

This Here...

"In a drunken stupor..." (D Cockfield)

EGOTORIAL

THE HERMIT AND THE VISITOR (FICTION)

[[What follows is a recounting of a dream...]]

"I reckoned someone would want to find me and kill me", I said. "Just didn't think it would be you".

She at least had the grace to look a bit startled by that, as far as I could tell by the oil lamp light.

"If you thought that", she said after a minute, "Why did you let me in?"

"Curiosity, of course. That, and you're not carrying any weapons, poisons, anything like that."

"Oh? And how would you know?"

I couldn't help laughing, a little, getting a pout in return.

"Why's that so funny?"

"You've always thought of yourself as being so clever, haven't you? That's rhetorical, by the way.

What's funny is that you don't seem to realize that you've been manipulated by both sides - as a lawyer you ought to appreciate the skill involved. I'm going to infer that you were contacted with information as to my whereabouts with the intention of piquing your interest, which it obviously did. You might not have been the only person they tried to use - don't be offended at that. I do wonder how you rationalized the decision to actually come here. Nostalgia? Regret? Revenge?"



"I was the nearest", she almost snapped, annoyed as I knew she would be at the suggestion that she was a pawn in a bigger game.

"Probably true", I agreed. "Scotland's still a big country though."

"And you're a hard man to find. You don't disappear by halves, do you?". She paused, then said "What did you mean by "both sides"?"

"You instinctively made an assumption that I figured everyone would make, given the knowledge that I was holed up in a hermit's cave - you took that to mean that

everything was going to be primitive as fuck, although the other lot had the wit to not immediately accept that. You asked me how I knew you had no weapons. You were thoroughly scanned before McGregor allowed you to leave his cottage with directions, and he contacted me for prior approval, naturally."

She was definitely startled now. "McGregor? The gillie?". Now confused, she

trailed off with: "Scanned?... Contacted?..."

"Yes. Also we needed to disable some of the traps and guide you around the rest."

"Traps?" Now she was looking scared.

"Yes. Mostly low-tech stuff actually: gin traps, deadfalls, tripwires, caltrops - brutally effective though. We've got embedded new tech to disable them remotely in a cascade sequence. However, I'd expect that you were followed and it's probable that one or two will have got through. They'll be surveilling now, which is why I shouldn't let you leave."

"You're saying I'm a prisoner?"

"Not at all. You can go any time you like, but I wouldn't recommend it. I doubt you'd get a hundred yards - as far as they're concerned your purpose has been served. I could tell you exactly where they are if I could be bothered. Like I said, this isn't just a hole in the hill, as much as the effort was made to make it look like one. There's a lot of technology in here."

"Now I'll admit I'm frightened", she said. "Who are they?"

"Do you remember *any* science fiction? All right, rhetorical again. In 'Slaughterhouse Five' there's Paul Lazzaro, one of the Dresden POWs who carries a thirst for revenge against Billy Pilgrim because of the death of Roland Weary, right?"

I noted her blank look. "That doesn't matter as to the specifics, but conceptually you might say that I have a Lazzaro of my own - someone who's spent a lifetime waiting and planning my assassination. She's been accumulating wealth all these years, and by now presumably had enough to hire the team that's out there - or what's left of them anyway."

"This is insane", she said. "So we just sit here and wait?"

"More or less, yeah. The cave's well-defended, actually. Bulletproof up to and including anti-tank and armor-piercing ordinance, and the force field is good against energy weapons. Not entirely bomb-proof, but ey, you can't have everything..."

"Wait - what? Force field?"

"Lot of technology in here, I told you. Future tech. Plenty of *Star Trek* stuff, you know. Which reminds me, I haven't even offered you a drink - the replicators will do you a nice gin if you'd like one."

"Oh God! Seriously?"

"Seriously."

There was a rather loud bang at the door then, which shook the cave enough to dislodge a little dust from the ceiling.

"Hm. Bazooka, I reckon. Not wasting time, are they?"

"Jesus!" She almost shrieked, then a little more thoughtfully: "How did you get force fields and everything anyway?"

"Easier than you'd think. Science fiction is an excellent tool if you know how to apply it. I remembered reading a story years ago where the salient point was "What does time matter when you're building a time machine?" And I took that to heart. So my grandkids and their kids and grandkids will be working on it. The time machine will get built, in secret naturally, and when the various bits of technology get invented, or indeed if they already exist by then, they're sent back to me. It's a simple causal loop. Shall I get you that gin?"

"You better make it a very large one."

The bangs at the door and the walls were continuing at increasing frequency.

"Can they get through?", she asked.

"Possibly, eventually. I wouldn't be surprised if they called in an airstrike soon to be honest."

Now she looked *really* frightened.

"Then what?"

"Transporter room in the basement..."

"It's all good."

May 2024

CORFLUX

The honkin' news round here is the early determination of the Corflu 50 Fund delegates who will be assisted to travel to Corflu 42 in Newbury, UK next year, who are... (drum roll) ... **Nic & Jen Farey**.

(Cue "oo" face emojis, outbreaks of "WTF" and some modest rejoicing, interpretive dance, Bulleit 95 Rye whiskey ect ect...)

This will mark my first steps back on home soil for almost 18 years, and **Jen's** first trip ever, so as such we're going to try to make the most of it with (hopefully) a three week trip starting at the beginning of April and encompassing not only Corflu but also the Belfast Eastercon (Reconnect) and some family visits for me and touristy bits for her.

For all that to happen, fair warning that we'll be looking to do additional ~~begging~~ fundraising which will be formalized in some way in the coming months along with the actual itinerary.

I'm sure you can all expect a joint trip report...

HEALTH DIARY

STUCK

Back at the oncologist on May 17th on one of my now six-weekly sojourns (down from once a month) with the results of that week's blood draw in hand. Since the previous tests, the cell count numbers hadn't moved at all, and in fact were slightly up, DoBFO still short of normal range values and so that had us a bit worried.

Reassuringly, however, nice nurse Hannah says that the numbers are pretty much what expects them to level out at given my history and continuance of bad habits. All the other numbers are normal range, but then again they have been pretty much all along.

So despite Dr. Gollard's confident prediction of remission, it looks like I won't get there, or not anytime soon, at least in terms of those numbers. Hannah's breeziness about it all, though, is comforting to the extent that we already knew leukemia is for life and I can expect to be dealing with the effects, mostly tiredness and the bodily aches & pains, a lot of which might otherwise be easily attributed to age, and these days lack of activity.

She recommends that I add a daily dose of B12 to my existing schedule of a vitamin D mega-dose, so we'll see if that makes any difference.

I've got my disabled parking placard now an'all, so assuming there's a space available I don't have to walk as far from the parking lots of places I'm required to go out to on a regular basis - the shops and the various medical offices. I had managed to pull a ticket before the placard arrived, but a visit to the county Justice Center got that dismissed - well pleased since it was \$355.

And now... More Songs About Bollocks and Lumps...

As I write these words, I've got a urologist appointment coming up on Tuesday the 28th which I strongly suspect is going to be a total waste of fuckin' time. Ahead of that I had a new testicular CT scan done on the 20th, and the very nice technician concluded that there's "nothing there", or if there is it might be the size of a grain of salt. So naturally, while not doubting her expertise, I have a feel around the sore bit when I get home, and fair enough, it's better to describe the lump as bollock *adjacent* rather than being the makings of an extra bollock *in situ*, so to speak.

I'll therefore be asking Dr Finkelstein (for it is he) "Any ideas?" after he tells me there is no actual bollock deviance occurring. I'm beginning to wonder whether this will turn out to be a recurrence of the dreaded cellulitis which had previously manifested most cruelly in the arse crack and requiring ruinously expensive hospitalization on that occasion seven years ago. Results in the next paragraph, no doubt...

I return waving a piece of paper upon which is written, thanks to the absolute fuckin' rockstar Dr Finkelstein, an actual diagnosis: sperm granuloma of spermatic cord. While that typically sounds a bit oo-er, perhaps suggesting somebody has been stuffing the testicular area with bran flakes by input methods you probably don't want to imagine, in more comprehensible English it's vasectomy scar tissue, which is a thing and possibly explains some of what the Red Hot Chili Peppers were on about.

Michael Finkelstein is jovial and somewhat rotund with crinkly hair drawn back into a straggly ponytail, and grinningly claims I've "made his day" by me having realized that the CT scan didn't show anything because the problem isn't scrotal, and also being an apparently very

straightforward diagnosis. Wanting to check the lump himself, of course, I am instructed to "stand up and drop 'em" as I note the refreshing absence of jargon. The scar tissue itself isn't dangerous, though its effects are a bit debilitating, so we discuss its removal, which I say will depend on whether or not the insurance (Medicare + Advantage) will cover it. Turns out, via a couple of calls made by his surgery coordinator Marisa, that there'll be zero co-pays for either the doctor or the surgical facility, although I'll undoubtedly have to wait to find out what any "deductible" might be in this ridiculous system.

I'll need to see my Primary Care Provider to get a medical clearance for surgery, and getting the call back from the inevitably very nice Marisa about the co-pays just as I'm coming up on Eastern Avenue on the way home, I make the turn to go the *that* office to see if I can drop the paperwork off then and there. No I can't, as it turns out, but the check-in person says she'll look at the appointment schedule.

In a turn-up that will not only amaze most Americans, but also those groaning under what I've heard about the state of NHS waiting lists, there's an opening *that fuckin' afternoon!!* So I return at 2:30 to see Dr Park and get all the required testing (EKG, heart and lung check, chest X-ray, blood draw) done then and there and am pronounced fit for surgery.

