

WILD HEARS

#7.5



Wild Heirs 7.5

Take a faan fiction sidebar with **Wild Heirs**, the result of conspicuous overproduction by Springer and Katz. **Wild Heirs #7.5**, the sixth issue in five months, is distributed in conjunction with **Wild Heirs #7**.

Responsibility rests with Arnie Katz (330 S. Decatur, Suite 152, Las Vegas, NV 89107) and Tom Springer.

Member fwa. Supporter afal
EMail: WildHeirs@aol.com

If you're looking for our celebrated editorial jam, check the other fanzine in the envelope. "Vague Rants" can be found in its customary position, right after the contents page, in **Wild Heirs #7**.

As the colophon elsewhere on this page suggests, what we have here is the consequence of too many visits from the Fannish Muse to Tom and Arnie.

After we'd both amply satisfied **Wild Heirs #7's** editorial needs, we each produced an additional, lengthy faan fiction story.

It wold be unthinkable to add 20 pages of fiction to a regular issue of **Wild Heirs**. That wold be against our principles and beyond our staplers.

We wanted to see both in print as quickly as possible, without overwhelming the rest of the issue. I (Arnie) suggested we put both stories into a .5 **WH**, and so was born the Fiction Sidebar you now hold.

"A Chance of a Ghost" by Bob Shaw from **Retrobution** (edited by John Berry and Arthur Thomson) is a bonus. It's a chance to clear the literary palate between these two salvos of contemporary lunacy.

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Art Credits

Ross Chamberlain: Cover
Grant Canfield: 8

Bill Kunkel: Back Cover
Jeanne Gomoll: 11

Bill Rotsler: 6, 13, 17, 19

The fallow and seedy roots of the fiendishly evil Intergalactic Brotherhood of Shellfish Gobblers can be traced back to the smokey environs of room 1812 at Silvercon 3, a place of fannish wonder where this dark and hungry metamorphosis took place. I was there, along with many others, when Andy Hooper, Dan Steffan, and John D. Berry succumbed to the Will of the Creel, deciding to forsake the incredible multi-conversational room party for a limp and cheap shrimp cocktail across the street at the Golden Gate Casino.

It was with sad wonder we watched them depart, unknowing shrimp-deviants who had crossed over to a darker side. I think it was Ted White who dubbed them the Shrimp Boys.

No one can exactly say when John was dropped from the lists, unable to meet the tough gastronomic standards set by the King of Creel, but that did little to slow the diabolical plans brewing between the remaining two.

Since their metamorphosis over a year ago, Dan and Andy live the Way of the Creel, having given themselves up to their King's soft wicker embrace. No one could have imagined they would become more than the already famous fans they were, that they would evolve: actually become fraternal, and change their name to the incorporated "Shrimp Brothers"...and become the founders of an intergalactic not-so-secret organization spanning the entire known universe dedicated to the single most evil act known to fankind; shellfish gobbling. No one could have guessed the power they would command, and the danger to fandom that they presented.

Except, thank Ghu, for Joyce Worley Katz, the first to realize the Shrimp Bros. were more than just a couple fans having a good time with an old joke. Joyce was the first to wade through the deceptive cloud of cocktail sauce to a growing not-so-secret society of shrimp worshipping seculars. It was Joyce who discovered that the Shrimp Bros. were recruiting simple unsuspecting fans into the shady and semi-illegal group of Intergalactic Shellfish Gobblers.

Arnie, unknowing of the Shrimp Bros. master plan (to bend warm fannish souls to

The IBSG Faan Fiction by Tom Springer

the dark ways of the Creel) found the whole idea moderately amusing and jokingly went along with the basic concept, keeping an eye open for the humorous, but completely oblivious to the real danger. Fortunately Joyce saw through the silly shrimp sayings and not-so-secret hand signals to the heart of the matter; they carried and handed out membership cards. Joyce figured (and rightly so) that if they were serious enough to covertly carry not-so-secret membership cards, well then, something was definitely going on.

Joyce quietly observed the strange finger-waving recruitment speech, eagerly playing along, sucking up their crustaceous propaganda, biding her time in the guise of a loyal Shrimp Gobbler for when she could strike back and reveal the Shrimp Bros. to fandom for what they were. She didn't have long to wait.

With Corflu over, a good number of not-so-secret membership cards distributed to key figures in fandom, the Shrimp Bros. slowly sunk out of sight, back into the murky depths from which they came.

And battle was joined!

Joyce began her attack immediately, cutting the legs right out from under the terrible IBSG by alerting fandom with her April edition of **Situation Normal??** (her monthly zine) to the imminent danger the Shrimp Bros. and the King of Creel posed. The first volley fired was titled "Something Is Fishy In Seattle...Just Ask Hooper," publicly naming one of the two Shrimp Bros. and thereby delivering a devastating wallop to the IBSG.

She went on to reveal how Andy, through his zine **APAK**, had promised to hit her with a fish if she didn't respond, a clear threat, and one Joyce wasn't going to take lightly. She then went on to say, "Now Andy is again showing his fishy fascination. In a recent issue of **Apparatchik**, he bragged about the nature of the fish fry in Palmyra. And, in another, he referred to the **Nine Lines Each** crew as flounders." Joyce was quick to pounce on this stating to all on **Sit Norm's** mailing list, "If he must be intimate with fish, why flounders? Is not Washington the home of the mighty salmon? We demand answers."

Joyce followed up this line of attack with another merciless assault in her May issue titled, "Fishy Plot Widens; Bi-Coastal Conspiracy Feared To Be Underway." Which went on to reveal the not-so-secret membership card of the Intergalactic Brotherhood of Shellfish Gobblers. She also divulged their not-so-secret hand signal, delivering a crippling blow to their intergalactic communications.

She replied with martial alacrity to the fishy threat made to the editors of **NLE** by Andy Hooper in his **APAK**, circa Spring '95, that states, "I will hit you with a flounder." On the spot, she roughed out a first draft concerning Andy's meaningless threats to the Nelly Boys, promising to pursue the means by which she would reveal the IBSG to fandom, showing to all, even the misguided, that the Shrimp Bros. were not just evil, habit forming, hungry, bad for the back, shellfish gobblers, but really much, much more.

With swiftness born of experience (and a healthy dose of fear), Joyce continued her fight, defending isolated victims (like the **NLE** Boys) who had been threatened with a

flounder pounding, and revealing whenever possible the inherent dangers unknown "crustaceous critturs" in our fannish future might present.

Joyce, being a ghuist if she were to be anything at all (because she likes to insert the letter 'H' into words), found herself the lonely-lit beacon of reason along the shore of a hostile (and readily available) sea of shrimp: The only trufan prepared for the fight against shrimp eager to spread their particular brand of evil among the unsuspecting faneds of fandom.

Months later.

Through Joyce's concerted efforts, fandom became aware of the Shrimp Bros. and their secret organization, the IBSG. Gingerly fandom began to explore and consider both the Brotherhood and the Shrimp Bros., and what they represented. Much was made of it...faneds talked...articles were written (by the hundreds)...and inevitably, sides were chosen. Lines were drawn (as if they weren't already apparent enough), and fandom became divided into two camps.

CAMP A: The followers of the Shrimp Bros. and that certain shadowy philosophy of "*crustacean mastication for the nation*." Who live only to serve the Dark King of Creel.

CAMP B: And the ghoud followers of Ghu, readers of Jophan, and practitioners of trufaannishness. Who can light up a smokey room with a few selflessly shared words found in their wise fannish hearts.

Arnie, blissfully ignorant of the writhing wave of shrimp looming behind him, oblivious to the deadly battle taking place around him, continued to view the whole thing with tolerant amusement instead of the serious and deadly attitude it called for. But Joyce was careful not to involve non-combatants. She subtly maneuvered about to insure all was well between battles with the King of Creel and his crooning crustaceans, the Shrimp Bros.

Slowly, Joyce's little fannish seeds (a monthly produced **Sit Norm**) began to bloom, and recently Creel-converted faneds were once again shown the light. One by one they reaffirmed longheld fannish beliefs and took back into their shriveled fannish hearts the story of Jophan, the ways of bheer and Ghu, fanzines, and for Roscoe's sake, sex too, as it became apparent that all the King of Creel and his Shrimp Bros. had to offer was a not-so-

secret membership card and some dead shrimp.

Still, the threat remained. Though the not-so-secret Intergalactic Brotherhood of Shellfish Gobblers had been effectively disbanded, two of the most diabolical followers of the King of Creel were still at large; Andy and Dan, the Shrimp Bros.

Dan lurked far to the east in the mythic land called Falls Church, and the other, Andy (whom Joyce believed to be the more dangerous of the two), resided in his watery coastal sanctum of Seattle. Yet to confront them in their own lairs was too dangerous a proposition (living in Vegas Joyce knew about such things), so she waited, biding her time.

