



The seventh issue of a weekly, or thereabouts (job, weather, life etc., permitting), letter substitute from:
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St. Patrick's Weekend, Toronto, 1997

"Happy St. Patrick's Day!"

"Fuck off..."

Yeah, I worked in Allen's bar over the weekend, or to be more accurate I lived there. Two ten hour shifts and two twelve hour shifts, finishing at midnight on St. Patrick's day, Monday 17 March. I find it difficult to recall any other time in my life where I worked so hard, and enjoyed it as much. There was the summer job at DuPont in Derry - where I was first introduced to the concept of hard, physical labour. There was the time of my finals at University where I was intellectually tired as well as physically tired. But never in my life have I been rushed off my feet, physically incapable of standing last night and yet still had to smile, explain my Irish heritage and proclaim the wonderfulness of everything Irish. It was really hard work.

"So you're from Ireland, then?"

"Yeah, from the North mostly, though my Grandparents are from Donegal."

"We went there on holidays..." etc., etc. "...wonderful country! When are you going back?"

"I'm not. Why the hell do you think I'm here? Do you think it is so fucking wonderful if you can't get a job? If the first question a stranger asks you is what school you went to? Where the type of beer you drink, for fuck sake, determines your religion? Wonderful fucking country, just fantastic. Just why I left."

"But that is the North of Ireland, isn't it..?"

"And two coffees, sir?" I reply in my best Orish accent, with a side order of charm.

I could appreciate a conversation like that happening. No, really. Most of the people we had into the restaurant we're already very happy and, minus the swear words, would have been oblivious to any of the sarcasm above. However, most of the conversations I had we're even worse. This shit is true. The above quote isn't.

It's 2.30pm, the post lunch crowd are here for the beer and to listen to the live music. A, granted, older couple are eating at the back for a couple of hours. They saw the band come in, must have heard the sound check and the raucous clapping and celebrations going on. It's a small place, there're not that old, they must have...

"Excuse me, do you have any Irish music you could put on?"

I couldn't answer. Seriously, I couldn't say anything. I walked away and got barman (once he had stopped laughing) to go and talk to them. I finally came back to the table, and they, seriously, complained that the music wasn't loud enough. I had to bend over to hear this complaint as my ear drums were reverberating to the beat.

"And two coffees, sir?"

It is St. Patrick's Day in Allen's, in Toronto, 1997. So a guy and his dolly bird come in. They're American and in town to see the ice hockey match. Allen's is recommended to them so they come to check it out. On one of our busiest days, with no reservation. I'm polite and charming, as only I can be, until he asks:

"So what part of England are you from?"

Not Scotland, which is cool, or Wales which is understandable. What isn't understandable is Australia or New Zealand, which I can't get at all. But it is St. Patrick's day, in an Irish bar, with a live Irish band and he mistakes me for an English person? But I'm a professional, I don't give him the treatment, play nice and make sure he has an out before his lady friend. He may even be interesting

"I'm from Belfast," I offer him. The Derry thing has become over worked.

"Oh, what part of England is that?" I'm sorry, with a comment like that, he's literally belly down, supplicated and asking for this.

"The North-West. The far North-West..." I've Maple Syrup that wasn't as thick as the subtext.

"Is that anywhere near Birmingham?"

"No sir. Two coffees, sir?" as I walk away.

Now I know about the image that Ireland has abroad, green beer (which we didn't serve), leprechauns and all that blarney shit. I also appreciate that not everyone is as aware of what the country is like, even the fact that there is such a thing as the State of Northern Ireland. I'm also willing to play along with the whole Irish bit as it may increase my tip at the end of the day. I'm not entirely stupid here, and this is a two way thing in an Irish bar. But when faced with levels of ignorance that rise above mundane Joe Public apathy I have to respond.

I'm working tomorrow at 5.30pm. I was off today, Tuesday 18th, so as you can probably guess THIS is my response and if people were as aware of some of my remarks, examples above, to be suitably offended by them then I wouldn't be working tomorrow. There's is no accounting for how low the common denominator really is.

Oh, I worked 44 hours in three and a half days and loved every minute of it. Slainte.

