

2008 was the worst year of my life.

2008

Head down't shitter...where I belong!

Throwing up a right deadly cocktail I am – occasionally checking if I can spot a piece of plastic in the mix.

Night previous: bus to Victoria, get meself a döner outside the station – bit of grub for the walk home – and I'm staggering tipsy shovelling kebab meat in my face, my trusted legs on shitfaced cruise-control to take me home, put me to bed, when I dazedly see the middle finger of my plastic fork is missing. I hold it before my double-V eyes to make sure. Yes, there's a gap. A prong has snapped off. Pick through the kebab to see if it's there. It's not. Assume the worst and would have probably forgotten but when I woke this morning the remains of the kebab were sharing my bed, lying on the pillow next to my face: the amputated fork a portent of doom.

A blade of plastic tearing my stomach to shreds, I mean, fuck it, why not? Why the bloody hell not, eh? It's not like I could be in any more pain...

I lie by the bog, having a breather. Bloody Nora, could do with a smoke. Hangovers, they never used to take me down, never was ever a puker after a large one, but times change. 24 now – not the man I used to be.

The occasion?

A night of triumph, riches, pride, honour – graduation in the true sense for Alexander Brenchley: the end-show at Prince's.

Goldenballs was back.

2008!

What a year. Tears fill my eyes at the prospect of revisiting it – every memory of every moment fills me with dizzying horror – nowt but pain, demons,

terrifying associations – deep-tissue damage – where to start? where to finish? it was all shit and those expecting any laughs and light relief along the way, three words: stop reading now.

But I'm outrunning my story.

Last night... turned up for the private view hammered from the night before and I hadn't washed properly so my skin retained its ghastly visage. And also, is it me or do I smell of piss?

The Prince's Drawing School has its end-show presentation inside the Prince's Trust HQ on Charlotte Road. This was the last place I wanted to be but I didn't have the cojones to throw the towel in, say, "Up yours!" to my parents and Miss Ravenscroft, the Head Mistress.

Yeah, it were my works that had Miss R sighing and tittering, pulling all her dusty followers over to my exhibit. My dour, sour classmates looked on, enviously, from where they stood before their pastel studies of fruit and detailed portraits of wrinkly relatives and... hand drawings... bloody hell, yes, it's all coming back to me now: t'were lots and lots of drawings of hands.

At the bar – Abs leaning back on the wall like a mummy, a melancholy corpse – in fact, I did really look like a corpse, my skin purple, orange, green, a mere adumbration of Abs, guzzling glass of red after glass of red, staring numbly, blankly at the hullabaloo that passed.

The crowd was mostly family and friends of the students for whom *this was it*. Night of nights, where dreams and careers are made. Registered a few Nutty Solitary Men, inevitably. Wasn't a cool opening, had no credibility, no artistic significance

whatsoever; not that that really mattered for those tragic lunatics. I couldn't bear to look at them. Another verre de rouge. Spotted plenty assorted posh-nobs milling around, experiencing first-hand the East End's thrilling art scene...

Red-faced horsey men – vulgar, expensive clothes – Jermyn Street fashion – ladies with robust foreheads and replica daughters. It was all so morbid. Wa'n't my people! Was a London I despised!

For some reason there were a few old classmates from Minster. They all looked older – the dried complexion of quarter-life, where age takes its grip. Age! that terminal disease...

"Congratulations, Alexander!"

"Beautiful! Beautiful!"

"I never knew you were talented!"

"I'm speechless!"

These suited shadows from my past guffawed, their praise echoing in the chambers of my mind. Blackness, blackness. So numb, Abs-less and brain-dead. A prisoner – of conscience and of consciousness. There was no way out.

A crying pain in my heart.

Miss Ravenscroft came by with an elderly lady dressed like a birthday cake who bought three of my drawings.

Like I gave a shit.

Somewhere in the last year, I had died. I wish it had been a single moment – happened in one fatal strike – but I'd slipped, slipped away, the soul was gone and this broken, tired, discoloured body held on. Another glass.

