

# GNAT'S TESTICLES

*A one shot fanzine from Max (20 Bakers Lane, Peterborough, Cambs, PE2 9QW) and Ang (26 Hermitage Grove, Bootle, Merseyside, L20 6DR)  
Autumn 2002*

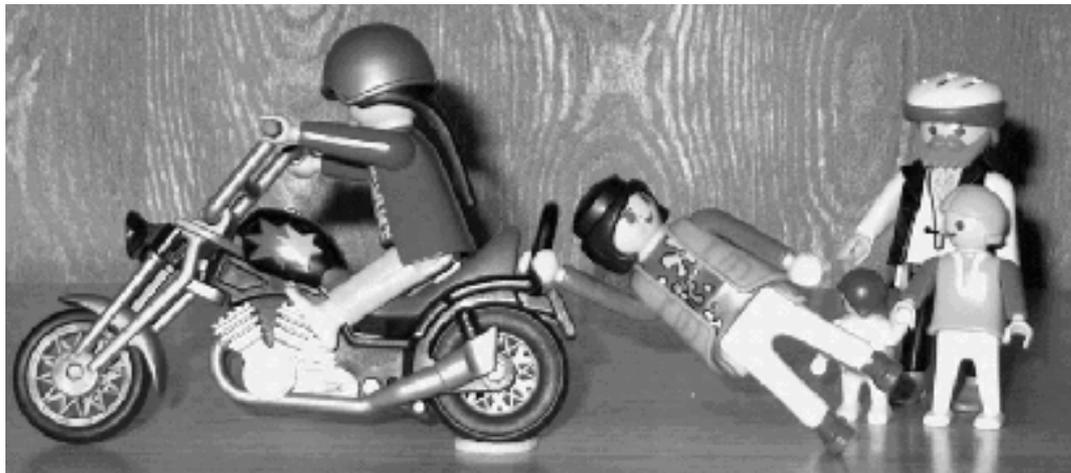
## The Bluffer's Guide to Fandom.

By Ang Rosin



At *Damn Fine Con* James Bacon, called me a "Truffle". At least I thought that was what he said and I was quite offended at the time. Pigs have rarely rooted me out from under trees and I'm certainly not wafer-thin and used a meal garnish<sup>1</sup>. I just smiled and nodded and I think he didn't notice that I was completely confused by what he said. Later on someone pointed out that he had probably called me a "Truff" and it didn't make me feel any better, even when a kindly soul told me what it actually meant.

This was an important event. It was probably the first time I had successfully bluffed my way in fandom. James was fooled and thought that, even though he didn't have a fucking clue who I was, I was a fan who had been around long enough to understand what he actually meant<sup>2</sup>. This gave me confidence. I had expertise. My previous career as a stealth fan had given me the knowledge to survive in fandom. This is the result of my study, my gift to others who have bookshelves that stretch the length of but a single room. Read what I write and learn. The most important thing you have to remember is that you must show no fear. In particular, don't be afraid of making a fool of yourself.



Be assured there is someone who has done something more demeaning, dangerous or downright stupid and usually her name is Alison Scott.

Also remember that attack is the best form of defence. You know these people are odd. They are at a science-fiction convention for chrissake. Distract them before they absorb you. Strategies include:

- 1) Singing at them
- 2) Buying them a drink
- 3) Giving them a tattoo
- 4) Dancing with your friends to music that no one else can hear.



Bring mix-and-match fannish accessories. Suggested items are:

- 1) Water pistols. Use them whilst muttering phrases like “Wombat”, “ZZ9” and “Damn Fine”. People will pretend they understand.



- 2) Imaginary friends or substitute friends. Try a bear with two heads, a cardboard cut-out of your current lust object, or a puppet.

- 3) Children. Have them perform cute actions during convention programming. Note that wailing and being dragged from room to room is not often considered cute but exceptions are made if the wailer is a female rubber clad adult.

Those without access to such accessories might consider acquiring cats to talk about at length at the convention. Two cats is too many. More is insane; particularly if you feel inclined to name one of them Snufkin.

If this all seems like too much effort, try to appear blasé about the whole con-going experience: Dress up as if going to a wedding and disappear for several hours in the middle of the convention. Pretending it is your own wedding may arouse suspicion.



If all else fails, tell people you're having a room party and give them Tobes' room number. They will enjoy themselves, most won't realise you weren't really the host and you will be bought drinks in the bar the following day.

While we are on the subject:

**DUFF is not a beer.**

Be mysterious. Pay people to mention your name a lot and then don't turn up anywhere. Try not to push your luck, though: Jim deLiscard got away with claiming to chair a convention whilst actually going snowboarding but he is a practised professional. If you strike the right balance then before you know it you will be mentioned in more fanzines than anyone else.



Yes, fanzines. You'll have seen them if you have been anywhere fannish, they are the small (if you are lucky) pieces of paper that people hand to you. Accept the paper, it is a bonding ritual. Later on you can redistribute the paper to other people.

If you are particularly successful and get mentioned often, half the fanzine readership will believe you have been made up and don't actually exist. Now you can start admitting to being you.

Try to think of a witty response to "Oh, so you're <your name here>!" as you may need to use it a lot. In this way you integrate into the tribe. Talking of tribes:

**TAFF is not a person of welsh extraction.**

If anyone does ask you what fanzines you read, just make up a ridiculous title. They will believe it exists and is simply obscure.

You may get a "best new fan award" based on supplying articles for *Gnat's Testicles*, artwork for *Adjective Noun Verbs*, or locking *Spite*. Even better, you can claim that you are writing a fanzine but that it hasn't been published because you are waiting for "one last article to be sent to me" and that you will distribute it at "the next convention".

Yes, conventions. Because you will never stop at one, oh no. Conventions are the shopping malls of fandom and contain the highest concentrations of fans in one place, generally hanging around in large groups and behaving in a way that alarms the general public. It is here that your survival skills must be honed to perfection.



This is the most important piece of advice I can give you: Never attend a program item with the words "Wag" and "cocktail" in the title. Your first foray into fandom may be your last. That reminds me:

**GUFF is not slang for breaking wind.**

You have survived a convention. People believe you are a fan, and yet you know you are successfully bluffing, but be careful. Are you still just a Bluffer? Are you sure you haven't slipped over that final boundary? A short test with simple yes or no answers:

Has anyone ever called you a SMOF?  
Did you know what it meant?

If you answered yes to both of these questions then I'm afraid it's too late for my help. I suggest you get yourself a comfy seat in the bar, order a pint of real ale, complain that they've run out of whatever you'd rather be drinking and start reciting your collection of ancient puns.

If you answered no to one or both then you may be safe, you can still bluff proudly and well. If you forget all else you have been told today, then I charge you to remember this:

**Filking IS a disgusting sexual practice.**

[1] Although service available if negotiated in advance. Prices on application.

[2] Or so I thought at the time. As I become more expert in the field of fandom I realise that many fans don't understand that a lot of what they say is, essentially, nonsense[3].

[3] Actually, it might just be James Bacon.