



Broken Toys 23 is a personalzine by Taral Wayne. Despite the best of intentions, I've made little progress on backlogged projects in the last few months. The usual excuses apply ... as well as all new health issues. Seems to be a lot of material in this month's folder, as well as the usual out-of-control letter column. Keep writing and let that be my problem! As I have for the last 22 years-and-counting, I live overlooking the west end of Lake Ontario from the 21st floor at 245 Dunn Ave., Apt. 2111, Toronto, Ontario M6K 1S6. Contact or loc me at Taral@teksavvy.com. The date is late November 2013, and the year is beginning to look rather worn out and grey. This is Kiddelidivee Books & Art (or ExtraTaratoriality) 273. Copyright 2013 by Taral Wayne, retired fan & humbug.

LATE MIDDLE AGE CRISIS, OR EARLY OLD AGE SENILITY?

I'm not going to apologize for having so little new art to post, or for drawing so little of late.

If you don't mind, I *am* going to indulge myself in some self-pity. In fact, I'm going to indulge myself even if you *do* mind.

Lately I've been going through hell because of my neuropathic condition. It had been largely under control with a drug that suppresses unwanted nerve stimulation in my legs and hips. But around the end of summer, just before my birthday, it seemed as though the meds were becoming less effective. I visited my doctor, who prescribed some minor exercises. Although skeptical, I agreed to try them. After all, I had been gradually growing less active, and the thought that I might be losing fitness had been on my mind.

That night I undertook the prescribed stretching and bending, and rapidly abandoned the effort. It was too painful to do the entire set of 10. Half an hour later, I attempted to get out of bed ... and fell back into it, curled in a ball, wracked in agony. My hips and both legs felt like they were on fire and being amputated with a dull hatchet at the same time. For the next fifteen minutes I was mainly concerned with self-control, and making the decision whether or not to phone for an ambulance. If it kept up, clearly I would need emergency intervention. *Fortunately*, the worst of it passed after about a quarter-of-an-hour. The pain was still bad, but it faded slowly over the course of the evening.

By morning, I was still far from well, but much better than the previous night. Over the next few days, I improved by tiny increments. I could spend small amounts of time on my feet or sitting, watching TV or working at the computer. I could even use the toilet. Movement grew a little easier every day. Still, the improvement was also *less* every day. Now, more than three weeks later, I feel much better ... but I am still not in as good a shape as I was at the beginning of October!

The good thing about this is that certain bodily functions that are critical were not affected. The bad news is certain bodily functions that are pleasurable were off-line for more than a week, and are still unreliable. The worst loss of all was my ability to sleep. No matter what position I took – legs lying straight, stuck upright in the air or wrapped behind my neck – I was never entirely comfortable. While reading or working, a certain amount of discomfort can be ignored ... but not so when trying to sleep. Having nothing to occupy the mind focuses your mind on the discomfort instead, and sleep will not come. In fact, quite minor discomfort will soon seem like torture, and I had about four separate kinds of discomfort to overcome. For a couple of weeks, sleep came only when it was almost literally impossible to remain conscious. Even then, I was doing well to stay asleep for more than five hours. I think I slept over seven hours only twice in that time.

I've begun sleeping fairly dependably at last, but I still don't think I've had a full eight-hour rest.

The thing that's important about sleep to me is that I particularly enjoy the minutes before dropping off. I live a pretty sedentary life, where a walk around the neighborhood on a pleasant day is about as exciting as it gets. For the last couple of years, I haven't really been able to do even that, because walking has become such an unpleasant chore. So it became all the more important to me that I could lay my head on a pillow and, in my mind, explore Mars on foot, arm-wrestle with Klingons, crawl through a hole into Fraggie Rock or straighten out the messes that uncles Curly, Larry and Moe got into. I know it's awfully silly, but at my age I no longer give a damn if you think it's silly. I bet half my readers do the same thing at night before they sleep. The other half would, too, if they didn't lapse into unconsciousness instantly.

But when lying quietly and withdrawing into your own mind only brings a heightened awareness that your leg aches and your hips feel bruised and there is a strange numbness in your feet, you can't do that. I've been robbed of the best part of the day!

It probably comes as no surprise that all this has left me feeling rather apathetic. Little seems to matter except whatever snatches of sleep I can get, the occasional meal, and such calls of nature as cannot be ignored. If it weren't for my first cup of coffee of the day, I wouldn't know what I was living for.

Relief may come soon. I have another doctor's appointment tomorrow, on Tuesday. He'll prescribe something to deal with the constant, nagging pain, or I'll know the reason why!

This growing indifference isn't a new experience for me. I've been dealing with it for a year or two now, as my mobility has decreased and various other events in my life haven't panned out well. Every little disappointment has been magnified into a crisis of self-doubt. So I'm not going to the local SF con this Fall ... do I really like cons, anyway? I haven't been drawing much. So what? Does it make me rich, do I win awards, are there books written about my life's work? Do I even enjoy what I'm doing? I've been more successful with writing, but the same doubts are growing. If I publish 100 issues of *Broken Toys*, will it change anything, either about myself or the way others think about me?

Will I make a difference to anyone? Do I have anything left to write about? Without definable goals, it doesn't seem worth getting a grip on myself.

In the last few days, though, I've been interested enough to scan a few drawings that were done during the previous month. I scanned them, posted them online, and filed them away. While looking over the folders storing my artwork, I realized just how *bloody much* of it there really is. Flipping through the sheets, I see there is a little crud, a lot of mediocrity, but quite a number of things that I feel pride for, even though I may have done them five, 10 or even 20 years ago. It seems hard, now, to believe I drew them. The realization almost makes me feel like weeping over the rediscovery of the joy felt in such an amount of really *fine* work.

It may seem as though I've published and posted most of it. After all, there are more than 1,600 images posted on FurAffinity, and several hundred more on DeviantArt. In fact, I've hardly scratched the surface. Only the *highlights* of the work done in ink has ever been scanned, and of thousands of pencil drawings done since 1990, far fewer than half exist in digital form. I could easily spend the remainder of my life scanning old artwork for the internet.

Would it be such a tragedy if I stopped creating now? Would another five years of effort turn me into a household name like Frank Frazetta, or Roger Dean? Would it fill my bank account to make my declining years comfortable? If 40 years hasn't, another five probably won't. Do I even enjoy drawing anymore?