Imagine if she'd been here.

We'd have had a laugh, made a joke of it.

Could've introduced her to my parents (they were buzzing about somewhere, soaking up my 'triumph'). Wonder what they'd make of her? Not much, knowing them. "Are you sure she's right for you?" They'd much prefer I went out with one of the clone-daughters of these matronly large mommas or brittle countesses vampishly skulking this saturnine 'exhibit'.

But if she had been at my side... imagine... fuck, I'd've felt proud.

DAMN IT! Story of my life: one big what if!

"Alexander, you are a real discovery," said an orange man who had introduced himself as Gillehad Rauss-Hedgley.

He told me he'd been following my work under Miss Ravenscroft's recommendation and invited me to exhibit at his gallery on Duke Street St James's.

"Whatev," I agreed, just to get rid of him.

BS, all of it, but I was playing the game weren't I? My surly malaise most likely enhancing my appeal. My peers stared ruefully on as I garnered praise, attention and riches, effortlessly and carelessly.

But these weren't the treasures I sought – hell no – it was like the meddling gods were giving me what *2005* Alex most desired.

An old woman with a kind face bought six of my woodcuts. As she spoke to me (compliments unearned, undeserved) I couldn't fail to notice people migrating closer, ocuous attempts at innocuous glances... and there was Q, hopping, actually hopping, behind her. He looked mad. As soon as she departed, he bustled over and gasped, "Alexander, do you know who that was?"

"No," said my sad eyes.

And he boomed, "Bouquet residence, lady of the house speaking!"

It was Patricia Routledge – I don't think I'd ever made my father more proud.*

Marky. He arrived direct from work – still in his suit but somehow that suit hung off him, like the body repelled its conservative strictures – top button undone, loose tie and wino hair, he was a breath of fresh air...

Beaming smile, he bounded over.

First things first, however, Marky had priorities and there was an open bar next to me. He fisted eight wines, four in each hand, and gave me a mighty hug.

"Well done, you talented fuck!"

Ah Marky, buzzing around – laughing it up, an opening to him was a chance to refuel before a night at... where did one go these days?

I'd lost touch.

His eyes cruised the crowd. "Plenty action here, Lank, why aren't you smothering up to these shawties?"

Why not, Alex? *Eh?*

"I... I haven't the energy, Marky."

* I was reminded of an incident a few years back during a trip to the Motherland. We visited les Musées royaux des beaux-arts de Belgique. Stood before the majestic maelstrom of barbarism, passion and masterful painting-genius that is Rubens' *Martyrdom of Saint Livinus*, there was a grey-haired middle-aged man, to my side, also viewing the work and Q sidled between us and began speaking – and I realised he wasn't talking to me, as he asked, "If I said *3rd Rock From the Sun*, what would you say?" I turned from Rubens and saw that the man was John Lithgow, whose reply came: "That I starred in it."

Feeble.

“Haven’t the—! Want to get yo’self seen, kiss of life, mate, ’cause if you can’t get snug in a sea of tot like this...”

I knew I’d let him down. That all his advice, the opportunities he’d bestowed, I’d pissed frivolously away...

Perhaps Marky could see that I was a broken man (broken record, more like) for he paused and said, “Well, look here, little present, maybe this’ll solve your—” he looked down, at my cock, “problems.”

He slipped an envelope into my breast pocket and winked before sailing into the sea of tot.

An amplified tap and whistle of a microphone being switched on.

Speeches.

Time for a fag.

Stares and whispers as I excused my way out. I was the star of the evening, mine were the drawings everyone was talking about. Did I care? Hell no. Praise was meaningless. Drawing was meaningless. They weren’t even drawings – they were depraved meditations on lost love, as naturally responsive as wanking to her memory – I might just have feasibly exhibited scrunched tissues encrusted with dried globs of my homeless spunk!

What I’d give...to have her (and, with her, my sanity)...if only I had the strength to call her number.

