

the RISFA players present ~

The Decomposers

Songbook or,

"Rivets Has Risen From
the Grave" by M.M. Keller
and

(illustrated by Stu Shiffman)

Sue Anderson



Shiffman
1979

The RISFA Players present

THE DECOMPOSERS

OR - RIVETS HAS RISEN FROM THE GRAVE

a science-fiction musical

Book and lyrics by Sue Anderson and Mark M. Keller

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Act 1. The day before MuddyCon II, a Worldcon -- lobby of the hotel

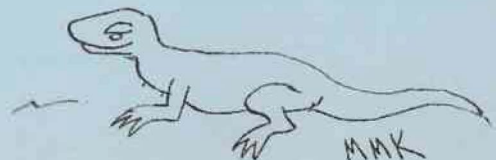
Act 2. The following morning, same place

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Additional material by Mike Saler. Thanks to George Flynn for the subtitle.

The Decomposers was first presented at BOSKONE XVI on 17 February 1979, in the Grand Ballroom of the Sheraton-Boston Hotel. Two hundred and fifty copies of this script were produced by Chainik Press for sale to the fannish and general public. The text was done on the Chainik Press mimeograph, still working after all those years (3). Illustrations done by offset at Jo-Art Copy, Providence. Copies are available at \$2.00 each from Chainik Press c/o Mark Keller, 101 South Angell St., Providence RI 02906.

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Illustrations (c) 1979 by Stu Shiffman



WHO'S WHO in "The Decomposers"

The Hotel: The METROPOLIS-GILTMORE -- a huge white elephant of a building, formerly the State Asylum for the Criminally Enthusiastic. It has 2000 rooms (padded) and miles of twisted corridors. Who else but the MuddyCon Committee would hold a convention here?

The Fans: DICK WASHINGTON -- Chairman of MuddyCon, with an unquenchable thirst for egoboo and a genius for delegating work.

PAT WASHINGTON -- Co-Chairman of MuddyCon, in charge of paperwork. The Committee members ask her all the hard questions.

ELOISE and ROGER -- Eager and hard-working fans on the MuddyCon Committee. Glorified gofers and rejoicing in it.

HELMINTH OF BOSKONE -- Once an arch-villain in the Eddorian conspiracy, then an out-of-work heavy in the fantasy film world [see Rivets Redux]; now a hired security consultant for cons. Helminth can be very intimidating.

F. N. BARBLE -- Enthusiastic neo-fan and computer freak, who's used his personal THX-1138 computer to schedule the convention program: hundreds of groups in dozens of rooms. He has the only complete printout (47 feet long) and is thus totally in charge of who meets when and where.

MIKE RISFA -- Producer of regional fannish musicals, New England.

ELAINE DuPAGE -- Producer of fannish musical shows, Chicago and Midwest.

MAD MADAM MIMEO -- The archetypal fanzine fan and mimeograph collector.

FORREST J. TUCKER -- Bheer-drinking, party-hopping trufan from way back. His van is in constant use driving from con to con.

The Pros: DR. ALEX ASENION -- He abandoned colloid chemistry for the joys of SF writing. Turns out a book a week, while other authors look on in awed envious disbelief.

DR. EDDIE PRINCETON -- With a Ph.D. in English Literature ("The Role of the Clothing Fastener in Milton, or, Heav'n Unbuttoned"), Princeton has set himself up as a universal expert on all science and all knowledge. A few groupies believe him.

FREDDIE TODD -- A competent writer of technical SF before he teamed up with Eddie and got overwhelmed. Plans to rewrite Dante's Purgatorio as SF. He wanted to do Inferno, but Niven and Pournelle got there first.

The Fringe Groups:

CONEHEADS -- or POTHEADS, nobody is quite sure -- Alien Visitors from the planet Remulak, first exposed on NBC's Saturday Night Live. They have picked up many Earth customs, most prominently drinking large amounts of beer.

LESSA -- Devout reader of Anne McCaffrey's "Dragon" books. Brings her own baby dragon to cons. Sells dragon eggs to friends.

CORWIN -- Overdosed on Roger Zelazny. Now believes he really is the Lord of 28 Universes. Followed by "shadows", the weird forms he might take in alternate worlds. They think he's real too.

SYME -- Follower of one of the more obscure fringe groups, inspired by Jacqueline Lichtenberg's "psychic vampire" stories.

FREE AMAZON -- Wants to live on Darkover, the medieval-magic world invented by Marion Zimmer Bradley. While waiting for a spaceship to take her there, she practices costume-making and knife-fighting.

NORMAN JOHNSON -- Very fond of soft-core SF porn, where Earth women are stolen by lustful aliens and forced to become helpless slaves. He somehow never quite meets the GOREAN SLAVEGIRLS who are wandering about the convention looking for lustful aliens. This is perhaps just as well.

QUARK FANS -- They claim to be fighting for the comeback of a TV science fiction series about an insterstellar garbage scow. Nobody else believes the show ever actually existed.

POXIE -- An exceedingly Cute Kid, a character in a very unlikely TV series. A desperate cargo of human refugees flee from an angry horde of robots in a flotilla of ex-livestock transport ships: Cattlecar Galactica. This kid, Poxie, is one of the refugees, along with his robot dog Muffin. (In a later episode the dog is revealed as an enemy spy.)

ROCKY HORROR FANS -- Fanatical followers of a rock musical with SF overtones, they dress as every movie monster you'd want to imagine.

DWIGHT -- An uncreative anachronism and throwback to the graceless adolescent boyfan of 1939, loving his slide rule, fearful of Girls. He really believes there was a Golden Age of Science Fiction...long before Chip Delany wrote Dhalgren.

MuddyCon also hosted a throng of comics fans, space colony fans, and wargame fans. They stayed in their assigned rooms and didn't bother anybody. A Good Thing.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Full page illos by Stu Shiffman

1. Cover - "The Decomposers"
2. Dr Asenion reassuring Eloise
3. Norman Johnson confronted by a Darkovan Amazon
4. Helminth threatens to gafiate Barble the Program Planner
5. "My Evil Self is at that door!"
6. Back cover - The last trufans on the road

Text illos (pages 19, 29) by Mark M. Keller

ACT ONE

[The inner lobby of the Giltmore Hotel, the day before the WorldCon. To the left are the hotel offices and the ConCommittee headquarters. To the right, the parking lot and main entrance, plus the elevators and staircases.

The members of the MuddyCon Committee enter singing, carrying chairs, tables, and boxes. They hang signs: "WELCOME SCI-FI FANS" and "MUDDYCON II."

Once the work is done, the Chairman, DICK WASHINGTON, enters in triumph and splendor. He is followed by his wife, PAT, and two assistants, ELOISE and ROGER.]

CHORUS: Conventions are ever so merry--
There always is plenty to do,
When details and conflicts are hairy
And the fans are depending, depending on you.
But your dedication keeps showing--
As trufans, you don't want to shirk
The duty of keeping things going
And doing conventional work.
You grotch that you're missing a party,
But really don't mind it a bit,
For the comradeship here is so hearty, so hearty,
It makes up for absence of wit--

Conventions are ever so merry--
There always is plenty to do,
When details and conflicts are hairy
And the fans are depnding on you.

DICK: I've worked for a worldcon committee--
I've answered that trufannish call--
But I found it a terrible pity
That I couldn't enjoy the convention at all.
I made a heroic endeavor
To have a good time, but in vain,
And I swore up and down that I never
Would volunteer ever again.
I'm happier far when decreeing
Big projects and grandiose plans,
And being the Chairman, who's here overseeing
The efforts of hundreds of fans--

ALL: Conventions are ever so merry--
There always is plenty to do,
When details and conflicts are hairy
And the fans are depending on you!

[The CHORUS scatters and exits. ELOISE returns, carrying a box, and approaches DICK.]

ELOISE: Hey, look, the Hugoes are here! Right on time. Where should I put 'em, Dick?

DICK: Ask Pat. She's taking care of the details.

PAT: I suppose we'd better take them home for safekeeping. We won't need them until Sunday.

ELOISE: Our first Worldcon! Isn't it thrilling!

PAT: Just put the box on the table for now, Eloise, okay?

[ROGER enters, headed for DICK.]

ROGER: Dick, the Program Books are out in the car. What should we do with them?

DICK: Well, Roger, I think Pat can tell you that. That's more her department than mine, don't you think? [ROGER turns away.] Ah, it's just wonderful how well my convention is going. All the work is done. Everything's under control.

ROGER: What about the Program Books, Pat? And, uh, this is the bill from the print shop.

PAT: Give the bill to me, and get somebody to help you take the books up to the Con Suite.

[ROGER nods happily and hurries off to the Committee headquarters. Passing him, HELMINTH enters with a long banner draped over his black cloak, takes it off and hands it to PAT.]

PAT: Thank you, Helminth, I was wondering where this had gotten to. [She looks around.] It should go on that wall, if there's enough room left.

[PAT and HELMINTH stretch the banner between them. It reads: 37TH WORLD S. F. CONVENTION. ELOISE produces a tape measure and climbs on a chair to measure the open wall space. This doesn't work very well.]

PAT: Okay, the banner's about six feet long--

DICK:[absently]: Twelve feet would be better, dear.

PAT [ignoring him]: Yes, dear, you're right.

[ROGER returns, interrupting DICK's reverie.]

DICK: Ah, Roger. I'm putting you in charge of signs and things. Just check with Pat. We have some paint left over from the last time I painted the garage.

[PAT drops her end of the banner -- she painted that garage. HELMINTH gathers the banner in, and he, ROGER and ELOISE go off to the Con Suite with the Hugoes. PAT sits at the table to catch up on paperwork. DICK takes center stage.]

DICK: She's running my Worldcon --
 What a lovely way to prove she really loves me.
 Running my Worldcon --
 I don't care about what the fans are thinking of me.
 She's getting angry, her face is glowing.
 The pile of papers on her desk is daily growing.
 Running my Worldcon...

PAT: I'm a woman insane and it really doesn't thrill me...

DICK: Running my Worldcon...

