

...And Nowhere To Go

By JP Relph

APPENDIX 2.1

List of clothing and accessories:

(please package small items carefully)

1 x apricot silk slip and French knickers, ivory lace neckline and straps

You flushed like a Maiden's Blush apple when you unwrapped his gift. Chosen to complement your muscari-blue eyes, Leo secreted the glossy package in his luggage before you left Montmatre. The water-light silk flowed through your fingers, over the marquise opal, glided over your damp skin. The slip became a beautiful memory when family life raced up on you, plumped you like ripe fruit. It fits again, now.

1 x pistachio-green fit and flare dress, full skirt with embroidered violas around hem

You sewed fun, beautiful dresses - your girls loving their dinosaurs and blousy florals - but this one was just for you. Dainty blackberry and grape-purple flowers reminding you of the Cumbrian holiday cottage. A velvety scrunch of cheeky faces in a jam-jar, brightening breakfast. Leo burning pancakes shaped like diplodocus. You had to adjust it for the anniversary party, that was rough, but the skirt bloomed like a cabbage-rose when Dad spun you carefully in his arms.

1 pair x purple Converse All-Stars

You always coveted trainers - abandoning constrictive flats and heels in hallways, a vibrant wave of flattened backs and scuffed toes beckoning. You wore custom-made ones on your wedding day: white, bedazzled with lace and sequins, they squeaked the full length of the polished aisle, drew giggles from beneath hats. Leo found the purple ones in a Baltimore thrift store. You wore them on the day before the treatment, eating with your fingers in a harbour-side crab-shack as night fell on your fear.

1 x printed vintage Hermes scarf, 'Seashells' design

You worshiped Grandma Ruth's wardrobes, lost for hours in the camphor-scented depths while your brothers barrelled through misty Scottish woodland. You learned Ruth's skill with styling and colour and when she offered, you chose the sixties Hermes. It reminded you of Welsh seaside holidays; walking miles of tan beach, shell-hunting with Dad. You wore the scarf French-style on your first date with Leo; in a bow around your clutch at weddings; in increasingly creative ways when the last caramel-blond hairs gurgled down the plughole.

1 x gold chain with large swallow pendant

You loved that the girls chose the necklace. Sharing your eye for simple, beautiful things, they made bracelets from tiny acorns and seedheads. On Mother's Day, the rose-gold swallow took flight from the fabulous cleavage the reconstruction created. When the time came, you hung the delicate gold chain on your bedroom mirror. In those dark, wintry days after you flew from the hollow of your family, Leo was tormented by the pendant spinning slowly in cruel shards of sunlight. Those precious girls insisted it join you again – it has nowhere else to go.

Please sign and print name to acknowledge the use of the above items:

H. Pollard Helen Pollard

Relationship to deceased:

Mother

Signed as Received by:

Date:

_____ Funeral Co-ordinator

White Willows Funeral Home

Let's Pretend

By Jo Clark

Let's pretend, you say;
and the solidity of the world slides away glib as glass, leaving restraint in a fight to the death with desire; and we both know that should desire win, winning will always mean losing — losing ourselves in each other, in a seeking whirlwind of lips and tongues and fingers, of twined limbs and tangled sheets, tumbling through grey eyes smoking urgency and green eyes kindling temptation, consuming each other's souls and bodies; it will mean losing all those who inhabit our separate realities, losing their trust, losing our self-respect, losing everything outside this selfish pretence of ours that will annexe reality, destroying its integrity like a deadly barrage, laying waste to precious and carefully constructed lives;

but we both know that should restraint win, winning will always mean losing — losing this tingling anticipation, this giddy potential for mutual discovery, this unsated yearn for a flavour untasted and yet so full of intrigue that our separate memories will forever ache with the impression of it, a flavour so potent in its unknown-ness that it renders the impossible possible, leaves a memory of an unreality; we both know that should restraint win, it will mean losing this precipice moment suspended outside of time, losing each other, losing the opportunity to reshape reality into pretence, the chance to cling to something so precarious and beautiful it shatters our fragile hearts before you've even finished saying the words;

let's pretend.