Technically we've got to wait for the x-rays to be available (about a week), but it should be all good, and there's a timeframe for pre-op which involves a fuckload of "don't do this" (eg take ibuprofen, certain vitamins) starting seven days prior to the knife, because anesthetic, I think.

Searching for a suitable accompanying photo, I discover there's something called a "bollock dagger", which seems like a jolly thing, so here y'go...



TV GUIDE

ENDINGS AND COWBOYS

Seems like I often stumble into shows that I feel I should have known about but inexplicably haven't, and recently one such is 'Outer Range' (Amazon Prime) when I clocked an article about the just-released season 2. As soon as I read "time travel" I got interested, and at the top of the cast list

the name “Josh Brolin” was another DoBFO draw. I’ve seen this un-described often (and perhaps lazily) as a cross between ‘Yellowstone’ and ‘Lost’, two shows that I know only by reputation, never having watched an episode of either. Having got well into ‘Outer Range’ I’d add a pinch of ‘Twin Peaks’ to that description.

From the title you might think “spaceships and asteroids and stuff”, but the ‘Yellowstone’ comparisons give away the fact that it’s cowboys (and a property war of sorts) in modern-day Wyoming. It’s a difficult show to describe overmuch without spoilers, but the focal point is a mysterious hole (portal?) that Royal Abbott (Brolin) discovers on a tract of his land which his neighbor and rival Wayne Tillerson (Will Patton, mad as a box of frogs) is desperately trying to annex. Descents into madness (for all) ensue, and the plot gets twisty, driven in part by Autumn Rivers, an intruding stranger played with appropriately mysterious depth by English actress Imogen Poots. I’ll be bingeing season 2 very soon...



Our three “Sunday shows” (which we usually watch on Mondays because streaming, I dunno) all had their season finales “CSI: Vegas” with its final episode since it hasn’t been renewed (arse! ect) ‘Tracker’ and ‘The Equalizer’ both setting up for their next seasons, the former clueing a bit more of Colter Shaw’s strange family history and the latter with what appear to be a couple of main cast departures. At least these are “regular” shows where we presumably won’t have to wait fuckin’ *years* for the continuations.

About my favorite moment in ‘Tracker’ so far is a scene where Shaw is being helped by the local straight-arrow sheriff and goes to investigate someone’s house which he ends up have to bust his way into. Sheriff: “What are you doing?!” Shaw: “I am breaking and entering. *You* are in pursuit...”

The Deinotheriums (correct plural?) in the room are, DoBFO, ‘Doctor Who’ and ‘Star Trek: Discovery’, both of which seem

to have secured Marmite status among long time fans of the peripatetic Time Lord and/or any fuckin’ thing “based upon” that 1960s series created by Gene Roddenberry. All good lumping them together an’ all since the story arc of Discovery’s final season is basically “The Key to Time”, innit?

I’m going to hold off on the commentary for now, though, until the seasons have finished, but will admit to liking both shows generally, even as they both have their faults. And like any self-respecting Whovian, I’m well into all the fanwanking about the identity of “the one who waits” as well as the recurring appearances. I’ll have ten bob each way on Susan Foreman, meself...



Does this woman grow up to be Anita Dobson?

RADIO WINSTON

THE THE - ‘INFECTED’ and ‘MIND BOMB’

Subtitled, as always, “More Songs About Buildings and Food that Leigh Edmonds will disdain”...

After first considering pieces on the Australian Northern Soul scene (yes, there is one) and possibly an in-depth look at the Okeh record label, I typically got distracted. Besides, “in depth” always implies a lot of fuckin’ research which I’m more often than not too lazy to do.

The distraction was a post on FBF noting Morrissey being a twat about something (yawns) which did, however, serve to remind me of the time I got to see Johnny Marr live as the then touring guitarist for Matt Johnson (aka “The The”) when the band went on the road after the 1989 release of ‘Mind Bomb’.

The The had received attention for the debut album 'Soul Mining', which included the minor hits "Uncertain Smile" and "This is the Day" which were critically very well received - *Melody Maker* placed it at number three on its critics choice list of the best albums of 1983.

It would be three years until the next set, 'Infected', and the first single off that, '[Heartland](#)' was one that Johnson claimed it took him half that time to write, saying it was "probably the best song I've ever written", and continuing:

I'm attacking those working class Tories and middle class who still think Britain is on a par economically with France and Germany... I wanted to write a classic song which is basically representative of its time, a record that in 1999 people will put on and it will remind them exactly of this period of time...

38 years on, we'll find out this July if he's still right.

Fueled by various not exactly legal substances and a *lot* of vodka at the time, Johnson decided to promote the album by making a video for every slice, and actually managed to get something like half a million quid off CBS Records for the purpose. My favorite off the set, '[Sweet Bird of Truth](#)' was intended to be the first single, but since the US had just bombed Libya and American militarism (of which that slice is notably critical) was under scrutiny, CBS balked. (A very limited edition single was punted on the day of the album release, and it eventually got out the following year.)



Another three years go by during which I believe the lad cleaned himself up a bit and assembled a band around himself to record 'Mind Bomb' and tour behind it. The main personnel were the aforementioned Marr, James Elder (ex-Nick Lowe and Julian Cope band member) on bass with

session drummer (and former ABC member) David Palmer. Yet again the purported first single, '[Armageddon Days Are here \(Again\)](#)' (with its 'Ballroom Blitz' parody opening) was nixed by the record company because the line "Islam is rising, the Christians mobilizing" might have upset Salman Rushdie, or something.

The set did provide The The's highest charting single up until then, '[The Beat\(en\) Generation](#)' which made #18 on the UK charts.

I'd contend that both 'Infected' and 'Mind Bomb' could be accorded *meisterwerk* status, and perhaps readers will punt opinions thereof. But not **Leigh**. He was asleep...

PROPER RABBIT

BEES AND HONEY

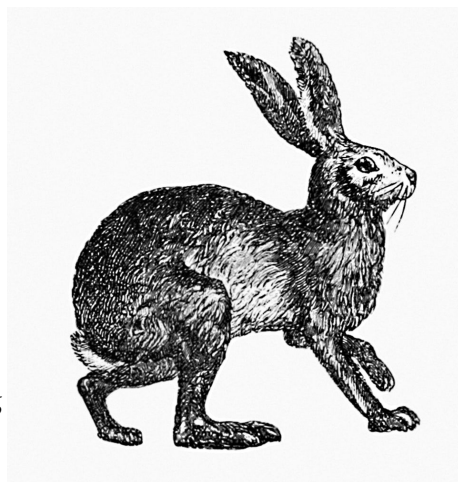
I must be feeling better since I appear willing to engage in some actual research again.

This'un was prompted by my recent re-watch of 'The Sweeney', and having fun explaining all the rhyming slang to **Jen**, a vernacular which I would

consider myself certainly well-versed in. Then there's the various words which *aren't* rhyming slang (eg "Peter" for a safe, discussed in a previous 'Proper Rabbit' column), and there's a fair few of those relating to bees and honey ("money").

Let's start at the low end with an easy one: the pre-decimalization 6d (sixpence) coin was known as a "tanner", the plausible explanation for that being that it was given the moniker after John Sigismund Tanner, engraver for the Royal Mint in the reign of George II.

Now we start getting into "no fuckin' idea" territory (moving up the denominations), firstly why a shilling was called a "bob"? The usage seems to date back to the late 1700s - Brewer's 'Dictionary of Phrase and Fable' (1870) suggests that's derived from "bawbee" (Scots), although that was slang for a halfpenny (recorded from the 16th to 19th centuries, it says here). Some contend it's named in honor of Robert Walpole, but the timing seems off there - something that's going to come up again. Those of us of A Certain Age still reflexively describe the amount of money known as 50p since 1971 as "ten bob".



I drew another blank in trying to find the etymology for “quid” and “nicker” for a pound (although it’s often suggested that “quid” derives from “quid pro quo”. What I did find interesting in passing is that, like “sheep”, “bob”, “quid” and “nicker” (and “grand” for £1000) are all the same in the plural as in the singular. To paraphrase, I think, the great Simon Hoggart, who noted that during World War II any seemingly otherwise perfect Englishman who referred to “Moss Brothers” rather than “Moss Bros” would be identifiable as a German spy as easily as if he wore a monocle and had dueling scars - the same as if he’d said that the cost of something was “eight quids”.

Moving further up the dosh rating, we’ve got “pony” (£25) and “monkey” (£500). The frequently posited reasons for those are that the slang was introduced by British soldiers returning from India, where the 25 rupee coin had a pony on it and the 500 rupee note a monkey. Even minimal searching, though, shows this not to be the case. The 25 rupee coin actually had a water buffalo on it, and the closest you get to a 500 rupee monkey is the Indonesian note which is either a gorilla or an orangutan. In any case, they date from the 1940s, which fits with the British soldier theory but fuck all else.



One respondent on Quora noted the following, though without citation:

In 1827 a reference to gambling in gentlemen’s clubs gave the information “A pony is £25, a rouleau £50, and a monkey £500.” A rouleau was a roll containing coins, sometimes in a stick, which was both a wallet and a club for defence.

Also pointed out: £25 at the time was more than the average working man’s annual pay at the time (cf Mr. Micawber, 1850), and it’s also highly unlikely that a British serviceman would refer to, let alone possess, the sum of £500.

Anecdotally I also surmise that when bribing a bent copper, a pony would have been “a drink” and a monkey a “big drink”.

