

It is unusual to begin *Rat Sass* with a letter of comment...

Perhaps this doesn't seem odd to you, but, as a matter of Definition, it definitely is. Apazines such as this one have *Mailing Comments* addressed from one member to another. *Rat Sass* is very clearly an apazine, and should have *Letters Of Comment* from a reader to the editor. If these things were to become confused for one another, everything would fall into disarray, and become discombobulated! There is no telling where this might lead in the end, so it is better not to risk everything by failing to distinguish the niceties between readers and publishers.

All the same, I have a letter of comment.

It is from a gentleman named Bob Jennings, who was a reader of my regular fanzine *Broken Toys*, who decided that it was a crying shame that such a well-produced and thought-out apazine as *Rat Sass* should not be rewarded by an equally well thought-out letter of comment. It was three pages of tightly written comments on a number of topics of interest to Mr. Jennings that were inspired by the contents of my previous issue. As it appears likely that the current issue will be rather long, I've decided it will not be possible to print the letter of comment in its totality, but perhaps a few salient comments will add a bit of flavour.

As I wrote, Jennings also recalls lost friendships. But he adds also that many were lost as a result of negative reviews, a familiar danger to book reviewers who also have friends who write books. I must make a note of that – “do not write any books. You will not make friends.”

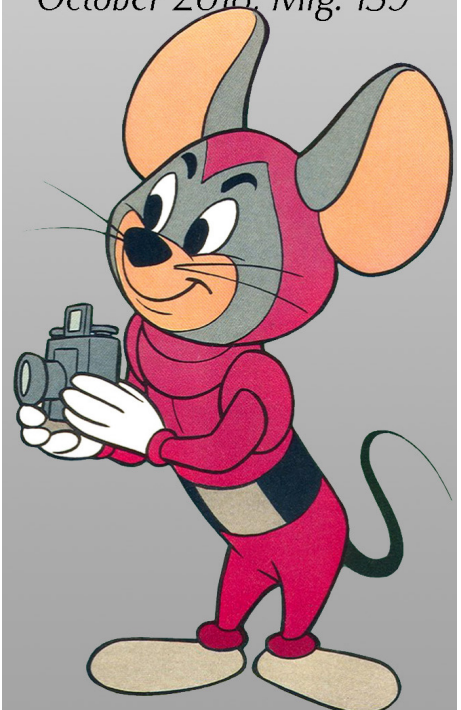
It was also suggested that I acquire a heavy-duty, construction-grade hazard warning device to attach to Traveling Matt when want inattentive pedestrians to make way when I am using the road. Matt came equipped with a wimpy little buzzer next to the hand control, but it cannot be heard in realistic traffic conditions. It is fine in a quiet office, or a waiting room, but compared to the din of growling buses, parking delivery vans, motor bikes and two streams of honking automobiles, it is hopeless to expect that I can be overheard. Of course ... it isn't the vehicular traffic that concerns me. It's the pedestrians who cannot hear me while their noses are in their phones that cause me the trouble!

There were brief mentions of Fraggie Rock (may the Trash Heap smile kindly upon you), the vexations of finding homes for no-longer-wanted comics, and a gentle suggestion that I should seek to have more of my art published. We'll see...

However, the immediate point was that I had a letter from someone who is not even a member of Rowrbrazzle. Imagine if the actual members tried as hard as Mr. Jennings!

# Rat Sass Ten

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# Past my Prime?

According to a popular vote last weekend, it is now official that all my best days are behind me.

Every year there is a convention called Corflu, that is located in a different city, and this year it was in Toronto again. It is a tiny little convention, aimed at the graying publishers of science fiction fanzines of the old school. It is an exclusive group, and by no means represents all fanzine editors, or even only editors of science fiction fanzines. The world is full of fanzine editors who have no knowledge of, or interest in the cozy little circle whose ancestors descended from the SF fans of the 1930s and '40s. As it happens, I am a longtime member of that same incestuous group. I am only second generation, but my roots go all the way back to 1971-or-2.

As I said, this year Corflu was held again in Toronto, and was the 35th.

I can't travel anymore, but it would have been a pity if I hadn't attended this Corflu in my own town, especially as the cross-town hotel was well within the traveling radius of Traveling Matt. Still, I was rather nervous about other issues, such my invariable routine of pills, my peculiar sleep habits and the need to carry a bulky CPAP device with me, hung on the handlebars of the chair. But it actually all worked out without any real difficulties.

That is, not counting the wicked 60-and-70 mph windstorm that afternoon, that nearly blew me off the street while trying to reach the hotel.

Nor the wheelchair lift that broke down on the second day, nearly stranding me in midair.

But those were mere details ... albeit details that were accompanied with a considerable amount of cursing and complaining.

What matters is that I had a fine time for the entire weekend, met a lot of old acquaintances again, met others I had known for years but never *actually* met, and – just as important – seem to have pleased everyone that I was able to be there.

For me, the highlight of the weekend was on Sunday, when a show of hands at the award presentation acclaimed me the new Past President of the Fanzine Writers of America (or *FWA*). An ancient fan came forward to remind me that I had no official duties or responsibilities, except to be cool, and then faded away to wherever it was that the ghosts of Jedi go. I especially liked the, “no duties or responsibilities” part ... and the free lunch.

Unfortunately, it now seems official. The better part of my life is now over ... and now it is time to begin the other half.

I wrote about the convention at much greater length for the British fanzine, *Banana Wings*. I expect it to appear in the upcoming issue. But, more recently, it was suggested that I attend the local furry con here in Toronto. It has grown to surprising size from humble beginnings. But I had discovered that I had grown to have little in common with modern furry fandom – which is preoccupied with role-playing and costuming. With my background, I was skeptical about putting my time there to good use – never mind anyone else's. Nor was there any mention about covering the membership fee, a detail that may have been overlooked, but I was not about to spend money doing a favour for a con where, I strongly suspected, I would only want to be home again as soon as possible.

# Dodging a Bullet

It seems that I have...

Last month it was suggested that I undergo a colonoscopy, a procedure that probes your “innermost secrets.” Putting it more bluntly, that sends a lighted camera up your bottom to examine your lower intestine for abnormal developments that may be harmless, but just *might* be cancerous. This is generally considered a good idea for most late-middle-age men, such as myself, every few years ... particularly if traces of blood are found in any of the “specimens.” My tests had always come back positive, but one of the samples drew a negative this time, so it was suggested we look more carefully at my poop.

This was not welcome news, since a colonoscopy is *mucho* inconvenient ... not the least the because I would have to be lightly sedated, and there were no arrangements to look after me once discharged. I could imagine trying to drive home from the hospital in Traveling Matt while only marginally competent to control a joystick down the street. We rescheduled until I could find a “minder” to make sure I got home.

It turned out that it was a damn good thing we rescheduled!

The clinic that had administered the lab test had automatically booked the original appointment with the hospital. But when I had a chance for a proper appointment with the specialist, he strongly advised that I *not* take the test. I had a recent history that, had I submitted to the standard colonoscopy exam, would have put me at risk of another stroke. In this case, I was in greater danger from the cure than from the disease. To make matters even worse, I had just been prescribed a new drug for my *Myathenia gravis* that requires adjustment of my Warfarin dosage. In other words, my system has been recently been thoroughly shaken up, and the last thing I needed was a invasive examination of my gut.

Fortunately, the enterologist realized that we needed a more tactful approach, so we will be doing a CAT scan instead ... a simple procedure that won't run me through a proverbial wringer.

So that was *my* day last week ... how was yours?

I waited a bloody long time before hearing back from the enterologist, and I was rather hoping he had actually forgotten all about me. Unfortunately, I got a letter today with a list of instructions that has my head reeling. When dealing with a mind-bogglingly routine, it's never enough to simply know that you need to be somewhere for an hour or two, and then go and do it. Probably even the army does things more simply. But ... no. Your time has to be organized for days ahead of time, all strictly according to a schedule! The irritating thing is that I'm virtually certain the test is not needed. There were three tests on three subsequent days, and two of them were perfect. Unfortunately, I had the bad timing to have had the runs one day, and rubbed myself a little raw...

Is *Rat Sass* a fanzine or an apazine – update! According to Fan award voting, it's a fanzine! Every year a small, select band of fanzine editors who engage in mutual back-patting, announce award their favorite fanzines in a number of categories. It was *no* surprise that I didn't win in any. It was a surprise, however, to find that *Rat Sass* was nominated! My *Rorwbrazzle* zine is only an apa contribution, and not eligible as a fanzine at all. Fortunately, it was down in 10<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> place, in no danger of winning.

# News Briefs

If the news fits, they're too tight.

The big news for me was the completion of my fourth Fraggles Rock story ... and I intend to start a new story soon, titled "Heroes and Villains." Like most of my stories, they are highly structured from the start, and follow a long-term plan that I began at least three years ago. I had hoped to have more done, but recovering from a stroke did little to further my plans. But at last I am prepared to begin the fifth installment, and expect it to be the longest so far. Knock on wood...

A while ago I attended the International Donut Festival with my friends Bob and Sharry. I confess that I don't have many opportunities to socialize. Even though I at least get out of the house as often as I want, I don't often meet up with people I know – either they're out of range of Traveling Matt's batteries, or the people I knew are reluctant to leave the suburbs, or the restaurants they want to go to have no wheelchair access. I don't enjoy seeing movies alone, and I just don't find book signings interesting. So Donut Festivals are Big Events for me.

Also, I got to eat a lot of donuts.

