

A photograph of a person sitting on the ground, wearing blue jeans and sneakers, with their hands clasped in their lap. The background is a red brick wall. The person's face is not visible.

*Disraeli
Avenue*

a novella

Caroline Smailes

Disraeli Avenue

Dizz-rah-el-lee Avenue

Caroline Smailes

First published in Great Britain in 2008 by Caroline Smailes in support of the charity **One in Four** (www.oneinfour.org.uk), an organisation run for and by people who have experienced sexual abuse

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For those who are one in four

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and Campbell-Bannerman Road. The neighbours all said it
dizz-rah-el-lee (four chunks) Avenue. My mother's house was a
semi-detached on a street with 31 similar-looking houses.
They looked identical but I knew that they weren't.
There were differences.*

In Search of Adam

Disraeli Avenue

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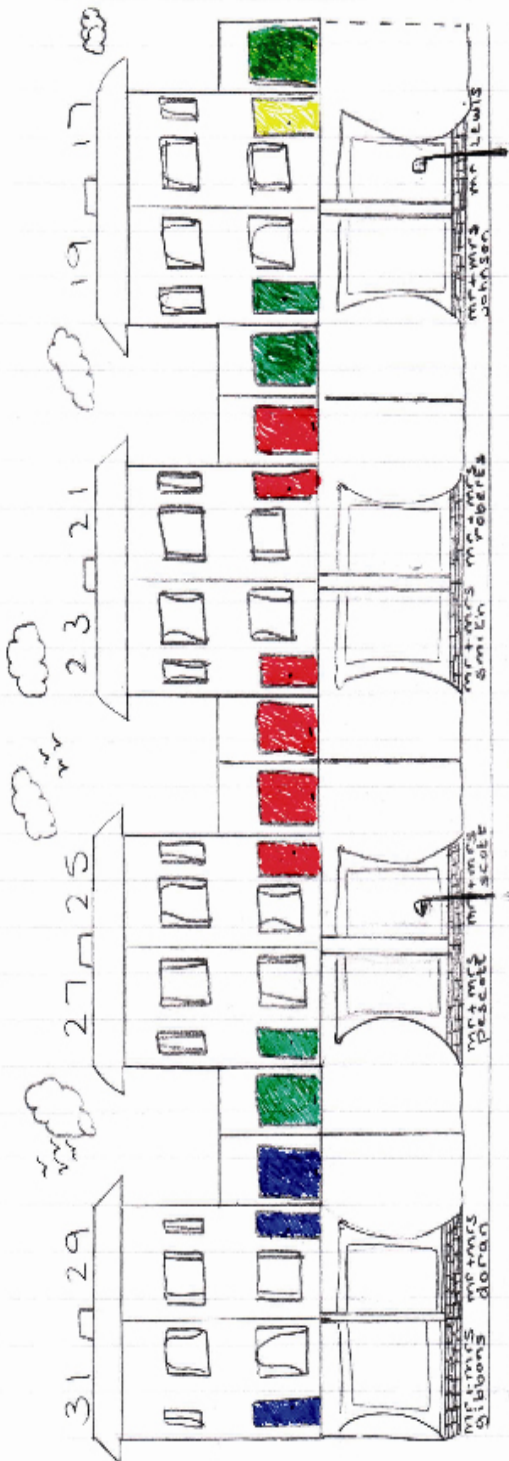
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Number 9

Bill and Jude Williams

Green front door

Green garage door

Yellow car.

KON 908V

In Search of Adam

Two years, six months and twenty-one days before I was born, my parents moved to New Lymouth. From a block of flats that were as high as a giant. My mother's house was brand new. It was shiny. Spick and span. There were two new estates being built in New Lymouth. The housing estate that I was to live on and another one. They each had four parallel streets and formed a perfect square on either side of the main road.

On this Coast Road, there were 'The Shops'. Dewstep Butchers was also New Lymouth Post Office and displayed a smiling pig's head in the window. New Lymouth Primary School. My primary school. Was a perfect E-shaped grey building with a flat roof. Mrs Hodgson (Number 2) told Rita that many cuckoos were put in nests on that roof. I didn't understand. New Lymouth Library was on the Coast Road too. It was a rectangle. Like a shoe box. Inside the library there were eighty-seven Mills and Boon novels and three Roald Dahl books. There were signs everywhere. 'Absolute silence at

all times.' The grumpy librarian liked to read her *Introducing Machine Knitting* magazine. I read the first chapter of *Danny the Champion of the World* twenty-seven times. I read all of *Matilda* and *The Twits*. Thirteen times each. Brian's newsagents stretched across 127–135 Coast Road. Inside the shop I heard gossip being tittled and tattled, as I stood looking at the jars of delicious sweets.

Rhubarb and Custard. Chocolate Raisins. White Gems. Aniseed Balls. Coconut Mushrooms. Brown Gems. Cola Cubes. Pear Drops. Cherry Lips. Liquorice Comfits. Toffee Bonbons. Jelly Beans. Edinburgh Rock. Pontefract Cakes. Pineapple Chunks. Sweet Peanuts. Scented Satins. Sherbet Pips. Midget Gems. Sweet Tobacco. Chocolate Peanuts. Toasted Teacakes. Rainbow Crystals. Sour Apples. Lemon Bonbons.

Unable to decide. I wished that I had the courage to ask for one from every one of the twenty-five jars.

On the other side of the Coast Road there were five really big houses. My class teacher, Mrs Ellis, and Mrs Hughes the local librarian lived in two of them. I didn't know who else lived there. The children in those houses didn't go to New Lymouth Primary School with me. The children in those houses didn't play foxes and hounds around the estate with us *local bairns*. I walked down that road on my way to school. I peered into those large houses. I stopped walking to stare in. I tried to look past the fresh flowers in the window and I thought about all the nice smelling things that would live inside.

The Coast Road ran a slope from New Lymouth down to the Lymouth seaside. The estate that I lived on was at the top of the hill. As the road continued up, it travelled through a number of similar estates and villages. Signs warned drivers when they were leaving one village and arriving in another. My father said that the *nearer yee lived to the coast, then the richer yee were*. We lived about a ten-minute walk from the coast. I'm not quite sure what that made us. All I know is that, when my mother was alive, my father talked about one day living on the sea front. The houses there were enormous. Five stories tall. They went up and up and up to the sky. You could stand on the roof and your head would be in the clouds. I thought that really important people lived in *those* kinds of houses. People like the Queen could live there. A *hacky lad* in my class at school lived in one, with about twenty other children. His mother and father hadn't wanted him. They, the twenty other children *and the hacky lad*, lived in their mansion that looked out over the beautiful Lymouth cove. They were very very lucky. They must have been very very rich. They must have been the richest people in England.

Lymouth Bay was shaped like a banana. There was a pier at each end and three caves lived in the cliff. Just over the left pier. Sat tall on a throne of rocks. There was a lighthouse. The most beautiful. The most elegant. A white lighthouse. Legend had it, that hundreds and thousands of small green men with orange hair lived in it. I never saw them. But. Paul Hodgson (Number 2) had seen one buying a quarter of Toasted Teacakes in Brian's newsagents.

There were one hundred and twenty steps to climb down. One hundred and twenty steps before touching the grey sand. The sand was unhappy. It looked poorly sick all the time. A green handrail wove next to the steps. I never had the courage to touch it. The paint was covered in carved initials, decorated with lumps of hardened chewing gum and topped with seagull droppings. Yackety yack. Hundreds and thousands of lumps. Hacky yack yack. Paul Hodgson (Number 2) told me that his uncle caught an *incurable disease* from touching that handrail. He said that his *uncle's hand had dropped clean off*. I wasn't going to risk it.

To me, the Coast Road seemed to go on for ever and ever and ever. I was told that it was a perfectly straight road, which travelled from the seafront and through four villages. You could catch a bus on the Coast Road. The road passed by my school, up the slope, close to my house and then on through village after village into lands that were unknown. Into lands that sounded magical and exciting. North Lymouth. Marsden. Hingleworth. Coastend. Mrs Hodgson (Number 2) told me that Coastend was *famous for its cheapness of tricks*. A magical place.

I lived in Disraeli Avenue, in between Gladstone Street and Campbell-Bannerman Road. The neighbours all said it dizz-rah-el-lee (four chunks) Avenue. My mother's house was a semi-detached on a street with 31 similar-looking houses. They looked identical but I knew that they weren't.

Disraeli Avenue

There were differences. Thirteen had red front doors. Seven had green front doors. Five had blue front doors. Seven had yellow front doors. The garages matched the front doors. Except for Number 17. Mr Lewis had a yellow front door and a green garage. I didn't know why.

green,
red,
red,
yellow, green, red, red, yellow, yellow, green, red, red, red,
green, blue, blue,
red,
blue,
green,
yellow, red, blue, blue, yellow, green, green, red, red, red,
yellow, red, yellow.

I wanted the numbers to fit better. I wanted the colours to fit better.

It should have been sixteen red front doors. One half. Eight green doors. One quarter. Four blue doors. One eighth. Four yellow doors. One eighth. It was simple. The colours could look really nice. I had worked it all out.

red,
 red,
 green,

red,
green,
red,
blue,
blue
green, red,
yellow, red, green,
red, yellow, red,
red, green, red,
green, red, blue, blue,
green, red, yellow,
red, green, red,
yellow, red, red.

I wasn't happy with Mr Lewis (Number 17). His colours didn't match. Maybe he didn't realise. I wished that I had the courage to talk to him about it.

There was a little wall in front of the garden. A dwarf wall. A dwarf wall for Snow White's friends to play on. There was also a drive for my father's Mini. There was a garden to the front and a slightly larger one to the back. The front lawn was just big enough to squeeze onto it a folded tartan picnic blanket. The soil surrounding the perfect square of grass was always packed with flowers. I watched the flowers. I noted them all in a little lined book. It was green and lived on my windowsill. Thorny rose bushes, coordinating colours and then down to a mixture of blossoms. Depending on the month.

Disraeli Avenue

Gaillardia 'Burgunder'.

Shiny red flower, with light yellow centre.

June–October. 30cm.

Dahlia.

Really orange and red.

June–November. 60cm.

Narcissum 'Amegate.'

*Orange outside with a darker orange
in the middle.*

March–April. 45cm.

I liked to write things down. In the green notebook that I kept on my windowsill. Flowers. Colours. Number plates. Full names. Times. Routines. All of the first chapter of *Danny the Champion of the World*. So I wouldn't forget.

* * * * *

Number 1

Mr and Mrs North

Green front door

Green garage door

Red car

DFT 678T

Martin North leaves home

I was the first lad from Disraeli Avenue to get into uni. There'd been this lad Paul Hodgson who used to live at Number 2, he went on to study law but they'd moved out of the road by then. So I'm saying that he doesn't count.

Getting into Liverpool Uni was fucking huge. I managed two As and a B at A level and my mam was beyond happy. She was right chuffed and painted my results on a white sheet, then hung it from the front room window. It was a right sunny day and all the neighbours slowed down to look at what me mam had painted on the sheet. I told me mam that it didn't really make much sense. So she got another sheet, asked is how to spell university and then wrote 'Oor bairn Martin is ganin to university' in fuck off huge red letters. She was practically dancing around the house. I've made me mam so proud.

Mam, dad and me nana North gave is a lift to Liverpool last week. The car was packed with everything I'd need. Pans, a kettle and a

load of food. Me nana North had baked is pies and scones and stuff. They all wanted to give is a right good start. My going to uni is the most major thing in me mam's life and I have to try me hardest not to fuck it all up.

I'm sharing a flat with two other lads, Ginger Matt and Charlie. They're sound lads. We're right in the centre of Liverpool, just off Mount Pleasant, around the corner from the Everyman Theatre. It's sound being right central. We can walk everywhere and don't have to bother with the last bus or with hailing a taxi. Charlie's a private school lad. He's right posh and his dad's mates with Jeffrey Archer. He's studying French and Spanish. Ginger Matt's a Manc and so fucking sound. He's writing a novel and studying English Lit. They're both a bit off their heads. Charlie has a never-ending supply of pot and is determined to roll the longest joint he can. He reckons he's going to get in the *Guinness Book of Records* with it. We're out every night and I'm spending me money far too fast. The Guild's a laugh and there are thousands of fit birds wearing hardly any clothes. I've shagged two lasses already and I've only been here a week.

Early this morning, I reckon it was just after two. We'd left the Casa before closing and were having a few tins in the kitchen. The kitchen has huge windows and looks out onto Oxford Road. Charlie managed to pull a lass by shouting out to her from the window. The silly tart came up and let him shag her before he chucked her out. We were laughing about that, so I reckon it must have been about three when

we heard screams. Charlie was first to see and ran straight out the flat. He'd had first aid training and even though he must have been stoned, he seemed to know what to do. Ginger Matt had some lass straddling him on one of the kitchen chairs. He was on a promise. I stood at the window and saw her lying, curled up on the road and there were already a few people screeching around her.

The taxi driver was out of his car and was looking down on her. I could see that he wasn't right. He was lighting a fag when he puked all over his shoes. Charlie was on the floor giving the lass mouth to mouth. I could only catch glimpses of him through gaps in the crowd. Another lad, who I kind of recognised from downstairs, was in the phone box, must have been calling for help. Charlie came back up to the flat with the lass's blood all over his face and t-shirt. He told us that she was dead and then he went and got himself washed.

It turned out that her name was Laura. Well that's what a copper said when he came to get statements from us all a bit ago. She was a fresher and studying English Lit, must have been in the same lectures as Ginger Matt. She was pissed after a night in the Casa. She'd been in the phone box calling her boyfriend who was still back home somewhere in Wales. The copper said that she'd been giving the lad shit. The last thing that she'd said to him was fuck off. Then she'd staggered out from the phone box and straight onto the road. He told us that she'd died on impact, and although Charlie had done his best, well there was really nothing that he could have done to save the lass.

And now it's pissing it down outside. The cars are going up and down the road, over her blood and it's as if nothing has happened. I reckon there'll be flowers by the side of the road at some point and a few people will come and stare at the spot. And maybe that's a good thing, because at least if there are flowers people will wonder and ask questions and the poor lass won't have died without anyone noticing. She was eighteen years old and she died after saying fuck off. I'm not going in to uni today. None of us are. We're all going out to the Guild to get pissed. I was going to phone me mam and tell her about Laura, but I don't want her to worry about is. I guess what I'm learning is that life is too fucking short and that I shouldn't waste any of it.

Number 2

Mrs Hodgson and Paul

Yellow front door

Yellow garage door

Red car

GYS 606S

The making of Paul Hodgson's legend

Mam and Sam had met through a dating agency. It'd been advertised in the local *Guardian* free paper and we'd had a laugh about it. My nana was the one who made my mam fill out the form, because she reckoned that my mam needed a man about the house. My mam had been to see Mrs Curtis from number 20 for a tarot reading, she was holding out for a ginger bloke, on a horse in a field full of pumpkins. My nana told mam that she was holding out for a pile of crap and that she had to make her own future, that no one got anything by sitting on their arse waiting for the world to come to them. So mam got the form and, although we took the piss out of her, she filled it out and sent it back with a postal order for £15 (meet your ideal man within six months or get another six months free).

Sam was mam's first date. He had no kids and was divorced, because his first wife had shagged his best mate. Sam's a decent bloke. He's a teacher at the local college, earns pretty good money and treats my mam like a princess. Nana likes him and I do too. I can't really fault him as a person, but his dress sense is shit.

We moved in with him three months after mam met him. He lives on the new estate, in a canny posh detached house with three geet big bedrooms. Mam was a bit stressed about leaving Disraeli Avenue. It was more to do with her independence than anything else and I think that my dad leaving all those years ago made it difficult for her to let go. My nana helped out and gave her a good talking to and then we moved in with Sam. We'd been here just over five weeks when my dad turned up.

Legend has it that my dad left us when I was a toddler. I can't remember much about him. The story goes that he'd been on jury service when he'd met a lass called Sky Thursday. Two weeks after the end of the jury service, after he'd eaten a plate of egg and chips, my dad packed his bags, took a pint of milk and pissed off.

That was the last we heard from him.