The actual rhyming slang expressions are almost quotidian by comparison: “sausage (& mash)” = “cash” for example, and a few that I think are out of use these days - “cockle” = “cock and hen” for a ten (also “speckled hen”) and “Lady

Godiva” for a fiver. Perhaps inflation has made those hardly worth mentioning.

Mind you, “threepenny bits”, usually abbreviated to “thru’pennies” still refers to the female chest area, as well as occasionally - er - diarrhea. Extreme pony (& trap)...

MOVIE NIGHT

BEES AND WORMS

Late to the party, as is often the case, we just got to clock ‘Dune Part Two’ - late, because we’ll tend to wait for the free streaming to turn up rather than cough up as much dosh as it would cost to go to an actual cinema. It’s a rare event that’ll get me out of the house anyway, generally limited to James Bond, but ey...

There’s two viewpoints round here: **Jen’s** which comes from little to no knowledge of either the original novel nor David Lynch’s 1984 movie, and mine which encompasses familiarity with both, but for this’un we arrived at the same conclusion, a fairly resounding “MEH!” I’m afraid.

As undeniably fab as it all looks, I identified two (only two?) glaring weaknesses. The first is that there’s nary a sympathetic or likable character in the entire thing, and the second is all the incredibly tedious religious mumbo-jumbo on both sides throughout. Both these things are, of course, accurate to the source but hardly make for audience engagement once you’ve got over the goshwow of the still well fuckin’ awesome ornithopters.

Jen observes that the conclusion isn’t a clean ending either. Villeneuve has made noises about wanting to adapt ‘Dune Messiah’, but the Mrs grumps that she’s not about to wait five years to see what happens next, and being solidly uncaring about anybody in it isn’t about to read the book(s) either.

After that slog, I thought, all right, I’m going to cough up for the latest Jason Statham vehicle, ‘The Beekeeper’ which I’ve DoBFO wanted to clock since it came out, and duly relieved the Amazon account of \$3.99 for the pleasure.

As with most Statham movies, and to use what’s a well overused phrase now, what you get is exactly what it says on the tin but with remarkably concise fight scenes leading up to a more extended ruck at the end. Adam Clay (Statham) dispatches the opposition with sublime efficiency, including company security goons (for the phishing scammers who have incurred his ire) in increasing numbers, Secret Service, special forces, an FBI SWAT team and some quite hilariously caricatured Sarth Efrikan mercenaries - the fight scene with their leader near the end is a classic Statham close-quarters confined space (in this case a corridor in a posh mansion) signature bit.

Action movie fans won't be disappointed, and at an hour shorter than 'Dune Part Two', 'The Beekeeper' is better value at \$3.99 than that other movie is for nothing...

GIVE US A CLUE

Eli Cohen : "First pink gin, lingering with sicklier drunken former TAFF winner (11)" So an 11-letter TAFF winner? How about PICKERSGILL? Has the first letters of "pink gin", P+G, plus almost an anagram of "sicklier", just missing another L, which might come from "lingering". And a gratuitous insult ("drunken"), which, when discussing British fans, might not even be considered an insult, just the normal state of affairs...

[[Quite so. To summarize: "First" (letters of) "pink gin, lingering = PGL + SICKLIER; "drunken" is the anagram indicator...]]

Then, "Two plus eleven minus one, amazingly! (6)" This is easy, just basic math -- TWELVE (twoeven with o, n, e removed).

[[I know this'un was Googlable. "Amazingly" is the anagram indicator here...]]

However, I'm totally stumped by "Deposit the last letter, Dick? (4)". Something to do with "trek" (from the last letters of the last four words)?

[[Heh. I compiled that'un Just For You. Very simple, really: "Deposit" = PUT + "the last letter" = Z yields PUTZ, which is of course Yiddish for penis ("Dick") amongst other less naughty meanings...]]

Nic : Thish's efforts:

"Gloomy trade unfortunately dealing with acne, perhaps? (11)"

"Finding Nemo gutted with a Fantastic Fourth gets fuck all (7)"

"Superman villain I bring to account for Anderson's space pilot (6)"

ANORAK

As we await **Pete Young**'s essay on the whistling Type 40 (no **Pete**, I'm not about to allow you to forget) or indeed as **Leigh Edmonds** mistakenly (and almost certainly sleepily) looks for **Ulrika O'Brien**'s contribution to the topic (see locs, *TH...* #74), I suppose I ought to make good (for a change) on the



promise to write a little about the Advanced Passenger Train (APT) project from the 1970s and 80s.

With a typical aside, though, I should note that others' perceptions of traingeekery might be that we're all obsessed with the Age of Steam. There might be a grain of truth in that (but don't tell the Deltic Preservation Society) and yet I find myself looking more at the 1980s as my personal Golden Age and I can easily get very nostalgic about the InterCity 125 or indeed the dear old workhorse DMUs (Classes 100-131) and the later Pacers and Sprinters which are all admittedly a bit short of goshwow but were the backbone of the network for local travel.

However, due to fucking off the last several days and failing to engage in

enough suitable research (imagine that ey?) I shall instead supply a little vignette about Mrs. Alice Boardman.

Mrs. Boardman's story is usually quoted in the lengthy list of "Bastard Beeching" wails, and of course I was quite ready to follow that framing, but as turns out, Great Longstone station (London, Midland and Scottish railway) was closed in 1962, the year *before* Bastard Beeching's report which led to all those actual line closures.

Trains still ran through the station until the final closure of the line in 1967, and one passenger train in each direction did stop there by special arrangement to allow Alice Boardman to travel to and from work in Buxton, where she was a nursing sister. She had her own key to the booking office, but still phoned the scheduling manager every day to arrange for the train to stop for her. This unusual setup got a segment on British Movietone News: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7J9USbjHY4E>

It couldn't happen these days, ey?...



THE OLD SOD

BY DAVID HODSON

It's Thursday May 30th, the footie season finished a week ago, and I've just received notifications that my annual standing orders for memberships (I mistyped that as membershits initially, which is probably more accurate) of Tottenham Hotspur and The Tottenham Hotspur Supporters Trust will be leaving my bank account tomorrow. Manchester City won the Premier League title but unexpectedly lost the F.A. Cup final to Manchester United, both of which contrived to do down Arsenal and Chelsea. Arsenal, having been beaten to the title, and their fans, started blaming Spurs for not really trying against Manchester City at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium in their penultimate game of the season, which City won 2-0, and accusations of not being real fans were thrown at Spurs supporters who actively wanted their team to lose the game just to deprive Arsenal of any chance of the title.

Cue: Chelsea fans popping up on social media to tell the Arsenal contingent that, if their club were in the same position, they'd be doing the same because they hate Arsenal as well. Arsenal fans were sending encouraging messages to their West Ham United equivalents in the forlorn hope that the Hammers would pull off a miracle and win their game against City in Manchester on the final Sunday of the season, and, absolutely true to tribal form, got told on X (formerly known as twatter!) to "Fuck orf, you cunts, we fuckin' hate you too!" The summer will seem quite tame with only the Euros to be played; Ing-er-land fans have long since had to drop the "two world wars and one World Cup" chants of yore aimed at German fans, mainly due to the fact that the Germans don't actually give a fuck about any perceived rivalry with the Ing-er-lish.

The biggest upcoming sports event of the summer for me will be the T20 Cricket World Cup taking place in the West Indies and the United States. You read that correctly: The United States of America is co-hosting a major international cricket tournament with match 1, the USA versus Canada, being played on June 2nd at the Grand Prairie Cricket Stadium in Dallas (pictured). I was late getting started on this column because I watched England beat Pakistan at The Oval on BBC2, which was played from 6.30pm until 10pm. I like the evening games under lights; the balls react strangely to the moisture seeping out of the pitches, so swing and spin bowlers get interesting results, although, if you're England with Jofra Archer and Mark Wood both bowling consistently at 90+ MPH, you probably don't really need much else to scare the willies out of the opposition.

Overshadowing everything, at least on this side of the Atlantic, is the General Election called by lame duck Prime Minister Rishi Sunak on May 22nd to take place on July 4th. If only he could have held out until November 28th, this year's Thanksgiving Day, so I could have used the line about Brits voting for Turkeys whilst Yanks are eating them. UK politicians are crushing disappointments in the showbusiness stakes; no moist cigars or blowjobs in 10 Downing Street, no looking at the calendar to line-up dates. The biggest source of drama in Whitehall is Larry, the tabby cat. (Interesting. Word365 underlines the word blowjobs as potentially offensive to my audience, but completely ignores fuck or cunt. In years past I'd have been tempted to create a macro virus flagging up Arsenal as offensive...)

I have to admit to a certain amount of frustration with my fellow Labour supporting members of the electorate. There's been numerous criticisms of Kier Stammer, the Labour leader, for not being left-wing enough, not presenting a more radical election manifesto, and for supposedly trying to purge the left-wing of the party. The latest news story to play into this narrative has been the supposed banning of Diane Abbott, M.P. for Hackney North and Stoke Newington since 1987, from standing in the upcoming election following a dispute that saw her lose the Labour whip (the whips are the Members of Parliament in each party responsible for making sure the rest of the membership turns out to vote, preferably the right way if they've been in the Palace of Westminster's heavily subsidised bars beforehand, on legislation; they're basically whipping the membership into shape.

When an M.P. has the party whip they have the backing of the party to support issues or legislation they want to raise). Abbott has just had the whip restored, but was expected to retire before the next election so it was a cosmetic exercise at most, until, that is, Abbott decided she wanted to continue as an M.P.

