



## **BEAT THE DUST**

August 2008

### **Featured Writer, Adelle Stripe**

#### Introduction

The Mark SaFranko lit fest edition of Beat the Dust in May was one of our most popular to date. So, based on the principle that 'you can't have enough of a good thing', Beat the Dust is devoting another issue to the work of just one featured writer. This time we invited Brutalist Adelle Stripe to take to the helm and she's done us proud. By way of background, Adelle's poetry, prose and music journalism have been widely published in all the right places, 3:AM, Rising, Scarecrow, Savage Kick and Laura Hird to name a few. She is also the editor of her own litzine Straight from the Fridge. Her poems appear in the Brutalist anthology 'Nowhere Fast' alongside poetry by fellow Brutalists Tony O'Neill and Ben Myers. Her debut solo collection is 'Some Things Are Better Left Unsaid' published by Blackheath Books. Beat the Dust is very pleased to have the opportunity to showcase so much of Adelle's new, unpublished work all in one place with illustrations by one of the most talented artists in London, Lisa Craddock. Adelle describes Lisa as 'an artistic genius and a Reverend in the Universal Life Church with interests in voodoo, Bela Lugosi, museum and cake day trips, poetry and filth.' Great for Beat the Dust to be able to provide a platform for Lisa's work too.

All that remains is to say a big thanks to Adelle for agreeing to be Beat the Dust's second featured writer. We'd also like to thank the great and the good of the underground lit and music scenes for taking time out to pose Adelle some probing questions, which feature alongside the poems and stories. So, close the curtains, grab yourself an Old Legover (umm, it's a beer) and a bag of Seabrook Crisps and have a read... but don't tell yer mum what yer doing... or more to the point, Adelle's mum what she's been doing!

Mike Title, lead singer of East London hellraisers *Dead Kids* asks Adelle: When did you lose your innocence?



It was 1995. He had Superman wallpaper and wore Adidas tops. He had white drainpipe chords and scuffed Gazelles. We used to go dancing to These Animal Men at Ziggy's nightclub on Micklegate and drink cheap lager as the sun came up. Thing was, he sang really loudly and had the worst voice I've ever heard. If X-Factor had been around back then he'd have entered it and everyone would have laughed at the audition. But, he was very sweet and made me laugh a lot. He was my first proper boyfriend.

### **Because You Always Hurt The One You Love**

Running through Shadwell's industrial lights  
into the night, away from Mile End

my heels were broken, metal on pavement  
silk scarf in a bow, choking and tight

I put up a fight in a two page letter  
cowardly typed on Microsoft Word

found fifty six reasons – all of them lies  
hacked out, sans serif, signed off 'with love'

it felt like the breath was wrenched from my lungs  
sucked up, blown out to the twinkling sky

I sat by the reeds, grand union canal  
opened my first pack of menthol cigarettes

in the midsummer silence all I heard was his scream  
causing a ring I couldn't escape

and a memory imprint of him on his knees  
as I walked, back turned, into the light

later on I lost count of the calls that he made  
messages left, my phone switched to silent

brown case on wheels sat by me that night  
for I had committed unspeakable crimes

I could still hear his scream, tagging my shadow  
whiplashed insides spilled out to the park

red tears in the night, red tears in the night  
tinted in bourbon, fell from my cheeks

red tears burned holes through black shirt and tights.  
In the Palm Tree's back room I stared at old pictures

of boxers, bare knuckles, Whitechapel fighters  
and slugged back shots against gold lame walls.

Lee Rourke, editor of *Scarecrow* and author of *Everyday* asks Adelle: Do you like rats? And have you found them to be bigger down south than up north?



I hate rats. This stems from reading a book way advanced for my years, called *Lair* by James Herbert. It was about a plague of super rats that lived in Epping Forest. There was a giant worm that spawned them and they overran the whole of London. This started my obsession with rodents. Also, my Dad is a farmer and during the summer I would go ratting with him in the calf pens. I would stick a pitchfork into the straw and as the rats shot out my Dad would clatter them with a spade. It was like whack-a-croc.

A few years ago I got myself the ultimate ratting tool: a Patterdale Terrier. I used to live out near Hackney Wick, there are hundreds of rats everywhere out there – my dog is from serious ratting stock. In one summer he took out about a hundred rats. After they kill them you give them a drink of milk to wipe their palates. I used to train him by watching ratting films - my favourite is *Ratting at the Chicken Farm with Albert Fox*. It's like rat snuff porn; apparently *Night & Day with the Yorkshire Ratters* is a classic. Albert Fox is my ratting hero. His dogs wiped out 369 rats in one session; Albert has an engine that smokes out the rats, they go flying out of the holes then he sets his terriers on them. It's a sight to behold.

As far as the North vs South debate goes, I think they are pretty much equal, though London rats are very well fed – all those Fried Chicken boxes have a lot to answer for.

When I moved to Haberdasher Street, one night I found a rat in the toilet. It was hanging on the U-Bend with its tail swishing up and down. I couldn't see the head, only the tail. I was considering sticking my hand in, pulling it out, and beating it over the head with a bottle of Domestos.

Apparently rats symbolise a fear of becoming a destitute scavenger, although personally I put it down to James Herbert...

### **The Worst Days Of Your Life**

By the time I had hit my fifth year at school my hair had grown and was coloured purple.

