

# The Zero-G Lavatory

Fall 1994

FIRST ISSUE!!!

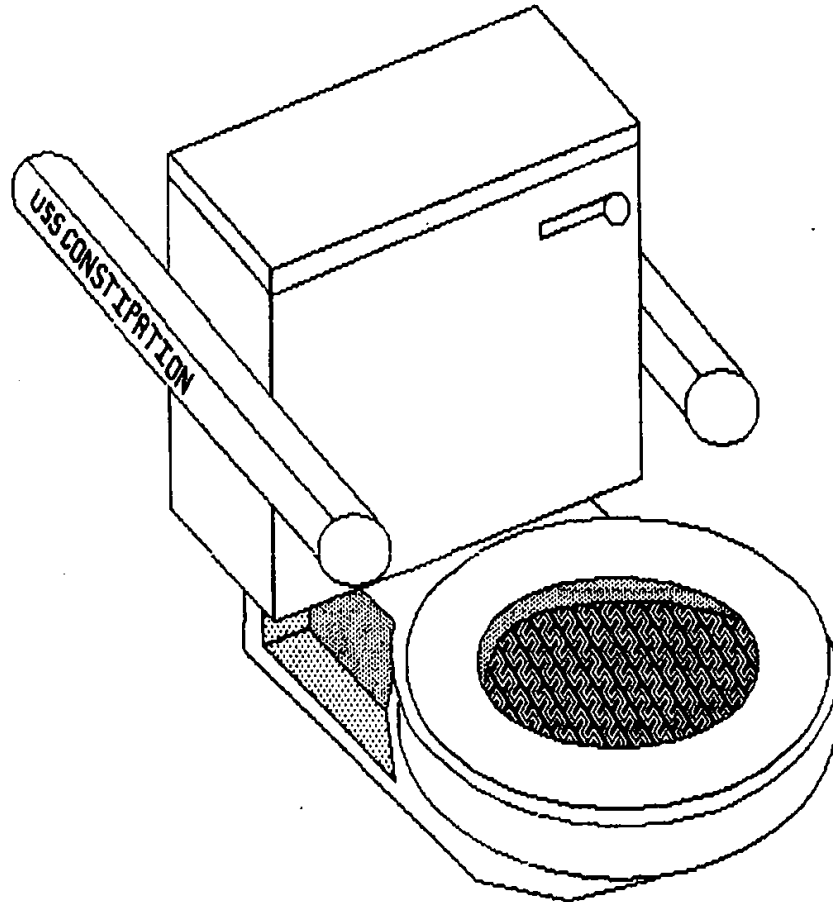
THE HONCHO  
RETURNS

*To boldly go...*

MOG SPEAKS:  
Sasquatch Views

GARTH SPENCER:  
Fannish Jargon  
Past And Present

IMPISH MISCHIEF  
By Scott Patri



# The Zero-G Lavatory

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*COVER: Ever wonder where the toilet on the Enterprise was? (or did people in the future evolve to the point where they didn't need to go to the bathroom?) Well, I always wondered, and I decided to create a starship that answers this problem once and for all.*

# *The Return Of* THE HEAD HONCHO

It's been over a year since "the incident". I was the communication secretary of a small SF&F club for about four months, and discovered that the "happy, happy, joy, joy" attitude of one certain fan club was nothing but an illusion.

I became the ComSec at the same time I joined the club and was thrust into an executive position with few clues of what my position was supposed to do. I did finally learn that I was the club's "mail room", in which I mailed out stuff to out of town members, produce a newsletter, and also advertise the club's activities and existence.

Mailing out stuff and doing the advertising sounded simple, but I was uncertain about what I was supposed to do about a newsletter. Asking the president of the club, I was told: "Do whatever you want with it."

Before, the "newsletter" consisted of a single sheet that was sent out quarterly. It contained a few notes of the club's activities to that date, and not much else. I thought I could do something creative.

Instead of a quarterly newsletter, I attempted a monthly fanzine. It had articles, artwork, cartoons, advertising (of bookshops, etc., since I needed financial help to cover the printing), and I tried to make it into something that would not only advertise the existence of the club, but be a conduit of communication with other clubs that I mailed it out to.

I was winging it from the start.

since I had absolutely no experience with publishing a fanzine, but with each issue, I corrected errors and improved the format. I thought something good was being created, for it was beginning to draw interest from people outside of the club. In fact, the fourth issue actually had letters from readers, one a well known SF&F writer.

It was with the fourth issue that the president of the club decided to drop the hammer, and it was then I learned the awful truth of CLUB POLITICS.

It was the cover of the fanzine that sparked it. A sitting troll holding a sword. BITE ME written on it's arm... the issue needed a cover, and I was forced to do one. This particular issue was a double run, since the club was holding an open house that month, and half of the issues would be handed out at it. During the monthly meeting, the "state" of the issue was brought up, and I gave assurances that subsequent issues would keep improving, since I was beginning to receive artwork submissions that were better than the stuff I did. The meeting ended, two of the executive and the gamemaster left, and the president and the treasurer ambushed me.

It started off so innocently. A concern about the cover...the possible reactions to it when it was handed out at the open house, for "some" might consider it demonic, or some would be offended by it, and it could give the club a "bad image"... The suggestion of

placing a CENSORED sticker across it, which would not only sooth potential furrowed brows, but entice people to read the issue to find out what the beef could be about...There was talk about where to get these stickers...

I felt like someone had a knife in my gut and was slowly twisting it around.

I hate censorship in any form. I personally believe that the silencing of opinions, ideas or images is the first step towards enslavement. I am also opposed to using censorship as a marketing gimmick. I made my reservations about this clear, and after heated discussion (argument) with the president, he commanded" that the sticker go on it, or the remaining issues went in the trash.

Now, you would think that this was in the power of a president of a SF&F club. I almost thought so too, but I felt that there something seriously wrong with the situation. After fuming for several days, I realized that such an action by the club president required an executive vote, since the club was supposedly run democratically. I then realized that there *had* been a perfect opportunity for just that.

The fact was the "concern" about the cover was staged, for the president and the treasurer had already discussed this beforehand and waited for the other members of the executive to leave before they sprung it on me.

The makings of a fight were in the process. I would have recanted all my objections with a signed statement by the president of the club absolving me of the act of censoring the cover, since I did not want to take part in any of it and wanted proof of my non involvement. When the president flatly re-

fused, I began gathering evidence that the basis of the of censorship was unfounded and the action of the president was unjust, and prepared to fight my position in front of the entire executive at the meeting before the open house.

I resigned instead.

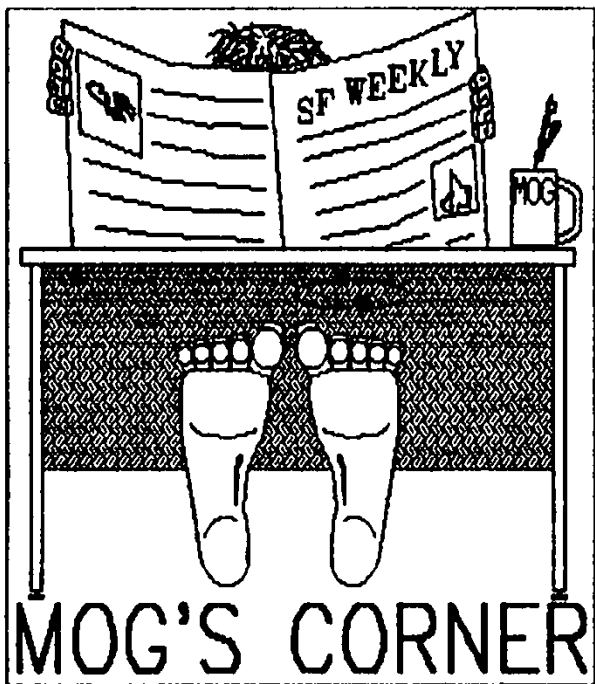
I was in the right, and the methods of the president and treasurer were underhanded, and was ready to proof just that, when I realized *what* I was fighting for, and what the results of such a fight would be. I discovered that I could win the fight, but it wasn't worth it. It was just the cover of an insignificant Fanzine, and the hostility generated by the confrontation over it would be a waste of time--especially since the president owned the photocopier I was using to publish the 'zine, and he was such a bastard that he would prevent me from using it, which would force me to find another, which would cause the expense of printing the 'zine to go up, which would effectively kill it.