Light up.

Lovely lovely lovely.

Into neutral, ciggies were made for times like these.

Ey up, here’s another reflection on the weak-willed hypocrisy and shallow conformity of Alex Brenchley: I’d made sure I’d walked a few doors down, lest my parents should catch sight of me. Yep...I’d never come out to the folks about my smoking. *Grow a pair, why don’t you?*

Chance to take stock.

Another year done with, thrown away. It was September and, let’s be honest, September on it’s all looking back. Loose ends and fag ends. No no...2008 was an Annus Shitticus...and yet it did all begin so hopefully – the promise of LOVE – but was now fucked, fucked worse than ever.

Take me quietus!

“Abs!” It was Marky, hanging out of the door to Prince’s. “Get in ’ere! You’ve won sumfin!”

I did as I was told. I went back inside and collected my prize. The first of three that night.

And now – having drunk the night away down’t street at the Old Blue, first with Marky then later, after he’d had to go to the launch of a new space in Lewisham, on my own – I found those prizes.

I was back in my bedroom, having surely puked the best of it out, looking through my clothes for my smokes. And in the pockets, there was a crumpled certificate for The Prince’s Trust Young Artist Scholarship 2008. The Sir Thomas Rilroy Bequest For Etching. And the bla-bla-award-for-who-gives-a-shit? Yeah, I was minted but a fag, a fag, my kingdom for a...

A-ha!

There they are, open the pack and there’s just the one. Is all you need in the morning!

As I rummage for my lighter, I find Marky’s

envelope. Had forgotten about it last night. Hmm, wonder what it is?

Tear envelope and inside is a card, on it is written:

Use it or lose it
N 51° 34' 05", W 0° 10' 20"
The Lady Field

The Lady Field?

Hold up, let's not get ahead of ourselves – first we need to journey back to the start of the year. Abs had been called into Prince's for a "little chat" with Miss Ravenscroft.

Suppose I'd been at the school 'round five months.

Did my head in it did – the talk, constant talk – all trousers no action art is – the emphasis on direct observation – the dead techniques championed – woodblocks! – and this place, it's like it likes to act like it's in the real world and involves itself with contemporary art but far as I could tell this extended to Paul Noble and NO MORE.

And the students – woe! – people my age, lot of them their first time in London but they might as well have still been in their dreary suburban homes – they lived in London but were not *living* in London – pensioners! pensioners in twenty-something bodies – one hoped there was vice, fun, danger lurking somewhere inside but, no, I think they really did want to spend their days drawing fruit and the leaves of potted plants. Needless to say, they didn't take kindly to dear old Abs. Ask one, "Fancy a pint?" they'd look at you like you'd pulled

out your crack pipe. Figured me a loafer, a phony, not serious about their vocation.

Guilty on all counts!

What's more, the work I did eventually make didn't fit their school of arthritic mark-making, wispish lines, blurred pastels. Nay, my graphic forms, flat colours and use of daring materials, such as enamel paint and perspex, was anathema to them lot. Not to mention the emotional charge – the desire, the all-consuming love and ravishing beauty that sung from my multifarious studies of a mysterious female...

Little secret. Lots of the Little Princes and Princesses used to set up an easel in their studio space before a still life they'd arranged. Apples, glasses, (disingenuous) wine bottles, patterned cloth, that kind of thing. Perhaps some books – art or philosophical ones – if they were wishing to controversially invest some external meaning into their work. Well, while no one was looking, naughty Abs used to move bits and pieces, ever so slightly. But these nutters, *they liked it!* It was a new challenge, a delicious dilemma they could gurn and get their stomach in knots over.

"Horatio, could you come over a moment and give me a hand? I'm having trouble capturing the ellipse of this bowl..."

Having said all that, Miss Ravenscroft, who ran the course, liked me. And I suppose I liked her too.

