

Bone Dust Disco

by Penny Goring

Every lover fades away or violently deceases — cancer, car crash, overdose, never-ending coma, epileptic fit on Sunday, heart attack in Halfords, he fell off a block of flats, she jumped under a train — I live here alone.

You are the one who still walks tall — I'll be here when you're beaten.

Come to me with chest complaints, bedsores and contusions, on bare feet, empty-handed, all your dreams divided — I will take you in. We'll huddle together in our decline in my tunnel of fag fug.

This kitchen shall cater to our finicky appetites with resurrected childhood delights, and outrageously huge portions of vegetables, to aid our stricken bowels. There'll be plenty of bags of frozen peas for soothing hip replacements, a complicated rota of medicines, creams and capsules, a calendar ringed with red letter days at the Out-Patients and the Doctors and a rotating disco-ball flinging sunspots round the walls.

This bathroom will be steaming from our strenuous excretions and the anointing with lathered suds of each others loosened skin. Woodlice — constant, harmless friends — hide beneath the bath mat, upon which you shall teeter as I scrub your wedding tackle. I'm saving up for a hand-rail.

This bedroom holds a double dread for our unattainable pleasures — you will never touch me you know where, I will never notice or even really care. Our feeble token gestures, forlorn stabs in the dark, will spark the tea light in the saucer on the bed-side cabinet, and with fuddled irritation we will keep a vigil for our looming shadow as it fidgets on the wall — a two-backed beast made by us, fuelled by the flop and rattle of our long-term smoker's lungs.

This lounge will always be curtains drawn against the glaring percussion of now. We'll shrivel in re-upholstered evening, thermostat too high, ashtrays — like cryptic clues — dotted about in profusion, and the extravagant amount of dust accumulated from our ridiculous years, making fuzzy outlines of we two. From down amongst the grubby cushions my laboured breath will tickle your cauliflower ear as I pick a bone or two with you:

Remember when you told me you didn't believe in me? Holding my wrists you spread my arms and I engulfed you.

Remember when I went out with your best friend just to get closer to you?

Remember when you said I was your great big gorgeous fat-lipped female?

Remember when the sky caved in and the birds flew out from the steeple and the houses arrayed themselves in regal curves and my life-line was splintered and thin?

Remember?

I'll shake you by your slumping shoulders until you remember too.

Remember when we came up and down on our first trip, my face like a side of bacon, yours like a waterfall, with a misleading message flashing in cursive from your gushing forehead: 'I will be the one'?

Remember when you had a go at me for leaving a scum-ring round your bath?

Remember that New Year's Eve when I yelled in your ear at the same time they turned the music off and everyone heard our business?

Remember, after Old Lang Syne, I stood outside the Men's toilets, slapping in turn each bloke who walked out — you bundled me into the front of your van and we drove to Beachy Head and when you parked up you put our seats down and I was crying because my feather boa ripped on the gear stick and you said it was already in bits, everything is trashed, this

year is in tatters and its only two o'clock — don't worry, we've got plenty of time?

Remember when you said you needed it hot and fast and I made you two slices of toast?

Remember when you told me to shut up, pulled me onto the bed, and melted your body into mine? Although I could feel your honed aplomb I wasn't really there. I was floating near the ceiling looking down.

Remember the very next morning? We had breakfast in a working men's cafe and you confessed it was the first time you'd been unfaithful to her in ten years. And I didn't get it, fluffed my lines, lost you in the fry-up.

Remember when you told me you two had always had a good sex life?

Remember when she rang and begged me to stop you getting her sectioned?

Remember when you glibly said you should have married me?

Remember when I was your karaoke disco gurl with my sticky mobile in my pocket caning coke and disco dancing darling watching you?

Remember when we sneaked into my dad's study and opened his Remy Martin — I came to topless on your lap, with my arms round your neck, and my tits in your face, and my mum was dancing on the table, because it was my eighteenth birthday?

Remember?

Remember when you got down on all fours and kissed my blue patent boots?

Remember when I first let you see me naked, you said: 'But, you're thin', and I slunk into your bed, hid under the covers and took you in my mouth?

Remember when she walked proud after claiming you — a gliding walk with not much bend at the knee? She was always a sullen one and fizzing with static. She played the age-old

game and you were blinkered. Hook, line and sinkered. Don't deny it.