She continued pubbing her zine while secretly preparing herself for the most deadly confrontation of her life. What Joyce hoped to be the final battle between herself and the Shrimp Bros. was to take place somewhere in Las Vegas during Silvercon 4.

Knowing that Joyce was there in Vegas, waiting for Silvercon 4 and their inevitable arrival, Dan and Andy began to consider preparations and other weighty matters of import concerned with the defeat of their nemesis. Things needed to be decided. This wasn't your everyday conversion after all. Joyce was no longer considered a member of the Brotherhood, she had cast off those robes, deemed herself a heretic, and began a crusade against the Brotherhood. She was dangerous, for she new many fans and BNF's, and presumed powers they did not possess. Frankly, they were a little worried.

The pressure had begun to build, and correspondence between the two became more frequent as they made their final plans concerning their visit to Las Vegas, Silvercon 4, and their inevitable encounter with their hated nemesis, Joyce Worley Katz. Presented below is a letter written to Andy Hooper, from Dan Steffan, arguing a new and radically dangerous strategy.

Dear Brother,

I do not think we're sufficient to the task that awaits us at Silvercon 4. Our Brotherhood has been diminished, nay, devoured, to a few insignificant (but loyal) followers. Yourself and I are the only beings of power that stand between the

Heretic and our King.

We need new blood, plain and simple. New recruits to swell our ranks so as to serve as soldiers in the battles to come. We are not yet undone, Shrimp Brother! Our intergalactic crusade is only momentarily stalled, nothing more.

I propose that instead of joining you at Silvercon 4, I travel across the Pond, the great Atlantic, reknown shellfish receptacle, rallying our brethren as I go. I will arrive in Glasgow at the Worldcon to recruit a new army, a stronger army, of shellfish gobblers. I will stay for a short time to introduce them to our not-so-secret ways, then return and prepare for the Final Meeting at Corflu Nashville, at which time I will summon our European Sect of shrimp worshippers and shellfish gobblers to do battle against the Heretic.

It is a selfless thing that I ask of you, to carry on the fight, to finally physically confront the Heretic without me at your side. So I ask of you, this sacrifice. Do it for me, your shrimp brother, our King and his basket-like embrace, and for the values and ideas that the Intergalactic Brotherhood of Shellfish Gobblers stand for. Do it for yourself and all you believe in, for all you hold close to your heart. Do it for the shrimp.

Your beloved and devout Shrimp Brother,
DAN

This letter was retrieved from one of Dan's not-so-secret couriers, who had been ambushed and subdued by a cadre of Joyce's closest fen, armed with specially bound issues of Burbee's **Shangri-L'Affaires**. With this information, intercepted at a time so close to Silvercon 4, coinciding with the fact that Dan Steffan won the **TAFF** race, led Joyce to believe that she'd be facing only one Shrimp Brother when the time came. Knowing this, she began to make preparations, deftly clouding Vegrant minds while commanding them about on her errands. What she was planning to do would remain a secret, none would know, not even her loyal Vegrants. It was her fight, and she'd fight it alone.

Secretly, without alerting even Arnie, Joyce began a special training regimen,

consuming a powerful diet of trufanish zines and subtly sprinkling the letter "h" throughout her prose. Joyce never doubted herself, even during the hard times, though on occasion she'd wish someone would help her collate. But she was a fan filled with purpose, righteous and empowered with the trufannish spirit, Joyce remained focused and positive.

As both forces prepared for the coming battle, fandom, unaware of the upcoming clash, continued with its idyllic existence; a corner at a broken stoplight where two momentous powers were destined to collide. No one knew that on the second day of Silvercon4, with the con in full swing and the Katz's room party the ball of energy to which all the fanzine fans gravitated, that Joyce and Andy would meet in the very shrimp bar at the Golden Gate Casino that first lured the three intrepid fans to the dark side of the Creel, a year and a half ago.

This historian was fortunate enough to have followed Joyce undetected to the Golden Gate's shrimp bar, a dark blotch near the heart of Vegas Fandom, to witness the enormous confrontation between these two titans of Ghood and Evil. I beat her out of the parking lot, and seeing where we were, made a bee-line for the shrimp bar, where Andy sat waiting, several shrimp cocktails placed conspicuously nearby. Through the smoke and background noise I saw Joyce casually close the distance between herself and Andy with a calm purposeful stride.

As she passed me I noticed she held something gingerly behind her back, hidden from Andy, but her hand fully encompassed the object, making it impossible to identify. She stopped mere feet away. Andy turned on his stool to face her, looking grim and determined.

"Hello Andy," she said.

"Hello traitor," Andy bitterly replied. Joyce had the grace to wince.

"I'm glad I was able to find you here," she said, standing a couple stools away.

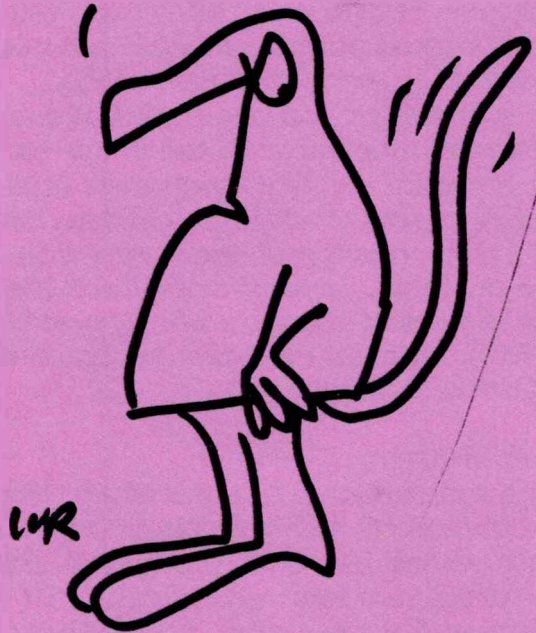
"I wanted it to be private," Andy said "it's not every day I find myself having to put down a heretic-run-amok, who has lost sight of the Creel and its comfortable wicker embrace. Who has forgotten the glory of the masticated crustacean, the succulent juices and power

found beneath the shell. Who has turned her back upon the Brotherhood and led a crusade against Dan and I, her brothers, and our loving and all-powerful King!" he intoned with an accusing stentorian voice "You are responsible for the decline of the Intergalactic Brotherhood of Shellfish Gobblers!" Andy spit at her. "It's you who have spoiled our game, you who have dared to interfere with the Shrimp Bros. and the IBSG!" he cried, "It's you!"

Andy, mouth contorted with unexpected fury, deftly scooped (with his trademark two-fingered hook) the small limp shrimp (laden with cocktail sauce) from the cocktail-glasses before him, flinging them at Joyce with each accusation, putting some major spin, curve, and drop on the shrimp for added emphasis.

Joyce was quick to block with her shield of Umor, for this task, temporarily taking the form of the latest **Fosfax**, she adroitly blocked each shot. The pale rubbery shrimp bounced off the heavy zine to plop to the floor where they were unknowingly smushed flat by a

IS THIS EVOLUTION
FORWARD OR IN
REVERSE ?



dancing and dodging Joyce. Cocktail sauce splattered everywhere, thick glops of it, and soon the bar was littered with the gory remains of three shrimp cocktails. It's a picture that still wakes me at nights from a restless and troubled sleep, sweating and hiccupping, the pungent aroma of smushed shrimp tickling my nose.

"Your shrimp are powerless against me!" Joyce proclaimed, tucking her soggy **Fosfax** into her back pocket. "You'll have to do better than that!"

Andy stood up, his knees maybe a little weak, but his gaze narrowed as he glimpsed his target (Joyce's tummy) and a look of concentration tightened his face. He raised his hands with a practiced flourish, a quick and efficient movement, and pointing his index fingers up and in, kind of creating a triangle, he began wagging those two fingers up and down.

"The not-so-secret signal of the Intergalactic Brotherhood of Shellfish Gobblers?!" Joyce asked incredulously.

Andy continued with his finger wagging, and as I watched I began to feel a craving, an urge, that almost formed into a definite need had it not been for Joyce's mocking voice. I began to salivate as the odor of smushed shrimp and drying cocktail sauce began to tickle not only my nose, but my appetite as well.

Joyce squinted at the wagging fingers, the bobbing shrimp antenna, then from behind her back, where she'd been hiding it all along, she pulled out what I thought to be her secret weapon. A hotdog, with The Works (ala Walt Willis.)

"Backed by the faannish and potentially economically powerful Chicago Science Fiction League I will not fall prey to your slaving shrimp hungers! With this dog, I do protect me, and proclaim your lowly shrimpdom a lie!" Joyce proclaimed, waving the Chi-dog about with righteous vigor. Then began to eat it. With great gusto, I might add.

Halfway through the dog Andy stopped with the finger wagging, and relaxed his stance, though his very being radiated mortal desperation. "You'll have to destroy me, you know."

