



Broken Toys is a personalzine by Taral Wayne, and while I should be working on *New Toy* 4, this issue came together of its own accord, instead. As was the case last issue, I have a letter column that overflows. Nevertheless, locs are always welcome. As has been the case for the 22 years, I live in partial exile at 245 Dunn Ave., Apt. 2111, Toronto Ontario M6K 1S6. However, contact or loc me at Taral@Teksavvy.com. The date is **March 2013**, This issue is ExtraTaraltoriality (or Kiddelidivee Books & Art) 264, © 2013 Taral Wayne

COLD CUTS

I'm afraid I've lost the capacity for coherent thought for the time being. You see, I've picked up a virus, probably from my friend Steven last week, when we had dinner at the corner chop suey restaurant. The timing was exquisitely bad, as the sniffing and sneezing started the night before I was planning to attend a coin show. I *love* attending coin shows, and sometimes can even afford to bring home a bronze As or silver Denarius – but this time I'll have to sit at home, sneezing and snuffling, while all those lovely little bits of metallic history go unseen by me ... all because of a virus. Damn.

Worse, I haven't slept in at least 48 hours now, and still don't feel any inclination to visit the Land of Nod. While reading a book in bed, I suddenly find my thoughts drifting off at a tangent ... and then I snap awake just before I tilt sideways and I end up on the floor. This is incredibly aggravating, because sleep is supposed to help you recover from a cold sooner. And, without sleep intervals to go by, I never know whether I should have breakfast or dinner, since I don't operate by mundane considerations such as sunrise and sunset. No question about it, though, the worst part of sleep deprivation is that I do my most creative thinking while I slumber. Another 24 hours ought to resolve the problem, however – after three straight days of wakefulness, I expect to keel over into a coma and probably drown in my own nasal discharge.

I can't even call what drains from my nostrils proper "snot." It's more as though a tap has been left running in my head and the water pouring out my nose. Last night I put some finishing touches on a drawing, stood up ... and a drop of fluid the size of a grape instantly fell on the paper.

As fast as I wiped it dry, that one single drop wet a spot about as wide as a quarter ... which then dried all wrinkly. So, not only can I not sleep with a cold, I can't safely work, either.

What I *can* do – fairly safely – is watch the boxed set of the complete four seasons of *Route 66* from end to end. It is strange to watch these stories so many years after Martin Milner and George Maharis toured the country in their early model Corvette. Those were the years in which I grew up – I was ten when Buzz and Todd had their first adventure in a small town called Garth, somewhere in Mississippi. Nothing about the program *ought* to seem strange, though. In many ways, seeing 1960 again is like revisiting an old neighborhood. Yet, the early '60s are a foreign country now, and that is what's most strange about it.

Of recent attempts to re-create the era, *Men in Black III* gets it wrong. Most people really did *not* wear hats in 1960 – except possibly in rural Mississippi, the fedora and its like fell out of fashion a few years earlier, in the mid-1950s. But the strangest detail of all about the world of *Route 66* is the way men seemed to engage in fist fights at the least provocation – even Todd and Buzz took swings at each other on an almost routine basis. Everybody drank and smoked. Women were, on the whole, sex objects – and a statistically unlikely number of them bleach-bottle-blondes, as well. All automobiles were made in North America. And *anyone* could get work just by parking outside a foreman's trailer and asking for a job. Ever drilled for offshore oil before? Dusted crops from a Stearman? Prospected for beryllium? No matter, you start tomorrow morning at nine sharp. In the 1960s the economy just *boomed*, and any clod could find employment.

And then there was the Rod Serling style of writing. No matter how uncouth or uneducated, ordinary working men, booze-hounds or flighty women could deliver a Shakespearian monolog at the drop of a martini olive in dry gin and vermouth. Marvelous word-smithing! Of course, it was no wonder we all grew tired of it before *Abbey Road*, but now nobody writes like that anymore ... probably no one *can*.

Much of the delight I get from watching these old road dramas is from spotting the guest stars. Some were important in their day, and rated a billing. E.G. Marshall, for instance, also Leslie Nielson, Ann Francis, Jack Warden, Suzanne Pleshette and Lee Marvin. But before *2001: A Space Odyssey*, nobody thought to give Keir Dullea a billing, nor Edgar Buchanan before *Pettycoat Junction*, nor Donna Douglas before *The Beverly Hillbillies*, nor Roger C. Carmel before *Mudd's Women*. If I watch long enough, I may even spot an early appearance of Johnny Depp. It's hard to name a film Depp *isn't* in.

But, perhaps *Route 66* is too heavy a dose of reality for me when I'm feeling this poorly. For the last week or so, while I'm falling asleep, I try to imagine life as a Fraggles. How pathetic is that – a 61-old-man imagining he's a singing puppet that is neither child nor adult. The only thing that would make it worse is if I added mature relationships between the Fraggles ... so, of course, that's exactly what I did. There I am, talking to Marjorie the Trash Heap about how I can't make up songs or sing like other Fraggles, and she's dispensing the Ancient Wisdom of the Universal Jewish Grandmother ... and I can't fall asleep. Instead, my nose blocks up, my breathing grows labored and I jerk bolt upright, wide awake. It's so frustrating that I could light a match to the old bag. And I was just about to discover how an ordinary cats-eye marble was the right gift to take back to my friends, too.

Oh well, time to open a fresh spray bottle of decongestant. I'm going through the stuff like I was slugging back tap water. And don't even *talk* to me about Kleenex tissues.

I haven't really felt like writing while waiting out my cold. Writing is too much like work ... moreover, I feel the demon inside me that has driven my writing for the last seven or eight years may have finally exhausted itself. Perhaps I've written everything there was to write? Or perhaps my demon is huddled miserably on the coals, snuffling and snorting molten sulfur onto wadded sheets of asbestos, and writing is only one more thing that will have to wait until the cold is gone. Damn, I hate colds. I'm glad I don't get them often.

But eventually, the damn thing *will* be gone, and I can get back to writing. And drawing. Maybe even attending coin shows. And best of all, soon I'll know how I got away from the Gorgs while carrying that cat's-eye marble.

