

Bloo Kangaroo



Bloo Kangaroo, the fanzine with pockets, is brought to you Whenever Things Get Too Serious by Sharon Lee, who lists her place of residence as P.O. Box 425, Owings Mills, MD 21117 (and you thought your apartment was small). This publication can be had for: Trade, LOC, Art, Documentation of Feline Intelligence, Beautiful or Unusual Boxes, Stamps or the Goodyear Blimp. Mom, Flag and Apple Pie Production #1. May 1984. Contents copyright 1984. All rights revert to contributors on publication.

The Queen's Purse

He has red hair and a black half-cape decorated with moons-in-phases, so I stop to admire him, there at the Inner Harbor, along with a hundred or so other lunch-hour curiosity-seekers. "And remember," he cries to the crowd, pulling serially-knotted kerchiefs from an unsuspecting bystander's pocket, "that neither I nor any of the other entertainers you may see here this summer under the auspices of the City of Baltimore are subsidized by the Mayor or the Queen's Purse. We all depend upon your generosity. And so," here his voice sinks to a more intimate bellow, "if I have mystified you today, if I have filled you -- even for a heartbeat -- with a sense of wonder, if I have caused you to ask just once -- and in a whisper -- Why? Just place a token of your appreciation here in this basket," he raises his arms in the ageless magician's gesture. "Any denomination will do. Just fold it up and place it carefully in the basket -- mind the wind..."

I move on, feeling a cheat for having taken a few moments of his theater for nothing. But what could I do? After all, I have no money on me -- rarely do I have money on me. It's hard to be a street performer, depending upon sleight-of-hand magic for your bread... But maybe he loves his magic. Maybe he loves his as much as I love mine. And, maybe, because of his love, he never has any jingle-money in his pocket, either, to drop into another artist's basket...

A little further on, across the street -- I have no destination, really, but it's a nice day -- warm and not yet hideously humid, as it will be in another month... In the middle of Light Street there is a -- park, I suppose you'd call it, though it's paved with brick and sports streetlights instead of trees. The focal point of this park is a -- oh, dear -- a sculpture? -- of rocks and water, with a pathway winding through. At one point, the pathway goes behind a waterfall -- memories of Johnny Weismuller's Tarzan -- this is one of my favorite City walks during the spring and summer, when the water runs.

There's a crowd around the fountain, people with cameras -- pointing. I slip through the first two or three layers, set my feet on the path, glance up at the pile of rock -- and stop dead, heart squeezed.

The water is red. Seriously red. Like Almond Smash. Or, supplies demon imagination, like blood. Don't be stupid, Sharon, blood doesn't really look like that.

Right.

But who would put red dye in the fountain, for godsake?

Well, the answer is: The Mayor's Department of Special Events, that self-same organization which non-sponsored the magician across the street, draped pink bows across the store balconies at Harborplace, that posh shopping district (in the middle of which the magician performed his act), and strung high the banner -- visible now as I turn back toward the harbor for some clue as to what goes here -- proclaiming "Pink Positive".

Huh?

Fun and games from Hizzoner the Mayor, may he long be re-elected. Hot dog. So why not pay the magician?

Sighing, I turn away from the fountain, somehow not steady enough for the view of the park through red-dyed water...

Break Shot

Good morning -- it is still morning, isn't it? -- and welcome to Bloo KangaRue, the first independent fanzine attempted by Sharon Lee -- so don't laugh at me, OK? Or, better, do, because that's what 'Rue is all about; why it exists in the first place. And the second. The third reason starts the descent into the seething abyss of my psyche, and I'm not about to answer for that...

In short -- and to remind myself, not you, who I am sure read the colophon -- Bloo Kangaroo came into being as a safety valve, as a place to talk perspective back into one's life, to tempt a return of laughter. For it has come to my attention that there are times -- even for those of us who have held our senses of humor as sword and shield for lo, these many years -- when the world is too much with us. And the world is too often not a very funny place.

I saw my first fanzine -- five years ago? Can it really be five years ago? Oy. Never mind -- the first fanzine I saw was Mainstream. I remember it well. I didn't understand it, mind you, but I remember it. I had only just moved in with Steve Miller, been to a few cons (some on my own, more with Steve, of course, who in those days was a rabid con-goer). I had quit my job for what I'm sorry to have to bill as The First Time in order to Be a Writer.

