

**Ex-Inchmery
Fan Diary**

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**A. Vincent
Clarke**

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A personal letter to Fandom by A. Vinç Clarke of 1 Pepys Rd, New Cross,
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July 1st. This letter is outrageous; unthinkable. It's not the sort of thing that's done by any sane and civilised person. It's an offence against good taste and some of my dearest friends will be horrified.

I am sorry, in advance, for any distress to your feelings and suggest that if you feel that reading about someone else's troubles is not ... er ... nice, then you'd better stop reading and throw the rest away.

Right, my tougher minded brethren. Almost 1 month ago I wrote a circular letter to my nearest friends in fandom, asking them to pass on the news (that I had been betrayed by Sanderson and Joy had deserted me) to others whom, for various reasons, I couldn't contact. The response to this circular was, to me, overwhelming. Offers of sympathy and help poured in, especially from British fans who had known us personally at Inchmery. I am still trying to cope with answering this mail, and in part this letter must be taken as a progress report to those who haven't been answered. I shall write personal letters, given time.

Well, I've been through hell – naturally. Have you ever wondered what it must be like to have your life a walking nightmare, terrified that your thoughts will turn and dwell on subjects which formerly occupied 90% of your attention? You're s-f fans, you think about the future; how would you react if your future suddenly ceased to exist except as a black chaos? You wake up, after three or four hours sleep at, perhaps, 5.30am., and immediately the thought springs to your mind: "I'm rejected/deserted." And you cry. I'm a 5' 11" male 38 years old and bearded, but I've cried and cried like a child during these past four weeks. A man and a woman walking arm-in-arm in front of you bring a pain; reference to how nice the vacation is going to be from some happy husband sends your thoughts into an abyss of aching loneliness. Those pop singers with their aching hearts and lonely days are more corny than you could ever imagine; your grief is so large you try and try not to think at all for the sake of your sanity.

You wonder why you don't, in the popular phrase, End It All, Then you

think of the precious charge which is your responsibility, and you know that you can't take the easy way out. Sometimes in the past few weeks I've wondered at the trite "Where there's life there's hope." Is it true? My friends, and especially those who have been similarly betrayed, assure me that the memory fades, that it might be for the best, etc. I honestly don't know; I can't see into the future (like one female fan who wrote to say that she foresaw this in '56 and could have named the destroyer then – and hopeless, ceased visiting us ... as she did) and all I can do is to hang on and try to see some way along the various timelines ahead and to plan accordingly. Hence, in part, this letter, for if I come back to fandom I want to resume without lies and hypocrisy. This present disaster to me is inextricably bound up in the ways of fandom ... but more of that later.

A person whose work I admire more than that of any other British s-f author happened to see a copy of my leaflet (thanks, Mike) and wrote me a note of real sympathy and encouragement, in the course of which he said: "But one cannot help thinking at present a little anger might well help you. You have many friends – perhaps more than you know – and I'm certain many of them will feel as I do that you have been treated unfairly, although where love is concerned questions of fairness rarely enter."

A little anger ... I've had periods when a red rush of rage nearly overwhelmed me. I stood over Sanderson one night for several minutes, thinking of the way some fictional heroes beat the Other Man to a pulp. Sanderson, as usual, was carefully avoiding seeming to be interested in me, tho' he was trembling. But I thought: what the hell? A broken nose soon mends and isn't sufficient exchange for if I may be so trite, a broken heart. And a call to the local cops would soon get rid of me and leave Nicki without me. So I stayed my hand ... and suffered, because the beast in us is only just below the surface. It's been stirring in me more those last weeks than in all my previous calm and civilised life.

In any case, the author was not in possession of many background details. I've been unable to avoid tracking back in my memory, trying to find the reason for this blow, trying to find out what went so terribly wrong. I came up with several answers. I thought that this gloomy exercise was for myself alone, but have since heard that in spite of the presentation of the bare facts in the leaflet there are still a lot of rumours around. People ask questions and if they don't receive an answer they're open to hearing an invented one. One or two still murmur "reconciliation." In the US, there is bewilderment;

separated by the Atlantic we necessarily partake, to them, of the substance of fictional figures between cardboard covers (Hi, Harry) and it is as though someone has suddenly started to rewrite the book. I hope this helps.

I hate dishonesty and hypocrisy; a good deal of my life in the past few years has been lived under the shadow of those sins. And I have in my blood the publishing instincts; through the years I've communicated far more by the written word than the spoken one, and however much help I am given by my good friends here (Ken Bulmer & John Newman and their respective wives have been exceptionally helpful, I must say) my mind and my hands still go to the typewriter and the duplicator for expression. So I came to the breaking point today, when I felt that it was against my nature to suffer in silence, and I must be embarrassing and pitiful and ridiculous and god-knows-what and go back to throwing my mind open to fandom. I've been in fandom longer than I care to remember, and if I treat fandom as a dear friend I hope I may be, ultimately, excused, because it has been the source of all my emotions, both pleasurable and painful, during the last few years.

So – I'll give you an Inchmery fan diary that'll make you realise just what happens when someone decides that truth will out ... and gives it a bloody great shove from behind to start it. I warn you ... if you read further than this paragraph you'll be better acquainted with me than anybody except two or three intimate friends ... and you may not like it.

My early life was ruined, especially my school life, by the fact that my mother had a nervous breakdown (through nursing *her* mother over a protracted fatal illness) and this robbed me of parental control, guidance and ambition. I think I had about 6 years formal education; the lack of anything further has always been a severe handicap to me. The War came when I would normally have been ready to branch out into the world; afterwards I drifted, aimless, the handicap of my background making me almost devoid of ambition. I never really bothered about life, or living. And one day I realised that I had passed thirty and I had more married friends than unmarried and that no one other than my parents could really care for me, alone, and be cared for by me, and that life was passing me by. Some people are not affected by this feeling; there are born bachelors and spinsters. I realised, tho', that I was not one, and was not happy. I flung myself into fandom; I became, in Britain at any rate, a BNF. I had scores of kind, good friends, with affection for me. And still I hungered.

