

# CLAIMS DEPARTMENT



**ISSUE 7: IT'S ALL ABOUT THE LADIES**

CLaims Department

Issue 7

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in the near future, if  
you are tired of read-  
ing the print version  
and wanna see what it  
Looks Like on-Line.



Last time, I talked about a great trip to a small hotel and there wasn't much going on. The Steam-punk theme was all the art, but this time, I've decided that it's important to talk about the ladies.

You see, I love the ladies, they're my thing. There have been long periods of time where I haven't had a romantic interest in my life, and long periods where I have. Im just beyond the break-even, I imagine. When I came across the work of GoblinQueen. Her work features a lot of lovely ladies in a very stylized and cartoony fashion. That got me thinking about one of the better periods of my life.

You see, for every terrible period, I've had a period where I could walk down the aisle and pick my girl. The period where this issue takes place is one of those, and it's a fun story that takes place

right before Gen and I had started dating. I had had a fairly bad run of lady luck over the previous couple of years. I had a little luck in Sonoma when I met and had a delightful afternoon and evening with a lass from out of town (which I detail in Claims Department Issue 2) I was getting tired of things the way they were, so I figured I'd step out a bit. I had met a number of fun lasses at Cinequest and around town, so I figured I'd start hanging around with them some more and seeing if anything developed.

Of course, nothing ever did.

I was really annoyed with the state of things, so as I decided to take a break and head out to a place called Las Vegas.

Some may know of Vegas as the home of Arnie and Joyce Katz, or maybe from the 1970s TV series. Believe it or not, Vegas is a popular destination, despite being in the middle of the desert. I love to play cards (who doesn't?) and I had a little extra cash. I hopped in the

car and headed down, hoping to prove that unlucky in love must mean that I'd be lucky in cards. I started down after a drive-by CD grab from my old place.

## The Music

I once had a giant collec-

tion of CDs. Sadly, between moving across the country a few times and having been broke enough to need to sell them, I'd lost about 90% of them over the years. I knew I had a bunch of them left on my dresser at the old home, so I gathered a few of them and hopped in the car after I stole a small cooler, a few Cokes, a can of Pringles and a bottle of Johnny Walker Black I had left at Mom's before I moved. I also grabbed a pillow and a blanket, since I didn't know if I had a hotel room, or would even have enough money to

let one once I was down there. All that was done before 5 am.

I found a pair of CDs that I had forgotten had been given to me for Christmas 1995. They were the only CDs I had gotten that year and I hadn't listened to them since. I had bought Miles Davis' Kind of Blue just before Thanksgiving and it had yet to come out of my CD player by the time Christmas had rolled around. I hadn't even listened to them in the

eight years since. The CDs were Devo's Greatest Hits and Devo's Greatest Misses.

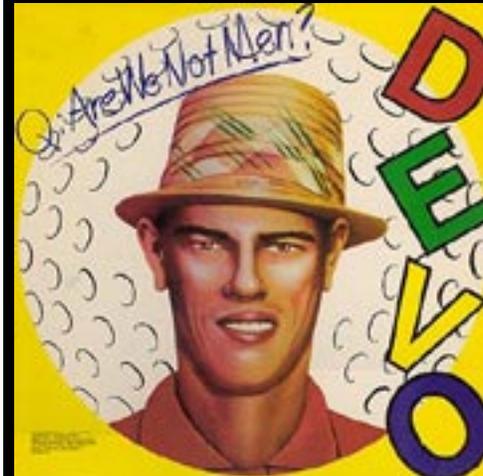
If there was a seminal Science Fiction band, it would be a race between Kraftwerk and Devo to see who got the title. Their gimmick is simple: They devolved from a long-line



of brain-eating apes. That's the simple version. In reality, they were a bunch of college friends from Ohio who met and found that they all had similar interests in SF and music tinkering. That's the basic story of the group. They started making SF-tinged music in the mid-1970s and they were the second band I ever saw live. My first show, which my Pops brought me to when I was far too young, was The Avengers, Devo and Blondie. The Out-of-Town acts were on first and The Avengers closed the show. I can still remember parts of it, though it's kinda a blur. I've read about it in more books since than which is the only reason I know the order of the bands!

I put in The Greatest Hits album first, knowing that I liked Devo, though it had been years since I listened to them, I figured getting the great stuff out of the way early would be a way to pass the time.

