

## A CUSTARD COLOURED SUPERDREAM

Chops was looking out of his tenth floor window with the top half of his pulpy heft threatening defenestration.

- There's a lotta people down here Casio old pal
- They're marching
- Why
- Tryna save the world
- Why?
- Good question

He squeezed his heft further out into the sunset. Leith Walk was gubbed up full with protestors wall to wall, arm in arm allaycross the tarmac crossing all the classes and denominations of folk imaginable. Casio could hear them but he could not, like his porky pal, see them down there doing their thing. He had an itch bodily and metaphorical: one being his sweaty sack and the other being this nagging jag jag jag that he was missing out on goings-on going on downstairs. So up he got and out the window he went, scooshing in beside Chops the beast who was raining down a few droplets o sudoriferous dribblings ontay the heads of some old folk onlookers now jammed between the mob and the Greggs. It was nice to be out in the heat. Casio could have murdered a pint, he'd a'gone Peter Tobin on a four pack. He looked down at the mob. Seething. Writhing it was, like a lumpy wayrum of flesh and placards.

- We should go join them
- Why?
- Chicks dig morals

This was one of the most inspired ideas that had ever deigned to enter Casio's acne clad cranium. Chops almost fell out the window in excitement. He almost squealed. Why hadn't he thought of that? Chicks fucking digged morals. Chicks fucked diggers. Fuck morals dig chickers. He'd been surveying a few of them already but he'd never thought of actually going down there. Down there in the lions' den temporarily repurposed by leopard print thongs and all imaginable incarnations of zoological wonders. There were loads o girls from the uni about. Lotsey them white tank top affairs. Bra straps on beginning to bronze shoulders. Surveying his fleshy kingdom he had been. Chops the statesman. Then the stately beast of a Chops did have an idea and not a semi bad one for someone semi-attended in other distracting departments.

- Here, we should call the Shaggers
- Fucking right you are Chops! Get all the troops? Ayee, imagine Stocky down there!
- Seen the mort at twenty-seven past two?
- No. What's she wearing?
- Fuck all
- Wi the wee pigtails cut number on top? Trio of piercings in the anti-helix descending lobewise?
- That's the one
- Fuck me
- (shouting out) Get thee to a nunnery!

A few of the mob look up but only for a glance. The boys laugh and retreat all squishy through the window

- The beast it cometh cometh down!

And they were into the stairwell, onto their phones, through the dust ridden shards of light, along the hallway of lizard skin paint all crackling away and ringing up their pals in a chorus of here we fucking goes. Crashing out intay the furore of an oft proclaimed sunshine on Leith. Here they were

and what a scrum ey bodies before them; man it looked different from above. Above it had seemed all serene somehow but down here it was more like surveying a Dorling Kindersley cross-section of Hive or WhyNot such was the interweaving grope of flesh. Someone somewhere had a sausies and burger van grilling up, drifting out a balmy scent of Danpak dope fumes above proceedings which were doing wonders for the boys being over hung as they so often were. Their plan was, at first, simple: make their way to the rendezvoooze point at Pilrig Park where they'd meet the troops. To get there they'd either have to ram right through the blob or skirt around its ever bulgeoning edges. Ol Chops and Casio need only a glance to ken the inner cogitations and connivings of their compatriot: neither wanted to be absorbed into the blob quite yet, save that treat for when the Shaggers were en masse. So real chill and aloof like they begin to orbit the mob de Mr Blobby, the paedo jellybean, heading up the edges of Leith walk towards the crater fucked fissure of Centres Omni and St James. Casio had often thought what a rough gig it must be up in highballs heaven for St James given that St Paul gets a big fuck off cathedral while the poor wee man James gets a shitey shopping centre with its underground arse packed full of Sports Direct depositories. Amen, Casio inters under his breath although who can say whether he was addressing the plight of St Jay or the neat little rig of a bobcutbrunette at a quarter to four. Chops had also clocked the dimple faced L.Brooks doppelgänger and was about to pass comment when both sets of oggle goggles and gawpin mouthes were distracted. A song was drifting through the crowd and calling all to a reverential silence. Nobody could work out where those guitar chords were coming from, slow acoustic purrs emanating from deep within the blob. At first Casio thought it might be *Wonderwall* and was about to fucking kick off but then the blob divided à la the messiah, Allah the Messiah, all the same anyway and the wandering minstrel was revealed. His name was Diaz Pora Dylan and, to many, he was a god.