Although not religious, I had been instilled with and taught myself the

elements of a code of morals of almost puritan Christianity; I had never been out with a woman, believing in the rather old-fashioned ideas of romantic love and virginity until marriage and suchlike. I thought of this a few months ago when the Dietzes were across here and were digging at Sanderson on his celibacy; Americans, it appeared, just didn't let anything stand in the way of their virility from an early age. Embarrassed for Sanderson at the joshing I waited until he was out of the room and explained that he'd had an unhappy love affair – please spare his feelings....

So in '53 I met Mrs. Joy Goodwin at the MedCon, a regional convention, was impressed by her bright, eager personality, saw her again a few months later at the SuperManCon of many memories in '54. Then she started to come to the GLOBE, the LC meeting-place regularly. She jarred on me, then; boisterous, almost desperately so. An eager fan though. By this time I had descended to the depths of gloom myself. I was trying to write professionally and wasn't getting anywhere.

Some friends who came to know Joy better than I invited both of us to their house one weekend in the late summer of '54, and behind the hard shell I found in her something infinitely pathetic. She had been unhappily married since 1950; it was her second, her first being a hasty war-time affair which was annulled on the grounds of non-consummation. I seemed to be mentally in tune with someone for the first time in my life; my expressions of sympathy and encouragement were eagerly and pitifully grasped. She was afraid of her husband, whom she said ill-treated her both mentally and physically. He had tried to strangle her within a week of their wedding. She was in an extremely nervous condition and was growing desperate; in an effort to obtain wild pleasure she had already broken her marriage vows at the SuperManCon, if I may phrase it thus. Two unhappy people – both eager to be loved...

We met, secretly, and became lovers. Her letters glow and radiate love: "I can't believe it happened to millions of people before, either. I think possibly one in every hundred married couples, experience the complete mind-welding certainty that we have gained, but not many more. The dismal faces, the everlasting nagging, the quarrelling, the snapping and backbiting of the ordinary couple is proof enough of that. When two hearts and minds are so in accord that they are semi-telepathic there simply can't be that unkind spitefulness" "It seems amazing that it should really be true. I can hardly believe it. And then I think back over the weekend and know that it is

true. That I should have met the one person who is the only person for me, out of the millions on this earth! I wonder how many couples are like us – the two incomplete halves that finally match to make the perfect whole? ... Were I to die tomorrow I should do so in complete content at having found you – only feeling sorrow at leaving you behind...” etc etc.

Oh, I know that I shouldn't quote that sort of evidence; “surviving the acid test of living together after the honeymoon is over” etc. Also, “working to make a marriage a success.” But, and this was my greatest fault, I was innocent and inexperienced enough to build this outpouring (and there was much, much more) into a system of belief about love. This was my own romantic conception flung at me by someone as intelligent as myself if not more so; it confirmed it and made it a part of my mental outlook, something so basic that I didn't think to question its existence until ... oh, until nearly the time I started to write this paragraph (this whole thing is being written direct on to stencil, by the way.)

The letters were answered from the depths of a completely happy heart; I was happier than I'd ever been in my life. There was only one worry – my conscience concerning her husband. And that was carelessly brushed aside; he was sulky and never remembered what she told him and he'd been miserable for two years and she loathed him. She might go out to work now to obtain a little money to assist in leaving him ... which she did. Whatever the truth concerning her husband – and I never met him – I've paid for that breaking of the old commandment in full in the last few weeks. Those same charges were levelled at me, with countless others, by my first and only love – Joy.

Yes, I have been bitterly aware that I may have wronged that complete stranger. I trusted Joy's views. He let her go away for weekends; this was brutal indifference to her and a surpassing interest in his own affairs to the exclusion of his wife's pleasure ... I believed. Or now ... my re-awakened conscience adds to my pain ... was it complete trust, the sort that I gave? I wish I could know.

She taught me to love. Our friends didn't know how fully we were committed and when she finally fled her husband we lived apart for a time to save embarrassing them. We tried to get a divorce; he refused her one, and as mental cruelty is not, in England, sufficient grounds and physical cruelty is almost impossible to prove without witnesses or severe hurt, her lawyer said it was useless to start the action. Sharpening a knife for a full evening, as she

said he had done just before she left, could not be cited as evidence that he was threatening her. The lawyer advised waiting out the period for desertion.

So we lied about a secret marriage to save embarrassment (we never did fix on a date) and set up at 7 Inchmery, as you all know. The first few months were ideally happy – the first two years, really. The rent was large and Joy went out to work again. With the knowledge of hindsight I realise that we should have taken smaller quarters, saved until we could deposit a down payment for a house. Joy could then have stopped work. If only ...

But I didn't think; I was almost mindlessly happy. And I remember once in those days she woke both of us in the morning with a cry; she'd had a nightmare in which I'd left her. I held her close, reassuring her that our love was 'til death ...

It's in gratitude for that period and for the birth of Nicki that I've taken no more violent action in the present situation than publishing what is probably pretty bathetic stuff in this fashion.