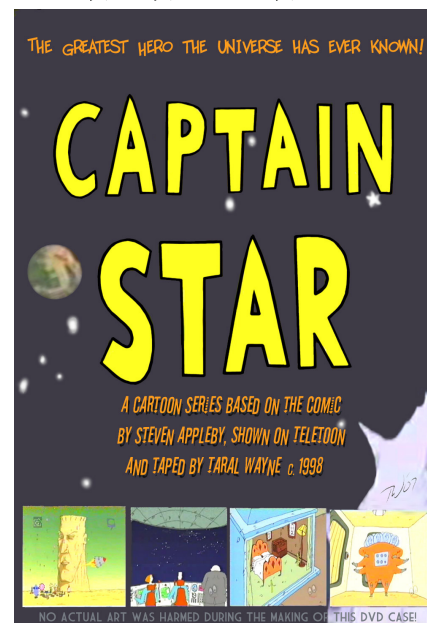
One of my favourite adult cartoon shows of all time, *Captain Star*, was based on a mini-comic I never saw, but from the descriptions I've read, it seems to have read rather differently on the printed page than it did in the animated version – more bitter and less sympathetic toward the main characters. The animated version created a number of rounded, profoundly sad but likeable individuals. There is Black, the fussy, rotund, self-abashing English-middle-class nobody who is navigator of *The Boiling Hell*, who prefers to run a seafood restaurant and communicate with his fish. Another is Scarlett, the science officer. She is stern, practical, logical and not altogether as lacking in empathy as she seems. Nevertheless, she despairs, with good reason, that she will ever get anyone to take matters as seriously as they warrant. Then there is Jones, the stoker. Even with nine heads, he barely has the intelligence of one good head. His condition is the result of what he describes as “a terrible accident” while he was stoking the atomic furnace of the ship. But Jones is faithful and true to his captain – he is the eternal innocent. And, incidentally, a superb stoker.

And last, there is Captain Star himself, acknowledged by all the galaxy as the universe's greatest hero, a prat as rigid as a neutronium fireplace poker, who lives by the rule book, has named hundreds of worlds after himself and has no shred of a sense of humour ... and yet, now and then permits his carefully hidden human side to show.

Before landing on The Nameless Planet, their mission was to discover new civilizations ... and sell them

STAR IN THE MAKING

TARAL WAYNE



things they don't need. But that was all in the past, which they can only look back on. They have been stranded ever since landing on The Nameless Planet – not because *The Boiling Hell* is disabled nor because the crew is lost. They are simply waiting for Orders that never come. Somehow, HQ seems to have forgotten all about “the Greatest Hero Who Ever Lived,” even though there are (usually unwelcome) visitors of all sorts to The Nameless Planet, and routine mail is delivered daily. Yet, there are never Orders! If *Captain Star* has a theme, it is certainly *futility*.

Futility is a theme I can really get into, myself. But, the animated *Captain Star* shows a surprisingly subtle sense of surreality as well – although *Captain Star* is more or less a parody of *Star Trek*, the crew of *The Boiling Hell* (except the Captain himself, who despises it) are all fans of a TV program that is a dead ringer for *Star Trek* ... except that the show is based on the “actual” life of the “real” Captain Star. And like any media presentation, they tend to get the facts wrong. “Jones” has only three heads instead of nine, for example. The actor who plays Star defeats a race of sentient polyester fibres in a lime green rug by ripping off his shirt and wrestling with it. But in the actual episode in which the “real” Star defeats the “real” Zooties, he defeats them by tracking dirt on them. Naturally, the “real” Star hates Kenneth Shed, the self-important actor who plays him, while remaining completely oblivious to his own monumental vanity. As though there were no end to the ironies, Kenneth Shed speaks just like William Shatner, and also wears a toupee. On the second occasion that Star meets Shed, Star is kidnapped by aliens, taken to the convention planet and forced to take part in a Captain Star look-alike contest. His abductors are certain that the real Star is a shoo-in to win. In a predictable twist, Shed is one of the judges and says the real Star looks nothing like the real Star! Only one small boy is actually able to recognize him.

Captain Star not only looks inward on itself in strange ways, it can be touchingly poetic as well. Star plainly loves deep space, and writes moving soliloquies in his diary about the endless days on the Nameless Planet without the purpose that being a space captain gives him. He had once possessed greatness that is now ineffably lost to him – he fears it may never return, but must never admit it to himself.

Unfortunately, if you haven't seen this show, you probably never will. It has never been available either on tape or DVD. In fact, I bless my lucky Stars that I was prescient enough to tape the episodes from TV when they were aired. If desperate, you can watch all 13 episodes on YouTube, but a show as good as *Captain Star* deserves better than a third-rate venue with intermittent sound and a tiny, blurry image you can't save that was probably taped from TV, just like my copies. I can't imagine why no DVD release has been forthcoming ... waiting for Orders from HQ, I have no doubt.

HOLD THAT POSE!

A while ago, I was e-mailed by a man named Zack – whose name I couldn't place, but who turned out to be working for a casting agency for the National Geographic Cable Channel. I was a little skeptical at first, but after some research on Google I believed him. His current job was to find material for a program called “Taboo,” and apparently he regarded “Pygmalionism” as a possible topic. He had noticed my art on DeviantArt and wanted to talk to me about it.

For those of you who have fairly normal sex lives, let me explain that “Pygmalionism” – Zack's

word – or “statuephilia,” – mine – is an attraction to inanimate representations of a sex partner, such as statues and mannequins. Inevitably, it is closely associated with fetishes in which people are turned into other sorts of inanimate objects, such as trees or furniture, or in which they are wrapped like mummies in cloth, cellophane or tape. Plaster casts are another variation on the theme. The key concept seems to be immobility.

Zack and I talked for about an hour on several subjects, actually, since “statuephilia” or “Pygmalionism” is obviously (to you and me, anyway) only one of *many* interests I have. In that time, I tried my best to answer a number of questions.

For instance, was there a *community* of statuephiles? Well, I said, *yes* and *no*. I know of somewhat fewer than a dozen currently active artists who are well known, and a larger number of others who are unskilled in varying degrees. I added that most artists manipulate photos or used software similar to Poser to create their art – not many artists of note were still drawing the old-fashioned way (as I do). To my knowledge, there was not a great deal of traditional statuephile art being done anymore. Most was done by the artist as a one-off.

Were Pygmalionists a community? I had to say, no. Almost without exception, statuephiles are only known by online pseudonyms, and there didn't seem to be much networking going on. People posted stories or art and, for the most part, didn't discuss it beyond posting one-liner comments like “She looks stoned,” or “I got stiff.” I doubted many of the artists had met any of the others in the statuephile community, or knew them beyond what art they saw online.

Perhaps I'm all wet about this, but that's my impression. I've only communicated with perhaps a half a dozen individuals, one or two of them quite superficially. I assume this is typical, and infer from it that members of the statuephile community prefer to be anonymous, and don't wish to announce their taste in art to the world. I'm not sure you can blame them. Would you like to explain to strangers why you fantasize about making love to a marble sculpture or plaster mannequin? Or about *becoming* one?