"Moff nephfufarugna," Joyce chewed.

"Oh yes," Andy said, "I won't let you take me alive. I won't be put into one of those

reconditioning fandoms! I won't!"

"Yougg nof hag a chompf," she said through her Chicago dog.

"I'm not going back to Madison either! You'll have to destroy me, there's no other way I'll submit!" Andy laughed hysterically. He pulled an empty cocktail glass close, wiped his finger through the remaining sauce, and began to paint his death face.

"We'llg haf nonf othat," Joyce chawed, finishing off the last of the yummy shrimp-inhibitor. Andy continued painting, humming the Brotherhood's theme song, a little ditty that went something like, "Shrimp Boys are a-snackin' -- they're snackin' tonight -- Shrimp Boys are a-comin' -- with big appetites!"

Joyce shook her head and wiped a dab of mustard from the corner of her mouth. "That's not going to work Andy, let's face it, it's time to pay the subscription. There's no copping out to a reconditioning fandom Andy. You don't get off that easy," Joyce announced.

Andy continued painting, having traced a red smeary line from his forehead to his chin that divided his face. He crossed it, tracing his eyebrows with the sticky sauce. As he began to dab beneath his eyes, Joyce, exasperated and a little put off by this strange behavior, stepped forward and grabbed Andy's cocktail covered hand while he drew a line beneath his left eye. Seeing her move toward him, Andy jerked back, Joyce flailed at his saucy hand, and while grabbing the red waving limb, she accidentally pushed one of his scarlet digits into his eye, nearly poking it out.

"Ouch! Hey, watch it!" he complained, eye squeezed tight and tearing from the acidic sauce.

"Oops, sorry about that," she said, deftly snatching a napkin and dabbing at his eye.

"It stings."

"Here, let me dip this in some water," and suiting actions to words she dunked the smeared napkin into a waterglass and carefully dabbed at his eye.

"Ouch," he whined, but there wasn't any heart in it.

"Can you see?" Joyce asked, concern writ all over her beautiful faannish face.

"I dunno,"

"Well try, open your eye," she suggested,

leaning close and looking at the injured orb.

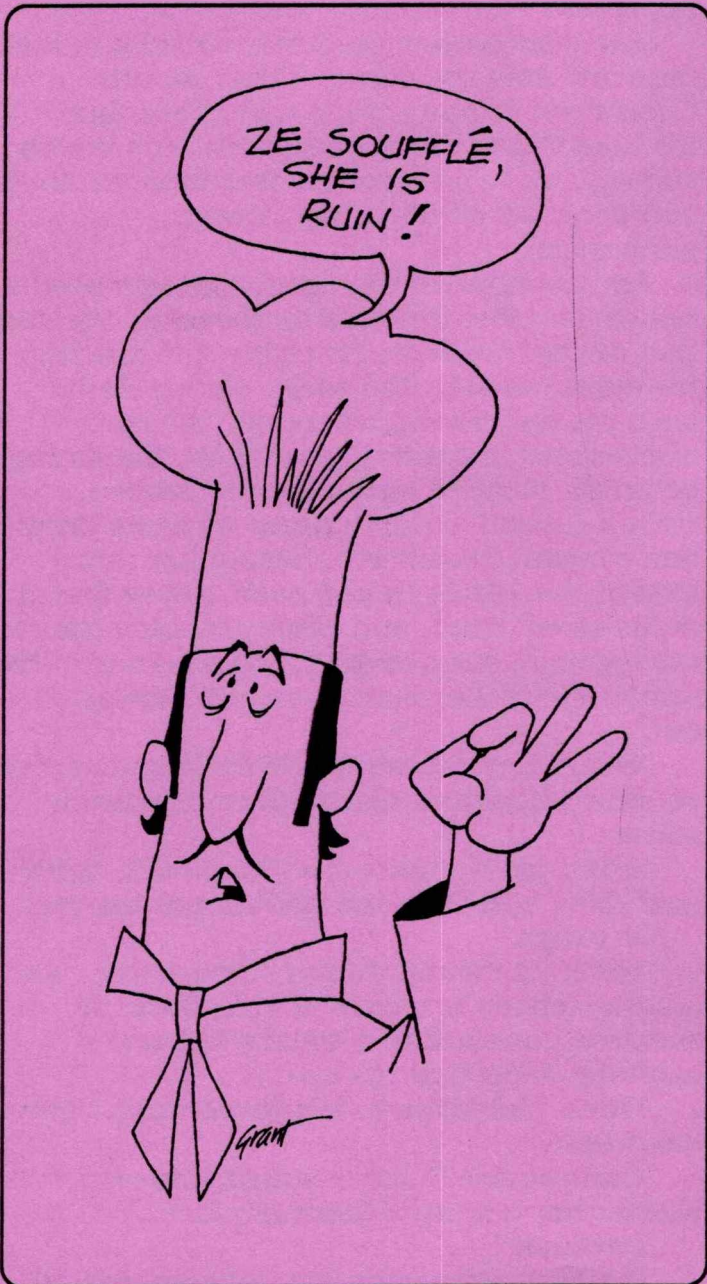
Andy's eyes fluttered, he blinked hard, and rubbed at his closed eye with the ball of his finger, then blinked again and assumed a painful looking squint.

"Well?" Joyce prompted.

"Yeah, I can see," Andy said, obviously dejected about his lousy chances for martyrdom, "It still stings though."

"Let's get you up to our room and we'll flush it out real good," she said, catching his wavering arm and clutching it to her side, maternal and possessive. "And we'll have a hotdog, and maybe some good cheer," she promised, guiding him along.

"But what about our..."



"Don't worry about that dear," Joyce interrupted, "that's already taken care of," she assured him, patting his hand.

I followed them to the doors but thought it wise to go no further, for Joyce seemed to have things well in hand and I didn't want to spoil her momentum with a sudden appearance. But there, at the swinging-hissing doors of the casino, I heard Andy ask plaintively, "But what are you going to do with me?" Joyce turned to him, glowing with trufannishness, keeping the door open with her hip, and said, "Why Andy, we have to keep an eye on you! We can't do that if you're up and away in Seattle, now can we?" Andy shook his head in the negative, moving through the door Joyce held open.

"No sweetie, and we can't send you back to Madison either. So that only leaves one thing left that we can do."

"What's that?" I heard as the door began to swing close.

"You're staying here Andy," she said, earnestly looking up at him. "You're moving to Las Vegas!"

And that's how Joyce Worley Katz defeated Andy Hooper and the Shrimp Bros., breaking the Intergalactic Brotherhood of Shellfish Gobblers, and forever shattering the shellfish gobbling bond that was born lo those many months ago. Backed by the indomitable power of a trufan and the CSFL, Joyce laid to rest yet another menace to fandom while at the same time bringing another misguided fan into the Vegas fold. Andy was righteously exorcised with the fanacal fervor of a trufan who not only sees the light, but reflects it as well. And so Vegas fandom gained another faned, while the Shrimp Bros. were forever divided.

Not until Dan returns to the States will Joyce have the opportunity to finish the job. And though Dan will have a compliment of European Shellfish Gobblers backing him at Corflu Nashville, with Andy now basking in her trufannish glow, Joyce feels confident that Dan too, will fail his King, and cross back over to the trufannish side.

So, before Arnie could use his not-so-secret Shrimp Bros. membership card to pick a piece of shrimp flesh from between his teeth, Joyce had, temporarily, saved fandom.

Just like that.

A Chance of a Ghost

Faan Fiction by
Bob Shaw

The hero of this classic reprint is a descendant of Goon Bleary, the comic fannish detective John Berry created in the 1950s. The Goon Defective Agency (GDA) solved cases with a mixture of sleuthing, luck and craziness. This story is the antitheses of the series' usual slapstick hijinks. Goon Bleary VI returns to 170 Upper Newtownards Road, (Oblique House), where his fancestor played Ghoodminton, cardboard bat in hand, against the other members of Irish Fandom.

Winter came early in the year 2113 -- a long succession of cold, sad months in which the chill rain swooped in windy shapes down deserted streets and gurgled mournfully in the gutters. Goon Bleary VI, head of the GDA, walked slowly towards his home; trench coat buttoned tight, hat pulled down against the hopeless drizzle. He was whistling a low, sad tune, which reached no other ears but his own.

Overhead the hard evening sky was occasionally disturbed by the whisper of commuting copters, but the Goon preferred to walk. The GDA was not far from the Bleary ancestral home, anyway. Reaching his house, he opened the front door and stood in the hallway, removing his outer garments.

Before him, lined along the wall, were the familiar portraits of the preceding heads of the GDA. They were remarkably alike -- strong, athletic-looking men with keen penetrating eyes and luxurious mustaches. The Goon hung up his coat and went down the hall into the living room, stopping for a minute at the painting of Goon Bleary the first, which was in the darkest part of the hall where it could hardly be seen.

