



Julia Brightly

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Front cover is the Pacific Ocean at Venice Beach, Los Angeles, CA.

Back cover is Midtown Manhattan from Long Island City, NY.

Intro

My name is Julia Brightly.

It is my legal name, changed in the New York courts in April 2011.

I also changed my gender from male to female.

Actually I have never been male.

I was just born into the wrong body.

It happens.

In 2002 I moved to New York City from London, England, the place of my birth, and changed my body and mind to the right one.

In June 2013, after a year in Los Angeles, I moved back.

Since becoming my true self after half a century I have written many articles, made a lot of music, produced some radio, knocked out a painting or two.

When spring is in your eyes it's time to get acquainted with everything you've been denying.

Put on your party dress, come dancing with me tonight.

xo

One Step Ahead Of The G-Man

One Step Ahead Of The G-Man is a song written by David Rogers in 1988 that appeared on the third Mute Drivers LP 'Stop Or I'll Scream' the same year.

The G-Man in question was not any particular person but represented the state that one can find oneself in when one loses everything, and how people around react.

The following is a piece about just that.

.....

The past four years of my life have been remarkable.

I came out as transgender and started hormone treatment to transition from male to female, and toured the world many times over with the bands M83, Mogwai and Caribou as their Front of House sound engineer.

I moved from New York City, where I had been for a decade, to Los Angeles, into a perfect little modern house with orange and lemon trees in the garden, with a little white car parked out back, christened Snowflake by my darling friend Kimmy.

At Christmas last I and M83 finished off a triumphant year with a little run of arena shows, ending at The Gibson Theatre in LA.

The after show party was epic.

All was right with the world.

New Year came and went and I along with all my friends was confident that twenty thirteen was going to be stellar.

Easter arrived bringing still no work, but I was settling into my new home, relying on savings and credit cards to get me through what seemed just a sticky patch.

I knew a couple of groups that were looking to hire and guessed I'd be high on the list, but they passed me over for young cheap men.

Still I was sure all was going to be fine, though what meagre savings I had all but run out and my cards getting close to maxed.

By the middle of May things were getting fairly serious.

It was looking like nothing was going to come my way.

I began to look around my little house with trepidation, with a feeling that I was mad to think it would all work out, that this life could be mine.

I started to feel like a fraud, like I'd been caught in first class with a third class ticket.

At the eleventh hour came an email offering me a tour with Cat Power starting immediately.

She'd let me down once before so though perturbed I said yes yes yes.

A week went by.

Nothing.

Now all my cards really were maxed out, my bank account in the red, my rent and bills overdue.

Reality hit me like a punch in the guts.

The dream was over.

What to do?

I'd become the person I always should have been, a woman, living in a place I'd always wanted to live, LA, with the orange and lemon trees, and had travelled the world.

It was time to go.

I'd been meditating for a year and had shed my ego, was at peace with the world and myself, had been awestruck at the beauty of our tiny planet, had found the inner light, and was ready.

I decided that I would drive out to Malibu to stand for one last time on the golden sands looking out at the mighty Pacific before heading up to Topanga national park where, at sunset, I would cut my wrists.

It seemed to make complete sense.

I said my goodbyes online to my friends, being careful not to let them suspect anything as I didn't want to be stopped, and went to sleep in my own bed for the last time.

Just as I was about to walk out the door the next morning my cell phone rang. It was an old dear friend who had clearly seen through my obfuscated farewell message and begged me to stay, saying she would wire me money for a flight, and that I should hot foot it post haste to London and stay with her till I sorted myself out.

I took some convincing, not because I didn't want to see her or appreciate the love she was sending, but because I really had decided to go.

I was at peace, I was ready to leave this place.

She persuaded me to stay and made me promise to get on the plane.

I've been in London for two weeks now, sleeping on her couch, trying to figure out what the hell to do.

I abandoned everything in LA, just walked away with a suitcase and guitar in hand.

This is not the first time I've been here.

In 1991 I was playing guitar and singing in a band called Core and we all decided to move to Amsterdam.

After nearly a year of living in a squat, stealing food from the local supermarket because I was boracic, I sold my guitar getting just enough cash for a bus ticket to London, turning up at the same friend's house, this time with just a suitcase.

But now I'm 54, a middle aged woman.

Capitalism is going through its inevitable collapse and leaving millions of us by the wayside.

I have no money, no home, no history here for a decade so zero credit, and still no job.

My friend, my angel, is helping all she can but the reality has me still gasping for breath.

Being a freelance worker, self-employed, one is often a pay cheque away from the street, and I've lived like that for 20 years, somehow managing to survive.

This time though the pay cheque didn't arrive.

So here I am, one step ahead of the G-Man.

Just.

Whatever Happened To The East End?

Coming back to London was a shock.

I wrote this piece having been back just a few days.

.....

The black cloud hung like a pallid shroud over London town as the rickety American Airlines jet that had borne me from the City of Angels slid into the murk.

A cold, grey mid summer day.

I arrived at my friend's house sad and lagged from the redeye having abandoned my home in a hurry.

She ushered me up the stairs and plied me with hot tea and buttered toast before leaving me for the weekend, off visiting her folks.

I slept for 16 hours.

After more tea and toast I decided to venture out.

Where were the litter strewn streets, the pavements smeared with dog shit, the piss soaked phone boxes, the beaten up Cortinas and Jags belching unchecked emissions into pushchair strapped toddlers, the gangs of roaming racists, the queer bashers, strike a light apples and pears?

OK, the days of Cortinas and Jags are long gone, but when I left it was a scary, miserable, grumpy, cold, grey, hateful place.

I hopped on the tube and headed to Stratford East.

Now I know the 2012 Olympics generated bucket loads of cash with which to transform that part of the world, and in a hurry, but it's beyond recognition.

The first thing I noticed upon exiting the much revamped but peculiarly painted in snot green underground station was the enormous shopping mall that has been plonked right next to it, like the result of a giant child playing with lego.

My initial thought was one of condonation, that this paean to consumerism might be a good thing, especially as I was need of underwear, toiletries, a mobile phone, and chips with mushy peas, all of which were located within spitting distance from each other.

After 30 minutes I felt like I had been scooped up by the giant child and dropped into a human ant farm.

At three on a Tuesday afternoon it was chock-a-bloc with folk all scurrying around on their particular missions, none of whom seemed to care a jot who or what they trampled over to fulfil.

I scampered out with bruised limbs and scrunched toes to survey the main street.

I'd attended school at Stratford Grammar from 1970, so this was my stomping ground.

It's all gone.

The old shopping centre across the way looked dejected, a bargain basement relic.

I remember before even it was built, before indeed the bus station was there, when Angel Lane existed in its place, full of two-up-two-down terraced houses, condemned then as slums, which now would have been absurdly high rent des reses.

As I looked out at the bijou coffee shops and bistros my mind superimposed the old place, like Bobby Moore's pub Mooro's, previously The Two Puddings, a notorious watering hole full of stories of violence, where my old schoolfriend Carlton Leach worked as a bouncer before becoming a gangster proper.

Suddenly the clock chimes of the modern arty timepiece on the station forecourt brought me back with a jolt.

The good old days, they say.....

I jumped back on the tube to Bethnal Green and went for a walk around Victoria Park to clear my head.

Last time I was there the lake was brown.

Now it's been dredged and is so clear it looks drinkable, with a brand new Chinese pagoda on the island in the middle, a cute little bridge to it.

I wonder if when the lake was dredged the bodies of all the war time aborted babies were found?

The Pavilion, once a rarely open workers caff selling mugs of PG tips and Mother's Pride white toast, is now overrun with what appear to be trust fund couples paying ridiculous amounts of money for decaf lattes and soy frappucinos.

I mean, there's even a bookshop!

When did Eastenders start to read?

Well, thing is you'd be hard pressed to find an Eastender around these days.

Is that a bad thing?

Eastenders to me were racist, homophobic bigots, with the IQ of an amoeba.

A little unfair you might think but was in fact my family, coming as I do from the East End, a cockney born and bred.

I hated the filthy dump and could not wait to get out, but now back I'm more than happy to sit with the yummy mummies and sip a ginseng and cauliflower iced tea whilst perusing Kant.

It's beats watching kids on a lager induced rage smashing up bus shelters any day.

Letter From America

In the mid aughts I wrote and presented a weekly slot called Letter From America on my friend Mick Hobbs' Resonance Radio show 'Life and Living'. Alistair Cooke had been broadcasting his via the BBC for about 900 years and had to stop due to death.

So I picked up the baton and ran with it for a few years.

Upon moving to LA in October 2012 I found the baton in a box of shipped knick-knacks and so started to do them again as a podcast.

Here is a transcript of number six, June 15th 2013.

.....

(Music - Eruption by Van Halen)

Hello, fancy seeing you here.

Welcome to this weeks Letter From America coming to you today from Los Angeles, California, hurray!

Lots to get through this week, so let's get cracking.

I want start with same sex marriage, or as I like to call it, marriage.

There are a number of arguments that fucked up idiots like to put forward against same sex marriage so I'm going to zip through a few, rattle them off, then get on to more important matters.

Number one, people say that the union is sterile, that a man and a man, a woman and a woman, can't procreate so it shouldn't happen.

Well, I think everyone should stop procreating.

Adopt a child, there are so many here already that really need you should you truly crave a child so desperately.

Number two, it destroys the moral societal structure.

I'm firmly with Kurt Cobain here, not something I say everyday - everyone is gay!

What's the difference between a heterosexual and bisexual person?

About 6 vodka tonics.

Number three, marriage between two women denies the child a father.

Well, my father was a complete and utter bastard, so that's fine with me.

Number four, it goes against natural law.

Well, in the natural world there are hundreds of species who exhibit homosexual behaviour, that's natural.

Finally, the big one, it's against God.

Strap yourselves in people for this is the simplest answer of all - there's no God.

Just yesterday I was flicking through some vinyl records and came across a bunch I played on, for example Colour Box 'Shotgun', Nitzer Ebb 'Kick It', and... Jimmy Grierson.

Jimmy was a gay Liverpudlian for whom I auditioned in 1980, and got the part. He had made an LP called 'A Series Of Long Jumps' which was never released, and looking at the cover I can kind of see why as it's one of the most god awful covers ever.

He's jumping about like a bad cartoon with a very stupid grin on his superimposed face.

It's a shame as he was lovely and quite brilliant.

But looking at the cover, at his picture, I can only think of one thing... I sucked his cock.

(Music - Astral Glamour by The Homosexuals)

The government are spying on us, the government are spying on us!

Is it paranoia if it's true?

It is true, as we all now know, and Barack Obama seems fine with it.

Who on earth would want to go through people's drunk dialling?

Who wants to read all those comments under Facebook postings?

Here's what I think - I don't give a flying fuck who records what I say or who reads what I write, I won't stop calling out the bullshit, I will not stop telling the truth.

Speaking of totalitarian regimes, Russia has declared illegal the promotion of homosexuality, or 'the spreading of propaganda of non traditional relationships'.

Anyone remember Section 28?

It was a law passed in Britain that... hang on a minute... outlawed the spreading of propaganda of non traditional relationships.

It was repealed in 2003 and in 2009 pasty-faced David Cameron apologised, and about time too.

What I don't understand is why anyone would get so het up about same sex relationships, would be so bummed out by people who cause no harm.

I saw a posting on Facebook the other day that asked me to imagine all the people of the world as 100 people in a room, clearly for those not so good at math, who struggle with percentages.

10 of them are gay, although we know that's really 100, 30 of them are hungry, that's awful, but 40 of them have no shoes, that's 40% of all the people in the world have no shoes.

Bill Hicks once memorably referred to us humans as a virus with shoes, and now we don't even have the shoes.

(Music - It's Obvious by The Au Pairs)

Finally this week it's, yes...

Pedophile Update.

Ta-da!

Operation Yewtree, in case you'd gone to the moon, is a police investigation initially to look into the sexploits of former celebrity Jimmy Savile who committed hundreds of sexual offences against minors, and I don't mean miners, people who go underground digging for coal, I mean children, innocent, petrified children.

As part of the ongoing investigation there have been a lot of old celebrities arrested and charged with similar offences, but just lately there's been a spate of actors from TV soap Coronation Street.

