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July

Sunday 13

4 p.m.

OMG. Am actually weak at knees. In fact think may need to lie down for a bit. Is unprecedented. Is utter revelation. Am happy! Not just 'thank God it is chocolate sponge instead of povvy yoghurt for pudding' happy, but when Baby does the lift at the end of *Dirty Dancing* happy. Or when James got a laminator for his birthday happy. Oh. Am actually going to have to lie down as think may swoon, Jane Austen-like, in my delirium.

4.30 p.m.

OK. Am temporarily unswooned and can confirm that am in love with Jack Stone. Oh, even writing his name makes me feel breathless and dizzy. Although that could be dog, who has eaten Glade Plug-In and is emitting overpowering scent of hyacinth every three minutes. Or possibly low blood sugar as have used up all joules of energy snogging. Will stop for bit again.

4.50 p.m.

Have had replenishing Marmite on toast. But only one slice. As am in love, cannot eat properly, it is well-documented fact. But is enough to be able to write coherently, if only for brief moment. Am likely to hit wall of pain any minute, i.e. start pining and panicking as have not seen him for more than an hour.

Cannot believe I feel like this. Have been utter fool.

True love has been staring me in face for years but was blinded by shiny but hollow bauble, i.e. Justin Statham and his halo of blond hair, small nipples, and ability to play 'Stairway to Heaven' on guitar. These trappings are meaningless to me now. Jack is my true destiny. He is my Paulie and I am his Juno. Except not pregnant and with better dress sense. We are inseparable. Or at least we would be if he hadn't had to go home for Sunday lunch (at 4 p.m. in Stone household due to various issues involving tantric yoga classes, biorhythms, and scheduling on T4). But I will see him again tomorrow after school. Point is, we are soul mates, i.e. we like all the same things, for example The Doors and Waitrose hummus. Plus I can tell him anything. Like the time I ate sheep poo because I thought it was a Malteser. Or when I got my hand stuck down a drain trying to reach a Sylvanian something.

Except fact that am actually in love with him. Am going to build up to that. As *a*) do not want to appear like overkeen stalker type; *b*) am waiting for him to say it first, and *c*) declaration needs romantic setting, e.g. sunset, or beach, or balcony in unspoilt peasant village, i.e. not John-Lewis-decorated bedroom contaminated with odour of hyacinth-scented dog and within earshot of eleven year old singing 'Nessun Dorma'. Which is obviously why Jack has not told me yet either.

Also have not told him what actually happened on the night of prom, obviously. He did ask me where I went

when I left the party. I said was depressed about wonky portrait mix-up and had gone for refreshing walk. Which is not a total lie. Have not added bit that walk was to meet Justin and that ended up naked in his bed and possibly only narrowly avoided doing 'It' because Justin did snakebite sick and passed out on racing car duvet. Jack does not need to know silly details like that. Justin is a closed chapter, or paragraph even, in the foreword of my life. Oooh. Who would do the foreword? Maybe Julie Burchill. Anyway. Book metaphor is excellent as life is officially a fairy tale and Jack is my knight in shining armour. Or shining skinny jeans. Anyway, he is totally my Darcy.

This is it. This is my happy ever after. I just know it.

Ooh, doorbell. Maybe that is him. He cannot bear to be apart from me and has sacrificed his nut roast in order to gaze once more on my features.

5.30 p.m.

Was not Jack. Was Sad Ed, who has already eaten (two helpings) and is engulfed in gloom, as usual. It is because his mojo has decided to fall in love with our best friend and Jack's sister Scarlet, who is oblivious to Sad Ed's (admittedly not many) charms and is still pining after bat boy Trevor. I said surely my happiness could lift the veil of tears that is strapped permanently to his head but he said, *au contraire*, it is nauseating, and if I want to help I can tell Scarlet asap about me and Jack, and then she

might be inspired to reassess her friends, i.e. Sad Ed, for potential boyfriend material. I said would think about it.

6 p.m.
Have thought about it. Am not going to tell Scarlet yet. She is just too judgemental. And sometimes plain mental.

Mum is also in a bad mood. Do not know why. She should be delighted about me and Jack. He is clean, brainy and has never worn a Kappa tracksuit.

6.30 p.m.
Apparently Mum's misery is not in any way related to Jack, as James has pointed out, as part of his well-practised 'the world does not revolve around you' lecture. It turns out that was in such bubble of bliss that have made grave error in judgement and forgotten that today is Mum's birthday. That is why I only got one roast potato at lunchtime and the soggy Yorkshire pudding.

7 p.m.
Have solved birthday dilemma and given Mum Jack's portrait of me as present. And pointed out that this was yet further evidence of Jack being such excellent boyfriend as he has painted picture that can adorn her walls and remind her of me for ever. Mum said 'hmm'. And Dad said, 'Why would a picture of Princess Margaret remind her of you?' There is no pleasing some people. It is because they have forgotten what it is like to be

consumed with passion. Or possibly never knew in first place. Cannot imagine habitual vest-wearers Janet and Colin in heated clinch. Or rather do not want to imagine it. Gak.

Nothing can dampen my good mood though. Jack's portrait has saved me from domestic abuse. It is like magic talisman. Will text him to tell him that.

7.30 p.m.
And to tell him that had four fishfingers and peas for tea.