This was the Goon's favorite ancestor. All the others were grim determined men, but Goon 1st was different. There was a cheering

twinkle to his eyes and under his mustache lurked the hint of a grin. His clothes were slightly disheveled and in his right hand he held a square of battered cardboard.

Goon VI had often pondered on the meaning of that incongruous piece of cardboard. It was a pity that the beginnings of the GDA were shrouded in mystery. So many years had gone by. Years in which the GDA had become the world's foremost detective agency, fighting crime in all its many forms, and always headed by a Bleary. A fine tradition, and one which every member of the Bleary line was expected to carry on.

In his living room, the Goon sat down before a glowing coal fire, which differed little from a 20th century coal fire only in that it never needed tending. He pressed a button on the arm of the chair and a bottle of beer and a glass were levitated up from the basement store. Goon poured the beer and sat staring into the fire, and the cold rain pattered on the windows.

An hour later, the Goon was aroused from his lonely reverie by the robot butler's announcement that he had a visitor. He went out to the hall, where he saw a small, neat man with large ears and sleek black hair, turning off his field force umbrella. The small man was looking surprisedly at the Goon's dripping trench coat and hat.

"The traditional GDA outfit," the Goon explained going forward. "I'm Goon Bleary."

"How do you do?" the small man replied, and the Goon saw that he was pale and nervous. "I'm Aub Long."

"Indeed. I would have said you were fairly well-rounded. Get it? Hee hee hee. What a smashin' pu --" The Goon stopped, inwardly angry at himself. Why did he sometimes get these uncontrollable impulses to make weird puns and then praise them extravagantly?

"What's your trouble, Mr. Long?"

"It's my house. It's haunted. Do you handle cases like that?"

"Oh, yes," said the Goon. "The more unusual the case is, the better.

"Where is the house?"

"The address is 170 Upnards Road."

"170 Upnards Road," the Goon echoed faintly. "170, Upnards Road."

"What's the matter, Mr. Bleary?" Long said anxiously. "You seem quite pale."

"I don't know," said the Goon. "Am I pale? For a moment I seemed to...it's nothing. Let's go," He grabbed his trench coat.

"Right *now*?" Long queried.

"Why not? This is a lonely house. I hate it. Tell me about your ghosts."

As the flew in Aub Long's copter, Long explained that he could not get any tenant to remain in his house more than a few days. They all claimed that they had heard ghosts in the attic -- screams, shouts, bangs, horrible cries, moans. Probably the ghostly re-enactment of a terrible murder.

"Don't worry," the Goon explained. "Until a few years ago ghosts were not accepted, but with the definite proof of psychic phenomena, great steps were made in these things. Exorcising, for instance. I have in my pocket a little machine which sets up vibrations which either destroys spectres or renders this 'continuum' absolutely untenable for them. When I use this machine, these ghosts will vanish forever." He gazed sadly down through the whirling mists to where the lights of the Upnards Road were rising slowly to meet them.

The tiny copter landed in the front garden of 179, The Goon got out and stood surveying the house and lawn, arrowing his eyes against the wind-bourne rain.

"What is that?" he asked, pointing to a jumble of vaguely seen bars on top of a short pedestal.

"It is a genuine 20th century bicycle. I had it put there as a curio. It was found out at the back of the house."

"Really?" the Goon replied. He poked the thing with his fingers, and it sagged slightly. "Hard to believe that it could have become so rusted in 150 years or less." He smiled a little as he tried to imagine the sort of person it would have been who actually rode on that piece of metal.

They went into the house and stood in the dark, empty hall. The Goon took off his hat and flipped it towards the stairs, where it landed on top of the newell post.

"Why did you do that, Mr. Bleary? We will be here only for a few seconds, won't we? Are you sure you feel all right?"

"I don't know," the Goon said faintly, retrieving his hat. "Listen, I heard something."

They listened. From upstairs came strange sounds, growing gradually louder and louder -- bangs, cries, weird laughter, screams.

"It is they!" screamed Long. "It's the ghosts. What a horrible sound. Quickly, Mr. Bleary, use the machine."

Moving like a man in a trance, the Goon removed the exorcisers from his pocket. For a moment his fingers hovered above the activator switch, then he withdrew them. "I'm going up there to see them," he said slowly.

Long caught his arm. "Are you *mad*? You can't go up there. Who knows what would happen to you?" The sounds floating down the stairs grew even louder.

The Goon's eyes were shining with an unnatural brightness as he brushed off Long's hand. "I don't care. All my life I have been lonely. I've been searching, searching, searching. Looking for... something. I'm not a Master Detective at heart. I need something else, and I'm going up those stairs."

He started up the stairs, and the sounds grew thunderous from above.

With a desperate cry, Long threw himself forward, caught the exorciser and turned its switch.

All at once the sounds ceased. The house was silent.

The Goon stood stock still on the third step, his face buried in this hands. He swayed like that for some time, then turned and walked slowly, tiredly down the hall.

Outside the house, Long said timorously, "I guess we've both been under a strain. I'll fly you straight back."

"No thanks, I'll walk."

He pulled his hat down over his eyes and walked away into the night. Long glimpsed him once as his copter rose in the sky; and the Goon looked very small and lonely as the rain and clouds closed over and hid him from view.

-- Bob Shaw

The Insurgent Elevator

A Trufannish Adventure by
Arnie Katz

A contented smile replaced the rapacious grimace on the sensitive fannish face of Andy Hooper. He had wanted that copy of **Masque #2**, and he had made it his against bidders whose determination nearly rivaled his own.

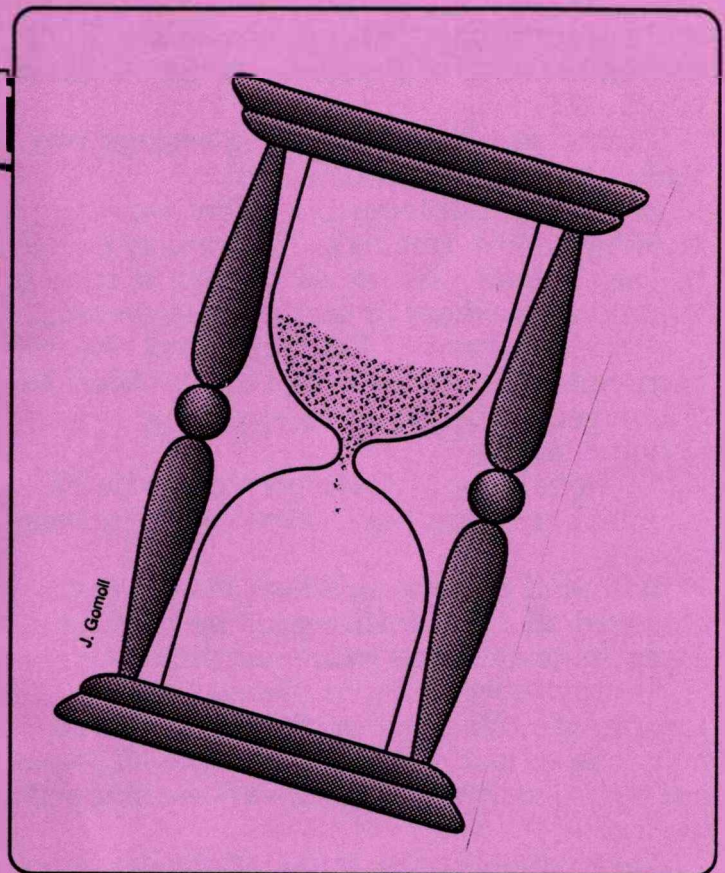
The bidding started at a nominal figure, but the auctioneer soon had the price jumping by \$10 and #20 a pop. Those fanzine-hungry Vegas fans, Andy mused as he walked toward Ken Forman to claim the prize. Give them Rotsler and Burbee, and they'd pay anything. He could visualize them prying open their slot machine-shaped piggy banks and unstuffing mattresses in preparation for the Corflu Vegas auction.

But he'd beaten them, beaten them all. When he'd boomed his \$100 bid, all sound ceased in the meeting room. Then came the murmurs, the excited whispers, as fans asked each other the last time they'd seen such a price for an insurgent fanzine. It's the special Al Ashley issue, you know. Everybody knew.

He read disappointment in the faces of several losing bidders. He wished there were enough copies so that everyone could have them -- and he wouldn't have had to pay a hundred bucks, either.

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"Did you see that **Masque #2**?" said Tom Springer as the four co-editors of **Nine Lines Each** wrapped up Saturday's issue. They were weak from the effort of writing 18 lines, including all necessary punctuation, in just



two days. The four men plowed through the end-of-issue routine. Ken saved the copy to disk and shut down his beloved portable Macintosh. The others emptied ashtrays and collected empty bheer bottles. The **NLE**enies disdain bheer in cans, though after hearing about Berkeley Fandom's bheercan tower to the moon, they were trying to tolerate others' without their refined suds aesthetics.