The obvious answer to the first two questions is "no." I can't give a definite answer to the third yet.

ooo

FurAffinity <http://www.furaffinity.net/user/saara/>

DeviantArt <http://taralwayne.deviantart.com/>

The Incomplete Taral Wayne Cover Gallery <http://efanzines.com/Taral/Incomplete-Taral-Wayne-Cover-Gallery.pdf>

“Like any good virus, Reality disguises itself well.”

CREW MATES

I was recently weak enough to use a link to a site that determined which *Star Trek: New Generation* character you were most like. Many of the questions were so transparent I hardly knew how to answer them honestly. For example, “You have a hard time expressing your emotions,” or “You often have an urge to detach body parts.” I did the best I could, half expecting to be cast as a Horta or an even lower form of life, such as Deanna Troi's mother. Surprisingly, I wasn't unhappy with the generated match:

You are **Geordi LaForge**

Geordi LaForge  65%

Jean-Luc Picard  60%

“You work well with others and often fix problems quickly. Your romantic relationships are often bunned.”

An Expendable Character (Redshirt)	60%
Spock	55%
Leonard McCoy (Bones)	55%
Deanna Troi	45%
Worf	40%
James T. Kirk (Captain)	35%
Uhura	35%
Chekov	30%
Mr. Scott	30%
Will Riker	25%
Data	24%
Beverly Crusher	20%
Mr. Sulu	15%



Being Captain Piccard as runner-up was nothing to complain about, either. On the other hand, I scored as just as highly as a “Redshirt.” In the Star Trek universe, donning a red shirt is signing your own death warrant.

Besides ... all along, I really wanted to be *Q*. There’s a character I feel truly in empathy with. Unfortunately, he wasn’t on the list. Otherwise, I’m *certain* I would have scored a solid 100%.

PAYING THE TROLL

Today I got some very amusing e-mail. It was from someone who – for the time being – I’ll just call “Jay-Em.” His full name doesn’t matter. Along with the rest of furry fandom, I am apparently to blame for most of his life’s failings. He wasn’t very clear just what those failings were, or how everyone but “Jay-Em” is responsible for them, but I was able to infer a couple of things. One, he seems to be banned from most galleries, groups and pages. The other thing I was able to guess was that he was incensed over the issue of violated copyrights. “Jay-Em” seems to have become a pariah in furry fandom because he was copying other artists’ characters, or perhaps posting their artwork as though it was his own. “Jay-Em” didn’t give details. However, he did touch on the common practice among furry artists of using copyrighted characters belonging to big studios like Disney and Warner. I imagine this was his justification for doing whatever it was he did.

Now, this is an interesting point. It is a truism that fan artists do regularly violate the copyrights of characters from *Rescue Rangers*, *My Little Pony*, *Kung Fu Panda*, *Sonic the Hedgehog* and so on. If it is alright to rip off a giant corporation owned by thousands of anonymous shareholders, the argument goes, it is therefore alright to rip off one insignificant guy hunched over a drawing board, whose sole

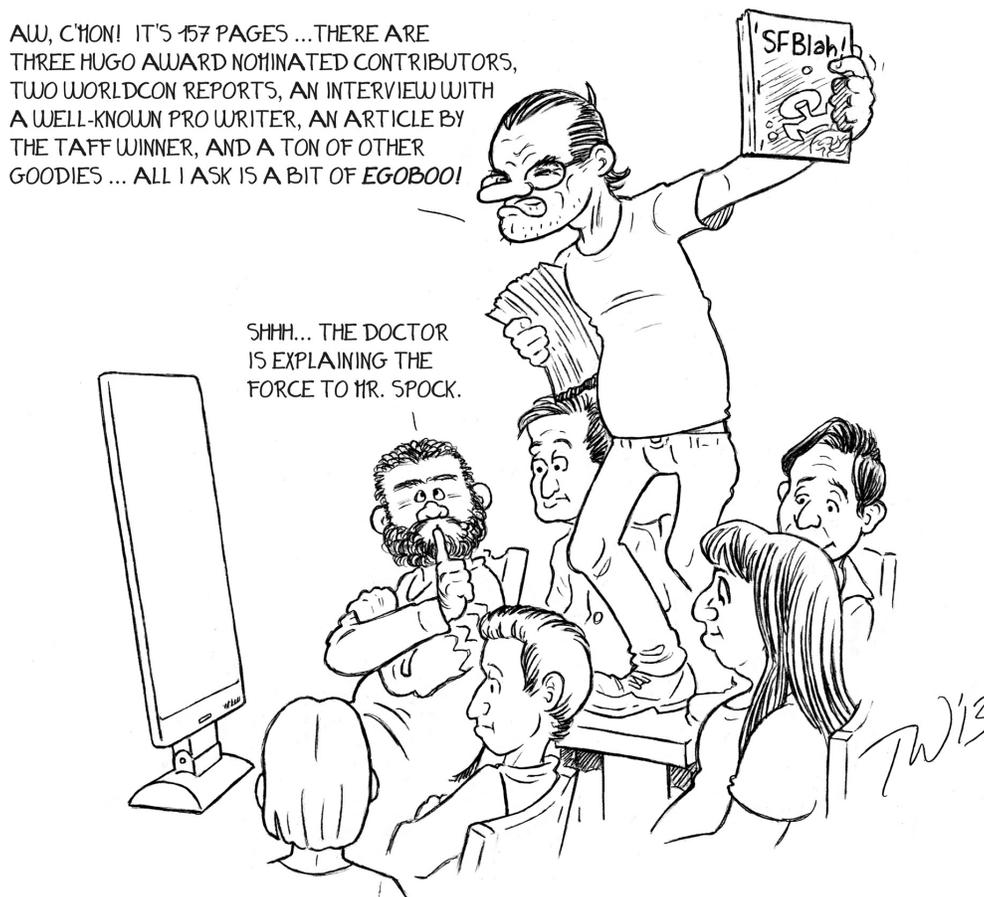
contribution to the world is his super-powered bunny rabbit or his fox girl cyber-spy. Is it really the same? No, I'm afraid I don't see it that way. Not unless stealing a few pens and blank CDs from work is the same as someone breaking into your garage and driving away in your car. The difference is scale. A fanboy drawing Lola Bunny without permission costs Warner Brothers nothing, and clearly doesn't damage the studio's reputation. On the other hand, that super bunny or fox girl spy is likely all that anyone thinks of when they think of the fan artist who created them – take that from him, and you take *everything*.

“Jay-Em” apparently had no problem with this. Taking everything from other fan artists was no more serious an ethical breach to him than a bit of minor office theft. This probably tells us a great deal more about “Jay-Em” than it does about ethics.

