

Fallout Equestria: Murky Number Seven

The Cutting Room Floor: Dropped concepts from MN7's creation

This will contain full and open spoilers of the entire MN7 story throughout.

Ensure to check out the Imgur link at the bottom after reading for scans and photos of my notebooks throughout.

Chapters or Story Directions

Frontier Six-Two was the original Chapter 23

Perhaps the most well known dropped chapter, purely because I announced it as coming back as a standalone story at some point in the near future. However this was originally going to be the first chapter of Act 3, beginning immediately after the trip to the mountain.

You'll notice that in the chapter "Defying Gravity", they start in the room with the memory machine in the Ministry of Arcane Science, right beside the "stasis" pony, an Equestrian soldier. In the current story, he has died long before the cast really hear much about him and functions as the reason why Grindstone and Shackles knew about Aurora Star's research and Ministry Station. They got it from his memories, but using the machine for that killed him in his fragile state in the process. To be honest, I might go back and re-edit that section of MN7 to have him just remaining alive in there during this part. Him "dying" was just a slapdash answer that emerged after I'd cut 'Frontier Six-Two' and before I'd realised I could make it into an independant story linked to MN7.

So the basic concept was that Chapter 23 would have caught people off guard by immediately starting in the past, during the war time with seemingly a new protagonist. It was to elicit the "Hey, what's going on? Where's Murky?" response and drive questions. It then functioned as a tale of a group of Equestrian Army reservists forced out to the borders of Equestria to stand watch, who discovered the infiltration of zebras and the opposite end of the portal from MN7. As those who read the epilogue will no-doubt remember, the town Murky finds his friends in was a bit further out than normal after all.

I won't go into an enormous amount more detail on the story content as that will be told in the release. However, one aspect that won't make it into the remake will be how the "protagonist" being followed would die multiple times and "reset" to waking up in his bunk, only tangentially aware that something is wrong here. The eventual realisation is that this is a kind of Vault 22

vision quest memory dream, where Murky and his friends take part in a shared dream instigated by Grindstone, in order for him to datamine the soldier's memories (Think the Animus from Assassin's Creed) through using their friendship to complete it up to the point he needed. The implication being the slaver teams who tried it didn't have the bonds needed to replicate an old Equestria spirit. Eventually after completion, the chapter would end on what the current one begins with; Mister Peace's rescue.

If that sounds incredibly confusing to present to a reader and filled with a ton of hand waves, it's because it is.

I never got more than 10% of the way into the chapter before feeling very unsettled by it. Upon showing it to the pre-readers, they universally disliked it. Snipehamster in particular asked the key question, "In what way does this help the main story?" The realisation I had from that was it didn't. It was confusing, sudden and unnecessary, and just to cap it all off, 'Edge of Tomorrow' released a month later using almost the exact same concept.

Realising the entire thing was just a mashup of concepts that had little place in the "world" of MN7, I dropped the entire chapter and pushed forward in my plans.

Slave work in an abandoned hospital with Caduceus

Comparatively, this one never really got off the ground at all. It sat in my planning documents for a long time (well over a couple years) but I never bothered really fleshing it out into the full 'script' of chapters I had written out to help me with direction. The intent was that this chapter would tell the story of a long dead hospital that had tried to keep treating people even after the balefire struck Fillydelphia.

The idea of the "just after" period was very enticing to me, as well as an opportunity to tell a story through environment and audio alone, similar to the Stable in the chapter "Behind Closed Doors". It was slightly inspired by the Germantown Police Station in Fallout 3, which had some background story of someone post-bombs. This would also have given Caduceus something that in the end he may have lacked; time to develop and show his character depth a bit more. This was to feature Murky, Glimmer and Caddy together on a slaver task in the hospital. They would have learned more about his background and followed the story of a young female nurse back then to reflect how he is much like her in the present time.

It held promise, but it fell into the issue of "This does nothing for the main story". A chance to flesh out Caduceus would have been lovely, but ultimately it wasn't worth the delay on pushing ahead with the plotline.

The Stable of identical cutie marks

Hey! I've got this great idea! What if the characters found a place where everyone only had the same cutie mark and they were all pretty miserable in forced happiness? What if it was as part of a method to make everyone equal and prevent any conflict or nightmares from ever occurring again? Oh wow, that's such a cool idea! I can't really find a place for it though, I'll just keep it on the backburner in case I really need it. I bet no-one will ever-

[Oh for goodness sake.](#)

Here's one that was on the "Hey I could do this" list, but never even entered planning because it was only ever an "aside idea". The idea that the slaves would be given a second Stable to do in the story. This was one I'd planned would still be occupied by, well, let's just call it what it is. It's the *exact same flippin concept* that years later would be used in Season 5 of MLP. It's not an enormously unusual one, I can remember "everyone is the same" type plots all the way back as far as the old Sonic the Comic series in the mid 90's after all, not to mention film in general. But good grief that was a weird episode to watch with this still sitting in my notepad, albeit as a defunct concept.

The team would have went in, and ultimately the plan had been to have Murky stuck down there, One idea even called that his friends tried to leave him there in an attempt to make him live in more comfort, leading to him having to spend a chapter trying to escape the Stable. I liked the idea of escaping an enclosed system to play off Pip's own beginning, and it had some nice potential themes given at that point Murky was still trying to be his own free pony in his mind. However as the character concepts developed, and his friends became more staunchly loyal and less "grey area", the concept just felt redundant, out of character and once again fell into "This isn't necessary for the main story". It would only have delayed things.

Thank goodness I didn't use this, even though it would have predated Season 5 by two years. Those kinds of similarities can be dodgy at the best of times, especially to readers coming late to the party.