The school decided to phase out black uniforms and everyone was instructed to wear navy blue. Of course, I had no intention of ever wearing navy but for some reason the head of year let it drop. They knew my parents were getting divorced and gave me an easier time than the other girls in the year.

On the school photograph I am the only one in black with a white face, skirt hitched high above the knee. That morning I had been pulled into the toilets by Miss Millet who screamed blue murder at the Revlon liquid eyeliner piled on my lids – she grabbed me by the collar and marched me to the sinks, prodding my shoulder blades with her spindly yellow finger,

“You young lady, can take that muck off your face!”

“But Miss, please..”

I tried to avoid her gaze as her shrill voice resonated like a jackhammer through the back of my eyeballs.

“Your problem is you are too big for your boots!”

No matter how much charm I tried to turn on, with that old serpent there was no mistaking the inevitable, she was about to administer the Holy Grail of painful make up removers. Incensed with rage at my obstinate attitude she grabbed the back of my hair, forcing my face into the sink.

“How dare you wear that tart’s paint on school photograph day?! Who do you think you are? Eh? You know the rules at Tadcaster Grammar: No Punks, No Goths, No Weirdos, No Make Up, No Black, No Nail Polish. But for some reason, Miss Stripe you seem to have ignored me. Yet again.”

“But Miss. I’m not doing any harm. I can’t help it if I’m different.”

"You are not allowed to be different. That's the whole point. You will do exactly as I say. And that means following the rules. I saw you last week with a red scarf on. Waving it out the window at me in the bus park. You think I didn't notice didn't you?"

"No Miss. I didn't see you..."

I tried not to laugh. All I could think of was the cider I would drink that night and the new Roxy Music album I had bought at *Les Emmett's* that weekend. I thought of boys and discos and *The Boy Looked at Johnny*. I thought to myself, 'What would Julie Burchill say in this situation?' and whispered at the old crow as she stamped her pensioner's shoes on the cracked piss-stained tiles.

"Well Miss. Some of us have youth on our side...and I think I look pretty damned hot. You should try make up sometime, it would do wonders for your jowls..."

She shrieked at me and pulled a pile of green sandpaper hand towels from the wall, pushed the cold tap onto full and scrubbed the make up off my eyes and cheeks.

I remember the toilets smelled of shit. And cheap Impulse body sprays from the fifth year girls. The old bitch dragged at my face, clawed the paper across my eyes and dripped smeared mascara onto my cheeks. The shame of it. Not the shame of the public ticking off, more the shame of having to spend the rest of the day at school without it.

A few days later someone went into the toilets and shat in the washbowls, smearing shit all across the walls – spelling the words 'TAD GRAMMER IS SHIT', incorrectly, all across the tiles. I got hauled into Millet's office; she was sure it was one of the fifth years but there was nobody there that would ever admit to it. I explained to her that I would never spell Grammar with an 'E' so it obviously had to be someone from remedial class.

In the toilets they had transparent greaseproof paper to wipe your arse with. It used to skid off your butt cheeks and slip into the water, reminding you that the school was under invested and you dear student would never be worthy of wiping your arse with the proper paper the teachers used.

I hated Tadcaster Grammar School. Every day a sinking feeling wallowed in my gut as I dreaded lessons with Pineapple Head or the geography teacher with sweat rings the size of dinner plates under his armpits.

At least the boys would relieve my boredom.

Most of the boys in the fifth year would have permanent erections. I knew because I had a trained eye and at lunchtimes I would go to the top of the playing fields to cop a feel of my latest interest's hard on. And sometimes on the bus home I would also manage to forage in the trouser tops of the ones who had developed faster than everyone else. The boys would line up as I walked down the bus, whispering my name as they prayed I wouldn't sit next to them. Sometimes I would bring my friend along and we'd stroke each others inner thigh as the boys jaws dropped open; real life lesbian sex – or the closest they would ever get to seeing it.

Every morning the day would begin with a torturous two mile run in the sleet, rain and mud. All through the hail-drenched winters we would be forced into a pair of 70s gym shorts, an Artex shirt and knee high cricket socks. Minus 7? *Get the shorts on girls we're going for a run.* If we didn't complete the cross country in under eighteen minutes we would be forced to do it again. And again. Until we did manage a lap in the time they specified.

The boys would wait for us in the bushes, smoking cigarettes and cracking one off to the blonde thin girls who kicked mud in their faces where they hid in the thickets. They would ask me to report back about the showers.

The girls changing rooms were strictly communal; all the girls had to change in front of each other. No privacy whatsoever. The head of games would make us strip off and march into the showers as we tried not to stare at each other's tits and muffs. The teacher had massive swinging breasts and the hairiest fanny I had ever seen. It made me feel slightly sick. I would store up the details and tell all the boys about it on afternoon breaks outside the science blocks. In exchange for my dirty stories they would give me cans of beer and crumbles of cheap hash.

And that's where my journey of smutty tales began. I was a purveyor of filth from the age of fifteen...

Ben Myers, fellow Brutalist, poet, journalist and author of *Dreams of Luminous Lines* asks Adelle: If you were to make a choice on a desert island, which would it be – tea or coffee?



