



FLAT

We are not normal. We flatten, you can fold us up to three times over, and slide us inside an envelope, and post us all over the world. It takes three days to get us from here to there, and we get out at the other end and wave our two-dimensional goodbyes, leaving the recipient wondering what all of that was about, that transient strange presence, and we leave and do what we do until we find someone else who will post us to another part of the globe.

There is no prescience involved; a lot of it is pot luck. Gemma 227 Black Tyler met her husband that way and stayed with him. Sometimes he posts her on holiday and follows in a more conventional way; they tend to save enormously on travel costs. Barry 476 Coral Menzo found a career as a jazz singer in Chicago once he was unfolded inside a night club which appealed to him enormously.

And I: my adventure ended before it began, because the first time I was posted I gathered dust for months in an unused office as my envelope had been addressed the wrong way. I was meant for greater things, but a clerical error sent me to a company whose doors had been shut due to bankruptcy days earlier. I lay, folded twice over inside the uncomfortable paper sheath, breathing. Couldn't open it from inside because it had been sealed. Sealed, with proper sealing wax, I ask you, who uses that these days?

I was liberated eventually by some cleaning staff. I suppose I was lucky, in that my envelope was opened at all, the other mail just got trashed but the seal attracted the cleaners' attention: they thought that perhaps my envelope contained something valuable. And boy, were they surprised when they broke the seal and I unfolded and stepped out, and said, thank you, thank god I'm out of this hell-hole, that was no fun at all, that seemed like half a lifetime. I coughed a bit and left and they stared after me, and I thought, yes, you do see some strange things in the world, but if you look closely enough, they all mean something.