The next big event will be this weekend, when I take Traveling Matt to the coin show. There are three shows downtown every year every year ... and a couple that I have only attended twice, because of the distance. However, "Torex" is quite convenient, being less than two miles away. The room is not impressive for its size, but there are probably several tens of millions of dollars' worth of coins on display. I spend most of my time with Robert, my favourite dealer. He is knowledgeable, and usually knocks off 10% of his prices for me. 10% adds up to huge savings if I'm on a spending spree... There are a couple of other dealers in ancient and medieval coins that I also browse at Torex. Most of the dealers show modern coins, from the 19<sup>th</sup> century or later, which I'm not usually in the market for. Most collectors seem to be obsessed with having every penny from 1776 to the present, or all national park commemoratives. I regard those collectors as potential compulsive-obsessive types. My interest is in ancient history, or whatever is unusual enough to attract my attention.

I have a certain coin earmarked for this weekend. It's being held for me, but otherwise the money I have saved up can be spent on whatever strikes my fancy ... up to a certain limit, of course. I will not be toting up my expenditure with more than three figures. The coin being held for me is a rather crude bronze piece about the size of a nickel, or a quarter, that was struck by the Ostrogothic king, Theodoric the Great, shortly after the fall of the Western Roman Empire. It looks more or less Roman, but not quite. It was unquestionably meant to represent a continuation of "business as usual" under the new, barbarian ruler, but – in the last decades of the Western Empire – it was simply *not* business as usual, and the decline in the quality of the mintage was disappointing. Not so the Eastern Empire, of course. Business with the Byzantines definitely *did* continue as normal for the next thousand years. But those were Greeks, really, not Romans. Thus my collection of Roman coins reaches a sort of end. I'll just have to collect more from the beginning and middle, of course.

There are some days that you shouldn't get out of bed, though. It was one thing after another, apparently culminating in store help at the mall who wouldn't return a purchase that I couldn't use. That seemed bad enough, but, at the end of the day's excursion, I realized at the supermarket checkout counter that I had lost my keys! I was able to pay for my purchases, but how on earth would I get home into my apartment? I backtracked my way through the supermarket and into the mall, then to the other end of the mall, where I hadn't been able to return my unwanted purchase earlier. From there I tried the mall security

office, but they hadn't found any keys. Next I went home, retracing the same way I came. At that point I found a clue. My Lypsyl was on the ground next to an intersection about halfway home. There was no sign of the keys, but it was a certainty that the lip balm had somehow fallen out of my pocket! Finding it was less good luck than it was an insult.

By then, I was mainly concerned with the issue of getting into my apartment. People go in and out of my apartment building all the time, so I had no trouble getting inside. By luck, I kept a copy of my apartment key with the social workers in my building, so they let me in ... where I quickly found the duplicate. Other items from my key chain were also replaced in short order from around the apartment. But the next day, I had to pony up a replacement fee for the *electronic* key that permits entry to the building. With the bank's fee for a money order, that came to almost \$50! *That* was a bummer, but to be expected. The most important problem remaining was the key to my post office box...

The Post Office has nothing to do with my building, of course, so they want a fee to open the mail box, as well. Worse, I had no idea when the PO would replace my mail box key. That was when Winston, my "main man" in building maintenance, said he could just copy it in the office and keep quiet. That's where the situation remains. I'll get the damned key without further cost ... but Winston doesn't know when I can expect new blanks. Until then, I have to bug him once a week to see if there's anything in my mail.

Clearly, it pays to sleep in late, and never get an early start to your fucking day!

At least I got a break next Monday, when I was able to talk the store manager into taking my unwanted purchase back as a return.

I can't believe I've watched all of *M\*A\*S\*H* on DVD... Will I ever have the nerve to do it again, or should I begin eight years of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* instead? Or perhaps Ken Burn's *The Vietnam War*? Or lighten up with the complete *Ren & Stimpy*? You'd think I had all the time in the world to watch all the movies and television I wanted. But I've watched so much of it over the years that I don't think I can reasonably expect to live long enough to watch it all again.

It's something to hope for, anyway.

**More News Briefs** – After a couple of weeks of stress, I got my replacement mail box key, free of charge. Winston, the "fix-it" guy in the building, went around to all sorts of people in the building, passing out keys that people needed ... so I finally got mine, and was able to empty my box to find my monthly checks. Rats, though... I was just a couple of minutes late about getting to the bank, and will have to try tomorrow.

**Even More News Briefs** – Preliminary findings on the coin show are that I have gone out of my mind and spent about three times as much money as I had any intention to! I had my spending well in hand, with nine or ten moderately inexpensive purchases, and one somewhat pricier piece that I planned for at the start. But then, I learned that my favourite dealer was going to sell his store! That meant that if I wanted certain coins set aside for me to buy at the next show, in a few month's time, they might not be available! Or I may not benefit from the usual discounts from Robert, which can be over 20%! I have to admit, too, that I fell in love with three other coins I wasn't shopping for -- one was a gold solidus from one of the last Roman Emperors of the Western Empire (none after him were anything but shadowy figureheads who were deposed whenever convenient by the German general who was really the ruler). Another was a different solidus from the Eastern empire, that was, relatively speaking, not as expensive as it should be, given that it was graded "as struck" -- which meant it was looked exactly as it would have at the moment it was hammered at the mint, and then had rolled onto the floor and fallen through a crack, never to be seen again until the mid-20th. Century. Then I went for broke, splurging on large French piece by Charles VI, also known as The

Beloved ... who went mad in the early 15th. century. Not surprisingly, he was *also* known as Charles The Mad. It is a beautiful coin, about the size of a half-dollar. By coincidence, this is the same historical period as Henry V, and England's, high water mark in creating a joint Anglo-French Empire. Henry managed to depose the French king, marry his daughter (or someone), and was within an ace of having the French nobility accept him. Then it all fell apart, and Henry V died shortly after ... probably from dysentery. So I have a coin by each of these rivals ... but the English one is a cheap copper or bronze thing, and the French one is a near-mint gold piece. Maybe I can improve on the English one eventually. Ahead of me is several days of "processing" the coins I acquired -- scanning them, sketching them for my file cards, recording all the information retrieved and just plain glorying in their splendor! I'll report the details as they become available.

**Still More News Briefs** – At the last moment, I've agreed to buy a very worn, small half-penny that was minted by Richard III. There is little to see ... it is almost all worn off. But Richard minted few coins before he was killed by Henry Tudor, and good examples of these coins are very expensive!

## Missed Goals



Generally, I've really enjoyed every Aardman film I've watched – starting with *Wallace and Gromit*, then continuing with *Chicken Run*, *Flushed Away*, *Arthur Christmas*, *Pirates*, and the *Shaun the Sheep Movie*. When I saw that *Early Man* had appeared on the shelves of Walmart, I bought a copy as soon as I could. I rushed home, filled the popcorn popper and started to melt some butter for a pleasant evening of stop-motion animation!

Aaargh ... it was a disaster from start to finish. Not being a fan of soccer, maybe I just didn't *get it*, but it seemed to me that this was less a movie than the wishful thinking of British soccer fans. I began to feel something had gone amiss in the first seconds of the film, when dinosaurs were cheerfully conflated with early humans. It was an easy error to fix ... replacing dinosaurs with equally huge mastodons and giant sloths would have done fine, and not perpetuated a thoughtless gaffe. But before I had time to bridle over a 65-million-year anachronism, we see the dinosaurs wiped from the planet by an asteroid strike. Then after a moment's thought, it occurs to the viewer that it couldn't have been the *same* asteroid strike – surely that would have wiped out humanity as well. Yet the dinos are gone, while humanity appears to have survived somehow, and settled into the lush and verdant crater left behind ... where, apparently, they have never had it so good.

Also, the cavemen inadvertently invent soccer by kicking the leftover, football-sized remnant of the meteorite. At this point, I was hoping this was only the overture before something much more interesting begins. However, all that happens is that early British cavemen seem to have promptly *forgotten* all about soccer ... and have reverted to hunting for bunnies. (Apparently ducks are too tough, being about 12 feet tall.)



The story skips ahead for an unknown number of years, in which little seems to have happened. The prehistoric British tribe still lives in the lush and verdant crater in which they settled thousands (or millions) of years of ago, having accomplished more or less nothing in the interim. The sense of deep historical time is not the least cuckoo thing about this movie. However, the idyllic life of the cavemen is suddenly upset by the unexpected appearance of “Bronze Age Man.” The invaders round up the cavemen and drive them from their home so that the “bronze” can be mined.

Where did “Bronze Age Man” come from, I wondered? Why were we given no notice of them until this late moment? How did Bronze Age Man live among the desolation that seemed to extend everywhere *except* the crater valley? As though all this was not surprising enough, it appears that soccer is alive and well in this mysterious Bronze Age civilization. It is, in fact, “sacred game.”

To shorten an already tiresome story, the displaced British cavemen challenge the reigning soccer superstars. If they win, they get their valley back ... and presumably live happily ever after. If not ... they go to the mines to work their lives away in misery. Would this sound like a good bet to any sensible person? It didn’t sound like a good bet to me.

There are the standard plot devices to use up the middle of the picture, in which the British team realizes that they are completely hopeless, and the only chance they have to escape the mines is to wander away into the desolation, and live on very large cockroaches. At the last minute, though, appears the plucky young Bronze Age woman who befriends the hero. She has always wanted to be a soccer star herself, but she was not allowed to play for some reason ... so she teaches the British team to play. Apparently it will be no problem if a girl plays with mere cavemen.

As well, there is a Queen, who could have permitted this at any time.

Of course, you know that the Brits don’t end up in the mines, even though no-one who wasn’t bonkers would have expected it.

So the challenging team wins *their first game!* It is probably worth repeating that. Thousands of years before, the cavemen had completely forgotten anything about kicking meteorites around, and have never even imagined the possibility of playing soccer. But after a short practice period – and a cunning realization that the Bronze Team are all prima donnas who cannot play well together – the British team *wins!* Hoo-ray! *Jolly good!*

Yes, we might as well stop pretending that this has *anything* at all to do with cavemen. The movie is little more than a wet dream for British soccer fans. Did it give you any clue that *all* the Bronze Age people have strong accents reminiscent of Germany, France and Italy?