The Devo songs that I've always known are on this one. Jerkin' Back and Forth is one of the classics, and Big Mess is one of the songs that I think of when I hear a piece of modern electronica.



Devo Over the Years

Lots of wild Moog work in that one. The album includes Beautiful World (some car commercial used it in 1997 or so) and Satisfaction and Whip It, all the songs that people know when they first come to Devo. But it also includes two songs, put back to back on the CD, that define Devo to me.

Smart Patrol is the story of Jocko Homo, a guy who has been with the World, or so they say. There's a group that monitors reality on this place, and they're not happy. The song is slower, but a steady, rockin' rythm.

And then it goes nutty.

The second half of the Song is about a pair who come from the past to save humanity by sacrificing Devo. They are Mr. Kamikaze and Mr. DNA. This song speeds up and trails along the punk rock sensibility that Devo was founded on while mixing in all the electronic elements they added. The song rockets away from the slower portion and really imparts a sense of panic...or maybe I'm just reading too much into it.

The other great song feautres the most perfect song opening of modern times. Gut



Feeling is a song where the lyrics are only there to play around the tune they've constructed. 'Something 'bout the way you taste makes me wanna clear my throat./ There's a madness to you movement, it really gets my goat' are not the type of lyrics you drop if you want folks to listen to them. The opening is a power piece of simple guitar and piano-synth with rocketing drums. It's hard to resist the urge to move, and the car-based equivilent is speeding, when the opening is on. Later, they would use the opening for a training scene in Wes Anderson's *The Life Aquatic*. It's just about the perfect way.

This was the Devo I knew and loved, and as I made it to Barstow, I was in full rocking mode. I stopped at a little bar/restaurant that advertised a steak sandwich for 5.99. I love me a good steak sandwich, so I pulled in and grabbed a seat.

The place was well-lit for what I had hoped would be a dive bar. There were the regular barfly types, all with the same amount of beer that seemed to stay in the glass the entire time I was there. Every few minutes, someone would buy a lotto ticket and stare at the screen until the numbers came up.

But even with all those dead-

eyed humans staring into the screen, I would come back every day because that sammich was damn good. It was a huge and thoroughly cooked steak. They didn't even ask how I wanted it, because there's only one way they make it; halfway to jerky, but however it is that they marinade it, I must find out. It was tangy and smooth and the meat melted in my mouth even though it was tough to break from its parent matter. It was amazing how well it worked. I washed it down with Johnny Walker Red on the Rocks.

And then I saw her. On a bad day, she might have resembled Lauren Bacall in *The Big Sleep*, and I'd have no idea what she might look like on a good day, since the two times I saw her she was leveled in a depression that made the lights go a little darker around



where she sat. I got up from my bar seat and headed over to the restroom. Someone had grabbed my old seat, but I wanted another drink and the only seat available was next to the Queen of Sorrows.

"You mind if I sit here?" I asked.

"Not at all," She said, she twisted around so that her elbows were on the bar, thrusting forward a considerable chest. "my name's Melinda."

We started a conversation about television for some reason. She was a big fan of a TV show that had been off the air for a while called Lucky. I was also a GIANT fan of the show. Basically, it was the story of a remorseful pro-gambler who falls off the wagon hard and the two friends who help him in his adventures.

It was during that conversation, which lasted four Lotto draws, according to the screen over the bar, that I noticed she had placed her hand on my arm and while she hadn't changed her face much, still carrying the signs of unhappy times prior to her drinking, she was smiling...sort of. It was hard to judge what she was thinking, but after about an hour, and with the hour of One approaching, I thought I had to leave and through the rest of the desert.

"Sorry, but I gotta head out."

"Shame." She said, now certainly smiling. She grabbed a pen and wrote something down. "If you find yourself here again, gimme a call."

And she handed

me her number.

In fact, up to that point, I had never gotten a number from a lady in a bar. Other strange locations yes, but never a bar. I left feeling pretty good about myself, not realising what lay ahead.

The Desert.

## More Music

I started driving through what was really desert land. I took out The Greatest Hits and put in the greatest misses of Devo CD, not sure what to expect. What I should have thought was the CD would be an interesting look into a band that did otherwise smart and interesting music, but what I found was that their failures were almost as good as their successes.