I know what she did. She took a lamb's heart from the butcher's, smeared it with your semen, wrapped it with her hair, put it in a cardboard box and kept it in her fridge that thrummed night and day in her house made of glass on the cliff. After nine cold months she yanked it out, put it in the boot of her banger and drove far away, swearing on her Holy Trinity: 'Eternity, Opium, Poison — I'll have him, if it kills me'.

Remember when you offered my boyfriend one thousand pounds to have me for the night, and he agreed but you couldn't afford it?

Remember when you gave me a lift home on the handlebars of your bike?

Remember when you both lived down the road from me in your old ambulance, she was heavily pregnant and I let her come in for a bath?

Remember when we had nothing much to remember?

Remember when you told me you didn't believe in yourself? Holding my wrists you spread my arms and I contained you.

I'm building a collection of colostomy bags — they reek with the promise of intimacy — in my bottom drawer, next to the pink vibrator, last brandished by you. Turning it on and twirling it above your shining head, you said: 'I will not ever, no, not never, be tied down by you'.

I haven't washed it since. I sniff it, when I inspect my collection.

Come to me when we are old, I will take you in.

We will lose ourselves in the puzzle of my foggy maze.

I will stroke your papery palms, run my fingertips along your life-line, its bitten in deep, curving away, its edges are hard and crusted.

I will give you blanket baths as an occasional treat.

**I will pet the sagging folds of your knotted neck.
I will gently trace the patterns of your bulging varicose veins.
I will warm your milk and squirt it over your jim-jams.
I will rub my bunions on your arthritic ankles.
I will have a good old moan as I massage your marshmallows.
I will plait my silvered pubes and loll about in a see-through nightie.
I will festoon your frayed lapels with helium-filled balloons.
I will dribble in your tea and suck on your used tea bags.
I will flick my fag ash in your mashed potato.
I will pose in my Marilyn wig and dig out your Batman mask.
I will cake my ruined lips with dried red lipstick — you won't need to ask.
We will dawdle up the road — you will carry the shopping.
We will take our soiled undies to the nearest launderette, watch them spin, skim the papers, share a bag of bonbons.
We will ignore our mobiles when they wobble on the worktop, screeching her lies round the room.
We will turn a blind eye when she pisses through the letterbox, saturating my carpet with her suicide demands.
We will pay no mind to the shards of glass crunching under our slippers when she's chucking bricks through the window.
On Saturday nights we will dine on jam tarts and nod off in front of the telly.
On St. George's Day you will buy me daffodils and peck me on the cheek.
On Christmas Day we will string up fairy-lights, settle side by side on the sofa, and waving our eight inch glow sticks, we'll sway gently to and fro, in our bone dust disco.**

**Remember when you told me you didn't believe in us?
Holding my wrists you spread my arms and I released you.**

I sat down and I couldn't get up. Sat down behind this nylon netting for five sodding months. I ate as much food as I could get in my mouth and I read box loads of very big books. It was heavy. I was heavy. You were off on a breeze.

One day I stood up, for no apparent reason, and I've been staggering around ever since.

I've been told you live hand to mouth in a mountainous region.

I've been told you got custody of your three mysterious children.

I've been told you made a cradle from twigs and hung it from the ceiling.

I've been told your brakes have gone and you drive with no insurance.

I've been told you overcame a problem with the booze.

I've been told you ask after me whenever you're in England.

I've been told you got up on stage when you saw Iggy Pop live.

I've been told you got divorced last year, or maybe the year before that.

I've been told you hold your looks at arms length with a careless disdain.

I've been told your eldest son recently made you a grandfather.

I've been told the rain paints road maps on your leaking windows.

I've been told your latest girlfriend is a flamenco dancer.

I've been told you move your legs on ice cold sheets in the mornings.

I've been told you wear a second-hand Hawaiian shirt.

I've been told you toyed with the idea of starting an artist's commune.

I've been told your dad got a loaded gun shoved down his throat.

I've been told your ex-wife swims backstroke in a puddle of slime.

I've been told your brother couldn't sell his amazing invention.

I've been told you made her eat all her bleeding placentas.

I've been told recovering junkies make pilgrimages to your house.

I've been told you smoke strong grass all day every day.

I've been told the sun still shines out your rosy rectum.

Your sister lives where I was born. Your mum shares my birthday. My husband was in awe of you. He's one of those that died. His was the most peculiar and protracted death I've ever lived through yet. Your brother's wife delivers my parent's post. She used to go out with my brother. She gave my mum your current address and asked her to give it to me. I've stuck it on my pin-board.

