

## ARROWS OF DESIRE 5½

### DOES HE STILL DRINK BEER?

#### ANNOUNCEMENT

*It is with some regret that the hitherto biennial sequence of **Arrows of Desire** issues will now be broken. Pressures of work and the demands of other projects have conspired to make it impossible to produce **AOD #6** to the expected schedule. #6 will now appear in November 1991. The deadline for LoCs and contributions for this issue is therefore extended to 1st October 1991. The theme, you will recall, is **Religion**. Meanwhile, here are some reactions to "I Drink Beer Me. The Story Continues..."(Nic Farey) from issue 5. Please feel free to comment on what is written here.*

**S V O'Jay, April 1991. PO Box 29, Hitchin, Herts SG4 9TG, UK.**

[S V O'Jay is italicised and squarely parenthesised]

**Steve Jeffrey, 44 White Way, Kidlington, Oxon OX5 2AX**

*I Drink Beer, Me (Nic Farey):* Strong (too strong?) meat for a zine. I suspect that this will evoke similar comments to those regarding Kiki's letter in AOD4, which raised questions as to what a zine is for. That repressed tendency for out of control violence against somebody weaker, although more verbal than physical, is something I recognise in myself, and worries me. When it comes to physical violence, though, I have a set of well trained coward's legs.

*[I expected some hostile reaction to I Drink Beer..., which has not really been forthcoming. I don't know whether people are too shocked, too embarrassed or just too indifferent to comment. I was asked at Novacon (by Helena Bowles, I think), during the course of a conversation regarding the piece, whether I felt better for writing it. The answer was an unhesitating yes, although on reflection, what I actually meant was that I felt better for telling people about it. This, in itself, is a large step towards controlling the problem. It also has the distinction, for obvious reasons, of being the first piece in these pages with the byline "Nic Farey" rather than the usual "S V O'Jay". There are what I consider sound reasons for writing as "O'Jay", and we may go into them in future issues, given a suitable theme.]*

**Mike Abbott, 102 William Smith Close, Cambridge CB1 3QF**

There's a serious comment I'd like to make, on *The Story Continues...*: it's terrifying, but I'm not convinced about the phrase "true natures and desires". They may be a part of you (I can't judge that), but they are no more "true" than the way you behave the rest of the time. Don't assume the worst of yourself: the ways you behave by your conscious decisions are just as real, and just as much an important part of yourself as anything else. It's a mistake to let the most worrying or offputting part of yourself be thought of as real, to blow it up out of proportions, and to fail to balance it by the good features of yourself. That's what I think anyway: I hope you'll excuse me saying it like this.

*[You are excused! This is just the sort of reassurance that I needed (and got) from various friends at the time I recognised this problem and decided to try to address it. I won't embarrass anyone by naming names, but they know who they are and will probably be reading this.]*

**Alan J Sullivan, 13 Weir Gardens, Rayleigh, Essex SS6 7TH**

*I Drink Beer Me...;* Now this is probably the star piece - not because it's anything to do with the subject, but because of the courage involved in facing up to and living with this thing. Here's hoping that you make it.

**Harry Warner, Jnr., 423 Summit Ave, Hagerstown, Maryland 21740**

Nic Farey's contribution worries me. I assume it's partly an exercise in imaginative writing, but I also suspect there is some personal experience mingled with the fictional elements. If so, Nic should try to get professional help as soon as possible with the drinking problem and the impulses that alcohol uninhibits. A real tragedy could result if he just tries to cut back on the number of times he drinks excessively per week.

*[As Harry will by now have realised, Nic Farey and "S V O'Jay" are one and the same, a fact taken for granted by most UK readers who know me, but something unlikely to be known by many fans elsewhere. I am sorry to have to tell you, Harry, that other than the possibility of the piece being an exercise in style, it is **not** fictional. I disagree with the need to seek professional help. I had occasion to do this many years ago for an unrelated problem and did not respond well on that occasion. As I have earlier implied, "Crisis Intervention" techniques in my case have proved to engender a much more positive response. Despite possible appearances to the contrary, and having admitted the problem, I believe I possess the strength of character both to recognise and address it. With a little help from my friends. I would also like to correct the impression you seem to have drawn that drinking necessarily leads to drinking to excess. This is not at all the case, as I can be quite happy with a glass of wine with a meal, or a beer in front of the TV, or a glass of rum before turning in. None of these would necessarily compel me to continue drinking until I become obnoxious, fall over or whatever. As most of my social life centres around the consumption of alcohol, whether at a convention or at the local pub, I do not believe it realistic to become an abstainer. I merely strive for the position where I control my drinking, not the other way around.]*