These tend to be a little more DIY sounding and rougher, but at the same time show more experimentation than the other disc. It features another version of Satisfaction that is far more Kraftwerk-y than the Greatest Hits version and at times more punk rock.

The first song where I thought I was listening to something really special was Pink Pussycat. Every





New Wave band had at least one song that could be read multiple ways and this was Devo's. I'm betting you can figure out what they're talking about half the time in this song. Devo Corporate Anthem sounds like you'd im-

agine an anthem would sound if it were written by The Allen Parsons Project. It's unhuman, sterile and totally corporate. It's a wonderful piece.

The two most interesting pieces on the CD had to be the ones that moved me most were Mongoloid and Speed Racer, but for completely different reasons. Mongoloid is almost totally a punk rock song. There's an electronic element to it, but in construction and performance, it's as punk as you'll find. The lyrics are good too.

'MONGOLOID HE WAS A MONGOLOID  
AND IT DETERMINED WHAT HE COULD SEE  
AND HE WORE A HAT  
AND HE HAD A JOB  
AND HE BROUGHT HOME THE BACON  
SO THAT NO ONE KNEW  
MONGOLOID HE WAS A MONGOLOID'

That's good song writing. Speed Racer is an electronica song that points out many of the troubles of electronica songs. The few snippets are comical bits, but they don't mean anything, they're simply filler in the gaps left by the machine. And the lines they deliver are all simply about their places in the world. It's a tough electronica song if you go through it and look at the signs and signifiers.

I was up to my neck in desert at this point. I-15 is not the type of road that rewards attention to the passing scenery. I must say that it's pretty country, but that wears off before the first 50 miles. I was listening to my music, sitting in the front seat, boldly remembering Melinda and thinking of what I could possibly do to set up some sort of arrangement to see her again. I pulled off the road for a while at an overpass road that didn't lead anywhere. It was nearly 100, but I wanted to catch a quick nap. I parked in a bit of



shade from a large rock and actually caught about 90 minutes worth of shuteye. I believe I dreamed of a woman in a long dress, longer hair and a wearing a beautiful piece of jewelry around her long, kissable neck line. I had never seen this woman in my thoughts before, though I can't remember the context of her being in the dream. I simply remember that she was there and looked like my vision of spring.

When I woke up, it was my feeling of a blast furnace or a coke oven that hit me first. I had rolled down all the windows, and the shade had stayed with me, but the heat was insane. I started the car and headed down the road, ready for Vegas and anything else that might come along.

### Las Vegas: Day City

Vegas is hot. Damn hot. I had no sooner parked in the parking lot of the beautiful Excalibur Hotel/Resprt/Casino then it all washed over me. I had figured that I'd be dealing with near 100 degrees, and I was right. I took myself and my small bag inside the hotel, and since it was so hot, I

wanted to get a little swim in.

"Yeah, my room's not gonna be ready for a bit and I was hoping to get a swim in. Is there anyway I could check these and maybe get an escort into the pool area?"

He fished around underneath the desk and handed me a keycard.

"This'll get you in to the pool and any of the weight rooms. You can just give it to them at

the desk and they'll have it activated to your room key." and he handed me the key.

I don't know where I picked that trick up from, but it's never failed me. I headed down to the pool and grabbed myself a pool towel and a lounge chair underneath a lovely umbrella. It's a nice pool area, but the best part had to be the sights.

The ladies.

They were there in all sorts of suits. Some were tiny, revealing levels of flesh that should best be left to doctors performing examinations. Other wore well-thought-out swimwear that led a viewer to closer examination. These were



