

A Wild Heirs Special

# TRUE FAN DETECTIVE MAGAZINE

All True!  
All Fannish!

You Must Read:

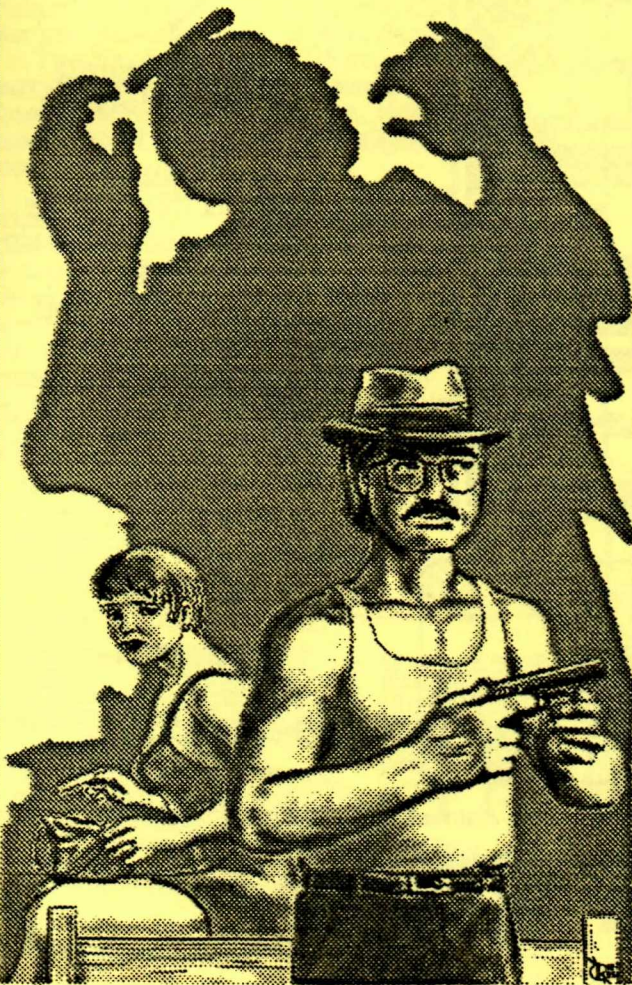
## Crime

Stalks the Fanworld

A Messy  
Situation

And the thrilling  
conclusion of...

## The CSFL Hotdog Mystery



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# TRUFAN DETECTIVE MAGAZINE



**A Messy  
Situation**



**Crime  
Stalks the Fanworld**



**Me, My Plonker  
and Ken Forman**



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## From the Files of the Bureau of Fannish Detection

### Chapter One: The Party of the First Part

I've often remarked on how local fans tidy up after our parties. There's always going to be some clean-up after a Night of Frolic, but fans rarely leave until they've gathered up the drink can, emptied the ashtrays and stacked the chairs in the garage.

I am almost embarrassed by the pleasure I feel when I see this process underway. Hosts in less fortunate fandoms often experience post-party depression when they survey the wreckage of the event. Even after a Social, usually a gathering of 30-50, we seldom spend more than a half-hour -- plus the same amount of time the next morning to empty the sodas and beer cans out of the bathtub and get plates and glasses into the dishwasher.

The Vegrants' predilection for cleanliness continues, but the fanzine fan club isn't the totality of the Fandom of Good Cheer. Some recent newcomers -- I hesitate to call them fans -- are apparently unaware of social niceties like not dropping chicken bones in the corner of my office or toeing out cigarettes on our just-refinished coral pink deck.

The Thursday night Silvercon 4 kick-off party drew over 60. Most were considerate. Enough who weren't, though, that I found a mountain of debris in the backyard Friday morning.

I'd just gotten a letter from John Berry (the fingerprint expert, former Wheel of IF and founder of the Goon Defective Agency) a couple of days earlier. I'd dug out my beloved, bulky file of **Retribution**, painstakingly acquired one at a time from zoned-out fans at Corflu parties. I thrilled anew to the daring exploits of the crimefighting colossus in the trilby hat and luxuriant mustache. Those exquisite zines were sitting on my desk, not the one with the Macintosh, but in my secret *sanctum sanitarium*.

If only the Goon were here! I thought about the disks packed solid with porno GIFs. They'd be ideal to pay his customary fee. And thanks to the miracle of computer technology, I'd be able to retain that shot of Julia Parton bathing with her rubber ducky. A woman who knew how to enjoy herself, I thought, and a lovely visual image.

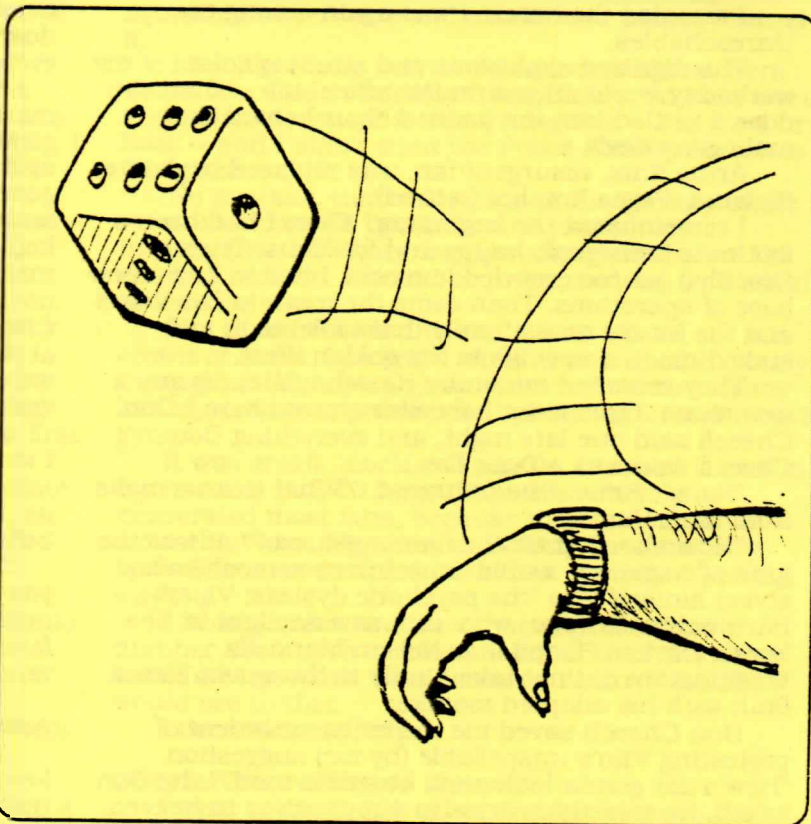
After a couple of hours, I pulled away from this reverie. Daydreams would do no good. The Goon was retired, living in England and trying to become a Filthy Pro. He could not help me.

I thought again of **Retribution**. I might need them now, as I had on another occasion when I had faced a deeper, more personal problem.

It was time to Contemplate the Infinite.

### Chapter Two: Hyde in Secret

I listened carefully. Nothing. Toner Hall was



# A MESSY SITUATION BY ARNIE KATZ

empty except for me and Slugger, the yellow-and-white monster who pretends to be our family cat. My secret was safe in his paws. No one would ever make him talk -- or do anything except eat, sleep, and use his litter box -- and bite and claw anyone who challenged his domain.

I hurried down the hall and turned left into the guest room that doubles as Marcy Waldie's office during the business day. I darted into the huge closet, tripped nimbly over a box of x-rated video tapes from Mark Kernes and closed the door behind me. Practiced fingers flicked the hidden light switch.

I moved a few cartons of old video games and rotated the middle clothes hook on the wall. Gears turned. The previously invisible ceiling hatch opened with a barely detectable swoosh. (Actually, it was mechanically perfect and noiseless, but I had the sound on tape loop for atmosphere.) I climbed up the retractable ladder into the secret room.

I resealed the hatch. I was again among the Unreachables.

The digitized explosions and strobing colors of my workaday world stayed on the other side of that trap door. I settled into the padded chair behind the mahogany desk.

Arnie Katz, resurgent fan, was replaced by Andre Kassino, Vegas hotshot (retired).

I remembered the beginning. Once I had been a footloose Insurgent, happy and frivolous. Then Brooklyn got too crowded, too cold. I had to find a new base of operations. Then came the move to Las Vegas and the kindly mafia family that took me in and staked me to a new life in the golden West.

They renamed me Andre Kassino. "Get dis guy a new name, none a dat hebe shit around here," Don Cheech said one late night, and everything Don Cheech said was a Done Deal.

"Katz... Katz..." he muttered. "What can we make from that, Vito?"

"How about Arnie Catelamongaluzzo?" It was the kind of name one would expect from someone who styled himself Vito "the psychotic dyslexic Viper" Bartluchinetti. Vito, who first saw daylight in New York's Harlem Hospital as Nelson Mandela Washington, did not take kindly to those who found fault with his adopted moniker.

Don Cheech saved me the embarrassment of protesting Vito's unspellable (by me) suggestion. "How's dat gonna look onna business card?" the Don asked. He raised his arms in supplication to heaven. "We gotta have a classy name for the kid." He looked at me, sitting tensely in the straight chair. "Hey, you're some kinda genius writer -- gimme a name for yourself!"

"André Kassino," I said, before Vito could blurt out another tongue-twister. "Does that sound right, Godfather?" The gray-haired boss nodded, bringing his multiple chins into additional prominence.

I became Andre Kassino.

I recalled my final year of gafia, those days of hot lead and hotter women. Computer game expert Arnie Katz by day, flashy player Andre Kassino at night. I heard the clicking of roulette wheels and felt the rumble of trucks hauling tons of nothing to parts unknown -- at double golden holiday wages.

Those bogus trash trucks had made my fortune. How appropriate for a fanzine editor, I often mused as

I watched the phantom fleet head out on the highway with non-existent loads of refuse. Garbage and I were made for each other.

Then as suddenly as it started, that chapter of my life ended. Like most revelations, it came unexpectedly. I was sorting through old fanzines, thinking about the fine fannish times of my youth for the first time in over a decade. When I unearthed **Retribution**, the official organ of the Goon Defective Agency co-edited by John Berry and Arthur Thomson. I thumbed the immaculate buff-colored pages, captivated by ATom's cartooning. Inevitably, I reread **Ret** from its first issue.

It had been a long time since I'd read those accounts of the GDA's many fannish cases. The Goon's exploits had lost none of their entertainment value or moral vigor.

Time lost its meaning as I read tale after tale of Goon Bleary's manic manhunts. I thought of that heroic figure, plonker cocked and ready to blast evildoers, and I was ashamed. (I was not \*ashamed\* or even Ashamed, because I was not yet a reborn fan.)