I admit I have a problem with Abbott. The same problem I had with Jeremy Corbyn and former, at various times, Leader of Haringey Council and local M.P. Bernie Grant in



the 1980s and 90s. I admire most of their politics, I have no doubt they are/were essentially good and honourable people, and they were able to win their local seats with ridiculous ease because they championed local causes (this is starting to sound a little "six-fingered", but bear with me), but they are frequently held up by the largely Conservative supporting national press as loony leftie stalking horses to frighten the blue-rinsed racists in the shires (y'know, the ones who voted Brexit) into voting at elections. The muck-stirring has already started at the Tory-fearing BBC with Boris Johnson apologist Laura Kuenssberg, possibly the only blonde female in right-wing British politics not to have sampled Johnson's cock but more likely the only one sensible enough to have used birth control, desperate to depict the situation as a stumble with the potential get the pathetic Sunak re-elected (Labour's

battle between right and left causes Starmer to stumble - BBC News).

My personal opinion of Stammer [*sic*] and his performance as Labour leader is that he has largely played a blinder and has taken a leaf out of the political playbook of Margaret Thatcher.

In the wake of the October 1974 general election, the second of the year in the only year in which that has ever happened, which was won by Harold Wilson's Labour party, Thatcher defeated Edward Heath for the leadership of the Conservative party and became the leader of the opposition in the House of Commons on February 11th, 1975. She set about re-inventing a moribund Tory party, helped in large measure by the appalling state of the British economy at the time and the underwhelming performance of the Wilson and Callaghan Labour governments, which had to apply to the International Monetary Fund for a \$4billion loan in 1976 because the country was essentially bankrupt. The one thing Thatcher knew not to do was show too much of her hand. She always knew she was going to radically overhaul the British economy by breaking the backs of the more militant trade unions and then dismantling the aging and obsolete industries that were causing many of the countries problems, but did she say that at the time? Of course not. Her main concern was to present a safe pair of hands to an electorate that was far more working class left-wing than the neoliberal indoctrinated electorate of today. Stammer's tactics, which many Labour supporters see as a problem, have been to do the same thing; keep the loony left bogeyman out of public view in an electoral system that's gamed to give the Tories an advantage.

My one concern with Stammer is that, should he win a landslide election victory, he'll believe the Labour party can win general elections against the Tories when the Tories aren't a complete shitshow. Remember that gamed system. The one thing that Stammer must absolutely deliver, even if

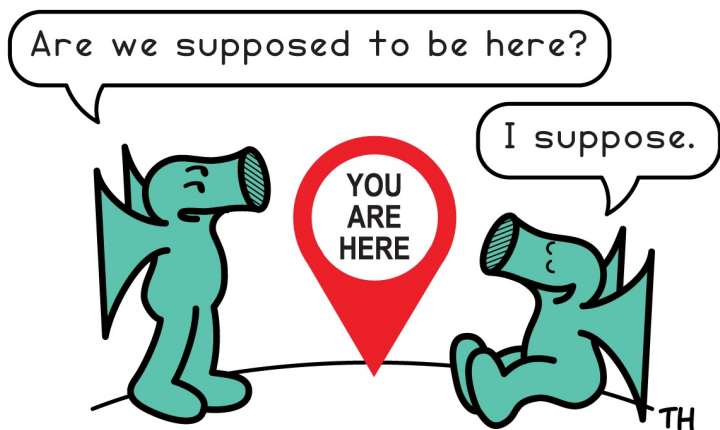
it means the Labour party can never, ever win an election outright again, is electoral reform and a proportionally representative system to replace the current first-past-the-post race with a majority of seats out in the countryside. I'm hoping that Stammer is savvy enough to realise that being the main party in an endless sequence of progressive coalitions with the non-Nick Clegg, non-Tory friendly Liberal party and probably also an increased Green party representation is better than spending nearly two decades in opposition to the Tories ever again.

There seemed to be a great deal of surprise at my not knowing the term The Old Sod and when Nic explained the logic of the title. I was a little surprised myself that it had never occurred to me that that was its meaning. The only previous context in which I had heard the phrase was my grandmother, who died in 1976, calling my grandfather a silly, old sod when he had mildly annoyed her. Later in life I just assumed she had bastardised the admonishment "you silly, old sot!", obviously meaning a drunkard, or had suffered a malapropism. Thinking on it, I probably had that wrong. My grandmother was a descendant of French farming stock whose family moved to England when new land was opened for agriculture following land reclamations in Essex in the 17th century.

One of the most backbreaking archaeological jobs I ever had was drilling 10-metre-deep core samples from the Canvey Island landscape prior to a new gas pipeline being sunk into the ground because they just didn't know what the land was actually made of. I had previously, with a colleague, been drilling core sample size holes with the same petrol engine driven kit in Shrewsbury for the installation of ground water sensors when we hit a bloody great granite pad which had just been dumped in the bottom of a pit at some point in the dim, distant, and unrecorded past. Strike one steel stitch tube and several metre long rods bent to buggery (Word is telling me I may be being offensive again). My grandfather's forebears were Dutch and amongst those employed to reclaim the Essex land from the North Sea. Somehow my grandfather's and grandmother's families stayed in touch despite my great-grandfather moving to Edmonton, then a tiny village mid-way between the High Cross in Tottenham and the Eleanor or Waltham Cross just West of Waltham Abbey on Ermine Street, to become a postman. So, maybe, she was calling him a silly, old sod (a thick, old clump of mud) rather than an old sot because she'd retained some of that countryside parlance. I can only excuse my ignorance by saying I'm a city boy, I know nothing of these pagan, rural practices.

LOCO CITATO

[[“I have more to say than Hemingway, and God knows, I say it better than Faulkner” (Carson McCullers)...]]



From: perry@middlemiss.org

Perry Middlemiss writes:

The **Archbishop** notes that the fans in the background of his picture on page 2 of *TH...73* were uninterested in the award presentation. Actually more like “unaware” it was going on till it was all over. **Julian Warner** and myself would have had no chance of hearing what was happening anyway as the noise levels in that pub were a tad high at that point. Not from us, you understand, (no, no, none of that nonsense), it was all the other patrons. Anyway **Bruce** got his gong and got his picture in the paper, so all is well. At least **Leigh Edmonds** got the picture in focus. Not like a picture of me a few years back.

Good to read that **Eli Cohen** is now up to speed on the Aussie lingo. When **Irwin Hirsh** and I were searching for a fanzine title back in the mid-1980s I had the first thought that we should call it *The Languid Larrikins*, but **Irwin** was having none of that and edited my suggestion into something much better. We were aiming to be sorta fannish and just aimed to have some fun with it. I hope we succeeded.

From: gsmattingly@yahoo.com

Gary Mattingly writes:

[*TH...#73*]

Of course I don't get around to this until *TH... 74* shows up in the mail.

‘Egotorial’: I don’t nap but I do try to do too many things and there simply isn’t enough time to do them all. Plus there’s the issue of ordering things and gee wouldn’t it be nice to watch a movie now or go on a long hike or read a book. (ooh that reminds me . . .) I did finish the taxes and we did owe money but I did pay that. I also finished figuring out and reserving most of the hotels and flights and such for my trip to Patagonia in November and December but I still have three more to do but am waiting on one of them to get back to me relative to any issues on when I want to do something. Then of course there’s reserving any day tours that I want to do and that will take some time. But then back to those hikes I really need to do a couple of hikes per week here, with a pack on, to get my endurance up since I’ll be going on numerous day hikes in Patagonia plus an 8 or so day hike over about 70 to 80 miles near glaciers and such in Torres del Paine (the 0 circuit). I hope it is not too cold since some of those nights will entail sleeping in tents. Fortunately some will be in refugios (hostels) but I’ve never been that fond of sleeping with people I don’t know in the same room.

May 5 Now where was I?

Good luck with the various and sundry publications!

‘Corflux’: I might convince myself to go to next year’s Corflu but definitely won’t be going to the Eastercon . . . too many people. However part of the convincing will go hand in hand with convincing myself to go to Morocco and maybe Turkey after Corflu. All TBD.

As I noted last time I’d love to have a Corflu in San Francisco proper, possibly at the Holiday Inn on Van Ness where we held a Ditto many years in the past, although someone did suggest a hotel near Haight and Golden Gate Park. SF would be moderately easy to get to from the airport (SFO) and there are a huge number of marvelous places to eat, explore and visit in SF. However I don’t think I really want to go through dealing with the Faan awards and various and sundry other similar things with which you and others have had issues.

[[*Hopefully Santa Rosa will work for you...*]]

‘Faanwank’: Ah yes, the fun part of Corflu. No thank you. At least I wouldn’t have to worry about being the recipient of one of the awards. The likelihood of that is very, very, very close to 0 . . . for various and sundry reasons.

[[*You managed a top ten finish in the Letterhack category this year, you know...*]]

May 5

‘Health Diary’: Good luck on all the health and bureaucracy related to health issues. I get to have a colonoscopy sometime next month, what fun. My doctor thought it would be a good idea because 1) I hadn’t had one in a while and 2) My blood tests reveal some anemia related to insufficient iron levels and, well, there is always the chance

(tiny though it hopefully may be) that it is related to problems where the colonoscopy checks.

[[I got sent a Cologuard kit, much easier...]]