But in the autumn of '56 Harold Peter Sanderson, Sergeant in the RAPC, BNF in fandom, was posted back to England and came to lodge with us. We took on an extra bedroom, and he shared the rest of the quarters with us. He was bound up then in the affairs of a married woman himself; for some time we saw little of him as he was out so often escorting her around the town in the evenings. But, in the summer of '57, she rejected him. He showed gloom, bought Sinatra records by the dozen and listened to the melancholy strains of vanished love for hours. "Darling," said Joy in front of another fan, "I think the best way to make him forget Frankie is to make him fall in love with me." I had an inward pang, but... "Oh, you needn't worry about me and Sandy, sweetheart. He's so *immature*. You're the only one for me." And later ... "People are puzzled about us and Sandy... they don't realise the love we have for each other." So the '57 World Con films show Joy in Sandy's arms, Sandy kissing Joy, and myself taking no notice.

Space where you can insert any epithet that occurs to you.

So Sandy and we two became a trio, and one of the most well-known of fan groupings. He was always with us, everywhere; we were indignant together over the WSFS mess, went together to parties, published fanzines by joint effort. It was Joy and I no longer but Joy, Sandy and I. And about the time when monetary worries were affecting us over the World Con, the tiffs and quarrels (Joy finding faults in me, a good many true) seemed to arise more frequently. As might happen to any normal married couple. But us, we

had Sandy with us almost always, a check to any feeling by Joy that she might resolve an argument with me for the sake of harmony between two of us. I quote from a letter from myself to Joy, a sort of symbolical farewell on her marriage:

“In a quarrel Sandy would be there; most outsiders would have quietly excused themselves, or tried to restore peace, but Sandy, except for a calming word to remind you he was there when you became unusually excited, would sit, a perfect audience for your declamations and a perfect foil.

“I was affected too; when I was wrong (and I often was) how could I apologise without a mental struggle, in front of another man in my own home? God knows, there were evenings when I was boiling with words inside, wanting to lay our differences of character and outlook out for examination in the light of mutual love, wanting to bare my inmost thoughts, sure, that although there were differences as there are with 90% of people living together we could find a way to get along. But ... Sandy was there. I couldn't say what I wanted to say; I couldn't examine my own weaknesses and yours, and be perfectly frank in front of someone else. I would sit in desperate silence, wanting to talk and not being able to be frank. I would then be accused of sulking, and, if I revived the subject when we were alone, in bed, was afraid of being accused of nagging.

“It was not a natural life. Looking back, I can see that many of your criticisms were true and just – many were wrong also – but they were ten times more difficult to bear when uttered in front of an outsider. And Sandy was an outsider to someone who regarded our life together, you and I, on an emotional level as much as on an intellectual/friendly/togetherness level. My view of love is as something instinctive, something which one gives as a natural thing before all else; to love and be loved is not something which should be affected by any outside considerations whatsoever; ‘in sickness and in health’ etc.

“You may criticise the loved one, you may be angry, you may do anything to them, but it should make no difference to the inmost core of love which should bind you together, forgiving, understanding and accepting, for ever. My own feelings were that, although we had these differences, the inmost love was still there, binding us together until death. You couldn't seem to understand that I should laugh when you became annoyed; can you not understand that this show of emotion seemed absurd, a waste, a superficial display of lost control when, deep down, love should have been

ready to swallow all these differences in a short time? And if that basic feeling should be interfered with, surely it should be a more serious matter than should be exhibited in a flashy show of temper? If I felt my love for you falter, I would summon all my memories of you-as-my-love to my aid, and would curse myself as a fool at allowing trivialities to interfere with that core of happiness.

“This, as I now fully realise, was Blind Love with a vengeance. Now ... now I am tortured with doubts. I think of the film of the '57 Convention with you kissing Sandy ... correspondents have written to say they have read between the lines in APE, or knew from personal knowledge of us.... You need never worry about me and Sandy, you said, he's so immature.

“I was blind and a fool in love. It didn't matter that you travelled together to work, that sometimes when you were sick he'd happen to get leave, that in my feeling that you needed a break but that one parent must look after Nicki I'd practically lie myself out of pleasure jaunts, going to the movies etc., so that you'd not be uneasy about going with Sandy.

“And finally, this business of the breakup. Sandy takes out a marriage licence within 48hrs of your first (and only) announcement that you want to leave me and go to him; how long had you known about the divorce from Goodwin? It was always a pain to me, that our union wasn't legal for the sake of Nicki, except by mutual trust. I never enquired why you didn't push forward earlier thinking that such memories of the past would cause you distress. I have so many doubts; Sandy, sitting in silence while you tell me, without warning, that you want to go to the US with him and Nicki, and later that you don't want me along. Only a few hours before you'd given me an entry for the competition in Sandy's magazine. Only a few days before you proudly displayed three concert tickets. We had holidays booked. How was I ever to know how deeply and seriously the rift had grown? If I was blind – who blinded me? What surprise did Sandy show at all this, what sympathy has he exhibited? None!”

I was aware of strain, naturally, but as all who know her will confirm, Joy feels passionately and terribly every trouble, great and small, that comes along, and to worry with her on everything was too much for me. When a minor fan had published in a very minor fanzine a tissue of half-truths and lies about Inchmery, Joy flew into a raging passion when I insisted on shrugging off the pest with a postcard. And when the next issue carried another article it produced (on my “why worry” attitude) at least three days

tearing temper and cries of “It’s your *duty* to defend me!” Ironically, that was barely 6 months ago. Sandy, at least, has something of this in common with Joy; a full editorial in a fanzine like APE attacking a minor US fan had me expressing objections without effect.

Much of the initial strain resulted from Joy’s ambition to emigrate, first to Canada and then to the US. For various reasons I was not enthusiastic. The American way of life is difficult to take for one of my temperament. My roots are in England; my parents are aged but still living in a place I can call Home; Joy’s parents split when she was very small (no, no divorce) and she was brought up by a grandmother she hated. A perfect case-history. Oh, we were star-crossed lovers, all right, and some people had the wit to see it. I didn’t. Eventually, the Dietzes offered to loan us passage money and money to buy Sandy out of the Army. There would certainly be jobs for Joy and Sandy ... and they could fit Vince in somehow. Now, what could Vince *do*?