In the last several years, I've had two or three run-ins with jerks like “Jay-Em.” The price of “fame,” I suppose. I dealt with it at the time, and then life moved on. That's what's so amusing about all of this. It seems that I've made a major, almost life-altering impression on this “Jay-Em.”

But for the life of me ... I can't remember who *he* is!

“God moves in mysterious programming languages.”



LEFT-OVER PARTS

WAHF: GOSH... *It seems nobody wrote anything too self-incriminating to print!*

RON KASMAN, RON.KASMAN@GMAIL.COM

Thanks for the sepulchral edition of *Broken Toys*. I hope your physician is able to help out with some of the pain. Congrats on having good blood pressure. I hear that high blood pressure is a very strong indicator of pending heart disorders.

When you mentioned a rainy Halloween that you experienced as a child in Willowdale, I thought that I must have experienced it too, over in Downsview. However, I am not sure if my mind is filling it in as real or if I actually remember it. I think I would like to increase decoration of my home on Halloween, even if it is just so everybody knows that I am in with the spirit of the times but I don't know where I would put the stuff in the off season. My Christmas crap is already in every nook and cranny. It is one or the other and as a modern Jew, I feel it is important the Goyum know that I am on their side. What better way to show them? Now that I think of it, not having much Halloween stuff on the lawn will further show some of the Goyum who are stuck in the middle ages that I am on their side too.

Holy cow! Christmas and Halloween are religious holidays? Not to me they aren't. They're as secular as Richard Dawkins' birthday.

I have never been to a party where I met a French Maid costumed lady who wanted to sit on my lap, either. I have been to one with a woman wearing a horrible looking witch costume who told me that she would get laid by the end of the evening because that's just the way guys are. She was right! You learn something new every day, eh?

WALT WENTZ, WALTW@TELEPORT.COM

Your comment on the American obsession with guns seems brisk, intelligent and detached enough for me to pass it along as a prime example of how a thoughtful outsider perceives the American circus. Naturally, my passing it along offers no guarantee that my right-wing, elderly relatives, Tea Party acquaintances or assorted nut-job correspondents will actually READ it; more likely their eyes will glaze over by the second paragraph and they will begin droning the magical mantra, "if guns are illegal, only criminals will have..." and winding up with the obvious conclusion, "...Obummer is comin' ta take away mah guns!!!!"

It is a pity, but the NRA, the Tea Party and the various billionaire-sponsored right-wing "think tanks" seem to have hit upon the perfect formula for manipulating and controlling the elderly, the frightened, the resentful and the ignorant ... a sometimes-subtle, sometimes naked appeal to all our baser impulses: fear, intolerance, selfishness and contempt for critical thinking. How else can one explain the spectacle of elderly, frugal folk, dependent upon

Social Security and Medicare, dutifully voting for the party that has been obsessively striving to gut and destroy both programs for decades?

The President's skin color has been the greatest boon to the lunatic fringe of the Republican Party since JFK's Catholicism. People can be persuaded to swallow the most glaringly obvious absurdities and to vote against their own economic survival if the "enemy" is depicted as one of "those others."

"Don't call ME a racist!" one of my elderly former co-workers shrieked indignantly... and he then proceeded to dredge up the latest "Birther" conspiracy theory.

Sigh. Sometimes I wonder if it would be better for the world at large if our beloved country, founded in such high hopes, were simply permitted to disintegrate into a clutter of insular, impoverished, brutal but mostly ineffectual little domains, ruled by ignorant warlords and their wealthy sovereigns.

If it does, I suppose it means more of the worlds' resources for the rest of us.

E.T. BRYAN, ABPIX.GREMLIN@VERIZON.NET

Thanks for the *Broken Toys 22* – Halloween Issue. My personal fav movies for Halloween night are James Whale's classic "Bride of Frankenstein", "Arsenic and Old Lace", "The Nightmare Before Xmas" and "The Crawling Eye" – (American title forgot the original). All pretty bland stuff but still entertaining and more in line with waiting for the local kiddies to arrive for their extortion payments.

I love "Arsenic and Old Lace," as well as "Nightmare Before Christmas." The others are actual horror movies, a genre I never got into.

Sorry to hear about the issues with your lower back. I've had some similar, if not as severe problems myself, and found the short term solution to be placing the lower legs on a chair while lying on the floor for back realignment and consciously relaxing the back muscles. The long term solution is weight loss and exercise, although that may not be an option for you. Hope you're feeling better soon.

ERIC MAYER, GROGGY.TALES@GMAIL.COM

Looking at your Halloween issue I can't help but thinking about my own *Revenant* Halloween issue from last year. Was it that long ago? In fact, I am a bit uncomfortable locking because I feel rather as if I am commenting on one of my old zines. Then again, why not? Hardly anyone else did.

I still believe that your problems with *eDitto* and *Revenant* were twofold. First and most important, I don't think many fans knew of your fanzine. With so few review columns, you pretty much depend on the title alone, posted on Fandom.org, and the thumbnail on eFanzines.com to draw attention. With so many other zines also online, the good and the bad go equally overlooked. Secondly, with

Revenant in particular, your zines tended to be introspective, almost intentionally divorced from fandom and the cliques that make up fandom. It is harder to draw people in when they feel no involvement. Perzine though *Broken Toys* is, I always try to include a fannish element.

As I begin this loc it is actually Halloween. We are too much off the beaten track to draw any trick-or-treaters and just as well. I used to enjoy handing out candies to excited little ghouls and ghosts but when I moved to Rochester suddenly we were swarmed with more than 100 visitors, many of whom were large teenagers costumed, apparently, as glowering thugs. Adults even showed up, collecting treats for their sick children. Since this evening it is threatening rain, I recall my favorite Rochester Halloween when it teemed down and was freezing cold and kept even the most rapacious candy seekers off the streets.

Augh! Only one hour and six minutes of Halloween left! I need to put out my styrofoam gravestones, plastic skulls and rubber rat *now!* And start eating my candy, too.

What horrifies me most about Halloween these days is how it has become practically the night before Christmas. As soon as those trivial sales of candy are out of the way, stores roll out the Christmas decorations and Muzak in earnest. Thanksgiving is yet to arrive and when I was growing up Santa came to town, to visit department stores, the day after, but now the turkeys are liable to be run down by reindeer pulling sleighs.

What I would like to see is Commercmas starting on January 2nd, and ending when stores have rung up the sales they expect. That would certainly encourage people to shop early and put a stop to all that godawful music and fake sentimentality.