So I bailed, and gave each member of the club a copy of my resignation, which also described what had happened in detail.

The members of the club didn't seem to give a shit.

I spent my time from then on working at fiction writing, keeping up with the correspondence I made when I was in the club, tinkered around with matter transmission, learned how to speak Sasquatch, and did a bunch of other things to keep reality from driving me crazy. But two things were al-

*Continued on pg.6*



*In '84, a plane crashed in the mountains of Vancouver Island. Although nobody died, it's cargo was never recovered.*

*The plane's cargo consisted of a Hooked on Phonics package, a cassette player, a box of batteries, and hundreds of science fiction and fantasy books and magazines.*

*The reason the cargo was missing was because it had been taken by a sasquatch.*

*Sasquatches are curious creatures, and after fiddling and fumbling with the stuff he had found, he managed to properly place the batteries in the cassette player, insert part one of the hooked on phonics tapes correctly into the player, pressed play, and became the first non-human to learn how to read English.*

*Aside from certain literary critics. And after several years, this sasquatch became one of the most know-*

*ledgeable SF&F buffs around.*

*Now this sasquatch, who's name is Mog, has decided to share his wealth of knowledge with the rest of Fandom as a reviewer, news correspondent and critic for the ZGL, in hopes that he will eventually become recognized enough to find a job as a PAID reviewer of SF&F, since bookshop owners won't take fish and berries as money.*

*Take it away Mog!*

Take where Honcho? Nice intro, though.

Me Mog and you not. Ha-Ha. Ha. Me been reading magazines that Honcho lends me, and Me see big Ho-Ha about differences between Science Fiction and Fantasy. Me see Ho-Ha, but no see difference.

They both fiction.

They make big noise how Science Fiction should be real, while Fantasy shouldn't. Ok, I understand that Fantasy not real, for Me only see dragons, trolls, and Elvis when rock hit me in head, but me no see space-ships that go faster that light, and me no see people-looking robots that can think.

Maybe problem of those that make noise about things being called Science Fiction when they say it's not is because they want to make noise. Me understand that Science Fiction is supposed to be real, like in area when Me jump river. For me to jump river, sides of river must be close enough for muscles to jump. If spaceship goes faster that light, then science must say how it can do this. If people-looking robot can think, then science must also say.

Those who make noise that think this is good Science Fiction may be right, but Me think this is boring reading.

Science Fiction is fiction, at least

Me think so, which means it not true. Fantasy is also Fiction, which means it also not true. The difference between the two is that Science Fiction is made up of stuff that is true, while Fantasy isn't.

Problem noise-makers have is Fantasy being called Science Fiction. Me think it's like calling rock stone. I know they both different, but each book I read is different. I see books as books, but noise-makers say they are novels.

Honcho calls people like this anal-retentive. Me understand this as people who look at place where poop come out. Me think that people like this make their own poop. All this poop has to do with science.

Science Fiction has science as it's basis, which means everything works because science says it does. Fantasy has imagination as it's basis, which means everything works because the writer says it does. Me read Science Fiction where *writer* says it works, and Me read Fantasy where *science* says it works.

What big fuss? Me read Science Fiction not because of science, but when me like writing. Same goes with Fantasy. Some say what Me like is poop, but what they like Me no understand or me fall asleep reading.

Some say that Fantasy is dumb. Fantasy is fantasy, and the only thing dumb is when it's written dumb. Science Fiction can also be dumb too, but not when writer says something works and not science. Most people don't know how science works, even those who's job it is to know how science works. Most times when writer says something works when science says it doesn't is when science don't know how it works either!

Me read Science Fiction when it tells good story. Me *may* read Science Fiction when there is lot of numbers and big sounding words, but numbers and big sounding words hurt my head.

Me and others read Science Fiction not because it has science, but because it is good story. Maybe people who make noise can't understand this. Me think they understand science too much to understand what is a good story.

Anne McCaffrey has new book out, The Dolphins Of Pern. This is number ten (or thirteen, if counting harper books) of *Dragonriders of Pern* series. Me liked it. Story goes that dolphins that were brought to Pern by colonists (Dragonsdown) were forgotten by colonists after deadly thread began to fall from skies and the people moved north from the southern continent to hide in caves.

When the decedents of colonists returned to southern continent after several hundred years, A boy named Readis and his uncle were rescued by "shipfish" that seemed to be able talk to them.

While planning to finally rid Pern of thread, Dragonriders and others at the place where the original colonists landed learn that the dolphins were intelligent creatures that could talk to humans, and did, in past. They also worked with human partners in exploring Pern and rescued people from sea during storms. People also learned that dolphins had been trying to get people to listen to them over hundreds of years after the human colony had moved north.

The story goes about the creation of a Dolphin Hall, where dolphins would go to receive medical attention and inform people of changes in Pern's

oceans. Me recommend this book, for not only is it a good read, and that it also shows different aspect of the epic of *Dragonriders of Pern*, but it also sets good example of fantasy that is really science fiction.

Here is space voyages, genetic manipulation, Newtonian Physics (ow), extraterrestrial biology (bigger ow), artificial intelligence, and bunch of other things science says works. Because series also has flying, fire-breathing telepathic dragons, people call it fantasy.

What *Dragonriders of Pern* epic is good story. It takes reader on splendid voyage, making reader forget what vehicle is travelling on. Each book is like piece of puzzle too. First there was planet with dragons, then story of what dragons were, then story of how people got there, explaining how people forgot, then story of how everything was planned to destroy thread... Good Story! The Dolphins Of Pern is next part of puzzle. Explains how dolphins can talk, and shows how smart they could be. Also shows parallel between people culture and dolphin. Me recommend The Dolphins Of Pern to read if you like dragons and/or dolphins. Also recommend Dragonsdawn, which tells about the first landing of people on Pern, and The Chronicles Of Pern: First Fall, which has many short stories of Pern, one being *The Dolphin's Bell*, which tells of the evacuation of Landing with dolphins' help.

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HONCHO *Continued from pg.3*

always on my mind; to create and publish a fanzine on my own, and learn as much as I could about Fandom as possible. I wasn't about to let one bad incident turn me off, for there was

something about Fandom that beckoned to me like a moth to a flame, or like Elvis to a fried peanut butter and banana sandwich. Plus, I enjoyed doing a 'zine and wanted to get back into it.

My persistence paid off, and I connected with Garth Spencer.

A fanzine publisher, a Fandom historian...a Trufan. It was from him that I learned that I was better off not being in "that" club, since in comparison with the rest of Fandom it was only a SF&F club in name only. The only evidence of SF&F interest was what I did when I was in it, and it wasn't that much.