Vince could feel his heart sink at the thought, of emigrating to another country with a large debt to pay off, with Joy and Sandy brightly bringing in more wages than an untrained man, to live with the Dietzes who were generous people but who didn’t seem quite the stuff of intimate friends, to adapt to a race for material things, to leave parents whose only offspring I was. But if she wanted to go ... shrug. Don’t bother to do this and finish off that, to hunt enthusiastically for a better job, to plan ahead; we were going to the US willy-nilly. I tried not to think of my parent’s reaction; sorted out my collection of books (still at the parental home) ready for selling. But I lost sleep and had a fortnight off work under doctor’s orders through sheer nervous strain. But I was unwilling to shatter Joy’s rosy dreams or put myself as standing in the way of her idea of happiness.

Came the inevitable evening when a letter from Belle Dietz contained a half-page on the wonderful times awaiting the four of us (for we were four now, and Nicki is quite definitely, for the benefit of two who have enquired, my child) when I couldn’t muster up sufficient interest ... it was being seen to by the others, I was dead tired. Work, nappy-washing, washing-up, turning the handle of the duper for Sandy & Joy had become my tasks, which I was reasonably happy to do as my contribution to the household while the other two handled the cooking and the finances and the fanning. At the last London Convention, this Easter, I was the one who volunteered to stay at Inchmery each night to look after Nicki, the nursery spelling me on one night to avoid exhaustion, tho’ I still stayed at the flat, so the other two could spend the

whole Con at the hotel. In view of Joy's previous carelessness about sleeping partners when she was living with a man she no longer loved, I've wondered since about that, too ... uselessly.

So my non-enthusiastic reception of the letter was remarked upon, and Joy, in her usual forthright fashion speedily asked me the key question: "Don't you *want* to go to the States?"

And I, cursed by honesty, muttered "No."

I expected that there would be a discussion on the point, a little self-examination by the gestalt (if such we were) as a whole, or between Joy and myself. But Sandy was there. A freezing silence lasted the rest of the evening, and the subject was not brought up again. Oh, I would have discussed it and, if discussion became impossible, would have backed down as I *had* to back down, for naturally I would have to go with Joy and she was mad to go. But discussions, if they ever started, on other subjects, so often became arguments; Joy shouting or bitter – I put it down to a most difficult birth and the afterstrain; to the hottest summer in living memory when we acquired a large refrigerator but lost a lot of sleep over the new baby, to Joy's continual ill-health as winter came in, to London Circle quarrels, to my own stupidity ... something was rotten, and I could only fall back on the solution that we were acting like an "ordinary couple" as cited in that early letter. And ... I knew that I still loved her, as much as when we exchanged those wondering letters after our first intimate contact, believing that when Sandy was posted abroad, as he expected to be, then we could really become a family and not a trio of busy BNFs. But he wasn't posted abroad.

A filthy winter ended in a spring that passed by before we could appreciate it. On June 1st, 1960, we'd put Nicki to bed and I was reading the paper before going out to the bathroom to wash some nappies when Joy said, without any preliminaries: "Vince, about going to America. Would you agree to let me go to the US with Sandy and Nicki?"

She *had* to go. She couldn't stick this country, with the prospect of working to help keep the household going for years ahead ... she was fettered, she was stifled ... I can't recall everything, for I was fighting for breath. So ... she had to go ... well, I would naturally go with her. No, Vince, I'd always feel that you were unhappy and were blaming me ... Vince, I can't live with you any longer, you irritate me too much ... Sandy has promised to help me get a divorce and will marry me. Sandy loves me.

Sandy sat in his chair, eyes down, motionless, as he was to be practically

all that evening.

She had to give me some whisky for the shock; only a few hours before she had presented me with her entry for the Apidiascope competition in APE; a couple of days previously she had produced tickets for a forthcoming Tom Lehrer concert for the three of us; we had our holidays booked, especially late in the season because Sandy might be in the States as a TAFF winner, there was Nicki ... I thought I would go crazy. Nothing else mattered. The ties of blood suddenly overwhelmed me. You can't take Nicki ... I won't let you take Nicki ...

The pleas for another chance, for reconsideration, lasted until we were both exhausted. What had I done to lose her love? Oh, so many things, little drips wearing away a stone (I would not have compared my love to a stone). I would leave so many decisions to her; I had not defended her sufficiently in the London Circle; I would leave the broom standing bristles down; after washing and drying-up I often left the drying-up cloth on the kitchen table instead of hanging it up (I'm quite serious – these last two reasons were advanced by Joy and Sandy respectively, the latter practically his sole contribution to the scene). I admitted I was wrong like any brainwashed prisoner in a maniac world ... without effect. But she finally agreed that I could keep Nicki, after I adduced the cares I could give her ... and threatened suicide if she were taken. The next morning Joy appeared crying (I had been sleeping in Nicki's room for the past two months as she was cutting teeth and it was better that one be disturbed and comfort her than three) and sobbed that she had changed her mind, she must keep Nicki ... and my immediate intense reaction frightened her into changing it back again.

In the following three days I pleaded, agonised, ready to promise anything for a chance to live with my love and Nicki. I remembered the loneliness before meeting her and was terrified; thought of Nicki being the product of a broken home and felt sick to my soul. Joy was distressed, for my sake and her own. "British fandom will hate me for this," she cried. It was immensely and hopelessly futile to try and make mental contact, but I had to try. For three days we practically lived on tranquilliser pills. Sandy was silent and unemotional; silently and unemotionally went home to his parents for Whitsun weekend; a glorious weekend – I had intended to suggest Nicki's first visit to the seaside, with Joy and I alone together at last. Instead, shaking, I sat down on the Sunday morning and drafted a letter giving news of the break-up. Joy agreed to put it on stencil while I took Nicki to the park.

