

Jo Randerson – Specifically

First of all, before anything begins I'd like to say that I am a totally reliable person who never throws in the towel until it's time. So if you've heard other things you should banish them already from your mind, banish them! I'm not sure why those things are going around getting themselves said, because as far as I'm concerned, I would never say or do anything bad to anyone, sometimes I cry just looking at a little puppy. Look at him! He just got born and no-one prepared him for how tough the world would be. No-one told him he was pretty much going to be on his own getting lonelier and lonelier with every day that passed. No-one told him he was going to grow up to be an old man dog with no lady to call his own.

Understand, as this affair begins, that I am a totally honest and well-intentioned old fadoodler who just likes a bit of old jape, and what is the harm in a couple of friendly and mature folk engaging in a bit of tom-japery which causes only pleasure to themselves and no damage to anyone else? What has happened to this world that no-one can have a friendly old jape anymore without going to jail over it? This place has gone to the dogs if you ask me. Not that anyone's asking me anymore.

That's how I knew the dogs were coming.

I'll say a few things about myself. Sometimes things don't happen the way you wanted and no matter how much fadoodling you do it still doesn't work. Sometimes people say they've posted a very precious item, but they haven't. Sometimes people want things they don't need. Or, sometimes they don't want things which they do actually need but have failed to realise because they don't have a good grip on life (which, by the way, is just a series of random interactions with others until we die, there's no purpose).

I am a person who does have a good grip, and I am very good at maintaining it. Here's the key: grab on. Grab on to those awkward and elusive moments where something meaningful seems to be pending, that empty mailbox, that beautiful little face crying, those little flashes of solidity that appear out of the swirling, foggy darkness and make us cry out 'Something happened there! Something different was meant to happen there!' Grab on tight and don't let go even when they try to prise it out of your cold clammy grip.

There's lots of different versions, but I'd rather you heard it from me so I'll say the events as they actually happened.

I work in computers so I'm used to carrying little bits and pieces around. Sometimes the bits get bigger than the pieces, and that's where the trouble begins. Shirlene is gorgeous. Shirlene is beautiful. Shirlene's breasts are taut with the milk of human kindness and it leaks out in the late afternoons. Sometimes I see a little bit of wetness on her and I want to reach over and rub it off. Rub it all off.

I don't know what your experience is, but what seems to happen with me is that something starts, then it meanders around trying to find its feet, and then, just when it

starts to get fun, a small corner gets caught up somewhere, there's a bit of a kerfuffle, and suddenly the whole thing blows up in your face and you're left in the middle of a huge mess, with lots of people standing around pointing fingers at you.

And you lie there thinking: why didn't things work out another way for me? When did my life start heading off in a different direction from the one that it was supposed to take? If only he'd posted it when I specifically asked him to. Sometimes in a quiet moment it comes floating up behind me, that life I should have led, and leers over my shoulder.

I can taste that life.

I can see myself as the happily married father of two with a good steady job in parliament. I would have a little white beard and know how to joke with the young people without patronising them. But that ship has sailed. Somewhere along the way my road forked and I failed to realise it was forking. I lay there panting at the crossroads and now, many turns later, that path is lost to me. I don't even like bars. Believe me when I say that I will die before they put me in a cage.

So let's get the facts straight about Shirlene.

1. No-one made the rules clear.
2. Its hard to know what another person is thinking.
3. Sometimes its important to make a move just for movement's sake, otherwise you could be waiting at the station for hours without realising your train has left.

And I'd like to make it clear that I didn't start it – I just responded. And I don't think a man can be blamed for responding in a way that his body has been programmed by God to do. Who would be at fault for that? The great almighty himself? And if you're going to start levelling accusations at that superior figure, then why don't you sue the sky because it rained? Why don't you take nature to court? Why don't you imprison the trees and the birds and the flowers for just being who they are? And anyway, as I already said, it was a jape! It was a jiggery-pokery old jape which a few over-zealous law-abiders took a bit too seriously. I mean, did she die? Did anyone die? No-one died, and there wasn't even blood spilled, so if you can't take that as a joke then one of those screws must have come a little bit loose in that cavern behind your eyes which is supposedly responsible for holding your thoughts in place, or setting them free, or whatever the trendy thing to do is nowadays...

I don't believe in crystals. I don't believe in smells that make you feel better. I don't believe if you look at my finger you could tell what's wrong with my whole body. I believe in having a shirt tucked in nice and tight and a dependable belt to keep it all in. I believe in being born, then living and living and living until you die. I don't believe in apologising because someone misunderstood what you did or is too uptight to take a joke. Imagine my life as a page. I tore that page up years ago. Overnight it re-forms as a collection of memories and incomprehensible sounds, some of which make me weep, right to the bottom of my soul.

So sue me because I tried to grab at something that spoke to me. I blame the young people, with their bulging muscles and brown oily bodies. There was a world here years ago, but it's worsening by the minute. Think of me how you like, but I say this; a seed grows where it was dropped, and there's no point blaming the soil. No-one asked to be born. A small detail, here or there, that may or may not change your life: he said he was going to post it, and he didn't. And I had specifically asked him to.