My dad didn't bother with us and I'm not too sure how that's supposed to make me feel. He was too busy shagging Sky fucking Thursday, selling crystals from a stall in Coastend indoor market and being a dad to the three kids that he'd had with Sky fucking Thursday. He didn't give my mam any money for me and he never bothered with my birthdays or with Christmas.

I used to care.

Of course I fucking used to care. My dad abandoned me and then went on to be a dad to three other kids. I'd see Karen Johnson with her dad and Jude Williams with hers and I'd feel like shit. I didn't know what I'd done to make my dad hate me, but he must have. My mam's been great and my nana made sure that I had as much as she could afford. She's canny kind. And next week I'm

starting university, studying law. How the fuck did that happen? I'm going to Newcastle, so I'll still live at home with mam and Sam.

But dad turned up.

I answered the door and of course I didn't recognise him. He looked a state in a knitted cardigan covered in wolves and a moon. His hair was long, grey, thin, scraggy and he was wearing flip flops with trackie bottoms. I thought he was collecting for something. Anyway he started talking and it turns out that he'd heard about my mam and Sam and thought that seeing as my mam had come into money, that we'd all be able to be one big happy fucking family. Apparently my three brothers were waiting around the corner to meet me too. I don't know why him having three more lads pissed me off quite so much, but I got the need to deck the bloke.

It was then that my mam came to the door.

I was standing with my fist clenched leaning forward, my mam was in front of me pushing me back with her huge arse and she was staying canny cool. She looked my dad up and down, then she did her fake laughing thing that she does when she's actually scared shitless. She told my dad that we'd managed sixteen years without him and that really he should just fuck off. Then she closed the door in my dad's face.

I used to make up a story for the kids in my primary school class. I'd tell them the legend of hundreds and thousands of small green men with orange hair living in the lighthouse in Lymouth Bay. I even told them that I'd met one when I was buying a quarter of Toasted Teacakes from Brian's newsagents. Jude Williams and Karen Johnson believed me.

Now for the real legend.

Legend has it that I once had a dad who went on jury service and pissed off with some woman who he'd known for all of three weeks. He left me and his wife of ten years for a fucking weird tart who changed her name from Wendy Jackson to Sky Thursday and made my dad want to live in a council flat and play the didgeridoo. Legend has it, that my dad ate his egg and chips, then packed his bags, took a pint of milk from the fridge and then pissed off. It took him nearly sixteen years to remember me.

Number 3

Mr and Mrs Drake

Red car matches red front door

Red car matches red garage door

EVS 343V

A tarot reading

() indicates the length of pause, in seconds

(.) indicates a pause of less than one second

'What question would you like to ask of the cards?'

I'm only allowed one question?

(.)

My thoughts are all over the place

(5.0)

I'm sort of thinking that everyone needs a partner.

(.)

For some I guess it's sexual, for others convenience.

For some I guess that it's a chance to be eternally mothered, for others something else. I wish I knew what that something else was.

(3.2)

No that's not my question. That's not even a question.

(.)

Some people don't enquire. They accept what they're given. They say 'thank you very much' to the first man or woman who happens upon them. They panic, they grab, they accept. They can relax then. They can mate.

(2.0)

And I'm kind of sure that most people can go through life feeling content. They accept, they embrace, they make do with whoever it was who happened to stumble onto them, into them, beside them.

(.)

I'm beginning to sound cynical.

Really this isn't a bad thing.

I'm just saying.

(1.2)

I've been thinking too much about life and death. It comes from living on this bloody street. The bed hopping, the suicide, the abandoning, the repression. It's all getting to me a bit, but we can't move. We've got too much debt, we're trapped.

(3.0)

I'm looking at him and wondering if I've made a big mistake. I didn't know who else to turn to and so I thought I'd try you. I thought you'd understand. I thought you'd be able to see into my lives and give me an answer.

(.)

But I'm only allowed one question.

I'll have to formulate all my ramblings into one, all of these floating thoughts into one question.

(.)

You see I've got to thinking that maybe life is continual.
I know that this goes against what you, what some people believe
in. Well it sort of does. Doesn't it?

(2.3)

That's not my question.

(.)

I just think that life is one big series of livings and deaths. And the
more that I think about it, the more I get to worrying that there may
be one true soul mate for each of us.

(1.5)

I'm rambling on. I'm trying not to sound too manic. Too confused.
But I guess that I am.

(.)

You see, I'm wondering if there is just one special person for
each of us. And then I'm wondering if life is really simply about
bumping into them. If that one special person keeps coming in and
out of our lives. And if only true believers, I mean believers in true
love, could ever realise.

(.)

Does that make any sense?

(4.1)

That's not my question.

(.)

I'm getting to wonder if life is one big game of Russian Roulette,
but without the gun. It's kind of like holding your nerve until the
time is right. Until you get a feeling that there is no next one. Really
no next one. That this one person is true.

(1.8)

I met a lad called Simon when I was five and he was six. I clicked with him instantly. We met at a family wedding. He was on the groom's side, being a page boy. I was on the bride's side, being a bridesmaid. I remember dancing with him during the do. We held hands and loads of people snapped photos. I remember it being late, dark and I remember him leaving the party.

(.)

My mam used to have a photo of the two of us on the sideboard. She'd polish it and tell the same story.

(.)

The story went that when Simon left, I started crying. Apparently I was inconsolable. I sobbed and sobbed.

(.)

'When will I see my boyfriend again?' I asked my mam.

'Maybe when there's another party,' she'd answered.

(2.7)

I never did see him again. Well I don't think that I did. Maybe we brushed into each other. There must have been other family parties. But maybe that one meeting was our only scheduled hit for this life.

(.)

Am I making any sense at all? I know that you'll be thinking that my question is about Simon, but it isn't really. Not at all, really.

(1.3)

You see, I think that I must have loved Simon. Truly loved Simon.

(.)

Apparently I cried all the way home from the party. Apparently I

fell asleep, releasing tiny sobs. Mam says that the next morning I woke up and told her not to laugh at me. She'd been shocked by how mature, how adult like I'd sounded when I was only five years old. Mam reckons that I grew up during that night.

(1.1)

What if Simon was the one? What if he was my one true love?

(.)

No they're not really questions for this reading. Not really. I'm rambling again.

(2.9)

Simon and me never met again. The connection that I had with him was instant. I still remember him. Or is it the photograph that prompts the memory? You see that's where I get stuck.

(2.2)

I think that I came here for you to tell me about life and death. I think that I wanted an answer to my wondering about if I kill myself, if I die tomorrow, will I simply start a new life?

(.)

Because I'm kind of thinking that this life is shit and if I try the next one, then I might meet Simon and I might actually manage to live.

(5.0)

You see me and Len have money problems. It's no big secret. I'm not coping. We married young. I was eighteen and Len was nineteen. We lived beyond Len's wages. We spent, we lived and soon the debts started to pile up. We tackled the bills by getting into more debt and then it all spiralled. We've had bailiffs knocking on our door. I've got nothing. They've had everything.

(2.2)

I've got zero, zilch, nothing left to give anyone. You're my last option. I guess that I came here, hoping that you'd see into my future and tell me what to do.

(.)

You know that I work in Woolworths in Coastend. But what you probably don't know is that I'm only thirty-two years old. I know you're shocked, I can see it in your eyes. I look twice my age.

(3.1)

And Len, well he doesn't work. He spends his days in the bookies in North Shields, he says that it's work. He has bad days and good days. Mainly he has bad days.

(1.7)

He's the one that I married. It was sexual, it was me saying, 'thank you very much' to the first man who showed me any interest.

(.)

He was good looking, came from a nice family, was an apprentice. It was all good to start with, for a couple of years.

(2.0)

But now it's shit.

(1.5)

Now I don't think that I can go on.

(.)

I don't think that I can take any more.

(1.1)

Sorry.

(1.2)

Disraeli Avenue

You asked me what my question was. What question I'd like answered with this reading.

(1.9)

Well I'd like it to go no further.

(.)

I don't want it being spread around the street.

(.)

You see my question is, 'Should I kill myself?'

(.)

I'm supposed to focus on my question aren't I? Would you like me to shuffle the cards whilst thinking about it?

(2.7)

Number 4

Mr and Mrs Black

Black car matches their name

Red front door

Red garage door

POK 776T

The banana and milk diet

Fat.

Fat.

Fat.

Fat.

Fat.

Monday.

Drank – 3 pints of milk.

Ate – 8 bananas.

Fat.

Fat.

Fat.

Fat.

Fat.

Tuesday.

Drank – 3 pints of milk.

Ate – 8 bananas.

Fat.

Fat.

Fat.

Fat.

Fat.

Wednesday.

Drank – 3 pints of milk.

Ate – 8 bananas.

Fat.

Fat.

Fat.

Fat.

Fat.

Thursday.

Drank – 3 pints of milk.

Ate – 8 bananas.

Fat.

Fat.

Fat.

Fat.

Fat.

Friday.

Drank – 3 pints of milk.

Ate – 8 bananas.

Fat.

Fat.

Fat.

Fat.

Fat.

Saturday

Drank – 3 pints of milk.

Ate – 8 bananas.

Fat.

Fat.

Fat.

Fat.

Fat.

Total pints of milk – 18 pints

Total number of bananas – 48

Weight Sunday – 13 stone 9

Weight Sunday – 13 stone 4

Total loss – 5 pounds.

Fat.

Fat.

Fat.

Fat.

Fat.

Fat. Fat. Fat. Fat. Fat.

Caroline Smailes

Fat.

Number 5

Mrs Grant

Red front door

Red garage door

No car

Stamps for Crystal

Crystal from number 9 came and knocked on my door. She's a sweet kid.

'I'm starting a stamp collection. Have you got any spare ones?' she had her eyes pointing to the floor and she was fidgeting, moving from foot to foot.

'Are your mum and dad with you?' I asked, looking over her shoulder.

'No. Mam's in bed and dad's at work.'

'I'll have a good look around and I'll pop what I've got through your door, in an envelope. I'll put your name on the envelope. Is that ok Crystal?'

'Thank you Mrs Curtis,' she smiled, she turned and she walked away.

I started searching for stamps, looking in the bin and on the kitchen side, searching for used envelopes. I looked in cupboards and then in drawers. I had found quite a few before I found the postcard. It was picture down, his handwriting looping up at me.

19 August 1972.

My dearest Loulou,

Weather hot, fishing without a shirt on. Not seen the Monster yet.

Had a dodgy stomach last night. Perfecting my Scottish tongue.

Miss you. Back soon.

Love Bob xxx

I turned the postcard over, the picture was a cartoon. Nessie was coming out from the loch, wearing a tartan beret and looking rather grumpy. She was breathing fire onto a man fishing in a boat. The man's fishing line was attached to Nessie's nostril. I know that Bob would have smiled when he found that card. I know that he would have felt it to be perfect.

Holding the card that Bob had sent to me, seeing the handwritten words that he had chosen for me. I could hear his voice. I could hear him reading the words, emphasising 'yet', laughing after the word 'tongue'.

Bob and I met at school. He was my first and only boyfriend. He was my sweetheart, my soul mate. We married at eighteen, they said we'd never last, but we did. From the day we married, we only ever spent four nights apart. This was the only postcard, the only letter that he ever wrote to me. He'd gone fishing with his brothers, I'd begged him not to go but his dad had been ill and Bob had promised. Bob was a man of his word. I remember crying myself to

sleep that first night. I missed his warmth, I missed how we'd sleep with our legs brushing.

When he came home, he was dirty and shattered. We spent two full days in bed. My love for Bob goes beyond words and clichés. There is no comparison. Even after all these years he still covers me, he tightens my stomach and causes me to gasp in pain.

But Bob died.

His heart was faulty. It was sudden, his death was quick. The doctor said painless, I shuddered at the word. Bob died when we were twenty-eight, before we'd started a family, before we were ready.

But I still talk to him.

I tell him about my teaching, I tell him about the people in the street and the stories that they try to gossip at me. I shout at him for leaving me with nothing, I laugh at him for making such a mess of our lives.

I feel him near to me.

I feel him hovering behind me, breathing on my neck. I turn expecting to hold him, to touch him. I know that I'm going insane. Grief does that, I guess.

I live a normal life outside of my home. I teach a class of thirty-two children. I smile, I control, I engage. Then, within my house I become Bob's wife again. I cook for us both, I set the table for us both. I talk during the meals. I laugh, I cry.

I miss him.

I can't find enough words. I have an ache that turns my stomach, that won't go. I have a constant taste of nausea, I panic when I

remember. I can still see him collapsing, crumpling to my feet. I am helpless.

I long for his touch.

I've closed the envelope, I've written Crystal's name onto it. The scrawl is looped, slowly written. I thought about taking Bob's stamp, about cutting around the perforated edge. But I couldn't.

Finding Bob's postcard is a sign, for something.

Number 6

Mr and Mrs Wood

Yellow front door

Yellow garage door

White car

NPK 911V

Payments for work, not yet done

6, Disraeli Avenue,

New Lymouth,

North Shields,

Tyne and Wear,

NE30 3LF

Dear Richard A. Smith,

23, Disraeli Avenue,

New Lymouth,

North Shields,

Tyne and Wear,

NE30 3LF

Attached cheque for payment for invoice number 124, interim payment number 1.

We are a bit concerned that building work hasn't started yet, but we understand all of the upfront monies that you have to pay out for the project.

Caroline Smailes

Therefore, I attach the advance and now hope that the building work will start before we fall too far behind schedule.

*Yours sincerely,
Mr Wood*

Lloyds TSB		35-46-57	
Whitley Bay (354657) Branch			
1-4 Marina Road, Whitley Bay, North Shields, NE30			
Pay <i>Richard A. Smith & Partner</i>			
<i>One thousand, three hundred and ninety</i>		£ 1,399.90	
<i>nine pounds and 90p</i>		Mr and Mrs Wood.	
Lloyds TSB Bank plc		<i>Mr Wood</i>	
Cheque No.	Sort Code	Account No.	Trans. Code
000257	35 4657	0866542	19

*6, Disraeli Avenue,
New Lymouth,
North Shields,
Tyne and Wear,
NE30 3LF*

*Dear Richard A. Smith,
23, Disraeli Avenue,
New Lymouth,
North Shields,*

Disraeli Avenue

*Tyne and Wear,
NE30 3LF*

Attached cheque for payment for invoice number 125, interim payment number 2.

Of course we are deeply worried that building work hasn't started yet and wonder if the target completion date will be met. It has been six weeks since the first interim payment was sent to you. We do understand that you are having cash flow issues and that you require further upfront monies to progress with the project. We are happy to assist, but will require progression and evidence of labour and materials being deposited on site. Of course we trust you, but we are sure that you will appreciate our concern.

I attach further advance and now hope that the building work will start before the weather turns for the winter.

*Yours sincerely,
Mr Wood*

Lloyds TSB		35-46-57	
Whitley Bay (354657) Branch			
1-4 Marina Road, Whitley Bay, North Shields, NE30			
Pay <i>Richard A. Smith & Partner</i>			
<i>Two thousand, five hundred and seventy</i>		£ 2,574.90	
<i>four pounds and 90p</i>		Mr and Mrs Wood.	
Lloyds TSB Bank plc		<i>Mr Wood</i>	
Cheque No.	Sort Code	Account No.	Trans. Code
000265	35 4657	0866542	27

*6, Disraeli Avenue,
New Lymouth,
North Shields,
Tyne and Wear,
NE30 3LF*

*Dear Richard A. Smith,
23, Disraeli Avenue,
New Lymouth,
North Shields,
Tyne and Wear,
NE30 3LF*

It has now been seventeen weeks since we sent the cheque in payment for invoice number 125, interim payment number 2. Six weeks prior to

that, we sent payment for invoice number 124, interim payment number 1. We also note that both cheques have been cashed.

Of course we are deeply worried that building work still has not started. The target completion date has been and gone, without evidence of building materials or any labour on site.

We understand that you have had other building jobs to complete and that we are 'next on your list', but we would appreciate a date being assigned to the start of the work. Of course we trust you, but we are sure that you will appreciate our concern; after all we have been neighbours and friends for a number of years now.

We would appreciate an outline of your proposed schedule of work and of course, we would like to see work commencing as soon as possible.