I knew what the Goon would say. He would look at me sternly, disappointment dulling the abnormal gleam in his eyes. "Sufferin' catfish," he would say, and perhaps even throw in a "crikey." "Yer a trufan gone fake!" I would never have been able to meet his steadfast gaze. The mere thought of his disapproval kept me sitting and thinking in the tiny room for many, many hours.

Certainty arrived with the sunrise over Mt. Charleston. "Red sky at night, sailor's delight; red sky at morning, sailors take warning," the adage said. I wondered if there were similar portents for guys who want to get back on the right side of the street.

After working up my courage for a couple of days, I went to see Don Cheech.

"A family must stay together, for in that unity lies its strength," he said once I had placed my petition before him. "The strength of the family is its unity."

"I understand that, Don Cheech," I soothed. "And you have built a strong family." He grunted noncommittally at the compliment. "I am just a fanzine fan. Let me leave. You can trust me. I wouldn't repay your kindness with betrayal."

"How do I know this?" the Don said. "Maybe you're gonna go talk to the Feds."

"With all respect, Don Cheech, you would not have kept me with you this last year if you thought I was that kind of man."

"Yes, yes, you're right." Several big sighs. "You're a good boy. Maybe you're not cut out for this family life." I started to speak, but he commanded my silence with a gesture. "You do not need to speak further of this to me. You may go."

"Thank you, Don Cheech," I said.

"But you better not get mixed up in my business," he said, his voice now low and rumbling. "I let you go, but not to work independent!"

"That will never happen," I promised. He poured small glasses of some thick, amber-colored cordial.

"Now let us drink to your new life," Don Cheech said. We each picked up a glass and downed the liquor in a single swallow. I didn't know fire came in licorice flavor.

I walked out of Don Cheech's paneled office, afraid to look back to see whether my erstwhile benefactor

had sent one of his boys after me. It took all my willpower to keep my eyes straight ahead and not glance over my shoulder. If Don Cheech intended to send someone to "see me off," I was as good as dead anyway. There was no sense finding out about it prematurely. If he was really letting me go, which I devoutly prayed he was, looking back would have been a sign of disrespect that could've changed his feelings about my future health.

I walked out of Don Cheech's office that day, out of the half-world of glitz and glamour. I walked away from Andre Kassino and back to Arnie Katz.

I rejoined fandom. Soon I was pubbing my ish, trading letters with faraway fans, and all the rest of it. I was Arnie Katz, whole and at peace for the first time in years.

The other side of my life was gone, but not forgotten. At times of utmost tranquillity, I missed the excitement, the danger, the sheer adventure. I never seriously considered becoming the Andre Kassino of yore, but I faunched for that adrenaline rush that spells high voltage thrills.

So I set up the secret room, the one above the guest room. I got in the habit of spending odd hours there, reading old fanzines. Gradually, after a while, I moved some memorabilia to this sanctuary. Just a slow trickle of things that even sharp-eyed Joyce didn't miss among the knickknacks and objets d'art that cover most of the flat surfaces in our home.

As I filled and lit the pipe, I looked at my surroundings. As always, my eye came to rest upon the huge oil portrait on the wall opposite my desk. I studied the lined face under the deerstalker cap. Those fiery eyes! They missed nothing and met any gaze. The painting was so lifelike that the sweeping wings of his mustache looked poised to flap at the first movement of his noble head.

Beneath the painting was a small gold nameplate inscribed in forceful block letters: The Goon!

Yes, Goon Bleary, watchdog of fandom for two decades. He'd retired years ago, and fandom had never been quite the same.

How many times had I poured out my heart to this painting? None, but this was a good time to start. Now, as I pondered the biggest decision of my life, I silently implored the Goon to give me a sign.

I waited with mounting anticipation for a steaming teakettle, or similar trufannish manifestation, to speak words of wisdom to me. None did, though a clock commented on my possible mental state when a little birdie popped out to mark the hour.

I hadn't read "The Minute Manager," but I once walked past a bookstore which, at a previous time, had featured it in the window. I knew there was no percentage in sitting there, reeling off flashbacks like a fannish Joe Franklin.

### Chapter Three: A Fan of Action

Then it came to me: Lack of a \*Sign\* -- I'd been back in fandom almost five years and rediscovered the asterisk -- could itself be a sign. Yes, that was it! With his awesome silence, the Goon was telling me that I couldn't rely on the past. He could not come to my aid, so it was definitely up to me to unravel the puzzle of the mysterious mess.

Right then and there I vowed to carry on his great work, fight crime and injustice in fandom. Thus was

the Bureau of Fannish Detection born. Not a minute old, and already I had my first BFD case!

I closed up the secret study, and when I was sure that no one would see, scampered down the ladder and tripped over that box of x-rated video tapes. I hurried to the door and bounced off the jamb with only minor contusions. I staggered across the hall, through the master bedroom, into the master bathroom and out the door to the back yard.

I was in a deductive frame of mind as I paced what I mentally dubbed The Scene of the Crime. As I tugged at my mustache thoughtfully, I wished I'd known about this case -- my first case! -- sooner. I would have put more effort into growing it fuller in emulation of my hero. If it was bigger, maybe I could've had bigger thoughts.

"Too late for regrets," I muttered as I surveyed the area, alert for the slightest incongruity. And right at the epicenter of the worst of the mess, among squashed beer cans and abandoned plates, I found it.

I felt like Philip Marlow, Sherlock Holmes, Nero Wolfe. Aw, heck, I felt like Goon Bleary. I'd have worn a trenchcoat, except it was 97 degrees -- but it's a dry heat -- and I didn't want the Police Flasher Squad to recognize me.

No mistake, this was a clue to the identity of the worst slackers. I'd bring them to justice. My investigative brilliance would indict them before the court of fandom. I would be judge, jury ad D. West all rolled into one.

The Clue beckoned to me. It was a jewel set in a crown of trash. I picked it up and examined it closely through a magnifying glass some software company had sent me as a promotional premium for a detective game.

It was small, black and plastic. I turned it over in my hand. It had 10 faces. That immediately exonerated most fans, because they seldom have more than two. We must be looking for some very special fans, even apart from their garbage-strewing ways.

I looked closer and saw that each face had a number, from zero to nine. Soon all their numbers would be up. Arnie Katz, formerly Andre Kassino, would see to that.

I needed some help.

### Chapter Four: Whatsa Watson?

I went to my public office and got busy on the phone. Within minutes, the door bell rang. I heard footsteps, and JoHn Wesley Hardin stood before me.

"What is it, Arnie?"

"Call me Chief," I spat.

"Can't I call you 'Godfather' like always?" he asked, after he wiped the moisture off his shirt.

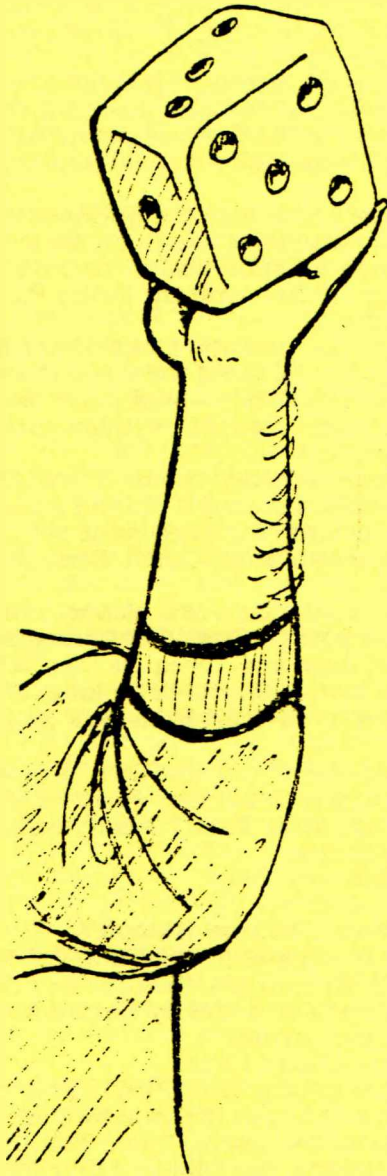
"I'm on a case, JoHn," I told him. That wouldn't explain anything, but I had no time for explanations. No time for anything but solving this case. Except a pun or two, and a few asides and digressions.

"A case of what?" JoHn demanded. "Will it get me high?"

"It depends on how far up the conspiracy goes," I told him.

"Conspiracy?" he echo'd, dubiously. "This isn't about those fantasy fans again, is it?"

"No, that was Joyce's conspiracy," I corrected. "I'm



talking about the incident at the party."

"Incident?" JoHn asked, tempting me to pad this narrative with a repetitious explanation. I handed him the story so far and waited while he read it. Then I waited while he read all the fanzines on my desk and the instructions to three new discs for the Sega Saturn.

"I see," he said. "This is a serious matter."

"I'm glad you realize the gravity of the situation," I continued. "We must solve this case and rescue the reputation of Las Vegas Fandom."

"I didn't think you could rescue that kind of reputation." He paused. "I didn't think you could touch it without gloves."

"We'll see," I said grimly. "We'll see"

"Look, Arnie," JoHn said, "we've got a 10-sided die." He held it up between thumb and forefinger. This reminded me that I should've dusted for prints. Whatever that means. I was out of Pledge anyway. "You know what that means?"

"Someone's gonna fail their agility roll?"

"That's true," JoHn acknowledged, "but that wasn't what I had in mind." Did he expect me to read his thoughts? The next thing, he'd be expecting me to be a psychic psychologist.

"Sufferin' catfish, JoHn," I said.

"Do you think catfish really suffer?" John inquired. "Do diners at a fish fry have the viscous fluid of suffering catfish on their hands?"

"Only if they're sloppy eaters," I replied. It made me feel good to have some of the answers, even if I didn't have a clue about this case. Well, to be technical, I *did* have a clue. I just didn't know what to do with it.

"You said it yourself, Arnie," JoHn said. He can be so insistent. "This is a percentile die."

"Don't we need another to play?"

His eyes screwed up, his shoulders hunched, and he emitted a sound like "dough," only elongated into a moan. I hoped it wasn't a sudden attack of indigestion or other untoward occurrence that would frustrate our work on this case. "That's the point," he said when his facial muscles stopped twitching.

"Gee, JoHn, this die has so many little points," I rubbed my finger along one. "It's easy to get confused about which one you mean."

"They're slightly rounded, it appears. Do you think that's significant?"

"No, not really," he said. I wondered why he was doing eye-strengthening exercises at a time like this. Rolling them around that way must be uncomfortable. I supposed it would make him a fitter Arfer to my Goon, so I knew I should be grateful. Still, I wondered about the timing. "But you're overlooking the forest for the trees."