11 p.m.
James has just been in to demand an end to texting. He has counted no less than sixty-three beeps in five hours and has calculated that so far today my love has cost £7.56 plus several pence in battery recharging electricity. He is right. I do not need to text Jack. We are so in tune I will send my thought-waves out of window and he will telepathically know what I am saying.

11.45 p.m.
Just got text from Jack checking am still alive as had not replied to previous text. Think thoughts ensnared on Clive and Marjory's leylandii. Have texted back. But is last one of night.

12.05 a.m.
Is new day. So can text again. Have sent him message to say cannot sleep.

1.30 a.m.
No reply. Maybe he is dead. Maybe should ring and check. Yes will do that.

1.45 a.m.
He not dead. He asleep. Or rather was. Will do same. So can meet in our dreams. Plus James has confiscated phone.

Monday 14

8 a.m.
Am still in utter bubble of bliss. Love, as effete Tory Bryan Ferry says, is the drug. Mum did ask if 'crack marijuana' was in fact the drug due to my uncharacteristic perpetual smile and fact that did not get minty with dog when it coughed on my Shreddies. She is still in bad mood about temporarily overlooked birthday yesterday. I said inconsequential matters such as dog spit and birthdays are of no interest to me since I now operate on a higher plain. Which made her suspicious again. So pointed out higher plain was love, and that I do not need artificial stimulants as Jack is more than enough. But mention of stimulation and Jack in one sentence made her eyes perceptibly bulge and lips go thin so left house before either she or James could launch into anti-teenage pregnancy sex lecture. James is very much anti-sex. And love. It is because he is still reeling from the devastating union (in pathetic

eleven-year-old sense) of Mad Harry and Mumtaz. Though am not sure if he is more distressed at Mumtaz's choice, or at the demise of Beastly Boys and untimely end of his boy band dream. He says only the dog understands him. Which is possibly true.

4 p.m.

The saggy sofa is just not the same without Jack. I cannot believe his buttocks have graced Yazoo-stained cushion for the last time (except for annual last day silly string/release the sheep ritual). I miss him. I miss the sweet sound of his voice shouting at Fat Kylie to stop microwaving Wagon Wheels. I miss the thud, click of his boots with the drawing pin in the toe chasing rogue Retards and Criminals along B Corridor. John Major High is an empty shell without him. Yet just a few weeks ago I barely noticed him among the crowd of pasty faces and McFly hairdos. Oh, it is utterly poetic.

Plus his head boy replacement, i.e. Sad Ed, is clearly not up to the job. He is too busy being consumed with lust over his self-appointed Chief of Staff/Director of Communications aka Scarlet to enforce any kind of control. Scarlet, *au contraire*, is consumed only by power. She has already been to see ineffectual headmaster Mr Wilmott three times to demand *a*) a ban on Dolphin-unfriendly tuna in the canteen, *b*) a ban on pupil-unfriendly Mrs Brain in the canteen, and *c*) an overhaul of the fruit and nut dispensing machine as there is a

packet of dried figs in there that is potential chemical weapon. He says they will not be able to implement any changes until September, and possibly never in the case of Mrs Brain. Scarlet is unperturbed and says it will give her time to draw up a manifesto for lasting change. Asked what I got to do in the new regime. She says I can be Peter Mandelson. Normally would be utterly peeved at weird-voiced and potentially evil role but luckily am too busy being in love. Am going round to Jack's house now. Ostensibly to visit Scarlet in her war room (aka the den), but mostly to gaze at Jack.

9 p.m.

Have done several hours of gazing, four minutes, thirty-three seconds of snogging when Scarlet went to the toilet, and some minor under table footsie while she comforted Suzy over birth of Jolie-Pitt twins (Suzy boiling with jealousy at vast and multicultural family when her own ovaries are withering on vine). Jack said maybe we should reveal our new relationship to cheer her up but I said this was further proof why we cannot, as our young and potentially fruitful union might push Suzy even further over the edge. Plus think having secret love is utterly literary. Is like *Romeo and Juliet*. Our families are from opposite sides of the tracks, well, Debden Road anyway, and might fight to keep us apart. Jack pointed out that my mum already knows what is going on and has not forbidden anything except closing of the bedroom door at

any time so that she can see into every crevice to make sure we are not doing 'It'. But I said she is only not declaring war yet because she is gloating in her superior position of knowing something before Suzy. Jack rolled eyes, but luckily at that point Scarlet came in to demand my immediate repatriation to presidential headquarters to take tea orders.

In contrast, Mumtaz and Mad Harry's love is very much not secret. Apparently they were all over each other on the St Regina's junior log (official territory of Years Five and Six) in first break. James says it is disgusting and he is minded to inform Mr Mumtaz who is not a fan of snogging, or Mad Harry. The only reason he is holding his tongue is because he gets his SATs results tomorrow and is confidently expecting them to be so high that he will be instantly admitted to Eton, and thus avoid having to go to substandard John Major High, which not only has a broken locust tank and unhygienic toilet facilities, but is where the Mumtaz and Mad Harry love nest will be ensconced come September. He is heading for certain disappointment.

Tuesday 15

As predicted, James's SAT results have not magically opened the doors of Eton, Rugby, or Hogwart's. In fact, according to official statistics, he is utterly not as boffiny as everyone thought. Mum says it is the influence of

deadly Keanu O'Grady who is ruining not only his own life, with his endless consumption of peperami and Capri-Sun, but the lives of those around him. James says it is not Keanu, it is that no exam can do justice to his unique intellect, and is begging to be sent to private school. Dad says we cannot afford it in these austerity times and we are all going to have to make sacrifices in the harsh months ahead. I asked what his were. He says he has been using the same golf balls now for several months.

