

# Life, in a slowly roasted nutshell

*by* Colin White

you wake up. slowly but surely. okay, you're in the bookshop. yes, apparently this is where you slept, on the floor, with absolutely no sense of irony, in the romantic fiction section. you appear to be... delicate, betwixt the ears and suchlike, curiously damp on one arm. however vital signs are normal, alive and inspired and amused, which is a genuinely pleasant surprise. a morbid suggestion whispers with a wry smile that at some point last night you thought you were going to die. it's... saturday.

zang! the coffee tastes rich, delicious. animates your body, just enough to reclaim and ready your capacity to stagger about, making incoherent babbling exclamations about the day. the first cup is but stiff medicine. the second is the sweet hot chalice of some forgotten war hero. it is your birthright.

you neck the last contents with what the passive observer may mistake for confidence, pick up your bloody mary and walk with dilapidated swagger upon this intrepid tightrope of reality to the non-smoking section. right. the wetherspoons pub now, yes, full of early rising ale drinkers, the strange and gnarly gentlemen who take little notice of you and your companion. toast and preserves. then sharing the remnants of a joint discovered deep in the pockets of his coat. one eye still heavy, the world quite literally goes by, regardless.

thank god for dwayne, embodiment of all things dweeeb, who fetches the coffee and watches over the bookshop while we are gone. cheery, youthful and bearded. you drop apricot marmalade and sachets of ketchup on the counter as gifts for him, but he is far too engrossed in his game of solitaire on that dusty old machine to

think of breakfast. where the hell did terry meet this man? move him in, you say. he is useful.

it is horribly bright, and you neglected to pocket your big brown fuckface sunglasses when you left for town yesterday evening. an instant camera, spent, awarded for our loyalty to kronenburg in a bar that didn't serve stella artois. bits of paper. and a cherry flavour chupa chups given to you several days ago by the object of your unrequited affection; kept, cherished, but not devoured.

that's right. you think you might be falling in love. and in a way, it's perfect. you can float around all day, full of those warm gooey feelings, in comparatively no danger of making a mess. you click. she is beautiful. and she knows that you adore her because you told her so, in a greeting card. neither of you actually want a relationship, because both of you know how utterly full of bollocks and inevitably dire consequences such things become. it's quite enough that she is beautiful and nothing more, you are almost certain. it makes you smile.

your hair is a state but, swept to one side, it may even look deliberate. doesn't matter. how long have you been blonde now? it's unnatural. one day you suspect that you will wake up with lady bosoms if you spend this much time in the company of lesbians. you have been offline, and yet your sanity is virtually as you left it... wherever it should eventually appear, like a lost set of keys. the same reassuring jingle-jangle, and the same happy twisting of locks.

october? jesus. a paper diary almost full. a peculiar sense of commitment and completion. receipts retained and stuck upon its pages, along with bus tickets, printed pieces of history and faded nondescript regalia. words. building blocks. play things. how much you have come to appreciate the look of your own handwriting. your quirky little black-ink capitals. the story that they tell...

zang! a library. the impartial glance of its well meaning wide-arsed librarian workerbees; stocking shelves and sticking to rules like regular human beings, only supposedly better educated. a thousand tales in your head for the world, which is in the computer at your fingertips, if you can find your quiet corner. but you are complacent when you get there. confused, sublime. everything swims...

oh yes, she sent you an email! the one that never was. not dead yet, she said, and nothing more. her simplicity eloquent, and her timing poignant. for it was perhaps a year to the day that you went there with honest intentions, in her arms to weep perchance to dream, but inadvertently fell for the girl and returned to earth with your new misguided purpose. have twelve months really passed? just when a week ago you realized that you were finally over her. oh exquisite torture! barbed wire on the inside, your sinister grin. same as always... that which cannot and could not be. like you keep telling yourself, it's the best kind of love in creation. one without any mess at all.

you are hesitant. people are both infinitely sickening and intriguing; self-mutilated, medicated, and killing themselves softly. but, blessed indeed are the curious. having fairly successfully pried open your third eye by admittedly conventional means, you are both bigger and smaller. pretty-pretty and yet ugly as sin, even though of course there's no such thing. you will walk wherever the rain falls. you are poetry. nothing. you are laughter in a can.

having sat here all this time, again with absolutely no sense of irony, alongside a wall section labelled cookery, do-it-yourself, and child care... now you must stretch your legs. the gathered clouds above are grey, for certainly they favour monochrome, hanging heavily they shift effortless like the recollection of your dreams. so you click save, and then you leave, as anonymously as you arrived.

