

Lost Toys 6

NUMBER SIX IN A SERIES OF ENTIRELY UNNECESSARY PUBLICATIONS FOR AN APA CALLED TEPE, PUBLISHED BY TARAL WAYNE, IN AUGUST 2014, FROM HIS ABODE AT 245 DUNN AVE. APT. 2111, TORONTO ONTARIO, M6K 1S6 WHO CAN BE CONTACTED AT TARAL@BELL.NET THIS IS KB^{AND}ART 285.

This is going to be hard, very hard. Rarely have I felt so little like writing, and it's gone on for not just days, but weeks. It isn't as though I'm totally bereft of ideas. I have a promising idea for an article about the time I nearly set fire to my housing complex while living in North York. There are some animated films I have recently seen and can review. The germ of an idea has formed for another story about Aubrey James Bartholomew Ainsley, OBE, and the Flying Squad at the Pump and Bucket, (see <http://amazingstoriesmag.com/2014/06/fly-wall-taral-wayne/> for the first). Doubtless, I could cite a few more.

Oh, but it's all such a bother! (Think in your mind, Winnie the Pooh looking into an empty honey pot, and Sterling Holloway speaking the part.)

What it comes down to is this: I don't feel much of a thrill when I see my name in a fanzine anymore. In part, it depends on the fanzine, of course. But is it my imagination, or are the influential, "name" fanzines of just one or two years ago now in decline? When was the last *Challenger*? *Askance*? *Banana Wings*? Or even *Flag*? At times I wonder, will there ever be another issue of *File 770* at all? To be sure, new zines have come along. They are unfamiliar to me, though. I see some of the names from older zines carried along, but I also see new names that mean nothing to me. The new zines seem tiresomely serious also, with pious articles on science fiction, reviews of films, writer bios and lists of available publications, none of which I have the least interest in. Science fiction can bloody well go to hell, for all I care ... for all that I still talk the lingo and even mention it now and then. Sadly, I don't even like how recent fanzines *look*. Either they are too amateurish or they are trying too hard to look like a slick magazine or a professional website. Either way, they are unsatisfying.

No need to point out that fanzines are not really changing, just passing from one generation to another. I'm fully aware that the main change is probably in myself. I've played the game out, and can't work up interest in going through the motions of learning new names and extracting the needles from the haystacks again. I don't want it to be 2014, but that's just how it is. Titus Flavius Vespasianus may have said it best for me on his deathbed, "Oh, dear, I think I am

becoming a god." No doubt, Andrew Hooper has taken note of my spots and will tell the world they haven't changed ... that I'm still a Gloomy Augustus.

Yet it's only fandom that tends to bring that mood out. I probably just need a new set of legs and to attend a few conventions on them to infuse some relevance into this thing we call fandom. That's out of the question, so let us move on to other topics...

Back in early July, I had the sad duty to report that my friend and proofreader, Walt Wentz, went under the knife for quadruple bypass surgery. He had been in Springfield, Oregon on the 3rd, and began to feel chest pains. When he checked into the hospital they found all the usual signs of arteriosclerosis, and hustled the patient away for surgery the very next day. His daughter Amber informed me of Walt's operation by e-mail, but the first word directly from Walt was about three weeks later, on the 21st. He had been released and was staying at his girlfriend Linda's home in Springfield as he recuperated, using her PC, and said he would be going home in a few more days.

Sure enough, I heard from Walt again on the 28th, after he returned home to Forest Grove, near Portland. He reported that he was recovering well. Also that he would be returning to Springfield to confer with the cardiologist, and visit with his girlfriend again. In a few months he should be back to normal ... or as normal as a 72-year-old guy can be. "72 was just a rather annoying number," he wrote. "Hopefully I'll get that mindset back in a few months, when I'm fully recovered."

Perhaps it was Walt's absence, as much as anything, that has thrown a blanket over my writing lately. He was not only my proofreader but also an avid e-mail correspondent. Once I fall below some daily threshold, it is easy to get out of the habit of composing my thoughts in the written word.