I suggested we could move to Hull, i.e. potential new home of Jack and utterly cheap, according to Phil and Kirstie. But Mum says she would rather move to the Whiteshot Estate than north of Watford, i.e. not at all. James says there is nothing else for it then, and is demanding to be home-schooled. He has clearly had some kind of emotional breakdown. I can think of nothing worse than being trapped in the dining room with Mum for seven hours a day while she bangs on about osmosis.

Wednesday 16

10 p.m.

The home schooling dream is over. Mum says if the credit crunch continues, then come September she will not be available for tuition as she will be looking for a job. It is because she is worried we will be forced to shop at Lidl or give up Cillit Bang for own-brand substandard cleaner.

James warned her that we will become latchkey children, and get obese on microwave meals and that the house will go downhill and we will be festering in discarded Pot Noodle cartons and Mars bar wrappers within weeks. Which sounded excellently tragic. But Mum has put paid to any dreams of Dickensian squalor. She says she will only work part-time and we will continue to consume a balanced diet including liver once a week and oily fish on Tuesdays.

Also Granny Clegg has rung. Apparently Grandpa Clegg is up in arms about the curfew in Redruth, i.e. all menacing local youths have to be inside their houses by nine p.m. He says it is anti-Cornish and wants it imposed on anyone who eats olives, wears coloured wellies, or drives a 4X4, regardless of age. Granny says he is showing no signs of giving up his allegiance to the Cornish Liberation Army and that she does not know how much longer she can take it. This morning he claimed his blood ran black like the Cornish flag, and said if he ever needs a tranfusion, it has to be from someone born within the county boundaries. Granny is now sleeping in the spare room with Bruce. Said did that not compromise 'relations'? She said they hadn't had 'relations' since Boris Becker won Wimbledon in 1985 (no idea) so there is no change there. Plus Bruce does not sing mining songs and his breath is less deadly.

It is utterly sad. Jack and I will never end up like that, i.e. locked in political conflict. Or wearing elasticated

trousers. We will be at one for eternity. Even though he is at band practice, I feel utterly connected to him. In fact, can feel him telling me to call.

10.15 p.m.
Think maybe he was just telling me NOT to call him. So just marginal error. He had left mobile at home and Scarlet answered and demanded to know why was ringing him 'out of hours'. Said *a*) needed political advice relating to inbred Cornish relatives, and *b*) did not know Jack had official office hours. She said *a*) to tell Granny Clegg to embrace life and possibly join match.com to find a like-minded pensioner who does not think the Health Secretary is someone who types up prescriptions; and *b*) after ten is reserved for head girl (i.e. smelly Oona) business, band business, or girlfriend business, and I am none of the above. Said will bear that in mind in future. There is no way am telling Granny Clegg about match.com though. She has had a hip replacement. Plus am still holding out hope for a Clegg reunion. She may have forsaken her racist and generally moronic tendencies for newfound left-wing feminism, but she still thinks *Doc Martin* is real so all is not lost.

Thursday 17

There has been another relationship breakdown. Wonky-jawed Welsh Lib Dem Lembit Opik has been dumped by

the Cheeky Girl. It was obviously not true love. He should have stuck to his own kind, i.e. the wide-mouthed weather woman, also from Wales and also habitual shopper in Marks & Spencer's 'sensible' department, instead of being seduced by hot pants and exotic Transylvanian accent. James says it is utterly like his own situation, i.e. Mumtaz has been swayed by Mad Harry's bottom and has ignored James's superior intellect and interest in chess. Although he is visibly less despondent today. It is because Keanu has taken James's side and has banished Mad Harry from the gang. I said it was an empty gesture as in a week neither of them will be in the gang anyway as they are leaving St Regina's and Keanu will have to recruit a whole new set of idiotic minions. James says, *au contraire*, it is replete with symbolism, as it means he will enjoy the protection of the O'Gradys at John Major High. Said O'Gradys are not the mafia, they are just over-large family of helmet-headed mentalists. And that includes the girls. James said exactly.

Friday 18

Scarlet is getting more suspicious of me and Jack. It is because had to offer apologies for non-attendance at saggy sofa summit this lunchtime (to discuss potential ban on kettle on environmental grounds, i.e. it is giving off odd fumes since I tried to heat milk up in it for Ready Brek) because was meeting Jack for romantic walk down

Battleditch Lane (aka snoggers paradise aka dogshit alley). Obviously did not say was going for romantic walk, said was going to help head boy round up escaped lower school snoggees. Luckily Sad Ed came to rescue by saying he had a few things he needed to run by her in private. Do not think he meant strategy though. He is still hoping she will suddenly develop interest in his pants area. Thank God she is out tomorrow (on PA duty for Suzy, attending lubricant convention in Ipswich ('Sliding into the Future')). Which means Jack and I can spend entire day enjoying secret love. It is utter serendipity (new favourite word) that we do not have Saturday jobs any more. We do not need money—we can live on love alone. Think Mr Goldstein (hunchback, Fiat Multipla, proprietor of lentil-smelling wholefood outlet Nuts In May) must have known this when he sacked me.