I’ve probably said more than I ought to in a movie review, but on the whole this was a film that you probably have better things to do than watch. I will give the film a single star for passable stop-motion animation ... and for the possibility that I am biased about the whole idea of a movie about soccer. Local “football” fans may have found this the inspiration that British football fans have longed for over the last several thousands (or millions) of years. Likewise, I have tried to put myself in the place of a fan of baseball or ice hockey, and then judge whether the same plot would have made any difference worth noticing. Let us say that a tribe of primitive Leafs fans has challenged the reigning stars of the ice, and rescued the Stanley Cup from cynicism and commercial exploitation. Would it have rescued this dismal plot?

Sorry to say, it would not have. This film missed the goal by a mile.

A Fraggles Rock story...

# Where the Magic is

There were days when Darl just had to see the sky again. It wasn't often, but the yearning usually grew on him every now and then, and when it did he would grow fidgety. He felt cramped in, surrounded by too much fuss, and missing the sense of open spaces. The first time that Kiki noticed that something was bothering Darl, he denied it. He said he must have gotten out of the bed on the wrong side that morning. But he stepped out of the wrong side of the bed on the next morning too, and again on the next day.

"Darl, love, are you bothered about something? I haven't seen you act quite this way before."

"Why would I be bothered about anything?" Darl said. His reply came just a touch too quickly, and Kiki seemed to know it.

"You *are* bothered by something! What is it – tell me, or you'll be chewing your tail by lunch time."

And so Darl told her.

"Don't get me wrong – Fraggles Rock is simply the most fascinating place where I could imagine living. Every day it's as though the world begins over. Around every corner, something unexpected happens. The Fraggles never fail to surprise me, and every corner of the Rock is an unexplored world. But then I think about home..."

Kiki found that word unexpected. "You *are* home."

"Well, you needn't be astonished. But I *had* a home before, you know, even if I do have a *new* home with you. I think ... I think I'd like to see the old place, and be in among the Silly Creatures again. Just for a short while."

The two of them followed the long path that led to the original Fraggles Hole, the one that Gobo's Uncle Matt – in his conceit – believed that *he* had discovered. But then the path twisted off in another direction entirely, one that was not the same way at all, and then emerged in the busy urban setting where Kiki and Darl first met. Kiki was not at all keen on re-entering the frightening world of the Silly Creatures ... but wary of allowing Darl go alone, either. She had a real fear that he might not come back.

"Suppose something happens so you never return," she wailed. "What if you decide to stay with the Silly Creatures again!"

"Kiki, Kiki love ... that could never happen. How could I go away and live with the Silly Creatures again, when I'm less than half their size? I'm a Fraggles now. I know all the ways to be safe that I knew when I was still a Silly Creature myself, so I'll be in no danger, and be back before you know it."



And that was how it was. Darl did not come often to Outer Space, but nevertheless he was drawn to it, now and then, to reflect on the life he once led ... not without a twinge of almost unfelt regret.

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On this day, it was not much of a day at that. When Darl left the Fraggles Hole, the overcast was ragged, grey and moving with a ponderous sense of purpose that left no doubt as to where it had been and where it was going. It had been raining within the hour, leaving puddles standing on the sidewalks and patches of drowned grass. Darl's feet were soaked through the fur before he found his destination. Fortunately, he liked walking in the rain.

Back when he had been a Silly Creature, he had lived in a cramped, third-story walk-up opposite a small park. The neighborhood had been somewhat run-down, as befit a street of old Victorian brick homes in Sunnydale that had long been divided into flats, and his place had been the smallest apartment at the very top of the stairs in one of those houses. Despite being only a sitting room and a small bedroom to which there two steps up, over which he had to take care not to stumble, it had been comfortable enough. His belongings had been fairly meager, consisting of a couch, a couple of end tables, a chair, a stereo set and a book case. He cooked on a forbidden hot-plate, from which he ate while watching the TV. There was room enough for a computer next to the bed, but not much else. He kept to himself a lot of the time, with his videos and his hobbies, and didn't mind much that he was lonely a lot of the time ... not *very* much.

Today, Darl was headed toward a glass bus shelter at the park entrance. The bench would not be very comfortable, since it was too high from the ground for a Fraggles the size of a small child, but at least it would be dry, and from his vantage he could even see his old apartment house. It had not changed appreciably in the three or four years he had been coming here. But the difference in his viewpoint had become literally worlds apart.

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After a while, a light rain came up and pattered on the bus shelter roof. He'd learned a lot from the new friends he had made in the Rock. One the lessons he learned was how important sounds were – not only the chatter of the umpty-ump Fraggles, who filled the Great Hall every morning when they woke, but also the sigh of air currents curling from one cavern to another, the gurgle of spring water gushing from cave rocks, the echo of dim unseen chambers and even those things that you do realize you have heard!

Mokey had once tried to teach Darl what the Minstrels had taught her.

"Once, I thought I would become a Minstrel myself," Mokey explained. "I thought I had the \*ping\* ... but I was wrong ... at least for now. Someday I may find I have the \*ping,\* or even the \*zing,\* then – gosh – if I don't become a painter or poet instead, why not become a Minstrel? However, perhaps *you* should try something that Cantus showed me, that helped me find the music!"

Mokey led Darl to a secluded cave far from all the distractions of a Fraggles's daily life, and bade him, "Sit!"

Darl sat. "Now, what do I do?"

“Hush-shhh-shhh. Don’t do anything! I’ll come back in a while, but until then – \*listen!\*”

Mokey went away, leaving Darl with no clue about what he should do while he listened.

For the longest time, Darl was simply bored. The cave was almost supernaturally quiet – in his imagination he almost thought he could hear the Pocky Ferns grow. He brushed his feet and tail more than once, but they were clean. He picked at his hockey sweater and suppressed thoughts about whether he should start a hockey team. Then he walked over to the far side of the cave, and then back again – but one side was the same as the other. There didn’t seem to be anything at all special about the cave, and certainly there was no music.

After a while, however, he began to think about the number of cave formations. Stony icicles and pillars, that seemed to grow forest-like wherever there was space. Several of them were glistening wet from dripping water, Darl noticed, and he tasted a drop. It was pleasantly cool and tasted slightly like coconut water. That was when Darl noticed that another drop had immediately replaced the first one, and that as it fell the drop made a delicate, almost inaudible musical sound. He noticed that droplets from other rock formations also made musical sounds, each one different. At that moment it suddenly seemed that the entire cavern was awash in musical notes, and Darl finally understood what he had failed to recognize at first. There was music everywhere ... and he remembered, now, he owed his life to it.

The effect of Darl’s discovery was somewhat spoiled, however, by the anticlimax. He sat for the rest of the day, growing slowly bored in spite of the musical symphony he had discovered, until it began to grow dark, and it was time for him to head home for a late dinner. Mokey had forgotten to return at the end of Darl’s “lesson.”

He had learned to recognize the music – he had gained that much from his time among the Fraggles. While he waited out the rain, he instinctively kept time to its rhythm time with his dripping feet.

But despite his years in Fraggle Rock, Darl still did not feel comfortable exercising the one gift all Fraggles were given as a birthright.

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There was a noticeable lull in the rain, which abated to a mere drizzle, then finally let up entirely. A few hearty souls had weathered the intermittent rain while Darl watched from the shelter, but at last they began to shake out their umbrellas, and casual strollers began to venture out onto the streets. As usual, no one noticed the Fraggle in their midst. It was not a failsafe strategy, but it was almost always perfectly safe to ignore the Silly Creatures. Almost all of them seemed unable to see or hear Fraggles – or rather – they simply *would* not. Children were the exception, who seemed to have eyes and ears open for things they hadn’t learned to ignore yet. Most learned soon enough ... although not all.

“I should stop calling them Silly Creatures,” Darl thought to himself. “We’re humans ... well, I was, once. Maybe I could get my friends to call humans ‘Topsiders’ instead? And really... instead of ‘Outer Space,’ isn’t calling it ‘Outside’ good enough? Although ‘Upside’ has a nice ring to it. Or...”

That was the moment when Darl noticed a Silly Creature who seemed to have noticed *him*. All thoughts of calling them anything else ceased immediately. Whoever this person was, he

seemed to be bearing down on Darl with a fixed purpose, which was highly unusual. It was not unknown, however. Some Silly Creatures unexpectedly kept the ability to see Fraggles in adulthood. Darl ought to know ... he had been one of them! The ability to see Kiki from the start had begun a new life and opened a new world to him ... but it didn't bode well at the moment, he thought.

His apprehension only grew as he suddenly recognized the Silly Creature as Raymond Gantz.

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Ray was one of the few friends Darl had kept up with before his old life ended. They weren't exactly close, but, with one or two exceptions, Darl had no one closer. He might have shared a bottle with the man, but not a toothbrush. Ray lived in Darl's old neighborhood, but there was obviously no reason why Ray, or anyone else, should recognize Darl as an old acquaintance under these circumstances. To be truthful, Darl had ruefully expected that he would be little missed nor long remembered from his old life, and could leave all that behind with a clean conscience. There were too many unfinished pages in that book to go back and read them now.

Yet, clearly, Ray had noticed the Fraggles sitting across the park in the rain shelter. He hurried over, hesitating as he peered through the glass, then approached warily.

"You *are* a Fraggles! My Gran always said they were real. It's alright if you want to be left alone, but I've always wanted to meet one of you ... okay?"

Darl didn't speak. For one thing, he hadn't thought of anything he wanted to say. Maybe it would have been best to say, "I'm sorry, no, I have to go," and splatterdash away through the rain-soaked grass as fast as he could. But Ray had always talked too much, and before the Fraggles could decide what to do or say, Ray had already sat down beside him and begun a steady gush of words.

