



The Twenty-first issue of a sortof letter substitute, kinda thing, maybe weekly, maybe not, from:

798 Manning Ave, Toronto, On. M6G 2W6

E-mail: tferg@globalserve.net Phone: (416) 539 8992

Web Site: <http://www.globalserve.net/~tferg>

Distribution in the UK by Eugene Doherty, 110 North Parade, Belfast, BT7 2GJ EMail him at: e.Doherty@virgin.net Available only via the net at the moment. Dated, already, 24/7/97.

"You're Twenty-one and still fucked up Tommy..."

Well I never thought I'd reach 21 issues of this thing either. Canadian winters are well known for being cold, dark and enduring (Canada has two seasons: this winter and next) - the last one was no exception. So I thought I'd get on the web and let everyone back home know what was going in my life, how I was settling down, not settling down and then getting really settled down again. It was a good idea, it still is, but things have gotten out of hand recently.

First up there was a possible threat to my distribution system. Mark McCann contracted a Word Doc virus on his system and, mate that he is, he quickly thought of me. Quickly thought I was responsible that is. Mate that I am I quickly thought of all those people I send TW to... A few test transmissions later Mark found that it was not me but some Scandinavian blade at his work. The first mention I get of her, of course, concerns a virus.

But that set me thinking. This goes out to a whole bunch of my friends, people whom I never met but think I would like and some people who, openly, just asked to be put on the mailing list. There's an awful lot of people out there reading this shit. I know sometimes there is something not too bad but mostly I'm just rambling on about my life and what happens to it and stuff I've been thinking about. This is just another forum for doing that and is quicker and cheaper than a regular fanzine, or even an Apa. As I've said before, I'd be doing this anyway, in some format.

So I do write personal stuff - that is just me. But sometimes stuff that I think, and say, hurts other people - I've an unfortunate habit of unconsciously doing that, as I mentioned to a correspondent (?!) recently. In a lot of ways some of the content of this thing can be a hell'uva lot more dangerous than any technical viruses that it brings along. I know one person, for example, who suffered a mild coronary upon sight of the repeated spelling and grammatical errors. But seriously, all those people are getting

exposed to me, and quite a lot of them I haven't even met. I'm not entirely sure if that is a good thing.

Yes, for me, dummy. You guys can always just unsubscribe but I have gotta keep writing this stuff. What I'm getting at is that I don't have to always keep publishing it and that anything that does get said in future will be in person, on a one to one basis. So with that bit of a downer you can enjoy, or not, this rounding up of stuff that has been hanging around TW for a while with no real conclusion. And who knows, I may see you next week.

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((- First up Jim Mallory with all that ancient ethical thing. I knew the answer would be a lot more revealing than he was letting on, but that is the kind of wag our Jim is... -))

"Tommy, Here goes the answer (not verbatim but close enough): The one who resurrected her (Zamu) behaved as a good FATHER to his daughter and he should stand in that relation to her; the one (Tamu) who washed her bones in the Ganges behaved as good son and let him stand as a son to her; the one who truly mourned her as a husband (Ramu), let that man be her husband.

Oh, how did it go when I ran this. First, I was reading it aloud to my two sons. Conall went for Zamu as I did, i.e. action man (Fintan went for zzzzzzzz; he always falls asleep when I'm reading to him). We were both pissed off since passivity was rewarded while activity was not. Then I read it to my daughter (11 years old) and she went for Ramu. Hmm, is there a pattern? I then inflicted it on the people I eat lunch with and basically all the males went for action man while the one woman (yes, we have a very unbalanced department) got it right. By then I thought I was on to a Mars:Venus thing and that this was an appropriate gender test. I then inflicted it on my wife who went for Zamu (Uh oh, I thought but I was present at two of the births so I couldn't have been fooled that badly...). I fired the question off on e-mail to Sweden to a friend (female). She fired back:

"Zamu being an alpha-man (you do know about alpha and beta men??) is then the person who takes the most positive action by resurrecting the gal. Admittedly it could not have been done without Ramu guarding her ashes and Tamu cleansing them from disease. So whereas I have the feeling that Zamu is not the good and proper answer and that it really should be something boring like Ramu who grieved her the most I think Zamu is the guy, being an alpha-man and so forth. (He probably also has a low MAO level, if you know what that is!)"

And when I told her the right answer she replied: "I knew I was wrong! I think it has to do with the MAO level in your brain. Those who go for action probably have a low level

of MAO and belong to the type that will most readily go for the bungy-jump and use their chocolate cream. I think I have to test it on my daughter before she leaves for the US. (Unfortunately there is nothing that can make her go to sleep at a decent time.)"

