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... a belated letter-substitute:

CATNAP: Having been blessed with a black cat over the 1976 Christmas Holidays and, despite various additions/deletions over the intervening years, never having been "owned" by a cat of any other solid color ["Brown Cat" was, in essence 'Sponse's "pet"] I was unaware that a majority of pure white cats are born deaf. I first learned this essentially innocuous fact the evening of August 1, 1990...from Cokie Cavin.

"Bill Bowers' Responsibility" will turn fourteen in a month or so. She's the Black Cat (albeit with a white star and, now, a touch of grey) who has been one of the few constants in my life the past decade and a half--otherwise known as The Cincinnati Years. True, there was the "separation" from late '86 until late '88, a period where I gave up the cat allergy shots and paid "support" in the form of cat food and kitty litter. I missed her--but had that status stayed 'quoted the odds are that today, instead of a *XENOLITH* of lower number and pagecount...I'd be "working" on an *OUTWORLDS* in the high 'sixties.

Nowadaze 'Sponse spends a lot of time alone. I leave for work at 6:30 a.m., and don't arrive back until twelve hours later--if I should come "home" directly... (Avoid the obvious, Bill [those days I'm even "Bill" in the possessive; the surname by which I'm used to talking to myself in print has been preempted by another...; for the moment] and don't say Something Cute like: "...and we all know I do *nothing* directly...")

'Sponse moved back in with me (as part of a Package Deal) in mid-November, 1988. But from the morning of July 30, 1990, until the evening of August 23, 1990, I didn't see her. Once. (No, I wasn't at an extended convention...) For the last four days of this involuntary "separation" I wasn't at all sure she was alive.

[...when, eight-thirty the evening of 8/21/90, I'd finally post-work arrived at my home-away-from-home, Tanya-the-Landlady called and asked if I could "come out" and get "something" she'd picked up at The House.... All the way--the 20 miles, the half hour drive --from Norwood to Sayler Park...the only thing that I could think of was that she'd found 'Sponse's body--and just couldn't bring herself to telling me over the phone.

[It wasn't that, thank whatever God that's governing my Fate. ("I'm not a Christian," she said, more than once: "I'm a Cath-o-lic!")]

4651 Glenway Avenue, a.k.a. "The House", resides in Western Hills, just half a block up the road from Price Hill. About two-thirds of the way from Norwood to Sayler Park, as the crow flies. (But crows don't fly in Cincinnati's atmosphere; they're pigeons and they *wade!*) Where I work is located about two-thirds of the way from 4651 Glenway out to Sayler Park. Not exactly up the street from Norwood. But from the evening of August 1, 1990 until leaving for work the morning of August 30, 1990, 3937 Floral Avenue in Norwood was my "home"...

--which explains how it came to pass that Cokie had the opportunity to explain to me the deafening silence of Whiteness, but which does *not* explain why I'd not seen her, her Very Significant "Other", nor indeed, had I seen any of the other local fans [exceptions: Tanya Carter in her role as Landlady; Lalor-at-Thriftway, in *his* role; Greg & Sandy there...once... (embarrassing memory)] since a brief visit to Octocon. Octocon, 1988.

It also doesn't explain just why I didn't respond to any mail contacts from any of you (when I managed to see the mail), and it certainly doesn't explain why the phone number was constantly changed....

When Tanya-my-friend managed to extricate me from the environs of Adolf Leis' Hamilton County Justice Center the afternoon of 8/1/90, and I had no place to go, she said in essence that she was trying to retain some degree of naturality (after all, we *both* had signed the rental agreement), and that it would probably be best if I *didn't* stay with her and Don. Still confused, dazed, and numb from the events of the previous 48-hours, I said, so totally despondent: "...but what will I do...where will I *go...?*"

"...perhaps it's time you reestablished contact with your friends..."

(Yes, Tanya: I thought it cruel at the time. But in the end, it was the best advice I've received. In a very long time!)

