleep. But you are so frightened that you cannot even close your eyes.

Suddenly, you hear a scratching noise at the window. You sit up, your whole body shaking; but the noise turns out to be the branches of a tree scratching on the screen.

Then you hear more scratching. This time, you know that someone—or something—is scratching at your door.

The room is pitch-black, but you hear the knob turning. And the door creaking open. Your heart is beating in your throat and you are paralyzed with fear.

You watch as a shrouded manlike figure comes through the door, shining a flashlight on the floor. Nearer and nearer he comes, stumbling silently toward you, clumsily transferring the weight of his massive body from one foot to the other. Closer and closer.

“Who are you?” you manage to croak.

But he does not answer.

“What do you want?” you ask, as the man stands beside your bed.

Still, he does not answer.

(continued on page 110)

Instead, he sits on the edge of your bed.

You try to speak, but you cannot move your lips. You are silenced by fear.

Then, as you watch in terror, the man takes the flashlight and shines it on his hand. You gasp at the sight.

Circling his wrist are big black stitches; his hand has been sewn onto his wrist. As you lie there, helpless and horrified, he moves the flashlight up his arm. At his elbow, there are more black stitches. You gag when you see the stitches that attach his arm to his shoulder. They are so new that blood is oozing out of the spaces between them.

You try to scream. But the sound never reaches your lips. You want to tell him: "No! Don't show me any more." But the flashlight moves on.

The vein on the side of his neck throbs against the stitches, and you wonder if the thread will hold.

(continued on page 112)



Then the man hesitates. It is as if even he cannot bear to show you his face. But, finally, the light moves on.

Slowly, slowly, the light rises.

"NOOOOOOO!" you scream. "NOOOOOOO!" you screech at the top of your lungs. Unable to bear this unspeakably hideous sight for one more second, you leap from the bed and run out of your room.

You race down the stairs, knowing that you must escape this monster, not caring what terrors await you in the darkness.

"NOOOOOOO!" You run screaming into the night.

The End

You do not wish to risk your life by going inside the ship. Neither do the others.

As you stand there arguing about what should be done, the ship takes on an unearthly pink glow.

The pink changes to red, and the red changes to orange. The color grows more and more intense until it becomes the color of light itself.

You shield your eyes from the brightness. And then you hear a strange sizzling noise.

When you uncover your eyes, you see a molten mound of twisted metal on the ground.

The ship is gone and the threat is over. You have acted wisely.

The End

You turn to run in the opposite direction, away from the hideous black slime that threatens to engulf you.

But, in your panic, you failed to look around carefully.

You are surrounded by slime. It closes in on you.



The End

All together, you pull the stoppers from the barrels and pour turpentine onto the slime.

You watch, horrified, as the slime begins to bubble furiously. A low, enraged rumble fills the air as the black mass squirms and wiggles. You almost feel sorry for it as it struggles in its death throes.

(continued on page 116)

Finally, the slime begins to break up. As it disintegrates, a furious hissing noise fills the air and a swarm of insects flies out of the ship. You are certain that they are after you.

But as the slime disappears, the humming noise grows lower and lower; and soon, billions of insects fall dead to the ground.

Just as I hoped, you think. The slime provided nourishment and intelligence for the insects. They cannot live without it.

When silence finally descends on the woods, the group gathers together near the spaceship.

"What now?" Felice asks.

"We must explore the ship," says a man. "Who dares to go inside?"

If you volunteer to explore the ship, turn to page 102.

If you are not interested in taking any more risks, turn to page 113.

Felice volunteers to pilot the helicopter, and everyone helps to load the dynamite. Soon, you are hovering directly over the spaceship.

Below, you see the black slime bubbling into peaks, as if it is trying to reach into the sky and swallow you up. But you are high and safe from the evil, noxious slime.

Then, from the spaceship itself, a swarm of insects flies toward you. But the rotor blades of the copter blow them away.

You are trying to position yourself in order to drop the dynamite when suddenly there is a flash. Then a ball of blazing white light streaks toward you.

They must have had weapons on board, you think. It is the last thought you have.

The End

You tell the group that you think the slime is the main source of the problem and that you must devise a way to destroy it. The others are very skeptical about this, but when you ask them to come up with a better solution, nobody has one; so you proceed with your plan.

One of the untouched survivors owns a hardware store for industrial supplies, so you are able to procure small barrels of turpentine, which is a strong solvent.

To protect your eyes from the sun, you put on a hat.

Then twenty-five of you enter the woods, each shouldering a barrel.

As you approach the spaceship, the black slime slithers toward you. Quickly, your group surrounds the slime as it begins to stretch out in all directions, bent on destroying you.

"Don't throw the turpentine until I tell you!" you call out to the group.

The slime moves closer; the smell of ether and garlic fills the air.

When the slime is only five feet away, you yell, "Now!"

Turn to page 115.

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