

SELF-INDULGENCE OR A NEW ART FORM? READ...

NUMBER 1
JUNE, 1978



TROUTMAN
ZINE GROUP

MUTATED KLANTH

A



BIG
BROTHER
RIPOFF
PRODUCTION



OKAY...! NONE OF THOSE "FOHRTZ" JOKES OUT OF YOU, BUDDY, OR I'LL SLICE YOUR HEAD OPEN!

HOW ABOUT "VIBRATING" JOKES?

HANDFUL OF SAND?

JP '78

BEGINNING: THE EPIC SAGA YOU THOUGHT YOU COULD EASILY DO WITHOUT...

CORFLU VS. GEEK

MUTATED KLANTH #1 (Chapters 1 & 2) is brought to you by that conspicuous team of Jay L. Silber and Miggle Flynn. Jay is currently working out of Fan Central Station, 220 East 85th Street, Apartment 5R, New York, NY 10028, and wishes to remind his audience that while he has no telephone, this is still PUCzine #69 (Fiawolf). Miggle, who is now semi-officially in residence at Apt 312, 600 20th Street NW, Washington, DC 20052, and who claims a telephone number of (202) 676-2424, also reminds everyone that this is a BIG BROTHER RINGOFF PUBLICATION. The ditto'd stuff's Jay's fault; all other ballast is the handiwork of the redoubtable PUNKY 2!

((WAIT! WE CAN EXPLAIN!))

There are times one creates one's own monster. Or digs one's own grave, so to speak. Bites off more than one can chew. In fact, things can mutate right before one's eyes if one isn't too careful.

Well, gang, we've thrown caution to the winds here. The story goes something like this:

In March of 1977, Mike spent three days of his spring break visiting Jay when Jay lived in Philadelphia for the semester. Mike had been a member of APA-5 for but three months, and already was in desperate need of a quickie 'zine. Jay, too, had a 'zine on his schedule, and, while sitting down to do a one-shot (a tradition since spurned mightily by Mr. Flynn) the main problem was: how does one do a one-shot with a little bit of originality?

What emerged was a bizarre synthesis of the strangest nature. It was a cross between faan fiction, convention reports, Mike's youthful memories, and an in-joke. It was MUTATED PANTHER. The in-joke was the title; it referred to Jay's roommate's little puppy dog, China, who insisted upon looking like a mutated feline. The plot of the story had its basis in an eighth grade project Mike had once undertaken: a fiction piece about his classmates. The rest fell into place. MUTATED PANTHER would be a fiction story of the members of APA-5 at a San Diego Comic Convention, and their reactions to the murder of Harry Broertjes. In this story, however, HCB was a certifiable baddie -- in fact, for all intents and purposes, he was Alan Light. We played around with a few lives, and wound up doing a two-shot that was the only 'zine MF's ever done in an apa to win first place in an egoboo poll.

That behind, Jay and Miggle began to continue working together on a number of projects: a KARATE KID pitch that didn't sell, a mystery story that didn't sell, and the outline for the Legion Academy for THE MANUAL (which will one day see print... at least I'm not as slow as Harry. Yet.)

Cut to: March, 1978. Jay, this time, is visting Miggle in Washington, DeeCee. Miggle hands Jay a yellow legal sheet with two words Flynnscrawled on it: Mutated Klant. After five minutes of hysterical cackling, and without a word further said, it was obvious that the two were once more working on the same wavelength. At last the idea for PANTHER had come where it belonged: INTERLAC. The apa where the people know each other well enough to understand all the nuances and in-jokes. The apa which we felt most obligated to turn in a sterling performance to. The apa we called home. *APAX! Now can you write captions like this without getting bored?*

So, we figger, it should all be self-explanatory. Enjoy!

JZ *Miggle*

MUTATED KLANTH

CHAPTER ONE

Fan Central Station. Ken Gale stood outside the front door and watched the sun set behind the New York skyline. He chuckled inwardly at the nickname given 220 East 85th Street Apartment 5-R. And how true it was -- aggravatingly so at times, but somebody has to do the dirty work, he rationalized, lest fandom fall apart at the seams.

Ken skipped up the four flights of stairs with his usual multiple-step-at-a-time gusto. As he fiddled with the keys, he began humming a tune which an observer might have described as sounding vaguely like "My Generation." The lock clicked open, and Ken locked it again behind him. Zilber was gone. Probably out on the town with ol' what's-her-name, Ken mused. "Which suits me just fine. Fan Central Station this may be, but tonight it's just me, the typer, Pete Townshend on the stereo, and a quire of stencils which will be converted into another INTERLAC zine by morning." As he slipped the appropriate record out of its jacket and onto the turntable, Ken turned to the statuette on his desk. "Isn't that right, Corflu?"

