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Epic Slinky (published in New Writing 12 Picador anthology 2003)

Canning Town

I was in her mouth. She was beautiful, although I didn't notice at the time. She had a Product 250 T-shirt on with the sleeves hacked off. She had borrowed it from the last boy she picked up. He wasn't getting it back. After I had her, the T-shirt was torn slightly at the front. She covered the tear with some gaffer tape. She was very stylish.

King's Cross

I was beautiful. I was slinky. In high, high Jimmy Choo boots. I had a ponytail and everything. It was Saturday. I went to the disco.

The promoter said hello to me and we climbed the stairs. He was my friend. He was a kind man.

My heels clopped up the winding stone staircase and my hamstrings tugged.

I was slinky. My thighs were glistening trunks, my knees were snow-capped volcanoes, my smooth shins encased in spike boot heels, poised step by step as if to puncture chests, and my dusty soles to crush faces.

The promoter was out of breath. 'I'm going to die on these stairs one of these days.'

'That's a good idea,' I said.

'Thanks' he said and meant it. He liked good ideas.

I met my friend at the bar. She hated her boyfriend. He was in the toilets. He was a DJ, but she wished he was in a band. The promoter bought us drinks and we got drunk.

When there was a lapse in conversation, I did a series of somersaults across the room, showing off. It was quite busy in the bar, but after you turn the first somersault a path always clears for you. I'd done it before a few times. I was good at it. I cut my hand on a piece of glass this time, but it wasn't too deep and I was past caring.

There was a band on downstairs. They were girls. They were called Emergency Girls. They were dressed in fake Gucci jewellery and charity shop clothes circa 1985. The promoter managed them. The singer was called Police, the guitarist was called Nurse, bass was Fire and the drummer – who was so drunk she wet herself during the second song – was called AA. The song was raw, but sort of catchy. Police introduced it saying:

'This one's for all the accidental fathers in the house. You can run, but you can't hide. The CSA will find you, and I will be waiting, for the weekend.' And then she screamed. And sang the song.

'Young dad, Young dad

Don't you make your baby sad

Young daddy, young daddy

All laddy so laddy

Fit young dad in Mothercare

He's got previous in his hair

He's got access

To Practice

To get it right the second time around

His bareback prick is bound for market

Morten Harket
Aha, aha
You fucked up, you cocked up
Now put your prick up me and see what
comes out

(Heavy panting)

Baby, baby baby

Baby baby baby

Baby baby baby

Baby baby baby

A young daddy, young daddy

Young daddy with no money

I could be so good for you

Love you like you want me to

Young daddy, young daddy

Young dad, young dad

Don't you make your baby sad.'

The promoter looked happy. 'They're mental,' he said proudly.

Later on my friend decided to try and annoy her boyfriend by getting off with Police. The three of us left together, teetering across Pentonville Road to try and talk our way into the Turkish club. The doormen weren't going to let us in because we weren't Turkish. But Police insisted that we had been invited by someone called Don Juan. I don't think that's a Turkish name, but they let us in all the same. Inside we drank more. My friend started getting off with Police at the bar. Like a switch had been flicked, the atmosphere in the bar changed. All the men dimmed their conversation and looked over. A big man with a moustache slid along the bar and grabbed my arm. 'My sister says you look lonely, she wants you.' He pointed. I looked along the bar, and saw another big man. His whole face wobbled like jelly when he laughed.

I persuaded my neo-lesbian friends it was time to get a taxi. We left the Turkish men to their coffee and staggered towards King's Cross station. The Sunday papers were on sale. Sunday was here already. Police lifted a copy of the *Observer*, ditched the supplements and rolled it up into a fat baton. She launched an assault on a blamless, trampy-looking old man who was sat on the pavement outside W.H. Smith's. She thwacked him about the head. We managed to pull her off the tramp and bundled her towards the front of the long, long taxi queue. People complained. My friend pushed Police into a taxi and climbed in. 'Get in,' she told me.

'No,' I said.

I went back to the disco. Climbing the stairs was a bigger job this time. The boots hurt.

The karaoke was in full swing when I got back to the top bar.

A celebrity and her non-celebrity friend were singing 'All of me'.

They were quite good.

I spoke to the celebrity and her friend. They wanted more drink, but the bar had closed. I spoke to the promoter, who rustled up a bottle of vodka. We drank more. I curled up in a toilet cubicle for a while, with my arms around the bowl. Everything flashed red and white. The noise outside was getting quieter. After a long time I pulled myself up and staggered out of the toilets. Nearly everyone had gone. I gathered myself at the top of the stairs and began to fall.

I was proper slinky now.

I managed to land on my hands and flip over and nearly made

it onto my feet again, but my balance was shot, I skidded down a few more steps on my knees, then clutched at the wall. I fell spinning and tangled up for a flight and managed just one more somersault before I stood, walked a couple of steps and then my legs gave way. I reached the bottom of the stairs in a heap of legs and arms. I stood up in front of a bouncer.

'I fell,' I told him.

'Don't worry, love,' he said, 'you fell like a star.'