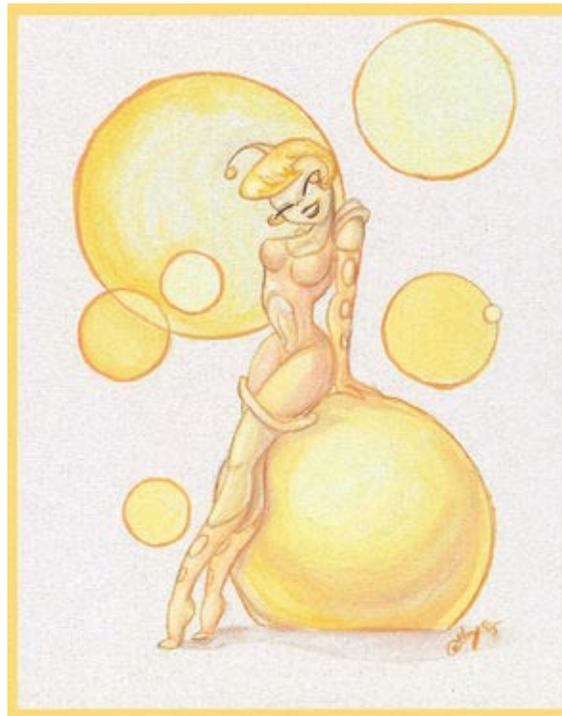
particularly worn by those ladies who wished to catch the eye but not attract too many of the swimming males sharks that circled everywhere. I sat in my pants and t-shirt, watching the swimmers and listening to the chit-chat. I pulled out my book and began to read between fits of staring at the marvelous young thing in the orange two piece that seemed to have curves designed by Mountain roadway engineers.

### The Book

For me, reading around the pool requires a certain amount of selection choicetivity. It can't be too serious a book, it can't be too light a book. You must choose something that fits the time and setting. I had my favourite choices for rereading on hand in my bag, but there was one that I hadn't read that came skipping out.

It was Stephen Goldin's Scavenger Hunt.

Maybe it's the fact that I watched the movie Scavenger Hunt so often when I was a kid, but from the first moment I started reading it, I realised that it was just the book for



me. Tyla DeVries is a daughter of money and adventure. They had been lost in the last hunt when a pompous ass named Jusser won the event. Tyla enlists the help of her brother, who will technically be leading the team on a Pan-Galactic Scavenger Hunt. The premise is pretty simple: they've got to go about doing a bunch of tasks and do them faster than all the other contestants. Luckily, these are tasks that make for entertaining reading.

The story actually opens up with a dance where all the entrants are to make chit-chat and find fault with each other. It's exactly the same as those old Cattle Baron ball scenes in Westerns. The girl who is trying to make good is corraled by the one guy she doesn't want anything to do with, that tinhorn polecat Jusser. She also runs into Johnathan R, an android who slights her and causes her to flee the dance in anger. It's a great set-up and it got me thinking.

The book goes on to talk about the adventures and the group on the ship which includes various couplings and oth-





sliced and eventually he put it out as the full work it was intended to be. I still haven't found it to read it yet, but I plan to.

The first thing that struck me was the easy connection to the Westerns of old. I could easily envision this as a SteamPunk story

(and one that I've tried to write ever since). It was rollicking fun while it lasted and the Freas cover only sweetened the whole thing. I finished it over a few hours out by the pool, then I gathered up and headed in to the water for a bit of a swim.

The pool at the Excalibur isn't as grand as many of the others at hotels all around Vegas, but it's a nice little place for a swim. I made a few long laps and was about to get out and head in to play some craps when I found that a young lady was playing Solitaire on the edge of the pool. Lovely young thing, probably 25 or so, nice shape, two-piece suit that seemed to have been made in the 1950s and retrieved at great expense from a RetroShoppe. I headed over to her.

"Nice bikini." Great opening line, kid.

"Thanks, I got it at this place called the Attick." She didn't look away from her cards (I think she was moving a large pile onto another)

"I know the Attick. I bought a pair of Stacey Adams shoes from them."

At this point, she did look at me. I had failed to notice that she was completely un-made up. Most of



er funnesses. As I read it, I was impressed with just how old skool this was. It's like it was a 1950s book released in the 1970s. Goldin, a writer who I think was doing the best stuff of his career for the Laser Book line, really hit it big with this one.

That is, until the end.

After a great adventure section, it's obvious that Goldin had to fiddle with it to fit it in the Laser format. He stopped the adventure with a lame excuse and the book died. As I understand it, it was

the other women, particularly those who wore suits to gather attention, had come in well-designed make-up. She had not.

"You don't strike me as the Stacey's type, really." She said.

"It's hard not to enjoy a good pair of shoes when you've got hair like mine."

She laughed. Score!

"I'm Chris. Out from San Jose."

"Cherise. I'm a Bostonian."

That led to long discussions of Boston. She was actually a student at BU, so I told her all my BU stories. She was younger than I had thought, 21 to be exact, and she had come to meet some friends for their 21st birthday. She had come a day ahead and later she would meet them at the airport.