...and now it is time to, belatedly, inadequately, reestablish contact with friends outside the I-275 circle. And this is the only way I know:

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This is My Publication #166 # Draft started 9/21/90 # Entry started 9/23/90 # Gala 13th Annish
 [This assembling of words is being entered on Greg & Sandy Jordan's AMSTRAD PCW8256, Thanks!]
 It's intended for distribution through FLAP [Mlg, #66], at DITTO 3, to Friends, Contributors, et al.
 [...neither *this* Phone Number, nor *this* Fanzine -- is intended for distribution outside of Fandom.]

On Wednesday, August 1, Tanya drove the considerable distance from the aforementioned Saylor Park to Blue Ash, where the agency I work through is located (as opposed to the location of the company I work at, which is only a couple of miles from the Carter manse) -- to pick up my paycheck. She then took it the not inconsiderable distance downtown, and turned it over to whoever at the Justice Center. The check was brought up to me [Cellblock 4-D, South] where I endorsed it...and in a matter of an hour and a half (remarkably) I was out on bond--

After waiting for Tanya to return from an errand (we both had fully expected it to Take Longer)...it was on the drive Back West that she hit me with the "time to reestablish contact" comment. We stopped by "work" where I picked up my car (still the same Tabakow/Causgrove-Locke/Bowers '78 Buick...still "going" at 165,000 miles) from the spot it had been parked in since a quarter til seven (am), Monday, July 30th. I followed Tanya home, called "my" home, and was informed that *she* would deign to gather a few essentials together for me. Even though it was terribly inconvenient. (Those were our (to-date) last direct exchange of words.)

Again, I followed Tanya: I parked a half block up the street from 4651 Glenway, while she and Sean went in. They emerged shortly with a suitcase (Tanya's) containing: half my essential medicines, two pairs of jeans, two pair of work pants, four shirts, three sets of underwear, a garbage bag of unmatched socks, two pair of shoes (neither my "good" pair) --and, other than what I'd been wearing for three days--that was, apparently all the essentials I was entitled to after fifteen months of marriage... Not to mention after twenty-nine years plus one month of employment (with a few gaps).

Tanya took off to deliver Sean to his Boy Scout meeting. I backed up to avoid passing the house, turned around--and drove up to the Western Hills excuse for a Mall. And called Bill Cavin.

Long Ago (June, 1977) and Far Away (approx. 3 miles), the first night *after* I moved to Cincinnati...I spent on Bill Cavin's couch. The next day(s) he did the bulk of the unloading of the U-Haul-it that contained the sum of my (even then bulky) worldly possessions. (Three months earlier, the weekend *he* had moved to Cincinnati, I *had* journeyed down from the wilds of Northern Ohio to Cinsanity--but immediately departed on a trip to a Beecher Illinois Birthday Party... And Bill ended up making his move alone.)

For the next four or five years, until he had the unmitigated gall to move across to the dull and dreary Eastside, Bill and I lived a half mile from each other, on Harrison Avenue. I used his shower, I used his friendship (and gave him grief at CFG meetings); and I, a chain smoker, harassed him endlessly about his weight.

And he was my friend.

And is.... Without hesitation Bill and Cokie took me in and put up with me for a month.

I owe a lot of people--friends, fans, family--for a lot of patience, support and understanding. There's no magic tote sheet here any more. But I'll never forget the month in Norwood. Thanks, Bill & Cokie!

She spent a lot of time, a lot of verbiage, badmouthing my friends in general and fandom in specific. I knew *she* was "wrong" then--

...so, even though there was the hesitation--the embarrassment of reestablishing contact after so long an awkward deafening silence--it was not a surprise that the acceptance has been caring and wholehearted.

...no surprise; but that doesn't make it any less gratifying.

What follows will be the most doggedly-chronologically-sequential, determinedly-dispassionate exercise in non-esoteric* words-on-paper I've ever attempted. On other occasions I have needed to get it down in order to work it out in my own mind. [*Exception, already! When I visited Steve and Denise for the first time this decade (8/10), after hearing "the story" Denise said that she expected I'd be doing a fanzine soon. And perhaps it's only my imagination, but I recall Steve saying something about "catharsis"...] Cavin said that, since I'd mentioned that it had taken me more than a year to "get over" my first divorce...he expected it would be likewise this time. Wrong, I said. This is not one of those occasions I feel a necessity to bleed on paper: in this case, the emotion ended before the relationship did. Which is sad, but which makes this easier...even if it's never all that easy.

