



BEAT THE DUST

December 2007

Adelle Stripe interviews herself



Tadcastrian poet Adelle Stripe is the editor of *Straight from the Fridge*. Her writing has been published in *Flux* magazine, *Savage Kick*, *Rising Poetry*, *PBHP*, and in two new anthologies in 2008 – *City Sickness* and *Degeneration X on Social Disease*. She is a music editor at *3:AM* and regular contributor at *The Stool Pigeon*. Her debut poetry collection *Brutalism One: Nowhere Fast* is published on Captains of Industry Press, alongside Tony O'Neill and Ben Myers.

Q: So Adelle, tell us about your living room

A: Well, there's a big Mexican wrestling poster on the wall of Santo. A fibre glass floor lamp. A fire. A bookshelf crammed with beat literature, thousands of LPs, and boxes of reggae and punk 7inches from my DJ days. Ben is watching *The Mighty Boosh* with his snakeskin slippers on. *Kilimanjaro* by The Teardrop Explodes is sat on the record deck.

Q: What book is by your bedside?

A: About 15. There's a biography of Caravaggio, *The History of God*, *Borstal Boy*, *Wait Until Spring Bandini*, *You Don't Have To Say You Love Me*, *V for Vendetta*, and *The Norton Anthology of Poetry* to name but a few. Depending on what kind of dream I want to have I choose a book according to the bedtime remit.

Q: If you were to recommend a day in Peckham to a tourist, where would you send them?

A: Firstly, Khan's superstore. The shop that has everything. Then onto Gaby's for a saltfish pattie. Buy a book from Roz at Review. Walk across the Rye and try and find William Blake's tree where he had his visions. Then onto Nunhead Cemetery, sit in the bench at the top of Dissenter's Row and watch the sun go down across London. If you're still on the go, walk back down Forest Hill and stop off to see the house where they filmed Entertaining Mr Sloane... Other local attractions include Boris Karloff's house, The Hornimann Museum, Chener Books on Lordship Lane, and St.Christopher's charity shop for good second hand clothes.

Q: Anything else you would like to plug?

A: Oh yeah. Brutalism One: Nowhere Fast is out in January. We've got a big box about to go on sale via www.captainsof.com

hinterland by Adelle Stripe

He made her feel uncomfortable, and she didn't like that. It was the look on his face, the way that sweat boiled up in the acne scarred crater pits that littered his jowls, the stench of old tarter from his nicotine stained teeth, even the way that he jutted out his hips when he walked – in fact everything about Old Chump at the petrol station made her stomach sick.

Located somewhere between the M62 and the back roads to Hull, where trees never grew and the sky was dark grey, the wind throttled the window frames in the old station, as her fingers ached around a black coffee cup, sucking the heat into her frozen bones.

As the sun rose over the fields of dirt, the rest of the country coiled up in deep sleep, she stumbled down the hill and opened the shutters, as Old Chump rubbed his scaly hands together, watching her on CCTV from the back office. And every day she muttered and groaned as the stacks of newspaper (damp from fresh rainwater) gained two stone in weight as she pulled them across the forecourt.

For £3.75 an hour she stocked up the cigarettes, filled out time sheets, took readings from creaking fuel pumps and waited for customers. It was a glittering future at the hands of Texaco Oil Corp.

Early mornings brought in Vauxhall Novas, alloy wheels adorned the souped up boy racers - their final pit stop returning from The Gallery in Leeds. In a Ben Sherman buttoned down shirt, sensible trousers and Patrick Cox loafers, the tall one called Dave with curtain hair bought packets of Royals and Fab ice lollies. The girls in mini skirts waited in the car. She handed back his change as envy stopped a reply smile dead in its tracks.

If only she could go dancing all night to acid house, taking Double Dollar dips, listening to DJ Huggy. She imagined watching the sun rise over a thumping warehouse in Ancoats; instead of across the godforsaken forecourt, the only sun rise that greeted her each day.