Is that January 2nd next year, or do you mean get a 12-month head start on Christmas-The-Same-Year?

For a science fiction writer Ray Bradbury sure was backward looking. How could any writer not appreciate the value of the word processor, even if they didn't want to use one himself? On the other hand, I can understand how a writer, or any artist, might not want to change his creative process, especially if he has had success with it. Creativity is mysterious. Why risk messing with it? Perhaps the sound of the typewriter clattering along helped the vibrations in Ray's brain. Who can be sure? Two-finger typist that I am, word processors were a miracle for me. Never could I have managed to co-write (and do the necessary rewriting) a novel. I couldn't even have typed out a novel. It would have taken me three lifetimes to get a clean manuscript.

Sorry about your bout with bad health -- or should I say *particularly* bad health? Sounds as if you have pinched a nerve. I used t get a tingling/numb feeling in one foot when I ran too much, and sometimes even while walking. Years later, when a new doctor finally sent me for the MRI the old doctor should have sent me for, it revealed herniated disks right where they would have pinched a major nerve. I probably wouldn't have irrevocably damaged the nerve, as seems to be the case, had the first doctor looked into the cause of my complaints as he should have. I understand doctors are human and can make mistakes but what pisses me off is when they won't take what you tell them seriously.

Fortunately, one of the first things my new doctor did was have me X-rayed. They shot my hips and the lower back. While there were the signs of aging you'd expect in a man of my years, the negatives

were clean. Neither arthritis nor and sort of degeneration of the spine was to blame for the pain. I also felt nearly immediate relief from the pain when prescribed with a drug called Gabapentin, which acts on the nerves and muscle tissue, suppressing unwanted excitation. That pretty much nailed the problem as neuropathic pain associated with my Myasthenia Gravis. Both are auto-immune disorders and are often associated. Still, my recent bout of extreme pain might easily have been a pinched nerve or some other trauma. That's one of the frustrating things about life – you never have so many problems that you can't have more.

It is probably not good to segue from health to your musings on how we will be perceived, or not, by future fandom after we limp off into oblivion. My desire -- likely to be honored -- is that I not be recalled at all. Mary has strict instructions that fandom is not to be alerted to my passing. Who cares really? Anyway, I don't consider my fanwork as any kind of legacy. It was all done for the moment, not for posterity.

That is a neat write-up in *Amazing* though. Hope it gets you a few readers. I'm not sure what kind of readership that site has but it's got to be more than the typical ezine on eFanzines.

DAVE HARREN, TYRBOLO@COMCAST.NET

There was one dynamic in the model, however, that offered some hope. [Brad] Werner termed it “resistance” – movements of “people or groups of people” who “adopt a certain set of dynamics that does not fit within the capitalist culture”. According to the abstract for his presentation, this includes “environmental direct action, resistance taken from outside the dominant culture, as in protests, blockades and sabotage by indigenous peoples, workers, anarchists and other activist groups”.

Serious scientific gatherings don't usually feature calls for mass political resistance, much less direct action and sabotage. But then again, Werner wasn't exactly calling for those things. He was merely observing that mass uprisings of people – along the lines of the abolition movement, the civil rights movement or Occupy Wall Street – represent the likeliest source of “friction” to slow down an economic machine that is careening out of control. We know that past social movements have “had tremendous influence on . . . how the dominant culture evolved”, he pointed out. So it stands to reason that, “if we're thinking about the future of the earth, and the future of our coupling to the environment, we have to include resistance as part of that dynamics”. And that, Werner argued, is not a matter of opinion, but “really a geophysics problem”.

You have probably noticed that I am horribly opinionated. It is all part of the great grandfatherly toolbox.

When a scientist like Brad Werner looks at his modelling and decides that getting out on the barricades is the answer to the world's quite obvious problems, just maybe it is time to take a step back consider it from another angle. I'll bet you that making a mess and making a fuss is just going to obscure the real problems with a lot of noise and spectacle. Capitalism has been croaking the same old line of crap for 300 years without bothering to do what any reputable thinker would. If it really takes 500 poor to make one rich person, how exactly does ruining the economy to make the 500 even more wretched every year do anything

for rich and poor alike?

If the jails and prisons are already full, how does getting more activists into jail make an improvement in the system that created the jails and the mess ?

Capitalism is the system of slavery, it started that way, it has continued that way and has no intention of changing its ways. It may mask this off from most people with suspicious rhetoric and ancient justifications but once the mask is removed it is still the same as it was in the beginning. No magic Marxist worker-owned factory slave pen will rectify this problem, no leftist bullshit will fix a system that is accelerating its plan to push us all into the nearest Soylent Green processing plant.

One wonders what capitalism even is any more, since you read so many different definitions. Strictly speaking, it's a system of investment in privately owned enterprises, involving limited liability loopholes and fictions about shared ownership. In reality, corporations are run by a much narrower group of people than the shareholders – the directors and CEOs gain leveraged power over assets they do not themselves own. But capitalism has also come the mean the stock market, and financial manipulation of monetary instruments such as debts, futures, derivatives and so on. Furthermore, most people assume a collusion between government and corporations to further corporate interests. The one thing capitalism *isn't* is a free market. Most corporations depend on tax breaks, government contracts, anti-labour legislation, undue influence on the process of law-making, exemptions from all sorts of regulations – environmental, safety, minimum wage, etc – and, of course, the protection of their property – intellectual as well as material – by a taxpayer-funded system of police, courts and prisons. How is this a free market?

So what should we do ?

First, watch Europe as it tries out anarchy (defunding the governments) except for the police and legal systems of course, that might lead to someone not being taxed, surveilled, and jailed if they do something disapproved of.

I heartily approve of your plan to regain mobility, I recommend a flame paint job, loud exhaust pipes and a five-chime airhorn snagged from a diesel rail locomotive to clear laggards from your path.

Over exercise makes you hurt and a sudden attack of enthusiasm for it will make you suffer badly. Eventually it does stop hurting you but it's a long uphill battle to regain reasonable fitness.

I don't think I overexercised ... I think activity of any sort in my condition is asking for trouble later. My recent episode of immobility and pain was probably triggered by too much walking in the days before. I strongly suspect that I over-exert myself if I try to walk more than a few blocks, and should rest up on the following day. It's not as though there was a cure for what ailed me...

MILT STEVENS, MILTSTEVENS@EARTHLINK.NET

In *Broken Toys* #22, you mention celebrating your birthday. I stopped celebrating my birthdays years ago. It's hard not to observe birthdays with their annual delivery of entropy, but I try to ignore them anyway. These days, birthdays slither past before I can hit them with a shovel.