She was an artist herself and her work might best be described as bloody awful. Mixed-media canvasses – prints, drawing, oil paint – which colourfully and cacophonously combined scribbly flowers and plants with figures based on

classical sculpture. Some tasteful nudity (a tit or ripe arse) and sometimes small animals. All a far-off echo of similar stuff she'd done in the Sixties which made her name.

But she were alright, Miss Ravenscroft.

Unlike most art teachers she wasn't all sleepy and jaded and dried-up and faded and a bit smelly and bloated with beer and bitterness, confused, like they'd discovered somehow they'd gotten old and past it and lost whatever desire they once had and instead of bowing out gracefully they soldiered on, and on and on, as a teacher, battling their irrelevancy by doctrinising and championing only that which represents their own practice and rhetoric.

Nah, Miss R escaped the pitfalls of art-teaching to remain happy, energetic, robust – when she must have been over 70. Though she was mildly crackers.

I looked and felt like shit that morn, as I arrived at the Tea. Bloody Nora – not even ten and the place was packed, the young drawers labouring away.

What's-her-name was doing a watercolour of rocks on a beach.

Brian-or-Kelvin, young lad from Bristol, I believe, holding a hand-mirror, doing a self-portrait.

I felt like the walking dead as I made my way through this sweatshop of direct observers.

Reached R's office – knock knock – “Come in!”

Hadn't really thought what this meeting was about – I was flotsam...

“Abs! So glad you could make it, do take a seat.”

Gladly. Fuck, I was tired.

“How are you, Abs?”

A shrug, a sniff, a grunt.

Ravenscroft smiles, sympathetic.

Sat across from me, she has on a bulky Aran sweater, her salt-and-pepper hair uncombed, short, practical. There's a rosy glow about that wrinkled face as she observes me from over her cluttered desk.

“You've seemed...distant the past month or so. Haven't seen much of you in the studio.”

I exhale, loudly blowing air through my lips.

“Is everything okay? Anything you'd like to talk about?”

I slouch further in my seat and sigh.

She frowns – concerned – a kindly gaze...

A silence before, “Where are my manners? Would you like a drink? Coffee? Tea? Pop?”

“Coffee!”

“Certainly. How'd you like it?”

“Black, no sugar. Have you Ristretto?”

“I think so. Let me have a look.”

Miss Ravenscroft had a Nespresso machine and Ristretto was my fave – strong and hard, just what I needed.

Long sniff. Fuck, I'd caught a cold. No wonder, hadn't been looking after myself of late.

As Miss R made my coffee, I stared through the window. What a view – London – East London – all of it, infinite – had sent shivers the first time I saw it, incredible it were.

Now that view...grey, drab, resigned, lifeless... I could see no joy out there. It was a city of sadness and rejection.

“There you are,” as she placed the coffee before me.

Immediately guzzled it down. Lovely stuff.

“Now, Abs, I hope you don’t think I’m prying but I’ve noticed you’ve made very little work the past few weeks and when you have been in class you’ve seemed . . . remote and slightly fractious. Now, please don’t take this the wrong way . . .”

Don’t take this the wrong way, hear that and you know you’re in for a treat.

“ . . . from the get-go I could tell, I could see you were a go-er. Full of beans. I knew, I said to myself, ‘This young man has many extra-curricular activities.’ Indeed, it might be some time since I myself went on an all-nighter but I can remember what a hangover looks like.” She smiles knowingly. “Yes, you’ve come to school a little worse for wear, a few times, I dare say.”

I have nothing to say and just look on.

“Well, what’s wrong with a bit of fun? It’s what being young is all about, is it not?” A pause, she breathes in. “But I have to say . . . lately it doesn’t look like you’re having too much fun.”

Another pause – I reckon she reckons I’ll open up, pour my heart out. No chance . . .

So she continues: “I was on Brick Lane on Monday – no, Tuesday, yes – and do you know who I saw?”

I grunt.

“Pete Doherty.”

She raises her eyebrows. A gesture of an unspoken, implied understanding?