What this is...is simply a "well, I'm back--a this is where I've been" narrative -- so I don't have to repeat it endlessly. Some of you will be vicariously interested in the "details" (I know my friends!) while others could care less. Those details will probably pop up hither and yon, over the years. But then, maybe not.

Herewith a brief His-story of How I Came To Be Married, Declare Bankruptcy...on the way to becoming a Convicted Wife-Beater:

I moved to Cincinnati, and into the first floor (front) of 2468 Harrison Ave. in June, 1977. A year or two later, *she* moved into the 2nd floor of 2468 Harrison Ave. A year or two later, we became involved. A year or two later, without a word of explanation, *she* moved out. Disappeared.

June, or maybe July, 1985. I received a call from *her* sister. *She* wanted to talk to me....would I? Certainly. Turned out that *she'd* gotten married...but it wasn't going well.

The next call was in October. *She'd* decided to move out...wanted to see me...but not until *she* was "out". Okay...fine, I said.

A couple of more calls....

...and the reason for *her* disappearance years before came out: *She'd* stopped taking the pill (not telling me) and become pregnant. Telling me this, long after the fact, *she* said it was "mine"...and I had no reason to disbelieve her. (Then.)

"So..." I said, stunned, "Why didn't you tell me...?"

"I didn't want to tie you down..."

Honesty compels me to state I'd probably not have been thrilled at the news, at the time. And I don't know what I would have done about it. But I told *her* I thought it was my *right* to know when the event occurred, rather than in retrospect. *She* never did understand that, although I might well have turned out to be a total cad...I at least should have been given that chance.

She had married a guy who'd convinced her that *she'd* lose the other kids (even though *she* was off welfare and working by that time) and had a miscarriage, as a result of lifting furniture during the move away from me.

A few more calls.

Silence from November until early April, 1986.

A few days after "landing" in Norwood, Cavin and I went out to his garage to find a box in which to store my meagre worldly goods. "Here, will this do...?" he asked, pulling down a copier-paper box from the stack. "Sure," I said, noting that there were several crumpled-up pieces of light-blue paper left in the box.

Un-crumpling one, I suffered a twinge. It was a flyer [Vol. 1 #2] for a local convention---Cinclave 1. The flyer is undated, but the dates of the con are prominent:

April 25-27, 1986.

It must have been a week before then, that I saw *her* for the first time in three or four years. [I COULD go back and look up the relevant dates of the earlier incarnation; at this juncture, it doesn't seem worth the effort,..] A friend (a friend soon discarded once *she* became reinvolved with me) drove her to a local restaurant on Colrain Ave. (no longer there) where we met for lunch. We were both extremely nervous--but we both agreed we like to see each other again.

She HAD moved out, but was extremely nervous about her soon-to-be-ex following her. So I suggested *she* have her friend take her downtown the following Friday evening--and that we meet at the Clarion...at the convention.

April 25th (obviously) 1986 until mid-November, 1988. We saw each other, and we didn't. *She* would "go away"; then I. But, usually on my initiative, we always got back together. *She* finally got divorced; six months after I was told she had. I paid for it.

Occasionally I paid the rent. When *she* moved, I paid the deposit. When the utilities weren't paid, and the disconnect notices came... Good Ole Bill! And then, two years ago *she* told me that others in *her* apartment building were receiving eviction notices...and *she* was convinced that they were shutting it down...and that *she* would be next....

In the same time frame I happened to be talking to Tanya Carter. For some reason *she* mentioned her father had moved in with her and Don...that his house was sitting vacant.

In the middle of the night, I said to *her*: How would you and the kids like to move in with me...? *She* later said it was the most wonderful words *she'd* ever heard.