I have deliberated on this and it's a tough choice. On the one hand, coffee – well, without it I can't get up in the morning and, ahem, it keeps me regular. But, how could I go through life without a cup of Yorkshire Tea? It's a king of drinks. Yorkshire Tea has this lovely deep orange tannin colour and with limescale, causes a film of dark brown to collect on the top. It punches you in the face after a cup. You can even drink it at night. And what coffee offers a top class token service like Yorkshire Tea does? Even on my desert island, I could still collect the tokens and save them up in the hope that, after a few years, I could send off for an apron, hard water tea caddy and a tea towel. I like the design too; they manage to capture everything that is great about Yorkshire in a nice sensible water colour on the front of the box. Brimham Rocks, Masham, stone walls, sheep, even Bolton Abbey. If I'm feeling flush I'd buy a packet of Yorkshire Gold. The thing I like about the tea is that you only have to mash it for a minute and do the five squeeze teabag tip then bingo, a perfect brew. Apparently Booths have launched a 'rival' tea...called 'Lancashire Tea' – the bloody nerve of it, eh?

### **Lucid Dreaming In A Gypsy Caravan**

*- sestina on Valentine's Day*

Green leaves and red flowers painted on panels  
 Gypsy Rose Lee once stood in this door  
 lined purple curtains shroud frost from our feet  
 barn owls and curlews keep me awake  
 across fields of clay mud - in the air hangs an eagle  
 chasing small rabbits on heath land and hedge.

Peach and grey haze, Skirrid shadows the hedge  
 I read Vasko Popa, Pasternak, beside panels.  
 From goose feather blankets I look for the eagle,  
 as black cats bask against corrugated doors  
 the scent of ash cinders still keeps me awake  
 on soft calves and shins I press my cold feet.

Thrashing their wings at the glass near our feet  
 moths, cabbage whites from the braided bare hedge  
 torch light at dawn a substitute moon – awake  
 for the third night staring at panels,  
 I wrap troubles in dreams, head to the door,  
 run across fields, reach up to the eagle.

Wind in my hair, overhead floats the eagle  
 as morning dew soaks through the soles of my feet  
 a shamanic cliché, like a scene from *The Doors*  
 I think I am mystic and climb over hedges  
 cracking my ankles on woodworm soaked panels  
 a groan from the vardo says he's awake.

I blame it on sleepwalking, that's why I'm awake,  
 not running round fields, chasing an eagle,  
 he laughs, reaches out - pulls me under the panels,  
 squeezes cold toes on the tips of my feet,  
 crackles the kindling, burns wood from the hedge,  
 kisses my neck and closes the door.

From outside to in through the caravan door  
 half clothed in the half light both half awake  
 through the curtains, bent over I stare at the hedge  
 and point to the shape that I think is an eagle  
 twisted and tangled - our arms, wrists and feet  
 glued bodies cast shadows on crocheted rose panels.

"Is the door still open? Are you awake?" whispers the eagle  
from beyond the hedge as visions unfurl in a series of panels  
I now have talons where once I had feet.

Tim Wells, lover of reggae, editor of *Rising Poetry* and East End bard extraordinaire asks Adelle:  
Shag, Marry, Kill – Raymond Chandler, John Cooper Clarke, Thom Jones?



Tim, this is a hard one. As I wouldn't want to shag, marry or kill any of them. John Clarke, well, he's bag of bones but an interesting one at that. Maybe I could marry him and he could tell me how I make better tea than Nico ever did and give me a few poetry lessons whilst I'm at it? He could sing *Evidently Chickentown* to me in the bath. Raymond Chandler, well yes, mystery men are always good for a shag – I think he's probably the best candidate. There's something appealing about the idea of a man in an overcoat with a trilby on. I always found the Noir genre very sexy, so he's probably the best of the bunch. Which leaves Thom Jones who I will have to kill. It's a hard choice as his stories run on boxing themes and touch on some serious Schopenhauer ideology, which I'm rather partial to along with Kant....

### **Why Net Curtains Are Symbolic In The North...**

It took what seemed like a lifetime to scabble up Wingate Hill's rocky track to the farmhouse overlooking the Vale of York. Every time I sat in the muddy fields listening to the squeals of stuck pigs, I would think of Nana baking giant Yorkshire Puddings in the old house she called 'School House'. If you walked up and over the dual carriageway bridge, past the derelict windmill and

beyond the old Oak Tree damaged by countless car crashes, you got to the School House at the top of Wingate Hill. It was where I had the most fun growing up. Fields, butterflies, silence, rabbits, quarries, Carmelite Friars and honey bees. Between Hazelwood and Wingate Hill was a place I called home.

Wingate Hill was next to a village called Stutton. It was a small place with only one pub, a few hundred houses and a community of middle class twitchers who felt they were above living in Tadcaster. Nana used to tell me stories about the goings-on in Stutton. According to her, Stutton was a hotbed of wife swapping, perverts and paedophiles. In the 1950s, the women would put a packet of washing powder in the window in order to attract any man who might be passing - obviously whilst their husband was away at work or having a fling with the latest secretary. The washing powder was OMO, which stood for 'Old Man Out'. Every time I went to the village I tried to imagine the boxes of OMO in the kitchen windows and milkmen and delivery drivers popping in and out of the painted doors.