“Do you like him, Abs?”

“He’s alright,” I huff.

“Hmm, yes he is alright, isn’t he? Some of his songs are quite affecting. And he has it all, doesn’t

he? The talent, the money, the fame . . .” – pauses a beat – “the women.”

My head falls back and I whimper.

“Is something the matter?”

Could tell where she was headed and *Abs-no-like*.

“Well, I’d imagine a lot of young men, like yourself, would love to be just like Pete Doherty.”

No.

“Just as in my day they all wished they were Mick Jagger.”

What you’re selling, I ain’t buying!

“The romantic dandy figure. Footloose and fancy-free. Quintessential London.”

I’ll draw! I’ll draw! Please just let me out!

“Abs . . . I do hope you take what I am saying in the spirit in which it is being offered, because I am speaking to you out of concern for your well-being, as I do care for you – I care for all of my students, but I take – and perhaps I never explained this to you, after all one must be discreet in this day and age, but I take a special interest in my boys from Westminster. I know you won’t tell the others, but it’s true that I always make sure there’s one or two Minnoes on the programme – keeps the standards up, prevents things getting too parochial . . . us born and bred Londoners, we’re a dying breed, alas . . . and indeed it keeps things fun for me – of course, girls weren’t admitted in my day but my father and my two brothers all went to Minster, many years ago now, that school was the making of them and to this day, especially the boys, its pupils stand head and shoulders above the rest – you’ve all enquiring minds, you’re good conversationalists, have lovely

hair and the get-up-and-go to make something of yourselves in this world. Gentlemen to boot. Well, needless to say, it's a pleasure to have you young men at the school and it does a world of good for the other students to work alongside your kind. All of which is to say, and you might have already guessed, but Abs, are you taking drugs?"

Eh?

"I might seem long in the tooth but I know a thing or two and all the signs tell me that you are abusing drugs... the serious kind." She was getting heated. "Don't think I don't understand – that I don't empathise... you are an incredibly gifted artist. Believe me, I should know – one sees only a handful of draughtsmen with your ability in a lifetime. And I cannot stand by and watch such talent be thrown away!"

Bloody Nora, she was so far off the mark...

"Ah! Even in my day, there was a tragic, self-destructive streak in the Minnoes. Genius, expectation, youth: it can prove a deadly cocktail."

I stood up – that's right, I got to my feet, couldn't listen to another word. She'd pushed my button and as a delirious, love-sick bebop the following words sung from my lips:

"Yeah, yeah," a malevolent sneer, "yo' right, yo' got me, I am an addict – a junkie, the flunkie, he's all shot-up, blazin' and erasin' the foibles of youth," – speaking in tongues – "here's proof, standing here, let loose on the dreamscape that hates the love and the lover – you heard me right, an addict, addicted to love – L-O-V-E – the pinprick of the thick endorphins and cruise missiles riles my mind and tears the bed sheets, this love is not discreet,

doesn't peter or fade, it misbehaves, as well it should – down boy, bad boy – it can't be played, sent into remission, a fission, no indecision, brought to my knees, addiction's a disease and while Pete drank gin in tea cups I'd be shooting up and fly my mind, race the heart on ecstasies to chase away this unreachable high, to wave goodbye to a memory that haunts – lie still heart! lie still! – and rest mind, forgot the want and lust, trust, must, ground to dust, to break these invisible handcuffs, to ply my trade of yesterday's man, was he all that bad? – love wants, love wants, and I can't give it to her, can't feed this addiction, an affliction that has torn me, born from me a zombie life, half-life, towards a new death, regret regret, she's got me – good – hooked and I'm fucked, baked, joy-riding, un hiding the wild thing, this love's got wings but the cure is the drug is the cure, that universal panacea, hoochie mama, she's gone, disappeared, can you see her? And I'm a junkie fo' life – the drug of choice: her voice, her hair, eyes, mouth and nose – this pain right there!" I beat my chest, "she should be there! so I'll stand on a chair!" I stood on my chair. "To sing it out loud! I'm in love! Love! And I'm alone – so leave me alone..." I stepped down from the chair and crawled under Miss R's desk and curled into a ball, crying, "Hit me up, give me all you've got... it's all rot, because when the cuckoo on the clock..." I trailed off, sobbing, spent, unable to come up with any more rhymes.