The good news is that drawing has taken up most of the slack while I wasn't writing. I've finished a half-dozen drawings this month, and have started at least as many more.

They are usually posted on FurAffinity and DeviantArt as soon as I have them scanned. I sometimes post the more interesting examples on FaceBook as well. But I've been very bad about sending art to fanzines for publication. As with fanwriting, the thrill of seeing my name in print isn't what it used to be ... especially as I'm ever more convinced nobody reads fanzines, *not even the people who produce them*. We all want to be creative geniuses, but have no time for the uninspired hackwork of others...

I have submitted some drawings here and there. I wish I knew where, but my once-fabulous system of recordkeeping has entirely broken down. I have no idea who is holding what art for future publication. From the little that has appeared recently, they are holding it for posterity. I usually get more feedback from the art from FaceBook and the two artists' sites.

The CBC has been glutted lately with stories about Canada's involvement in World War I. Readers in the US won't have noticed the significance of 2014 because the U.S. didn't enter the First World War until 1917, when most of the hard work of stopping bullets and breathing poison gasses had already been done. From childhood, I found both world wars fascinating. But as I grew older, my interest dwindled until today, 100 years after the beginning of "The War to End War," I have not the remotest interest. My feeling is, "it was a century ago - get over it."

That may sound callous, but time is a very subjective thing, and it would profit us to think objectively about once in a while. When I was ten, the American Civil War celebrated *its* centenary! I remember the car trip my family took to Florida for a summer vacation around that time. (It might as easy have been 1962 or 1963.) We passed through Gettysburg, where I insisted we buy a toy musket with a real wood stock, metal barrel and rubber bayonet. The percussion lock worked just like the real thing. I even bought a couple of genuine Minié balls that had been fired on the battlefield, and exhumed decades later. I still have them, in fact. When I was ten, they were fifty cents apiece. What they would cost today, I'm terrified to guess. I also possess a commemorate china plate, embellished with the principal generals of the Blue and the Gray. I'm confident in saying that it is worth exactly *nothing*.

Nevertheless, by then the Civil War could not be mistaken for anything but ancient history. The politics were not entirely dead - there were still plenty of Confederate battle flags flying in Dixie, and segregation was a fact of Southern life. Families below the Mason-Dixon Line still prided themselves for their relation to long-dead, backwoods ambushers and aristocratic slaveholders. The South had a long memory. But apart from very real racial issues that remained unresolved in 1960, the Civil War was as distant from the present day as 1776, 1588 or 1066.

The First World War is now 100 years old. Oddly, the machine gun fire and artillery barrages don't seem to have receded as far into today's past as had the musketry and cavalry charges of the American Civil War when I was ten. It should have. A hundred years is a hundred years. Yet we still think of WWI as modern times.

Perhaps only just barely, though. Perhaps in another few years, when the Guns of August have been silenced for 110 or 120 years, we will finally let go of the first of the World Wars.

I'm actually looking forward to putting the Second World War, Hiroshima and the Holocaust behind us, as well. Let them keep company with the War of 1812, the War of the Roses and the Punic Wars.

Last issue I mentioned that I had a new air conditioner installed. There was a brief problem with water coming in around the sides and soaking the floor, but I managed to tilt the unit the other way, so the water *runs out of the window* now, not in. Since then, I've had the AC on most days. No matter what certain prim environmentalists say about not needing air conditioning, it really does help. I sleep easier and can be more active during the warmest hours.

However, it's not been much of a year to give an AC a real workout. There *have* been a few hot, sunny days, but more typical are days in which the forecast warns of possible showers. It may not actually rain, but it *might* rain any minute. Now and then, the sun comes out and the temperature rises perceptibly. Then it ducks behind some ragged-looking cloud again, and the day becomes merely gloomy and muggy once more ... except when it actually rains for half an hour. Not that we haven't had a few terrific thunderstorms – just yesterday there were flooded streets around Toronto, an almost unheard-of occurrence, and a few people were struck by lightning. The summer of 2014 won't set any records in Toronto for the most rain or least sun, but it has been well below par so far.