*Yours sincerely,
Mr Wood*

Number 7

Mr and Mrs Lancaster

Yellow front door

Yellow garage door

Black car

GOY 443V

On me way to Bet's flat

I met a bloke on the Metro a few weeks back. It was a Thursday, I was on me way to see wor Bet and the missus thought I was working late. The bloke was wearing one of those bright yellow jackets, the kind that the track workers wear, the ones with the big black M on the back. He got on at Tynemouth, sat opposite is and didn't speak, to start with.

The inspector got on at North Shields, shouted 'tickets please!' and worked his way through the carriage and down towards where we were sat. He got to us, the bloke looked at the inspector and then sort of patted the outside of his pockets, as if he was feeling for something. Then he said, 'I'm going to work.' The inspector must have looked at the bright yellow Metro jacket and figured that the bloke was one of his lot, because he smiled and then turned to me. I passed him me ticket and then he carried on.

The bloke spoke a few minutes later, 'Works every time.' He laughed. 'It's me brother-in-law's jacket. He used to drive trains before some lad jumped in front of the one he was driving.'

‘Mr Scott, 25 Disraeli?’

‘Aye that’s the lad, you know him?’

‘Me neighbour,’ I told the bloke.

The conversation stopped for a bit. I didn’t want to get too friendly and for him to go telling Mr Scott that he’d met is. I was supposed to be working late, not going to Wallsend to shag wor Bet. The bloke was sort wriggling about a bit, like he needed a piss. He was staring out the window with the peak of his flat cap almost touching his glasses. They were them big black National Health ones, a bit like those Eric Morecombe used to wear. His hands were tight together and his feet were doing tiny steps. I didn’t know what to make of him.

‘Will you do is a favour?’ the bloke asked.

‘What like?’

‘I’m going to bugger off. I’m going...’

I stayed quiet.

‘Thing is, I didn’t leave a note or nought.’

I nodded my head.

‘And I’ve not taken any spare keks or ought like that.’

I nodded again.

‘I’m just bugging off, so if you could make like you’ve never seen is before?’ he smiled.

‘No problem mate,’ I smiled back, relieved.

We didn’t speak for the rest of the journey. I got to Wallsend station, stood up, caught the bloke’s eye and told him to gan canny.

Number 8

Mr and Mrs Douglas

Red front door

Red garage door

Green car

RTS 446T

James' outbox¹

cm asap²

J³

ruok⁴

:-s⁵

J⁶

cid⁷

:-9 g⁸

1 The folder in James' phone containing sent text messages.

2 Call me as soon as possible.

3 James Douglas.

4 Are you ok?

5 I am confused.

6 James Douglas.

7 You can consider it done.

8 I am licking my lips at you Gill (Gill Andrews from number 18).

Caroline Smailes

jx⁹

gal >:-(¹⁰

j¹¹

f2t m8 cm ned blo asap¹²

j¹³

Ltns g u 3 ths wknd 4 blo¹⁴

jx¹⁵

y¹⁶

8-0¹⁷

j¹⁸

9 Love James Douglas.

10 Get a life, you are annoying me.

11 James Douglas.

12 I am free to talk mate. Can you call me? I need cannabis as soon as possible.

13 James Douglas.

14 Long time no see Gill (Gill Andrews from number 18). Are you free this weekend to share some cannabis with me?

15 Love James Douglas.

16 Can you tell me why?

17 I am shocked by this news.

18 James Douglas.

Disraeli Avenue

dk betr f2f u 3 2nite 4 bit¹⁹

j²⁰

- - - - -

Uraqt g swalk gd shag 2²¹

:-t²²

jx²³

- - - - -

Iou1 thx l8r²⁴

j²⁵

- - - - -

19 I don't know. I think that it would be better face to face. Are you free tonight for a bit? (presumably a bit of cannabis?)

20 James Douglas.

21 You are a cutie Gill (Gill Andrews from number 18). I seal this message with a loving kiss and think that you are a good shag too.

22 I am pouting at you.

23 Love James Douglas.

24 I owe you one. Thank you. Until later.

25 James Douglas.

Number 9

Bill, Rita and Crystal Williams

Green front door
Green garage door
Yellow car
KON 908V

Being Crystal

Mam once told me that my sister Jude had *bad blood*. I didn't really get what she was trying to tell me. She used to say really mean things about my sister. She'd say that Jude was *an evil brat just like her killer of a mam*. She'd say loads of mad stuff about how Jude was *off her head*. I love my mam, but I love Jude too. Jude wasn't my mam's kid. Jude's mam was dead. She died ages before I was born and then my dad met my mam and got married. Mam says that she was really fat with me in her belly at her wedding. Jude and me have the same dad and that's how we're sisters. Mam'd say that we were *only half sisters*, but I knew that was just mam being rubbish.

Jude was nearly eleven years older than me. She was skinny. She could put makeup on really nicely. And she had really pretty blue eyes. I wish that I had eyes like hers. I wish that I was skinny like her too. I miss Jude. I miss her so much that it makes me cry. I cry till my throat hurts. I wish someone would make it better. I wish someone would explain what happened and why my big sister did what she did. She was kind and gentle. She looked out for me

and told me that I was special. She worked in the pub and she used to get me stuff out of her wages. She'd just put it in my room and wouldn't make a fuss. I'd find new stuff and know that my sister had given them to me. My Care Bear with the big red heart on its belly is my favourite thing in the world. When I hold it I think of my big sister. And then I cry. I miss her more than anything.

When I was growing up Jude used to tell me loads of things. She used to say that she was going to protect me. She told me that there were loads of bad people in the world and that she would make sure that nothing bad ever happened to me.

But she was lying.

Because the worst thing that has ever happened to me was done by Jude. And instead of looking out for me and protecting me from all the bad shit, well my big sister made everything go bad. And now because of my Jude I know that no one tells the truth. And no one will give me answers to my questions. And my dad has gone really weird and says that it's his *fault*. And I want to know why it's his *fault*, but I don't know how to ask him. And no one really cares about me at all. It seems to me that everyone is really fucked up because of some bloke called Adam.

You see this isn't a recent thing. It all started five years ago. When I was eight years old. I remember that I was dressed and ready for school. And it was 7:56 am on my watch. I remember the time because I was worrying that I was going to be late for school. My big sister Jude wasn't awake. I needed her to be awake to take me to school. She always walked me to school. I knocked on her door. Gently at first. She'd been so grumpy and I didn't want her to start

swearing or shouting. Jude'd been different for a few days. I didn't know what I'd done to stop her liking me. I remember knocking on her door a few times. She didn't answer to any of them. I went into her room to wake her. I found her lying on top of her duvet cover. She was still wearing her pyjamas and I thought that she was asleep but her eyes were open. Next to her, on her duvet I saw an empty bottle of Vodka. And there was an empty bottle of tablets too. And then I saw a scrap of ripped paper.

There were words on it.

'Gone in search of Adam.'

I didn't understand. I must have known that something really bad had happened, but I didn't scream or shout or anything like that. I was really calm. I remember thinking that she was sleeping funny. But I knew that she wasn't playing a joke. Jude never did jokes. My dad had already left for work and my mam was still in bed. I didn't want to wake my mam. I didn't want her calling Jude names or swearing at her. I didn't like it when my mam said swear words. I didn't know what to do. My mam didn't like it when I woke her and mam didn't like Jude

I took the piece of paper with Jude's words on it. I crumpled it into the pocket of my school skirt. I don't know why I did that, but I wanted it. I wanted Jude's note to be mine. Then, I sat on the bed next to my sister. I held her hand in my hand and I made her fingers slot through my fingers. I wished that she would wake up. I wished that I knew what to do to make her wake up.

I stayed with Jude until my mam woke. I heard my mam moving around in her room. I called out, *mam*. She came into the boxroom.

She looked at me and then at my sister. Then my mum started screaming really loudly. I didn't know what to do. I didn't move.

Then.

My life changed and now I have no one who cares about me.

I miss my Jude.

I wish that she'd taken me with her.

Number 10

Mr and Mrs Russell

Red car matches red front door

Red car matches red garage door

Red car

GOT 654V

I love Noel Ernest Edmonds very very much

I didn't used to like Noel Ernest Edmonds when I lived with my other mam and dad but that was because I didn't know who he was and I'd never seen *Swap Shop* before. We moved here and we got a nice new mam and dad and we got a colour TV and I can watch Noel Ernest Edmonds in my pyjamas and sometimes *Rentaghost*, but he's not in that.

Ring Rinnnnnnnnng.

Swap Shoouoooooop.

La laaaaaaaaaaaaaah.

Hello hello hello hello.

Wave wave wave.

Oh yes, hello.

And a very good morning to you.

My name is Mrs Edmonds.

Noel Ernest Edmonds is my husband and our birthdays are on the same day.

I hope that you can see that in full colour.

We have so much to pack into the programme.

I've found a rather interesting news story for later.

Swap Shoouoooooop

La laaaaaaaaaaaaaah.

I'm going to write in to *Swap Shop* and ask Noel Ernest Edmonds to marry me for real. His birthday is the same as mine and we could get married in a castle. I love him very very much and think that he is canny lush. I would like to know who his best football team is. I would like to brush his straw hair and put nail varnish on his toenails. He's so little and thin and likes to wear brown. I love him so much better than Keith Chegwin who's a bit rubbish. When we have a baby we can call him Posh Paws, which is kind of nearly *Swap Shop* backwards. That's so lush!

Swap Shoouoooooop.

La laaaaaaaaaaaaaah.

Number 11

Mr and Mrs Symons

Red car matches red front door

Red car matches red garage door

Red car

HYT 664X

A potbellied pig for Christmas

Ring a ding a ring a ding a ring a ding a ring.

Hi ya.

[pause]

Mrs Clark, lass.

[pause]

Aye Ah'm alreet. Was just going te call ye.

[pause]

[throaty laugh]

Yee won't believe what Ah just heard about what Mrs Walker frem number 24's getting hor youngest laddie.

[pause]

Aye. Ah reckon he's about eighteen noo.

[pause]

Aye he gets the dole an does the windas wi his dad

[pause]

[throaty laugh]

Aye ernly a matter of time before he goes bad leik his brothers

[pause]

Well Ah wez taakin te me mate Janine aboot it. She's got horsell two of those Rottweilers. They're evil buggers. An sheh sez tha she'd love one tee.

[pause]

Ne you'll nivvor guess. An me forst question wez weor it wez gunna sleep.

[pause]

Ne it's not a snake an it's not a dog. They're the two ideas tha Aha'd tee.

[throaty laugh]

Dad. Dad. Will ye tyek me cup in tee? Thanks pet.

[sound of Mr Symons' footsteps]

[pause]

Anyways. Ah reckon tha he's eighteen years aad an he's got everything, so wheyaye his mam didn't knaa what te get him. Apparently yee nyame it an he's got it.

[pause]

Apparently he's got a load of pig ornaments in his room an that's weor Mrs Walker got the idea frem.

[pause]

[throaty laugh]

Aye a fucking pig. One of those potbellied ones. Canny good job he didn't hev loads of ornaments of camels.

[throaty laugh]

Apparently they had te gan aal the way te Manchester cos nowhere

in the North East does them.

[pause]

Yee knaa what Ah mean, leik breeds them. But Mr Johnson reckons tha there's a playce in Bill Quay tha does them, so they haven't dyun thor homework git well. They could hev saved themselves a few quid.

[pause]

[throaty laugh]

Ah don't care if they're supposed te be cleaner than other pigs. It'd stink the hoose oot. It's got te stink the hoose oot. It's not leik the houses on wor street are huge. Apparently sheh's gunna let him keep it in his bedroom. Can yee imagine what a shock it'd be if he ever took a lass hyem fre a shag?

[pause]

[throaty laugh]

Pig shit aal ower his bed sheets.

[throaty laugh]

[pause]

Anyways, apparently Mr an Mrs Walker went aal the way doon te Manchester. They'd got te taakin wi him frem some bloke on the internet. They were gunna bring the pig hyem in the back of thor blue car. When they got te Manchester, they met the bloke in Asda car park, they paid him a hundred quid deposit, then went te meet the pig. Then cyame the best bit. Really you'll wet yer keks when Ah tell yee.

[throaty laugh]

[pause]

Ne you're so wrong. Honest te God. Yee couldn't myek this stuff up! Mr an Mrs Walker paid the hundred quid non-returnable deposit, then they went te meet thor new pig. It wasn't a little pot bellied thing, it wez a fucking huge pig. It wasn't a dwarf at aal. An they'd paid a hundred quid!

[throaty laugh]

[pause]

Aye don't myek is laugh anymore. Ah swear te God, Ah'm gunna piss in me keks

[pause]

So two hundred-odd miles there an back, petrol money, a hundred quid deposit an then somehow thor laddie foond oot about it. So they can't change thor minds noo. The laddie really wants a pet pig, so they're having te pay more than the gannin rate te get him one.

[pause]

Ah've ne idea weor they get aal thor money frem.

[pause]

Reet dodgy.

[pause]

Did yee hear tha Mr Lewis had ower twenty thoosand quid stolen frem under his bed the other neet?

[pause]

Aye. Apparently he wez in a reet state in Brian's newsagents. Rita Williams wez telling me aal about it an hoo tha Mrs Walker could hardly gandie poor Mr Lewis in the eye.

[pause]

Where'd Mr Lewis got aal his money frem ? He's a reet tight fisted

aad gadgie. Ah've heard some fowk saying tha they reckon it serves him reet.

[pause]

Yee knaa Ah don't leik te gossip, but Ah wez taakin te Rita Williams an Ah reckon tha Simon Walker had summat te dee wi it. He's been flashing his cash around the Traveller's. An Ah reckon a pig's got te cost a few quid.

[pause]

[throaty laugh]

He'll be sleeping in a bed of pig shit!

[pause]

Yee nivvor did! Yee looked in the windas?

[pause]

Ne! Did yee really? You're pulling me leg!

[pause]

What did yee see?

[pause]

[pause]

[pause]

Tha number 32 isn't really port o the street an they've a bairn but sheh doesn't gan te the Primary school. Ah reckon they're stuck up. Wi should send Mrs Walker roond theres wi hor pig!

[throaty laugh]

Shall Ah come roond fre a cuppa an yee can tell me everything?

[pause]

You'll tyek me curlers oot fre me an pull the comb through me hair?

[pause]

Caroline Smailes

Ah'll bring a packet of Custard Creams. See yee in a minute.

[pause]

See ya, gan canny pet.

Ring.

Number 12

Mr and Mrs Ward

Red front door

Red garage door

Maroon car

FVX 404W

Details of a piano lesson

LESSON OUTLINE 4TH JUNE

Theory: p5, Exercise 7 c) and d)

Exam pieces:

New – A3 Allegro in F.

Please use fingers as marked.

Complete to the end right hand only.

The Old Cuckoo Clock.

Lots of practise with this please. Work on sequences right +left

(Left hand bars 6 + 7)

1st three lines hands together.

Slowly!

Moderato in C.

Good playing.

Keep this slow and steady, careful with wrong notes.

Work in phrases, right + left hands together.

Scales:

C Contrary.

Arpeggios: C G + F Major

A + D Minor

Say finger numbers aloud. This week just C D + G Majors.

Excellent!

Broken Chords: Use manuscript for C + G

Parent comment:

Dear Mrs Ward,

I am most impressed with Sarah's progress. She is keen to practise. However Sarah is apprehensive about playing in front of an audience. She informs me that Mr Ward sits in the room with you both during the lesson.

I wondered if it would be possible for Sarah to have a lesson without your husband present?

Many thanks,

C Lock

LESSON OUTLINE 11TH JUNE

Theory:

None this week. Correct p5 Ex 7 e) from lesson.

Scales:

C Contrary.

Major C G D + F

Minor A + D

Lots of left-hand practise for smooth under thumb.

Arpeggios: C G + F Major

A + D Minor

Remember to hold last note for two counts + then lift.

Broken Chords:

C G F A D

Most practise on broken chords.

Exam pieces:

Moderato in C.

Good playing.

More difference between piano + forte needed.

Slow tempo to aim for accuracy.

Parent comment:

Dear Mrs Ward,

As last week, I continue to be impressed with Sarah's progress. However, Sarah has informed me that Mr Ward was again present during her lesson. She has spoken of how uncomfortable she feels playing in front of others and I am hoping that you will respond to this comment either in writing or by telephone.