William Roache, longest serving soap star of all time, plays Ken Barlow, was charged with sexually assaulting a fifteen year old girl, and Michael Le Vell, who plays Kevin, has been accused of nineteen sexual offences including six counts of rape.

Something is rotten in the heart of Corrie,

One that slipped by is a chap called David Smith, a BBC chauffeur, who has been accused of repeatedly raping the same boy over a period of years.

Look, stop fucking children!

(Music - Save The Country by Laura Nyro)

That's about it for this week but before I go I see that the inbox at Letter From America is bulging with an email asking who I am?

Well, let me tell you.....

I was born way back, not long after the war.

Food was scarce, the air was shite, flattened houses remained bomb sites, and all kids had rickets.

The government was an abominable patriarchy.

Women were terrified.

Families in slums aspired to life on penal colonies, or housing estates, the projects.

Occasionally they'd be let out to spend a couple of miserable weeks in prison, the dreaded Holiday Camp, the blitz spirit and all that.

I spent some summers of my childhood there, in Prestatyn, North Wales, next door to Rhyl, regularly voted the worst place in Britain.

The camp was at sea.

I remember the deep brown colour vividly.

When the fog lifted, a rare occurrence, one could just about make out the distant islands where men would gather, digging for liquid gold.

Women soldiered on.

There were no bathrooms, ablutions would take place in a communal outdoor puddle.

There were no telephones either, people would each have a paper cup joined by a piece of string which doubled as a Cat's Cradle, then the epitome of home entertainment.

Eventually though prosperity loomed and folks were herded on to flying cattle trucks to spend two weeks in Torremolinos, where they would troll the streets looking for dripping on toast and a Double Diamond, which they swore worked wonders.

There were two TV stations back then, the BBC, and another for the proles. Ah the cavalcade of entertainment - The Black and White Minstrel Show, Love Thy Neighbour, Mind Your Language, a rich mix of unbridled racism and misogyny.

In my twenties came The Troubles, or mass culling of the civilian population by armed forces as it's rightly known.

The voices of the IRA, the political wing of one of the confederation of dunces, were spoken by actors.

The rest got away with murder.

There was also Margaret Thatcher, a barmy lady who did no good whatsoever.

Around this time I shouted a lot, sometimes coherently.

Occasionally I would do this from a stage to two sometimes three people and a dog.

In my thirties all my hair fell out.

I have no idea what I did to upset it.

In my forties I compensated by growing it out of and around most orifices.
Now it's back and I keep it in a box at the foot of my bed.

My parents were drunks.

My father beat me, kicked, punched, in the name of fuck knows what.

My mother was sexually abused by her father and I'm pretty sure I was too.

Who would hurt a child, what kind of human thinks that's the right thing to do?

Not me for a kick off.

I was born into the body of an alien.

That took some time to work through.

But I struggled and I struggled, and here I am, and I thank you.

(Music - You Know My Name (Look Up The Number) by The Beatles)

Today I'm drinking to you a cup of decaf Earl Grey with ice.... nice!

You know, shit happens, things go bad bananas, so what to do?

Stick on the kettle and make a cuppa rosy lee.

It really is mixed up muddled up shook up world but it's beautiful too, and the one thing I know to be true is that war is over, if we want it.

Sounds simple?

That's because it is.

Keep it up!

(Music - Ride A White Swan by T.Rex)

The Beatles and Me

Like Marmite, you either love or hate The Beatles.

If you love them you will be completely unable to understand how anyone could hate them.

I know many people who do, but I am not one of them.

The first song I remember hearing was 'She Loves You', in 1963.

This marked the beginning of Beatlemania so in reality it they were difficult to ignore.

The refrain of 'yeah yeah yeah' was so radical, the 'woo' and shaking of the hair before it energising.

It was a revelation, true.

It was a love affair, pure and simple.

.....

Like much of the country in sixty three, I fell in love with The Beatles.

Firstly Paul.

Those eyes, wide open, capped by heavenly brows.

That voice.

That face.

The Hofner bass.

In seventy two Ringo hove into view.

Born To Boogie.

Like much of the country, I fell in love with Marc Bolan too.

He sure was no square with his corkscrew hair.

In nineteen eighty of course it was John.

Sometimes it's only when someone is gone we realise what we missed.

He was a bully, true, sexist, yes, but a human who found himself through beautiful Yoko, and rose above his weaknesses.

You know, war really is over if you want it.

Nowadays it's George.

He was gorgeous, said what he felt, knew intrinsically what we needed, and lit the way.

The message is crystal clear, and while it might sound trite, it is what we need,
right here, right now.

Love.

The Inner Light.

Freedom from fear.

Together they woke us from our infant state.

And me?

I'm alive and striving to be the best I can be, through meditation, compassion,
understanding, and peace.

Yeah yeah yeah.

Community Spirit

At the behest of a friend's daughter I recently attended a free concert by performers from a local high school.

I'm not sure what I expected but it was most definitely not to be as absolutely blown away by the amount of talent, joy, and love that burst off that little stage as I was.

There were three bands who were the match of many I've seen at major festivals around the world, and I've been to them all.

There was a singer with an acoustic guitar who's songs made me cry.

There was a human beatbox dancer I wanted to wrap up in cotton wool and take home, that cute!

What makes this all the more phenomenal is that the performers were aged 14 or under, were 50/50 girls and boys, and were from all races, creeds, religions, and backgrounds.

The school is in Tower Hamlets, the London borough that is one of the most culturally diverse in the country.

This is what the EDL want to smash.

Having not been living in the UK for the past decade I was unaware of the EDL. They are the continuation of a cancer that we should by now have eradicated from our psyche.

The letters EDL do not as I thought stand for Extremely Dense Lumps, but should.

The members of this cretinous collective seem somehow unfinished, like a vital piece of their brains was omitted when they were cleaved from bulldog chalk.

The kind of people that in childhood pulled wings off gnats, drowned kittens, bullied peers mercilessly, failed to get exam points for spelling their name correctly.

They are white, predominately male, and so riddled with fear that they pummel anything they don't understand with fists till it's dead.

Queers, coons, pakis, slags, and poofs.

Translated that's homosexuals, anyone of African descent, anyone from Asia, women, and the people they seem to fear more than anyone else, men in women's clothing.

As a man who used to wear women's clothing I have come face to face with the look of confusion turning to fear, to dread, and to hate in their eyes.

It's very hard to comprehend that someone would want to beat you to a pulp for just being you.

Fortunately I don't have to put up with that particular abuse any more as I am now a woman.

This behaviour is handed down through generations like a precious heirloom, puffed up pride in all things wrong.

The abused becomes the abuser.

I've seen it in my own family.

My father was a violent sot who failed to come to terms with the pain inflicted on him by his own father and so carried it on by battering me.

After a while this blaming on the past for one's acts is a smokescreen, a copout.

Ultimately we must be responsible for our own patterns of behaviour.

When it became obvious that I was the most terrifying person in the world, a boy who wanted to be a girl, and he was not going to be able to punch me into shape, he disowned me.

He hasn't spoken to me in 30 years.

What I witnessed at that performance the other day from all those children, from all their parents, relatives, friends, was the complete rejection of this nonsense.

Embracing community, love, and acceptance of all people, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, colour, background, it was beautiful.

This is the true human condition, this is what we are, this is the next level of our evolution.

To those who preach hate, who would deny us our rights as individuals to be ourselves, to be joyous human beings expressing love, it's time to put your knuckles down, hug each other, open up, try reading a book even, and begin to truly live.

When I see children embracing the differences in us like this with love, with compassion, I know we have a future.

Community spirit is alive and well.

Now, let's save the planet too.

Signposts

It is said that there are two traditional ways out of the East End, boxing or music. My awesome friend Michele Aboro chose both, being undefeated World Champion and sound engineer extraordinaire.

Actually there are two other routes, the military or further education. Although I went to a Grammar School, having been the last in Britain to get that choice by passing the Eleven Plus exam, university was never going to be an option for me as I needed to get away from the horror of home as soon as possible which meant beetling out of there at sixteen.

Teachers lied to us when they said there was a level playing field. I told the careers advisor I wanted to be a musician, words I watched waft over her head as she suggested I speak with my father to see if he could get me a job at Fords in Dagenham, working on the conveyor belt.

I was in the top ten brightest of my school, second in my class (David Thompson was a freak!) but I had given up.

I felt there was nothing they could teach me and I was right.

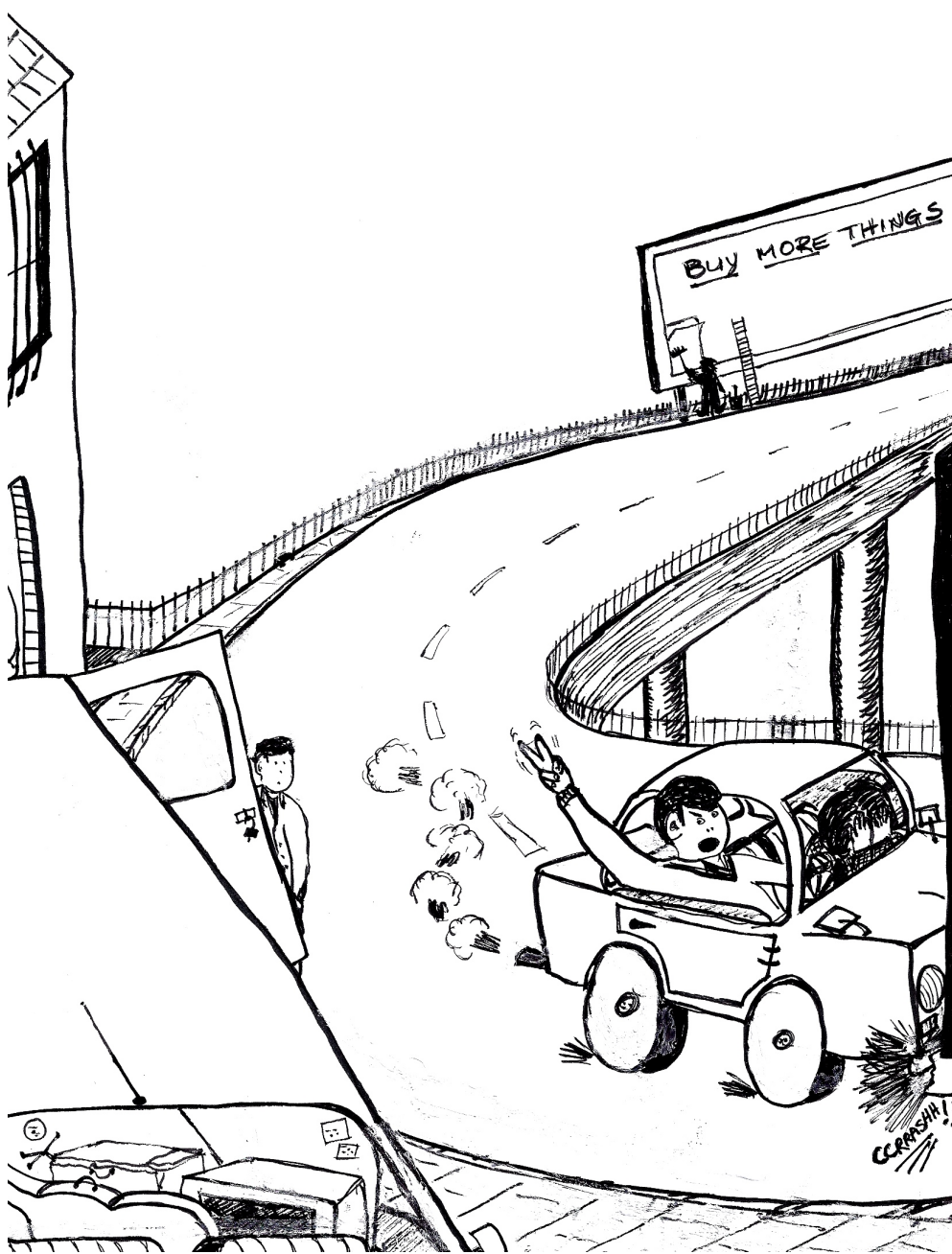
Obviously the military was out.