No reply. The perfect guest, Ken thought. He may not always agree with me, but he never talks back either, unless I want him to. The skinny, pastel white-ish statue occupied a place of honor at one corner of the heavy oak desk. It had been a gift from Erich Heinemann some months ago; its shadow against the wall looked exactly like the outline of Ken's own awkward sketches of his ape mascot, Corflu. Ken's heart skipped a beat as the first guitar chords of "I Can't Explain" drifted from the earphones. This put him in the perfect mood to finish the mailing comment to Sherman Boyson which he'd started a few days ago, before Julycon interrupted everything. He mentally discarded an entire repertoire of "asshole one-liners" before settling on a suitable one for the MC. As he typed the first sentence, his heart skipped another beat. And another. Ken became aware of a dull pain at the base of his head; his breathing grew raspy, shallow...

Ken stopped typing. He rubbed the back of his neck. The excitement of the last few days must be catching up with me. A glass of water, maybe...?

He stood up and tried to focus on the glass he'd set atop the refrigerator, but there were two glasses there now...or was it three? The entire room seemed to have been distorted by a fisheye lense.

How much sleep DID I miss this week? Ken started toward the kitchen and stumbled over a pile of green crudsheets, banging his knee on the coffeetable as he fell. What's happening to me? How can I feel so rotten when I'm listening to The Who? He winced in pain.

As he lay on the floor, caressing his injured knee, he became aware of ...something. Another presence in the room. Which should have been impossible since the door was locked and bolted. "Jay? Is that you?" No answer. Strains of "Happy Jack" were just barely audible from his earphones which had fallen off and lay at the other side of the room. But there was another sound now...no, not a sound. A...presence. Ken's head was pounding now, he could barely catch his breath. He stood up shakily and hobbled to the couch. Where was that sound coming from? From behind... He whirled around, though the air seemed to have the consistency of jellonow, and reached out blindly towards what he expected would be another person standing there. But there was nothing

there save empty air. A sharp pain ran through his head now. Ken collapsed on the couch. Right before he blacked out, he thought about saying "my brain hurts," except that his brain hurt too much to say anything at all.

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The population of Colorado decreased significantly at 11:25 p.m..

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Len Rosenberg shuddered. The subway car had been almost full at 86th Street, but as it pulled out of the Fordham Road station in the Bronx, he noted with mild concern that he was now sharing the car with only two old ladies with shopping bags and a near-lookalike for Lou Ferrigno, green makeup and all, who displayed a distinctive Sal Buscemaesque sneer on his face. Len coughed, nervously, and the shopping bag ladies eyed him with suspicion. One of them gripped her shopping bag tighter. Lou Ferrigno sneered harder. Ghod, why me? thought Len. He fumbled around in his briefcase for a comic book or a newspaper -- anything he could hide his face behind for the duration of the subway trip. Five minutes more, and he'd be at the relative safety and comfort of the Mosholu Parkway stop. Home was just a couple more blocks from there. New York is such fun.

The train slowed to a halt at Bedford Park... one stop to go, thought Len. The shopping bag ladies toddled off, and -- Joy of joys! -- Lou Ferrigno decided to follow them, though not without giving Len a good-bye sneer first. Len grinned back, and immediately buried his nose in his briefcase again until the train pulled out of the station. He sighed in relief -- he'd be home in no time at al --

The grafitti-coated MOSHOLU PARKWAY sign blinked in and out behind the moving train as it gradually decelerated and screeched to a halt. The door whooshed open. Nobody left the car. The doors clamped shut again and the empty train disappeared into the distance.

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There had been no witnesses, no other drivers on the lightly-travelled Pennsylvania back road, so the wreck wasn't discovered until the light of dawn. The volkswagon, registered to a Mercy Van Vlack, had evidently hurtled off the curve while doing at least 60 miles per hour, crashed through the guard rail, and plummeted 20 feet down into the thick underbrush, coming to a halt only when it struck the base of a large maple tree. The front end of the car was totaled; the steering column would have impaled the driver had there been one at the time of the accident. When the ambulance arrived, they searched the area for a body that might have been thrown clear, but there was none to be found. Anywhere.

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"Where's Valeria this morning?" said Mr. Beasley.