PAT: If I volunteer next year please someone kill me.

[PAT gathers up her papers and leaves in disgust, passing BARBLE, the program manager, on his way in from the Con Suite with the latest computer-arranged schedule.]

BARBLE: Hey, Dick, you wanta see my notes for the program?

DICK: Ask Pat -- aw, now, where'd she go? That's more in her line. She takes care of details like that.

BARBLE: Well, I've never done a con program before, so I thought you'd like to check it.

DICK: No, no. I trust you, Barble. You may be only a neo but you're a good hard worker.

BARBLE: Aw, thank you, sir.

DICK: You did assign function space for everything?

BARBLE: Sure. Me and the computer. Don't worry, we've got lots of space. [Unfolds map.] The Napoleon Room, the Oedipus Complex, the Electra Complex--

[They are interrupted by three CONEHEADS, carrying six-packs, who seem to have been consuming a few mass quantities and stagger over, offering DICK and BARBLE some beer. DICK and BARBLE refuse; the CONEHEADS exit angrily, shouting "mibs! mibs!"]

DICK [looking at map]: Didn't we have the Hucksters' Room downstairs in the Inferiority Complex?

BARBLE: The Star Trek slide show is going in there. I put the hucksters in the hall.

DICK: Well, all right. Do whatever you think is best, Barble.

[Two young women enter, wearing abbreviated costumes and harnesses.]

1ST GIRL: Hi there. We're from the "Slavegirls and Friends of Gor." We'd like to know where our function room is so we can set up the -- equipment.

[DICK looks at BARBLE, puzzled. The 1ST GIRL cuddles up to BARBLE, while the 2ND GIRL strokes DICK's beard.]

BARBLE: Well, I thought we could open up the folding wall between the Soccer Court and the Masoch Lounge. Then you can put the auction block in the center and the cages over along the goal lines.

2ND GIRL: Oooh, peachy! Have you arranged for a stage?

BARBLE: Stage?

1ST GIRL: We'll be doing some -- dance numbers. If the auction block is big enough we can use that.

BARBLE: Oh sure, no problem.

DICK: Ah, just what sort of dance numbers?

[The two GIRLS arrange themselves for their song.]

GIRLS: We were kidnapped, had our limbs strapped,
Ev'ry hour another beating --
Locked in boxes, 'lectric shockses,
Now who knows what we'll be meeting --
Dreadful meetings-- dreadful meetings yet to be!

[Two GOREAN MEN stride in.]

GOREAN MEN: We're thoroughly sickened of women who're thickened
And ugly and wrinkled and scarred, and scarred
From breeding and kneeling, no longer appealing,
But finding replacements ain't hard, ain't hard:
Bring tarn in and park it here at the slave market,
These hags we will trade in for brand-new Earth maiden:
So Radcliffe and Vassar, come meet your new massa',
Our slaves for the moment are ye--
Our slaves for the moment, our slaves æ ye!

GIRLS: Of he-men on Earth there's a terrible dearth, there's
Nobody impressive as they, as they,
The Earth men are puny and many are looney
And most of the others are gay, are gay:
They're roommates and brothers and frustrated mothers,
Doctors and lawyers and paw-mines and paw-yours,
Cowboys and truckers and pitiful fuckers,
But never a lover for me -- but never a lover for me!

[SLAVEGIRLS dance off, followed by GOREANS. DICK and BARBLE watch them go.]

DICK: Innovative programming, Barble. Very good. Keep it up.

[The Producers, MIKE RISFA and ELAINE DuPAGE, enter, deep in discussion, not seeing DICK and BARBLE.]

MIKE: I don't believe this con committee. They said they wanted a big
fannish musical for Saturday night. So I brought the whole cast of
Space Side Story out here from Providence. And now the committee's
not sure.

ELAINE: Well, they told me they had \$5000 for a fannish musical show. I came
here from Chicago with Wilbur Whately Superstar ready to go.

MIKE: Has the committee told you yet which play they want for Saturday?

ELAINE: Told me which play? They haven't told me anything. I can't find
them.

MIKE: They really should pick Space Side Story. It has great special
effects, the rocketship take-off and the whole cast floating weight-
less in zero-gee.

ELAINE: With the soprano upside down. If they're smart, they'll choose
Wilbur Whately Superstar. Think of the big chorus number when
Wilbur goes home to Yuggoth for the mating season -- eleven cthulhus
and twelve cthulhuettes!

MIKE: Cthulhuettes? How can you tell which is which?

ELAINE: The cthulhuettes have long eyelashes. Twelve pairs of long eyelashes.
Each.

[MIKE groans and turns away, when he spots DICK and BARBLE.]

MIKE: Hey! Dick Washington!

ELAINE: Dick! We have to talk to you about the play.

DICK: Play? Oh yes, the traditional fannish musical.

MIKE: Which play does the committee want for Saturday night?

DICK: You people certainly hit the big time this year. You're doing your little fannish production at a world con. My worldcon.

MIKE: Which show do you want?

DICK: Talk to Pat about that. She takes care of all the details.

ELAINE: Okay, but we want to know which play to do on Saturday.

DICK: No, no. Really. I mean it. I can't bother with details. I'm too busy. Take it up with Pat. [Turns to leave.] Or ask Barble there.

[DICK exits hastily. MIKE and ELAINE turn to BARBLE.]

MIKE: Who are you? Can you tell us which play the committee wants?

BARBLE: My name's Barble. I'm in charge of program planning and giving out room assignments for the whole convention.

ELAINE: Great. Now, each of us has a play all set up and rehearsed. Lights, sound, special effects, everything. Both of them ready to go. Now, tell us, which one do you want?

[BARBLE looks blank.]

MIKE: If you pick Wilbur Whately, you'll need four hundred pitchforks and a gross of pine torches.

ELAINE: If you pick Space Side Story, you'll have to build a whole spaceport.

BARBLE: Just a minute, just a minute. [Fumbles through papers.] Let me look it up.

[BARBLE backs toward the elevators, riffling printout. MIKE and ELAINE follow, insistent. The CONEHEADS emerge, still carrying six-packs, ready for a game of ring toss. They chase MIKE and ELAINE, who duck. BARBLE sees his chance and escapes in an impressive display of broken-field running, followed by MIKE and ELAINE and the CONEHEADS.]

[ELOISE and ROGER enter.]

ROGER: Gee, it's great being part of a Worldcon Committee. I never did anything this fannish before in my entire life.

ELOISE: It is exciting, isn't it?

[DR. ASENION enters from the parking lot, carrying an overnight bag and portable typewriter.]

ASENION [to ELOISE]: Can you help me? I'm looking for the MuddyCon people.

ROGER: That's us. We're on the Committee.

ELOISE: Yes, we're on the Committee.

ASENION [to ELOISE]: That's good. Could you direct me to the registration tables?

ELOISE: They aren't set up yet, except for special VIP guests. Excuse me -- you are somebody famous, aren't you? I'm sure I've seen your picture somewhere.

ASENION: I am Alex Asenion -- Doctor Alex Asenion.

ELOISE: Doctor A! (She and ROGER fall to their knees.) Doctor A, himself in person! Author of 408 books, 1283 short stories and 15,000 magazine articles!

ASENION: Fifteen thousand and six. Are you by any chance an admirer of mine, Miz, ah...

ELOISE: I'm Eloise. [She stands and shakes hands with ASENION.] This is Roger. [ROGER gets up, extends a hand; ASENION nods briefly.] The club I belong to is working on an all-inclusive Index of everything ever published by anyone in science-fiction. I spend four hours every weekend just keeping your file up to date.

ASENION: Be careful, my dear. I'm very susceptible to flattery.

ELOISE: Actually, some of that stuff is pretty bad. I read some letters you wrote to the magazines that would get you run out of town if you published them today.

ASENION: May I ask you what, in particular, bothered you about those letters?

[ROGER has been standing to one side, ignored, during this conversation.]

ELOISE: There's the one in the February 1939 Astounding --

ASENION: 1939? Remember, I was only six years old in 1939. Well, maybe twelve.

ELOISE: -- where you said, quote: "Let me point out that women never affected the world directly. They always grabbed hold of some poor, innocent man, worked their insidious wiles on him (poor unsophisticated, unsuspecting person that he was) and then affected history through him", end quote. Now, really.

ASENION: Oh, that business. I assure you, Eloise, my dear, I've improved considerably since then. Truly I have.

[ROGER has gone to one side and brought himself a chair. As he moves to sit down, ASENION snags the chair and seats ELOISE in it, pats her on the head, and strikes a pose. ROGER stalks off.]

ASENION: Time was when girls and I were unacquainted --
I didn't dare to look them in the face --
My writing with no mushy stuff was tainted:
I stuck to rocket ships in outer space.
In stories girls were only good for saving
From aliens, then dumping off again,
Or standing at the spaceport fence and waving --
Ah me, I was a silly neo then.

"Girls are a headache!" cried the boys in chorus.
"They only live to get their hooks in guys.
They want to own us, run our lives and bore us --
We'd better just ignore them if we're wise."
Our fandom was a brotherhood of losers
(S F was only read by boys and men) --
We held that beggars surely could be choosers...
Ah me! Ah, me! I was a little turkey then!

[As ASENION turns to ELOISE, a TRUCK DRIVER enters from the main lobby.]

TRUCKER [calling to ASENION]: Hey! Hey, you! You with the people puttin' on the play?

ASENION: Play? No, I don't know about any play.

TRUCKER: Oh. You was singin' so I thought you was one of them.



[MIKE and ELAINE hurry in from the Con Suite, and see the TRUCKER.]

MIKE: Are you from the rental agency?

TRUCKER: Yeah. I got the lights and speakers in the truck outside. Where do you want 'em?

MIKE: We'll know in about five minutes. Okay?

TRUCKER [handing invoice to ELAINE]: I need a check for \$1800 before I unload anything.

ELAINE: There isn't any problem about that. We have a \$5000 budget this year.

TRUCKER: Just hurry it up. I'm double parked.