We experienced some extreme weather the other day, but for all that Toronto was actually rather lucky. This is the time of year of our Caribbean Festival, the largest in the world that actually isn't *in* the Caribbean! I had business out of the apartment that day, and observed people in festive costumes carrying cheap paper flags of West Indian island nations. As well, there were rather too many overweight young women in plumes and sequins for my taste. The annual parade takes place along the Lakeshore, a little south of my neighborhood. But patches of sky visible between buildings were pitch black to the north. Later that afternoon, I learned that there had been torrential rain and a terrifying electrical display in the north end of the city. The storm might as easily have washed out the parade and all those sequins.

The Caribana (as we persist in calling it) was rather peaceful this year. I remember about ten years ago there was a violent gunfight between two rival youth gangs down by the parade route. This year there were only two deaths – from overdosing on party drugs – and one 14-year-old kid that stabbed a 19-year-old kid, who remains in serious condition. That sounds much worse than it is, really. During the Caribana over a million people attend the parade, and as there are as many as two million visitors to Toronto. Only about five million people live in the Greater Toronto Area, so a spike in the crime rate is only to be expected. If a World Cup soccer match were held here, the shootings and riots would have been *much* worse...

Mailing Comments

Eric Mayer — I had many bubble gum cards, but never those ones! Yet I have recently seen them and could have bought the set. Before it closed, the bookstore across the street, The River, had a complete set for sale. I think they were a bit pricey, though, and since the TV show they were based on wasn't a favourite of mine, I let them go on collecting dust in the store. Or were these based on a movie? Maybe there was a movie and a TV series?

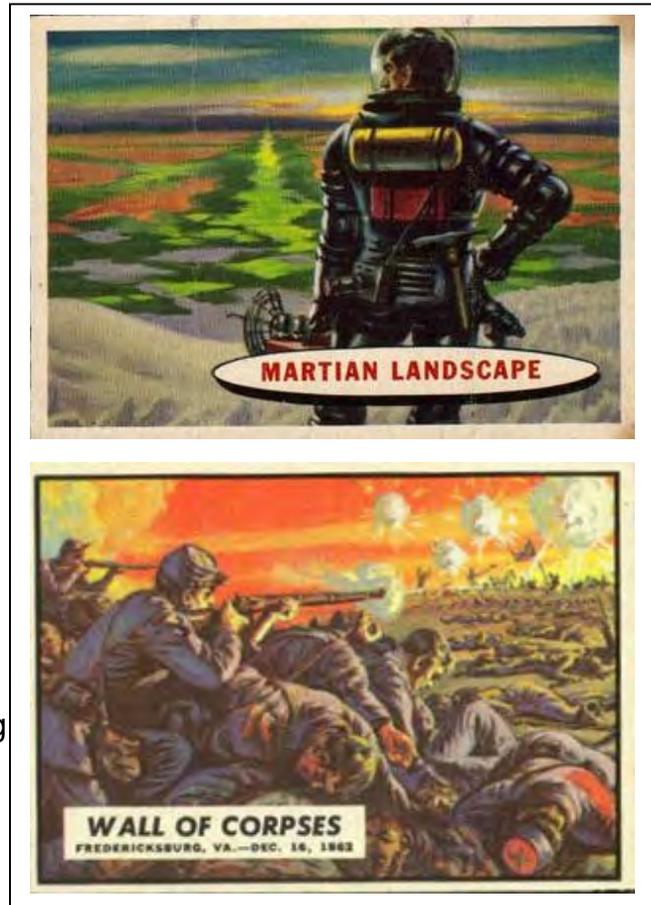
Among the bubble gum cards I remember having were the required hockey cards, but also a complete set of Indianapolis 500 winners, a complete set of jazz musicians, all the U.S. Civil War cards (with over \$3,600 in realistic Confederate money), I think all the Caribbean pirate