"What?" said Mrs. Beasley.

"Never mind," said Mr. Beasley.

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Ron Coyne must have run away from home. His parents had called the police earlier in the morning, frantically. Ron had gone to bed around 11:00 the night before, and he didn't come to breakfast. He must have sneaked out during the night, but he hadn't taken anything with him, no food, no clothes, no money. He was doing well in school, and he'd

never had any serious discipline problems. If only he hadn't gotten involved with that comic book crowd...

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Jenette Kahn smiled. "What on earth could be keeping Paul?"

"Damn if I know, Jenette. I've been phoning his apartment every fifteen minutes...no answer. I'll keep trying, but..." Mike Gold's voice trailed off as he spied Marty Pasko sauntering out of Julie Schwartz's office. "Hey, Marty...!"

"Yeah, Mike?"

"You got any idea where Levitz is this morning? He's usually in by nine, and it's almost 10:30."

"Paul?" Marty scowled his how-should-I-know? scowl. "I think he was up last night writing a JSA script. Could be he overslept. Try calling him?"

"All morning...no answer. It's very strange. Paul's one of the most punctual people in the world. It's not like him at all."

Jenette sighed. Running a comic book company wasn't all fun and games, and this was one of those days. First Neal Pozner had missed his DC Direct Currents #12 conference, and now Paul hadn't shown up at all, with no explanation. Oh well. No use moping about it, just because DC Comics might grind to a halt without its Editorial Coordinator. So Jenette smiled again.

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Why did everything have to go wrong? Karin the Nurse knocked furiously on the door. "Haaaaaaa-reeeeee! I know you're in there! Wake up! Some nerd parked a moving van in front of my car, and I need someone to help me move it out of the way. Haaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa-reeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!"

Something was wrong, she sensed. Karin put her ear to the door; the faint buzz she'd heard earlier grew even louder. "C'mon, Harry. I can hear Schroeder humming. I know you're in there." Still no answer. She tried the door...locked, she cursed. There was only one answer left now. Much as she loathed physical violence, Harry might be in trouble. Summoning all the adrenalin her system could muster, Karin the Nurse stepped backwards a few feet, paused, and then hurled herself at the door with all her might. The lock shattered instantly, shards of metal and wood exploded in every direction as the remains of the door flew open.

It was not a pretty sight. She surveyed the room, littered with inky, smeary mimeo stencils and old newspapers. The stereo had been switched on and left that way, as though someone had been listening to records all night and had forgotten to close up shop. She switched off the power and slipped the record, still on the turntable ("The Gizmos? Her eyebrows shot up!) back into its jacket. "Harry...?" she whispered, "where are you?"

The typewriter was still humming also, as though it were trying to speak. Karin the Nurse clicked it off; the ensuing silence was even more ominous than the typer's hum. "If only you could really speak, Schroeder...what stories you could tell." Then she glanced at a half-empty bottle of Dr. Pepper which sat by the typer. Harry can be such a forgetful slob, she sighed. As she leaned over to put the stale-smelling bottle away for him, she caught sight of something which had

been typed at the top of an otherwise-virgin stencil which seemed to have been very hastily pulled from the carriage. Holding the stencil to the light, she read aloud:

I'm out of my hed,
Please hurry or I may be dead
They musn'

Karin the Nurse dropped the stencil as though it had burnt her and, reflexively, she drew her hand to her lip. Harry hadn't even enough time to finish the message. What horror could he possibly have been drawn into this time?

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There they stood in temporary stasis, all 46 of them. Fan Central Station was crowded, to be sure, but there was no other place to put them all. Guess it's about time to bring them back to consciousness.

This is going to be interesting, he thought, as 92 eyelids fluttered open simultaneously.

"GET YOUR ELBOW OUT OF MY EYE!" Rick Taylor squeaked. He paused to look about, and then up at the confused, apologetic face of Valeria Beasley. "Er...what are you doing here, Val?" Rick refocused his eyes. "What am I doing here?" It began to dawn on him that he and the entire roster of INTERLAC was crowded into the Gale/Zilber residence, and his jaw dropped three inches, almost brushing the top of his shoes. All he could utter was a feeble "wooooo wooco.....!"

The next few moments saw the unleashing of a cacaphony of fannish madness, the likes of which, had it been envisioned by Jerry Bails when he founded comics fandom, would surely have given him cause to gafiate even before there was a fandom to gafiate from. Roy Thomas would have burned those first classic Alter Ego ditto masters. Julius Schwartz would have speedily abandoned his plans to print full addresses in his letter pages; better these people should remain ignorant and isolated than to permit the insanity which was destined to occur 17 years later in a location for which the term "Fan Central Station" could never have been more appropriate.

