

SERCON- NAVIGATION

Sercon-navigation #14 is written and produced by Tom Springer (hereafter known as "Old Weak-ankles") for the 24th Distribution of Apa V, the Las Vegas apa, which has as this month's theme "Work" Today is Oct. 7, 1995.

Member, fwa.

Oh, how I long for the old days. When the Vegrants were a happy-go-lucky bunch of fen glowing with trufannish pleasure behind their designs to resurrect the Chicago Science Fiction League. Back then our bellies would squeal with delight upon hearing plans for a trip to our clubhouse, Chicago Hotdogs. I remember how we would barrel in faces glowing with sercon joy as we gabbled among ourselves about fanzines, friends and what hotdog would soon meet its master, waving our membership cards and calling for free franks. Those were the days when Vegas Fandom had yet to realize that it wasn't all Coney Dogs and smiles in fandom's desert outpost.

Oh, we were naive back then. Trusting, accepting, gracious and generous, perfect victims for treachery of the basest sort. We just didn't know any better, and never at any time were we given the slightest reason to suspect there might be traitors in our midst.

"Completely Inconceivable!" would have been my response to such a suggestion. If we'd only known more about the concept of change. We just weren't ready for it, and certainly not expecting it. We had taken for granted our friendly comradery within the club that we all shared. We once believed we were a cohesive group of like minded individuals finally due their share of the loot, and willing to fight for it. Now we know better and are fully versed in the theories of change and growth (both natural and artificial), and well aware of the need for cosmic observation. (Such are the advantages of the Group Mind.)

Two weeks ago you would have recognized me as the happy, enthusiastic neo you all knew me to be. Always ready to lend a hand, collate, type, and staple. Always eager to convene a meeting, always there for the club (and the hotdogs). Now I'm a scarred and callous fan, downright grim at times. An unsuspecting veteran of the violently historic battles within the trusted and wholly unsuspecting and gastronomically self-involved Chicago Science Fiction League.

September 23, 1995, the last Saturday evening before ManureCon (Silvercon 4). It was a dog day afternoon...

On that day the core group of Vegas Fandom gathered themselves upon the palatial grounds of the Katz's estate, many of us having suffered life's cruel vagueries and together were looking to blow off a little steam and relax before the con. In due course and typical Vegrant fashion we all tuned to our various channels then rolled the big knob between thumb and forefinger, grooving on various fans and conversations.

The letcol and editorial for WH#10 were up on

two computers, available for any Vegrant with half a mind still intact. Cookies, fruit, chips, salsa, chocolates, crackers, and candy were close at hand for the hungry fen, who, if they weren't talking, were either listening, eating, drinking, or smoking. These activities and consumables were always close at hand and available to all, as usual, to increase their personal enjoyment.

That day my cycle was inconsistent but enjoyable. I felt in^{to} the habit of moving from the couch to the kitchen counter (where the donuts and other treats resided in humble sugar), then I might wander over to a computer and read a few things, maybe type a bit, then find something to eat and have a smoke, talk to someone, then wander outside to confirm it's still too hot to do anything out there. come back in, and inform everyone it was still too bloody hot. All in all a very enjoyable way to spend an afternoon. Completely lulling as well. Almost lullaby-like. We had achieved our goals and had begun to meld with the furniture, having relaxed to such an extent that we could no longer lift our arms to feed ourselves from the table before us. (I still think the Katz's new couches had something to do with it, possibly possessing some sort of pseudo int^{ellect} collected from a series of residual leftovers that were deposited by conversant fen over a period of time, forming a rudimentary projectionist-like empathy that contributed to our solomnent state of mind.)

Despite the couches' best efforts to consume us in their burgandy velvet, we managed to address a more serious problem. Unable to lift our limbs enough to feed ourselves, eventually (it really took no time at all) we grew hungry.

I was thinking hotdogs.

"You at all hungry?" I asked Arnie, trying with all my might to levitate the pipe to him.

"Yeah, I think it's time to start talking about dinner." He said, frowning intently at the brass contraption.

"I agree," I agreed.

Sensing Ken's imminent arrival, Arnie diverted his attention and addressed Mr. Forman as he approached, apparently on some sort of errand, "Mr. Forman!" Arnie exclaimed, stopping him cold in his tracks. Like myself, Arnie is blessed (or cursed) with the ability to project his voice to great effect. (Arnie and I were too proud to ask for help with the pipe, but dinner was another matter. That Ken was ambulatory was testament to his will and his wife that he hadn't joined us for a sidebar all afternoon.)

Ken stopped behind the couch upon which Arnie sat, unconsciously futzing with his watch. He bent slightly at the waist and inquired graciously, "Yes, Arnie?"

"We're thinking of dinner, what are your plans?" Arnie asked.

"I don't know," Ken responded, "that's what I'm on my way to finding out."

Arnie looked hopeful, "Really?"

"I'm gonna ask everyone what they want to do," he said itching to be on his way.

"Let us know," Arnie supplied as Ken dashed off.