cards, a set of Brooke Bond dinosaur cards and another of Brooke Bond space cards (I still have them), various sets of humorous cards (such as Ripley's Believe it or Don't), monster funny caption cards, a 1957 set of space cards that I still own, cards for WWII, aircraft cards, cards for the Batman TV show... somewhere I have a list of all I was able to remember. But I don't remember where the list is. Years later, I acquired a huge number of Star Wars cards, but only for mercenary reasons. I later sold them all for a profit. Then, at Anticipation, I came across a complete set of the Civil War cards on some dealer's table. I had to have them!

And so I do! Another time, let me explain the airplane and other picture coins I used to get in bags of Hostess potato chips.

Your summers must have been a lot like mine, at least as far as how we experienced them. I never *did* anything but fool around, explore the banks of the creek next to where I lived, build models, watch TV, bicycle over to my friends' places and sleep as long as I wanted. But I never went to camp or played Little League Baseball, or anything organized like that. We never had the money, for one thing, and I didn't have the desire, for another. Some years, however, my folks went on a long Car trip and took me along. During those years I developed a taste for long car trips that I've never fully satisfied. During the years I Went to conventions with Victoria, we often made a trip of it, and I enjoyed the sight-seeing as much or more than the silly convention at the end of the drive.

To further misquote John Lennon, "I don't believe in fandom!"



Re: your comment to Arnie about the fads in crises, and the population explosion. It's still around. When I was born, the population of planet Earth was about 2.5 billion. It is nearing three times that, now! Over 7 billion! Hindsight tells us that 2.5 was close to the carrying capacity of Earth, and if we all wanted to live like the Jetsons, it was clearly way past it. As for 7 billion, our numbers are probably not sustainable unless we accept that we can live no better than our early 19th century ancestors. Spin our own cotton again? Cut wood for winter? Churn our butter and read a hand-printed book by candlelight? No thanks.

But the discussion of population growth has fallen out of fashion. It might be because the rate of growth has, in fact, slowed, and we will probably not exceed 9 billion by the end of the century. Still, that's far too many even if there is no climate change, and it seems that climate change is inevitable at this point, unless some mega-technological miracles happen.

But I also think that discussion of the population bomb has stopped because it's politically incorrect. Any attempt to raise awareness of countries where the population growth is out of

control will invite accusations of racism. “You just don’t like brown people or Muslims or the poor, and that’s why you want less of them!” That they already outnumber “us” never seems to register. We’re asked to tighten our belts and share more with them ... and more... and more.

Of course Adolf Hitler didn’t think he was evil. He did think he was a genius, and the savior of the German people. He also seemed to think he was a pure Aryan superman, though he was squat and dark. Or maybe he wasn’t so sure about that. There was a persistent rumor that his grandfather was half-Jewish, I think. (I’d have to go back and look up his antecedents.) The rumour might be baseless, but it’s thought-provoking that Hitler had all records of his ancestry from his birthplace destroyed!

Re: typos in fanzines. Even with a professional proofreader combing my prose for errors, they still appear. What can a mortal faned do? I even find typos in real books! So to take great pain to enumerate every tiny spelling error or misjudgment in punctuation strikes me as an exercise in sadism. Or maybe masochism.



FLEER PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN



MARY READ

Dian Crayne — getting rid of books has become nearly impossible. No used bookstore wants them, since apparently they acquire all the stock they’ll ever need just before opening on the first day. When now and then they buy books, they are monstrously fussy – it can’t have any sign of wear, and mustn’t be a best seller that can be found anywhere – yet they pay next to nothing. First editions are actually less valuable to them than one republished last year, because the recent printing will have a higher price printed on the cover. The customers don’t want old books anyway, I’m told. Books from the ‘60s, ‘70s, and ‘80s look old-fashioned, with those quaint Powers and Emsch and Dillon covers ... young readers want big embossed titles in red or blue foil! I guess I could probably take books I don’t want to fan gatherings, except I don’t go to any and can’t carry any more than a small number of books with me anyway. That just leaves the Salvation Army or the garbage chute. I remember when it was the other way around, and collectors wanted old editions!

