What were you thinking?

Julian Stannard
for Jack and William

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First published in Great Britain in 2016
by CB editions
146 Percy Road London w12 9ql
www.cbeditions.com
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Printed in England by Blissetts, London w3 8dh
isbn 978–1–909585–11–9

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Dear All

Just to let you know
the QMO document’s been
converted to the intranet.

Pam

(Phew!)  
I could explode
with happiness.
Bus Replacement

What’s the point of sitting on a bus and fuming? For days I’ve been dragged across the fringes of English cities falling into melancholy and despair.

Sometimes we pass railway stations and dream of journeys that are linear and which are free from the humiliation of chemical toilets and sick bags.

But what’s the point of sitting on a bus and fuming now that this one’s drifted into a crematorium? We’re getting out and stretching legs, some of us are lying down utterly defeated but almost happy.

Jerry Hall Meets Salvador Dalí

I flew to Paris at seventeen and got talking to Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir over coffee. I was happy to meet them. The trouble is, I just can’t write poems when I’m happy.

Mother said, The Riviera is the place to go. I bought a pink bikini, some high-heeled shoes and walked myself along the beach.

I love cooking, I love gardening. I keep chickens. Mick’s an alley cat. Happy, happy, mostly happy.

Salvador Dalí said, Why don’t you run naked through my sculpture garden?
King's Cross

When I lived in King’s Cross
I used to lie on the bed and listen
to my bones melting. At first
I thought I was listening to Elgar
and then I thought I was listening
to the couple who’d moved
into the flat above and who were
getting to know each other better
and then I thought I was listening
to the music of the spheres.
I was listening to my bones melting.

Alakefic

I’m lying on a brown leather sofa
chatting to Mother on the phone.
Mother doesn’t hear awfully well
but that doesn’t stop her from talking.
Sometimes she says, What’s that?
My mother likes the word ‘ballistic’
as in I nearly went ballistic or Veronica
went ballistic or the Bude-Smiths went
ballistic. And she often says
‘facetious’: I hope you’re not being . . .
And a lot of people have chips
on their shoulders which is bad
and woe betide mutton dressed as lamb.
And the word ‘log’ turns up quite a lot.
I’m down to my last log, she says,
do you think I should ring Neville?
I would, I say, lighting a cigarette.
You’re not smoking! she says.

Of course not! I’ve given smoking up!
I can hear my mother frowning.
And then she says, The trouble with
Neville is that he is so alakefic.
You’re right about that, I say,
blowing smoke into the air.