[ELOISE leads ASENION off toward the registration office. BARBLE enters from outside, leading a little boy and a fuzzy cute robot.]

TRUCKER: What the hell is that thing?

BARBLE: It's CornMuffin the Danggit. You know. Battlestar Galactica?

[As BARBLE leads the pair off, MIKE and ELAINE chase after them. ELOISE returns, followed by ROGER, just in time to meet a party of VIPs arriving. The two men in leisure suits are EDDIE PRINCETON and his associate FREDDIE TODD. They are followed by a teen-ager in a white shirt, wearing his pocket calculator like a talisman. This is DWIGHT.]

EDDIE: Who's in charge here? I just flew in from St. Croix. Where's my room and where's the bar and what panels am I supposed to be on?

ELOISE: You must be a famous pro. Welcome to MuddyCon Two.

EDDIE [to ROGER]: Are you on the Con Committee?

ROGER: Uh...yes. Yes sir.

EDDIE: I'm Edward Princeton, Ph.D., E.E. It's been a long flight from the islands and I want to relax a bit, so I hope you have everything ready for me. That's Princeton with a capital P. Look it up on your list there.

[TRUCKER exits, shaking his head in disgust. ROGER checks a Program Book.]

ROGER: We have you listed to be on the Space Colony Panel, the Atomic Energy Panel, and, um, you're first alternate for the Sociobiology Panel. Special emergency VIP registration is set up in the main lobby. I hope you enjoy the convention. Sir.

[EDDIE nods acknowledgement and turns away, closely followed by FREDDIE, with DWIGHT a respectful few steps behind.]

EDDIE: Three panels. Not bad. Not bad. [He notices DWIGHT.] Did you want my autograph, kid?

DWIGHT: No sir, I have all your books and everything already. I want to ask you about all those space colony articles you write for Galapagos.

EDDIE: You disagree with my viewpoint, do you?

DWIGHT: Oh, no, sir. I think you're just about the smartest man in the world. But what I want to know is, is why all the space colony articles talk about having girls up in space with the men? Girls can't do science. They should stay back on Earth like they're supposed to.

[DWIGHT moves forward respectfully.]

DWIGHT: In S F's truly Golden Days
(Before the "New Wave" junk)
All women found their proper place
Was here on Earth, not out in Space
Or in the Hero's bunk.
Delayed in pre-pubescent phase
Was S F in its Golden Days...

All authors then were Men because
Technology was hot --
Take Bob Heenleen and Lee Brackett:
They didn't mess with girls, or let
Them interfere with plot.
Oh yes, the men deserve the praise
For causing S F's Golden Days...

And S F then was Clean and Pure,
For sex was not its goal:
You'd read instead of Rocket ships
That went on vast, heroic trips
Straight into a black hole.
A purely intellectual craze
Was S F in its Golden Days--
A purely intellectual craze
Was S F in its Golden Days!

EDDIE [patiently]: Listen, kid -- say, what's your name, anyway?

DWIGHT: Dwight. But everybody calls me "Ike" for some reason.

EDDIE: Now, listen, Dwight. Men get -- lonely -- in space. Very lonely.
If they didn't have women out there, the men might be tempted to turn
to...perversions.

DWIGHT: When I get lonely I talk to my computer terminal. I play with it.
Chess. Is that a perversion?

EDDIE: Kid, there are a few things you ought to know...

[EDDIE takes hold of DWIGHT's shoulder and leads him off. FREDDIE follows.]
ELOISE and ROGER head back for the Con Suite, passing DICK entering in deep
conversation with the HOTEL MANAGER. BARBLE follows them in.]

MANAGER: The Giltmore Hotel, a subsidiary of ITTT&T, is certainly pleased
that you science fiction people are holding your convention here.
Now, as you're the chairman, Mr. Washington, there are a few details
I'd like to clear up.

DICK: Actually, of course, my wife Pat takes care of the detail work. I'm
responsible for overall coordination and policy planning.

MANAGER: Yes. Now, you expect to have ten thousand people attending this
convention.

DICK: True. It'll be the largest S F Convention in History.

MANAGER: -- and yet your advance room reservations... Well, your people have
only paid for 473 rooms. That won't work unless you have [punches
pocket calculator] 21.1 people per room.

BARBLE: Well, fans are very gregarious. They thrive on crowding.

MANAGER: I rather doubt the hotel can permit that, Mr., ah...

BARBLE: Barble, the name's Barble. I'm in charge of program planning for the committee.

MANAGER: Then you're the person I'm looking for. We've had a lot of experience with conventions before, and I should warn you. You're overbooking the function space. You have too many things scheduled to go on at the same time.

BARBLE: What's wrong with the schedule? [He brandishes a thick pile of printout.] I worked very hard on this schedule.

MANAGER: Yes, but look here. In the Grand Ballroom Saturday evening, you have--
[The computer printout spills to the floor. DICK, who has been wandering about, starts off.]

MANAGER: Wait a minute, please, Mr. Washington, this is important.

DICK: Barble can take care of it. I'll be busy for the rest of the afternoon.

[As DICK exits, two QUARK FANS enter, carrying bulging trash-bags and wearing vines around their heads.]

1ST QUARK: We're from the Quark Fan Club.

2ND QUARK: We're the entire Quark Fan Club!

1ST QUARK: Shh! [To BARBLE.] Where's our meeting room?

BARBLE: The dumpster, out back, in the alley, behind Wing B.

1ST QUARK: Wing B.

2ND QUARK: B. B. Bee-bee-bee-bee-bee-BEE-BEE-BEE!!!

[The QUARK FANS rush off to find someplace quiet to pollinate.]

MANAGER: Anyway. Look here. The Auxiliary Kitchen on Monday morning. Alien Cooking Contest ends at noon, the Art Show opens at one. That's only one hour to move out all the stoves and move in the whole Art Show. It's just not enough time.

BARBLE: We have plenty of people. [He unrolls a long list -- volunteers.]

MANAGER: But the kitchen is all steamy and full of vapors. Wouldn't that hurt the paintings? I never heard of having an art show in a kitchen before.

BARBLE: Don't worry about it. There's no problem.

MANAGER: We have a nice little display gallery just off the Napoleon Room.

BARBLE: The gallery's reserved. [He locates the relevant page, twining the MANAGER in printout.] Reserved for the Souvenir Shop, all weekend. There are thousands of fans who want Galactica and Superman stuff. Posters and kryptonite and wind-up danggits. The Art Show? Nobody buys anything at an art show.

MANAGER: Well, it's your convention. [Kneeling to point to another section of printout.] But here, on Sunday...

[BARBLE kneels beside MANAGER. MIKE and ELAINE enter, pursued by ring-tossing CONEHEADS. Rebuffed, the CONEHEADS stomp off.]

MIKE: Hey, Barble, we've been looking all over for you.

ELAINE: Which show gets the Grand Ballroom on Saturday night?

BARBLE: Show? What show are you talking about?

MIKE: Come on, Barble. The science fiction musical. Five thousand dollar budget. "Space Side Story."

ELAINE: "Wilbur Whately Superstar."

MIKE: Full casts, costumes, props, the whole works, the biggest and best science fiction musical ever!

ELAINE: But of course we can't do them both at the same time, so "Wilbur" gets the Grand Ballroom with the big stage--

MIKE: Wait a minute. "Space Side" should get the big stage.

ELAINE: Sopranos dancing on the ceiling, hah!

MIKE: Just because you went way over budget with those Cthulhu costumes--

MANAGER [engulfed in printout]: Excuse me--

ELAINE: So anyway, Barble, we talked to Pat and she said you were in charge of programming--

MIKE: So you tell us, which show gets Saturday night? We have to move the equipment in. The driver's waiting.

MANAGER [struggling to stand up]: Just a minute. Here, look at the schedule--

BARBLE [retreating]: What are you two so excited about? What show?

ELAINE: The big new S F musical! The one announced in all the flyers! The two-hour musical in the Grand Ballroom!

MIKE: Which one of us gets the Grand Ballroom?

BARBLE: There is no musical scheduled for Saturday night!

[Stunned silence.]

MANAGER [into the void]: Here they are. "Space Side Story" and "Wilbur Whately Superstar." They're supposed to be in the film room, Monday morning.

MIKE: What? Let me see that! [He grabs at the paper, pulling MANAGER up with it.] "...The Green Slime. Ends 10:43. Two Sci-Fi Skits by the Rizdee Players. Maneater of Hydra, starts 10:57."

ELAINE: You put us between two monster movies? Twelve minutes?

MIKE: You even got the name wrong!

BARBLE: I...I thought it was some kind of comedy skit.

MIKE: Are you crazy? \$5000 for a six-minute comedy sketch? We have to have the Grand Ballroom.

BARBLE: There's a costume party in there Saturday night. You could do your play on the other side of the room, if you like.

ELAINE: During the costume party? How do you expect us to compete with a mob of naked barbarians?

BARBLE: Well, and the disco dance band. But if you really insist we can work out something....Hey, what did you mean, five thousand dollars? I don't remember any five thousand dollars.

MIKE: We were promised five thousand dollars. We have bills for the costumes and the lights and the sound system. The driver's still double parked -- somewhere -- and we need an eighteen hundred dollar check to get that equipment in.

ELAINE: I've got a copy of the budget. Look here--

[She is interrupted by a warbling bellow. LESSA enters, leading a small dragon.]

LESSA: We made it! My dragon's here! We made it!

MIKE: Barble, we were promised that money--

LESSA: Who's in charge here?

MANAGER [indicating BARBLE]: That.

LESSA: Hi there! I'm from the Dragonriders Guild. You promised us a room for our meeting, remember? A big room. With a high ceiling.

BARBLE: Sure. How many of you are there?

LESSA: Eighty-three humans and five dragons.

MANAGER: Dragons? In my hotel? Now just a minute.

LESSA: Don't worry. They're paper-trained.

BARBLE [checking remnants of schedule]: Why don't you use the auxiliary kitchen complex, Monday noon, after the Alien Cooking Contest.

LESSA: Just so they don't try to cook my dragon.

BARBLE: No, no, and the dragons can help clean up the leftovers.