My number is 0191 2526673

Many thanks,

C Lock

LESSON OUTLINE 25TH JUNE

Exam pieces:

Moderato in C.

Tricky – careful with bars 4 + 5.

Excellent articulation + dynamics.

Careful with notes bars 11 – end.

The Old Cuckoo Clock.

Excellent playing today Sarah.

Work on middle section a little more + hold minim chords well down.

New – Industrious Student.

1st 8 bars hands together, the rest right + left hands separately.

Theory:

p12, Exercise 22.

Scales:

C G D + F Major.

A + D Minor.

C Contrary.

Arpeggios: C G + F Major

A + D Minor.

Broken Chords:

C G F A + D.

Parent comment:

Dear Mrs Ward,

I am becoming alarmed that you are not replying to my comments. Sarah continues to be distressed by Mr Ward's attendance of her lessons. As Sarah comes to you direct from school and I do not feel it right to interrupt the paid lesson to

discuss this matter, please contact me as a matter of urgency. My number is 0191 2526673

I await a phone call from you.

Many thanks,

C Lock

LESSON OUTLINE 2ND JULY

Scales:

See previous page!!!

I believe that these have not been practised since last week.

F major scale – please work on right hand.

Broken Chords – need everyday practice.

Most work with these please.

Exam pieces:

Moderato in C.

Remember the key signature.

Hold tied notes + consider rests.

Correct fingering + timing is needed.

Be quicker changing hand positions in bars 7 and 8.

Bar 11 – watch out for F1 on G!! *DYNAMICS!!!!!!*

I do not feel that this has been sufficiently practised.

The Old Cuckoo Clock.

Be careful with timing + keep quavers even.

Up tempo please.

Watch bar 5 – no extra notes.

Watch last bar – crushing note!

Industrious Student.

Keep crotchets even.

Most work with this piece please.

Don't guess left-hand notes in the 2nd part.

Parent comment:

Dear Mrs Ward,

Please contact me as a matter of urgency. My number remains 0191 2526673

If I do not hear from you within the next week, I will be forced to give notice on Sarah's piano lessons with you.

Many thanks,

C Lock

LESSON OUTLINE 9TH JULY

Aural Tests:

Clapping 2 + 3 time.

Echoes – singing

Recognising changes.

Legato + staccato description.

Piano – quiet

Forte – loud

Scales/Arpeggios/Broken Chords.

All well known, but more work needed in future to boost student confidence.

Scales completed to inform your future teacher:

C Major, G major (F#), D Major (F# + C#), F Major (Bb), A Minor

(G#) D Minor (Bb + C#)

Right + Left 2 octaves.

Arpeggios C G F A + D

Broken Chords C G F A + D

Parent comment:

Dear Mrs Lock,

I am using this space to contact you, mainly because I do not like to talk to people over the telephone.

I am afraid that I am not able to ask Mr Ward to leave the room during my teaching of Sarah or any of the other students. We feel that it is most important for a future pianist to learn with an audience watching them and I do believe that Mr Ward is the perfect audience.

I had hoped that, over time, Sarah would be encouraged by Mr Ward's courteous and supportive comments, but this doesn't appear to have happened. I can assure you that he has applauded Sarah's progress and I do believe that he may take some credit for her musical achievement to date.

I am sorry that you have chosen to communicate with me via this notebook and that you have not considered Mr Ward's feelings in all of this. He is most upset.

For this reason, I accept your notice on Sarah's lessons.

Many thanks,

Mrs Ward

Number 13

Mrs Thomas

Red front door

Red garage door

No car

A Lady Di hair-do

I was flicking through the *Guardian* free paper and came across a headline 'Models Wanted'. So of course I found myself reading on. They wanted models for the hairdressing students at the Community College. I quite fancied meself as a model, so I called them up. I got meself a date with a couple of students at the Community Centre in North Shields. They gave is a Lady Di hair-do and plucked me eyebrows and it didn't cost is a penny. There was no way that I was going to tell the other lasses on Disraeli Avenue about it. I was onto a good thing and I wasn't going to let any of their greedy arses in on it.

Rita, that new lass of Bill Williams', was the first to notice me new hair-do. She asked is where I got it cut. Of course I panicked and before I could stop meself from saying the words, I told the lass that I was doing it meself. The silly cow believed is and started asking loads of questions. I ended up telling her that I was doing a night course in hairdressing and that was when she asked is to cut her hair. She wanted it just like mine and I was kind of chuffed and that was when I found meself saying yes.

Well I couldn't really tell her the truth could I? I didn't want her finding out about me freebies at the Community Centre. The silly cow had a mouth on her the size of the Tyne Tunnel.

So I went round to Bill's house and cut his Rita's hair over newspaper in their front room. She got her a Lady Di hair-do with me chopping at her hair with a pair of blunt scissors. I told her that she looked just like Princess Di and she seemed happy with the result. I thought she looked a right fucking state, but I was hardly going to tell her that. Then she told is that she needed her roots doing and asked is to do them. I nearly found meself agreeing to do it, but I didn't because Bill's reet strange bairn was watching is and I reckon she knew that I didn't have a fucking clue. So I told Rita that I'd only been doing the course for three weeks and hadn't learnt anything about roots yet. I charged her two quid for the cut. Then I went to the chippie on the seafront with me two quid and bought meself a packet of chips and a tin of lager for me tea.

Number 14

Mr and Mrs Clark

Green front door

Green garage door

Yellow car

Same as Mr and Mrs Johnson's but shinier

FDT 609X

The Queen of tittle tattle

Number 1 – Mr and Mrs North own Brian's newsagents and think that they're better than the rest of us on Disraeli Avenue. They've got one lad called Martin and he was born with a silver spoon in his gob. They're stuck up and Mrs North gets Mrs Bruce from number 26 to do her cleaning for her, because she's too fucking lazy to do it herself.

Number 2 – Mrs Hodgson's husband bugged off after meeting a hippy lass on jury service. He'd been the envy of the street having a whole week off work, on full pay. Apparently Mrs Hodgson, the poor hinny, was cooking his egg and chips when he told her he was leaving. The poor woman has had to bring up her lad Paul all on her own.

Number 3 – Mr and Mrs Drake have money problems. They've had a bailiff around loads of times and I was told that Mr Drake spends

all their pennies in the Bookies in North Shields. Mrs Drake looks like shit most of the time and they don't get their milk delivered.

Number 4 – Mr Black's an alcoholic who hangs out in the bus shelter on the Coast Road. Mrs Black's fat and looks a state. We don't really bother much with them.

Number 5 – Mrs Grant is a widower but she's not that old. She won't tell anyone about how or why her husband died, so it must have been of something canny bad and probably Aids.

Number 6 – Mr and Mrs Wood are having some sort of container built in their back garden by Mr Smith from number 23. Mr Smith is a lazy arse builder and they're pretty thick giving him money before he's even started the job. I don't get why they're having a container built anyway, probably to be better than the rest of us.

Number 7 – Mr and Mrs Lancaster must have problems in the bedroom. Rita Williams from number 9 told me that she knows a lass called Bet and Mr Lancaster is one of her punters. He goes to Bet's house every Thursday after work and tells Mrs Lancaster that he's working late. Apparently he gives Bet a right good seeing to and then pays her sixty quid.

Number 8 – Mr and Mrs Douglas have got one son called James. He works part-time in Brian's newsagents and is mostly off his face on drugs and booze. His poor mother doesn't know what to do with him.

Number 9 – Mr and Mrs Williams have a kid called Crystal. Rita is Bill's second wife, his first killed herself in their bedroom, then his kid Jude was wrong in the head and went and killed herself in the same way as her mam. Bill's not quite right any more.

Number 10 – Mr and Mrs Russell adopted themselves two new bairns. Apparently the girls' proper ma and pa were pot heads and the poor bairns were bags of bones when they got delivered to number 10.

Number 11 – Mr and Mrs Symons live there and she's me mate. We keep our eyes open and share all the stuff we figure out. She's got more nerve than me, like when young Jude Williams from number 9 was in hospital, apparently having tests for three months, Mrs Symons got herself into the hospital and got Rita Williams to tell her all about Jude being wrong in the head.

Number 12 – Mrs Ward teaches piano to the local bairns from her house and Mr Ward likes to watch her do it. It's fucking odd and I wouldn't be sending my kids to her. I've been talking to some of the local parents and telling them the same. You never know what goes on behind closed doors.

Number 13 – Mrs Thomas used to train to be a hairdresser. Apparently she even got offered work in one of the posh salons in Newcastle, but she didn't fancy catching the Metro in every day. She's happy to come around to your house and cut your hair for

two quid. She's still learning new styles, but she's cheap and always tells me stuff I didn't know.

Number 14 – Mr and Mrs Clark. Me, and me husband.

Number 15 – Mr and Mrs Shephard bought the house new like we did. Mr Shephard likes to get his cock out and flash at us lasses from his bedroom window. We reckon he's harmless really, especially after seeing the size of it, but we're going to get the police and do him for indecent exposure.

Number 16 – Mrs Smith's insides don't work properly and she's had loads of miscarriages. She reckons that Mrs Curtis put a curse on her, but I think she's off her head. I'm not surprised that her husband left her.

Number 17 – Mr Lewis is an old bloke. He's got no money and tries to keep himself to himself. I don't really know much about him, but I wouldn't go in his house because he stinks. Apparently he lets cats piss in the corner of his front room.

Number 18 – Mr and Mrs Andrews are decent people, but their daughter Gillian's a bit of a slag. She's slept with most of the lads on the estate and is pregnant again, but no one knows who the father is.

Number 19 – Mr and Mrs Johnson have got two lasses, Karen and

Disraeli Avenue

Lucy. Lazy arse Mr Johnson was fiddling on his own doorstep and shagging his next-door-neighbour Mrs Roberts. Thy have a bairn together called Timothy, but neither Mr Roberts nor Mrs Johnson know about it. It's the best-kept secret on Disraeli Avenue.

Number 20 – Mrs Curtis is the street witch. She's off her head. She reads tarot, does stuff with crystals and noses in on people's business. I try to avoid her because she's full of superstitions. Her finger nails are ridiculously long and curl.

Number 21 – Mr and Mrs Roberts are happily married. This is mainly because Mrs Roberts has shagged Bill Williams from number 9, Mr Scott from number 25 and then her neighbour Mr Johnson. She's the street bike and we all know to keep our husbands away from her, apart from Mrs Johnson of course. Mrs Johnson thinks that Mrs Roberts is her mate.

Number 22 – Mr and Mrs Wallace couldn't have bairns of their own. He lets some of the blokes play his bugle when they're drunk and he talks about how his da played it in a war.

Number 23 – Mr and Mrs Smith don't have any kids. Mr Smith's supposed to be a builder, but the only time I've ever seen him work was when he did the blocks at the end of the street for the Royal Wedding party in 1981. He's a bloody waste of space lazy arse and I wouldn't have him put up a curtain rail. I reckon Mr and Mrs Wood from number 6 need their heads read.

Number 24 – Mr and Mrs Walker have got three lads and they're pretty well known around the estate. The police are always parked up outside their house. Their eldest is doing time for beating up a lass. I try to stay away from them and would appreciate it if you didn't repeat what I was saying about them. Let's just keep it between us.

Number 25 – Apparently Mr Scott shagged Mrs Roberts a few years back, before she started with Mr Johnson. He used to work on the Metro, until some lad jumped in front of his train and died. He never worked again and spends most of his time in the Traveller's Rest.

Number 26 – Mrs Bruce is a cleaner for Mrs North from number 1. She won't tell me how dirty Mrs North's house is though. I think cleaning other people's toilets is the lowest job in the world and that Mrs Bruce must have something wrong in her head to do it. She must only be getting a quid an hour or something like that and Mr Bruce works down the docks, so he must be on ok money.

Number 27 – Mr Pescott had foreskin problems recently and had to get it chopped off. The poor bloke's been getting the piss taken out of him something rotten. Apparently Mrs Roberts went around and asked if she could have a look because she'd never seen one like that before. They've got twin lads who are little buggers.

Number 28 – Mr Stevenson likes to dress in women's clothes. His wife came to me in tears asking for advice. I nearly pissed me pants

when she told me that she'd found her husband wearing his dead mother's dress. I told her to chuck the dirty bugger out, but she didn't. I reckon he was wearing mascara when I saw him the other day in the queue for the lottery at Brian's.

Number 29 – Mr and Mrs Doran are the street's religious nutters. They go to church nearly every day and they won't answer the door to the local bairns on Halloween. I don't understand why they believe in God so much, especially after their own bairn was knocked down and killed by a drunk from Gladstone Street. Where was God then? Where was he when their poor bairn was bleeding to death in the middle of the road?

Number 30 – Margaret Jones gets called Aunty Maggie by the local bairns. She once had a kid and gave it to some nuns to look after. She likes to tell everyone that her darling husband Samuel passed away in his prime, but he didn't. Apparently her darling husband Samuel is called Samuel Cleggit and he lives with his real missus of thirty years, in a council house in Wallsend. Margaret's brother Eddie was in the paper. He's a dirty bastard and I hope that they chop his balls off after what he did to those kiddies. He's inside doing time for fiddling with bairns.

Number 31 – Mr Gibbons is in a wheelchair and his wife only really comes out when she has to push him somewhere. They don't have any kids and I'm not sure if that's because Mr Gibbons' body doesn't work properly. She's a quiet lass and always looks sad.

Number 32 – Mr and Mrs Alexander moved in a couple of months ago. I think they have one child. I went around to tell them all about their neighbours, but they didn't answer the door. I've been watching them, but can't figure them out yet. The husband never seems to leave the house and they've had an ambulance there a few times, so he's probably a drug addict. I'm thinking that perhaps I should ask if they need a cleaner.

Number 15

Mr and Mrs Shephard

Yellow front door

Yellow garage door

No car

Being naked has caused an angry mob to be on my driveway

Q Q Q forum

<http://www.qqqforum.co.uk>

Show me another>>

Hi all.

I have a question that may sound a bit odd to some of you, but it's causing me a bit of bother.

The thing is that I like to walk around my own house naked. I don't mean that I do it all the time, but every now and then, like after having a bath and when getting changed, I like to walk around for a bit without my clothes on.

The problem that this is causing is that sometimes, when I'm walking around naked, the curtains are open. Do you see where I'm going with this? Four times in the last week, I've been without my clothes, near my window and I've looked outside to see eyes staring at me.

One of the women from my street got herself a little gang of spectators yesterday. They were waiting outside my house all day and I didn't dare go out. She got her husband to start banging on my door, saying that they were going to get the police involved, saying that it was indecent exposure. Before I knew it, I had an angry mob on my driveway. One of the women was screaming that I wasn't 'normal' and I was yelling back that I wasn't trying to harm anyone.

It wasn't like I was exposing my bits, like flashing them out the window, I just like to walk around my own home without my clothes on. What's so bad about that?

So what should I do? Should I go to the police or do you think they'll be coming to me? And is it wrong to want to walk around your own house naked?

Sheepman

3 days ago.

Report it?

Best answer, chosen by Q Q Q.

I tk that its normal, although I don't really liek walking around without my nickers on myself. I wouldn't be bothered if I saw u walking about naked and I think that u must live in a pretty uptight place. In Europe were used to nudity and we kind of like it. What is it with you Brits? U should perhaps be a little bit more careful and try not to go too near your windows.

Doz

2 days ago

Report it?

Other answers

U ned 2 clos ur curtins mate cos its so wrong 2 flash ur bits.

Lemon

2 days ago

Report it?

its wrong if your being disrespectful to your neihbours. you should wear your undies.

Alisha

3 days ago

Report it?

It's indecent exposure and they could put you away for it. Most normal folk take offence at people exposing themselves.

B

2 days ago

Report it?

Me and my man walk round naked al the time, but keep are panties at the bottom the stairs case ne1 nocks.

Smokin

1 day ago

Report it?

Go to the police b4 they cum to u + get uself a lawyer cos u hear bout this kind of stuff happening over + over these days. Next u neighbours will b claiming 4 sychological damage! LOL!

Bow

2 days ago

Report it?