If only Ken Gale could have appreciated it.

It was Liam O'Conner who took control of the situation. "OKAY, EVERYBODY -- LISTEN UP!" Dead silence followed.

Liam climbed onto the coffeetable, wringing his hands until his knuckles cracked. "Okay now," he bellowed calmly, "I'm afraid I don't know many of you people very well, and I don't know exactly what's going on here, but let's just remain cool and calm and sort things out here in a nice, rational manner." Carol Strickland started to protest, but Liam quickly added, "And anyone who doesn't wanna behave in a nice, rational manner -- me and Mike Flynn are gonna play 'sandwich' with ya!"

He winked at Mike from across the room. Mike was forcing his way through the morass of fen in search of Harry, who was worming his way toward the center of the room, climbing over Tom Mitchell, who had fainted into Liz Smith's arms while, nearby, Neal Pozner stood in a corner trying very hard not to socialize with Bob Rodi, who was trying equally hard to avoid socializing with Neal, as Ray Chan and Richard Burton quietly conferred about the cost of overseas return airfare. As the hubbub began to grow in proportion again, Liam slammed his massive fist into the table and again demanded silence. There was silence.

Mike Flynn spoke up, meekly. "Thanks, Liam, but now that things are under control, why don't you let Harry take over, seeing as how he's Leader and all." This sounded sensible to Liam, so he gracefully abdicated from the coffeetable and motioned to Harry to take his place. But before Harry could speak a single multi-syllabic run-on sentence...

"Excuse me. I'll take charge. I was responsible for bringing you all here, and I have lots of explaining to do. The fate of fandom itself depends on what happens here." It was a high-pitched voice, yet an authoritative one, sounding not unlike Ken Gale trying to sound tough in falsetto. The voice's source, however, was nowhere to be seen.

"DOWN HERE, YOU GAENSE!" The tiny figure leaned nonchalantly against one of the coffeetable's legs, its lanky arms folded confidently across what would theoretically pass for its chest.

"It's adorable!" Paula O'Keefe squealed. "Is it alive?"

"Is it real?" Sherman Boyson moaned.

"Is it saved?" Rick Foster queried.

"Is it gay?" Denys Howard pondered.

"Is it from Earth-2?" Rich Morrissey speculated.

"It's short, whatever it is," Chuck Nanco noted.

"It looks mighty fishy to me," Tom Mitchell noted.

"It's weird and ooky," Jay Zilber screamed.

Harry Broertjes had been uncharacteristically silent up until now, but he could no longer hold it in. "IT'S CORFLU!" Harry ejaculated.

Sure enough, Ken's statue no longer occupied its place of honor. Mike Flynn slapped his forehead. "I can't deal with this. Okay, Ken, how'd you rig this up?

"Ken?"

Corflu stormed up to Mike's leg and punched him in the kneecap. "Flynn, if you were the least bit observant, you'd realize that Ken is the only member of INTERLAC who isn't here. I've stored his comatose body away in the bathroom for the time being..."

Scott Sherman reacted first. "Comatose? What...?" He grabbed the animated Corflu in one hand and flung open the bathroom door with the other; "Okay, you reject from a Pilsbury commercial, this has gone a bit too far, don't...you...think...?" Scott turned as pale as the ex-statue he held in his hand. He'd expected to see Ken alive and well and operating some sort of remote control device, or at least prepared to offer a satisfactory explanation for what might be the biggest fan prank in history. Instead, he came face-to-face with Ken's immobilized body, awkwardly propped up in a corner. When awake; Ken's face seemed to embody a hint of evil; now his half-open unseeing eyes screamed bloody murder. Scott dropped Corflu like a hot patootie.

"If you'll give me that chance to explain," Corflu scrambled to his feet, "I'll make everything clear in a bit." He pushed his way through the crowd and took a flying leap, alighting upon the coffeetable.

"Now then." Nobody moved a muscle. "First, you can rest assured that Ken is in no further immediate danger. His body will live indefinitely in its present condition. I've set it into suspended animation, just like I did with all of you last night while I figured out just what was happening here myself."

"As near as I can figure -- I know this sounds far-fetched, but you'll just have to stretch your willing suspension of disbelief -- someone or something drained Ken of his fannish energy force."

