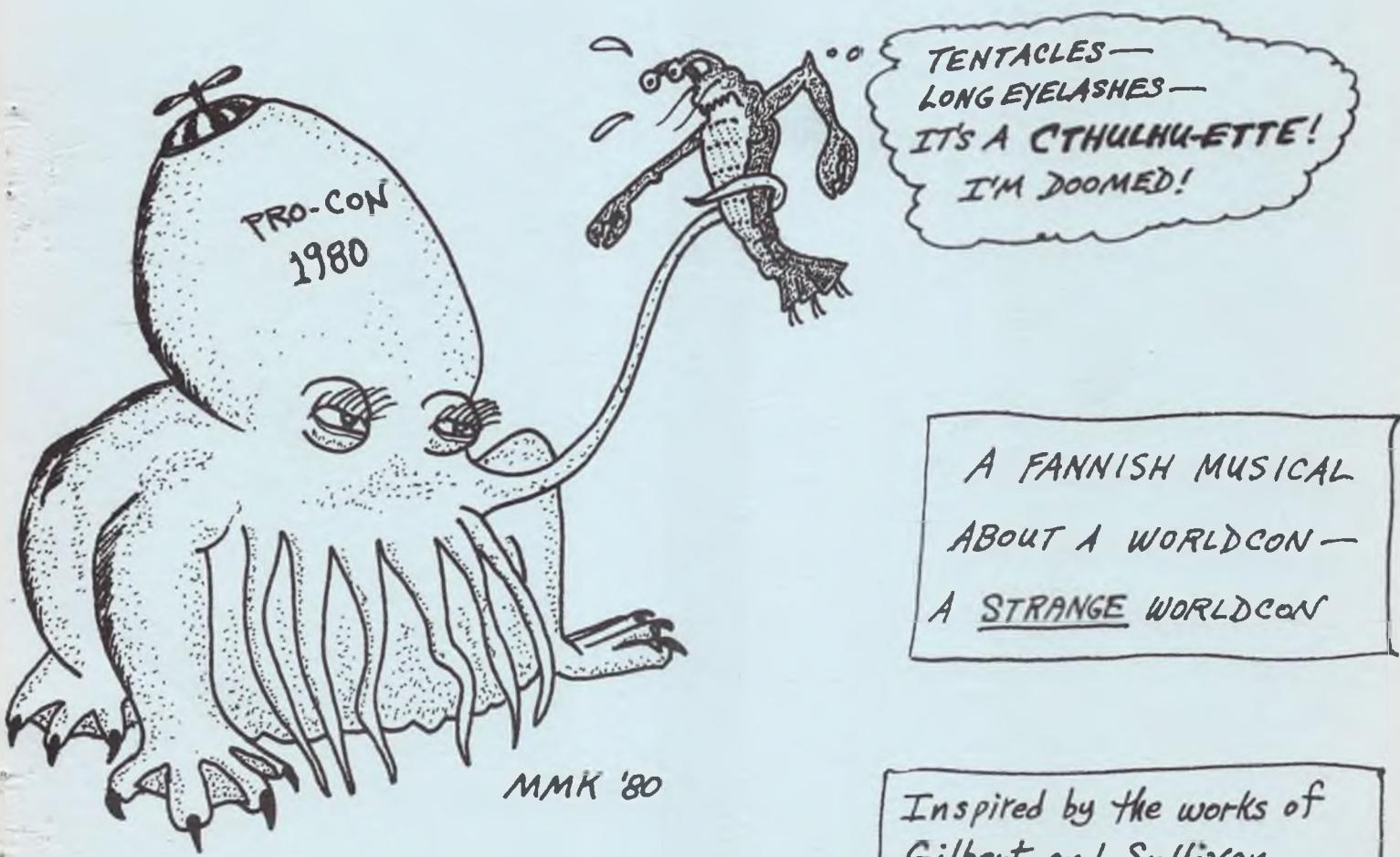


MIK ADO ABOUT NOTHING

(*BACK TO RIVETS, part 1*)

by SUE ANDERSON & MARK M. KELLER



SECOND EDITION
with notes & illustrations

MILK AND MOLDY NOTHING

A FANNISH OPERETTA

Inspired by the Savoy Operas of Sir William Schwenck Gilbert
and Sir Arthur Sullivan

As produced by the RISFA Players at Boskone 14, February 1977,
in the city of Boston, Massachusetts

With six pages of notes, and illustrations by the co-author (MMK)

Book by Sue Anderson and Mark M. Keller

Lyrics by Sue Anderson
Music by Sir Arthur
Sullivan

Additional dialogue by most of the
RISFA Players and a number of
interested bystanders

Choirmaster, transposer,
and Musical Director:
Chip Hitchcock

Additional copies of the second edition of the script are available
for \$2.00 at hucksters tables or \$2.50 by mail from Sue Anderson,
12 Summit Street, East Providence, RI 02914, or Mark M. Keller, 101
South Angell Street, Providence, R.I. 02906.

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ACT ONE

SCENE: The convention hotel where Pro-Con is being held; the lobby. It is ten a.m. on the first day of the con.

(The lights come on to reveal a middle-aged gentleman sitting in a straight chair, taking notes. On the rear curtain, at center, is a large banner reading;

PROCON 1 - 1980
Welcome to Providence

There are a couple of unoccupied chairs, and a table set upstage left.

(The FANS wander in, meeting friends, looking around, ignoring the man in the chair, although he seems very interested in what they're doing. Music starts. One of the FANS steps forward and sings:

Look at the fans, Neos and Slans,
Milling in the hotel lobby--
I like to go to a Con, though
Fandom's Just a Goddam Hobby!

CHORUS: Hobby, hobby, hobby,
Fandom's Just a Goddam Hobby!

(A few of the fans take the OPPOSING point of view:

Put out a fanzine twice a week,
Steadily new subscribers seek--
Outranking health, and job, and wife,
Fandom Is a Way of Life!

(The rest of the FANS move away from them. A FEMMEFAN sings:

Much overplayed, costume parade:
Naked girls whose knees are knobby
Brandishing swords, seeking awards--
Fandom's Just a Goddam Hobby!

CHORUS: Fandom, Fandom, Fandom,
Fandom's Just a Goddam Hobby!

THE OPPOSITION (armed with wadded paper brickbats):

(During this verse the CHAIRFAN, a large, impressive fellow with a whistle, enters and surveys the scene, appalled. He steps forward into the space between the two groups and meets a barrage of brickbats from both sides.)

CHAIRFAN: Some of our band don't understand:
Argue with 'em, they turn mobby!
Hey, clowns, let's go! On with the Show!
(Fandom's Just a Goddam Hobby!)

CHORUS (very softly):

(Goddam, Goddam, Goddam--
Fandom's Just a Goddam Hobby!)

THE OPPOSITION: Okay, we'll save our sharp retorts
(Until we write our con reports)
Keep the Con quiet and free from strife--

ALL: Fandom Is A Way Of Life!

(The CHAIRFAN blows his whistle and directs FANS to set up things for registration. Two hang a sign reading "REGISTRATION". One attaches signs reading "A-B" and "C-Z" to the front of the table. Others bring in boxes of registration materials and put them on the table; others move chairs behind table, clean up brickbats, etc., as CHAIRFAN sings:

For every fan who feels inclined
Some task we undertake to find
Congenial with his frame of mind
'Cause fans will work for free!

They'll staff the babysitting room
And lead the tour of Lovecraft's tomb
And help stave off impending doom--
True fans will work for free!

A fan only asks for egoboo
And maybe a can of beer or two
There's nothing at all a fan won't do
And all of it for free!

They'll guard the doors at party suites,
Collect the money, buy the eats,
Perform the most amazing feats
And all of it for free!

Of course we want our Con to go
As smoothly as it can, and so
Experienced Con Committees know
That fans will work for free!

They'll help to calm first-timers' fears,
And put down kids with pointed ears--
How wonderful are volunteers!
How wonderful are volunteers!
True fans will work for free.

(As the song ends, the FANS get into registration lines. A problem develops:)

CLERK: I'm sorry, we need some ID or we can't accept your check.

NEOFAN (in a highly sloganized t-shirt, and wearing a magnificent propellor beanie): Well, here's an expired Illinois driver's license...

CLERK: Sorry, that's not good enough.

NEOFAN: How about my student ID from Illinois Institute of Technology?

CLERK: Come on, nobody takes student IDs.

(The CHAIRFAN comes over to see what's going on.)

NEOFAN: But that's all I've got.

CHAIRFAN (peering into NEOFAN's wallet): What's that card there?

NEOFAN: Oh, that's just my Minneapolis in '73 membership.

CLERK: Minneapolis in '73 membership? Why didn't you say so?

(CLERK hands NEOFAN his registration packet. NEOFAN moves away; the next fan in line steps up and gives a card to CLERK.)

CLERK: Seymour From Under the Swamp? What kind of a name is that?

SEYMORE (whose t-shirt bears an ancient amphibian labeled "Seymouria"):
That's the name I use at every con. That's my fannish identity.

CLERK (riffling impatiently through box of packets): Sorry, there's no "Seymour" in here. Now what's your real name?

SEYMORE: It must be in there. I preregistered last year at BermudaCon.

CHAIRFAN: Now, now. [To CLERK] If you can't find it under "Seymour," look under "Swamp".

(CLERK checks different part of box, finds packet, sourly gives it to SEYMORE. SEYMORE moves downstage as registration continues at rear. FAY, a young woman in medieval dress, enters. She looks around, lost, and after a moment approaches SEYMORE.)

FAY: Is this where the medieval tournament's supposed to be?

SEYMORE: Medieval tournament?

FAY: Yes, the Society for Creative Anachronism is holding a medieval tournament today, and this is the address they gave me, but I don't see anyone I know.

SEYMORE: Well -- I saw a few people in funny clothes down in the parking lot, just standing around.

FAY: That must be them. Thanks a lot. See, I thought you were in the Society -- you've got a dragon on your shirt... Say, what's going on here, anyway? These people look pretty weird for a bunch of mundanes.

SEYMORE: Mundanes? They're not mundanes! They're fans! This is the Thirty-Eighth World Science Fiction Convention! "Mundanes." Sheesh. It's obvious you don't know much about fandom.

FAY: Science fiction convention, hm? How long does it last?

SEYMORE: Five days.

FAY: Five days? You all sit around and talk about science fiction for five days?

SEYMORE: That's hardly time to get started. Don't you have any favorite science fiction books you'd like to [tries to put his arm around her] -- talk about?

FAY (nimblly evading him): Oh, no. I don't like science fiction at all. (Sings:

I do not know what S F can be --
I don't think I like it, though, not me --
It cannot be good, as fandom hints,
Or why do they read and wince?
It cannot be highclass English prose,
Or fans couldn't stand it, goodness knows;
It cannot be understood, it's said,
And yet it is bought, and saved, and read...

Though everywhere S F I see
Raved over by all, though not by me,
I cannot tell what S F may be --
So I'm in Sca, The S C A,
It fills my time from day to day--
Think of the gulf 'twixt them and me:
"Fal-la-la" ... and Rocketry!

If S F's for scientists and such,
Then why do you like it all that much?
If S F's all math and without wit,
Then why do you cherish it?
If S F gives knowledge and makes you smart,
Then how can you take it so to heart?
And if it be none of these, then how
Has it come to be respected, now?

Though everywhere S F I see
Raved over by all, though not by me,
I cannot tell what S F may be --
So I'm in Sca, the S C A,
It fills my mind both night and day --
Think of the gulf 'twixt them and me:
"Rah! Ia! Ia!" ... and Pageantry!

SEYMOUR: Well, you know, you've got to give it a chance. Surely you must have read some science fiction book you liked?

FAY: Yes -- once.

SEYMOUR: Ah! What was it?

FAY: Atta, by Francis Rufus Bellamy. It's about a man who shrinks until he's half an inch tall, and makes friends with an ant warrior who's just his size. I suppose that's science fiction, isn't it?