Miss Ravenscroft knelt down and looked at me under the desk.

"Abs, you need help!"

Mysterious, mythical, magical is the Lady Field.

You hear the rumours growing up but Marky insisted it was real... an area of Hampstead Heath where women – yes women – go cruising.

For sex.

With men.

It was too implausible *not* to be fact.

And they're not mad women – they're allegedly sane, beautiful, classy, albeit typically more mature (though *experience preferred*, I say) women escaping the trappings of passionless marriages or City jobs too demanding to allow traditional relations.

Go ahead, scoff, "You're having a laugh!" but I believed it. And as I held Marky's card with its secret co-ordinates, I knew, I had to find it.

This time, *this time* – this was it – no excuses, no turning back, do-do-do or die – I collected my (seven-year-old) jonnies and Oyster card and left the flat, stopping off at Maplin Electronics on Victoria Street to buy (you guessed it) a handheld GPS tracker into which I punched Marky's priceless numbers and – *ay caramba* – there it was on the little screen... X marks the G-spot(s)... in woodland off Spaniards Road... gulp... stay strong, ABS... I would return a new man.

Oh Alex...

Watching him – Mad Alex – setting off on his way to the Lady Field – lust and insanity scrawled across his wasted face – eyes glaring and frenzied – one can see... he's not all there – he is searching, searching – searching for answers to questions that haunted and devoured him – but was what he was looking for to be found in the middle of Hampstead

Heath? – really? – or was it another rainbow he was chasing? and maybe that is it? – as dear, dear Paddy McAloon once sang, "He admits all he's chasing is the chase."

The Lady Field, I ask you...

"Abs."

A pause.

"I don't know how to say this."

Another pause and, oh God, I know what comes next:

"I'm confused."

"I think we should take a break."

"I don't love you anymore."

"I've grown embarrassed of you."

"I've met someone else."

In other words: it was over.

But why? And how had I not seen the signs?

Oh God, no. Fuck. Please, not this. I'd rather she killed me.

She must have sensed my anxiety as she let out a sob.

I held her tight...

United, an impossible bond, the unspoken truth this was our last embrace.

My arms gripped her waist. *Please, my love, don't speak, don't say it.* I never wanted to release her.

"Abs..."

Now it was my turn to cry. Tears engulfed me as I bawled, "Oh Trevoreesia!"

"I'm pregnant."

I lurched forward, pushing her from my lap. My head dropped between my knees. I couldn't breathe.

"Abs, I'm sorry!"

Pregnant.

"I...don't...it just happened."

Pregnant.

"I'm sorry, I'll get rid of it!"

Pregnant.

"Say something, please!"

Alex Brenchley, a daddy...

Tears rolled down my cheeks. Tears of happiness.

I collapsed from the chair, onto my knees. My sobs turned to laughter – wild, shrieking laughter – as incredulous elation took hold and I looked up, forever up, into the eyes of this woman – Woman of Woman – Trevoreesia, carrying my child.

Wishful thinking!

Ever since I'd met her, had looked into those galvanic eyes, it had been like this...waking and dreaming (nightmaring rather, for this was a tragic, impossible desire), inventing memories and far-fetched fantasies of every intimacy of episodes from our un-lived life together and it was all so real: so real, I could feel the kick of my baby.

This one, it came to me at the National Gallery. Where every Tuesday, 10am till 6pm, I was condemned to *draw* by you-know-who.

Sketching.

Sketching the masters.

Think: Abs Brenchley – seven-foot of piss 'n' vinegar, full tank and the engine running – a love so strong it could cut diamonds coursing through his heart – sat on a portable stool, the sort old people carry around county fairs for when they need a rest, sketching.