"Come on," interrupted Mike Valerio, "what do you take us for? Gerry Conway acolytes? I'm not going to swallow any of this pseudo-science crapola!" Corflu snapped his fingers and a 16-ton weight dropped from the ceiling, crushing Mike into protoplasmic jelly. He snapped his fingers again and the weight disappeared. Mike returned to his previous shape.

"We'll have no further interruptions, I trust." Corflu glared at the collective INTERLACKers with grim determination. "Ken's fannish energy was drained, which is why I've placed him in stasis to prevent any further deterioration."

Bob Soron meekly raised his hand. "Sir...? Could you please explain how the rest of us fit into all this?"

Corflu glared again. "I was getting to that. I teleported you people here myself, in the hope that you could save his life, as well as that of fandom as we know it today. There is an evil force which..." Corflu stopped short. "I'm sorry. We'll have to set explanations aside for the moment. I must get us out of here immediately." Before a single objection could be raised, 46 LACKers and one statuette were instantaneously transported to the corner of 85th and Lexington. Corflu took note of the new Roma Pizzeria. "As long as we're here, howabout some munchies? I feel like I haven't eaten in my entire life!"

Fearing the potential of 16-ton weights dropping from the sky, the entire procession followed Corflu into the pizza shop, much to the astonishment and dismay of the Italian-American behind the counter.

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"As I was saying," Corflu continued between attempts to nibble a slice of sausage-pepperoni pizza half his own height, "There is an evil force at work here. Last night it attacked Ken, and moments ago it tried to drain all of us simultaneously. This force must be focused specifically on Fan Central. Now, as near as I can figure, by the laws of conservation of matter and energy, the energy drained from Ken's body could not be destroyed, so once removed from his body, it was attracted to the nearest fannish receptacle...me. Obviously, the substance of my body and Ken's fannish energy had opposite attracting charges."

"Conway..." Howard Medinets muttered.

Corflu glared again, but continued. "I came into consciousness last night just in time to see Ken pass out. Immediately, I --"

"Yes, I've *chomp* been meaning to ask you *chomp*chomp* about that," Rich Morrissey said between munches. "Aren't you just a statue?"

"JUST a statue? I'll have you know I --"

"No, no...I don't mean that as a put-down, Corflu. It's just that... I mean...statues just don't come to life on Earth-Real. Howard and Mike may have overreacted in comparing you to a Conway plot, but they do have a point. How can you exist? What is this evil force? Where did you gain your powers? If this is an origin story, you'd better tie up these loose ends."

The tiny statue closed its eyes and shook its head. "I can't explain the hows of it. I do know that I came into this world last night with a full set of memories drawn from Ken's subconscious. These powers of

teleportation, transmutation, mind over matter, telepathy -- I'm communicating by telepathy, you know -- I can do these things because I'm directly tapping the fannish energy flow, which gives me unlimited --"

"THE WHAT?" Martin Berkenwald could bear it no longer. #Even Bob Rozakis wouldn't stoop to a deus ex machina like that!"

"There is a fannish energy flow, Martin." Corflu was indignant. "All of us are attuned to it to some degree." Noting Paul Levitz squirming uncomfortably in his seat, he added, "Some more than others, Paul. I suspect Ken was attuned to the flow more than anyone else in the world, which may explain why the enemy tried to attack him first."

"What enemy, for heaven's sake?" Jon Ligget was determined to get a word in edgewise.

"Now that's a good question." Corflu lowered his "voice" to a whisper. I don't know. My only memories are taken from Ken's subconscious mind. And for that reason, I'll be taking his place on the INTERLAC roster for the duration of this little adventure."

Harry raised an eyebrow. "Not so fast, little fella. I'm the only one around here in charge of Ken Gale roster substitution in-jokes!"

Jim Anderson added, "What was that about an adventure?"

Tonie Nichols interjected, "You still haven't explained why you brought us here. What is this all about, anyway?"

"What this is all about," Corflu said, "is the future of fandom itself. Someone is trying to destroy fandom for some reason of his own. The fannish energy flow can't be destroyed, but a person's link with it can be severed and the energy drained from him. It happened to Ken, and it almost happened to every single one of us before I teleported us out of the apartment. Luckily, I'm in direct contact with the flow and sensed its disruption before the process was complete. I couldn't tell who was doing it, or why. Obviously, he's not a fan, whoever he is."