U is nasty :-{

Pete

1 day ago

Report it

Number 16

Mrs Smith

Green front door

Green garage door

Red car

PHC 665X

I call her Elizabeth

I discovered that I was pregnant on the same day as a Rita, Bill's lass from Number 9. We were at the doctors at the same time and we got talking in the waiting room. I wasn't going to tell her at first, but she told me what she was there for and we had a laugh about it. We even talked about how nice it'd be for them to grow up together, joint birthday parties and stuff like that. It turned out that both of our babies were due on exactly the same day, 23 July 1984. Rita said that they were practically twins.

Mrs Curtis from number 20 reckons that she's a bit of a psychic. She reads tarot cards, she has a crystal ball in her front window, plays whale music at 11:27 am each morning and seems to like passing on doom and gloom. Someone told her about mine and Rita's babies being due on the same day and she came around to my house to bless my stomach. She started mumbling on about a whole load of superstitious stuff, that I didn't really understand, then she left saying that there was nothing else she could do and she wished

me luck. She said that she hoped I would be the one, because she thought I wanted it more. I had no idea, at that time, what she was going on about.

I miscarried at eleven weeks. Rita didn't.

Mrs Curtis was the first one to visit. Rita had been round to tell her about my losing the baby. Mrs Curtis told me, *It's the way that it should be. One baby was always going to die. No two babies, conceived in the exact same postcode, can be due on the exact same day.*

Her words didn't comfort me in any way. I screamed at her to get out of my house.

I watched Rita getting fatter and fatter. I watched Bill's bairn Jude always alone, neglected. She was such a sad bairn. I couldn't figure out why they had been chosen over me. I couldn't figure out what made their baby better than mine, more worthy of life. I couldn't figure out what had made them more deserving.

My baby didn't make it into the world. Rita's baby did.

Crystal was born 25 July 1984.

I've looked out from my window every day since she was born. I've kept my distance so as not to scare the lass, I've watched her grow. That child that I had growing inside me is Crystal. Sometimes I

Disraeli Avenue

think that it's been a mistake, that Rita simply carried my child for me, that there was an error, a trick, witchcraft, deception. Crystal is beautiful, not at all like her mam. Crystal is the child that I should have had.

When I see Crystal, through my window, I shout out Elizabeth. But she never answers.

I miscarried three more times before my husband left me and got himself a woman with a womb that worked.

Now it's just me, alone, watching my Elizabeth.

Number 17

Mr Lewis

Yellow front door

Green garage door

No car

The old man in the queue

They stood in the Dewstep Butchers, which was also New Lymouth Post Office, and proudly displayed a smiling pig's head in the window. There were huge queues, as usual, it was pension and benefits day. A cold grey rainy Tuesday.

Mr Lewis stood in front of a younger woman whom he had never seen before; she wasn't from Disraeli Avenue. Beside Mr Lewis his female companion stooped towards him. She was arch-backed and her hair was a mass of grey tight curls, nestled under a plastic rain hat.

'It doesn't matter how healthy you are or how much money you have,' Mr Lewis stated. 'When your time's up, death will find a way.' He spoke loudly, his voice bouncing along the queue. His companion nodded, she agreed.

The younger woman, directly behind the old couple, couldn't help but listen. She thought about Mr Lewis' words. She wondered if talk of death was a sign of old age. She wondered if the old man, who was almost touching her, was waiting for death and longing for death and even perhaps needing death. She shivered.

The queue was long, slow moving and soon Mr Lewis' companion began to flutter. She had to leave.

'I need to catch the bus to Coastend to buy some fish,' said the old woman.

'What about your pension?' Mr Lewis' words wafted past unheard.

'There used to be a fish shop near this post office you know?'

Mr Lewis nodded.

She continued, 'Asda fish isn't that fresh, you know?'

Mr Lewis nodded. After a moment of indecision, she hurried, flustered, out from the post office, trailing her canvas trolley on wheels behind her.

The younger woman turned and watched Mr Lewis' female companion barging herself through the queue. The younger woman found herself smiling. She willed the little old lady to hurry, to catch the bus, to buy fresh fish for her tea. The younger woman wondered if the old lady was actually in the queue or merely sheltering from the cruel weather. As she turned back towards the post office counter, Mr Lewis was staring at her, searching for eye contact.

'See that lady,' Mr Lewis pointed out of the shop and in the direction that the old woman had exited. 'That's Betty. She used to collect ticket stubs at the old Odeon cinema. I used to go there when I was a laddie.'

The younger woman nodded, not a patronising nod, just enough movement to support his words. Mr Lewis had finished his sounding and then turned his back on the younger woman, facing the counter, waiting.

Disraeli Avenue

The younger woman was left wondering what had happened between Betty and the young version of the old man standing in front of her. He had a sour smell, he was shrunken and his skin was slack, hanging from his cheeks. He was old. She tried, but she could only see the old. She wondered what images were jumping around and making the old man smile and jutter so much. She tried to think of him as young, full of life, living life. She tried and she tried, but she couldn't. She could only see the now, the old man waiting for his tiny pension, waiting to die.

She hoped that Betty would have enough money to buy fish.

Number 18

Mr and Mrs Andrews

Yellow front door

Yellow garage door

Green car

MYG 55 3W

Dear Diary

9th August 1993

Dear Diary,

So much has happened and I've been really crap for not writing it all down in here!

I'm home from the caravan and have been for four and a half weeks! I had a lush time. Joe came home two days ago from his holiday in Blackpool but we finished before he went away so I didn't get a present. It's a bit shit seeing him around and he's got a new lass now who's right stuck up and lives on the Coast Road.

I met up with James Douglas (number 8). I'd been bumping into him loads of times around Brian's newsagents, cos he's got a job there for the holidays. We went out every night for eight days or so! He was canny great and we got on well, but he had a lass and was always off his face on dope and

Diamond White. I'll probably not see him again apart from when I'm in Brian's. He's got my Pulp CD which really pisses me off cos I really want it back. I should just go into Brian's and ask him for it or I could ask Zander to do it for me, but then Joe'd find out about me shagging James Douglas. Why is life so complicated? Why am I even bothered what Joe thinks about me?

Anyway what I wanted to write about is that I've to make probably the most difficult decision ever. I'm pregnant! Yes me! I'm still in a state of shock, what the hell do I do? Nobody knows except for Joe and Zander. I told Zander and he told Joe for me, cos Joe and me aren't speaking proper. Joe wants me to have an abortion and I feel like he's being canny selfish. It's not like we're even together anymore. I can't talk to him about it, cos he says that it's not his problem and that from what he's heard I've been shagging around. I reckon Zander's been telling him stuff, cos Joe reckons it could be a number of different lads.

I don't even think that I've got the possibility of having the baby and I'm feeling shit scared. I've no idea what I've got to do next. Zander says that I should go to the doctors, but I could do without mam and dad finding out.

Gill x

29th October 1993

Dear Diary,

Sometimes I really frighten myself. I realise how easily I could commit suicide. I'm totally alone.

Today I've been thinking about my baby. I wouldn't be alone... I'd always be loved if I hadn't done what I did. Who am I? How could I kill the thing that would love me more than anyone could?

I really hate myself. I really hate what I've done.

Zander came around before. He's in love. He didn't admit it, but it's so obvious. He's seeing some lass from Campbell-Bannerman Road and he can't get enough of her. I've been seeing Joe around and he gives me so much bullshit that nothing's happening between him and Lucy Johnson. Lucky for me Zander's told me everything and now I know that Joe and Lucy are shagging. She's a stupid cow and he's a bastard liar.

Life is fucking great!

How should I kill myself? Paracetamol is too awful.

God I'm screwed up! I haven't felt like this for ages.

I'm frightened.

I need to die,

Gill x

7th December 1993

Dear Diary,

Today's my last day being eighteen. I'm leaving home and moving in with my new boyfriend. His name's Les and he's really gorgeous. He works the shift in the Findus factory in Longbenton and gets ten French bread pizzas for a quid.

It's ten in the morning and I'm waiting for Les to come around and get me and my stuff. He's got his own car, but we're going to be living with his mam. My mam helped me pack and even got us a bag of food. She's being canny lush about it all and has told me that I can come home whenever I want. I'm pretty frightened and a bit nervous cos it's all new and I've never lived in Coastend before and I'm going to miss seeing Joe around.

Les says that I can get pregnant if I want to. He reckons that we'd make canny parents and with a bairn we'd go straight to the top of the housing list. I kind of want to be pregnant again cos I really want to piss off Joe but I'm being grown up and trying to wait for a bit. I'm making sure that I go straight to the bog after we shag and Zander told me that if I don't come then I can't get caught.

So long Disraeli Avenue, it was nice knowing you.

Gill x

29th December 1993

Dear Diary,

I shagged Joe. I didn't mean to it just kind of happened. I came around to see my mam and I bumped into Joe. We went to the park on the other estate and shagged under the slide. I love Joe so much, he's like my first love and everything. Him and me have taught each other everything there is to know about sex. Joe says that he still thinks about me and that I'm a canny lush shag. He knows that I'm living with Les and his mam and Joe said that I should come home and we can start courting again. Joe said that he was sorry about telling me to have an abortion and that he was just pissed off with me for shagging James Douglas.

I didn't tell Joe that I was pregnant again. I haven't told anyone yet cos I only found out the day before I shagged Joe.

I'm pregnant again! Yes me! I'm in a state of shock again! and now I don't know what the hell to do. I could tell Les and I reckon he'd be really happy about it and we could put our names on the housing list or I could wait a bit and tell Joe that it's his, even though I know that it's Les who I got caught with. I might have another abortion instead and then come back and live with my mam and start seeing Joe and tell Les about killing his

Caroline Smailes

*baby. My head is spinning with it all.
I don't know what to pick.
Gill x*

Number 19

Mr and Mrs Johnson

Green front door

Green garage door

Yellow car, same as Mr Clark's

DEW 664T

Loose change

Seventy-five 1p coins.

Thirty-seven 2p coins.

Nineteen 5p coins.

Fourteen 10p coins.

Thirty-seven 20p coins.

Eighteen 50p coins.

Seven £1 coins.

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$$\begin{aligned} &1p \\ &+ \\ &1p \\ &+ \\ &1p \\ &= 75p \end{aligned}$$

Not enough. Sheh'd be insulted if Ah gave her a couple of handfuls of me pennies.

$$\begin{aligned} 2p + 2p + 2p + 2p + 2p &= 10p \\ 2p + 2p + 2p + 2p + 2p &= 10p \\ 2p + 2p + 2p + 2p + 2p &= 10p \\ 2p + 2p + 2p + 2p + 2p &= 10p \\ 2p + 2p + 2p + 2p + 2p &= 10p \\ 2p + 2p + 2p + 2p + 2p &= 10p \\ 2p + 2p + 2p + 2p + 2p &= 10p \\ 2p + 2p &= 4p \\ \text{Total } 2ps &= 74p \end{aligned}$$

£1.49 in total.

Still not enough. Ah need to have a look down the sides of the sofas an in me secret stash.

$$\begin{aligned} 5p + 5p + 5p + 5p + 5p + 5p + 5p + 5p + 5p + 5p &= 50p \\ 5p + 5p + 5p + 5p + 5p + 5p + 5p + 5p + 5p &= 45p \\ \text{Total } 5ps &= 95p \end{aligned}$$

$$£1.49 + 95p = £2.44$$

That'd get me a kiss without tongues if Ah'm lucky, but sheh won't be best pleased with is.

$$10p + 10p + 10p + 10p + 10p + 10p + 10p + 10p + 10p + 10p = £1$$

$$10p + 10p + 10p + 10p = 40p$$

$$\text{Total } 10ps = £1.40$$

$$75p + 74p + 95p + £1.40 = £3.84$$

This is fuckin ridiculous. Ah've got nae money. Ah'll have te raid the bairn's piggy.

$$20p + 20p + 20p + 20p + 20p = £1$$

$$20p + 20p + 20p + 20p + 20p = £1$$

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$$20p + 20p + 20p + 20p + 20p = £1$$

$$20p + 20p + 20p + 20p + 20p = £1$$

$$20p + 20p = 40p$$

$$\text{Total } 20ps = £7.40$$

$$75p + 74p + 95p + £1.40 + £7.40 = £11.24$$

That's more like it. That should be getting is a blowjob at least. Now Ah'll see what the other bairn's got.

Disraeli Avenue

$$50\text{p} + 50\text{p} = \text{£}1$$

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$$\text{Total } 50\text{ps} = \text{£}9$$

$$75\text{p} + 74\text{p} + 95\text{p} + \text{£}1.40 + \text{£}7.40 + \text{£}9 = \text{£}20.24$$

Fuckin fantastic. That's going to get is a blow job one day with the promise of a shag the next. There's nought quite like thrusting into her when sheh's resting her arse on the cistern. Sheh wraps her thighs around is an Ah can practically come before Ah'm right in.

An now Ah need to nick some of them pounds from wor lass' secret stash.

£1

+

£1

+

£1

+
£1
+
£1
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£1
+
£1

= Total from £1 coins is £7

$$75\text{p} + 74\text{p} + 95\text{p} + £1.40 + £7.40 + £9 = £7 = £27.24$$

Ah reckon Ah could stretch that oot over a few days. An Ah could ask wor lass for a couple of quid for a pint.

Clink
clink
clink.

Sheh likes the sound of me loose change filling up her tips' glass. Sheh changes any notes to coins later, so Ah know it's best to give her coins. It makes her smile when Ah hand over a great big pile of coins, like Ah've really thought about her an made an effort.

Sheh once said that sheh liked to hear the rattle and the **clink clink clink**. Sheh said that it made her wet in her pants.

Sheh had sex in the toilets. Sheh did most things in the toilets. Though sheh once gave is a blowjob behind the pool table when it was a quiet shift. Ah think it was a Thursday afternoon.

Clink
clink
clink.

Of course word has spread around the regulars and the neighbours. They know that if you gave wor Jude a few quid sheh's up for it, but not always a shag. It depends on what wor Jude fancies.

Sheh's right grand at blow jobs, the only thing being that sheh won't swallow, even if Ah offer her a few quid extra. Sheh said something about being on a diet, not that sheh needs to lose any weight. Ah wonder how much sheh'd charge to let is see her without her clothes on. Sheh doesn't like wanking, says sheh prefers is to shag her hard and having sex against the cistern does it every time for is.

The problem that Ah've got today is that wor Jude Williams hasn't made herself a price list yet, so there's no fixed rates an sheh seems to give out what sheh fancies

Clink
clink
clink.

There's a set of rules to follow. Ah offer her a drink an if she says yes, then Ah tell her how much money to take, or Ah give her a couple of handfuls of me loose change. Sheh takes the money and puts it in her tip glass.

That's where the clinking starts.

Clink
clink
clink.

Then sheh teases an sheh plays with is, all with words an her eyes. Sheh's a right sexy bairn. Of course none of this can happen if her da is in the pub. He'd fuck is with his fists if he knew what a dirty slag his bairn was. Ah haven't seen her about for a couple of weeks, so Ah'm hoping that sheh's on shift this afternoon. Ah need a shag and Ah don't want to be going back to her next door. Her tits are right saggy now, sheh stares at is all the time and sheh's started wanting to talk about stuff. Ah don't want to chat to her, Ah want a quick fuck an go.

Ah think that me first blow job with wor Jude cost is six pounds an twenty-odd pence. Sheh was just getting started then an was cheaper than sheh is now. Sheh was good though, worth every penny. We had a shag a couple of weeks later, think it cost is seventeen pounds something. Ah've had cheaper since.

Disraeli Avenue

Ah need to be sorting this loose change out into piles. Ah could do with some of those bank money bags, the plastic ones with the blue writing on them. Ah should phone wor lass at work an tell her to get is some on the way home.

Number 20

Mrs Curtis
Blue front door
Blue garage door
No car

The Wheel of Fortune reversed

My question – *will I ever be happy?*

I look to the obstacle that stands in my way.
The card that is visible at the centre of the Celtic Cross spread.

My card – Wheel of Fortune, reversed.
An unanticipated turn of dreadful luck, from a wrecked sequence of events.
External influences that bring about the worst.
An inevitable descent.
Decline perhaps due to fate or karma.
Immense changes taking place stem from previous actions that cannot be erased.

My answer from the reading – *no*.

Number 21

Mr and Mrs Roberts

Red front door

Red garage door

White car

GOP 143W

I am watching you

There's a song, *Ave Maria*, it's a song that takes me back to a time, a place. I think that I first heard it at a funeral. We went as a street, we went to support Bill. The poor lad had so much to deal with, being left to care for Jude on his own. It was his wife's favourite song. No one had heard it before, but I remember thinking that it was pretty.

