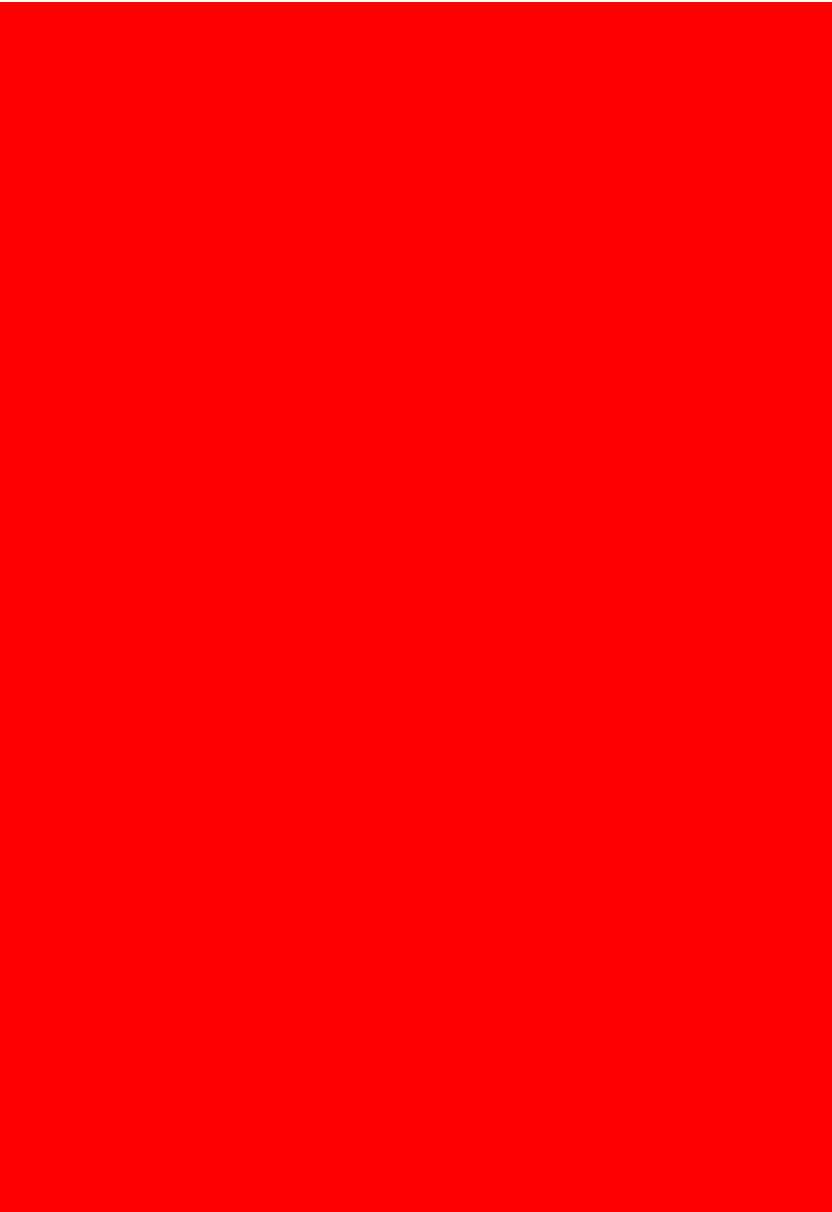


PAUL HAWORTH

**SILK
HANDKERCHIEFS**

TRUE TRUE TRUE



Here I am. Dear old Abs Brenchley. The man in full.
All seven foot of me, ready to show, tell, give all.
One may as well begin with the adjective story.
Rather not, but I accept that it reveals, most painfully and truthfully, what you're dealing with.
Some time ago, years back, before the drought, I had what you might call a one-night stand. *One-night stand*... makes it sound so loveless and temporal and it weren't like that – it weren't – but a spade's a spade. And I made an early exit – *easier that way* – and she gives me her number – *yes please* – and on't bus I can't recall her name. For the life of me... holding my phone, filling her contacts, total blank. Nothing new in that, we've all been there. But thing is... don't ask me why, was probably still drunk, high, whatever, doesn't matter because and God only knows where it came from – Bloody Nora, Alexander – quit stalling! I wrote ADJECTIVE.

