

KINGSLEY AMIS

has a shot at a female narrator



Joshua, typically, still hadn't telephoned when I got back from work. Since the old Nag's Head, a passable Victorian boozier with a regular and satisfied clientele, was naturally deemed ripe for transformation into a 'Men's Outreach Centre', I had instead to go to the local wine bar, Tossers or Prats or some such name. Here I passed a moderately entertaining evening with Philippa, who managed to avoid buying me a drink for almost two hours as we wondered what it would be like to be a PE teacher in a boys' school.

A young man presumably interested in the only thing young men have any interest in, attempted to start a conversation with us.

'Where were you bought up?' he asked, implying that I had been bartered as a child in some Alexandrian slave market.

'I was *brrrr*rought up in South London,' I corrected him.

He looked puzzled. 'That's like, cool?' he said. 'Near the Tate Modern? That's like, iconic?'

'Are you asking me or telling me?' I said.

'I'm like, asking you?'

However, the little shit did buy me half a dozen Glen Larchaigs, after which it seemed only reasonable to invite him

back to share the magnum of quite passable Chilean pinot I had bought from Brobdingnag's Volume Discount.

I awoke next morning with the feeling that an entire pack of foxhounds had used my mouth as, consecutively, kennel, latrine and exercise yard and were now taking it in turns to cross-examine me.

The source of the questions turned out to be little Darren or Darryl from Tossers, who was unaccountably in my bed, shaking my shoulder and asking if I would care for some 'like, tea?'.

I dressed as fast as I could in a paisley shirtwaister from the outsize shop on Haverstock Hill called, unbelievably, All Bra None. My arse looked enormous, like the rear end of, say, a handsomely, though not exceptionally, endowed Ugandan flabhog.

At this moment, typically, Joshua chose to pay his weekly, unannounced, visit. After I had given him a brief and highly selective account of the night's events, he told me how 'let down' he felt, then went home in tears.

And bloody good luck to you, chum, I thought.

MARTIN AMIS

sends his lad to Hogwarts



Primped and shining in the school's idea of a uniform – to which my success in the risibly straightforward scholarship exam had condemned me – I was presented to 'Professor' McGonagall, a chestless sexagenarian with halitosis that could have downed a wing of Lancasters; then to Dumbledore, the shuffling dotard of a headmaster, whose eyes appraised me with the unhurried insolence of the career pederast.

He entrusted me to Hermione Granger, a smug little number with a row of coloured gel pens in the pocket of her Aertex shirt, an item given pleasing heft by the twin discs of her tumid little breasts. She was, I had already been told, rumoured to give hand jobs of Stakhanovite efficiency to the gods of the Quidditch team as they showered off the stardust of their sporting triumphs, lined up in engorged single file.

The dormitory was a row of iron beds, purchased at some Gulag boot sale; the wanking opportunities, doubtless in breach of numerous human rights, looked about as promising as those in a lock-down facility for convicted Islamic pick-pockets.

Next from that baleful twilight emerged 'Ron' Weasley, a spavined welterweight who reeked of chav, with his fucked-up bathmat of orange frizz and his eyes full of cancelled hope. In the bed next to mine was Harry Potter, a

weapons-grade geek with a thunderbolt of acne through his candidly sebaceous forehead, who told me he lived in a *cupboard* for fuck's sake.

Outside, I waved goodbye to my parents with sinister, *noir-ish* gestures, the sculpted rhomboids of my fingernails still glistening from the manicure they had received that morning from Renska, the tragically unmagnetic Pole in Hans 'n' Feat on Ken High Street, who had more or less begged me to let her go down on my, admittedly, triangulated groin.

'Gosh,' said little Potter. 'I hope you'll be in Gryffindor.'

'I think not,' I said, watching as the witch McGonagall embarked on some embarrassing hokum with an oldster's rug-covering into which she periodically plunged her veiny claw.

I had been given the low-down on the houses by one Malfoy, an enthusiastic sodomite in the second year, whose parents knew mine through some unspeakable, almost certainly adulterous, connection of tennis and 'pot-luck' suppers, for which Mrs M favoured pleated white skirts of possibly illegal brevity, granting occasional glimpses of white cotton gash that had furnished material for an entire summer of jackhammer fantasy.

And so it was that at the end of my first day, answering wearily to the call of my name, I pulled myself up to my full four feet eleven and sauntered through the porter's lodge to Slytherin, its turbid quadrangles, its simmering ante-rooms . . .

JANE AUSTEN

steps out with an American Psycho



Mr Bateman was said to have a fortune in excess of five million pounds a year from his employment in the counting house of a usurers in the lower part of Manhattan Island; which sum enabled him to venture forth that Wednesday night in a suit of clothes made for him by Thomas Clark Esq. of Madison Avenue, a tie of a design by Mr Sandor Ferenczi, a pair of buttoned boots bespoke from Lowell & Andrews of Beacon Hill, Boston and undergarments fashioned by his grandfather's slaves on the plantations of Lauren, Alabama.

At dinner in the Chinese establishment of Mr Wu upon Park Avenue, Mr Bateman became agitated when it was revealed to him that a fellow diner, Mr Kellynch, was in possession of an annual fortune nearly twice as large as his own and moreover affected a tie-clip made by a Miss Sophia Klein, and a belt he had imported from the remote South Sea establishment of Ishiguro Mazuki.

Taking the arm of Miss Woodhouse, his betrothed, Mr Bateman ventured out at once into the night and drove her to her lodging place. It now being past the hour at which the ladies of the Upper East Side were given to dine, and finding himself on the verge of contracting involuntarily a union in which neither his affections nor his financial interests could be

said to be served, Mr Bateman had recourse to the servants' quarters from which he returned equipped with implements of the artisan variety, with which, notwithstanding her several admonishments, he set about the young lady until such time as he had both eliminated any chance of an unwise alliance and rendered unnecessary the cold supper that awaited his return to Little Hampton.



JANE AUSTEN

braves a contemporary 'dance'



'Father,' said Emma, 'I am invited by the Netherfield Ladies to attend a function for the 18–30 summer holiday.'

'My dear Emma,' replied her father. 'Why this gazing to the future? The year is 1814. By 1830 we may all be subjects of the Emperor Bonaparte.'

'But Father, we dance all night by the sea.'

'I never had much opinion of the sea air,' said Mr Woodhouse. 'It is never safe to sit out of doors. And who shall chaperone you?'

'All the Bennet girls will be there, Father, and Miss Bertram and Anne Elliot – and she's twenty-seven! And we drink gallons of water and take little pills.'

'I am pleased to hear there is some medicinal aspect to the entertainment,' said Mr Woodhouse, 'but I counsel you against too much water. It is injurious to the liver.'

When Emma arrived for the festivities upon the Cobb at Lyme she could not help remarking the absence of a band; such music as there was issued from a species of hurdy-gurdy operated by a gentleman from Sir Thomas Bertram's plantations in Antigua.

A young man whose family was not known to the Woodhouses requested the pleasure of a dance, but Emma told him she was engaged by the Reverend Elton for the

polka. 'However, sir,' she told him, 'I should be obliged if you were to bear me in mind for the quadrille.'

Emma's mind was thrown into consternation by the noise of the music and it was with relief that she spotted at last a familiar acquaintance emerging from the seaside waters.

'Mr Knightley!' she cried.

'Indeed,' he replied, with an uncommon leer upon his face. 'Though down here they call me "Twice Knightley".'