Lack of funds was slowly killing her. No pay rise in at least three years. No chance of that from Old Chump. He made excuses about rising costs, and how maybe one day, if she 'improved' her attitude he might consider a 25p hourly raise. She knew he pissed every penny away in the bookies. Profits were spent on cases of Scotch hidden under his desk. He would scratch at the old anchor tattoo on his wrist, the only hint of his former life in the navy, and pour another taster to get him through the day.

It was a stalemate. A well of resentment consumed her. Violent thoughts crossed her usual placid face. If she fed him to the pigs nobody would miss him. There was a fleeting fantasy to break into the safe, run off with the cash, hitchhiking across Europe. But with his new camera system there was no chance of that. He suspected his staff might be up to dirty tricks.

Her eyeballs were bloodshot, every blink giving her a split second of life saving sleep. Icy draughts ran up the back of her shins as she stared at the buses with steamed up windows, the people inside happy, wrapped up in scarves, smiley faces drawn on the fogged up glass. The

bus disappeared into belching black clouds, off to the bright lights of Hull, York and Leeds, where they'd spend money, drink cappuccinos, lose themselves in overcrowded streets. Emptiness consumed her. She wanted escape. Just like the nameless faces taunting her from the coaches.

If it wasn't for Old Chump's tight wallet then the job might have been tolerable. She found ways to relieve the boredom. There were only so many shelves to dust and toilets to disinfect of ripe shit stains from the night's previous shift. On days when he drove off in his grubby Austin Maestro, buying packs of bacon from Morley Macro - that was the time when she could have fun.

Sneaking into the storeroom, stuffing her cheeks with stolen chocolate, squashing slim packs of red Marlboros into her bra pockets, she found a new type of morning stimulation. She thanked God for Old Chump's bumper orders of Day-Glo Jazz mags.

Reader's Wives offered salvation.

Not through the pictures of fake tanned bimbos, wearing only ankle chains and heavy mascara. Not even in the smutty stories from Bradford *'One day a builder came round, I was feeling horny that day as my husband was away on business...'* It was through the pages at the back, buried in classifieds, that a new column had started up: Readers Wives Contacts UK - *'Localised for Maximum Thrill'*.

She wondered why the men in the contact pages took pictures of themselves in their worst fitting underpants, a black mark crossing out their eyes. She preferred to look at the rooms behind the men; most of them didn't even bother to make the bed. Rice pudding walls, stained empty mugs, even pictures of them and the wife in happier days framed in the background. The men wore sports socks and open toe sandals. Some asked for a bossy dominatrix. Others took photographs of their flaccid members with a tape measure wrapped around the side.

She thought about placing an ad - an act of mischief that would bring her at least a few pieces of fan mail. She hoped the men might send her photographs - she would name her collection Losers UK. Offering a combination of everything that all of the men were seeking, the legions of forgotten husbands would besiege her address with lust requests and envelopes stuffed full of cash. It was decided her picture would be shot in the bathroom - taken on a Polaroid camera from the top of the cabinet. She would advertise for a submissive. Wearing a rubber Cat Woman mask, a fishnet body stocking, pink high heels, and sucking hard on a Sherbet Dib Dab - her new name was 'Fat Yorkshire Jane'.

With ink stains running onto her bitten down fingernails she chased the idea to its conclusion - how a collection of the country's biggest sexual losers could be a perfect addition to her already over packed bookcases.

Every afternoon on her return from the garage Jane scrubbed the floors in her two-bit red brick flat, cleaned the windows, and boil-washed her sheets. Meticulously she pulled out each photo album, ran chamois leather across the covers and pushed a cotton bud down the seams dipped in a glass of boiling water and white vinegar. The lino floors sparkled in the sunlight. Jane washed her red raw hands with antibacterial wash, and looked out across the collection with searing pride. She thought back to the debut album of photographs; the job in Castleford processing pictures - where she fed rolls of film into a machine. Every day thousands of images passed through her hands. 'Doncaster's finest' as she liked to call them. The ugliest men were the ones that interested her.