I'd already decided by that point that I didn't want to kill animals for food so shooting people was a no no.

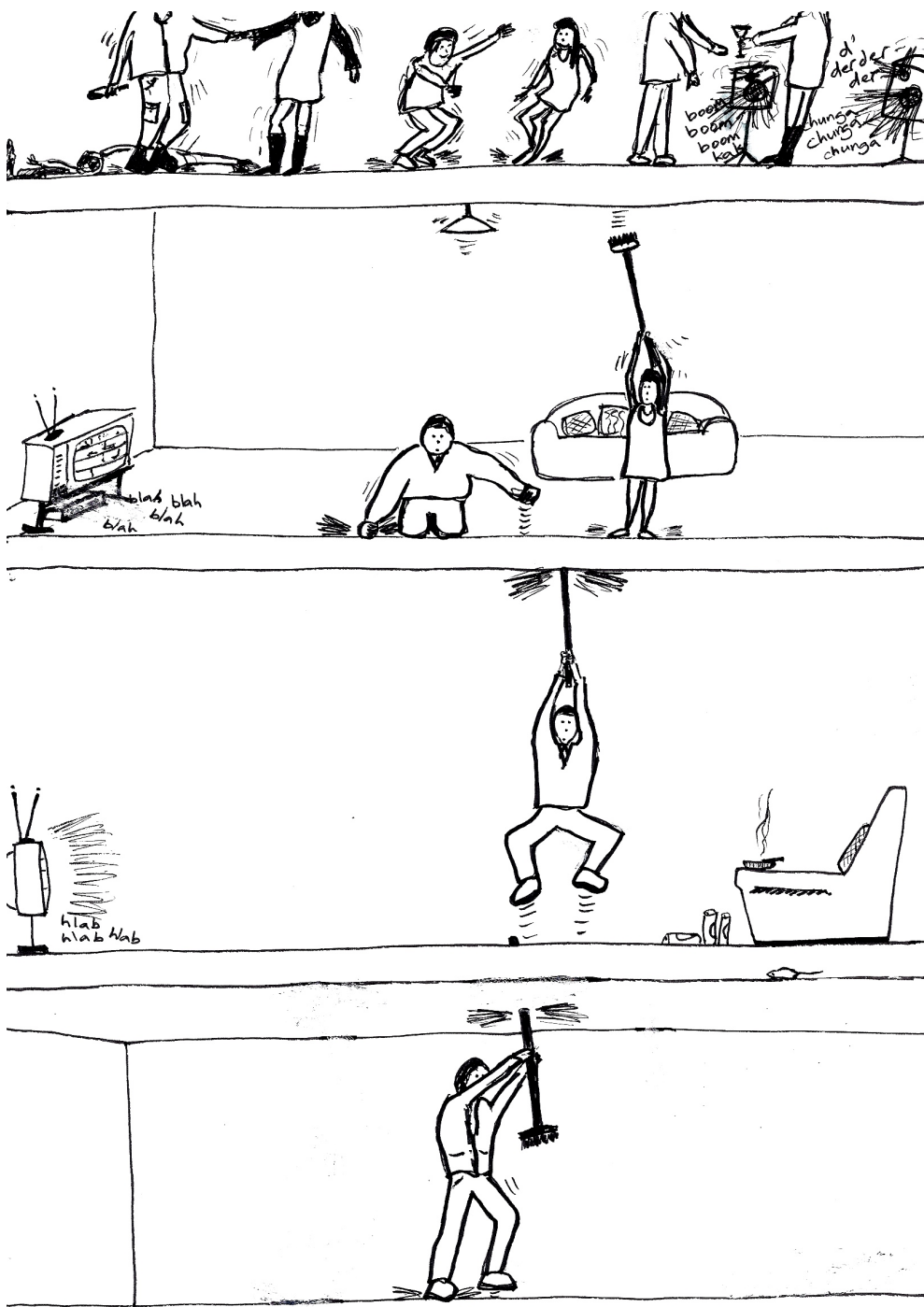
Besides, I valued my individuality.



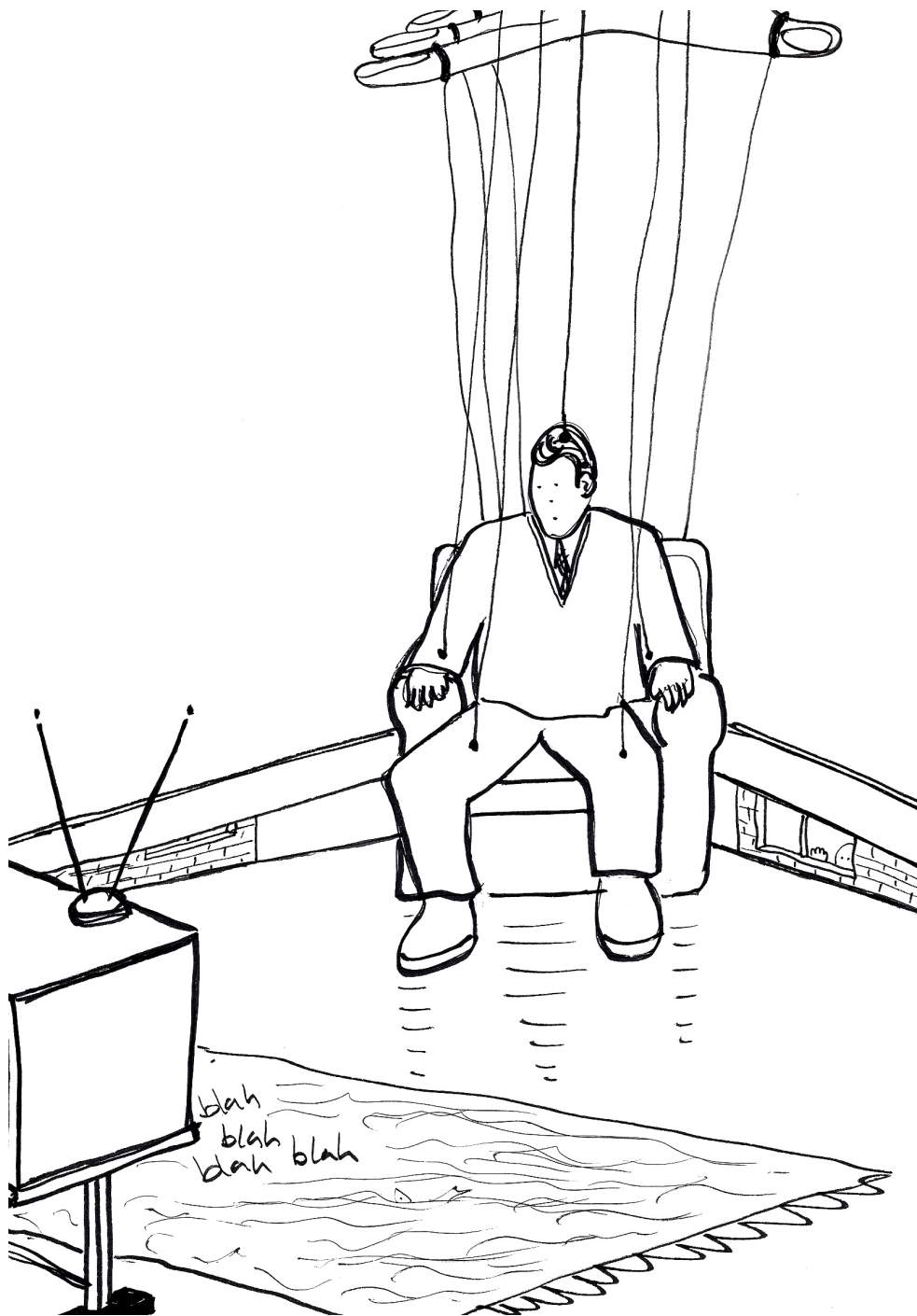
I chose music.



It was a good way to dress up and meet girls.



My friends from school, like my parents, moved a couple of streets away from their parents, got regular jobs, started on their regular lives, and faded away.



I'd been told for so many years by my father that I was worthless, that nothing I said or did would ever matter, that my life wouldn't count.

That was his life, it sure as hell was not going to be mine.

I played in many bands throughout my twenties, created some astonishing music and art, met extraordinary people, travelled to places I previously only dreamed of, had frankly some fantastic times on drugs, had amazing sex with all kinds of fascinating women and men, but what I was unable to do was sustain an ongoing relationship.

We all have our parents as role models and I was dealt a truly shitty hand.

It was about as dysfunctional an upbringing as is possible to imagine, except for two remarkable things, they bought me a drum kit at 10 and a guitar at 13.

What there wasn't, ever, was love.

There was plenty of violence, and I beat that out on the drums.

Apart from the bands I have had four long term relationships and all of them ended disastrously.

I fucked up.

Apart from hardly ever being around, when I was I was miserable for much of it and I could not for the life of me figure out why.

It didn't occur to me that the feelings I had been suppressing since I could remember were making me out of whack.

I was not true to myself, my spirit was broken, I could not align myself with anything or anyone.

I was lost.



I hit bottom in Amsterdam in ninety two age thirty three, squatting, stealing food to survive.

There were people living in boxes, smacked out right outside my door.



That was where I was heading.

I decided there and then I had to quit trying to become this pop star, to quit living such a hedonistic and destructive life and listen to my inner voice.

That was a big signpost.

It took me another twenty years but I got there.

I was born in the wrong body

Nineteen fifty nine

Lived in a house

With all the wrong people

T.Rex my lifeline

I'd go to sleep

Wish that I'd wake up

One day in July

Two thousand nine

I did it

I went to see a miracle worker

West eighteen and nine

Planted the seed

To my future

Gave me the pills to cure my ills

Set me free

To burn brightly

Look in my eyes

There ain't no disguise

Dig it

Well well well well well, I made it home

I Wrote The Songs

John Cooper Clarke, The Bard of Salford, wrote a wonderful piece called 'I Wrote The Songs' in which he lists song titles of his that other people changed one word of and had worldwide smash hits with.

This inspired me along with my friends Mick Hobbs and Benb Gallaher to riff. Here is a selection for your delectation.

Tell Laura I Love Herbert

A Town Without Pitney

I've Got You Under My Sink

Wholesome Prison Blues

Eight Days A Month

Black Magic Marker

Stained By Your Man

I Was Mad To Love Her

I Believe I Can't Fly

The Heating's On

It's Improbable

If I Had A Hamper

Don't Go Breaking My Harp

Please Re-release me

Happiness Is A Warm Gnu

A Walk In The Black Forest Gateau

I'd Like To Teach The World To Sign

Singed Sealed Delivered I'm Yours

Ticket To Ryde

Horse With No Legs

Little Sparrows

Green Bunions

Life On Mars Bars

Forever In Blue Cheese

You're So Veiny

Hegel Don't Bother Me

Living Next Door To Lice

No Egrets

Shrink Wrapped

The first thing I had to do when getting back to London was sort out my transgender health care.

Having found a doctor, a GP, the next step was to see a psychiatrist for a mental health evaluation.

.....

This morning I went to see a shrink.

I walked into the empty reception area and, through what seemed like bullet proof glass, told the receptionist I had an appointment, handing him through a slit the letter I'd been sent to confirm it.

He looked it up down, tapped some keys on his computer, scratched his head, sat back in his chair and read the letter again, a look of consternation crossing his already mardy face.

He thrust it back through the aperture and without looking up mumbled "Take a seat."

A few minutes later another man popped up in the glass cage and sat next to him.

They had a little confab and both shook their heads.

This second man came out to the water cooler next to where I was sitting.

I looked up at him and smiled as he ambled by.

He snarled.

Wow, I thought, these two are the grumpiest patient care people I have ever seen.

Having been looking for employment the past couple of months I would happily do it better.

I took out my iPad to read while I waited.

I heard a door opening and looking up was surprised to see the area full of people waiting for appointments, in varying degrees of distress.

We all looked over, like meerkats.

A woman called out a man's name.

We looked around but no-one got up.

She said the name again, louder.

With dread and horror as I realised it was my old name, the name I had when I was a man.