Saturday 19

10 a.m.

Hurrah. A day of love beckons. Am glad to be alive. Unlike Sad Ed, who has already texted to say he has only been herding trolleys for half an hour and is already suicidal and if he does not unite with Scarlet soon he will have to revive untimely death plans. Asked him how fellow herder Reuben Tull was, i.e. was he not cheered up by his seemingly endless ponderings on whether God is a

dog-headed lizard with lasers for eyes? But apparently Reuben has other withdrawal symptoms (crop failure, and not the wheat kind) and is 'on a total downer, man'. As is Scarlet. Though is not drug- or Sad Ed-related. It is because she is stuck in traffic on the A14 and Suzy is insisting on playing her hypnotic anti-smoking CD, which is not at all conducive to driving. Or giving up smoking, as Suzy has been listening to it for three years and still has a packet of Silk Cut permanently stuck down her bra. Told her to call Sad Ed, as will be busy for rest of day. She said 'doing what?' Said charity work. Is not complete lie. Is utterly kind to Jack to snog him. And anyway, lie is for good cause. Is essential she does not find out. Or secret love will just be normal run-of-mill love. Which is not at all literary or tragic. Will be OK. Convention does not finish until five and traffic clearly awful, so she will not be back until six at earliest. If leave by half five she will be utterly in dark still.

5.45 p.m.

It is all over. Scarlet very much not in dark any more but bathed in 100 watt polar ice-cap melting light, i.e. she knows about me and Jack. She burst in on us in den and said, 'Oh God, it is true. Ugh, ugh, make them stop, Suzy, make them stop.' Which was pointless as *a*) Suzy in favour of all sex and *b*) were not actually engaged in any nakedity, were in seventies loveswing watching *Scrubs*, but was clearly in non-just-good-friends way as one of his

hands was twirling curl of hair and other was hovering dangerously close to left breast. Said I had thought she wouldn't be back and had not intended for her to find out like this and it is fault of unusually favourable traffic conditions rather than my fault per se. But Scarlet said in fact is Sad Ed's fault as he confessed on phone what sordidness was going on in her absence and is why she made Suzy ignore speed limit and traffic impediments in order to stage utter bust. Jack said it is better that it is all out in the open and that Scarlet should be happy for us. But Scarlet not in agreement. She demanded that all non-Stones (i.e. me) depart forthwith so she can lie down in darkened room and meditate in bid to calm mind. Jack said not to worry, and that he will talk her round and all will be fine by tomorrow. I said he had better as do not want to be forced to choose between best friend and lover. Although then realized that, actually, would be good as is utterly Shakespearean. But Jack said, 'I know what you are thinking and you are wrong, it would not be good, or literary, or tragic. Just annoying.' Oh, I love him even more. He is in tune with all my innermost thoughts and feelings.

Unlike Sad Ed who is utter traitor and in tune with nothing, as his misguided mojo only serves to testify. Rang him on way home to demand to know why he had spilt proverbial beans. He said he had hoped it would win him points for being loyal and also that she would collapse into his arms in either *a*) face of our horrifying

forbidden love, or *b*) realization that he is her Jack, only not her brother, and with slightly 'more developed' (aka fat) upper arms. He is utterly disappointed though. Not only did he miss the crucial revelation moment, but he is on overtime untangling a nest of trolleys that Reuben jammed behind the pay and display machine. Which, frankly, is divine justice.

Sunday 20

9 a.m.

Am racked with torture. Every second I do not hear from Scarlet is another potential nail in the coffin of our sixteen-year alliance. Is excellent. Am totally living in episode of *Skins*.

11 a.m.

Still no news from Stone household. James says whatever happens, I am my own person, and do not need the approval of my friends. I said I was glad to see he has forgiven Mad Harry and is moving on in his life. He said on the contrary, Mad Harry is a treacherous villain and he is hoping to wreak revenge by going solo and securing five-album deal thus showing Mad Harry what he is missing by breaking up Beastly Boys. He wandered off singing 'The Promise'. Which was ironic as it did not show any. Plus the glory is never the same after the band has split. Look at Duncan out of Blue.

2 p.m.
Scarlet has texted. She is coming round now for a peace summit. Have texted Jack to come over too but he says is better if we sort this out together and not to worry, Scarlet is calm and has no discernible weapons on her. He is right. I will be brave and face my fate alone.

2.10 p.m.
Have texted Sad Ed for back-up. Calmness is worrying and Scarlet has been known to cause injury with only a strawberry bootlace.

4 p.m.
Hurrah. Am injury free, and still officially best friends with Scarlet. (Sad Ed permanently downgraded to second best friend due to betrayal, and also presence of penis.) Scarlet said it was an extremely difficult decision for her, as it compromises all her beliefs, i.e. snogging only weirdy bat people or oddballs you pick up at Glastonbury, but that, on reflection, it is not friendship-ending stuff, and is probably only a phase as Jack is going to college in a few weeks. So as long as I do not mention Jack's genitals then she will accept it. As have not actually seen Jack's genitals yet, cannot discuss them, so agreed. She is wrong about it being only a phase though. He is my ONE. Am sure of it.

Sad Ed is not happy though. It is because Scarlet said she hoped no one else was harbouring weird and unnatural lust secrets as she could not cope with any more

horrifying revelations. He pretended to be lost in musical reverie, but as was Snow Patrol on radio at time, was not utterly convincing as he is renowned for thinking they are mawkish sellouts.