The Bible says the years of man are threescore and ten. That could mean several things. It could mean you should drop dead at 70 and not plague your children anymore. It also might mean that 70 is enough age for anybody, and you don't have to admit to any age greater than 70. So I guess you can freeze your official age at 70 if you really want to.

Unfortunately, there's still the problem of all that entropy piling up.

That's one you don't hear from the fundamentalists -- that despite good odds of living to 85 these days, thanks to medical science, we should commit suicide "in obedience of God's will" at the age of 70.

This year, Halloween was easy. It fell on Thursday, so I was able to go to a LASFS meeting rather than stay home and deal with kids. I live in a single family dwelling neighborhood, and the number of kids who might visit for Halloween might range from zero to quite a few. So how much candy do I buy? It would be nice if the candy and the kids ran out at about the same time. If I run out of candy first, I can always turn out the lights and pretend I'm not home. Leftover candy is more of a problem. If I have surplus candy, a satanic biker gang might invade my home and force me to eat it all. You might think that's highly unlikely, but you can't discount the possibility altogether. My only hope is that it won't happen before the next LASFS meeting, where I can get rid of an unlimited amount of candy or other edibles.

The trouble with those traditional orange-coloured Halloween candies is that they are *not* edible!

LLOYD PENNEY, PENNEYS@BELL.NET

Thank you for issue 22 of *Broken Toys*. A quick peruse of the zine shows me comment hooks galore, so I will get started immediately.

I do recognize Bohemian Rhapsody, and I do recognize where you're coming from. Myself, I feel like I am slowing down, things don't matter as much as they did. I don't read as much as I used to, I am not as active locally as I used to be (I miss it in some ways, and not in others). I do feel a little left behind, but I am sure there were some that felt that way when I got into local fandom in the early 80s. It's a generational thing, and I am finding there are other things presenting themselves that Yvonne and I are engaged in. In the long run, as long as we are having some fun and doing something creative, we're pleased. There's a space conference and the World Mystery Convention in Toronto in 2017 that we may have a hand in along the way. It's still some fun for me, but as I am well into my 55th year, I find myself thinking what you have, does any of this really matter? It's been a fun hobby, and sometimes I think people take up hobbies when they find there's nothing really important they can do/are allowed to do/can afford to do.

Congrats on the acceptance by the provincial government, and that nice retroactive cheque. I am sure you were wondering what you were going to do moneywise before it arrived. I'm in a similar boat, I am now working as a copy proofreader for an advertising agency, literally down the street from where we live in Etobicoke. I'd been living on EI and savings since March, and if this hadn't come along, I have no idea what we were going to do for the next month's expenses. Definitely go for the scooter, and get your mobility back. Ah, if only reading was exercise, we'd all be fit and trim.

(Got a contract extension today, and will have work until Christmas Eve. Then, I am told to expect the very strong possibility of another contract extension to take me at least into the first quarter of 2014. I am saved.)

I know what can be done with a computer, and it continues to amaze, especially now with 3D printing, and similar technologies that were a part of science fiction not long ago. Still, I miss the smell of must in searching out a used book store, seeing what treasures might be buried somewhere behind a shelf or a corner. I've found some amazing books that way, and I even bought some of them. Yvonne and I have extended that adventure into antique and vintage shops. When it comes to communication, the computer is superior, and I can write this up, save it and send it to you via e-mail, and it can be with you in minutes, instead of the days a paper loc would take. Superiority more so, when it comes to communicating with friends in Australia or New Zealand or South Africa.

I never liked Hallowe'en much, mostly because I grew up in Orillia, north of Toronto, and most costumes were covered over by heavy winter coats to stay warm. I think as soon as I hit 9 or 10, I said I'd stay at home and hand out candy, I didn't mind at all. Even with local fandom being costume-minded, we usually didn't find out about the costume parties until they were past. This Hallowe'en, friends in Hamilton announced a costumed Hallowe'en party, and we dug out our steampunk costumes, and wore them there, and we had a great time. I realized it had been decades since we'd done that, and I'd missed it. We're in an apartment building too, and in the 15+ years we've been there, we've almost never had any kids at the door. The building super does nothing for anything at the front door, so Hallowe'en is a non-event here. Two huge condo towers are being built beside our building, so that might change as soon as people move in.

Coffee...where I work now, one of their clients is Second Cup, so we have it on demand, and I am quite spoiled; it's pretty good. If we had Starbucks here, I think I'd be sticking with cold water. I think most people aren't too concerned with the taste of most coffees, for they are more concerned with the effect of the caffeine. We all need our eyes opened in the morning.

Greetings to Dave Haren...only I see how many places I send locs to. Not just Canada, the US and the UK, but also Australia, New Zealand, Germany, South Africa and even Slovenia. In the past, I've received zines from Ireland, Spain, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia, France and Holland. I learned a lot about fandom elsewhere, and I'd like to think that they learned about Canadian fandom from me.

I have suggested to Chris Garcia to showcase Galen Dara and the other fan Hugo winners in an upcoming *Drink Tank*, and let us see *why* they won. Obviously, we're not seeing what these people create. I still cannot fathom Tansy Rayner Roberts getting the Fan Writer Hugo;

to the best of my knowledge, she is a professional SF&F writer from Australia, but as Eric Mayer wrote, perhaps it was her non-commercial writing that won her the award. Be assured that when the FAAn Awards come around, you do receive a Fan Artist nomination from me each year.

Just got back from the pub night tonight. A fun evening indeed, and at least this time, I had something to smile about. I hope this contract extension will brighten my moods. At least there's the encouragement of the paycheque to keep me going. Thank you for this issue, and see you with the next.

JASON BURETT, JASON.BURNETT@STARFLEET.COM

I've never read *Ah, Sweet Idiocy* - I hope that someone scans it in someday so I have the chance - but I'm still looking forward to your piece on Francis Towner Laney. (While I'm wishing, I'd also like for someone to scan *Warhoon* #28 so I can read it, but that being so much newer I don't know what the copyright status of it is and what legal details would be involved.)

It's already scanned, and has been for about three years. The hold-up has been getting started on that piece on FTL, which required me re-reading ASI and making notes. I'm just about done with the note-taking, but it's been a hard slog. ASI is a tangled skein of events and opinions that is hard to digest. It gets better with a second reading, but not with a third.