We had only just begun then. It was new, exciting, out of the daily routine that bored us both. We were beyond control, then. We seemed to be on the edge of being caught. I remember sitting next to you in the funeral, your wife on the other side, absorbed in the action. We sat on the pew and I put my hand into your pocket and I ran my fingers over the outline of your dick. I wanted the funeral to end, for the street to make its way to the Traveller's Rest, for us to find a moment. We had sex, up against the door, in the toilet cubicle.

Your wife didn't notice what we did over the next few years, she was blind. We have managed the best-kept secret on Disraeli Avenue. And so we fooled around, we played, experimented. I guess that it must have been fuelled by adrenalin, power, pure. I don't know. We behaved like teenagers, fools. I don't know how we were never caught. I sometimes think that we wanted to be caught.

Then, today, you tell me that we have to finish.

I'm creating a soundtrack, *Ave Maria*, to mark the ending too. It's playing in a loop, over and over. My stomach is cramping with those loops, spasms in time with the beats. I don't understand the words, it's about that memory and that moment. I wish that we could travel back in time and start again. My stomach is churning, sickness, nausea. I don't know what to do.

I've lost you, just like that.

An ordinary day, a nothing date, now marking the losing of my future. I am shattered, I can see no potential. I am faced with empty paths and boredom, a sexless union with a man who does not desire me. I am lost.

Last week you told me that you were leaving her. You spoke of the lack of love, the intolerable life and your absolute need to be with me. Today you come with your duty filled words. You're denying me, you're denying yourself. You talk of obligation to your two

girls, refusing the child that we have created, together. Timothy deserves to know the truth. He needs to know his father and I will tell him, one day.

Your words today sting, puncture.

‘It’s not the right time.’

‘I’m not in the right place.’

‘I can’t be the person that you need me to be.’

‘I can’t leave my daughters with her.’

You’re a fool.

You blamed me. You twisted your reason onto me, but you were wrong to do so. I crave nothing beyond the man who has entered me. I want you. The man who makes me giggle, the man who laughs like a horse with hiccups. I want to be with you, always.

I am alone, grieving, left with that final image of your leaving me. I saw that look of relief as you left, task complete. But you were my fit, the missing piece that I should never have found and I can’t quite let you go that easily. I won’t let you go quite so easily.

I told you how I felt. I told you my words. You said that you didn’t understand my fancy talk. You laughed your hiccupping laugh and then you left. It was too easy for you to walk away. I won’t let go. I won’t.

I will watch you with her and with your girls. I'll always be there, always in view.

You can deny our intimacy. You can pretend that we are nothing more than neighbours, but they all know. We know. Our unfaithfulness was easy. We were alone every day. We lived next door to each other. No need for transport, or excuse. It was easy for you to nip in, deep. They all knew what we were doing, except for him and her.

It was too easy.

But now you say that you will stay away. It sounds effortless, uncomplicated. But I won't let it be. I'm going to watch you.

I'm going to watch everything that you do, always.

Number 22

Mr and Mrs Wallace

Blue car matches blue front door

Blue car matches blue garage door

MTR 320X

Me da and his bugle

Me da was one of those lads who chose to be in the army long before the second war started. He was one of the Durham Light Infantry. They called it DLI for short. Me da served his time in Egypt and all that. He got right down crawling about in the sand. The things he must have seen. His lad mates dropping dead about him and him killing folk too, but he never told us about it. He never bragged and he never made a fuss.

All I know is that me da was wounded in 1944. He had his finger shot off in the fighting. He never really spoke much about it and it happened before I was born. I remember asking me ma about me da's stump of a finger and her telling is about how he was discharged home. She told is not to ask me da about it, so I never did. Me da didn't have to work, because he'd been given a pension for being shot. Me ma said that he was a changed man when he came back to Consett with his bugle and a whole load of secret memories.

I don't know how he met me ma, but she was from Consett too. They had me and I grew up there. As soon as I could, when I'd

worked me way out of Consett, I moved is as near to the coast as I could afford and I brought me da's bugle with me. I visit me da and me ma once a month, but with is not being able to have any bairns of meself I know that I've let them doon.

Me da never comes to visit is here. He says that we live too near to the beach. I don't know if it was an excuse or not, but when I was a wee bairn he'd make a fuss about being near sand. He'd never take is, no matter how much I nagged on. I used to hate him for it. All of me mates talked about messing around on the coast with a bucket and spade, but me dad would never take is.

Number 23

Mr and Mrs Smith

Red front door

Red garage door

White van

CWS 694V

Invoices for work, not yet done

RAW. Richard A. Smith & Partner

— *Builders of Quality Homes* —

23, Disraeli Avenue,

New Lymouth,

North Shields,

Tyne and Wear,

NE30 3LF

ESTABLISHED 1968.

HOUSE EXTENSIONS * REFURBISHMENTS

INVOICE TO:

Mr and Mrs Wood,

6, Disraeli Avenue,

New Lymouth,

North Shields,

Tyne and Wear,

NE30 3LF

Invoice Number: 123

Account No.: 0886

VAT REG No: 132 2634 98

DESCRIPTION

Re: proposed container-based extension to your property.

Excavate 6 bases and concrete to form level bases for container.

Excavate soil to front area and cart away to existing soil heap.

Dig trench for electrical pipe and lay ducting with draw string.

Lay 22 tonnes Motand roll level.

Spread dust.

Lay 160 slabs on sand and cement.

Slabs, sand and cement, hardcore, pipe ducting	£1,054.60
Skip loader, Roller and Mixer.	£212.00
Labour	£1,644.00

Supply and fit 75mm x 50mm timber bolted to all sides of container.

Fit base and top plates to verticals.

Construct roof trusses and fix to plate.

Cover walls and roof with feather edge boards,

75mm x 50mm, 100mm x 50mm, 125mm x 50mm timber,
feather edge boards.

Nuts and bolts, nails and wall plate straps.	£1,794.80
Labour.	£3,285.00

NET VALUE	£7,990.40
VAT @17.5%	£1,398.32
TOTAL	£9,388.72

Disraeli Avenue

RAW. Richard A. Smith & Partner

— *Builders of Quality Homes* —

23, Disraeli Avenue,
New Lymouth,
North Shields,
Tyne and Wear,
NE30 3LF

ESTABLISHED 1968.

HOUSE EXTENSIONS * REFURBISHMENTS

INVOICE TO:

Mr and Mrs Wood,
6, Disraeli Avenue,
New Lymouth,
North Shields,
Tyne and Wear,
NE30 3LF

Invoice Number: 124
Account No.: 0886
VAT REG No: 132 2634 98

DESCRIPTION

Interim payment number 1 for proposed container-based extension to your property.
Labour and materials on site.

Payable immediately

NET VALUE	£1,191.40
VAT @17.5%	£208.50
TOTAL	£1,399.90

Caroline Smailes

RAW. Richard A. Smith & Partner

— *Builders of Quality Homes* —

23, Disraeli Avenue,
New Lymouth,
North Shields,
Tyne and Wear,
NE30 3LF

ESTABLISHED 1968.

HOUSE EXTENSIONS * REFURBISHMENTS

INVOICE TO:

Mr and Mrs Wood,
6, Disraeli Avenue,
New Lymouth,
North Shields,
Tyne and Wear,
NE30 3LF

Invoice Number: 125
Account No.: 0886
VAT REG No: 132 2634 98

DESCRIPTION

Interim payment number 2 for proposed container-based extension to your property.
Labour and materials on site.

Payable immediately

NET VALUE	£2,191.40
VAT @17.5%	£383.50
TOTAL	£2,574.90

Number 24

Mr and Mrs Walker

Red front door

Red garage door

Blue car

LPY 529W

Probably a robbery

Mr Lewis was standing behind me in the queue at Brian's newsagents. There was a lottery rush, a double rollover and we all reckoned that it was just a matter of time before someone from the estate won. Brian North said that the most anyone had won from his newsagents was ten pounds and that that made our odds of a biggie win really high. It was just a matter of time. I reckon that everyone from Disraeli Avenue was queuing. The queue was curling from the counter out through the open door. Mrs Smith said that if one of us won, we should share it with the rest of the street. I nodded with everyone else, but knew fine well that I wouldn't be sharing my winnings with that load of bastards. I knew what they thought of me and my lads. My winnings would be for my lads and their future, not for the gossiping folk that didn't have the time of day for us Walkers.

'Am I behind you pet?' his shaking voice made me turn to my right. He was standing too close to me, not behind in the queue.

‘Yes Mr Lewis you are behind me,’ I smiled at him, thinking that there was no way I was going to let him in front.

‘I’m all over the place. I had a burglar last night. Buggers got seventeen thousand pounds,’ Mr Lewis spoke smiling. His sour smell floated from his being, his wrinkled skin hung from his cheeks. I didn’t get why he was smiling.

‘Have you told the police? Did you have all that cash in your house?’ I was shocked for the poor bloke. I’d heard about people stashing their savings in their houses, afraid of banks. But seventeen thousand pounds was a huge amount, especially as the bloke had led everyone to believe that he couldn’t even afford paint for his front door and garage. He was smiling, like a Christmas elf and moving closer, gripping my arm with his hand.

‘Yes I told the police and they were very nice. They stole a cheque.’

‘The police stole a cheque?’ I was confused. Mr Lewis smiled instead of answering with words.

As I turned away from him, gently unpicking his fingers from their grip on my arm, the image of my smiling Simon jumped into my head. He had money this morning, had said he’d had a win on the dogs. It wasn’t thousands though, a couple of hundred at the most. It couldn’t have been him, he’s a good lad. But still my stomach churned, a feeling of dread.

I have three lads, Mark’s doing time because some lying cow said that he beat her up, then there’s Simon who has been looking for

work for a few years and then my bairn Rob who helps his dad out on the window cleaning round. They're all good lads, they treat me like a queen, but the local police have it in for them. The slightest bit of bother on the estate and there's police on my doorstep.

I could hear Mr Lewis.

'Am I behind you pet?' he was talking to Rita Williams who was standing behind him in the queue.

'Yes you were,' she told him. She's a lying nasty cow that Rita. She thinks she's the queen of Sheba because she married Bill, but we all know where she came from. My lads told me all about what Rita used to do for work before she met Bill. Her mate Bet is a mate of my Mark's lass.

'Sorry pet,' Mr Lewis moved behind Rita, further down the queue. 'I'm all over the place today,' he tried to catch Rita's attention, 'I had a burglar last night and the buggers got fourteen thousand pounds.'

Rita Williams didn't respond. She's such a nasty cow. Mr Lewis was a mess, befuddled, alone. I was happy to see Brian North coming over and taking Mr Lewis out of the queue.

'What's been going on mate?' Mr North asked him.

'Got robbed last night and they got two hundred pounds. Someone will be getting a good Christmas box,' Mr Lewis laughed.

'Have you told your daughter?'

'No she's in Wetherby, married a bloke called Mr Curtains but he doesn't hang up,' Mr Lewis laughed again. Brian smiled at him.

‘Were the police good to you?’ Brian was trying to get answers. My stomach churned again. But my Simon was a good lad, he’d not steal from Mr Lewis.

‘The police took my cheque for ten thousand,’ Mr Lewis continued smiling. ‘Some bugger will be getting a good Christmas box. I’m wanting to strangle him.’

‘Come into the back for a cuppa,’ Brian North, hand on Mr Lewis’ shoulder, guided him into the back.

Things were always tight at Christmas. The window cleaning round doesn’t happen so much, what with the rain and the wind. Our Simon only had his dole and the bairn Rob only had his dole and the little bits that his dad gave him. Things were tight, but my boys are good lads. If they did anything bad it’d only be so as they could treat me like a queen. They care about their mam. They’re all good lads, really, they’re all good lads.

I stayed in the queue, got my lottery ticket and then got myself home to have a word with our Simon. I told him about Mr Lewis and him being probably robbed. I told our Simon that I hoped the lad who’d done it would have the head to hide the money somewhere safe, because I reckoned it was only a matter of time before the police would be on ‘someone’s’ doorstep. Our Simon smiled at me and then gave me a big hug and smacking kiss on my cheek. He’s a good lad.

Number 25

Mr and Mrs Scott

Red front door

Red garage

No car

Reciting Metro stops, unable to sleep

It starts with seeing a big yellow cube.

The letter M is black and big.

It tells is that I have found meself a Metro station.

Cullercoats.

Whitley Bay.

Monkseaton.

West Monkseaton.

Shiremoor.

Northumberland Park.

Palmersville.

Benton.

Four Lane Ends.

Longbenton.

South Gosforth.

Ilford Road.

West Jesmond.

Jesmond.

Haymarket.
Monument.
Manors.
Byker.
Chillingham Road.
Walkergate.
Wallsend.
Hadrian Road.
Howdon.
Percy Main.
Meadow Well.
North Shields.
Tynemouth.
Cullercoats.

I used to drive Metro trains.
Of course I don't do that anymore.
Now I ride them when me missus and me should be asleep.

**Cullercoats, Whitley Bay, Monkseaton, West
Monkseaton, Shiremoor, Northumberland Park,
Palmersville, Benton.**

I ride is a loop of sorts.
I never buy is a ticket.
Me eyes, me ears do the route, like I used to do every day.
I used to be able to drive with me eyes closed.

Disraeli Avenue

I know times and I know distances and no matter how hard I try, I can't seem to shift them from me head.

First train from Cullercoats is at 5:44 am, then coming every eight or twelve or fifteen minutes.

I do the route proper.

Cullercoats.
Whitley Bay.
Monkseaton.
West Monkseaton.
Shiremoor.
Northumberland Park.
Palmersville.
Benton.
Four Lane Ends.
Longbenton.
South Gosforth.
Ilford Road.
West Jesmond.
Jesmond.
Haymarket.
Monument.
Manors.
Byker.
Chillingham Road.
Walkergate.
Wallsend.

Hadrian Road.
Howdon.
Percy Main.
Meadow Well.
North Shields.
Tynemouth.
Cullercoats.

The lad jumped in front of me train.
I was driving from Benton to Four Lane Ends.
Then it happened.

**Cullercoats, Whitley Bay, Monkseaton, West
Monkseaton, Shiremoor, Northumberland Park,
Palmersville, Benton.**

It was reported that the lad fell, that he stumbled onto the track and
then me train went over him.
They were protecting his family.
He had bairns and a wife.

**Longbenton, South Gosforth, Ilford Road, West
Jesmond, Jesmond, Haymarket, Monument, Manors,
Byker, Chillingham Road, Walkergate, Wallsend,
Hadrian Road, Howdon, Percy Main, Meadow Well,
North Shields, Tynemouth, Cullercoats.**

I saw his eyes and I saw the lad jump.

I saw the final decision that he made and I saw it with me own eyes,
so I know that it's the truth.

**Cullercoats, Whitley Bay, Monkseaton, West
Monkseaton, Shiremoor, Northumberland Park,
Palmerstonville, Benton.**

I killed him with me train.

**Longbenton, South Gosforth, Ilford Road, West
Jesmond, Jesmond, Haymarket, Monument, Manors,
Byker, Chillingham Road, Walkergate, Wallsend,
Hadrian Road, Howdon, Percy Main, Meadow Well,
North Shields, Tynemouth, Cullercoats.**

I couldn't stop me train.

I killed the lad.

**Cullercoats.
Whitley Bay.
Monkseaton.
West Monkseaton.
Shiremoor.
Northumberland Park.
Palmerstonville.
Benton.**

Four Lane Ends.
Longbenton.
South Gosforth.
Ilford Road.
West Jesmond.
Jesmond.
Haymarket.
Monument.
Manors.
Byker.
Chillingham Road.
Walkergate.
Wallsend.
Hadrian Road.
Howdon.
Percy Main.
Meadow Well.
North Shields.
Tynemouth.
Cullercoats.

So now I don't work.

I do nowt all day and then at night I ride me route.

I do the loop.

I should be sleeping with me missus.

But every night is the same.

I can't sleep.

Because when I sleep, I see the lad.

**Cullercoats, Whitley Bay, Monkseaton, West
Monkseaton, Shiremoor, Northumberland Park,
Palmersville, Benton.**

There was talk of is having to see a shrink. They said that I should
get me head some help.