Fandom seen and experienced without the restriction of a club...I was connected with Fandom more firmly on my own than in the supposed support of a club. And that was the key: I was on my own, without the hindrance of someone telling me what I can or can't do. Exchanging correspondence with someone has a better flavour when you do it own your own than at the dictate of someone else. Discoveries are more fantastic when made by the lone explorer. it's freedom to do what you want when you want it without it hinging on the opinion of someone else.

Well, I'm having my interest in Fandom fulfilled, and my fanzine is going to reflect it. Over the course of time, I hope to probe the depths of Fandom and illuminate some of it's greatest mysteries--what Fandom is really like and what it is supposed to be. Don't let the name of the fanzine confuse you; The Zero-G Lavatory just reflects the seriousness and purpose of SF(as in figuring out solutions to problems that presently exist or will

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# THE STORYTELLER

Fannish Jargon Today  
By Garth Spencer

Fannish jargon? Oh dear. I guess you never knew I twice proposed to publish a fandom directory, did you? And you never heard of Robert Runté's efforts, let alone the recent reissue from LASFS? Okay, let's look at current fannish jargon.

Notice: I say "current" because, the last time Robert Runté published a Guide to SF and Fandom (he that was a Giant among Fen, in the Before Time), it struck me how... well, old-fashioned a good many terms were Outmoded, No longer in current usage, Out of date.

At that point, not yet 30, I started to feel old; so old I remembered what corflu was, so old I remember when the Aurora Awards began.

Let's see... firstly, here are the fan terms that strike me as current. (I'll go on to rarely used terms later.) You will notice that a lot of these definitions are convention-related:

con (short for "convention"): the usual term for science fiction conventions. I thought that there might be need for careful, laboured explanations of these social-event-weekend-parties-cum-trade-shows, until I gathered there are other "conventions" that are essentially entertainment events. In recent years the consensus

as to what cons are has broken down. I have actually heard fans say, with their bare faces hanging out, that "a convention is a business", like as if it wasn't trying to be several conflicting things at once.

artshow: One of the usual features at conventions. Quality of pieces varies wildly.

dead dog (\*\*): It has become traditional for conventions to feature a party on Sunday night, after the con has officially closed, generally for those who stuck it out to the end... meaning anybody who is still around.

dealer (alternatively, huckster): One of the usual features at conventions is a dealers' room. These days, SF dealers range from book and magazine dealers, comic book and gum card dealers, costume makers/buyers/sellers, swordmakers, etc. to people hawking T-shirts.

fan (pl. fen): Presumably, someone who enjoys SF, fantasy, or at least Star Trek/gaming/costuming/writing/other. Many compounds, e.g. fanzine, media-fan, fanartist, faneditor/fan-publisher, etc.

fanzine (alternatively, zine): a publication produced by at least one fan, usually on his own dime. Purpose: self-expression, usually "fannish" (see below). In the misty dawn of fanhistory these were closely modelled after the professional (i.e., paying) SF magazines. By the point that I ran into them, fanzines had transmogrified into light,



ironic, sardonic, absurdist magazines that took a humoresque, slantwise look at reality--and at fandom--and did not (generally) run any fiction. Perhaps the best examples are genzines and perzines (see below). Fanzines as traditionally defined were available for "the usual" (several kinds of contributions, or in trade for your own zine). By the point that I was pubbing my own ish, I had trouble deciding whether club newsletters were fanzines or not; some people distinguished between their newsletter (basically a local-interest, just-the-facts, ephemeral production) and a fanzine (which they made a much heavier deal, like an amateur fiction magazine, and maybe that's why a number of these things didn't get off the ground). For one thing, the "fanzine", as some clubs aspired to produce it, was a fiction magazine, and only available by payment. I had the sense that some people don't get the word.

fillo (rare): a filler illustration. Some fanartists have concentrated on providing fillos to faneditors.

gofer: a volunteer, in whatever capacity. From "gofer" (go fer the medic, go fer a cup of coffee, go fer the AV equipment, etc.). NOTICE: SF conventions rely on unpaid, volunteer labour, from the paying members, where other conventions and conferences would budget (heavily) for paid help.

GoH (Guest of Honour): It used to be that concons invite one, well maybe two, Guests of Honour, with a definite reason in mind. Now even local or regional conventions seem to feel obliged to have a ProGoH or Author GoH, a FanGoH, a Toast-Master, a Media and/or Gaming GoH... see a trend here?

green room: I started to hear of this feature in the late 80s, as a sort of staging room at cons for the GoHs

just before their panel appearances, and/or a relaxation room afterwards; stocked with consumables, and probably featuring a wall-sized schedule of the program. It chances that I know where the term came from: "green room" is used in the theatre for the analogous place for actors (and stage crew) to go before their stage appearance.

liaison: a set of concom positions. When I started working on cons, it appeared that they required:

- A) a Hotel Liaison
- B) a GoH Liaison
- C) an Artists' and Dealers' Liaison

In each case, a concom person whom the hotel/GoHs/artists/ dealers consistently contacted. This is a Good Thing as it does not inspire confidence, to say the least, for a hotel (let us say) to have to deal with a parade of different faces and explain everything all over again. Besides, in the case of hotels especially, the same person dealing consistently with the same relations can prevent someone pulling a fasty.

loc (letter of/or comment): Originally appearing in the prozines, letters of comment probably began fandom; a staple feature of fanzines is the loc column (loccol). The tenor of locs seems to be that fans can express their opinions or exercise their reasoning powers without being required to prove every damn thing; that's what science magazines are for. At their worst...well, you can imagine.

masquerade: A staple feature of conventions, these days, is the wearing of costumes, which has led to a formal costume parade.

media: In the 50s, Britain had "Dalek Fever"; in the 60s, North America had Star Trek. After which, more than half of all fans were fans of Star Trek (or Dr. Who, or Battlestar Galactica, or

anime, or Gerry Anderson series, or...) This is sometimes referred to as mediafandom to distinguish it from an earlier fandom with a different direction. It is fannish in the sense that mediafans pursue their interests their own way.

membership (\*\*): Unlike mundane conventions, SF con memberships admit you to the con, period. You do not get a blanket membership-room-meals arrangement, as for some conferences. On the other hand, you don't have to buy a separate admission all over again for panels, films, the dance, the masquerade, etc. (I have heard of events called conventions where the committee sold "tickets" or "admissions", and one East Coast convention that limited members to one panel and one film apiece. Again, some people don't get the word.)

pink room: Within the last five years I heard this term being used for a sort of "green room" for gofers. This makes sense particularly for large cons requiring a large volunteer workforce, which in turn needs a dispatcher, a central place to receive assignments, conceivably a place to depressurize.

pro: originally synonymous with GoH; someone who pursues their activity as a profession. Since Western civilization fell that merely means "I'm paid for doing this." (Compare dictionary definition for contrast.)

promotional party: one variety of room party at a convention, the party where you promote your own upcoming convention. Since the rise of large perambulating cons for which bids are necessary (Worldcon, Westercon, etc.), bid promotion parties have been staple features of convention fandom. Sometimes that leads to running gags, such as the Minneapolis in '73 Worldcon bid parties, held well into the 80s just for

fun, or the Worldcon '89 at Myles' House parties held across Canada (and I think the States).