Feeling the itch to get my gambling started, I started planning my exit.

"I'm gonna head out and play some craps. Hope you have a good time with your friends."

"You know," she said with a voice that actually seemed to hold some promise "I've never learned how to play craps."

"Really? I've been told I'm a good teacher."

"Why don't we change and meet at the gate in twenty minutes?"

I smiled and said "sounds good" or some other stupid thing and we both got out and headed to the changing rooms. I rinsed off under the poolside shower and then changed into my dark green jacket, purchased just minutes before I was to be on TV, and my black pants. I threw on my gambling shirt too, the one with cigars and cards all over it. I got to the gate early, and I ended



up waiting nearly twenty more minutes while she got herself done up.

And wow, was she done up. She wore a late 50s outfit that seemed to have been one part Audrey Hepburn and one part Greaser girlfriend. She showed up with a face that seemed to glow. I also had not noticed that she was a very short girl, maybe 5 foot nothin'.

"You have your heart set on playing here? I was thinking that we might head over to the Bellagio or Paris."

Knowing what I know of Vegas and table limits, Bellagio was right out. Almost every table was 25 bucks plus, and I didn't have that sort of scratch. If I did, I would have checked into a hotel room! Paris was more my style and I hadn't been there yet.

"Yeah, Paris sounds good." I said, offered her my arm and we were off.



## The Craps Table

It took me about half and hour to explain to Cherise exactly what was going on in the game of craps. She started playing the pass line and won a few. The table wasn't very crowded, so the dice came to me after forty-five minutes or so. I figured I could pay it cool and have her blow on the dice for good luck, but then I got a

better idea: I handed her the dice.

She put her money down on pass and started rolling. She hit a big 7, which I had covered on her coming out roll, and she was off to the races. She followed that up with three elevens, two of which we caught, and then a point: six. I covered hard six, and she hit it four rolls later. Though we were playing at a low-limit table (I think our biggest bets were 5 dollars), she had gathered about 400 bucks and I had won maybe 700 by the time she rolled a seven when trying to make an eight point. We hadn't celebrated in the forty-five minutes or so that we had been playing, but once she crapped out, she threw her arms around my neck and gave me a quick kiss on the cheek.

"You wanna go blow this?"

I said yeah, but then she looked at her watch.

"Crap, I'm late." she said. I had forgotten about her friends too. "Call me: room 1907: The Excalibur."

She gave me a quick peck and ran for the doors. I had also failed to notice that she had taken her chips with her. I went and cashed mine in, a little more than on cloud nine than I had been in ages.

I figured I had a bunch of time,

so I wandered down the Strip. There are Volcanoes, Pirate Ships, the Eiffel Tower, a couple of Roller Coasters, a GIANT Stratospheric Tower and so many other things on the Strip to distract you that you kinda have to be careful that you don't walk into people. I managed to make it and saw that there was a movie theatre where a movie that I wanted to see more than anything was playing. I had completely forgotten that the release of a film by one of my

four favourite directors had coincided with my trip to Vegas, so I thought that I'd take a look and see if I could catch it.

And of course, I did.

### The Movie

I'm a big fan of the foul-mouthed, violent directors of the 1990s. There are a lot of them, with one standing head and shoulders above them all. Quentin Tarantino is the star and in a way the Wunderkind of the group that came up around the same time. With all the violence of Guy Ritchie and the foul language of Kevin Smith, Tarantino has become the man you go to when you want a great flick with shootings and F-bombs. In 2003, he released his first movie since Jackie Brown in 1998. It was the first part of a Two-Parter and it was the most



anticipated film of the year by us film geek types. I bought a ticket and walked inside.

I don't know what I was expecting, but it was just like every other theatre in the world. It was a big ol' Multiplex and it could have been in Branson, Mo instead of Las Vegas, NV for all the differences it had from the rest of the many screened monsters. I bought a coke, grabbed a seat and settled in just before the first preview started.

