



The tenth issue of a weekly, or thereabouts (job, life etc., permitting), letter substitute from:  
COA is imminent - Be Prepared - Your country needs Pares.  
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Distribution in the UK by Eugene Doherty, 110 North Parade, Belfast, BT7 Email: e.Doherty@virgin.net Available in the North Americas only via the net at the moment but send me a note and I'll print you a copy and put you on the list. Dated, already, 7/4/97. Many thanks to Andy Hooper for his kind words.

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So here's the real story...

It is the second Saturday and I'm arriving at Jo McBride & Bob Wilson's monthly bash. There is quite a crowd here already, as I enter the hall and struggle with my boots, in fact the walk through lounge is packed. Jo greets me in the hall,

"Hi, Tommy, glad you can finally make it." I'm late again, though only a few beers gone.

"What's with all the people?" I ask, nodding my head in their direction, "Someone die or something?" I finally manage to disentangle myself from my boots, and reach to grab the case of beer.

"No, Bob's just sold another book option and bunch of people are here from out of town." She introduces me to names and faces as I struggle through the legs and bodies towards the kitchen. I nod at Phil and Hope, ensconced on one of the sofas, Peter and Mike are as effusive as ever and help me with my load of beer, which just gets lighter.

"Christ, I didn't know Toronto had this many fans..." I wave at some fans on the other side of the room, filled with roughly forty people.

"Yeah, the sweet smell of success brings out the worst in people," Peter suggested. "Or the worst people," Mike opined, "Talking of which..."

"So you're Tommy Ferguson," I hear bellowed across the room, the old Novacon 24 refrain. I waved vaguely in the guy's direction, he waves frantically back.

"Who is that guy Mike?" He has no idea and I snag Jo on the way past.

"Oh some mad Militaristic SF nut associated with the film production company." He is gesticulating wildly for me to join him. "Is he okay, Jo?"

"Yeah, he's been in and out of hospitals but he's basically okay. The head of marketing vouched for him."

That made me feel really at ease, as I scrambled over more people to the corner of the room, by the window, where he was far too casually leafing through books I had deigned to even remove from the shelves on previous visits. A tall guy, he looked well put together, but had a nervous energy about him that seemed out of place with his bulk. But cultural ambassador that I am, I was going to be polite and represent everything good about the Irish.

"Hi, wanna beer?" He shook his head vigorously at this.

"I don't touch artificial stimulants." Oh fuck, I thought, it is going to be one of those nights. "You're from Belfast, right? I want to show you something."

I hate that. People ask you a question, to which they know the answer, and even then don't give you the opportunity of replying; gets my goat that does. This conversation wasn't starting off well, and got worse when he dug a gun out of his bag and handed it to me.

"Do you know what that is?"

I looked down at the automatic weapon in my hand, and up at the insane look in the guys eyes. How had I missed that? Looking back at he gun I weighed my options. Shoot him with it? Nah, that didn't really figure. Chicken out and run away or brave it out? Sometimes even I am amazed at how stupid I am. This was a Glock 9mm parabellum automatic pistol, 45 calibre and I could easily mis-quote Clint Eastwood. About 5 years ago it was de-riguer for your average street tough in South Central, and was one mean mother fucker piece of work.

I carefully looked over it, glancing at him now and then. No-one else in the room seemed aware of what was going on, so... I released the magazine. "Bit rusty, there..." It flowed through the handle with consummate ease. I pulled the action back, saying, "Arrgh, not nice..." The thing glided along with oiled precision. I caught the chambered round as it was ejected, in front of this guys face. "Chambered round, very dangerous..." and laid both on the table. Another five minutes of careful examination of the revealed innards and I reloaded the gun and gave it back to him.

There was a sheen on his forehead, and a hopping quality to his stance now. His face had an expected triumphant look on it that, frankly, scared me.

"Nope, no idea what that is." I turned back to the crowd and the kitchen.

Behind me there be dragons I thought, lets get into the relative sanity that is the Second Saturday bunch. Weaving and ducking, dodging people, I was coming back to where Mike and Peter were conversing, when I felt the hairs on the back of my neck tingle and the sinking sensation in the pit of my stomach. The retort of the gun coincided with the explosion of wood on the kitchen door frame, above and to my left.