The original ending for the first 3 months of planning

Woah boy, now we're getting into one that is big. Way back, waaaay back, the plan was for Murky to escape the city in around ten chapters at most. This was a story formula I'd had since before I even knew about MLP, that of a character being "tricked" into his own escape at the expense of others who give their own freedom up for him. In this case, it would have been a short story of Murky failing to escape, meeting a small group of friends and then them helping him to escape. During the escape, each of them would have a "Go ahead, I'll catch up moment!" moment, before disappearing.

Eventually Murky would be left with who was to become Glimmerlight eventually, having gotten into one of the Pinkie balloons in Fillydelphia. At that point, Murky would realise what they're doing, they are sacrificing to give him and him alone his freedom. It was supposed to be an

enormously difficult and powerful moment as he glides over the wall, spurred on by “Glimmer” staying behind with the others, having achieved their end of freeing him.

Now in isolation at the start this wasn’t an awful idea for a story (it sounds worse now because, of course, we know the characters, back then Murky didn’t even have a name). However the more I thought about it, the more I realised that *this ending isn’t happy in the slightest*. MLP is about friendship, and I’ve always believed FOE should be more about the MLP part than the Fallout one. This ending would be depressing to leave one’s friends behind in hell, especially as I figured out more of the other characters and knew that his friends staying behind would crush people who became fans of them.

Long before I even started writing Chapter 1, this concept was dropped, and a more significant journey was conceived to permit a grander, happier ending for all.

Coral Eve and Murky find Red Eye’s failed alicorn experiments

Back when I was planning out the world of MN7 and trying to “expand” Fillydelphia into greater detail, history and character, I tried listing everything I currently knew about it. I wanted a base of knowledge. One of these was “Red Eye has alicorns”. These of course are made in Splendid Valley by the Goddess, but we know Red Eye had his own taint work going on in the Cathedral. Surely, he had some experiments?

Enter this slave journey. Yet another of the “characters given a task as slaves” concepts that got cut. Originally the story was to have a lot more “working as a slave” to help sell the willingness to escape, but it just never logistically worked out that way, it was too restrictive and samey as a story, and I felt I got a good balance by the end without them anyway.

But this one involved Murky and Coral going into an underground bunker in Filly to clear it out along with a big team of slaves. They would find a large facility of taint vats, similar to the ones around The Goddess herself. The reason why they were abandoned quickly becomes clear, as this was part of Red Eye’s attempts to make his own alicorns, and break his reliance on The Goddess early. This would have featured a giant “failed creature” within it, like a Shoggoth type amalgamation of flesh and taint bursting from the tank and chasing everyone out.

It was short, weird and completely pointless. Not to mention, I realised that the story of taint, The Goddess and Red Eye’s relations with her isn’t MN7’s story. Sometimes, even as FOE readers would get it, I really had to reign it in and remember that MN7 had to exist as its own story, and couldn’t keep throwing in sections of FOE’s, even while MN7 was designed to fit seamlessly into FOE lore for audience engagement. In this case, it was going too far and telling a story that wasn’t part of Murky’s world. Fun fact though, this was originally where he would have found his grappling hook. A crazed survivor would give him it after “promising he’d show him how to be free”, then just hang him from the ceiling to show him how to use it and proclaim “Now you’re free!”

I dunno, it worked in my head then, it feels ridiculous to say it now.

In the end, this instead became the Orphanage story in Chapter 16 with Lilac Rose. The shared aspect of it being a Coral and Murky adventure remains intact; however it's now far more connected to Murky's own tale.

Ragini was originally to kill Protégé

Here's one sure to upset a few people. I really am a bit of a monster to the griffon fanclub out there who love Ragini, when I think about it.

This one involved the method of Protégé's death. Shackles, as has been shown, is a bit of a schemer and very adept at controlling the machinations of others. In this case, Ragini would have been revealed to be a plant by him to keep an eye on Protégé near the end (she originally survived right till the finale) and would be the one to put Protégé down. This was inspired by the story "Sabbat Martyr" by Dan Abnett, which features one of the most aching and painful character losses in any literature I've read. Not just for him going down, but for it happening in the most horrid, simple and undramatic of ways. He's simply shot down borderline off-screen. I remember feeling gutpunched for days after that one, and it stuck with me. It got a *reaction*. I sat there thinking "Isn't that what stories should elicit?"

For a little while, that was the fate I'd had concepted for Protégé in order to get readers to detest Shackles and Ragini, leading into the finale. However, Ragini's character never made sense for this. I liked the swerve that the "always loyal" griffon was the one to turn, but her actions in the rest of the story made zero sense, and it really undersold her and Protégé a lot.

That and, well, come on. It sucks. It's an awful end to a character like Protégé. People already hated Shackles, I didn't need to add it on. It worked in Dan Abnett's case because (as I've gone back and looked at it with a more knowing eye this time) he had it built up in a subtle way for that to happen. It wasn't just to put heat on a villain. I'd misinterpreted it and only taken the shallow bit from it, one that would have resulted in readers only feeling insulted and depressed, rather than anything positive coming out of it.

The idea never made it past early planning on the finale. Protégé's end was never written to be this, it never even entered full planning. Ragini's loyalty to him past her contract (the opposite swerve) may have even been an aftereffect of me feeling guilty for even considering this.

Coral Eve could potentially have died in her finale

Coral Eve saving the foals is one of my personal favourite sequences. I'd had it in my mind for literally years, even down to the "shield crush" finish for Grindstone. Hell, the shield was only implanted early on *simply to permit that*. (Although it ended up being useful to permit villain dialogue in places too dangerous to talk at length too.)

But until around chapter 16, I never knew if I'd have her live through it or not. The thought had always been there to have her push herself past the limit to save the foals, and pass away peacefully afterwards. I'd pictured the teary eyed scene of Glimmer hugging a confused Chirpy Sum, telling him "Mommy's sleeping..." to end the scene.