“Well, you see, it's something like bondage, but also like dominance/submission, with a little exhibitionism thrown in, and ... oh, *hell*, mind your own business!”

I suspect that at this point, the National Geographic Society agent's enthusiasm began to cool. I wasn't feeding him what he needed to hear to work up a story. We began to talk more about *me*, instead – my other art, my long involvement in science fiction fandom, my professional work, and so forth. I promised to send him additional images and text that he could take to the next producers' conference ... that was about two weeks ago. I'm waiting to hear back, and think I may wait a long time.

Most likely I've talked him out of doing an episode on statuephilia, having convinced him that there's nothing of interest there for the TV viewer. But, as one of my friends put it, did I really want to be known nationally as the father of Pygmalionism? Hell yes! Not many people have fetishes named after them! Sadism and Masochism, of course, are named after the Marquis de Sade and Leopold von Sacher-Masoch. Who wouldn't want one's name to appear among such august company?

Then again, maybe “Pygmalionism” is for the best.

Left-Over Pieces

Richard Chandler, mauser@kendra.com, 17 Feb 2013

Heh, I had been composing a message with a few typos pointed out myself.

On the other hand, I couldn't come up with much to *say* in terms of the main topic, being the vapidness of Con reports. Indeed, I haven't even been to a Con in nearly a decade. Although these days I could probably finally afford to go to one, I wouldn't know anyone there.

As for the previous issue, I guess I've been a bit of a weirdness magnet, because I've known a fair number of people at various stages of the Transgendered journey since college. At least half a dozen, including my ex-brother-in-law.

They never seem to be very happy people, and they cling to the idea that changing their bodies will change themselves. But after surgery they are still the same miserable people. Probably why they have such a high suicide rate. Of course, another reason could be something I saw in an interview with a Pre-OP Transsexual who would never go through with it. "She" said that after surgery, you will never have another orgasm again. What a bleak future that would be.

Keith Soltys, keith@soltys.ca, 17 Feb 2013

This is a well-known phenomenon among technical writers and I have experienced it many times, much to my chagrin. Unfortunately, no matter what you do, there will always be at least one typo in any document of significant size or importance. It may be that type has a half-life, and characters transmute to random values at random intervals.

In the interests of reading this issue in a reasonable amount of time (before the next one comes out, in other words), I sent the PDF to my Amazon account, which converted it to Kindle format and loaded it on my Kindle. It came across quite well, minus the graphics. I will, of course, look at the PDF too, so I can admire the artwork and layout, but it's much easier for me to read it on the Kindle where I can actually see the type.

Rich Lynch, rw_lynch@yahoo.com, 17 Feb 2013

Thanks for BT#13. I liked your article about con reports, and agree that it's becoming a rarity to find ones that are informative, succinct, and also entertaining. But I will offer you this somewhat ironic fanhistorical insight: the con reports that are dreariest to read - the ones that go on and on about various minutiae - are often the ones most valuable to historians, simply because they **are** so filled with detail.

Felicity Walker, felicity4711@gmail.com, 17 Feb 2013

"Why I Don't Write Con Reports": I too have felt the need to write about food in my con reports. I have no idea why that's a thing. I thought it was just me and my love of food, but it must be universal. Dale Speirs has complained about the same phenomenon in several issues of his zine. If you read my old con reports, though, you'll notice that--while I did write about food--I also did my best to summarize the panels I attended, and gave capsule reviews (not just lists) of the comics and zines I bought. "Left-Over Pieces": Ordinarily I wouldn't be writing this until I'd first read and reviewed your other 12 issues, but the message in your e-mail tugged my heartstrings and so I jumped ahead to #13. I saw that I missed some trans-content

in #12, so I went back and read that too. Until now, my guess as to why transpersons are more prevalent in fandom was not that original: fandom is open-minded and offers shelter to all sorts of unusual people. Also, fans are intelligent, thoughtful people who are more likely to self-reflect and realize if they're transgendered. However, I think that John Nielsen Hall's explanation is even better.

Wait ... did you just imply you haven't read any previous issues? Arrggh! I am publishing to a vacuum!

I wonder if I'm one of the people Graeme mentioned. When I came out of the closet as transgendered, all the /fans/ I knew were supportive; mundanes, less so. (Pro-tip: don't walk past construction sites.) I was too sensitive in those early days and I owe one fan an apology for taking a light-hearted comment too seriously and including it in my report of the convention where it happened. These days I'm much more relaxed about pronouns and names; if someone accidentally calls me "he" or by my male name, I'm more likely to worry that I haven't presented as a girl enough lately, than to assume the speaker doesn't accept me. (I have to divide my time between male and female modes due to work and filial obligations, and often come to BCSFA meetings straight from work, still in boy mode.) "Bob and Doug Conquer Mars!": That dream should be adapted. Just don't let Dave Thomas use his animation studio. I have a mutant ability: I can read in my dreams. I think it's because I've always been into fonts and lettering, and I see words as art as much as text. Just last night I dreamed that I saw a book about souls by an author named Susan Ambrose that would be perfect for a friend of mine. When I woke up I Googled "Susan Ambrose" and there is no author by that name, so I guess my friend is out of luck!

Ned Brooks, nedbrooks@sprynet.com, 17 Feb 2013

Hi Taral - I'm one of the tired old fans who only gets out one issue a year, though I do get out 18 apazines a year. But there are still large frequent zines with long letter-columns. Look at *Reluctant Famulus*:

79	Jan/11	86	Mar/12
80	Mar/11	87	Jun/12
81	May/11	88	Aug/12
82	Aug/11	89	Oct/12
83	Sep/11	90	Dec/12
84	Nov/11	91	Jan/13
85	Feb/12		

I tend to agree with you about con reports. It's a lost art. I never could do it well because I don't have that sort of memory. And I seldom read them now, for the reasons you mention. But I have a dim memory of having enjoyed them way back when.

I get fanzines, but there is no stack of them awaiting attention - I decide immediately whether I want to write a loc, and then the zine is recorded in the inventory and archived.

This issue seems to be over half locs! I admire Steve Stiles' ambition to read a biography of Woodrow Wilson - I know I would never get far with one. If he gets through it perhaps he can tell us about the worst thing I remember reading about Wilson - that he had the suffragettes abused in the Washington jail.

He was also a racist, who I believe had staff laid off from the White House because they were black.

There is no way to add e-zines to the archive inventory I have here, unless I wanted to actually print each one out. Let some younger fan keep a cyber-file of them on a thumb drive! As the world becomes more crowded and personal space ever more cramped, it may well be that our collections of fetish objects will vanish. Where will my 300 typewriters go? Probably for scrap rather than sinking into a landfill. The fanzines can go to the paper recycle.