SEYMOUR: No... great ants don't count. Or maybe that's just wishful thinking.

FAY: I did know a science fiction fan, a few years ago. My roommate one year used to watch a science fiction TV show...I think she said she was a "Tricky".

SEYMOUR: A "Tricky"? You mean a Nixonette? -- Oh, you mean "Trekkie". A Star Trek freak.

FAY: That's right. Well, Star Trek is science fiction, isn't it?

VOICE from group of fans: Is Star Trek science fiction? Is the Pope Catholic? Is Captain Kirk a tin-plated, overbearing dictator with delusions of--
(Someone has tried to strangle the voice. A femmefan starts forward.)

FAY: Anyway, she was really a weird--oh, my god, Eloise!

ELOISE (the Trekkie): Hello, Fay. So you still don't think much of Star Trek fans, hey? I don't see why. We've made lots of contributions to culture.

SEYMOUR: "Contributions to culture"? Like what? [Music starts.]

FAY: You had to ask.

ELOISE (sings): If somebody there chanced to be
With pointed ears and skin of green,
Whose sex life is a mystery--
I think you know the man I mean--
I'd like to run away with him,
But bless my heart, he's awfully prim--
They say of him, he's very prim,
He's either very dim, or prim!

If Mister Spock would notice me,
He'd find how blind he's always been:
He's call a special kal-i-fee,
And walk on air like any teen...
But Vulcans need a little shove--
It's quite against their ways to love--
In "Amok Time", you've heard the line:
Alas, it's quite against their ways to love.

(SEYMOUR starts toward ELOISE, stands in front of her and looks as menacing as he can. She starts the next verse:

A member of a star...ship...crew?

(ELOISE exits, followed by the NEOFAN. Does he want a copy of the lyrics?)

FAY: You see? Weird. Are all sci-fi fans like that?

CHORUS: Rhubarbrhubarbrhubarbrhubarb...

(SEYMOUR gestures soothingly and the CHORUS subsides. The man has charisma...)

SEYMOUR: But, seriously, you ought to look over the Con. Your friends outside looked like they weren't going to get started for hours. They had a sign up-- "Tourney Starts at Noon" -- and it's only ten now.

FAY: Noon? That means they won't get going until 2:30... All right.
What's happening?

(FAY and SEYMOUR watch as the FANS, directed by the CHAIRFAN, clear away registration materials and the Hucksters set up their stuff. The sign is changed to "Hucksters Room.")

SEYMOUR: Well, what do you want to know first?

FAY: What in the world are you doing wearing a lizard on your shirt?

SEYMOUR: Oh, this is no ordinary lizard. This is Seymouria -- my totem animal. I'm Seymour From Under the Swamp.

FAY: I'm Fay, and I'm Seneschale of the Canton of Llanfair Gwylllobach. And all these people are science fiction fans?

SEYMOUR: Right. You know about Trekkies, but there are other kinds... [He looks around for some odd and illustrative fan, but doesn't see any; they all look normal to him.] Like, there's...um...

(NEOFAN passes by.)

FAY: Who's that in the funny hat?

SEYMOUR: Ah. that's called a "neofan". Just discovered fandom and picked up on all the fads and customs. See his propellor beanie? Now, no one outside of comic strips has worn those in twenty years. Thirty years. But the neofans see the comic strips and think that's what they have to wear to be accepted into Fandom. He'll learn. [NEOFAN approaches a huckster's table.] That is, he'll learn if he survives the hucksters.

FAY: Dealers?

SEYMOUR: Right. They'll sell anything. Oh, mostly science fiction -- books, magazines -- but they also go in for comic books, Star Trek gimmicks, anything like that. And there are always some people who'll buy it.

FAY: But not you, of course? Then what are you doing here?

SEYMOUR: Well, this ought to be a very interesting convention. See, this is Fandom's last chance to get together and stop Richard Deadwood from completely taking over science fiction publishing.

FAY: Who is Richard Deadwood? And how could one person take over all of science fiction?

SEYMOUR: He's a very ambitious editor...of sorts. Nobody knows where he came from, but all of a sudden he was putting out ten or twenty anthologies a month, and a magazine, and a series of novels for ZapGun Books. Anyway, now there's a rumor that he's trying to promote a Congressional investigation of science fiction, on the grounds that there's too much sex in it. He's always insisted that whatever he publishes be absolutely pure and wholesome, so he'd be safe. And he's trying to buy the three biggest paperback publishers of science fiction. So far they haven't sold -- but with the paper shortage, they just might.

FAY: So then he'd be the only one who published science fiction? But wouldn't the shortage be a problem for him too?

SEYMOUR: Not really. ZapGun Books is based in Canada. So he'd have access to practically unlimited supplies of pulp--

(A FAN who has been looking through the hucksters' boxes hears the magic word and whirls around, interrupting SEYMOUR. He is carrying a huge notebook: the mark of the COMPLETIST.)

COMPLETIST: Pulp? Pulps? Where? Good condition? What issues? Just let me check my want list-- Do you have any Clayton Astound-- oh, I've got those. Weird Tales-- no, I've got those too. [Flips through notebook.] Do you have a copy of Miracle Stories Number Two? It's the only thing I still need.

SEYMOUR: No, no, not that kind of pulp, I meant wood pulp. Raw paper.

COMPLETIST: Oh... [He turns away, crushed.]

SEYMOUR: Wait a minute! We need your help to save S F from Richard Deadwood. Why, the -- the whole future of the Future is at stake!

COMPLETIST: But Future folded in nineteen...nineteen sixty. Oh. Haha. Hey, I'm so far behind in my reading I don't care what happens next. I'm Only up to 1937!

SEYMOUR: I should have known better than to ask a crazy completist.

FAY: What's a completist? [Music starts.]

SEYMOUR: You had to ask.

COMPLETIST (sings): I used to buy each book I'd spy
And take them home to date on--
I heard the call to have them All:
A Collection to gloat on.
So for a fee, a dealer, see,
Would send me all the new stuff;
I'd search each nook and dusty book-
Rack for the old and true stuff.
And soon my heart was filled with glee:
Great heaps of books belonged to me--
I thought of fannish coups I'd pull
When all my collection was finally full!

I've bought each 'zine I've ever seen:
Each Unknown and Astounding,
Beyond, Vortex, Outer Space Sex--
Digests and pulps abounding!
I placed my hoard 'bove room and board
And clothing and tuition;
I saw my plot to have the lot
Approaching its fruition.

But soom the cons were filled with gloom:
There's naught for me in the hucksters room--
Ah, isn't your life extremely dull
When all your collection is finally full?

I squandered gold in sums untold
On the last few I needed.
Friends said "You joke!" -- Though I went broke,
Detractors went unheeded.
My buddies laughed and said "You're daft!"
And said I was too zealous,
But you and I, ah, we know why:
It's only that they're jealous!
So now I'm buying comic books,
Although I hear the dealers are crooks,
I'll buy each Superman, Duck and Kull--
I've still got a closet that isn't full!

FAY: That's very sad. You mean you don't really want comic books, but
that's all there is left to buy? The old thrill of the hunt is gone?

COMPLETIST: Precisely.

FAY: Well, why don't you just start over?

COMPLETIST: Two collections? That would be hoarding?

FAY: Oh, Horror!

FAY: No, no, not that. Why not sell the stuff you've got, and start over?

COMPLETIST: But--but--prices are going up all the time--and I might never be
able to replace some of these things--and--and I haven't read all
of them yet...hmmm. I'll do it! [He exits, and returns immediately
with a little red wagon piled high with boxes.] I just happen to
have a few things with me. [He snags the passing NEOFAN, who has
a handful of old Ace Doubles.] Ah, sir! I see you're buying used
paperbacks. Do you also collect magazines?

NEOFAN: Magazines? Uh--

COMPLETIST: Yes, magazines! [He waves a pulp in the NEOFAN's face.] Do you
realize that many of these stories have never been reprinted? And
Think of the illos! How can you call yourself a Fan if you don't
collect magazines?

NEOFAN: But--

COMPLETIST: No buts! How can you quibble at a time like this? There is
only one recipe for perfect happiness! [Music starts. COMPLETIST
begins to hand magazines to NEOFAN, and sings:

Take a set of Startling Stories, an Other Worlds or three,
And some Thrilling Wonders too.
Buy this lot, and I'll find more,
Planet Stories, Galaxy,
At a special price to you.
There's Imaginative Tales--
I won't make this offer twice--
Hear these old Amazings call?
I'm not in this just for sales--
Analog is always nice,
And you've got to, got to have them all.
Ah, buy them all, you lucky fan,
Every magazine you can!

Get this stack of Futures rare,
And Fantastic Universe,
Saturn, Venture, Spaceway, wow!
You can find the cash somewhere,
And you know you could do worse,
Rocket, Comet, buy them now.
Look at Science Fiction Plus,
Science Fiction Quarterly,
Nebula and Satellite--
Buy them, you'll be one of us,
And collectors all will see
That you have finally, finally seen the light.
Ah! Now you've got them, silly fan,
Now go read them, if you can!

(The NEOFAN doesn't hear this last bit, as he is all but buried in magazines.)

COMPLETIST: And just to show you what a good guy I am, I'll even throw in the wagon.

(The NEOFAN gently places his magazines in the wagon, pays the COMPLETIST, and turns away. The COMPLETIST reaches over and flicks his propellor.)

SEYMORE (to COMPLETIST): Great! Now that you've got that load off your mind, will you help us thwart Richard Deadwood?

COMPLETIST: Deadwood? Heck, no! [He tosses away his notebook, which lands in front of TED the Huckster's display.] I'm going back to the hucksters' tables!

(The COMPLETIST returns to the table, eagerly buys an armload of magazines, and exits. FAY and SEYMORE exit together. The NEOFAN goes over to retrieve the notebook -- maybe he can find out what he's just bought--)

TED: Ah, my boy, I see you've just acquired the nucleus of a fine collection, a fine collection. But, you know, magazines aren't everything. You can't spend all your time reading, after all -- can you?

NEOFAN: Well... I could make an Index...

TED: No, no. I'm concerned for your social life. Allow me to show you the latest thing in games!

(Music starts; as TED sings, he hands the NEOFAN various boxes and things.)



TED: If reading S F epics makes you long to feel adventury
We've wargames from a thousand lands, from each and every century:
In alleyways of Lankhmar follow Fafh' and Mouser's lechery,
Or take a walk with Frodo but beware of Gollum's treachery.

Become a Starship Trooper and you'll mash the Bugs quite properly,
Or mortgage half the universe while playing Space Monopoly;
Fight dragons that are green and brown and golden and vermillion
With heroes from the Conan books and from the Silmarillion.

Or travel into paratime, the histories that might ha' been:
Have Cromwell fighting Romans, or Lord Kalvan leading Arakeen;
The Minutemen of Washington are meeting Omar's Saracens
And Rommel fights at Waterloo, and other weird comparisons.

From World War Two we have a game, the Yanks against the Germans where
The Fallschirmjaeger Panzerfaust at unspectin; Shermans there;
Or you can play Diplomacy, where double-crosses skewer ya,
Or stage a little World War Three and atom-bomb Manchuria.

But if the C R T is just a mass of puzzling cuneiform,
We have some model soldiers you can paint in gaudy uniform;
If you esteem the horse and hold the infantry in low regard
We have the dashing cavalry of Stuart, Lee and Beauregard.

That ancient King Sennacherib's nine hundred iron chariots,
And here's a train of wagons for King Arthur's commissariat,
A Cossack with his saber raised to smite the proletariat,
And here's a western cowboy chasing Indians with a lariat.

The armies of Napoleon, the mighty Guard Imperial,
The surgeons who treat cannon wounds or illnesses venereal,
With cataphracts and cuirasseurs and light dragoons and skirmishers
And Bonaparte's own battle tent, with model Empire furniture.