I whirled around. No trees. At least none that I could see. Those eye-strengthening exercises were already improving his vision! "Good work, JoHn. Lead me to those trees!"

He made that "dough" sound again, which wasn't what I kneaded. "No, Arnie, what I meant was that the presence of the die itself is significant."

"Why didn't you say so?" I'd have to get him a supply of No-Doughs if detecting became a regular job. "This is incontrovertibly a percentile die, the certain spoor of the roleplaying gamer!"

"Yeah, they use 'em to see if they can climb a wall or drink your blood or something, right?" I'd led a checkered life, so I knew how the game was played. Someone had dropped the die, and when I put a plonker bolt in the middle of his or her forehead, they'd sing like 20 drunken flkfers in a soundproof room.

"That's right, Arnie," he said. "Now what we have to do is find the gamers, and see which one is our quarry."

"So what you're saying is that the litterbugs were not loyal and true science fiction fans," I summarized. What a tonic for my trufannish sensibilities! Now I could just blame it all on another tribe.

"You've got it."

"I think we'd better pay a visit to some gamers," I said, putting an edge into my voice.

"And you are...?" April asked from behind the registration desk.

"Arnie Katz," I spat. Ever the gentleman, JoHn sprang forward, handi-wipe rampant, to mop it up.

"How do you spell it?"

"Correctly most of the time, except when my fingers slip and it comes out 'Arine'."

While April was banging her head against the wall, her replacement efficiently prepared our badges. Silvercon, here we come!!

### Chapter Five: Interview with a Vampire

"Hello, fanboy, I was wondering when you'd show up," a voice husked from a doorway. I noted the heavy breathing and come-hither look.

I reached for my wallet. No detective yarn is complete without a sex scene, and I was willing to pay up to \$20 to add one to this story.

Then I saw she had a con badge and put away my wallet. I wouldn't need the \$20 this time. This was one of those fanzine femme fatales, with love and flesh in equal superfluity.

"You look like a woman who knows where it's at," I said to her. I blinked my eyes. This close to the gazebo, the smell of steer manure irritated my sensitive orbs.

The femmefan must have been experiencing the same difficulty, because she blinked her eyes, or one of them at any rate, back at me. "I sure do," she said.

"Good, then you can tell me where it is," I said.

"I'm looking for games."

"Come inside, and we'll play," she said.

"No time for games. I'm on a case." I held up the percentile die. "Lose this?"

"No, I don't use dice," she said. "though if you strung them together and insert them in your..."

She seemed to have lost the thread of conversation, but she wasn't the malefactor. She was useful, since she didn't know the location of the game room, but she was in the clear.

I relaxed. "No time for that now. I'm on a case. Thanks anyway," I added as I walked down the path toward a conspicuous building. One of the reasons it was so conspicuous was that JoHn was standing by the door hollering his head off: "Hey, Arnie!" and pointing inside.

"You sure we'll find the gamers?" I asked JoHn as I climbed the three steps to the doorway.

"They're here, all right," he said, grimly.

We entered a large room, which was filled with fans grouped around tables. I heard the clink of dice and the growls of the lupines. I observed the oblivious knots of gamers and wondered about the best way to proceed with my investigation. Not for the first time, I asked myself, what would Goon Bleary do?

Then I Knew. One instant I was just standing there, directions, and the next I had a firm course and true. I would imitate the mustachioed sleuth. "Crikey, Arfer, I mean JoHn, what should we do?" I asked. I felt good. I was starting to get the hang of this fan detective stuff. I fancied that even Goon Bleary couldn't have asked that question any faster.

Before JoHn could speak, Will Ryan, an out of town gamer briefly active in Las Vegas Fandom in pre-contact days, strolled up to us. He looked worried.

"Hi, Will," JoHn said.

"Hi JoHn, Hi Arnie," Will said. "Have either of you seen my percentile dice? I'm looking for a little black one."

"I'd like to help you, Will," I replied, "but we're on a case. I'll tackle yours as soon as we get this one solved."

"Arnie..." JoHn said. "Don't you think we should show our clue to Will?" I thought one sidekick was enough, but I'd go along with JoHn if a show of harmony kept the investigation going.

"Good point, JoHn," I responded enthusiastically. This was the kind of sharp thinking that even the Goon himself would envy. "Maybe you can help us solve this case so we can accept your assignment," I said as I held out the 10-sided die.

"That's it!" He said, eyes wide with wonder. "You found my lucky die!"

"Glad to help, Will," I said. "Well, JoHn, we'd better get going."

"Don't you think we should question Will, since it's his die you found at the scene?"

"That's a point, JoHn, a definite point." I looked directly at Will, who seemed a little confused by the abrupt change in the mood. "Where were you Thursday night!"

"I was at your house, Arnie," he said. "I was there all night."

"And did you go out to the Jacuzzi?" JoHn demanded. "Where you in the deck area after 10:00 on Thursday night?"

"Y-yes," he was warily. "Are you guys playing a life action version of *Maltese Falcon* or something?" It was a good idea, but I'd already written too much of the story this way. I would have to play the card, and dice, that fate dealt me.

"No, this is reality," I said. "Friday morning, I went out to the backyard and found heaps of squashed cans, half-empty plates, glassware and that die," I told him. "It was just sitting there, in the middle of the clutter. Got any idea how it got there?"

"Will Ryan, you are the mysterious messer, and I have caught you!" I thundered. "Guilty! Guilty! Guilty!" I screamed. I had read that in some classic novel, or maybe *Doonsbury*.

The accusation's effect on Will Ryan was dramatic. He reeled back, knees buckling slightly. His shocked gasp was the only sound audible in the vast room, which had quieted suddenly grown tomblike.

"Uh, Arnie, I think you may have, er, miscalculated," JoHn said as he pried my fingers from Ryan's spasmodically twitching arm. "If he made the mess, why would he have put the die in the middle of it? If he'd seen the die, he would have picked it up so he could use it today at the con."

"That's right, Arnie. It's my lucky die," Will put in quickly. "It rolls a lot of high numbers."

"It must have been someone else, person or persons unknown, who left it there for me to discover," I said. "You are innocent, Will Ryan, and I hereby exonerate you."

"Sorry about this, Will," JoHn said. "Maybe we can get you a job as the open act for OJ Simpson."

"Don't go yet," I said. Will looked really alarmed this time. "You may be an eye witness. Do you remember who was out there?"

"Well..." he was hesitating. I drew my plonker.

"I don't want to have to zap you," I told him as I waved the menacing muzzle under his nose, "but I will. Unless you cooperate."

"Cooperate?" he repeated. "Sure... sure, Arnie."

"That's the right spirit," I told him. "Now who were they?"

"I can't rat out my friends," he said, though I could tell his resistance was weakening.

I had another idea. I told Will to stand there and gave him a look that I hoped was piercing enough to pin him to the spot. I pulled JoHn aside for a small strategy conference. He was dubious at first, but I stood on his bare foot until he saw the reasonableness of my idea.

"OK, Will," I said when we'd rejoined him. "I'm roleplaying the prison guard and you're a Denebian smuggler we've pulled in to try to get a line on the space pirates. JoHn is the dungeon master"

"This is a game?" he was positively bewildered.

"Yep. I invented it recently," I assured him. Two minutes ago, in fact, though I did not share this data with him.

"And then you'll leave me along so I can go back to the other game?"

"Absolutely," said Warden Hardin. "We'll spring you."

"OK."

"Loan me those dice for a second," I asked. He handed them over. "I'm torturing the prisoner, using Altarian vibro needles under his finger nails and shooting 5000 volts a jolt through his testicles."

Will moaned right on cue. I could see why he was considered a good RPGer.

I rolled a "72.." The plan was working! "Made my inquisitors skill roll," I announced triumphantly.

"Now you've got to roll for a resistance test," JoHn announced, exactly as I told him to do.

Will took the dice, cupped them in my hands. He shook them a long time as sweat trickled down his forehead. Finally, he tossed them. A "98"

"Oooooo sorry, you failed the role," JoHn reported. "But you were *very* close."

"Now you've got to tell me what I want to know," I reminded. "Where are those space pirates who left the garbage behind on their last mission at my house?"

Will Ryan hung his head, a defeated man. "They're in room 1848."

"Thanks, Will," John said.

"You won't fry my nuts anymore, right?" he called after us as I ran from the hall with JoHn pounding after me.

### Chapter Six: The Final Scene

JoHn reached out to knock on the door to 1848. I reached out and stopped his hand short of the mark. "We'd better check our weapons<" I cautioned. "We can't hurry this. We've got to have our wits about us."

"Then you're only half-armed," he said.

"No, I've got the trusty plonker, too." I pulled it out of my shoulder holster and checked the tension on the red-sucker-tipped bolt already lodged in the barrel. "I'm ready, what about you?"

"I've got this. Aileen thought we'd need it." He reached under his coat and brought out the multi-barreled nerf gun with which the Silvercon chairman had threatened early arrivals to the opening ceremony. The business end looked like a custom-made dildo for a cluster fuck. No question, my sidekick was prepared for the worst.

He banged on the door. I heard running footsteps and then the door opened a crack. "We're gaming." said the kid with long stringy hair wearing an "I {Heart} DOOM" teeshirt.

I recognized him from the party. Things happened fast after that. I drew my plonker as I bulled forward, put my shoulder into the door and blasted it off its rotting hinges like Jim Harmon paying a Midsection visit to Harlan Ellison's room.

Well, I would've blasted it off its rotting hinges, except that the kid opened tit wide, slapped a diet Coke in my hand and showed me a seat.

"Hey, everybody," he shouted. "This is that Arnie Katz guy we went to on Thursday." A chorus of hellos issued from people dressed as everything from Klingons to Klingons.

"So," he said, returning his attention to me. "What can the Klingon Empire do for you, Earther?"

"When you were at my home..." I saw a disapproving look. "When you were at my space port the other night," I corrected, "you left all kinds of half-eaten food and crushed and leaking beer cans on the desk. It took me a half-hour just to clean it up."

"That's terrible!" our host exclaimed.

"Repentance is important," I said.

"You really shouldn't have moved it all," he said. "Now we'll never be able to reconstruct the crashpad scene from *Bohemians and Bourgeoisie*. We were playing it, and we had to go home before we were finished. I thought leaving the die there would show even one of you fanzine fans that there was a game in progress. Guess I was wrong."

"I'm really sorry," I said. The kid was explaining called The Klingon Test of Manhood when John and I back out of the door back into the light and the now familiar, and therefore comforting, smell."

"Well, JoHn," I said, shaking his hand. "I guess we can mark the Case of the Mysterious Mess closed."

"I guess we'd better," he replied.

"Let's have a sidebar to celebrate!" we both shouted simultaneous.