Romulan ale: Some vile green concoction or other with dangerous alcohol content served freely at room parties if the sponsors think they're Vild Und Krazy Guys. The formula varies; the concept is borrowed from blog (see below); the results are by turns hilarious (ask about Garth and the Merchants of Deva party, at V-Con 20) and horrifying (ask about 16 year-olds and the Vancouver Comic Book Club's atomic cherries, at earlier V-Cons).

room party: it's become conventional (there's that word again) to hold room parties at conventions. A really good convention is known, among other things, by the range and quality of its room parties. These can range from as few as four to six people talking in Robert Runté's room until 4 a.m. about sociology to the Merchants of Deva party, costumed Bob Asprin fans, pouring vile green concoctions into yard glasses and challenging an already-squiffed Garth Spencer to drink it. (This may not be too good an idea, unless he survives without an ambulance call and having his stomach pumped, as in fact he did.)

room rate: one of the features affecting my con attendance is the room rate at the convention hotel. If it costs too much, I can't go. If it costs very much, I may not want to go. If it's way cheap, you may give the con a pass but I may enjoy being there. (I find staying elsewhere, even in a nearby hotel, a bit of a pain.)

semipro: this adjective characterizes magazines, not persons. "Semipro" and "small press" are easily confused terms. Semipro magazines, like small press publishers, are characterized by

state subsidies for the arts and low circulation /distribution numbers, or infrequent publication, or both.

slave auction: a recurring feature at conventions is the "slave auction", usually a benefit auction OR a role-playing Bit of Fun in which various persons are "sold" to other people. Really, all one "buys" is one hour of someone's public company. (This point has had to be stressed for some out-of-it "buyers".) I have been at slave auctions where the bids were in made-up currencies, but the object has been fundraising at some slave auctions. Closely related to kissing auctions.

You may suspect from the foregoing that I think some things have changed, even in the time since I joined fandom. We are concerned here with the resulting changes in fannish jargon. The following terms, I suspect, are obsolete or becoming obsolete. By no coincidence, rather a lot of them are drawn from the world of small magazines/self-publishing:

APA: an Amateur Publication (or Printing) Association. The original APA was a society of letterpress-printing enthusiasts, making up classy sample publications on antique machines to show each other. Fandom took up the idea of the APA and modified it; X many fans who wanted to club up with each other wrote up at least x many pages of text every two months or so, sent X many copies of their apazines to a Central Mailer, who collated them and mailed them out to the members. APAs have been set up for a number of purposes.

blog: the original idea of a vile green concoction, before anyone heard of Romulan ale. Recipes, of course,

varied from place to place.

COA: Change of Address. Fans have always been a highly mobile population and notices of new address have amounted to regular columns in many fanzines.

copy count: Different APAs had different "copy counts", the number of copies of your contributors that you had to make for the members. Usually a few were supposed to be left over so samples could be offered to prospective members.

corflu: correction fluid. Back when fanzines were produced on mimeograph machines, or (my God) spirit (ditto) duplicators, you first had to make up master pages called "stencils", then correct any typographical errors. (Correction fluid, usually a virulent red, was for mimeo stencils; white-out for ditto stencils.)

ditto: a slightly older and distinctly inferior duplication method than mimeography. I've used it. Don't ask me about it. it's just too painful...

faanfiction: note the spelling. "Faanfiction" (fiction by and about fans) could feature real or fictitious events, and real or fictitious fans, as opposed to fanfiction (fiction written by fans), which I guess is the right term for much mediafiction.

fan fund: originally, the idea of fandom was that fans wanted to meet other people who shared their SFnal interest. (This was in the days when fans were pretty thin on the ground.) Getting some well-known overseas fan correspondents to your con, like the once-famous Walt Willis or Mike Glicksohn, seemed like a good idea. Auctions and fundraisers support the fan funds.

fanhistory: Yes, that's right, there are actually histories about fandom.

Notable fanhistorians have been Sam Moskowitz and Harry Warner Jr. (in the States), and Rob Hansen (in the United Kingdom). Several fanhistorical articles have been written by Jack Bowie-Reed (Winnipeg), Michael Dann (B.C.), Taral Wayne (Toronto), Luc Pomerleau (Quebec) and yours truly. Harry Warner, who writes two-page letters religiously to every fanzine he receives, has published two volumes of fanhistory: All Our Yesterdays and A Wealth of Fable. Warner said that if read after reading a history of World War II, Sam Moskowitz's The Immortal Storm does not seem like an anti-climax. I keep running into fans who don't see the benefit of making a record of the past.

fannish: this is a really important, central term to my thinking, but it's almost undefinable. I guess "light-hearted", "sophomoric", "Pythonesque" are the things I thought fannish, after I had been in fandom a while. Steve Forty, one of the longstanding figures in Vancouver fandom, thought "fannish" meant "elitist" and "cliquish", based on some fans who sort of drew away from his BCSFA group. Question: is contemporary fandom fannish?

fanzine room: a good index to the change in fandom is the disappearance of fanzine rooms from conventions. It used to be that fans went to cons to meet the pros, to meet the fans, and by the way to trade fanzines. There is still a fanzine room at OryCon, but it tends to be a bit off the beaten track, or at least overlooked; a place where some fanzines are displayed, some are for sale, and some are for free distribution. Some proceeds are earmarked for fan funds or charitable causes.

femrefan (alternatively, fanne): an obsolete term long before it was poli-

tically incorrect. (Female oriented fanzine.)

genzine: general-interest fanzine; locs, art, opinion/ editorial/humour articles, personal journalism, con-reports, some news, some views, some reviews (books and fanzines), all sorts of stuff.

ghod: from the phase when fans would put on spoof religions; see Warner's books.

Ghu: one of the fannish ghods; from H. Beam Piper's future-history stories.

ish: short for "issue". Jophan say, pub your ish! (T-shirt from Corflu, the fanzine fans' con)

litcrit: short for "literary/critical" or "literary criticism."

mailing: the appearance/ collated bulk product of an APA.

minac: minimum activity; the minimum number of pages per mailing required to maintain good standing in an APA.

OE: Official Editor; alternatively, CM for Central Mailer.

perzine (alternatively, personal-zine): basically a glorified Christmas letter, with pretensions to be a genzine.

pocstard: the Irish post office once produced a series of postcards mislabeled "pocstards" or some such typo, which became popular among fans for *jsut* that reason.

pub: short for "publish".

Roscoe: another fannish ghod, the protector of all good faneds everywhere, resembling a squirrel (or was it a chipmunk? I forget).

*Roscoe is confirmed as a squirrel, and not a beaver as Art Rapp portrayed him. I know because Roscoe told me so.*

---Honcho

sercon: short for "serious-and-constructive." Fandom went through

this let's-all-become-scientists phase, then this let's-all-accomplish-something/become-writers phase (sercon/litcrit), then this let's-make-fun-and-party (fannish) phase...and then...

**SMOF:** Secret Master of Fandom. Some people carry a lot of weight in fandom. Some people just throw a lot of weight around. The punch line about SMOFs is real SMOFs don't know they are or don't show it. The term was so frequently used of those who run cons (or work deals to get the Worldcon or Westercon) that the annual convention-runners' con is called, in all seriousness, SMOFCon.

**sticky quarter:** there was a time when you could send for a sample issue of a fanzine by taping a quarter to a postcard and mailing it to the fan-editor.

**trade:** part of "the usual" is to send someone your zine as a trade for his/hers.

**trufan:** back when people took "fannishness" seriously (well, as seriously as they took anything) this term was used to mean those who were really fans--those that had surely attained the fannish nature--as opposed to those who merely aspired.

**waitlist:** a list of people waiting to get into an apa. Sometimes they waited so long they got fed up and started their own.

