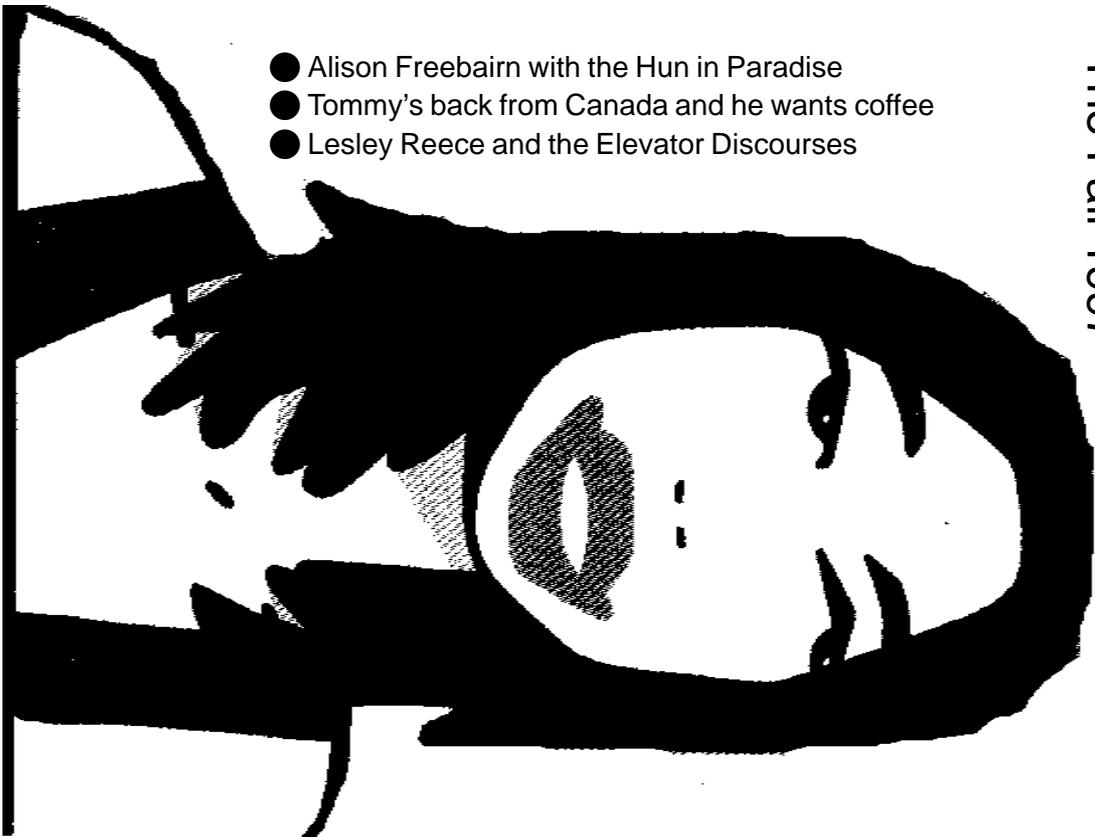


GO #10

The Fall 1997

- Alison Freebairn with the Hun in Paradise
- Tommy's back from Canada and he wants coffee
- Lesley Reece and the Elevator Discourses



A fanzine from the North

Into the Valley of Death, rode the 500

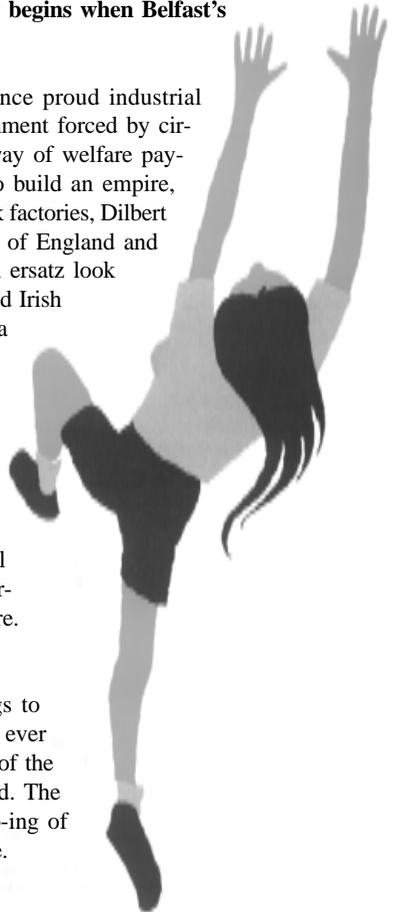
Tommy

Belfast. God, nothing much changes. A drab nineteenth century industrial backwater that the late twentieth century has not treated well. The city centre is a monument to the industry that made Belfast in the last decade of the nineteenth century the commercial nexus of the British Empire. More tonnage of ships were built and launched from Belfast in that decade than the rest of the world combined. Belfast factories, foundries and mills supplied the world's most industrialised country with all its requirements and then some. In Toronto, late at night and early in the morning, I regaled people whose history begins when Belfast's starts to decline with these tales.