After Chapter 16 (which was Coral's first primary adventure as a lead character) I simply realised I couldn't do that. This was also around the point when reactions to the negative tone in Chapters 14-16 were coming in hard and I told myself to up my game on providing more hope spots to balance back. (I personally believe the latter half of the story is far superior to the first half due to this.) Part of this was the decision that I was going to have *everyone* get out alive from the core group, sans Protégé. (Who had bigger themes to work with anyway. Redemption, sacrifice, purpose etc etc) A truly happy ending was decided at this point, and I knew I'd want to build to make it look like there wouldn't be one.

That and the imagery of her accepting all the foals into her arms, promising to care for them all and open an orphanage, so she can be a mummy to them all. Come on, how could I deny that?

Scenes

The cut Luna scene from the finale

This scene was present right up until less than a day before the finale was released online, believe it or not. This is easily the most "eleventh hour" change the story had.

Originally, when Murky flew through the wall and up into the clouds in the finale, he was going to crash land in the mountains a fair distance from Fillydelphia. Tossed around by the storms raging at the time of the escape, he would be forced down. Absolutely exhausted, he originally found a small farm and took shelter inside a small wooden structure. A pig sty. I suppose I was looking for the bookends to his time in Fillydelphia, given he started the story in one.

From this, there was a deliberately vague line about him keeling over and 'the darkness flowing in'. Asleep? Or worse?

Immediately after this, he would 'wake' to find a larger shape above him. Battered and sore, Murky is completely unsure of what it is, until amongst his squirming to move his numb body he hears its voice. A voice telling him 'Shh. It's okay. The pain is finally over.' He vaguely saw "a large horn, and wings" before feeling himself being lifted up higher and higher, fading out again.

The story then immediately cut back into the released version, in Tenpony.

The purpose of this bizarre scene was to cast doubt on his escape's outcome. Did he escape, and dream of Luna keeping him alive from his injuries? Or did Murky make it out, only to fade away from the battering he'd taken during the escape; and what we saw was what he'd told us in Chapter 17 about the afterlife? That the Goddess will carry you up, into a world "not so

different from this one” where you would have to tell the truth to someone who would know, before you would go to find your friends you knew in your life.

The story immediately cutting to Tenpony, and speaking to the *Element of Truth* before commencing a journey to find his friends sound familiar now?

I wanted to offer a subtle ‘alternative ending’ to it. However when I wrote the scene, it stood out *badly*. It just didn’t fit the flow of the ending, and cast doubt when the reader by this point was wanting certainties and finales to subplots. Writing it out here, you’ll probably think, “Well yeah, that sounds dumb”, but the point here is that ideas often feel right thematically, perhaps even feel clever, until you really say them. The learning point here is to judge even after it’s written. In the end, I deleted the scene and scrapped the bits with the farm. Instead, after speaking to editors and having a few test runs, the ending with the clouds became the chosen option instead.

Winter originally meeting Protégé with Red Eye's message

This is another one that, like the Luna scene, existed up until the scene in question was being written. This was in Chapter 25, “The Apprentice’s Downfall”. In the released version, Murky speaks to a broken Protégé in his office, just prior to Protégé changing sides for good and taking the Mall back. This all happened in the original version, however the true turning point was from another source.

As Murky speaks to Protégé, Winter enters the office. If you don’t remember, this is Red Eye’s cyber-dog. He had travelled all the way from the Cathedral after losing his master to carry out one final request of Red Eye’s; to deliver a message to Protégé. Extremely careful readers might have noticed that there were some spare projection orbs. Aurora made one for each of the Mane 6. Chapter 10 had one from Twilight, Chapter 16 had one from Fluttershy and Chapter 19 had one from Pinkie Pie. But what about the others? Well, one of them made its way to Red Eye, and he sent it back with Winter. This led to Red Eye getting to speak to Protégé one last time from the grave.

The projection of Red Eye would tell Protégé of what had transpired, and admit the mistakes made with Fillydelphia and (more importantly) with how he had treated Protégé. It was in effect an apology, combined with a hope that Protégé would do the right thing in the end, now that things were falling apart. It ended with him ordering Winter to deliver the second package, his old scoped revolver. This was supposed to mark the culmination of Protégé’s relationship with his master, and bring them both into realising that while they were master and slave, there had been something else there and that ultimately, Red Eye was proud of the stallion Protégé could be if he was given more freedom to choose for himself.

The themes were strong, and it had a lot of great imagery and weight. However, after writing it, there was one enormous elephant in the room: Murky.

The entire story had been building Murky and Protégé's relationship, and it was notably the favourite one of the readers...and shippers.

So suddenly, at the crux point of Protégé's story, Murky was being removed from the equation with the credit and 'big moment' all going to Red Eye. This just didn't feel right at all. Murky was left standing as a fly on the wall, not party to Protégé's final turn. And while Red Eye's intentions were good in the end for Protégé, we kinda already knew this from their last meeting. As such, this held the tone of "master letting the slave go" which devalued Protégé's choice to break free of the same mental shackles that Murky had.

So while I did like that it gave Red Eye a little more screen time, and it provided an explanation of what Winter did (who just disappears into thin air in the original FOE story) I had to change it. All the focus was put on Murky and Protégé, and Red Eye's old revolver became one centred around an Equestrian symbol of unity. The themes were stronger, and the confusing requirement of remembering these projection orbs (which were otherwise just a minor plot point in the greater Aurora Star story) was removed. It made for a much cleaner, more emotional scene in the end.

Sometimes, I found out there, less really is more.

Murky grappling a Skyship during the Battle of Fillydelphia

This one is short and simple. I had the awesome visual in my head of Murky running across the Mall roof, leaping off it, firing his grapple hook into the hull of a skyship and then being whisked up and away from the buildings. It felt like one of those shots you'd see in trailers after the name card has displayed and it goes for "one more cool action shot" before cutting to the next one.