2007

That was a stiffy pressing hard – bloody hard – against my pint-sized M&S chinos.

Laugh? I could cry.

Fuck me it hurt. Men can relate. When the little fella stands to attention (no one to blame, he's his own boss) and he's push-push-pushing 'gainst insides of your trousers. I guess this weren't such a big deal few years back when tight weren't in but now...now!

Stiffening, hardening, engorging, lengthening. Tightening the tight – the impossibly tight – and when that helmet digs into the teeth of your flies – Tom Verlaine! – it's torture.

But I didn't care. Why should I? I was in love!

Love! Love! Love!

I was stood outside Gaz's and I had just – she'd walked past – we spoke – only briefly – but – hoochie mama – fuck – words ain't nothing. Know this: I've seen some beauts in my time but she... she re-wrote the rulebook.

Never felt like this before.

Love at first sight? You don't believe it – why should you? – and then it happens and badaboom – shoboy – she's the one.

I knew, I was sure of it. Stood there, jaw on't floor, I was a changed man. It was irrevocable. When Marky comes out the door and growls, "Phwoar, did you see that?"

I resented the *that*. She wasn't a *that*, she was so much more.

"Yes, yes," rubbing his hands together, "she were a bit of alright!"

"Oh, she was more than alright," I corrected him, my voice undeniably infused with lustful,

reverential longing.

Marky must have assumed that I was drunk. That I was horny. *No, no, Marky, you are wrong.* He slapped me playfully on the back, laughing, and this futile ladtalk continued until eventually he said, “What you waiting for? Get in there, Sexy Boy, show us your magic.”

Magic. I had it once. I did, yes I did. Big or small, a love affair in its genesis relies always on that sprinkle of fairy dust.

Where did it all go wrong? Where had that magic gone? And would I ever get it back?

To answer these questions, we ought rewind to the start of the day which had begun, oh so predictably, with me wanking. What? Ain’t nowt unusual in a man giving himself a handy wake-up call – healthy alternative to snooze alarm I say!

Just to digress for a mo’. All of us, we got ghosts in the closet, done shit we’re ashamed of, but I can’t hide that, can’t compartmentalise, don’t want no Other Side of Alex Brenchley. So whether it’s a morning wank, life drawing at Prince’s, blind drunk at Y+L, a family day at Hampton Court, a J with Marky in St James’s or a quiet few at the Bricklayer’s, this...it’s all Abs. I’m just doin’ me.

Wake this morning, past nine, hey ho, no school so no biggie. I’d crashed at folks’ place in Teddington. Drop in there now and then to break bread and collect my washing. So’s I make some brekkie. Double espresso, couple boiled eggs, toast, bacon butty, the usual – big man, big breakfast. I crash in front of telly and it’s bleeding Jeremy Kyle. Thing is, he gets a lot of shit but I kind of like his show. Can relate: my kind of people, warts

and all, real talk, folks just getting through, trying to sort their shit, in need of a little guidance from the Kyle. Pulls no punches, that one, as we all know. Wish there were more like him, tell the truth.

Munching on toast – *crumbs* – there’s this girl. Lovely young thing. And her husband, brother-in-law, her own sister, they’re ganging up on her, saying she’s been sleeping around. She hadn’t, I could tell, she was true blue. And this poor girl (empathy, yes) was beside herself, crying, and there was something... *ooh Alexander*... a raw, unspoken indomitability... a stiffy began to form.

The Way of the Abs – so get used to it!

My big daddy, coming to life, stretching as it awakes.

Good morning, morning erection!

I put my espresso to one side – *trembling hand, anticipation* – and looked, bemused, at the tower in my lap, with an expression that might have read, “What’s this? I’ve never had one of these before,” before my gaze returned to my parents’ 78-inch HDTV. Back to the girl.

Tears, screams, shiny skin and hair, shapeless clothing.

“Yes please,” I said out loud to myself.

Why did she stimulate me so vehemently? Where to start? Can man explain the wild vagaries, abstruse fibres and stimuli which arouse, stir up, guide one’s loins? *She made me hard.* Her strength, an unspoken strength, yet with a bruised fragility, it got me right off. I speculate that it was because she was out of reach for someone such as I – my life spent in the best schools and later at Oxford and Prince’s, always surrounded, sometimes literally, by

queens. Queens who would never face a DNA or truth test. Well, *lick lips*, did not kings always have their mistress the maid? Was this any different? Because, slumped there on the couch, she struck me as the most beautiful creature I had ever beholden. Behold, my cock...