On her first week at work she saw hundreds of badly focussed disposable camera shots, and wondered 'imagine waking up next to that?' As a hobby (or more as an act of evil) Jane brought back snaps of beer guts, men jerking off, and shots of their cocks from the waste bin at work. Her friends would scream with laughter down the Royal Oak pub, and unsurprisingly Jane's photo albums made her the most popular girl in town. Over 18 months her once empty phone book became crammed with scraps of paper - life could not get any better. Until one night, by accident a volume was left down the local pub, and handed back to Snappy Snaps HQ. And there her career as a developer ended. Her only redundancy being the photographs she kept.

On a dark January morning, rustling through the dirty magazines at the back of the storeroom she chanced upon an advert that caught her attention:

WANTED
**STERN EXHIBITIONIST FOR VOYEURISTIC
 YORKSHIRE COUPLE. MUST NOT BE CAMERA SHY.
 CAN TRAVEL. GSOH AND PVC ESSENTIAL.
 (DISCRETION ASSURED)**

Somehow the wording in the advertisement triggered a flashlight in her head, sending a tiny electric current running down her spine. She rubbed her cold goose bumps through the white cotton shirt, generating enough heat for another five minutes, and circled the ad with a red felt tip pen.

"Interesting..."

Taking a scalpel from the newspaper pile, she cut out the page in Reader's Wives and slipped it into her bra. Jane made herself a strong cup of Co-Op Instant Coffee and smiled at the prospect of a new adventure.

She decided to compose a short note to the PO Box address using paper and stamps from the stationery section. Written in black ink, using her best comprehensive school handwriting (the one she always used to fake sick notes to the teachers when her Mother was drunk down the British Legion) - the letter had to be perfect. Her nerves would not show through.

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to you to inform you of my interest following an advert read in November's Issue of Contacts UK. You will be pleased to hear that I am 5 ft 6, with black shoulder length hair, and like to pose naked for the camera.

I am willing to travel, and also to partake in a threesome - although I would appreciate a photograph of yourselves in advance of a meeting?

Donations encouraged, in the form of cash.

Yours Sincerely,

*Jane Rhys Scott
 01964 765341*

As the buzzer beeped and flashed on pump three she could only think about the advert, and what trouble she might get herself into this time. She licked slow and hard on the first class stamp and pasted it onto the corner of the envelope.

Within a week of posting the letter, a reply was received in a pink floral envelope. The postmark was from Pontefract - only a bus ride from her own front door. The handwriting was ladylike, and Jane sniffed at the paper which had been sprayed with Anais Anais. The letter was from a woman, named 'Patrice'. The letter contained a photograph of the woman, dressed in red and black Anne Summers standard issue. Patrice stood behind a wall with a peach floral border and a pot-pourri bouquet hanging from a light fitting. She wore a wig and the fat rolled out over the top of her hold ups.

Jane laughed at the picture and wondered if Patrice was a dinner lady and what her husband looked like. There was no picture of him. Patrice had large sagging breasts and was winking. Her g-string revealed folds of flesh, and thick dark pubic hair spilled out from the sides.

The letter was an official invitation for a threesome. Her husband was a 'voyeur' and was under strict instruction to stay behind closed doors. Patrice had organised the meeting as a 'special treat' - a secret for him on his 48th birthday.

It was at this point that Jane wondered if she might actually have to go through with the ménage a trois. That was never the original intention. Part of her thought it could be fun. But part of her knew that all she wanted deep down was a photograph. Taking the photographs herself was a strange concept. Having cash in her pocket for doing it seemed like a decent offer. It could be well spent on a new investment of leather bound albums. But the idea of Jane being in the pictures, or even taking them herself gave her secret hobby a new and disruptive angle.

Jane considered the letter, and commemorated the day with a new album, titled '*People I have met – but wouldn't want to meet*'. She pulled back the cellophane and inserted Patrice's picture, closed up the book and put it into her chronologically ordered shelf.