I closed my eyes hoping she'd figure out the error and get it right, or would just give up after which, letting enough time pass so no-one made a connection, I could get up quietly and leave.

She said it for a third time, this time loud enough that people on the street turned their heads.

I opened my eyes, steeled myself, stood up and walked the gauntlet over to her.

"That's not my name" I hissed as she fumbled with the combination lock on the door.

I could feel all eyes burning into the back of my head, my mouth so dry it literally felt like there was a sock in it.

I'd rather have walked on hot coals than back to that water cooler.

She was mortified too, poor thing, trying to apologise as she finally punched in the correct sequence of numbers and we both fell through the doorway in relief.

We entered a little cubicle where she and another young woman quizzed me.

It was clear they were in training and more than a little out of their depth, but I smiled and we carried on.

"How did you do at school?"

The words Eleven Plus, Grammar, and GCE gave them cause for concern, as if I was speaking gibberish.

"Do you ever feel like you are a famous person?"

I mentioned this to a friend after and she said, "Did you just tell them you were in The Passions?"

"Do you ever feel like people are talking about you behind your back?"

Not the best time to mention the receptionists I figured, so kept mum.

After fifteen minutes trying to catch me out they told me to wait in reception while they spoke with the head honcho, then they'd give me their assessment.

Cautiously I opened the door and was relieved to find it again empty, and the receptionists replaced, presumably their shifts over rather than turfed out for their narrow mindedness callousness.

With barely enough time to regain my composure I was called back in, this time to a spacious office where sat a man, mid forties, leaning back in his chair behind a large desk, the two students seated to one side looking very down in the mouth.

I feared the worst.

"Do you know why you're here?" he asked, eyes piercing my skull.

I glanced over at the girls hoping for a clue but their heads were bowed, looking at their trembling hands.

"Well" he continued, "I am a psychiatrist and your GP has asked me to assess your mental health before referring you on to hospital."

I expected the door to open and men in white coats strap me into a straight jacket.

"I'm not sure why they sent you here as Charing Cross have their own psychiatrists, but as far as we're concerned you clearly have no mental health issues so I see no reason why you cannot be treated for gender reassignment on the NHS and I'll be writing a letter to your GP in the next week or two informing them of this. Goodbye."

I know.

Two weeks to write a letter!

The girls showed me out in silence.

I concluded they must've had a dressing down for using the wrong name and putting me into an awfully embarrassing situation which I thought particularly unfair seeing as it was most likely his error.

It was a kind of surreal and not altogether pleasant experience, my first and hopefully last encounter with the NHS mental health department.

In the UK one can have gender reassignment on the National Health Service but there are a number of hoops to jump through.

The psych eval was number two, the first being to register with a GP, a family doctor.

Step three is referral to a Gender Clinic for primary care such as hormone therapy, and for me this will be Charing Cross hospital.

To qualify for this one has to live full time in one's chosen gender for a period of one year.

This is particularly cruel as it is the hormones that give the confidence and body shape to do that successfully.

These hormones are Estradiol, oestrogen, the female hormone, forms the breasts, redistributes fat, alters body shape, and Spironolactone, an androgen blocker, stops the production of testosterone.

In the US hormones are prescribed immediately after registering with a clinic and being assessed by a psychiatrist, something I did in 2009, and for which of course I had to stump up cash.

No, Obamacare doesn't cover it, though it is now tax deductible.

Fortunately because I had been on hormones over there for nearly four years my GP over here prescribed them straight off the bat.

Lucky.

The final step, the one I am most keen to complete, is SRS or GRS, sex/gender reassignment surgery, turning my bits around, a procedure that would cost me upwards of thirty grand in the US.

I'm no medical tourist, before you reach for your green pen.

I've paid taxes and national insurance here for over thirty years and do so now.

SRS for many but not all Transgender people, is the final stage, the last piece of the jigsaw.

After years of hormones, the gradual reshaping of the body and mind, after laser or electrolysis hair removal, after voice training, after trachea shaving, comes the vagina.

Those of a nervous disposition look away now - for male to female surgery the glans of the penis, the head, is turned into a clitoris, the penis itself turned inside out to form the vagina, the testicles removed, the labia formed, and the urethra repositioned.

We're talking major surgery.

Not everybody chooses to have it.

Some people do not want to have to go through the pain, discomfort, and the three months minimum recovery.

Some simply cannot afford it.

I have had done and paid for everything so far, including the trachea shave, where an incision is made under the chin and the trachea, the Adam's apple cartilage, is shaved to reduce or remove its prominence, feminizing the neck.

It's a long journey, a gender journey, and one not to be taken lightly.

Yes, it has been wonderful, calming, life affirming, to be able to at last admit to myself who I truly am and, most importantly, to feel good about it.

But there are pitfalls, should you, reader, be thinking about choosing this path.

It is not uncommon to find that the thing that makes you feel complete makes other people run for the hills, or want to beat you to a pulp.

Within the blink of an eye home, job, friends, can all disappear.

I've been lucky in that most of my friends have stuck with me.

Not all though, and not all those who've stuck around have found it easy.

It must be quite a thing to have a friend you've known for 30 years seemingly out of the blue declare themselves female and start wearing dresses and make up in public.

After the initial shock and embarrassment most folks come around.

Those that don't, well were they really friends?

I travel a lot as a touring sound mixer, and in early transition found myself in some tricky situations, with my name change papers in one hand, and my old passport in the other, trying to get into, for example, Russia.

Should you find yourself there stand your ground, be open, sincere, smiling just enough, not too much that you look insane, or more than they already think you are.

In Japan one time the immigration official looked at me, a woman, looked at my passport, a man, put a hand to his forehead, exhaled deeply, and waved me on, shaking his head, puffing.

In China I had five men in uniform all looking at my face, then my passport, up and down, up and down for 20 minutes, jut-jawed, grimacing, then begrudgingly letting me pass.

I walked through with all the dignity I could muster.

One thing it's worth bearing in mind at these situations, should you ever find yourself there, is to remember that sometimes the straightest looking people cross dress.

Oh yes, it's a lot more common than you'd think.

Most who transition do so later in life, when it is hardest.

When the skeleton has formed, the voice dropped, the beard thick, the head bald, all the will and pills in the world may not produce the effects society deems appropriate.

The best time for anyone to change gender is before puberty, and thankfully that is beginning to happen now.

When I was eight years old I would go to sleep every night hoping I would wake up a girl, and cry every morning.

Just the other day I saw an article in a national newspaper about a happy heterosexual couple who had both changed gender.

We've come a long way since I was eight.

But there are people who would've looked at that happy couple and called them freaks, or worse, much worse.

We can have two happy people who don't fit into a warped nonsensical bigoted hateful view of humanity or two miserable people who do.

I know which I choose.

I 'pass'.

This really helps, as no gang of uncouth youths have tried to hospitalise me.

But I am now a middle aged woman which presents me with a whole new slew of discrimination, not least that I am trying but failing to get work.

A friend who is still struggling a bit said to me recently "I don't understand why anybody would chose to be a middle aged woman."

There's nothing I can do about being middle aged.

Gender is not black and white.

It's a rainbow.

Fortunately I am a citizen of a country that recognises my condition as something essential to treat, that will do so for free at point of need, and will allow me to become my gender of choice legally whether I have had SRS or not.

Now, gis a job.

Letter From London

Being back in London was tough but by the beginning of September things started to calm down and pan out a bit, not least due to the help of my friends Dan Snaith and Anthony Gonzalez.

I found myself a room in a house sharing with Annie Day, with whom I worked at Mute Records some twenty five years earlier.

As I unpacked my suitcase I found the Letter From America baton and so decided to start a podcast called, wait for it, Letter From London!

Here is a transcript of the first one, from September 1st, 2013.

.....

Fancy seeing you here!

Hello and welcome to this very first Letter From London, coming as I am to you from North Finchley in the London of Barnet, or barnit as the cockney would say.

There's been a lot of news this week so without any hesitation, repetition, deviation, or repetition let's get on with it.

Depending on where you've looked for your news this week you'll have read differing headlines.

If you were trawling the internet you'll have seen that all that happened this week is Hannah Montana wriggled her bottom in front of a bunch of oversized teddy bears.

If you'd travelled the Tube and glanced at a copy of Metro you'll have seen that Lady Gaga played the iTunes festival at The Roundhouse, Chalk Farm London.

If, however, you'd managed to look further afield you may have noticed tucked away that the Fukushima nuclear power plant has been pissing radioactive water into the Pacific Ocean continually for two years.

Radioactive traces were picked up on the west coast of America three days after the actual disaster happened, and now, well it's everywhere.

Again depending on what you read it's either completely safe or an absolute nightmare and we are fucked.

The truth is probably in the middle there somewhere, but there are a couple of things we know for sure:

One, nobody really knows how nuclear plants work, and nobody really knows how to contain the disaster, to stop the leaking water.

Two, that within a decade all the oceans of the world will be contaminated.

Again, depending on what you read, this is either completely safe or we can never eat fish again.

Not that we killed all the creatures in the sea but that us poor humans won't be able to eat them anymore.

Meanwhile Barack Obama, cold-blooded killer, and pasty faced David Cameron are gung-ho for war in Syria.

Fortunately David Cameron was vetoed this week, so we're out.

Barack Obama it seems says 'yes we can' and looks like America are going it alone.

Where is the money going to come from America, seeing as the country is completely bankrupt?

Well, Barack Obama has just decided, after much rhetoric to the contrary, that he is not now going to stop states legalising recreational marijuana.

Those tax dollars have to come from somewhere, so get high people, praise the Lord and pass the ammunition.

You can now smoke a fat spliff, sit back, realise what bullshit it all is, and freak the fuck out.

I'm going to smoke a fat spliff, sit back, and listen to some music.

(Music - Dreaming Of Delphine Remix by Misty Roses)

Well it's that time again..... yes you guessed it....

Pedophile Update!

It's been quite a week for Operation Yewtree.

First off Dave Lee Travis, the Hairy Cornflake, has been charged with eleven acts of pedophilia.

Still awaiting the outcome, but that sound effect he had, "whack whack oops", sounds like him coming over an eight year old then realising what a complete shit he is.

Then there's Rolf Harris, charged with nine acts of pedophilia.

That noise he made that was meant to resemble a wobble board was actually him heavy breathing as wanked over an eleven year old.

I wonder if when he had a small child in front of him and was trying to get his flaccid penis erect he said "Do you know what it is yet?"

As Stuart Braithwaite said to me the other day about his DJ sets, "First Glitter, now Harris. It's getting that I can't play a record that isn't by a pedophile."

Brrr, let's have some palette cleansing music.

(Music - It's Good News Week by Hedgehoppers Anonymous, produced by Jonathan King)

Oh no, that won't do.

(Music - Sun Arise by Alice Cooper, written by Rolf Harris)

No, that's no good either.

(Music - Little Children by Billy J Kramer and The Dakotas)

No! Gosh, I see what he means.

(Music - I am Missing You by Lakshmi Shankar)

Ah, that's better.

There is a newspaper called Positive News that has in it, yes, positive news.

There was a poll carried out, they say, that had two questions:

One, do you think Britain is a multicultural society?

Two, if so do you think it's a good thing?

90% said they do believe Britain is a multicultural society, and 70% of all those asked, across all ages and ethnicities, said they believe it is a good thing. Amongst young people, between eighteen and thirty five.... is thirty five young, oh dear I suppose it is when you're fifty four.... it goes up to 85%.

So, EDL..... fuck off!

(Music - You Know My Name (Look Up The Number) by The Beatles)

Well, that just about wraps it up for this week.

Today I'm drinking to you a cup of decaf coffee with almond milk on ice... nice!

You know, it is a mixed up muddled up shook up world but war, it's over!

It really is simple as that.

So, come on people, smile on your sisters and brothers, everybody get together and love one another right now.

Keep it up!

(Music - When There's No More Fear by Mark Lesseraux)

Sisters

In my life I have known and worked with some of the most incredible women artists and performers, Siouxsie Sioux, Karen O, Susan Stenger, Morgan Kibby, Diamanda Galas, Barbara Gogan.....

These are all powerful women, forces of nature, making their mark in life, music, and the music business, that most male centric of industries.