As it turned out, this was unnecessary. No story element even planned for gave this an opportunity to be a thing.

Defending the Mall on the roof against ladders

This was another "started as a cool visual" idea. Originally, the siege of the Mall took place more fully on the rooftop. In an attempt to reflect a traditional siege visual, the slavers and soldiers would be assaulting the Mall with ladders, after the slaves blocked the doors with rubble. It felt heroic and full of opportunity; fighting back to back on the rooftop, surrounded by a burning city and duelling aerial forces to knock off ladders and exchange fire with griffins and sky-chariots.

Unfortunately it was also profoundly stupid. While my action scenes have always favoured the drama and pace above anything else this one pushed it too far for two reasons. One, it all being on a rooftop with the Enclave around was just pushing the already pushed "why don't the Enclave hit them all the time?" factor. And two, well, have you ever seen horses climb ladders? It had all the potential to be absolute hilarity, not the frightening whiplash of battle that I was planning.

In the end, the griffon battle on the rooftop was a self-tribute to the idea; and to give unexpected darkhorse (literally) character List Seeker a cool moment in the finale chapters.

Murky kills someone in an angered rage at some point

This idea was written in for, I believe, Chapter 15. The one that at the time held the Murky and Coral adventure into the taint factory. Murky would have gotten bullied around a whole lot more, now that he was considered Shackles' "pet", with other slaves and slavers taking advantage to knock him down. In a fit of rage from not wanting to take all this, he lashed out in anger, fear and desperation. Like a savage little wolverine, he used his own chains to choke and slam down another pony that was beating and berating him. Eventually knocking them out and choking them to death. The idea was to show his resistance to Shackles was being redirected by the slaver himself into making Murky fall outwith his own personality. A form of mental breakdown.

Ultimately, it was just too negative sounding and out of character for him. Too depressing, and would have needed chapters worth of anguish to come to terms with it. I preferred Murky remaining through the whole story without having killed anyone that wasn't an enormous plot point, like Barb and Shackles. Although Chapters 14-16 still ended up being too negative and depressive in the end, removing this idea helped it from being even worse.

Murky uses SATS on the raiders in Chapter 4

At the beginning of the story, Murky overhears Sundial in a message stating that "SATS saved my life" against an attempted mugging in the past. This was to establish that Murky's Pipbuck still had some degree of charges left. In this case, just one. Early on, this was used as early as Chapter 4, in order to have Murky use SATS to win a brief melee exchange with Barb and keep himself alive until Brimstone showed up as in the released version.

It was a sound idea. Using what resources he had to keep himself safe was a staple of the early chapters. However it had a few problems. First and foremost, he had no EFS, which is in many ways considered a requirement for the SATS. Secondly, this cut Barb's lethality off at the knees on his debut and reduced how dangerous he seemed. Lastly, the preference for retaining the single charge as the classic "pistol with one shot" mechanic was more appealing. Especially as he'd have carried it all the way from Chapter 1 until it was finally used on Shackles, with Protégé's EFS installed by then.

Finale Capture and SPP Rainboom scene

This is a pretty big one. The ending chapter after Murky gets left on his own was once a lot more elaborate than it ended up being, which after writing it makes my hands ache with the thought of how long it'd have gotten had I done it.

In the original plan, Murky would have killed Shackles as normal, but in doing so would be caught by the other slavers after being left too weak to move. The idea was to throw a level of "He accomplished something, and that is his victory, even if it ends in a bittersweet way now"

onto it as a last ditch effort to swerve readers. Caught by the remaining slavers like Wicked Slit, Murky would have been set for execution.

On the podium, to be executed as an example to the remaining slaves, they tell him, that no-one can help him now. He is alone, and his friends can't stop it this time. That there's no tricks left for him to make. That in the end, just like he originally felt, 'she' couldn't save him.

At that moment, between the slavers, he would have spied a glint in the sky, before the SPP is set off. From Littlepip's actions, the sky is filled with Rainbooms. The force of them shattering the wooden platform he is on. Slavers are thrown to the ground. Storm winds, driven by the enormous events flow around and past him.

And, unsure if he was hearing it right or not, it would be as though the winds said "Go!" to him.

Diving from the wreck, and soaring above the heads of those around him, Murky took to the air, propelled by the fierce and strong winds of Rainbooms, to reconnect with what happened in the released finale, and fly out of Fillydelphia.

Now, I did like this idea in how it bookends the story with Littlepip's actions affecting his life, and it nicely offers a positive side that in the end she does get him out through her own actions in some way. Whether it was actually some super magic words on the wind to tell him, or whether he was just having an overactive imagination would have been left to the already deliberate presence of abstract and sometimes unnatural events in the finale. In other words, it was up to the reader.

However, it was so very very fragile as a concept. It held a lot of opportunity to be seen as very "out of the blue" and disconnected. The swerve I wanted, similar to the Luna scene, complicated the finale beyond reasonable amount. Even more crucially, it took the achievement in escape away from Murky and gave it to someone else. That was the final reason that led me to cancel it some months before the finale, instead writing it to be all on his own merit. The story was much stronger for it, I feel. While it held a touching moment in it, the drawbacks to have that were just too numerous, and the scene had too much potential to be awful.

Carrying Memories with him out of the city

Some people look upon the ending of the story and think that Unity was only 'cured' once Murky arrived in the village. Really, this was just a little moment to make people wonder if she WAS cured, before she suddenly shows that yes, she was. That he did save her. I'm still debating whether to clarify that a bit, but it's not exactly harming the story by being there. It always ends the same way regardless.

However, in the past it was supposed to be far more deliberate that yes, Murky would carry Unity's memories with him on his escape to find and heal her after the Nexus had stripped her of her personality.

The concept is solid enough. It was either to be on an orb, or even on his Pipbuck, imbued in a similar way as Unity does to objects. It lent him additional motivation.