Monday 21

And as one fledgling relationship begins to soar, another is mired in the bird poo of life (could not think of other bird-related metaphors except dead seagulls or swivelly owl heads). It is the Cleggs. There has been more Cornish Liberation Army related hoo-ha in St Slaughter. Grandpa, Pig, and Denzil are now under curfew along with unsavoury youths. It is for picketing the sundried tomatoes and pesto shelf (aka the tourist section) in Spar. Maureen said she had no option but to call the police after Pig started telling customers he had injected the olives with contaminatory urine. They are now forbidden to walk the streets of St Slaughter, Redruth or surrounding conurbations at any time after nine p.m., and are instead holed up in Pasty Manor (aka Belleview, aka Chez Clegg) drinking Pig's potato wine, eating pickled eggs, and singing sea shanties. Granny says sound and smell is overpowering and she can bear it no longer. She is demanding that Mum comes to retrieve her immediately or she may well be under curfew for murder. Mum suggested she could stay with Aunty Joyless, or with Hilary (former boyfriend of Scarlet, future first-ever black Prime Minister, home

help to Cleggs), who is partially responsible for all the hoo-ha, having politically educated Granny above and beyond her place in life. But Granny says Aunty Joyless has a house full of zealots on exchange from a church in Bodmin and the Nuamahs are having their spare room painted (something called Dead Salmon, despite Granny suggesting a nice roll of lupin-printed Sanderson). Mum has given in and is going on Saturday. But not to collect Granny, to broker peace as a matter of emergency, as she does not want a Clegg here getting under her feet, even a newly politicized one. Dad is in agreement. He says it is bad enough having to endure that level of idiocy once a year, let alone 24-7. Although I think he secretly would welcome the addition of Viennetta to the Riley household. The credit crunch has hit puddings hard and we are on fruit or plain yoghurt only.

Tuesday 22

5 p.m.

James has drawn up a list of pros and cons of housing a Clegg at 24 Summerdale Road as follows:

GRANNY CLEGG

FOR	AGAINST
Enlightened opinions on minorities. No longer thinks hummus	Will bring Bruce, thus initiating almighty battle of the moronic dogs,

is 'spit of the devil'.	with inevitable ensuing mess and shouting.
GRANDPA CLEGG	
FOR	AGAINST
Will not bring Bruce.	Does not like: black people, gay people, tall people, ginger people, or anyone not born west of Tamar. Is still not talking to Grandpa Riley (although Grandpa says this is a positive thing).

It is in case Mum's peace-brokering fails. I would offer Jack's services, as he is excellent negotiator (saggy sofa accord is still holding, admittedly by a thread since Mark Lambert showered sofa aka Jerusalem with a can of Vimto) but Saturday is beginning of our utterly romantic first summer holiday together, and do not want to spend it in contraceptive atmosphere of Pasty Manor, i.e. confined space with Grandpa Clegg (anti-romance) or Mum (anti-most things). They are both guaranteed to dampen desire.

6 p.m.
Not that am planning to do 'It' yet. Not until love has been officially declared by both parties, and not just in

sexual lubricant manner, but in true, non-pants-based Jane Austen-type way.

Wednesday 23

It is utterly frustrating to be finally immersed in fairytale-style love but unable to share details of passion with best friend. I have tried but every time I mention Jack's lips (soft and taste of peppermint)/eyes (smouldering)/shoulders (broad and smooth with scar on right one where Scarlet stabbed him with a Bill Clinton figurine) Scarlet covers ears and says, 'La la la, I can't hear you.' Even Sad Ed has shut up shop. He says it is more than his frustrated mojo can bear at the moment. Have even broached the Um Bongo cushion to speak to Thin Kylie in my desperation (she is renowned for being interested in all things love-based (or sex-based anyway)) but she just said, 'I can't believe you, like, dumped Davey for that knob-brain. Are you, like, blind, or mental?'

Thursday 24

Tomorrow is the last day of school. It is utterly poignant moment as is officially Jack's last day at John Major High, i.e. end of an era. Scarlet says it is not the end, it is the beginning, i.e. of her and Sad Ed's new and improved regime. Reminded her that she is locked in power-sharing government with Thin Kylie, but she says Kylie will lose

interest by October and be back in the West Bank microwaving cola cubes and fiddling with Mark Lambert's sherbet lemons, leaving her free to impose absolute rule. She is sounding more like Hitler every day. But have not told her that as do not want to alienate her further. She said she has had to ban Jack from talking about me at breakfast as she is struggling to keep her muesli down. Which sounds bad, but in fact is excellent as it means we are being gagged like political prisoners, trapped by the love that dare not speak its name.

6 p.m.
James says the love that dare not speak its name is 'boy-on-boy love' which ours is most certainly not. Said how did he know. He said Grandpa Riley told him. Asked how did Grandpa know, as was worried he might turn out to be closet Oscar Wilde or Graham Norton, thus throwing Baby Jesus's life into even more Jeremy Kyle-style turmoil than it already is. But James said Grandpa read it in *Take A Break*.