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Okay, rant over. Apologies time. First off to the people who received Email messages from me at the end of those shifts - I'm sorry, what can I say? From those that didn't, sorry, I will try and make it up this week. And for those who happen to know me at all - er, just sorry, I suppose. But you insist on replying to these things. You're not really supposed to, though it is great to hear from you all. I'm printing snippets of e-mails that I'm getting just to let you know how things are going down. As for the disclaimer at the end, no one has asked to be taken off the list - so it can't be all that bad.

From: "Lesley Reece" <lreece@u.washington.edu> "So what do you do that you get to work at night?" ((Er...))

From: Greg Pickersgill <gregory@gostak.demon.co.uk> "Thanks a lot too for the couple of issues of TommyWorld (oh the joys of a colour printer, eh). I've been picking up the others from your excellently constructed website and I must say, without seeming too fawning, that its some of the best fanwriting being produced today. Catherine also took a disc-copy of your website back to work with her the other day, as a good example of how it ought to be done. Is it all your own work or did you have expert help?" ((All my own work, using MS Publisher and the many and varied skills I have picked up as a ten year veteran of publishing zines too wonderful to mention. So I must thank all those... etc, etc.))

From: Mark McCann <mark@nicrc.thegap.com> "You missed a cracking game last. Remember last year's Liverpool/Newcastle match at Anfield? 4-3 to Liverpool. Well, they met again last night and the final score? 4-3 to Liverpool - Liverpool were 3-0 with fifteen minutes to go but Newcastle came back to make it 3-3 in the final minute. Up pops Robbie Fowler to score the winner in the dying seconds - I almost shit a brick. Fuck

what a GAME! Liverpool can now win the League by themselves- they just have to win their last eight matches (including a visit to Old Trafford on April 6th - a game not to be missed!)" ((Yeah, like I needed to hear all this. I know I'm missing a great soccer season back home, from the dribble and drabs that I get to see on TSN (The Sports Network, re-dubbed Toronto Sports Network because of all the local stuff they broadcast.) Hopefully I'll be able to check out a few games when I visit.))

From: "Nigel E. Richardson" <nigel@impolex.demon.co.uk> "Who's been a busy boy? Got 2 Text Only copies of TommyWorld 6 and A DESIGN FOR LIFE. Your productions are the only fannish gubbins I get. Oh, and your ex-playmates at Gotterdammerung too. So keep it up, least I forgit. Have to say I prefer the RTF format you did before for TW. Easier on the eye. ((See header above.)) Never was that impressed by the Star Wars Trilogy. Guess I was too jaded to be excited and too young to be nostalgic for old style space opera made flesh. Alien was the first SF film to make me think "yes, this is how SF and cinema ought to work"."

From: "Westwood, Valerie" <westwoodv@aecl.ca> "Happy Saint Patrick's Day. Don't drink to much green beer, as we all know that green stuff they put in it will make you quite sick. Do they make such a big deal of it in Ireland? All the Irish born people I know, certainly celebrate." ((Er, yes. It is a national holiday and those people who abstained from alcohol over the Lenten period get real drunk on this day. Parades, singing and dancing in the streets - you know what the Irish are like ;-))

From: Damien Kearney <sgha105@sghms.ac.uk> "If you thought Carrie Fisher was good looking in that one just wait until she is in a bikini and chained to Mark McCann in Return of the Jedi." ((Um, let me see the movie before I respond further...)) "I never really thought there was much character development in SW. It is basically a highly enjoyable sword and sorcery flick; set in space. All of the characters are black and white and I don't just mean the uniforms. Even when Darth eventually turns, it is completely to the good side. How can a character who was so enjoyably bad turn so good because he had Mark Hamil as a son. After watching the SW quite a bit, I can say that Mark was the weakest actor in the movie. In Empire I just wanted to see him bite a light sabre and let Harrison get on with it." ((Quite, Damien. Direct and to the point as ever..!))

Enough already. Thanks for all the e-mails and DFL locs - Issue two in the works with a n early summer release date. about the same time as Götterdämmerung 10 - double digits - which I'm putting together from over here. So expect some interesting stuff.

This is being distributed to a whole bunch of friends on the net, if you received this and would NOT like to be on the mailing list please accept my apologies for this intrusion and let me know so that you will not be bothered by further ramblings. If you know someone who would like to be on the mailing drop me a line.