Then I come home and see what the city has become. Once proud industrial strengths now exist on the meagre scrapings from a government forced by circumstance and political impasse to investing millions by way of welfare payments and public investment. A people, skilled and able to build an empire, now inhabit sad and pale imitations of workplaces. Make work factories, Dilbert like offices doing the work for London and the South East of England and long queues at the dole office. The pubs and clubs have an ersatz look about them: fake Americana ('we're alright...') or pseudo Old Irish charm. The people of Belfast forced into becoming part of a show in order to enjoy a pint.

And the politicians... The same pathetic excuses for political debate, the same mantra trotted out to rouse the passions and dreams of a country that just wants to go to work in the morning. An end to violence is not just the laying down of arms, not just a paramilitary cease-fire or the censure of their acts. In order to achieve this there has to be real and meaningful political debate. There has to be trust amongst the political parties. A willingness to give up the past and welcome the future. That is as likely as Turkey's...

Narrow minded, self-serving bigots is a phrase that springs to mind when I think of these politicians. If Northern Ireland ever does get some form of parliament I will be surprised if any of the current batch of party leaders will be substantially involved. The politics of sectarianism have no place in the to-ing and fro-ing of political debate. Unfortunately, I do not hold out much hope.



Memoirs of a former fanzine editor

James

Low key intro... to misquote Nicky E. Grinder. I'll just ease myself back into this writing thing, after all my last screed was in Gö2; no shocks or deeply personal revelations (and anyway I couldn't compete with Tommy). The lads have prodded me back to writing and let me tell you that 10,000v doesn't half sting.

A recent screening of *Contact* at the local multiplex has restored my faith in cinema in general, and sf cinema in particular. *Contact* was transcendental. I came out stunned, wanting on one hand to run out and evangelise people, to make it compulsory viewing for every impressionable being on the planet. On the other, I wanted to find a quiet corner and have a good cry at the beauty, the sense of wonder that is so remarkably absent from so much of sf in book and filmed form.

Cinema, for me, over the past year has been fairly unremarkable though my sporadic attendance pattern has not helped, I'm sure. Some films e.g. *Austin Powers International Man of Mystery* raised a chuckle but others in the 'okay' bracket have become annoying by their wish fulfilment. Case in point - *The Long Kiss Goodnight*. A good 'leave-brain-at-door' movie some might say but this overall pattern of all right in the end, against all odds eventually grates. *Men in Black*, the sf equivalent of APIMoM, whilst having a happy ending, succeeds where *Independence Day* does not by its use of humour. Again *Mars Attacks!* is an excellent film because it doesn't take itself seriously for a moment. Some sf movies can survive the three minute culture without (over)using humour, e.g. *12 Monkeys* and still be commercially successful with a dark ending.

Which brings me to the stimulus for this rant - *Event Horizon*. Reasonable acting skills, state of the art special effects and plenty of money. A good initial premise - a rescue mission mounted when an FTL ship returns after several years, derelict but functioning on the outer edge of the solar system. Elements of mystery, a scientist with a tragic past and an ambiguous last message from the vanished crew.

A film taking itself seriously. Yet one of the worst sf movies I have ever seen. So what went wrong? A tragic lack of plot. It was obvious within the first few seconds. A spacecraft door opens with an earsplitting crack intended to make the audience jump. Fine, *Alien* relies on much the same opening gambit. But unfortunately where *Alien* pulls back and builds up the tension until it's required, *Non-Event Horizon* relies on a continuous series of 'doors' all the way through. There is no suspension of disbelief and it gets to the stage where you think, 'no matter what happens next, I am *not* going to jump'. Unfortunately, it needs to rely on these party tricks because there is no plot to speak of. The crew run from one ship to another incessantly and nothing happens. *Solaris* meets *The Black Hole* meets the *Amityville Horror*. How much can good scriptwriting cost? A tragic waste of time and effort.