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*Actually, it disappeared in a temporal vortex. This will be explained in the next ZGL in Time Travel Experiments at Conventions: The disappearance of V-Con 21. The truth of why this convention never took place... when it actually did. Learn the astounding facts about the con that went to hell and took several dozen fans with it with the attempt to alter time that went horribly wrong, and the evidence that reveals Robert Runté's involvement in it.*

*Like we didn't know.*

*HONCHO continued from pg.6*

potentially exist, like going to the bathroom in space), the lighter side of fiction, fantasy and fandom (probing discussions of why going to the bathroom in space is so silly) and brings attention to the little things that we take for granted or just plainly ignore (like going to the bathroom in space).

The title also has a great potential for generating numerous gags. Life isn't worth living unless you can have some fun once in a while.

Party on.

Scott Patri

Got Something to Sell?

Looking For A Place To Sell it in?

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*If you could wish for anything  
in the world...would you dare?*

# IMPISH WISH

BY SCOTT PATRI

IF you're a fantasy writer, you can be accused of being nothing but a hack ...among other things. Such accusations can, after awhile, get a writer down. The remedy to this is the letters from the people who read and enjoy your work. And if you receive enough of them, you can blow the proverbial raspberry at those who thumb their noses at your profession.

But what do you do when someone, or more precisely, *something* blows a raspberry at you--not though a letter, but right to your face?  
And what if this thing also grants you a wish?

One day, as I was going through such a stack of messages from the outside world, a strange creature appeared on my desk out of a puff of bluish-white smoke. Now, much as I was relieved to discover that the creature only stood less than a foot tall (since his weight should correspond to his height, and his sudden appearance wouldn't collapse my desk) it was the *suddenness* of his appearance--and his appearance in general--that gave me such a start that I went flying out of my chair and backed up against the nearest available wall.

At that time, I would have liked what I backed up against to be either the nearest available door or window, but the wall was quite sufficient for that moment, since it allowed me to keep my balance long enough to collect my wits and start looking for something to clobber the creature with.

"Pretty snazzy entrance, eh?" the creature said with a smile filled with needle-like teeth.

The fact that it *spoke* to me was probably the only reason I didn't grab my fallen chair and smash it on the spot where it stood, for it was even more shocking that it's appearance; both entrance and looks. That, and I would have smashed my personal computer that sat on my desk in the attempt.

"What...what are you?" I asked softly, since it was the most logical thing to do, next to screaming for help. I *would* have screamed for help by now, even

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though I live alone, except the amount of lung power I presently had could only raise my voice slightly above a whisper.

"What!?! No screams for help?" it asked, surprised, and was rightly so, since I *should* have been screaming for help, except for that bit about the lung power... It made a cute grimace (it was able to pull off such an expression) and said, "I'm an Imp. What did you think I was...a troll?" It cocked its head to the side, as if expression I was the most stupid person he had ever met.

"Imp? Of course." I thought. Cloven hooves for feet, a whip-like tail with a barb at the end, elf-like ears and two horns set into his forehead. It looked like a devil, but smaller and cuter. I now knew what I was dealing with.

I was having a delusion.

I sat back down in my chair after righting it and proceeded to return to the day's mail as if everything was normal and a fictional creature hadn't appeared and nearly gave me a heart attack.

"Hey! Big guy! Don't you want to know why I'm here?" the voice of the fictional creature said.

I was holding a letter so that it blocked my view of it, for someone once told me that the way to deal with delusions was to ignore them. Other people thought you were nuts if you responded to them, so if you ignored them, other people didn't know you were having a delusion, and the delusions went away after awhile.

There was presently no one else around to think of me as nuts for seeing me talk to an imaginary creature, but I didn't want to get into a habit just because of that.

This delusion was going to be persistent, for a tiny clawed hand grabbed the top of the page of the letter I was trying to read and pulled it down, bringing its devilishly-cute face into view.

"I don't *like* being ignored." it stated with a not-so devilishly-cute gleam in its tiny eyes.

I flipped the page up, and his fictional claws made three imaginable tear marks in the top of it. If this delusion was going to be persistent, then my ignoring of it would have to be even more persistent.

A sharp pain on the end of my little finger of my left hand caused me to drop the page and let out an exclamation of anguish. I looked at it and saw that it was bleeding, for the little imp had taken a tiny bite out of it.

The page I had been reading had landed on the imp, and as it crawled out from under it, spitting out the part of my finger it had bitten off, it also spat. "Bleek! Do you ever wash your hands!"

I stopped considering him a delusion at this point, for the pain I was feeling was certainly real. I also considered myself in serious trouble, for if it was truly and imp that bit me, I was at the mercy of his magical reputation. I also realized that my perception of reality was seriously flawed, but I was prepared to deal with that at a later time.

"You're real." I said, stating the obvious, aside from saying *owwww*.

The imp rolled his eyes at me and said, "Listen, I'll save you a lot of trouble here. You are not having a hallucination or day-dream. You didn't fall down, nor



were you hit in the head. You are also not having a reaction to medication or a drug. I *am* real, and that nip on your finger was my way of proving it to you. Now, if you'll hand it over, I'll fix it so you won't have to bleed any more than necessary." It held out it's tiny clawed appendage like a mother demanding to see an unwashed hand.

I hesitantly offered my finger, knowing very well that it could decide to take another bite out of it. My common sense told me that I should have left the room instead of offering him another snack from my finger, but I was hoping that he truly did find my flesh distasteful.

Plus, I needed to distract him from what I was doing with my other hand --namely reaching out for a stone topped with amethyst crystals that one of my readers had given me as a gift some time back. I proudly displayed it as a paperweight, and it's weight and protrusion of crystals would be perfect to pulverize the little monstrosity on my desk.

The imp grasped my finger...and surprisingly didn't try to take another bite out of it. It instead grabbed his tail with his other hand and wiped it's barb across my bleeding wound, making it disappear as if he was rubbing out a mistake with a pencil eraser.

He released my finger, and I looked for the wound that was no longer there; it didn't even hurt any more. I glanced at the imp, and he was smiling up at me with an expression of whimsical contempt. I smiled back, and then brought the stone I had grasped down upon the spot where he was standing.

"I might as well add that trying to hurt me is next to impossible," the imp said, and I discovered that the voice came not from the place where the rock landed--which wasn't surprising, since if the rock had connected with it's intended target, there wouldn't be anything left of the imp to make a voice--but from the keyboard of my computer, upon which the imp sat with it's legs crossed while twirling it's tail with his hand in an un-concerned manner.

"I've been attacked with mallets, frying pans, flyswatters, chairs, vacuum cleaners, and an assortment of footwear; so instead of vainly trying to smash me with that rock over and over again--since I can magically change my location before I can be hit with something--why don't you put it back and we can get down to business," he explained smugly.

I put the rock back from where I took it, and gestured slightly to it's original position.

"Well, what do you know? I didn't think you were that smart!" the imp said in an annoying tone, which momentarily made me wonder if he wanted me to make another attempt.

I knew better than that to try. "I just don't want to smash my keyboard, imp," I said, trying not to project my annoyance of him. I then picked up the page of the letter I was reading and held it so it blocked my view of him, keeping my hands out of his biting range.

"I said I don't like being ignored," the imp said after a few moments.

"Then go find someone else to bug who won't ignore you." I muttered loud enough for him to hear.

Actually, I really wanted to find out more about this amazing creature, but

at the time I was so frightened of it that I could only barely acknowledge it's existence.

"Hey! Don't you want to know why I'm here!" it shouted, jumping up and down so its head bobbed into view above the top of the page.

I sighed, realizing that I could never come to grips with the existence of a supposedly fictional creature while that same supposedly fictional creature was presently asking me why it was here in an animated manner in the first place. I'm funny like that. So, putting down the page, and looking into his face as it came into view, I asked, "All right; why are you here?"