Andrew Hooper — You’re not writing these heavily researched pieces just for *Tepe*, are you? They *must* have been written for some other purpose than educating the dozen or so members of this tiny apa. *“I intended to publish the third installment of my series*

on female espionage agents of World War II this month, **The Spy Who Starved**, but it was originally composed for an *apa* without a page-count limit..." Yes, aha! I thought so. Well, there's nothing in Arnie's rules that says you can't. I would do it myself, but so far I've always used up my 12 pages before I had the chance. Maybe it's just as well. I have another fanzine I can make as long as I want.

I'm afraid you've probably defined our problem perfectly. What we want is to excel in and be respected in a fandom that doesn't really exist anymore. (The Garth Spencer Paradox.) While many of the people remain, nattering away on Facebook in a semblance of actual social interaction, few are active in what made them fans in the first place. Even those of us who publish likely do it entirely for our own pleasure, and may take little interest in other fanzines. The bigger fandom, that used to be the stage upon which we strutted, has given us the gate.

Whatever shall we do in our unwanted retirement?

Garth Spencer — While it is unquestionable that a great deal more could have been done in the way of manned space travel over the last 30 or 40 years, the fact is that we have done quite a lot if you consider *unmanned exploration*. In less than a single lifetime, the entire solar system has been opened up to our scrutiny, turning wandering points of light in the sky into real places. Thanks to the cameras and instruments of the Pioneers, Voyagers, Cassinis, Galileos and other space probes, we know what it would be like to visit almost all the major planets. Pluto and Ceres remain mysteries, but mysteries that will succumb our robot servants as soon as next year! The only place, then, that will be completely unknown to us are the vistas beneath the cloud tops of the gas giants.

What we have accomplished so far is a strong indication of what we might have accomplished if we had continued to fund the manned exploration of space. Certainly we could have had temporary bases on the Moon, and *might* have sent men to Mars by now. But I believe that Clarke and Heinlein (or anyone else) who predicted permanent colonies on other planets, manufacturing plants in orbit or affordable, safe space travel, were simply wrong. The problems involved in long-term space travel are more difficult than we imagined. We have not made any real advance in propulsion over the old V2 rocket engine. Ion engines and solar sails are too slow for manned space flight, and cannot lift a vehicle from any planetary surface. Nor is there any commodity in space that is valuable enough to bring back to Earth. We might possibly exploit some resources in space *in space*, because it will be cheaper than bringing them with us from the Earth. But even that is most likely decades in the future. But remember ... science fiction writers were writing stories to entertain readers. I doubt many ever thought of themselves as prophets. It is probably also the case that so close to the dawn of the Space Age, the distance ahead was impossible to judge.

Harry Simon — The comic universe is a fantasy world, and inherently unrealistic. This is why I have little patience for criticism of comics that focus on superheroines with revealing, sexist costumes. Have they looked at *male* superheroes, lately? You don't suppose that men could be stereotyped by figures in skin-tight costumes that show every ripple of their perfectly ripped abs, do you? Or that elastic pants that squeeze the genitals tightly might be revealing? The idea that superheroes shouldn't be sexist ultimately falls down on the basic masculine premise that fighting is the only way to settle disputes!

The only “practical” superhero costume I remember seeing was from one episode of the late 1980’s *Batman, the Animated Series*. In a flashback, we see Bruce Wayne in his first attempt to foil a hold-up, dressed in dark pants, dark pullover sweater and a ski mask. The problem was that the crooks took one look at him and said, “Who are you, Mac?” and put up a tremendous fight. Later, when Bruce Wayne took up the Batman costume, crooks were half-beaten the moment they saw him. It *almost* made sense. But, then, Batman (and The Spirit) were the only comic book superheroes who ever did seem even halfway believable.