"Do they make anything larger than 'super jumbo'?" Ben Wilson wondered. "I can hardly get the twist tie on."

"We could start a second bag," offered Tom.

"**Nelly's** got a brand new bag....ooooowwwwww!" said Ken as he flailed through a James Brown impression. Make that "attempted to flail through." The Society of James Brown Imitators doesn't recognize impressions by 6'5", pale-skinned white men. At least not officially, not in this country.

"This could affect our publishing sessions," said Ben, warming to the idea.

"If we keep at it longer, we'll produce more," said Tom enthusiastically. "We could switch to a bigger postcard!" Visions of picture pocrsards danced through his head.

"Drink more, smoke more, fan more."

JoHn Hardin summarized impatiently from behind his copy of **Fanthology '91**. "Can we handle it?"

"Remember that publishing session two Tuesdays ago," cautioned Ken.

"We had a publishing session two Tuesdays ago?" Tom asked, obviously puzzled by the allusion. His brows knit as he tried to summon a memory of that bygone evening.

"That's my point," Ken explained. "Even I don't remember it too well. I think I blacked out sometime before I was supposed to write my nine lines --"

"-- *eight* lines..." JoHn corrected. He didn't even look up from the D. West piece he was reading.

If he had Superman's heat vision, Ben observed silently, JoHn would be holding ashes instead of this year's fanthology.

"--- my *eight-and-a-half* lines," Ken continued. "We filled up the super jumbo hefty bag so fast and so full that we *all* passed out before we wrote. That's why we skipped a week.

They pondered the implications of moderation, which Ken's discourse had just revealed to them. Except, of course, for JoHn. He continued to read, though he had now finished **Fanthology '91** and switched to the latest **Fosfax**.

And so, consumed in thought (except for JoHn, as already noted) and consumed by the consumables which they had only recently consumed, the intrepid quartet set off down a long featureless hallway.

They had a mission. This band of fannish brothers sought what all fans seek -- the company of fanwriting and fanpublishing colleagues, the unquenchable Spirit of Trufandom, the psychic center of Corflu Vegas. In short, they wanted an elevator to the consuites in the South Tower and a significant sidebar that was smoldering out there somewhere, waiting for them.

They continued unsteadily down the hall.

"That elevator's got to be along here somewhere," said Ben optimistically. He was about to add that it felt like they'd walked for at least 20 minutes, but he chalked that up to the time-dilating effects of conspicuous consumption of contemporary combustibles.

"It has to be up here somewhere," said Tom, hurrying down the corridor ahead of the

other three. Producing a daily oneshot was a Good Thing, in Tom's opinion, but not quite as appealing as the Saturday night Corflu Vegas revel promised to provide.

The hall dead-ended in a "T". Just around the righthand corner was an elevator door. "And here it is," said a vindicated Tom. The seemingly interminable walk had finally reached its destination.

"I thought the elevators were arranged in banks," said Ken, as they formed up in front of the entry to wait for the car to reach their floor.

"Well, one is all we need, Ken," said JoHn, who had finished **Fosfax** and was working quickly through the instructions to guests printed on the wall near the elevator. "Four of us into one elevator car. Seems like a winning equation."

The arrival of the elevator cut short further conversation. The door slid open, and they rushed forward.

Only when the door closed behind them did they realize that they weren't alone.

"Where to?" said a handsome, bearded fellow wearing an old Corflu teeshirt. He gestured toward the floor selection panel embedded in the wall to the left of the door.

"You want the Sixth? The Eighth?... what'll ya 'ave?" asked a shorter man with a pronounced London accent. "Or shall we just pick one at random, Terry?"

"It's up to them, Arthur," the bearded fan replied.

"Four, I guess," Ken responded. Who were these two guys? He didn't recognize either, but then, it was still only Saturday and there were quite a few Corflu attendees still unmet. Perhaps this chance encounter would be the start of a lifelong friendship.

"Four it is," said the one who'd been identified as Arthur.

"Maybe a little past four?" the other inquired.

For a panicky instant, Ben worried about these strangers. What could "a little past four" possibly mean? Would this odd pair stop the elevator between floors? That wasn't likely, given the odds and the relative sizes of the potential combatants. Of course, the little guy could have a sawed off shotgun...

They seemed out of place, even by the elastic standards of Corflu. Ben decided after he'd considered the matter a little more. Their

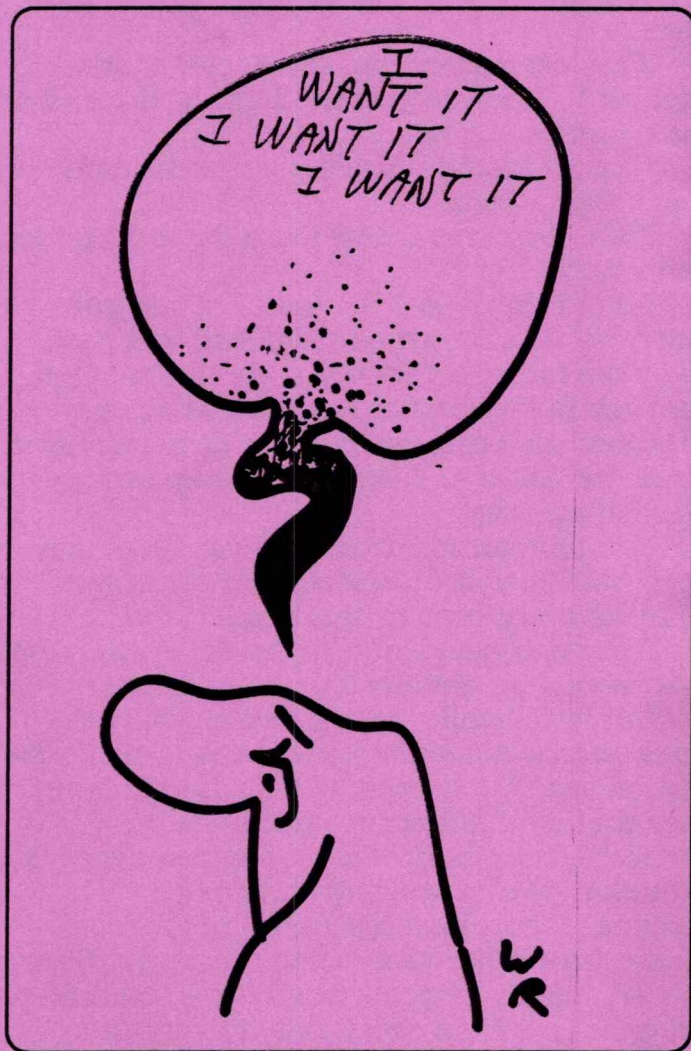
solicitude didn't represent an immediate threat. Maybe they'd participated in a few sidebars, too. Ben was just working through several additional, unpleasant, if farfetched scenarios when the door opened. It's gone be okay, he thought as he stepped into the hall.

"Hey, this isn't the third floor!" Ben said. The other three had followed close behind. This was fortunate, because the door closed with unusual swiftness. The car departed quickly, destination unknown.

JoHn looked up from a particularly engrossing placard advertising the casino's girlie show. "That's true. I don't think this is the third floor."

"This could be a good thing," Ken said reasonably. "Maybe we'll meet new friends who will become fans and enrich our lives."

That wrenched JoHn away from the pizzeria delivery flyer which had so totally monopolized his attention. He ought to tell them that they weren't even in the hotel any



more. He'd do that when he finished reading the newspaper he'd found lying next to the door. He'd probably mention the date on the front page, too.

"Everythings old fashioned," Ben observed. "Not old like antiques, though. New stuff" They examined the door and the surrounding wall -- and saw that he was right. The door looked like those in old black and white movies, but it wasn't worn like the genuine article would have to be. It was a fairly *new* old door.

"So, Ken, what do you think we should do in a situation of this unusual nature?" Tom asked.

"There's a door," the Mainspring replied. "Let's knock." Before anyone could say anything, he suited actions to words and rapped on the door.

Nothing.

Ken knocked again, putting more snap into it. He didn't spare any of his considerable strength. The wood was already dead beyond his power to inflict pain on it. That, he could never do. But he would cheerfully tattoo this lifeless wooden door with his fists from now to forever if it helped his friends.

They heard footsteps and then unlocking noises. The door swung halfway open to reveal a slim man with a huge, lionine head. "Yeah?" He made it sound like foreplay for a fistfight.

"Hi!" said Tom as he extended his hand toward the small opening between the door and the frame. "We're fanzine fans!"

The door slammed. They could hear raised voices inside. Frustratingly, the thickness of the door muffled individual words.

The door reopened.

"Burbee wants to know who sent you." It was the same man. He stared at them with undisguised skepticism.

Ben called for a strategy conference.