"I'm here to grant you a wish." the imp said importantly.

"Imps don't grant wishes." I said flatly.

"Says who!" the imp responded, sounding offended.

"Everybody. I say so. I should know, I write fantasy for a living." I said, which was true, and from what I've read by others on the subject, it was on extremely rare occasion that an imp granted anything other than trouble.

"Oh? And who do you think generally grants wishes then? Jinnis?" the imp asked sarcastically.

"The plural of jinn is jinni. There is no 's' on the end." I corrected him.

"Jinni, jinnis; tomato, tamato. Don't be a stick in the mud." the imp said snidely.

"I have to be, otherwise my readers will correct me on things like that." I said, pointing to the stack on mail that I began to feel I would never get through that day. "The fact of the matter is that it's usually inanimate objects that grant wishes, like rings or amulets. The exception for creatures granting wishes would be those that had been trapped in objects such as lamps or bottles, who grant them out of gratitude for their release..."

The imp was rolling on his back, laughing in evident mirth. I was wondering why when he caught his composure and said, "Out of gratitude for their release! Do you really think that something that was stuck in a bottle for hundreds of years would be gratuitous enough...and sane enough...to grant the opener a wish!?"

"Well..." I started to say.

"Even a few years stuck in a bottle would make a jinn so skitters that he'd kill the person that opened it." the imp interrupted, "and a jinn wouldn't get stuck in a bottle in the first place. If he did, he could just wish himself out of it!"

"Unless the container had a spell that..." I started again.

"Do you really think that a human could come up with a spell that could contain a jinn?" he interrupted again.

"The stories about jinni being imprisoned explain that it wasn't humans that imprisoned them, but it was either gods or demons." I stated.

The imp kicked its foot in a cute manner and said, "Alright. You've got me there. Of course jinni can be imprisoned against their will, but I've yet to meet one that has granted even one wish for their release."

"Maybe the ones who would be still imprisoned?" I offered helpfully.

"Do you want this wish or not?" the imp asked in a surprised manner, then

added, "And believe me, I can grant wishes."

"Why do I merit a wish being granted?" I asked, not because I didn't really want a wish, but I was seriously suspicious about the motives of the creature before me.

"Because you deserve one, stupid!" the imp exclaimed.

"Exactly. Why do I deserve a wish above everyone else?"

"What an ego! Above everyone else..." he muttered, then made a grand sweeping gesture (for him) towards my bookshelf that contained every book and story I ever wrote and exclaimed "That's why!"

"My writing?" I asked, confused.

"The effect your writing has on others! You have gifted joy, offered comfort, created inspiration, invoked laughter and resurrected emotions and dreams that were buried in every person that have read your works, and the powers that be have decided that *you* deserve a reward for what you have done!"

"My writing has..." I started to say.

"Hey! Don't let your ego swell to the size of this room just yet." the imp interrupted. "Others may think you're a great fantasy writer, but I can stand here and point out numerous flaws in your work for a week...and I don't have a week, because I have others to grant wishes to. So make a wish already!"

"Others?" I asked in a surprised manner, and slightly irritated at the imp's crack about my literacy skill.

"Duh. My job is to grant wishes to those who deserve them, and until you make a wish, I can't leave. So would you do me a favour and make one?" the imp demanded, tapping his foot impatiently.

"But you're a demon! I can't have a wish granted by a demon!" I exclaimed, stating what I thought was the obvious.

"Huh? Who says I'm a demon!" the imp exclaimed in outrage.

"Imps are demonic in nature, and because of that, they caused nothing but evil, and certainly don't grant wishes unless the wish makes the persons who made the wish regretful that he ever made in the first place." This was true, as far as I knew, and that's why I was so hesitant about letting this creature grant me anything.

"Oh give me a break!" The imp exclaimed, rolling his eyes. "First off, imps aren't demonic, we're...impic! We have no connection to the underworld, except for those who align themselves to it voluntarily, and those who do find out real fast that it's a raw deal. Second, we don't cause evil. We may cause trouble, but only when it's appropriate for an imp, like being *ignored*. Third, this wish isn't of the monkey's paw variety. You get what you wish for, no dire consequences attached. You have my word on that."

"A demon's word is worthless." I stated flatly.

"I'm not a demon!" the imp exclaimed hostilely. "Trust me, a demon wouldn't grant you anything unless it was after your soul."

"Right. What price do I have to pay for this wish?" I asked.

"None at all! It's free; no strings attached." the imp stated.

"Except for the one that will cost me my soul to correct the damage done by

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the wish." I said, mostly to myself.

The imp began banging its head against my keyboard. After numerous thumps, it looked up and asked, "What do I have to do to convince you that this wish is on the up-and-up?"

What would convince me? I could just believe him, make a wish, and he would be gone from my life. Yet, this could be a trap to snare my soul, or just a way of making my life hell.

He was a classic imp, though cuter than I imagined, but that was because I had never seen one before and...

Three questions sprang to mind. "If you answer three questions, then I'll decide whether or not I want this wish."

"You'll decide?" the imp said in mock outrage. "I can't leave until you *make* this wish." The imp took on a more devilish look and added, "And if I can't leave, you'll see the extent of my impish nature."

"Then your answers had better be good then, or you'll have to get a new job as my assistant." I said, with a somewhat devilish look to my eyes.

The imp grimaced and said, somewhat to himself, "Damn, you're right. If I stay with you too long, I have to stay with you forever." He looked up suddenly and asked, "How did you know that?"

"I didn't. I just assumed that you would get fired from your job." I said, somewhat surprised at this bit of information.

The imp slapped his head and said, "Of course. Silly me. Okay, what are your questions?"

"Well, for starters, why is this the first time I've seen a mythological creature, or for that matter even heard about their actual existence?"

"Because you believe in magic. Next question." the imp said quickly.

"Hold on," I cautioned, "That was a pretty glib answer."

"Because it was a pretty simple question. Come on, I haven't got all day." the imp said impatiently.

"As far as I'm concerned, you have all year." I stated forcefully, then demanded, "Now, would you mind clarifying your answers so they make sense to me."

"Sheesh! You really expect a lot out of me!" the imp exclaimed, his irritation to being ordered around evident. "Okay. You can perceive me and other magical creatures because, deep down, you truly believe in magic. Plus I solidified that belief by allowing myself to be perceived by you..."

"Wait," I interrupted, "If I could already perceive magical creatures, why did you have to allow yourself..."

The imp interrupted my interruption. "You believe in magic, okay? But you didn't believe enough to actually *perceive* me unless I pushed your belief to the point where you could, which is why I needed such a flashy and noticeable entrance. Got it?"

"Yes. Go on." I answered, with barely a clue of what he was talking about.

"Fine. That's the reason you and most other humans can't perceive magical creatures, for unless you fully believe in magic, or were brought up in an environment that makes magic second nature to you, or a magical creature forces

you to be aware of it's presence, we magical creatures are invisible and intangible to the modern world. Are you happy now?"

"No." I said gravely, for there was something that made his explanation dubious. "Why is it that I haven't heard of anyone else seeing true magical creatures?"

"Gee, that's a no-brainer." the imp commented snidely. "It's because us magical creatures don't want to be known to the majority of the modern world. A unicorn could let itself be seen prancing down main street, and everybody that sees it would believe in unicorns. Then they would be able to capture it, brand it, and then some moron would cut off it's horn for some reason, and then other unicorns would be seen, then..."

"I get it; self preservation." I said, cutting off the imp's ramblings. "But there must have been other people that have seen..."