The next day a cheque for £5 was mailed to Contacts UK Classifieds department. Her face lit up when the picture appeared in February's edition. Jane waited for the box to fill up. In one week she received fifteen letters from desperate men in the north of England.

It was more attention than she had ever known. Each picture was carefully placed into the new album, their letters in the opposite page – her advert pasted into the front. Over three weeks it was nearly complete.

Patrice's letter was still on her mind. It was the itch that wouldn't go away. The fact she was only a bus ride away made the prospect seem more real. The money, escape, and photos of Jane might just break the tedium of day to day life. Reluctantly, she posted a reply, and arranged a visit for the following Friday.

Over the next few nights she spent every waking hour making up excuses, and trying on different outfits. She would be filmed and Patrice's husband would be watching from his peephole. Somehow it didn't sit right. There was something about the letter that wasn't quite right. Jane worried about the voyeur. If she knew him there could be trouble.

On the Friday morning, after a stretch of sleepless nights, Jane arrived home to find a message on her answer phone. This was a rare occurrence. She pressed play:

'Hello Jane, it's Patrice. Look, I'm really sorry – can't make tonight. My husband's not too pleased about our little arrangement. He's found out and has gone ape shit. So we're off to Weatherspoons for a chicken dinner instead. Sorry to let you down love, but I'm worried this might cause damage to a very wobbly marriage. Thanks anyway...'

Jane let out a sigh as she listened. An act of God had let her off the hook. She wandered into the kitchen and opened the envelopes picked up from her box. This time there were only five. She boiled the kettle and rubbed the sleep from her eyes.

Carefully Jane sliced open the first letter, and pulled out a photograph of a man dressed in a blue satin Alice in Wonderland dress. He had a large bow in his hair and wore a blonde curly wig. He had knee high socks on and big black buckle shoes. He was laid across a Shackleton chair with frilly white girl's knickers on. His shaved and polished balls were hanging from each side. Jane thought they were the biggest knackers she had ever seen. She looked closer at his face, past the smeared on cake foundation, and noticed acne crater scars all over his face. And a small tattoo on his left wrist with an anchor.

The next morning Jane arrived at work two hours late, and demanded a 25p per hour pay rise. With a rare smile on her face and the letter in her top pocket she knew she would get everything she asked for.

Karl Koweski interviews himself



Q: a/s/l?

A: 33 male Alabama

Q: what are you wearing?

A: pyjama bottoms, Spongebob Squarepants motif

Q: shaved/trimmed/or natural?

A: fri-sat shaved, sun-wed trimmed, thur natural

Q: latest chapbook available?

A: Diminishing Returns www.sunnyoutside.com

Q: are you happily married?

A: yes I am... hello? hello? u there?

a couple polacks and a dumb ass by Karl Koweski

drinking Okocims

at Pawlewski's Pub

a Polish soap opera

plays on the television

suspended above the bar

a police officer

and a swarthy man

wearing a fingertip length

black leather jacket

sit on the edge of a bed

making "yucky" faces

and rubbing their bellies

the bartender translates dialogue
when the conversation
doesn't zip by too fast

"not sure what's happening, now"
Mark says, cracking open
another Okocim
"they ate some poisonous mushrooms"

"is that a bad problem in Poland?"
I ask "tainted mushrooms?"

"how the fuck should I know?
I ain't never been there,
learned the language from my jaja"

two stools down
a young guy who's been
text messaging on his phone
for the last twenty minutes
asks for another draft

"got a good woman,"
the young guy says
motioning to his cell phone
"been together nine months
she wants a commitment
but I don't know
I love pussy too much
to stick with just one.
what do you think of that?"