'TV Guide': I enjoyed the Netflix '3 Body' series. I only watched part of one episode of the Chinese version. Maybe one day I'll get around to the rest. I have not watched 'The Gentlemen' nor any episodes of 'Tracker' (other than the partial I watched of one episode). I did watch all of the new 'Shogun' and quite enjoyed it. I also have been watching 'Dead Boy Detectives' which is moderately entertaining and the 'Spiderwick Chronicles', also moderately entertaining. Neither are great and wonderful but I'll continue watching. Also watching the new and final season of 'Star Trek Discovery', the final episodes of 'Young Sheldon', the current season of the 'Good Doctor', 'Last Week Tonight', 'Will Trent' (which I quite enjoy) and 'Ghosts'.

'Radio Winston': I enjoyed the links to the music featuring Peggy Jones. Interesting dancing and clothes (pants) in "We Got Togetherness".

'Movie Night': Sorry about your tiredness. Unfortunately I have not yet watched 'American Fiction'. See below for what I've watched since last issue.

'Anorak': I look forward to train geekery. I like trains.

[[Hopefully we'll not disappoint...]]

'The Old Sod': Interesting column. **David Hodson** is certainly a lot more social than I am. Admittedly I think almost everyone is more social than I am. The music mentioned in the last paragraph or so all sounds interesting. Yeah, I also have a tendency to like music from the past, mainly from the 60s and 70s. However I do like music much, much farther back and also a lot of what is current. I definitely don't like the ones with lyrics that are misogynistic.

'Loco Citato': **Jerry Kaufman** - earnings aren't deducted from SSA Benefits after you reach full retirement age. "The current full retirement age is 67 years old for people attaining age 62 in 2024."

Enjoyed the artwork by **Harry Bell** and **Jose Sanchez** in this issue and all of the photos.

So here's my list for this issue of movies I've seen since the last issue.

- 26 April 2024 Get Crazy (1983) 3/5
- 22 April 2024 The People's Joker (2022) 3.5/5
- 21 April 2024 Mahjong (directed by Edward Yang) (1996) 3.5/5
- 20 April 2024 The Lighthouse (2019) 4/5
- 16 April 2024 Civil War (2024) 4/5
- 14 April 2024 La Chimera (2023) 4/5
- 11 April 2024 Cabrini (2024) 3.5/5
- 10 April 2024 Monkey Man (2024) 3.5/5

08 April 2024 Problemista (2023) 3.5/5

04 April 2024 A Confucian Confusion (directed by Edward Yang) (1994) 4/5

01 April 2024 The Wandering Earth II (2023) 3/5

29 March 2024 Nimona (2023) 3.5/5

25 March 2024 Piccadilly (silent) (1929) 3.5/5

[TH...#74]

'Egotorial': I usually play two games in the morning, Cribbage and Solitaire, but only until I win a game. Obviously that often doesn't take a lot of time usually. At night I usually sleep 5 to 8 hours. Wake up time, more often than not is dependent on when my bikram class is that day or if no bikram, possibly when I will go on a hike. On hot summer days I tend to go out early while it is still cool outside. The dogs prefer it cool. I try to get up 3.5 to 4 hours before the Bikram class in order to walk and feed the dogs, shave, shower, make coffee, possibly do some exercise here, study some Spanish, look at emails and facebook, maybe play above-noted games and read a few pages in whatever I'm currently reading. The time I go to bed is usually dependent upon thinking about when I want to get up the next day and trying to finish whatever I'm in the midst of that evening. Obviously sometimes those tasks or movies or whatever push into my sleep time. I prefer 7 to 8 hours but don't really have any problem getting by on 5 or 6, as long as I don't do that consistently.

[[I didn't know you were a Cribbage player! S&ra and meself had vague plans for a tournament at COR41U (since we both play) but it came to o...]]

[...]

'TV Guide': I think I've watched all the episodes of 'Inspector Morse' but I can't recall watching the other Brit series that you mention. With respect to books, I rarely go back and reread books from the past. Currently I am trying to get through some of the Hugo nominated novels but I've also been skimming through various tour books on Patagonia, Chile and Argentina. Also I've been reading various things on and by Stoic philosophers because I take part in a Zoom discussion on Stoicism. I think it is only once a month or something like this. Today the discussion was on: Pierre Hadot: "Physics as Spiritual Exercise, Or Pessimism and Optimism in Marcus Aurelius", From The Selected Writings of Pierre Hadot and Marcus Aurelius: Meditations, the whole of Book 2 (It's not that long), then Book 6 passage 13, and Book 3, passage 2.

'Radio Winston': Interesting information from your former bandmate. I'll listen to the music while continuing this. Ah finished it (somewhat later). It was short. Reminded me of German techno, Kraftwerk and such. I'm sure my memory is screwed up and someone will say no, doesn't sound at all like Kraftwerk. Whatever . . .

'Movie Night': I don't recall seeing that Justice League movie. I haven't watched any movies since the LoC I sent earlier today. I hope to start another movie after I finish this LoC.

[[Had a big ole argument with Lenny Bailes about the 'Crisis' movie which he thought was fuckin' terrible...]]

'Anorak': I enjoyed your writing on trains. For a few years my father was a station agent in Bronson, Kansas. Unfortunately at that point in time the railroads were beginning their downsizing and someone who had more seniority than him and who had been bumped from another station, bumped him. Then my father went to work for an insurance company but I don't think he ever enjoyed it as much as being a station agent. The station in Bronson is gone. I liked the smell of that station. I liked watching and listening to my father using the telegraph key to send and receive messages. Anyway, the tracks are pulled up now. However when I was around 6 or 7 years old when he was an agent, I got to ride in the diesel engine area for a short distance. We also took the train to San Diego California to see his father and step mother. That was quite a trip. My father also ordered boxes of fireworks that were delivered by train for fourth of July celebrations. Of course I think none of those are legal in California at this time. My father was the only employee at the station. He also did some book keeping for the grain elevator across the street to make ends meet. Bronson was a good place to be when you're 6 or 7. There wasn't a theater but it was a very small town and the kids all knew each other and ran everywhere around town. The school housed grades 1 through 12 and the lower grades were two per classroom, first and second grade together, third and fourth together, etc. There was no kindergarten. The playground abutted a cow field. If we'd stayed there why I might have even been on the football or basketball or baseball teams since I think all the boys in high school played, just in order to have enough players. The Bronson Bulldogs.

We moved out of Bronson when I was 9 or 10 I think, hm, maybe 8 or 9. I sang solo at a lot of things. I sang at my

mother's Eastern Star meetings a few times. I sang at our neighbor's daughter's wedding. I sang in local talent contests and even took first place once. Got to ride in the Moran Day parade. Moran was a town next to Bronson, only a little bit bigger than Bronson. My father was friends with two brothers who owned the Phillips gas station on the highway. They had a diner that was inside an old bus. I liked it. They had good french fries (the curly ones, suzi Qs?) They also had a pop machine with a rack where you had to shove bottles around in order to get the one you wanted. I think it was a dime. However our neighbors across the street owned the Texaco station right across from the Phillips station. I was best friends with the younger of the two brothers of the Texaco owner's kids. The younger brother was just a year older than me. I have no idea whether he's alive or dead at this time although I have tried to search for him on the internet. There was a 5 and 10 cent store on the main street. They had a fountain. I liked the lemon lime phosphates. They also had a comics book rack. Then there was the meat locker down the street. It was great to go in there on a hot summer day. There also wasn't a swimming pool in Bronson but there were various rivers, creeks, lakes and ponds not too far from town. When we first moved to Bronson we didn't have an inside toilet. There

was an outhouse in the garage. Fortunately my father had an indoor toilet put in shortly after we moved there.

'The Old Sod': Well, can't say anything about the footy notes. Politics. Gee, so much fun. Good thing we don't have anything like that in the United States. Oh wait, we have lots of that kind of stuff. Oh well.

'Loco Citato':

Leigh Edmonds: Nowadays I always take BART into the city (San Francisco) when I go see movies there. I'm quite used to it and it makes sense to me. Admittedly I live here.

I enjoyed the artwork and photos in the issue. This is short but I thought I would try to actually get something to you on this quickly, as opposed to after the fact.



From: excellenceingardening@gmail.com

May 5

Joseph Nicholas writes:

Waking at 5.00am as the river cruiser I'm on bumps against the side of one of the giant locks in the Danube's Iron Gates Gorge, I find *This Here...* 74 in my inbox. A quick skim before I go up on deck to watch the proceedings, and I see a photograph on the last page captioned "Ageless Beauty 2: Stephanie Turner". Oh dear me, no! That is Alison Steadman, as any fule kno.

T'interwebs advise that there are two actresses named Stephanie Turner, one British and one American, but they cannot of course say which one you had in mind. Nor why you've confused them with Alison Steadman.

Take one hundred lines and see me after class, etc. etc..

[[Oops! In context of lastish's "Beauties", I of course meant the British one (ie 'Juliet Bravo') to wind up Jerry Kaufman...]]

From: portablezine@gmail.com

May 8

W^m Breiding writes:

Apologies for not loccking the Post-Corflu ish. I find myself flagging in the loc-hack department. It's perpetuated by the very unfannish trait of getting tired of hearing my own voice. I'm hoping that you soon navigate through the current fog of renegotiating your wake/sleep issues that retirement has slogged upon you. I'm sure prescription drugs and your alcohol intake are contributing factors. Might as well go get a bit of Leaf to mix it up a little, eh?

[[I'll still take a pass on the weed, and I don't get tired of hearing your voice (yet)...]]