With a follow up: "What, you don't have MAO over there...Actually, I can for the life of me not remember exactly what it stands for. But I do know that it is an enzyme which you and everyone else has in their little brains. If you have a low level of MAO you are the type of person who will throw yourself out of aeroplanes without a parachute, go bungyjumping and risk your life at every opportunity. Therefore a certain type of criminals tend to have a low MAO. Alcoholics of the type young and down and out by 25 are also likely to have a low MAO just as army-officers. If you really want to know the name of the enzyme you have to wait until I changed the sawdust and hay in the guinea-pig's cage she currently eating that particular excellent paper. If you really like it I send you that paper, or even better you can have the whole cage with the guinea-pig. (Preferably a dead guinea-pig). Yes, the guinea-pig is out of favour at the moment. She devoured the cord to my battery recharger. I saw her jump and fly in the air in a very peculiar way but did not think much about it to begin with. (Why did she not die I wonder?)"

Then another correspondent (female): "My first thought was that Zamu should have the girl in marriage because it was he who actually resurrected her (although I don't like that he STOLE the parchment, why did he not explain the situation and ask for help rather than abusing the hospitality offered to him?). I also like that he was a man of action who did something ADVENTUROUS, trying out new roads and solutions. However, without the other two guarding bones (who tried the traditional ways) and ashes (who was the passive one, the one to accept situations without trying to do something about them) the spell would not have worked. So they are all three entitled to her in a way. The problem is now how to divide her. I still like the man of action most of all and would be most inclined to favour him. The others must somehow be considered also, however, the question is HOW. It is here that I am stuck and call a recess."

Basically, the pattern goes 1) most males go for Action Man; 2) females get split about 50:50. There are, of course, exceptions to this (in the Monico, of course) where we find deeply sensitive males who get it right. A very few have gone for Tamu. Some get worked up about the theft of the parchment and exclude Zamu on that basis; others castigate all three brahmins for their unrelenting emotional blackmail.

Saying the girl should be able to make her own choice (which I also heard from another Swede) is cop-out; the riddle is for you to decide what that proper choice is - it doesn't have to be out of gratitude for the resurrection but it should be based on the characteristic elements of each person and their reaction. Some women really would prefer that a man mourned his wife for the rest of his life; my wife would prefer that I would bring her back if she died (but then, she has never read 'the monkey's paw').

((- Try this out on your friends and family. A game for everyone who has emotions and brain to think about them. Not for use in fannish circles.... -))

And now, you...

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From: ansible@cix.compulink.co.uk (David Langford) "Tommy ... Occasionally, between revelling in life's little joys like beer, incipient sex, not living in Northern Ireland, and the near-destruction of the Tory party, you may wonder: "Why doesn't that bastard Langford ever respond?" That bastard Langford has to confess that it took him all this time to scrape together the software to decipher and read your bloody RTF attachments. Good stuff, though. You must really appreciate that great thought of Sorensen's that you published twice." ((- What can I say - he's my fannish mentor (allegedly) -))

From: UAOBRIEN@uci.edu (Ulrika O'Brien) "In re the riddle about the three Brahmins and the resurrected girl, I have an answer, or two, but it is probably a side-step of whatever alleged ethical issue is presumed to be pivotal: "Now to pick up the literal text of the tale: 'To whom does the girl properly belong as wife? Your head will burst asunder if you know it and fail to speak.' So I ask you to consider the tale as an ethical question and tell me which one of the three ('none of the above' will get you absolutely nowhere) should be declared the husband." The feminist answer: Whichever one she wishes to marry; being resurrected doesn't create an obligation to marry. The poly answer: All three, if she likes... ((- And Later... -)) Regarding all the love discussion in TommyWorld 19, in reply to me you say: Well, you can define love for yourself any way you like, of course, but I'm a bit concerned about that last sentence. Sounds like you're trying to hold others to your definition, or doubting that those who love more than one person are really feeling love at all. Maybe they aren't feeling what you think love should be, but I don't think that conclusively establishes that it isn't love at all. From my own experience, loving two people at once, or three, or five, or twelve, isn't hard at all, it's a natural outgrowth of meeting people who are kind, and funny, bright, talented, impassioned, witty, and giving. The only time I've ever stopped loving an ex- was the one break up that was so bad, so ugly, so bitter, and so prolonged that every strong emotion was burned out of me and all I have left is ashes. The limits I find on relationships are not ability to love, but time and distance and other people's cultural biases. I can even have wild, irresponsible, palpitating crushes on more than one person at a time. What I can't do is be alone with more than one person at once.