But it also completely gave the ending away. There was no other option than for him to escape then. As it stands, I like to think there is just enough doubt that maybe he'll not make it and that the finale was him saving her by destroying the Nexus orb. If he had been given another step to return to her after that in order for that to have worked, then it's effectively telling the reader that he HAD to have made it out. I much preferred leaving people feeling they had to cheer him on right to the long awaited, relief filled escape.

Glimmer quotes Angel

I love the musical 'Rent'. It changed my life in a number of ways, and stood as part of what drew me out of a horrible, terrible portion of my life back in 2010. It opened me up to not be scared about some things any more, and taught me that it was okay to find happiness even in times that you feel guilty about it. I owe that show a lot, and getting the chance to actually be in it on stage was a dream come true.

Come MN7, I wanted to pay tribute to it. There's a smattering of references throughout the story. Chapter 16's opening quote is from the song "Will I?" for example. There were plans for a comedic scene where Glimmer pays tribute to Rent's eternal optimist Angel as well. Upon Murky being bullied by slaves, Glimmer would come to his rescue and stand between them like the big sister she is at heart. The slaves had been joking about how Murky was a little "mare like", in that ongoing gag at Murky's expense.

Glimmer stared them down, and uttered the words, "Murky here is more of a stallion than you'll ever be." She smirks, "And more of a mare than you'll ever get."

It's a direct quote from Angel, as recited by Maureen in the show, in how Angel (a crossdresser) handles some thugs giving her grief for it. It's funny, it's meaningful and it gave Glimmer an awesome moment to stand up for Murky.

Unfortunately, I just never found the space for it to make it into a Chapter. There were thoughts for it to go into the Battle of Fillydelphia chapters, but they ended up too cramped and otherwise serious to fit such a scene. This is one I really regret not getting to include in the end.

Pegasus Wings Joke

There was a second joke with Murky that never made it in. The pony community is well aware of "pegasi wing" jokes. And we are well aware of Murky's thoughts about Littlepip, at least earlier on. There was always a little part of me wanted to fit a scene of Murky (after his wings had been healed) getting a good look at some video footage showing she's still out there, the look of her thrilling heroics and dramatic stances making his heart flutter. While he watches, he would have heard 'Glim and Brim' behind him suddenly begin to giggle and snort together. Confused, Murky

turns to ask what they're having a laugh about, only for Glimmer to pat his mane and then slowly fold his wings back into place. The scene would cut with his blushing.

It's amusing, but it's not exactly meaningful humour, and the set up for it is harder than it sounds. How, why and where would they have seen anything of Pip at that point of the story? Sure, I could have figured something out, but having to figure that out meant creating the characters being there for some reason. That adds complexity, additional scenes and wordcount. You need to reorder entire chapters sometimes for that sort of scene to actually have a position.

All that for one pretty "all right" joke? Not worth it. Especially so that after getting his wings, Murky is supposed to be becoming a lot less dependent on other's legends, and more about what actually matters to him.

The bunker in the crater was the way to the finale

Originally, the way back to Ministry Station in the finale was through the bunker in the crater. This was the one that Murky encountered the ghouls who believed they were zebras. (More on them in a further down 'cut element'.) The idea was that this was an "early set up" way in. If you remember back in Chapter 5, Murky sees a door leading to deeper tunnels before he has to escape. Later on, Glimmer even outright states in story that this bunker holds a way to the Outer Metro. The idea was there right up until around Chapter 28 or so, but as it came close I began to realise that it was too "empty" a concept. Returning to a random bunker, to go down to a random tunnel, to return to the actually interesting Ministry Station was not exactly exciting sounding. It held a lot of potential for odd scene skips or lacking in the same momentum the finale needed.

Instead, letting them go there through the Ministry of Arcane Science was a much superior feeling. It took Murky back to the place he had originally met Unity prior to the memory wipe, and held the story in the atmosphere of Aurora Star's work in the ending to draw everything together. This is the same reason that Murky emerged inside it too when they came back up. Originally I had written Chapter 30 to have him come up in a random metro outlet from an engineer tunnel, but it just felt too random.

The lesson I took, always stick to important locations, if at all possible.

Murky once mistook Protégé for Littlepip...possibly the dumbest idea I ever had

Oh for goodness sakes, do I really have to tell people about this one? Do I really, really have to? Well, my intent with this list is to show that it's okay to have dumb ideas in planning and that everything that turns out good often has a few silly things that didn't get used. This was one of them.

Okay.

Back in Chapter 8, “The Virtue of Freedom”, you might remember Murky and Protégé’s first big showdown; the one where Protégé shoots Murky and stops his escape. It’s a big dramatic moment that solidifies Protégé’s position as more than just an intelligent and surprisingly caring slaver. It introduces the concept that he’s in chains as well, in his own way. His grabbing of Murky after shooting him was meant to convey just how unique and extreme his relationship with Murky is that life has them interact in those ways.

Originally, this scene was Murky mid-escape mistaking the sight of someone with a scoped revolver as Littlepip. In his hesitation, he gets shot down and wakes up later to find it was Protégé.

Yup.

I haven’t a clue what I was thinking. But this idea still exists in my oldest story summaries, so it clearly stuck around for at least some time. Thankfully, it never survived through to when the Chapter was being written.

Character elements

Glimmerlight was once Glimmerdew

When I was in Poland I got reminded of this while showing Snipe some of my old notepads on my laptop. Just a little line about plans for a chapter that referred to the character “Glimmerdew”. As I recall, this was one of the early names for the character while I was trying to find a very positive, bright title for her. I think I was worried that “light” would play into sounding too similar to “Twilight”. In the end, “Glimmerlight” was the best option, and played more into her visual design with her cutie mark too. It permitted more of a ‘light glimmering in the dark’ tone too, which better suited her character.