(*She*, later, said a lot of things.)

The weekend before Thanksgiving, 1988, when "together" we moved into 4651 Glenway--apart from what I'd bought *her* and the kids--*she* "owed" me almost \$5000.

I knew *she* was emotional.

I knew *she* was insecure/jealous....

I knew *she* was fiscally more irresponsible than even me.

...at least I thought I knew all these things.

She said the most beautiful things anyone has ever said to me. *She* said (later/but simultaneously) the most hateful things anyone has ever said to me.

For the longest time I tried to live with the ying--in spite of the yang--but then *she* zagged on me.

...

(Just so you know right off this is the Genuine Stuff,...)

(*The initial jottings for this 'epic', jotted down in Norwood; 8/11/90*)

Two weeks after we moved in, I was "laid-off"--and was out for five weeks. Early this year I was out-of-work again; this time for twelve weeks. This did not help.

But from January 16, 1989, until January 5th, 1990--by dint of a 41-mile/one hour commute--I made more money than I ever had before...or have any reasonable expectation of making again in the immediate future...

She also worked.

In the end it was not enough.

On April 24th we had an appointment with the local Consumer Credit Counseling Service. The lady added up the figures--and recommended a bankruptcy lawyer who would give us the first half hour consultation free.

(Also, after hearing (repeatedly) that it was *all* my fault... *she* recommended family counselling...)

May 4th. We saw the bankruptcy lawyer. When, halfway through, he said that if *she'd* used the credit cards, even if they were in my name...*she* also was responsible...*she* walked out. I finished up as best I could. The papers finally came. I told *her* that *she* didn't have to sign them...that I would take in on in my name alone. For whatever reason *she* signed, and neither the lawyer, nor I, "made" *her* do so. You wouldn't know it now.

The papers were filed, and eventually a hearing date of July 13th was set. In the meantime, *she* had two weeks of vacation scheduled in late June. Ironically, I ended up being out of work again...exactly the same two weeks. The first week went well enough, but came the weekend...something happened and *she* took off with the kids for two days...and went through seven hundred dollars. I make good money when I'm working; but I don't make it that good. And this was not the first time *she'd* taken off and depleted the bank balance. Later, every time, *she* said *she* was "sorry"...but somehow the money never went back to cover the rent check.

The hearing before the Trustee. Friday the 13th.

I tried. I really did. But when he kept pressing me as to how we'd ended up this deeply in debt...I finally capitulated and said, "Well, most of it has occurred since we've been married..."

Which is the truth, but which was the Wrong Thing To Say.

She blew up. Literally. It was all the fault of Mr. Bowers and the debts he brought to the marriage. *She* produced my hotel bill for the Atlanta Worldcon, admittedly substantial, but long ago paid for. *She* went on. And on. "Our" lawyer eventually said: "Mrs.

Bowers...as your attorney is my considered advice that you should shut up. This is not divorce court."

True. But again, not the wisest thing to say. (He later told me that he'd not seen an outburst like that in twenty years of practice.)

The outshoot, is that I was ordered to produce all sorts of documentation. And that, eventually, the "discharge date" of the bankruptcy was postponed from 9/11 until 12/11. *She* has since retained *another* bankruptcy lawyer (without formally discharging our joint lawyer, who I'm still paying off). Eventually there will be another "hearing", eventually I will be able to prove that while I overdid it, the majority of the debt was incurred for *her* and the kids ("furnishing" the house, the kids' clothes, *her* cosmetics/clothes/jewelry, eating out, concerts, the list is endless), not to mention the things *she* charged directly and I found out about only when they were in the house, or showed up on the monthly statements... [This is one mess that is still unresolved...]

In the beginning, I bought the things, or went along with *her* sprees, because I cared for *her*...and I wanted *her* to be happy. In the end I did it to "buy" a day or two of peace, here and there. I knew it was a no-win situation a long time ago, and I should have put an end to it a long time ago. But I didn't: When *she* wanted to...*she* could be the sweetest person I've ever known--and I kept hoping, I guess.