We were both emotionally exhausted and the holiday (!) ended flatly. I posted the letters with a feeling of my life turning down into darkness, went back to the office. Almost in passing Fate dealt me another deuce. One of the prospects on which I had based some fugitive hopes for months back that I could some day make a home without Joy going out to work was the fact that my immediate superior at the office had been looking for another job for a couple of years. He found one and gave in his resignation only a few days before the split. I kept this secret from Joy, hoping to surprise her with promotion and pay raise. I went back to work a zombie; at the end of the week another man a few months my junior in the office took the job. There may have been no connection, but ...

Fate jeered. Nicki suddenly developed ulcers covering her tongue and mouth. It hurt her to screaming if even a bottle nipple was put into her mouth. This was three days before I left Inchmery, and she was still suffering when we left. I spent a ghastly weekend moving; that and the kindness of my friends who had sprung to assist me numbed the wrench of parting, and Nicki took any spare time. But in a few days the infection was cleared, and then I had time to think ... the worst time of all. I thought of Sanderson, to whom I'd given hardly a moment's consideration until then. Sanderson, sitting so quietly while Joy smashed my life and showing no surprise, not offering any mediation ... Sanderson, whom I'd called my best friend in an article in SMOKE which, due to delay, appeared *after* the break-up. I remembered the times when I secretly sympathised that he had no one to love him as Joy loved me and wished that there was someone around in whom he could take an interest. He was so emotionally withdrawn, so hidden behind a glassy exterior – except the last few months when he had been posted from his War Office job to another depot on the outskirts of London, had come home night after night complaining of headaches from the monotonous routine work, vowing that he must leave the Army soon ...

He was now sleeping with the woman I loved, was soon going to a new life with her, was hoping to win TAFF with the aid of Dietz-organised votes. Of the three of us Joy and I had lost bitterly and the one who had gained all he could ask for was still under my roof.

My roof! I was still legally the tenant of the flat, for the rent-book was in my name. I had moved out because I couldn't possibly have afforded the rent, and the memories – “You won't want to stay on here,” Joy had remarked, and I had agreed, the familiar rooms only adding reality to my nightmare. But the

thought of the flat still being occupied was, in my state of mind, nearly unbearable. I went around there and asked for the rent book. I was going to give them notice. Joy first of all refused the book, then Sandy, somewhat more perceptive to the legal issue, said they had just sent it away with a fresh month's rent. I told them I'd be back. Joy was hysterically alarmed: "If you throw us out I'll fight you in the courts for Nicki!"

The threat didn't alarm me unduly; these two had pushed me into such a mental corner, stripped me of so much in the way of hope, that I couldn't feel further sadness concerning Nicki. It was keeping Nicki or death, and I was so desperately tired I couldn't think further than these two simple alternatives. But friends pointed out that it was a further responsibility if the flat was left in my name. If the other two left suddenly (and why not?) I would be liable for rent and repairs. I saw this and went back with Ken Bulmer as witness a week later, to make out letters to the landlord asking for the lease to be transferred (I found out later that Joy had written to him after my visit, asking if they could carry on if I gave notice).

Joy couldn't believe the offer; she was madly suspicious, down to accompanying myself and Ken down to the pillar-box to ensure the letter and rent book were sent. In the course of the arrangements, she said that before the rent book was returned she and Sanderson would be married.

This was one of the final hopes I'd held shattered; it was closing the door on a dream of Nicki being brought up by her own mother and father. And I had a few dreadful minutes when I thought of the fact that for a normal license fee (which was all they could afford) three weeks notice had to be given. There just didn't seem to be enough time since the break-up. However, Joy said later that the day after she'd announced the split (Thursday) her office had occasion to send to the Records Office for some papers, and she took the opportunity to have her own papers searched, finding to her surprise that she had been divorced for desertion 18 months previously. Sandy, took out a license the following day (Friday). When I sat down and wrote in the leaflet the following Sunday that Sandy had agreed to go to the States alone if Joy and I could reach an agreement, he already had the license in his pocket. Of course, he could always have torn it up.

Further: many correspondents said, in relation to a remark in my leaflet about giving up fandom, that I mustn't; I must cling to it. And Joy had said that she would drop out when she reached New York and enter prowriting instead. Then I heard that Sanderson wanted to continue fanning, wanted to

be President of OMPA (he was sure of winning TAFF, with the Presidency advocated by Joy as an additional prize), was thinking of continuing APORRHETA, the only link I had maintained with fan-publishing in the last two weary years, and on which I had spent so many hours of spare (!) time.

As far as I could see in the chaos ahead, fandom would be my only escape in a future of toil; Nicki would leave me little or no time to go out in the evenings or weekends without her, no chance of meeting someone else to mother her, no chance of changing an arduous (if interesting) job without fear that I was leaving security; I faced a timeline which was grey and endless ... except for fandom and the friends that it had brought me. But ... if I saw Joy and Sandy's name – *name*, I mentally cringe as I write it – in fanzines, what pleasure would the future hold? Memories would forever haunt me. The correspondents who had been through this wrote encouragingly that I would forget, but when you are all in the same hobby, and that involving communication at all levels, what chance would I have? And I was too old in fandom to change, after 20-odd years of activity.

So when I went around to Inchmery with Ken I asked Sandy, put my case to him that with so many new pleasures ahead of him and a new life to carve out he would drop out of fanning. He refused; a few curt words. Joy was indignant ... I had taken her baby from her and now I wanted to cut off their pleasure ... Sandy had to keep in touch with a wide circle of friends and a fanzine was the way to do it...