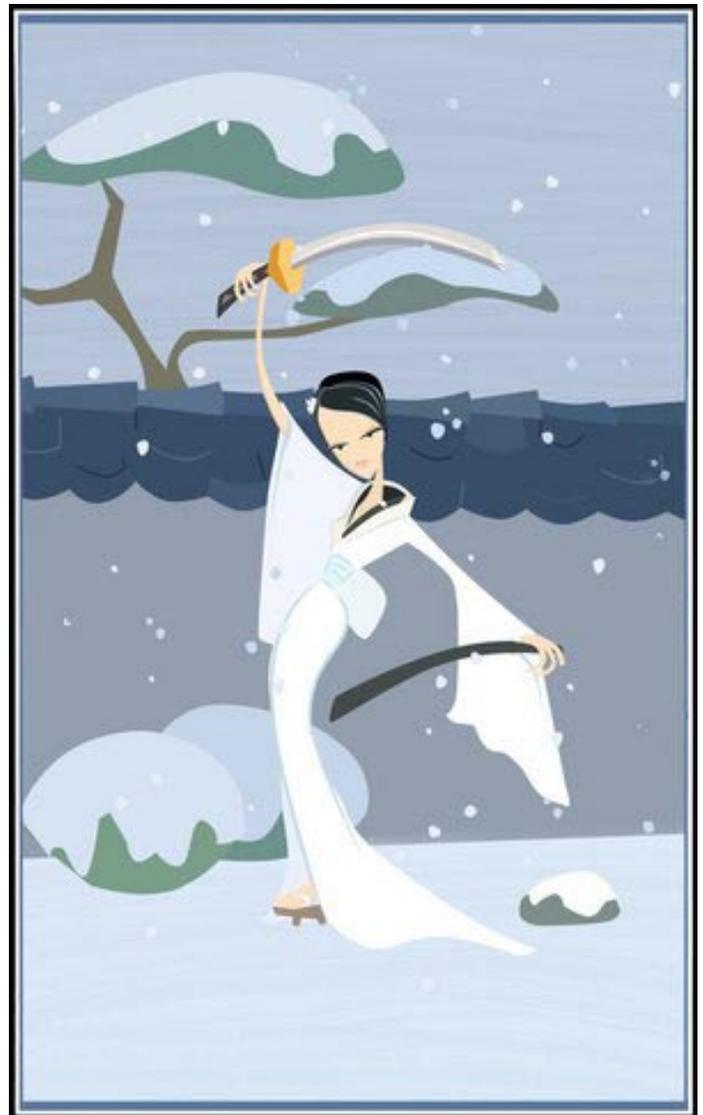
Kill Bill Part 1 is the story of The Bride, a woman who is shot multiple times at her own wedding to a guy who is not Bill. There are four others there with Bill and they do the shooting. They all have snake names: California Mountain Snake, Black Mamba, Copperhead and Cottonmouth and Sidewinder. The Bride was once Black Mamba, and she's played brilliantly by Uma Thurman. She really takes the part and makes the revenge only a portion of the story of the character. She's tough, but beaten, determined, but battered. It's a tough road to walk.

The movie flows with harsh violence. Vivica A. Fox and Uma have a fight all around Copperhead's suburban home, and Uma kills her right in front of her daughter. There's a nice moment where Uma recognises that she's going to have revenge taken on her by the little girl someday, and she says that she expects it. I was thinking that set up the sequel nicely and I still can't wait.

Quint throws everything into this movie. While the film is live action Anime at times, there's an actual Anime section to explain the hellish early life of O'ren Ishii, played by Lucy Liu. There's stunt driven and flashbacks, as well as at least one flash forward. But there's

one thing that makes Kill Bill memorable over all others: the Battle against the Crazy 88. It's probably the single most bloody fight scene in the history of American film. It's got The Bride fighting tooth and nail against the Crazy 88 with only her katana (a Hittori Hanzo original) to protect her. The battle is amazing, with fountains of blood, massive pools of it, and some of the best fight work ever. Probably the best part is when she faces off with Go-Go, a Japanese Schoolgirl-type with a massive spiked ball on a chain. It's brutal.

I've seen it three or four times now and I can say that Kill Bill is one of those movies that you just can't help but let wash



over you. The violence is incredibly over-the-top, but it's not oppressive like, say, The Gangs of New York. It's operatic in that the violence is a part of the artistry, it moves everything forward. It would be impossible for Kill Bill to exist if there were no Italian Operas where people get their ears bit off. A lot of folks see Chinese Opera in Kill Bill, but the traditions are just too different. The Chinese Action films and Sonny Chiba movies are the direct fathers of Kill Bill, and they pull more from a Western trough than an Eastern one.