ELAINE: Barble, about the five thousand dollars, what do you mean you don't--

BARBLE: Besides, if you use the kitchen, you won't have to bring the dragons through the lobby. How about 12:30 till 2?

LESSA: Great. Tell them to leave lots of leftovers.

MANAGER: But what about the Art Show?

BARBLE: They still have the room from 2 to 3. Don't worry about it.

LESSA [calling]: Come on, everybody! It's all set!

[A horde of DRAGON FANS enter from the parking lot, dancing.]

DRAGON FANS: Down on your heels! Up on your toes!
 Flame from your mouth! Smoke from your nose!
 Everybody do the Varsity Drag--on!

Lift up your wings! Waggle your tail!
 Do all these things! You'll never fail!
 Everybody do the Varsity--
 Teleport and do the Varsity--
 Burn that Thread and do the Varsity Drag! On!

[DRAGON FANS scamper out, pulling the protesting MANAGER.]

BARBLE: Gee, it's great having all these interesting people coming to the con.

MIKE: Fringe fans, the fringe fans are taking over...

ELAINE: We have to get this turkey to give us a room for the play. And without any distractions. [To BARBLE] Listen, Barble, the play is one of the big attractions of the Worldcon. We need a Saturday night spot and we need a room big enough--

[A prolonged yell ends in a crash. A rope swings in, followed by a limping figure in a leopard skin. TARZAN has arrived.]

TARZAN: Kreegah, Tar-mangani. Who's in charge of programming?

BARBLE: That's me, right here.

TARZAN: I'm the advance scout for the Burroughs Bibliophiles. We were promised a suite of rooms to hold our dum-dum, that's "banquet" to you, and the annual meeting.

ELAINE: Barble, we need a decision on the play.

BARBLE [to ELAINE]: Just a minute, can't you? [To TARZAN] How many are you?

TARZAN: I'll check. [Calling] Sound off!

[A chorus of ooking, trumpeting, bellowing assails the hotel, followed by one lone "mibs!".]

TARZAN: One hundred forty, plus twenty-five apes and-- [more trumpeting] three elephants.

BARBLE: Okay. Take the Electra B Complex. There's nobody set in there but the John W. Camp-bell Memorial Orgone Drive and Dean Machine Derby. I don't expect they'll mind making room for a few elephants.

TARZAN: Okay, everybody!

[A middle-sized ZOO PARADE enters, bouncing excitedly.]

CHORUS: For -- we're going to have a dum-dum! (Dum-dum!)
We'll hang from the drapes
And we'll chatter like apes
And we hope that you're all gonna come (Come-come!)
And help us to praise E. R. B.

He's a better writer than some! (Some-some!)
His jungles and Mars
With John Carter and Tarz-
An are awful exciting, by gum! (Gum-gum!)
Yes, this is the fandom for me!

[The PARADE proceeds toward the office area, leaving BARBLE capering with glee.]

MIKE: Barble, the man from the theatrical supply company is still waiting. If we don't get that check we can't get the lights and the sound system. They won't unload the truck without that money.

BARBLE: Okay, okay, I'll find the treasurer. Don't get so excited.

[BARBLE exits toward committee headquarters.]

ELAINE: How did a nitwit like him ever get put in charge of programming?

MIKE: He volunteered.

[Prolonged kazoo fanfare. CORWIN enters with four FOLLOWERS in a line behind him.]

CORWIN: You there, peasant, where's the program chairman?

FOLLOWERS: Yes, where is he, you varlets?

ELAINE: Who are you?

CORWIN: I am Lord Corwin of Amber, master of 28 universes.

FOLLOWERS: And we are his shadows.

MIKE: His what?

CORWIN: Shadows. I am a real person and they are images I cast through all the lesser planes of reality. Including this one.

[CORWIN raises an arm; the FOLLOWERS step forward, imitating him. They all have mustaches. One is a CONEHEAD.]

CORWIN [dancing]: Me--

CORWIN & FOLLOWERS: -- and my Shad-ows,
Strolling down to Av-a-lon'

CORWIN: Me --

CORWIN & FOLLOWERS: --and my shadows!
Don't look twice or they'll be-- [FOLLOWERS vanish.]

CORWIN: Gone?

[CORWIN looks around. An APE waves at him.]

CORWIN: We need a room. For twelve real people and 174 shadows.

MIKE: How about the parking lot?

ELAINE: The program chairman went that way. [She gestures toward parking lot.]
[A huge sneeze offstage.]

MIKE: What was that?

VOICE: The Shadow Nose!

[The little boy and the DANGGIT return. Cute POXIE tugs at CORWIN's sleeve.]

POXIE: Hey, Mister, can I have a cracker for my Danggit?

MIKE: Now what?

ELAINE: Another Poxie and Muffin. The third set I've seen today.

[A hysterical SYME, red tentacles wriggling from her forearms, dashes in.]

SYME: Saline! 0.9% saline! I gotta have saline! I need a fix! That's the only solution! Saline!

POXIE: I got a saltine--

SYME [to CORWIN]: You promised us a room for 83 symes and 22 gens. A private room! Where is it? Where? I need saline! I'm going into withdrawal!

[As SYME lunges at CORWIN, a FREE AMAZON enters, sturdily garbed, waving a knife.]

AMAZON: Amazons of Darkover! Rally to me! Down with the wicked slave-holding Drytowners who keep women in chains! To me!

ELAINE: How serious are you?

AMAZON [confidentially]: We've got the Grand Ballroom Saturday afternoon for a pageant of three thousand years of Darkovan History. I'm rehearsing.
-- To me! No more chains!

[Enter old NORMAN, in his trusty raincoat: the archetypal Dirty Old Man.]

NORMAN: Chains? Did somebody say chains? It's too good to be true! Women in chains? Where are they?

AMAZON: It's Norman Johnson! Get him out of here! Get him out of here before I ---

[AMAZON advances, bowie knife at the ready. NORMAN retreats nervously.]

NORMAN: Now, girl, be sensible. We have our own little party upstairs. Wouldn't you like to join it? 35 Gore fans in a double room, lots of nice stiff leather boots and hundreds of feet of lovely chains. Wouldn't you like to -- eek!

[NORMAN breaks and runs, chased by the AMAZON, followed by CORWIN chased by the SYME, POXIE and BLUEBERRYMUFFIN, and an APE.]

ELAINE: These specialty fandoms are getting a little much.

MIKE & ELAINE: Cult figures! They're the ones
Whose fans are the most insane --
The most inane --
These adult figures! Overwhelmed
By thousands of teen-age fans
With writing plans!

Fans turn fan fiction out by the ton,
Put themselves and their friends in for fun --
Pity Captain Kirk, losing his dimples:
They've been overgrown with pimples...

Cult figures! They're the ones
Whose fans are the most insane--

[The chase passes across again, followed by two CONEHEADS.]

They're back again!

[PAT enters from committee headquarters, with the harried-looking MANAGER.]

MIKE: Pat, we can't get that idiot Barble to tell us which play is scheduled for Saturday night. Time's getting short.

ELAINE: And he keeps making silly jokes about not having the money. You know there was supposed to be \$5000 for the fannish musical.

PAT: And you each have a show? [Both nod.] Hoh boy. All right, I'll have to decide between them. If you'll tell me what they're about.

MIKE: Better than that, I'll show you. "Space Side Story" is a happy, upbeat space operetta. The story of how a gang of slum kids fulfill their dream of Space Travel.

[MIKE whistles. The Space Side Story set appears. The MANAGER gives up, exits.]
MIKE leads off with a solo.]



MIKE: Maria!
 The rocks and the rills and maria!
 I really love the moon --
 I'm gonna go there soon,
 You'll see,
 Maria!
 The craters and hills and maria!
 I love the lunar scene,
 I don't care if it's green,
 Not me!
 Maria!
 Over there in the east it's rising:
 Silver crescent of beauty surprising,
 Maria
 Its features comprising,
 Maria!

ELAINE: Hey! That's maria, stupid!

[MIKE glowers at her, steps back. A gang of kids in leather jackets and blue jeans enter, some wearing mirror sunglasses, some carrying tire irons. They are accompanied by a large green three-headed alien.]

CHORUS: I wanna be in the Space Patrol!
 Plenty to see in the Space Patrol!
 We could be free in the Space Patrol!
 --- Ain't got the fee for the Space Patrol!

1ST J.D. I wanna go back to New York!
 2ND J.D. I know you don't wanta miss Mork!
 1ST J.D. Won't even wait for the free beer!
 2ND J.D. Old rocket fuel's what they serve here!

CHORUS: I wanna fight in the Space Patrol!
 I think I'm right for the Space Patrol!
 Really too bright for the Space Patrol!
 --- Ain't got the height for the Space Patrol.

[The J.D.s retreat as a SOPRANO twirls forward.]

SOPRANO: I feel weightless, Oh so weightless,
 I feel weightless and hateless and free!
 Sort of fateless--
 Like I've overcome my destiny!
 For I'm flying -- no denying
 That I'm trying and flying for real,
 'Cause I'm weightless
 And I can't describe how fine I feel!
 See that fellow hanging up in the air?
 Who is upside down, him or me?
 Floating through the halls,
 Bumping into walls,
 Nothing ever falls,
 There's no gravitee!
 I feel shriven, I feel clever,
 Feel like livin' forever in space --
 For I find
 It's a pretty wonderful place!

[SOPRANO dances off. The THREE-HEADED ALIEN lumbers forward.]

THREE-HEADED ALIEN: Make of our heads
 One head,
 Make of our hearts
 One heart --

PAT:(quickly): Ah. Yes. And the other one?

ELAINE: "Wilbur Whately, Superstar". The theological implications alone are staggering--

MIKE: Because they can't stand up--

ELAINE: -- it has lots of monsters and Crawly Things and real old-fashioned BEMs.

[ELAINE gestures. A horde of CTHULHUS and CTHULHUETTES shambles in. The THREE-HEADED ALIEN flees, whimpering. The very air turns green.]