"I belong to a group that tries to watch for Fraggles – there's just a couple of other people other than myself, actually – but I think I may have seen a Fraggles once myself. It was at a distance, and I didn't get a very close look. There were a lot of kids in the way, buying ice cream, while this tiny old guy with a mustache and pith helmet watched ... and before I could push through the crowd, he was gone. He *could* have just been a really *short*, dark guy, since I didn't have time to look for a tail. You don't have a mustache, so guess it must have been some other Fraggles, hey?"

"I didn't know you belonged to a *club*, for gawd's sake!" Darl blurted out before he could think.

"We only formed it a while ago, since you disa... uh." Ray stared at the Fraggles for a steady thirty seconds, trying to see something through pale blue fur... around rumped, darker hair... despite a ropey looking tail ... and saw his eyes.

"It really *is* you. Oh, shit, it *is* you!" cried Ray. "Even with the fur and tail, and you're only halfway to my belt ... but you still look sort of like yourself. Where have you *been*, man!"

The jig was up, as they say.

--

Ray was a slight man with a small, protruding belly, but nevertheless he was more than twice the height of a normal Fraggles. The two of them, seated side by side beneath the rain shelter, were as incongruous as a hog and a chinchilla. Regarding the Silly Creature's flat face and bare flesh dispassionately, Darl thought he could not *possibly* have been as ugly as that himself once. Worse, Ray had grown a short but straggly beard on his chin, so completely unlike the elegant tuft at the end of Darl's tail. It was amazing how one's perspective changed ... along with what was "normal."

"What happened to you?" Ray demanded. "I don't believe it's possible!"

"Where I've been, I think *anything* is possible. Even this."

"But... but... why did you just vanish, and not tell anyone?"

What was Darl supposed to say to an old buddy – that he had never thought about until this moment? Once he lived in one world, and then he lived in another, incompatible one. But he had few regrets about leaving the first one. He had missed his hobbies, his bike, his mother's old photos – and, of course, his books. But Ray had not once crossed his mind.

He'd have liked to bring his CDs into the Rock ... but that was silly. How could he play compact discs in a Fraggles Hole without electricity? His mind was in a whirl, and he could not even begin to start explaining his last few years.

"...after the rent was unpaid for a couple of months, the landlord put your stuff out for the trash, and you were *gone*. Darrell – everyone thought that you were dead."

"What?"

"Everyone thought you were dead! You don't mind that we took as many of your books as we could carry? And you know, I still have your model 'Visible Head' and that detailed Lunar Module you won a prize for."

"No ... that's okay. It's just that everyone calls me Darl. I haven't heard that other name in years."

"*Go on!*"

"So far as I can figure, as Fraggles we seem to understand everyone, wherever we are ... and everyone, everywhere, understands us."

"It's a weird experience, but you don't notice it. However, names and words for unfamiliar things like the "telephone" or "microwave" tend to get garbled. Kiki just didn't seem to get my name right, and so, ever since I moved to the Rock, everyone has called me *Darl*. I'm used to it ... and actually find 'Darrell' a little dorky now. I'd rather not use it again, if you don't mind."

"Fraggles live in an isolated, hidden world of their own, but don't have their own language? It's scientifically illogical!"

"Somehow logic never comes into it when you live in Fraggles Rock."

“Alright ... maybe that is getting ahead of your story. Start from when you appeared outside your old rental apartment, with a silly-looking tail dangling from your caboose!”

“This is going to take a while, you know.”

“I don’t work today. Why don’t you start with telling me about this magic Rock you live in now. Maybe you can teach me some tricks.”

“I doubt it, but... ”

It was a long story, that had grown longer every time he told it to another Fraggles. Even they had found his story rather unbelievable at first, and took some convincing.

Fortunately, most Fraggles are rather trusting souls at bottom, who accept almost any story willingly, however improbable. Still, explaining how Darrell became Darl was a more difficult matter, and not one he had ever cared to dwell upon. Much of it touched on suppressed feelings from when he had been lonely, before Kiki, and other parts on events that had been compressed into a short span of days when he thought he faced the end. How do you talk about things never shared before with Silly Creatures?

--

“The short version of the story is that I met a Fraggles named Kiki. I first saw her in the street, just as you saw me today – but *I* wasn’t lost. *Kiki* certainly *was*! There are likely Fraggles Holes in all sorts of unlikely places, and Kiki is more curious than most Fraggles, so she discovered an unknown Hole right here in Sunnysdale. It didn’t take her long to become confused, however, and she soon lost all sense of where she was. To make matters worse, Fraggles have an almost infallible sense of direction ... except it doesn’t work *at all* in Outer Space.

“We call it Outer Space, and – as far as Fraggles are concerned – the outer, the better.

“I was across the road, only a few blocks from my own apartment, when I saw a lost Fraggles. Of course, I couldn’t believe it at first. I didn’t even believe in the existence of Fraggles, except as stories, but this one was clearly in trouble – and that was how I met Kiki. I had to put her up on the couch for a couple of days while we looked around the neighborhood for the missing Fraggles Hole. In the end, it was right across the road from my place ... right across the road from where we are now. There had been men working in the park, moving road equipment and filling dumpsters, and to Kiki it looked completely different from the other side of the Hole.”

Darl was warming to the subject, but stopped for moment while he thought ahead. He really didn’t want to make the story any longer than he had to. Among other things, he wondered whether, in the long run, if it was a good idea to tell any human much about the Rock. Humans didn’t have a very good record of respecting either nature or other peoples.

Ray had grown more excited as the story unfolded. “You’re still human, though, so what happened to you? Did you decide to leave home and live in Fraggles Rock with Kiki? Is that when you changed?”

“Don’t be an idiot. We knew perfectly well that Kiki would have to go home once we rediscovered the entrance. She even returned a couple of times later, to visit. What led to what happened next is that she talked me into trying to visit *her*. That was a mistake.

“The entrance to The Rock was a crack between two cement walls that had crumbled, so that it was just possible to squeeze between them. That was fine for *Kiki*, but it seemed an impossible fit for me. The way seemed to come to a dead end after only a couple of feet ... but it was possible to follow Kiki by squeezing into the tight space behind her. After one or two hundred feet, it began to open into a space large enough to call a decent walk-in closet. There was nothing ‘wonderful’ about it, though.

“In fact, it was as barren as a fire stair, and badly lit. But Kiki insisted that this was just part of Outer Space, really ... that once I got into the *real* Fraggles Rock, I would find bright colours, fragrant breezes, music, laughter and I would see for myself that it was the most wonderful place anyone could imagine. It was only a little farther on that we entered the Rock *properly*.”

“And was that what you found?” asked Ray, expectantly. “Was it better than Disneyland?”

Darl sighed. The rain was coming up again.

“Unfortunately, no. After a few hundred yards more, the cavern grew much too narrow for me to go any farther. Kiki had forgotten about a particularly narrow passage in the rock wall that *she* easily shimmied through, but that I couldn’t fit through in a million years. Realizing that I had to go back, she was crushed. By then I was anxious about being underground for so long, and just wanted to get above ground again.”

Darl remembered how he hunkered down while Kiki hung over his neck and cried a while ... but at least she had promised visit again, soon.

“That was when I discovered that the cave entrance had been blocked up while I was underground! It seemed as though the workmen had straightened and cemented up the broken concrete walls while I was gone. In a word, when I tried to leave, I was trapped – by myself. I tried every crack and cranny I could reach into, but there was no way out.”

Darl paused, suddenly remembering details he didn’t especially want to re-live.

“Well, what happened? You didn’t die, obviously ... or did you experience some kind of reincarnation?” Ray asked.

“Of course not!” Darl retorted. “Kiki *did* return ... but I don’t recall clearly how much later. She had no idea that I was stuck, neither in Fraggles Rock *nor* in Outer Space. I had nothing to drink or eat until Kiki returned and discovered what had happened. Kiki did bring food and water as soon as she could ... but by a cruel twist of fate, none of her friends believed I was real! They all thought it was a peculiar joke for Kiki to take food somewhere into the caves and eat it herself ... so she could pretend she had a *make-believe friend*. It wasn’t easy for one small Fraggles to feed a full-grown Silly Creature every day, and I ate every crumb she brought me for a week. I was even grateful for the radishes ... ” Darl shuddered.

“What? What about the radishes?” Ray asked, distracted from the narrative by the odd remark.

“Never mind ... I got used to them. What mattered was that they weren’t even remotely enough to keep me going for long. Unless something was done soon, I didn’t know how long I’d last.”

A wistful look came across Darl’s face as he remembered what had happened next.



“Kiki had an idea. She said she should ask the Trash Heap.”

“What?” protested Ray. “What trash heap? What’s trash got to do with this? First radishes, now a trash heap?”

“It had practically *everything* to do with what happened next, if you’ll let me explain. Kiki said she’d ask the Trash Heap for advice. Madam Trash Heap is believed by the Fraggles to be the fount of *all* knowledge ... as well as literally a trash heap, where nearly *anything* can be found, useful or not. Of course, I was as confused as you are about Madam Trash Heap, but what had I to lose? So Kiki returned later that day, and brought back the Trash Heap’s advice: that we *had to sleep on it*.

“In fact, even Kiki was mystified by this advice. What good would sleeping on it do, she asked? But Kiki believed the Trash Heap would help, even though oracles never seemed willing to give advice without making you work for its meaning. Kiki decided to stay the night with me, and we’d sleep on it together.

“Don’t give me that dirty look!” Darl snapped. “It was perfectly innocent. Kiki explained that we were supposed to share a dream together – an ability all Fraggles have. But Kiki didn’t know whether she could share a dream with a Silly Creature or not. The idea was new to *me*!”

Darl was lost in thought again, and seemed to be half-humming, half-singing to himself.

*"What makes dreamers feel,  
That dreams are more than real.  
Why does dreaming, keep revealing  
What our nights conceal.  
Dream a dream and see, to find a dream for you.  
Dream a dream and see, and make it more than true.. "*

Ray watched Darl with a peculiar expression on his face. “Were you... singing to yourself?”