### Rolling Rainfall Revolutionary Revue

A high calibre bullet  
From a high powered guy  
Ash clouds and chaos  
Where once there was sky

What we mean means nothing  
Though they feign us choice  
Bothallchoractorschumminararoundgansumuminarumdrum-  
strumtruminahumptadumpwaultopoofoolooderamaunsturnup  
In the words of James Joyce

Mongers of fish: feeding the poor  
Mongers of iron: keep us secure  
But go straight to hell ye mongers of war

A high class of broad  
Bought by a low class of sleaze  
He runs the papers  
Rules what we believe

What we do does nothing  
Though we have a voice

Thingcrooklyexineverypasturesixdix-  
likencehimaroundhersthemaggerbykinkinkankanwithdownmind-lookingated  
In the words of James Joyce

Mongers of fish: feeding the poor  
Mongers of iron: keep us secure  
But go straight to hell ye mongers of war

Gushing applause. Coo Coo. Pants of men and women were moistened by his exotic gravel tones and the altogether elsewhere intensity of his aurmonica. The cat was a shaman. Or so he liked to style, thought Chops and Casio.

- What a softboi
- What a cunt you mean
- His tune was alright to be fair
- It was like two chords again and again
- Aye true
- Christ though look at him, he's started a sex cult with one song

And he had, right in the middle of the masses, look, just there, a genuflecting circle of petty worshippers assembling round this hawthorn idol. This drifter. This

- Daft cunt
- He's dressed like a rabbit hutch
- Aye but he'll be shagging like a rabbit the night
- Proves my point though ey, chicks dig morals
- Reckon he believes in it though? In what he's singing?
- Does it matter?

They continue up and try put Diaz far out of mind. His surprisingly catchy tune makes the putting out of mind all the more tricky.

- Fucking mongo of war more like

As the blob starts tay thin out they criss across the road an over to Pilrig. Stocky and Romulus D were already there and looked buzzed.

- Awritee sheggerssss
- How's yous going?
- Good man good. Yourselves?
- Buzzing for this ey
- What exactly is *this*?
- A protest
- I fought the law kinda vibes
- What are they protesting though?

This was a good question. Good meaning a right needling pain in the ersse. Young Casio Casablanças, Sherlock of the bunch, looked about in the hope o spying something signed or signified. The actual signs, of which there were many, were of no use. NO. NOT IN MY NAME. NOT AGAIN. Jeez man, gloomy cunts. No wonder Diaz had gone down such a hurricane. Stocky, who was assembled in killer double denim, was getting twitchy and already grooving on the spot in the hope of getting on with it. He downed his tinny of DragonShoop and gobbled out the remaining diabetic phlegm.

- What does it matter what they're protesting?
- It matters to the morts
- When's such a quibble stopped you before Gandhi?

- It's a quandary nay a quibble
- Words words words boyos
- Casio's right though, how're we gonna patter them if we don't know the patter?
- We could say we're dealers?
- Remember what happened the last time we tried that?

What had happened happened like this: they had had to buy seven bottles of Glen's Vodka in order to get five students drunk enough so that they'd believe one wee baggie of sour Skittles was in fact a primo supply of narcotic loot. The vodka had cost £80.85, the Skittles had cost £0.75 and they had sold the *drugs* for £40 and no sex or anything. It hadn't really been worth it. But today would be different. They were here to deal in politics not drugs. They were conscientious objectors to something - they just werny sure what.