It was completely useless; talking to Joy and Sandy was – and is – like talking to suddenly alien beings with a hard determination to have their own way, and little else in the way of human feelings.

The agony of losing Joy had begun to lapse, a little, into a dull despair, the hopelessness of the situation had seeped through the feeling of shock. But, most absurdly, their continuation of fanning – that hit at the foreseeable future too. My horror of the whole mess revived. I suffered in the next few hours: the forthcoming marriage on one plane and the minor but still (in the circumstances) significant threat to future happiness on another plane ... they hurt. And I knew what I could do if I had no pity, either.

In the long nights I had, full of wonder at the way my mind was beating and beating at the door which had suddenly closed off so much of my life, evolved various schemes of revenge. Not schemes for regaining what I had lost, but revenge for the nearly intolerable strain placed on my sense of responsibility to Nicki. And revenge could be, in one particular way,

fascinatingly simple ...

In the afternoon after visiting Inchmery I lifted up my phone and asked for a number. It was engaged. Shaking, I called Joy instead. I pleaded for help against myself; I was crying in the middle of a busy office, shaking with emotion ... I managed to conceal it but only just. Joy was brusque; don't make a scene, come round to see us tonight. I did, I pleaded again – they could at least leave me something to look forward to after making such a mess of my life. Sorry Vince. You'll get over it. From Sandy. You bloodsucker – you leech – you want everything from us – from Joy. So I left, fought the animal in me, and won.

If I had got through to that number, I would have reported to the Military Police at Sanderson's depot that he had pilfered, whilst at the War Office, a large number of duplicating stencils for his own use. I have them in my possession; the Government mark is on many of them, with easily identifiable typing. Sanderson would have been arrested, the marriage stopped, even the emigration halted if not cancelled, for I would also have taken steps to let the US authorities know the affairs of both of them. And Sandy would have been confined to barracks before his case was heard and Joy would have been left alone with the flat in her name and with the company of her thoughts for a while. I knew Joy; it would drive her into a breakdown.

It was too madly cruel; she had given me such happiness and had borne me Nicki, and still, thinking of her, turned my heart over with pity and love. I wrote, telling them what I could have done. And I ended: "Sandy will know in future that I've had it in my power to harm him ... and I've held my hand because I was a fool in love, and still am. I hope for your sake, Joy, that you make a go of it..."

July 21st. The amount of spare time I get can be gauged from the fact that it has taken me three weeks to type this, working when possible to 11 o'clock at night. My current attitude to fanning is this. If I can obtain fanzines without coming across the name of Sanderson I would very much appreciate them. I will have to contribute or write letters of comment as I won't (for several years, anyway) be able to afford to publish one of my own. My rent and Nicki's nursery take over half my wages, and I'll be paying more income tax. I have no savings – given that we ever saved anything our mutual bank account was in Joy's name and she has refused to let me even see the bank book. She has, however, stated that she will continue to pay off instalments

on our refrigerator (which will be left with me) and on my insurance (taken out for Nicki's benefit) which alimony, as it were, will amount to about 25/- a week (\$3-\$4) and will relieve me of something – as long as it continues. There can be no legally binding agreement, so it's no sinecure. I've also custody of the tape-recorder – without, of course, money to buy new tapes (tho' they have promised to record some music for me) and also have various items of household equipment.

Altogether, I shall have to pull in my belt a bit; a simpler process than it used to be as I lost over 20lb in the first month since the break-up. Being disinclined to eat also saves money.

On attitudes to people: from what I've written it's easy to jump to one conclusion, that Joy's love for me was in direct relation to my ability to be of help to her ambitions. After she escaped from the life she dreaded with my help, became interested in fandom and a BNF, her self-confidence increased and the incompatibility of our temperaments became more evident as I meant less and less to her.

That's a view which might reconcile me to her loss: "better off without her" as they've said. But – I could say that the "honeymoon over" danger coincided with worries (the World Con and other fannish troubles), Sanderson becoming "unattached", the US emigration dangled enticingly before her by the Dietzes, these factors added to the differences in our outlooks brought Joy to a (perhaps assisted) breaking point. That's another view.

Or I could say that I just wasn't good enough for her, and, to quote her own (scarcely heeded) words when she left her husband "I feel sorry for what he is going to suffer when I leave but is it better for one to be unhappy than three or am I just being selfish?" I always did feel that the happiness and love in my life was too good to be true – it just didn't seem to fit my pattern. And, sure enough, it wasn't true. These are the sort of questions that can never be answered and only time (and ceasing to think of Joy and Sandy) will render them meaningless to me. But, right now, I just wish that I didn't want my love back; I just wish that I could wake from this unending nightmare and find her beside me again. I just wish that I could be sure that her personality which has branded itself so deeply into my mind and my every memory will some day be erased ... and I'm terribly afraid that it will not. If I encounter her name and personality in fanzines then I can certainly never forget.

As for Sanderson: I, too, helped to break up a home, and from having no

personal knowledge of the situation, trusting and sympathising absolutely with Joy, may be equally guilty of taking her from someone who loved and trusted her too well. But – it was a childless marriage and I didn't sleep under the same roof for four years and then act without a word or a look of shame against someone who'd counted me as a friend. Of the three of us at Inchmery, two have lost bitterly over this. One has gained from the *gestalt* – prospects of a new, easier and wealthier life, a wife (to ward off any aspersions against his lack of manhood), fame as the editor of one of the world's most popular fanzines, another start while he is yet young (10 years less than I, 9 years less than Joy) and still he says he wishes for more – my child, to father.