She was once the motherly character

This is one of those ‘older than pony’ concepts in the story formula of a young and weak protagonist finding a motherly character to provide a sense of direction for him. As time went on though, I fell out of favour with the idea as it added too much submissiveness to a character who was already very submissive by concept. Glimmerlight as a sister worked much better as someone to build Murky up from alongside him, rather than from a standpoint of maturity.

The concept eventually migrated to Coral Eve, who does share a few motherly moments with him. She’d lost her son, he’d lost his mother; so a couple scenes of that dynamic meshing together for comfort were inevitable.

Glimmer’s “betray” character element

Back at some point in planning, I made a conscious decision to give every character some degree of ‘shades of grey’ because I thought that would make the story feel mature and deep. As I learned more about storytelling, this began to feel, quite paradoxically, very shallow to me.

There's a growing sense that if something isn't layered in grey then it isn't "deep" or "real". I have always rejected this notion. A healthy mix is what I feel produces the best outcome.

But back at that time, the prevailing "grey" aspect for Glimmer was to be that she was known for betraying people. Now I never intended this in that she would turn them in to save herself, quite the opposite. She was someone who would do things outwith your knowledge. The big example was going to come in the chapter "Defying Gravity". Remember Murky's first flight where he chased after a sky-chariot to help Unity succeed in stealing back the Nexus Orb? Well, that originally was to save Glimmerlight after she'd sold herself out to get Murky a pardon from slavery.

Don't think too hard on how that story element fits into the narrative, because the concept never hung around long enough to actually get designed into the plotline. I believe the intent was that this showed Murky's commitment to his friends over freedom, and to show Glimmer's commitment to him over 'the right thing' by handing over something important to save him instead. This concept never got fleshed into an actual thing, as prior to any writing started I'd already rewritten Glimmer into being a vastly more positive and comedic character.

At most, the subplot of how Creaky Hollow (Glimmer and Coral's village) was attacked is slightly related to this, but it's definitely not from the same themes.

Brim was once younger, an older brother

As Glimmer was originally the older mother character, Brimstone was in turn a much younger character who would be like a big brother to Murky. The 'unrelated brothers' concept is a time honoured one, and held a lot of promise. But as Glimmer became the sister, Brimstone needed a newer identity. He ceased to be "a" raider and became "the" raider. His age became a defining trait of his character story, playing the part of the 'over the hill' monster who was living out his last few years of ability.

Interestingly, his age grew after Chapter 4 had already been written. In the released version, there's a scene where Murky asks if Brimstone and Glimmer are a thing. Brim laughs it off and says he's "at least ten years older than her". After that chapter was released, I mid-story upped his age from around 40-50 to high 60's, forgetting that this exchange took place.

When I realised about this, I decided to keep the line in. I find it amusing, throwing in the implication of Brimstone massively underselling his own age either to mess with Murky or out of embarrassment deep down. It turned this dialogue into a very amusing 'second read' section.

Murky was once Sunset Dreamer

I sought for weeks to find a character name for the main character. Sunsets were always going to be a running theme in the story (and have been in past stories too from me) to give him something to chase over the wall, so the forename emerged from there. 'Dreamer' just felt natural given his own wishes.

I do like the name, and it might have worked well. It far pre-dated Sunset Shimmer so at the time there were no worries about name clashes. However, something about it never quite hit the 'defining' name I was looking for. It just felt like 'a' pony name, rather than one everyone would remember persistently, like Blackjack or Puppysmiles.

The concept of slaves being numbered rather than named came up soon after (thanks to my mother suggesting that concept, not that she knew the exact nature of the 'slave story' I was planning) and from there I simply threw around names before a series of numbers before the play on Lucky Number Seven came up.

The name still exists in a certain way within the "MN7 world" though. You might see why soon enough.

Unity was once to have glasses

Unity's character was always intended to be that of a well wishing and caring mare, but she was never supposed to be a 'stunning looker' or 'super cute' character visually. Murky's own views on her are of course tinged by that he likes her, but I wanted her to just feel like an everyday person rather than your classic 'Hollywood female casting' character. Her mane is often described as being quite straggly, even outside of the conditions of Fillydelphia, for example. This never emerged much in story because in a first person story, he isn't going to describe her that way. It's not how Murky thinks or sees others.

Simply put, Unity was just a normal mare with her own strengths and flaws, both personality wise and physically. How someone interprets that is up to them, I just didn't want it to look like Murky was getting a supermodel written in as the mare he had possibly been or possibly could be in a relationship with. There's a reason Murky never once talks about her physical appearance in any form of attraction. It's about their personalities matching.

As part of that impression though, she was at one point considered to get to mention she had glasses when not stuck in Fillydelphia and possibly was to acquire a hastily built set made by Glimmer. This was meant to further show that Unity was just a bit of an introverted character who wasn't one for big crowds, even if she had no trouble making individual friends and getting very worked up about what she felt was right. However, the concept never came up for a couple reasons. The first was that it bordered on making 'glasses' a stereotypical addition for that sort of character. I didn't like the image it put out.

The second reason that killed this for good was Moondancer. The comparisons were far too likely. Unity thus never got her planned glasses. However in hindsight, she really didn't need them to be the earnest mare that so many people loved to ship with Murky.

Wildcard was once red

I'm not much of a visual designer compared to artists, I'll openly admit that. Protégé's cutie mark is absolutely a demonstration of why (although InLucidReverie did a great job of making the same concept much simpler and viable) and this sometimes falls into the character's own visual design too.

Wildcard was, as mentioned, red. Chapter 15 (his debut) was released with him red in it. However within days, Ana Mizuki released artwork of Wildcard, in which he was white. In her comments she stated that this was how she saw, or thought of him. The moment I saw it, I fell in love with the design and immediately edited the chapter to define Wildcard as snow white. The colour is just so much more unsettling on him, while red I distinctly remember just being a 'no reason' colour choice.