There is no way, it seems to me, to say that the gluten-free diet of our primitive ancestors would be good for us. I doubt they lived on fruit and nuts alone. Long before the invention of agriculture, man had discovered fire - which allowed him to eat the meat that he didn't, in general, have the dentition or digestion for. Most human-scale predators swallow their food whole. But so what? Most of those people died far younger than the modern life-span, now past 70, often for reasons that had little to do with diet. My mother lived to be 103, on whatever middle-class people ate 1908-2012 - she was, however, never overweight. If there is a diet that will increase the average lifespan, I would not look for it in our primitive ancestors. Some years ago there was an experiment with rats that indicated that their life-span was significantly increased if they were fed only every other day.

Eric Mayer, groggy.ales@gmail.com, 17 Feb 2013

Thanks for *Broken Toys* 13. Hope you won't mind my short loc this time. You seem to be getting plenty without me! If I'd got half as much response I'd still be publishing.

It's true that, as you say in reply to my loc, much of my writing in *E-Ditto* and *Revenant* had nothing to do with fandom, which I realized was a shortcoming. However, if you look through the issues, there was actually a lot of stuff about fandom mixed in with the mundane essays, including of course numerous digital reproductions of the hectographed covers I did for *Groggy*. (And the whole dittoed look and feel of *E-Ditto*) Toward the end of *Revenant*'s run I wrote a longish article about my personal experience with hectography. I was interested to see that there was an article about hectography in the new *Fanstuff* and I would've thought the writer might have at least referred readers to *E-Ditto* and *Revenant* for some hecto examples, but no. The zines simply weren't noticed. I was pretty much publishing into a void.

While I am sure part of that was due to my own rather tenuous participation in fandom, I also think -- and some of your loccers comments confirm -- that ezines also have a much smaller potential audience than print zines. Obviously you have managed to garner good response to an electronic zine despite the handicap, so it is possible.

I had hoped that by publishing ezines I'd be able to connect with fandom and make some sort of valued contribution. Unfortunately, I failed. As writers, we are not entitled to an audience. It's up to us to either produce something the readers we approach want, or find a different bunch of readers who might be more receptive to what we want to do.

I noticed that D.B. Williams made no reference to a very similar article I wrote about the history of fanzine reproduction many years ago -- but it was many years ago. He probably knows nothing about it.

eFanzines have another disadvantage, I think. They appear on Bill's site and either you know what it is or you don't, and want to download it or you don't. Well ... no point crying over milk you can't afford to spill. We publish e-zines because that's what we can publish, and there's no point wishing otherwise.

I think what's working for *BT* is sheer persistence -- I also talk it up a lot when writing locs to other zines, and announce in on FarceBook when there's a new issue. I'm pushing the idea of a prejudice against ezines only partly because it's true -- but also to get people to loc *my* zine. Finally, I talk about fandom and other fans often enough that its bound to generate involvement. With issue 13, I almost succeeded too well ... 15 pages of letters in a 26-page zine is actually ridiculous.

I thought you were doing well with *E-Ditto* -- it usually had a good lettercol ... although not pushing 15 pages. The zine also seems more current, the outsider contributors giving it a lift also. *Revenant* really did seem as though it were a zine from the Phantom Zone somehow. There was a distance between it and fandom that I think reflected the distance between you personally and most other fans. Imagine yourself going to a convention, but sitting in the corner by yourself talking about your life and experiences, but there's no one else there. That was something like the spirit of *Revenant* -- you knew you didn't have an audience, and weren't trying to get one.

Hope that's not coming on too critically -- it was a fine zine. But that may have been why it wasn't getting the same notice as your previous effort. I think you could probably recapture the spirit of *E-Ditto* and become more involved in fandom, but it would take noticing fandom more yourself, and I don't think you have been paying much attention to it.

That, and who reviews zines anymore? Guy Lillian has the only regular venue I know of, and it's not very regular.

I'm not going on any faanish crusades these days, but in my opinion fandom is stupidly cutting itself off from people who might otherwise be inclined to contribute. Dave Locke told me lack of response to his ezine was why he quit. There are old fans and probably even more young people who might be potential fans who cannot, no way, no how, afford to accommodate those who demand paper.

And why? Does anyone mimeo these days? It's not like the feel and look of old handcrafted zines is being preserved or that fans still admire hand stencilling. As far as I know editors make computer files and print them on their own printer or take them to a print shop. Wow. There's a valuable art for you, delivering your files to Kinko's.

For people that want print zines, the pdf is supposed to be a delivery system. The individual takes on the negligible cost and trouble of printing his or her own copy, thus saving the fanned the enormous cost and trouble of printing and mailing every zine. To me, that sounds like a great idea.

Then too, how many young people are going to be convinced to waste their time messing around with printing and mailing? And remember, today the printing is not a skill or even an art like it used to be in the days of mimeo, ditto and hecto. It's nothing but donkey work. I can see how some young people might find the old-fashioned concept a zine to be intriguing if emulated on a computer.

I cater to a shrinking audience -- I recognize it, and accept that there's probably nothing I can do about it. The fundamental problem is that there's no reason for younger fans to take an interest in fanzines whether they're printed, posted in digital form or transmitted by mental telepathy. If anything is to be done to revive interest in fanzines, we have to incorporate the interest of contemporary fandom in our zines -- which means stuff about *Stargate*, Terry Pratchett, *Game of Thrones*, Transformers movies, Dr. Who, Jedi, Heinlein and shit so beneath my boredom threshold that I'd rather give up publishing first. But there's probably no way to make younger fans care about shit I did when I was their age, 30 or 40 years ago. I sort of picture strapping fannish victims to seats and using wires to hold their eyes open like Alex in *Clockwork Orange*, to make them read my fanzines. Just possibly my wit and wisdom would win out ... once in a while. But short of such drastic stratagems, I don't know how to make younger readers read *Broken Toys*. I'm sure as hell not going to start writing about science fiction on a regular basis.

Robert Runte, runte@uleth.ca, 19 Feb 2013

So here's the problem with a zine that comes out frequently: it places an unfair burden on subscribers to keep up with reading and loccing. I believe I had a loc in issue #2, and here is issue 14. Even allowing for the fact that free distribution by email considerably lowers the loc-to-issue ratio requirements of most faneds, one has to expect to loc least one issue in ten.... Where is one to find the time when there are something like ten issues in a year? What do you expect us to do: quit our jobs?

