

SCHIZOPHRENIC

by Ally North

1

I was sixteen when I met Steve, before life putrefied into colourful and sometimes wonderful shit.

We both went to the same basketball club. I liked to shoot three pointers and watch the ball launch in the air.

In comparison, Steve was up in the stratosphere. He played centre, and his nickname was “Plank” because his right hand seemed to get in the way of every shot. He was so big with his arms up, quick but all angles, all arms and legs.

That was the nice thing about guys, though, the way they differ from the curves of a woman. Men never understand that’s what makes them attractive – *difference!* In comparison, I was skinny, blonde, 5’3” in trainers and the biggest thing about me was my fucking sweaty sports bra which chewed into the side of my super and stupid-big boobage.

Steve had dark brown hair, an uber-young and sharp face with a little mouth and a little smile. His light blue eyes softened whenever he talked in his fast, monotone voice. He looked about 18 years old.

The first time I played, he loomed over as I got the ball on the perimeter. You could barely hear him move, like a giant ghost. He said, kindly and with no sarcasm, “Ello, little one.”

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He gave a little smile. So I smiled too and I said, "Hullo."

He hid his little mouth from the other players and said, "Every time you shoot I'll duck, ok?"

Steve ducked, feigning like he was going for a steal. I shot over him with my left hand and it rimmed out. Damn it –

Steve did the same with all the other midgets. He would block the guys but the only female he would block was Jenny.

Jenny was pretty but overweight and exceptionally angry. I was friends with Jen for a long time; best buddies in Mongland.

Her battles with Steve were highly amusing because Jen enjoyed being in a fight. It was one of the reasons why I liked her so much. When she smiled it stretched out, her lips so wide and thin and threatening that you could see her gums.

Jen was a goth so it was funny to watch her play in her all-black gear. She had black denim shorts, a black torn *Korn* t-shirt, black mascara curved into swirls, and an elvish *Lord of the Rings* tattoo on her shooting hand. Take that, orcs! Take that, Steve!

Jen's main hobby was scowling. She'd stomp off the court and by the side she said things like, "Steve's a fucking pterodactyl. He's a cunt." Steam would erupt from her ears. "He never passes to us when we play with him and he blocks us when we don't."

I stuck my tongue out and said, "I think he's cute."

She almost killed me after that, then more steam billowed out of her flesh-tunnel-pierced ears at the nearby College's Open Day all because Steve was there. He was the Film Studies' teacher. Who knew? It was the only good lesson at the monstrous event, so I picked it along with with my Usual Suspects; Eng. Lit, Art and Media Studies. Of course, Jen picked Film too. Hah!

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Film Studies became my favourite lesson. It was miles away from lessons at school that always followed the formula of the recap at the start, pomposity and verbosity in the middle, then a godawful summary at the end. Film was full of weird and wacky movies, even Bill Hicks' *Sane Man* too. Shock and awe!

Steve talked too little, if anything. Short, clipped sentences. Another big change from High School. None of the "likes," "y'knows" and "ums" that poisoned those teachers as they wrestled for words. Steve was my "Personal Tutor" too, and his first meeting with my Mum was a blast.

Mum was the "Gypsy Queen" when Mum and Dad were young. They were the "pride of the tribe" before things went tits-up. The thing is Mum used to be *incredibly* beautiful. I saw polaroids in over-bright colours and contrasts. Everything was there for her, and Dad kept telling me how smart she was back then. He was still in love with her but I'll never understand why.

Mum became a raging drunk when I was seven, before her sobriety made her prim, proper and very dreary. Her third husband had the personality and smell of a rotting turnip, and all Mum did now was draw back her grey hair into the schoolmarm look to accompany her decomposed personality.

At Parent's Evening, my then very l'il sis Mads charged around FUNFUNFUN as Mum shouted, "MADELAINE! SIT STILL!"

Mads sat down and I shared some eyebrow-raising with Steve. If he saw that I was in Mongland, he didn't care at all. I wished Dad was there, he would have *understood* Steve. But Mum – six A grades and three B's weren't *good enough* for her.

I don't even remember what they said, except two lines –

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Steve (flatly and loudly), “YOU-HAVE-A-WONDERFUL-DAUGHTER.”