Darl shook himself impatiently. “Hardly. Fraggles sing day and night ... but *I* never got the hang of it.”

“So you actually shared a dream together with Kiki?”

“I said so, didn’t I? We woke up next morning no more enlightened than before ... but there was a clue. There was water dripping somewhere in the quiet that we hadn’t noticed before. If we hadn’t heard it, I would never have been saved.

“I found my magic there, eventually. It took Kiki’s help to understand what I had to do, but the Trash Heap had been plainly telling me what I needed to do all along. I needed to follow the music, and then discover who I needed to be. When I finally knew, the magic had already happened, and the rest was just ... just perspective.”

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“That doesn’t explain *anything*,” said Ray, rather peevishly. “You used to believe in science, but now you expect me to believe that you changed the laws of nature because you *wanted* to? I think you aren’t being entirely honest with me.”

“I’ve told nothing *but* the truth, if you can only see it. You can be *anyone* you choose to be, but only if you open your eyes and ears. But I think – as I think the Trash Heap knew – perhaps it shouldn’t be too easy. I’m not sure I should give away Madam Trash Heap’s secrets too easily.”

“But ... you’ve said nothing that I can make sense of!”

“Maybe not, and maybe that’s for the best if you can’t work it out for yourself – as I had to. Let me put it like this, Ray. Am I a Fraggles or am I not? If I am, then why do you disbelieve your own senses? Here I am sitting next to you in a bus shelter, living proof that magic of *some kind* must exist.”

“In Fraggles Rock maybe, but not here in the world of physics and math!”

“You think not?” said Darl, pointing to the slackening rain. “Think about why water comes from the sky. And when it falls, where does it go? When it is cold, why does it become snowflakes that lie on the ground, instead?”

“Because of the change of state from a liquid to a solid, or from water vapor to rain,” said Ray.

“Sure. But why *don’t* you call it magic? When the summer is over, don’t the days become shorter and the trees turn red and gold? Isn’t that truly magic? When you blow through a hollow stick and notes are created, don’t the notes become music? If words are spoken in the right order, don’t you tell a story? But what is colour, what is music, what is a story? Of course it’s magic, not only in Fraggles Rock but wherever you are! Even in Sunnydale ... even in a bus shelter.”

With that, the Fraggles slid to the ground and walked quickly away.

“Wait!” Ray called after him. “Do you have to go? I must know more than these ... these metaphors ... they are figures of speech, after all ... !”

“Maybe one day *you’ll* find the magic. I can’t tell you unless you see it for yourself, you know ... but I should go. Kiki will be waiting at home.” Home!

In the gathering gloom, Darl had already dodged between some bushes, and Ray couldn’t make out where he went. The Fraggles he once knew seemed to be there one moment, and gone the next. He wasn’t near the concrete wall, long repaired, beyond the park. Neither had he fled up the street. There were no parked cars that might have hidden him. He was just suddenly out of sight.

“I don’t understand any of this. What are you trying to tell me?” Ray cried into the empty park. “Will I see you, so we can talk again someday?”

A voice that was almost too far away to be heard answered in the only way it could before vanishing into its unseen Fraggles Hole – “Don’t you love to walk in the fresh rain?”

And that was *everything* that needed to be said.

# SCHMOOZING

**Robert Alley** — Had I been 20 years younger, I might have been champing at the bit to write a book on furry fandom, but when you're on the downhill side of 60, and you begin to pick up speed, you start looking at things in terms of the best use of your time. And it seems that a book that few people will read, about a subject that doesn't interest many people and doesn't feed them whatever pabulum they want instead, is not a good use of my time. Let Fred Pattern tell the world that he invented in furry fandom in 6 BC – I don't really care. I will happily stand by while Joe Strike assures us that we all we all have a critter deep inside ... waiting to find our true self and emerge to parade in cartoon heads. I will not contest it. ☐☐☐ There's a lot to be said for living in a material world. For one thing, I actually wonder if the corporate world isn't quietly forcing us into a future in which we own nothing, and all our income goes to services, entertainment, and virtual experiences. When you are reassigned from one job to another, you find a "home" already waiting when you arrive in the new place, with all your preferences from music to furnishings, the freezer stocked with your favourite foods, a compatible life companion who has herself put down her bags upon arrival, friends, hobbies and a lifestyle already perfectly coordinated with your personality. You need never really leave your 500-square-foot "efficiency" unit with its multi-media entertainment channels. Vacation in Israel, Japan, South Africa or Antarctica ... all from the convenience of your living room, only a heartbeat away! Work is only as far as the right folder on the Cloud! But don't ever mistake that the rich will live that way. THEY will still own everything, live REAL lives and do things that MATTER. ☐☐☐ Fractious fandom. You probably don't know the half of it, and better off *not* knowing it. From what I've learned since from Joe Strike, Schirm may have been more than a little non-cooperative about the book ... although this would not really explain why Schirm was not mentioned at all. All things considered, this may have suited Schirm perfectly, too. ☐☐☐ Curiously, Mike Glyer is the editor of *File 770*, a well-known SF news page. I've done a lot of work for Mike in the past, but I recall him saying not very long ago that you should *never* rile a fan cartoonist. He tries to stay pretty careful with me...

**David Bliss** — Does that mean that RVs are no longer made, or only that they are made in Germany, Japan or Korea? If there no RVs, where will people find portable meth labs?

**William Earl Haskell** — *Lhude sing cuccu.* ☐☐☐ Your comments about furcons echo mine completely. There is a local furry fandom, but I have only the most tenuous connection with the people. They were friendly enough, many young enough to still be school, and their heads are full of things whose importance I cannot grasp. New game platforms? Not only do I not have the most recent, I have *none!* The latest apps for my phone? My phone is still plugged into a jack in the wall. Is everyone today LGBTQXYZ? I'm not sure I know what most of that means, and I don't get any kind of sex at all! But the main thing is that I just don't share the modern fandom's compulsion to role play and costume. In part, I'm unwilling to suspend my sense of identity while I entertain other ideas of myself. But also, my deeply felt sense interior landscape feels diminished when everyone has a super power, or lives in a fantasy world. We become more equal ... but all the same, alas. What is the fun in flying if *everyone* has a flying carpet? However, one can look too deeply for reasons why you don't find something fun. It might not be.

**Jeff Wood** — An app for organizing art on the hard drive? Unfortunately, I have been using one called "delete." I once saved huge amounts of art from various sources such as Deviant Art and FurAffinity, but, over the last couple of years, I increasingly doubted the sense of doing this. At one time, good furry art was a hard-to-come-by and valued discovery. But if I want, I can download 2,000 new

images daily. It has become depressingly all the same, too. Gay magic vore ponies in the Star Trek universe? Dark Gothic Harry Potter Pokemons? Wet and Messy Amerindian fat fetishists? It's all there, if you look for it. There is not just something for everyone, THERE IS TOO MUCH FOR EVERYONE! So I have been gradually vetting my hard drive to save only that which I have a special interest in. It isn't an issue of hard drive space – I never *came* close to filling it with my “new” computer. Nor could I imagine regretting I had deleted so much art ... I can download it from my “favourites” again at any time. So do I need Pinterest? I can't see it. ☹☹☹ Oh, darn... there's another person suggesting I wrote a book about furry fandom. The third... Maybe after I finish my Fraggles Rock masterpiece.

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## The Off-the-Record Ducks...

A few years ago, I was obsessed once again with re-reading Carl Barks. This time, I was also bubbling over with ideas for original *Uncle Scrooge* stories. There was never a more hopeless ambition than that of creating new Carl Barks stories, since Disney owned the works, and would no sooner give up rights for *anything* than Satan would surrender a juicy soul. So I never dreamt of publishing my Barks inspired drawings, or the plots I had sketched out. But I thought they would make a handsome portfolio.

There were four stories. The first is “The Constantine Donative,” and explained why there were so many Castle McDucks! I know of two that are unquestionably the ancestral estates of the clan McDuck. One is depicted in a early issue of *Uncle Scrooge*, and is a fully intact, castellated stronghold with turrets and battlements. The other appears in a much later issue, first published in the 1960s, but it shows McDuck castle as a ruin. Why the discrepancy? My plot explained that the older of the two castles has its roots in Roman times. This is the one that brings McDuck back a second time, seeking a rare coin that has surfaced recently, and is the basis for a claim that the rightful heir to the entire Roman empire stems from a supposed “Donation” to the Church. In fact, the Church did *make* such a claim in the Dark Ages ... even though no one ever took it seriously for a moment. Nevertheless, Scrooge has seen such a coin once before, many years ago, in the heather near the castle, where it had no right to be... Now it has surfaced again, and someone is *trying* to make claims with it. The story continues with McDuck's efforts to find another such coin in the ruins, and explains how it got from 4<sup>th</sup>. century Rome to 11<sup>th</sup>. century Scotland. As you might guess, things are not what they seem. The coins turning up were *not* real. The surprise ending is that the one Scrooge had *was* real, and really had descended to Scrooge from Roman times, and he really was heir to all of the Roman empire. But he disapproved of accepting anything he hadn't earned for himself, and quietly buried the ancient coin where it would do no more mischief. At least, that's as much as I recall. I had made a couple of sketches, but I had not worked out the numerous plot holes yet.

By that time I had conceived a different plot, for a story about “The Lost City of Prester John.” While it was short of plot, I did a couple of finished drawings of the Ducks in the desert, one of them beginning the ascent into the mountains, and the other of them entering the canyon that conceals the lost city. I also created a number of henchmen in the employ of Flintheart

Glomgold. Flinty was also looking for the lost city, but had no idea where to find it ... so, naturally, cheated.