Besides, I've always been one to ride out the storm as best I could, keeping it all to myself. Until afterwards.

It's increasingly hard to remain unemotional. It *is* an emotionally-charged situation, and one still in progress. One that now seems out of my hands, but one which *will* work out.

On Monday, July 23rd, I dropped the kids off at the babysitter, and took *her* to work, on my way into a job I'd just started June 25th. *She* didn't come home that night. This was not entirely unprecedented; what was -- was that this time I made no attempt to find *her*.

...Sunday night/Monday morning following, 1 a.m. *She* called, waking me up. Said *she* and the kids were "coming home". I said "fine." 1:30 a.m. *She* called back. Said something about a "retraining order".... I said "fine", *she* hung up, I ended up staying up all night, and went to work in the morning.

I was working 7 til 6. At 5 that afternoon I was 'paged' to the front office. There were two Cincinnati cops there. ...something about being charged with "domestic violence" and that I had to come with them. I went back to my board, packed-up my briefcase, clocked-out, put the briefcase in the trunk of my car, and got into the back of the cruiser. The door-locks clicked. The officer let me smoke on the way downtown, and didn't handcuff me until he'd parked behind the remote-controlled gates of the Justice Center. (Such small considerations...so important in retrospect.)

Handcuffs are terribly uncomfortable. You can't even adjust your glasses. But it was the briefest period of the incarnation. They ran a computer-search; I was "clean". I had to empty my pockets, sign the receipt, and was booked, finger-printed, and mug-shot-ed. I was permitted my one phone call; I called Tanya. I didn't know what else to do.

Monday night; 7/30/90: We were brought in too late for supper. Fifteen (it seemed like more) spent the night in a concrete-block holding cell, approx. 7' x 11', with two concrete "benches" (18" wide; 7 or 8' long) and an adjoining one-hole john (with a trickle of warm water from the tap. The lights stayed on all night, as did the air-conditioner--full-blast. By staking out a claim to a portion of bench, I managed perhaps two hours "sleep".

Tuesday; 7/31/90: We were served breakfast at 7. I've had worse. Others were herded in. About nine I had five minutes with a public defender. He said he'd ask for bond and a continuance. About 9:30 I was put in line in the small room interconnecting "our" cell to Courtroom "A". My name was called. I went through the door, took no more than ten steps, and was standing beside "my lawyer", facing the judge. About six feet on the other side of the lawyer *she* was standing; *she* didn't look at me. I heard a case number, a date of August 6th...and "five thousand bond; no 10%". That's all I heard. I was taken back to the small room, told to sign a paper (I didn't have time to read) and was sent back into the (now) wall-to-wall filled cell. Groups came and went and eventually six or seven of us were taken up for processing, issued uniforms & kits (comb, toothbrush & -paste, one wash~~ing~~ bag, one towel, one pillowcase, one sheet, one blanket, and then we were taken up to a cell-block on the "2nd" floor. In time for "lunch". I waited two and a half hours in line to

use a phone; called Tanya. The "\$5000/no 10%" was what was throwing me.

It was a long day. Eventually I was transferred to another cell-block (just like in the movies!), given a bunk in a cell, made one more call to Tanya, and got 6 hours of sleep. It was an experience (even getting called "Pops" for the first time in my life), and I found out what Tanya arrived at independently on the "outside" (that the "no 10%" was circumventable) -- and was "out" by Wednesday afternoon.

At no point during this process was I "read my rights", given any specifics of the charges against me...and the only reason I have a copy of the restraining order (the document signed unread) is that I went in...and asked for it. I obtained a lawyer through the Bar Association, saw him Saturday afternoon after work. ("What is your opinion of the state of your marriage, Mr. Bowers?" pause. "I don't think it's salvageable...." "Good," he said. "If, after what you've described you'd have said otherwise, I would have wondered...")

