

PowWow #23

PowWow #23 is by Joyce Worley Katz, created for the monthly assembly of Apa V, September 8, 1995. Thanks to Arnie for doing the onerous chores. This is Mailing Number Twenty-Three, and we're getting mighty near to our second annish of this worthy organization. But, live for the day--that's the fannish way. And today's subject is one close to every Insurgent's heart, the sort of thing that could grow to be a habit, the oil that greases the wheels of IF, brings sunshine to Seattle, and keeps Falls Church from falling.

Something Funny

FanMetheus

A Tom With No Ease

Tom Springer knew this must be the desert. Instinct told him, instinct and the stinking alkali smell. Even more than that, the glow of the Las Vegas lights far far in the distance told him, as they blotted out the Big Dipper and the North Star. Because, no matter what had happened, Earth still had its polarity.

There was no cactus. There was no living thing. Only the long white stretch of burning sand that lay before him, and the long white stretch of burning sand behind. A line of mountains lay like a cloud of gray ash far away, trailing across the horizon.

Winds blew, and the sand whipped around him, cutting him with its tiny blades. Rain fell, and the sand turned to mud. Then the sun baked the mud into a white cement. And still Tom crawled on.

Calluses formed on his elbows and knees. His broad shoulders toughened. His sinewy thighs turned to steel. And he kept on crawling.

A form reared up before him, and words drifted to

him. "Well, what are you going to do about it?"

It was Hooper. Standing tall and mighty, his fez blotted out the sun. "Crawl, Tom, crawl. You'll find nothing but sand."

Hooper produced a cigarette lighter from his pocket. He flipped it, and a golden flame danced in his hand.

"Hooper!" shouted Tom. He raised his hands, trying to reach the fire, but pain stopped him. He fell back to the desert.

Hooper waved the flame in front of Tom's eyes, standing just out of reach from the quivering fan.

"Keep crawling," he said bitterly. "Crawl round and round this stinking desert. You'll find nothing but sand."

Suddenly he was gone.

Tom wept. The tears flowed wetly into his mouth and gave him strength. "I must go on," he swore. "I must find my way into the Valley of Fire." And he crawled, painfully, step by step, into the west.

The sand whipped around him as the wind grew stronger. He reached back, pulled out his knapsack. It held three things. There was

a copy of *The Enchanted Duplicator*. There was a portable computer. There was a picture of the Tucker Hotel.

He typed a few words of the next issue of **Brody**, then read six chapters of **The Enchanted Duplicator**. He lay down in the sand, eyes fixed on the picture of Tucker Hotel.

In his tormented dreams, he saw it happen. Silken voices murmured to shopkeepers about merchandise reorganization. Fleets of trucks arrived from the north, filled with replacement supplies. Stealthy figures crept over the Vegas Valley, dark in the shadow of The Great Man, as they peered under the hoods of cars.

Joyce tapped him on the shoulder. Tom knew it was her before he looked up. He could tell by the brown wooden box she had in her hand.

"Tom," she said, "You've got to hurry." He raised himself up on his hands and knees. Her voice drifted to him as he crawled away. "Hurry, Tom, we're waiting."

Tom remembered how it started. He drug himself inch

by inch over the burning white sands, and thought of the beginning.

Everyone had been so happy at SilverCon III. It didn't seem like anything could disrupt the Fandom of Good Cheer. Then it happened.

It was the lure of cheap shrimp cocktails that started it. But then it grew. Dan printed up membership cards. Someone invented a Secret Signal. Before anyone knew what was going on. The Shrimp Boys had become a power to deal with.

Next, Hooper started threatening people with fish. "I'll hit you with a flounder," he bellowed. It was obvious that The Shrimp Boys had gained support of the denizens of the deep.

Vegas fandom went happily on, blissfully unaware of the mounting perfidity. They pubbed their ish, baked their turkeys, and held numerous legal conferences as they discussed the important issues of the day, like the history of numbered fandom and the future of fanzines. They felt secure. Impervious. "Let them have their measly

shrimp," they said to one another. "We'll roast our all-beef hotdogs and be strong."

Then it all exploded. Dinners lay icy on their plates. Fireplaces were cold; the buns were frozen. Even the sparkplugs had been removed from their cars. When they went to buy fire-starters for the barbeque, there were none. Matches disappeared from the supermarket stores. "I don't know where they are," whined the clerk at Smith's Grocery. "Someone must have moved them."

"No matter," chirped the shopping fen, "we'll use lighters."

A large display of lighters gleamed like plastic jewels, in all the colors of the rainbow. But, across every lighter was emblazened one word, "Childproof". No one in Las Vegas, where fan hearts are pure, untroubled by vice, corruption or mechanical dexterity, could fathom how to use them.

And so Tom crawled. The future of Las Vegas Fandom depended on him.

Before him a shape began to form from the dust. It grew

larger, more ominous, crouching like a wounded buffalo on the desert floor. Its shadow fell across his body, cooling him. He raised one caloused paw, to wipe the sand from his eyes. He could barely distinguish the outline of a sign.

"Moapa Smoke Shop" it said. He eased himself through the door, and lay at the feet of a bronze idol.

"What'll you have?" said the idol.

"Must have...." Tom's throat was parched, his body wrecked. His blistered mouth formed words, but they sounded like the cackling of a demented crow.

"Speak up, white eyes." The bronze idol seemed irritated.

"Lighter.... must have lighter." Tom lay with his face turned toward the sky.

"Two for a buck," said the Indian. He picked up a big plastic bucket filled with contraband lighters, and put it before Tom. "Take your pick." They gleamed and glowed to Tom, like a femmefan's smile. None of them were approved for children.

Tom laid his dollar down, and picked up two lighters.

Fans would again gather around turkey-laden tables. Fans would again fire their barbeques, roast their all-beef hotdogs. Sidebars would gather them in dens and garages all over Las Vegas. They'd warm themselves with the flames he brought, light their candles, start their seed fires. It would all happen again.

Tom lit a pipe, and smiled up at the neon lights that danced across the sky as the sands rippled and rocked him to sleep.

Fandom had been saved.