We went off to collect our friends.

### Epilogue: Whatever That Is

I was back in my secret study, feeling pretty satisfied with myself. I had pursued my investigation to its conclusion, found the perpetrators and apologized to them.

A pretty full day for fandom's newest detective.

I looked up at the portrait of Goon Bleary.

Was he smiling?

My first case was fanhistory. Perhaps there would be others.

-- Arnie Katz



# CRIME STALKS THE FAN WORLD By F. LEE BALDWIN

Some call me a gum-shoe, but I let it pass. I do, however, operate the *Shamrock Agency*. No glamorous jessie answers my phone or tells a prospect that I'm in conference or opens my bills. I run the Agency without that detective writer's frill. It's damn lonesome, too. But the gray dampish walls of my cheap office room would be depressing for some slick frail, and besides I can't afford rye for two, let alone after-hours dinners.

I had to go to Croyford on Saturday but because of two bits of mail I locked up the dump on Wednesday and went ahead of schedule. Number One piece of mail was an issue of **FANEWSCARD** and a paragraph said: "Old time fan Pat McGoy returns to activity after 7 yr absence. Now living at coastal pueblo of Croyford. Welcome back, Pat." It gave his address.

Number Two was a third-class circular from Pat himself. He had something to sell. It said that due to an accident which had resulted in the amputation of both arms he was forced to sell his collection of autographed fantasy and science fiction to held defray the cost of medical aid. It was touching, a pity-garnering thing. The stuff he had on offer was excerpts from magazines between twelve and twenty years old, each with the author's John Hancock. He must have put out a lot of effort and postage and bothered a lot of hack writers getting such a mess of stuff. Anyhow, now he wanted to peddle it, and, indeed, it was an imposing array of "names" he had. Clark Ashton Smith, Lovecraft, Merritt, Howard, Wells, Burroughs. All them guys. Enough to make a tyro's mouth water.

I've been a fan since I was a kid in knee pants and the name of McGoy was familiar enough to me. But like a lot of others he had dropped out as he grew

older. The name Pat McGoy, in later years, had a familiar ring to it too. So that Wednesday afternoon I went down and thumbed through the morgue at the *Free Press* office. My think tank was plenty refreshed anent the McGoy when I left. It was Pat McGoy who was gungel for the Narara-Cillio gambling syndicate. The clippings said nothing, though, about his having met with any accident.

Hell, Croyford's only seventy-five miles or so up the Coast from here, so I grabbed the five-forty bus.

He had a suite at the Benchley. The clerk said he was in so I rode the express to me 20th and catted down the hall to his door. It was closed but the damn fool had forgotten to lock it. Anyhow, I was in the room watching interestedly before he saw me. That is, before the broad saw me. She saw me first. I got a good gander at her, too. Her legs, what I saw of them, were long, very shapely and very white. She had indigo sloe-eyes and her matching velvet dress was wadded up around her flat little tummy. That's all she had on, I'm sure. The McGoy was making with the mush, but in earnest. His sleeves had a couple of good, healthy arms in them. His back was to me and when she pushed him away he misinterpreted the action and cuffed her along the jaw. He said, "What the hell's the matta, b..."

Then he got the drift.

He turned. He was in his shirt-sleeves, shoulder holster unbuckled loosely. When he saw me he went for his rod.

I said, "If you're Pat McGoy, put that thing away. This is a friendly call. Name of Boyle." I stuck out my mit. "I'm a fan and I thought I'd drop over and see what you had for sale. The line-up sounded good."

His eyes got pleasant and he clasped my hand. He said, "Sure, sure, I remember you. You used to write a column in *Astrovox*. Sure, sure, but you've changed a lot from them early pix. Christ, I thought you was a shamus at first. You look like one; no offense." He grimaced in an effort to be cordial.

I released his paw and as he drew it back his brown eyes clouded and his craggy face crimsoned from his collar up. I thought I was going to have to bat him one, but he swallowed his embarrassment. He shrugged his heavy shoulders. "Just a gag, just a gag. Come on, and I'll show you the stuff." He laughed down in his chest and motioned with his head to follow as he took off toward a doorway across the room. I let the arm deal pass.

The indigo dame gave me a breathtaking leer. She was taking her time arranging herself. When she had it smoothed out the velvet fit her like a skin.

The room was a bedroom, nicely furnished but untidy as hell. Piles of magazines littered the place. The corner to which he led me had a semblance of neatness and what he had piled here and there was crisscrossed and labeled "HPL" or "Two-Gun" or whatever the piles happened to be.

There must have been a hundred items or more in each. He motioned with his head, saying, "This is the stuff. Personally autographed by the author -- five skins per, and that's plenty cheap in these times." He picked one at random off the Lovecraft stack. I easily recognized the minute scrawl of Howard Phillips. The yarn was "The Rats in the Walls" from a pre-1930 *Weird Tales*. I put it back and scanned through the others within reach. McGoy watched my face, his own

impassive. He was a heavy-set little gee and his shoulder muscles seemed to be bunched whatever his stance. The forty-five he packed looked plenty aggressive.

"Brother, these are plenty sweet," I said, and gave him what I hoped was an envious smirk. I didn't want to buy as I was not at the time adding to my own collection. It was good enough -- cost me plenty of rocks, too.

I thumbed through the Bob Howard pile and pulled one out at random. There was his fine-lined, green-inked John Henry. Title of the yarn was "Almuric", extracted from some 1939 issues of Weird Tales and very neatly bound by a professional binder. Then something clicked in my noggin: that this smelled. I had it! "Two-Gun" Bob had cashed his chips on June 11th in 1936. So how the hell could he have autographed this deal? I did a good job of controlling my face as I tried to put it with the others. My brain chucked any ideas that the handwriting had sprung from the spirit world. The McGoy shouldn't have tried it. Hell, any starry-eyed punk would know the facts. It was a cinch the whole works was just like this one.

Just then Velvet Dress came sauntering into the room. She must have gotten lonely. She gave us a condescending appraisal, especially me. She said in a husky voice, "Come on, you freaks, and I'll buy a drink."

"We ain't thirsty," McGoy rasped. I was, and hungry too, but not for grub. "We're doing business," he finished, a note of dismissal coloring his voice.

Velvet Dress turned archly and headed back toward the door. I watched her swing. It was neat. Where the hell was a jig band to go with it? Then she suddenly had a change of mind. She turned and crossed toward another door opposite -- evidently leading into a bath or another bedroom.

McGoy didn't seem to like this. He growled, "Where the hell you goin'?" The crags in his face jumped as though made of muscle.

"After some cigarettes, small fry," she said coolly.

"Here's some." He flung a pack at her. "And stay to hell away from that door."

But he was too late with the lip. She had the door wide open, ignoring the fags on the floor at her feet. It was another bedroom and I couldn't help seeing what was just across the sill. More stacks of magazines and a funny little table that looked like a bedside smoking stand only this particular article had a glass top and a light cord running from it to a plug-in in the wall. All this I took in at a quick glance as the tableau of McGoy and Velvet Dress held for a short breath. Whose, I'll never figure out.

He said, "Shut that door."

She appeared to ignore him but her blue eyes kindled a new kind of flame.

McGoy made a very fast shuffle toward the dame and swung a heavy mit at her, his pan clouding up with pounding blood. He looked brutal. He didn't get to slug her because just then I swung the barrel of my thirty-eight across his temple from behind and that ended that. He fell like a safe full of lead nickels.

She gazed approvingly at my handiwork, exhaling slowly. The late afternoon sun from the window touched her hair just right. Its coloring reminded me of a new automatic.

She said, "We better tie mutt-face up. He might be

troublesome."

We did, with a gag and all the extras.

I said, "Now what'll we do with him?"

"Nothing now. Later we'll dump him in the Bay -- if you prefer."

I allowed it was a good idea.

She went on, looking down at him, "He was hard to take. Head to big for the peanut brain. The steady diet of his egotism and brigandry was wearing on me." She hesitated, then went on quietly with her eyes boring into mine, "I'm a great one for the natural and more simple things of life."

Me too, I thought.

I went on through the door she had opened and sized up the room. It was nice, like the others. Littered to the rafters, though. The only place stuff wasn't stacked was in the fireplace. That had been spared.

It was easy to figure how the glass-topped smoking stand with the light cord fit in. I marveled at the punk's guts. Several bottles of different colored inks and various sized pens were on a nearby shelf. Just then Velvet Dress put her hand gently but persuasively on my arm. She said, as she steered me toward a divan near the fireplace, "I'll buy that drink now. You earned it."

I figured I'd earned more than a drink, but hell, I'm no bore.

I said, "Sure, and maybe you'll tell dear old Boyle all about this little dodge."

She fixed me a rye-in-the-ditch and we lit cigarettes.

I liked being around this dame. She was all reet. We parked on the divan, her long leg touching mine, but in a polite way, of course. It had a personality; I could feel it. The cool way her voice husked into my ear was swell music suggestive of a Berigan trumpet.

She said, "You can see the set-up. To start with he had about five or six original pieces he'd collected while in the heat of fanning, he told me. All he does now is cruise the old magazine stores, rip out the yarns he thinks he can peddle, hold them over that glass with the light underneath and trace the signature from the original under it. He's got all the pens and inks to match -- even though they don't have a faded look he gets by. It's a damn dirty stunt."

I didn't answer for a moment. Then I said, "Guess I'll burn the whole works." While I was building a nice little blaze in the fireplace I could hear McGoy's feeble thumping through the open door. The dame got up and closed it. With the arson act well under way I parked comfortably on the divan again. We didn't say much, just watched the flame lick away McGoy's artlessness.

Then somebody in the apartment across the court-shaft turned on the radio and a dixie combo started kicking out "Four Or Five Times". Velvet Dress laid her head on my shoulder where I could find her lips and her breath was warm and fragrant on my neck. I found them.

I was glad I'd come to Croyford on Wednesday instead of Saturday, four days ahead of schedule. ••

*(Crime Stalks The Fan World originally appeared in Shangri-L'Affaires #22, January 1945. It was reprinted by Terry Carr in Entropy Booklet #1)*

# ME MY PLONKER AND KEN FORMAN BY TOM SPRINGER



## THE C.S.F.L. Hotdog Mystery CONCLUSION

For those steady readers who suffer the unfortunate circumstances of misplaced memories the following is a quick summary of the last two installments of what I've come to call the Hotdog Wars, or Insurgency Strikes the Chicago Science Fiction League. For those of you just joining us you are about to embark on a dark, seedy, violent voyage into the depths of Vegas Fandom and all its dirty particulars. If you've got hardhats and seatbelts I'd put em on.