Both Siouxsie and Barbara were at the forefront of a breakthrough in attitudes and possibilities in the late nineteen seventies, that along with the still new and revolutionary feminist movement dared to question and dismantle the pervading patriarchy.

America won World War Two and subsequently ruled the world.

Not attacked on its mainland, it was a powerful and intact economy ready to burst out onto a brave new world.

Full employment meant that teenagers in the mid fifties had for the first time huge spending power and with it independence.

The middle class, white picket fenced, staid Christian mentality of their parents was roundly rejected for something new, something exciting, something unheard of.

Sex.

Rock 'n' Roll was a euphemism for sex, hot, sweaty, wild, passionate sex, sex that sprayed the black and white world with technicolor, and the teenagers engaging in it needed their own music to gyrate to.

With it's origins in black blues and gospel, Rock 'n' Roll music was born and quickly hijacked by the very white and uptight middle aged it was against, and became a perverted, sexist cash cow, at times worryingly pedophilic.

Songs like 'You're Sixteen' where the girl in question comes on like a dream, peaches and cream, is sung by a man old enough to make it statutory rape.

'Shake Rattle and Roll' has a line that goes 'I'm like a one-eyed cat peeping at a seafood store, I can look at you till you ain't no child no more'.

Then there was the notorious 'He Hit Me (It Felt Like a Kiss)' where the singer, a woman, thanks her man for hitting her because by hitting her she knows that he loves her. *

Men wanted their women to behave like children, or even be children, take Jerry Lee Lewis and his marriage to his fourteen year old cousin, and readily give them a knocking about whenever they didn't obey.

Throughout the Swinging Sixties these attitudes continued, where the idea of free love, far from being liberating for women, was a means for men to fuck as many women as they wanted, and women should be grateful.

Scantly clad schoolgirls were used to sell everything, portrayed in a way to make men wet dream.

Whether lying sprawled across a car parting legs and lips, or licking chocolate like it was an erect penis, the message was clear; women were merely objects, slaves, with no free will, no ambition or desire to do anything other than fulfil men, in the kitchen and bedroom.

If they dared to want anything for themselves, such as a job, their own money, a bank account, they would get that nonsense beaten out of them.

In the late seventies, due to things if anything getting worse, an explosion of powerful women erupted onto the music scene and changed everything.

Patti Smith, The Au Pairs, X-Ray Spex, The Passions, Penetration, Siouxsie and The Banshees, The Pretenders, The Slits, The Raincoats, Nina Hagen, to name but a few.

Barbara Gogan, singer and guitarist with The Passions, wrote a song called 'Why Me?', which challenged the whole patriarchal hegemony head on.

You call us the weaker sex when it's you who'd make us weak,
You fool us with sexual delight then you threaten us with physical might,
When you've really ground us down you kick us in the teeth,
Don't talk to me like that you creep you haven't got the right,
I never gave you the choice to be prostitute or wife.

This was a staggering statement coming as it did in 1979.

Sure, there had been John and Yoko's 'Woman Is The Nigger Of The World' a few years before, and others were challenging the status quo, but never had a woman written, recorded, and had released and published on her own terms something so incendiary.

The floodgates were open, and in the eighties the feminist revolution stormed ahead, helped along at last by male peers who were not going to stand for those outmoded sexist attitudes and outright misogyny any longer.

At the same time what was termed Alternative Comedy pushed out other vile men like Bernard Manning and all their hatred, lead by Dawn French and Jennifer Saunders, Ruby Wax, Jenny Eclair, Josie Lawrence, Rita Rudner, again to name a few.

That there was a woman Prime Minister at the time of this breakthrough is no co-incidence.

Whilst Margaret Thatcher was indeed a powerful woman she was the epitome of everything that was wrong in society, filling her cabinet with madmen, thus politicising a generation.

Just listen to the records by Diamanda Galas, Kate Bush, Sinead O'Connor, and even Madonna during that time.

Huge powerful statements by strong beautiful women about what it was like to be a woman in that awful world of men.

The nineteen nineties though was a turning point.

Yes, there was Riot Grrrl, a terrible name, and many of the bands from that time carried on what had gone before, such as Bikini Kill and Sleater-Kinney, but found themselves sidelined and lumped into a genre by that old male guard and trivialised, replaced by Tori Amos, Alanis Morissette, Sheryl Crow, safe, manageable, squeaky clean.

Ah but then, in 2000, there was an explosion in New York City that gave birth to the group Yeah Yeah Yeahs and unleashed onto the world the inimitable Karen O.

Forget the The Spice Girls and their manmade Girl Power nonsense.

Karen O was real.

There is a documentary film called 'Kill Your Idols' in which Karen is interviewed along with people from the previous generation, and in particular a very disgruntled Lydia Lunch, relentless in what she saw as Karen's vacuity.

It is a shocking tirade and baseless, comes over as outmoded, bitter, sour grapes.

It is that kind of backbiting that has helped usher in the return of the dead, where the music business is in the sweaty grip of crusty men who will only deign to let women through if they can be totally manipulated into male fantasy, and as can be seen by Miley Cyrus' recent simulated sex with man sized cuddly toys, that fantasy is child fucking.

In reality that attitude had never gone away.

An A&R man once told me he would 'never sign a band with a chick in it'.

I toured with Siouxsie for most of 2000 and the men on that tour were relentless in their condemnation of her, mocking her voice, her image, the way she looked at the end of a show, sweat covered in smudged make-up, looking in fact stunning.

When Susan Stenger wrote, played, and directed the music for Michael Clarke's ballet 'Current/See', stunningly, the men in the crew called her a witch, laughed at her behind her back because of her power and, oh horror of horrors, had some grey in her hair.

I toured with the Yeah Yeah Yeahs for a fair few years and I cannot count how many men have told me all kinds of absolute horseshit about Karen's temperament.

Insecure men fear powerful women because they cannot control them.
That is the majority of the men in the music industry.

Well, here is the good news.
The music industry is finished.

It is no longer up to slimy pedophiles to decide who gets to make music and who gets to listen to it.
Their time has come to an end.
Denigrating women, some of whom have paid their wages, no more.

To Simon Cowell and all the other parasites that perpetrate the old way of doing things, when Jimmy Savile was not the exception but the norm, it's hello, goodbye and good riddance.

Try as they might to keep us all in the dark ages, and try as they might to prostitute young girls to up their bank balance, there has been a huge shift in opinion and awareness, an awakening.

Siouxsie, Pauline Murray, Patti Smith, Leslie Woods, Barbara Gogan, it is because those women and others like them stood up all those years ago and did not stop that we are right now at this pivotal stage of our enlightenment.

Karen O took up the baton and now new powerful women artists are carrying on being strong, creating and distributing art on their own terms, women like Morgan Kibby, Susanne Sundfør, Annie Clark, Elisabeth Oswald, Natasha Khan.

There is not a revolution coming, it has already started.

*He Hit Me (It Felt Like A Kiss) was written by Gerry Goffin and Carole King, was allegedly about their reaction to singer Little Eva being beaten up by her boyfriend, and her telling them that she wouldn't leave him because he loved her.

However without this knowledge the lyric comes across in support of the man and Phil Spector's production of The Crystals performance is unambiguously misogynistic.

You Couldn't Make It Up

I went to a funeral the other day with my friend Megan to see off her ex.

She wasn't sure if it was burial or cremation she'd wanted as she died quite unexpectedly.

We settled on a green burial figuring it would be right to give her body to the earth.

The undertaker had a new portable CD player for the occasion and peered at it over spectacles to play 'Annie's Song' by James Galway on a greatest hits of 1978 CD and had the volume turned up quite loud, it being a quiet and gentle instrumental.

She pressed play but was on the wrong ID and instead blasted out at full volume 'Running With The Devil' by Van Halen, the force of which knocked her off her feet.

Being a sound engineer I quickly intervened and got it under control, helped her back up, and we all calmed down to the gentle ululation of Mr Galway's flute.

It was a beautiful day, autumn leaves on the trees, on the ground, around the grave.

As the eulogy was read we lit Chinese lanterns and as it drew to a close set them off to drift away majestically, beautifully, poignantly.

Unfortunately they went straight into the tree overhanging the grave and set the dry leaves on fire, burning branches falling to the ground.

Eventually the fire brigade arrived and put it out and, done in, Megan and I decided to go back to hers for a quiet drink.

She poured us both a glass of red and we flopped onto the couch, sipping in silence.

From behind the bedroom door we heard heaving breathing, gaining in intensity and volume.

Her teenage son was masturbating.

The breathing turned into groaning, reached quite a climax, then slowly subsided.

"Maybe he has emphysema" I offered, hopefully.

The door opened and he came out wiping his hands on some tissues.

He leapt with a start when he saw us.

"Argh!"

"Hi Rhodri" I said

"I.....I....."

"You didn't hear us come in."

"I didn't hear you come in."

"Obviously" hissed Megan.

"That's a lot of phlegm you've got there, you should see a doctor about that chest"

"I.....I....."

He looked down and hurriedly threw the tissues away, open mouthed.

"How was the funeral?" he finally managed to blurt out.

"Ah, well, you remember we weren't sure whether she wanted burial or cremation?"

"Uh huh."

"She got both."

Kick Out The Pricks

There has been a lot of talk lately about abusive messaging on social media sites.

Mary Beard came in for some of the worst of it after an appearance on BBC TV's Question Time.

At the same time this obscene laddish culture is being amped up in a bunch of despicable publications by men who really should know better.

.....

I've been boning up on the protest over so called Lads Mags and the stiff pressure to cover up their covers and wrap them in cellophane at grocery stores.

It's created quite a round of comment, from young feminists who say they are disgusting and degrading, to the magazine owners who say they purely reflect the views of millions of young men, from those who feel the cover up is an attack on freedom of speech to those who feel it doesn't go far enough.

Well, let's clear this up.

These publications should not be covered at all, nor should they be hidden on the top shelf to keep them away from the prying eyes of toddlers.

No.

They should be piled on high and set afire.

There should be no place for this kind of garbage in an evolved society.

These rags are despicable, meretricious, without a mitigating feature.

They do not reflect the view of millions of young men, they feed on baseness and force them to remain in a state of mental bondage.

It doesn't matter whether your argument is for or against these publications.

They are wrong and should have been banished from our collective psyche long ago.

Let's stop the printing of this misogynistic bile, stop this perpetration of outmoded and sick mindsets just so a bunch of unprincipled meatheads can stuff more filthy lucre into their cum drenched fists.

These magazines are not a bit of fun, they are about perpetrating the idea that the objectification and subjugation of women is perfectly acceptable.

Well it's not.

It's painful, hurtful, morally reprehensible.

This is not a pornography issue, let's be clear.

This is not about soft core as in Mags Fags and Shags shops.

No this about Loaded and its rotten spawn.

There was a boy a few days ago who with bravado egged on by the editorial content of all that bilge, Tweeted in scatter gun pattern callow thoughts about the sight, size, and smell of a middle aged woman's vagina.

When threatened to have the beans spilled to his mother he was forced to examine his actions through her eyes, a middle aged woman, and was terrified, appalled, contrite.

People cry that every one is entitled to their opinion.

Well no, they are not, not when it's dripping in hate.

It isn't big, it isn't clever, and the only people laughing are the nervous under peer pressure and the profiteers, be they from Loaded, Twitter, Facebook, the local Co-op.

There is no altruism in this cover up, not when there are bucks to be made.

I am heartened to see that young feminists have taken this up.

I was beginning to think that there were no young feminists.

If you are someone who thinks that there is no need for feminism today, then please think again.

This is one clear example of why you are wrong.

Now look around you.

Those billboards bursting with photoshopped shots of barely clad girls selling us stuff we neither need or want are part and parcel.

It is slavery.

I am not one for censorship.

On the contrary I believe in the maxim ban nothing, question everything, with the proviso it causes no harm.

A bald man being called bald may feel uncomfortable, though it is a truth.

A woman threatened with rape in her own home for being a woman is a crime.

As an evolved, mature, enlightened species which we know in our hearts we are, we must not, cannot stand for it anymore.

We are so much better than this.

Kick out the pricks!