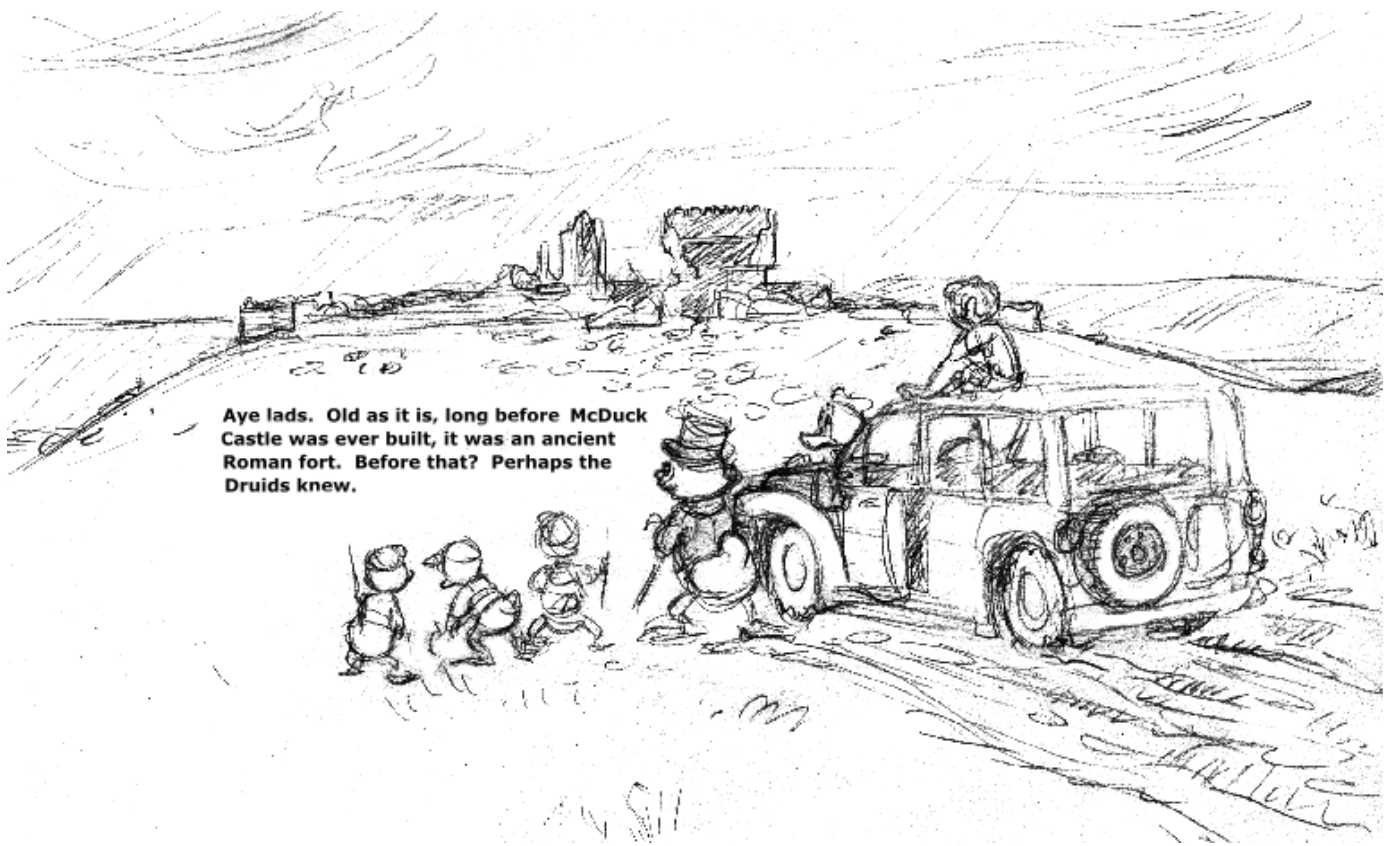
You might have noticed that the main character of the two desert drawings was one of my own Kjola critters, not a duck or any other sort of funny-book character. She appears on the roof of the Range Rover in the "Donative" sketches. I have variously called her Terra or Luna.

I cooked up "Two Flags Over Barsoom" just as the Martian rovers began to roll in real life. In my story, Gyro Gearloose had invented a practical Mars rocket, but discovered that it had been sabotaged. Meanwhile, Brutopian spies, who had stolen the designs, planned to land on Mars first and claim the whole planet for themselves. Although the rocket meant for the Ducks cannot get to Mars ahead of the Brutopians, there *is* a way. Terra does not need oxygen, heat, or tolerable accelerations and can ride a cramped test vehicle by herself, beating the Brutopians by a mile. Being true assholes, they blew up Terra's capsule, thinking she was dead, and returned to Earth claiming the girl must have been lost in space. The story was really about the months that Terra spent alone on Mars, with nothing to do but explore until the relief ship arrived. By then, of course, everyone on Earth knew all about the perfidy of the Brutopians. As a story, it is considerably the weakest of the lot, but I enjoyed mapping out Terra's journey on foot. As you can see, it took 20 days for the longest trip. Valles Canardis is named for the Ducks, and Huey, Dewey and Louis for the nephews.

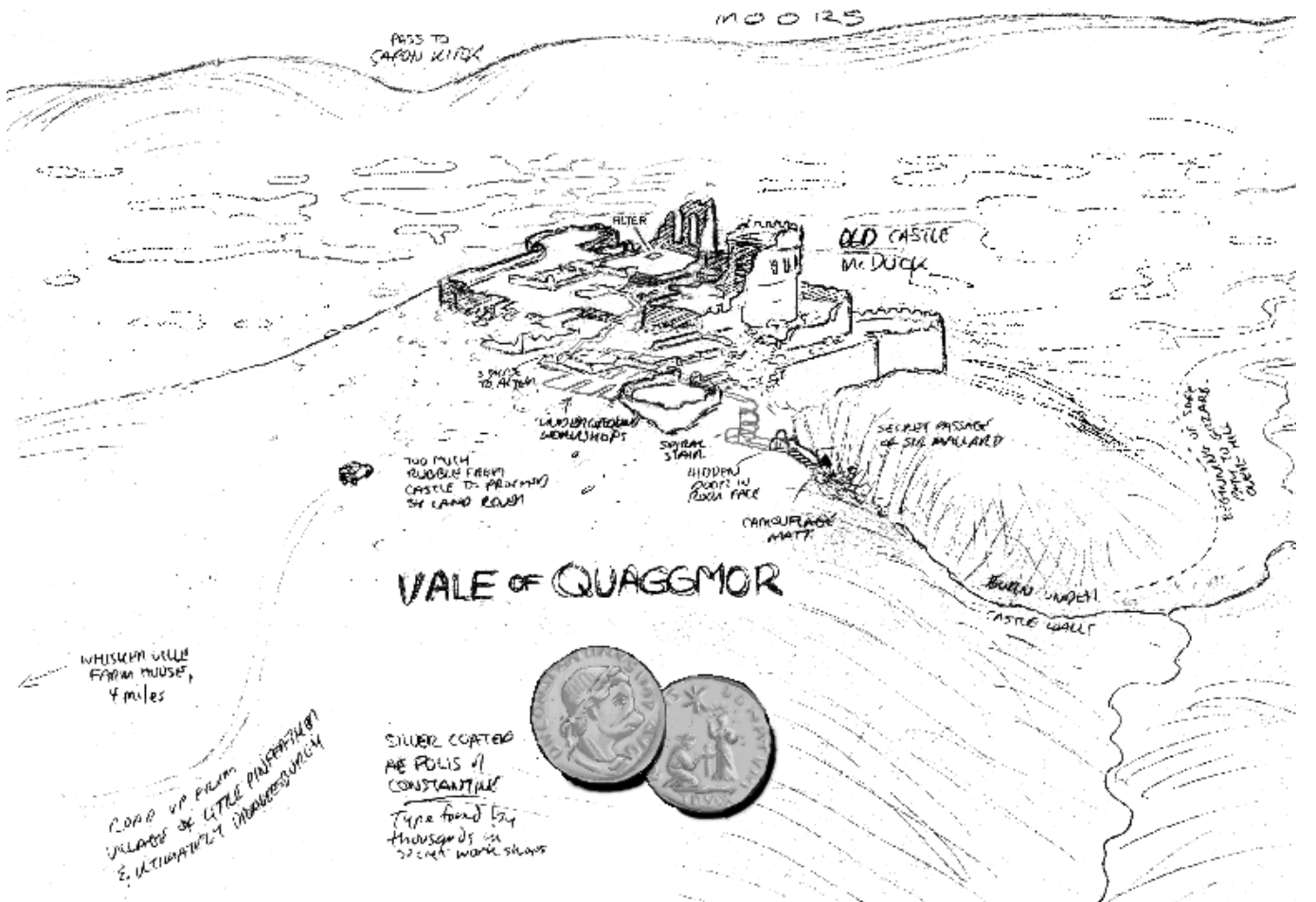
There are at least two half-finished drawings I really ought to dig out. One was another illustration from "Lost City," and another was of "The Three Brothers" in "Two Flags Over Barsoom."

The final illustration is a departure from the others. I was asked to do it for one of the Worldcons ... I think it was Chicago. I got a few copies, but it felt like a completely thankless task. I got no feedback at all, though I was as pleased as punch with the work. The story has no beginning, nor end, of course, but captures the essence of such a story – the adventure, the exotic locale, the respect for knowledge, and the humour. I had by then decided to remove my own creation, Terra, and replace her with one that suits the Barks universe. Luna may be a super-girl of some sort, but she is clearly avian. Unfortunately, I never defined her more fully, since my inspiration had begun to fade, and there was no further work done on the character, nor on the written short story of her origin, nor – of course – on the unfinished artwork.