- We could ask the pigs?
- We could lick Alex Salmond's scrotum
- We might get them confused with his heed
- We could ask one of the old gades in Robbie's, they ken everything that's happening
- Aye that's a good shout but best wait for the others
- True true

There were nods and murmurs of approval. Robbie's pub was back on the other side of the blob, on the corner of Leith Walk and Iona Street. It was a fairly decent swally house that had so far resisted the hipsterisation which had been sweeping through Leith the past couple o years.

- Awrite helmets?

Revels and Gummy were jiltjigging along Pilrig street with strides o swagger and purpose. They'd been delayed by an argument over to shorts or not to shorts: was getting your pasty white pins out in the sun a good or a bad plan for pulling tidies? They'd decided on bad. Short shorts were the only acceptable shorts but upon donning short shorts you either looked like a spicy cunt or a rugby boy from the uni.

- Jeez Gummy what are those?
- Linen
- Linen?
- Aye, the ideal summer apparel allowing for a cool upward draft into groinal nether regions
- There's dribbles o piss showing through
- Really?
- Yup

Gummy rubbed at his crotch, only making matters worse, while the others laughed and administered some preening of their own. Revels was almost as hoppy as Stocky but for other reasons. Revels loved a scrap you see. Protest, riot, fresh pickings. Scrawny hypocritical posers. Perfect for a summer's afternoon scrap. Revels was so named on account of his fluctuations in wanting to fuck people up - he could be the chilliest, kindest boy going or you could pull out one o those coffee chocolate fuckers and get a fist in the face.

- Revels?
- What?
- We come in peace, comprende?
- Ay compadre
- Birds not bruises
- Message received
- What are they all doing?
- We don't know, gonna go ask some old boys in Robbie's
- Could get a quick round in? A sharpener

-Good shout Chops!

So the whole gang go bustling across Leith walk and into the bronze by gold green fronted pub. Sun looks something special ghosting amber through a Tennents. The dark wood panels take on a soft and ancient gloss. Peace. A few suspicious eyes eye the new arrivals but the barman, a gristle of bristle and twisted tattoos, kens Chops and Casio at least and loosens up upon recognition. He mutters to a couple of drowned out old gadses at the bar whose eyes are as sad and as distant as can be.

-Don't worry, they're locals, they're no with the protest

-They're no?

-Aye they're no

Chops rolls up to the bar and nods at the regulars. It's like they don't even see him. And there's a whole heefty lot of him to see.

-Six Tennents please

-£23.34 please

-What's all that out there?

-A protest

-Aye but what are they protesting?

The barman shrugs. Chops turns tentatively to the old folk.

-Scuse gents

-They won't hear you

-Are they deaf?

-Nah, they're just very busy listening

He nods towards a large jar of peanuts. Someone's taken the lid off. The rest of the Shaggers gather round to receive their pints.

-What are they listening for?

-Shhhhhh

Hisses the gristle as he leans in towards the peanut jar. He's earnest like. It's intriguing. The boys lean in closer to the jar. They all watch for a few minutes. Sip sips sere and sere of Tennents in between. Reverential. The riot quiet forgotten for the time being.

-Can you hear it laddies?

One of the old men enquires in the voice of an oak tree.

-Um

-Hear what?

-The loquacious peanut

The boys look at each other amused, intrigued. Gummy and Revels' attempts to restrain laughter result in them sneezing into their pints and schooshing up a cold nippy jet of lager into their nostrils.

-There it goes again!

And do you know what, there had been something. A little lost voice. Perhaps American in accent.

-There's a talking peanut?

-Aye but we don't know where it's gone

-It's either in the jar or in old Rocco's stomach

-I swear it's no, it'd be nibbling me if it was down there

-Aye he kicked up an awful fuss when that young lass Sheils swallowed him up Sunday past

-Are you in there wee man?

Old Rocco asks intay the jar. There's no reply. The boy's have never drunk a pint so slowly.

-Ach he's probably in a strop

-He'll pipe up in a wee while just you watch

-Mind not to go serving the nuts though aye?