Then again, I assume it's a fairish bet that you were raised Catholic, and my experience with even lapsed Catholics is that they have a hard time getting past the deep, early enculturation to even believe that poly is possible. ((- And later still, mainly in reply to Margaret Bergquist... -)) Of course you can still be in love with the person you do the dishes with, still hold hands and nuzzle with the guy who you have to wrestle through

the credit card bills with, and I am, and I do, after ten years of it. What I am saying is that, in my experience, some of the internal experience, the phenomenological quality of being in love changes with time. You no longer go into palpitations waiting for him to call. You don't live with a constant adrenaline rush just knowing he's in the world, get excited about being on the street where he lives, catalogue the minutes since the last time you saw each other. Some of the sheer franticness of love goes away. Thank god. I'd have ulcers if that weren't true. Margaret says she's had that giddy rush with someone lived with. But she doesn't say for how long. I'm betting it wasn't for longer than three years. In general, I'm not seeing a lot of people claim that they have sustained exactly the same high off of being in love for ten years, twenty, and so forth. If it happens at all, I think it's quite rare, and I think it's a huge and pointless mistake to discount anything "less" as not the real thing. Otherwise you can end up on that never-ending merry-go-round of moving from one person who gives you a giddy rush to the next, without ever getting the wonder of building something deeper together over time.

But, if you'll forgive me for sounding horribly egotistical for a moment, I will observe that wisdom cannot be taught, it can only be learned, and so I am probably telling you these things at the wrong time in your life. Go forth and live your life and chase that eternal rainbow, and pull this out in ten years and see if any of it makes any more sense to you. ((- And yet later still, on the whole idea of polyamory... -)) I'm cool with not everyone getting it. That's okay, not everyone will, maybe even without cultural biases not everyone would really be "wired" that way. I'm a little sceptical about simultaneous coital orgasms, myself. As I said, or tried to, I just was concerned about a vague sense of feeling that you were using your own yardstick to judge other people's relationships and feelings, and that just doesn't seem appropriate or fair, to me. Other than that, best of luck to you in your own search or find. ((- Thanks. -))

From: rbyers@u.washington.edu (Randy Byers) "Hey, Tommy. Thanks for the angle on recent events in NI. I didn't get all the references -- for instance, what it means that "The crowd all started chanting 'Up the RA' which must have pissed the INLA off something terrible..." Still, your ambivalence about watching things from a distance came through loud and clear. You're safe, but your friends are not -- anyone for a relief and shame sandwich? Haven't seen you on rass-eff, where, not long ago, you could have witnessed a (surprisingly?) unanimous denunciation of the IRA and Sinn Fein from Brits and Americans alike. Don't know that much about the SDLP. Have you written anything about them? Interesting comments you're getting on Love. Speaking of which, are you sure it's food poisoning? Maybe it's love-sickness. Going to the preview of Jackie Chan's 'Operation Condor' tomorrow. Wheee! Forget Batman, and let Jackie take you higher!" ((- Condor is unfortunatley not a new Chan movie, but a re-dubbed old Hong Kong movie. Still way better than all the other crud though. Check out Face/Off - I can promise you'll like it. -))

From: cjackel@freenet.edmonton.ab.ca (Cath Jackel) "((- Nice to know that I'm helping to drag out some of the older farts of Canadian fandom... snigger, snigger -))" Why, you

young whippersnapper, if you don't start treating your elders and betters with more respect, I'll get up out of my wheelchair the next time we meet and give you the thrashing you so richly deserve ;) It's good to hear that nemesis is keeping an eye on you already. "Fans shouldn't dance," pronounces our hero. Then he's dragged in amongst them at Ad Astra. I'll agree that a number of fans are rhythm-deficient - but that's why I like con dances. Those of us who are um, challenged, can go out and have fun without worrying too much about being uncool. I wouldn't have said you were being coy about your new interest... after all, publicising such things in the initial stages can have disastrous effects. I bet the relationship between you and Vikki changed after you published her essay, fr'instance. I've found that early on there's an almost irresistible impulse to include The Beloved's name at least once in each sentence. I think you should be congratulated on any restraint you managed.