There was a woman in the village that spawned eleven kids and when she put her sheets out on the line, the sheets were always black. This was of great concern to Nana. It was a representation of being morally corrupt. The family didn't have a washing machine. But in Nana's world that was no excuse. The wife was known as the only woman in Stutton to have black tits. She would show them off down the pub for half a stout, flashing a toothless grin to anyone who asked.

In Nana's rulebook you judged a woman by the colour of her sheets. Cleanliness was akin to godliness. You could commit murder, fraud, burglary and rape – but if you had white net curtains you were forgiven, 'You can say what you like about her next door, she's got lovely clean sheets!'

I could never quite understand how white washing meant that you were a good person, but for some reason it was a code between the women in the town where I grew up.

And I made sure that when I grew up, I would never have net curtains or white sheets.

Matthew Coleman, film maker, poet and author of the *Provocative Pages* asks Adelle: What shining relics would you like to be remembered for? What deeds done would you like to leave, like a statue for people to marvel at?



I hope that some of my books will make it into the archive at the Poetry Library in the RFH and maybe some in the British Library. I hope to complete my life as an obscure poet of the northern underground, leaving a few books for people to read in a couple of hundred years' time. I love rifling through old chapbooks in the Poetry Library by people I've never heard of, some from countries all over the world, dating back to the turn of the century. I think that's one of the best things you can bequeath as a writer, just knowing that a copy of your book is locked away in an archive for people to stumble upon one day. I don't have any other ambitions and would be mortified if anyone built a statue of me. I would hope that the local kids would deface it and decapitate me.

### **Eiderdown**

Nothing  
 beats  
 waking up  
 with you  
 on a  
 sunday morning  
 buried  
 underneath  
 pillows and blankets  
 my toes

touching  
yours

I spend my  
whole week  
waiting and wishing  
for that special  
time with you  
when pink light  
illuminates your  
unshaven face  
sunken  
in my armpit  
whispering  
"good morning – y' alright?"

I smile and  
say yes  
because I know  
life just  
doesn't get better  
than drinking  
coffee  
and watching  
countryfile  
with you.

Heidi James, ballet dancer, head honcho of *Social Disease* and author of *Carbon* asks Adelle: Patti Smith or Siouxsie Sioux?



Well, this is definitely a Siouxsie Sioux answer from me. I love Patti Smith but she is a moaner and does go on a bit. Every time I listen to *Horses* I get excited for about five minutes then have to turn her off as all that rock roll mythology/invoking the spirit of Jim Morrison bullshit really gets my goat. The thing is *Piss Factory* was one of the first pieces of music that made me want to write. The thing that puts me off her is that she really takes herself way too seriously. On the outside she's a poetic goddess of cool, yet I reckon behind closed doors she puts on her tracksuit bottoms just like everyone else and watches Jeremy Kyle with her rollers in. Siouxsie Sioux also takes herself way too seriously but you have to admire a woman who dresses up in bondage gear and takes her boyfriend for a walk round Bromley shopping centre on a dog lead. *Happy House* is also one of my favourite ever songs. There's something very creepy about her music but she rocks a great eye make up look, which scores points for Sioux. There are so many other female punks who I probably prefer to Patti and Sioux – Polystyrene, Patti & Judy Snatch, Linder Sterling, Viv Albertine, Gaye Advert, Jordan, Soo Catwoman, Jeanette Lee, Kleenex to name but a few!

### **Feed Me With Your Kiss**

It was one of those clammy midsummer days. Damp. Stifling. The sweat ran off my forehead as I set off from the house towards the street where he lived. That afternoon he had emailed me four times:

*I want you. In an hour. Tied up to my bed.*

It was a year since we first had met. And what initially we thought was a flash in the pan, turned out to be an everlasting season of trips through the park to the flats on the hill. He would email me every morning, asking what I was wearing that day and often,

*I've been looking at pictures of you again. The ones from last week. With your arms behind your back and your legs spread apart.*

And every time his name dropped into my inbox I would cross my legs under the desk at work. The finance manager would wonder why I was letting out squeals and gulps as I sat speechless in the corner of the office. Pretending I was wrapped up in important proposals, the emails would fly from my account to his, playing tennis between Brick Lane and Camberwell, each word dripping with ambiguity; the patch between my legs getting damper through the day.

I would write him poems, telling of how I wanted to be pushed up against the wall down a dark alleyway, his palm across my mouth as he pulled my skirt up to my hips and pushed his soft fingers through the lace in my knickers. Then he would mail me back, as my boss screamed and ranted, telling me how he was thinking about me, and what he was doing as I sat at my desk.

It didn't take much for me to make up excuses. A doctor's appointment. 24 hour gastric flu. Whatever it took to get me out of work, regardless if it threatened my job; I was so blasé, I just didn't care anymore. Because all I wanted was to slip into my high shoes, pull on my Cuban heel silk stockings, backcomb my hair and run down Hanbury Street towards the bus stop to his flat.

He would command me via text to arrive at his flat or be waiting on a street corner wearing a mink coat and the Japanese stilettos he had bought me for my birthday. And I would wait. Sometimes for an hour before he turned up. The wait would drive me insane.

