

MOUTHPIECE

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So what happened back there in the 1960s and how does it effect my life more than 30 years later? When I was little, even at the age of five, I was very aware of boys, getting married and so on, although innocent of sex.

I married Nigel in the road in front of my house. Writing this - it feels like a statement, a confessional, as if I am the guilty one. Let's get this straight. I AM GUILTY OF NOTHING. So - back to Nigel. We got married and lived happily ever after (apart). He did look after me when I had a broken arm, but then we split up before both our fifth birthdays.

I also remember a boy called J, but I was older then - perhaps twelve. He brought me Turkish delight and we used to kiss. I remember he had very wet lips. Neither of these boys abused me ... nor I them.

So - I think I was about eight, but the details are hazy. In the photo I was eight years. You have an older brother. I go to your house. Your parents must be out. I have on a turquoise suit, with box pleats and a square-ish cut jacket, a white plastic necklace and a turquoise woollen jumper that my mum had knitted. And black stockings - suspenders.

You say you have a camera and want to take some pictures of me with no clothes on. I enjoy stripping off and you take photos about there comes a point when it has all gone too far. I am very scared and start to cry. I want to leave and feel very guilty in case my parents might find out. But I can not leave. You have hidden my clothes and I am naked. Did you touch me then?

I think it is because of this that sometimes when I have sex I imagine walking naked through streets in the dark from your house.

I get upset. Eventually you give me back my clothes. I go home.

I was so frightened after that. Frightened that other people might find out. You stole my innocence. You destroyed a side of me which could trust people.

I heard rumours that H. a girl in the next class had been telling people that I'd taken my clothes off in front of you. I think your brother was the ring-leader. I remember hating you with a passion. I remember wanting to kill you. I remember feeling alone, isolated, ashamed.

I go on the train to take my piano exam. You get into the same compartment. You have the same piano teacher. I smoke loads of fags that day and throw up the remains of my first ever Chinese meal.

On another occasion I remember your Mum picking me up in her car and taking us on a picnic. She leaves us in the countryside. We walk along a track. I have shorts on, no doubt. We stop and I go for a snog with one of you.

(My memory tells me this is years later and I am not eleven and you were living next door to my best friend.)

Your mother has a brown car. You have red hair. Your brother is ugly. Unattractive. I am standing behind a wall and no doubt one of you is keeping watch, while the other

one ... what? Blank. Up against a brick wall. Actually it was a dry stone wall, possibly a sheep pen.

I do not know what happened. I knew it wasn't only kissing although I think that was part of it. I don't like you kissing me. I hate the taste of your mouth. I was very unassertive later one when I was with boys. I couldn't talk and ended up in many difficult situations. I remember a lot of fear, guilt, shame, a lot to do with girls liking sex, being a tart.

My Mum was very sweet when I got home. She hoped I'd had a good time with my friends in the countryside and thanked your Mum for taking me out. I MUST HAVE HELD ON TO SO MUCH. HIDDEN SO MUCH.

I could talk to nobody about anything that had happened. I had to keep silent; yet surrounding these incidents there were rumours. Hints of what I had done. No blame on you. I knew I had a bad reputation from an early age and had almost an obsession about kissing and romance. When I was little I used to follow couples and watch them kissing behind the changing huts on the beach. Strange behaviour from one so young. Now the memories are all confused yet many things are beginning to fit into place. Sometimes I can remember a lot of details. Certain smells or places remind me of that time. I am scared sometimes of walking alone in the countryside.

At other times it seems like all this happened to someone else, someone who was not me. The school photo - a group of innocent children playing out the best year of their life. I think not.

I am angry now. I am a ball of rage. Your face is bleached out by my anger. Bleached out, burnt, distorted. You become part of the background. My background. The effects are in my unconscious, disturb my dreams.

My rage is at YOU - who seem to have escaped the humiliation, the fear, the guilt, the absolute terror of being found out. And rage at any abuse of power, of people using their strength over others.