I can't respond adequately to TW20, having grown up in a country and region where that sort of violence is not, thank goodness, a part of daily life. I have some bozo compatriots who wonder why Canada keeps getting chosen by the UN as the best country in the world to live. I'd like to show them your article and tell them they don't know how lucky they are. Have fun (hah!) at Toronto Trek this weekend, surrounded by people with pointed ears and wrinkly foreheads. I'm off to a real convention myself, namely Conversion in Calgary. It should be fun, especially since our new office assistant for On Spec has never been to a con before. I can hardly wait to see what she thinks of it all. Here's a little trek story from that con a couple of years ago: The con takes place on the final weekend of the Calgary stampede. Tons of tourists, plus locals who should know better all wearing stetsons and shouting "Yee-haw!" An obviously out-of-town couple, in town for the stampede, stay at the downtown hotel which is also hosting Conversion. They get into an elevator with two guys dressed in original series red-shirt security outfits. Tourists look at them sideways, and finally ask The Question: "Say, are you guys Mounties?"

From: Peverel@aol.com (Steve Jeffrey) "As a Brit and Englishman from the relative safety of this side of the waters, I'm not sure how prepared or justified I am to comment on the situation of Northern Ireland. From the TV reports, interviews, justifications, accusations and counter accusations, I have no sympathy at all with the Orange Marchers and the pig-headed insistence of taking a route right through a Catholic area. It was provocative in the extreme. Their very appearance and bearing, and the whole paraphernalia of drums and banners was, to me, never mind the catholic residents, a disturbing and provocative display. That they silenced the drums and (I think) broke step as they passed through (looking extremely uncomfortable and threatened and thus ruining any effect they thought they might make) is really only as maginally accommodating as a German WW2 veteran agreeing not to flash a Heil Hitler salute at the Cenotaph ceremony. (On a side note, the GPO have issued us a slight quandary. The new set of stamps features pictures of WW2 bombers. We have friends in Germany and Austria that we regularly write to, and that we'd rather keep. Or do the GPO have their own ideas of European unity?) Neither do the nationalists come out this any more

covered in the glory of martyrdom they wish us swallow. Being provoked into an angry response is one thing, but the magical appearance of petrol bombs belies a rather more deliberate planning for outright confrontation and violence. Nobody, anywhere, seems willing to confront the stark possibility that there may be no 'solution' to Northern Ireland. Except escape.

Tommy, I have no idea how this affects you, much less Mark. So far I have been inconvenienced only to the extent of mainland bomb scares, incidents and traffic disruption. I have walked through the aftermath of London bombings but never, so far, been involved. I have not had to live with it day to day, year by year, or with the constant threat of violence and intimidation. You went to a Star Trek con? and you freely admit it? Is this the Tommy Ferguson of the Gotterdammerung of yore which printed Trekkies Must Die, and was debarred from Octocon? Hey, was your favourite author Peter Morwood there? This I must see next time. I still don't quite believe it's not a wind up though.

Vicki, I am a Bear of Little Brain and I apologise as I think it was me that got your name wrong. After 10 years together, the writing of 'Vikki' is now almost automatic. I should pay more attention, 'cos I know how much other peoples' misspelling pisses her off.

From: d.farr@interserv.com (Daniel Farr) "I have been thinking about the last TW-20 more than probably any other issue. It's disturbing - and that is putting it mildly. Northern Ireland once again makes the headlines - a good safe international story - just as long as you don't live anywhere's near? Can't comprehend - can't imagine - madness!!!! Two groups who continue in this day and age to hate - frankly seems like maybe the place should be fenced in and left to it's own destructive devices for 1 or 2 thousand years. Actually I'm being a little to flippant - I know a lot of good people live on both sides of the divide and some even miraculously seem to be able to live right on the line. Won't be fair to them - but a solution my friend????? Honestly don't see one that would satisfy either side. The divisions are too deep and too long simmering - so I doubt you or I will ever live to see one come about. Sad. Not very uplifting - or for that matter positive - sorry. Funny thing is - after even the most hard core supporters either side leave - hey blend in and behave like normal civilised? or close approximations - people? Funny isn't it.

((- So now the whole love thing and resultant poly discussion is dead. Talk to me one to one but I think we've done this thing to death. The whole discussion of Jim's story is also out the window, thank you very much for that Jim - loads of fun. comments on my Northern Ireland piece - I'll just publicly apologise to Mark, his comments were not meant for publication (DNQ people) and consider that closed as well. Thanks for the feedback on that. This seems like a lot of closure doesn't it? Hah, not so fast. I'll be back - but probably not for a week or two. Talk to you soon... -))