Mum (forked tongue), “Well, I hope Allison has a WONDERFUL teacher.”

Steve fixed a stare into Mum’s eyes. Then Steve and I just grinned and grinned and Mum sighed and harrumphed.

On the car ride home in the back seat, Mads played with her *Sylvanian Family* toys and Mum was in full-on scowl mode.

I’d half-heard Yolanda, Lenny and Harriet telling Mum I’d fail their subjects. I couldn’t have cared less about their opinions, but Mum shouted the unimaginative cliché into the back window, “YOU NEED TO BUCK UP YOUR IDEAS!”

I preferred to fuck up my ideas, Mum.

“Steve said nice things,” I said.

She exploded into wide-nostril flames that even made Mads twitch, “HE’S AN IMPERTINENT YOUNG MAN,” then Mum tailed off a little as she turned a corner in the road, “and he shouldn’t be teaching.”

That made me smile.

Only another eighteen months of College to go!

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The powers-that-be forced me to study four subjects at College because of my high grades at school. If I’d known that I would have done worse. It meant I only had one free period and the whole shebang was knacker and mostly futile.

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Art was the biggest deal for me, but the lessons were a titanic waste of time. I didn't even have Jen to make it a laugh.

I liked to draw animals and landscapes. The best fun was painting landscapes with a palette knife and making them borderline crazy. My own personal Mongsapes.

To be fair, the first year was alright. I had a teacher called George who seemed to be near death but at least he never touched me. He didn't help much but he didn't hinder either. He was caught in his own world and preparing for retirement.

He was a tall runner in super-short shorts. He raced off after the lesson and sometimes we would see him running past the bus-stop, leaving a trail of smoke from his pipe. Whee! He was always coughing but training for marathons and maybe aiming for a knobbly knees competition too. He must have been 60 but he could still rattle his bones along at high speed.

George also had a giant thumb, which was allegedly because he got it trapped between two school desks thirty years earlier. At least it made it easier for him to smudge my pastels. Very handy.

It felt like he wanted to enjoy the shortened time he had left with elevated, transcendental living. "Look inside," George said one time, as he puffed on his little pipe in the days before smoke detectors and bans would suck him into oblivion. George's smoke probably stained everyone's paintings, but I think it helped preserve them too.

He would puff away and gently point at angles. "Palette knife here, then just smear." Puff, puff, his happy smoke signal. "It's good. It's very, very good."

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At least George gave a shit about what he did. You knew he did even though he never told you. Then the College's infinite wisdom hired Yolanda. Yo-Land-Duhhhh – I reckon the Principal's penis had something to do with this wondrous decision. She was a very pretty person of Greek descent, and she had beautiful womanly curves.

Then Yolanda opened her mouth and everything was shattered. She talked at 100 miles an hour and it was almost always about herself. She even projected arty-farty black-and-white pictures of herself in the nuddle on the whiteboard screen. Showing off her tits just enough for her nips to be seen.

She was not afraid of self-promotion, "We're going to study some of my art today and then work on how we recreate the same lines and structures."

The year before Yolanda taught us, she'd won an award for a lifeless top-down photograph of some chairs taken from the top-deck of the Guggenheim Museum in New York.

Sure enough, soon into her teaching my Art class, we *went* to New York. Mum stumped up the cash, eager not to seem inferior to the other parents. Yolanda and her swollen clit took us to the same top-deck of the spiral building and got us to look down at her flat, rigid view of nothingness.

The rest of trip was enlightening, especially when a guy in a city car invited me into his vehicle. I told him to "fuck off" and he sped off in terror. I can only think his pre-cummed pants were as filled as Yolanda's every time she showed her masterpiece.

Our first lesson back, Yolanda had plastered a giant, professionally printed poster of her award-winning vision in her

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classroom. She must have got up early to put up her opus and wrinkle out the creases with her pussy juice.

The rest of the time, Yolanda consistently turned up to lessons late and she put no effort whatsoever into them.

First block on Wednesday summed it up. It was cereal time for Yolanda. She started the lesson eating muesli and telling us what to draw while her skimmed milk bubbled out of her lips. By this stage, the guys had such an erection they didn't care. I did care a great deal; she made Art empty and fucking submissive.