CHORUS: Yog-Sothoth, Yog-Sothoth, Sothoth, Sothoth, Yog-
 Sothoth Yog, Sothoth Yog So Thoth!

Look at all my friends and my relations
Sinking in a gentle pool of slime --
Don't disturb me now, I can see the Answers
And I think they've done something to my mind.

Always hoped that I could follow Dagon,
Knew that he would take me if I tried --
And before we stop, we'll make all men pagan
So they'll sacrifice to us beneath the tide.

ELAINE [surrounded]: The End...is just...a little harder when
 Brought about by fiends.
 For all they care, my bod' could be Big Macs.
 For all they care, my blood could be Red Ripple.
 The End...they want my blood to drink,
 They want my body to eat...and they could
 Dismember me, ere they eat and drink!

I must be mad thinking
I'll be dismembered, they
Won't even cut off my head!
Just look at those creatures,
They'd eat me in one gulp,
Won't even wait till I'm dead!
That one could devour me,
That one could inhale me,
That one could engulf me,
That one in the distance -- that giant amoeba --
That one could absorb me!

[The CHORUS falls upon ELAINE, slobbering, crying "Yum! Yum!", then re-forms.]

CHORUS: Look at all my friends and my relations,
 Undergoing metamorphosis --
 Don't disturb me now, I'm in hibernation
 And just think, someday you can look like this.

Always hoped I'd hear the Call of Cthulhu.
Knew that he would find me if I'd wait --
Knew that he would sense me, and holler "Yoolhoo!"
And take me to my unearthly fate.

[The CTHULHU/ETTES shamle off. As MIKE and ELAINE corner PAT, BARBLE enters from the office, followed by ELOISE.]

BARBLE: Okay, here's your check. I don't see what all the fuss was about.

MIKE [taking check]: There's a traffic jam three miles long outside, among other things.

ELAINE [taking check from MIKE]: Look at this! Eighteen dollars! It should be for eighteen hundred dollars!

BARBLE: No, come on. I knew that \$5000 had to be a typo for \$50.00. I mean, nobody could spend \$5000 for a science fiction play. So I transferred the other \$4950 to the general budget.

ELAINE: But we've spent \$700 for costumes already!

[The TRUCK DRIVER enters.]

TRUCKER: Look, I've got to get my truck out of the street. Do you want the equipment or don't you?

MIKE: Five more minutes -- we'll have a definite answer.

PAT [to BARBLE]: No wonder you never came to us for money. What exactly did you do with the \$4950? How soon can we get it back to pay for the stage equipment?

BARBLE: I don't think we can get it back at all. I used it to charter the airplane.

ALL: Airplane?

BARBLE: Sure. How else were all those L.A. fans supposed to get here? I got a real good deal, a whole 747--

PAT: Eloise, get the rest of the Committee together. We're having an emergency session -- right now!

[ELOISE runs off to headquarters. In the interval, crowd noises are heard off on the other side.]

PAT [to MIKE and ELAINE]: It looks like you two will have to get by on what's left. But you can have the Grand Ballroom. We'll move the masquerade.

MIKE: Two shows with \$18 worth of equipment?

ELAINE [to TRUCKER]: What sort of equipment can we get for \$18?

[TRUCKER takes check, hands ELAINE a flashlight and a megaphone, and exits.]

ELAINE: That's about what I thought.

MIKE: Well... Look, let's do your play after all. I feel very generous, all of a sudden.

ELAINE: Oh, no, I can't let you do that. We'll do your play. I insist.

[Both look at the megaphone.]

MIKE: No mikes.

ELAINE: No lights.

MIKE: No zero-gravity field.

ELAINE: No Cthulhuettes!

[MIKE and ELAINE lunge at BARBLE, who hides behind PAT. The noise offstage is louder now, speckled with cries of "Dammit Janet!"]

PAT: Barble, get out of there. Barble. Listen to me. How many fans are coming in on the plane, and when are they getting here?

BARBLE: Oh, they're here already. They got in this morning. 238 people. I think that's them now -- listen.

[Screams of "Time Warp, Time Warp."]

PAT: Those don't sound like science fiction fans.

BARBLE: Well, uh, they aren't actually all members of the con. A friend of mine told the line at the Midnight Show that there was a free flight out here, and...about 200 people came from the show. The other 38 are just ordinary fans...

PAT: You mean we paid to fly 200 people from California and they aren't even members of the Convention? You idiot!

[Chaos. PAT tries to strangel BARBLE. DICK arrives, followed by ELOISE and various gofers.]

MIKE: Honest, Elaine, I think you should do the play. Really. I'll bow out.

ELAINE [trying to hand MIKE the megaphone]: No, you wanted to do it. It's all yours. You're in charge.

[MIKE and ELAINE start toward BARBLE, who breaks away from PAT and hides behind DICK.]

DICK: Here, now, here now. What's all this excitement? Honey, this isn't like you.

PAT: This idiot just blew our budget on a charter flight from Los Angeles for two hundred of his friends who aren't even fans!

BARBLE: They are too fans!

MIKE: He took our money!

ELAINE: Now we can't do the play!

[NORMAN, chased by the FREE AMAZON, runs across stage and exits toward the source of the crowd noise. Screams. The two re-enter in a panic.]

AMAZON: Oh, my god, did you see what's in the cafeteria?

NORMAN: Two hundred of them! What a bunch of weirdoes!

[Both run off.]

DICK: Barble, now, calmly, tell me: who are those people in the cafeteria?

[MANAGER enters, distraught.]

MANAGER: They're tearing up the tablecloths! Great scott!

[Offstage roar: "GREAT SCOTT!!!" Rolls of toilet paper fly in, unrolling merrily.]

ELAINE: What about Saturday night?

BARBLE: Don't worry about Saturday night. They brought lots of costumes. They'll do a show Saturday night, sure they will, all we have to do is give them free memberships. You don't have to worry at all.

PAT: What kind of show?



BARBLE: A Time Warp Disco Dance Contest and Toga Party. It'll be great.

(All turn in horror. Voices off: "What's for lunch?" "Meat Loaf." "Not again!" "FOOD FIGHT!!" -- Assorted garbage sails in. The MANAGER runs off toward the chaos.)

MANAGER: Hey, stop that! You can't do that! AAAARGH!!

PAT: Rocky Horror Fans?? You brought in two hundred Rocky Horror Fans?

[The ROCKY HORROR FANS enter, carrying the MANAGER. Some wear net stockings, some wear top hats, all wear togas.]

1ST HORRORFAN: Hey, Barble, thanks a lot. This is a fun hotel.

[They pass on through, still carrying MANAGER, and exit. The rest turn to stare at BARBLE, who is trying valiantly to shrink down into the cracks in the floor.]

PAT: Take him out and gafiate him!!

[MIKE and ELAINE grab BARBLE, tie him to a chair, and blindfold him. HELMINTH enters, carrying a ceremonial zapgun, as the others line up and stand at attention.]

HELMINTH: Have you any last words?

BARBLE: Science Fiction Double Feature! Doctor A will build a creature--

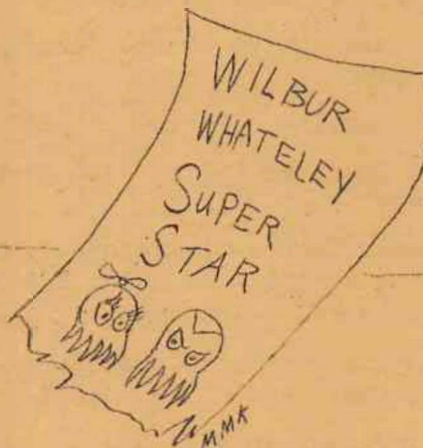
[HELMINTH fires. BARBLE slumps.]

PAT: The convention opens tomorrow. We don't have a program. We don't have any money. -- What can we do?

DICK: Perhaps we should resign from the Committee.

[PAT nods agreement. She and DICK solemnly remove their Committee badges and toss them into a corner. The line files across, headed out of the hotel. ELOISE, at the rear, stops to poke the inert BARBLE, shrugs, and exits. After a moment BARBLE picks up the chair and turtles off in the opposite direction.]

BLACKOUT



ACT TWO

[The same place, the next morning. MIKE and ELAINE enter, dejected, followed by a couple of CTHULHUETTES and the THREE-HEADED ALIEN.]

MIKE and ELAINE: When planning for a fannish show
 You must be comprehensive,
 And think of the effects you need
 And budget with according greed
 For fantasy's expensive:
 There's anti-grav and hyperspace,
 And costumes far from human face,
 And scenery for alien place --
 That's right, it is expensive;
 No doubt it is expensive...

 But when you have five thousand bucks
 To do your show, you don't need luck;
 Just buy whatever gear you like:
 Rotating sets, stereo mikes--
 Stereo mikes? Stereo mikes!
 Stereo mikes? Stereo mikes!
 But now we can't have any mikes.

 Our costumes will be taken back,
 And sound effects we sadly lack --
 We've got the megaphone, of course,
 And we might manage half a horse --
 Pantomime horse? Pantomime horse,
 A sandworm and a lousy horse.

 We're budgeted overly strictly,
 And we've got to get out of it quickly;
 Though the Players may cry,
 We'll explain to them why
 Any show we could do would be sickly...

[Cast members exit, whimpering. ELOISE and ROGER enter, in conversation.]

ELOISE: Looks like we're in charge of the whole thing now.

ROGER: Yeah. Dick and Pat have disappeared and Helminth is sulking in the auxiliary kitchen complex.

ELOISE: We have twelve hours. Let's see what kind of a program we can put together.

[A FAN enters, carrying a 6-foot plastic zeppelin.]

FAN: I'm from the Philip José Farmer Fan Club. Where are we scheduled to meet?

ROGER: Farmer Fans?-- let's see...[Consults printout.] Ah. You're in the steam tunnels under the kitchen -- that doesn't sound right. Wouldn't you rather be out back in the garden?

FAN: The steam tunnels...oh, beautiful. They're dark...and warm...and wet. Oh, thank you. Thank you!

[FAN jumps up and down in glee and runs off.]