Like the model Michelle de Swarte from Streatham, in Gucci in Milan? Like Naomi in Vivienne Westwood? Falling gets you places.

I slunk out of the door towards the celebrity and her friend.

They were getting into a car. 'I fell,' I told them. They stared at my knees. Blood had erupted and was flowing into and over my boots. Perhaps my leg was broken. But I was past caring.

'Come with us,' said the celebrity. She was very kind.

We went to her house in Primrose Hill. It was nice. There was a small waterfall in her fireplace. And a Damien Hirst above the mantelpiece. I slumped down into an expansive red-leather settee.

She put *Girl on a Motorbike* on her widescreen TV with the sound down and brought up a bottle of absinthe. We danced to Michael Jackson. Then I don't remember anything for a bit.

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Primrose Hill

I drove the three girls to the celebrity's house. They sat in the back clacking away to someone on the celebrity's mobile phone.

I looked over my shoulder at her friend. Her friend winked at me and opened her legs, then laughed and shut them again. I had only kissed her once, after the celebrity had finished talking to me at the club. She was a crazy. When we got out of the car the celebrity and the girl with bleeding knees went into the house.

The celebrity's friend grabbed my hair and we stood kissing in the middle of the road. It was beginning to get light. The friend pulled away and took all her clothes off. She squatted naked in the middle of the road and pissed. A black taxi slowed down as he passed her. Her knickers lolled on the tarmac getting dirty. I picked up her dress, grabbed her arm and led her inside.

We danced and drank for about an hour. Everyone was out of their minds on green stuff. The girl with the bloody knees passed out on the sofa. I went downstairs to the toilet. When I came back, the celebrity and her friend had gone to bed. The party was over, but I couldn't sleep.

The scabby-kneed, Product 250 T-eeed girl was still lying there on the sofa, like she was dead. I knelt on a white tiger rug and stroked her legs. I touched her arm, trying to wake her up. She didn't move. I pulled at her arm and she stirred and tried to push me off. I kissed her face. I managed to pull her up and lean her against me. She put her arms around my shoulders and snorted a bit. I got her to the top of the stairs and tried to get her to walk down. She had her arms stretched out and stepped forward like a sleepwalker. I got in front of her and held her waist, and she slumped over my shoulder, all floppy legged. The top half of her was heavy, but the legs flobbed out behind her, light and easy. Plong, kerplong, kerplong. When the weight got too much for me I held her back and took two steps down and then dragged her, she plunged down easier that way. It was like dancing with a corpse. I propped her up against the banister and kicked open the bathroom door. She unwound and fell at the bottom of stairs in a heap.

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I started to be awake again. I was bent over. He was up me. I thought it was someone else, in a dream, someone good. He stopped for a moment. 'Come on, come on,' I muttered. He just held me and kissed my neck. Everything was wet. I pulled down my skirt and looked in the mirror. My make-up was still spot on. Then he started again and did it in my mouth. It felt sick so I got up and clung to the wall, up the stairs. Something was burning inside. I lay back on the settee and listened to the waterfall in the fireplace. It was lovely and soothing. He started kissing all up my legs. He put his head up my skirt.

The celebrity's friend appeared at the end of the sofa. The kissing stopped. I sat up and looked at the man and the woman. I didn't know who the man was. The woman was shaking. She seemed angry. My mouth was open.

'you are evil,' she shouted.

I didn't say anything.

'i hate you,' she screamed and ran down the stairs. I followed her. This needed sorting out. In the kitchen, she got a knife and held it to my neck.

'evil whore, i hate you.'

Time was moving slowly. I was evil. I must have done something very, very wrong. I racked my brains.

'Sorry.' I hoped that would cover it.

The man pulled me away and out of the house. 'Thanks for having me,' I called back. 'See you soon.'

Canning Town

I was in the car with the man. He drove to Canning Town. It was light now.

I stood with the man by the Thames. I could see the Millennium Dome. Some big warehouses and a rusty barge. The man looked at me. His skin was deathly pale and his hair was matted with dry sweat.

'What's wrong with you?' he asked.

I am slinky. I flip, I fall.

He took me to a room in an empty warehouse.

'This is my studio,' he said. The studio was filled with electronic music equipment and computers. There was a mattress in the corner. It was cold. He gave me a beer. 'You don't even know my name,' he said, shaking his head. I felt guilty. We swapped names.

He put some music on.

'Do you like this?' he said.

Perhaps it was a test.

'It's OK.'

'I've got to go in a bit, got to see my little girl.'

He showed me a photo of a little girl.

My T-shirt was torn. It wasn't mine. I picked up some gaffer tape and ripped off a length to cover the tear.

He held me down on the mattress in the corner.

'You're very beautiful,' he whispered.

My mobile had run out. I looked at the cracked ceiling. A leak dripped onto my face.

We went outside again. A security guard wandered over. He looked just like a security guard. Tubby with a grey moustache. He said hello to the man and gave me an odd look. It might have been pity.

'Kept you here all weekend, has he?'

'No.' I smiled. Everything was good.

The security guard wandered back to his portakabin.

I gave the man my number and then walked to Canning Town station.

There's a party next week, in Hoxton. I might go if I feel like it.