



The Eighth issue of a weekly, or thereabouts (job, weather, life etc., permitting), letter substitute from:

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"A Death in the Family."

I've never been able to handle death. It doesn't become me. I've tried to give this some thought over the years - what exactly will it be like when I'm dead? I have a real difficulty, you see, accepting the 'nothing' theory - you won't feel anything, know anything or be aware of anything because there won't be anything of you to experience anything. No sale.

There has got to be something. Not necessarily God, Heaven or any religious stuff, but something at least. "Why, because it will make you feel better, Tommy? Well, hey fuck you man. You're in the same boat as the rest of us and if that scares you, get used to it, man." Yeah I accept that. If that is what happens then fine, for me. But what about everyone else? What about my aunt Lala? Where is she?

My aunt Lala died last week. I didn't know her that well, just met her on the occasional special family occasions. The last time was my father's sixtieth birthday celebrations where everyone came around to the house and we all had a good time. She was a lively figure, drank a little too much whiskey and was full of wonderful stories about my father. I'd never heard these tales of my father as a young adult, and fell on each word with glee.

My aunt had been ill for a while. Everyone knew that her cancer was terminal though we had expected a little more time. I thought I might have been able to see her again on my visit home next month, maybe give her some word from the folks over here. "Being ill for a while now," "At death's door," and, "she doesn't have long to go now..." are grave, and serious situations. But you can handle them with, "but she is in no pain," and, "doesn't she look/sound/appear good today?" But there comes a time when my aunt wasn't ill anymore. She didn't look or sound like anything. She was dead.

That is final. There is no last minute visit to clear your conscience. There is no, after thirty odd years, glimmer of time to get to know this person. There isn't any time to be the returning hero, with the last words to be parted on. I can't get a handle on the

situation by going to see her and then reporting back to my father, and my family in Canada, "She isn't good obviously, but seems to be managing..." That won't happen. My aunt Lala is dead. I won't feel better.

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I got a lot of response on the last issue, for which many thanks.

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." {Well, yes we do. It is a national holiday back home, so everyone, North and South, gets a day off work and goes out on an almighty piss-up. Well, that's what we used to do anyway..}

From: "Lesley Reece" <lreece@u.washington.edu> "So were you busy at work? Hee hee, sorry. There aren't any big celebrations of St David's Day (that's the Welsh saint) but I suppose the Welsh aren't as rowdy as the Irish or something; the tradition is to wear a leek on one's hat or lapel on March 1st. Heather and I were in fact going to wear leeks to Potlach (she's Welsh also) but we couldn't find any that were small enough not to look silly. {Missing the point entirely, Lesley. If you're Welsh, you are meant to look silly on St. David's day. I think there is a law to that effect.}

I'm just home from Corflu. It was great; I'm glad I was able to rearrange everything so I could go. There were so many fans I'd never met, and it was really cool that people would just come up and say "I really like your writing." I even wore my silly badge so people'd know who I was. Very good for my suffering sense of self-worth, it was. I don't know if I'll be able to go to Leeds next year, though Ian Sorenson did try awfully hard to convince me by showing me pictures of himself wearing a tutu. He also showed me a picture of Alison Freebairn -- that was amusing! Not only do we have similar hair, but in the picture she was wearing a dress quite like the one I happened to have on at that moment. Before he told me who she was I was thinking, hmm, who's that tastefully dressed person with the nice hair? She looks like someone I'd like to meet... {There are some things I just have to print... Unfortunately there are a lot of things I print which I don't want to. I'm trying to open up a bit more in my life, be a bit more honest and sometimes it can really hurt everybody.}

From: "Lilian Edwards" <eusl01@srv0.law.ed.ac.uk> "Hi there, Ian just got back from Corflu so we are now officially the proud runners of the Next and First Great British Corflu in 98. Cor lummy. Will have to hold a panel on it at Eastercon, or something. He has some interesting pictures of my room party with Naomi at Attitude, should definitely snag them for a Web site some time.. Happy St Patrick's day, ho ho ho, as Nigel would say. Swig a green pint for me. Keep watching the leprechauns. {Ah, irony. I knew that

nice young Alanis lady didn't have it quite right. I am glad to say that, despite numerous requests, we did not serve green beer...}

From: bevansa@cix.compulink.co.uk (Bernie Evans) "Hiyah Tommy, Thanks for DFL 1, which I'm still absorbing (there's some heavy stuff in there) {See above}, and for TommyWorld 7, which made me laugh out loud despite the interruptions in text from great gobbs of "=3D=3D=3D" for line after line. Vicky (my daughter, dunno if you ever met her) has worked in catering almost since she left school, and has done the lot, from part time barmaid to licensee, from part time waitress to manageress of a restaurant she helped the owners set up from scratch, but she has never had a Saint Pat's day crowd to put up with. I think if she'd heard you she'd have fired you, but she'd have had a hell of a lot of sympathy with you: -)) {Oh I'm sorry, I should point out that I'm a complete chicken and didn't actually say any of those things. But then, that would be lying, wouldn't it....}All the best, keep the 'zines coming, I *do* enjoy them.