If naval wars you like to wage, then to this pile just lend your eyes
Of model ships of every age, from galleons to the Enterprise,
Or little plastic fig hter planes, a Sopwith or a Harrier--
Buy ninety model Phantom jets and fly them from a carrier.

We've model trains and model planes and model knights like Galahad
For D & D and S & S and P B I and Stalingrad;
We've monsters that are animal and vegetable and mineral--
And here's a little model of a modern Major General!

(The song ends with the poor NEOFAN laden with games, etc., and fishing for
money in his all but empty pockets. He manages to pay TED, who sits down
behind his all but empty hucksters table. The NEOFAN moves downstage and
sits down, surrounded by his purchases, trying to make sense of it all. He
sings:

If you'll give me your attention I will tell you who I am:
I'm a celebrated would-be big name Science Fiction Fan!
From the reveries of Malzberg to the wit of "Bones" McCoy,
If it's labeled "Science Fiction" it's the stuff that I enjoy.
In any game of Trivia I certainly excel:
I'll date you any story, give its author's name as well;
I can say who did the illos, how it fits the Seldon Plan--
But every time I turn around, they call me a neofan--
And I can't think why!

(He gets up and turns, displaying the Day-Glo "G R O K" on the back of his
shirt.)

I know each author's style, down to how he paragraphs--
It's rather esoteric, but it's sometimes good for laughs;
For instance, though my reasoning I never could explain,
I'm absolutely certain "Van Lorne" was in fact Tremaine!
I can recognize a pseudonym in less than half a page,
Which has made my reputation as an author-index sage,
But though I publish articles as often as I can,
Each time I show up at a Con, they call me a Neofan--

And I can't think why!

(He pushes a hidden button and sets his electric propellor beanie spinning.)

I know the rules of physics, I know all the laws of chance,
And I carefully compare 'em with the stuff the author plants;
Any little fault of logic, any scientific flaw,
Makes me write another letter to the editor -- by paw!

(He displays a furry, clawed glove.)

I've the Annotated Alice and the Annotated Snark,
The Annotated Sherlock Holmes, the Annotated Quark,
And now I'm working on an Annotated Mulligan--
But every time I mention it, they call me a Neofan--

And I can't think why!

(The NEOFAN loads all his stuff on the little red wagon, and exits with it.)

(FAY and SEYMOUR enter.)

SEYMOUR: I don't believe this! I've talked to dozens of fans and none of them will help me. They don't want to get involved. Well, I won't give up yet. [To TED] You, sir! Will you join us on our quest for the Holy Grail -- I mean, to stop Richard Deadwood from destroying Science Fiction?

TED: Are you kidding? Me get involved in fan politics? I swore off fan politics in 1965 -- and 1972 -- and 1978 --

SEYMOUR: But this is a matter of fannish honor!

TED: Go away, boy, you bother me.

OFFSTAGE VOICE: Let's put out a one-shot!

CHORUS (offstage): Let's put out a one-shot!

(Fanfare. CHORUS, led by a young woman pushing a glittering mimeograph on a wagon and wearing a shirt reading MAD MADAM MIMEO, enters, carrying typewriters, paper, a gallon jug of corflu, etc., and singing:

Mim-e-o-graph, dit-to mas-ter,
Gen-zine, ap-a-zine, O. E.,
Corflu, repro, collate, staple,
L. O. C. --
Mailing list, ever-growing postage fee.

(The Hucksters hastily pack up and exit. Sign is changed from "Hucksters Room" to "Fanzone Workshop". The FANS set up their equipment on the table and begin typing. MADAM MIMEO parks her machine in front of the table and starts cranking it. After a moment they all stop, repeat the song, then resume typing.)

(FAY and SEYMOUR approach MADAM MIMEO.)

FAY (reading shirt): "Mad Madam Mimeo"? Is that you or the machine?

MIM: Yes!

FAY: What's all this about?

MIM: A commemorative worldcon oneshot. Want to contribute?

(FAY, naturally, looks blank.)

SEYMOUR (translating): A fanzine -- sorry, amateur magazine written by science fiction fans -- "fanzine" [FAY nods] -- which is intended to have only one issue -- a "oneshot" [FAY nods] -- put together and duplicated on this magnificent, marvelous...sorry, I got carried away...mimeograph machine, before your very eyes. She wants to know if you'll put in something on your reactions.

FAY: Oh. [To MIM] I'm sorry, but I don't think you really want me to contribute. You see, I'm not a fan. I don't even like science fiction.

MIM: You don't? [aside] Can I trust her? [to FAY] You say you don't like science fiction -- well, between you and me, I don't like science fiction. It's complex, mechanical, inhuman. That's the use of yearning for faster-than-light travel, when you know you can't get it and would only use it for inter-galactic commuting if you could? Real fanac doesn't have anything to do with science fiction. Want to join my new apa? Egoboo guaranteed or your corflu back!

FAY (totally lost): What?

SEYMOUR: Never mind. [He steers her away. FAY keeps typing; MIM resumes cranking.] I can see we won't get anywhere with this bunch.

(Enter the middle-aged gentleman we saw at the beginning, still taking notes. He is kindly DR. FRED, balding, bespectacled, very scholarly. He makes a circuit of the stage -- wherever the conversation is, there is DR. FRED -- and winds up listening to FAY and SEYMOUR, as he scribbles in his steno notebook.)

FAY: Who's this with the notebook? Another completist?

SEYMOUR: No, I believe that's a psychologist. He once wrote a book about comic books that practically destroyed the comics business. Then he wrote a book about fanzines, but nobody paid any attention to it. [DR. FRED stops writing and wipes away a tear.] So now he's trying to return to his...former triumphs. He's going to write a book about science fiction -- proving that today's science fiction is likely to destroy the American Way of Life -- and destroy the science fiction business.

FAY: Gee, maybe you could sic him on Deadwood.

SEYMOUR: It won't work. Deadwood's too Pure and Wholesome. In fact, if they ever get together, we're really in trouble.

(Offstage kazoo fanfare. The FANS stop fanacking, except MADAM MIMEO, who keeps on cranking away. A large fellow in uncured furs enters, looking menacingly: MONGO, the bodyguard. He takes down the "Fanzine Workshop" sign and hangs one that says "No Smoking / No Spitting / No Snogging / No Smoffing". The FANS leave, taking their materials with them. MONGO walks over to MADAM MIMEO and makes shooing gestures. She doesn't notice. MONGO is getting nervous. A second fanfare. MONGO approaches SEYMOUR, points at MIM, points back offstage, trembles.)

SEYMOUR: Perhaps if we could hit upon some word for you to use -- some word that teems with hidden meaning, like -- "hektograph" -- it might restore her to her saner self.

MONGO (tentatively, to MIM): Heck toe graff?

(MIM gives him a panicky look and flees with mimeo. MONGO, satisfied, exits.)

FAY: What's a hektograph?

SEYMORE: You wouldn't believe it if I told you. Anyway, here comes Richard Deadwood, world-famous editor, making his typical subdued, humble entrance.

(RICHARD DEADWOOD and suite enter: DEADWOOD in a black opera cape; his lawyer, in a business suit, waggling a combination fountain pen and cigar; MONGO; an Artist, wearing a necklace of little silver rocket ships strung like shark's teeth; and a CLOWN in a curly blond wig and baggy coat, honking a bicycle horn. CHORUS enters and lines up at rear, four of the members playing kazoos.)

CHORUS: Behold the world's most science-fictioner!
His books are everywhere at bargain prices --
Prolific and persuasive editor,
Whose virtues almost overweigh his vices!
Defer, defer, to the world's most science-fictioner...

(As they finish, the lawyer, RUFUS T. FIREFLY, pays them off & moves to center.)

FIREFLY: Let's have a big hand for Mister Deadwood! [Silence] He's going to make science fiction bigger and better than ever! You won't have to be embarrassed to show it to your friends, or even your Mother!
There won't be anything dirty in it any more!

FAN (in ecstasy): Back to Rivets!

DEADWOOD (spotting TED the Huckster among the FANS): Well, Ted, this is certainly a comedown for you. Used to be editor of your own prozine--

TED: Two prozines!

FIREFLY: They were filthy prozines!

DEADWOOD (annoyed): --used to be editor of your own prozinezzzz, and now I hear you're pushing little plastic soldiers.

TED: Well, the publisher had this cash-flow problem...

DEADWOOD: Ted, my boy, I have a vision. I think I can bring sci-fi together. I see a line of S F prozines sold all across North America, in every drugstore in every town and village and farm. I see a whole rack of covers, all alike [ARTIST cringes] -- don't panic, O'Shaughnessy, we'll hire you an assistant -- and no naked women. Ted, I see you as editor--

TED (on his knees): I'll do it! I'll do it!

DEADWOOD: Don't say yes till I finish talking! I see you as editor of a whole line of good old-fashioned S F magazines with good old-fashioned stories with good old-fashioned heroes and good old-fashioned hardware and good old-fashioned values and good old-fashioned plots--

SEYMORE: Hey, nobody writes that stuff any more. Where do you think you're going to get all those stories?

(MONGO moves threateningly toward SEYMORE, but DEADWOOD magnanimously restrains him. FIREFLY hands DEADWOOD a gold-tasseled scroll. He unrolls it. It rolls up again; they always do. He unrolls it again and clears his throat. Music starts.)

FAY: You had to ask.

Series developed by RICHARD DEADWOOD!

ZAP-GUN BOOKS

PTAROT DACTYLS
PLAY IN WYST

by some author
or other

lousy hand.

Two
pentacles.

Edited (brilliantly) by
RICHARD DEADWOOD

Another DEADWOOD Triumph!



MMK '80

DEADWOOD: As someday it may happen that an author needs a plot,
I've got a little list -- I've got a little list,
Of some things that have been used before and others that have not--
I can't think how they were missed--can't think how they were missed!
There's the race of talking octopusses, telepathic plants,
Lost tribes that dwell deep in the earth in league with giant ants,
The fellow who goes back in Time to mess up Grandpa's life,
And who returns to find his doppelganger with his wife,
The rocket pilot who can solve all problems with his fist--
How can they have been missed? But now they're on my list!

There's the guy who changed the universe by dying ere his birth,
When thunder-lizards hissed, in prehistoric mist,
For this altered all of history, at least of planet Earth--
He never did exist, but still he's on the list.

There's the little kid who says he has a Martian for a friend
(His parents don't believe it, but they learn before the end),
And the guy who keeps a dinosaur, despite the zoning laws,
And the guy who blows up Earth to prove the rightness of his cause--
The latter's an example of the stock Mad Scientist,
But I've got him on the list -- he won't stand being missed.

I've got personable villains who can foil the Space Patrol,
Pterodactyls playing whist? How'd they get on the list?
And all the latest gimmickry: clones, lasers, a Black Hole,
A hyperspatial twist -- I think you get the gist --
And a host of useful characters we've gotten very cheap,
Like the Kindly Professor, Gallant Young Jack, a Robot who goes
"beep!"

The sexy-voiced Computer, stolid Captain, varied Crew,
The skinny lady Physicist -- that's just to name a few --
The Professor's pretty daughter to be rescued and be kissed--
If there's anyone I've missed, just add them to the list!

CHORUS: You can add them to the list, and crumple it in fist,
And they'll none of them be missed, they'll none of them be missed.

DEADWOOD (handing scroll to FIREFLY): We will be auditioning authors this
afternoon at one. Anyone who's interested in writing for ZapGun
Books, just register with our attorney.

(As DEADWOOD starts off, a FAN breaks from the chorus and runs toward him,
evading MONGO. He falls on the floor, clutching DEADWOOD's ankle, gibbering
and holding up what looks horribly like a manuscript. MONGO dislodges him.
DEADWOOD gathers up his dignity and exits, followed by his associates.)

FAY (to the FAN, who is getting up): What was that all about?

FAN: An editor! An editor! A real, live, Editor!

CHORUS: Welllll...