How much of this mess was his responsibility? Joy says, as a sort of defence of his ethics, that she would have left me in '58 if he hadn't been around. ("Dearest heart – I can't describe my emotions where you are concerned and in any case don't feel I need to. You know exactly how I feel and that this is something for all eternity." Joy to me, November '54. Short eternity – mine is still with me.) He certainly never showed any concern over the course of our life together, or made any attempt to indicate to me the way things were going. We'd sometimes exchange looks of puzzled male resignation over Joy's head as she "blew her top" or he'd shake his head after she'd stormed out of a room (he had, of course, been present) but that was all. There are, of course, other explanations for this, and not to be too Christian I'll quote the letter of a correspondent who feels far surer than I about Sandy's role:

"I am astonished at the speed that Sanderson and Joy have moved since I first heard about it. The lucky 'fluke' of finding that – surprise! – surprise! – she'd been divorced years ago and was thus able to marry him immediately is just too much for me to believe.... It seems fairly obvious that she must have known about it for some time. I, personally, think that Sanderson has been working up towards this business for at least two, and very likely three, years. He's one of those lecherous all-sorts who'd find more odd sort of pleasure from the betrayal than he would from the act itself. I can even find it in me to pity Joy for her future. If he'd betray Cyril and then you, without showing any interest in any other unattached woman at all, what difference will being married himself make? If I was Frank Dietz I'd be damned if I'd let my wife within a mile of him."

I differ from this on several points – Sanderson might get overlaid, for

one thing. But he himself can say a word or two, in one of the two or three short letters I've had from him:

“It now looks pretty much as though you have now thoroughly convinced yourself that the total blame for what has happened should be laid on me. This is *not* the case, but there appears to be little point in arguing further. [*No argument had, in fact, been started.*] If you are not able to admit your own portion of responsibility then I doubt if I could persuade you that it exists.

“Since you are not able to admit your own responsibility you have fastened on me as a scapegoat ... it is all my fault ... I planned and I plotted, etc. Perhaps I should have realised the way you were beginning to think after discovering some of the things you put into the circular letter you prepared while I was in Manchester. There was no agreement on that statement of yours, of course. There was not even opportunity for agreement...”

As I replied, the circular letter was a personal one from me: it was not a getting together of the betrayer and the betrayed to assure everyone that things were just fine. But a correspondent who characterised the letter as “almost superhumanly fair” will be interested to hear of Sandy’s views of it. Joy was later bitter about the letter, as she considered that it spoilt Sandy’s chances for winning TAFF. I suppose a suspicious person might think that her own announcement of the split was delayed until it would have seemed impossible to circulate news in time to affect the election and that my own prompt action must have been highly disconcerting, but in spite of the fact that it seems foolish to place any faith in their integrity I don’t think that this point actually occurred to Joy – consciously. It was certainly nicely timed in relation to the period needed to get visas, etc. and enable them to get over for the World Con.

I can’t honestly see how much of this horrible mess I can blame Sandy for, but in similar circumstances I would have left a home in which I lodged if I looked like being the third leg of a domestic triangle ... if I couldn’t mend the situation. But then, one doesn’t come across the Joys of this world very often, and the temptation must be overwhelming. One of the many reasons for writing this letter, incidentally, is to remove one possible blot on Sandy’s character. *He did not steal my wife*; as Joy and I were never married he may, somewhere down in that thickly walled subconscious of his, have regarded Joy as “fair game” with no legal ties. However, my own feelings towards him (and especially in regard to his utter indifference to mine) can easily be

guessed. You can also imagine my feelings if I continually come upon his name in fanzines, too.

On the Dietzes: in my previous letter I took particular care to point out that they were not to know in what circumstances their generosity would be accepted. In spite of the fact that my simple trust in human nature has received the two worst blows it could endure – my love and the friend under my roof betraying me – I am still of that opinion. However, to keep the record straight I will note here that in spite of this friendly gesture, in spite of the fact that their money is being used to sadden my life, that they stayed with us last Fall in my home, that I was going to share an apartment with such good friends, and that I have suffered much criticism from defending their actions in the WSFS mess, I did not receive until 6 weeks after the break-up one single solitary word of commiseration from them. It seems that my instincts regarding *this* “friendship” did not play me false, at least.

But I had mentioned this silence to Joy, she telling me that Belle Dietz had phoned her on the morning she (Belle) had received my leaflet, and, finally, in a letter dated July 10th and covering 2/3rds of a standard airmail form, Belle wrote. “Joy writes that you are distressed at not hearing ... I had not realised you would be so and also with our recent move to the new seven room apartment which was to have housed us all, Frank and I have been so terribly busy and dreadfully overtired...” The touch concerning “which was to have housed us all” is nice, don’t you think?

She goes on to say that they feel morally obligated to go through with the offer. “To do otherwise would constitute setting ourselves up as censors and judges, which thought is repellent to us and I don’t see that it would solve anything anyway.”

Which is perfectly true, but remarks concerning censors and judges come curiously from the lips that told us at Inchmery “just between ourselves in this room” that when they heard of the trouble we had with Kyle over the London Plane Trip Fund affair, they decided it was the “last straw” and decided to run him out of fandom by bringing a court action (the examination of the WSFS papers) against him. Which reminds me that anyone who quibbles at any matters set out here as not being relevant to fandom (or, for that matter, science-fiction) should have realised by this time how the wild thread of fandom wound around our lives. It was through fandom that I met Joy, it was as a famous fan rather than a good human being that we gave lodging to Sandy, and Joy in particular made the stresses and strains of really

active fandom echo in our domestic life, down to striking me because I felt too tired (and ill) to join in an SFCoL meeting at Inchmery. Even after the split-up; when I mentioned that I'd seen a solicitor about my legal position regarding the flat and Nicki, the jibe "And you're the one who was always against fan affairs getting mixed up with the law" was instinctive and instantaneous. And true.