-Aye

The old men returned to their distant planes of existence and the gristle went off to wash up glasses. There was a klaxon blast from outside. Then another. Euuuuu, Euuuuu, Euuuuuu ripping a gash in the afternoon's erse. The old boys didn't even twitch but the Shaggers immediately returned into the riotous proceedings outside. The sip rate picked up. Things on the street looked to be getting a bit more rowdy. No violent just lively. Stocky was bouncing and the first to finish his pint.

-Come on boys, drink up

-We should be in a beer garden or something

-Out there's the fucking hanging gardens of Babeylon

-And we've still got nothing to say to them

-I've always got patter to say to morts

-Like what?

-Awrite?

-Pffffff

But the joke is acknowledged with eyes a'twinkle all around. It's nice to be together, just them; the calm before the storm, the couch before the casting. They finish up in silence and place their glasses on the bar. A goodbye is murmured to the old gages but there's no response. Romulus and Gummy, who're at the back, think they hear a tiny cheep from the peanut jar but they cannot be sure.

Outside the world was a tumult of energy tumbling ever thicker across the streets and the pavements. One vast washing machine set to the Boogie Discordance spin cycle. A great millipede of legs. Bodies upon bodies. Writhing, threshing and yet harmonious. Soon to be very gentlemanly, kindly, considerately defiled if the Shaggers are to be successful. Casio and Romulus have been formulating a plan which is Sainsbury's Basics as it stands but it's the best they've got. It's more of a demeanour cum disposition to assume than a plan ey action but they outline it to the troops there on the outskirts of the blob.

-Right the plan's to shuffle real casual and cool like

-Real cool, horizontal if yeas can manage

-Dissolve ourselves into the milieu

-Adopt the disgruntled negativity of those around us

-Assume fraternity with all fellow protesters, especially morts

-If asked about the *issues*, just grumble one of the following all intellectual and introspective

-*The bastards, something's never change, the fascists*

-One questions messrs Casio and Romulus

-Shoot Stocky

-Is the point of a riot not to change *some things* and might we not then be accused of bringing bad vibes into protesting proceedings were we to suggest that, in fact, some things will never change to quote Mr Tupac Shakur?

-He's right

-He is

-You are

-Scrap that line then. Thanks Stocky. Sorry boyos

-Shall we?

They shall. Easing themselves into proceedings. Attuning themselves to the rhythm of the crowd as when gig attendees find the optimum frequency of sways and head bobs. Nonchachachalant. Easy does it, nice and sleazy lemon peasy spying glorious incarnations of womanhood all around them. The Shaggers believe their sneaks and side glances are top notch covert but it's more like ey swarm o tweaking meerkats has entered the fray. Not that any of the morts notice: they're here for the

movement and meaning of it all, for moral meat rather than man meat. What type of lowlife would use a protest as a pulling opportunity?

-Scuse us

The boys are manoeuvring their way over to a convent of unholy angels. They've never seen such beauty, backlit by golden sun and so at one with the world it's as if they exist within their own special halo. The girls are idling and laughing more than the other protestors. Enjoying more than engaging. God they're incredible. Just have a little look. Bare legs. English accents. A fatal formulation. What a way to die. They've got that huskroak smoke London voice of the social tobacconist who socialises intensely at least three times a week. Students. They must be. The Shaggers ease closer, as aloof as they can manage, and, me oh my blimey, no chance, the mortos smile, actually fucking smile, at them. Oh it's a quick wee grin but it's a moment of pure cosmic divinity to the boys. A couple o the mortos have the standard tote bags - your Barbicans, New Yorker, Edinburgh University, RealFoods - but these ones are full o cans as sleek as the girls themselves: clinking piles of pre-mixed Pimm's, G&T's, rum and cokes. Most of them are sipping away on a current swally with lips red, glossy and pert like all they pornographic orange juice adverts. Once more unto the breeches dear Shaggers. The valiant and oft buzzing Stocky begins walking alongside a blonde of immaculate conceptions. She smiles. He nods back.