Seeing them all – the cold-shoulder buffoons from class – squatting and hunched, pads on laps,

some with little easels – easels! in this day and age! – all rubbing and smudging, squinching and grimacing at their tedious scribbles.

Sketching: even the word... something so wrong, weary, ponderous, pastimey, laborious about it: *sketching*.

And charcoal – was there ever a more melancholic medium?

And with charcoal comes...fixative.

Fo-sho, pre-T, I'd played along, anything for't gimble and office space, but love blew this charade to pieces – I was disgusted with myself and horrified by life's vacuous rituals which were central to Prince's.

And, since the little to-do with Miss R, I knew I was living on borrowed time.

Time's up.

I slammed my pencil down on my pad. A few peers glanced over – one offering an understanding smile...ha, he must've assumed my frustration was born of difficulties with my drawing.

Puh-lease! Could draw this with a pencil up my ass!

I sighed and my sigh became a moan – it was all...too...much.

The guy who'd smiled now frowned – I was disturbing his concentration.

Damn, they all hated on me – always made me the bad guy.

If he knew...

If he only knew what I was going through. But how could he? How could anyone? I doubt even you, privy as you are to my every thought, can comprehend what I was enduring because, in all honesty,

through the history of love, I challenge you to find one as deep in feeling as mine for Trevoreesia.

I was crying.

And I had a big boner.

L O V E

A new word for love, let's find one. War? Because that's what it is, not what it's like, what it is. A war that never ends. That produces only casualties, losers, victims.

And I had come back from war with Trevoreesia a changed man.

My hardy was chomping at the bit. Ouch.

Seemed I had a perma-boner these days...

I fell forward, onto my knees.

"Trevoreesia!" I bellowed.

A hush in the gallery – eyes on me – all is silent but for the weird, weird devil-whispers of audio-guides. A girl from class – Elspeth or Melanie – scowls and spits, "Do you mind?"

I'd had it.

"I've had it!"

On my knees, curled over, I punched the floor.

Sketching / National Gallery / death...what's the fucking difference?

I staggered to my feet. Gasps filled the terrified silence. All eyes on – not me – but my boner. That gigantic bulge in my pants.

Security guards.

There's Miss Ravenscroft.

"Abs?"

She has this helpless, bewildered look on.

Of course: this is real life, real life you hear me, not a sketch, not something you can erase and put right with a putty rubber.

I look at my classmates – fuck, I don't hate them, course I don't, they just need corrupting is all. Had things been different I might've been able to turn a few of them onto London's hard stuff, but as is they were starved of Classic ABS – saw only this nutty, feeble model – this lunatic before them, tears pouring, a fat cock poking through his trousers.

And then – a final act of madness – I stamped on my portable stool, breaking its legs.

"Audere est facere!" I cried out loud – to the students and tourists, and the security guards who swarmed, gabbering into their walkie-talkies.

Made a run for it.

As I bolted from the gallery, a mother held her child close, covering its little eyes.*

* Shame on you, Alex. Hold my hands up there – I crossed the line and had to ask: did my phallic bulge break not only a moral code but a legal one? I consulted Cain Ormondroyd, BA (Oxon), Barrister-at-law, old pal from Ox:

"Section 66 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 creates an offence of intentional exposure. It has two elements. First, an intentional exposure of the genitals and second, an intention that someone will see them and be 'caused alarm or distress'. You are certainly not committing this offence as neither element appears to be present. It is highly unlikely that a court would hold that genitals within clothing (however tight) were 'exposed' and in any event there is no evidence that you intended either the 'exposure' or that anyone would be alarmed or distressed thereby.

There is, however, an old common law (i.e. created gradually by the courts, not by an Act of Parliament) offence of doing acts outraging public decency. In order to be guilty of this offence one must do an act which is 'lewd, obscene, disgusting and... of such nature as to outrage minimum standards of public decency as judged by a jury in contemporary society' (Blackstone's Criminal Practice 2010, para

Soon as I was outside the National, I lit up.