"And that's why I brought you all here, in the hope that you can discover the identity of this madman and put a stop to his activities... and also because, in spite of all my powers, I can't reverse the process that disabled Ken. I tried for hours last night, I tried to siphon a little fannish energy from each of you, but it wasn't a workable solution. Fannish energy doesn't just exist -- it has to be generated, converted from ordinary energy through the activities of comics fans. Before we can revive Ken, I need all of you to find ways of generating this energy."

"How do we do that?" Judy Rosenbaum asked.

"Entirely up to you people, but I'll help in any way I can. As you generate the energy, I'll store it in my body until we have enough to transfer to Ken." Corflu finished his pizza, wiped his beak on Alan Turniansky's shirttail, and added: "By the way...none of you have to do this. I'll gladly return anyone to the precise moment in time I pulled you from if some of you prefer to go back."

Corflu looked about. Nobody stepped forward. The fannish spirit was still as strong as ever. "Not even you, Paul?"

"Are you kidding?" Paul Levitz smiled his disarming smile. "I wouldn't miss this for the world. I'm sure it will give me enough plot ideas to last for years!"

MUTATED KLANTH

Chapter Two

"Mission: Fannish!"

STARRING:

Valeria Beasley Paul Decker
Sherman Boyson Mercy Van Vlack

1/ "I'm not really sure I understand," exhaled Sherman Boyson, as he watched a trace of marijuana smoke escape from his mouth. "We're listening to a Corflu statue. Basically. Am I right?" Toke.

"Somewhat, Sherman," began Valeria. "What seems to have happened is explained well enough by the Corflu-creature. Something tried to drain all the faannish energy from Ken. Unfortunately, whoever performed this feat didn't realize that an energy sink existed to capture that energy before it dissipated. That, of course, was the Corflu statue." Both Boyson and Paul Decker were listening attentively to her words at this point. Unfortunately, Mercy Van Vlack seemed to be interested as well. Unfortunately, because she was driving, and would swerve every once in a while. Moic' had always confessed to being an inattentive driver; here was the proof for three other Interlackers.

Valeria continued, while furiously fanning the air in the car, as best she could, with her arms. "This means two things. First, it had to be someone that was unfamiliar with the apartment, because I think it's been common knowledge that Ken's had the statue for some time." Val coughed, and her face grew flush. She glared at Boyson as he took another toke. "Second, our 'bad guy' for lack of a better term, obviously has little knowledge of Corflu himself; after all, Ken has said that the Corflu character in his strips is really an alter ego nasty persona. This Corflu is definitely a walking, talking, short, animated, funnier-looking Ken Gale."

"Has a marvelous voice, too," noted Paul Decker. Paul was trying very hard not to yawn. At Valeria, anyway; Paul'd heard stories about the driving skills of Rich Morrissey and Frank Mancuso, but Mercy's lack of caution terrified even him. "Oh..." Val began, as if to shut out the two males in the back seat. Uncharacteristically, she continued. "Well, that's why Harry's suggestion made sense. To me. And to Mike. Jay."

"You mean this faannish labor stuff?" Mercy bubbled, one hand on the wheel, and both eyes on Paul in the back seat. "Exactly, and why not. How else does one generate faannish energy?"

"Mercy!" Paul cried out. "Please stop!"

Moic' braked suddenly and decisively. The car lurched, and its occupants were hurled forward; luckily, the only injury suffered was a good whap to Val's noggin as it met the small dashboard of the Volkswagen Bug. Paul brushed himself off and picked up his glasses. "Thanks. Now, let's find a television -- it's time for ALL MY CHILDREN."

2/ They wound up in a bar.

"Mercy, have you wondered how you had your car when you arrived downstairs from Ken's?" asked Val. Mercy sipped a draft. "Nope. I assume it was Corflu."

'Corflu's a stupid bird," interjected Boyson, himself becoming interested in the bizarrely intermingled relationships on the television show.

'You're right," Val said to Mercy, snubbing Sherman. "I suppose the car means very little, anyway. It's the mission. Groups. To recharge fannish energy, that Corflu will absorb until there's enough built up to do so... I guess it's logical. So. What do we do?"

"Ignore him," interrupted Boyson. "The bird's an asshole."

Val's glare would've killed a person in a nominally unstoned state. Sherm just shrugged it off. "Besides," he consoled, "I like assholes."

"Sssh!" commanded Paul. "This is where she's going to trick her half-brother to marry her cousin, the illegitimate daughter of the Reverend who married the paraplegics last week."

Boyson joined the girls. "Actually, this whole bit about doing something fannish to help Ken is... I dunno, it doesn't strike me as right. I'm a Day State Bonger, Mercy's into a completely different scene, and Paul's not even paying attention. He does a great Ethel Merman, though."