Speaking of legal details, I thoroughly enjoyed what you presented of Debb's story. Normally, given the existence of other little people living in the walls of human houses (the Borrowers, the Littles, etc.), I'd suggest you just file off the serial numbers and go for it, but this story makes use of so many particulars of Fraggie Rock that I'm afraid you'd file off quite a lot of the story along with the serial numbers.

That's the challenge, isn't it? To disarm the lawyers I may have to disable the story.

I also enjoyed the hints you gave about "Only Once a Year." Unfortunately, for the time being it seems to be the case that the people who have incentive to change the copyright system don't have the means, and vice versa.

BRAD FOSTER, BWFOSTER@JUNO.COM

First, (If I've not already noted this before, on *FaceBook*, or an e-mail, or another loc), that's great news about the funds coming in from the Support Program. Being able to add some basic comfort with the AC units, so that you will be able to do more, as well as improving your mobility now, are huge pluses to get you back into life and creative again. Hopefully both of those improvements will help to avoid problems such as your present leg difficulties in the future.

I agree with you totally on how the computer has made it not only easier for me to write, but I think it has improved my writing, by allowing me to take the time to re-write, to re-arrange, to

re-edit my material closer, since it is so much easier to do.

I enjoy seeing what costumes other folks don for Halloween, and checking out the house decorations in the neighborhood. But, for myself, never have been much of a personal participant in Halloween. I think the last time I even went trick or treating was when I was around 12 or 13. I like candy well enough, but I don't think I've got that much of a sweet tooth that I ever crave it, or that the idea of a bag of sugar goodies gets me excited. And, the neighborhood we now live in has not had a trick-or-treater show up at the door in over a decade or so. I watch the special on TV showing the wildest house decorations around the country, and the cooking competitions to make spooky food displays, and that's about it these days. Just an old guy glad those damn kids are no longer stomping over his lawn, I guess!

TOM TURRITON, TOM.T@SHAW.CA

Heya Taral! You send me your *Broken Toys* and I almost never respond, so it must feel like the messages are going into a void at my end. Mainly, I never have anything to *say*. But it's been months now so I figured it's damn time to say hello again!

Halloween in Winnipeg depends very much on the neighbourhood. My block is particularly dead; I'd say one in a dozen houses participates. I gave up a couple of years back, now I turn off my lights and hide in the back. On the bright side, our local Comic-Con is always held around Hallowe'en. Some corporate-run thing at the convention centre, not our local SF people who run Keycon. It's mainly a large sales floor, plus some gaming tables, some local club tables, and an area where people can line up for signatures from whoever got roped into the event. I paid Bruce Boxleitner a quick complement, but didn't outstay my welcome otherwise.

Crazy thing though was that it took 45 minutes of waiting in line to get into the event! I've become quite fond of a portable mp3 player, as a result. I can zone out while waiting in line, while grocery shopping... and especially on the bus to and from work. Not music though, audiobooks. Right now I'm working my way through some of the Discworld novels. Not sure what I'm going to tackle next, but it's a long winter of taking the bus, and I'll need to fill the void with something.

Anyway, even though there isn't much at the Comic-con that attracts me, I love seeing the city's nerd population out in force and celebrating their nerdiness. A lot of zombie costumes this year, I'm surprised the zombie trend has lasted this long. I picked up a 2-DVD set of the HitchHiker's Guide TV series from the early 80s, but I haven't watched them yet.

Otherwise, life goes on as usual. I've got a roof over my head, I get to hang out with friends occasionally if not as often as I'd like. I'm not sure whether I want to go see the new Thor movie yet, but Gravity was well worth seeing on a big screen. 3D - well, not so much.

“Unfortunately, my imagination is unemployable.”



My birthday had been two weeks before, but at the time Steven was in Australia, visiting his married sister. Before he left the country, he had promised that when he got back we'd go to Montana's for a fine meal to celebrate my turning 62. He was as good as his word.

Our mutual friends, Lisa and Yi, were invited along for the occasion, which made it all the

You may or may not have Montana's rib houses were you live. It doesn't matter. You surely have something just like it – dark, lots of weathered wood and kitschy decorations such as rusty oil lamps, hand pumps, stirrups, and ancient license plates. The intended impression

seems to be that the meat is so fresh it has just been slaughtered, and is being served to you right in the barn. I noticed that the three large-screen TVs over the bar were up-to-date, though. Regardless of the rustic pretense, the food at Montana's is fine indeed! The steak is tender and tasty. The pork back ribs with three choices of barbecue sauce – Honey Garlic, Apple Butter and Bold – are to die for. They serve several scrumptious desserts, including a Mile-High plate of chocolate-mocha-cookie ice cream, covered with whipped cream and chocolate sauce. It is only 8 inches high, but I estimate it weighs nearly two pounds. That's a lot of ice cream ... so they serve it with *two* spoons.

Steven ordered a buffalo burger platter and a beer. Yi ordered a salmon dish and a beer. Lisa wanted ribs and beans. I went all out and ordered the pork back ribs, which also came with beans, salad and corn bread. Steven asked if I wanted a Frangelico from the bar. Frangelico is a hazelnut flavoured liqueur, one of my favourites. I raised my eyebrows and said, "of course." To which Steven added, "a double?" Again, "of course."

For an appetizer, we agreed on "Kapow" shrimp, which seemed to be breaded with herbs and peppery spices, with a light lemon sauce. I can recommend many ways to prepare shrimp that are as good, but none better.

In the course of the meal, our conversation shifted from subject to subject like patterns in a kaleidoscope. One moment we were talking about Hizzoner, Rob Ford, the sinister clown-mayor of Toronto, of the evidence in police hands of his crack use and drug connections; the next moment about the game of hockey in the days when it was played wearing hardly any body armour, and it was televised from a single black-and-white camera high up in the benches. At one point Lisa described how Yi's mom once nearly blew up her apartment by checking a propane tank with a match.

Almost as though on cue, Lisa's story brought forth one of Steven's.

I'd heard the story once or twice before. Steven has an inexhaustible fund of them, so I never grew tired of hearing one again. This one was about his father and the new family barbecue.

Gas barbecues were all the rage at the time, and Steven's father was unable to resist bringing one

home. After all, the barbecue is one of the few toys a grown man is allowed to play with, and the new-fangled version that ran off propane was a temptation that Rocco Baldassarra had *no intention* of resisting. The only catch was that he was not altogether certain how to use it.

Steven must not have been around when his father brought home the new barbecue. Otherwise it's a little hard to explain why the old man would have asked Steven's sister – the one he calls Tia – how to play with a Man Toy. Stranger than that, she was able to explain how it operated.