Very well, I am seriously considering quitting my job at the end of June. I have to decide next month whether to take the early retirement plan offered us. I personally do not like the word 'retire' since it implies both that I am elderly and that after leaving the job I will have nothing to do. I therefore prefer to tell people that I am planning to quit my day job to become a full time writer/editor. The reaction is somewhat skeptical, given that I have only ever published two short stories, but when I explain that I am almost finished my novel, and that I have already written my Hugo acceptance speech, they realize that my plan is entirely sound.

Bit disappointed by the lack of mention in this issue. I haven't actually read any issue of *Broken Toys* since my own letter in #2 (the rest remains on my 'to be read' shelf, which I have only recently realized is short for 'to be read when I retire') but thanks to the wonders of the "find" command, took the liberty of egoscanning the last ten issues and did not find myself mentioned once. Of course this is your personal zine, and so focused primarily on yourself, but surely I intrude upon your thoughts on a regular basis? I've only been gaffiated for a couple of decades, and so am slightly wounded that I should leave your thoughts so quickly.... Do I need to reignite one of our previous fan feuds/debates/et., satires etc to regain your attention? Perhaps I shall put out an issue of *Broken Syot* when I retire.

I haven't mentioned you for simple, solipsistic reasons -- we hardly encounter one another in any context. Now and then I must see your name, mentioned as a panelist on something serious and constructive at some western convention. But I have never been to a Canadian convention west of Winnipeg, and only once west of Kitchener/Waterloo. And, from your point of view, I probably don't even qualify as a science fiction fan -- I hardly read the stuff and have little to do with that side of fandom. It's almost like some sort of *Star Trek* phase nonsense, where we exist in different universes and can walk through each other. That may be why you taste a bit of spleen, now and then ... I'm passing through you.

Brad Foster, bwfoster@juno.com, 19 Feb 2013

I didn't notice much in the way of errors in this second posting of *BT*#13. So, to make up for that, here is a short loc that might be considered an error in and of itself! (A meta-error?)

Regarding the logo on this new issue: I was wondering recently if there was actually any rule given to the designers of the Hugo bases that the rocket itself, while it must of course be included in their designs, always had to be in a completely upright 90-degree position. Why not do something where it was going at an angle, or even horizontal, if you could design a base that worked to support it? And now, here comes *BT*#13 that not only addresses that question, but tosses in the extra, "and why not glue a spring mechanism to it as well?" Yeah, I think they need to really have more fun with the thing. It'll drive some folks nuts, and give much joy to others. We'll just have to wait and see, I guess...

Regarding being a part of groups on Facebook: Belonging to too many similar e-groups, mail lists, Facebook groups and discussion forums, all with subjects based around small variations on the same theme, can certainly eat up a -- lot -- of -- time weeding through all the overlapping information that they will contain. I've removed myself from a number of such things in the past when I realized I was both spending too much time there, weeding through it all, and not enough time actually -- doing -- something, actually contributing in any real way. Sometimes it is just time to step back, take a breath, and re-evaluate what we need to do with the limited hours we have each day. And hey, we can always drop back into any group when we feel like it.

And that is, apparently, the full extent of my pitiful thoughts for this issue. sigh. Sometimes it's magic, sometimes it's not...

Bruce Patterson, bpral22169@aol.com, 19 Feb 2013

I think the difference between post-media-sf fandom and the fandom we started out in are more that it's not the same thing -- not even the same kind of thing -- even though it has the same name. I doubt very much that you were even alive at the time of *The Staple Wars* (I wasn't) though probably just barely there when *The Enchanted Duplicator* was written. Why it would be reasonable for us to be interested in things that happened before our births but not for media fans to be interested in things that happened within their own memory is very simply that media fandom -- and therefore increasingly fandom-without-qualification -- is essentially spectator and passive in nature. SF Fandom before about 1970 was essentially (that is, in its essence) participatory and self-referential. That is, fandom was about fandom, more than anything else. Which is why I am skeptical about participatory activities (such as smaller, faster fanzines) having any impact at all.

On the other hand, it occurs to me this may pinpoint *why* e-zines seem to receive the short shrift you noted/ranted about, even from other participatory types: they *look like* they belong to the passive/spectator genre, so there's an additional entrance barrier to giving them a participatory response.

I joined Facebook because it lets me hear from or at least about people who have otherwise *stopped communicating*. Generally not for reasons of distaste -- just dropping through the cracks. I spent several years in the 80's grinding my teeth over the fact that I had to be the one to keep in touch, until I got tired of it and simply didn't.

I rarely post, for the simple reason that it vanishes -- though I do "like" and "comment." The problem seems to be that there is no such thing as a discussion -- the feed just doesn't support it.

Nor is discussion possible even on a blog. I have an author blog for the Heinlein biography (www.whpattersonjr.com) but the comment facility has become so overwhelmed with commercial spam that it became quite impractical to leave open, and it doesn't seem that anyone is willing to register in order to make a comment. (Of course it does not help that the publisher so frustratingly drags his feet that the reportable milestones are too few and far between).

There are a number of people posting old fannish photos online, and I am quite sanguine about this even when I have no immediate interest in them. "Interest" is necessarily a personal quality that changes over time. When I become interested in A or B, the photos are there and available. (Somewhat more serious is that they sometimes get the attributions wrong)

I tend to agree with Chris Garcia, both that I'm somewhat underwhelmed by Frances T. Laney, and also that your "Ah, Sweet Idiocy" material should be published -- soon! -- and with you that it should be done in some special fashion so that it becomes available to those interested. Maybe the Fancy III people could shed some light on ways and means? I think a lot of context-setting historical material might be useful now that we're so many cultural watersheds away from it. Still, it sheds Light On The Eternal Problem of the Nature of Fandom.

R. Graeme Cameron's addition to the discussion of paper zines vs. e-zines makes me think of another lamentable factor about paper zines: storage and perpetuation. Paper -- particularly not the low-grade, sulfur-embedded older papers -- does not store well (to say nothing of bulkiness). I recall the sad, sad case of Gary Farber's once-estimable collection of historical (paper) fanzines, lost to accidental tragedy (I disremember the details at this remove of time) and to his inability to keep them due to ongoing personal misfortunes added to the accident. That was an invaluable historical archive, now gone.

Lloyd Penney -- be careful how you malign Brussels sprouts! I cannot say they taste "like chocolate," but they have gotten an undeservedly bad reputation because of generations of vile cooks who boiled them to a sulfurous, reeking mess. When lightly steamed and tossed with salt, pepper, a little butter and lemon juice, they are very tasty, and I make them several times a month in this basic state. The butter can be dispensed with if appropriate, but the lemon juice is essential.