A voice like Ethel Merman's came from the vicinity of Paul. "Ahhh-you, light up my li-i-i-i-ife..."

"Paul," sighed Valeria. "You're only... oh, skip it."

3/ A young kid of about fifteen came into the bar. His pockets jingled with the sound of quarters. The boy walked to the rear of the bar, where three pinball machines stood, looking new and unused.

"Heyy..." said Boyson. "That's what we can do. Bingo! All Soron and Flynn ever seem to talk about is pinball... let's play!" Decker reluctantly left the television as Sister George was considering leaving the Church.

After each of them had played five games, all five of which were won lopsidedly by Valeria, Sherman declared that he'd had enough, and surely by now they'd recharged some faannish energy. And he wanted to get back to Massachusetts.

"Without so much as an Ethel Merman singalong? Without a Phantom Cactus Girl joke? Without a reference to 'It's Alive...And It Sucks!'" Sherman, I must admit, I may disbelieve the Corflu statue, but if Ken does require fannish energy, surely poor pinball isn't what'll do the trick. Don't you remember Soron's quote from Ken? 'I don't come to conventions to play pinball!'"

"Say? Wouldn't it be neat if we could get a quote of the issue out of this?" Mercy asked.

"Exactly my point, Mercy," said Paul. "What could be more faannish to Ken than a quote of the issue?"

"Yes, but we'd have to find the perfect quote of the issue," replied Valeria. "I've never done a quote of the issue."

"Hmf," was Paul's comment. "Maybe -- maybe if we read a few Interlacs. We'd get the idea perhaps. Or maybe even find a quote that was missed before. I -- I

wonder if we could get back to Ken's apartment to go through the back mailings."

They collected themselves, and walked through the door to the saloon, the bartender glaring at them for buying two beers and a Pepsi, and not even leaving a tip. Into the sunlight of West 96th Street they exited - just in time to see a New York's Finest tow truck turn the corner, with Mercy's powder blue Bug attached.

"Is it fannish to be towed?," Mercy asked, sarcastically indignant. "I didn't even owe a ticket. And we were only there a few minutes..."

Boyson propped himself against the hydrant the VW had so recently been next to. "We can hoof it - Ken's place is only across town and then down a few blocks."

4/ As they walked, they tried to be fannish. Paul listed the names and powers of the membership of the Legion of Super-Perverts. Sherman described fifty ways to leave Gerry Conway in a leaky raft in the middle of the Atlantic. Valeria began to re-redesign Ms. Marvel's action togs. Mercy rattled off every cover Nick Cardy did for DC Comics since 1970.

Desperation multiplied in their breasts like wealthy Catholics in New York.

Finally, they reached 220 East 35th Street. Boyson looked at the apartment's entrance as if still in a trance. It was a quite ordinary looking building - no dirtier than any other in the area, and not markedly different in its architecture, either. Only its address set it apart. Hell, even the devil chose a rich bitch in Georgetown last time he showed up. But this...?

"Wow I," said Moic'. "It's so weird. All that energy, and it radiates from that one apartment."

They hopped up the stoop and into the lobby. They were immediately stopped by the security door. It was always locked, just as it was now. The only two means of entrance, therefore, were with a key, or by ringing Ken's bell, and having Ken press a 'buzzer' which unlocked the door.

Paul tried Ken's doorbell. And waited. "I guess that won't work."

"Shit," said Boyson. "I wonder if we've got keys that are similar..." As he reached into his pants pocket, his hand found something unfamiliar, which didn't belong. It was a small manila coin envelope, plainly marked in Ken Gale's writing, "Extra Key."

"I think I've got one, too," said Paul. And indeed he did, as did Valeria and Mercy. Valeria, being closest to the door in the small vestibule, inserted the key and pushed open the door.

"It works," she said, and walked into the cool, dark hall.

5/ They ascended the four flights of stairs as rapidly as possible. None, of course, dared match the three-at-a-time pace Ken himself usually took to the fifth floor, rear apartment, but for Interlackers not from the New York area, they did quite well. Boyson cursed. "They never hear of elevators in New York? How do they get to the top of the Empire State Building?"

Valeria laughed at Sherman from the fifth floor landing. Val, of course, had been inclined to take the stairs to the 14th floor command central at the Philadelphia Sheraton during the 1977 Julycon. Decker burst into his best Ethel Merman im-

itation of Led Zeppelin's "Stairway to Heaven."