429 Harrow Road

A nondescript red brick building, the ground floor of which was a builders merchant, on a suburban street in Westbourne Park, west London, housed Depeche Mode, Yazoo, Erasure, Nick Cave and The Bad Seeds, Fad Gadget, Sonic Youth, Big Black, Butthole Surfers, Swans, Pussy Galore, Wire, Laibach, World Domination Enterprises, Diamanda Galas, S Express, AC Marias, Anita Lane, Bomb The Bass, to name oh but a few.

In 1986 my friend David Rogers called me to say he had a job delivery driving for Mute Records, a job we could split, cash in hand, thanks very much.

I turned up at 429 Harrow Road thinking I had the wrong address.

Next to the window display of avocado bathroom suites was a small intercom.

I pressed the button and entered through a plain grey metal door, climbed a dusty staircase to the first floor and entered what I presumed to be reception.

An Australian woman with a shock of red hair and attitude furiously pressing switchboard buttons intoning "Hello Mute, can I put you on hold?" and doing so before anyone had chance to utter a response, barked at me.

"Yes?"

"Hi, I've come for the...."

Before I could get any further a stunning woman with short blonde hair and multiple earrings and studs all along one ear stormed in.

"Jo, I need a bike for this right now, it's extremely urgent", dropped a package on the desk and sped away.

Sprawled across the package, an LP mailer, it screamed in bright red marker
EXTREMELY URGENT.

Jo looked at it with laser beam eyes and tossed it into a plastic bin by the door.

"Hi, I've come for the...."

"Oh just go through, can't you see I'm busy!"

I walked into the main office.

To my right was a small kitchen that looked like it had exploded.

I carried on into a large open plan room, where sat mostly women at and on desks, making frantic phone calls, half opened boxes of records scattered about.

I did a double take as Rowland and Harry Howard edged past, moving office furniture.

To my left was a tiny room in which sat David Baker with a huge bin bag full of cassette demos, listening through, inscrutable.

A sweet young bald man looked up at me and spoke in a very soothing Scottish accent.

"Hello can I help?"

"Hi, I've come for the.... driving job."

"Great. There's a plastic bin in reception, go grab everything in it and deliver it."

"But..."

His phone rang and he was immersed, pate down.

I went back out to reception and mimed holding a steering wheel to Jo, grabbed the packages and off I went.

Within a year David Rogers and I had formed a band, or rather a duo with a drum machine, called ourselves Mute Drivers, had signed our publishing to Daniel Miller's company Dying Art, and had our first LP out through Rough Trade.

So much happened that year.

I drove Big Black to Manchester, to a tiny gay bar, and watched them play a blistering show, life changing.

Pat Naylor from Blast First handed me the LP 'Locust Abortion Technician' by Butthole Surfers and said 'You have to listen to this' and she was right.

Erasure had their first huge hit single 'Sometimes'.

Depeche Mode released 'Music For The Masses'.

Nick Cave released 'Your Funeral...My Trial'.

Swans released 'Children of God'.

Diamanda Galas released 'The Divine Punishment'.

Sonic Youth released 'Sister'.

Big Black released 'Atomizer'.

Bomb The Bass got to number 2 with 'Beat Dis'.

It went on and on, an explosion of unbridled talent having amazing success.

This was a company interested only in the artist's vision, giving them room to grow.

Fantastic.

The builders merchant moved out and the ground floor became the stockroom.

The top floor was taken over and converted into Worldwide recording studios.

Mute Drivers recorded most of and mixed all of our five, yes five LPs there with Paul PK Kendall.

Jeez, just that alone has so many memories.

It's really hard to put into words what the place meant to me.

So much music, so many friends, so much excitement, so much drama, so many drugs, the best of times.

Mute Drivers split in 1990 and I started to mix live sound, having already been a studio engineer, and throughout the nineties mixed pretty much every artist on the label.

In 2002 Daniel sold a major stake to EMI and a little while after 429 Harrow Road was demolished.

The party held there on the last day was legendary.

Each room had a different theme, many many artists performed, there was a lot of laughter and a lot of tears.

In the morning breakfast was delivered and the party wound down as the bricks were taken away.

That building had so many stories, so much unbelievable creativity embedded in its walls.

I was in some ways glad I couldn't be there for the end, to see it being pulled down, having just moved to New York City.

I feel so privileged, so lucky to have been of that incredible time.

I went past there just the other day, a strange sensation

As I cocked my ear to the wind I was sure I could hear Roland S Howard's guitar wailing.

The Heart of Westminster

Recently I applied for the post of Production Assistant at the Royal Shakespeare Company.

Not Production Manager, just a mere assistant.

There were 220 applicants.

220!

Up a gumtree I browsed some online general job sites and was flabbergasted to see that while the number of posts on offer totalled just 1900, the number of people looking were 33,000.

33,000, and on just one site!

What jobs were they, you may wonder?

Gofer mostly, paying minimum wage which in London won't cover rent in a shared hovel.

Full employment, it will never ever happen again.

Instead of dealing with this head on successive governments have spent their time putting their fingers in their ears and their heads up their bums.

Why?

This week some bright spark took it upon themselves to check the House of Commons toilets for cocaine traces.

There were 9 .

9!

So, people with the power to literally decide who lives and who dies by what legislation they devise and pass into law are doing so coked up.

"I've got an idea, bedroom tax!"

"Brilliant!" (hoovers up line the size of arm and leg)

Let's be clear about this, politicians may be wily, but they are far from smart.

Not having our best interests at heart their decisions are questionable at the best of times.

Under the influence of cocaine they are mad I tell you, mad.

There is something very wrong in the heart of Westminster.

It's a private club, its members peeing on us from a great stoned height, clutching bags of our cash as they sell off what's left of the family silver.

Britain's not working.

Oh sure, wander around vast swathes of London chock full of restaurants stuffed with diners pigging out on overpriced offal and you'll think recession, what recession?

But try and find somewhere to live as a homeless single person over the age of 40 and reality will hit you like a steam train driven by a blond buffoon.

What will you do when *your* boss texts you in the morning to say you've been fired, and with no explanation or recompense?

Ragged Trousered Philanthropist anyone?

One thing we don't have to worry about right now is being blasted back into the Stone Age by North Korea as we seem to be dismantling all we've held dear since the formation of the Welfare State quite nicely on our own thank you.

Do we really want to go back to soup kitchens, work houses, rickets, back street abortions, plague and pestilence?

A bunch of immoral chancers backed by barely elected tosspots gambled our history away in a casino, then stole all our savings, climbed up their towers, kicked away the ladders laughing like drains, and they are laughing still.

We have spent so long looking up the behinds of people who deserve not a jiffy of our time that we've gone blind.

Well it really is time to squeegee our eyes and wake the hell up from this infant state before, as Flaubert memorably warned us, the edge of the crapper on which we stand crumbles and we plummet headlong into a century of shit.

PWA

In nineteen eighty nine I wrote a song called 'PWA'.

It was in part inspired by American playwright and activist Larry Kramer and his efforts to get the then POTUS George Bush Senior to release plant based drugs without the hold up of trials to people who were dying from HIV and AIDS.

Instead of tackling this problem head on people in power began to talk of God's biblical wrath against homosexuals, and in Britain a series of government TV commercials were produced showing commandment like tablets crashing to the ground in slow motion, espousing safe sex.

Bush memorably referred to 'the giggle factor' when he thought about gay men as many lay emaciated at death's door.

I still don't get the joke.

Thirty years on we as a species have come a long way, but unfortunately not always in the right direction.

Here in Britain, since adopting and repealing the notorious Clause 28 which made illegal the promotion of homosexuality, we have passed same sex marriage into law whereas in Russia, a short hop away, buggery obsessed men with self-imposed ignorance would have homosexuality made illegal or, as in Iran, punishable by death.

They see a queer conspiracy lead by packs of limp-wristed nancy boys who lurk around school playgrounds luring children into lives of butt-fucked depravity. Feel sorry for these poor fools, their heads filled with this hogwash.

Homosexuality equals emasculation, they'll say.

Oh how could there be anything worse for a man than to be in touch with his emotions?

Men are strong, hit things with hammers, blow stuff up, are kings of the castle, whereas women are chattel, here to give birth to and look after their spawn, in desperation popping valium washed down with gin in Tupperware cups, having "walked into another door".

The traditional roles.

How people love to waffle on about tradition.

Men destroy while women cower, that's tradition.

In Nazi Germany, in living memory, homosexual men were rounded up and murdered, although some high ranking male officers were indeed homosexual themselves.

Hypocritically they didn't see themselves as such, they were 'real men' who just happened to like a spot of sword swallowing, taking warm showers, riding the top deck of the bus.

Lesbians were deemed first and foremost asocial as their predilections fostered ideas outside of bondage, but were also slain after men tried and failed to fuck the perversion out of them.

Pink for a boy, black for a girl, triangles that is.

The concentration camp, another Great British invention.

Long before Hitler cottoned on we had them in South Africa during the Boer War.

I was born just 14 years after the end of WW2 and it would be another 8 years before homosexuality in Britain became legal, when we entered the age of enlightenment.

Sadly a leap forward is often followed by a backlash.

HIV and AIDS were like manna from heaven to the unreconstructed bigots amongst us.

At the time of writing 'PWA' it was predicted that 5,000,000 Africans would be dead from HIV and AIDS by 1991.

This was roundly ignored.

That figure today is 30,000,000 and rising.

You see so long as it was blacks and gays dying we were fine with it.

It's as much a black disease or gay plague as measles.

There is a hangover from white Christian Missionary in Africa that gives vent to the absurd idea that homosexuality is against God, is not natural, brings nothing but misery and disease, and that sodomy, intrinsically connected in the minds of the vacuous, is the work of the Devil.

With over 400 animal species known to have homosexual behavior, what's natural?

There is more anal sex amongst heterosexual couples than homosexual.

As for all that religious hokum, come on people, there is no God.

We in Britain are responsible for much of the backward thinking in the world as we once spread ignorance and hate throughout the Empire.

Now we know better we must continue to lead by example.

In India they have thrown off those shackles, though their treatment of transgender people leaves much to be desired.

America, land of the free, home of the brave, shelterer of huddled masses, has categorically rejected the stupidity of uptight short sighted pig headed politicians and their wish to drag us all into to the mire.

Stephen Fry's TV documentary 'Out There' recently showed us where we are at globally and where we are in danger of going if we allow the most dim witted control.

The awake and aware people of the world know that sexual orientation is something we are born with, that it is not black or white but a rainbow, a beautiful multicolored rainbow.

Ignorance and fear are inexcusable in this day and age, and the perpetration of those two states of being on mass populations by spiteful God Botherers is abhorrent.

As both the L and the T in LGBT I feel it keenly.

If you think that these issues have nothing to do with you, think again.

Ignore the knocks on doors at your peril as one day the knock will be on yours.

We are your sons and we are your daughters,

All we bring is love, don't turn your backs on us.

PWA

Oh Obama

When Barack Obama was elected in 2008 I was in a hotel in Spain with Joan Wasser and my beautiful friend Michele Aboro.

We stayed up as long as we could watching the election on TV, gulped for a moment near the beginning when McCain/Palin surged ahead, then eventually slept hoping against hope.

I went down to breakfast to find Joan and Michele in tears and we hugged and cried together.

It didn't matter that he really had no concrete policies, what mattered was that he cared.

There was so much hope that day, around the world.

When he was re-elected in 2012 the world breathed a huge sigh of collective relief not because we all believed in him but because Romney was certifiable.

.....

I saw a headline on Democracy Now's website this morning that started 'Obama cancels Putin summit...' and thought for a hopeful second that it was going to continue '...because of his barbaric treatment of LGBT people in Russia.'

Sadly no, Obama is miffed at Putin giving asylum to Snowden, a man who has had to run for his life after telling the American people that their President is spying on them, much the same way as.... wait..... The KGB once did.

Oh Obama.

We had such high hopes.

Remember all the people gathered together, singing, crying, believing that a real change was going to come.

It seems like such a long time ago, doesn't it?

It was eight months.

You promised us that business in the White House would not be business as usual.

Well, that's a promise you've kept.

How many people have you killed so far?