I turned around slowly, giving myself time to recall what Starsky used to do in these positions, because the guy was too far away for all that shit I learned in the Segal movies. There was a rush of feet from the cellar door in the kitchen and heads popped around the door jambs off the hallway. Someone dropped a pin as I looked at the guy. Jesus, he looked worse than I felt. The full enormity of what he had just done was slowly brightening his face and, as I took my first step towards him, he looked at me and it dawned on him.

That just made me mad. As Jo moved to intercept my Moses-like crossing of the room, still shrouded in cordite silence, it became obvious that the rest of the party realised just how mad I was getting.

"Now Tommy, it was an accident..." Jo tried. The guy was still pointing the gun at me and I looked from her to him and back; she shrugged her shoulders and backed off. I put my beer down on empty air and it found a hand as I stepped up to the guy.

He was shaking. He probably hadn't fired a gun before, didn't expect the recoil or the shuddering that begins in the arm and travels upwards to the shoulder and then the rest of body. I slowly reached for the gun, never taking my eyes off the beads that had become his pupils, and took the gun away from him. I relaxed a little and thought about my next move. I should just take his knee caps off, here and now, I thought. Simple really. Or hit him over the head a few times, at the very least. I was angry enough just knee him in the balls and then lay into him.

I looked at the big crowd, their expectant faces and then saw Devon: 8 years old and the world is still a wonderful place to have fun in. He was puzzled. Well, let's un-puzzle him, I thought, with a visicious grin. I looked at the sad man.

"May I demonstrate something to the crowd with your weapon?" I think he nodded in response.

"This is a very large gun, very powerful and, as I'm sure you all know, very loud. It has a magazine," I showed them, "of 19 rounds, er eighteen at this point, and a chambered round." I ejected the round, inserted it into the magazine and laid it down on the floor. It may be damp in Jo-Anne's house but then again this guy may have actually pissed himself. A brief wave of pity flowed past.

"Now you can see the weapon is not loaded. In fact you can see right through the weapon," I showed the crowd, looking at Devon, "and there is nothing up my sleeve either." This got a fumbled laugh, and broke a little bit of tension. "So this is now a safe weapon. The safety catch is on for added protection but, as you have seen, there is really no need for it. My point then is that this perfectly safe gun can do no harm. Now watch this."

In a swift motion I raised the gun to this guys temple and releasing some of my own tension started to twist it into his skull, as he tried to get out of the way, making a barrel shaped indentation. I made a big and elaborate show of realising the safety catch and, as I pulled the hammer back in one motion, the three stops clicking into one noise, I leaned forward and whispered into the guys ear:

"Intellectually you know this gun can't harm you. Emotionally you're not too sure. In five seconds I'm going to pull the trigger. Five. You KNOW that I am. Four. But you don't know what will happen. Three. I have a good lawyer. Two. Can you feel you're heart racing? One. This is what it is like to shoot someone. Zero. Time's up..."

I slowly removed the gun from the guys head and he collapsed to the floor and started to cry.

"And the moral of today's little demonstration?"

"Never play with guns!" Devon shouted enthusiastically from the back.

"Very good! A final point though, even though I knew this gun was safe, and even though, deep down I may have wanted to, I still didn't pull the trigger. And now, the amazing Gandalf and his dancing pygmies..." A few embarrassed and strained laughs followed me into the hall as I began to put my boots on. Jo was, inevitably, waiting for me.

"That was a bit harsh Tommy..."

"Well, it was like this. Attempted Murder or possession of a weapon is serious criminal offence. I didn't want to do that to the guy, nor did I want to attempt to hit him, he'd have probably beaten the crap out of me. So I thought a lesson was well in order." Just then Bob Wilson came around the door, Devon tucked behind him. He had his hand out.

"I'm sorry Bob, I not proud of what I did." His hand dropped, but his smile stayed.

"But it was necessary Tommy." He looked at Devon.

I looked at him as I left. "That it was, Bob."

That it was.

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Usual disclaimer at the bottom.

Toronto in '03 On-Line at: <http://www.worldhouse.com/worldcon-2003>

Well the fall-out from my non-visit continues to happen. I think there may be more going on now than there would have been had I made the visit. More details of these as they unfold. Julia Daly is currently off at the Ontario Science museum (all this getting up at 7.30 in the morning is really not my style.) A full trip report in the next issue. She leaves tomorrow for New York, (God help them) and I start work again at the weekend which once again fucks up my Detroit plans. It does mean that I will get along to the Second Saturday meetings outlined above for a few hours at least.