It all began at a Vegrant meeting with Arnie and me, a brass pipe, and our inability to move it betwxt ourselves. This quickly escalated to questions about dinner then a smooth deflatory declaration by JoHn Hardin by way of introducing the first clues of betrayal that were quickly confirmed by his wife.

*They wanted to eat vegetarian.*

Zap guns and plonkers were unexpectedly drawn and sizzling bolts of zap juice splashed across our fandom forever darkening our previously happy and innocent history with vigorous intent. The Loyalists won out in the end, driving the Separatist from the field of battle with superior tactics, firepower, and a willful hatred for chlorophyll. Shortly thereafter the Loyalists convened a meeting at their clubhouse, Chicago Hotdogs, and discussed the evening's action. Besides having experienced a violent betrayal on a scale previously unimaginable, what weighed most heavily on our fine fannish minds was the fact that Ken not only had possession of a zap gun (the only armed fan in the Vegetable Lobby, in fact) but wasn't afraid to use it. This led to no small amount of thinking about Ken, zap guns, and his renown pacifstic attitudes (not to mention the fact that it was previously unimaginable that he would indiscriminately lay waste to the environment with lethally toxic zap fuel). It just wasn't like Ken, none of it added up, and while we dodged another bullet in the form of bad service and a crispy fried gyro at Chicago Hotdogs, we also came up with the most probable hypothesis possible.

Ken must have been remotely controlled. If indeed, Ken was being remotely controlled (and as of now there is little doubt, we even suspect the sex of the manipulator), hiding out there in one of the many crooked corners of fandom there lurks a female fan who has not only gained remote control of a Vegrant but has shown a desire, for whatever reason, to visit violence upon Vegas Fandom.

With this fact stirring my gray matter with irreverent swipes I dropped Arnie and Joyce off back at their house after our meeting and sped home to commence my research, determined to find the fan behind Ken's mortally deviant behavior.

My research began tentatively as did all my activities following the terrible rift that cracked the very foundations of the Chicago Science Fiction League (which in turn established a subsidiary group of fans vainly calling themselves the Vegetable Lobby). The Loyalists were left to watch each other's backs and keep a wary eye on all who claimed to munch the dog, for after the Squash Separatist's Revolt it was revealed that even the closest and most true seeming fan could possess the green envy of vegetarian violence and at any time might pull a zap gun and aim for the eyes.

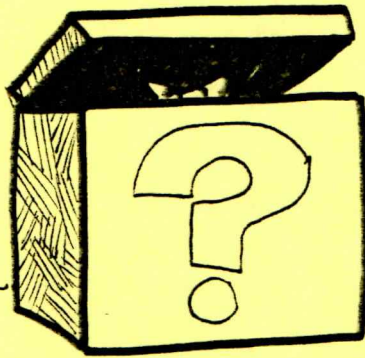
Sunglasses became all the rage.

Everything seemed to be coming to a head. Not only did Vegas Fandom have to worry about two gastronomic groups of fen battling it out over all-beef and broccoli, but SilverCon 4 was only several days away as were about 30 of our friends, Andy Hooper, Victor Gonzalez, and more than one card carrying member of the Intergalactic Brotherhood of Shellfish Gobblers. My plate was full and I had no room for shrimp or hotdogs (well, maybe one hotdog), and I still had to solve the problem of our out of town mystery female fan suspected of remotely controlling Ken.

Preparations had to be made.

First I began with a sincerely ingratiating letter to Chuck Harris, our Wild Heirs and European Chief of Vegrant

I DON'T CARE!  
I WANT ANSWERS!



Operations. I needed his help, only help he could give, and had to count on his reputation for selfless generosity and his incredibly comprehensive knowledge of fans, previously shown to some extent in **Hyphen #10**, which gave me the idea to write Chuch in the first place. Here's a fan who had taken it upon himself to contact a hitherto unplumbed fandom, and though he extended his hand of friendship in the form of a request for three hundred copies of their latest one-shot in the guise of Charlotte Harris (Miss), there's no doubt Chuch is a fan who shares great concerns for the well being of other fandoms. I was hoping he might still harbor such beliefs and aid us in our desperate time of need. (Unfortunately Vagrant Headquarters had yet to come up with the buxom blonde assistant he'd been asking for, subsequently making me feel rather hesitant about the whole thing.) "Still, what are co-editors for if you can't ask a personal favor now and then?" With that questioning thought I posted the letter and made a quick spiritual offer to Roscoe, promising to polish up on my collating skills, and hoping it would be enough.

Second, knowing that Tucker was coming I dropped by the liquor store the next day and stocked up on Jim Bean. Properly lubricated I surmised Tucker might furnish the answers to many of the questions I found lurking in my hind brain, distracting me from my current problems, and quietly spreading a sense of unease throughout my thoughts. Fortunately I recognized this as a signal for another sidebar and fortified myself well enough to continue my brazen plan (which I had yet to fully comprehend, but that's what made it so brazen).

The Shrimp Boy and his sidekick would have to be dealt with in real time and only the most ambiguous precautions could be made, but Chicago Hotdogs is flexible and a portable weenie's no big thing. Concealment's the real problem, not to mention untimely mustard stains.

Being properly provisioned can lead to over

confidence, thinking, "Why look at all this stuff, I'm ready for anything!" is exactly what I'm talking about. The IBSG is not small time, no way, they're in the major leagues and should never be underestimated. But here, on my own turf, backed by the battle hardened Loyalists of the CSFL (not to mention Tucker and a bunch of out of town fanzine fans) I felt pretty secure and expected very little in the way of hanky-panky from the Shrimp Brother and his minions.

Having done what I could in regards to the upcoming convention (only days away), I turned my attention to more immediate concerns, namely Ken Forman and the devious out of town female fanzine fan suspected of remotely controlling him.

Who could be doing it and why?

That it was actually happening was no surprise. Everyone who knows Ken is aware of his substantial weakness concerning those bound in the curvy forms of female flesh. Ken is a ladies man in a way that only Ken can be. He's

shameless and quick to throw himself at the feet of a pretty face who deigns to notice him, adeptly fawning over them and ingratiating himself to the point of total debasement. For all this Ken's an ineffective flirt which allows for a certain amount of play on both sides but no real danger of bedroom action, perhaps more to the disappointment of the women than Ken.

Knowing Ken's broad and generally accepting taste in women does little to help narrow down the field of suspects. That he married Aileen indicates he needs a strong feminine presence in his life who's not afraid to put her foot down, or kick him in the balls. Ken needs a volatile female to insure his meek compliance and happiness, and after a quick look around local fandom I could see that there were no such women available, which only supports the out of town female fanzine fan theory. So my best bet was to follow this line of thinking out of the city limits and into fanzine fandom for that mysterious female fanzine fan corresponding with him, playing the flirt, and subtly wrapping him around her little finger. An out of town female fanzine fan that would not only be attracted to Ken, but superior as well.

The link between the two is found in their suspected correspondence on the Internet via e-mail. What out of town female fans are on-line, and which ones has Ken met in person? When detecting one shouldn't be afraid of qualifiers, for they are the logic evaluators that advance a case, but if you're wrong about the qualifier you may as well shitcan the whole mess and start over. But I'm almost positive that Ken would have to meet this female fanzine fan in person before being able to flirt with her via e-mail, just because he likes to see. If you're really going to expend the energy to flirt, then you gotta do a little fantasizing, and to do that you have to be able to envision the lovely you someday hope to grope, if just to make the day pass by more quickly. Therefore Ken must have met her in person, which conveniently shortens the list.

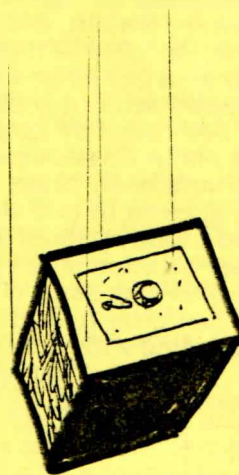
The following is an alphabetical list of the suspected out of town female fans who Ken has met in person and who are on-line: Janice Eisen, Janice Murray, Michelle Lyons, Jeanne Bowman, Lucy Huntzinger, Linda Bushyager, Lynn Steffan, and Geri Sullivan. A list comprised of some of the most well known female fans in fandom. A couple of these fans can be immediately ruled out, others are standouts for such dastardly accusations while the rest are complete mysteries to me.

Not knowing her very well at all, despite three landmark visits to Vegas Fandom, I still get the distinct impression that Janice Eisen would quickly become bored with Ken and could never sustain a flirtatious correspondence with him over the course of several months. That's my initial impression and have yet to be presented with any evidence that would argue otherwise. I can't pretend to know Janice's predilections but she is married, that's somewhat of a factor, and I can't recall ever seeing them spending much time together at one of our local cons. I think she's too smart for him.

The only thing I know about Janice Murray is that she distributes **Ansible** in the U.S.. This bit of information may imply that a secret relationship exists between Janice and Dave Langford, **Ansible's** publisher, who's to say? But as far as I can tell there's no connection at all between Ken and Janice, except that they both receive **Apparatchik** and I dare not explore those darkened avenues for that way lies madness.

Michelle Lyons, on the other hand, is a prime suspect. Forget her marriage to Richard Brandt, I've seen this voluptuous number, on more than one occasion, isolate a fan near a window or on a couch for a private conversation of the sort I've luckily been party to. Watch out! On the surface she's bubbly and effusive, but knowing Richard's penchant for involving himself in conventions there has to be a darker purpose to her friendly tete-a-tetes. I suspect she's fishing for an innocent faned to help Richard with his work, and is not afraid to troll at Corflus or other conventions, but so far has met with little success, apparently. She must know that Ken would be an ideal catch, which leads me to wonder why its taking her so long. There's no way Ken could play hard to get with her charms on full power and smoke in the air. Not Ken.

Jeanie Bowman is another prime suspect, especially after having implicated herself in the **Wild Heirs** letter column. In WH#10 she writes about how much she enjoyed Joyce's writing about the book trading chainletter article and her hardware wanderings in particular. This can easily be interpreted as a desire to emulate, if not replace, our Vegas High Priestess by examining how easily she was able to connect with Joyce's writing and parallel her thoughts. Already we have undeniable evidence that she's more than just a little interested in Vegas Fandom. But here's the capper. By the looks of her interesting and amusing informative about hornets, bees, eggs, hives, larvae, honey, and decomposition she's challenging Ken (I'd say it rates a glove slap in the face) on his strongest front (he is Mr. Nature) in the hopes of total domination, thereby assuring an open door into Vegas Fandom with the hopes of possible advancement in the Vegas hierarchy. (Refer



to WH editorial masthead.) There's a definite possibility that she might be making her play for Ken through the WH letcol (perhaps that's where she first set her hook?), and then later over the Internet. So Jeanne Bowman currently tops the list of female out of town fanzine fans suspected of remotely controlling Ken.