**Harry Andruschak, PO Box 5309, Torrance, CA 90510-5309**

O my, and another *I Drink Beer...* sort of. Well, I will have had seven years of sobriety as of 17 March 1991, and by sobriety I mean **total** abstinence from alcohol. One day at a time, of course. Reading Nic Farey's story reminds me of Martin [Tudor]'s story which in turn reminds me of a passage from the book *Alcoholic's Anonymous*:

"The idea that somehow, someday, he will control and enjoy his drinking is the great delusion of every abnormal drinker. The persistence of this delusion is astonishing. Many pursue it into the gates of insanity or death."

Note the key phrase "Control **and** enjoy". I have seen many drinkers like Martin and Nic. Hell, I was like that myself once. No matter how much I was able to **control** my drinking, I was never really able to **enjoy** it, and sooner or later I'd be out of control again.

Hence that concept of 'Do not take the **FIRST** drink'.

Now what has alcoholism have to do with the topic of death? Well, among other things, I sometimes go on AA panels that visit hospitals. One of these is *Rancho Los Amigos* a county-run hospital with mostly welfare types as patients.

We AA visitors go to what is called the "Liver Ward". According to the doctors, at least 95% are here due to drinking, and about half who arrive here, die here. After a few visits, you get to figure out who is going to die. Sometimes the charts give it away, sometimes it is the look on their faces.

Ever seen a man 11 months pregnant?

As for the other 50% who might get another chance at life, some will talk to us AA types and accept the written pamphlets we distribute. Most, however, will deny they have a problem with alcohol. Next time around, they are going to control and enjoy it **for sure**. Just like Martin I suppose.

*[It would seem rather futile to disagree with you here and state that I do indeed enjoy drinking. This, of course, cleverly*

*proves your point.]*

**Kev P McVeigh, 37 Firs Road, Milnthorpe, Cumbria LA7 7QF**

Strong stuff, really strong stuff. Difficult stuff to comment on, even though I've carried you home afore now, I didn't know. I thought: he's just had a bust-up with his ex, it's almost Xmas. He had a few drinks, so what, and maybe that knock on the head made it worse. He'll be OK in the morning. You see, when we only see people now and again, in social, drinking settings, we never know what goes on the rest of the month. And when we find out... it's a shock.

Can I ask, did you run that piece by Tara first? You should have. I think it negates the apology if you didn't. Making it public doubles the abuse, Nic.

That said, I hit a lover once, over nothing at all, where we crossed the road or something like that. I was sober, that doesn't matter. It really frightens me sometimes to know how much anger I can develop over nothing at all, and how it can spill over. The paper today has some pillock campaigning for more guns to be allowed in Britain. If I'd had a gun... if you'd had a gun... black eyes and broken noses heal. Psychological wounds heal slowly. Funny thing was, she used to play rough and I didn't like it, I complained, and one night I hit her. As I said, it scares me.

*[Read the following...]*

**Tara Dyson**

**Caroline Says**

*Caroline says, as she gets up off the floor  
Why is it that you beat me? It isn't any fun.  
Caroline says, as she makes up her eye  
You ought to learn more about yourself, think more than just I,I,I.  
(Lou Reed)*

Nic and I have been friends for years. We've had our ups and downs, but we're still the best of friends. I'm sure we'd do almost anything for each other. Probably because we know each other so well, we know how to wind each other up, and sometimes end up arguing about anything and everything. Still the fact that we're still together after all this time must prove something.

All the time I've known Nic he's been a drinker. If, when I saw him, he didn't drink, it would be unusual. I like a drink myself, in fact not so long ago he had to almost carry me to a taxi to get me home. I don't object to Nic's drinking, and I can't imagine him ever being teetotal. I do object to my suffering emotionally and physically as a result of his occasional violent outbursts that arise from excessive drinking.

The first time he hit me, we'd been having a row. He was drunk. In the middle of the row, he got up, said he was going to bed, so as far as he was concerned, that was the end of that. It's probably a flaw in my character, but I have to finish an argument, so I waited a few minutes, then went into his bedroom to wake him. He just turned on me, threw me on the bed, put his hands around my throat and kept yelling "Die! Die!". Luckily I struggled enough to make him let go quickly, and no harm was done. I ran into another room and he went back to sleep.