But you can’t win these arguments. A misogynist is, by definition, anyone who disagrees with an opinionated feminist, and all the passive crowd will do is nod their heads and agree with the loud woman. In the long run, there’s no point in arguing since one hopes that chauvinism is deservedly headed into the waste bin of history, and single-minded political correctness will lose its purpose eventually. Relax.

Robert Lichtman — Whatever will we do when paper is too precious to waste on wiping our bums? Can’t do *that*, “in the cloud.”

Wolf von Witting — To edit .pdf files together, you need Adobe Acrobat or similar professional software. Adobe Reader is a free download, meant only to allow you to read a .pdf document ... almost nothing more. Unfortunately, Acrobat is expensive. Perhaps there are free downloads of something similar to Acrobat, but I haven’t had to look.

Arnie Katz — Astrology? Roller derby? Wrestling? Not much for me to get my teeth into. It would be in bad taste to go all “I told you so” about Toner, so I’d better just move on to the next zine. Or maybe this: weren’t you asking for suggestions for new members?

How about recruiting from among Al Sirois, Arthur Hlavaty, Brad Foster, Chris Garcia, Darrell Schweitzer, Guy Lillian, Jerry Kaufman, Kim Huett, Ro Nagey, Rob Imes, Sheryl Birkhead, Steve Fahnstalk, Steve Stiles and Walt Wentz?

Ross Chamberlain — the BBC’s production of *I, Claudius* is significantly different than the two books by Robert Graves. The books are more like reading history, with all sorts of interesting events happening off stage that the author (Claudius himself) explains to the reader. The TV series is quite a bit more like a soap opera, with Claudius weeping like an old lady, Augustus shouting, Caligula raving like a madman, etc. I’ve read most of Graves’ history novels ... but although I own a copy of *Watch the Northwind Rise*, I could never bring myself to read it. It is semi-science fiction and has no basis in real history. If you read *The White Goddess*, I advise you take it with a grain or two of salt. Maybe even a pound or two. Graves was enormously erudite, but also something of a crank, whose unorthodox theories about the matriarchal pre-Olympian cult were once fashionable in semi-occult circles, but are not generally accepted by scholars.

Joyce Katz — At the moment I keep a copy of *100 Great Lives of Antiquity* in the bathroom for toilet reading. In the past, I’ve kept *An Encyclopedia of the Old West, Oxford*

Companion to Children's Literature, Hockey's Glory Days, Imaginary People, X-Planes and Prototypes, and Great Cars of the 20th Century. When I finish one, I replace it with another. It's important to have the right bathroom reading. Novels or short-story collections won't do, since you have to leave them unfinished until the next time you need to be there. Ideal are encyclopedia-type books full of short entries, like the ones I've listed.

NOT LIKELY SCENE

Three Animated Films You Probably Missed

One of the movies I recently watched was *Arthur Christmas*. Surprisingly, this Aardman release came and went without so much as leaving a bit of frost on the window. I thought it was quite good, actually. Its take on the Santa Claus story was quite original. They are a family, you see, and each generation's Santa performs 70 Christmas runs before retiring and handing the reins of his sled over to his son. The three generations in this film, however, are not happy. Grand-Santa lives in his memories of delivering presents through the London Blitz, and regrets that he has nothing to do. He is forbidden to even take the old sleigh out for a spin. The present Santa is a complaisant mediocrity, who has just completed his 70th mission, but gives no sign that he is ready to retire ... much to the chagrin of his eldest son, Steve. Steve is all business. His suit is half-Santa, half-desert fatigue and he is as fit as a Marine drill instructor. His mannerisms match. Then there is Arthur.