He filed a written "not-guilty" plea for me on Monday the 6th, found out the so-called specifics, and informed me that the Trial was set for Wednesday, Sept. 5. ...And on Friday, the 10th, at noon, a Sheriff's Deputy showed up at work, and served me with divorce papers. ("Good", my comment was; "it saves me the trouble.") (But right now I'm patiently waiting to find out what pretext she uses to send a State Trooper out to work...)

For a mere \$500 more (so far) my criminal lawyer has become my divorce lawyer. I saw him in his new role Saturday the 18th. He told me to stay cool. I went to work Monday the 20th if not cool at least calmly resigned to waiting it out. I should have known.

Tanya called that afternoon. A neighbor had called, saying that "she" had moved out...and that she'd said the place (4651 Glenway) would be up for rent in two weeks...

Tanya drove over and found the place gutted and trashed. Well, essentially all the furniture I'd moved in and all we'd bought was gone, along with my computers, typers (including the 1969-purchased Selectric One), the vcrs, the tvs, stereo system, CD-players, 200 compact discs, 4-500 video tapes, the quilt my mother had made me (before the marriage), the flower arrangement I'd saved from my father's funeral... And so on. What was left was, her old couch, lots of cosmetics, most of the kids' clothes/toys, my books, records, audio cassettes (but nothing to play them on), the copier(!), the microwave, enough dirty kitchen utensils and towels for me to survive...and that's about it.

It's my belief that Tanya showing up stopped the process; otherwise everything would have gone. As it is, she told her divorce lawyer she'd moved out, so the respective lawyers decided I could move back in. Which I have. It's depressing; but I am surviving!

I'm also running close to my pre-set 6-page limit; there's more (much more), but only details.

There's two sides (at least) to every story. I'm know she has hers... My Side is: The specifics with which I was charged... I did not commit, I've done foolish things, I've verbalized vindictively at times, but I've not (as was "alleged") committed physical violence against this woman. Nevertheless, at the trial, her word-against-mine, I was found "guilty". The sentencing is set for October 17th. The lawyer says not-to-worry: no-criminal-history, first offense, et al--the worst I'll get is a fine and a slap on the wrist. Easy for him to say. I'm tempted to appeal, even though I know what he'll say about that.

But, damnit, it's my life. And I didn't do it...!

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Maybe I never "loved" her; I don't know. But I gave her myself, and everything I had. She forbade me contact with my friends (and slandered them, whether she'd met them or not), she opened my mail and destroyed it, she went through all the boxes of personal kipple I'd accumulated over the years... She threw dishes, chairs, plates, a CD-player, knives AT me, but her big thing was slapping my glasses off my face. She once did this while I was driving, with the kids in the back seat. All this I took, but when, on the night of my father's funeral in February she refused to spend time with my family (including my 80-year-old Mother) instead demanding to be taken "out" to an X-rated theatre (it had the same name as she...) and I said "No!" ... the lens came out of the glasses this time, my medicine was poured down the drain, and she took off into the night. I found her the next morning, in a motel across the expressway, and I brought her "home." I'm not quite sure why... Now,

Bitter? Me? Well, maybe just a bit. But I'm getting over it...

I don't want to be bitter. I don't want to have to sit down and write this all out again (and either bore or titillate you). I just want to Get It Over With...and get on with my life... And that is precisely what I'm going to do.

There will be more communications from me. There will even be an OUTWORLDS 60 -- this I promise (even if it will end up being the 21st Annish, rather than the planned 19th). I still have all the material for that, safe. Eventually I'll get my toys back, or borrow, or get new ones. It's just a matter of time...

It's trite, but my heartfelt Thanks... To Bill & Cokie. To Tanya, Don & Sean, To Dave & Jackie, for the conversations and the quiet nights. To Steve & Denise. To Namoi and Chris, for the meals (and for Being There). To Sandy & Greg... for putting up with me spending endless hours in their bedroom attempting to get this down on disc... To the CFGers, To everyone who wrote... called, as soon as they "found out", I may not always be the best with responding promptly, but I have, and I do, appreciate(d) the support. I need it, ...but in the end, this too, will pass into mere Bowers-lore. --Bill Bowers; 9/30/90