The second time was much worse, and occurred not too long after the first. We'd arranged to go for a drink at my local pub. The evening started off fine, with us having a chat and a couple of drinks. Then some friends that he used to drink with years ago in Tufnell Park came into the pub. They recognised each other, started talking about old times and having a few - well, more than a few - drinks. After a while they ended up playing darts with some of the other locals. For a while things were OK, but as Nic got drunker he started arguing with one of the guys. I could see things getting out of hand, so I steered him to the door and suggested we go back to my place, just three doors away, so he could have some strong coffee, calm down a bit and hopefully sober up before he caught the train home. This was obviously the wrong move on my part, as he refused point blank and a row developed. It didn't help that I'd been sitting alone most of the evening, my temper had been rising and I was ready for a confrontation (verbal though, not physical). He started to stagger up the road and I followed, determined to have it out there and the, although I should have know better. He punched me in the stomach, hit me round the head, slapped me and tried to strangle me, all the while yelling a constant stream of insults. I was too frightened to fight back, though I'm no weakling and can usually give as good as I get, but this time I just froze. Eventually I broke free, ran the short distance home and cried into my pillow for most of the night. All kinds of thoughts went through

my mind while lying there, too shaken up to be able to sleep. What do you think is worse, being attacked in the street by a stranger, or being beaten up by someone you love and trust?

I was in too much of a state to be able to go into work the next day. I kept shaking and bursting into tears. My head ached, a painful lump had developed just behind my ear and I couldn't turn my head very far without my neck hurting. Not very far into the morning, the phone rang: it was Nic. He was hoarse and said he'd found some grazes on his hands and wondered how he'd got them - had anything happened last night? I blurted the whole story out, in between sobs. He said he didn't remember any of it. He rang a couple of times more that day to check that I was OK, and he seemed genuinely concerned about what had happened. We arranged to have lunch a couple of days later to talk things over properly. I wanted some sort of explanation - why me, for a start - but he didn't want to talk about it, as the incident had upset him too much and as far as he was concerned talking about it would make things worse. All he would say was to promise it would never happen again.

Shortly afterwards, I asked him to write about the incident to see if he could get down on paper what he couldn't express to me. He's done this before with other personal issues, writing as S V O'Jay. At first he agreed, and said it would be the lead article in the next zine, but not long afterwards changed his mind, saying that he didn't think he'd be able to write it properly, and that was that.

Despite his apparent lack of concern for my emotional welfare, the incident did seem to have affected him. He cut down on his drinking and promised me several times that it would never happen again. Things were fine for over six months. Then it happened again.

The third time was different. He came over to my house feeling a bit depressed, so we went out for a drink and he cheered up noticeably. We came back to the house so I could cook dinner. We had a nice evening, and everything seemed fine until he started to drink heavily, refilling his glass with bourbon every few minutes. Everything still seemed OK, and it never crossed my mind that anything terrible would happen. One minute he was fine and the next he was drinking straight from the bottle and started ordering me around. I'd never seem such a frightening look in his eyes.

*Down on my knees I lie.  
My real self stays locked safe from you  
My ears always ringing and the tears always brimming  
It's so hard to keep you at bay.  
(You're Love is a Lesion - Marc Almond)*

I obeyed his every command, as I was too frightened to do anything else. He made me crawl across the floor to him, but when I didn't do it fast enough he lifted my head up by the hair and slapped me across the face. While making me crawl around on my hands and knees he kept shouting that I loved the power that he had over me and that I enjoyed being mistreated. Finally, to my relief he passed out on the floor, so I covered him with my duvet and left him to sleep.

This time when it was all over and I thought about it, I realised that I wasn't as frightened. I'd been through it all before and I was more concerned for Nic's welfare than my own. What was going to happen to him if he carried on drinking so heavily?

When he awoke the following morning, he remembered parts of what had happened, and it frightened him. He admitted that he thought he was an alcoholic.

*One drink is one too many, but a thousand's never enough.  
(Irish folk song)*

Since then, things have improved noticeably. He's cut down on his drinking, there has been no outbursts of violence, and sometimes we even have a laugh and a joke about what has happened.

I've forgiven Nic for what he's done, but I can't forget it. I still love him and he's still my best friend, but I still don't know why he did it. Does he harbour such feelings of hatred towards me that only surface when he's had too much too drink and his shields come down? And why me? He admits that he's never done this to any of his other female friends, ever, so why now and why me?

A more sobering thought - recently we had an argument when neither of us had been drinking. Nic stormed out of the house before things went very far, and later admitted that if he had stayed, he may have hit me again. I wonder, is it just the drink that does it?