"In your opinion, Ken, who do you feel is responsible for our presence here?" Tom whispered.

"Those Terry and Arthur guys had something to do with it," Ben said.

"We neglected to obtain their surnames during our discourse," Ken reminded. "We'd better pick fans whose names we know in their entirety."

That threw open nominations. They

bandied around the names of several fans, who would no doubt like to see themselves mentioned in this story, even in a minor way, until they reached a consensus. The huddle broke.

"The Katzes!" the environmentalist told their reluctant greeter. "We know Arnie and Joyce!" The door slammed again. Evidently, the man at the door hadn't heard him correctly, Ken decided.

Heated discussion raged inside the house.

The door opened, but only a crack this time. "We don't know them," the man said. "Who else ya got?" He laughed uproariously, as though someone had just told him a funny story.

"Widner and Speer," JoHn said as he pushed his way to Tom's side. When the door closed again, JoHn turned to Tom. "I've got a funny feeling about this. Obviously, this guy never heard of Joyce and Arnie."

The door opened yet again. "Burbee wants to know if you brought the five bucks Widner owes him."

"No," said JoHn. "I don't believe Art mentioned any five dollars." The door banged shut.

Someone else opened it. All four immediately felt they knew him. They just couldn't quite place him. "You know that cheapskate, all right," the newcomer said. "That's not the kind of thing he'd mention." He stepped back from the door and swung it open wide.

"We're working on a fanzine," he said as he shook hands with Tom Springer. "I'm Charles Burbee!"

It *was* Burbee! A younger, healthier Burbee, a startled Ben realized. It was definitely the Avatar of Las Vegas Fandom. Yet this Charles Burbee was no older than Ken! Younger than Ken!

"Greetings and felicitations, Mr. Burbee," said Ken, brimming with *bonhomie*. "We're the **NLE** boys!" He waited expectantly for a response. It was surprising that Joyce hadn't told him about this aspect of Corflu. Well, being surprised was fun, sometimes, Ken thought happily.

"You're all nelly boys?" Burbee blurted, momentarily shaken by this unprovoked confession. He took a couple of steps back, so he could take in the entire group. "All four of

you?"

"All four of us!" chimed in Ben. At least these people had heard of **Nine Lines Each**. It was the first evidence that the world hadn't turned upside down. This recognition was a rock to anchor his reeling mind. Everybody had told him that wedding days are nerve-jangling, but this was ridiculous. He almost wished he'd stayed in the consuite with Cathi and let Saturday's **NLE** slide over to Sunday.

"And how long have you been nelly boys?" Burbee pressed. He was thinking whether to write it up as an article or if he could get a whole **Burblings** out of this. He could try.

"Since the beginning," said Tom proudly. The first few issues hadn't set fandom afire, but **Nine Lines Each** had built up a good head of steam in the months preceding Corflu. Several fans had already praised the daily issues. It might not be on a par with being one of the original Shrimp Brothers, but it wasn't bad going for four guys from Vegas.

"Except for me," added Ben. "I got into it later."

"They converted you, did they?" Burbee observed. "Showed you the light at the end of the tunnel, as it were?"

"I found fandom and a wife in the same year," Ben added.

"Wife'... is that a new word for it?" Burbee persisted.

"I don't think so," Ben said. "I just got married!" Ben informed him. And you gave away the bride, he thought. He didn't say it, because Burbee appeared to have already forgotten the occasion, and he didn't think it would be polite to point out this apparent lapse of memory.

"You just got married, and you're a nelly boy," said Burbee. "Just when I think I've heard of everything in fandom..."

"Have you heard of us?" asked JoHn, who was certain he already knew the answer.

"Not specifically, no," admitted Burbee. "I think there's someone who needs to meet the four of you." He turned and headed for the door that led further into the house.

"We've back here," Burbee called over his shoulder. "We're working on Rotsler's **Masque**." Their host led them into a room where three other fans toiled diligently. Bheer bottles, mostly empties but with a few half-full ones, stood on every available surface. So

did numerous fanzines, each opened to a page for quick reference. Empty bottles doubled as paper weights to wedge them open.

"Fran, I want you to meet the four biggest nelly boys in fandom!" Burbee said. The man who'd first talked to them at the door looked up from a big manual typewriter. "This one is Ken and he wants to felicitate you."

"I didn't know nelly boys came so big," Fran barked.

"You're quite a man of the world, aren't you Towner?" asked Burbee, seemingly abandoning the conversation for safer ground.

"Sure am, and proud of it!"

"I take it you've got a lot of experience, then?" Burbee wanted to know.

"Definitely," Fran said. "I have followed in your footsteps."

"Why is that, meyer?" Burbee asked.

"Because you are my fannish ghod," Fran said. "Besides, I meet a lot of skirts along that path."

"So you'd say you follow the path of bad intentions," Burbee said, "at least as it applies to the Fairer Sex. That's right, isn't it, meyer?"

"I figure if 'the road to hell is paved with good intentions'," Fran explained. "Bad intentions must lead to heaven. Or at least to a willing woman."

"It's always good to get the benefit of your experience, Towner," Burbee said.

"Thanks, meyer."

"And in that extensive experience, Towner, how big do nelly boys generally cum?"

"You bastard," said the man Burbee had addressed as "Towner."

Then Fran threw back his head and laughed, a stentorian bray that shook the walls. Ken supposed it must be the much-celebrated Laney Laugh. Ken was sure this must be Francis Towner Laney, the stormy petrel of fandom, the dark ghod of insurgentism. He hoped there wouldn't be much blood.

"Don't you dare draw something, Rotsler!" Fran shouted. A young man, certainly junior to the four Vegrants, looked in Fran's direction. He'd been etching a drawing into a shiny blue sheet stretched over a light box.

"Good afternoon to you, Mr. Rotsler," Ken said as he crossed the room. Ken peered over

the artist's shoulder. Now he saw that Rotsler was actually tracing a drawing of a bountifully endowed woman watching a spaceship land, which was under the transparent blue material. Maybe it was one of those stencils about which Arnie always waxed nostalgic.

"I'm sorry, but I don't think we've met," Rotsler said and returned to his work.

"We might have met during one of my visits to Lassfass," Ken recovered. It wasn't a lie, technically. He hadn't met *this* Rotsler at LASFS, but it was theoretically possible that it could have happened. Perhaps in an alternate universe, but possible nonetheless. Rotsler didn't recall meeting him, so obviously this wasn't his **Wild Heirs** coeditor. That would explain the age discrepancy.

The Mainspring felt fortunate for this chance to get to know what must be a scion of the Rotsler family. Perhaps this new Rotsler would do for 21st century fandom what the original had done for the 20th century version. Even if Rotsler the Younger didn't have as much talent as his relative -- and that was yet to be evaluated -- meeting a potential new friend could only increase the joyousness of his life.

"And here's the capper, Fran," Burbee continued as though his friend was still paying attention, which despite all outward appearances, he was. "The tall skinny one got married today!"

"If you want me to comment intelligently, meyer, you've got to give me the facts," roared Fran. "Did he marry a man or a woman?"

"Definitely a woman!" Tom, Ken and JoHn chorused almost as one. It would've been in perfect unison, except that JoHn had removed one of the bheer bottles from a fanzine and was reading the former while finishing off the latter. He'd noticed with a jolt that the editor of the zine he held was "Al Ashley," at the precise second Laney asked his question, so his faulty timing was pardonable.

"We're all married!" Ken said.

"To each other? That's certainly a strong foundation for a coedited fanzine," Burbee cut in.

"No, we're all married to fine specimens -- or should I say speciwomens? -- of the feminine gender. Except Tom" The Mainspring elaborated.

"Tom is married to a man?" Burbee hoped he'd have time to get it all down for **Burblings**. Maybe a double issue.

"No, Tom has not yet embraced the sublime state of matrimonial ecstasy," Ken corrected. "He has a steady girlfriend. Tammy is intelligent, personable and utterly delightful."

"Big knockers, eh?" guessed Burbee.

"Pretty big," Ken acknowledged. "Quite large and ample for the purpose"

"Hey," said Tom.

"Hah! I knew they weren't homos," Laney sneered without turning away from the typewriter. He could spot them just by looking, and these strapping fans weren't queers.

"Not us," said Ken. "We like women! We even chase ugly ones!" He couldn't help feeling more chipper at the thought that this misperception was well on its way to settlement. What a grand world it would be if all beings of good will could communicate openly and honestly.

"That's very encouraging, for homely ladies, if not for anyone else," the room's heretofore quiet fourth denizen said. He added something more, but none of the visitors could decipher it through the boozy slur. The still-unintroduced fan took a few deep breaths to get control of himself, and then said: "I am glad that I don't have to worry that you'll take sudden advantage of my current extreme state of inebriation."

"We're from the state of Nevada, Las Vegas," said Ben. "But that's about the same thing." It wasn't a great joke, he knew, but he thought it beat awkward silence.