Before I knew it, he was out of the cage, the wild-est of creatures. And I'm rubbing myself off. Rubbing myself raw. Like a madman. Like my life depended upon reaching orgasm with immediacy.

Every word, cry, stunted blow from this girl-soul peasant drew me closer.

Pause-rewind: I had been wanking voraciously in recent months. The sleeping giant (my penis and I) had been rudely awoken and I was greasing the pole day and night, night and day. Such relief to be able to release this canned heat whenever I saw fit. Other than one lapse I had not masturbated and/or ejaculated in five years. Do you think I'm lying? Ask yourself – why would I lie about this, eh? One might suggest it impossible to not ejaculate over such a span of time and connote that I ejaculated in wet dreams but don't you get it? My mind weren't concerned with carnality. *No sex please, I'm a scholar!* As far as I was concerned I'd had my fill of sex for one lifetime – and for most people this'd be many lifetimes.

Wanking though is all well and good so long as it's short-term but all it is, really, is a stop-gap, a quick fix, one which I believe is bad for a man in the long run. If he doesn't get his passion ration he goes funny in't head. He canny live by hand-to-boner resuscitation his whole life. Which is to say, maybe I'd gone a little bit crazy...

Furiously I was tugging my loving. She was a big girl, this one, had short practical hair and was wearing drab and dowdy clothes.

Often I wondered why they don't dress up a little. I mean, they're on TV, all their friends will be watching. But no, they always look like they've just got out of bed. Can't have your cake and eat it, Abs! Oh and they're shouting, squawking more like, a dreadful, impenetrable dissonance. My girl, my girl. Giving as good as she got, I'm battering my staff. O. was on his way. Couldn't come soon enough. Frantically, I beat my hard hat. Men know what it's like...when you're *nearly* there...the edge...that precipice...the bottle shaken...on cue Jezz introduced my amore's mother-in-law.

That did it.

Mamacita, a right firebrand, big ball of ferocious anger, comes running out as fast as her fat legs will take her, screaming her head off, insanity in her eyes and *badaboom*. I came. A catastrophic orgasm. Immediately I wanted to die.

Felt sickened. Ashamed. Hollow.

Who was I? Who was this man holding my cock? How frequently it goes this way. That urge, the unquenchable thirst, it overrides all reason and pride, and in the imperceptible membrane of orgasm one's life alters irrevocably. Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde. It's the tragedy of man.

Oh Alex! Enough of your philosophical back-chat! Jeremy Kyle – in your parents' home – on your parents' couch – watching your parents' TV – HDTV – 23 years old!

Well, disgraced and self-loathing though I was, such rock bottoms are usually an omen, are they not?

Spread-eagled in front of telly, PJs 'round me ankles, semi-on in my hand, juice everywhere. I already feel bad enough – how the mighty bloody fall – when I see – fuck me – it's the postie. He's looking at me through't front window. Our eyes meet, he stares blankly...confused most likely... when, bloody hell, he winks! He knew exactly what I'd just done. He moves on and I'm left feeling dirty, like a nutter, my P shrinking, wondering how this had happened to me. Me! Don't you get it? How had I, of all people, become so creepy? I asked myself, who else is at home now wanking to Jeremy Kyle? Sad truth: probably quite a few. But I didn't want to be like them. I was Abs Brenchley.

Tears. Welling up.

“You disgust me!”

It was Kyle. Staring at me, speaking from the telly.

“I can't even bear to look at you,” he spat malevolently. “Has no one ever taught you a little thing called self-respect?”

JK was right. Fuck, was he ever? O' roll down tears, roll down. Wretched, squalid, cheap, rueful shadow of my former self is what I was and laying there, my sauce cooling and drying, staining me with white shame, I knew I had to make changes in my life.

Namely, to have sex.

To read the rest of Abs's adventures, order Silk Handkerchiefs from [10](http://truetrue>truetrue.org or ask your local bookseller</i></p></div><div data-bbox=)