So I'd wind Yolanda up by drawing big, VERY BIG, luminescent willies. We'd be doing "life class" and I'd focus purely on the willy of actual men exhibiting their goodies. Then in all the detentions she'd dish out I would draw even bigger ones.

I was proud of my bright colours and shading around the veins of some random man's penis, but it never went down well. She definitely preferred her own tits to guys' dicks.

It didn't help that Tara was in my Art class and she was a giant pain in the posterior. She came from Lowestoft, a ratty town ten miles away which is known for being tough. I *knew* tough, I knew I could kick her arse if I wanted to.

Three months into the second year, I was palette knifing another Mongish landscape and then Tara loomed up behind me.

"Looks good," she whispered, "Little Miss Awesome."

As with Yolanda, Tara knew she was pretty. A temptress, tempting you to snap. She had curly, dark red hair and a perfect evil grin. Her art was actually decent – semi-realistic charcoal drawings of cities and sketches of another model-pretty girl called Saskia from the first year class. Tara cheated, though, by tracing

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over photographs, which freed her up to spend half the lesson farting and flirting around. I reckon she was in competition with Yolanda over the boys. Either that or she was just a lazy pricktease.

The first time I remember my brain humming was after another Tara whisper as I tried to carve something with the College's shitty acrylic paint, "Y'coming to the dance-off today?"

I knew what it was but I said, "What?"

"Ssssss Dudley."

Dudley was a pitiable creature and insanely sweet and likeable, but Tara revelled in tormenting him.

"Ssssss against Kiaron."

Kiaron was black, very good-looking and an amazing dancer. Tara had the steaming wet hots for him. Kiaron could be an arrogant prick, which put me off, but I could see the angle of his body and the smoothness of his skin were beautiful.

"Nah."

"But ssssss Kiaron."

Hum, hum, hummmmmmm. I didn't slap her. Yet.

3

I was rolling a fag and I saw Dudley dash out of Steve's room at College. I waved at Dud, and he sheepishly waved back before putting his head down to run faster. Then Tara came out a few minutes later, giving me her devilish look as she sashayed off.

Hum. Hum. Hum.

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She was *too* sexy, even for Steve. The worst but kinda funny moments in Film were when Steve would fuck up students' names in class. "Tara" would often accidentally pop out.

"Tara?"

I just smiled at him, "I'm Ally."

He whispered, "Ah, shit," then he said, "you share a fuckin' vowel, at least."

Jen had a field day laughing at that –

I finished my rollie, went inside and stood next to Steve.

Steve's classroom was a beautiful cave. He had painted all of the walls black – with Tara's help, I bet – and covered them with movie posters and film terminology. It was fun to look at all the words that surrounded you. *Mise-en-scene, cinematography, genre, expressionism, montage, male gaze, auteur, connotation, denotation, narrative, dutch angles (oo-er!), chiaroscuro* and a bunch more. They sunk in.

The curtains were always drawn so we could clearly see the films because no light could permeate. No-one could see you in there and that was great, a home away from home. It was the ultimate in safety, so it became Bunker Number 2.

I said, "Hullo you!"

Steve looked deep in thought. "Hey, Al." That C.U. Next Time had done something to him.

"What are you looking at?"

"A blank screen," he said. "I'm contemplating my existence."

Ah, existentialism. "Angst, huh?"

"Yeh."

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I don't think I ever heard Steve say a sentence that was longer than ten words. The best advice Steve ever gave the class was, "People think in long sentences and –"

"What?" Tara said.

Then his eyes pinched, "– they talk in short ones."

"Why?" Jen said.

"Because they're constantly being fuckin' interrupted –"

You had to fight to get words out of Steve any time that he wasn't talking about films or telling his little stories.

I said, "I saw Tara leave."

"Yeh."

"I didn't want to come in with her about."

He looked confused and said, "Yeh?"

"I see how you look at her."

Now he just looked crushed, "Al."

Ah, now I felt bad, so I said, "She's uppity!"

He looked at me, all soft eyes again, "Why aren't you watchin' Dudley dance fer the masses?"

"Because the masses are mean."

He rubbed the back of his head and slowly said, "Yeh –"

I leant over him, "Cheer up and check your emails!"