FAY (reading his t-shirt): "Publish or Perish"?? Anyway, what's so thrilling
about editors? [Music starts.]

SEYMOUR: You had to ask.

FAN: A would-be writer I, a thing of pens, and pencils,
Of mimeos and stencils,
And typewriters in the sky.
My range of styles is broad, I do all sorts of story,
From pastoral to gory,
From vicious satire to laud -- I'll even do scripts for "Maude."

Are you in with the New Wave crowd? I'll write for you --
Oh, Harlan!

To Bunch's genius have you bowed? Gee, I have too --
Oh, Harlan, Harlan!

I'll gross the reader out and make him writhe and shout --
There's not the slightest doubt, that's what I'll do --
Oh--Harlan, Harlan!

But if "Up the Third Foundation" is your motto,
I've lots of plot devices true and tried:
Like Rocket-War or Lost-Race-in-a-Grotto,
Where sex is neither stated nor implied --
Space Warriors and other noble heroes
Rush in hot pursuit of alien or "trog",
And the hell with all those longhair hippie zeroes,
I'm going Back to Rivets -- Analog!

Or if you call for a Fantasy,
I'll swing my sword-arm 'round,
With a slash and a hack and a carven "Z" --
Ah, this is the true reality!
I'm back on my own home ground!

CHORUS: Ah, so! We know
He'll never get off the ground.

FAN: To lay a wench in a castle keep
May tickle an effete snob,
But barbarian swordsmen never sleep,
They carry on from dawn to dawn
And their thoughts are never deep -- oh, no!
They fight and rape and rob.

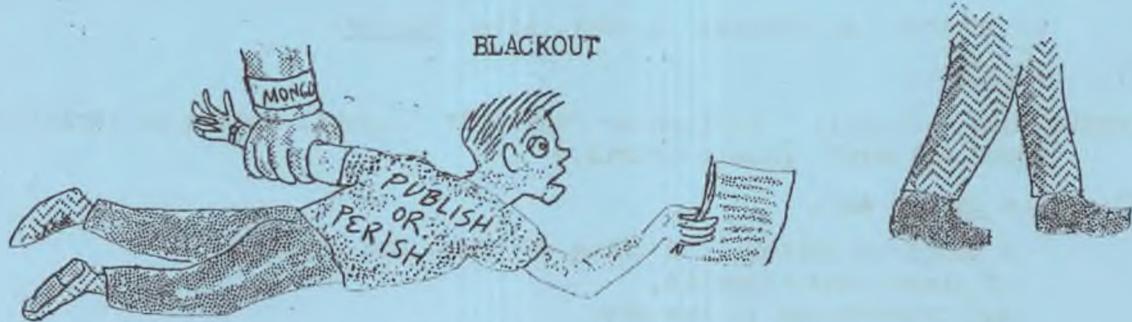
CHORUS: Help type the one-shot, tell a joke,
Go off and enjoy the Con,
Find a joint to smoke, or drink rum and Coke,
Until this ambition's gone...

FAN: A would-be writer I, a thing of prose and postage --
I'm almost at the pro stage --
Some editor far away
Will send me a check -- some day -- some day...

(The WOULD-BE WRITER runs off after DEADWOOD and suite.)

WOULD-BE WRITER: Mister Deadwood! Mister Deadwood! Wait for me-e-eeee...

SEYMOUR: It looks like we're doomed.



ACT TWO

SCENE: The same hotel, three hours later; meeting room just after an authors' organization has left.

(The lights come on, revealing a deserted shambles: chairs knocked over, empty bottles here and there, papers scattered about. The sign reads: "SFWA Business Meeting". The CHAIRFAN and FANS enter, followed by FAY and SEYMOUR.)

CHAIRFAN: Okay, the authors' meeting is over. Let's get the room set up for the auditions. If you volunteers do a good job, you can stay and watch Richard Deadwood select the people who will write next year's ZapGun Books. So let's go.

(CHAIRFAN blows whistle; the FANS go into action, setting up chairs, cleaning off the tables, etc. FAY and SEYMOUR stand to one side, observing. The FANS try to sound properly enthusiastic.)

FANS: Ohboyohboyohboy...goshwo...Richard Deadwood in person...

FAY (to SEYMOUR): What hit this place?

SEYMOUR: Well, the Starving Fantasy Writers of America just finished holding a meeting here. I hear they agreed the future of the field looks pretty grim -- and that's all they agreed on. Now Richard Deadwood is going to hold a shape-up to pick the writers he wants. They'll be part of his "stable" -- guaranteed income, fringe benefits, and all that -- but they'll have to do stories the way he wants them.

(A FAN removes the "SFWA" sign and replaces it with one reading "ZapGun Books / ZAP! 'They're Sterile'". DR. FRED enters and stands behind FAY and SEYMOUR, notebook and pencil at the ready.)

FAY: That Richard Deadwood seems like a real egomaniac.

(DR. FRED tugs at SEYMOUR's sleeve and whispers something to him.)

SEYMOUR: Huh? Oh. E-g-o-m-a-n-i-a-c.

(DR. FRED nods and resumes writing.)

SEYMOUR (to FAY): Hey, you haven't seen half of it. If you thought the procession this morning was something, wait until he makes his official entrance.

(DR. FRED writes all this down. FAY and SEYMOUR, finally annoyed, move away from him. DR. FRED retreats behind the table. The FANS, now finished cleaning up, move to sides. The CHAIRFAN surveys the situation. FIREFLY enters.)

CHAIRFAN: How do you like the setup, Rufus?

FIREFLY: It will do, it will do. Just one thing. Mr. Deadwood likes to be above the crowd. Put his chair up on a table. No, make that two tables. Three would be better.

CHAIRFAN: Looks like we've got kind of a low ceiling here...

FIREFLY: All right, all right -- I suppose we'll have to make allowances.

(CHAIRFAN blows whistle and signals to FANS. Two of them place a chair on the table; a third hands the CHAIRFAN a roll of gold brocade, which he flings over the chair. It hits DR. FRED, who drops his little notebook.)

CHAIRFAN: That looks good -- oh, sorry, Fred.

(DR. FRED retrieves his notebook and moves to a less exposed position.)

FIREFLY: He'll be here any minute. Get these fans out of the way.

(CHAIRFAN signals again, and two FANS bring in a velvet rope and stand holding its ends. The other FANS group behind the rope. FIREFLY looks about, then stands at center stage and makes a magicianly gesture.)

FIREFLY: "Authors!"

(A DUCK descends from the ceiling, bearing a large sign reading "Authors". Kazoo fanfare offstage. Two LACKEYS enter, unrolling a toilet-paper red-carpet; a third follows, scattering flowers.)

FIREFLY: I am Rufus J. Firefly, Esquire, of Firefly, Hungadinga, Hungadinga, Haldeman, Ehrlichman and Hungadinga, legal advisor to Mr. Deadwood. Oops, I left out a Hungadinga. The most important one, too. Never mind, I'll--

A FAN: You're awfully shy for a lawyer!

2ND FAN: He's a shyster lawyer!

FIREFLY: I won't dignify that remark with an answer! -- This is Mr. Mongo, Security Consultant and bodyguard for Mr. Deadwood. [MONGO lurches in.] Here is O'Shaughnessy Slush, house artist for ZapGun Books. [SLUSH enters, sketching, not watching where he's going, preceded by a LACKEY who makes sure nothing gets in his way.] Mr. Slush can single-handedly paint one hundred and fifty covers a year [SLUSH stops and confers with FIREFLY] -- make that two hundred covers a year -- provided they all have ugly little faces in the foreground. Next is the publisher's representative, for Punchinello Books -- [CLOWN enters, beeping] who works very closely with Mr. Deadwood. And finally -- heeere's Richard!

(DEADWOOD enters. He pauses at center for applause from the admiring throng. There is no applause. He surveys the setup and nods his approval.)

CHAIRFAN: All writers who wish to audition for jobs with ZapGun Books, please form a line here.

FIREFLY (to FAY and SEYMOUR): You aren't writers! Get over there with the rest of the fans. [They do so.]

CHAIRFAN: All writers line up here.

(TED and an unidentified woman enter and stand under the DUCK. The WOULD-BE WRITER dashes from the Fan area and joins them.)

FIREFLY (to Writers): Mr. Deadwood will give each of you two minutes, so have your presentations ready.

(DEADWOOD tries to climb onto the table, fails, looks annoyed. He snaps his fingers; MONGO goes offstage and fetches a stepstool. DEADWOOD mounts with dignity to his throne.)

DEADWOOD: First of all, Ted, will you step forward? If you want to be considered for a place on our editorial staff--

TED (eagerly): I have a lot of experience in that line. Maybe I can give you some help in picking writers--

DEADWOOD: Yes, yes, we've all heard about your prozines. What we want is a dynamic new editorial approach that will attract readers and sell 500,000 copies of each book. Minimum. Have you any suggestions?

(TED steps forward. Music starts.)

SEYMORE (to FAY): He had to ask.

TED (sings): Oh, an editor's job isn't fit for a slob,
Don't believe any contrary rumor--
There's more to it, I mean, than arranging the 'zine
With a balance of pathos and humor.
There's more to it, of course -- I could talk till I'm hoarse--
Think of this as an inside confession:
There are several clues editors ought to use
To make good in the prozine profession.

Let me give you some clues--half a dozen, or ten--
You will find you can use
Them again and again
To make good in the prozine profession.

If you wish to get through as an editor, you
Must learn all of the S F vernacular
So the world understands you're just one of the fans
With comments and essays oracular.
And get up to date on the topics which rate
As the center of fannish attentions:
Ecology -- war -- and the perverts of Gor,
And the increasing cost of conventions.

If you're anxious to write on a topic that's "in"
Try to aim for the height of what's thought of as sin:
It's the increasing cost of conventions.

(DEADWOOD, by this time, is extremely bored, and making no secret of it. TED realizes this and skips ahead to the last verse.)

You will have to attack every magazine rack
If you want to get good distribution,
And encourage the tribe somehow not to subscribe
If they'd help you avoid destitution.
If you can't get the 'zine into spots where it's seen
Your predicament can't be called funny --
'Cause the 'zine has to sell -- for you know very well
That a prozine's supposed to make money!

(DEADWOOD perks up, but it's too late.)

Yes, it adds to the drag of an editor's day
When your publishers nag you to make the 'zine pay--
'Cause they're only involved for the money!

(DEADWOOD waves TED away. TED exits.)

DEADWOOD: We are ready to hear from the writers now. [SLUSH tugs at his elbow.] What is it, O'Shaughnessy? [SLUSH shows him a sketch.] Ah, yes, the cover for ZapGun Book Number Five Hundred and Thirty-Two. That's fine. Firefly?

FIREFLY (taking sketch): Very good, O'Shaughnessy. Only seven minutes to finish this one, eh? You're getting better. [He hands SLUSH a small piece of paper.] Here's the plot outline for ZapGun Book Number Five Hundred Thirty-Three, The Chloroplast Menace. Make this one green. [Resets watch.] Go.

(SLUSH tosses away the plot outline without reading it, and sits down and starts drawing.)

DEADWOOD: As you are all doubtless aware, in five years ZapGun Books -- a subsidiary of Punchinello Romances [CLOWN honks] -- will be the only remaining publisher of science fiction in North America. [He pauses for applause, again. There is none, again.] If you writers want to stay in the field, now is the time to make your move. Tell us what you can do for ZapGun Books.

FIREFLY: All right, all right, step right up. Who's first?

(The WOULD-BE WRITER dashes to the foot of DEADWOOD's throne.)

WOULD-BE WRITER: My name is Paul Allen Sheffield and I'd sure like to be a real writer and here's a manuscript I brought for you to look at Mister Deadwood Sir. [Hands thick manuscript to DEADWOOD.] It's a novel.

SEYMOUR: Yep, there sits Richard Deadwood, contemplating his novel.