Sorry about the bollocks situation. This guy Steve I used to know had testicular cancer and had to have one of his balls removed. He was just fine afterwards. Though he did go on a bender and do a bunch of fucking around just to make sure, including his ex, Tracy, who is a good friend of mine. She said he worked just fine, and she was glad to help the cause. I occasionally gripe about the ache and pains of growing old, but when I hear about other people's problems I thank my lucky stars it's just my teeth and some hip pains, and my eyes finally going bad (let's not mention the cognitive situation). The teeth alone are costing all our (very) meager retirement savings, just so we can chew. If the Republicans had their way we'd be homeless after paying off all the doctors. Yes, the US of A does know how to care for its elderly population. Especially those damned WWII boomer babies now depleting the system.

Bruce Gillespie inadvertently tripped one of my recent fannish bugaboos and then **Mark Plummer** reinforced it: all the talent that goes into apas that none of the rest of us are privy to. I keep dreaming of all the great genzines that could be created with the energy that's put into limited circulation apazines. And all the great locs that could be written to them. I understand the lure of apas, having been in one that sustained two glory periods decades apart, and how thrilling and interesting they can be, but damn, I find it frustrating when I run across some current apazines by accident that are magnificent or charming or thought provoking, and know I will never see another issue, and it's useless to loc it. It's one of those situations. Apas have always drained talent away from genzines. Early FAPAnS did work arounds by actually creating genzines and then submitting them as their FAPA zines. **Heath Row** is currently diagnosing this situation and finding a cure: turning his apazines into bundles for general distribution, and now he's actually trying to turn *StF Amateur* into a genzine. We'll see how that goes. It's in the rough stages right now and he'll have to figure his plumbing a bit for it to work, or to make it work.

[[If you felt up to it, there's an 'Omphaloskepsis' column to be had expanding on that APA question - I would of course encourage you to scrawl it out and I'd happily publish that in this here random assemblage of discarded Legos...]]

Leigh Edmonds cracked me up with his comment about the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART). Because I was using it from its very inception (a subway that goes under the Bay - wow o wow!) in the early 1970s it's never been a puzzle to me. However, on recent visits to my old hometown I've found that actually buying a ticket with their new Clipper Card system is more complicated than negotiating the actual train destinations. I can tell **Leigh** exactly where Balboa Park is. I took BART there for years, and got on and off at that station, because it was the neighborhood in which I lived, and the quickest way to get downtown for a commuter. The surface Muni K-Line probably took three times as long. If **Leigh** was trying to get to the San Francisco Airport he was on the right line, just got off way too soon! I've actually found all the public metro systems in the States to be pretty user friendly (Chicago, New York, the DC area, etc.). It was in London and Paris that I got that head scratching confused look that **Leigh** likes to assume. Never got lost in London's Underground, or the Paris Metro, though. Just confused.

I've been delaying watching either the Chinese version of the Netflix version of *Three Body Problem* because I want to reread the book again first. It was all the background of the cultural revolution that I found intriguing. I recently found a copy of the second volume, *The Dark Forest*, and am on the lookout for the final volume. One of these days I might watch one or both of the series. Netflix just acquired the Chinese language and produced *Judge Dee Mysteries* which is

really excellent. There have been shit-tons of films and series based on the real-life Judge Dee, but none that have actually been based on the awesome Robert Van Gulik novels and short stories before this series. They take many liberties with the story lines and make them overly complicated, but that is to be expected. The Van Gulik novels and stories read rather like Doyle's Holmes stories - they are neatly defined and not overly complicated and have lots and lots of atmosphere. The actor who plays Judge Dee does so perfectly. He obviously read the Van Gulik stories and studied Van Gulik's accompanying illustrations. The body language and facial expressions are exactly as I saw them while reading the stories.

Anyway, enough. I can't thank you enough for hosting Corflu. It was really great getting a chance to meet and observe you in your native habitat! Gail sends hugs and howdys.

[[And it was fab to meet you & Gail an'll...]]

From: srjeffery@aol.com

Steve Jeffery writes:

Vikki sends you another picture of 139002 from 2017. Not sure when your photo in *TH...#74* dates from but the livery appears to have changed. Apparently there are just the two of these, 001 and 002 running the shuttle. (But you knew that, obvs.)

[[Vix's photo below. Mine was dated September 2023...]]



I've not done shift work since my twenties so my sleep pattern seems pretty locked in to 5-6 hours a night, falling asleep in the middle of something I wanted to listen to on the radio and waking about ten minutes before the 5.45am alarm. I do recognise the falling asleep in the middle of the day, or after lunch (why conference speakers hate the post lunch slot as they talk to an audience of gently nodding heads and the murmur of gentle snores.) I can easily lose an

hour mid afternoon six pages into a new chapter (currently alternating between A. C. Grayling's *The Age of Genius: The Seventeenth Century and the Birth of the Modern Mind* and Peng Shepherd's *The Cartographers*), or watching the daytime snooker.

"Learned helplessness" is a phrase I've had recourse to use a lot in a work context for those situations where I get an email asking for some information that I know the sender can easily get themselves if they had bothered to RTFM (or the instruction/help/Wiki page wot I wrote and sent a link to two years ago.) And then I'm faced with toss-up of whether it will be simpler and faster to just do it myself and sent them what they want (thus solving the immediate issue but perpetuating the problem) or taking a longer time to lead them through how to get the information themselves. Or maybe, given I don't intend to stay on for much longer (though for some reason I still keep deferring that decision), handing the problem over to someone else.

[[I think it's true that "Oh never mind I'll do it me fuckin' self" can end up being a default. It's a bit sad really that worklife often ends up with us making assumptions that other people are crap at stuff...]]

May 9

I look forward to the new "more cheerful and upbeat" (**Bob Jennings**) Nic Farey, though I'll wonder where the cranky and argumentative old codger of old went. Not holding my breath though. :-)

[[Me neither...]]

Amused to hear from **Mark Plummer** that Vikki was "quite forceful" telling him that he needed a plan for retirement when her own plan was to get the hell out of the NHS the moment she reached her 60th birthday and not look back. Perhaps that's part of the reason I keep deferring setting a final date, especially as I still find myself logging in to catch up on my days off. Similar to **Mark**, I reduced my hours to working a four day week, two of which are supposedly working from home. However the company are retrenching on that arrangement, so I'm going in on one of those days, but holding out for one day WFH. If that goes, I shall seriously reconsider my situation.

From: daverabban@gmail.com

May 13

Dave Cockfield writes:

Shock! Horror! Chillin' at the Comic Mart at the Royal National Hotel London when the Mists of Time part to reveal **Rob Hansen** and **David Hodson**.

This picture is of the Old Sod at the Troy Club as leader of the Dave Society. Cropped from a very poor group photo that I have now mislaid.



Rob once credited my average fanzine, *Atropos*, to which he was a contributor, in his fannish history. No mention of my real skill in organizing events for Silicon in Newcastle Upon Tyne, sourcing obscure films, introducing SF Charades ("Servants of the Wankh" and "Imaginative Sex"

went down very well), and hosting a quiz or two. My most famous question garnered laughter and amazingly everyone knew the answer. "Who wrote 'Riders of the Purple Wage' by Philip Jose Farmer?"

[[My nastiest (I think) card created for SF Charades was 'Report on Probability A'...]]

David Hodson exclaimed "Fuck! Dave Cockfield!"

We have both changed. He is big, more jovial, and lacking hair. I use a walking stick.

As he commented I am still a loud mouth. True, I am a garrulous Gabblerdictum. He revealed an old nickname that he had for me. Cockus Maximus because of my Falstaff-like girth. Both then and now.

Once the Old Sod was lanky, skinny, and sported black hair. Iain M Banks was GoH at Eastercon held at the Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool in 1990. In a drunken stupor a select group created "The Dave Society".

David was Chairman, Iain Vice President, Graham Roberts designer of T-Shirts, and Paul "GAMMA" Gamble who anointed us with our "Dave" name. No oil was applied.

I was typically "Dave Customs" because of my job.

Regular meetings were held at the Private Members Troy Club to imbibe alcohol, and gaze at the legendary permanent fixture John Brosnan propping up the bar.

Tragically only **David** remains from our group of leaders. A King in Exile with Daves scattered like the Knights of the Round Table no longer to gather in merriment.

Those were the days that we thought would never end.

From: jakaufman@aol.com

May 13

Jerry Kaufman writes:

I've got Black Tempest's "Marmalade Eyes" chugging away as I write this. It's not the album that **Stephen Bradbury** suggested your readers try, but it's the first thing the Bandcamp link took me to. Pleasant enough.

Your accounts of sleeping vast hours and having concerns about your bollocks are disturbing - hope these situations don't prevent you from enjoying (long) life and hopes of travel. Keep calm and wake up.

[[Bollock updates are now intrinsic round here...]]

We're watching the same Sunday night CBS lineup as you. I'm learning so many life lessons from *The Equalizer* that I should soon be a fully functioning, caring adult (insert sarcasm indicator here). Seriously, I get a little irritated with shows that include moralistic conversations, or heart-to-hearts in the middle of action-oriented programs (I'm looking at you, *Walker*). We've also watched some episodes of *The Sympathizer*, an HBO series about a Vietnamese aide-de-camp to a General during the Vietnam war and after, in the US. He's also an informant and operative for the North Vietnamese. (Robert Downey Jr's in it in four roles, including a CIA officer.) It's a serious drama with the blackest of comedy included.

You say in 'Indulge Me' that I "flee from" your choices of Ageless Beauty "in abject terror." No. What I do is to stroll by in dignified indifference.