"Nevada?" the drunken one demanded. "You came here all the way from godforsaken Nevada just to bask in the radiance of our find minds?" He paused again. "Hey, Burbee, it must be that unghodly N3F award, again." Like all the Insurgents, Elmer had an abiding distrust of anything so strenuously supported by Walter J. Daugherty. A fan had to have principles. He was a fan of principles, and he was a prince of a principled fan.

"You my be right, Elmer. First a free membership, then those letters from the Welcommittee and now fannish tourists!" Burbee mused aloud. "Who knew that winning an N3F laureate award could be so damn inconvenient." At least he'd gotten an

article out of it.

"There's one thing I've always wanted to know about the N3F," said JoHn without diverting his eyes from an EE Evans **Timebinder** editorial.

"What's that?" Burbee asked.

Suddenly, JoHn's palms were damp. He thought he knew what was going on, but if he was wrong, and Burbee had already heard his carefully prepared quip, the loss of face would be irretrievable. He swallowed hard. "Which of those 'f's stands for 'fugghead'?"

Everyone laughed. Rotsler grabbed a pad and drew a cartoon.

Reassured about gender preferences and pleased with JoHn's joke, the Insurgents went back to preparing **Masque #2**. The Vegrants started to shed their shyness and mix with the other four.

Tom walked over to where the heavy drinker with the wild tie and eyes to match was polishing off another bbeer. "You must be Elmer Perdue," Tom said to the obviously zoned fan, who now rested his head on his typewriter.

"No one else wants the responsibility," Elmer replied. "You like music?"

"Music?" The abrupt change of subject put him off-balance, but he managed a "sure."

"Like what?"

"Big bands... jazz," Tom replied, relieved to be on familiar conversational territory once more.

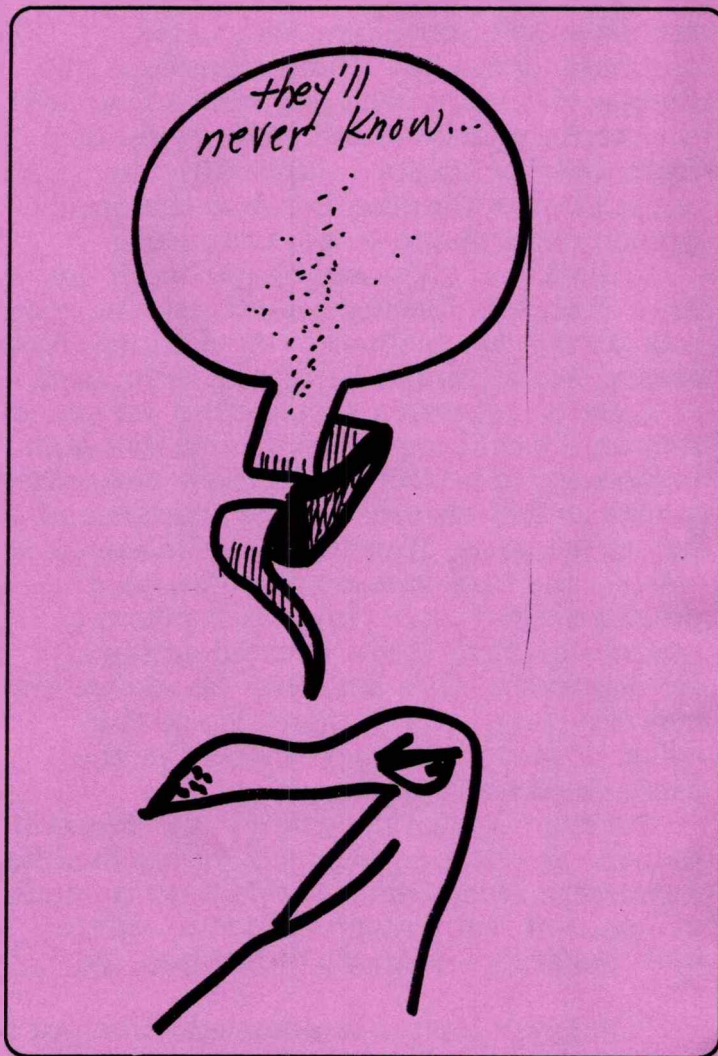
Perdue abruptly rallied from his stupor, spurred by the proximity of a kindred soul.

"Help me to the next room," Elmer offered, "and we'll listen to some of Laney's collection."

"You know what's an excellent accompaniment to the swinging sounds of the great bands?" Tom said as they left the room.

Ben watched Rotsler put the finishing details on the illos. "So that's how it's done," he said, more to himself than to Bill.

Rotsler explained the mimeographic process, as he would to any rank neo. "Maybe some day other fan publishers will learn to render my line," Rotsler added wistfully. Ben yearned to set the artist's mind at ease by telling him about the photocopied fanzines of the 1990s, but he was afraid that such a revelation would warp fanhistory.



Improper foreknowledge could result in Walt Willis overlooking that *Astounding*. Revealing the future might lead, through an inexorable chain of cause and effect, to a cataclysm. What if, Ben fretted, his loose tongue somehow led some as-yet-unknown BNF to go wild over a trifle and persecute his friends for years on end until their pleasure in fanzine fandom turned to a dull ache for the good times fled?

So Ben said nothing as he admired Rotsler's skill.

"I don't want to upset anyone or anything, but I don't think we're in Kansas any more." JoHn told Ken as they watched Laney run the mimeo.

"How perfectly marvelous!" Ken exulted. "Everyone will hang on our every word once we return from this great adventure."

"If we get back from this great adventure," JoHn said morosely. The heart-wrenching

possibility that he might never again see his Karla or their yet-unborn child broke his communion with Burbee's file of **Shangri-L'Affaires**. So he decided to stop reading and turn the full force of his Fine Mind on getting the hell back to Jack Gaughan's Plaza. Besides, he'd probably have gotten a load of new fanzines to read by the time they got back. A desirable result from every conceivable angle, he assured himself. The only thing he needed to get straight was the getting-back-to-Vegas part.

"How are we going to get out of here?" asked JoHn, hoping that the Mainspring would come up with something.

"In times of utmost dexterity," Ken said in a distant cousin to a WC Fields imitation. The passing "Firesign Theatre" reference went unrecognized by JoHn, "we must turn for solace to the holy literature of scientifiction to extricate ourselves from this unwholesome predicament. Yassss" He flicked an imaginary cigar.

"Colonel Sanders?" JoHn guessed.

"This may not be the most auspicious occasion in which to contemplate the joys of fried chicken," Ken scolded. He still wanted to tell JoHn his idea. "How would they get home on *Star Trek*?"

"Someone would beam them up?" JoHn offered. He could see it was the wrong answer, at least in Ken's opinion.

"They'd do whatever it was that the aliens seemed to want and then whatever it was would send them back to the *Enterprise*," Ken reminded. "Maybe if we help them produce their fanzine, the Spirit of Trufandom will whisk us back to Corflu Vegas!"

"That's how it would be if Arnie wrote it," JoHn agreed. "The Spirit of Trufandom, a short sermon on the sanctity of fanzine publishing, and they'd be back at the parties.

"I'd like to read that story," Ken said. "I'll go volunteer!" Within seconds, or so it seemed to the Mainspring, he was laying inky crudsheets on top of each freshly run page as it rolled from the clanking machine. Burbee called it "slip sheeting." According to Burbee, it warded off the heinous malady known as "set-off," streaks caused when the mimeo dropped a sheet onto a just-printed, and still wet, one. Ken had previously encountered neither term. So he diligently interleaved sheets with the ones issuing from the mimeo,

content that he'd expanded his fannish vocabulary by two words in a single day.

JoHn offered to proofread. He expected Laney to hand him a stack of white master pages, but instead, Towner rose from his chair and indicated that JoHn should replace him at the typer.

"Here's the corflu," Fran said, handing him a small, conical bottle of blue liquid.

"It's larger than this in Vegas," he observed. Then a thought struck him: could this be the legendary substance for which the annual convention was named? Arnie had extolled its curative powers so many times that JoHn had often wondered why Arnie hadn't used it more often himself.

Well there's only one way to tell if this is Corflu, JoHn thought. He unscrewed the cap, raised it to nearly eye-level and inhaled deeply. "Ahhhh," he said. "A little overrated, I think, but an interesting head."

"Have you met Elmer?" Laney asked. JoHn felt the pressure of his stare and returned his slightly befuddled attention to proofreading.

Proofreading and the consequences of unrestricted time travel. And REM. "If you're going to do it," said Towner, "let's get to it."

JoHn started to wind the stencil thing out of the machine.

"No, no, no!" Fran bellowed. "You'll never line up the text if you pull the stencil. Read the stencil without removing it from the platen, and then paint over the mistake with the corflu. Then roll the typer back to the line you want and retype it the right way."