-It's good ye'es are staying hydrated

-Lolly works at Waitrose. They're all defects, malformed

-Orphaned cans?

-We're their mother's now

-That's very charitable of you

-Help yourselves. They're a pain in the arse to carry

-Oh thanks, mean, that's smashing

-Here we can help with those bags

And in come the gallant Shaggers to shoulder totes and take up stride with this troop o tidies. The totes were awfy embarrassing but it made them feel as if they were these girls' men you know, not minding about carrying their stuff in their stupid bags, ambling along together as if it was the most natural thing in the world. The girls were friendly and lubricated from the defects. Not as stuck up as most of the uni mortos but still hefty posh and/or English. On they all went, children of the revolution. The girl who had first spoken to Stocky seemed to be the mother superior of the angels along with a more elfin mort who was nearing six feet and anorexia. Their names were Annie Poussin and Varicose Clark-Quinine. Several of the other girls were smoking and giving off I'm too cool to talk demeanours. They muttered among themselves secretly. Sometimes these mutterings might burst briefly into a giggle or an adumbrating nodnod of agreement. To the boys it was hellalluring. Towards what darker purpose did these girls incline? Is there anything more erotic than a mystery? Panel of eminent scholarly Shaggers, your answer please. A big fat naww. These mortos were as enigmatic as their midnight snarl of eyeshadow.

-So are yous at the uni?

-Yeh

-We live together

-Aw nice, whereabouts?

-Dundas Street

-Very nice indeed

-Did yer daddies pay for that?

There was a moments pause. The Shaggers shot Revels a glare. Had the loose cunt fucked it up before any actual fucking fucking? No. Praise be. After a terrifying silence the girls snorted with laughter. They smiled.

- Perhaps our mums are paying for it? Did you ever consider that?
- No, you're right
- Apologies for our man Revels
- He's what you could call a dinosaur but actually he's very progressive
- He used to work in the gay club just up the road
- Why?
- I fucking love Abba. I'm a dancing fucking queen and I don't care who knows

This eases them all up and the girls hand around a few more defects for the boys. The rest of the protest is forgotten; this is the centre of the universe. A pack of intermingling pheromones and exchanged glances.

- You know it would be nice to discuss these uh issues with you somewhere more quiet
- Once the protest is finished of course
- What do you mean?
- Well you know like discussing the protest and that, what else we can do to help
- Aye further movements going forward

The girls look at each other. Like Chops and Casio, they also share some inexplicable form of non verbal communication. Varicose then speaks for them all.

- We heard that Diaz Pora Dylan was here, we were going to go look for him
- Aw that guy's just a sham, a moralising showman
- Aye he doesn't believe in the issues at hand
- In what's really at stake
- Well we like his music, he's so enigmatic
- He's an entry level sudoku
- I'd like to see you lot write a song
- Maybe we have done
- Oh really?
- You don't believe us do you?
- No
- You girls better prepare your temporal lobes
- Ready troops?
- Ready

### My Girl's Like An Escalator, I Go Down On Her

She's the number one penumbra this side of the Humber  
A velvet shadow dancer, a whips and chains romancer...

*(The band comes in kicking with real heavy splendour, they can blow a pipe like a fuse)*

She is a tidy, she's a catch, she is the choicest of the dregs  
Her eyes are like green eccies and her breasts are like poached eggs  
Her legs go on forever, her hair's the colour of béarnaise  
I only last ten seconds but her kisses last for days

Babe you're blazing up my blazon  
So here's a tributary sing song

You are pneumatic, you're a mort, the ambrosia of the slops

Your bottom pulp is mango and your earlobes can't be topped  
Your voice is smooth as Lurpak, you bathe each night in Jo Malone  
I take you to the bingo but you never take me home

Babe you're blazing up my blazon  
So here's a tributary sing song

We are together, we're a thing, an item par excellence  
We'll fly with Ryanair to cheap provincial parts of France  
Though now you may not like me, soon you'll see that I'm your man  
Not that you'll have much choice chained up in my Vauxhall van