Which makes *Contact* doubly refreshing. As good a movie as could have been made from the book, which as I remember was competent. I read Frederick Pohl's *Gold at the Starbow's End* around the same time, which also dealt with first contact themes and thought it somewhat better. I was initially doubtful of Jodie Foster as the lead and Robert Zemekis didn't inspire confidence but both excelled. See it in the cinema if you can.

El Cucharacha cubana

Hugo McHenry

I awoke this morning at 5am; scratching. I got up and put on the light because it was still dark. I found I had developed two massive bruises; one on my neck and one on my arm. I put on some cream to relieve the persistent itch. Must have been the mosquitoes during the tropical rainfall yesterday afternoon...

Had a 'light' breakfast of one bread bun, half a cup of yoghurt (all that was left) and one banana. The house was full of flies. *Que kako...* It's the first time I've seen them this year. There must be over one hundred of them in the room and they're also on my plate... argghh! Must have been the tropical rainfall yesterday afternoon.

What is always here though (come hail, rain or shine) is the phenomenon of the *cucharacha cubana* (remember?) Yes, the infamous "cook-ar-acha" – (don't forget to give it that guttural Glaswegian "a-chaa" at the end – sounds just like a good sneeze really). *Vamos...*

They truly are the strangest of creatures in many ways. Like myself, I often wonder why they came here in the first place... Selma tells me that the smallest species disembarked from a German boat many years ago. As for the larger race, I know nothing of their point of origin, which remains shrouded in mystery to this day.

Many people here say that the *cucharacha* is a synonym for "immortality". Tell me about it! I've been in Havana for two years now and still haven't got rid of the blasted things!

What do they look like? Like Cubans in general they come, as it were, in three basic

hues: Black, white (or all they albinos?) and mulatto or coffee coloured. The latter are predominate and blend in with the environs, in this case the furniture (some kind of Darwinian advantage I presume?)

Behavioural patterns? When breeding they virtually stick together and are inseparable. Nothing out of the ordinary in that really I suppose. They live in families in a 'semi-conventional' sort of way and the smaller types are generally faster movers, in terms of locomotion that is (I can't vouch for the sexual aspect fortunately). However, don't be fooled. The big buggers can sure move as well when the mood takes them. And what is worse, when you are just about to give them that fatal wham-bam-thank-you-mam, thump with a shoe or whatever object comes nearest to hand, they fly for you face, usually for the area of the mouth. "It's not easy", as the Cubans so often say... It's not easy.

The Random Dictionary of the English Language concisely describes them as "orthopterous insects of the family *Blattidae*, characterised by a flattened body, rapid movements, and usually nocturnal habits." Can virgins continue to slumber peacefully in their beds with such "pests" running at large? I wonder...

As stated, they have a tendency to come out at night or when the lights are off. However,

To Think Again

Alison Freebairn

Don't get me wrong. Just 'cos I was born in this little cragged country don't mean I have to lower my achingly high standards - even when it comes to football.

Just 'cos I loathe the English national side (it's too full of wife-beating bastards, drunkards and models for my liking) don't mean I have to don crap clothes and applaud appalling jingoistic journeymen masquerading as athletes.

So I took a ticket for the Scotland vs Austria World Cup Qualifier out of curiosity rather than nationalist fervour. The trash tartan drummer-girl-in-a-plastic-tube mentality of post-Braveheart Scotland is an embarrassment to me - I have blocked out any sense of shame drawn from the Tartan Army's blinkered (but well-behaved) antics.

So I find myself at a Scotland match. Ha, I can't believe I'm doing this. My sense of nationality is fierce and true and solid, and it has nothing to do with nationalism. My worries over my own attitudes - toward the match, the fans and my own dislike of the Scotland team - occupy my mind until I leave the M8 and find myself in the cold with nothing but Kevin McDermott for company.

I'm stuck in two lanes of stationary traffic, cars and vans and buses of saddoes in

bad scarves and inflated ideas of adequacy. And I'm stuck beside a bus full of ten year-olds with 40-year-old eyes, little men who stare down from their lofty position straight onto my legs as I change gear. I only wish I'd changed out of this dress before I left work.

The lads in the van in front wave hands and scarves at me, possibly mistaking me for a commuter, and the little boys in the bus make faces through the glass as we all inch forward. I glance over at the bus. Big mistake.

One of the urchins holds a piece of paper up to the window. It reads "What's Your Phone Number Darling?"