And knowing that he was sat in his car watching me as I caught the eye of every man passing made him want me even more. When he crept up behind me sliding his hands up the inside of my leg he would whisper,

*Don't say a word. I've been watching you.*

I would feel his hard cock rub up against my ass cheeks, as he opened the door into the seat of his car. And the heat. My underwear soaked through in anticipation of this man. A man who had more power over this self-confessed feminist than any other man had ever had. I didn't think for

one second about morals. It had been a long time since I had felt this good. And a longer time still since the riding crop had stung the skin on my ass.

Thinking about him got me through the long days at work. In the office I would shout and scream, break balls, fire staff but on a night, on a night things would change.

And on this particular night, in the midst of midsummer, I made a special effort. I slid on a pair of silk seamed stockings that he bought me from Amsterdam. During our stay, back in the spring when we ran off for a weekend of smut in the Vondelpark, he took me round the Red Light District – my second visit there.

After staring at women perched in stools by canals and the British stag parties throwing up on the cobbles, we wandered into a theatre - 20euros to watch a live sex show. Somehow the peepshow seemed a little more appealing, privacy booths banned only for couples. Of which we broke the rules, of course. Locking the door behind us we watched a girl dance from the peepshow cubicle. She had white blonde hair and a picture postcard pink slit, I could feel him getting hard as I slid my hands into his trouser pockets.

Through the windows the girl writhed close to the glass, as we watched ten pairs of eyes in the cubicles behind her. He stroked the back of my neck and pushed his fingers into my bra, circling my skin as the girl spread her legs in front of the window. She beckoned to us and he led me through the back doors into a private room. He paid euros to the girl as she sat us down in a red velvet booth, pulling her pert cheeks apart, as she poured oil down her torso. I watched transfixed. And we could have done it there and then. She could have bent me over and slid her polished nails up inside of me and he could have pushed his cock into her, as I leant over her mouth, as she ran her tongue from my ass into my pussy. And I would have kept on kissing him, deep and hard and fast and frantic as he pulled his cock out and sprayed cum across her naked belly. But no. He wouldn't give me the satisfaction of that this time.

*It's time for us to leave.*

We left the peepshow theatre and he could feel the pulse beating on the nape of my neck, shuddering ten to the dozen, and he smiled at me. He flashed the most beautiful smile, the smile that first made me tear off my clothes and come all over his face, the first time he made me dinner. It was a smile that would make any woman melt. And his smell, a scent that made me

wet every time I forced my face into his downy chest. Just being near him made me shiver. And in Amsterdam he bought me the Cuban Heel Stockings.

He liked me looking like Bettie Page. They were expensive 'but worth it'. He bought me pairs in red and black and would tell me which colour he would me like me to wear – down to the very last detail of the colour of my coat.

After a day where I had spent the morning at my desk, making excuses about 'a property I needed to view' I set off to his flat on the East London line. I could see him watching me from the bottom of the park, his blinds twitching from the Victorian front. I sent him a text, to let him know I was there and dressed as a secretary. At his express command.

*I know. I've already been watching you. Take a deep breath.*

It would be an hour at the most before I would feel him inside of me. That depended on how long he would make me wait. If he had watched dirty movies that day, I might have to wait for at least a few hours. If he hadn't though, I knew his balls would be heavy and ready for me; his hard on at full peak before I walked through his doorway.

I pressed on his intercom and waited for his response.

*Go out into the street again. I want you to sit on the bonnet of my car. Bend over and look in your handbag. I want you to pull your skirt up a little so I can see the tops of your stockings.*

I walked out into the street and saw the dim lamp shimmer on his desktop. I could see only his silhouette as I rifled through my bag. I did exactly as I was told. And as I pulled the hem up on my skirt, it didn't matter one bit if anybody else saw me do it. If they wanted to watch they could. But this wasn't about them. It was about me and him. It was sexual obsession in an unconventional frame. This was all about the chase. And how long he could make me wait.

He waited for five minutes before he released the buzzer on the door. I pulled down my skirt and walked up the second floor of the flats. The door to his apartment was open. He was sat in his chair with his belt in his hands. In front of the television was an empty chair.

*Take a seat.*

I locked the door behind me, removed my coat and sat on the swivel chair to face him.

*Don't look at me. Look at the television screen.*

I obediently looked ahead and felt the heat rise between my legs. He stood up and pulled the blinds down on the windows that overlooked the street. All except one.

*Put your hands behind you. Clasp them together tightly.*

He pulled out a reel of shiny black tape and locked my hands to each other. He pulled up my skirt and ripped open the buttons on my tight shirt. He forced his tongue into my mouth for a few seconds. He tasted good. I lurched forward to kiss him again but this time he wouldn't let me. He pulled away a few inches. He loved to watch me beg. I pleaded. Instead he kissed my neck. Even better.

He pushed up the volume on the stereo to drown out any noise I might make – and pressed play on the DVD player. I spread my legs apart as he tore off my silk panties with his teeth.

*I told you not to wear these.*

When he said things like that I got even wetter. I watched the screen as images flickered up of a red haired, big lipped model laid across a leather sofa. She dripped hot wax onto her nipples and pushed a glass vibrator all the way up her pussy. He knew I liked that film. But this time he would pause it and leave it on the screen, running in slow motion, playing with time. And he put a strip of tape across my mouth, so this time I couldn't scream. He would re-enact the scene straight onto me. What I didn't see was the camera. He had left the tripod in the corner of the room and left the blind open for perfect light. He spun the chair over to the camera and started licking my clit harder than before. He could feel I was about to come. So he stopped and pushed a vibrator up inside my pussy. It was the same one as the one on the screen. I opened my legs wider, as he sucked on my nipples, dripping hot wax onto them. And if I flinched it didn't matter. Nobody would hear me scream with a tape across my mouth.