[[Noted for future pisttacking, a relaxed and unconcerned "flee" occurs...]]

But you are right that, as a rule, I have never heard of your British choices. *De gustibus non disputatem*. Yet I do find Adrienne Posta attractive.

[[She likes you too...]]

From: kim.huett@gmail.com

May 14

Kim Huett writes:

I was watching 'Up Pompeii' when your thing arrived. Most auspicious timing as now it delights me to imagine you as Frankie Howerd. Seems most appropriate now that you keep struggling to to start the show as much as he used to on 'Up Pompeii'. Actually, you might want to take some advice from Frankie himself, "If you're going to do it right then best do it slow and really enjoy yourself, because you may not manage to do it right ever again."

I have to agree with Frankie, I did it once and it was certainly worth stretching it out as long as possible. You might as well

when most of your time is your own. Currently I'm only working two evenings a week so I can't say I'm pressed for time.

[[Salute! I take any comparison to Frankie Howerd as a massive compliment, probably not what you intended?...]]

Anyway, while we're on the topic perhaps you can explain to one and all why you're still living in Las Vegas? I can understand staying in town while still employed, the lure of money and all that sort of thing, but now you're retired surely there are other options? You don't own property there, or do you? I assume not, so surely buying a camper van and living out of that would be cheaper in the long run?

[[Too much stuff to fit in a camper van, for one thing. Remind me, what's wrong with living in Vegas, again? It seems like The Meadows has advantages over, say, Alice Springs...]]

Anyway, since you like sharing your future plans with us you should really explain the future living arrangements part as it seems like a really important piece in the jigsaw.

I did think it might have to do with the rule that what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas. For all I know you might be required to wear one of those exploding collars that's primed to go off if you leave Vegas city limits. It's probably true that Vegas taxi drivers

know too much and so for the peace of mind of the general public the authorities ensure they never leave Vegas.

[[Taxi drivers see and hear so much that they're regularly exhorted by eg the police to report suspicious activity. I tried to tell them about your emails but they said they were busy...]]

Reminds me of the time I worked at the interstate bus station. Here's an anecdote from then:

I knew it wasn't my day when I saw there was a bear in the departure area. I knew he was a bear despite him wearing a fedora and trench-coat because he wasn't wearing anything else. He did have a backpack though and that usually meant they were intending to travel rather than just stopping in for coffee and sandwiches.

"Excuse me sir but do you have a weekend pass?" It always pays to start polite. He handed one over. Everything seemed in order but as usual I couldn't tell if the picture included

was of him or not. Staff at the zoo claimed it was easy to tell their bears apart but I had never found it to be so.

"And can I see your ticket please?"

"What do I need a ticket for? I'm a bear." I could see this would be difficult.

"You need a ticket to get on one of our buses."

"I want to visit me mum in Sydney. You wouldn't want to keep a family apart, would you?" was all the reply I received. I put my stern but fair face on and repeated myself but that did no good because the bear was too busy looking over my head at the electronic timetable board.

The bear nodded, "There's my bus. Over at bay 5."

I looked over my shoulder, and indeed there was a bus at bay 5 with Sydney Central lit up on the front and the door wide open. Was the zoo really teaching bears to read these days?. That seemed like an irresponsible road to go down if

you ask me. Bears can get into enough trouble without being literate. There was no time for further speculation though as the bear had heaved himself up and with the backpack over one shoulder was heading towards the bus.

Bears are slow when walking on only two feet as this one was so it was no trouble for me to cut him off at the door of the bus, "I'm sorry sir but I can't let you ride for free."

He paused in his shuffle for which I was thankful. I gave him a steady look, "You can either pay or savage me in front of witnesses and I don't think you'll be seeing your mum if you do the latter."

I knew I had won when he let go a sigh that sounded like it had been wrenched from the bottom of his soul and smelt like the fish market at Pyrmont on a hot afternoon. One paw opened his coat and the other fumbled inside for several moments before pulling out a neatly bound bundle of notes. Carefully he counted out \$60 and offered me the notes pinched between two blunt claws.

I smiled, "Thank you sir. Have a good trip and feel free to recommend us to all your friends in Sydney." My smile turned genuine as I imagined staff at the Sydney depot dealing with an influx of holiday bound bears. That would be sweet revenge for that business with the hyenas.



Money secured I gracefully slipped out of the bear's way and headed towards the booking desk to dump on them what I had just realised were some banknotes that reeked of fish.

Some days I'm simply not paid enough.

I'm sure you can relate.

[[I had that Rupert in the back of the cab once...]]

From: paulskelton2@gmail.com

May 15

Skel writes:

I never fall asleep whilst reading your fanzine. "Ah, that's probably because..." you may say, "...given your usual lack of response, you probably hardly ever read the bugger." Indeed it is true that, whilst I hardly give you the "back and forth with the readership that a monthly schedule allows" to which you allude in your response to **Jerry Kaufman**, and to which you are clearly entitled, I do read and enjoy almost every bit.

[[In fact I tend to assume the opposite of what you suggest, as naive as that may be. I get the occasional polite 'RAEBNC' from some people on the email list to assure me that they are clocking at least some of the content, which is always nice to hear. Most of those aren't habitual loccers of anything anyway, and that's quite all right innit? There's also a few here and there who ask to be removed from the list, usually claiming lack of time rather than lack of interest and noting that they can of course clock this here calendar of continual calamity on efanazines if and when they feel like it. Then there's the very odd one who actually blocks my email entirely [koff] John Thiel [koff]...]]

The problem is I don't feel I have anything significant, or even different, to add. But, HOLD THE PRESSES! Maybe, just maybe, I now have something that might interest you, even if it might not interest your readers. I'll settle for a WAHF, and I'll at least put the effort in. I should also point out though that whilst **Jerry** is enjoying, even whilst possibly feeling guilty about that enjoyment, his recent FAAn LoCsmith award (as indeed I have also done in the past), he recently wrote in a LoC somewhere, at the peak of his powers, "Even when **Skel** has nothing to say he says it more interestingly than those who have a lot to say." ...or something like that. Maybe I'm not entirely a spent force... well, at least according to **Jerry**.

[[I'm happy to agree with the Killer on this. What we might call self-weeding seems to have eliminated those with nothing to say and endlessly dull ways of saying it...]]

First off is the embarrassing admission that I buy the Daily Mail. Only on a Saturday, I hasten to add, and only then because Cas prefers their Saturday weekly TV guide

magazine to any other. I have pointed out that you can actually buy a TV guide magazine for less than the £1.50 the Mail now costs on a Saturday, but she remains unmoved.

[[Rob Jackson has given a similar rationale for buying the Daily Fail...]]

Anyway, on November 4th 2023 their 'Weekend' magazine published the results of a poll on 'The 100 Greatest TV Shows'. This is not just UK shows, this is worldwide shows as seen on UK TV. I will attach a list of the complete 100 for your edification. That will be a tedious balls-aching bit of typing, but then I do owe you at least that much by now... but then again, whilst the pages are too big for my scanner, they'll fit when folded in half.

The trigger for this is that you were going on about 'The Sweeney' being the best ever TV Cop Show. I tended to agree, though I'd also never miss a 'Z Cars' or the 'Softly, Softly' it morphed into, back in the day.

Needless to say, none of these featured in the Mail Readers' Top 100.

'What about 'Hill Street Blues'?' asked **Mike Meara**, who happened to be sitting across the breakfast table at the time. Good as that was, it didn't feature either.

Of course I have no real idea of the Mail's demographic, except to say it is hardly a young person's newspaper (but is any newspaper these days?) though I tend to assume an audience much like me (although not exactly like me as I don't read the Daily Mail. OK, with my weekly copy being the Saturday edition I do check out the sports pages, but other than that I just flip through the small number of pages that are not adverts for cruises, holidays, kitchen make-overs or stair-lifts, to see what I am expected to be outraged about...which in this instance, unintentionally, was the TV Poll.

So what, you are by now doubtless eager to know, was voted the greatest TV show ever to appear on UK Television?

'Only Fools and Horses'!

Yeah, right!

[[Not a surprise, really...]]

The top cop show, at number two, was 'Line of Duty' (which I haven't seen), just beating out 'Happy Valley' (which I enjoyed) at number three. 'Downton Abbey' came fourth (which Cas insists wasn't a patch on 'Upstairs, Downstairs' which came in at 35). 'Fawlty Towers' filled out the fifth place. Yes, it was good, but it wasn't ground-breaking like 'Monty Python', which came in at 37. 'Strictly Come Dancing' (can you actually believe this?) was voted the sixth-greatest show ever to appear on UK TV.

[[For possibly baffled American readers, 'Strictly' became 'Dancing with the Stars' on this side of the pond...]]

As for SF, 'Game of Thrones' was number 11, 'Doctor Who' made it at 18, with 'Star Trek' at 33. 'Dallas' made it in at 21, whereas 'Coronation Street', clearly the best soap ever (based on its sheer staying/pulling power), tailed in behind at 22. 'The Avengers', which for me was another unmissable show made it in at 70 whilst 'I Claudius', which I think actually was great television, did not make the top 100.

But I'll leave the rest to your own fulminations (always assuming you have any). I'll send this now and get around to scanning and sending the full poll over the next few days.

From: peterpumpkincat@juno.com

May 23

Cy Chauvin writes:

I especially enjoyed the 'Anorak' section, about the shortest line in Britain. The Parry People Mover is enjoyably dorky looking, so you'd never guess it has that new flywheel technology to store motive power when braking, so it can be used for power later on.