Wicked Slit was originally a one off character

Yes! It's true!

She was written into Chapter 1 as a one off slaver just to fill the sequence showing Murky's working life in Fillydelphia. However, pre-readers adored her dark comedy so much that they kept asking if she would turn up again in Chapter 2. And then Chapter 3. And then Chapter 4.

In fact, she made such a mark from Chapter 1 alone, that Olafski (The Act 1 cover artist who at the time had only read Chapters 1-3) legitimately believed she was one of the main cast and added her to the cover art! She remains in that cover image to this day as the unexpected darkhorse of the cast with a bit of a 'cult following' who kept demanding her again and again.

Not bad for a one scene only extra.

Xenith and Ditzzy were to appear

The planning for the Battle of Fillydelphia created something that was impossibly large to put to paper. It had extra scenes, battle sequences and duels in it that were simply the product of inexperience in how much page space it would all take.

One of these was going to involve Xenith fighting at the Mall as part of the 'save the slaves' section of the story. Finding allies, her motive was to help them so they could point her to Stern. In particular, a sequence where Brimstone and Xenith fight back to back was planned, given they were the two record holders of the Pit. Careful readers noticed that Brimstone's win in Chapter 17 added to his wins mentioned in Chapter 1 made him equal Xenith's record of combat victories, something I would have had him tease her about from his dry humour. Xenith naturally wouldn't have cared in the slightest for such things. In the end, she wasn't necessary for anything more than her offscreen return to clue the cast into the events about to happen.

Ditzzy was to turn up far more in the section about making a hole in the wall. Less in combat, and more to have her meet Murky face to face to give him that big hug everyone always wanted to give him. Ditzzy is (alongside Homage) that character who tends to turn up in every story as just

one of those running characters of the wasteland. I absolutely love that she is one of those, because recurring things like that help show the connected whole of the world so much more. In fact, that chapter was once titled “Muffins and Freedom” in reference to her famous sign at the freeing of the slaves. Murky would have met her, received said hug and witnessed that moment of the original story first hand from just ‘off screen’ of the original’s writings. However, there was one big problem. This was Protégé’s sacrificial moment.

The tone could not, for *any* reason leave Murky and Protégé during that sequence. The camera had to stay fixed on them directly until their final moment together. Anything less, and it would have only harmed it. It was too serious, too core to the MN7 story, that distracting it with a crossover character (even if that character was in canon in that spot) would have damaged it severely.

As such, Ditzzy gets a brief background appearance in MN7 during that sequence and nothing more. Enough to get her in there (Radboom from a distance excepted of course) but not enough to intrude.

Coral Eve once controlled water

Up to main planning, Coral Eve wasn’t the telekinetic monster we all know from the end story. Her original power was control of water and other liquids with her magic, hence the wave cutie mark. This only really had one scene planned. Remember that big taint monster way above? Well, she was going to protect Murky and herself by making the taint flow around them rather than over.

And that was about the extent of that. I very quickly realised that restricting her to water in a city known for having little of it meant that any appearance of water in a sequence was going to be a giveaway that Coral was going to use it soon. As such, I wanted to redesign her. Changing it for powerful telekinesis came quick enough, but it was originally just “Pip style” to a lesser extent. She would hurl small objects like a ‘throwing weapon’ skill. I even imagined her using “RAGE” style wingsticks at one point.

Eventually, this design finalised with the uncontrolled telekinetic waves that she ended up using, matching her cutie mark and personality in a very satisfying way. Coral’s magic is probably one of my favourite things in the story.

Enclave character

This is one a few people have really asked about, but I’m afraid there isn’t a lot to tell. One of the things about the Enclave invasion that is quite interesting is that not all their personnel agreed with it. Some more than others. In the very morally grey area of attacking Fillydelphia for them, a few who disliked firing upon slavers regardless of slave shields or not were inevitable. This character, a mare, was to be one of them.

I only really had one scene planned for her. She would have landed on the Mall's roof during the war after spotting a pegasus (Murky). Discovering what the Mall was doing to protect non-combatants, I wanted to have her radio in to declare about the pegasus she'd found. When told by her superiors to kill the 'ground' pegasus (them assuming he was non-Enclave or possibly even a Dashite), she would have a very clear moment of indecision. Being ordered to fire, she would have fired into a wall instead, before informing her officers that the pegasus was dead, and that the Mall was empty now. After cutting the radio, she would have flown back into the sky, pausing only to tell the slaves to stay off the roof and the building would be left alone.

In the end, this simply didn't make the cut. MN7 had introduced every single member of the main cast by around the middle of Act 2. Adding more now seemed unnecessary. In addition, the Enclave was a wholly unrelated 'character' side to the MN7 story. Their story is told in FOE itself. MN7 wasn't about the Enclave. They were more of an environmental aspect than anything else. This is why, in the released story, there is not a single Enclave character or even a single line of dialogue from them.

Sunny originally died in chapter 8

Almost everyone knows this one already, but it's still worth chronicling. In the original Chapter 8 version I wrote for the pre-readers, Sunny was killed by Chainlink Shackles soon after Cayenne. Her death was a brief distraction that let Murky escape.

The pre-readers didn't like this. All of them said the same thing, that she seemed very unsatisfying if she just died then and there. They convinced me to let her live. So let her live I did, but in doing so I made a mistake.

The chapter released with contradicting scenes. In some of them, she lived, but then in a later one, Murky remarks that she died. I tried to fix it, but apparently some very ugly storytelling still exists in it somewhere. I've got more edits I need to make on it to smooth it all out eventually. But due to those errors, people got very confused after launch, and it's a well known 'mistake' on my part for that chapter.