He stood up and pulled the tape off my mouth, pulling his cock out from his trousers and pushing it deep into my throat. He cut off the tape from my hands and pushed me onto the bed where he slid his eight inch cock all the way down my throat. It felt like I was finally free. As the air

stopped reaching my brain, I could feel my clit pulsating harder. And with every gasp I took he pushed the vibrator into my pussy deeper.

Black. White. Stars. And then nothing. The camera clicked off in the shade of the afternoon's light. Our bodies lay still as we stared into each others eyes. Tears dripped from the corner of my eyes, eyeliner smudged, lipstick smeared on my face and his stomach.

Paradise never felt so good.

Joe Ridgwell, writer, journalist and creator of the Lost Elation asks Adelle: If there were only 24hrs left in the world, what would you do and who would you do it with?



I would go and sit under the old Oak Tree in the paddock outside of my Dad's house. I would make sure I had a gingham blanket, English strawberries, a Victoria Sponge and my portable record player. I think I'd play some records, eat cake and make daisy chains. I'd be there with my dog Seth and drink a malt coffee mocha milkshake flown in from Ed's Diner. I would invite my parents, my sister, Ben and my cousin Emma. If any of us could get a word in edgeways I think we'd probably end up taking the piss out of the whole situation and wondering how the hell we'd ended up covered in cow pats in a field just outside Tadcaster.

**I Can't Kick This Feeling When It Hits**

That night, on the hill  
I dressed as Cleopatra,  
gold eyes, black kohl,  
a snake around my head

the sky was orange  
at four in the morning,  
I rolled in wet mud,  
caused a stain on my dress

all the boys laughed  
at the green on my ass,  
drinking old sherry  
to the Teardrop Explodes

and I sucked on three cocks,  
of Elvis, John McEnroe,  
even Yasser Arafat  
who sold pink Champagne

my pale spotted skin  
bathed in the milk  
of cheap fancy dress  
and Crème de Menthe stains

but the fingers of Elvis -  
dirty and cold,  
rived at my cheeks  
(where I wanted soft kisses)

I crawled on all fours  
under the pool table  
fell asleep listening  
to a jumping stuck needle

mouth tasting of men,  
 the walls in a spin,  
 I slept, face down  
 in my teenage sarcophagus.

Tony O'Neill, poet, author of *Digging the Vein*, *Hero of the Underground*, and *Down and Out Murder Mile* asks Adelle: Should art and commerce ever mix?



I think the simple fact is – you need money to live and you might as well earn it from something you are interested in. To get paid for your art is the ultimate goal for most of my friends, who are penniless artists, musicians and writers. It's no fun when you can't even afford a loaf of bread, yet you still have to pay out £600 a month in rent for some fleapit room in a shared house in Dalston. If you can sell your art and get by then I think you've achieved the perfect balance. I've been a student for two years now; by the time I graduate in 2009 I will owe the government £22,000 for my BA. And that's after bursaries for being a mature student. There's no wonder people don't want to go to university!

In an ideal world I would write books, sell enough copies to pay the rent and eat, whilst sticking to my guns in terms of style and content. The hard thing is finding a publisher who will facilitate that without interfering with your writing. One of things I've liked the most about working with Geraint at Blackheath Books (for *Some Things Are Better Left Unsaid*) is that he makes really beautiful books, yet has given me the freedom to choose my own poems and front cover. He has

hand made every copy himself, in his own house and I think it really shows. There is so much love within his books, so much effort, that book buyers can smell the authenticity a mile off. If I could work with someone like Geraint for every book I put out then I'd happily set up my own cottage industry of publishing DIY poetry books. It would be great to think that you can sell enough chapbooks to live off but that's not going to happen in my lifetime. I think you need to sell 300 copies to be the best selling poet in Britain. It sucks! So, my point is, I'm under no illusion that I'll ever make a penny from my writing but if someone offered me half a million for my obscure collection of northern poems, or even to get my tits out for Playboy, I would, most definitely sell out.

### **Champion Of Nothing**

When I was a little girl my Mum had lots of gay friends. Most of them were hairdressers and would come round the house every few months to talk about the National Hairdressers' Federation, new tubes of peroxide and Lady Diana's latest look. They sported brightly coloured hair, expensive smelling aftershave and always, always, big moustaches. I loved them all. I had around twenty 'uncles', who would bring me additions for the giant Sindy house that sat in my bedroom. It had four floors, a side elevator and a swimming pool on the roof with a built in Jacuzzi. Barbie didn't cut the mustard; I preferred Sindy - she had a big head, rosy cheeks, a curvy bum and black hair just like mine.

Some days I used to draw nipples on the plastic dolls to try and make them more authentic. Sindy not only had a four storey house but also two horses and a brown, streamlined motor home. Between me and Sindy, we constructed plots inspired by *Dallas* and *Dynasty*. My gay uncles would bring me dresses for her to wear and if it was my birthday, new furniture for the house. If I was lucky Sindy would get shoes to match and I would dress her up and all of her friends too, letting them get off with each other on the swimming pool terrace, drinking Malibu cocktails in the dark shade of the Yorkshire sunlight.