So Belle extends an earnest wish that I can pick up the torn and scattered thread and possibly find happiness in the future, most sincerely. It's a pity that my experiences (and a word or two from New York) have made me rather dubious about these people's sincerity, but they have certainly been placed in an exceedingly awkward position through their generosity. However, each still has a partner for comfort, & in my present state of mind they are objects for envy.

July 26th. As time passes, I'm finding it easier to wall off part of my mind, tho' such routine experiences as an attractive female voice on the 'phone or planning ahead for the vacation send my mind cringing from my memories. Another of the reasons for writing this is its undoubted therapeutic value; when I started, 3 weeks after the split, I was still suffering from bouts of nervous tremor, still unable to discuss the affair without emotion. Once I started writing the change was fantastic, even tho' theoretically intelligible.

I've been as honest as I possibly can in this letter; no one can know how much he knows *is* the cold, factual truth. Reading back, I've picked up one error; I've said that after the evening when I was asked point-blank about going to the States the subject was not mentioned again. This is wrong; I remember that, miserable, I later suggested that Joy go alone to her friends and experience US life for 6 months; if she still liked the idea of settling I'd come over with Nicki and join her. This was not considered worthy of discussion.

I also feel now that perhaps I shouldn't have quoted the letters from Joy, even though they indicate the feelings that existed between us. For she changed my character and must have been sadly disappointed at the result. When we fell in love I was idling, living on savings and a few professional cheques, a drifter. She drove me into a steady job (as was quite right), went out to work again herself (which she hated) and then found that I'd changed into a contented character, happy in having a love and a home and a job of my own and not thirsting after much more than the pleasures of fandom as a hobby. She'd already left a husband in a steady job and a home where she

didn't have to go to work ... looking at things from the material angle only she must speedily have realised that she was somewhat worse off.

Unfortunately, I have extreme difficulty at looking at the affair from the material angle only, and speculations from me on this are useless.

So I come to the end of this letter and a chapter in my life. If it were not for my possession of Nicki this might very well have been my final letter to anyone. I think you can assess from the foregoing, however, why the initial father-love (and the horror of feeling my life wasted) which caused me to cling to Nicki has been reinforced by more intellectual considerations.

All my friends (with the exception of two office friends) are in fandom or closely connected with it, and I couldn't consider active fanning again before answering the questions I feel, rightly or wrongly, must lie behind the expressions of sympathy I've had. Some of that sympathy has been undeserved, as I've shown. Some will think that in any case I should not have written this and to them my only answer is that when an individual has been hurt as I have ordinary standards cease to apply. Assume my personality, go through what I've been through, and, if you can undertake these impossibilities you can give an opinion.

Finally, you can see from the foregoing why the future connections of the Sandersons with fanning, trivial though the worry is compared with my major concerns of living and providing Nicki with whatever concomitants for a happy childhood (and future life) I can, are of some moment to me. It would appear to be their hope that, being financially unable to compete in fan-publishing, I will restrict my activities to a small British circle and by a happy disregard of me the affair will "blow over" when they publish anew. My own feelings, if they are regarded at all, are dismissed as so much weak sentimentality. They may well be right; here again I feel free to take whatever action I think suitable.

This is a letter. If it had been physically possible I would have typed it and sent it individually. It is not being sent as a "fanzine" and is not therefore a fit subject for fanzine review – no more copies are available, and in any case I should like it treated as a private letter from a fan friend and on a similar confidential basis.

Very sincerely,



PS Nicki is progressing at a faster rate than ever before, both physically and mentally, thanks. This letter has been accomplished during her sleeping hours, and the cost defrayed by selling an item of my collection ... just in case you were worrying.

Notes

First published July 1960. Transcribed 2015 from scans of a badly flyspecked photocopy using ABBYY FineReader 6.0 OCR software. The original is fairly free from typos.

For those unfamiliar with the science fiction fandom of that era:

- APE (properly *Apē*) was the nickname of APORRHETA below.
- APORRHETA (properly *Aporrhēta*) was Sandy Sanderson's fanzine, published and contributed to by Vince Clarke. Its 17 issues appeared from July 1958 to June 1960.
- BNF: Big Name Fan, a person of some note in SF fan circles.
- GLOBE: see LC below.
- LC: London Circle, the loose group of London-centred fans who then met regularly in a London pub called the Globe.
- OMPA, the Off-trail Magazine Publishers Association, was a British APA (Amateur Press Association) founded in 1954 by Ken Bulmer and Vince Clarke.
- SFCoL: Science Fiction Club of London, a spinoff from the London Circle.
- SMOKE was another contemporary fanzine, published 1959-1963 by George Locke.
- TAFF, the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund, was set up in 1953 to fund exchange visits of popular fans between Europe and North America. Vince Clarke had been the first winner but was unable for financial reasons to travel to the 1954 World SF Convention in San Francisco. See taff.org.uk for more about the fund.
- WSFS is presumably the World Science Fiction Society, the governing body of the World SF Convention or Worldcon.

Ex-Inchmery Fan Diary has been only lightly copyedited for this ebook. At one point "God know" is corrected to "God knows", but "parent's" for (arguably) "parents'" and "license" for "licence" (noun) are unchanged. "Kitchen" in mid-sentence was capitalized for no apparent reason: this has been amended. The awkward phrase "many correspondents said that in a

relation to a remark in my leaflet about giving up fandom, that ...” is corrected or clarified as “many correspondents said, in relation to a remark in my leaflet about giving up fandom, that ...” Vince’s annotation “[No argument had, in fact, been started.]” was originally in double parentheses ((like this)), here changed to square brackets.

Thanks to Pete Young and Mark Plummer for reading the text and reporting transcription errors.

David Langford, 2015

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