In time, a -- booklet -- arrived in the mail, addressed to Steve Miller, who grabbed it with a grin. He proceeded to curl up in the middle of the bedroom/living room floor and, amid much chuckling, chortling and occasional groans, read the thing from end to end.

Then, he offered it to me.

I need to point out here that my street-smarts are not, perhaps, all they should be. I am wary of strangers, but, once my trust is won, it is won upon all fronts. I knew, certainly, that the first is always free -- but this was Steve.

I took the fanzine, turned it over in my hands, leafed through it with a certain amount of caution -- but no alarm. Frowning, I looked up, saw Steve watching me expectantly.

"So what is it," I asked him.

"It's a fanzine," he told me.

"Oh."

Perceiving my unenlightened state, Steve enlarged upon what must have been, to him, a completely adequate explanation. "It's like a letter, with other letters inside it, from friends you've never seen."

This I could relate to. Letters to and from friends have been a constant source of joy to me since I learned how to write. To be sure Mainstream was a rather large letter, but I was given to understand that it didn't appear in one's mailbox every week.

I read it. There was much that was unclear to me, and I pestered Steve for explanations. When other fanzines arrived, I read them, too. I never answered any, feeling too keenly my status as neo/fringe-fan. But I delighted in the interplay of personalities, the language, the wit -- ah, you've all heard this stuff before.

In 1982, Steve and I co-wrote a friendly little 'zine called Three Beers, and sometime in 1983 there arrived another friendly little 'zine from Linda Blanchard. It was called Some Luck/It Figures. I will point out that I did not answer the first issue (mostly because I was too busy crying and demanding of Steve and whichever cat was present, "What am I supposed to do with something like this?"), nor the second (though I began a loc for that one). The third issue grabbed me -- I wrote a loc. A few more issues, a few more locs. Linda asked me to write a column for her; around Christmas, 1983, Steve and I committed our second Three Beers...

And now you see how far I've sunk. Enter 'Rue. Which is where we started.

Welcome.



GO HOME SMILING

...was the headline on the classified ad for a secretary. It's funny, but that never seems to be a problem for me -- going home smiling. It's going to work smiling that's the trick I can't seem to catch onto.

Well, not quite. For a while, as I'm sure I must have mentioned, I worked -- ah, "for myself" -- as a writer, as an art agency, as (tragically) a bookstore owner. During that period of my life, it seemed that I didn't have much trouble smiling, no matter where I was going.

Sometime in the last two or three months, I read an article in Mainstream by R.A. MacAvoy (Let me quickinterrupt myself here to say that I have read Tea with the Black Dragon, Damiano and Damiano's Lute -- if you have not read anything by R.A. MacAvoy, do it now. If necessary, finish 'Rue later. I'm serious about this). In it, she asks the question, "Why does no one want to talk with me about my writing?" She points out that non-fans are suitably impressed when she tells them that she's had a book published; say predictable, silly non-fan things and then wander off. (I've experienced this and, while somewhat gratifying -- it is, after all, egoboo -- it's hardly helpful when I want to talk nuts 'n bolts. Try to talk process with a non-writer/non-fan and you get, "Oh, well, you're, you know, creative. I couldn't think about anything like that..." Sigh.)

Ms. MacAvoy then says that fans, among whom she has lived for some years, who have been fanfriendly and supportive, withdraw when she begins to talk about her newest project, her characters -- worse, they become silent (I ask you, please, to imagine a silent fan -- horrible, isn't it?); change the subject.

She asks, with good reason, how come?

I don't have an answer. I wish I did, because it's damnably frustrating not to be able to talk about the most interesting thing in my world to bright and interesting people. I do, however, have a Thought. Complicated, as always, but a thought, nonetheless.

It goes something like this: All my life, I've loved to read. Have read, certainly, thousands of books. Because of my love of writing, I instilled the vocation of writer with a special, magical, significance -- and I aspired to be a writer. On the basis of fourteen or so short stories now sold, I lay claim to the title (we'll argue later about whether it's justified, OK?). To me, being a writer is more than just putting words on paper and then hoping some kindly editor will pay me for them. Being a writer affects my entire worldview, the way I behave, the manner in which I think, the obligations I acknowledge. (Believe me when I say this to you: Being a secretary is a far simpler world, much less expensive of energy, time, love. Much, much less demanding.) In short, if writing is my job, I am my job. Which is fine with me.

