



RHYME & PARADOX

MO-2011

Writing is hard. Let's go shopping.

So the last time your humble correspondent left you, it was the leap day and Corflu was starting. It is now the end of August, which is a bit longer than I wanted to go, but I'm going to consider putting out two issues in a year as an accomplishment. We'll see if I get ambitious and go for three.

Last issue I mentioned that I'd managed to delete all my email archives and misplace the hard drive I had stashed a cover that Mo Starkey had made me all those years ago. Well, the hard drive turned up! The cover on this issue of Rhyme is the one Mo made me all those years ago. I'm so glad and grateful I was able to find it and finally let you all see the work she made. Thank you again, Mo. I appreciate it so much.

Speaking of things turning up, something else precious that I'd managed to misplace also turned up, but I'll talk more about that when I get into the drama that I've been living with for the past five months...

The Kitchen, c'est mort

Sometime in late March, the connection between the water line and the filter underneath the refrigerator sprung a leak. Water left to its own devices is one of the most insidious forces in the universe, and unbeknownst to us, the leak filled a pan underneath the fridge and then onto the floor. The first we noticed it was when the laminate flooring started to warp and make a very suspicious *squish* sound.

It turns out that when water manages to get that far, the chances of all sorts of things getting wet are rather high. I mean, that's what water does, it makes things wet. The problem is that there are all sorts of things in a kitchen that don't really appreciate getting wet -- things like drywall and cabinets and, obviously, certain types of flooring.

This led to people coming to the house, packing out the entirety of our kitchen, our dining room, and my dad's office area (they're all within the same four walls) and then proceeding to tear out everything. No more cabinets, no more flooring, no more counters, and even the drywall up to the bottom of the windows -- all of it was gone. All we were left with was concrete floors, exposed studs, some appliances, and several loud fans. Oh, and we had the kitchen sink. They left us with that.

Thankfully the loud fans went away after about a week, but we've been without a kitchen since. I never thought I'd actually tire of eating out every night, but it's starting to get rather old. That said, I don't miss having to do dishes every night -- and there's going to be a lot of pressure on me to do a better job of keeping the kitchen clean. I'm not looking forward to that.

In the meantime, since we have to replace the floors in the kitchen and the hallway, Dad decided that he'd pull out the grimy old carpet in the living room that probably dates to the time the house was built and have the floors in there match the kitchen and hallway. To save some money, he decided he'd tear out the old carpet himself. To do this, we had to pack up a good chunk of the living room and we decided to use it as a time to purge out things that we weren't using such as my mother's old math textbooks.

Since Mom died back in 2021, we haven't really touched anything of hers. It's been just too painful to even deal with her things. But we decided that we really just needed to get rid of things we

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weren't going to use and Mom's math textbooks are at the top of that list. Nobody else in the house really specialized in math -- Mom was a math teacher, which is why she kept her books -- and it was time.

For some reason, pushing through this psychological barrier has seemed to help. Once the house is in a bit less chaos, my sister and I are going to go through Mom's clothes, throw away the ones that are stained and donate what we can. Lessening the stuff in the house can only help. Watching all the stuff the emergency movers had to carry out made it clear we really cannot procrastinate on this anymore.

(One of these years I'll get around to finally writing about Mom, but I'm having a huge roadblock trying to get it down. There's stories I'd love to tell, but it doesn't feel right to tell them for various reasons.)

Anyway, while we were doing all this cleaning and straightening, we found a box of old paperwork to sort through. And in that box of paperwork was an envelope I'd misplaced several years ago -- an envelope that I believe Marty Cantor gave me all those years ago at the only Corflu I've gotten to attend. And in the envelope is a bunch of Bill Rotsler's work.

I'm embarrassed to admit I misplaced it, but I'm so glad I found it again. I have them all scanned in and I'm sure we'll see a couple of them show up in a fanzine or two. In the meantime, I've stashed the originals in a place I won't lose them again.

As for the kitchen, we're on track to possibly having the whole thing back together as soon as next week, depending on when the flooring guys come back and finish installing baseboards. It's been a long time without a kitchen



On Fanzines and the writing thereof...

I feel like I'm a bad fanzine fan.

Some of that, is of course, my mental health issues. I've spoken at length about depression some years back, and a bit about the ADHD issues last issue. But that's not all of it.