*(Rock and roll is reborn in a glorious glaze of sweat and half forgotten dreams, the ghosts of Sam Cooke, Nina Simone, Joe Strummer, Billie Holiday gather round to see what's new, enter the Moon onstage east wearing an iridescent Falconetti dress by The Vampire's Wife)*

The girls can't quite believe it. The thing wasn't half bad and it was hella more upbeat than Diaz's stuff. All around them the protest was spinning on and forever in a myriad of directions, down all possible side streets and into all the grubbiest wee corners of the night. The boys were all smothered wi this cheeky rogue's grin that you see on naughty school boys who the teachers canny help but love. Were the girls in tune with the amore? They were softening for sure - from ey block o Anchor to Lurpak. But they weren't quite spreadable yet. Those who had been aloof and enigmatic drifted in a little closer, easing back on the hieroglyphic glances. If the protest was still happening then it was doing so like a New Orleans steamboat cruising into the evening. A real dreamy haze o sound and vision. Such a night, as the good Dr. John one purred.

- You don't get many nights like this in Scotland
- It's beautiful
- It's magic Varicose
- Everyone calls me Vari
- Vari, that's a good Scottish name
- Really?
- Aye Gaelic I believe but nobody speaks that googoo
- I'm partial to a wee Gaelic bread though
- They're almost as stinkin as your patter
- Or them dawbaws from Pizza Express
- They are lovely
- Lollie gets hundreds of them from Waitrose sometimes
- Which one of yees is Lollie sorry, we haven't been properly introduced to your pals
- Ah, my bad, so that's Lollie, Effi, Iffi and Agave Syrup-Smith being all gloomy
- That's her thing
- Well fair does amidst a movement such as this, it's serious business and all
- Oh it's not that really, she's always a bit gloomy, it drives men mad
- Revels has been mad since primary 4
- So've we all more or less
- Do you have plans for tonight?

The magic words. The boys tense up but try and offset this by swaying even more easybreezy. This only compounds the tension. Ah shite. Play it cool boys. Nay too eager.

- Just pattering about probably
- How about yourselves?
- We were going to have our guy friends round to the flat but Hubert was being a right tosser to Iffi the other night
- I can fill the fellow in if you fancy?
- Oh no don't worry, he's been dealt with but thank you
- Very sinister, I like it
- You could come instead if you want?
- Come where sorry?
- To the flat
- Only if you wanted to of course
- Oh aye
- Aye
- Mean
- Decent
- Much appreciated
- Shall we head over now then? We can buy some booze on the way

The boys murmur and nod in baffled, bemused but overridingly oh so eager delight. Here they fucking went. Or go. Splintering off from the protest proper and wheeling around towards the town end o Leith Walk. A flat on Dundas Street with six unreal unrels. Jeez man. Such a night.

Crowds thinned out but there were still folk about. Couples sat outside the front o Joseph Pearce's, gaggles outside Revel's old haunt CC's, a few teenage herbal tobacconists trying to skateboard outside of the Omni. Clack, clack, clack across the grey stone tiles. Edinburgh before all the festival cunts vomited their twoforonefourstarstandupidrathersitdowninanelectricfuckingchair over the city. They crossed over to the top of Broughton Street, stopped off for supplies in an offie and then wound their way through to Dundas Street observing the toptippest standards of New Town etiquaint of course. Pink Lady apples dozed like stoners in the sky. Red sky at night, shaggers' delight. Warm, sweet air. Windows open. Music drifting. Middle age bougie folk sat on their flat steps in deckchairs wi swally and snacks purchased from Margiottas. The boys were wondering which one of these vast buildings was home to the girls. Home from their home counties or North London homes. A home that most grown up folk would never countenance occupying never mind six teenagers. Their building was on the right side of the road, heading up towards town, and just up from Cumberland Street. Annie Poussin took her keys off from around her neck and opened. Why, wondered the boys, did all the uni birds keep their keys and that on lanyard? It was a peculiar phenomenon they'd been spying more and more. Was it a substitute necklace drawing jangly clang clang attention down their neck towards South Cleavage Estate? Or was it an easily accessible garrotte for romantic or retributive matters? Who knew. Not the boys, it was another tiny mystery in the strange world which they were about to enter, a world of which they'd seen glances but had never gained access. Until now. In they went to an ancient stairwell of near total dark. Many, many floors above there was a soft smudging o pink light just visible through a grubby cupola. It was like stepping intay a swallowing womb. Far gloomier than they had suspected. The walls seemed to be very gently breathing or whispering as the girls had first done. But that was probably just the boys' nerves. Man this was it. Keep cool young Shaggers, keep cool.