At last, the three slowpokes joined Beasley in front of the door to Apartment 5R. Again, Val put the key in the lock, and pushed open the door.

Ken's apartment was pretty much the same as she'd remembered it, having last seen it without 45 other Interlackers present at the March 1978 CREATION. Boxes of comics stood in the middle of the floor. A dresser covered with record albums was to her left, and to her right and directly in front of her were shelves piled to the ceiling with yet more comics. Spike, the mimeograph machine that rarely worked anymore, and Ken's stereo, probably also named for a Mayer character, took up most of the working space on Ken's desk. Sugar, Ken's typewriter, still had a stencil in it. She surmised that Jay's stuff was in the other room.

"Isn't this dangerous?," Mercy asked. "Right," said Paul. "Sure," finished Sherm, "didn't Corflu say that whatever was the problem had tried to zap us here?"

Val shrugged. "Maybe. Then again --what was that?" Valeria's concentration had been interrupted by a noise in the bedroom. Decker rushed into the room in time to see -- he thought -- something -- someone -- fly from the bedroom window. The others appeared to see it as well. Paul could tell by the look on their faces.

6/ "We came here to find a quote of the issue," Val said suddenly, turned, and went back into the living room.

Corflu was lying down on the coffestable, reading THE TREATISE ON REALITY IN COMICS LITERATURE, by Mark Gruenwald. "Hi," he squeaked, or seemed to, even though he was communicating telepathically. "I found a quote that might do -- page seven; Gruenwald's talking about the plotting power that some DC writers seem to have in the Earth-One universe. I quote: '...Elliot Maggin does not display a similar ability in the course of this tale. Apparently all writers do not have this natural talent on "Earth-One", only mutants like Cary Bates.'"

"That's it!," shouted Boyson appreciatively. "...Mutants like Cary Bates. I love it!"

"But...?," Paul began. "Yes," Val asked of Corflu, "shouldn't we have performed the fannish feat?"

"Ah, but you did," returned Corflu. "Think about what you've done since last we met."

"Okay," said Paul. "First, we walked out of the pizza shop and saw Mercy's car. Mercy said she had room for three and I guess we three were fastest or closest to her."

"Right," said Val, "but before that Harry and Mike were saying that we should perform specific fannish functions -feats, or labors - to generate the fannish energy you brought to our attention."

"Uh huh," continued Moic', "but neither one of them had any suggestions."

"Oh! I get it!," said Boyson. "It was getting the car towed."

"Nope, not quite," yawned Corflu.

"Okay," Decker picked up, "We played pinball..."

"Nope."

"Then walked over here," said Val.

"Close."

"Then we got in -- say, how come we had keys?"

"I'll explain that later, Mercy," Corflu said, eyes sparkly. "But you're very close."

"Lessee," said Sherm. "We climbed those damn stairs..."

"To do what?"

"To get into Ken's apartment." "To find a quote of the issue." "To read Ken's Interlacs!!!," screamed Boyson, as if he were Archimedes.

"Correct. Absolutely correct. You came all that distance, on foot, because you had no car, just to glance through a few mailings of an apa. And that's your first -- 'fannish labor' -- if you will. Already I feel marvelous energies flowing into my body..." (Conway, thought Val.) "...But it's not enough. I need more. I only hope that the rest of the membership arrives at equally inspired methods of generating the required energy."

MI "What about us? Is it safe to stay here now?," asked Moic'.

"Yes," said Paul. "We all did see something in the window when we came in."

"Eh? Oh, yes, I saw that, too. It probably is best I return you to your homes now. After all, you've got mailing comments to do on the annish!"

And so...

In a classroom at the University of Delaware, Val Beasley offered her Intermediate Accounting professor an alternative to double entry bookkeeping.

At an answering service in Southern California, Paul Decker listened in for the fifth time that week as Jesse White ordered his groceries.

In a swinging disco in downtown King of Prussia, Mercy Van Vlack danced through the entire soundtrack to Saturday Night Fever.

In a back alley in Boston, Sherman Boyson gave his best "James at 16" look to a dealer whom he'd just talked down to \$25 for an ounce of Hawaiian.

And at Fan Central Station, Corflu smiled his worst Conway smile. Which is for the best. We think.

CHAPTERS Three and Four will be in the August mailing of Interlac. Be here as more Interlackers try to generate the fannish energy necessary to revive Ken Gale by performing their various fannish labors. You, or your favorite Interlactite could be the star, so be here!