I try to keep up with fanzines on efanzines as they come out and read the few that get mailed to me. (I suspect I need to make up my own mailing list, but that's a task in and of itself.) But I am not overly good at writing letters of comment. I want to -- sometimes I even sit down with my computer split down the middle with a fanzine on one side and a blank text window on the other -- but the words refuse to come.

Then, when it comes to writing my own fanzine, I'm scattershot. Some of it is that my life feels pretty plain, thus I don't feel like there's much for me to say. Some of it is that blank text window problem I have, where the words don't want to come. Some of it is simply that I'm not always sure what to share.

Then it feels as if I manage to write something, it's more like I've thrown it off a cliff instead of into a pond. Instead of the splash rippling across the top of the pond, it's just gone and if you're lucky, you'll hear it crash against the rocks below. If not, it just disappears into the abyss.

Some of this, I know, is a function of traditional fanzine fandom growing older. I'm on the younger side of the divide, and I'll be 46 in November. (Just a reminder -- I'm younger than *Star Wars*.)

Maybe, some of this is just a function of people getting older and, well, not having as much time for fanzines than they did in their misspent youth.

Then there's the matter of finances. Being on disability, I don't have the ability to get to conventions as much as I'd like to. (That is, I go to none and I'd like to go to quite a few.) Virtual conventions have helped a little, but at the same time, it's fairly lonely when you know there's quite a bit of the convention you're missing out on -- in the hallways, in the bar, in the con suite and so on. Back in the bad old days of uStream, it wasn't so bad because there was always a raucous crowd in the IRC channel. It felt almost as if there was a second track of the convention going on. It's not the same anymore.

Of course, there's the other option of bringing the party to me, but that's a terrifying thing to contemplate. First, I have absolutely no experience running a con, even one the size of Corflu, and I don't know where to begin. Second, see the finances issue above. I don't have the money to front expenses and I'm certain there's expenses that have to be fronted. Third, would anybody want to come to Sacramento? It's a nice town, but not exactly a tourist destination.

I don't know. Perhaps I'm just whining. Maybe it's just a bit of begging for attention.

That said, I am pondering running for TAFF the next time an eastbound trip opens up. I haven't decided for sure. I have time, of course, considering we just had an eastbound trip. If I'm really being honest, I'm probably going to do it. I'll just have to see what support I can muster up.

Life is better with cats



*Your humble fanzine correspondent
with a little black void...*

Right now, as I write this, I'm hanging out at a friend's house. My good friend has invited folks over to just do writing, and I figured I'd take the time away from home to do just that and maybe let a fanzine out in the world. That's the hope, anyway. So far it seems to have worked, I've written a bit on this zine and a small bit on my FAPA one, as well as had good times chatting with old friends.

There are also kittens.

My friend fosters cats, and right now they have three adorable voids (aka black cats) running around the house. One of them discovered the wonders of my shoelaces and another tried to climb into my bag. (I had to tell that kitten that as much as they were a cutie, we didn't have room for a void at my house. Two cats, especially one with Winter's issues, is more than enough.)

There's something great about kittens. They're adorable -- especially these voids, who are more ear and tail than anything else. They purr like you wouldn't believe and they especially understand that you need to play hard and sleep hard -- a lesson I'm sure we could all learn from.

I got to foster kittens once. They were put up in my room and some days it would get to be what I called 'Romper Room', where all the kittens were running around at once. It was hectic, and I wouldn't trade it for anything else. The funniest behavior was the kitten who would end up becoming our Tabitha. She was the first kitten in my room and spent a couple nights where it was just me and her. So, she would hiss at her siblings, as if to say, "Don't eff up my good thing." It was hilarious.

They didn't end up messing up her good thing -- she was the kitten who got to stay.

My friends are also fostering an itsy bitsy little kitty that still needs to be bottle fed. They are a very adorable kitten. This is the best part about going to my friends' house to write -- the kittens. Even if sometimes they get in the way of writing.

Letters, err, Letter of Comment

Lloyd Penney.
penneys@bell.net



Itsy bitsy foster kitty (about 3 weeks old)

Dear Kat:

Thank you so much for issue 5 of Rhyme & Paradox. Welcome back to putting out your own zine (been a long time for me), so writing a loc is a must-do.

Really appreciate it, Lloyd. You're the only one who wrote a letter of comment and it made my day when it showed up.