Lucy Huntzinger, an attractive, active, intelligent fanzine fan could very well be guilty but for one tepid fact, she's running Corflu this year. There's no way she could possibly run Corflu and have time to work her wiles on a receptive Ken. She's gotta be too busy, and other than the fact that Ken's expressed a desire to attend this year's Corflu, there's little else to recommend Lucy as the guilty party.

Linda Bushyager is another female fanzine fan who at first glimpse might be capable of this heinous act, but she appears happily married, too busy for Ken, and despite giving Fleetwood Mac tickets to Ken and Aileen she's yet to pay any more attention to Ken than Arnie's cat.

Nearing the end of our list we have Lynn Steffan. Again a likely candidate except for the fact that she and Dan have been busy this year experiencing the rigors of TAFF and all the wonderful responsibilities that go with it. The smell of latex and leather draws Ken as effectively as a horse draws a cart but there's no possible way Lynn has had any time at to spend disciplining dear Ken, which leaves me to cross her off the list. Besides, this is a woman who hangs around Dan and Ted, what could Ken have to offer except for a certain amount of naivety?

Lastly, we come to Geri Sullivan. At first I can't help but suspect her, just because it's fun, but there's evidence that proves otherwise. In WH#10 there's a conspicuous lack of Ken's name in her letter which begins talking about Vague Rants without getting specific and naming names. She certainly doesn't mention Ken. She then talks about Ross's cover art and a Rotsler cartoon. She shamelessly brags about owning a copy of **Wilde Heir**, goes on to talk about Chuch Harris, then at the end inquires about Ross's new address. Though she may be interested in Ross and his whereabouts, and gushes over some of those older fans, there's nothing in her letter to lead one to think that she's been corresponding with Ken, or now has remote control over him. Nothing. That she's a notorious flirt prevents me from crossing her off the list, but until I find something else I'll have to satisfy myself by sending a short note of warning to Ross and leave it at that.

So after hours of careful speculation, deduction, and consideration I narrowed down my list of possible suspects to three out of town female fanzine fans. Jeanie Bowman heads the list due to her interest in Joyce and Vegas Fandom and her undeniably successful challenge of Ken's strongest store of knowledge, nature, and the resultant quiet submission by our fandom's resident druid. Michelle Lyons

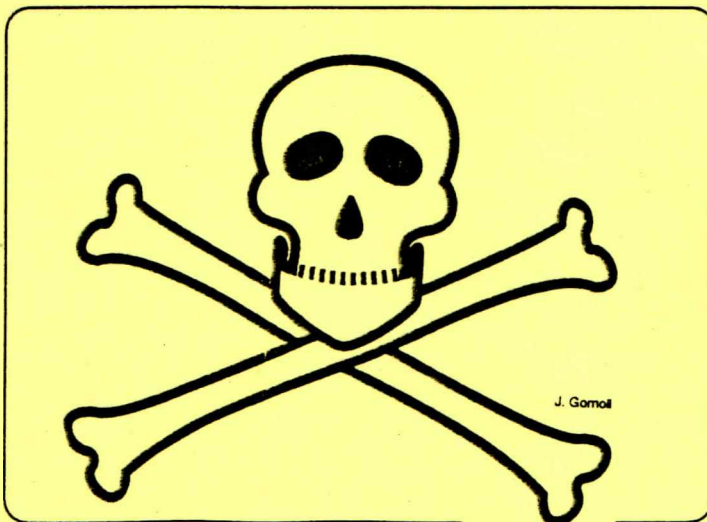
is next, though all evidence gleaned from my witless suppositions points out that Michelle could have had Ken long before now, and if she did possess the faculties to remotely control him she would've had him move to El Paso to help Richard prepare for this year's WesterCon. Though she rates second on the list it's a long second and I'm very doubtful she's behind Ken's latest shenanigans. And Geri, well, she's not so easily dismissed, and having talked with her over the phone leaves little doubt in my mind that she's fully capable of remotely controlling any male fan she so desires. But where Ken is concerned the motive's just not there.

Having a list is all fine and dandy, but it doesn't solve the problem. Sure, I have a pretty good idea that Jeanie Bowman is behind this whole remote controlled Ken thing, and possibly the Vegetable Lobby, but I still don't know for certain. Maybe it is Geri, or Michelle, or somebody else that I missed entirely during my armchair sleuthing. Fortunately there's always a way to find out.

My next bit of Tom-foolery would involve more than a quick bit of bullshit detection resulting in an indefinite list of possible long distance puppeteers, but would demand an intellectual and physical confrontation that would not only endanger myself but the mental stability of the subject; Ken Forman. While Ken Forman may be known as the most violent member of the Vegetable Lobby, and while they and members of the Chicago Science Fiction League are currently at odds, it should be known these facts do not necessitate an operations standstill in Vegas Fandom. We are, after all, a group of like minded adult fans who only happen to have a difference of opinion concerning what we use to fuel our bodies. Silvercon was still a go and so were we, as a fandom. That we are still fanzine fans should never be doubted.

None the less, before driving over to Ken's on my mission of mercy I replaced the spring in my plonker and broke out my new set of self-compression suction bolts that advertised they'd stick to "even the most uncompliant of targets!" With my plonker tucked comfortably into the pocket of my jacket I skipped down the stairs of our apartment to my Rodeo and cruised around the block and over to Ken's, not exactly eager for our little "chat", but ready.

Parked in front of his house, behind his red pick-up, I pulled my flask of Jack Daniels out of the center console between the seats of my vehicle and took a couple swigs (it was going to be a tense confrontation and the more relaxed I felt the better off I'd be). Jazz (Ken's dalmatian), started barking as soon as my fist hit the door, and with my banging and his barking we to which he had sunk.



"Jazz!" Ken bellowed, effectively silencing his dog. Usually a visitor is greeted with a happy and enthusiastic "Come in!" But not this time. Behind the closed door I heard the dead bolt turned and Ken's hand on the doorknob, yet the portal remained closed.

"Who's there?" he called from behind the door.

"It's me," I answered, hands loose at my sides in case it occurred to him to peek at me through his spy hole in the door.

"Tom?" he asked.

"Yeah, it's me. Listen, we gotta talk."

"There's nothing to talk about. Go away!" The deadbolt thunked back into the jam. So much for "like minded adult fans."

"Ken, this is important, I have to speak to you!"

"I don't care, I have nothing to say to you!"

"But Ken, I have something to say to you! And I can't say it through a door."

"What?" he asked.

"Open the door!" I shouted.

"I can't!"

"Why not?"

"I can't trust you!" he yelled.

"What do you mean you can't trust me? I'm one of your co-editors for Ghu's sake! I've been in your home countless times! We're the best of buddies!"

"You shot me in the eye!" he shouted back.

"Twice!"

He had a point. Still... "It was in the heat of battle! It wasn't my fault! I was just reacting. You drew your zap gun first, Ken!" I shouted into the paneling of his front door.

Silence greeted this accusation. Somewhere in the depths of his house I could hear Jazz whining. "I don't know," he said plaintively.

"Listen Ken, there's nothing you don't know. I'm here for a reason. I'm here to make things right. If you open the door we can talk like civilized fans. We can talk this thing out. C'mon Ken, this is important!"

"No plonkers?" he asked.

"No plonkers," I assured him.

"No zap guns?" he asked.

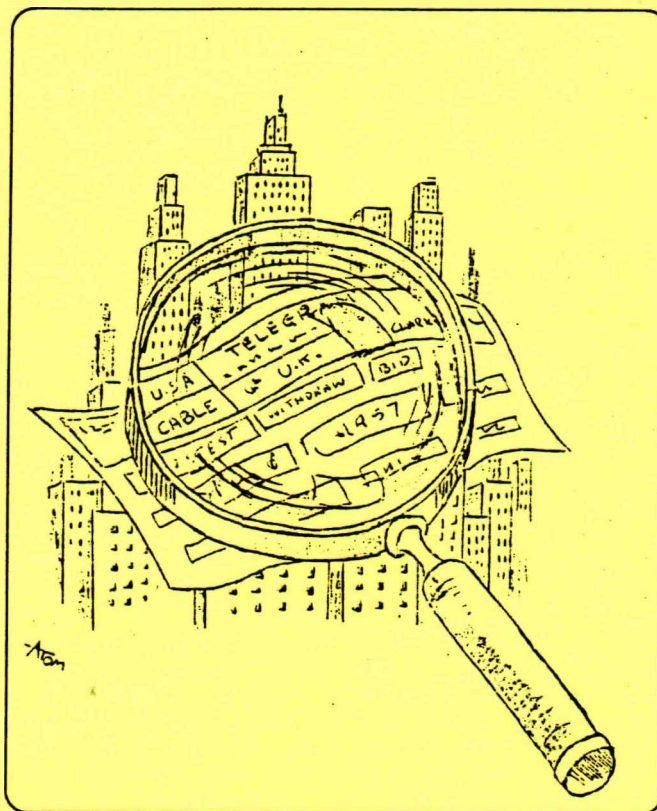
"No zap guns."

The deadbolt was turned once more.

"Promise?"

"I promise Ken, no plonkers, no zap guns, no nothing. I'm just here to talk," I reassured him.

"Well, okay, c'mon in," he said as he pulled the door open and stepped aside. Breathing in a whisky burp I slid my hand into my coat pocket, wrapped it around my plonker, and confidently stepped inside. Usually Ken and Aileen keep a slightly cluttered but clean, sunny and airy home that projects a feeling of



friendly comfort. I walked into a living room where the windows were closed, the shades drawn, the lights out, the tv on, where an air of suffering and desperation filled the room with a sweet cloying odor resembling too rich chocolate that invaded my nose and made me sneeze.

"Ah-choo!" I sneezed.

"Gestetner," he replied automatically.

"There's still hope!" I thought. "Thank you" I said, rubbing my nose. Ken turned to shut the door and slammed the bolt home with a twist of his hand. As he turned back around I pulled my plonker from my pocket and aimed it in his direction. His mouth fell open in disbelief.

"Huh," he breathed. I lifted my plonker high and squinted as I took aim. He stood there frozen like a freshly wrapped flounder recently shipped from

Seattle. I pulled the trigger. The spring exploded the dart from the muzzle of my plonker with a well oiled "Sprong!" and sent it streaking at Ken. The over-sized suction missile slammed into the door near his armpit, catching a large part of his sleeve. Upon impact the dart's micro-motor activated and a squeaky hissing could be heard as air was pumped out of the suction cup, compressing the bolt and Ken's sleeve into the door. The micro-motor wheezed once more, the dart and door creaked under the enormous pressure attaching the dart and target to the wood paneling, and Ken closed then opened his mouth.

