

The Love of Story: Oh! What a Difference a Year Makes!

The first thing publicist Louise Glickman noticed about artist Daryl Slaton was his humor and colorful stories, expressed through evocative emails. After months as pen pals, her request for his picture brought a colorful image of himself dressed as the Phantom of the Opera! Little did she know that, like the Phantom, he would reveal himself to be “an architect and designer, a composer and magician.” *

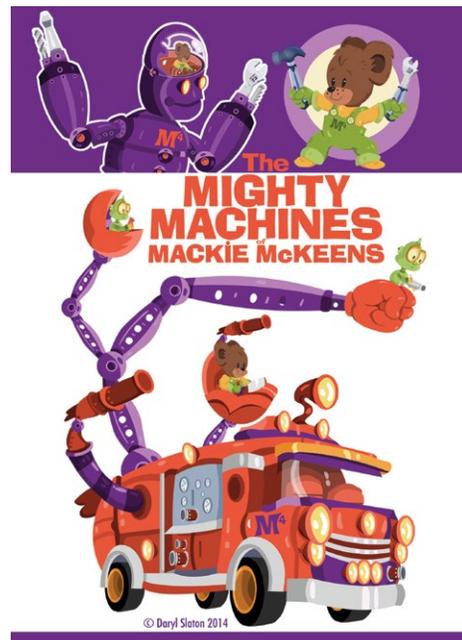
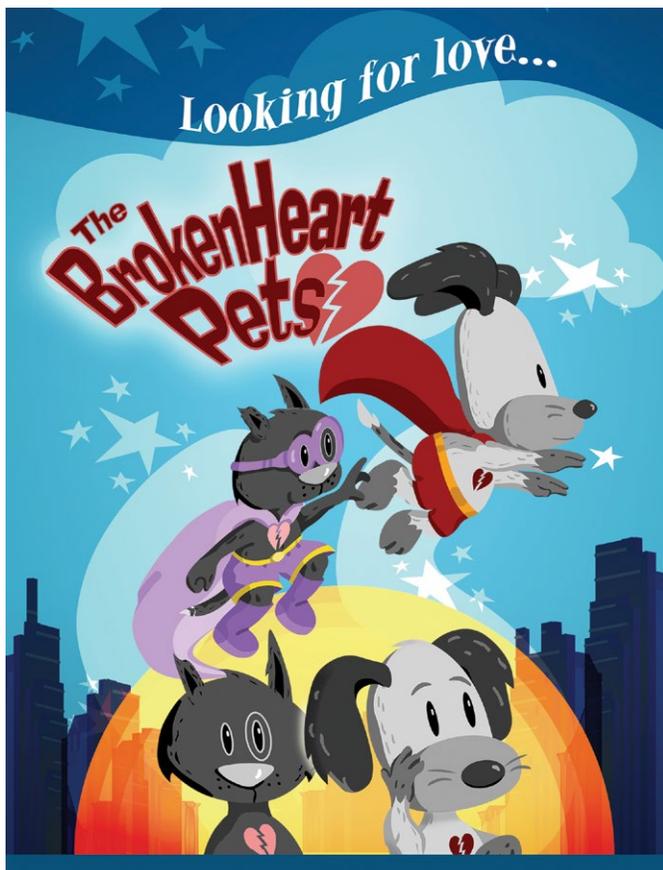
As architect and designer of his future, Slaton’s past life as a commercial artist had provided for his family but hadn’t fulfilled his creative ambitions. Trained in theatre as well as art and design, Slaton has been a storyteller since childhood. His tales, expressed through humorous and imaginative characters, have set

the course for Tails of Whimsy that provides properties for publishing, animation and products. Glickman, now his wife, provides marketing expertise.

As a composer and magician, Slaton was able to turn his career from business clients to collections for licensees and branders. As a team, their shared love of animals (and their rescued dogs Kodi and Sheba) brought forth lively tales, and ultimately the Tails of Whimsy collections. Properties are based on fanciful life adventures and feature a wide variety of magical animals: world travel, childhood diversions, and literary favorites with poetic license.

Each has its own story and lyrical intent. For example, his BrokenHeart Pets property got immediate attention when introduced for the first time at Licensing Expo last June. Initially used by the Louisiana SPCA as animated characters to thank hundreds of volunteers in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, these characters had been tucked away in Slaton’s archives. As pet lovers, Slaton and Glickman were “holding them back” for just the right venue to present them to a larger audience.

As BrokenHeart Pets, Scooter and Boots, a lost dog and cat, are looking for food, shelter and love. They have been conceived to help animals find homes, forever or foster, and to educate children to both love and care for their pets.