Friday 25

Last day of school.
8 a.m.
Am too sad to even chew Shreddies. Have been forced to consume porridge, which takes no effort, but is now sitting in stomach like leaden ball, adding to my misery. In

contrast James has had two slices of toast and an underripe pear and is dancing to Leona Lewis on Radio 2 with dog. I said historic nature of occasion, i.e. last day of primary school, will hit him later like giant rounders bat, and he will collapse in heap of sorrow. He said not likely as Mumtaz is going to Pakistan for six weeks and it will be the ultimate test of devotion for Mad Harry, who has attention span of gnat and will be begging James to reform Beastly Boys within a week, and then James can spurn him to give him a taste of his own medicine. I said that was a bit harsh. He said 'harsh is as harsh does'. Which does not make sense and suspect he has been talking to Granny Clegg on phone, who is renowned for inventing crap proverbs.

4 p.m.

Sadness has been dispelled. Not by joyous atmosphere of silly string and stray sheep (exceeding all expectations this year by getting trapped on top of Mrs Leech's biscuit cupboard), but by Jack's tongue. Have made up for wasted years by snogging all over school including: common room, library, and against nut dispensing machine. Would have gone for Mr Wilmott's office but Fat Kylie in there with Davey MacDonald (Mr Whippy on Donkey Dawson's (weird shaped head, allegedly large thing) stag do in Clacton). We have left our indelible mark on every inch. Metaphorically-speaking. Now every time walk down C Corridor will be struck by memory of his hands

pinning me against sky blue walls while sheep milled around us like slightly smelly clouds. Notice that someone, possibly Mark Lambert, has left actual indelible mark, i.e. stubby pen picture of genitals. Lou (caretaker, former Criminal and Retard, once ate school rabbit) was at it with a damp sponge when we left. He needs to have lesson with Mum. He will never get it off without at least a mild abrasive. It would be easier to turn it into a sort of erupting, though hairy, rocket.

Upper Sixth and substandard Year Elevens are not only ones leaving though. There is to be another departure from hallowed, albeit sheep-poo-strewn, halls. It is Mr Vaughan (head of Drama, lover of Sophie Microwave Muffins, proud owner of supersize nipples). He has got a new job in Bath. Scarlet said he will regret it as it is full of upper-middle-class Boden-wearing blonde airheads. Saw Sophie by nut dispensing machine while Jack having essential wee break from snogging. To show did not bear grudge over whole Justin/Jack thing, and that empathize with lover moving many miles away, said, 'It'll be OK, you'll see.' She said whatever, she will be glad to be out of this smalltown hellhole and get to uni. Asked where she was going. She said Bath.

Saturday 26

Hurrah, it is the first day of the holidays, and the long, hot summer stretches ahead of me. Except without hot bit as

is raining, as usual. But is still excellent as Mum is going to Cornwall this morning, plus she is taking mini menace James. He says his absence will only fuel Mad Harry's desire to rekindle their friendship. Mum was not at all happy about leaving me behind as she says Dad cannot be trusted to make sure I am 'controlling my urges'. Gak. But James has told Mum not to worry, he has given Dad a lesson in surveillance. Am unperturbed. Dad is renowned for being utterly lax when it comes to Mum's many and varied rules and regulations. Is lucky she is not leaving next-door neighbour Marjory PI in charge, with her ear for gossip and arsenal of digital spyware. Hurrah, will commence contraventions by inviting Jack, Scarlet, and Sad Ed round later to play loud music and take drugs.

10.30 a.m.
Or at least drink alcohol.

10.35 a.m.
Or possibly Ribena.

10 p.m.
Do not need Dad to meddle with urges as Scarlet is contraceptive enough already. Was only giving Jack minor snog (partial tongue, but no hands) when Scarlet started screaming 'My eyes, my eyes!' And squirted us with apple juice (near sell-by so possibly fermenting and cidery). Sad Ed is unperturbed. He just sighed and ate another Pringle.

He is still waiting for her to realize what is standing right in front of her, i.e. not largish son of Aled Jones obsessives with flabby upper arms and a stained Smiths T-shirt, but towering god of love. He will be waiting a long time. To make matters worse, the dog has eaten the volume knob on the CD player and it is stuck on 'barely audible'. Which is not at all edgy or law-breaking.

Sunday 27

10 a.m.

It is utterly poetic. Am being forced by Mum to stay away from Jack. She is Mrs Capulet, i.e. blind to my needs and desires. Mum said it is not poetic, and she is not Mrs Capulet, it is just that Dad cannot be trusted to cook Sunday lunch without burning or exploding it, so she has arranged for us to go to Grandpa Riley's. I said she was risking my love life, if not actual life, with this rash decision but she says she has given Treena a copy of Delia's complete cookery course and strict instructions not to let Dad or Baby Jesus or dog suck frozen sausages pretending they are Cuban cigars. Asked her how Operation Clegg was going. She said not entirely according to plan. Granny is still refusing to leave the spare room, Grandpa is refusing to leave the broken Parker Knoll and Bruce is refusing to leave the cereal cupboard. Said this must be very disappointing as is almighty blip in her record of imposing military rule, but she says she is hoping to

achieve small victory by corralling Grandpa into bath in minute. He has been on 'dirty protest' for a week. Then could clearly hear sound of someone singing 'Blow the Man Down' and James shrieking 'No more, Pig, no more,' and Mum hung up.

5 p.m.