But, is it fine for other people? Consider: Do you get tired when the proud grandma goes on for hours about her grandchildren? Do you tend to glaze over when your friend in Greenpeace treats you to a blow-by-blow description of every encounter with Russian trawlers she's ever been privileged to be a part of? Or the bridge player whose memory for suits led and tricks turned extends well beyond his sixteenth birthday?

Doesn't it get boring? Just a little? Not for them, maybe, but for you? I am very lucky to be married to another writer. I have someone close at hand with whom to talk nuts 'n bolts, characters, worries, puzzlements. However, Steve is only one person and I sometimes feel the need for a wider discussion. In general, it seems to me that non-writers -- whether fans or mundanes -- are not the proper group to bring this need to. I said, "in general", note. A thoughtful, patient, non-writer is a big help. I have perhaps two non-writing friends to whom I can talk writing. They have the combined virtues of flexibility of mind, interest in the world or worlds around them -- and they've both known me for a long, long time and are used to how I run on.

OK, I'm winding down. I think that it's important to be able to talk about one's love -- whether it's writing, plumbing, another person, cats, chess or selling shoes -- with kindred spirits. Sometimes it takes getting your head thumped a couple times before you locate said kin. But, since I spend an inordinate amount of time getting my head thumped anyway, the price doesn't seem so high.

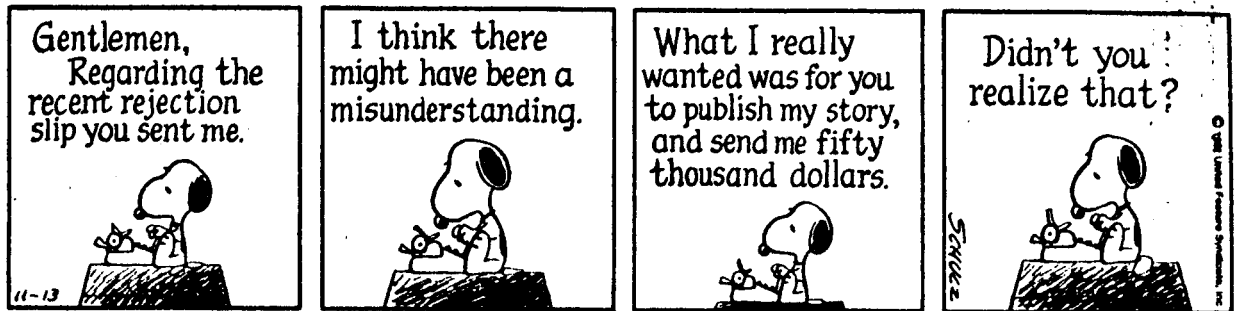
And one of the beauties of fanzines, of course, is that they give you the opportunity to find a few kin without so much pain.

That's it.

THE EVENING SUN, Friday, November 13, 1981

B 11

Peanuts



We Also Walk Cats

I have long been of the opinion that summer is the best season in which to be unemployed.

This is fortunate, because it is May and I am soon to be out of work.

Let this stand as a warning to you all -- a sense of humor is a dangerous thing, to be guarded closely in oneself and mostly suppressed. Remember that there are people Out There to whom one cannot safely offer a joke, who take any attempt at laughter as a frontal attack on their dignity and regard absurdities as mere lies.

'Rue/page six/We Also Walk Cats

Hell with 'em, I say.

Which is why I no longer have a job.

I mourn the loss of the job -- it was a good one, as secretarial positions go -- and I'll miss most of the people I came into contact with. But it is hard to be a secretary and be a person, too -- in fact, impossible, unless one has a vast store of patience upon which to draw. And my patience has been sadly depleted over the last few years. The only thing left to draw on is me.

Not good enough.

But there is this about that: I had been looking at moving on next summer, finding part-time work, writing a fuller part-time. The Novel, you understand. I had planned to have a little more in the way of stockpiles -- but we have some reserves and a tax check due in. All will be well. My hand has been forced, but it was the play I had been working toward.

So then, the search for part-time employment is on. The full-time job winds down toward May 31 -- the Last Day. And 'Rue winds down to the last page. All proceeds. I will contrive.

Remember -- never take laughter from strangers.

Steve Miller drew the cats; Charles Schulz, the dog.

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