(MONGO makes a threatening advance; SEYMOUR ducks back into the crowd. DEADWOOD glares, then hands manuscript to FIREFLY, who flips to the last page, reads a little, and looks ill. Holding manuscript between thumb and forefinger, at arm's length, he confers with DEADWOOD.)

DEADWOOD (to the WOULD-BE WRITER): So, this is an end-of-the-world story?

WBW (puppy-eager): Yeahyeahyeahyeah.

DEADWOOD: And you ended the story with only two people left alive?

WBW: Yeahyeahyeahyeah.

DEADWOOD: And their names are Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve?

(FANS boo.)

WBW: Yeahyeahyeah-- Huh?

DEADWOOD (to FIREFLY): Give him back his...manuscript. [To MONGO] Take him away.

(MONGO slings the WOULD-BE WRITER over his shoulder and carries him out.)

WBW: But Nelson Bond used that ending -- and Damon Knight -- and [distant wail] John Normannnn...

(MONGO returns, dusting off his hands.)

DEADWOOD (to Himself): Adam and Eve? Must be more of that crazy New Wave nonsense... -- Who's next?

(There is a sudden muted hubbub in the fan section, as autograph hunters cluster around someone who's just been recognized as a Famous Name in their midst.)

DEADWOOD (to FIREFLY): They aren't paying attention! Who is that?

(FIREFLY whispers to DEADWOOD.)

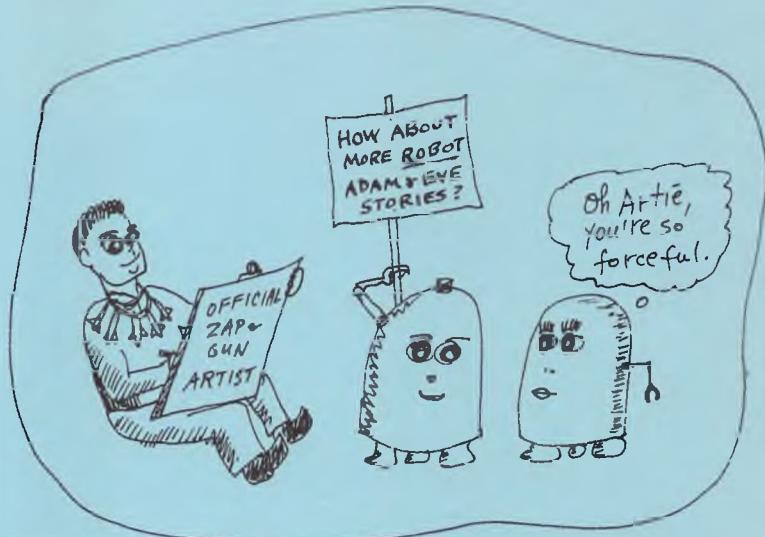
DEADWOOD (calling over crowd noise): Aren't you -- Elsie Smith?

(A pleasant but somewhat harrassed-looking lady steps forward.)

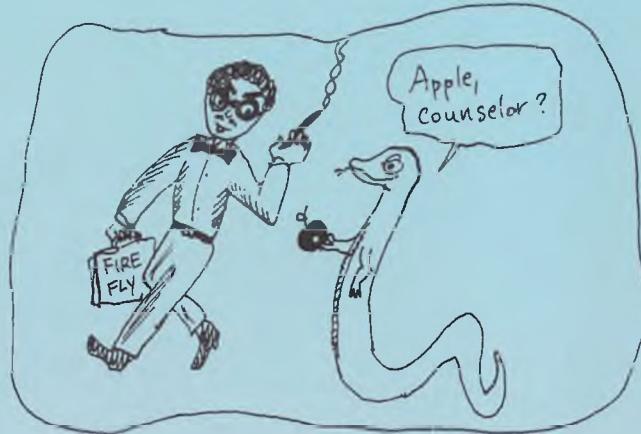
SMITH: Yes, that's right.

DEADWOOD: Well, why aren't you with the other authors? You used to do such rousing space operas for -- [He hesitates; FIREFLY cues him] -- for Coelacanth Stories, The Living Fossil of Science Fiction. "The Starfish of Space" is a classic --

SMITH: I don't write science fiction any more. I'm...just a fan, now.



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DEADWOOD: But why? Why haven't you written anything since Coelacanth folded in 1969? If the problem is that you dislike the decadent atmosphere of so-called "modern" science fiction, we at ZapGun can offer--

SMITH: No, no, it isn't that. It's just... [Music starts. She sings:

Gone the rocket pioneer,
Gone the one-man astrojet --
They're of no more use, I fear,
Though I dream about them yet.
NASA's taken over Space --
I R S will get there soon --
Science Fiction's lost its place
Now that Man has reached the Moon

Gone the lone Mad Scientist
Yearning for an alien voice --
New Wave writers now insist
Alienation is the choice.
Suffering from mental gout,
They don't hear the æther croon --
What is left to write about
Now that Man has reached the Moon?

DEADWOOD (genuinely touched...maybe...): That's very sad, Elsie, very sad.
[To MONGO] Escort the lady out.

(MONGO leads SMITH away. She pauses at Fan area to finish signing autographs, then exits.)

DEADWOOD (to FIREFLY): There's something wrong here, Rufus. Where are all the authors? -- Next?

THE ONE REMAINING AUTHOR: I'm James Treetop, Junior, and I might be willing to let you reprint some of my short stories.

DEADWOOD: Who did you say you were?

TREETOP: James Treetop, Junior.

DEADWOOD: Well, this is a surprise.

TREETOP: What did you think I looked like, clown? [CLOWN honks and is suppressed.]

DEADWOOD (covering): No, no, I mean we didn't expect to see you here. But anyway, you write modern, literate, symbolic stories [TREETOP nods, flattered] -- that nobody can understand. We print only Good Old-Fashioned Science Fiction at ZapGun Books. -- Next!

(TREETOP stalks off; she stops to sign a couple of autographs, then exits.
SLUSH approaches DEADWOOD.)

DEADWOOD: What is it, O'Shaughnessy? Ah, the cover for ZapGun Book #533. Firefly?

(FIREFLY takes the new drawing and hands SLUSH another plot outline.)

FIREFLY: Good work, Slush. Here's number 534. Put a monster or two on this one.

(SLUSH resumes drawing, the CLOWN posing for him, making faces, etc.)

DEADWOOD: Next? [But answer comes there none.] No one? -- We used to have a writer who could turn out a novel a week and two short stories for every anthology. Ah, where is he now? Barry Herovit -- Barry Herovit ---

(BARRY HEROVIT enters, looking mad at the world, as usual.)

HEROVIT: Listen, Deadwood, I'm finished with science fiction. I've got a good job writing publicity for NASA. This field isn't worth the aggravation. The pay is lousy, and I don't get any respect from these crummy fans --

CHORUS: AWWWWWWWW.... [Music starts.]

HEROVIT (sings): You fans are rough on class you've seldom known --
Ah, what the hell --
Although my stuff made sense to me alone,
It seemed to sell --
One plot, one theme, one style,
One manic smile,
One fellow's point of view, and crazy too --
Ah, what the hell -- Ah, what the hell!

CHORUS: Oh, Barry, Barry, don't say any more;
We've read it all a hundred times before --
Oh, Barry, Barry, go away -- go away --
Come back when you find something new to say.

HEROVIT: That does it! I'm leaving! You won't have the Mad Astronaut to kick around any more! [HEROVIT storms off.]

NEOFAN: He wouldn't sign my autograph book!

(DEADWOOD signals imperially to MONGO, who fetches the NEOFAN's autograph book. DEADWOOD signs, hands the book to FIREFLY, who slips it under SLUSH's busy felt-tip. SLUSH signs as if by reflex. CLOWN takes the book from him and rubber-stamps it. MONGO returns the book to the bewildered NEOFAN.)

FIREFLY: Isn't there anyone here who wants to write for ZapGun Books?

DEADWOOD: Of course there is. Watch this. [To FANS] All of you fans secretly want to be professional writers -- that's common knowledge. You, there, with the mustache, don't you have a novel to show us? Don't you want to see your name on the cover of a ZapGun Book? Why, we might even pay you.

RANDOM: No, I don't have a novel to show you.

DEADWOOD: What? -- This is incredible!

RANDOM: The ultimate science fiction novel was written twelve years ago. I couldn't improve on it, so why should I try?

DEADWOOD: Ah! Which of our ZapGun Books are you referring to?

RANDOM (disgusted): It isn't a ZapGun Book. It's Nova, by Samuel R. Delany.

(He gestures to FANS -- two others step forward to join him. Music starts.)

TRIO: When star is set to spring,
You head into the night for it,
You find yourself in flight for it --
It forms into a ring,
And though you feel a fright for it,
You keep your course held tight for it --
And on you bravely wing --
And on you bravely wing -----

You are headed for a nova
And you know that when it's over
You may find yourself in clover
You may possibly be dead;
If you seek a Holy Grail
You must be prepared to fail
Or to spend your life in Sheol
With a nova in your head.

CHORUS and TRIO:
For a nova's not a thing
Man was meant to look upon,
But anyway we'll praise Von Ray
And his Sun, Illyrion!

(The CHORUS applauds wildly. RANDOM and friends take their bows and return to the Fan area.)

DEADWOOD (to FIREFLY): This is terrible. We may have no writers at all for next year.

SEYMOUR (to FAY): This is great! Maybe we're in luck after all.

(LARRY NUTHVEN enters, highly excited, carrying a large stack of manuscripts.)

NUTHVEN: Am I too late? Am I too late?

SEYMOUR: Oh, no -- it's Larry Nuthven!

FANS: Larry Nuthven! Oh wow! Larry Nuthven!

DEADWOOD: Why, of course you're not too late. But we must be fair. You'll have to audition like the others. What have you been working on lately?

(Music starts. FAY looks at SEYMOUR, expecting him, perhaps, to say "He had to ask." He does not. He is utterly crushed by this turn of events. Who can think of catchphrases at a time like this?)

NUTHVEN: My mind is fully open to hypotheses and learning
(sings) And the wildest speculation fills a quintessential yearning
for a mad unfettered roaming through a vast uncharted region
Of the universe where wonders and discoveries are legion --
Now I do not wish to overwhelm my readers or cause friction
So I'm glad that lots of engineers and such read science fiction
And can follow me with ease as through the galaxies I clatter
As I seek the farthest boundaries of Space and Time and Matter!

CHORUS: Matternattermatternattermatternatter...

NUTHVEN: If I were not a dedicated science fiction writer
I am sure you'd find my fantasies more frivolous and lighter
For I wouldn't have to cope with ev'ry universal tension
And I wouldn't have to stagger you with gadget and invention --
And so someday I may write you a most entertaining story
Full of whimsy and of wit, with just a hint of allegory,
But at present I'm afraid I'm on a diff'rent line of chatter
For I'm dealing with the mysteries of Space and Time and Matter!

CHORUS: Matternattermatternattermatternatter...

NUTHVEN: If I had been so lucky as to have a natch'r al talent
For a convoluted plot with gorgeous scenes and heroes gallant--
But historicals are out, I couldn't stomach the restriction
That is bound to cramp your style in writing realistic fiction--
I suppose I should be glad for scientific education
But it's put new limits all its own on my imagination;
You may hear my lamentation as against the walls I batter:
I'm restricted by the properties of Space and Time and Matter
matternattermatternattermatternattermatternattermatternatter...

(MONGO goes over and shakes NUTHVEN out of his matterings.)

DEADWOOD: Splendid! [He stands up, almost hitting his head on the ceiling.] Suppose we go into the ZapGun Books temporary office and discuss the terms of your contract. Firefly?

(DEADWOOD descends. He, NUTHVEN, and the other ZapGun people exit.)

SEYMOUR: Damn! He's going to get away with it after all.

FAY: I've seen his type before. You may still have a chance. Don't do anything desperate until I get back.

(FAY exits. The FANS mill about. TED the Huckster enters, depressed.)