From: e.doherty@virgin.net (Eugene Doherty) "Thanks for the TW7, I notice that you have me in your mailing list twice, once as e.doherty and once as tinman, could you cut one of them please as I'm getting two copies and it's good but not that good. I liked getting the RTF copy are you not sending that out now? Did you get complaints or what? Was it too large (fnaar!) {Well, so many people would prefer one sort of mailing, RTF, some would prefer a word doc attachment and others have computers where the sprockets and gears can't handle anything more complicated than text... I shall revert to my old mailing list and split them up again. Please let me know if your version of TommyWorld comes in a format you can't handle...}

From: Neil Simpson <catwalk@ibm.net> "Glad to hear you`re as polite and understanding of people`s stupidity as ever. Have fun and don`t terrorise too many colonials.Are you going to go to this year`s Worldcon? PS-that con report sounded something like my memories of last year`s Octocon.Went down for the day (Octocon 95 was CRAP) and spent from noon till midnight in the bar.

From: "Mark McCann" <mark@nicrc.thegap.com> "A Chara, There's a naive and touching belief which we Irish hold dear (and I'm talking in particular about us dunderheads in the north) that the world is actually interested in us and our petty problems. As if anyone from outside actually cares about a bunch of sectarian warmongers!! Frankly, if it was me I wouldn't give us the time of day. The fact that many countries actually DO care (and I include the USA and Canada in this - their governments have given the north's economy 100s of millions of dollars) is, I think, quite touching and restores my faith in humanity a little (just a little mind you, I know they do it mostly for ulterior motives). But let's face it Tommy, is it not a teensy weensy bit arrogant to then expect everyone to be an expert on Ireland and its shabby cultural baggage? Why should they be? In all honesty I wish I was as clueless as to where Belfast was as your elderly customers. It would make my life much more pleasant. {Arrogant maybe, but the fact that they all claim to be Irish, from the 'Old Sod' and

their parents taught them all about the O'Gradys from Clare and the McLaughlins from Derry and they don't even know, vaguely, where the county or city is... As for the average Canadian I wish they were as ignorant as you expect. But they seem to be interested in the world outside their country and frankly I'm a bit tired of engaging in conversations about back home where the person knows more about current affairs and recent history than I do.}

Enough of the grumpy old bollocks - Excuse me but I'm feeling thoroughly pissed off at the moment but it's nothing a 24 week course of Prozac wouldn't fix. And as far as I can remember I didn't have the pleasure of being shackled to Carrie Fisher in Return of the Jedi (despite what you mention in TommyWorld 7) - I think you and Damian may be confusing it with my scene in Hal Hartley's 1987 movie of the same name where I was shackled for thirty six hours to Elena Lowenstein...ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh The things I do for my art. By the way is that Thoreau quote some kind of grubby hint?" (To me, only. Kind of what I'm trying to do over here. It is sort of working in large swathes and then, in particular instances, falling down around my ears. But it is my choice, I'm working at it and have to take the consequences. Going straight and..:}

From: Damian Kearney <sgha105@sghms.ac.uk> "Getting misunderstood for being English is not that bad. All the time English people as me "Are you American"! Ripley it or not, it gets worse. Once Neri and I were in a B&B outside of Oxford and the landlord of the pub we were in asked me if I was Dutch."

From: bigboy@super.zippo.com (Nigel Rowe) "Your St. Pat's day stories resonated around loud and clear. I get fed up at times with people asking where I'm from. or commenting on my accent. For one I would just like to be taken for granted (as a local)."

From: Rhodri James <rhodri@wildebst.demon.co.uk> "Hi, I won't LoC TommyWorld, honest I won't. This is just a convenient message to reply to. No, really. I will LoC Design for Life, but only after I've finished reading it. Honest." {Er, thanks. I think.}

From: Terry.Floyd@p2.cmnsens.fidonet.org (Terry Floyd) "Hey Tommy! Thanks for the email zines! I've enjoyed them immensely, and would have responded earlier, but for the hectic pace of life over the past few weeks. {No prolema, thanks for the note.}

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Well this issue was typed up in difficult circumstances. I'm eagerly looking forward to Julia Daly visiting these shores on 3 April, but it means I will miss out on a visit to a friend in Detroit. I had hoped to spend Easter either at Minicon (not going to happen, Nigel) or failing that in St. Catherine's with the folks. Now, however, I'll be working the

whole weekend in the bar, doing a repeat of the St. Paddy's day shifts. So I'll be out of contact for a while - apologies. Next issue early next month, with my thoughts on Return of the Jedi. I'm also undergoing seriously negative thoughts about going home to Ireland for a visit on the 14 April. There are friends back there that I've really missed, and an unfortunately increasing number I have offended (and probably lost); and then Nyree is getting married. Maybe this wasn't such a good idea after all... Life, eh? Usual disclaimer below. haven't you? What did I tell you about that type of behaviour... cut it out now.

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.