The last meeting with a bunch of fans and Julia went well and here is the official announcement. First Thursday of each month. 7.00pm until whenever. Foxes Den Pub, Bay Street (Two blocks South of Bloor, on the East Side, opposite Blockbuster video), private room, non-smoking. The reason? To have a few beers and chat. The cost? Nothing. Although if you want to have dinner there before hand it would help with management. Don't worry about buying beer, I'll drink enough to justify the room. The cost? Nothing but your appearance and enthusiasm. This is an open house. All fans, media, comics, role playing, fannish, whatever, are welcome - the more the merrier. Out of towners especially welcome and the first beer is on Mike Glicksohn.

A name for this meeting will be forthcoming, as will a page on my web site and a monthly newsletter. You have been warned Toronto. And now, you.

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From: gfs@toad-hall.com (Geri Sullivan)  
>See ya, "Not quite. But I look forward to reading you in print. (Where were you last weekend?!)" (Bloody good question! Work was so hectic that I can't remember much except being there. Ah, the joy, the pain, the excellent tips...)

From: bevansa@cix.compulink.co.uk (Bernie Evans) "These TW things do come thick and fast don't they? :-) Great to here you being so positive about the possible (probable?) loss of your job, and I hope something else turns up soon. (Now go back and re-read that issue...)

Nyree's wedding is something else on which, at least for me, saying little is the best course of action, but do consider yourself hugged again. I hope you'll enjoy Julia's visit as much as I suspect you will, she's great fun to be with, and very considerate with it.

Just make sure you send her back in one piece, we need her kind over here!! And I look forward to reading all about it in the next TW. (Many thanks for the kind words, and all shall be revealed next week. Julia may even contribute something... "The truth, perhaps, Tommy?")

From: ArtBrau@aol.com (Jeanne Gommel) "This is great. My aol connection hasn't connected long enough to see your zine at home, and work has been too harried to allow me to do some quality fannish reading at work, so I was very happy to see your zine come in by email. A LOT happier than the spew of advertising emails that accompanied it, that's for sure. ("RETIRE NOW ON YOUR WINNINGS!!!!," "GET FREE PHONE SERVICE, IT'S TRUE!!!!." I'm waiting for "DIE NOW, ENJOY HEAVEN AFTER DEATH, REALLY!!!!!!") (yeah, I keep getting this shit too. There is no one to rant at either, which makes it even more annoying. Violence never solved anything, but sometimes it just makes you feel better.)

I said this is great because I didn't realise that the RTF format would allow me to send formatted text, complete with boldface, italic, and even color over the ether. Thanks, this will be useful. Your zine came in loud and clear with RTF. I opened the file in Microsoft Word and almost expected to be able to double click on the blue faced names and be transported somewhere else on the web. (That is the idea people, but once again, if anyone has any problems with this format, let me know and I'll see what I can do about it. Steve Brewster, you fix is on its way!)

From: bigboy@super.zippo.com (Nigel Rowe) "Did I read this right, you're visiting Belfast soon? I didn't get to Minicon either, so I guess we both saved lots of money. Next con for me (and Karen) will be Wiscon in Madison next month. I'm sorry now I didn't get to Corflu, sounded fun. Andy Hooper is now waxing prosaically about your publishing activities. It's almost as if he discovered you or something..." (I'm not sure if this should be printed but I have a strict DNO policy: if it ain't marked, it's fair game. You have been warned. Andy is a nice guy, don't be cynical. Besides, he is obviously a man of taste...)

From: j.mallory@qub.ac.uk (Jim Mallory; Department of Archaeology, School of Geosciences, QUB) "I can read it - in colour (oh sorry! color) no less." (You can take America out of the man but not Jim out of America. What is it, 20 odd years and still you have the Californian drawl? I thought Belfast would have beaten that out of you long ago. RR in progress...)

From: Vicki Rosenzweig <rosenzweig@hq.acm.org> "I can't help feeling that if a certain amount of honesty isn't possible, you don't really have a friendship, you have an acquaintance you spend some time with. That doesn't mean you need to--or should--tell everyone everything, but that you should be able to tell some people quite a bit. On the other hand, TommyWorld goes to enough people, including a bunch of us who barely know you (if I said hi at Potlatch, I doubt I said more than that), so I think you're right

in this case." (Previous locs in next issue. Yeah, good policy, but it is hard to draw the line sometimes...)

There are a bunch more locs, some from old issues, which I will hold over until next ish - See you then.