But I don't go in for that kind of stuff.

Shrinks are for drug addicts and gays and not for fellas like me.

Cullercoats.
Whitley Bay.
Monkseaton.
West Monkseaton.
Shiremoor.
Northumberland Park.
Palmersville.
Benton.
Four Lane Ends.
Longbenton.
South Gosforth.
Ilford Road.
West Jesmond.
Jesmond.
Haymarket.

Caroline Smailes

Monument.

Manors.

Byker.

Chillingham Road.

Walkergate.

Wallsend.

Hadrian Road.

Howdon.

Percy Main.

Meadow Well.

North Shields.

Tynemouth.

Cullercoats.

Number 26

Mr and Mrs Bruce

Yellow front door

Yellow garage door

Red car

SRT 744S

Buy my stuff, buy me

OBITUARY

MICHAEL ALEXANDER

Born February 14 1970

Died December 27 2007

ALEXANDER, MICHAEL
(Mike) passed away in hospital
after complications of acute
leukaemia, with his beloved
family at his side.

Aged 37 years, beloved father
of Sophie, beloved husband
of Clare.

Funeral service to take place
at St Mary's Roman Catholic
Church Farringdon Road, North
Shields, NE30 3EY at 10.00

A.M., Wednesday January 2
2008. Followed by Whitley Bay
Crematorium.

The family requests no flowers
and all donations to be made to
Leukaemia Research.

For all enquiries please contact
L. Smilling, Funeral Director
on 0191 2526377

FOR SALE

**TALL SLIM MAHOGANY
CABINET** vgc £125. Large
crocheted cream tablecloth
£26, two silver candle-sticks
£35, set of silver fish knives
£15. Telephone 0191 2525255

UPRIGHT PIANO. DARK WOOD. Good Condition. £200 ono. Buyer must collect. Telephone 0191 2525255

WORK WANTED.

EXPERIENCED CLEANER. Fair rates. Available day and night at hourly rate. Thorough and discreet. Telephone 0191 2525255

GAS COOKER 18 months old £95, washing machine £95, Fridge-freezer frost free £75. Tumble drier 18 months old £65. Telephone 0191 2525255

PINE TABLE. 6ft x 3ft and 6 ladder backed chairs, with fabric seat. Excellent condition, £150 ono. Telephone 0191 2525255

Number 27

Mr and Mrs Pescott

Green front door

Green garage door

Yellow car

PLB 533X

A simple love story

Featuring:

Simon Pescott (21 years old).

Carol (16 years old).

Graeme Pescott (21 years old).

Sarah (18 years old).

Story:

Simon and Carol meet at Neil's 21st birthday party. Carol is Neil's cousin.

9th May

Simon and Carol go to the cinema (*Uncle Buck*).

10th May

Simon asks Carol to be his girlfriend (over the telephone). Carol says 'yes' (over the telephone).

11th May

Simon and his twin brother Graeme have a mobile disco. Simon invites Carol along.

12th May

Simon and Carol go to Oz's in Holywell and then have sex in Simon's car in the car park on the seafront.

13th May

Simon goes to Carol's house. She should be revising for her GCSEs. They have sex. It is quick.

14th May

Simon goes to Carol's house. She should be revising for her GCSE. They have sex. It is quick.

15th May

Simon and Carol go into town and look around Woolworths. Neither of them buys anything.

16th May

Simon and Carol go to the cinema (*Pretty Woman*).

18th May

Simon and his twin brother Graeme have a mobile disco. Simon invites Carol along. During *Come on Eileen* Simon and Carol have sex in the toilets.

19th May

Simon and Carol go shopping for new record releases in Wallsend. Then they go back to Simon's house and have sex on the sofa. Simon's twin brother Graeme watches them. Carol does not know that Simon's twin brother Graeme is watching them.

21st May

Simon and Carol go shopping in town. Carol should be revising for her GCSEs.

22nd May

Simon and Carol go to the quarry for an hour. Carol should be revising for her GCSEs. Carol lets Simon take photographs of her without a top on.

23rd May

Simon and his twin brother Graeme have a mobile disco. Simon invites Carol along. Simon is in an angry mood because Carol is on her period and will not have sex. After the disco, Carol offers Simon oral sex in the back of the car. Simon accepts the offer.

25th May

Simon and Carol go to see a fireworks display and then they have sex on the beach. Carol pretends to enjoy the sex by making loud screaming noises. Simon is embarrassed.

26th May

Simon goes to Donna's 18th birthday party. Carol's cousin Neil tells her that Simon kissed Sarah. Carol asks Simon if he kissed Sarah at Donna's 18th birthday. Simon tells Carol that Graeme kissed Sarah at Donna's 18th birthday.

27th May

Simon, Carol, Sarah, Graeme and Tony go to Lightwater Valley. Carol feels very intimidated by Sarah. Carol sees Simon and Sarah holding hands. Carol cries in the car on the way home. Simon does not notice.

28th May

Simon goes to Carol's house and they have sex in her bed. Carol should be revising for her GCSEs. After the sex, Carol and Simon go to Whitley Bay. Carol should be revising for her GCSEs.

30th May

Simon and Carol do not see each other because Simon wants to go out drinking with his friends. Simon tells Carol that she looks too young to go to pubs and that she should be revising for her GCSEs. Carol cries herself to sleep.

1st June

Simon, Carol, Sarah, Graeme and Tony go to the cinema at night (*Hard to Kill*). In the morning Simon goes to Carol's house and they have sex on her bed.

Disraeli Avenue

4th June

Simon and Carol go into town. Simon does not want to hold Carol's hand. Simon tells Carol that his hands are too cold to come out of his pockets. The sun is shining.

5th June

Simon and Carol watch a video at Simon's house (*See No Evil, Hear No Evil*). They have sex two times. It is quicker the first time.

8th June

Simon and Carol go to a party at Anthony's house. They play spin the bottle. Simon kisses Sarah and uses his tongue. Carol does not get a turn.

10th June

Simon goes to Carol's house and stays for twenty-seven minutes. They have sex. Carol pretends to have an orgasm and screams very loudly. Simon asks her to be quieter next time.

11th June

Simon and Carol go shopping for DJ shoes for Simon. They go to North Shields and Wallsend, but do not find the right DJ shoes. Simon does not want to hold Carol's hand. Simon tells Carol that his hands are too cold to come out of his pockets. The sun is shining.

13th June

Simon, Carol, Sarah, Graeme and Tony visit the cinema (*Ski Patrol*).

15th June

Simon, Carol, Sarah, Graeme and Tony go to the cinema (*Look Who's Talking*). Simon sits in between Carol and Sarah. Carol does not like that Sarah is sharing Simon's popcorn.

18th June

Simon goes to Carol's house in the morning. They have sex. In the afternoon Carol goes to Simon's house but he is not there.

19th June

Simon and Carol go shopping for fifty minutes in North Shields. They still do not find the right DJ shoes. Simon does not want to hold Carol's hand. Simon tells Carol that his hands are too cold to come out of his pockets. The sun is shining.

21st June

Simon goes to Carol's house. They have sex. Carol goes to Simon's house. Simon is not there. Carol talks to his twin brother Graeme. Graeme shows Carol his penis. Carol thinks that Graeme's penis is bigger than Simon's penis and that his foreskin is different. She does not tell Graeme.

25th June

Simon goes to Carol's house. He stays for fourteen minutes. They have sex.

26th June

Simon and Carol do not see each other. Graeme goes to Carol's house. Carol touches Graeme's penis. Carol knows that Graeme's penis is bigger than Simon's penis. Carol knows that Graeme's foreskin is not as tight as Simon's foreskin. She does not tell Graeme.

27th June

Simon and his twin brother Graeme have a mobile disco. Graeme invites Carol along. Simon is angry with Graeme and leaves early. Carol cries all the way home.

28th June

Simon goes to Sarah's 18th birthday party. Graeme and Carol go to Sarah's 18th birthday party. Simon has sex with Sarah in the toilets during her 18th birthday party. Carol cries when she sees Simon kissing Sarah. Carol does not know that Simon and Sarah have had sex in the toilets during Sarah's 18th birthday party.

30th June

Simon starts going out with Sarah. Carol has sex with Graeme.

Number 28

Mr and Mrs Stevenson

Green front door

Green garage door

Brown car

KHC 807R

For straight-talking advice ask Jane

Q. I've been married for twenty-three years now with a nice house and car. The problem is that I came home from work for dinner the other day and found my husband dressed in his dead mam's clothes. Our marriage was never 'Hollywood' but I love my husband very much. I made the mistake of telling one of my neighbours what had happened and she spread it around everywhere. Our bairns don't live at home anymore and I'm worried that it'll reach them soon and that they'll not want anything to do with their dad anymore. People have been telling me to leave him and some of them have been pretty bad to my husband, saying that he's one of those homosexuals. I stand to lose a lot if I leave him and really I want to stay. How can I stop him dressing in his dead mam's clothes and what should I do to make the neighbours stop picking on him?

Paula, 45

A. Don't be too firm with him, but do tell him that his dressing in his dead mother's clothing is making you feel uncomfortable. It's

usual for the source of cross-dressing to be about empowerment and the fact that he is choosing to dress in his dead mother's clothing suggests to me that she may have been a domineering woman. Was she? You need to talk to him, not being overpowering, just firm. There's been no mention of any sexual issues, so it is perhaps the fact that this isn't a sexual problem or maybe that you don't have a sexual relationship. Of course, your gossiping to neighbours must have upset your husband and his concealing his cross dressing from you does raise trust issues. Have there been other problems? You need to help him to remove his guilt and to be more open with you, but this will involve your being more accepting. Work through this with him, as a married couple, even consider external help and try to rebuild the lost trust. When you are ready to accept the person that your husband is attempting to express, then perhaps you could tackle your neighbours together, as a solid unit. You'll get there, eventually. Be happy.

Useful number –

Failing marriages

0845 999 9990

Number 29

Mr and Mrs Doran

Blue front door

Blue garage door

No car

Being married to Jezebel

My child was knocked down by a drunk driver.

It happened on Gladstone Street whilst my wife was in our marital bed fornicating with her lover.

[23] And I will kill her children with death.

I was drinking with colleagues and not committing to my family in any way.

I am not blameless.

We both repent of our sins.

Luke.1

[76] And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways;

[77] To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins,

[78] Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us,

[79] To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death to guide our feet into the way of peace.

We seek our guidance in the Holy Scriptures. We devote our lives to his precious words. We seek forgiveness. We worship.

Revelation.2

[1] Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;

[2] I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

[3] And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.

[4] Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

[5] Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

[6] But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

[7] He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto

the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

[8] And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;

[9] I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.

[10] Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

[11] He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

[12] And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;

[13] I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

[14] But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

[15] So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

[16] Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

[17] He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

[18] And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;

[19] I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.

[20] Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

[21] And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.

[22] Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.

[23] And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

[24] But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of

Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden.

[25] But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.

[26] And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:

[27] And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.

[28] And I will give him the morning star.

[29] He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

The Lord is our Master.

Job. 1

[21] The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away.

Number 30

Mrs Jones (Aunty Maggie)

Blue front door

Blue garage door

No car

My brother Eddie

Eddie is my brother. He was five when I came along and not too impressed at having to share mother. He didn't bother much with me and I actually can't recall him ever playing with me before I was nine years old. I can't recollect a time when we laughed or talked or played a board game. I presume that there must have been such times, but in my head there are many blanks and blacks.

I think that I was nine when Eddie first asked.

'Hev yee ever had sex?'

I didn't understand his question so I answered, 'yes'. I remember that my answer seemed to please him and that he smiled. It was then that Eddie began to give more attention to me and I liked that Eddie became interested in me. I needed him to love me and very quickly I knew that I would do anything for my older brother.

I think that I was nine when Eddie first came into my room and asked.

'Hev yee ever seen a cock before?'

I didn't understand his question so I answered, 'yes'. I remember that my answer seemed to please Eddie and he unzipped his trousers and pulled out his penis. His stumpy fingers clenched around it. I hadn't seen a penis before. I remember a curiosity that he had a stubby shiny thing in his trousers.

Eddie told me.

'Watch me wank.'

Eddie told me.

'I'll show yee the way tha lads laik te be touched.'

He guided my hand onto his penis. I remember that the hardness shocked me at first.

Eddie told me.

'Grip yer fingers around me cock.'

I did as my brother told me, directed me to and I wrapped my fingers around his stumpy penis. He placed his hand over mine and we played together. We continued until he told me to release my grip, but to keep my hands on his testicles. And then I watched as he continued to rub and move his penis until he came. I remember being shocked by what was released. I remember the sticky texture as his semen dripped onto my fingers.

I think that I was nine when Eddie first climbed into my bed at night and asked.

'Will yee tyek yer nightdress off an let me cuddle yee?'

I needed him to love me. I would do anything for my older brother.

I think that I was nine when Eddie first entered me. He told me.

‘Open yer legs an let me fuck yee a bit.’

And I did what Eddie asked me to do, because I needed him to love me. I would do anything for my older brother.

I think that I was nine when Eddie told me.

‘It’s oor little secret. You’re me special girlfriend.’

And I loved that I was his special girlfriend and I liked what Eddie did to me in the middle of the night for all of those years.

He loved me and I loved him. I thought we’d find a way of being together. Forever.

But we didn’t.

As I grew older, Eddie began to turn his eyes to other girls. Younger and prettier girls. I couldn’t compete with them. I was fifteen when Eddie stopped entering me quite so often and it was then that Eddie started playing with much younger girls. He would tell me all about their small tender bodies, of their innocence and I would burn with jealousy.

I was sixteen when I realised that I was pregnant. I was sixteen when I had to force myself to sleep with another man so that he could carry the blame for my pregnancy. I chose Samuel Cleggitt. He was known for his lustful ways and he proved an easy target. I let him enter me, I waited for a few weeks and then told him that I

was with child. He was quick to run and when my baby was born she was given to a Sisterhood to care for. My brother's name was never added to her birth certificate. After her birth, Eddie did not enter me again and I realised that my dreams of us being together, forever, were not going to realise.

After our parents died, my contact with Eddie dissolved. We had very separate, different lives. Then, without warning, Eddie decided to re-enter my life and become a house guest in my perfect home.

I know what my brother Eddie did to Jude Williams.

He told me.

He told me about her tender smooth skin and her tight lips.

I burned inside. All of my hidden emotions surfaced and I felt a deep rage. I wanted my youth. I wanted to be nine years old and desirable again.

I watched Jude change. I could see, could recognise her confusion. I could see that she was crying out for help and for words to understand what had happened to her. I wanted to talk to her. I wanted to explain to her how very lucky she was that my brother Eddie had picked her from all of the other children and how over time she would learn to enjoy, to perform during the act. I wanted her to know that we were a big family now, that we were joined as one and that I would help her to get used to Eddie and his needs.

But I could not form the words or sentences to help Jude. I would stare at her and feel hatred, envy towards her. My Eddie desired her. My Eddie had been inside of her. Her flesh was wrinkle free, her tiny body was perfect and Eddie liked flawless, smooth.

I look in the mirror and I see a web of wrinkles. I can trace a finger around the web that is twined with bitterness and deceit.

I am an old woman who is not desired.

I will die alone, longing for my brother.

Number 31

Mr and Mrs Gibbons

Blue car matches the blue front door

Blue car matches the blue garage

FKT 264R

My creative writing exercises

An introduction to Creative Writing – warm ups

A Haiku

Childless couple bound
by his wheelchair helplessness
as guilt steers her path.

Six-word biographies

Wheelchair constrained husband. Wife main carer.
Broken body but penis still flickers.
No children. Husband wheelchair bound instead.
Dreaming of escape. Suicide an option.

By Mrs G. Gibbons

Number 32

Mr and Mrs Alexander

Red front door

Red garage

Grey car or maybe silver

FFH 335V

Dear Father Christmas

Dear Father Christmas

How are you? I am very well. I am sorry for not writing sooner.

Did you know that I was at school when it happened? My dad had another fall last week and the ambulance had to take him in to hospital. He has falls quite a lot, but this one was bad. They think it has caused him to bleed inside his head, but they won't ever know because my mum has said that he is not to have any more tests. My dad is being made comfortable. My grandma had to come and pick me up from school, because my mum was in hospital with my dad. My grandma told me what had happened and she looked really sad. Her eyes were red and little, like she looks in the morning before she puts all of her makeup on. My grandma didn't cry and I didn't cry either.