He kneaded his head and I rested on his giant back. He tensed up a little, and I wanted to wrap him up.

I said, "Bet you've got one about me."

Hah! Yolanda had written, "*She's just objectionable and refuses to complete the artwork required!!! I don't want her in my bloody room... she's vile!!!*" The heading of the email was "GET

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HER OUT OF COLLEGE NOW." I was so infamous I merited capital letters, which made me suitably proud.

I watched as Steve wrote back, *"When hell freezes over, Yolanda. Have a good day sharpening your exclamation points!!!"*

He said, "How d'ya get chucked outta fuckin' detention?"

"I drew a disproportionate penis."

"Oh."

"That means a big willy."

"Yeh, Al," Steve said, "I know."

I smiled, reached around and poked his forehead. "Poink!"

He was stifling laughter because I could feel his shoulders going up and down. Now I really knew I could trust him no matter what.

4

High School had been a disaster. I hated the boys who acted like arseholes to get attention. It must be something wired into idiots' DNA structure. I liked the quiet, safe, scared ones. I guess they were the male version of how I was before I learnt how to take care of myself.

Still, sex followed me around like an infuriating fly that I kept having to swat away. Even one of the teachers was trying to diddle me.

I was thirteen and my dim-witted middle-aged Eng. Lit. teacher had spotted me and Jenny in Gt. Yarmouth's High Street

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the evening before. Mr. Fuckface said, “So what were you up to then haha?”

Jen said, with her eye liner and her short skirt riding up high on her big round bum, “Well, that would be saying haha!”

“I loved your outfits anyway haha!”

Jen said, “Oooh SIR hahaha!”

I wanted to kick Mr. Fuckface in the nuts and if he touched me I would have done.

But who was that angry guy in the corner training to be a teacher? It transpired it was Steve with a face full of fury. We only worked that out ten years later, after I read his story about that hideous event at my hideous Carry On Fucking High School. Steve was too, too *Steve-like* to fuck a student. He wouldn't even harm a fly –

The problems with blokes amplified when I was 12, when my boobs went from buds to jugs at an alarming rate. Suddenly they were there, accompanied by gut-busting period pain and even more unwanted attention and roving hands. I got all tomboy-like and covered up as much as could, but there was always some comment from some dick with a little prick.

All that was at its worst staying with Dad. Even though Dad would never hurt me, never touch me, always protect me. He was my guardian angel but he'd get so high his attention would waver and Dad's mates were often drunk and dismal.

One time I was busy reading *Oliver Twist* for Eng. Lit. and up came a googly-eyed Bill Sykes' lookalike. “All growed-up den, l'il Gypsy Princess,” he said, then he manhandled my boobs.

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I drop-kicked Bill Sykes in the nutsack. Nancy would have been very proud of me. I wanted to smash the ugliness out of his cock-eyed brain. I took both my little hands and slapped and scratched the top of his doubled-over head.

He didn't take kindly to it, "You fuh-fuh-fuckin' whore."

"YOU PAEDO!"

There was a ruckus and Dad yanked him out of the flat, then Dad got his non-filthy mates to slap Fuh-Fuh around a few days later. None of his mates touched me again. Hummmm.

Of course that was nothing compared to the one Mum left Dad for. I was only 11 then. Those were the worst six months of my life. Constant darkness, worse than even all the horrors that happened later. He held his big, fat hand over my mouth for all that time as he did all those THINGS to my body and mind.

That cunt was killed a year later.

When anyone asks me – and *they* with their notepads always ask me – through all the good and bad times, all I say is, "That's all that matters. *He's dead. He's nothing.*"

None of *them* were going to kill me, or shut me up again.

I told myself I'd never be filled up with dirt and hatred.

5

When I became a tomboy, naturally Mum thought I was a lesbian. I never told her anything that had happened to me.

By the time I was sixteen I had three pairs of blue jeans, five white t-shirts, seven black panties, three pink bras, three sets

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of white trainers, three blue hoodies (good for the cover up), three grey tracksuit bottoms. That was it –

Since when do you fuck clothes? You have sex with the body underneath them. The rest is artifice, silly-frilly, so I had precisely no interest in clothes. None, nada, zilch, zero, no matter how many times Mum brought out her passive aggression.