Was wrong about lunch. Was excellent as Treena forgot rule about leaving dog unattended in room with unsecured meat and it ate two packets of mince including the polystyrene trays so Dad took everyone to pub instead for prawn cocktails and scampi (banned on myrias of grounds including hygiene, fat content, and so-called thousand island dressing). I bet James is regretting his choice of parent now. He is probably trying to digest several pounds of health-giving vegetables in the company of dirty-protest Grandpa Clegg, plus a man who smells like pig (Pig) and one who looks like one (Denzil).

At least Grandpa Riley is relatively fresh-smelling. And utterly understands me. Had forgotten he is very much au fait with matters of the heart. It is all the glossy magazines he is reading. And *Hollyoaks*. He said if feel it in my toes when Jack kisses me then is love for sure. Said feel it everywhere. He said then options are pill, condom, or femidom, but he wouldn't go for that as is like wearing plastic bag in chuff, according to seventy-six per cent of readers who have tried it. Said was not at that stage yet. Grandpa said I was in thirty-eight per cent minority and

had better not wait too long, as Jack is hot-blooded male and eyes, and hands, might start to wander—look what happened to Britney.

He is wrong. Jack would never leave me. Even if took vow of chastity. Though will not do that as am not anti-sex. Just worried will be rubbish at it. Like hockey, all over again. Think might be time to tell him I love him though. Because is true. Utterly utterly do.

Monday 28

Mum and her demonic assistant James are jubilant. Not only are Grandpa Clegg's many orifices clean and lemon-scented (James says he used washing-up brush and bottle of Fairy Liquid and kept eyes averted at all times to preserve dignity, and contents of stomach), but Pig and Denzil have left the building, i.e. Pasty Manor. Asked if they had gone voluntarily. James said no, they had fallen prey to one of his expert 'hustles'. Apparently he used phone box outside Spar to call Chez Clegg pretending to be Trelawney, symbolic patron of Cornish Liberation Army, demanding Pig's and Denzil's presence at anti-Jamie Oliver march from the 24-hour garage (shuts at 8, on Mum's to-do list of complaint letters) to Watergate Bay. Said that Trelawney was dead and had been since 1721. James said clearly they are unaware of that fact.

James is right, it is excellent victory. Now they just need to persuade Grandpa Clegg to perform romantic

gesture in bid to win back heart of true love. Like paint over Hammerite Cornish flag on cladding. Or cut toenails.

12.15 a.m.
Or climb silently up *Dawson's-Creek*-style ladder for illicit midnight snog! Which is what Jack did fifteen minutes ago. Was excellent, although did have panic when heard knocking at window, as was having dream about Dracula at time. Although think it could just have been Trevor Pledger in full winged costume. Anyway, Dad is none the wiser. Hurrah, our love is utterly like mid-90s TV series, i.e. tragi-comedy, with clever postmodern script and big hair. May suggest *Dawson's Creek* idea to James. Although the Cleggs' record of injury through misadventure is quite high.

Tuesday 29

Dad has warned me that he will confiscate *Dawson's Creek* ladder if I continue to abuse its presence. As it is, he is fighting a losing battle with Mum, who claims leaving it in the side return is tantamount to an open invitation to burgling O'Gradys everywhere. Will have to tell Jack to be more careful. Clearly his drawing-pin boot tapped too loudly on the rungs. Though is odd as usually Dad sleeps through anything, including Mum changing the bed linen.

Also James has rung with grave news. Pig and Denzil

are back in Pasty Manor. Asked if they had realized the very dead nature of Trelawney and got wise to James's substandard hustle. James said, *au contraire*, he is Lord of the Hustle (which sounds hideous), but that they got hungry waiting at not-at-all 24-hour garage and decided to have armchair, or broken Parker Knoll, protest instead. Mum and Granny Clegg are now both in spare room having lie down.

11 p.m.

Oh my God. There has been another bedroom intruder. But horrifyingly, was not Jack this time, was Justin Statham—former boyfriend, future rock god, and possessor of small nipples! Worse, he has informed me that he bitterly regrets post-prom snakebite sick incident, as being mostly naked in bed with me was in fact opposite of vomit-inducing. I said he should have thought of that before he dumped me for Sophie Microwave Muffins Jacobs, especially given she had dumped him for Mr Supersize Nipples Vaughan. He said, 'I made a mistake.' I said, 'Yeah, well, me too, i.e. going out with you in first place. But I'm with Jack now, and we are in like. Possibly in love. We are soulmates and can tell each other anything. Unlike me and you, who had more secrets than episode of *Miss Marple*.' He said, 'Have you told him about mostly naked prom night?'

And then had complete panic and said 'yes'. Which I know is utter lie. But do not want Justin to think there is

chink of possibility we might still have chance. He just nodded blond Kurt Cobain hair and said, 'OK, Rach. I cede the battle. But not the war.' Which is very poetic for someone who only got D in English lit GCSE. And also somewhat ominous.

This is typical. Have waited years for a boy (i.e. not Sad Ed, who is boy, but only in loose sense) to ascend sacred *Dawson's Creek* ladder in bid to snog me, and now has happened twice in two days. At least Dad does not seem to have noticed this time. He is too busy enjoying Mum-free home and has been in living room since 6 p.m. with two cans of John Smith's Extra Smooth, a box set of *The Sopranos*, and a bag of Doritos. Is like when Berlin Wall came down and deprived communists went mad for Western excess.

Wednesday 30

11 a.m.