This is why for the next 12 or so Chapters, Sunny only makes very occasional appearances as a tertiary character. It took until Chapter 20 before I really figured out what I was going to do with her, then another 4-5 chapters to make it happen. She had a confusing start, a rocky mid-story, but she eventually got her moment to shine in Act 3, when she became a character that a lot of people seemed to really enjoy. For being one that I had my arm twisted to include, I'm glad that things ended well for her in people's eyes.

Story Elements

Murky's pipbuck would have gained Unity's voice through memory magic. Urgh...

Another awful idea that was bantered about but never got seriously considered. Although it does pop up in my original chapter synopsis planning document, which is rather surprising.

Remember when Glimmerlight fixes Murky's Pipbuck for him as a birthday gift? This concept centred around giving it a voice so that he could utilise it while not knowing how to read. It would say out loud what he had picked up, where he was and suchlike. This would have, through some shenanigans I never really planned, had Unity's voice. One scene came to mind that the voice would sound disappointed when he at one point picked up Party Time Mint-Als. The concept was dropped like a stone the moment serious planning came up.

In the end, while it wasn't a considered element when the concept got cut, Protégé teaching Murky to read a little was far simpler and more heartwarming than some dumb voice concept.

The "Mint Monsters" were originally even less seen, until Inside convinced me otherwise

This was a very late change. The finale had been entirely written, complete with its sequences of the so called 'Mint Monsters' throughout it as part of Murky encountering almost every threat seen throughout the story at least once before the end. I'd written in for them to be just as mysterious and unseen as always, and left it at that. However, something had been bothering me for some time about that. I couldn't put my finger on it, other than that "not seeing" was beginning to feel contrived. Thankfully their scant appearances (only two chapters before this) averted this, but a third chapter featuring them in the finale was feeling a little too patterned.

Around about this time I played the game 'Inside', which I have since criticised for having effectively no story content and never revealing anything to the player. It seems to just leave the player to make up their own story given some visual cues. It left me deeply unsatisfied with it, and it's probably my biggest disappointment in 2016 gaming to have such amazing build, tension and surreal quality amount to no explanations or revelations by the rather sudden end.

Immediately after playing that, I realised this was the same thing the Mint Monsters were facing. The story was ending without any further information on what they were. I went and rewrote the finale to offer a final few visual clues on exactly what they are. The confirmation that they definitely aren't entirely physical acting as the final bit of evidence. The story now definitely has all the clues as to what they could be spread throughout it. I didn't want to give all the answers together, but the rewrite provided the final few details to allow a careful reader to piece it all together on exactly what they are. (Yes, they do have a solidified 'canon' design.)

Every Ministry had something stolen by the zebras and Aurora

This was an early concept. In fact I clearly remember working on this while arriving early to a singing lesson and waiting in the car. Aurora and the zebras were supposed to have stolen something from every Ministry to create the Ministry Station end result. The implication was that if the Ministry Mares had worked together, they'd have seen the greater picture. This was supposed to tie into the overarching theme that Equestria's shattering was brought about by broken friendships more than anything else.

However, it quickly became a bit impractical and I was honestly struggling to think of things. The Ministry of Wartime Technology was in the final version, with workers like Sundial being forced into work for it. The Ministry of Peace had their refugees taken as experimental subjects, and also made it into the chapters. Of course, the Ministry of Arcane Technology was present too. However the other three never got implemented and eventually I just cut those sections as it was getting too complex. The 'in the past' section was complicated enough as is.

Funnily enough, back in Chapter 9 (Following in her Hoofsteps; which really should have been Hoofprints!), you can see a little clue as to this original idea. When Murky finds *Rarity's Grace*, he also finds a recording by the mare herself talking about something being missing.

This something was never explained, because it was never defined to be used ever again.

Minister Heartcare was to return at the end

In Chapter 5, Magister Heartcare flees from Brimstone and Murky at the end of the chapter. Later on, it's mentioned that Red Eye's alicorns purged his zebra worshipping ghoul cult from the crater bunker; but we never see what came of Heartcare. It's implied he was also killed, but entirely offscreen.

Originally, he was to show up again at the end. He had a full story alongside Doctor Weathervane originally (the good doctor makes reference to this in the released version) about how he was the one who gave the refugees to the zebras, or was involved in their taking at least. Whether willingly or forced was never defined. "Doctor Heartcare" as he was known, was to become a symbol of the Nexus' power. That zebra cult was the outcome of experiments from Ministry Station, appearing very early in the story. His return was to make that link, and tie everything together. It still exists as deeper lore, that's what the cult was. They were victims of zebra memory control experiments trying to fight the war still.

However as the story came to its finale, Heartcare simply became too random and unnecessary. The story had everything it needed already. His appearance would only have cluttered it, and was really just going to end in his death anyway.

Murky Number Seven was only the placeholder name

This is kind of an emotional little one for me. "MN7" has become a term that means a whole writing journey to me. So to think back to the time I was sitting in the sun while visiting the town I grew up in, writing out plans on a notepad, is very meaningful.

I wrote "Murky Number Seven" as the placeholder title for the story, and I distinctly remember that this was the moment everything began to click. The stories began to mesh, the characters became clear and the themes were strong in my mind.

Not too long after that, I opened up a Word document and typed “Chapter 1 - Flying Without Wings”.

Since writing that, in the time that I wrote Chapters 1-5 before even releasing Chapter 1, I persistently tried to think of a name for the story. None came, and the character’s name just kept sitting there. Eventually, without any clearer ideas, I began to realise I couldn’t think of a good name, because *I already had the best one*.

Days later, I released it. *Fallout Equestria: Murky Number Seven* had started.

But this document ain’t over yet! Look below!

Fallout Equestria: Murky Number Seven Notepad Photos

Please find them linked here: <http://imgur.com/a/dplyN>

Photographs of my notes, plans, maps and ideas throughout planning, containing the second half of the cutting room floor!