"Huh," he breathed again. He pulled against the dart but it held firm. He looked from the bolt to me, to the bolt, and back to me again. "Hey," he said. "You lied."

"You believed me," I answered back, lifting another bolt from my pocket and punching it into my plonker with a smart ratcheting sound. I armed the micro-motor with a touch of my finger. Ken's eyes grew wide as he once again took in the size of the suction cup as I lifted the gun and pointed it near the area of his crotch.

"So, Ken, what've you been up to lately?" I asked conversationally, squinting my right eye as I took aim. He turned his body to the side, hiding my initial target from view but the first bolt kept him from going any farther. I lowered my aim to his dangling pant leg and lightly squeezed the trigger.

"Aah!" he screamed as my suction dark sproinged from my gun and slapped against the door, trapping his left leg as the micro-motor did its work, hissing out air and sucking the bolt and his pants leg into the door. He now stood sideways to both me and the door, the armpit and sleeve of his right arm pressed against the door, slightly crouched as his crossed left leg (that

he moved to protect his groin) also pressed against the door, trapped by my self-compressing suction dart. He looked uncomfortable as he tried to sidle his right leg out from behind his left, turning to once more face the door.

"Ah, ah," I warned, reaching for another dart. "You're going to have to look at me when I talk to you." He scooted back and stood up a little more, taking some of the weight off his right leg. "Do you know why I'm here Ken?"

"You lied, I can't believe you lied to me!" he exclaimed.

"You're going to have to get past that."

"I just can't believe it!" he whined. "Liar!"

"Listen Ken, you probably can't believe you're stuck to your front door either, but like I said before, you're going to have to get past it. I'm here on important business and if you cooperate with me you won't get hurt."

"Are you threatening me?" he shrilled.

I pushed another bolt into my plonker, then looked up at him after activating the micro-motor. "Yeah, you miserable leaf eating lover, I am threatening you."

"Oh," he said quietly.

"The time for fun and games ended when you pulled that zap gun at Arnie and Joyce's." I pointed the gun at him again.

"I was only protecting myself," he said defensively.

"I don't believe you," I said, sighting down the plastic barrel of my plonker at my poor desperate friend.

"What do you mean you don't believe me?"

"I don't believe you were defending yourself. In fact, I don't believe that was really you at the Katz's that night." I stated, aiming at his butt.

"But I was there, you saw me, how could I not be there if I was there?" he argued.

"Your body was there Ken, but the persona I know as Ken was not."

"What in the hell are you talking about?" he asked incredulously.

"I'm talking about you Ken, your secret flirtations over the Internet, and the depths to which you've now sunk, allowing yourself to be controlled like that. Now, who is it? Is it Jeanie Bowman?"

Ken looked at me, afraid, concerned, and apparently ignorant of what I was talking about. "Tom, are you all right?"

"Was it Jeanie, you can tell me Ken, I understand what she did. I understand how easy it can be. It's okay, you can tell me." I coaxed soothingly.

Ken squirmed, unable to budge my immovable missiles. "What the fuck are you talking

about!?"

"I'm telling you that I'm on to you. I know about your secret relationship. I know that you're not responsible for your actions. It's time to address the problem, Ken, take care of business, and make things better."

"I have a convention to run, you idiot! Let me go!" he screamed at me, ineffectually struggling for escape.

I shook my head. "Your wife's running the convention. Poor Ken, you just don't get it, do you?" I asked him quietly. I slowly brought the huge suction cup to my mouth and licked it the several times it needed to coat the heavy rubber with my spit. "This particular model of dart doesn't require any saliva to achieve proper suction," I said, moving closer to the now wide-eyed Ken, who stood awkwardly before me watching me lick.

I raised the gun and sloppily drooling dart to his cheek. He turned away, a mew of disgust pruning his face. "Now, now, Ken, we have to talk," I cajoled. I pushed a wet half crescent of rubber against his quivering cheek, noting how his breathing increased and his eyes opened even wider.

I hoped he wasn't getting excited.

I slid the slimy missile down to his chin, cupping it in the huge suction cup, and turned his head to squarely face me. "Ken, are you secretly corresponding with Jeanie Bowman over the Internet on your computer?" I asked him, watching his eyes.

His mouth curled in disgust at the feel of my wet rubber dart. "No," he said, eyes darting around frantically.

"Swear it." I breathed.

"I swear it," he swore.

"To Ghu, Whazzat?, and Roscoe too." I supplied.

"I swear by Ghu, Whazzat?, and Roscoe too that I'm not secretly corresponding with Jeanie Bowman over the Internet."

I nodded my head and removed the loaded plonker from his chin, creating a rope of spit that wildly oscillated between his chin and my bolt.

"Are you happy now," he asked sarcastically, brave now that he no longer felt the cold slime of my suction bolt.

"I believe you," I said thoughtfully. "Just a couple more questions and I'll let you go."

"Great," he said sourly.

I licked the dart a couple times and held the shiny rubber up for Ken to examine. "What about Michelle Lyons?" I asked.

"What about Michelle," he asked back, almost seeming defiant.

A little too defiant for me, so I pressed the soaked rubber against his other cheek, smushing it around. He tried





to move his head away only to discover the bolt was now stuck to his face. "Jesus," he moaned, eyes rolling.

"Whoops!" I chuckled. I pushed and pulled, consequently moving Ken's head back and forth with my efforts. "Looks like it's stuck." I moved Ken's head so we could

look each other in the eyes. "Sorry about that."

Ken awkwardly stood there, miserably looking at me. "Tell me about Michelle, how long has she had you?"

Ken sighed. "She's never had me, Tom. What's wrong with you? What's this all about? Why are you asking me all these insane questions?"

I shook my head. "Tsk, tsk, tsk, I'm the one asking the questions here so I'm going to have to ask you to please be quiet and answer them. Can you do that Ken?" I asked, as if to a child.

"Yes," he gritted through his teeth.

"Very good. Now then," I continued, "how long have you been under Michelle's control?"

"I'm not under anyone's control!" Ken exploded. "And I'm not under Michelle's control, I swear it!"

"By Ghu, Whazzat?, and Roscoe too?" I asked patiently.

"Yes," he replied fervently, finally catching on.

"Very well, that leaves one more," I said, watching him. "Someone I didn't really expect would go to such great lengths..."

"Like you're doing now," he interrupted.

"No, nothing at all like this, though you're pretty good at sounding like you don't know what's going on." I said.

"I don't!" he screamed at me, spittle flying. I had to let go of my plonker to duck his slimy mouth missiles, leaving the orange plastic contraption dangling from Ken's now distended cheek, making him look like half his face was about to pop off.

"Doesn't matter," I said, standing back up. "Last question Ken, are you ready?"

He just stared at me.

I grabbed hold of my plonker and shook his head with it. "I said are you ready?"

"Yes, I'm ready," he quietly replied.

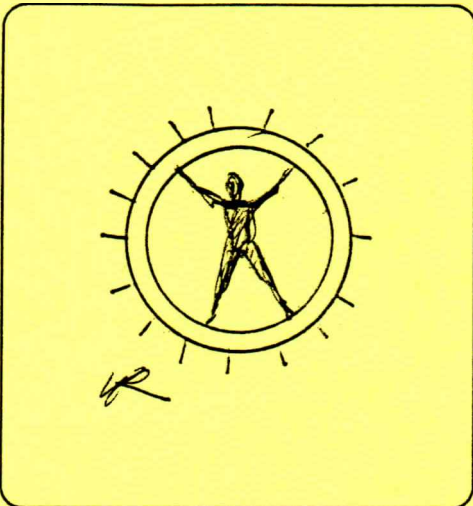
"Have you been secretly corresponding with Geri Sullivan over the Internet, thereby allowing her to take remote control of you?" I asked, watching him closely.

He answered me by twitching his head away from my plonker, eyes round and staring. His mouth opened "I, huh, no, I haven't."

"I don't believe you," I crooned to him, hand firm around the grip of my orange plastic plonker.

"I swear it," he said, staring off into space.

"By Ghu, Whazzat?, and Roscoe too?" I supplied.



"I swear by, by, huh, I, I..." he stammered into silence, eyes again rolling, this time wildly as his brow furrowed and he began to break out into a body shaking sweat. Something was happening to him.

"What's wrong Ken?" He was looking a little pale too.

"I, I, I, oomph!" he chuffed, the fist of his free arm having buried itself in his stomach with a thud. He would have sat down if he wasn't stuck to the door. I stepped back, arm extended, plonker still grasped in a now sweaty hand as I watched Ken's hand come around and smack him in the side of the head. Whack! Ken groaned, slumping against the bolts.

"Whoa," I said, impressed and a little weirded out. She must have taken control of him and was now trying to beat him unconscious to prevent him from answering me.

Geri-Ken hung against the bolts, seemingly on the verge of consciousness, possessed and delusional.

"Ken?" I asked tentatively, "is that you?"

He stared through me with bruised and black-ringed eyes, lines of sweat trickling down his pale and twitching face, through the remnants of my spit, and opened his mouth to speak.

At the same time we heard the clunking hum of their garage door opener come to life, for the first time noticing the engine sound of Aileen's car that had just pulled into the driveway. Geri-Ken's eyes darted desperately towards the door to the garage, a triumphant smile changing his face into a grotesque mask of hope.

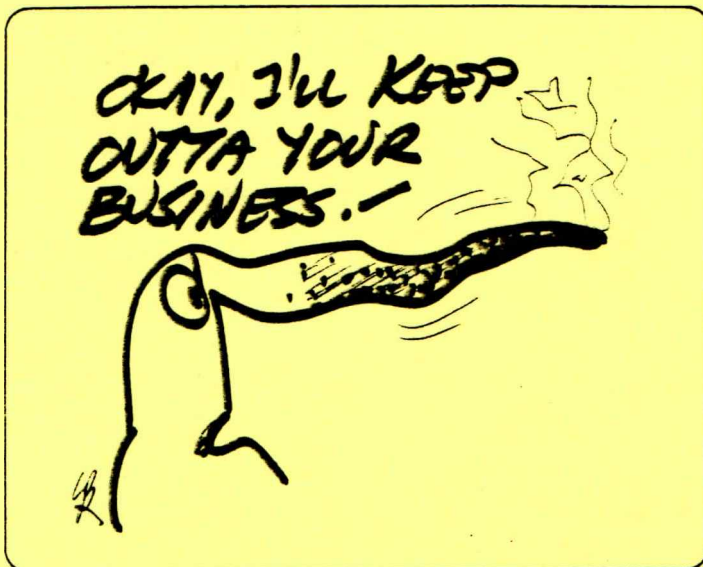
I shoved his head around with my plonker to get his attention. "Geri-Ken," I whispered close to him, "give it up. Whatever you're trying to do here isn't gonna happen." I could hear the garage door groaning open and thunk into place, then the distant squeal of rubber on concrete as Aileen motored the car into the garage. The engine died.