Courtesan

By Kathy Hoyle

The carriage arrives at midnight. She must attend the palace, by his majesty's request. The players wear their most mournful masks; their brightest star is leaving.

She keeps the footman waiting until dawn. She will arrive on her own terms, in her own time.

He gives her the finest rooms, a walnut cabinet adorned with gilded mirror, a soft-bristled brush, and a bed, all her own, with plump goose-down pillows.

The seamstress is sent for. She bustles in, carrying swathes of silks and a curious smile. Later, in the kitchen, she will tell them about the courtesan, with her breath-taking beauty and steely gaze, and how her hand shook as she placed the measure against skin as soft and ripe as a summer peach.

He enjoys exquisite things, Italian marble busts, bottles filled with exotic scents, birds with vivid plumage that saunter haughtily around the perfectly kept rose garden, her.

A beautiful umbrella arrives - sent from the Chinese ambassador - with a carved ebony handle, and an elephant with a glinting emerald eye. The courtiers gasp when it is he who holds it up for her.

She smiles benignly at the opera, lets him win at cards, regales him with bourgeoisie gossip, denounces the merchants and their petty wives, with their hired wigs and tawdry jewels.

Her laughter echoes through long-forgotten corridors, drowning out whispers of disapproval. The ladies of the house emulate her dress, the men tumble over themselves to court her favour.

In his bed chamber, he lays coins in her palm. She tucks them into a hare-skin pouch. She has mastered the skills of the Kama Sutra, and performs every single one with eyes closed, teeth gritted. All the knowledge she has acquired, in bath houses and brothels, she gives to him. He promises her the world for her heart. She promises him nothing.

For a time, she is amused by the lengths he goes to show her off. When they sail above the city in a magnificent hot air balloon, she waves at the crowds below. But when the balloon lands, she

finds herself still floating, higher and farther away. The jewels on her fingers begin to pinch, the palace walls close in.

In Spring, the heralds proclaim, a prince is born! The queen's convalescence is over.

The carriage arrives at midnight. She must leave the palace, by her Majesty's request. She arrives at the theatre by dawn, clutching only her hare-skin pouch. The stage is empty. The players have moved on.

She unfurls the letter, admiring the strong, elegant cursive.

Thank you for your service to the Queen.

An unexpected gift is in the envelope, a small card, emboldened with a nobleman's name.

She dresses in her finest silks and takes a carriage to the address the Queen has kindly given her. On the way, she checks the space where here her heart once lay, pleased to find only a cold, hard rock with a glinting emerald eye.

*Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Multimedia Installation
Commemorating the Death of Civil Society*

By Terry Holland

See No Evil

The Watchman is ever vigilant. He grants himself no rest. He stares at the screens, night and day. The screens that show, in grainy black and white, what the countless, unblinking cameras ranged along the walls see. The cameras sweep the perimeter; the Watchman's eyes sweep the screens. He never looks beyond the walls – what could be found out there?

The skinny guard dog, Tiresias, lies in the corner on a blanket, tethered by a chain that reaches only as far as the Watchman's chair. He growls, chasing uneasy dreams.

Hear No Evil

The Speaker wears his hair long and unruly, thanking his lucky stars that the days of the obligatory short back and sides are long gone. His greying locks conceal the ear buds he habitually wears during long debates. He keeps half an eye out for Honourable Members standing when they shouldn't, or gesticulating too wildly, or simply shouts 'Order! Orrrderrrrrr!' at irregular intervals. This seems to do the job. He's sick to death of listening to the garbage these clowns spew forth, day after day.

Beethoven is a particular favourite. To think that he was deaf. Incredible.

Speak No Evil

Hear ye! Hear ye! The Town Crier walks the streets, ringing his bell and calling out the News, all day every day. He keeps the populace informed. Every morning, he receives the News from the Council, for he is their mouthpiece. The News is always good. Who would want to hear bad news? Good news keeps the people hopeful.

He spends so much time listening to his own bellowing voice, he appreciates peace and quiet at home. His wife and children are voluntarily mute: at least when he's around.