CHAIRFAN: What's the trouble, Ted? You look unhappy.

TED: Richard doesn't seem to think much of my editorial philosophy. Looks like I may have to stay a huckster for a while longer.

CHAIRFAN: You won't have much luck around here. Everybody's broke. There's nobody left to sell anything to.

NEOFAN (to the world in general, in great glee): Hey, wow, look! I won't have to walk home to Watseka after all! I found this twenty dollar bill in my shoe where I hid it for an emergency.

TED (brightening) (to CHAIRFAN): Excuse me a minute. (To NEOFAN) Well, Forrest, that's certainly good news. There's nothing worse than at a convention, and seeing all those great things to buy, and not having the money to buy them. But you have enough cash so you don't have to worry about that, do you?

NEOFAN: Uh, I don't think I ought to buy any more stuff. I need this for bus fare home.

TED: Now, Forrest, you can always hitch a ride home with some other fans. Remember, fannish cars always have room for one more. Besides, your collection isn't really complete yet.

NEOFAN: Not complete? But I have all the Startling Stories back to 1939, and the anniversary issue of Fantastic autographed by Lin Carter, and the Ace Doubles, and the miniature wargame soldiers. What else is there?

CHAIRFAN: You had to ask!

(TED glares at the CHAIRFAN, and returns to his pitch.)

TED: We have a few minutes until Richard Deadwood comes back, so I can explain it to you, Forrest. You see, there's an audio as well as a video component to science fiction. Why are heroid science fiction adventures called space operas? Because you can hear the stirring music as well as reading the compelling words.

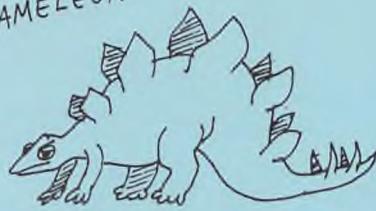
NEOFAN: Music?

TED: That's right, music. Science Fiction Music. Space opera music. The great classics --

NEOFAN: You mean music like that nut with the electric piano was singing in the lobby this morning?

TED (wincing): Oh, Ghod, no. That was -- ugh! -- filksinging. I'm talking about real music. The great classics of true space opera. Let me show you.

PROTECTOR
CHAMELEON



EARTH TURNS
EAST TO WEST...
OR IS IT WEST
TO EAST?



WHERE'S THAT
GODDAM WOOKIE?



A DANCE
TO SPRING...



SINGING AND
DANCING ALIENS?

DISCWORLD?
BANDWORLD?
(GETTING CLOSE...)

matter
matter
matter
matter...
matter



PDP - 18
WORD
PROCESSER

MMK '80

(TED goes offstage, brings back a box of props, and hangs his "Fifty Great Space Opera Themes" Sign. He gives various FANS cards with their instructions and cues for what follows. The CLOWN wanders back in and stands at rear, watching, waiting for his chance.)

TED (reads): Have you ever thought about all the great space operas you should know, that are part of the cultural heritage of every true fan, but you just haven't had the time to collect them? Now you too can own the thrilling space operas in your own home, just like the Big Name Fans. What we have done is to take fifty great space operas and put them all on one convenient ten-record set. If you were to buy each of these themes individually it would cost you hundreds of dollars, endless hours of searching huckster rooms, your sanity... But now you can have them! -- Not for hundreds of dollars, not for fifty dollars, or thirty dollars, but for a mere nineteen ninety-nine, marked down from two thousand one, heh, heh...and Forrest, I know you have it with you.

NEOFAN: I don't understand. What kind of songs are on these records?

TED: I'm glad you asked that. Here is an example from the record of Space Opera Love Themes -- a true classic, the love theme from Slan by A. E. Van Vogt. "Love me Tendril" -- yes, the slans, those wonderful telepathic superhumans with tendrils in their hair. Listen now, as slan boy meets slan girl under the palace of the dictator.

(Music starts: the piano playing the melody line of "Love Me Tender". As TED reads, two FANS -- male and female, wearing tendril headdresses -- enter from opposite sides and move rapturously toward each other.)

TED: "She had flashing eyes, this girl, and a finely molded, delicately textured face, and because his mind was always held on a tight band of thought, she came out thinking he was a human being. -- And she was a slan! -- And he was a slan! -- She fought for control and found herself uncontrollable."

(The two "slans" meet and intertwine tendrils, then exit hand in hand. The NEOFAN walks to center stage, gazing after them.)

NEOFAN: Wow! That sounds great!

(NEOFAN starts to follow the two "slans" off. TED stops him.)

TED: On another record we have the modern space operas done by the new greats of the sixties and seventies. Listen to the touching love theme from Dhalgren [FANS recoil] -- even if you've never read Dhalgren, you can appreciate the beautiful music, the haunting theme of "A Boy and His Tree". [TED directs FANS in off-key rendition of "Trees".] Imagine the mystical city of Bellona! Here is the man with one shoe, Kid Dhalgren [SEYMORE enters, one shoe off, looking put-upon] -- here is his beloved Tree [FEMMEFAN, holding branches, enters] -- hey, Forrest, get out of the way so we can see the Tree!

NEOFAN: Sorry! [He gets out of the way.]

TED: There is the great red sun that rises and then falls, rises and then falls...

(A third FAN enters, holding a red beachball, moving it up and down, up and down. After a moment, the Dhalgren group exits.)

TED: Well, the ZapGun people will be back soon, so there's only time for one more selection. From a far-off colony world, human emotions on a tempestuous frontier, from the immortal Time Enough to Fool Around by Robert Anson Heinlein, here is the unforgettable Lazarus Long -- [CLOWN steps forward, wearing a fringed buckskin jacket] -- and seven of his twenty-eight wives.

(FEMMEFANS file in, and TED hands each one a cover-girl mask on a stick, which they hold up in front of their faces as they stand in line. TED finds he has one mask left, counts only six "wives", shrugs, and gets at the end of the line, holding up the seventh mask. Music starts: the "1812" Overture. The CLOWN kisses each FEMMEFAN's mask, and each swoons in time with the cannons firing. As the CLOWN reaches the end of the line, TED lowers his mask and the CLOWN passes out.)

TED: And there goes Lazarus [giving CLOWN a nudge -- CLOWN gets up and exits] -- to meet his true love, Buck, the talking mule. But there's plenty of him in this fabulous ten-record set. And as an added bonus, with every set we will throw in absolutely *F*R*E*E* this Kay-Tell special, "Great Teen-Age Death Songs." It may not have anything to do with science fiction, but, ah, Forrest -- this is an offer you can't refuse.

(The CHAIRFAN hums the theme from "The Godfather" until TED shushes him.)

NEOFAN: A whole record of death songs? You're kidding.

TED: No, Forrest, I'm dead serious. An entire full-length album of death songs. Just listen what you get. Recognize this one?

(TED signals -- the FEMMEFANS sit up and do two lines of "Tell Laura I Love Her.")

TED: Plus, you get "Ode to Billy Joe", "Patches", "Teen Angel", the story of Running Bear and Little White Dove, "I Want My Baby Back", and eight -- eight! more, including the greatest teen-age death song of them all:

(TED gives another signal, and the FEMMEFANS do part of "Leader of the Pack," with TED joining in on the "Down! Down!" The CLOWN enters on a tricycle, beeping his trusty horn, does a circuit of the stage and exits.)

NEOFAN: Motorcycle! [To TED] Here's your money. Let me have the records.

(They exchange items.)

TED: Congratulations. You can now truly say you have a Collection.

(The NEOFAN, starting to come out of the trance, wanders off, shaking his head. The CHAIRFAN approaches TED.)

CHAIRFAN: Still helping out the neofans, eh?

TED (holding bill up to the light, etc.): Just keeping in practice. I was a neofan myself once.

(Another offstage kazoo fanfare.)

CHAIRFAN: Here they come again. Better get some of this stuff out of the way.

(TED and CHAIRFAN, aided by FANS, remove "Fifty Great Space Opera Themes" sign, and clear away masks, beachball, etc.)

(DEADWOOD and suite enter, DEADWOOD deep in discussion with LARRY NUTHVEN.)

DEADWOOD: All right, all right, have it your way. Firefly? Cross out Paragraph One of the standard ZapGun contract -- I suppose my name doesn't have to be in bigger print than the author's on the cover.



50 Great Space Opera Themes

Slan love Story



(**FIREFLY** has some difficulty with his fountain pen, or cigar. He hands the contract to **CLOWN**, who snips out the offending paragraph.)

FIREFLY: What this country needs is a good five-cent fountain pen. What this country needs is a good five-cent nickel.

(**CLOWN** hands contract back to **FIREFLY**, who hands it to **DEADWOOD**, who hands it to **NUTHVEN**.)

DEADWOOD: Now will you sign, Larry? [**NUTHVEN** shakes his head.] What is it you want? Stories with -- sex? [**NUTHVEN** shakes his head.] Stories with -- profanity? [No. **DEADWOOD** is much relieved -- then a horrible thought strikes him.] Not -- not Adam-and-Eve stories?

(**NUTHVEN** shakes his head again, and hands **DEADWOOD** a long sheet of closely-typed paper.)

DEADWOOD (scanning the list): What? You want to rewrite all the works of Charles Dickens as science fiction novels? Wasn't Dante enough...? Oh, well. Dickens is in the public domain. Why not? Firefly, we'll need...ten,twelve, fourteen contracts-- [**SLUSH** tugs at his sleeve.] Oh, what is it, O'Shaughnessy? [**SLUSH** cringes, proffers another drawing.] Oh, the cover for ZapGun Book #537. Now do something special for #538. Something that takes a little longer?

(**SLUSH** retreats and resumes drawing. **DEADWOOD**, **FIREFLY**, **CLOWN**, **NUTHVEN** and **MONGO** pass contracts back and forth, and move back to table.)

(Trumpet fanfare offstage. **FAY** enters, leading a fellow in a **HERALD**'s tabard, two **LADIES** in court dress, and two **FIGHTERS** in full battle array.)

SEYMOUR: Fay, what is all this about?

(**FAY** gives him a conspiratorial grin and goes over to the **CHAIRFAN**.)

FAY: The Committee said we could stage a demonstration tourney here at the Con. How about doing it right now? Nothing much else is going on.

CHAIRFAN: I guess it's as good a time as any, if Mr. Deadwood doesn't object. [He approaches **FIREFLY**, who is playing solitaire with the contracts as the **CLOWN** kibitzes.] Ah, Rufus, these people want to put on a demonstration, a tourney --

FIREFLY: Well, I'm an attorney -- [**DEADWOOD** glares at him.] Yes, yes, whatever you want.

CHAIRFAN (moves to center stage): Fans, gentlebeings, your attention, please. For your edification and amusement, ProCon, the convention with a little something for everybody, now presents an exercise in recreational archeology by the Society for Creative Anachronism.

(The **FANS** move forward, crowding around fighters, poking at their helmets, etc.)

HERALD: Step back, please. Give the fighters room to swing. They can't see very well in those helmets. [**FANS** move back. **HERALD** steps to center stage.] My lords and ladies, we will show you how the King is chosen in S C A contests. The winner of the Crown Tournament is King--not for a day, but for six months. [**DEADWOOD** looks up.] He chooses his consort, and reigns over all the nobles and commoners of the Society. Churls fall at his feet, lords bow, ladies curtsey, bards praise him to excess, heralds tell glorious lies about his majestic splendor. He is treated with worship that borders on respect. Yes, philosophers may sing of the troubles of a King, but the duties are delightful and the privileges great...

(FIREFLY tries to hand DEADWOOD the stack of contracts, as NUTHVEN also tries to get his attention. Both are ignored. DEADWOOD is fascinated.)

HERALD (to the FIGHTERS): Are you ready, my lords? [Both nod.] Then proceed.

(FIGHTERS move to center stage. HERALD joins two FANS for a trio. Music starts.)

TRIO: It's clear that medieval fandom is the coming craze:
To dress and act almost exactly as in olden day.