Geri-Ken stared at me, a smile stretching his now misshapen face wide, and grabbed at my plonker with scrabbling fingers. We could hear the car doors slam and hurried footsteps as the inside door to the garage opened and Aileen's melodious voice called for him from the laundry room, "Ken!"

Geri-Ken tightened his grip around my hand, a curious grunting sound began huffing from his chest, and scrunching his eyes closed his fingers convulsed around mine, and the plonker went off.

Ken's head spun around on his neck with the force of the discharge, his free hand falling to his side as his head banged into the door and he collapsed unconscious against my immovable missiles, one of which now hissed against his face and sucked half his cheek into the suction cup. A bright red bruise of tightened flesh surrounded the wet rubber ring of the dart as the micro-motor cut off and the stretched flesh on the side of Ken's face made him look like an ugly sneering Mona Lisa with bad gums.

"Ken! Oh my God! Ken!" Aileen shrieked, standing in the hallway, hands clenched close to her breast. I stood there, empty plonker in hand before my handwork as Ken hung unconscious from his front door, a large bruising dart on his right cheek disfiguring his pleasant features along with the now forming bruise from his self-inflicted whack to the head. It must have been quite a sight for Aileen to come home to.



"Hi Aileen," I said chirpily. My other hand discreetly wormed its way into my jacket pocket for another dart.

"Tom," she whispered to herself, face pale and scared.

"Tom?" another voice echoed from the laundry room. "Is Tom here?"

It was JoHn. I yanked the dart from my pocket and ratcheted it into my plonker. Aileen stood passively before me, unblinking and possibly on the verge of fainting. JoHn's heavy footsteps sounded as he moved down the hall. He appeared behind Aileen, some sort of large plastic thing cradled in his arms. It had a lot of barrels.

Aileen began to sway and JoHn had to hold her up with one hand and point his multi-barrelled gatling gun at me with the other. I pointed my plonker in their direction, stepped back towards the door and began discreetly searching for the doorknob with my free hand.

"Hi JoHn," I said, trying to put a little enthusiasm in it. "It's not what you think."

"So you really haven't been torturing and terrorizing Ken while we've been gone?" he asked, pointed at Ken with his gatling gun.

I stole a glance at the unconscious Ken, then looked back at JoHn, a nervous smile tugging at my lips. Those barrels were big. "Just a little detecting. You know, some sleuthing, interrogation, Q and A, that sort of thing." I explained. "Completely harmless," I added, my hand finally finding the doorknob and wrapping around it.

"Detecting my ass," JoHn declared, taking his hand from Aileen and aiming his weapon at me. I aimed mine at Aileen and twisted the knob. It turned but the door didn't open for I'd forgotten about the dead bolt.

"Looks like we got a Mexican stand-off here," I said conversationally, aiming at Aileen's chest. JoHn eyed Aileen, then glanced at the huge suction cup pointed at her.

"Guess we do," he said, keeping his barrels pointed towards me and Ken. We momentarily stood there in silence as we digested the meaning of this actuality. JoHn shoots me, and maybe Ken, and I affix Aileen to

the nearest stationary object. It seemed simple enough.

Aileen broke the silence. "What happened here?" she asked quietly.

"You don't really want to know," I answered, keeping my gun hand steady.

"Yes I do," she announced. She looked from Ken to me, eyes hard. "I'd really like to know what's happened here. Really."

I let go of the doorknob and shrugged. "You guys remember that night at the Katz's?"

Aileen nodded, her cupid lips bent in a frown. "How could we forget?" JoHn asked sarcastically.

"I don't know," I answered back, "but there was something odd about that night. Do know what I'm talking about?" I looked at Aileen, figuring she knew Ken the best and would then know what I was talking about.

JoHn shook his head. Aileen just watched me, quiet.

"Could either of you ever imagine, even in your wildest dreams, that Ken would pull a zap gun on his closest and dearest friends, then indiscriminately lay waste to the environment with lethally toxic zap fuel in an effort to do in those very same friends? And isn't it odd how Ken was the only armed participating member of the Vegetable Lobby? Don't these two things kind of strike you as strange?"

JoHn shrugged. "I thought it was strange that you and Joyce were armed. What's your excuse?"

Aileen now looked puzzled, her eyes calculating, her frown softening. I'd gotten to her, she was thinking about it. My free hand began looking for the deadbolt, concealed behind Ken's dangling body.

"Well," JoHn asked into the silence, "what's your excuse? Why'd you have that infernal plonker with you? And why were you so quick to use it? You'll notice I didn't have a gun, nor Karla or Sue, not even dear little Collette. But you and Joyce did," he said accusingly.

"Just a habit I'd gotten into after reading all those **Hyphens**," I explained, feeling for the cold steel of the lock.

"Habit?" JoHn asked disbelievingly.

"Yeah, you know, like brushing your teeth," I said, stalling for time. "I never thought I'd have you use it. Especially against you guys. But vegetables?"

"They're good for you!" JoHn shot back defensively.

I shook my head and shrugged. "Whatever."

Aileen shook her own head and held up a hand to break into our conversation. "So what are you trying to tell me about Ken?" she asked.

"Well, you remember what I said about Ken, his zap gun, and his most unnatural behavior?" I asked leadingly. Aileen nodded impatiently.

"After the battle we went to Chicago Hotdogs for a meeting and discussed what had happened, and we came to the inexplicable conclusion that he must have been remotely controlled by some mysterious out of town fan. It's the only conclusion we can come to that justifies his outlandish behavior," I explained, leaving the female part out because things were already delicate enough and I wasn't really looking for a ride on that sort of emotional rollercoaster. I'd already had one with Ken and was still feeling that nauseous rush one feels after a particularly harrowing ride.

JoHn dipped his plastic contraption down to look at me with cynical disbelieving eyes. Aileen appeared to be thinking. I slowly began turning the lock behind my back. "Remotely controlled?" Aileen asked wonderingly.

I nodded and JoHn shook his head. "Right, you expect us to believe that?" he sneered at me. I shouldn't have left out the female fan part, that would have locked it, while I was concerned with Aileen's jealousy I should have concentrated on the truth instead of trying to keep her feelings from being hurt. Besides, I didn't want to get poor Ken in trouble, he'd been going through enough lately as it was.

My hand slithered back down to the doorknob while Aileen and JoHn worked at digesting my story. All three of us jumped at the shrill ring of the telephone as it invaded our moment of contemplation. Aileen and JoHn were thinking about Ken and the possibility that he'd been remotely controlled, and I was thinking about escape. I turned the knob on the second ring but held the door closed.

Aileen walked over to where their portable phone sat on the couch, picked it up, and answered "Hello?" "Oh, hi Geri....No," Aileen said, looking over at her dangling husband, "he can't come to the phone right now."

It was her! Calling to find out if Ken had broke! I looked over at Aileen who stood there, phone pressed to her ear, nodding at whatever Geri was saying. The others had to be told. I pushed the door open and leaped out, dodging the flopping Ken, and kicked it closed behind me just before JoHn could fire. That's not to say that he didn't, for as I ran for my Rodeo I could hear the machine gun-like ricochets bounce off the front door and Ken with heavy thuds. As I started the engine the front door was again flung open, Ken wildly dangling, and JoHn emerged gatling gun in hand, pumping yellow balls of death in my direction. I turned the wheel and pressed down on the gas, squealing away before JoHn's ineffective onslaught, safe and in possession of most urgent news.

The no longer mysterious out of town female fanzine fan remotely controlling Ken was Geri Sullivan! I rushed home with this news hot on my lips, a list of Loyalists who should be advised ticking off in my head. My list was immediately replaced by frantic thoughts addressing the question of *why* was Geri Sullivan remotely controlling Ken? To what purpose? She must have something to gain, obviously of great import, or why go to the trouble of remotely controlling him?

At home I dropped my car keys and wallet on the kitchen counter next to the stove and slipped my trusty plonker from my pocket. I sat down at the kitchen table, setting the orange plastic plonker before me, and leaned back with my hands behind my head, phone forgotten. Why?

"Why is Geri Sullivan remotely controlling Ken?" I asked aloud to myself. Talking to myself sometimes helps facilitate my thinking, other times it creates some pretty awkward situations. Kind of a 50/50 thing. This time it did none of these things and I sat there with that question banging around my skull, listening to its tinny crashing, and suffering a terrible case of the "Whys???"

And though I couldn't figure out why Geri would want to control Ken Forman from afar I began to

believe that it might not be such a good idea if people were to know of this malific fact. If this became general knowledge Geri would soon hear of it, so I would have to keep it a secret. But if something happened to me no one would know the story, no one would know why all these things happened. If I didn't tell someone, some how, the truth would never see the light of fandom, or fandom would never see the light of truth. Something like that, take your pick.

Which is why I've decided to write this up. If, by some tragic happenstance I fall on the field of battle, days later they'll turn this computer on (or stumble upon the hardcopy in the gold-trimmed leather embossed notebook with the word "SECRETS" emblazoned on its front) and read the true history of Vegas Fandom and all the evil particulars surrounding the remotely controlled Ken Forman. I can now see the Vegetable Lobby's reputation was purposely tarnished by the violent possession of Ken Forman by Geri Sullivan as she wreaked havoc upon our innocent young fandom. Trying to divide us, perhaps conquer us, I don't know, but for whatever reason she visited her terrible contagion upon Ken, upon us, and warped our fandom into two feuding sects of food loving fans. Now, with Silvercon only a day away, and the Katz's annual Thursday Night Kick-off Party looming before me this very night, I wonder what fate awaits me and the rest of the Loyalists. What incredible moments will I have the opportunity to experience this coming weekend, what with Bob Tucker coming, Burbee, Jack Speer, Art Widner, Don Fitch, Robert Lichtman, Joe Haldeman, Rusty Havelin, Bruce Pelz, Bill Donaho, Richard Brandt and Michelle Lyons and a dozen other fanzine fans added to the mix. Not to mention the dangerous chemistry of Andy Hooper and Victor Gonzalez. Aileen will be running the con, helped by Geri-Ken, the Vegetable Lobby and whatever other resources Snaffu can bring to bear, and as security of the convention what mundane adventures will assail my post? And what resources will Geri Sullivan tap during Silvercon 4? What trouble will she bring? And will Chuch come through for me, can Tucker help us?

-- Tom Springer

## Don't Miss the Next





Ray Nelson