When Kill Bill was over, I figured I'd give Cherise a call. I rang up her hotel and had to leave a message. I figured I'd go and walk around a bit, see more of the city. You wouldn't believe it, but there she was, standing live in the front row waiting for the next Fountain show to start at the Bellagio.

"Hey, Cherise." I said.

"Hi there." she answered and introduced me to her friends. They were a nice bunch of girls, and an attractive one at that. I hung around with them for an hour or so before we made our way into a casino.

Caesar's Palace.

You see, to me, as a kid, Caesar's meant Vegas. Not these giant amusement parks with their flashing lights. Vegas was Evil's jump over the fountain, Ali vs. The Latest Chump, WrestlingMania IX. IT's a city that was defined by Caesar's and the showroom. Cherise actually said that we should to to Caesar's, and I agreed all the way. She headed straight for the craps table, and I started in on the 700 I had won.

By the time I realised I was

tired, I was up somewhere around 4 Large. Cherise got hot again, throwing 11's like they were going out of style. I watched her again and again, and I noticed that she had stayed with me and her friends had all rolled away. When she hit three sevens in a row, each time betting Big on the Seven, she pulled me in and gave me a respectable kiss. That was awesome.

I realised that it was time for me to get some sleep, so I thought about heading to my car. I had also failed to notice that Cherise had somewhere around five or six grand in front of her. I told her about the house account concept and we both did just that, storing our winnings for future play. They even let me use it to pay for my room. I headed up, but Cherise had to go back and see her friends, even though it was probably nearing six am.

"It's been a blast winning lots of money with you, Chris."

Yeah, I had a good time."

She gave me another kiss and we parted ways. I had probably north of five highballs since we started playing craps, and Cherise had been drinking Mimosas, so that should explain the reason I completely forgot to get her number. I just headed up to my room and passed out in my clothes, forgetting that I still had some things waiting for me at the Excalibur.

### **The Next Afternoon**

It was about one when I got the call that I was invited to a player's event downstairs. It wasn't anything fancy, just the buffet and a bunch of other gamblers. It was a nice time and I chatted with an internet type who had taken up poker. I'm not quite sure why I got the





call, I hadn't really won that much, but maybe they liked me. I spent much of the time throwing 10 dollar Keno cards. I just about broke even. The manager said that he had arranged for a private gaming area

for us, and I started playing a little Blackjack. I drank a bunch, and I dropped a couple of grand. It was my sign to leave, and I went back to me room and took another nap before I went and chaecked out.

With the room and the losing after my charm had fled for her friends, I was only up seven hundred. That was fine, I didn't need much more. I got my things together, bought a new outfit at one of the Caesar's Forum shoppes, and grabbed my bag from the Excalibur. I started home, with only one planned stop that wasn't for gas.

### That Bar Again

So, I drove straight from Vegas to that little bar in Barstow. I was starving, and interested to see what was going on in that place. I rolled up and as soon as I parked, I knew that she was in the pad. Walking in , I saw her sitting exactly where I had left her and looking the exact same pale shade.

"Well, look who came back."

I headed over to where she was and we started chatting. It was a nice half-hour conversation, one that I really didn't want to end, but I had to finish my sandwich and get back on the road home.

"When you expect to be passing through again?" She asked.

"I'd expect sooner than you'd

think."

She gave me a brief kiss on the cheek and I left, not to return until more than two years later, when Arnie and Joyce invited me over to pick up some stuff for the museum and enjoy one of their gatherings.

And when I stopped by the place, she wasn't there.



### That Is 100% ALL

I will return with issue 8 (which will go out on the FAPA mailing) and I will have a great deal more fun. That issue will feature me talking about the cities of Hemet and Perris, California and the time I climbed a mountain...and then fell down it. It happens to be a funny stury, so I hope you will enjoy it.

Other than that, I'll have mailign comments for the FAPA version, LoCs (hopefully) for the other version and a lot of talk about what it means to be a part of a family where you constantly disappoint them, but they still can't find anyway to disown you!

Claims Department issue 7 was written by Christopher J. Garcia. Every other issue is a part of FAPA. If you've got anythign to say about it, please drop a line to [garcia@compu-terhistory.org](mailto:garcia@compu-terhistory.org) or 1401 N. Shoreline Blvd. Mountain View, CA 94043  
Thanks, and Goodnight!