

Note to the reader: There follows our second set of postcards in this issue. Again, we recommend that you remove these three sheets, cut along the dotted lines, and read these numbered cards in sequence. We think you will find it worth your while going to the trouble. Again, if you are reading this on a screen we do not recommend any cutting. Simply scroll downwards.

1/

On 25 May my Dad died suddenly in his sleep.
I've written that sentence so many times in the last
few months that I almost believe it to be true.



2/

I don't really know if it was sudden or in his sleep.
I don't even know if it was 25 May. Perhaps it was
the day before. Around midnight.



3/

For the last two weeks of his life Dad didn't eat or drink. He had what most people euphemistically call a 'water infection'. It hurt when he went to pee.



4/

Dad's solution to this problem was to stop drinking. He gave up liquid in stages. First tea. Then orange juice. Then milk.



5/

He never gave up water because he never drank water.



6/

‘Dad, you can’t stop drinking,’ I said. ‘You’re going to die.’

Not believing me, or perhaps believing me, the last drink he gave up was Lucozade.

‘Everything else tastes of metal.’



7/

The water infection didn't kill him. The death certificate said it was a secondary cause.



8/

On arriving at the house I found his last letter. It was written to himself as much as anybody else. A rectangular yellow Post-It note, reminding himself to give Mum her insulin and to shave. He also wrote the PIN no. of his debit card in the top right-hand corner. He couldn't seem to remember numbers the last few months.



9/

He gave Mum insulin twice a day. Remembering it was one of the last things he remembered to do.



10/

I don't know if he remembered to shave. I forgot to ask my brother.



11/

The PIN no. worked for a week until the bank received the letter he was dead.



12/

They wrote me a letter to apologise. 'You may still continue to receive letters addressed to your father.'



13/

Yes. They keep arriving.



14/

Subscriptions to *Time Magazine*. *National Geographic*. The Open University.



15/

Other banks.



16/

Debt companies.



17/

The occasional postcard.



18/

Circulars. Reminders.



19/

I probably need to re-direct this post when the family house is sold.¹



¹. According to the author: 'The house, which my parents lived in since 1971, was sold on 9 October. The last thing I took from the house was a handful of cooking apples from a neighbour's tree that overhangs the back garden; I left some for the new owners. The post has been re-directed.'

20/

‘Don’t tell your brother I’m not eating’, were I
think his final words.



21/

Or 6206 on the Post-It note.²



²These cards were originally written on squares of bright and texturally pleasing yellow paper. The author initially believed the paper to have come from a Japanese stationery shop in Montréal, which he visited on his honeymoon eight years ago; on further reflection, he suspects it was purchased in 2004, on a trip to Japan to interview the novelist Haruki Murakami. In either case, the paper was made in Japan. We wish we could share it with you. The author also notes that his father's Post-It notes were not half as beautiful as the yellow Japanese paper, but that he has kept them all. For safe keeping. Even the last one.

22/

They probably mean something I'll never know.



23/

If you know, can you tell me?



24/

I'm not sure who this is addressed to but
it's by me.³



³Jonathan Ellis teaches at the University of Sheffield. His edited book, *Letter Writing Among Poets: From William Wordsworth to Elizabeth Bishop*, has just been published by Edinburgh University Press.

The photos used here were taken by the author at his parent's house when he was clearing it out in preparation for sale. They depict: the windfall apples from a neighbour's tree, the front garden path, and a fallen-down bird-feeder.