The imp made a wave of negation. "There are, but some keep quiet because for one reason or another they feel the magical world should remain a secret. The others...Well, most don't want to be considered crazy because of what they've seen, and the rest live in trailer parks, and nobody believes what they say they've seen!"

"What about reputable people that can provide proof of the magical world?" This was an uneasy question to ask, but I wanted to know in case sometime in the future I wanted to tell someone else about what happened on this day.

The imp smiled and said, "The patrol gets them."

"What patrol?" I asked.

"The patrol of imps, sprites, faeries, brownies, gremlins, and other creatures that have a knack for making trouble." the imp said proudly. "Say, for example, a picture was taken of a dragon by someone that believed in magic. Because of his belief, the image of the dragon would show up on the film, and the patrol would go into action to prevent anyone else from seeing it. Exposing the film before it was developed, making the camera 'disappear', putting the torch to a place that had the picture on display...stuff like that. A creature that had been captured would be released or given the means to release itself. Someone who was persistent in 'spreading the word' would have his or her reputation trashed. You got the idea?" he asked with an evil gleam in his eyes.

"You keep your mouth shut about what you've seen and you stay healthy?" I asked bluntly.

"Something like that." the imp said with a smirk. "Well, that should have been three questions, so..."

"That was only one." I interrupted. "I wanted to know why I had never seen or heard about an actual magical creature, and you've answered my first question quite nicely."

"That was *one* question! I must have answered about four or five!" The imp exclaimed in outrage.

"That was one, or would care to discuss it in a year from now, when you're my personal assistant?" I asked with an evil gleam in my eyes.

The imp fidgeted for a moment before asking irritably, "What's your *second* question?"

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"What price do I have to pay to have a wish granted?" I asked.

"There is no price!" the imp exclaimed irritably. "It's a *free wish*; no strings attached."

"There's a price for everything." I said moodily, knowing full well that you had to pay for everything you received, either financially, physically, or emotionally.

"Oh! You mean that you think the wish is what you're paying for. Listen dummy, the wish is what you pay *with*." the imp explained.

"Huh?" I uttered, not understanding the explanation.

"You though you were pretty smart, eh? The wish is currency, not the purchase. Now, what you do with that wish is entirely up to you, but you could spend it foolishly, and bring that price you fear paying down upon you head." the imp said, pointing in my general direction.

"Exactly. What would be the *consequences* of this wish." I asked.

The imp snorted and asked in a disgusted manner, "For a writer, you certainly can't phrase you words properly, can you?"

"As I write, I correct as I go along. It's a form of dyslexia, but instead of the letters being jumbled, I get my words and concepts mixed up. I can get it straight in my head, but it's just when I try to convey what..."

The imp interrupted my explanation by asking inquisitively, "Then why don't you wish that you didn't have this problem?"

That question set me back. I had this problem since my childhood, and was branded lazy and stupid for it. It was only later that I found out I had a learning disability, and later still that--on my own--I finally pieced together what form of disability I had.

The thought of ridding myself of this curse was an appealing one, but then I would lose something that had been part of my life for the longest time, and even though it was a curse, it was something that I was proud of being able to overcome on my own.

I looked at the imp suspiciously and asked, "I thought the wish was entirely up to me?"

The imp scratched one of his ears and said, "It is, but wouldn't it be better for you if..."

I cut off the imp by saying forcefully, "I think I can honestly say that I would be better off with it than without."

"Ah! But you could wish it away at an earlier date, like..."

I cut the imp off again by asking, "But what would be the *consequences* of that wish? Would I be a writer? I overcame my problem by writing, so if I lost it before I decided to become a writer..."

"I think you answered your own question about consequences." the imp said with a bemused smile.

I smiled back and said, "Common sense. If I wished for my problem to go away at a younger age, I wouldn't have had the life I have now; nor would I want it. If I wish for a million dollars, I would get nailed by Revenue Canada because they wouldn't have a record of it's origin."

"You do catch on fast." the imp said with another smile.

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"Then, common sense tells me not to even bother making a wish, due to a the potential trouble it would cause." I stated innocently.

The imp's face folded and he screamed, "ARRRRRRGH! You idiot! You moron! You still haven't got it! It's like buying MUFFINS!"

"Muffins?" I asked, genuinely surprised.

"Exactly! You have some money and you use it to buy some muffins. You like the muffins so you buy some more, and more, until all your money is gone. Now, you have had your muffins, but at the expense of your money."

"I could always get some more money." I said, getting a craving for muffins all of a sudden.

"You could, but you're missing the point I'm trying to make." the imp snapped. "Now, starting all over again, you buy some muffins, you eat the muffins, and you like them, but instead of using all your money to buy muffins, you decide to make your own. You take a cooking course, and learn how to make muffins for yourself, and you buy the ingredients and make muffins. Now, you find that you are still spending money, but not as much as buying the muffins pre-made, and you decide to make better muffins than the ones you bought before. After awhile, you succeed, and sell the muffins to your friends and neighbours, which help you cover the cost of making muffins for yourself. Others hear about your muffins, and you start selling your muffins to them, which means you have to acquire better facilities for making more muffins, so you start a business of making muffins. After awhile you start making more money than what it costs to make muffins in the first place...you do see where this is going?" the imp asked suggestively.

"Instead of using a wish to just get something, I use it as an investment?" I asked, also suggestively.

"Which pays off more than what you invest in--ah, wish for. It's the small, well constructed wishes that pay off better than the large, grandiose wishes some fools ask for."

"Like what?" I asked, curious about what other people had wished for."

"Well, there was this one guy who wished to win the grand prize in a state lottery. He thought that money would solve all his problems, and money from this source was a way of avoiding tax fraud. Well, he won it, and blew a big part of his winnings with impulse buying. His wife, who was looking to for a reason to leave him before he won the lottery, did so, and got half of his winnings in the divorce settlement. The guy had to go into hiding because of all of the people who wanted a part of it too. He also had to get a second job because he bought so much on credit--learning later that he wouldn't get all of the money at once --that he now had to pay off this incredible debt. Of course, finding someone who would employ him when he had won all this money..."

"I get it." I said, knowing how money could go to someone's head, blocking off logical thought. "Had he instead banked it..." I started to say.

"He could be living off the interest, even if his wife got half of it." the imp finished, finally making his point. "Now, does this answer your second question?"

"It does." I said with a smile.

"Then could you ask your third question and get on with your wish!" the imp

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exclaimed impatiently.

"Certainly." I said, with a slightly evil grin, then asked, "What is your name."

"I don't have a name." the imp said without emotion.

"Then what do your imp friends call you?" I asked in a slightly forceful manner.

"They don't call me anything. In fact, they don't call me at all. I'm going to have to do something about..."

I stopped him from changing the subject by asking, "Why won't you tell me your name?"

"I said I don't..."

"Could it be," I started, cutting him off, "that if I knew your name, I would hold some sort of *power* over you?"

The imp began to cloud up. "I said I don't have a name!"

"Naw, it couldn't be." I stated, ignoring his fibbing. "I mean, why would knowing the name of a magical creature grant that person power over that creature."

"That is, if I had a name." the imp offered helpfully.

"Of course, I would have to know the name of whatever granted me a wish, for I have this almost anal-retentive need to know who it is that does me a favour. I'm funny that way, you know?" I asked, then added, "Being that way that I am, I guess I can't have a wish granted by you, since you don't have a name to begin with."

The imp was visibly angry. "Is that so?"

"I'm afraid it is. Hmmmmm. I wonder what I can have you do for me when you get fired?" I asked, pretending it was to myself.

"I can make you wish for something very easily." the imp said with his tiny fangs bared.

