

Lonely Heart

by Lou Godbold

Billy Braithwaite tucks his scarf into his coat. Bloody parky waiting for the bus on this street corner! The wind whips round the chip shop and carries with it the snow on the moors, salt 'n vinegar crisp packets, a sniff of something curried.

He wouldn't normally be going to the shopping centre in this weather if he could help it, but the website says it will 'increase his chances' of being selected. Billy finds it hard to imagine that his image will inspire passion. He thinks of blond secretaries in London or 'fit bits' who frequent the local pubs and can't believe that his unruly hair and Yorkshire wind stippled complexion will inspire love, but he's doing it for Her - the one who will see through the black and white photos of design consultants and the heavy spectacle frames of the arty types and rest on him, an honest man, "Because I'm a warm, caring sensitive soul who will give everything to the right person." He worked hard on that line. Surely she will see. He is willing to give his everything. No games. Surely that means something.

Life is not a dress rehearsal, he mutters, once he positions himself in the photo booth. Momentarily, he wonders if he should undo his scarf. No, he thinks, leave it as it is. This is no rehearsal, this is the take.