My grandma took me into Newcastle to look at Fenwick's window. Then we went for a special menu Italian meal before going back to my house. I had spaghetti and garlic bread, my grandma had lasagne and garlic mushrooms. My grandma said that she thought it'd be a nice way to take my mind off everything with my dad. Newcastle city centre is ready for Christmas and Fenwick's window had a skating Winter Wonderland. The penguins were twirling on their skates and they looked really cute. You should go and see it. My grandma told me that my dad was really really poorly now. She said that my dad might not be coming out of hospital this time. Dad's been poorly all my life, but he's been getting worse lately. My mum thinks that I haven't realised, but I have. His skin is a different colour, he has to sleep downstairs because he can't climb the stairs anymore and his food is all mashed up, like my baby cousin Julie's. I still get to spend loads of time with him though and I love it when he asks me to read to him. I do loads of different voices and make him laugh. I love my dad's laugh. It's really loud and comes right from the bottom of his belly. I love my dad's fingers too. They stroke my arm while I read. He gets tired really easily though, but he tries to sleep in the day so that he's all awake when I come

home from school. I think that he must wake up when he hears my mum's car pulling on the drive. I guess this is all in the past now and that my life is going to change again. I'm trying not to think about it too much because I don't want to cry and make my mum more upset. When my mum came back from the hospital, she was sad. She sat with me and my grandma. She held my hand and she told me that my dad was dying. She said that it might take a while, but that dad was ready to go. My mum said that it wasn't that dad had given up on us. My mum said that my dad really really loved us, but more that his body had had enough of fighting. My mum said that enough was enough and that she didn't want my dad's body messed around with. My mum said that she'd done all her grieving, but grandma told her that she hadn't. Grandma explained that the next few weeks were going to be really tough, what with Christmas coming too and that I'd have to be really grown up. My mum started crying then. She said that I shouldn't have to be grown up, that I'm only ten and that Christmas should be a happy time. My grandma told my mum that death was part of life, but then my mum got angry and left the room. My grandma has been staying with us since last week. She's been talking to me about death and my dad

dying and I'm trying really hard to understand. My grandma says that she lost her dad at Christmas time. Grandma has told me that my dad's been in lots of pain and that he's been struggling for years. My grandma says that although we'll cry and we'll hurt when dad dies, at least it means that he won't be in pain anymore. I don't want my dad to be in pain anymore and I hate that my dad has been hurting. My mum went to visit my dad yesterday. She said that he was too poorly for me to visit, so my Aunty Sue came and got me from school. She took me back to her house and I played with Julie a bit, before my grandma came for me. We moved here a couple of months ago, before that we lived near to Aunty Sue and my grandma. We had a big house then, but then we stopped being able to afford it and we had to move here. I hate it here. My mum thought it best that I still go to the same school. My dad's insurance is enough to pay my fees but not for the mortgage on our old house. I hate living in Disraeli Avenue. The people are mean. One of the neighbours keeps coming around and knocking on the front door. My mum said not to answer. I don't think my mum likes living here either. Father Christmas you will know that it's Christmas in ten days. I didn't write to you earlier, because I'm ten now and I kind of am not really

sure if I believe in you or not. Sarah says that you're not real, that it's our mums and dads that do it all, but my dad is really poorly. I'm really hoping that you're real and that you'll be able to help me. Mum says that she really hopes that my dad doesn't die on Christmas day. She didn't say it to me, I overheard her talking to my grandma in the kitchen. I was sitting on the other side of the door. My mum says that if my dad dies on Christmas day, then it'll spoil every Christmas for me and her, forever. She said that she was being selfish and then she started crying some more. I don't really understand what she means by that, but she kept on crying and crying and I think that it's really worrying her. My grandma told my mum that she was right. She said that Christmas stopped being magical the day that her dad died. My mum told my grandma that it's only a matter of days till my dad dies. He's really really poorly. He's too poorly for me to go and visit, but I really really want to go and see my dad. I've made him a special Christmas card with a drawing of a Christmas tree on the front. We don't have a Christmas tree this year. Grandma told me that it wouldn't be right. Father Christmas, that's why I'm writing to you. I'm not writing you a list of what I want and I'm not even bothered about not

having a tree. I don't care about getting toys or anything like that.

Father Christmas, all I want for Christmas is for my dad not to die on Christmas Day. Please. I know that my mum really wants this too. Boxing Day or Christmas Eve would be fine, but please not on Christmas Day. Please. Please let me have this one thing for Christmas. Please. I want my mum be happy again.

Merry Christmas to you and your wife.

Lots of love,

Sophie Alexander

xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

** * **

Number 9

Bill, Rita and Crystal Williams

Green front door
Green garage door
Yellow car
KON 908V

Thinking about wor Jude and wor Adam

Ah keep thinking bout when Ah telt wor Jude tha Ah didn't want te taak about Adam. Ah telt her tha it wez aal in the past an tha it should stay buried wi her mam. Jude tried te laugh it off, but Ah could tell tha sheh wez hurting, tha sheh needed answers.

Wor Jude had been baad. Ah'd tried te help her bi telling her te eat an tha Crystal needed her. Ah telt her not te be so fuckin daft an te eat before sheh starved hersell te death. Sheh wez wasting away before me eyes an there wez nothin tha Ah could dee te help her. Sheh'd always been a strange bairn. Sheh'd keep everything inside, sheh'd always stare at is leik sheh wanted te taak but sheh couldn't get the words oot.

Sheh used te give is the creeps, so Ah guess tha it's me fault, but sheh looked just leik me missus Sarah.

Ah keep gannin back te when sheh discharged hersell frem hospital. Sheh came here, stood in this room an sheh stared into me eyes. Sheh'd telt is strite tha sheh wanted te taak about Adam an Ah

remember trying me hardest te avoid it. Ah didn't want te be taakin about aal the fucking mistakes in me leif, not in front of Rita. Ah'd buried a missus an a bairn. Ah wasn't proud of me past.

Ah telt wor Jude tha Adam had died a long time before. Ah telt her tha he wez a wee lad tha died an tha Ah wez sorry. Ah knaa tha Ah sounded leik a cold bastard, but Ah'd buried me feelings for wor Adam a long time before tha. Ah remember thinking tha it wez probably best if sheh didn't knaa exactly what'd happened. Ah telt her tha Ah wez really sorry tha she'd foond oot about him.

Yee see Ah didn't want te taak about Adam, cos Ah didn't reckon tha there wez owt te be gained bi dragging it aal up, but wor Jude knew much more than Ah realised, then.

Ah wez bein selfish an Ah wez protecting mesel.

Ah wez a hard lad wi me fists an Ah used te think tha if Ah showed any weakness, then Ah'd be less of a lad.

When sheh telt is tha her mam had left her a note, well Ah felt me heart breaking. You've ne idea hoo many times Ah've wondered what wez gannin through Sarah's heed when sheh took aal those pills an drank tha vodka. Ah hated her for not leaving is a note. Ah used te talk te Sarah in me heed, asking her hoo sheh wez an if sheh wez any happier on the other side. Ah thought tha if me an Jude didn't taak about it, if wi ignored it aal an got on wi living, then Ah reckoned tha wor Jude might have a chance.

But Ah wez wrong, cos Jude went strange when sheh foond her deed mam an Ah handled it aal wrong, again.

Ah fucked up, again.

Ignoring shit doesn't myek it haddaway, pretending tha me

bairn hadn't foond her deed mam didn't help wor Jude. The poor bairn had tee much shit stuff spinning around inside her heed.

It wez fuckin clear that wor Jude wez screwed up, sheh'd stolen me brushes tin an filled it wi strange stuff. There were nits an plastic squares an wheyaye there wez Sarah's note. Ah remember staring at the collection an not knowing what te say te Jude. The poor bairn had carried tha note around wi her for years an aal the time sheh couldn't share tha wi me.

What keind of fatha wez Ah?

Ah hurt her an Ah punched her an Ah nivvor made it betta for her. Ah think tha wor Jude wez strange cos her heed wez filled wi secrets tha sheh wez tee frightened te share wi me. Ah wez her only hope an Ah let her doon.

Ah let me bairn Adam doon, Ah drove me forst missus te kill hersell an then wor Jude, Ah nivvor helped wor Jude. Sheh didn't even feel tha sheh could leave is a note when sheh killed hersell, sheh didn't even want te tell is seeya, gan canny.

An when Ah'd a chance te ask wor Jude hoo she'd coped aal those years wi the questions an burden of her mam's death, well Ah let her doon again cos Ah shouted at her.

That's aal Ah ever dee. Ah shout an Ah scare shitless the fowk that love is most. Ah dee it noo wi Rita an wor Crystal. Ah don't want them anywhere near is.

Ah telt Jude tha Ah wez protecting her when sheh wez growing up. Ah didn't even try te explain tha Ah thowt tha if Ah didn't taak about summat, then it'd haddaway.

That's what wi used te dee, back then.

Ah keep thinking bout how Jude sez tha Ah did a crap job of protecting her an tha wez leik someone punching is in the face. Ah'll nivvor forget hoo sheh looked at Rita an the way tha sheh screamed ne reet into Rita's face. Ah'm supposed te live wi aal of this noo, Ah'm supposed te be able te forget me past an rewrite mesel into a future, but hoo can Ah?

Ah'm married te a woman who tret me bairn leik shit.

Rita nivvor showed wor Jude any love, sheh tret her worse than yee waad a dog an Ah wez a spineless bastard. Aal tha me bairn Jude ever needed wez for is te show her a bit of love. Sheh nivvor asked for much but Ah couldn't dee it.

Ah couldn't love me aan bairn an wor Jude wez reet when sheh sez tha Ah failed her an Ah failed Sarah.

Ah've still got the box tha Jude rescued from the rubbish.

It's aal Ah dee noo.

Ah packed in me job an Ah sit here aal day, wi me stuff frem me past.

Ah've got aal these questions tha Ah can't get answers fre. Ah divvent knaa where wor Jude got this shit frem, but it wez important enough for her te keep it aal. Then there's the stuff tha Sarah kept, tha sheh promised te leave behind when wi moved here te Disraeli Avenue, when wi were having oor new start.

It seems te me tha there's ne escaping frem the past.

Ah've got wor Adam's box.

Hand knitted blue booties. A blond curl in a plastic money bag. His hospital wrist band, wi Adam Williams 13-12-1967 written in black pen. A black an white photo wi blue pen on the back, Adam

aged two weeks aad. A knitted blue hat wi satin ribbon ties tha wez nivvor tied. An a broon teddy wi a button fer a nose. A letter, tha's been read bi is an wor Jude. A diary tha's been read bi is an wor Jude. A birth certificate sayin mutha Sarah Williams an fatha Bill Williams. An a death certificate fer Adam Williams, 29-6-1968.

An Ah've got Jude's tin.

Sarah's note. A sticker. A cigar. A load o nits in a folded piece o white paper. Sixteen squares o plastic. Her hospital wrist band.

Ah sit here or Ah gandie in the mirror an me eyes are red. Ah feel a sadness burning behind them. It's leik me bairn Adam an me bairn Jude are living behind me eyes, playing wi fire even when Ah tell them not te. Me eyes are filled wi thoughts of me deed bairns playing together.

Ah can see them when Ah gandie in the mirror.

Ah let them doon

Adam wez born on the thirteenth Decemba, twelve days before Christmas. He wez a reet bonny bairn.

Wor Jude wez born on the twenty-fourth Novemba. Sheh wez a beauty.

But Ah couldn't love her.

Ah couldn't love her cos Ah don't think tha sheh should ever hev been born. Ah didn't desorve te be a dad again, not affta wor Adam. Ah felt tha te love Jude waad be te forget Adam.

Ah couldn't dee tha.

An noo it's happened again. Ah've had two bairns die on is an Ah'm sure tha God's pissed off. Ah don't desorve te be a dad an Ah should nivvor hev got together wi Rita an had Crystal.

Ah'm fucked up.

Ah wez shagging Rita on the bed where me aan missus had killed hersell.

Ah should hev been looking affta wor Jude an not getting some tart up the duff.

Ah hump this burden. Ah feel the guilt an Ah don't think tha Ah desolve te be here.

Ah wish Ah'd the courage te piss off. Ah reckon Crystal an Rita'd hev a betta chance wi is gone.

Ah'm sorry wor Jude an Ah'm sorry wor Adam.

Ah'm sorry.

Acknowledgements

Acknowledging those who have offered help, support and often wisdom.

The idea to offer a voluntary donations page, in support of One in Four, stems back to a wonderful survivor who once spent hours reading my blog from start to finish. She has since become my friend. Healing and survival are possible when supported, when the survivor is allowed to voice within a safe environment. One in Four offers all that is needed to begin to heal, but they are a charity who require funds to continue their work.

One in Four is an organisation run for and by people who have experienced sexual abuse. They offer unconditional support and advice to those who need it. Visit their website for further information at <http://www.oneinfour.org.uk/about/>

And so, to thanking.

The following people have contributed their time, their expertise and their encouragement.

Beth Anderson, Emma Barnes, Joanna Chisholm, Clare Christian,

Helen Colmer, Anthony Delgado, Lindsey Fallow, Jennie Routley, Diane Shipley, Keris Stainton, Gary Smailes, Clare Weber, Jamieson Wolf and H +Z +L.

For further details on how to donate, visit <http://www.carolinesmailes.co.uk/disraeli.html>

About the Author

Caroline Smailes was born in Newcastle in 1973. She moved to the North West to study English Literature at Liverpool University, before going on to specialise in Linguistics. A chance remark on a daytime chat show caused Caroline to reconsider her life. She enrolled on an MA in Creative Writing in September 2005 and began to write *In Search of Adam*.



Caroline lives in the northwest with her husband and three children.

www.carolinesmailes.co.uk

1980

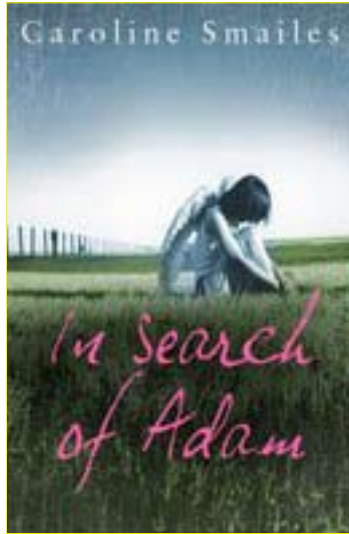
On March 26 1980, I was six years, four months and two days old. I was dressed and ready for school. It was 8:06am on my digital watch. My mother was still in bed. I went into her room to wake her. I found her lying on top of her duvet cover. She wasn't wearing any clothes. Her ocean eyes were open. She wasn't sleeping. And from the corner of her mouth, a line

of
lumpy
sick

joined her to the pool that was stuck to her cheek. Next to her, on her duvet I saw an empty bottle. Vodka. And there were eleven tablets. Small round and white. And I saw a scrap of ripped paper. There were words on it.

*jude, i have gone in search of adam.
i love you baby.*

I didn't understand. But I took the note. It was mine. I shoved it into the pocket of my grey school skirt. I crumpled it in. Then. Then I



climbed next to her. I spooned into her. Moulded into a question mark. Her stale sick mingled and lumped into my shiny hair. I stayed with my mother, until the warmth from her body transferred into me. We were not disturbed until my father returned from work At 6:12pm.

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Accomplished and affecting, Caroline Smailes weaves together a catastrophic tale of mismatched lives.

Ana Lewis is a woman trapped in a black box of her own creation; the black box of her mind. Afraid to blink for fear of puncturing holes in her memory she remains in her room, woefully neglecting her two children Pip and Davie,

leaving them to fend for themselves and find any kind of love, anywhere they can. Davie retreats into his own world, permanently soiled and communicating only by sign language, while Pip, fat and desperate, sneaks out of the house at night to have sex with a boy who hates her. Pip and Davie exist in parallel, with only Ana's bedroom door separating her from them. She does not want to see them. They are the present and Ana chooses to live in the past, continually raking over the ashes of a relationship that was never really hers.

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