Arthur is awestruck by his elder brother, reveres his father, and loves his old grandfather. But he is all too aware of his own shortcomings – scrawny, clumsy, nerdish and definitely *not* in line to become the next Santa. Nevertheless, he is satisfied with his lot and proud to do his inconsequential job in the department that answers children's letters. Arthur is also the only one in the family to care that *one child* that year didn't get her present... Grand-Santa, Santa and brother Steve all sweep it under the carpet. It's too late, it's impossible and it's only *one* child. It comes as no surprise that Arthur is the one who forces the others to relearn the true spirit of being Santa.

I missed hearing about *The Nut Job* until it was already on DVD. That's usually a bad sign. However, *The Nut Job* turned out to be quite enjoyable. In many ways, the digitally animated film about the denizens of a city park was similar to 2006's *Over the Hedge*. Both are about small animals banding together or looking out for themselves in the acquisition of food for the winter. But there the similarity ends. The urban and suburban environments are quite different and the humour develops along entirely separate lines. The casting in one owes nothing to the other.

On the whole, the reception to the film seemed lukewarm. Some reviewers summed it up as unlikable, unfunny and unnecessary. While I concede there is little that is strikingly new in *The Nut Job*, I nonetheless found it reasonably funny throughout, and the characters not

without their own charms even if they were rather grittier than in *Over the Hedge* ... as befit urban hardcases. The end credits, with their guest appearance by an animated Psy doing the Gangnam Style dance, was most unexpected. In a good way.

Of the three animated features I've recently seen, by far the least worthwhile was the disappointing *Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs 2*. Nothing new here, the title says it all.

The first film of that name was a surprise hit – original, funny and full of heart. Somehow, all of that was lost along the way to the sequel. The device that makes food from water and air but goes crazy and bombards the city with a flood of giant foodstuffs, was apparently *not* destroyed at the end, as it seemed to be. Instead, it was damaged so that the food it produces takes the form of living creatures – such as cheeseburger spiders, tacodiles, buffaloafs, watermelonphants and dill pickles that are crazy for canned sardines. Believed to be a danger to the world should they spread, the hero is sent back to find the device and shut it down. Things are not what they seem, however, and the real purpose of sending him back is to find the device and put it to evil use. A boyhood hero is shown to be a villain all along. And man-eating cheeseburgers are actually as lovable as giant man-eating kittens. Gosh. Who saw *that* coming?

All the characters from the first film are present, but allowed only a few lines each ... to little more than demonstrate they aren't forgotten. The supporting characters contribute little to the plot, and develop not at all. Instead, the focus of the story is on the evil TV "Mr. Science" guy ... and on the living fruit and vegetables. The result is not so much a plot as just "one damn thing after another." The gags are passably funny, and the visuals will certainly hold your attention. But it's a story without much of a purpose and not so much as a heart of lettuce.

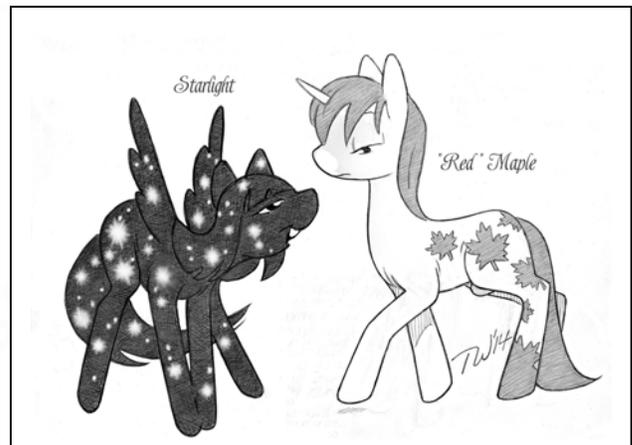


I know You don't believe it, but one day you **will** be a Fragggle.

Don't be silly, I don't sing...



Last issue I ran the rough sketch ... I liked it enough to finish it properly and run it again.





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For a gallery of my art

<http://www.furaffinity.net/user/saara/>
<http://taralwayne.deviantart.com/>

To download my fanzines

<http://efanzines.com/Taral/index.htm>
<http://fanac.org/fanzines/BrokenToys/>

ENOUGH!