

Best of Bugged July 29th

The Biggest Problem

By Cathy Bryant

Crowded carriage,
the usual uncomfortable swaying.
Clutching each other amid strangers.
She turns to him:
'Do you realise what the biggest problem in our relationship is?'
Oh darling, so not the time nor the place,
say so many faces, wary, worldly,
but also wondering what his answer is
and whether it's what she thought;
and we wait, while he squirms and shifts
and the train goes thunketa-*thunketa*
and the people sniff and cough
and pass the time of day.

'Well', he replies, 'Given that everyone here can hear us -
I'm going to say my inadequate penis size.'

- and a great laugh breaks from her,
and the whole carriage smiles
as if it had filled with balloons and cake
and friends.
'Actually', she says lovingly, confidingly,
'It's your cat allergy.
But I think we'll find a way to cope.'
And you can see the pink hearts floating around them,
and the train goes thunketa-*thunketa*,
rolling cheerfully on.

Last Train

By Suzanne Phillips

Two elderly people on the train to London from Cardiff. She speaks clearly to him, he mumbles short answers back. The conversation starts as the train pulls away from the station.

Woman: Spot on time. Spot on time

He has been looking at his watch and nods.

Woman: We're doing alright.

He nods again

Woman: Good team. Good friends.

He is looking at the local paper. She points at a picture

Woman: Blocked off the whole high street for two hours Friday.

Man: Stuart Cable. Lot of people knew him

Woman: Taxi driver said he's never seen anything like it

Man: The little ones I feel sorry for

Woman: Did you go down to the house? I haven't been there since I was a child. Used to sit on the swing in the ground out the back. Is it still there?

Man: Shouldn't think so

Woman: What is it, two years since we went to Barry Island?

He nods.

Woman: I told you I was dipping my feet in. I've never moved so fast in all my life. It was like needles to my heart. Had to catch my breath

She laughs.

Woman: What do you think about going back there this summer?

He nods

Woman: It's breezy up on the point. You wouldn't sit there for long.

Man: Wouldn't take long.

Sounds familiar By Maggie Doyle

She had the knack. Wherever she went she could always pick the trolley with the squeaky wheel. Today was no exception. Click click squeak, click click squeak. She made the sounds out loud and started to giggle. The nurse smiled down at her, the pre-med was kicking in; the anaesthetist would be a happy chappy.

ON THE TRAIN FROM WATERLOO By Rodney Wood

A young woman with a blue wool scarf
sits opposite me.

She has a huge smile
on her face as if she knows a big secret.
Her gaze crawls over the compartment.
She opens the shell of her mobile.
Steve.

My life has changed.

*I need
to show you that I'm an outrageous,
caring and loving person.*

*Meet me
outside the station.*

A moment later
the train stops at Clapham Junction
and she skips off, to meet Steve I suppose,
leaving me on this ordinary Thursday
to fold up words and put them in a box.

Mr Pinstripe takes her place and shouts
into his mobile *Kath, you could have tried
harder.*

I don't know how she answers
but he puts his phone down, takes off
all his clothes, folds them neatly,
and starts to cry.

Everything he needs
in the world has been taken away
and I'm at a loss to know what to do.

High Up

By Lynda Nash

We're smoking weed on the old stone bridge at Ty Pant and Trev says, 'Remember Nibsey? He used t'walk on this wall single 'anded.' He strokes the side of the bridge like you'd smooth a dog.

'Yeah,' Milton says, 'single 'anded.'

'You can't walk single-handed,' I tell them. 'Unless he was walking upside down balancing on one arm.'

They look at me then at each other, eyebrows raised; Trev in his parker and bobble hat; Milton with his head shoved so far down in his denim jacket it seems as if he has no neck.

'Yeah,' says Trev, 'he'd jump up yer and he'd walk from there to there.' He stretches his arms out as if he's being crucified. 'Nibsey was like some fuckin' gymnastic. An' when he got the end he'd give a little jump and turn around and walk back.'

I pass Trev the joint. 'That does sound impressive,' I say.

'Fuckin' impressive,' Milton says. He and Trev nod like dogs in a car window. Now their heads have been set in motion I think they might not stop until they work loose and crash onto the tarmac.

'He must have been some guy this Nibsey,' I say.

Smoke escapes from the corner of Trev's mouth like a trail of ectoplasm. He stops nodding and passes the joint to Milton. 'Nibsey wouldn't 'ave any messin' when he was doing his walk,' he says. 'Not even to pass him a can or a puff.'

'I saw him do the walk with a can in his hand,' Milton says.

'You couldn't 'ave,' Trev snaps. 'He wouldn't do that.'

'He did.'

'He didn't. He wouldn't be so stupid.'

They argue about this while I roll another joint.

When they run out of steam Trev flicks his lighter and the flame singes the fur on his cuff. 'I remember once,' he says. 'Nibsey called a woman a stupid whore when she told him to get down. Wasn't any of her fuckin' business she was going to the shop.'

'What was she going to buy?' Milton asks.

'I don't fuckin' know. Potatoes. Bread. What does it matter she shouldn't have bothered Nibsey when he was doing his walk. He told her though. He was the best rude person I've ever met in my life.'

I light the fresh joint, take a deep draw and hold it. Trev and Milton gawp. They must think I have lungs like bell jars. On the out breath I ask, 'Where is Nibsey? Is he still around? 'I'd like to see his walk.'

Trev picks up a handful of stones and throws one into the river – he stares at the ripples until they vanish and then throws another one.

'Nibsey don't walk no more,' Milton says.

A dog wanders down the grass bank, sniffs the grass and cocks his leg against a large rock that's on the edge of the shallow water.

Trev grabs another stone, lobs it at the dog and catches its side. It yelps and runs into the bushes. 'Fuckin' animal,' he mutters.'

'Piss off,' Milton shouts. 'That's Nibsey's rock.'