In fact, their humor is a cross between Snoopy and the Peanuts Gang and Pee-wee Herman’s Playhouse. Now under the mentorship of agents Jeanette Smith and David Wollos, the BrokenHeart Pets’ family has now expanded to include other animals that live in a park with Scooter and Boots. Others drop into visit at the BrokenHeart Pets Hotel, a crazy, imaginary funhouse with its own cast of characters, part of the Pets’ many dreams.

Once a volunteer reading aide for elementary schools, Daryl understands the importance of combining visuals and learning. His Furry Tale Theatre series features known children’s storybook characters as animals instead of humans. His Mad Catter has intrigued art as well as cat lovers to the extent that it is used as his branded image and logo. The inside joke is that Daryl’s allergy to cat hair has never stifled his love of drawing cats!

Furry Tale Theatre is set in a world of anthropomorphic animal stage actors such as FrankenApe, Barkula and the Bride of Poochenstein. Each story features behind-the-scenes antics and mishaps as the actors struggle to present condensed and sanitized classics for children 6-11. Licensed to Raz Imports, his lyrical Vampire cat and dog were transformed into 38” tall Halloween dolls that sold well last year at retail.

A new property to Licensing Expo this year is The Mighty Machines of Mackie McKeens. Mackie, a cuddly bear in green overalls, has a high-tech workshop where he can build

Furry Tale Theater Classic Characters Gone Wild!



mighty machines for any purpose. Need a stylish bus that literally picks up passengers and plops them in their seats? How about a 30' tall walking fire hydrant that washes and scrubs graffiti off buildings? A 70' tall purple construction-site robot? With the assistance of his sister and crew of mechanical Botties (little robots), Mackie is the guy to call.

For Slaton, the property ideas have been plentiful but recognition has come more slowly. He and Glickman explored many creative tracks that included showing and producing illustration and product for art fairs, festivals and galleries. Slaton designed over 150 images in nearly a dozen collections working nights and weekends away from the hum of his standard commercial clientele. This took three years of trial and error, promoting and test marketing his design ideas in commissioned pet portraits, cards, prints, children's book illustrations and on handcrafted ceramic mugs. The team visited Surtex and the National Stationery Show to try to find their way into licensing. Glickman tuned into webinars and researched companies and media contacts online. Together, they designed and distributed promotional materials and built several marketing plans that didn't bear fruit. Finally,

they took the plunge into licensing fulltime, investing both time and savings into their future, the one they had been working towards since first meeting in 2003.

Last year was the critical turning point. The Tails of Whimsy booth at Surtex stood out because of Slaton's colorful characters and stories, boldly displayed on banners. They gained valuable insight from many licensees and agents who loved what they saw. Even other artists noticed and complimented Slaton's work. Accomplished licensor and blogger Paul Brent in his "Surtex Wrap-Up" mentioned Daryl as one of only two artists "with truly new styles to watch as their career develops." These few words provided hope and renewed commitment to their chosen path.

Then Advanstar's show manager for Licensing Expo Kelli Couchee

fell head over heels for the "Mad Catter" and artist Slaton. She knew he HAD TO COME to Las Vegas, a mere three weeks away. Honored but hesitant, it appeared unlikely they would ever be ready to show against the likes of Disney and Jim Henson in so short a time span.

In reality, the couple hit the ground running to re-design their booth, even going back to their archives to retrieve characters like the BrokenHeart Pets. They were too late for the show directory, listings and direct mail to attendees. Deadlines were past due for publicity. Every step of the way, Kelly nurtured Slaton and Glickman like the neophytes they were and a last minute cancellation provided needed visibility in a corner booth location. The rest is history!

Before the show opened, while Glickman was attending seminars at Licensing University, Leo Valencia of Radio-Days stopped by the booth, not yet complete, and tapped Slaton for a potential branding agreement. Jeanette Smith of All Art Licensing, the licensing agent that turned Dilbert into a \$200 million annual retail brand, saw a publishing future for Scooter and Boots. Ditto, David Wollos of Think Tank Emporium, who also fell for BrokenHeart Pets, seeing its potential for an animated TV series. These accomplished industry stars now represent Tails of Whimsy's numerous properties and all of us will be back at Licensing Expo in Vegas this year.

Our team has expanded and our universe is bright. Slaton has new properties to show in Booth H33 this year and the couple is thankful for the affection they share as creative spirits and business partners. They are grateful to have found love in licensing and in each other.

*IMBd: plot summary

Visit Daryl Slaton at Licensing Expo, Art and Design Booth H 33 at Licensing Expo. Mandalay Bay, Las Vegas, June 17-19, 2014.

www.tailsofwhimsy.com and www.facebook.com/brokenheartpets