"Like...making you puff into oblivion?" I asked whimsically.

The imp winced at my response to his threat of making my life a living hell until I made a wish. He fidgeted for a bit, then asked, "Why do you want to know my name...really?"

"Why do you think I want to know it?" I asked in a gentle yet demanding tone.

"Because you can call me anytime you want for a wish, that's why!" the imp shouted in anger.

"Actually, I didn't know that." I said in a somewhat offhand manner, covering for my elation at this confirmation of my suspicions. "The reason I wanted your name was to make sure you were being honest with me, and since you lied about having one..."

"Hey! I may have to tell the truth when it deals with my job, but when it comes to my name, I don't have to tell you squat!" the imp proclaimed.

"You're right." I stated after a few moments of reflection.

"Why you...I'm right?" the imp asked, caught off guard at what I said.

"You're right." I repeated, then stated, "You don't have to tell me your name, since I could get it just by wishing for it... now that you've told me the extent of my wishing capabilities."

The imp looked at me in wonder. "You mean, you went through all this just so you could learn my name?" he asked.



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"No...It's just that this is my first encounter with a magical creature, and I wanted to be sure where I stood. I mean, an imp who can grant wishes appears on my desk and..."

"Oh! And if it was a Jinn that appeared you wouldn't have gone through all of this?" the imp snapped in irritation.

"Ah, no...I don't think..." I started to say, attempting to get across my trepidation of this whole encounter and my intentions to protect myself.

"Had I been some buxom vision of beauty, you'd been making wishes left and right! I knew I should have never taken this job!"

"What are you getting at?" I demanded, wonder why the imp was so upset.

The imp straightened himself to his full short height, stared at me defiantly and shouted, "You think you have the right to control me just because I'm an imp!"

And I thought I was just being clever. No wonder the imp was agitated. "I only wanted to call you back to remedy any consequences of the wish I make." I stated reassuringly.

The imp looked up at me suspiciously. "That's all? Just to fix anything that goes wrong?"

"More or less. I figured that..."

The imp cut off my explanation. "Will you bind yourself to an oath about this?"

"I don't think it's really necessary..." I started to say.

"I do." the imp said forcefully, then stated. "I will grant you the knowledge of my name for the express purpose of remedying any adverse consequences of the wish you make, for which you can only call me for such. If you call for any other reason, or communicate it to anyone else, you will forget it before you can do so. Will you bind yourself to this oath?"

"I thought I was the one who had to make the oath?" I asked, since I had always thought that was the way oaths worked.

"If you make the oath, or bind yourself to it, the effect remains the same." the imp explained, then asked forcefully, "Will you bind yourself to this oath?"

"Yes." I stated, not knowing what else to say, and it felt like a chill washing over me when I said it.

"Great! My name is Noxenibex." the imp said.

"Nox..." I started to say.

"If you say my full name, you'll violate the oath!" the imp said warningly.

"Uh, yes." I said, somewhat confused at this situation.

The imp clapped his tiny hands together and asked enthusiastically, "Well, that was your three questions. Are you ready for your wish?"

"Ah..." I stumbled, not ready for this.

"After what you put me through, this wish had better be for something interesting." the imp commented in a taunting manner.

"Yes, it better." I muttered, and began wondering what in the world I could wish for.

"Come on! You know how wishes work, and you've made sure that if you screw up, you can fix it!" the imp said impatiently.

"Hang on! I'm trying to think." I said irritably, becoming rattled by the imp's demands.

"The key word is *try*, I guess." the imp said sarcastically.

I ignored his attempt to needle me and thought hard about my life, and what I could have to make it better. My eyes fell on the letter I had been trying to read when the imp made his appearance, and I realized that there was nothing I wanted that I didn't already have.

Well, there was one thing...and I could get back at the imp for that crack about me being a crappy writer.

"I've got it!" I exclaimed, then asked slyly, "Are you ready?"

"I've been ready since I got here. What's your wish?"

"Are you sure you're ready?" I asked, trying to hold back my developing smile.

The imp saw my face and smiled also. "I think this is going to be good. Lay it on me!"

I thought about carrying on a bit, but I couldn't hold myself back any longer. "I want a ham and cheese on rye." I stated.

The imp's smile collapsed. "You want what?" he asked appalled.

"I want a ham and cheese on rye." I repeated.

The imp shook his head nervously and asked, "You've got to be joking."

"Hm... Yeah, it does sound a bit silly, doesn't it?" I mused out loud.

The imp laughed jerkily, "You had me going there for a moment. A ham and cheese on rye—that's a good one! Okay, what do you *really* want?"

"I want the *world's best* ham and cheese on rye." I said, keeping my expression straight.

The imp fidgeted for a bit, constantly on the verge of saying something then stopping just short of saying it. He finally looked up and asked as calmly as he could, "You're serious, aren't you? You really want a ham and cheese on rye?"

"Ah, the *world's best* ham and cheese on rye." I corrected him.

The imp lost it. He began kicking at and banging his head against anything available while ranting and raving. "I don't believe it! A bloody sandwich! After putting me through all this shit, he want's a bloody sandwich! Anything in the world, and he want's a sandwich! Hey! Up there! He want's a sandwich! A bloody ham and cheese sandwich! What a wimpish wish!"

"I said the world's best ham and cheese sandwich...on rye." I corrected him again.

The imp stopped his apparent demolition of the objects on my desk and looked at me as if he was ready to tear my face off.

After a moment, I looked around and asked, "Well, where is it?"

"*Where is what?*" he asked through clenched fangs.

"My sandwich." I stated.

The imp rolled his eyes up into his head, grabbed his ears and pulled on them in what looked like a painful manner, and muttered, "Someone shoot me—feed me to a dragon—drop an anvil on my head—just save me from this idiot!"

"Oh. I guess I have to actually wish for it now, don't I?" I asked.

I didn't look at the expression on the imp's face, but he was laughing in a

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somewhat insane manner.

"Alright. I *wish* for the world's best ham and cheese on rye." I said, and quickly looked at the imp.

"Here it is. AND I HOPE YOU CHOKE ON IT!" the imp shouted and exploded in a ball of smoke. When it cleared, there in his place was a ham and cheese on rye.

I picked up the letter I had been reading before the imp appeared and re-read a passage in it.

*...in a coma for three months since the accident. My daughter had always liked your books, so I began reading them to her at night, for the doctors had told me most coma patients could hear, and by doing this, she wouldn't feel that she was alone. I was reading your book about the little girl and the pegasus to her one night, and had to stop when I was half-way through because visiting hours were over. It was then I heard someone say, "Please, don't stop." I looked at her, and she was awake, demanding that I should keep on reading! I couldn't believe it for a moment, and called in the nurses so they could see...*

I put the letter down and smiled to myself. No wish I could ever make could give me the feeling of reading something like this. I did have a hard life, and sometimes things didn't work out the way I had planned them, but at this time I had everything I could want, or at least thought I did. Besides, any rewards I could get for what I do--aside from getting paid--should be serendipitous, for it was things like what was in the letter that made my life worthwhile. Any other person would think I was a fool, but that's the way I am and I wouldn't change it for anything, for no bauble or trinket could represent what I feel.

Of course, I never had a really good ham and cheese on rye...

I put the letter down, and saw what was supposedly the world's best ham and cheese on rye.

By the way, it wasn't a wimpish wish. It was an *impish* wish.



# ROSCOE

The Patron Ghod Of Fandom Has  
Returned!

Fandom's Salvation Is At Hand!  
This Ain't No Squirrely Deity!

## Party On!