Laney watched him start, checking that JoHn was following the letter of his instructions. He didn't want his Al Ashley article to end up as a shredded blue crumple.

This Hardin character knew his stuff. Fran prided himself on the small number of mistakes in his article, but his new assistant easily found several and corrected them with painstaking precision.

"Hey, this corflu really works," said JoHn, drawing a deep and satisfying breath.

"Corrects typos, too.!" Was the name of the convention derived from the mind-altering properties of this pungent fluid, he mused as he continued through the article, taking one heady inhalation per typo as a reward. "I wonder what happened to the feeling in my feet?" he asked aloud, but Laney either didn't hear him or affected not to have done so.

When Ben proposed to collate, Burbee immediately dubbed him his group's outstanding fan face. Hands toughened by dozens of Vegrant collating parties flew over the stacks with practiced ease. By the time Burb and Ken finished duplicating the second half of the zine, Ben had the first section crisscrossed in two neat piles.

"I think you guys are going to work out fine," Fran said, having noticed that the issue was getting done without a lot of Laney elbow grease. For a change, he reminded himself.

Once Ken finished slipsheeting, he joined Ben on the collating. The intricate two-man system they'd perfected won them astonished smiles as they breezed through the second half of the issue. They worked from opposite sides of the same line-up of pages, each pulling needed copies from each pile in a manner perfectly timed to avoid acting at cross-purposes with the other. No matter how fast they went, or how many copies they collated, they never once reached for the same sheet simultaneously.

Putting two demon collators like Ben and Ken on the relatively easy job got the fanzine together in record time. They'd built up such momentum that they proceeded to collate both Burbee and Laney's FAPazines, too.

"It's done!" Burbee announced as he put a bottle to his lips.

"And it's quite a remarkable production," Ken allowed. "I predict that fans in ages to come will pay fabulous sums for this issue of **Masque**." If they had traveled into the past to meet the LA Insurgents, as JoHn theorized, then that broad hint about the future was probably a little over the line. He thought it might only bend the Prime Directive or whatever it was, not actually *break* it.

"Thanks for all your help," Rotsler said. "'I did a cartoon based on your quote, John. Here it is.'" Bill extended his hand toward the Vegas fan and slipped the small paper over the top of the copy of **Masque** which he was reading.

Muffled laughter issued from behind the fanzine. "This is great," said JoHn. "Thank you for doing it."

The words had barely escaped JoHn's mouth when the room seemed to shimmer ever so slightly. The LA fans turned

translucent, almost transparent, before returning to their previous solidity.

"I think it's time to go home now, guy," said Ben.

"That's a terrific idea," Tom seconded.

The four, saying their good-byes as they went, moved to the door. Burbee walked with them. They stood in the doorway for an instant, almost reluctant to leave their fancestors, yet anxious to get back to fandom 1995.

"See you again soon," Burb said, waving good-bye.

"If not soon, then eventually," JoHn whispered, but so low Burbee did not hear.

The door slammed.

The elevator door appeared. Ken pushed the button, and they heard the car approach. It slid open.

Empty this time.

They hurried inside.

The elevator door closed, and the car began to ascend.

The cabin jolted each time they passed a floor. There were several jolts, but soon it stopped. They were out the door before it had time to completely open. It was the Jack Gaughan Plaza.

"We're home," Ben said.

"I can't wait to tell Aileen!" said Ken. "And

this will certainly enliven **Wild Heirs.**"

"Who's going to believe us?" Tom said.

"Maybe Rotsler and Burbee would remember, but it was a long time ago and they only met us once."

"They sure could drink in those days," Ben said. "It's a wonder they could remember anything!"

"We have proof!" Tom announced.

"Incontrovertible proof!"

"And what, pray tell, is that?" asked Ken.

"The cartoon Rotsler gave JoHn!"

"Dooooouuuuggggghhhhhhhh," said JoHn.

He scrunched up his face like Homer Simpson as the agonizing memory of what he had done came to him "Sorry guys," he said sheepishly. "When the room started doing funny things, I closed the fanzine I was reading. I guess I left the illo in it as a place marker."

= = =

He couldn't put it down. He'd read some of it before, of course, in *The Incomplete Burbee*, but a lot of it was new. And all of it was good. Was it a hundred dollars of good? Andy decided not to think about such mundane considerations until he'd read every word of **Masque #2.**

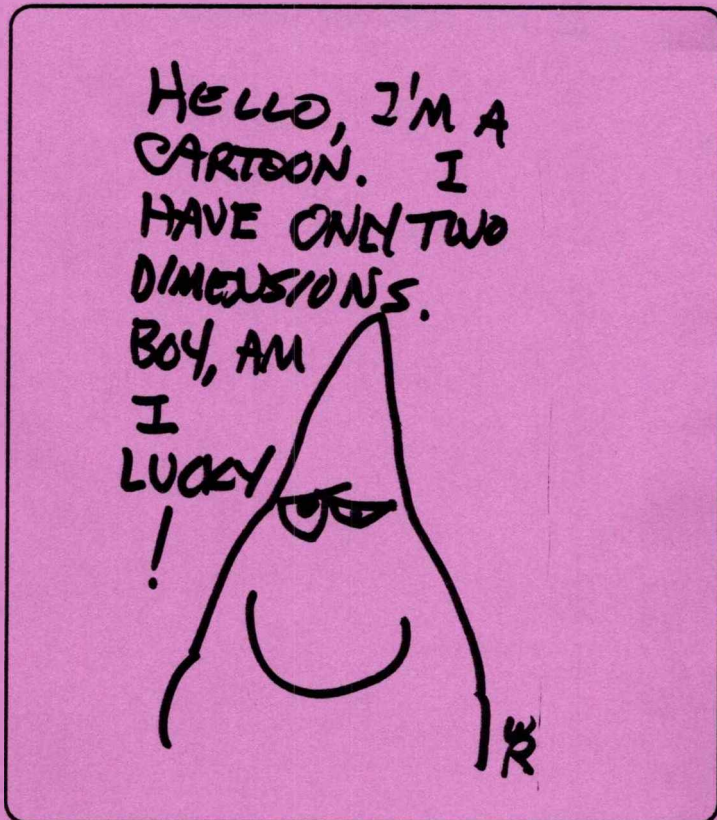
"Hey, what this?" he asked aloud when a little square of paper fluttered out of the fanzine as he flipped to the final page of a Laney article. Maddeningly, it sailed over the edge of the bed and onto the floor. He stretched out and snagged it.

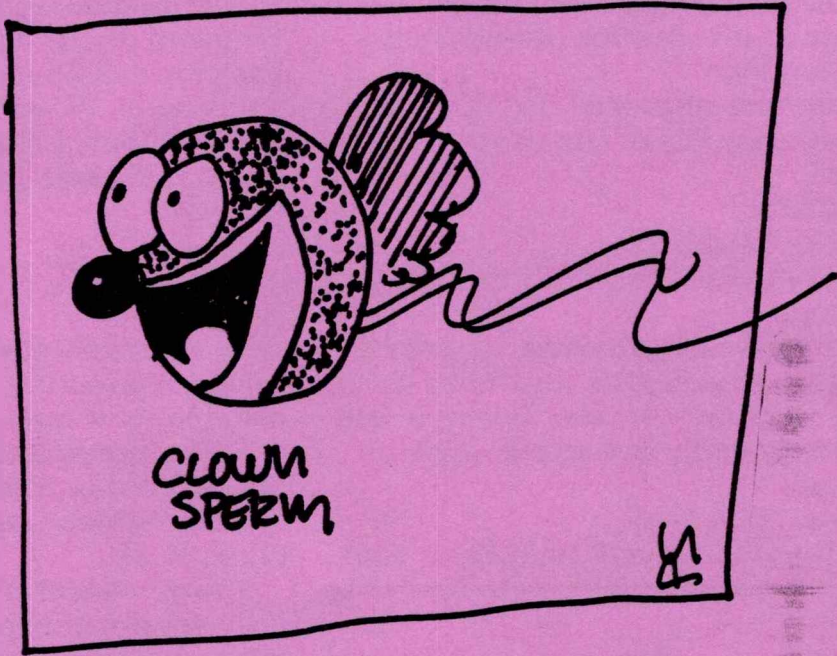
It was a Rotsler illo. Andy hadn't realized that Bill had started drawing Phallic Symbol Men again. Some kind of retro trip. Cute caption about the National Fantasy Fan Federation, too.

Then he had another thought. Maybe it was an old illo. The paper was brownish at the edges, now that he looked closer. He carefully put it into an envelope for protection. He knew a lot of artists didn't like fanzine editors to print old illos, so he would just retire this one. Maybe he could have it framed.

How about that, thought Andy Hooper. I buy an old zine and get a vintage Rotsler for my collection. That'll teach those spendthrifts who bought those rocks.

- Arnie Katz





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