Soon as I lit up, "Excuse me, sir, smoking is not permitted outside the entrance."

March down't stairs. When will they be happy, eh? How long before we can't even smoke on the street? Ooh I was born in the wrong era... this

B3.298). This act must be done in public, and you are clearly in public here. The fact that your penis is not exposed/directly visible would not in itself be a defence: compare *R v Lunderbeck* [1991] Crim LR 784 in which the defendant was observed by two police officers sitting on a bench, watching children play and masturbating under a cloth he had on his lap. He was convicted of this offence.

However, it seems highly unlikely that your conduct would reach the necessary threshold for a conviction. As Lord Simon said in *Knüller (Publishing, Printing and Promotions) Ltd v Director of Public Prosecutions* [1973] AC 435, 'outrage... is a strong word' and "outraging public decency" goes considerably beyond offending the susceptibilities of, or even shocking, reasonable people'. It would be highly unlikely for a jury to find that the bulge of an erection through clothing was 'outrageous' in this sense by today's minimum standards of decency.

There is also a more fundamental objection. The requirement in the offence is for 'acts'. There must be an intention to do those acts (although there need not be an intention that the acts should be obscene, lewd, disgusting, etc.: *R v Gibson & Silveire* [1990] 2 QB 619, a case about freeze-dried human embryos being used as earrings in a sculpture). Insofar as your erection is purely involuntary (as it appears to be) then it cannot be said that you have done an 'act', let alone done so intentionally. Even if a jury disbelieved you and found that you had voluntarily incited the erection, it would still be arguable that this did not constitute an 'act' in law, as it is a mere change in the condition of your own body.

As such it is reasonably clear that you have not committed any offence."

world, this London ain't for me... how much happier I would've been in the Fifties.

This is the worst place to think such joyless thoughts...

The Trafalgar masses, makes me feel so adrift every time: what am I? what is London? who are these people? what are we doing? lost and exhausted and passing through, where are we all going and what is the meaning of Alex Brenchley in this tide of man?

As I draw deep on my cigarette, I watch the faces and still wonder, is she there? is she one of them? e'er will I see her again?

In the immediate aftermath of our union, I felt that rush, glow, invincibility of love, I'd heard others eulogise. See, I don't think I'd ever truly been in love. There's a good shag, true that, but this was different.

However, it became apparent soon enough that no one knew Trevoreesia.

"Trevor-what?" asked Marky.

"Trevoreesia! The girl - woman - at Gaz's, you know, who I was talking to when I passed out."

"Ooh aye, right little Porridge Island, corker, I remember," rubbing his hands together like I simply wanted to reminisce.

"Yes yes, Marky, but who is she?"

"Trevoreesia."

"Yes, I know that! But who is she? Where can I find her?"

"Fuck should I know?"

"You know everybody!"

"I bloody well wish!" he laughed, not recognising the gravity of the situation.

Of course, I trawled the Internet...

Trevoreesia, Trevoresia, Trevoreesha, Trevorízha, Trevareesja, Treforeesha, Trivoreezha, Trivoré'sha, Tryv-o-riisya, Trevorayjah, Treworij-sia, Třeřlórižã, /tɹevə'ri:ʒə/, ↑R1P'XllHf, trevoresia, Τρεβορήζια, Треворижа, Τρηφοριωλ, Σρετζηρηθω, տրեջոհոհոցս, תרוריצה, تريفوريسية, تروريژا, トレヴォリージャ, 泰沃瑞西雅, 트레보리시아, తెరవోరిశియా, त्रेवोरेसिया, त्रेवोरेसिया, ತ್ರಿವೋರಿಯಾ, ತ್ರಿವೋರಿಯಾ, ತ್ರಿವೋರಿಯಾ, ತ್ರಿವೋರಿಯಾ.

...sweet FA.

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