The long walk to the Janefield Street entrance brought back way too many memories. The U2 gig in 1993 that I contrived to ignore, thanks to Davy and Brian. Celtic-daft Davy and I kneeling on the canvas covering the sacred turf of Paradise, slowly peeling back the toughened cotton to reveal the beautifully curved wide white line that proved, beyond doubt, that we were squatting on the centre circle of Celtic Park.

Bono is going through the multi-million dollar motions and we couldn't give a shit. This moment is worth the £20 cover charge alone.

Java For Dummies

Tommy Ferguson

Coming home to Belfast from Toronto and, especially, Seattle has left me in a quandary. I have become, if not addicted, at least accustomed to the easy access to good coffee and excellent espresso. In Toronto the bar I worked in had a wonderful espresso/Cappuccino machine which enabled me to get a wonderful fix every time I went to work. And when it was really busy and there was no time to make myself a decent cappuccino (yes it got that busy) there was the fresh coffee from recently ground Colombian coffee beans on hand. I was never more than 10 seconds away from a caffeine fix.

In Seattle things were even better. My first visit there, for Potlatch in February of 1997, opened my eyes to the possibilities of espresso. Previously I'd just make a single shot and beat it down my neck. If I had the time I would make a double shot and sit back, relax and enjoy it. Watching coffee vendors in Seattle rustle up iced espresso, cold Cappuccinos and things with chocolate and cream in them made me realise that Coffee flavoured liqueurs was the least of things to be done with this wonderful beverage.

My return visit to Seattle saw me experimenting with some of these different ideas. Cold coffee, or iced coffee, is a concept like decaffeinated diet coke, that is equivalent to the spawn of the devil. So, I went out with Lesley one day to her favourite coffee house (Bauhaus on Pine and about 12th) and in true tourist fashion, ordered whatever the lady was having.

Fortunately this was an occasion where Lesley was in not in a hurry so a quad shot of espresso wasn't what I got. What I did get was a 'Double Tall Americano' which is just about self-explanatory: two shots of espresso in a tall cup, topped off with hot water. It was a bit like a Jackson Pollack: I didn't know what it was, but I knew I liked it. When Lesley told me that it wasn't just some rare, mountain top coffee bean which had been roasted within an inch of its life and then left to stew for three years I thought: 'Of course, what a good idea!' and was hooked.

Returning to Toronto I found that the local coffee chain, The Second Cup, also had Americanos on

their menu. I was staying with a colleague from work for two weeks before returning to Belfast and there was a Second Cup at the end of his street – I was a caffeine junky. In the morning that would be my fix for the day and, believe it or not, I would find myself relaxing with a take out Double Tall Americano when I returned at night. For two solid weeks I drank more coffee than any human has a need for, I really was hooked.

Upon returning to Belfast my acquired North American ways were given the usual Northern Irish treatment, a mixture of charm, wit and friendly disdain:

"Take that stupid fucking Baseball cap off, Tommy. You look like a prat..."

"Hiya Nyree, it is good to see you again after all this time..." There is something endearing about the Northern Irish character that the use of insults as greetings seems to typify. I suppose the ultimate in friendly approaches, given this logic, would be to shoot someone. Well it would explain a lot of the tragedy that occurs in this little part of Ireland that we call our own.

"And now today's News Headlines... More friends kill each other after a long period of absence. This from Brendan..." And so on.

"So what is new, Tommy?" this from Mark McCann my new landlord. Yeah, I know, but what the hell.

"I've really got into this Seattle coffee thing, Mark, and now drink Double Tall Americanos." I knew

Night-clubbing

Mark McCann

It was about one forty-five in the morning and Lavery’s Gin Palace was well into the first serious stages of chucking its hapless customers out onto the street. Burly self important bouncers, festooned with earphones and radio-mikes, were screaming: “Move along now folks, *please!*” whilst pouring any unfinished beer into plastic cups which they pressed into drinkers’ hands, shouting, “You can finish it *outside!*”

Being a deceptively large pub, this customer-disgorging process can only be carried out safely if it’s done in various discreet stages. The younger teenagers are first to leave. High on E, untarnished hope and Purple Nasties, they are shepherded down stairs from the attic disco to emerge blinking onto Bradbury Place where the girls cry on each others’ shoulders, or vomit into the gutter, and the guys look nervously about to see who they can fail to get off with before making their way home.

The middle floor is usually the next to be ejected. A more difficult bunch to deal with - a motley collection of Goths, art student poseurs and would-be music-types - they protest that ‘Oscar Wilde wouldn’t have had to put up with such discourtesy.’