"It's easy, Papa. Just open the valve on the tank to start the gas. Then press the ignition button to light it. It couldn't be more simple." They were speaking in Italian, of course, but I don't write Italian, so here it is transcribed into English.

"It *sounds* easy enough," he said, perhaps with just a touch of doubt in his voice.

As Steven puts it, though, his father was of the old school. He had been using the old briquette-fired barbecue for a long time, and just assumed that his daughter had left out steps that would have been Standard Operating Procedure on the old charcoal grill.

So on his first try, he turned the gas on, then closed the lid over the grill to wait for something or other "to warm up." Of course, what happened was that the enclosed space under the lid rapidly filled up with propane gas. Then, after waiting a minute or so, the poor guy hit the button. ...

The needles went off the graph in Tel Aviv, prompting an emergency response from the anti-terrorist squad to rush into the streets, wondering where the bomb went off.

Alright ... it wasn't *that* big an explosion. It must have seemed so to Steven's father, though. The lid of the barbecue was torn off its hinges and launched into the air to come crashing down so hard it half-buried itself in the ground, while an accusing plume of smoke towered into the sky. Fortunately, the Master Chef wasn't actually hurt. Numb with surprise, and deafened, perhaps. But not hurt. Lacking any better alternative, Rocco went into the house ... probably with the idea of asking his daughter if that had been her idea of a joke, then grounding her until she was sixty. Steven had the dubious luck to be the first one the old man encountered, and heard the story first-hand: the knob controlling the gas. The lid. The wait. The button. The explosion. Then Steven explained to his father about the inadvisability of enclosing explosive gas until it built up to a density that could be detonated.

Strangely enough, Steven related, his father didn't seem *angry*. His voice seemed a little tart, but his face seemed ... well, *impassive* was the best word. It was that moment, Steven said, that he realized that his father had *no eyebrows!* They had been burned right off, leaving his father with no means to fashion a proper frown!

Next time, the Master Chef remembered to light the gas right away ... or perhaps he just left it to Steven to operate the barbecue after that. In any case, there were no more explosions.

Steven mopped up the last of the ketchup with a bit of bun, and took his bow.

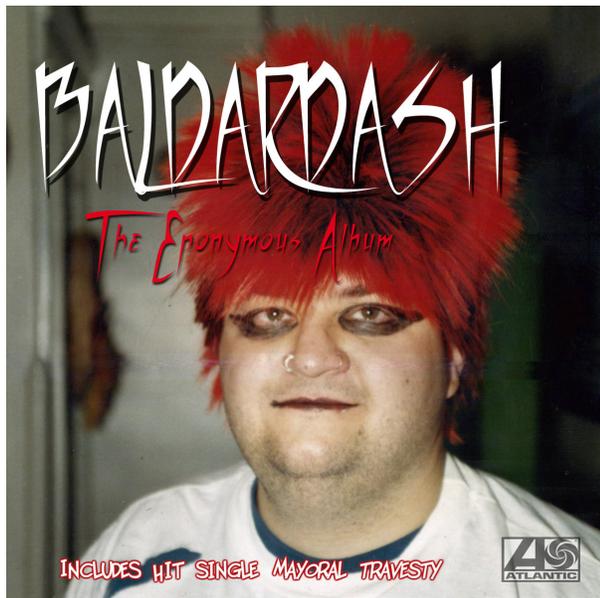
Our dinner occasion was swiftly coming to a close. Lisa had her night job at nine, and Steven offered to drive her home first. We finished up the last of our coffee, beer or 7-Up and pushed out our chairs: a lovely evening was over.

Did I say the evening was over? Well, Lisa had her shift ahead of her, of course. But I had a job of my own to complete that night. As soon as I shut the apartment door behind me, emptied my pants pockets and fed the cat, I turned on the computer. I had something to write ... something inspired not only by tonight's barbecued ribs, but by the story of another barbecue, which I had just heard. While the memory was still clear, I sat down to my computer keyboard and wrote the whole of Steven's story down in my own words.

Yep. I *stole* Steven's story, lock, stock and barbecue.

(This was the 8th of the so-called "Steven Stories." With any luck, there may be many more!)

"Someday we may not have to communicate with our thumbs."



There's been a lot said about Rob Ford, mayor of Toronto, lately. But not much sung! Here to remedy that, and sung to the tune of Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody" is Steven (a.k.a. Baldardash) Baldassara's new smash hit

MAYORAL TRAVESTY

Yes, this is real life
Nope, it's not fantasy.
Rob Ford's in a riptide
Of his own stupidity.

Oh how he tries,
To hide by his lies, you see,
He's just a rich man, won't get much sympathy
Because it's easy come, easy go
Gettin' high, snortin' blow

Anybody need blow? Doesn't really matter,
see, it's for me.

Brother, I just wanna kill a man
Rip his throat out, kick his head
Just 10 minutes, and he's dead.
Toronto, I'm 330 pounds of fun,
But now I've gone and toked it all away.

Toronto! Ooh...
I don't need to tell you lies
That I'll be coming back to City Hall,
tomorrow
I'll be there, I don't care; your protests just don't
matter.

It's great, doin' crack is fun,
Sending shivers down my spine,
Body's twitching all the time.

Goodbye, you reporters, your time has come
I have to leave you all behind and not face the
truth
Toronto! Ooooh (Anybody need blow,)
I will not resign
Sometimes I'd wish I'd never get drunk at all.

Watch my brother Doug, who is my biggest fan
Spin his words, spin his words, oh see how he
helps me?

Oh, so bold, defiant!
Metro Council giants, we!

(Another day goes) Another day goes.
(Another day goes) Another day goes,
Here's another "I'm sorry!"
Just let it go!

I'm just a rich guy and Ford Nation loves me.
I am the Mayor, who won't go quietly.
Oh, just go away and just let me be....

Easy come, easy go, will you let me be?
We're reporters! No, we will not let you be.
(Let him be!) We're reporters! We will not let
you be.
(Let him be!) We're reporters! We will not let
you be.
(Let me be) Will not let you be.
(Let me be) Will not let you be.
(Never, never, never let me be)
No, no, no, no, no, no, no.

(Oh, Brother Doug, Brother Doug) Brother
Doug come help me.

Oh remember, in October next year vote for
me, for me, for me

So you think you can accuse me of lies?
So you think you can scare me and make me go
bye?
Oh, Toronto, can't do this to me, Toronto,
Because I'm not leaving, because I'm not
leaving here.