MIKE: Do you really think you can put together a whole program in twelve hours? Some committees take months -- years -- and still can't manage it.

ELOISE: I'm sure we can do it. I've had lots of experience, with "NESFA".

ELAINE: Nesfa? What's Nesfa?

ELOISE: The North Eastern Scientification Fannish Authority. We do all kinds of big projects.

ROGER: Like that bibliography project: The complete works of Dr. Alex Asenion.

ELOISE: And two hundred ten pages and counting. And we're going to do a complete list for every writer who ever had anything published in a recognized science fiction magazine or anthology, ever since 1926. And when that's done, we'll do an index covering every fanzine ever printed. With cross references for letter columns. -- Conventions should be easy. They just move a little faster than story titles, that's all.

[DR. ASENION enters, writing in a notebook. ELOISE runs over to him.]

ELOISE: Dr. Asenion, Dr. Asenion!

ASENION: What? Oh yes. What seems to be the matter, my dear?

ELOISE: We have a problem with the Hugo Banquet. We need a Toastmaster, and Barble didn't arrange for one. [She leans toward him imploringly.] Help me, Dr. Alex Asenion. You're my only hope.

ASENION: Well, I do have the experience, but are you sure you want me? I've been Toastmaster so many times...at so many conventions...

The Hugo is Fandom's compliment
 To ev'ry work that's excellent;
 Each author holds the Hugoes dear
 And I expect one every year.
 But still I'm only the Toastmaster
 And up at the mike my brain I stir
 To think up cute stories to introduce
 The winners -- for whom I have no use!
 A happy situation, for
 I'm witty and thoughtful and seldom bore!

But though this compliment from you
 Provides me with some small egoboo,
 It might make me wonder (and I do)
 What the fannish world is coming to.
 For I write a lot, and I write quite well,
 And the stuff I even manage to sell,
 But alas, somehow, I never have scored:
 I've never won a Hugo award!
 A fine preoccupation for
 A popular author and editor!

They come to me to get the Award,
 Then take it home to have it stored,
 And in a daze I stand all night
 Giving out Hugoes to left and right.

With one for her, and one for he,
And one (of course) for Kelly Free-
Ze and one for Harlan, or two -- or three --
But never, oh never! a one for me!
A dreadful situation for
A writer who's given to keeping score!

[EDDIE PRINCETON, FREDDIE TODD, and DWIGHT wander in.]

ELOISE [to ASENION]: But you will be our Toastmaster -- please?

ASENION: Why, yes, of course.

[ELOISE leads DR. ASENION off, past EDDIE & FREDDIE & DWIGHT. DWIGHT glares after them.]

DWIGHT: I didn't come to this convention for mushy stuff. I get along swell without any women at all. Let's have more science and less females!

[ELOISE waves goodbye to DR. ASENION and returns to ROGER.]

ROGER: Okay, we've got the toastmaster. And we've got the Hugoes. Do we have a banquet?

ELOISE: Barble forgot to order one. But I've talked to the people who are running the Alien Cooking Contest--

ROGER: "First: Catch your alien."

ELOISE: -- and they've promised they'll whip up something.

[NORMAN rushes in.]

NORMAN: Whip? Whip up? Whip up something? Who, I mean, Whom? Where? I volunteer--

[The AMAZON chases NORMAN off. DWIGHT thumbs his nose at them.]

EDDIE: That's what's wrong with modern science fiction.

ELOISE [noticing them]: Oh, Mr. Princeton, we wanted to ask you about the panels you're on.

[EDDIE taps DWIGHT on the shoulder.]

DWIGHT: That's Doctor Princeton, Ph.D., E. E. -- Expert on Everything -- and K.C.M.G.

ROGER: Dr. Princeton, we know you're on three panels already. But we need help. We're desperate -- no, I don't mean that exactly. Anyway, our -- late -- program director didn't schedule a panel on Women in SF, and we can't have a Worldcon without a panel on Women in SF. We just couldn't! Will you be on the panel?

DWIGHT: That's silly! Why would a con need a panel on Women in SF?

[MIKE, ELAINE, ELOISE and ROGER recoil in horror. FREDDIE gasps; EDDIE glares at him and he subsides.]

MIKE: We can't drop that panel! It's a fannish tradition!

[As the CHORUS troops in, MIKE steps to center stage. The others move aside.]

MIKE: In every Worldcon held
 Since nineteen sixty-two
 On Women in S F
 A panel you must do.

FIRST GROUP: Who in S F must scramble for a living,
 Rack his brain for stories,
 Typing night and day
 Of starships and girls, of monsters and of men,
 In hopes the publishers will pay?

ALL: The writer, the writer -- Tradition!
 The writer, the writer -- Tradition!

SECOND GROUP: Think about the Golden Age of magazines,
 Of helpless blondes and pirate queens,
 Women didn't matter in important scenes:
 They're making trouble or they're in the way.

ALL: The prozines, the prozines -- Tradition!
 The prozines, the prozines -- Tradition!

3 MALE FANS: At eight I picked Astounding up
 And then I turned to Gor --
 The girls don't argue, talk or think,
 They sure
 Are pretty!

ALL: The boyfans, the boys -- Tradition!
 The boyfans, the boys -- Tradition!

8 FEMALE FANS: Oh who could ever stand
 This kind of sexist guff?
 The revolution's coming:
 We'll write much better stuff!

ALL: The femmefans, the femmefans -- Tradition!
 The femmefans -- the WOMEN! Tradition!

ALL: At every Worldcon held
 Since nineteen-sixty-two,
 On Women in S F
 A panel you must do.

[The CHORUS scatters and exits.]

EDDIE: I'd be glad to help you out. Now, do you have a moderator? Who are the other panelists?

ROGER: Well, I --

EDDIE: Certainly, I can act as moderator. And I'll supply the other speakers. There's my friend Freddie Todd here -- and good old Ned Deadwood, he can talk about anything. And...oh, yes. The youth viewpoint. Dwight, you're elected. This is your chance.

ELAINE: There aren't any women on that panel!

EDDIE: My dear woman, you don't have to be a murderer to write mystery stories.

ROGER [hastily]: What sort of stuff should we put on the announcement posters, Doctor Princeton Sir Ph.D.?

EDDIE: I intend to open by reading a chapter from my recent best-seller, Beelzebub's Blowtorch. [FREDDIE tugs at EDDIE's sleeve.] Hm? Oh. Oh, all right. Our recent best-seller. Now, this chapter illustrates especially well the emotional structure of the female, in a science-fictional situation. And please don't feel that this portrayal is meant in any way to be offensive to women. I happen to be very fond of women. I even married one.

[EDDIE chuckles. DWIGHT and ELAINE are both disgusted -- for various reasons.]

VOICE of DOOM: "The giant swarm of comets was heading straight for Earth. First it was millions of miles away. Then it was thousands of miles away. Then it was hundreds of miles away. Then--"

[A terrible crash. Viol music swells: it sounds rather like "Bali Ha'i".]

CHORUS: "Comet heads are falling, on the land, on the sea,
tidal waves are forming, drowning you, splashing me.
When the world is ending, no more cops, no more schools--
I'll be King, unchallenged, grab the girls, make the rules."

[Music continues under as EDDIE reads.]

EDDIE: "Civilization is destroyed. Millions perish in the flood waters. The Hero and his girl reach sanctuary in an abandoned army field kitchen on the side of a mountain in California. Refugees come to join them as word spreads of the Hero's great abilities. He becomes their acknowledged leader. He sets up a self-defense organization to protect the survivors from looters and bandits.

[Music switches to the theme from "Love Story".]

EDDIE: "The girl watches his triumphs, glad to be merely a part of his life. She is able to help him by preparing nutritious meals for the pathetic refugees, using only nuts and berries, a little safflower oil, and her own inborn cooking ability. She loves her new life. She is -- fulfilled.

[Music returns to "Comet Heads".]

EDDIE: "Suddenly, secondary earthquakes erupt all over the ravaged Earth! Los Angeles sinks into the San Andreas Fault! The entire East Coast sinks into a huge trench! Africa sinks into the Atlantic! Hawaii and Australia sink into the Pacific! Europe sinks! Russia sinks! Yes, everything but the kitchen sinks!"

[EDDIE exits in triumph, followed by FREDDIE and DWIGHT and the viol.]

ELAINE [to ELOISE]: Why did you ask him to run that panel? Don't you know about him?

ELOISE: Hey, the Index is only up to "B". I haven't read any of this guy's stuff...

[DR. ASENION enters.]

ASENION: Well, ladies, how are things going for you?

ELOISE: We have the Hugo Banquet, and the panels. The hucksters can take care of themselves. Now all we need is a big Saturday night event, and Harlan announcing he's quitting S F.

MIKE: I hope you can find somebody with a show for Saturday night. We sure can't do it. Not for \$18.

ELAINE: At least you don't have to worry about Harlan. He's planning to give his resignation speech at the Starving Fantasy Writers of America luncheon.

ROGER: And this year Barry Malzberg and Robert Silverberg are going to get up there and quit with him.

CHORUS: Again?

[Three itinerant filksingers enter, cleverly disguised as famous pros. (They're wearing signs hung around their necks.)]

TRIO: From this genre you know we'll be leaving;
You will miss our sharp wit and bright style,
For we're off to score big in the mainstream --
We were just in S F for a while.

"BARRY": I wrote astronaut tales by the hundred
With the hero as mad as could be,
But I get no respect out of fandom --
No more damned science fiction for me.

"AgBOB": I wrote Dying Inside and you snubbed it,
Son of Man's out of print to-tal-ly,
You'll be sorry you didn't buy Nightwings--
No more damned science fiction for me.

"HARLAN": S F writers are whiners and losers;
I told SiFWA to go climb a tree,
Now I'll write with clean hands and composure--
No more damned science fiction for me.

"BARRY": I'll write books about psychos and killers--

"HARLAN": I'll get rich doing scripts for T V--

"AgBOB": I'll just crank out some stories for Playboy--

ALL: No more damned science fiction for me!