None of my friends were allowed to play with my toys. I was an only child and because of that, I had the best toys on the estate. I hid them in my room and refused entry to anyone except my cousin Jessie.

One day Mum sat me down for a quiet chat in the conservatory. "Meg. I've got something to tell you. Mummy's having another baby. Don't be sad. Be happy. You're going to have a companion...."

I watched the snails crawl up the window pane as the rainfall drenched the geraniums in the window boxes and I wondered what it would be like to have a brother or sister. There was a sinking feeling in my stomach as I realised that I might even have to share my bedroom; kicked out of my nest at the age of eight.

"...and me and your Dad were thinking, that maybe, if we have a little girl you might like to call her by a name that you like?"

Brilliant. I got a trade-off. If it was a sister, I would call her Gertrude, Maud, Jocelyn or Veruca. My brain started ticking over as I managed a half-smile. "Okay Mum. I'll have a think about it..."

Mum was pleased that I had taken the news so well.

I walked upstairs and punched the baby doll that lay on my pillow, slammed the door and lay face down on my Victoria Plum bedsheet. This was bad news. Mum had told me if it was a girl I would have to share my Sindy house.

In one of my best temper tantrums to date, I pushed all of my Ladybird books off the shelf and onto the carpet. I sat down with a battered copy of *George's Marvellous Medicine*, wound up Snowy my one-eyed dog (who played *Brahms' Lullaby* and nodded his head) and had a bit of a cry as I heard my parents chattering at the bottom of the stairs. Dad had come home from work early, but most of the time he wasn't around. He was a farmer and would come home covered in cow shit every night. Dad had two hundred women in his life, who were more important than us. They were black and white and demanded constant attention. Sometimes even in the middle of the night.

To top it all off, that weekend we had a visit from Uncle Willy. Willy the wrestler was Glaswegian, six foot five inches tall, was built like a brick shithouse and had a black handlebar moustache. One time he brought a picture of him in his wrestling outfit - it was an open front leotard like Big Daddy's; he wore a funny eye mask that made me nervous.

Willy had a boyfriend called Brian - he had an orange face and wore wet-look mascara. Every time they visited I got loads of great presents. The last time I got a Droopy & Browns frilly

handbag and a mustard yellow, open-top Sindy Car. I was excited that they were coming. It would certainly take my mind off the new addition.

At Christmas Big Willy would always send Mum a rude card. One time I managed to sneak into her top drawer and take a look. There was a picture of a real naked man. He had baby oil slicked over his body and was wearing a Santa hat. He had a very big todger with a miniature Santa beard covering his hairy bits. When I opened the card it sang *Jingle Bells* at me. Every year after that I made sure I broke into Mum's private drawer.

\*

It was a Saturday afternoon and Mum's delicatessen delivery had arrived; four sausage rolls, cream éclairs, vanilla slices and a box of Cornish pasties. As usual I rang up my cousin Jessie, who came over on her bike. Between the two of us we microwaved all the chicken and mushroom vol-au-vents and ate the strawberry custards.

I made sure that Jessie went home before Mum and Big Willy arrived. I didn't want her to get any extra attention. She was pretty enough as it was. She'd won the Tadcaster Carnival Queen competition three times and was even a Rose Princess. At the Youth Club talent contest she'd done an acrobat routine and won. I'd recited a Phillip Larkin poem and murdered T'Pau's *China in Your Hand* dressed in a brown leotard with red tap shoes.

Everyone laughed at my bad perm and even worse voice. I wanted barrel curls and bright blue eyes, not bushy eyebrows and a sprouting moustache.

The door bell rang after *Family Fortunes* finished. "Meggy – we're home...Guess who's here!!"

I ran to the door and saw Big Willy. I gave him a cuddle and he gave me a squeeze. He had a big bag with one enormous present in it and an envelope on the top.

"Hello Meg – how are you? I bet you must be excited about your new brother or sister, eh?!"

I blushed a little and pulled up my neon socks. "Yes..."

"Aw Meg, c'mon – you're not feeling left out are you? You'll have a little baby to play with. It'll be brilliant. I've even bought a pressie for the new delivery."

My face dropped as I realised that the big present wasn't for me. It was wrapped in Hamley's paper with a bow on top. Mum pulled the box from the bag and brought out a Cabbage Patch Kid. It was the ugliest doll I had ever seen. It had a round pug face with yellow dreadlocks in a clump on top of his head. He wore a pink romper suit and had a stitched on belly button. The best thing about the Cabbage Patch Kid was that he had an adoption certificate in the box. I pulled it out and wrote my own name as the parent.

"Meg!....what are you doing?...he isn't for you – he's for the baby."

Mum rubbed her belly and took me into the back room for a talking to.

It wasn't fair. Why couldn't I have my own Cabbage Patch Kid? Then I could show off and take it into school. Everyone would want one and I'd be the only person who had one. Until the baby came I'd make sure it was mine. By any means necessary.