[FIGHTERS feint and jockey for position.] We think we've found the best approaches in getting to be King,
And as far as we can judge, it's something like this sort of thing:

You hold your sword like this:]thump![
You hold your shield like that:]thwack![
You smash and bash and try to mash
Your poor opponent flat.]wham![
It takes a lot of pluck,
Some skill, a bit of luck,
Good aim, and force, and then of course
There's knowing when to duck! [blow misses]

(FIGHTERS move into side-by-side position, facing audience.)

If we don't dance exactly right the Ladies may get sore.
In armor plate we're doing great just getting off the floor.
True courtly medievalism Time alone can bring,
But as far as we can judge it's something like this sort of thing:

You hold your arms like this: [pose]
You hold your legs like that: [pose]
You creep, and leap, and try to keep
Yourself from falling flat. [sway]
You learn to run in place
With unrelenting grace -- [leap]
The hardest part of all this Art
Is keeping a straight face!

(DEADWOOD sends MONGO to get the HERALD's attention.)

DEADWOOD: Is that all you have to do to be a King?

HERALD (walking over): Basically, yes. There are a few other...details. Interested, in joining?

DEADWOOD (staring into space): King! Surrounded by worshipping crowds...King!
Yes, yes, I want to join! I want to become a King!

FIGHTER: Oh, boy, a new churl! Sign him up, quick!

FIREFLY: But, Mr. Deadwood, these contracts have to be signed. Our publishing schedule! Mr. Punchinello won't like it --

DEADWOOD: Tell him we are on leave. Indefinitely. Who wants to be a mere editor when we can be King?

FIREFLY: But my fee! [he gives up.]

HERALD: We'll start your training right away. Sign this waiver [DEADWOOD signs] and put on this helmet [FIGHTER places wastebasket over DEADWOOD's head] --

DEADWOOD: But it hasn't got any eyeholes!

HERALD: Oh, that comes later. First, a little shield work.

(HERALD hands DEADWOOD a garbage can lid for a shield, and a sword made from a length of old radiator hose. One FIGHTER bangs away at the shield while the other stands behind, blocking DEADWOOD's retreat. FIREFLY and CLOWN watch for a moment, shrug, and head for the FEMMEFANS, followed by MONGO. SLUSH remains seated under the table, sketching, sketching. The WOULD-BE WRITER goes over to show LARRY NUTHVEN his manuscript -- is there a collaboration in the offing? The FANS remain, watching DEADWOOD at practice.)

FAY (to SEYMOUR): I think we can handle him. We get his type all the time. We've developed some pretty foolproof techniques of managing ego-maniacs.

SEYMOUR: All I can say is, Thanks, on behalf of all true fans. Uh, now that you've seen Fandom... I mean, even if you don't like science fiction ...maybe...?

FAY: Well, no, I think I'll stay with the SCA. But be sure and call us if you run into any more power-hungry editors.

(FAY joins the SCA group. SEYMOUR watches her go, then turns to DR. FRED, who has ventured out of his hiding place at last.)

SEYMOUR: Well, you've been taking notes on the whole convention. Have you come to any conclusions about fandom?

(DR. FRED snaps his notebook shut, shakes his head, twirls his finger at his temple, and walks off. SEYMOUR joins the rest of the FANS. The SCA people lead DEADWOOD away. The FANS gaze at one another in wonder and disbelief; one holds a "Happy Ending!" sign.)

CHORUS: Now we'll write songs, gather in throngs,
Act like comrades, or act snobby --
Various plans -- still we are Fans --
Fandom's such a perfect hobby!
Hobby, hobby, hobby -- Fandom's such a perfect hobby!

ZapGun is dead, and gone away,
Deadwood's a churl in S C A,
S F is saved from censor's knife --
Fandom's still a way of life!



THE END

NOTES and COMMENTS

Comments are by Sue Anderson (SA)--mostly on the songs-- and Mark M. Keller (MK).

- p. 1 (MK) Yes, Providence finally got its World Science Fiction Convention! In the refurbished Biltmore in the heart of the "city at the starbow's end" in the hard-to-find state of Rhode Island, PRO-CON emerges. (If you think this is a joke, take a look at the other cities that are bidding...)
- p. 1 (SA) "Look at the fans," etc. is based on "Faint Heart Never Won Fair Lady, from the second act of Lolanthe. This is the revised version; the first one didn't seem to quite fit the plot we wound up with, having a third verse about the Hugos and ending with the "FIAWOL" group converting to index-freakdom as a less dangerous form of fanac. Having seen NESFA in action, I now realize this is not true.
- p. 1 (MK) An old old argument in fandom: the "hobby" crowd (FIJAGDH) and the "way-of-life" crowd (FIAWOL). It goes back to the Thirties. Rarely has it erupted into such violence, however.
- p. 2 (SA) "For every fan who feels inclined" is based on, yea, stolen from "For every man who feels inclined / Some post we undertake to find/ ...And all shall equal be", from the first act of The Gondoliers.
- p. 3 (MK) In case you've never seen the SCA (lead a sheltered life, don't you?) they are the people who dress in medieval clothing, drink medieval mead, speak to each other in a "forsoothly" manner, and in general try to recreate the nicer aspects of the Middle Ages, without the plagues or witch-burnings. There are lots of anachronists of all sorts in fringe fandom: some pretend they are living in early 19th century England as per the novels of Jane Austen and the Brontës and - what's her name? - Georgette Heyer; others dress in blue pajama tops and claim to be starship crew from the Federation 400 years from now. Fay belongs to a group that lives in a universe where it is always 1295.
- p. 3 (SA) "I do not know what S F can be" is from "I cannot tell what this 'love' can be" from the first act of Patience. Persons loyal to the Society for Creative Anachronism do not under any circumstances call it "Scah", I am told. Noted. // The line "great aunts don't count" is also a reference to Patience: at one point, the sweet young heroine is being chided by one of the other ladies for never having experienced the "ennobling and unselfish emotion" of love. "But, Patience, can it be that you have never loved anyone?" - "Yes -- once." - "Ah! Whom?" - "My great-aunt." - "No-- great-aunts don't count." Are you sorry you wondered?
- p. 4 (MK) OK, Trekkies, what episode is the source of the quote about Captain Kirk being an overbearing tin-plated dictator, etc.? (Real Star Trek fanatics dislike the term "trekkie", which they consider demeaning. "We are trekkers, not trekkies," say the serious cases. Anyone who calls him/herself a trekker is a real terkkie.)
- p. 4 (SA) "If somebody there chanced to be" is from the song of the same first line in Act I of Ruddigore. Sweet Rose Maybud, brought up on the solemn precepts of her little book of etiquette, finds she can't make advances toward the youth of her choice because everything she might do is forbidden... "But whispering, I've somewhere met, / Is contrary to etiquette..." A verse of the song was left out for considerations of time & bordeom. It follows.

A member of a starship crew
 Cannot afford to get involved,
 And if on leave he gets in too
 Deep, he can leave, his problems solved--
 He's got a girl in every port,
 His heart of heart's an armored fort--
 He's out for sport; his heart's a fort;
 He just goes out to sport, in port. Ah---
 So if Spock loved me, by some chance,
 If I could penetrate that shell,
 I'd lead him on a merry dance--
 I'd make him whimper, sob and yell--
 But whimpering, I've somewhere met,
 Conflicts with Vulcan etiquette--
 You know the line, Vulcans don't whine:
 They merely go berserk when they're upset!

- p. 5 (MK) Lots of SCA branch chapters choose unpronounceable Welsh names for themselves, just to be cute. The name of Fay's group is pronounced roughly "Shun four quill Bach". The "seneschale" is the paperwork organizer of a chapter: keeps membership lists, presides at meetings, etc.
- p. 6 (MK) Some of you may think you know who Richard Deadwood represents. Hold any opinion you like; it's a free country. Sue says the name is from HMS Pinafore, which features a surly sailor called Dick Deadeye. Does that seem likely?
- p. 6 (MK) For you non-collectors, "pulps" are beat-up old adventure story magazines printed on brown paper-towel stock in the 1920s and 1930s and 1940s. They had garish covers with monsters and naked women and all that. Why people want to collect them is something I won't try to explain.
- p. 6 (SA) "I used to buy..." is from King Gama's song in Act III of Princess Ida. Gama is a grouchy old man who's been held prisoner by a sadistic monster who's made sure that he's had "nothing whatever to grumble at." As a frequently frustrated denizen of hucksters' rooms, I know the feeling. Has anybody got a copy of Comet Stories Number 4?
- p. 8 (SA) "Take a set of Startling Stor(ies)" is to the tune of "Take a Pair of Sparkling Eyes", from Act II of The Gondoliers.
- p. 9 (SA) If the source of Ted the Huckster's song isn't pretty obvious, you may be reading the wrong play. Act I, The Pirates of Penzance. Mark?
- p. 9 (MK) Wargame acronyms: CRT is "combat results table". When two pieces move into contact, how to decide which one is victorious? The CRT cross-indexes strength of each piece and gives the odds for it to win; then players roll dice. -- D&D is "Dungeons and Dragons", a role-playing game based loosely on Tolkien and the Arthurian legends. -- S&S is "Sword and Shield", ancient tactical warfare, played with model Greek, Roman and barbarian soldiers. -- PBI is "Poor Bloody Infantry", an out-of-print game about World War One.
- p. 9 (SA) Thank you. "Space Monopoly" is a RISFA exclusive, invention of Don D'Ammassa, in which the streets are planets and the hotels are spaceports, or something like that. "Lend your eyes" doesn't rhyme with "Enterprise", but as many poor Trekkie filksingers have learned to their dismay, nothing rhymes with "Enterprise".

- p. 9 (SA) The Neofan's song is from another of King Gama's, this from Act I:
"Everybody says I'm such a disagreeable man / And I can't think why!"
- p. 9 (MK) Robert A. Heinlein is widely known among some of the more spaced-out members of the Aquarian Generation for writing Stranger in a Strange Land: water-brothers and grokking and like that. The Neofan has heard "grok"; doesn't know what it means, but figures it's somehow fannish. -- Oh gentle water-brothers... I could be tolerant too if I were an omnipotent murderer like V. M. Smith.
- p. 10 (SA) Come to find out that "Young Man Mulligan" is usually published in an annotated version...so it goes. If there is an Annotated Quark--
- p. 10 (SA) "Mim-e-o-graph..." is to the tune of "Miya sama, miya sama," the entrance of the Japanese court in Act II of The Mikado. // Mad Madam Mimeo's speech parodies one from Patience, again: "What's the use of yearning for Elysian Fields when you know you can't get them and would only let them out on building leases if you could?"
- p. 12 (SA) "Behold the world's most science-fictioner" is from "Behold the Lord High Executioner", Act I, Mikado. There was a song for Deadwood to the tune of "Taken from a county jail", but it got dropped.
- p. 11 (SA) "Some word that teems with hidden meaning, like -- Basingstoke!" --
(oops) Ruddigore.
- p. 12 (MK) If you must know, hectograph was a form of cheap duplication for amateur zines in the first half of the 20th century. A tray of purple jelly picked up the typed words from a page laid on top of it, then transferred the words to ten or fifteen other sheets, one at a time. Slow, messy; faint copies. The cheap spirit-master and the cheap mimeograph signalled its doom. Imagine printing a twenty-page magazine using a blob of Silly Putty as a transfer medium...
- p. 12 (MK) Show me a publisher anywhere that doesn't complain about cash flow problems. At least ZapGun Books paid its writers on acceptance of manuscript. Ted's old outfit didn't pay until the story was actually published. Rumor has it there was one zine in even worse shape: they didn't pay until threatened with lawsuit.
- p. 13 (SA) "I've Got a Little List", Act I, Mikado, again. We don't call this "Mik Ado About Nothing" for nothing. Tracking down the stfnal clichés is left as an exercise for the reader. Hint: the "pterodactyls playing whist" which Deadwood objects to are Sebastian's pets, from Nova; they are of course playing four-clawed Tarot whist.
- p. 13 (SA) The Would-Be Writer's song is "A Wand'ring Minstrel I," Act I, Mikado. Aspiring SFWAns are easy targets. (Even easier are one-story neopros trying to become two-story neopros.) You'll note, from internal evidence (David R. Bunch...New Wave...Third Foundation), that Paul Allan Sheffield has been aspiring since about 1965.
- p. 16 (SA) Some of Deadwood's associates may be looking a little familiar by this time. As a recruiting tactic, we told Joe Ross he could do his Groucho act (we felt it might help to have a lawyer on the scene). At almost the last minute, the Publisher's Rep became Harpo. Slush, the artist, seems to be a throwback to some of the legendary pulp artists of the Forties, doesn't he?

p. 17 (SA) Ted's song this time is from Jack Point's lament in Act II of Yeomen of the Guard: "A private buffoon is a light-hearted loon / If you listen to popular rumour.../ They don't blame you as long as you're funny." It is five verses long, but Richard Deadwood's normal attention span is a minute and a half. Here are the two verses which Ted left out:

(3) And you'd better catch up on your reading, my pup, an'
Watch out for the slushpile submissions;
An unscrupulous few will be out to get you
To reprint things without -- ah -- permissions.
Some readers aren't stirred if they see, word for word,
Epics stolen from Boucher or Borges;
But others I've seen turn me envious green:
"I read that thing in Air Wonder Stories!"