It all feels as though it had been a tremendous waste of my energies. But it had been fun while it lasted. Wouldn't it have been wonderful if I had met Carl Barks, and he had said to me, "Kid, you have spunk!" Or even better, "Kid, why aren't you doing this for a living? I'll call Walt right now, and you can start your apprenticeship right away, so that you can take over when I retire." Walt, of course, was already dead when this ambition manifested itself, but Barks was still alive then. Such things never happened to me, though. Some people go overnight from a badly drawn alternate comic strip to three successful network TV shows. But as for me, it seems "Those also serve who only stand and wait." I hope it all serves some purpose in the end...



Aye lads. Old as it is, long before McDuck Castle was ever built, it was an ancient Roman fort. Before that? Perhaps the Druids knew.



## VALE OF QUAGGMOR

SILVER COIN  
ARE POLIS A  
CONSTANTINE  
Type found by  
thousands in  
archaeological  
workshops



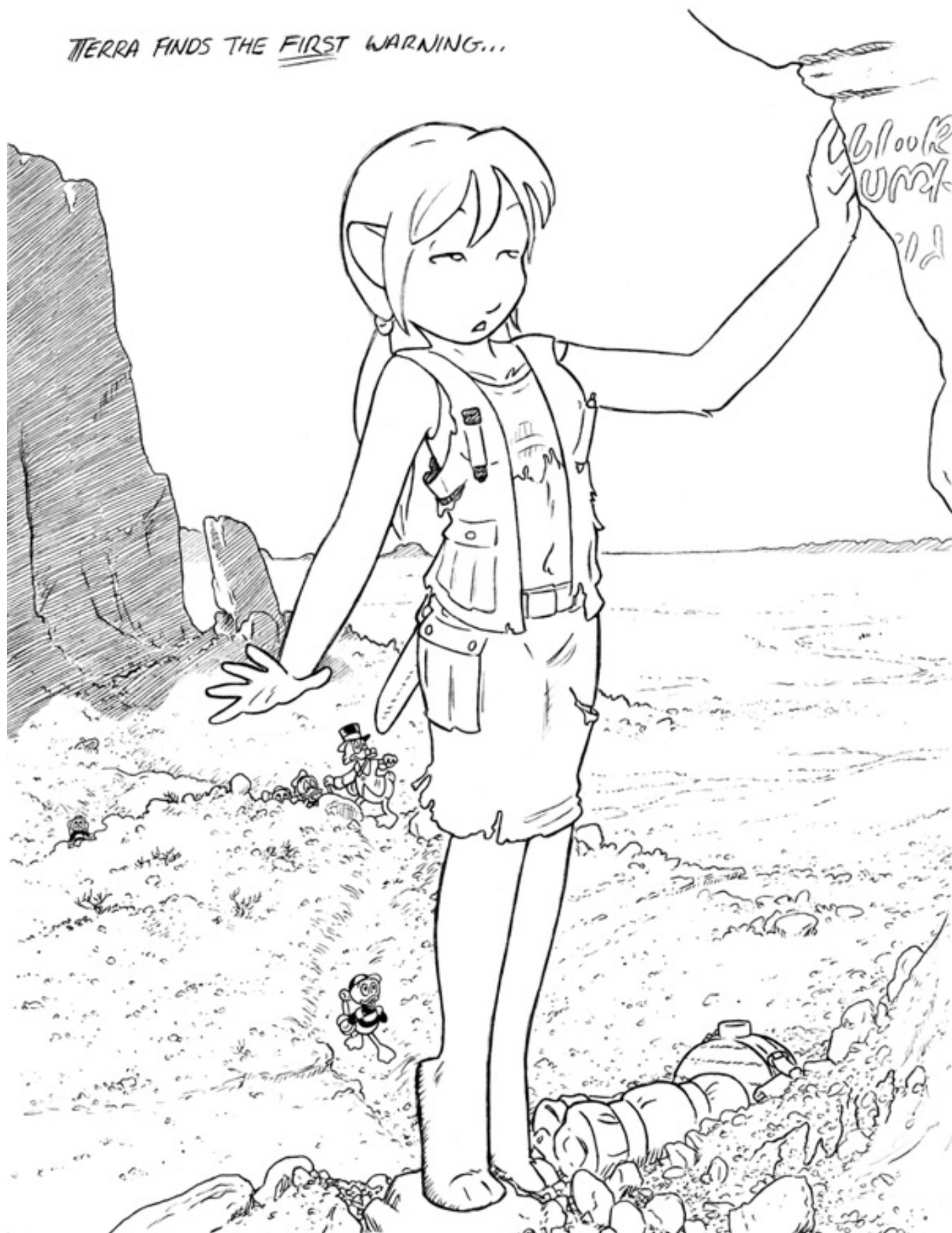


IT WAS SABOTAGE  
ALRIGHT,... BUT I DON'T  
THINK IT'LL CAUSE YOU  
ANY TROUBLE NOW,  
MR. McDUCK,

ASSUMING THAT IS  
YOU DON'T INTEND  
DRIVING **OVER** THOSE  
MOUNTAINS.



TERRA FINDS THE FIRST WARNING...



## Sue Shi

- \* Martial arts master
- \* Ex-Intelligence agent "XX7"
- \* alleged freelance assassin
- \* daddy pays for everything

## "Warhead"

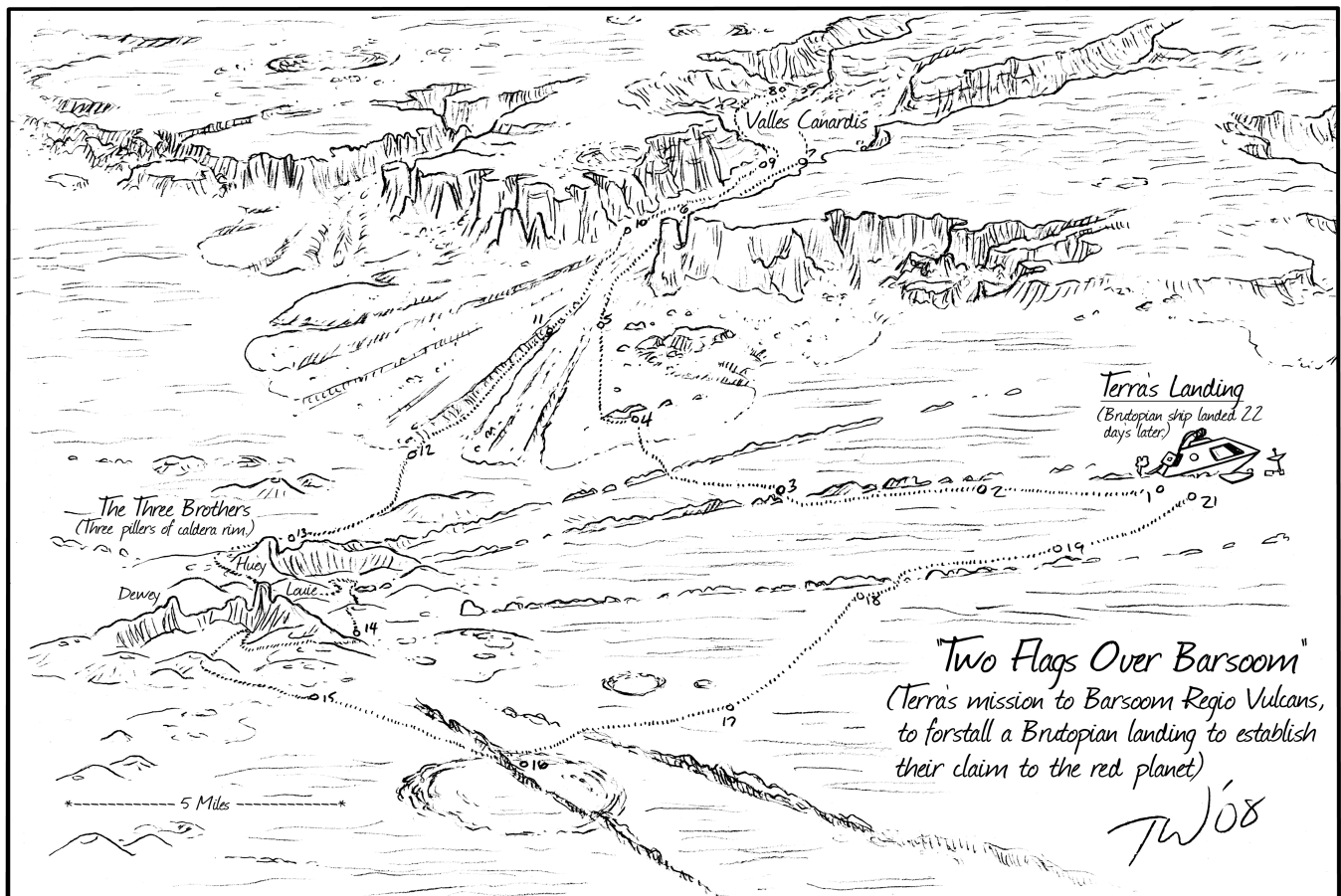
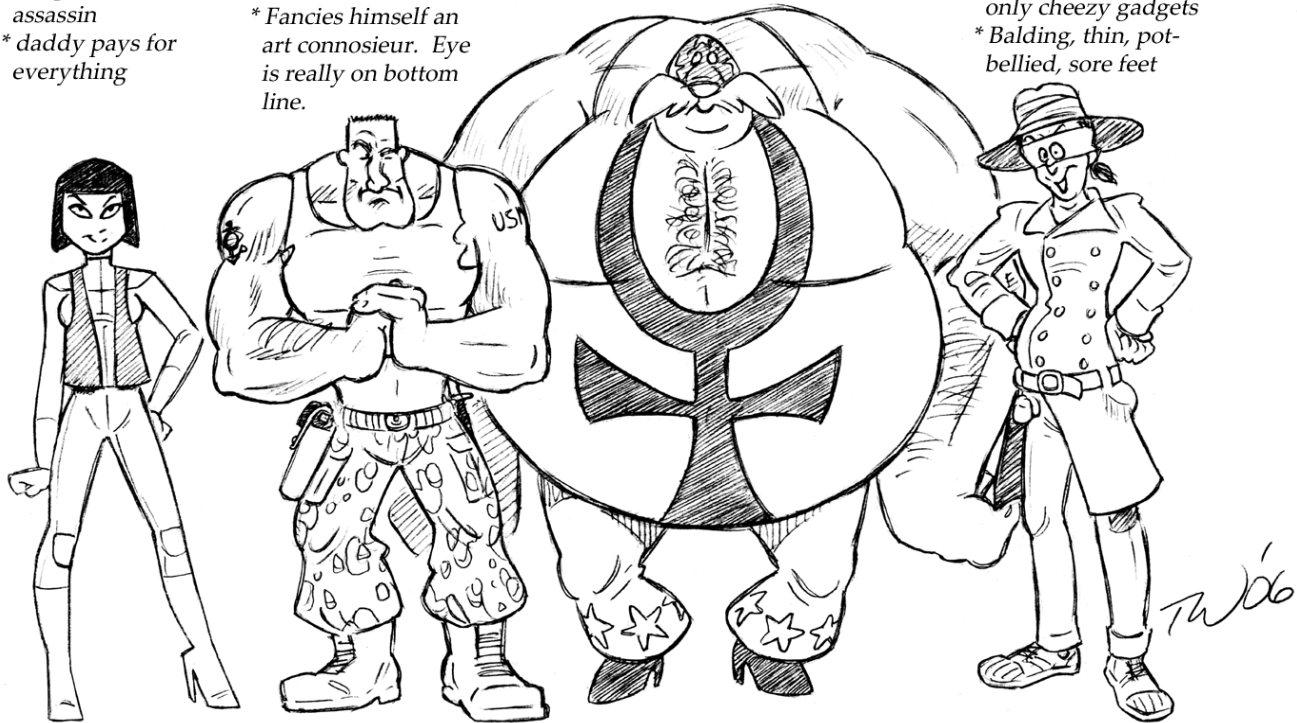
- \* Sgt. Elwood R.E. Lee Payne, ex-USMC D.I.
- \* Cashiered for improper relationship with certain arms dealers
- \* Fancies himself an art connoisseur. Eye is really on bottom line.