"what do I think of that?
I think you watch too much tv
just because I pour your drinks

don't mean I give a shit
about your life or
have any opinion at all
about what you do with it"

Mark walks back to my corner
after a few minutes of
television gibberish, he continues
"ok, the guy with the cop
is a member of the labor party
the cop was suppose to deliver
some kolachky to the mayor
but the mushrooms
gave them bad gas"

Edmond Caldwell interviews himself



Q: How many rejections does your first novel have now?
A: I stopped counting at twenty.
Q: What is the main reason given by editors for the rejections?
A: They find the hero unsympathetic.
Q: Is the hero unsympathetic?
A: He's a sociopath, you tell me.
Q: Why are you so angry at capitalism?
A: It looked at me funny.
Q: If you could be buried alive with a famous person, who would it be?
A: You my sweet!

good deeds by Edmond Caldwell

I had just completed a run and was walking the rest of the way home. It was a cool, showery morning, and even though I had worn a cap with a visor, the lenses of my glasses were misted over with fine droplets of rainwater and fogged from the heat of my face. My sweatshirt was damp with the rain and the t-shirt underneath with sweat, so wiping the lenses was clearly out of the question. Lifting and lowering my chin to peer under or over the rims, I tried to decide if I could see better with or without them. I took them off and cradled them in my fingers, squinting for a few blocks until I came to the intersection I had to cross, where I put them back on. The glasses were still wet and as soon as they settled on my nose they fogged up again.

There was a crosswalk at this intersection but no stop-light. Traffic was not especially heavy, but two young girls stood at the curb ahead of me, paused as if afraid to venture into the painted lines or perhaps heeding remembered words of caution from a parent. I couldn't tell too clearly through the wet befogged lenses but the girls appeared ethnic, with long straight black hair and brown skin. I assumed they were sisters, an older and a younger sister – or at least a taller and a shorter – and the hands of the taller sister rested on the handle of what looked like a baby carriage. I couldn't see if there was an infant in the carriage or not – maybe the carriage was a toy and there was a doll inside or even a pet – but it was obvious that the smaller sister was too large to have been its possible occupant now toddling alongside on foot. The girls were wearing long pastel-colored dresses instead of more typical attire such as jeans; there was something – especially with that baby carriage – old fashioned if not foreign about them.

There was a sign in the meridian reminding drivers that it was the law to stop for pedestrians in the crosswalk, yet the two girls looked like they might be waiting for the moment when simply no cars at all were visible as far as the vanishing points up and down the street. This chance to cross would be gone before long, so I stepped out ahead of the girls and held up my right hand, palm out, towards an SUV hissing along the wet asphalt about fifty yards away. I also lifted my left hand, fingers spread slightly, towards the girls, as if indicating for the driver the reason for my stop gesture or as an invitation to the girls to enter safely the arrangement of parallel and diagonal white lines demarcating the crossing. In any case my gestures produced the desired results – the oncoming vehicle slowed in plenty of time and the sisters undertook finally to cross the street. The older or at least taller one pushed the possibly-empty baby carriage before her and the younger or shorter one rested her hand on the carriage's edge, in lieu perhaps of being able to clasp her companion's hand for the crossing. One of the girls said thank you as they moved behind me but I gave only a slight nod and a hum of acknowledgement in response – I was keeping my eye on that SUV and a more distant blue car which had appeared further back in the lane next to it.

I caught up to the sisters as they stepped onto the concrete island of the meridian. The wheelchair-access dip allowed the taller sister to push the carriage onto the island without too much jostling. Plenty of cars were approaching the intersection from the opposite direction, but I now felt firmly in charge of the girls. Whether they had attached themselves to me or I had adopted them, we had become a temporary unit. I let some of the nearest cars pass and when a gap opened up before the next wave I stepped out. This time I felt far less tentative about thrusting forward my hand, palm out, at the oncoming cars. The cars in the first lane slowed and the girls followed me into the street, but it looked like the foremost car in the further lane was going to speed right through the crosswalk even though it was impossible at that point that its driver did not see us. With an appearance of affront I gave my extended arm an extra push – as if pumping a symbolic brake pedal, perhaps – and halfway through the intersection the car finally stopped. There were two lanes of stopped cars now so our procession had an audience as we made our way at last to the safety of the far curb. Here the sisters and I parted company, the girls pushing their delicate carriage down the side street while I continued up the main road in the direction of the apartment-block where I had recently rented a basement studio. The sisters didn't thank me again and I offered only a parting wave myself, which the girls appeared not to

see. Our unit had dissolved. The cars on my left resumed their journeys, whizzing past me on the wet asphalt.