“Just move your sodding arse,” retorts the irresistibly witty bouncer whilst pouring another unfinished pint into another plastic cup. “At least wait until I finish my Gitane... please,” cries a hysterical girl whom everyone ignores. They’re a dime a dozen around here.

The final stage is the eviction of the residents of the ‘bottom bar’ and adjacent ‘back bar’. You’ve heard of sink estates? Well, this is Lavery’s very own ‘sink bar’.

The first time you enter Lavery’s you may well mistakenly find yourself in this very section but you will have the presence of mind and sharpness of reflexes to get out as quickly as possible. However, if you drink in Lavery’s for long enough, you will inevitably find yourself drawn to this ground floor bar as surely as sediment settles to the bottom of your glass of Old Bushy Tail.

You might well start your days as a bright, seventeen year old sexy blond bopping in your Kookai skirt to the Chemical Brothers in the Attic Disco. But eventually ennui and gravity will drag you to the bottom bar having first turned you into a drunken forty-five year old hag who spends most evenings fighting with a prostitute from the Donegal Road over the ownership of a mouldy leather jacket. It’s just a force of nature.

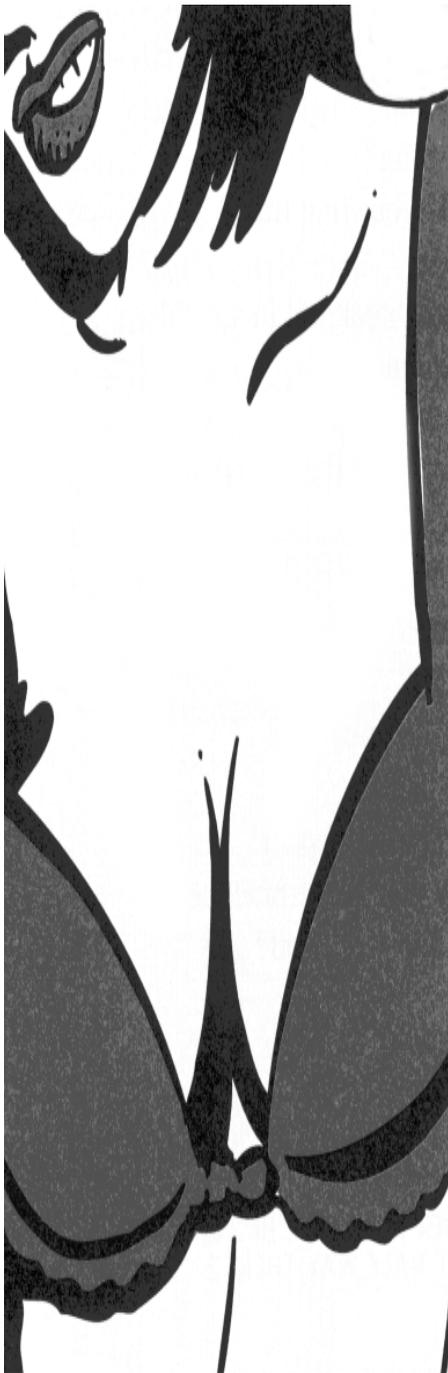
We got out of the bottom bar at about 2.15am. Several hundred drunken individuals were milling about Bradbury Place singing “There’s only one Salman Rushdie” - all of them thinking about the possibility of having a bargain bucket of Kentucky Fried Chicken with maybe a delicious serving of those micro-waved baked beans that burn the tissue off the roof of your mouth. Most will sensibly reject this idea before going home.

“I want another drink, Mark. Let’s go somewhere else.”

Billy steadies himself by leaning on my shoulder. He’s looking about for the girl he had been chatting to for the past hour. A sulky dark haired woman of indeterminate age with lipstick on her teeth, she drank five Rum and Cokes while I was still trying to finish a bottle of Grolsch.

“You could put flowers in that,” she had told me earlier pointing at my Grolsch bottle. I stared at her, not comprehending her meaning. “Sorry?”

“It would make a nice ornament – that bottle. It’s got a funny top.”



Usually, it's the sort of conversation I'd be willing to engage in - even with a taxi driver. You get a higher level of conversation with your average taxi driver in Belfast. Many of them are Open University graduates who (for various 'political' reasons about which we wouldn't go into here) had plenty of time on their hands for ten to fifteen years during the 70s and 80s. They got educated. Driving cars at high speed through red lights is definitely a waste of their many talents.