There has been weird and worrying incident chez Riley. Was enjoying Mum-free breakfast at Shreddies table (aka Crunchy Nut Cornflakes, Nutella, and doughnut table) and trying not to think about *Dawson's Creek* ladder hooha, when Dad said, 'I hope you are not thinking about engaging in hanky panky with Justin Statham. Jack is bad enough but I do not like the cut of Justin's jib.'

Is terrifying. Dad has developed an all-seeing eye in Mum's absence. Is contagious, like measles. He does not

need to worry anyway, as am not fan of Justin's jib either (gak). Plus Mum is back in seven hours so there will be no hanky panky of any kind. Like Justin, she has ceded the battle and is bringing Granny Clegg back to 24 Summerdale Road. But she also of opinion war is not lost. She says is only temporary arrangement as she is hoping our noughties 'wayward living' will be too much for Granny, who will realize that she is best suited to Grandpa Clegg and the environs of St Slaughter, which are both still stuck somewhere in the 1970s. Mum is confident Granny will be packing the Spar bags in days. She clearly has a skewed concept of wayward living though. The last time anyone did anything wayward here was when Dad tried a can of Red Bull. He paid for it later though when he lost a four-ball because his chip shot was caffeine-compromised.

Have emptied Nutella and Crunchy Nut Cornflakes in preparation for return of austerity rule (i.e. fed contents to dog). They are high on banned list for double whammy of contravention, i.e. sugary evil masquerading as nutritious by involvement of protein-based nuts.

8 p.m.

Granny Clegg is here and is installed in the spare room with Bruce, who has been chained to radiator until he can learn to follow simple instructions like 'sit' and 'stay' and 'don't eat the stairs, you moron'.

Plus Mum wants to know why father of Bruce, i.e.

dog, is having apparent sugar rush (it has been running round garden in circle for ten minutes). Said it is just excitement at return of supreme leader, a feeling also shared by her loving and obedient daughter. James snorted and said my 'hustle' was inferior, as give away signs were fiddling with ear, refusing to look at subject, and use of word obedient. But luckily Mum too busy questioning Dad about suspicious orange powdery residue on remote control to notice.

9 p.m.
Bruce unchained from radiator, having also engaged in dirty protest. Though hope Grandpa Clegg did not poo on carpet as part of his.

Thursday 31

Hurrah, tomorrow is my birthday and is set to be historic occasion. Not only will turn 17, which means will be fully-fledged provisional driver—but will also mark highly anticipated joint declaration of love. Hopefully.

Have decided am going to do it tomorrow night during party. Which will not be usual childish affair, involving rogue O'Gradys, Bacardi breezer or shaving the dog, but will be intimate dinner soirée involving fine wine, haute cuisine, and me, Jack, Scarlet, and Sad Ed. Had hoped not to have to invite latter two, but Sad Ed says romantic candlelight will be aphrodisiac overload and Scarlet is bound

to lunge at him over the lobster thermidor. Said he was making quite a lot of assumptions, not least presence of candles, which, as well he knows, are banned from Riley household on grounds of fire and melty wax mess risk. As are lobsters, on grounds of them being *a*) overpriced and *b*) eating poo and therefore at high risk of harbouring life- or bottom-threatening disease, and *c*) having tappy legs and feelers (me not Mum on that one). Plus Scarlet will not eat them as she is strictly vegetarian. Caved in anyway. Cannot forsake friends just because am in love. Will kick them out after pudding and do declaration then.

Amazingly Mum has agreed to arrangement, including request for her to vacate property for evening. Think it is because she is already struggling with perpetual presence of Clegg. She has issued several caveats though:

1. She will do cooking (Delia's wild mushroom stroganoff) and we can warm up in low oven later.
2. Granny Clegg will remain in the house. But will be installed in own bedroom with audio CDs of Mary Wesley and individual Fray Bentos pie.
3. Bruce and dog will remain in house. But in downstairs and upstairs toilets respectively, with doors to remain closed at all times.
4. There will be no alcohol, bar one can each of Dad's Shandy Bass (pseudo-alcohol and less potent than Benylin).
5. There will be no swinging, or 'sexual play' (Mum's horrendous words, not mine).

Will still be excellent night though. Do not need alcohol. Will be drunk on utterly head mix of stimulating conversation, sparkling wit, and potent love of Jack. He has already given me my present. Do not know what it is, as is in envelope, with strict instructions not to open until tomorrow. But is probably poem he has written inspired by our love.

10 p.m.
Although can feel something jangling, in unpoetic way. But will not open. Am grown-up. Not seven year old who prises open flap of paper to check that all gifts are up to standard (James), or rips them open on Christmas Eve, thus instigating the Riley 'no presents under tree until Shreddies have been consumed' rule (me).

10.30 p.m.
But is not wrong to hold envelope. Am not actually opening it. Just using telepathic oneness with Jack to determine contents.

10.35 p.m.
Or maybe just feel outline of jangly thing.

10.36 p.m.
Is key. Oh my God. Is symbolic key to heart. Is poetic after all. This is it. It is his boy-way of saying he loves me! Have texted Jack to say also have gifts for him (i.e. love) and

will be unveiling tomorrow night, privacy pending. He said, 'Can't wait to see them.' Texted back to say, 'Is not breasts. Is more metaphysical. Breasts later.' Grandpa is right. Even under exterior of progressive political and musical genius lurks oversexed *Nuts*-reader. But do not care. He is The One. And anyway, does not read *Nuts*. He is more *Guitar Monthly* man.