Looking at the blurs of the cars through my misted-over lenses made me wonder if it had been unsafe for me to have elected to ferry the girls over the crosswalk. I didn't think so, but their safety had not been my chief concern anyway. The children had been a pretext to stop traffic, I realized. Whether on foot or driving a car – back when I could afford my own car – I always felt excessively vulnerable on the streets. I couldn't go out without feeling jostled, particularly by other males; in fact I was so sensitive to real or imagined jostling that I could even feel jostled by a male passing on the opposite side of the street if he happened to be walking in a strutting or assertive manner. I imagined that the drivers I had made to stop had been males, even though I hadn't actually seen them. For a brief moment I had dominated them and their cars.

By the time I went down the steps to my apartment I was imagining that the drivers might even have taken me for an off-duty police officer. The cap with the visor was blue, and I wore blue sweatpants and a grey sweatshirt. My gestures had felt authoritative and I'd inhabited them as if I had been a quite different person. As I unlocked the door I remembered the surge of power and pleasure. But this made me feel uneasy now, because I hated the police as much as I feared them. I had been in town only a few days and hadn't yet registered with the police, which I was required to do by the terms of my probation. Days later, while waiting at the station, it occurred to me that of course the baby carriage had been a toy.

William Taylor Jr interviews himself



Me: Hey Bill, how're you doing today?

Me: Fine, just fine.

Me: Whatcha up to?

Me: Listening to Gram Parsons and submitting some sad little poems here and there.

Me: Why?

Me: I can't imagine what else there is to be done.

Me: Fair enough. Anything else?

Me: I need to go to the dentist soon but probably won't. Visit me here:

www.williamtaylorjr.com.

our last 5 dollars by William Taylor Jr

The clever know their way about the world
while the rest of us drift with
the fog and rain

as the last of the day's sunlight
glints upon the windows
of downtown buildings

we sit on the steps of an old hotel

with a bottle of wine
and whatever dreams we've managed
to carry through the years

and some days you see the world

through the eyes
of poets
prophets
and suicides

and you speak in the language
of sad songs
on the jukebox

existing somewhere between lost
and found
we bet our last 5 dollars
on the chance that a few more drinks
will bring us
closer to something.

yourself or something

You wake to find

everything
more difficult
than you'd imagined

the world so
expensive and useless
and easily broken

your skinny fists break against the sky

on an afternoon spent missing
all the people you never knew

pockets heavy with letters
never sent

and a feeling something like
embarrassment
to find your life has boiled down

to handfuls of hours
spent waiting on death

you'd dearly like
to pin some kind of
meaning to something
but it will not hold

the day crawls off
like some wounded thing to die

leaving you
one more evening
to tell yourself

if you can make it
through the night

you might wake to find
yourself or something
beautiful again.

lynze interviews herself

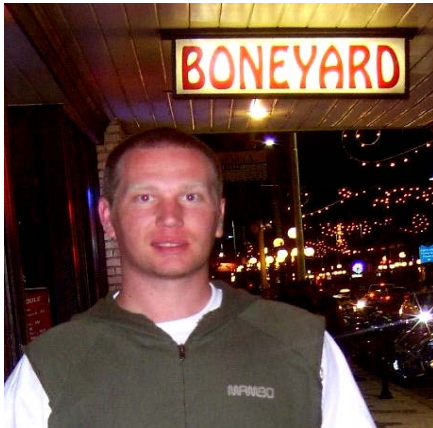


- q. how do you know when the poem's done?
a. it usually hits me over the head with a period then runs into the next room
q. can you tell the difference between fact and fiction?
a. sometimes
q. why don't you use capitals and punctuate correctly?
a. cuz my deadly sin is sloth
q. why don't you care if you're published?
a. who told you that?
a. you did.
q. you believe me? don't you know i'm a writer?
q. who's asking the questions here?
a. i am.