"I'm thinking we should convene a meeting of the Chicago Science Fiction League," I said. Forgetting how relaxed I was, and trying to rub my tummy as I related my idea to Arnie (for emphasis), I managed to flop my hand into my lap. Coincidentally proving that my whole arm/hand assembly weighed enough to penetrate to more fragile anatomy, rendering me helpless for what was to come. I believe I grunted.

"You moved your arm," Arnie accused.

"Hungh," I grunted.

Through the smokey haze Arnie couldn't see I was injured and continued with our conversation after noticing my lack of movement once again.

"Yes," Arnie said with a smile, "hotdogs *do* sound good!"

I heard Joyce in Ross's office where the letcol was, "Sounds good to me!" she called. She had somehow escaped our lethargy and was sucked into the letter column. With my eyes closed and over my heavy breathing and the intimate pain every man knows, I could hear Joyce tapping through Arnie's proposed menu, several roaming Vegrants, and the ringing in my balls.

Ken returned as I sat listening to my balls, his wife Aileen, JoHn, his wife Karla, their baby Collette and a couple other fans were gathered behind the Mainspring, as if in support. Alerted to Ken's presence Arnie slowly turned his head, and addressed, not only Ken, but the rest of the room, "We're going for hotdogs if anyone would care to join us," he invited.

I opened my eyes in time to see JoHn step forward to support his fellow fan and friend, "I'm sorry Arnie, but we won't be joining you tonight."

"Well, I'm sorry too," Arnie assured.

"We're going to the Little Squash instead," Ken supplied.

"Huh," I said, though not so clearly.

"Pardon?" Arnie said, swinging his head around.

Confused about Arnie's confusion I repeated myself in case it was me he misunderstood. "Huh," I said again.

JoHn discreetly grabbed Ken's arm and stepped back as Arnie looked over at me. "What?" Aileen and company slowly shuffled to the door. JoHn and Ken sidled over behind them.

Before the group could make the door Joyce appeared before them, bringing their sneaky sidling to a stop and a dangerously expectant air to the proceedings.

"So, where are you all off to?" Joyce inquired with her disarmingly coy smile. "What about the Chicago Science Fiction League? We're having a meeting."

Arnie again turned to face the conversation, momentarily forgetting about my inarticulate grunting. JoHn tried being diplomatic, "I'm sorry Joyce, but certain matrimonial elements within the group behind me have put forth the plan of visiting the Little Squash for dinner tonight."

Joyce was puzzled. "The Little Squash?"

Ken and JoHn both had the grace to blush and it was then our friend's careful shenanigans and manipulations were revealed with but four careless words innocently supplied as revelatory information.

"It's a vegetarian restaurant," Karla said. A quiet moment of milling and anxious glances followed her treasonous statement.

"Veg-veggi-tarian?" Arnie sputtered.

I toed the strap of my bag and pulled it over closer to the couch, my previous lethargy and injury instantly forgotten upon hearing Karla utter those dreadful words. It was then I knew we'd lost them and things would never be the same again.

Ken, trying to be inconspicuous and failing miserably stepped behind the unusually quiet and confused Su Williams. From my point of view he was only partially concealed, apparently more worried about Joyce than myself. I noticed a bulge in his pants pocket and a slowly growing wet spot beneath it. He was either very happy to see us or prepared for the inevitable conflict to come.

"That's heresy," Joyce said quietly, digging something out of her pleasantly rounded back pocket.

JoHn looked resigned and a little sad before loosing the first volley. "Looks like the Katz outta the bag."

"That's heresy!" Joyce shouted, bringing her zap gun to bear on the separatists before her.

"She's got a zap gun!" Aileen shrieked. Belle and Eric scooted back into a corner, having remained silent the entire time they had yet to choose sides. Arnie flinched at Aileen's voice and I took advantage of her distraction as heads jerked in her direction and jabbed my hand into my bag, desperate for my own protection.

Sweaty fingers snaked around the pleasing plastic-formed grips of my plonker. Ken, sensing my motion from the corner of his eye turned to see me rooting through my bag with a glazed but determined look in my eye. Adrenaline and instinct took over and he yanked out his own leaking zap gun. Arnie grabbed the pipe and cupped it protectively with his body.

Karla tucked sweet Collette under her arm and with a juke reminiscent of Barry Sanders, ducked around Joyce before she could open fire and made her escape, leaving JoHn alone to face the mighty wrath of Joyce Worley Katz.

"Watch out!" someone shouted as Ken opened up on me. I ducked my head and gave a quick lick to my suction-cup dart as a stream of zap spray sketched a wet squiggle on the wall behind me.

Poor naive Su. Unaware of the seriousness of the situation, yet realizing things might get out of hand if the Voice of Reason didn't make itself heard, Su took it upon herself to be that Voice of Reason.

"Now Joyce," she said, calmly advancing with her hands raised in supplication, "I don't think there's any call - urk, argle, hack, spurkelache," she gurgled as Joyce's pinpoint accuracy filled Su's gaping maw with butt-warmed zap juice.