“Why do you always wear the same clothes?”

“Because they’re comfy.”

“Why don’t you want to look pretty, Allison?”

Why don’t you evolve into a human being, Mum?

Mum didn’t know my clit was kept fit. I liked porn and I liked the shape of the guys more than the women, so I knew I was straight but I only liked it when the woman were giggling, happy. I loved the beautiful bodies and laughter and them floating in beauty and breathing easily.

Yet more fun for me were all the times I made hash muffins with Jenny. Those muffs were the goooooood stuff. I never drank because of Mum’s antics, so the only drugs I ever did were weed and a little E from Dad’s not-so-hidden stash.

“More weed!” I would say.

“More butter!” Jen would scream.

It was a mellow buzz, much like the ecstasy, like cumming when I masturbated where you just slowly rise into it.

The drugs sorted out my brain and I became more ME. I worried less and it helped the pussy-pain too. So don’t put me on an anti-drugs poster, alright? Even when you hear the later stuff, never forget there’s nothing like a trip to the Land of the Mong!

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I did wistfully wonder if I'd been wired weirdly as a woman because the E certainly made Jen randy, and she was getting herself around.

We were in a supermarket one time and she pointed out a dude called "Rooty" with silly spiky hair and kindergarten tattoos.

Jen pulled me to the other side of the aisle. She actually looked scared. I'd never seen her scared before. "Shit," she said, "that's the first guy who fucked me in the arse."

The first guy? She'd told me loads of stories about her love-life but that was a new one on me.

By the time we got to College, it seemed like everyone was heavily getting into sex. I'd just taken up roll-up ciggies instead. I had plenty of time, we were still only 16 or 17.

There were loads of rumours about how much Tara was sucking and fucking in nightclubs, but the craziest story was about Lois.

Lois was a fellow little person, about five inches shorter than me. 4 foot 9, I reckon. I did Film Studies and Media Studies with her and you could quickly tell she was smart. First off, she'd read comics. Even *2000AD*, which my Dad loved. I'd grown up copying pictures from that. *Chopper* and Cam Kennedy ruled.

Second off, Lois had great taste in films. She said, "Have you seen *Orgazmo*?"

I said, "Yep!"

Friends over a Chopper and a superhero with a big dildo –

Lenny was my Media Studies' teacher and he was a giant white shit. Like something a poor dog had passed after eating too

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much bonemeal. Muddy eyes and very long and sickly in appearance, and as useless as Yolanda at everything else.

One time, when Lenny was out of the room again doing whatever the hell he thought was more important than teaching, he'd set the task of designing a poster for an action TV series.

Jen was flirting and working with Adam, who was another spiky-haired bellend of twatness. Their "team" got *Night Moves*. Lenny didn't skimp on innuendo, so Lois and I were assigned *Private Dick*.

The creepiness compounded when he came back in the room and stroked his hand up my and Lois's backs.

"How are you progressing, my pretties?" The stench of his breath was grotesque. Like fucking Judge Death looming around me. Decay. Horror. I could have vomited.

The most tragi-comic part, though, was when I was sharing rollies with Jen on the field behind the mobile classrooms.

We saw Lenny grab Adam by the neck and ram him against a wall. Then Adam ran off and Lenny shouted after him, "NEVER DO THAT AGAIN!!!" Poor Lois was watching from the side. She looked as drunk as she often looked; but she never smelt of booze, per se.

He took her to his long car and laid his long body on her as he rested her on the back seat. We saw Lenny's lily-white bum rising up and down, very quick and very desperate. Then he climbed through to the front seat and drove off.

Jen's wide-open mouth started moving, "What the *fuck* just happened?" She stormed off and complained to the powers-that-be. I simply stopped going to Lenny's classes –

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After a while, and we're talking about a month, a Senior Tutor finally called me in.

"Why aren't you going to your Media Studies' lessons?" She was clearly a bull-dyke, but not one of the nice ones.

"I go when Lenny isn't teaching."

This threw her out of kilter. "Ah," she whimpered.

"He rubbed my back once when I was sat next to Lois."

She looked like she might bust out crying, "Um."

"Then he called us both 'my pretties.'"

Now she looked like a deflated helium balloon, "Oh."