## The Magic Mountain

- \* Real name Jesus Minudo Grandez
- \* Ex-pro Mexican masked wrestler
- \* Previous job as circus freak
- \* Into flakey counter-culture & mysticism

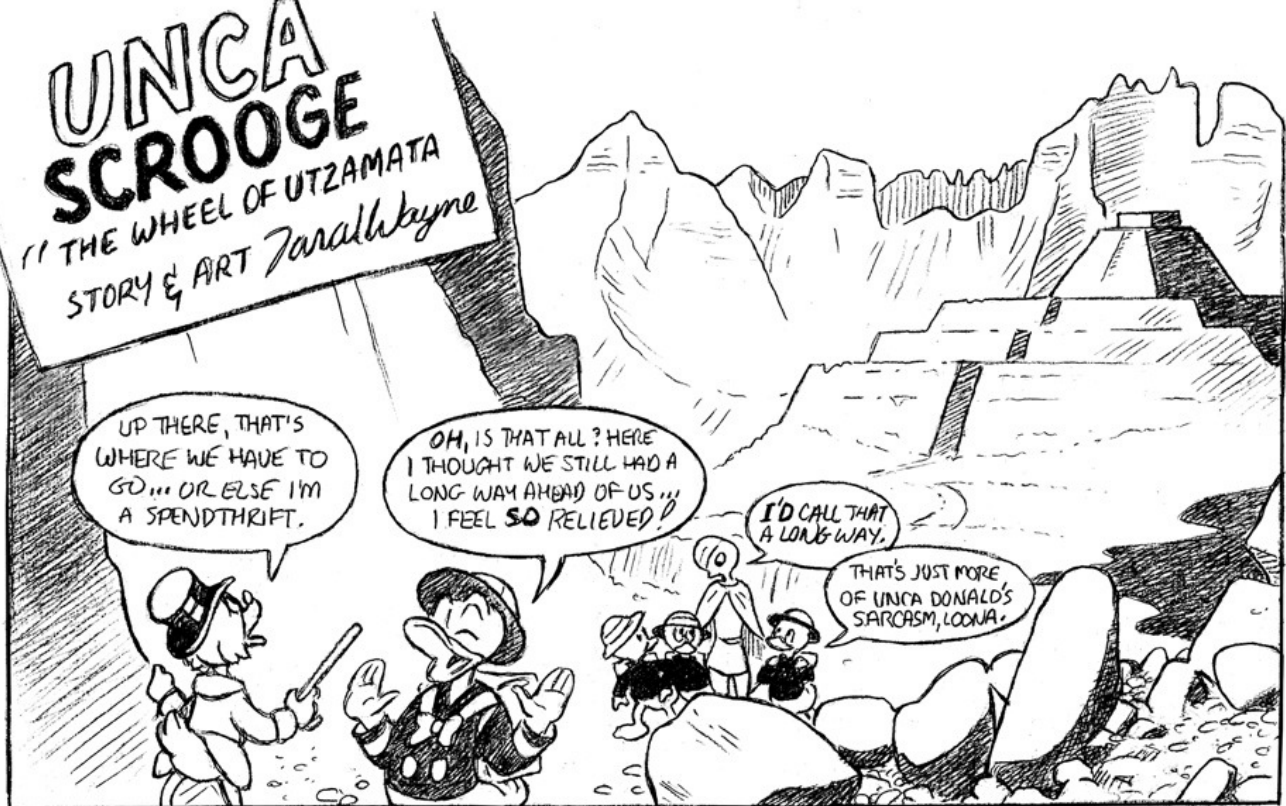
## Nimbus

- \* Real name unknown but answers to "Cosmo"
- \* 2nd. rate retired so-called superhero
- \* No known "powers", only cheezy gadgets
- \* Balding, thin, pot-bellied, sore feet

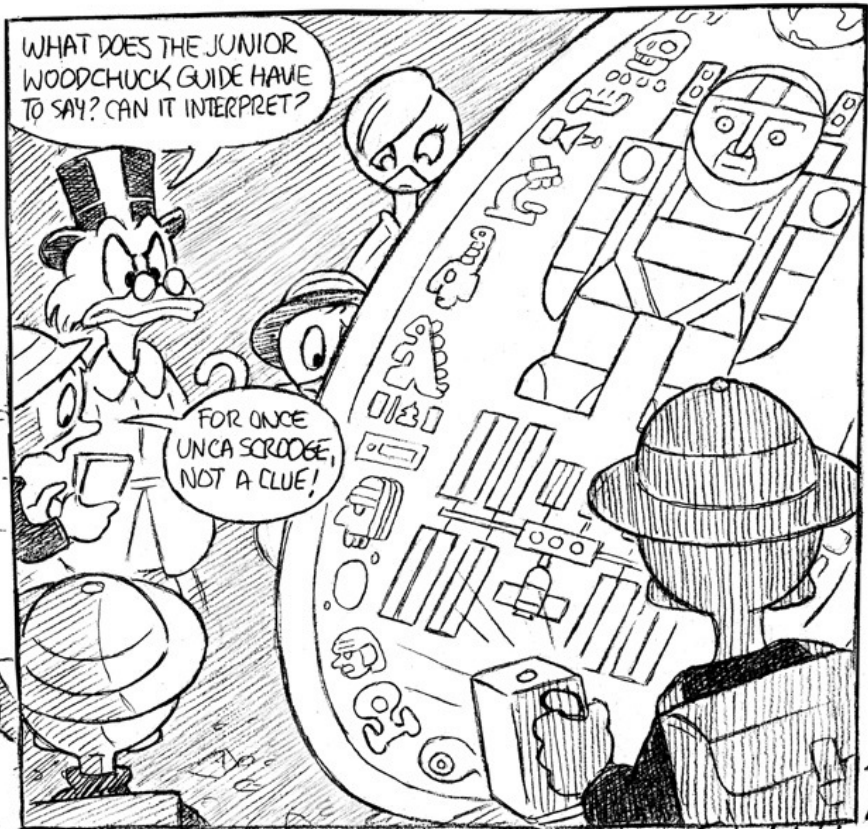
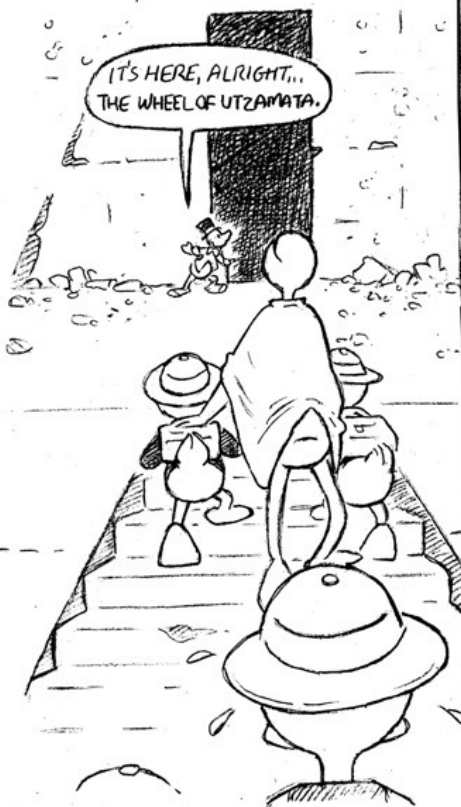


# UNCA SCROOGE

THE WHEEL OF UTZAMATA  
STORY & ART Zaralbyne



MANY WEARY MILES OF BURNING SUN AND ROCKY, WINDING FOOTPATHS LATER.



End of Another Issue!