(Oh, yeah, oh yeah)

Nothing really matters,
Anyone can see,
Nothing really matters,
Nothing really matters, except me.

(Anybody need blow.)



Appearing Soon in a Fanzine Coming to Your Door!

"True Dreams Do Lie" in File 770 163
"24 Hours" in Challenger
"The Road to Boskone," Banana Wings
"Ill Winds Still Blow", Askance

“Her Dance has a Josephine Baker accent.

Emotional – It Can’t Get No Worse!

Continued from, “Late Middle Age Crisis, or Early Old Age Senility?”

As a matter of fact, it probably could. It’s been touch and go since I wrote the editorial piece that began this issue.

I saw my doctor and made my pitch. I got satisfaction, too ... but just barely. No wonder drugs; no miracle cures. But he did take me off the Gabapentin and prescribed me Tylenol III. Tylenol sounds pretty prosaic, but IIIs are a blend of acetaminophen, codeine and caffeine, and on the list of controlled substances that can only be had by doctor’s prescription. He told me to take one when needed, but no more often than one every four hours. Then he wrote the prescription for 14 lousy pills ... at that rate, assuming I take none during the 8 hours of sleep, I could go through them all in 3 ½ days.

I asked Dr. Fung “what then?” but the answer I got was somewhat evasive.

He talked about physiotherapy, while I listened skeptically. The last thing I wanted was to travel more often, when merely going from my apartment door to the building elevators was a arduous journey. Also, I had good reason to believe that my legs and back were limber ... it was just that they hurt like hell if moved. Would physiotherapy do any good at all, or just help explore all the possibilities before we really got down to business? Dr. Fung suggested that for longer-term relief there were injections for the lower spine that might help – but they’d have to be repeated every few months. Having a needle stuck into my lower spine didn’t sound like much fun, but for three or four months of relief, it would probably be worth it. The plan went no farther, however. I left the medical center clutching my prescription but with no idea where I would be in a week’s time.

My condition had been so bad that I didn’t walk to the medical center as usual. The distance was only about three blocks, but I dropped a \$3 token into a streetcar fare box anyway. I thought I felt slightly better on leaving the center, though, and decided to walk back. It was a mistake.

For one thing, half the distance was uphill. For another, I had to walk another two blocks past Dunn Avenue to get to the drugstore with my prescription. If I wanted to sleep that night, I had no choice. I nearly didn’t make it. A block short of the pharmacy, I was already stooped over, then began to wobble and finally collapse. A young girl passing by asked if I needed help. I said no, like the idiot I am. “I can probably crawl the rest of the way.” She insisted on helping anyway. With her support, and by sitting for a minute on every gas meter along the way, we managed the last block. She also came into the pharmacy to keep me company.

I’d be very surprised if the girl was much over 18. She was too skimpily dressed for the cold weather, so it didn’t take much in the way of deductive powers to work out that she was a streetwalker. She also asked if I wanted to buy drugs. When I said I wasn’t into that sort of thing, she seemed to think I couldn’t afford it and offered me a free hit. She may have been just calculating, but you know ... no drug hooks anyone the first time. I took her offer as a well-meant gesture, instead. She did, after all,

stick with me, even when it was clear I was not going to allow her into my home or buy anything from her. Even prostitutes are people. It was rather touching, really.

She left after ten or fifteen minutes, but I wasn't left waiting much longer. I didn't have my drug card, unfortunately. I was a regular customer, though. The pharmacist let me have the Tylenols in exchange for my promise to bring the card in at first opportunity ... a promise, incidentally, that I'm afraid I broke.

When I arrived home, I emptied the vial into my hand and stared at the meager supply of Tylenol IIIs. Why take a whole one, I thought, when half might be enough? A sharp kitchen knife snapped the brittle white pill neatly and easily. I wasn't disappointed. The half-Tylenol worked a miracle. Within a short time, the pain was all but gone. What slight soreness remained was so trivial that I had to remind myself it was there. The pain did seep back into my legs and hips before bed, though, so there seemed to be nothing to do but take another half-pill. I needed another part of the way through the night. But when I woke in the morning, after the first full eight hours' sleep in more than two weeks, I felt like a new man. I still had the weakness in my legs caused by Myasthenia Gravis ... But Nothing Hurt! It lasted all day, too. But half way through my second night's sleep a familiar ache appeared in my shanks, sending me to the bathroom for a glass of water and another half-Tylenol.

So it went for the next couple of weeks. I'd take two, three or four half-Tylenols, and the pain would subside for a lengthy period. But it *always* came back. Meanwhile, I watched my dwindling store of pills shrink until I could see the bottom of the plastic container under the three or four left. That was when I began to think about the future again, and not just the next 24 hours. For reasons I have no sympathy with, narcotics can only be prescribed without a refill. If you want *more* narcotics, then you have to see the doctor again. I had made four days' worth of Tylenol IIIs last about two weeks, but even so, it looked as though I'd have to book another appointment. Worse, it was Saturday. The medical center was closed for the weekend, so I'd have to get by on very little for *who knew* how long.

But my luck is holding out, it seems. I'm a little better each swing of the cycle, and I have an appointment six days from now. In the meantime, Dr. Fung has given the pharmacy the okay to renew my prescription for more Tylenol III that I'll pick up tomorrow. I should be able to breeze through the days before I see Dr. Fung again. I do wish I had some idea how this was going to play out though ... Injections? I suspect so. I also want to discuss something called *Lumbar Spinal Stenosis*. It could well be the actual cause of my neuropathic pain. Strangely, I discovered this by accident when one of my correspondents complained of it. His symptoms matched mine, *perfectly*.

Meanwhile, I've had an unparalleled opportunity to catch up on my reading. Having little new to digest, I've gone back to the old classics, and picked up other SF that I never got around to, for one reason or another – *Bring the Jubilee*, *Joyleg*, *Canticle for Leibowitz*, Kurt Vonnegut, Joanna Russ, Tappen King's *Downtown*, *The Space Merchants*, and *Gladiator-at-Law*, just to name the more memorable. I'm almost tempted to write a little something about them ... but I'm sure I'll get over the urge shortly. Some evenings, I even draw.

However, lately I've discovered that one of the fingers of my right hand seems to lose strength from time to time, and fucks up my typing something awful! It seems as though my Myasthenia may be getting worse. It responds to taking an extra dose of my medication, though, so I think it's treatable. Something else to discuss with Dr. Fung, evidentially. It can always be worse, of course. It can *always* be worse. But, can we *ever* take two steps forward without sliding one step back?