[EDDIE enters, followed by FREDDIE and, of course, DWIGHT.]

EDDIE: I just want to announce that I'm not leaving S. F., even if I did get a raw deal on my last book. [FREDDIE pokes him.] Our last book. When the going gets tough, the tough get going.

[The three stomp out.]

ELOISE: What's he so sore about?

MIKE: That book didn't do as well as they hoped it would.

FILKSINGER: Eddie and Freddie were authors.
Both of 'em thought they could write.
Opened a bottle one morning,
Kept on drinkin' into the night,
Said "Let's write a book -- and let's make it long."

Eddie set up the typewriter.
Freddie set up some more drinks.
Eddie set up the plot outline,
Freddie read it and he said, "It stinks,
But it's sure to sell -- so let's make it long."

Freddie said, "Put in some sex scenes."
Eddie said, "Colonize Space."
Freddie said, "Put in some women."
Eddie answered, "If they know their place
They can join our book -- and help make it long."

Eddie and Freddie got published.
Got on the best-seller list.
Didn't get voted a Hugo, ~~and~~
And our heroes got really pissed, ~~and~~
Said, "Them fans are creeps -- and their hair's too long."

[FILKSINGERS exit.]

ASENION: You know, I'm rather puzzled by that young man, "Dwight", is it? He reminds me of someone I should know. I hope he grows up before someone shuts him up.

ELOISE: Well, you used to act that way yourself. Remember those letters. And you grew up -- didn't you?

[HELMINTH enters.] ASENION leaves.]

HELMINTH: Doom, doom! Doom and disaster! Doom!

ELAINE: What's wrong now?

HELMINTH: The function rooms are packed full of fringe-fans. Look!

[HELMINTH passes out assorted fliers, freebies, and promo material.]

MIKE [looking through stack]: Trekkies, Batties, Syme-fans, Kraith-fans, Space-1999 fans.

ELAINE: Three hundred and fifty comics dealers, videotape dealers, ape-fans.

ELOISE: Dragon-fans, lizard-fans, chain-mail-fans, Panzer Blitz wargame-fans,

ROGER: Objectivists, elves, a white goddess,

MIKE: The Elric of Melniboné look-alike contest (an equal opportunity employer),

ELAINE: English teachers, Quark fans, three dungeon-and-dragon expeditions, and sixty-three clones of--

ELOISE: --Elvis? Well, why not? What's wrong with this?

HELMINTH: But where are we going to put all the real fans?

ELOISE: We have the Hugo Banquet and the panels. Besides [checking list] -- just about everybody who's registered is already here. This is the Age of Specialization, ~~after~~ all.

[Enter, with gear and puppies, MAD MADAM MIMMO and FORREST J. TUCKER of Watseka, Illinois. SEYMOUR FROM UNDER THE SWAMP caught cold and couldn't come.]

MIM: Here we are, the contingent of trufans. Last of a vanishing species. Where's the bheer?

MIKE [introducing them]: Mad Madam Mimmo -- Forrest J. Tucker -- meet Eloise and Roger, the con committee. And Helminth.

MIM: Helminth, Speaker to Roskone? I've read all your books!

HELMINTH: Somebody remembers me!

[FORREST gets HELMINTH's autograph.]

MIKE: How was the trip?

CHORUS: You had to ask!

MIM & FORREST: Well, we left Watseka in a beat-up Chevy van:
Three dogs, a huckster and twelve excited fans--
The tail-lights don't work right
But there ain't a cop in sight--
Six days on the road and we're gettin' to the Con tonight!

We got one forward gear and a Sheewash overdrive.
Spending half our cash just to keep this beast alive.
Both headlights gone, all right --
Garage all shut up tight --
Six days on the road -- and we're gettin' to the Con tonight.

The brakes have died and things can't get much worse. [CRASH!]
Just lost a muffler to the terrible Breezewood Curse --
We're really quite a sight,
Dropping tailpipes left and right --
Six days on the road -- and we gotta make the Con tonight!

MIM: Yep, that was quite a trip. How's the con shaping up?

MIKE: That depends. What were you planning to do here?

MIM: Oh, the usual. Hit the hucksters' room--

MIKE: All comics and movie posters.

MIM: Okay...Any good movies?

ROGER: Thirty-two Hercules movies and the nonstop Rocky Horror Picture Show.

MIM: Seen 'em. Too bad. Who's the Guest of Honor?

ELOISE: Eddie Princeton.

MIM: Forget it.

ELOISE: Forget the Women in S F panel too, then. If you can.

MIM: If you say so. [To ELAINE] Didn't the progress reports say something about a fannish musical?

MIKE: Cancelled. Unless we find another show -- for free -- the Grand Ballroom's being used for the Rocky Horror Time Warp Disco Dance Context and Transylvania Transvestite Costume Show.

MIM [reacting at last]: Gaauh! I'd rather watch a bunch of index freaks teach computers how to alphabetize!

ELOISE: That's IT!

[As ELOISE runs off, DR. ASENION enters, looking nervously over his shoulder.]

ASENION: That Dwight is following me around. I can't shake him. And I can't remember where I've seen that face--

[DWIGHT enters and strikes a melodramatic pose.]

DWIGHT: You cannot escape me, Dr. Asenion! Do you know who I am?

ASENION: No! Go 'way! What do you want? I never did anything to you!

DWIGHT: Remember your last research project, seventeen years ago? That tissue sample from your typing finger? You thought you could just put it -- me! -- in an incubator and forget it! Hah! [Advancing] After all these years!

[ASENION retreats, panicky, and hides behind HELMINTH.]

ASENION: Oh, horrible! Too horrible! He's just like I was! Help me!

[HELMINTH fires zapgun at DWIGHT, who is unaffected by the energy blasts and starts toward ASENION. MIM whistles and a translucent green shield drops from the ceiling, blocking DWIGHT's path.]

MIM: That's an ancient fannish defensive shield, one of the Lost Secrets of the Cosmic Circle. Though it looks like ordinary lime jello, it isn't. There's no way he can break through it.

DWIGHT [pounding on shield]: Let me in! You can't keep me out! Not even the gods themselves could keep me out! I'll get you! Traitor!

ELAINE: That's you, Doctor A.! That's your misspent youth coming to have its revenge.

DWIGHT: Rowr! Argh! Traitor! Us he-men won't stand for this! Rargh! Rowr!

[The shield starts to give way.]

MIM: Impossible! That shield is twenty-six inches of solid Prell shampoo!

ELAINE: But that monster is drawing huge reserves of energy from the fannish collective unconscious! He can break through anything!

[The shield is on the verge of breaking.]

MIM: Monsters from the Id!!

ELAINE: Can't you fight it, Dr. Asenion? Do something!

ASENION: No -- my evil self is at that door, and I have no power to stop it!

[DWIGHT bursts through. ASENION collapses.]

MIKE [to DWIGHT]: Stop! I command you! [DWIGHT turns.] That man is what you will grow up to be!

DWIGHT [stunned]: I'm going to -- gulp! -- turn out like that?

ASENION: Yes! Exactly like me. If you're lucky.

[DWIGHT flees, wailing. ASENION gets to his feet and hugs HELMINTH.]

MIM [gathering remains of shield]: Seems to me there oughta be a robot in this somewhere.

ROGER: But what are we going to do about the fannish programming? There's no room for the fannish programming.

MIM: Just so there are fannish parties, we don't care about the programming.

ELOISE [rushing in]: And I've got the programmers! NESFA has arrived, and have we got a show for you!

[As ELOISE dashes back to ready the NESFA entrance, disco music starts. DICK and PAT, BARBLE, two or three gofers and some Rocky Horror fans dance onstage doing the Latin Hustle, the Bus Stop, and sundry other disco steps, in no particular order. HELMINTH joins them, but his body -- whatever it's like -- is not made for such things.]

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[Louder fanfares herald the coming of the NESFANS, carrying bales of computer print-out. They march in a straight line, pushing aside the dancers, and they sing.]

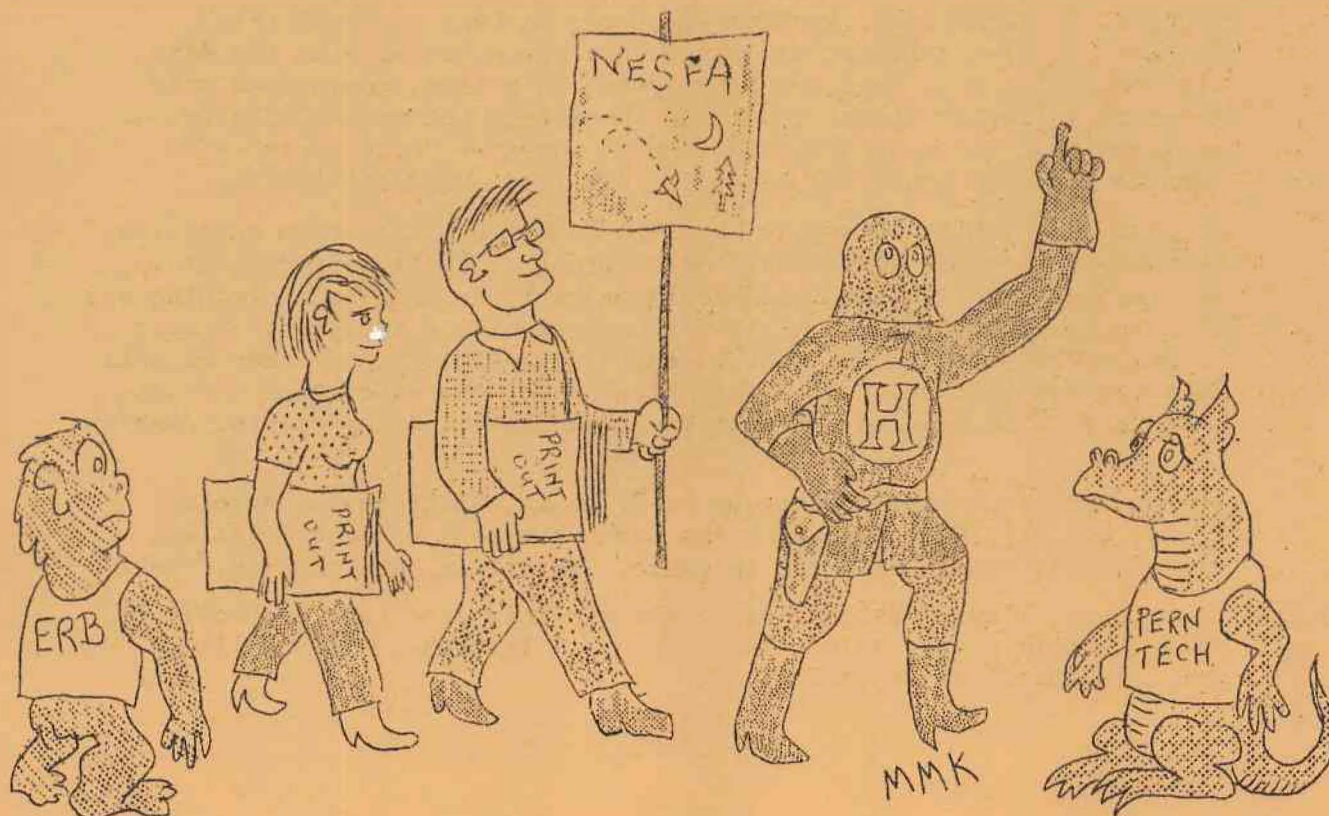
CHORUS: It's springtime
 For NESFA
 And M.I.T.!
 Winter for
 Non-sercon
 Fans.