I accidentally converted the whole of my family to sprout-o-philes one Easter when I made a recipe I learned from a friend: quartered, steamed, brown butter, toasted pine nuts, lemon, salt, pepper, and a splash of cream. I find the cream, which was part of the original recipe, gilding the lily, as it were, but they liked it. I made a small amount for myself for a family Easter one year but couldn't get the leg of lamb out of the oven before the whole lot was vacuumed up and I didn't get any. Now it's demanded every time the family gets together, so I make special trips to Trader Joe's because they have taken to selling sprouts on the stem during the season.

Not that a special trip to Trader Joe's is all that special. The Church of Trader Joe's is on my weekly calendar. And besides, TJ's has started offering a kind of Cheshire cheese with caramelized onions mixed in which, though it's a bit too sweet for my taste, the family adores with glad exclamations.

Strangely, broccoli and Brussels sprouts are among the veggies that I do like. But, again, can't keep them long. Sprouts will freeze, but I didn't like them at first -- they were bitter and tasted somehow like ashes.

Then I was told to blanch them before freezing. To my surprise, this worked perfectly! The fresh flavour was preserved and the sprouts themselves were kept bright green, not the sort of washed-out yellow-green they turned when cooked after freezing without blanching.

I probably should eat more of the veggies I like, but there are such a small number of them that I grow tired of the same three or four greens over and over. I also try to have a large garden salad as the last meal of the day about once in every three days -- but since the cold and snow settled over the city, my resolve has just about vanished.

Steve Jeffrey, srjeffery@aol.com, 24 Feb 2013

Your pastiche of the typical exhaustive (and exhausting) con report in *Broken Toys 13* was hilarious and spot on. Why do I care what these people ate (and ate almost constantly, it appears), who they met in the lift or passed in the corridor in the way to the art show, masquerade, etc.?

Like you, I don't, and it makes my eyes glaze over after a couple of paragraphs, especially when I flip ahead to discover there's eight or nine more pages of this stuff.

But what *do* I want for a con report?

In fact, I don't want a report at all. A 'report' sounds too much like a school assignment (and too many of them read like one, too), or something you have to produce for work to justify your expense account for attending a conference, to hide the fact you spent most of the time in the bar.

Most of the conreps I've enjoyed have been rather off-the-wall impressionistic articles that give the flavour of what it's like to have been at the convention without going into laborious detail about the minutiae of the catering, hotel reception. If I was there, I like to find out about parts of the convention I missed - sometimes to the point that you feel there were two or more separate conventions going on at the same time, most of which you weren't even aware of. And if I didn't attend, the conrep should made me want to have been there.

I don't know whether UK and US conreps fundamentally differ, but I've read some splendid articles in the past (though it seems to be a dying art nowadays), some of which take a Hunter S. Thompson approach to the art of con reportage, full of running gags, memes and in-jokes that catch the air of "desperate fun" (itself a splendid conrep coinage for that feeling of several hundred people trying to extract the most out of the dying embers of the weekend before real life swallows them again).

One of the best - or least most long-lasting - conrep memes dates back to a UK Eastercon in the '90s, "You are lost in a maze of twisty corridors, all alike", a lift from the "Colossal Cave" adventure game that perfectly recalled the experience of encountering groups of lost, bewildered and increasingly desperate fans trying to navigate the labyrinthine maze of the hotel's layout, many of whom had abandoned any hope of getting to a particular program item in time, and were now just desperate to find a way out, convinced the walls were constantly rearranging themselves around them, and they would be trapped forever. Other memes, like the strange British fan obsession with mushrooms at breakfast, were not all that funny at the time, and merely wearisome when they resurface again.

I almost never read a con report I didn't write myself... That's been my attitude toward that species of fanwriting since the late 1970s.

When I do write a con report, I try to write about anything but the con -- did we go hang-gliding or bungee jumping? Does the hotel have a lurid history of murders and gang-boss conferences? Did I hear a dirty story about two girls, a parakeet and a drawer full of unwashed socks? Did I have the corned beef or pastrami ... yes, even I sometimes have to resort to the usual.

The con report goes way back to the days when there was only one con a year ... then two ... then a handful. They were events that naive young fans of the 1940s thought each had historical significance. As

it happened, they were wrong. Balticon 13 has no special significance over Balticon 12 or 14 that anyone cares about anymore.

Jonathan McCalmont, jmccalmont@gmail.com, 25 Feb 2013

Having read *Broken Toys* #13 I was intrigued by your comments about “The Great Unwashed Masses of Sci-Fi Readers” and the Hugo award not being “ours anymore.” Comedic melodrama aside ... what did you *think* would happen?

I long harboured the impression that traditional fanzines were for people who couldn't figure out how to work Blogger. However, after working my way through a number of different fanzines (old and current), I came to realise that traditional fanzines are actually a more intimate (and in some ways superior) way of conducting an extended conversation with people who share your cultural spaces. The only problem is that, while my cultural spaces may back onto those of fanzine fandom, it's pretty clear that your conversations are mostly impenetrable to me. You know when you complained about convention reporting being nothing but names of people you don't know and meals you didn't eat? That.

When I think of fanzine fandom, I think of Mark Plummer's on-going Paraphernalia column for the weekly online genre magazine *Strange Horizons*: Rather than using the column to demonstrate the continued relevance of traditional fandom to younger SF fans, Plummer seems content to regurgitate lists of names and conventions that are as devoid of context as they are of relevance. In fact, Plummer's columns are so utterly inaccessible that I have begun to see them as rigorously encoded prophetic messages from some dark and wind-swept future. Maybe when the bombs finally fall we will realise that Plummer's anecdote about the 1987 Brighton Worldcon is actually a list of directions to a hidden stash of weapons and foodstuffs?

As much as I am intrigued by the traditional fanzine format, I am not surprised that the Hugo is migrating away from it. Fanzine fandom is a closed cultural ecosystem, and your flora and fauna are migrating to another continent. The only problem is that, while the Old World of fanzines may be in tatters, the New World of Pros-Winning-Fan-Awards-And-Dominating-All-Cultural-Spaces is almost certainly worse.

It seems to me that the Hugo fan categories are in serious need of discussion and rejuvenation. The SF community needs to work out what it means to be a 21st Century fan, and both nominate and vote accordingly. I don't know what a 21st Century fan should be but I'm pretty sure that it shouldn't be either a 1970s fan or an author with a blog.

Fanzine fandom has many flaws -- many of which I've flogged in *Broken Toys* -- but it is a community that I've chosen to defend anyway, because it resonates with me more than a circus full of strangers buying things I mostly can't afford, and reverencing people who (I have learned from experience) are very little different from the audience.

