

2020-21 6th Chapel Arts Short Story Competition Entry (over 16)
Terry Watson

BLUE

Jimmy was a bit sad (and by that I don't mean he was melancholy or depressed – though he was both these things a little too often) no, Jimmy was an obsessional sad sack in the fullest sense of the words. Jimmy lived in Hove Dale in the Peak District and while this part of the country is usually rightly renowned for its natural beauty, Hove did its best to buck this trend, it wasn't quite the end of the world, but you could see it from there. Though Jimmy was in Hove in the present day he lived firmly in 1982.

Last year, on a beautiful summer's morning, under a cerulean sky it was only 7.50am but the mercury was already on the move as was Jimmy's radio alarm as it vibrated to the sound of Radio 2 on his nightstand. Zoe Ball was already in full over enthusiastic mode, trying to inject some pep into a stirring population "and next up, for you lovely people we have the amazing, fantastic, simply super Style Council with..." From his prone, half asleep state Jimmy made a lunge for the radio off button but missed and knocked half a glass of Powerade tropical berries off his nightstand and onto his sheepskin bedside rug, an azure stain quickly formed and spread across the floor. "oh, for Christ's sake" squawked Jimmy to nobody in particular. It wasn't spreading mess on his mat that was upsetting Jimmy, no it was the warm, soaring, Bossa beat of cool Latin jazz emanating from his radio.

The problem was Jimmy hated Paul Weller with a passion he saw the former "Modfather" as a traitor to the movement, the mod movement that is, which had more or less ended in 1968 anyway and had only undergone a minor revival with The Jam - led by Weller and when he left the group in 82 that was the end of it, with exception of die hards like Jimmy. He always referred to his former hero as "that treacherous bastard Weller" mostly because of the smooth jazz vibe his music had taken on. It also amused Jimmy that nowadays Weller seemed to be physically morphing into a mini Iggy Pop.

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By the time Jimmy had hopped around his drink mess and picked up the thankfully unbroken tumbler, Zoe was just back announcing the offending track “and that was the fabulous, awesome Paul Weller and The Style Council with the silky smooth... Have you ever had it....” Bang, Jimmy hit the off button and this time he didn’t miss. It was too late though, and Jimmy knew that he would have that melody running through his head for at least the rest of the day. Jimmy was, to be fair, an equal opportunities obsessor, it wasn’t just Paul Weller, although he did make the top 5, along with modern pubs, Anthea Turner and Elizabeth Bloom.

Now Elizabeth Bloom or Betty as she was known to everyone except her mother, was a one (short) time, long ago girlfriend of Jimmy’s and as such she qualified as his number one obsession. This obsession chiefly involved checking Bettys social media pages (Facebook, Instagram and occasionally twitter) many times a day and certainly last thing at night and first thing in the morning, it also occasionally involved following her to local Pubs and bars in nearby Luxton. Jimmy had been warned about this though and was now careful to not be too obvious. This morning’s check in with all things Betty had, amongst the innumerable selfies and pictures of food (Betty liked food) thrown up a nugget for Jimmy. Betty was meeting her friend Vicky in a bar/café, after work, in Luxton that evening. Discretion was not Bettys strong suit, and neither was intelligence as becomes a person whose BMI number was a tad too close to her IQ score. This though was a godsend to Jimmy as it meant he could ensconce himself in the pub before her arrival and couldn’t be accused of stalking – win win.

Jimmy always sat on the top deck of the bus from Hove to Luxton because on mornings like this the stunning views of the Peak District were something to behold, as soon as you got out of Hove that was. About halfway on the journey if you looked out of the right-hand window there was a cobalt chemical pool that was as dangerous as it was beautiful, it occurred to Jimmy that if Brooke Shields took a dip in that particular lagoon her skin regime would involve an awful lot of calamine.

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Jimmy spent most of the day at work checking Betty's media posts and sure enough she couldn't resist putting where she would be going with Vicky that evening - "The Choux Moon". "For crying out loud she's going to The bloody Choux Moon" exclaimed Jimmy to himself. Jimmy couldn't stand these reinvented, cheaply modernised pubs but one the of things that made his blood boil the most was the incessant need for stupid, self-indulgent wordplay by would be writers. Still, there was nothing so sure as he would be there.

Jimmy was in the Choux a good 30 minutes before Betty was due, he went up to the bar and ordered a bottle of pale ale, the barman eyed him suspiciously and said "We only serve bottled lagers and cocktails sir" "ok a bottle of pepperoni and a straw" said Jimmy "Peroni sir" "whatever" said Jimmy taking the bottle and ensconcing himself in a discreet corner. Sure enough 25 minutes later Betty and her friend Victoria arrived and wasted no time in ordering two pints of Curacao shandy and "some £2 pound coins for the jukebox mate".

The modern digital jukebox had over 30 million online song options and Betty stood there pondering her selections, Jimmy was sat directly beneath a speaker when the warm soaring Bossa beat of cool Latin Jazz flowed over his head and Weller sang "Have you ever had it ...".