The girls' quarters were on the first floor. It was an entirely new world to the dusty gloom of the stairwell: a soft, vast, winding world of candlesticks dribbling down wine bottles and a whole cosmos of fairy lights. Nearly all ey the walls were painted in a soft pink with immaculate white eggshell skirting boards and cornicing. One wall of the hallway was covered in polaroids which charted the girls' friendship through university and their many holidays abroad. Skiing chalets,

Soufff East Ageahhh and that. The boys studied these closely with particular attention being paid to the snaps titled Halloween 2018. Jeez man. The girls had all gone in the short red dresses, almost like silk scarlet pillowcases. Gold bangles down their bare arms and crowns of twisted branches in their hair. They looked incredible. And they still did, standing right there beside the boys or beginning to float through the flat with assured calm. More candles were lit and drinks were handed round. They all crashed out in a huge fuck off dining room with three windows overlooking Dundas Street. There were paper globes hanging from the ceiling in between the luminescent ivy and the fairy lights. The boys weren't quite sure how to proceed. It didn't seem anyone was that swallyed and so they set about drinking as fast as they could while still retaining an air of easy breezy.

- Put some music on Effi
- What do you want?
- Something to make our guests feel welcome

Effi, a toned redhead with tremendously hammy homstrings, a smouldering beauty not to be lacrossed, began scrawling through her phone. Then she smiled. A fleeting wee smile that sent Gummy into internal paroxysms of delight. He had a thing for ginger lassies. Music began drifting out from somewhere but none of the boys could say what or where it was coming from. A disco ball descends from among the paper globes and casts its twinkle over proceedings.

### Viagra Blues

I need a pill to love you  
And that really gets me down  
When what I need to be is up  
Because I need to hit the town

They don't make blue Smarties anymore  
Oh but I've got my supply  
And pretty soon, pretty soon you see  
I'll be protruding through the sky

Don't you sit there so placid  
Don't you sit there so flaccid  
I'm on the viagra dole  
For you my Niagra Falls, oh yeh

*(whispered)*

And you're making me wet...

The playful moody blues of the piece, or the increase in swally consumption, had got the group to their feet. They were all gyrating around the chairs and sofas in mock eroticism, a performance that teasingly, tormentingly suggested descent into real romance at any moment in the mind of the Shaggers. They were all being silly. Pole dancing with table legs and that sort of thing.

- Is this Jarvis Cocksnares?
- Yeh, you're a fan?
- Aye, a couple of us saw him at Leith theatre years back
- He's the man
- He's a woman
- Nawwww

- Nayver
- For real?
- Yup
- I'd heard whispers about that aye

Remarks Stocky thinking back to his time at CC's. It was a startling bit o news for the boys but not startling enough to drag them away from their paramours. The music continued to play and hips continued to ketchup satchet. Bodies moving closer. Glances. A fleeting touch here and there. How was it, what, if, this, going to go down? Were they cruising together on an inevitable arc set to culminate in a tabletop orgy? Inexorable parabolass, sinful curves, cosy curves. Casio didn't particularly wan't to see Chops' bawbag. Romulus wasn't too keen on spying Gummy's hairy erse. Stocky had sniffed Revels' armpits on multiple occasions etcetera etcetera. But would they put aside these quibbles for a tabletop orgy? Of course they would. They'd throw the quibbles out the fucking windys.