Did you hear about the Australian train engine that is battery powered, and uses regenerative braking exclusively to recharge its batteries? It is only used on a mining railroad, which runs from the interior down to the coast (in Western Australia). The train is full when going to the coast, so lots of power is generated from braking, but it is pulling empties when going back, so is much lighter. It seemed like a Rube Goldberg device, a perpetual motion machine, before I realized the critical part about the cars being empty on the return. No chance for wide application, but neat none the less.

[[Perhaps my Antipodean correspondents will enlighten us further about that Aussie train (or even consent to guest a column)? I'm planning that 'Anorak' will be another semi-regular column, so I'm glad of the positive response to it so far...]]

From: eli.cohen@mindspring.com

May 23

Eli Cohen writes:

I love your line about "I just need to organize my time into a new schedule rather than the formless sludge of idleness that presently exists". Please let me know if you succeed, and how you did it, so I can try. Well, I've only been retired for 6 years now, so maybe there's still hope...

[[I am sort of getting there to the point where I now get up around the same time most days (between 5 and 6am), fuck

about for an hour or so then try to commit to some writing/fanac for the next hour or so before the morning nap...]]

I was very impressed by your pointing out that "the speed of light is 299,792,458 meters per second, and the latitude of the Great Pyramid of Giza is 29.9792458°N". I had no idea that the space aliens that built the pyramids were also involved in the definition of the meter. Alas, a bit of googling turned up:

...other lines also pass through the pyramid. This particular line passes slightly to the north of the pyramid's peak. When the fact checking site Snopes looked into this, they found that the line at 29.9791750°N would be closer to the apex, but of course that would not match the speed of light so neatly. The numbers in this claim are expressed to seven decimal places, which would allow you to draw about 20,000 lines with different numbers, between roughly 29.9802000°N and 29.9782000, all passing through the pyramid.

While this makes it much less impressive, a 5 digit match is still not too shabby. I wonder what would turn up using some more natural measure for the speed of light, like furlongs per fortnight? (That's about 1,802,617,800,000, if you're interested. By the way the copy release code for Alice Cooper's *Killer* on Discogs is 1802617. See <https://www.discogs.com/release/1802617-Alice-Cooper-Killer>. Coincidence?)

[[“Furlongs per fortnight” seems as though it ought to be a firm fannish measure of - er - something?...]]

I better send this before another issue comes out on your frantic publishing schedule. Why can't you have a normal fanzine schedule, like, say, *Idea*?

[[Idea runs on a schedule of no issues for 12 or 13 years then a bunch all at once, which is apparently what it takes to get an actual fanzine on the Hugo nominations list. I'm beginning to suspect Ulrika may have a similar schedule in mind for BEAM...]]

WAHF

Roy Hessinger liked the Carson McCullers quote so much he reposted it on FBF ; **Fred Lerner** asks for a definition of "doomscrolling" - Merriam-Webster doth provide ; **Katrina Templeton** ;

FANZINES RECEIVED

With gratitude as always...

ALEXIAD #134 (Joseph & Lisa Major) - Always solid...

THE TYPO KING #88 (Bob Jennings) - RAEBNC...

INTERMEZZO #1 (John Purcell) - John's promised steampunk zine (first annish?) which turns out to be chocker with Canadians We Know...

LOFGEORNOST #155 (Fred Lerner) - In his opening essay, Fred reminds us about the importance of personal real life interaction, in this case with his monthly sf discussion group at the Quechee Public Library: "Through *Lofgeornost* and a couple of online discussion lists I've got ample contact with the worldwide SF community. But none of this is sufficient to replace regular contact with live human beings who share my predilection for fantastic and imaginative literature". Don't know about you lot, but I feel I needed reminding of that...

SMALL STEPS DOWN A LOCAL STREET 2 (Perry Middlemiss) - A determinedly non-stefnal foodie zine, and as good as the old larrikin is on any topic...

THE STF AMATEUR #9 (Heath Row) - Just in under the wire...

INDULGE ME

✗ **RIP DAVID REDD** : I learn from **Mark Plummer** that one of my regular correspondents dropped off the twig on May 11th aged 78. He was another longtime fan (and published writer of short stories, starting with "The Way to London Town" in *New Worlds*, July 1966) whom I'd never met, or at least have no recollection of having met for the usual reasons including drink. Despite describing himself as "dropping out of the general fannish conversation" in a letter to the Fishlifters last year, David always seemed to manage a line or two about almost every ish of *This Here...*, all the while unnecessarily apologizing for the brevity thereof.

David Langford writes in *SFE*: "Redd was an engaging writer who long seemed deserving of a breakthrough work that somehow never appeared." His "Collected Stories" collection is available from Gostak publishing: <http://www.gostak.cymru/reddbook.htm> . I shall miss hearing from him...



✗ **EGOTORIAL (FICTION) NOTES** : The visitor in the story is a real person whom many of you know and will have sussed from the clues therein. The "Lazzaro" equivalent is also a real person whom almost all of you won't know, but ey...

✗ **AGELESS BEAUTY (1)** : Inevitable Brit, but this time one whom **Jerry Kaufman** might actually have heard of: **Alison Moyet**...

✗ **SCENTED CANDLE UPDATE** : Got a new one on the go which is named "Stress Free" and purports to be "Wild orchid blended with coconut and Seaspray". It's quite nice, but claims of stresslessness may be exaggerated...

✗ **HEALTH DIARY**

EXTRA : I have just learned that the manufacturer drug support request set in motion by nice nurse Hannah upon learning of the expected \$3,000+ co-pay is sorted! A test from AstraZeneca informs me that my Calquence prescription is being filled.

Late Night Final: notwithstanding nice Dr Finkelstein's diagnosis of scar tissue, I get a call from Dr Lam's office (GP) telling me they think it's a cyst. In any event, surgery is scheduled for June 24th...

✗ **AGELESS BEAUTY (2)** : Shurely being nice to **Jerry** for a change with an actual American: **Martha Hackett**...

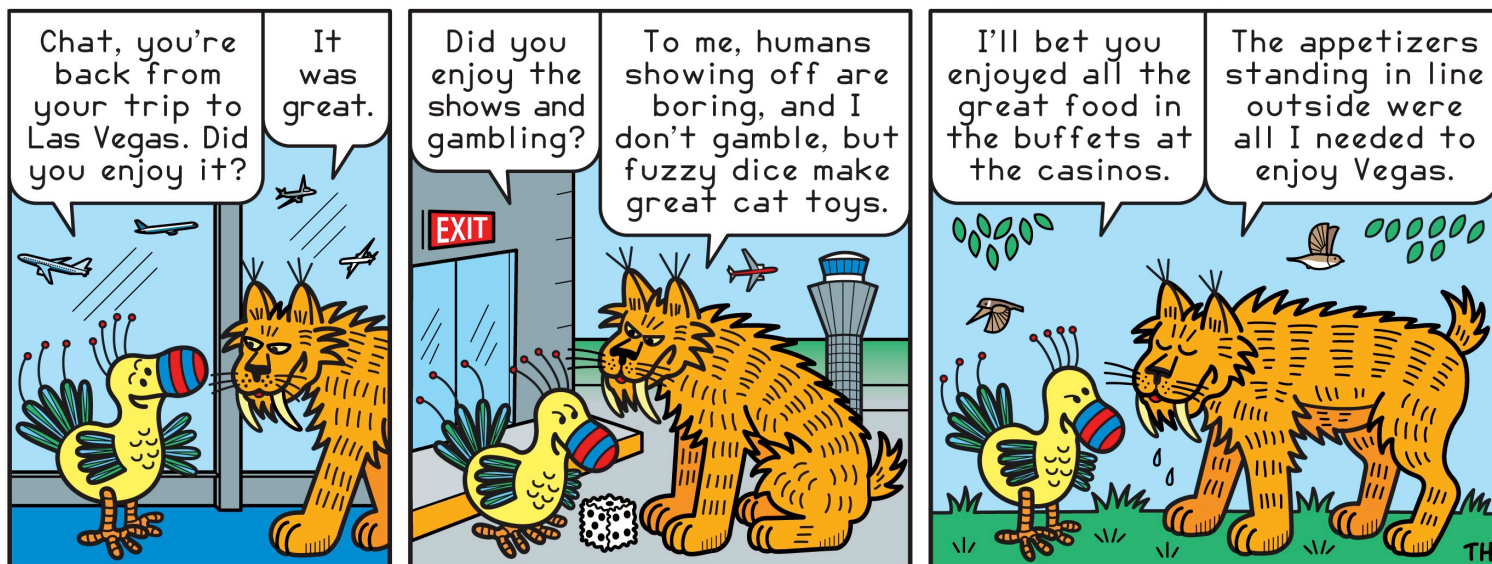


✘ **ANNIVERSARY WALTZ** : I (very) idly wonder what the likes of **John Purcell** would make of hitting the three-quarter century issue number. Nothing used to scream “annish” like - er - **John Purcell** every ten minutes...

✘ **TV GUIDE EXTRA** : Yes I do know that “~~The Key to Time~~” season 5 of ‘Star Trek: Discovery’ has just wrapped, but that’ll probably get commented on nextish...

✘ **NEXTISH** : June 29th looks good...

Chat, the 4th Fannish Ghod by Teddy Harvia



MIRANDA

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“She took us on the carousel
She made us smile and oh, how we laughed
Together riding on a crest it was swell
We stole her face and oh, how we laughed
She made us happy”