Oh, it won't look the best
To the readers' sharp eyes;
I sincerely suggest
That you don't plagiarize--
No, not even from Air Wonder Stories.

(4) You had best be alert lest some feelings be hurt
By what seems an innocuous story.
Or else some pressure group will land you in the soup--
If you outrage the righteous, it's gory.
In a letter campaign, if you try to explain,
You may say things that they want you banned for,
But if you give in, that's the ultimate sin:
Censorship is the thing fans won't stand for.

No, you can't edit out
Controversial stuff;
Be prepared when they shout,
Brace yourself, and act tough--
Censorship is the thing fans won't stand for.

p. 17 (MK) Ted's problem is that he is still dreaming of the two magazines he used to edit back in the good old days. Deadwood doesn't like to do SF magazines -- his own attempt was Appalling Stories, which, alas, folded after three issues - and Punchinello Books couldn't really care less about fandom or SF. They just want sales. Now do you understand why Deadwood is such a menace to Science Fiction As We Know It?

p. 18 (MK) Yes, John Norman ended Time Slave (1975) with a 20th-century woman scientist renamed Ava traveling back to the Pleistocene to become the happy slave of a caveman named Adam. And Fred Brown used the Adam-and-Eve ending, too, and so did Charles Harness in "The New Reality." Poor Paul Allan Sheffield! He thought he was following one of the grand traditions of SF.

p. 19 (SA) Elsie Smith, late of Coelacanth Stories -- Latimeria chalumnae Smith, "Old Fourlegs", the coelacanth, the living fossil of the fish world -- but you knew that -- is based upon nobody in particular. Really. Her song is based on "Little Will Be Left of Me In the Coming By and By," Act II, Patience. We left out the recitative intro: "Sad is that writer's lot who, try his best,/ Sees, one by one, his plots all laid to rest.../ Compelled at last, to turn to bygone glories/ And work up novels out of old short-stories..." It wasn't very good.

- p. 20 (SA) The "Barry Herovit" song is from Act I of Gondoliers: "There was a time, a time forever gone... Oh, bury, bury, let the grave close o'er..." Right. (Temptation, oh temptation...)
- p. 20 (SA) The Nova song is closely based on one from Act III of Ida: "When anger spreads its wing... So let us sing, Long Live the King / And his son, Hilarion." If you haven't read Nova, go do so. Even though the song gives away the ending.
- p. 21 (SA) Thanks to Mike Saler (who played the Clown) for suggesting Larry Nuthven's name. There's a character in Ruddigore called Sir Ruthven Murgatroyd (usually abbreviated "Sir Ruth", shades of Ruth, the White Dragon), pronounced "Rivven". Right again! His song is also from Ruddigore, Act II; each verse of the original ends "...but it really doesn't matter matter matter matter matter."
- p. 22 (MK) Ted is right about neofan Forrest not needing the money. He can always get a ride to Chicago, and from there it's only 130 miles to Watseca (straight through the cornfields). -- Ted's pitch is based on a Bible salesman I once knew, and on Long John Nebel. West Coast fans substitute Ralph Williams. Yes, that is a real quote from Slan, an example of Van Vogt's lyrical writing at its worst. The scene in which the Kid falls in love with a tree is authentic Dhalgren.
- p. 23 (SA) Mark had the "50 Great Space Opera Themes" sequence well in mind long before the play was suggested, and when we needed a routine to fill the stage while the plot was developing elsewhere, there it was. (That's Watseka, by the by.) We've already been taken to task for daring to speak irreverently of R. A. Heinlein. After Number of the Beast, I'm looking for an excuse to dump some more...
- p. 24 (MK) The Teen-Age Death Songs derive from a game published in National Lampoon in early 1975. Oh, we could have done more, many more. The chorus exhibited an unexpected desire to imitate Sha Na Na or the Shangri-Las. -- Recognize all the songs? "I Want My Baby Back" is a little-remembered classic, the ultimate teen-age death song. Done by Jimmy Cross in 1964. (No, not Jommy Cross; he's the slan boy.) "Baby Back" tells of a teen-ager so broken by the death and burial of his girlfriend, dead in a car crash, that after six months he goes to the graveyard and digs up her coffin and ... and sings "Now I've Got My Baby Back". No wonder you'd never heard of it. Now you have.
- p. 26 (SA) Speaking of being taken to task, the SCA song, which first appeared in Don D'Ammassa's Mythologies, has been called "garbage" by an SCA zealot. He later recanted. But it's a nice recommendation. The song is based on one from Act II of Patience, in which three officers of the Dragoon Guards decide to become æsthetic in hopes the Ladies will like them again: "It's clear that Medieval art alone retains its zest... By hook or crook you try to look / Both angular and flat," and Sullivan flattened the note for "flat", so the word had to stay the same in the parody! A challenge!
- ~ 26 (MK) Richard Deadwood greatly overestimates the power of the King in the SCA. But that's not surprising; many members of the Society have made the same mistake. As to "Medieval Fandom" being garbage, I am a member of the SCA and I like it, and if any caitiff churl claim it is an insult to the noble Society, I call him a lyar in his teethe and do challenge him to ye single combatte with any mannere of laweful wepon so that I maye proove on his calumniating carcase the falsenesse of his error ... oops, sorry. Get carried away sometimes. Ahem.

p. 27 (SA) Thanks to Mike Blake for suggesting, and to Sheila D'Ammassa for writing the first draft of, the finale, a reprise of the opening song. I had to throw out the first intended finale, disgustingly complex, when the chorus didn't have a chance to learn it in the rehearsal time available. This one has better words, too.

Again, thanks to Sheila D'Ammassa, Mike Blake, Mike Saler, most of the people in the cast, and the powers that be for suggesting chunks of dialogue. and to Joe Ross for his relatively restrained stage business. -- SA

How the Play Came to Be Written

The RISFA Players used to rouse themselves into corporate existence once a year to put together a group presentation for a convention costume show, generally at Boskone. But then came the word -- no more costume shows at Boskone. Showing good Darwinian principles of adaptation, the Players scurried for another niche. Why not put on a full scale dramatic presentation?

Well, why not? Sue Anderson had a folder full of fannish Gilbert and Sullivan parodies, some already published in local apas. Mark M. Keller had frustrated ambitions to stage either Fritz Leiber's The Big Time or Mozart's Don Giovanni as SF productions. Chip Hitchcock always believed he could whip an assortment of random fans into a good chorus. --- We had the talent, and as soon as the Boskone Committee heard of our plans, we had the space. It was too late to back out.

We had Sue's lyrics to about half the G&S parodies from the beginning, which helped, although it twisted the plot into some strange directions. Mark had written the "50 Great Space Operas" in 1974 as a possible filler for Discon. (The Players did "Buckets of Gor" instead that year.) There was, in fact, so much material that the problem was -- what to cut? Omitted were: scenes in which professors of English from the Modern Language Association descend on the con to investigate SF -- an aria by Isaac Asimov or facsimile -- an ode to the MidAmeriCon Committee -- the whole libretto of "Wilbur Whately Superstar" and other Lovecraftiana -- a sequence on comics fandum -- starship hijackers -- lots of hucksters, in chorus -- 1930s pulps nostalgia -- and so on and so on.

That's almost enough to do a whole other play. Maybe two. Gee.

-- MMK

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Why Gilbert and Sullivan?

Here is is almost a hundred years after the flourishing period of the career(s) of W. S. Gilbert and A. S. Sullivan, and their works are still being produced and parodied by groups all over the English-speaking world, amateur as well as professional. They were certainly an odd combination -- Sullivan the composer, a staunch Victorian in all senses of the word, puritanical formal, devout (he was given a knighthood by Queen Victoria for writing hymns such as "Onward Christian Soldiers"); Gilbert the librettist/lyricist, irreverent, addicted to lawsuits and puns, fond of young ladies, so nervous about his scripts that he never attended an opening night. It's almost fannish.

-- MMK

(What do you mean, almost fannish? -- SA)

CAST OF THE FIRST PERFORMANCE OF MIK ADO ABOUT NOTHING by THE RISFA
 PLAYERS
 (Boskone XIV, 19 February 1977)
 (Sheraton-Boston Hotel)

Chairfan (organizer)	Elliot Kay Shorter
Forrest J. Tucker (neofan)	Mike Blake
Seymour from Under the Swamp	Paul Di Filippo
Fay the SCA Lady	Faye Ringel
Eloise the Trekkie	Nancy Hussar
Completist	Morris M. Keesan
Ted the Huckster	Mark M. Keller
Mad Madam Mimeo	Sheila G. D'Ammassa
Dr. Fred Werthless	George Flynn
Richard Deadwood	Richard Harter
His Retinue:	
Mongo the Guard	Robert Benson/Rick Katze
Rufus T. Firefly, attorney	A. Joseph Ross, Esq.
O'Shaughnessy Slush, artist	Rick Sternbach
Publisher's Representative (honk!)	Mike Saler
Paul Allan Sheffield, would-be writer	Topher Cooper
Elsie Smith	Judith Schrier
James Treetop, Jr.	Krissy
Barry Herovit	William H. Desmond
Random NOVA Fan	Chip Hitchcock
Larry Nuthven	Andrew Adams Whyte
Fifty Great Space Operas:	
Slans	Jim Mann
The Kid	Laurie Trask
Seymour from Under the Swamp	Seymour from Under the Swamp
Tree	Debbie Newton
Lazarus Long	Mike Saler

SCA Recruiting Tourney:

Herald	Paul Mulvaney
Fighters	Evan Schrier
SCA Lady	Danamas Icarus
	Marya Schrier

Chorus of Fans:

Chip Hitchcock, Sheila G. D'Ammassa, Morris M. Keesan, Nancy Hussar,
 Mike Blake, Lori Meltzer, Topher Cooper, Krissy, Jacob Bloom, and
 Robert Benson

Directed by Sue Anderson and Mark M. Keller

Musical & Technical Director: Chip Hitchcock

Props: Jacob Bloom and various hands

Pianists: Faye Ringel, Morris M. Keesan, Clark Jarvis

Tape Recording: Kenneth P. Winters

Second Edition: Typos by Sue Anderson. Our motto: "If Roscoe hadn't
 meant us to sniff corflu, He wouldn't have given us
 fingers."

POOR LOBSTER-
ONLY ROSCOE
COULD HELP
HIM NOW.

OR ANITA!



AH, MAC,
YOU THINK THAT
MIGHT BE ...
ANTI-FAN?