Goodbye to teevee, beer and sex!
Here comes the Fifty-Year Index!

Saving the Worldcon from infamy,
Rescuing Fandom from doom--
Springtime for NESFA and M.I.T.--
Come on NESFA, take over the Con!

[HELMINTH deserts the disco troupe and joins the NESFAns. MIM produces a couple of sixpacks and sneaks off with MIKE and ELAINE, followed by a delighted CONEHEAD.]

THE END



NOTES

Page 1 -- Dragging the bottom of the Gilbert and Sullivan barrel, we find "The Grand Duke, or, The Statutory Duel," recently performed for the first time since its original failure on the London stage, as part of the G & S Centennial celebration, and recorded for the first time ever. Our opening number is a happy drinking song celebrating the delights of dining at somebody else's expense. /sa/

Page 2 -- "Running My Worldcon" is sung to the tune of Paul Anka's "Having My Baby", an appropriate melody. The con may be Dick Washington's baby, but he's at best a negligent father. // Finding the Anka song was surprisingly difficult. Record store clerks stared at me and shook their heads. Not even the Rhode Island Right-to-Life Committee had a copy. /mmk/

Page 3 -- By now there are a dozen books set on Gor, praising its slave society and describing it in lingering detail. Each year a new Gor book emerges, visiting yet another derivative tribe somewhere on the planet: slave-owning Mongols, slave-chasing Vikings, slave-beating Arabs, slave-hunting Aztecs, slave-driving Barsoomians, and most recently slave-catching Eskimos. The slaves are typically young Earthwomen kidnapped to serve the harem lords in the sky. The series is tedious. /mmk/

Pp. 3-4 -- The slavegirls' song is from another Gilbert & Sullivan, "Ruddigore" (a proper fantasy, in fact) -- in the original version a chorus of village maidens, bored with the local yokels, welcome a chorus of bucks and blades from the city at great length. /sa/

Page 6 -- Dr. Asenion's letters are appallingly authentic, but they were written by other people. /sa/

Page 7 -- You already know what Eddie will say about Space Colonies ("launch 'em") and about Atomic Energy ("build nukes"). His rationale for women in space was in fact seriously proposed in the science fiction magazines twenty-+ years ago.

Thus, R. S. Richardson, in "The Day After We Land on Mars" (F&SF, December 1955), explained how the single young men manning the Mars station, being stationed there for years at a time, would need some means of relieving sexual tensions. Therefore the open-minded Dr. R. proposed that the administration import women -- "nice girls" -- to Mars to keep the personnel sane. He was very proud of his idea.

Replies were published in the May 1956 F&SF: Poul Anderson suggesting that having too few women would cause problems (jealous rages, etc.), and that even though the women could probably do some housecleaning and secretarial work it would still be too expensive a solution. Miriam Allen DeFord pointing out that in any sane society young women as well as young men would be full working members of the expedition and the personnel would have to work out their own social arrangements. /mmk/sa/

Further repercussion: a story by C. S. Lewis, "Ministering Angels" (F&SF, January 1958), in which the women are sent up to comfort the men on Mars, causing the men to panic. Ah, times have changed. //mmk/

Page 8 -- Mike Saler, playing Dwight, wrote himself this song (ah, egoboo!), to "When Britain Really Ruled the Waves" from Iolanthe. With a little scansion added, we adopted it. /sa/

- Page 12 -- What's a Dean Machine? Back in November 1960, J. W. Campbell published in Astounding a newly discovered space drive: the Dean Drive. It was an arrangement of gears and wheels that was supposed to generate a one-way thrust with no recoil. Up, up, and away! (It didn't work.)
- Editor Campbell frequently included such enthusiasms in the pages of his magazine. Before the Dean Drive was the Hieronymous Michine, revealed in the June 1956 Astounding. This was a device that amplified magical psychic powers by attaching a picture of a circuit diagram to a plastic plate. Electronis amplification of magic -- wow! Psionics!
- Back before psionics was L. Ron Hubbard's "Dianetics" (1950). Hubbard used to be a science fiction writer before he invented Scientology and incorporated as God. /mmk/
- Page 12 -- Tune for the apes is "For He's Gone and Married Yum-Yum", from The Mikado. Sheila D'Amassa has been suggesting this one every year. And why not? /sa/
- Page 14 -- "Cult Figures" is to the tune of "Goldfinger". Speaking of the bottom of the barrel... /sa/
- Pp. 15-16: "Space Side Story" and "Wilbur "hately Superstar" have been hanging around for years, ever since the olden days in East Lansing, Michigan. The bones of "Space Side Story" were ossified by me /sa/ and Tracie Brown. "Wilbur" was the product of a mass mind -- including me, Rita Berens, Mike Brandl, Becky Price and Ken Winters, one weird summer. New lyrics for "Space Patrol" by Jean Berman. /sa/
- Page 17 -- Five thousand dollars for a worldcon show? We can dream...(MAC 1976?) /mmk/
- Page 18 -- Rocky Horror fans throw things during shows: rice, lighted matches, rolls of toilet paper. It's a ritual of some sort. /mmk/
- Page 19 -- So that's what "gafiate" means. // "Science Fiction Double Feature" is of course the theme song of the Rocky Horror Picture Show. /mmk/
- Page 20 -- From "The Grand Duke" again, a love duet between the parsimonious Grand Duke and his bride-elect cheerfully meditating upon "what joys our wealth could bring / Were we disposed to do the thing / Upon a scale extensive." /sa/
- Page 21 -- Does NESFA really exist? Can such things be? /mmk/
- pp 21-22 -- "The Law Is the True Embodiment..." from Iolanthe. The one about the "very susceptible Chancellor...giving agreeable girls away." /sa/
- Page 23 -- The opening number from Fiddler on the Roof. There are rumors that the competition is also looking into this source. Meanwhile... /sa/
- Page 25 -- "Red River Valley", of course. The line "write with clean hands and composure" is from Flaubert, and is a favorite quote of the real-life Harlan. /mmk/
What real-life Harlan? /sa/
- pp 25-26 -- "Frankie and Johnny". Everybody seems to know a different tune and different scansion. The words here are malleable. /sa/
- Page 27 -- Tune from "Six Days on the Road", a fun trucker song written in 1963 by two real truck drivers, Earl Greene and Carl Montgomery. At the time they were driving a load of flooring supplies from Pittsburgh down to Tusculumbia, Alabama, and had plenty of time for song writing. /mmk/

Page 28 -- Madam Mimeo, a fan of Forbidden Planet, notices the absence of Robbie the Robot. Maybe the Id Monster and the panel of Krel metal can make up for this deficiency? We had costume limits.

Cosmic Circle? In the 1940's there was a legendary fan named Claude Degler, who had a vision of science-fiction fandom as the seedbed of a vast new order of society. Claude hitchhiked his way back and forth across the U.S., sleeping on the couches and eating the food of other fans for weeks at a time, talking to small groups, trying to build a following. He wanted to form a political party called the Cosmic Circle, which would lobby for atomic energy and space travel -- "man's destiny". Since the future of the world was in the hands of those who loved science (what 1940's fan could deny it?), the Cosmic Circle would in time supplant the U.S. government, then go on to rule the world. Claude dropped out of sight by 1950, and the grand scheme never hatched. But who knows... what might they have done in another history? /mmk/

Page 29 -- If you've seen the 1968 Mel Brooks film The Producers, you must remember the big show-stopping musical number, "Springtime for Hitler". The tune is the same: "Springtime for NESFA." You may also realize suddenly why our show is called The Decomposers. /mmk/

Epilogue -- tunes that aren't likely to be used. From the first act of Iolanthe, the interlude between sweet Phyllis and the House of Lords.

She: Nay, tempt me not, to you I'll not be bound:
You live in water, I live on the ground.

It: Oh no, my dear, now do not make me chase you --
These tentacles want only to embrace you...

Spurn not the octopoid,
We'd make a couple --
Don't leave me in a void
Of care and trouble --
Give up these girlish whims,
Though you have so few limbs,
You could work out in gyms
To make them supple.

Blue blood! Blue blood!
Our love can never be -- I am not free --
I'm stuck here in the mud, blue blood! Ah, blue blood!

Spare me the bitter pain
Of desiccation,
And the appalling strain
Of water ration --
We'd make a pretty pair
If you would do your share:
Bring down prepackaged air
For your inflation.

Blue blood! Blue blood!
She never thinks of me -- below the sea --
My romance is a dud, blue blood! Ah -- blue blood!

/sa/



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