Shaggers in the night, exchanging glances. How did it progress? Would it ever onwards ever again? Were they destined to circle this table for the rest of their lives? Bound upon eh wheel ey fiery loins. Agave Syrup-Smith was still looking something sinister even though she was walking her finger's up Casio's stomach. Stocky was nosing at the neck of Vari. Chops was almost having his neck nibbled by Iffi. Etcetera sexcetera. Somehow, by forces unknown, proceedings then began to proceed through the girls' far from grotty grotto cum den of iniquity cum impropriety all a glorious glowworm world of soft pinks, ambers and reds emanating out from the tea candles and faerie lights arcing like luminous clouds across the ceilings or snaking like rivers across the floor. The boys glimpsing all manner of holy unholies: bras, dresses, panties, records, photos, scribblings and books which might hint at who these mysterious morts were. Heady heady times. The lads were teetering just on the right side of drunk, that salubrious sweet spot which blurs zeal and sleepiness on a carousel of obfuscated images. Warm, feminine hands squeezed into theirs. Soft kisses sent between lips and necks. Wandering through a wonderland. Drifting down the dreamboat river. None of them could really remember the song and nor did they click that it was the girls who were singing. It began as a breath. Grew to a whisper. An ethereal song which went ghosting through the maze of rooms.

### Lullaby for Laddites

*(whispered)* Listen, listen up now, little boys  
Happy are they that go to bed with grave music

*(otherworldly music seeps in)*

You sense my lips just seconds from yours  
I'm a negligible creature  
In negligee lace  
But beware Empusa's beauty  
She wears a mirrored face

Rich with the spoils of nature  
Poor in life's lot  
We are the brood  
Who our brothers forgot

Our little lives, a fleck in forever  
I'm just a scant lash of matter  
So scantily dressed  
But don't you scoff at Shania  
Her and I aren't impressed

Rich with the spoils of nature  
Poor in life's lot  
We are the brood  
Who our brothers forgot

All our trials, Lord, soon be over...

Upon waking. Jesus Christ. Upon waking. Fucking hell. All tied together in a room devoid of all light save for a candle in each corner. There were red shapes shimmering around them. Bare legs and gold bangles just visible in the gloom. All six shaggers were knotted in tight. Not even Revel's brawn could break those bonds. Their heads felt groggy and their vision blurred. They had teetered over to the wrong side of drunk and on to the hangover, or something awful like that. It felt to Gummy like the time he'd been spiked in Sneaky's. Only dimly aware of things, a slow pulse of pain strobing through your skull. Feet were stomping in unison and a bizarre series of words were echoing around the darkness like a parliament of dreams.

-Hello?

-What the fuck is going on?

-This is too kinky for us girls

-I can barely fucking breathe

-My head's gonna split

-Helppp!

Someone steps forwards from the gloom. She's beautiful. Terrifying. Agave Syrup-Smith in a red dress. The chanting continues. She leans in towards the boys giving them a full view of her breasts down through the loose red dress.

-Please keep quiet or we'll have to gag you

-What are ye's doing?

-Keeping our sisters safe

-You've got sisters?

-How old are they?

-Any twins?

-Be quiet

-Is this like role-play?

-What's the safe word?

-There's no safe word for us so why should there be one for you?

-Yeez are kinky minxes

-Do you think this is a joke?

-Nah we're into it, aren't we troops?

-Aye although maybe loosen the ropes a wee bit

-A glass of water would be nice

-Enough! We've had you marked for sometime

-You knew we'd be at the protest?

-How could you resist?

The lads were all a skitter now. Properly shiteing it.

-Um, okay, I'm sorry if we were too forward

-Sorry doesn't cut it I'm afraid boys

-Here, like, if you don't mind me asking Agave, what was that protest actually about?

-Women's rights

There's a moment of silence.

-Aw shite

Agave takes out her mummy's breadknife and thrusts it into Casio's neck with all her might.