So many of us experience clinical depression, and while many recover, many do not. Some think depression is just extended disappointment (how many parents threaten their kids to drop it, and get on with life?), but it is far worse, adding in self-doubt, impostor syndrome, and so much more. Help can be there, but it is often unavailable, especially because of cost, and sympathetic friends, with lots of hugs and attention, can only go so far. Some medical or therapeutic help is needed. I know so many people with depression or anxieties, and while they need help, they don't get it...for a few of them, if they weren't depressed, they wouldn't be interesting or cool, or they'd have nothing to complain about.

I hope sometimes that I fall into that interesting or cool bubble, but sometimes it just feels like too much. I joke that some days, it's just not worth chewing through the ropes. I'm doing better as long as I take my medications, but it still leaks through. And then you add in the attention deficit disorder and things get really fun. Self-doubt and imposter syndrome have been other familiar friends along the way. Right now, because I'm on disability, my healthcare is (mostly) free, but I fear what happens when I go to try and get a job again. There's no safety net for that.

Yvonne and I have never had pets, and we both grew up without them. But, we have certainly enjoyed lavishing attention and love on receptive dogs and cats, owned by friends or family. Some people seem to be naturals at abusing dogs and cats, and any other animals they can get their hands on, and yet, those wonderful dogs and cats seem to love humans, or at least tolerate them. We do not deserve them, and perhaps they need us.

I would honestly be worse off without the kitties in my life. Simply having something else absolutely dependent on me for their needs helps me keep my own life in check. I can't skip out on giving Winter his meds or feeding either of the kitties. I don't deserve them, but I can tell they love me, and I love them just as much.

Corflu...I've only been to a few of them, but I always have the feeling of being on the outside looking in at the cool kids, so I am never too upset if I can't afford to go. The next one is in England, so the chances of my being there are zero. I was at two in Toronto, and one in Las Vegas. There really aren't any places close to Toronto where it might be held...the closest major American cities to me are Buffalo and Detroit.

The only one I've been to is Chris Garcia's shindig in Sunnyvale, and I think the only way one is going to happen closer than Vegas is if I invite folks to come party with me. But as I wrote earlier in this issue, that is fraught with all sorts of issues that scare the hell out of me. They say money can't buy happiness, but it can buy fun times...

Money is tight, but we have plans that could be quite expensive, but we're going for it, anyway. In July comes the NASFiC in Buffalo, New York, which is just down the highway from us. In October, in the same direction and general area is the World Fantasy Convention in Niagara Falls, NY, and in late October, we are flying down to Los Angeles to attend Loscon 50. After that? Don't know...general SF conventions have largely gone away here, so there may be no more conventions for us to attend. We're thinking of these three major conventions as our farewell tour.

I hope the NASFiC was a lot of fun for you! Never been to either, just two (well, technically three, but the third was a day trip into San Jose) Worldcons, one Corflu, two Westercons -- one of which I worked and the other here in Sacto -- and maybe four Baycons, which are the local convention to the Bay Area. There's gate shows for comics and anime here in Sactown, but those aren't the same sort of convention -- there's an entirely different feel to them than there is at the cons I enjoy. Wish I could catch you at LosCon, now there's a local con I'd like to hit up some day that might be feasible.

This evening is our fannish pubnight in Toronto, our Third Monday, and it may be our usual small crowd again. Still, it is good to get out and chat with friends. This coming Friday and Saturday, two funerals, each for fannish friends in southern Ontario. I was so used to being the youngest in the room, but now, over the past 45 years, Yvonne and I are the oldsters, and we're getting used to having other things to do to keep ourselves entertained.

As I said elsewhere in this issue, I'm nearly 46 now, and on the young side for our fandom, and yet I'm not exactly a bright-eyed bushy tailed kid anymore. While I've mourned some of the deaths in fandom, I didn't really know everybody that much. The one that still stings is Randy Byers, because he was so kind to me and made me feel like I belonged in this hobby and this community. But I suppose it's something I'll have to get used to, especially since it seems I'm the rear guard.

Done for now, approaching the end of the page. I hope you're preparing R&P 6...see you then.

It's taken me a while, but here we go. I think I'm ready to do layout and then drop this issue.

And that'll do it...

For this issue, that is. Hopefully, I'll get another one out before the end of the year, maybe for my birthday, but no guarantees. I know my limits.

A quick note: If you'd like to be on the Rhyme email distribution list, send me an email and I'll put you on it. Thanks!