rhetoric by lynze

the sun's been going down earlier and earlier and earlier. oh not perceptibly but it's been shaving its legs closely from one year to the next. june knows this because it's her job to watch the sky with a stopwatch in hand and record the exact split second the eyelash falls into the gutter. when it rains or clouds she feels the spin of the earth anyway, a vertiginous motion sick fly. she's been recording the times for five years, takes triangulated measurements, calculates arc and density in the columns of light that thrust through the sky behind a thunderhead. she's very often correct but not correlative with what the navy predicts. the results are never published. not hidden, exactly, but buried like a face between thighs, satisfied fat folders of data that no one looks to for trends. it's all about the rub. her colleague, hild's on the other coast. it's her job to collect the morning sunrise. she says she can feel the vertigo too, but june doesn't believe she's taking the data. her numbers match the sunrise times predicted, to the nanosecond. june thinks hilda sleeps thru the sunrise. she wants to know if this difference is significant, but she can't prove the difference without correct data. the two times together are designed to encompass oceanic line of sight, the most acute available for the human eye. robots and sensors aren't trusted for this kind of work anymore. the brass is always a paranoid fuck. expectations become their own existence. she's supposed to record to the sixth digit but she's watching the ninth. the data from the last three years shows the trend is there but only on her side. one of us is falling down on the job and it's not me, she thinks. lieutenant armistace creeps into her cubicle on little rat feet, sniffing around. "so lieutenant, i've seen this anomaly." he's not paying attention to her charts. he's looking for the copy of an order for 458 pillows for the new recruits. fuck it, thinks june. this is just a minute part of my job, puts the data into the sunset folder and clicks on the link to purchasing. it's gonna be a long night. she doesn't want to think about it getting longer. the radio begins to play a mid-eastern loop. she's on the phone to the px, putting in the lieutenant's request. the sky glows over her head out the window, erasing itself into black.

Tom Leins interviews himself



Q: How's it going?

A: Not too bad. Life is sweet, right now.

Q: Why are all of your stories set in Paignton?

A: Because I want to put Paignton on the map?

Q: Why on Earth would you want to do that?

A: Because Paignton isn't just a shabby town made of brick, tarmac and concrete, it's also made of memory and imagination...

Q: Hmm. Did you just make that up?

A: No. I wrote it on a piece of scrap paper earlier in the year.

Q: Where can we get our pound of flesh?

A: www.myspace.com/tomleins.

in every dream home a heart-ache by Tom Leins

Her kohl-stained eyes start to water and she gets a mouthful of benediction. I don't kid myself that our relationship is anything more than a series of sleazy psychological battles anymore. It's a damn shame. Less than a year ago she ripped apart my bone-cage and sucked up my dead Paignton heart. We felt like love's young dream. We burned with love, plotting complicated welfare swindles in the rotting heat. She said that I was as handsome as a magazine. I wrote my name in her hair and let her haunt my nights. Now all we have in common is a box full of ratty paperbacks and stolen videotapes. My memories are like vague, broken dreams. I make her day-dream about home-grown atrocities. She makes my piss boil. Guts and lust leave me as nervous as hell. She has both, and sex leaves me shattered and nursing busted knuckles. People say that you win some, you lose some. I'm a three-time loser and my sloppy good looks just keep on getting me into trouble. She lies next to me on the mattress - bloodshot eyeballs the colour of red nail varnish. Winter sun oozes through the gap in the curtains. Under the glint of pink dawn sky her skin looks like vinyl. I have nothing to say, and no way of saying it. My pop life is dead in the water. I wash two rohypnol down with a stale cup of tap water. If this is the future, then count me out.