But I'm ill, nervous and depressed and Sour Puss and Billy are trying to make babies beside me. I don't want to talk cosmology right now. I just kind of give a nod of encouragement in the general direction of the driver to show that I'm listening.

"I *do* take my hat off to Fred Hoyle. Now, there was a gentleman and a scholar. None of this inflationary malarky from him, eh? If you ask me, steady-state still has a lot going for it. Makes sense, really, doesn't it?"

"What the fuck are you on about?" Billy asks after extracting Puss's tongue from his throat. He nudges me in the ribs. "Can he not just drive the car and leave us in peace?"

The driver checks his rear-view mirror to give Billy an eyeball-to-eyeball but says no more. I'm too drunk to care. I begin to feel that twelve hours of sleep would be useful right about now.

The car drops from ninety miles an hour to a full stop in the middle of a residential street lined with redbrick terraced houses. I'm disorientated but I think it's somewhere off the Cregagh Road. Or maybe it's the opposite end of town and we're in the Village? I can't tell. Wherever - it's a part of town I'm not too comfortable with.

Billy pays the driver who advises us to read more cosmology. "It's a big place out there and you've got to keep improving yourself, eh?"

"What a funny little man," says Sour Puss as the taxi tears off again down the street in search of another hapless customer.

Hit the North

John D. Rickett

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Tommy, your editorial [for *Götter 7*] was superb. One thing about fanzines is that you, the writers/editors, can let your feelings hang out. The bad things, in the case of the type of things you talk of, are twofold. One is that your emotions are very likely misheard, misunderstood, or rejected as meaningless by the majority of your English and North American readers, and the other is that the majority of them, again, know nothing of that sort of situation in real life, apart from the odd newflash on TV of stone-throwing or helicopters hovering over a suspected area...

Northern Ireland reminded me of my own childhood in London during World War II - most of them just went about their business; most of them were thoroughly decent people; most of them wanted no more than to be left alone to carry on with their lives. You poor buggers have the same problem, doubly and trebly compounded by religion, as if, for a human being, that mattered a damn. I think I probably read your stuff with more sympathy than many a younger person. Keep on trying to tell us what it's like, Tommy; it's important to get the message across to those of us who think that it is simply a religious thing and no more.

NI has the problem that we are all supposed to feel sensitive about the wishes and demands of the Roman Catholic minority despite the fact that democratic vote after democratic vote has opted for continuation of the union; Cuba has the problem that we are all supposed to feel sorry for the way the *Yanquis* have ruined their economy despite the fact that they never had an economy except that provided by *Yanqui* tourists (and maybe Graham Greene) in their heyday. You can regret the troubles in NI; you can regret them deeply. But Cuba has done no more than regress to the third world 'hubhub, confusion and filth' that it would have been without the capitalism that once drove it. People, especially people under paternalistic

socialist and secret police control, get the government they do not deserve. They 'know' that their way of life and belief is right; they expect not to have any hot water to wash their kids with, or good drains to stop the dogs tracking shit and flies into the kitchen. It is a horrible conflict between what you *know* is good for them and what they believe is good for them.

Stuff the revolution. Stuff the beliefs. Stuff religion and politics and dialectics of all types. When in the name of suffering humanity are we going to set up our state to care about people and their bloody needs, not to worry about controlling their individual beliefs?

Yours for caring anarchism, free thinking and the freedom to express it (hey, anyone in Cuba talk to you about informers or secret police or what kids are taught at school about the Revolution?)

Steve Brewster

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Mark's two tales of the horrors of drugs-testing (in issues 7 and 7.5) were excellent and frightening and should have been worth a fanwriter Nova. Re. Orange parades: I looked at the Northern Ireland Tourist Board's WWW pages to see how these spectacular annual events are being marketed but the pages merely say with elephantine tact that 'The tootling and piping goes on all summer as an array of parades and bands mark various anniversaries.' Well, that's one way of putting it. (I had a look at a few Orange-related pages at the same time, but not for long: they give off a scarifying whiff of genuine underpants-on-head-and-chopstick-in-each-nostril insanity.) A random thought: if the power stations *had* gone on strike, everyone who'd hoarded food in their freezers would have been a bit pissed off.

Perhaps one of *Götter's* eager readers will come up with a glorious fannish solution to NI's Troubles which can be implemented in a matter of hours and usher in a new era of peace and love. Working out latent sectarian aggression through Adams/Paisley

Götterdämmerung #10

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**Vote
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