It has seemed obvious to me for several years that Old School Fandom was losing its grip on the institutions it founded. Quite a lot of fans agreed with me, but where we differed was in that I felt it was inevitable and irreversible. Other O.S. fans thought the process could be changed. But, to do that, it would be necessary to make a thousand pointless shibboleths meaningful to tens of thousands of people, who had no reason to care what A said to B in 1957, or what C was. As you pointed out, Mark's attempts tended, instead, to fall back on the ABCs. What works as an amusing anecdote told over a couple of beers in the hotel bar, though, can fail to demonstrate any point in a column in a mass magazine about science fiction.

The only relevance that I can imagine being shown is to re-establish the priority of place of SF in Old School Fandom again. (Before the 1940s, no one could have imagined anything different, and even for many years after the War, SF was still central to many fanzines.) The trouble with this approach is that many older fans are like myself -- we read some SF, but it is no longer a burning passion. To reshape O.S. fandom to appeal to younger fans would be to reshape it in a way that doesn't appeal to us. Either way, we lose.

So, my plan is to lose the greater game, but continue to play the game we know among ourselves ... while we're still here. Our median age is probably 55, after all, going on 60.

I was pleased to get your letter, by the way. It proves somebody is bothering to read what I write, and think about it.

WAHF: Greg Benford, “Good to see your Mars discovery here. I keep wondering why they don’t release the measures of the Martian atmosphere composition; one of the design features was high molecular resolution, especially of methane--which could be a sign of life.” **We’d Like to Hear From:** Leah Zeldes.



COMING OUT

How many “Steven” stories have I written at this point? There was the Tale of The Bargain Brand of Tuna, and the Adventure of the Australian Groom. I also recall a story about the Central Air Conditioner That Froze, and another about Toronto, Birthplace of William Shakespeare. I don’t think that exhausts the list, so there must be five or perhaps

six “Steven” stories in all. There can’t be many more – he’s catching on that I re-tell them, much to my advantage ... and much the *worse* for his reputation.

But there is at least *one* more story.

Despite leanings toward the straight and narrow, Steven is a tolerant soul. Good Catholic he may be, Steven takes people as he finds them, in the full knowledge that they’ll get whatever is coming to them later ... when God catches up with them. In the meantime, it’s not Steven’s business. With an attitude that lax, it’s only natural that my friend knows people in all walks of life – businessmen, techies, minor literary talents and at least one funny animal cartoonist and fanwriter. Steven is also acquainted with a few of the sort of people whose sex lives can frequently be read about in police blotters.

A few years ago, for instance, Steven and I had the mutual acquaintance of a few furry artists who were not overly particular about their recreational activities with other men. I wasn’t comfortable with that crowd ... not because they were gay or bi, but because they were perfectly indiscriminate, and had no sense of delicacy. One time at a party, when one of them asked me if I had a problem with them being gay, I said, “No, I’d be just as uncomfortable with your goings-on if they had been *heterosexual* ...” which was true, as far as it goes. People had been taking turns, disappearing into darkened bedrooms all during the party. Steven knew one or two of them better than I cared to. He was invited to some of that crowd’s parties even after I had been mercifully forgotten by their circle.

The party that Chas. invited Steven to was held in a suburban split-level somewhere in the West End. When Steven arrived, the party was already well underway. Someone took his coat and shoes at the door, and gave him that skeptical look meaning, “I didn’t realize *you* were cool enough to be here.”

“Where’s Chas.?” asked Steven. He was given the laconic answer, “Oh, downstairs.”

In those suburban homes, the cellar is usually reached by a narrow door near the kitchen. I can imagine Steven squeezing his ample frame through the 30-some-odd-inch doorway, and down an equally narrow staircase. The first step would have squeaked under his mass, and so would most of the rest. Although not a tall man, Steven would have had to watch his head so as not to damage the low-hanging ducts in their acoustic tile disguise. Only when he was at the bottom of the stairs would his eyes be free to interpret the squirming pyramid of naked men on the floor in front of him.

One of them noticed Steven. It was Chas., who looked up at his guest and said, deadpan, “This isn’t what it seems.”

Of course not.

One of our other acquaintances was a fan whose role model in life was Bugs Bunny. He called himself one thing, but let’s say his real name was Glen. Glen was very, very gay. He had actually been an exotic dancer in a male strip club, and could easily have modeled for all those suits and leisure wear that regular guys never look good in. At cons, Glen was

both well liked and something of the butt of jokes. Painted like his animated hero, he would come up to anyone he recognized and give them a sincere hug. It says something about our species that people who are too open, too trusting, are often maligned.

He really *was* a remarkably nice person ... but I found him a little hard to come to grips with. I couldn't see through the glare of perfect looks and unlimited cheerfulness. By all accounts, Steven got along better with Glen than I did, and got to know him quite a bit better. They occasionally had lunch or met together in Little Italy for coffee.

Steven told me that on one such occasion, Glen explained that he believed everyone was a little bit queer – that no one was born gay or straight, but could be either or both, depending on upbringing. Glen made a good point. History shows us societies that were rabidly homophobic on the one hand, like Biblical Palestine, and other societies like ancient Sparta, where men only consorted with women to make babies – but there is only *one* Homo sapiens. Despite our species behavioral flexibility, there is at least one fundamental constraint. Any society that is *too* gay to reproduce won't make much of an impact on history. It will be overwhelmed by its neighbors in a generation or two. Most societies have, in fact, had complex attitudes toward sex and gender, especially on an individual basis ... but, for obvious reasons, the most successful ones have leaned far more toward straight than gay.

Such considerations apparently had little influence on Glen's thinking, however. His main premise was that *anyone* could be gay ... if they wanted, or if things had turned out a little differently in their lives. Steven, for instance, could have been gay ...

"No, I don't think so," Steven said.

"What, have you never even been curious what it would be like to sleep with another man?" asked Glen.

"I never gave it any thought. I'm just not curious, that's all," answered Steven, poking with a spoon at the chocolate syrup that was all that remained of his gelato.

"Oh, but surely you must be! Deep down inside you, there's a little man who wants to express his innermost feelings and affection for another man."

"No, I'm pretty sure he's not in there ... or, if he is, he's content with a handshake."

But Glen wasn't prepared to give up that easily. He gulped his dark-roast to fortify his resolve in the developing contest of wills, and bored in. "You've never, at any moment in your life, had the least doubt that you were 100% heterosexual? There's never been any man who was your friend who you would not consider sleeping with even if he propositioned you? There are no possible circumstances you can imagine in which you would ever be willing to experiment? I just find that so hard to believe!"

"Believe it," said Steven, who was beginning to see that no matter how much he denied possessing even a dim spark of gay potential, Glen was not going to accept it. Denial only

proved that there *was* a sensitive spot, deep down inside his friend, that Glen had touched with his probing. It couldn't be otherwise. Glen's philosophy said it was so!