"I can't be in the same room as him."

"Erm," she said, "we'll surely, um, arrange something –"

They didn't give me any hassle after that.

I caught up all my notes from Jen and asked Steve any questions I didn't know the answers to. I read revision guides with my rollies or when I was trying to avoid Mum. Learnt a fucksight more that way than fucking Lenny.

6

After all that, I could just turn up to Lenny's lessons whenever I felt like it. That wasn't very often.

He'd decked out his room like a shitty testament to *Quadrophenia* with lovingly cut-out targets. I wanted to plaster one of them on his back, like Lois had plastered one on his cock.

Myself and Jen spent much of the time looking cross-eyed at each other in his lessons, and then looking at Lois. She worked away, but she could never pull herself from leering at Lenny.

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Jen nudged my shoulder, “Didja see that?!”

Lois had stroked her boob, around the nipple. An itch she needed scratching, but not by her.

That wasn’t as shocking as Lenny’s lessons. They were abject shit; he never planned anything, he crept and letched, his goo-goo eyes blinded by Lois. It was more fun watching them flirt than listen to him witter on about advertising and soap operas.

He didn’t even use notes – he’d just waffle stuff like, “Christine Geraghty was so, so, so *vital* in analysing soap operas.”

Then he would pass out a 25 page article by some similar critic and we had to read it in silence with a sodding highlighter. I could do that at home –

Other nonsensical stuff permeated everything. One piece of meaningless homework involved annotating five fucking print adverts that didn’t even relate to what we were studying at the time. It was like he’d dropped his teaching notes on the ground and gathered them in a random order.

Our Media coursework was designing magazine covers for sodding men’s or women’s magazines. Doo-rag magazines that promote how men and women are supposed to behave, supposed to look, supposed to talk, supposed to be.

Lenny didn’t even know how to use Photoshop. This was before YouTube existed, so I had to get on forums and read lots to tread water. I felt myself turning into a barracuda. Hit. Bite. KILL!

I went into Steve’s black cave to rest. He could tell I was stressed and he knew I’d had it with Media. “Now I really don’t trust him,” I said, “and he’s got death breath.”

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At least Steve just smelt of a mixture of mouthwash and washed cotton. He was always insanely clean and I suspected OCD. He also looked so tired you could have scraped the sleep from his eyes, "But you've still gotta go to his lessons, Al."

"No, I don't. And he doesn't care about teaching, anyway."

Steve smiled at me, "Al." A kind, sad, bloodshot smile.

I licked my lips, "He's too busy fucking Loo-issssssss!" and I wiggled my tongue.

I knew he wanted to say something, but he went, "Hmm."

"But you couldn't possibly comment?"

He drew his mouth to one side, puffed out and then started laughing. I wanted to crawl inside his head and see what was rattling around in there. Probably Tara!

I smiled back, "Prepare for another e-mail."

"From?"

"Lenny," I said. "Whoop!"

Lenny must have called me in for another detention over the sodding adverts or magazines.

He sighed and gave another little smile, "Al."

He never let me down, ever. "Your catchphrase!"

I could see Steve looking at my boobs but the gentle bloke kept trying to look away. It seemed symbolic of his whole career; trying to look away when he knew the truth. Trying to keep his mouth shut when I knew he wanted to talk.

I sat upright and pushed out my boobage. "Come here."

Maybe that's why his mouth was small. So many years of biting his tongue and biting his lip. Ah, ah, cheer up!

He walked over cautiously and sat down next to me.

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I said, "Hullo."

He said, "'Ello."

For the first time I said it, "You can honk my boobs if you want to," and for the first time I would have liked it.

He just exclaimed, "Ally!" and turned red.

Ah, Steve! My hero.

"You know," I said, "when I was at school I had Mongland."

"Huh?"

"I was always in detention and I'd draw and play games with myself," I grinned.

"Ok," Steve said, "tell me."

"The best Mongland game is the chair game," I said and watched his eyes widen. "You balance your chair back as far as you can before you fall over."

We leant back and teetered on the edge.

I looked over at Steve and he said, "Not bad."

"It's great," I beamed. "I can do this for hours!"

I guess we did exactly that for the next sixteen years too.

– END OF SAMPLE –
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