Let's make it easier and say just with drones?

Of course your reputation as a cold blooded killer was sealed the day you strode up to the camera like a gunslinger and announced, with steely-eyed relish, that you'd killed Osama Bin Laden, the boogeyman.

Not merely found, taken into custody, but taken out.

No more covert operations for you.

Not even Dub-Ya had those cojones.

It left you jonesing for more.

Who next?

Everyone, it seems.

Remember when you were a young idealistic senator in Chicago?

If someone back then blew the whistle on say illegal wire tapping, such as, let's see, Watergate, would you have backed tracking the blower to the ends of the earth?

What's the difference between 8 years of Bush and 8 years of Obama?

Things got a whole lot worse.

It's not a joke.

Yes you showed a lot of promise but somehow you lost the plot, took the wrong turn, got in with the wrong crowd.

I hope that very soon, like tomorrow, you will wake up, look at Michele and your beautiful children, realise you have been *such* a fool, and start to do the things you have a huge mandate for.

Here are a few ideas to get you started.

Close down Guantanamo immediately.

Set the detainees free, put them on the witness protection plan.

They are not going to hurt anyone.

It's shameful.

Stop killing innocent people abroad and at home by (a) stopping all drone strikes and (b) taking some of the huge amounts of money away from the death squads, or the military as they prefer to be called, and feed the millions of people starving in America right now.

Ban guns, all of them.

I know, it's so simple, it's brilliant.

Imagine.

Pull out of Afghanistan.

You've destroyed so many lives over there, decimated so many families, that foul spot will not wash away, but you have the power to heal the misery right now.

Drastically, and I mean drastically, cut back the obscene amount of nuclear weapons you've got pointed around the world, and go for complete disarmament in your lifetime.

How much of a deterrent do you need?

Look, size really doesn't matter.

Force the Olympic Committee to pull out of holding the winter games in Russia, don't ask them or urge them, force them.

You're the POTUS, you can do what the hell you like!

If you need more info on this read Stephen Fry's letter to Cameron, or watch George Takei on youtube.

If ever there was a clear cut choice between right and wrong this is it.

Just do it, you'll feel so much better.

If you must have a war, I know what you boys are like, then have it with the Corporations who are screwing it up for the rest of us, and really deal with Global Climate Change.

If you don't then none of the above will matter anyhoo.

So, go on, give it a go.

Yes, the anally retentive around you will blow off so hard shit will literally fly out of them, but ignore them.

They're idiots, and they're wrong.

I know in your heart you are a good person and that when you were running in '08 you really believed that you were going to make a change.

Well you did, but boy did you ever take a wrong turn.

Get up, stand up, we are in dire need for you to do what we hoped, make the world a better place, and yes, you can.

In 2012 the old world that Romney and his ilk propounded was roundly rejected.
You have the power, you have the brain, you have the choice.
Make it the right one before it's too late, and do it now because the shit is inches
away from the fan and there will be no turning back.

Veg Out

Slaughtering animals for food is wrong in oh so many ways.

Please stop it.



Children of The Revolution

Jimmy Savile, radio DJ, TV personality, tireless worker for charity, friend of politicians and royalty, loving son to his dear old mum The Duchess, execrable predator.

For 40 years he preyed on the most vulnerable people in society.

Yes, we all knew the rumours but no-one had proof, other than his victims, who were so young, so alone, so traumatised that they could not speak out.

When Louis Theroux met him he denied being a pedophile when asked outright to camera, a denial that fooled no-one.

What's more it seemed clear that he'd indulged in bouts of necrophilia with The Duchess' corpse.

Now every shot of him has been expunged.

When the BBC run old Top Of The Pops episodes it's like he didn't exist.

But happen upon one on youtube and everything he said and did show him for what he was.

Once he was outed the rest of them began toppling like dominos, but there were already signs that all was not well in that world of weird men.

Jonathan King was an incredibly successful songwriter and record producer of such inane but huge selling hits as 'Loop Di Love' by Shag, and 'Leap Up And Down And Wave Your Knickers in The Air'.

He was also presenter of long running BBC TV show 'Entertainment USA' where he'd report on what was happening in New York, and although what was really happening for him may well have been captured on film it was certainly not broadcastable.

In 1997 he was awarded the BPI's Man Of The Year award, with a personal endorsement from Tony Blair.

In 2001 he was arrested for sexually abusing countless young boys.

He was released on bail stumped up by Simon Cowell.

His innocence was protested by the likes of Simon Bates and Max Clifford.

He was found guilty on all charges, sentenced to seven years in jail, and put on the sex offender register for life.

The one thing we repeatedly hear from his and the others apologists is that in those days it was just how things were, it was in the culture, it was acceptable.

By those days they mean the 1970's and dark days they were.

If in doubt watch any clip of TV show The Comedians for a stark reality check.

Whist Marc Bolan and David Bowie showed us that there was a new way, a light out of the darkness, we had to at first see through the glitter, Gary Glitter to be exact.

'D'Ya Wanna Be In My Gang?' he asked.

Not really, Gary.

'Do You Wanna Touch Me There, Where, There?'

No, Gary, absolutely not.

In 1999 he put his computer in for repair at PC World and the tech servicing it found 4000 images of hardcore child pornography, for which he served time.

Since then he's repeatedly offended and has miraculously escaped with his life.

For example, in Vietnam, to where he once fled, there were allegations of rape of 11 year old girls, and had they lead to a conviction would have carried a mandatory death sentence.

He is currently out on bail having been arrested in London for sexually abusing 14 year old girls with Jimmy Savile in Savile's 'Clunk Click' dressing room.

That dressing room was the setting for many of his conquests and it is said involved numerous TV personalities of the time, some of whom have been arrested lately, such as Freddie Starr.

Freddie Starr, like so many of his peers, pleads his innocence, yet they contradictorily say the offences for which they are being accused were such a long time ago that they should not be pursued, or, fumbling, that they cannot remember that far back.

Scared shitless they ran into the arms of Max Clifford, solicitor to the stars. Max Clifford has now himself been charged with 11 counts of sexual assault.

Is their assertion that the offences took place way back in the dark ages a defence?

No.

There is no statute of limitations.

Even if it was a defence how does that account for Max Clifford whose alleged reign of terror continued to the mid eighties, or Dave Lee Travis' latest in 2007?

The argument that it was in the culture, that everyone was up to it, that it was acceptable, will just not wash.

At the same time as these men were sticking their dicks into every available orifice Esther Rantzen started Childline, and John Lennon no less said that after women's rights must come children's as children had none.

It is about power, and it is not just the preserve of celebrities.

My own mother was sexually abused by her father from the age of 8.

It was systematic, calculated, relentless.

He held court in the Magic Kingdom, where the secret potion that all good little girls drank was administered.

It's shocking when someone in the public eye who we revere is proven to be abhorrent.

It's horrifying when it's one's own family.

It makes us wonder how on earth we didn't see it.

We didn't see it because they are sly, cunning, working sub rosa.

I don't know anyone who was surprised when the revelations about Jimmy Savile started to appear, but we are all staggered by the scale of it, and just how untouchable they thought they were.

The clip of him on Have I Got News For You when asked what "What do you do in your caravan" and his reply "Anyone I can get my hands on" is chilling.

Of the others who've been arrested recently Jim Davidson, well known racist, is not going to be prosecuted, not because he has been proved innocent, but that there was insufficient evidence, not none, just insufficient to guarantee a prosecution.

I suppose I mustn't forget about Stuart Hall, laughing gnome on ritual humiliation TV show 'It's A Knockout', but seeing as he's in jail, I can.

There are a slew of outer circle people who have been arrested, TV show producers, staff drivers, all caught up in modern day Rome, a debauched, despicable coterie.

It's big stuff, big ugly soul destroying stuff.

Is it an aberration or is it truly part of what we are?

It is undeniable that this behaviour was accepted back then, it is all there to see on youtube and no, it was not black and white but full blown in-your-face colour at prime time.

It is there today too and you don't have to look far as in every issue of The Sun men are encouraged to leer over topless girls, or in The Daily Mail where they continually gush over 14 year old curves.

I have heard pedophiles proffering the argument that they have a right to be what they are in the same way as homosexuals.

Let's be clear, homosexuality is a loving union in mutual appreciation, respect, and consent in exactly the same way as heterosexuality, whereas the likes of my grandfather raped children and scarred them for life.

He knew exactly what he was doing.

To call it pedophilia somehow excuses it, and listing it in the DSM as a mental health disorder somehow legitimises it.

I do not believe that any of the people mentioned here acted beyond their mental capacity to distinguish right from wrong.

They boasted, they swaggered, they felt it was their right, they lived by their own code of justice, they made up the rules in their own warped world.

But they are not aliens, they are human, and we feel it deeply as it defiles each of us.

They took our children, our beautiful loving children, who looked up to them for guidance, hope, security, protection, and fucked them.

With enormous strength and courage the victims are speaking out, they are the Children Of The Revolution that is happening right now.

At last we are saying no, you will not do this anymore and you will you not get away with what you have done, as we evolve, open our eyes, and heal.

Crash&Burn

2008 to 2009 I was again in a duo with a drum machine, with my big ebullient and brilliant friend Robert O Leaver.

.....

I got a call.

"Hey, I've been asked to do music at an art gallery opening in Manhattan. Want to do it with me?"

Indeed I did, and said I'd bring my Q-Chord.

"Great. I've got our name, Crash&Burn. Which one do you want to be?"

It was obvious he was Crash and me Burn.

Our plan was to do 20 minutes of improvisation, but the gig got canceled.

The idea was just too good to let go so we decided to rent a practice space for a couple of hours and see what happened.

Nice thought as the Q-Chord was I realised it wasn't going to cut it so brought along a drum machine, a guitar, and a bag of pedals.

He brought his little book of lyrics and away we went.

That day, despite the space in Long Island City, Queens, being a spore laden hovel, and me having a truly rotten cold, we plugged in and Crash&Burn burst out in joyous wonder, a glittering rocket ship.

In those few hours we wrote half a dozen songs all of which made it onto our eponymous album.

Buoyed, we made a quick home demo of the song P.O.N.K and gave it to a film maker friend asking if he'd be interested in making a promo for it, to which he quickly and wholeheartedly said yes.

Taking the names Crash and Burn we realised that we could be anyone we wanted.

Crash went for his look straight away, the green suit, fully formed, a star.

I decided it was time to dress up.

We arrived at the friend's house in Ossining and I went straight to his bathroom to change.

I came out in a curly wig, make up, big shades, women's vest and pants.

I was slightly terrified but figured what the hell, this was art!

Everybody said I looked great, phew.

He filmed us playing on the roof, it was a lorra lorra fun, I got changed into a man again and we went home.

Things would never be the same.

When I came out of that bathroom I realised that I had come out.

Next day I told Crash that I was transgender and was going to become a woman.

He took it like a man.

He knew a friend of a friend of a friend who ran a small label to whom he sent our demo.

They loved it and wanted to put out an album.

We met and this time I was in full regalia, in fact the very outfit I wore for the gas station bathroom video*

Seeing a marketing angle all was good and we booked their studio to record.

On leaving the boss said to Crash that he thought my schtick was hilarious.

"It's no schtick" he said.

Cue wind and tumbleweed.

We made the record, the boss hated it, and it all fell apart horribly over drinks in a shitty bar one night.

Stunned but liberated, we moved on.

Our video friend decided he wanted to make a film on Crash&Burn, a part fact part fiction 20 minute documentary.

Over the next few weeks he shot footage of us in conversation, playing live at the many New York clubs we destroyed, being interviewed on radio, goofing about.

Now he needed the music to go with it.

Far from happy with the recordings we did for the label we decided to record the album ourselves, so went back to his house, set up HQ in his bathroom and for two days recorded everything we had.

Over the next couple of days I mixed it and bang, it was done.

Incendiary, vital, so much fun.

The film was shown at the Tribeca Film Festival in 2011 to rave reviews.

First you Crash, and then you Burn.

Two years.

What a ride.

Three years later the music sounds utterly explosive.

I sometimes wonder how it would've turned out if we had done that gallery show?

Clearly we needed to be in the bathroom.

