

TWO  
Amber

Wake up in Paul's bed about eight, feeling like shit. Go to the toilet, turn the taps on full blast and puke my ring. In work at twelve, have to go home to shower and change. Anywhere else I'd pull a sickie, but Jo's da got us the job. There's a cup of tea waiting for me in the kitchen when I come out. Paul's on his mobile ordering me a taxi. Have a sip and look at the two snoring bodies on the sofa.

'Alright, angel?'

(*She nods.*)

But I'm not. Paul picks up a leg of chicken from a snack box he bought at half five this morning and starts chewing on it.

'Deadly night, wasn't it?'

'Great.'

Stee and Granite turned up about one o'clock with great intentions of getting their hole – but forgot they were ugly bastards and ended up back here, watching *Scarface* and smoking doobies. When they all started banging on about going to Australia again I gave up waiting and went to bed. Jo says until someone else comes along, I'm 'handy hole'. Nearly five months later I'm beginning to think she has a point. She wasn't impressed with me coming back here last night. Went a bit psycho on her, think it was the vodka. I was grabbing ice out of people's drinks and lashing them out of it on the dance floor. She nearly had me out the door when he turned up, said he was only outside smoking with the boys. She went off in a huff and I came back here. Taxi beeps outside. Paul tiptoes out with me cos he's no shoes or socks on. Taps at the window and slips the driver a score. Checking his ID, he says: 'Make sure she gets home in one piece.' He leans in the window and kisses me goodbye. Smile as he hops around, freezing in his tracky bottoms and T-shirt. 'I'll text ye during the week, see what you're up to.' He

says. Wave at him from the back window 'til he disappears. He doesn't know it yet, but this time I'm not replying.

Meet Jo in the canteen before we start our shift. She says I look bollixed. She doesn't look the Mae West herself. Feel myself heaving again and have to do a Sonia to the nearest jacks. Mandy from accounts is in the next toilet.

'Ye alright?'

'Grand.'

Open the door; she's waiting at the sink for me with a handful of tissues.

'What were you up to, you look wretched.'

Don't mention the coke I did with Jo, or the spliffs I had with Paul and his mates. She kind of looks on me and Jo like little sisters.

'My hangovers are brutal lately.'

Stick my head out the window. (*She breathes in big mouthfuls of air.*)

'Hope it's not morning sickness.'

(*Pause.*)

'As if, have to stop mixing me drinks, is all.'

'Buzzing off ya – (*Laughing like a sheep.*) Mee-hea, mee-hea, meaaaaaaat!'

She could put ye through a window, the bleedin' width of her. She sounds like a sheep on speed. My head. She finally goes, passing Jo at the door.

'Jaysus, and I thought the other one looked rosey.'

Jo's still huffy with me for legging it last night. Can't be dealing with her humours right now. Ask her to cover for me while I run out to the chemist. When I get back she's in the exact same spot, holding her hair back, swaying over the sink. She sees the brown paper bag.

'I'd plugs with me.'

Show her the test. Her eyes nearly drop out of her head. She's following me into the jacks. I'm like, 'Hello?' She says when we're out I always go the toilet in front of her. Push her out the door, telling her it's one in the afternoon and there's no queue.

(*She's sitting on the toilet now.*)

In two minutes I'll get an 'accurate' reading. Imagine me being pregnant? Like, a ma. There's no way. Imagine Paul being a dad! That's mad. Like, I know I've nothing to worry about but Mandy has my head doing fucking overtime. My yokes are always all over the place but... I actually can't remember when I got my last one. If I was... Paul'd have to... (*Looks at the strip.*) Oh my God, my heart. Negative. I knew it. Open the door; show Jo. The fucking relief. I knew it, but you know... Jo checks the box, then checks it again. She says it's positive. Give over, an 'X' means no. She turns it a bit and says: 'Plus means positive.' Bollix.

Sitting at my desk waiting for calls to come through. I'm on directory enquiries today for an English phone company. This fella rings in, looking for a cab firm in Hackney. He doesn't know the name of the place or the road it's on but it's definitely somewhere in Hackney, yeah... Do I not know it? How would I bleedin' know it? I'm about to start a search, but it feels too much like work and he's been real ignorant so I cut him off. Trying to remember when the fuck it could've happened cos in fairness we're always real careful. I've done three pregnancy tests and they all say the same thing.

There was this one night, when we got back to his gaff and I was wrecked. Was lying there waiting for the bed to stop spinning so I could climb aboard the night train. He was off somewhere – probably playing that fucking Xbox with Stee – then he comes in and starts nudging me.

'You awake? You awake? You awake?'

'Well, I am now.'

Was so knackered, did the starfish – you know – (*She stretches out her arms and legs and flails about a bit.*) decked out, no energy. He's going at it like a mad thing and I don't know... Must've nodded off – only for a minute, mind – cos then I heard – 'Oh shite, Amber, it's split! Amber! Amber! Amber!'

I'm like, 'What, what, what?'

'Were you asleep?' He says, disgusted.

'Nooo, I had me eyes closed cos I was getting really into it.'

'I might as well be into necrophilia.'

At that stage I could feel my headache starting so I just said: 'Fuck off.'

But the next day I said to me ma: 'Here, what does necrophilia mean?'

The look on her face was pure horror.

'What weird shit are you getting up?'

'Ah, nothing,' says I. 'Heard it on the telly.'

It must be really bad – like when they poo on ye or something. Maybe it's his posh way of saying I'm shite in the sack. He does that sometimes, uses big words I don't understand, bet the cunt doesn't know what it means either. We hardly made a baby outta that, did we?

**Lorraine**

Debbie and Katarina have bullied me into going salsa dancing tonight. They gave me plenty of notice so I couldn't make up any excuses. I'm not really one for going out. For the last six nights I couldn't sleep, thinking about it. Told 'the lady' about it at our meeting. She said even if I didn't go to salsa, I had do one nice thing for myself this week. Was noping at the end of it she'd say.