\*

The next day Mum and Big Willy got up early; it was the annual York Hairdressing Championships. Every year I would go to the Knavesmire Racecourse with my Mum and run around the empty corridors as she chatted to her friends, who had peach-coloured hair and big earrings. Empty glass boxes with Tote on the front ran for miles along red patterned carpets – they had white betting slips scattered all over and the windows looked out across the race track and fields.

The competitions were held in a big banqueting room and a DJ would play loud music as girls with too much make up on held long poses and tried not to sneeze. My favourite competition was called 'Fantasy'. There would be a theme, sometimes 'Outer Space', other times 'The Greeks' – the last time I went Mum entered one of her customers who had a Soft Cell tattoo. She painted him white and built big feather wings for him. He had a horse's head made out of Papier-Mâché on a stick; Mum called him *Pegasus*. Mum thought she should have won that year but got beaten by *Countess Dracula* at the last post. The model had backcombed hair and was covered in spider webs all across her velvet ball gown. There was a dry ice machine under her skirt that let out smoke across the floor. From the side wings, the hairdresser had a remote-controlled hand stuck on a four wheel mini motor car that sped across the floor with fake blood dripping out of the top. I screamed but Mum couldn't stop laughing. That year she didn't mind being second best.

I was excited that Big Willy was going to the hairdressing competitions too, as I would pester him all day for free lemonade and get him to tie my hair into ringlets. He was dressed in a black tuxedo with a silk cummerbund to keep in his belly. He was going to be a judge and decide which model had the best hair.

Mum was entering one of her models called Celine. She had blonde hair and was going to wear a sparkling canary dress with taffeta underneath. Celine was an air hostess who smoked Silk Cut cigarettes. Mum used to make hair pieces for her on a polystyrene head she kept in the kitchen. Every night she would sit with a dust mask on, perched on a stool, sticking hand made silk flowers and sequins into the hair. They looked like giant snail shells with feathers on the side. She would stay up until late at night, spraying lacquer onto the head and re-combing the hair with pins in her mouth. I would wander downstairs after smelling the fumes and find her asleep in her shoes on the breakfast bar.

Every year she would enter the competition and hope to come home with a trophy. She had a collection of them on the shelf in her salon. One was called *The Golden Tulip*. I would polish them with Brasso for pocket money once a week. I tied blue and red ribbons on the side and traced my Mum's name on the plated wooden stands. I was proud my Mum was a champion. This time she was going to come home with the *York Cup* and I would show off in the playground if her picture got into the *York Evening Press*.

\*

I had spent all week thinking about the hairdressing competitions. That morning I got up and put on my mauve Dash tracksuit with matching deck shoes. Uncle Willy laughed at me when I ran down the stairs; he told me I looked like a boy. Mum told Uncle Willy off and started packing her boxes into the Cortina.

"Your Nana will be round in ten minutes Meg so make sure you're on your best behaviour."

I felt a well of sadness swirling in my belly. "But Mum..I thought I was coming with you today..I *always* come with you to the hairdressing competitions..." I wanted to cry but tried to be brave in front of Big Willy. I looked at Mum with my big sad eyes that always got me sweets and ice cream, "Mum, please let me come?"

Mum sat next to me and gave me a big hug and whispered in my ear "Meg. I'm sorry but not today – I've got too much on. Mum's feeling poorly because she's having a baby. I can't look

after two babies today Meg. Please be understanding. I promise to bring you a present back...Tell you what, why don't you come to Blackpool with me instead? I'll take you to see Paul Daniels at the Tower Ballroom."

I frowned and grumbled in a low voice "But I *hate* Paul Daniels! I want to come and watch you today. Why can't I come?"

Mum turned her back on me and told me I was ungrateful. I folded my arms and started to sulk. Nana turned up five minutes later with a baking tin full of iced cream fairy cakes.

I watched the car vanish up Fairfield Road and waited for Nana to start baking the Yorkshire Puddings.

\*

As the day passed I looked out of the window at the kids playing on the street. Some of them had dirty knees and the boys were playing rough and tumble. I watched one of the girls, Claire Dawson, pull the hair of one of her friends – she was a tell tale tit and I hated her. When she used to call round for me I would hide behind the sofa with Mum and we would pretend we weren't in. I'd rather sit on my own and read than listen to her awful Shakin' Stevens records.

That day I thought about what Mum and Big Willy would be doing. I wished I could have gone with them and didn't have stay in rubbish old Tadcaster. I wanted to earwig on adults' conversations, run away from the horrible kids on the estate. But more than anything I didn't want a brother or sister. Being on my own suited me fine.

I picked up the Cabbage Patch Kid and ran my fingers across his big chubby face. He had dimples, a hard head and a body made out of soft fabric. I wondered if Mum's baby would look like him.

Downstairs Nana watched the TV and read books by Catherine Cookson. I opened up my packet of felt tips and pulled the Cabbage Patch Kid into the light. I thought the doll would look better with a make-over. Just like the ones I did on my Girl's World. I took out a pair of scissors and chopped off its hair leaving only wiry ends. I drew sharp fangs, spots, bushy eyebrows and a Hitler moustache on its top lip. It wouldn't win the Fantasy competition and I was almost certainly going to get grounded for a week. But in that moment, it felt good to pretend that I was the apple of everyone's eye. I put the Cabbage Patch Doll back in its box and stuck the pair of scissors in the back of its head.

I was the Champion of Nothing.

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