"Well ..." said Steven, leaving a pause to hang in the air. "Actually ... there was one moment of doubt, not that long ago."

Glen's face lit up. "I knew it! Go on, tell me everything!"

"I don't want this to get around, mind you. People would likely misunderstand."

"Of course. I won't breathe a word, if you don't want me to. But I have to hear all of this!"

Steven took a deep breath and took the plunge. "It was just a couple of weeks ago. I needed men's clothing, so went downtown to the Eaton Center to look at shirts, underwear, shoes, socks ... you know?"

"Of course. Clothes wear out. You want to look your best at work. Go on." Glen smiled beatifically.

"I found the shirts I needed easily. Basic white on white, long sleeves, regular collar and cuffs, no Adidas logo on the breast pocket. Socks – black, and one pair in Navy blue for festive occasions. Fruit of the Looms. A pair of black shoes. The only thing I had trouble with was finding a new belt, which had to be just right. You know how a belt is either you ... or it just *isn't*. Maybe it has a hideous brass buckle with a bucking horse molded into it, or it's faux crocodile skin and smells like rubber."

"I know just how that is! A man's wardrobe is very personal!" Glen enthused.

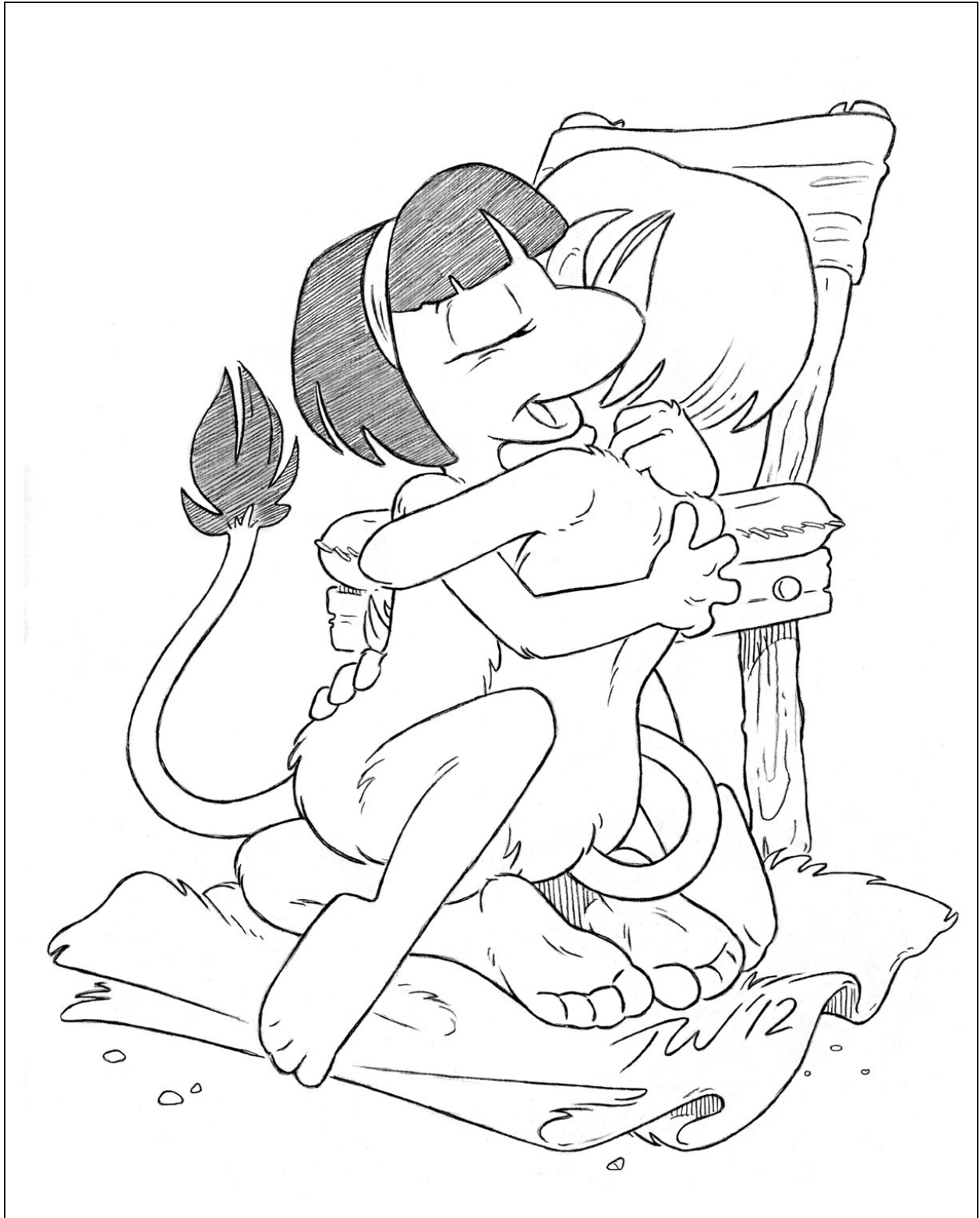
"I must have looked at *hundreds* of belts," Steven continued. "Not one of them felt just right. Finally, hidden behind a dozen other cheap cowhide straps, I found *it*. The belt was supple black leather, with a beautiful satin finish and tasteful brushed steel buckle that was *exactly* what I wanted. I congratulated myself on a lucky find for a minute ... and *that* ... that was when I had my moment of truth, that maybe I wasn't as perfectly straight as I had always thought!"

Glen looked puzzled. He struggled for a minute to make connections, but couldn't find any. "I ... don't see ... What has a belt to do with your moment of truth?"

"Isn't it obvious?" said Steven, in seeming innocence. He pulled up a pants leg and turned an ankle to show off his black leather shoe. "The belt, and the new shoes I bought ... they matched!"

Silence from Glen. Then outrage. "You bastard!" Then he broke up laughing.

If ever I win a Hugo for my fanwriting, I expect I'll have to let Steven have it on weekends – these ready-made stories never seem to happen to *me*. Perhaps I should be grateful they don't ... but sensible lives, like sensible shoes, don't make for good stories.



Since I was speaking of Fraggles in adult situations, the above is one of a number of drawings that I've been working on. They sure ain't Jim Henson's Fraggles! I've been trying to work up a design that, unlike the originals, aren't socks with ping-pong balls for eyes, so that they would look like living creatures. (I don't have puppeteers to make them live!) You might not believe it, but one of the biggest issues for me was whether Fraggles have furry knees! According to a song by Gobo, they do.