Aileen grabbed Ken about the waist, sobbing, and ruining his aim, sending his next shot into the table before me.

"We're gonna die!" she sobbed, clinging to Ken like contact paper. I took careful aim and let fly with my rubber tipped missile. He must've seen my spit covered dart coming because it impacted the left lens of his glasses with a wet smack, sending little particles of my spittle flying.

"Aah, I'm hit!" Ken yelled, the rubber dart sticking out from his glasses like some plastic-mutated Kafka-like antenna, bobbing as he tried orient himself. I punched another dart into my plonker as Ken fired wildly about the room, liberally soaking the empty couch seat beside me.

Su had raised heavy arms in a desperate attempt to block Joyce's shots, but to no avail. Joyce's skill with a

zap gun is well known and plinking at nose, eyes, mouth, ears, breasts, and sandled feet, she made Su dance a desperate and hopeless jig that shook the house.

Eric and Belle crouched behind copies of Lan's Lantern for protection, huddled in their corner, eyes wide with wonder as CSFL history was writ right before them.

Ken stiff-armed Aileen away from him so as to take proper aim, only to have his head rock back again as my second dart slapped against his right lens. "I'm blind!" he screamed, dropping his zap gun and clutching at my suction missiles. Aileen grabbed him again, sobbing even more at his terrible screams.

Sue continued to dance under Joyce's expert aim.

Arnie actually got the pipe lit, having crawled beneath the coffee table during the worst of it, and was happily puffing away, providing a steadily growing smoke screen for our forces.

John still stood by the kitchen table, where he was when it all started, completely unscathed, but not without plans. Forcasting the bitter end to the seperatist's first battle, and knowing, despite the outcome, what he was going to have for dinner, he began stuffing his pockets with M&Ms from a candy bowl on the table next to him.

Su, reduced to body-jerking hysterics rumbled towards the door, sobbing and gurgling, mouth still full of hiny-heated zap fuel. Joyce stepped aside rather than be flattened as Sue plowed her way through the door. Her primary target gone, Joyce tracked the smokey battle scarred room with her half-zap gun, looking for secondaries.

Ken, taking both stuck darts in sweaty fists gave a yank and pulled his glasses from his head in the attempt. "I still can't see! Aaahh!"

John watched as he stuffed his pockets with candy that melts in your mouth as Joyce brought her weapon to bear. Realizing our tactical advantage and rudimentary crossfire, John advised the remaining seperatists of the best course of action still open to them. Flinging a handful of chocolate M&Ms at Joyce he turned and ran for the back door screaming, "Run away! Run away!"

Incomprehensively, this brought Aileen to her senses. "Bean curd and a filk song, that's what we need!" she shouted. Grabbing her still-blind and bumbling husband she ran by the chocolate pocked Joyce, who watched them go while digging an M&M out of her ear with a dainty pinky.

My shot was late as it smacked into the closing door behind them. All was silent in the swirling smoke but for heavy breathing and the scrape of a match as Arnie lit the pipe again. Joyce slumped into the damp seat beside me as Arnie crawled out from beneath the coffee table, pipe in hand.

"Gosh," Eric enthused. "Wow, I didn't know science fiction clubs could be so, so..."

"Invigorating?"

"Exciting?"

"Dangerous?"

"No, wierd. That was probably the wierdest thing I've ever seen," he said, still clutching a battle-worn Lan's Lantern in his lap.

"It can get like that," Arnie said through a cloud.

"I had no idea," Belle whispered, still a little dazed.

"You get used to this sort of thing after a while."

Joyce informed her. "Still, this one was pretty bad."

"Is everyone okay?" I asked, dropping my plonker into my bag. Nods of assent followed my inquiry. Joyce tucked her own zap gun into her back pocket then accepted the pipe from Arnie.

"I'm glad you sided with us. It's a sad and terrible thing that happened here today, but to have lost you two as well..." Joyce let the sentence drop, taking a tremendous hit off the pipe.

"It would have been worse," Arnie said.

"Not just for us, but for the club," I added.

"Eric hasn't had a hotdog for a while, and vegetarian just didn't do it for him," Belle told us.

"Thank Ghu," Joyce exhaled.

"So we thought we'd go with you," Eric finished. "We just didn't have any idea..."

"Well, are we still up for a trip to the clubhouse?" I asked, successfully injecting some enthusiasm into my voice, happy to have survived the first battle of the Seperatist's Revolution.

"Sure," Joyce said, "let's go, all that shooting's made me hungry."

And so ended the first insurgent episode to happen to the Chicago Science Fiction League in 56 years, since the club-killing schism occured way back in 1940. A surprisingly significant fact when you consider the solidarity we once shared, a solidarity now forever fractured

Next month, in part two, follow our intrepid club members to the Chicago Science Fiction League's clubhouse, where they fall foul of an even more insidious plot contrivance. Where they realize, though the club is fractured and almost broken beyond repair, there's still worse to come!