We did get to use the Q-Chord though, it's the only instrument on

'Apocalypse When?'

I am a woman now.

Crash&Burn gave me the courage to come out.

It was also the most exciting, fun, ridiculously creative two years ever.

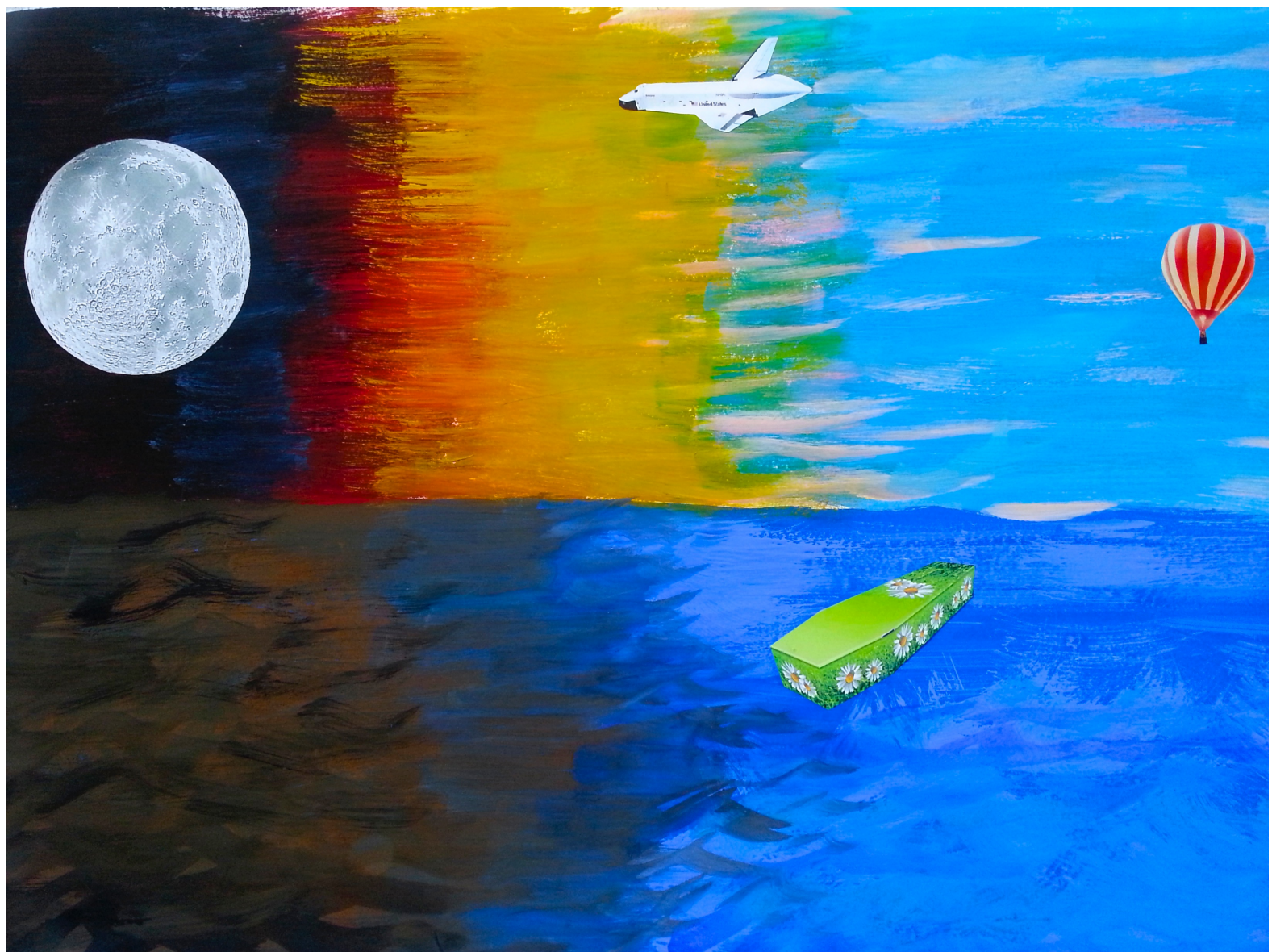
*crashandburn.me

SOS

I painted this in LA a month before everything collapsed.

I knew the game was up.

I was at peace and ready to go.



What It Feels Like For A Girl

I'm a girl in a boys body.

This is my earliest memory.

I'm living with all the wrong people.

This is a close second.

When Doctor Who came along in 1963 I was four years old and knew both those things to be true.

I wished I was his granddaughter and he'd whisk me away, not to go fight monsters but to get as far away as possible from a home full of abuse, physical, mental, sexual.

Fortunately The Beatles came along.

They were like beautiful creatures from another planet and for the next few years saved me.

The abuse didn't stop but they were always there, smiling, shaking their mop tops, twanging their guitars, being sane.

Eventually though they had to go but joy of joys along came Marc Bolan.

Suddenly boys wore girls clothes and make-up, and I embraced it.

My father had other ideas.

One day I came home from school to find he'd covered up the pictures of Marc that adorned my walls with heterosexual soft core porn.

I was 12.

For four long miserable years I endured hell on earth, not helped at all by the likes of Gary Glitter and Jonathan King, though fortunately Jim didn't get to Fix It for me in his own special way.

At 16, with all the hutzpah I could muster, I reinvented myself as a would be pop star and blasted my way out of there as far as possible.

After a bumpy ride I landed in The Passions, fell in love with a German Film Star, and started on the path to discovery.

It took another 34 years till I clearly saw the signpost and took the right fork.

In July 2009 I was living in New York City.

I called Callen-Lorde, the LGBT clinic in the West Village of Manhattan and booked an appointment to talk about becoming a woman.

They said sure, October.

I wondered why it would take so long.

Were there really that many big girls blouses out there?

Making that initial call was euphoric.

Something that had been on my mind my whole life, that I had pushed back and back and back was now out in the open, and I had at last taken the first step in making what I had dreamed about become reality.

I figured they'd given me a three month cooling down period, and that if I was serious I would wait.

October came around and I was a bag of nerves.

Although for the past year I had been living as a woman it had been in private.

Now there I was in a dress and make-up opening the door to a new life.

I went to the receptionist and barely able to speak conveyed that I was there for gender reassignment.

No one turned to me, pointed and laughed.

No one screamed I was sick.

No one tried to pummel me to the ground.

Instead very matter of fact she gave me a few forms to fill out and sent me forth to the fourth floor.

Coming out of the elevator I expected to find myself surrounded by a gaggle of overly made-up men in twin sets and pearls sitting pinched but no, it was a waiting room like any other, just a few ordinary people peering into their devices.

No-one looked up when I entered.

I was taken to a nurse to get my blood tested.

Then, after all those years of inner turmoil, there right in front of me was
The Doctor who was about to change my life.

He was gentle, kind, open, warm, asked me the same questions any medic would ask a new patient, told me I would need to see a psychiatrist, and if that went OK would start me on hormone treatment straight away.

Within two weeks I got the green light and on November 2nd 2009 received my first scrip.

For 50 years I had tried to live in the gender my body said I was and failed miserably.

I felt like an alien.

But I had to survive and back then there was no possibility at all of doing anything other than invent a male persona.

Transitioning is not a matter of becoming a woman, it is becoming ones true self, and fifty years of living as a man, living a lie, took a lot of stripping away.

Many things had to be unlearned, like walking.

As a child I watched other boys and copied them, settling on something they accepted.

I'd developed a deep voice and it took me a year of consciously training it to be in a higher register, with a different resonance.

I thought I'd never manage it, but with perseverance I did.

The phone is hardest.

"Hi can I get room service?" I'd enquire in my best female voice.

"Certainly sir."

The first time someone said madam I jumped up and down on the bed whooping.

Other things too take a while to adjust, things you wouldn't immediately think of.

Clothes buttoning, for example.

Before I started transitioning if someone would call unexpectedly I would be like a whirling dervish getting out of make-up.

After I started transitioning and someone called I would be like a whirling dervish getting into make-up.

Now, four years on, I feel I've made it, at last, finally, hurray, deep breath.... and relax.

However, nothing fully prepared me for misogyny.

I have been a lifelong feminist, ever since I witnessed my father beating seven bells of hell out of my mother.

Unless you are a woman you cannot fully comprehend how a man can hate you for just being who you are.

Sexism is everywhere, from the myriad photoshopped magazines to Page Three, from billboards to plastic pop stars, women as disposable objects, cum sluts.

In my work as a touring sound engineer I have come up against much discrimination, mostly from trolls sporting mullet hair cuts, dubious metal band tour T-shirts, and homemade tape holders strapped to utility belts, posture perpetually at a slant due to the copious rolls of gaffa hanging off them.

When they see it's me, a middle aged woman, come to mix a band at their venue, they grunt and shuffle away, knuckles dragging the floor, cursing.

More insidious is the outright hatred that can rear it's ugly head when a woman dares stand up for herself.

Once a man employed to help me screamed in my ear that I was a fucking bitch and he was going to fuck me up, this during a song I was endeavouring to mix.

Then there are the comments men squirt all over the internet, in anonymity of course.

Lauren Mayberry is the latest victim.

Lauren is the singer in pop group Chvrches, friends of mine, and she has men posting on Twitter threatening to rape her.

They say they will find out where she lives and fuck her anally, and she would love it, or that, being Scottish, they'd fuck the accent out of her.

I shit you not.

Who are these people, what makes them sink to these depths of human depravity?

Would they be so bold if their mothers found out?

The man screaming in my ear was a bully and clearly extremely unhappy with me being there, doing what I know he considered men's work.

What made it worse was denying it when confronted with what he had done in front of another man, my boss.

He fully expected some kind of secret male bonding to occur where they would both raise their eyes, snigger, and go get a beer together.

I felt sorry for him, the poor insecure frightened fool.

Fortunately my boss was a decent human being having none of it and stuck up for me.

Should I have to put up with this as I try to do my job?

Should women like Lauren Mayberry accept filth smeared all over their lives because they are in the public eye?

No.

It's abuse.

Stop it.

We are the other half of the sky.

I spent last year with a touring group of twelve in which there were five women, a rare and wonderful thing.

I was privileged and honoured to be included as one of the five, and I thank the men for that too.

We talked about anything and everything with openness and love, yet there were some topics I could not fully engage in.

I've never menstruated so cannot say what it was like to get my first period.

I went straight to menopause.

I don't know what it would be like to be able to give birth, to be a mother.

I missed out on so much.

I was born in the wrong body.

I knew that from the very start.

Parents, if you have a child who knows this too help them as soon as possible, preferably before puberty.

You will never regret it.

That I have become a woman, albeit at this late stage of my life, is the best thing that ever happened to me, because I am finally me, happy in my skin.

People have said oh you are so brave.

Well, yes, coming out was terrifying, but once it was done the feeling of wellness was overwhelming.

What was hardest, I now know, was for 50 years staying trapped in that body, cold and alone.

Boys, it is not weak to be loving, open, compassionate, kind.

It is essential.

Don't hate what you don't understand.

There's no need to be afraid.

Do I know what it feels like for a girl?

I am figuring that out more and more each day.

I'm on a wonderful adventure, and now my feet are firmly on the ground.

Radio FAB

Good morning this is Radio FAB

Here is the news

Peace has broken out all over the world

War is over

We have finally woken up from our infant state

We as one have realised that greed is not good, profit is a dirty word, that the planet is a wondrous place and we must save it

Worldwide debt has been written off, corporations have been disbanded, world leaders have become our representatives

President Obama said, quote, 'I have been such a fool'

All armed forces have melted down their weapons to make musical instruments for all, and are using their enormous resources to distribute food to the hungry, to build shelter for the homeless, leaving not one person behind

There are no borders, no religions, there's no prejudice, no fear, just love, compassion, understanding

Here's the weather - it's a beautiful day

Outro

In these pages I have written a lot about misogyny.

A little over 50% of the population of us humans are women and a handful of the other percentage would want to destroy us.

That has got to change and right now if we are ever going to survive.

I am a woman who is also transgender and lesbian.

Statistically I don't stand a chance out there, but I travel the world spreading peace love and joy.

Join me.

xo

juliabrightly.com

