

SUE TOWNSEND
ADRIAN MOLE
FROM MINOR
TO MAJOR

THE MOLE DIARIES: THE FIRST TEN YEARS



Monday July 17th 1989

My father has just telephoned the office to say that he thinks my mother is having an affair with the lodger, Martin Muffet. I asked him what evidence he has for his suspicions. 'I found your mother in Martin Muffet's bed this morning,' he said. Apparently my mother claimed she had been 'testing the tog rate' of Martin Muffet's duvet. Will I never escape from my parents' perpetual domestic dramas? I have written to my mother, reminding her of her parental responsibilities.

Oxford.

Monday July 17th

Mother,

My father telephoned me at 11.00 am this morning in some distress. He had just witnessed the unsavoury sight of you and Martin Muffet side by side in the aforementioned's bed. Your explanation 'testing the tog rate' etc seems a little, on the face of it, unsatisfactory. (Especially since we are all suffering from the highest temperatures since 1976; it was 93degF or 34degC last night. I was forced to take my pyjamas off.)

When I lived at home I was constantly complaining about my thin duvet, yet not once did you crawl into my bed to investigate further. My father and I are now convinced that your relationship with Martin Muffet is of a sexual nature. Though how you could bring yourself to be intimate with a man who has the complete works of Wilbur Smith by his bed baffles me.

(That reminds me, you never did acknowledge the volume of Kafka's Letters I sent to you for your birthday.) Do I have to remind you that you have a small child in the house, namely my innocent sister, Rosie.' I am confined here in Oxford with matters domestic and intellectual but as soon as I have fulfilled my commitments I will hasten home and attempt to sort out the mess.

I urge you to restrain your unseemly middle-aged passion until then.

Your son,

Adrian

P.S. May I remind you that Muffet is a mere twenty-two years of age, whereas you are forty-five.

Friday July 21st

A reply from my mother:

Dear Adrian,

Keep your nose out, you pompous git! Martin and I are in love. He doesn't give a toss that I am twenty-three years older than him. He adores me. He says that I am a 'free spirit' and that it has been a crime to shackle me to suburbia. When Martin qualifies as an engineer he is going to build bridges in the Amazon Basin, and I will be there at his side, holding his slide rule, or whatever it is that engineers use.

Rosie is also in love with Martin; she hardly sees her father and when she does he complains that her voice gets on his nerves.

I enclose a photocopy of something Rosie had to write at school, 'My family'. By the way, did you know that Sharon Bott is pregnant? I saw her in Tesco's and she told me she is 'three months gone'. She asked me where she could contact you. I said I'd forgotten the address, but she is bound to come back to me.

Yours,

Pauline

My family

by Rosie Mole. 6 yrs. 8 months

My family is my dog my mummy my martin my daddy my adrain and my grandma who is old. I love my dog and my mummy and martin best aftar them comes daddy.

mummy and martin play at cards at night they do laurghing a lot. daddy shout to be quite, adrain do not live in are house he lives in annother house, i am glad, he does moane and he has got spotts on his face.

Saturday July 22nd

Sharon Bott swore to me that she was on the pill. I even saw her take one now and again. Oh God! Oh God! Oh God!

pm.

At last! Ken Dodd's ordeal at the hands of the Inland Revenue is over. He was acquitted of the charge of keeping PS336,000 in cash in his attic. Dodd cried in the witness box and said his mother had told him not to trust banks, PS336,000! It would buy a hell of a lot of tickling sticks.

Sunday July 23rd

I am a little calmer today. My pulse rate is almost normal. I feared for my sanity last night. How much worry can somebody of my sensitivity take? There must be a point at which my frail human body cries, 'No more!'

WORRIES

Sharon Bott (pregnant)

Pandora (finding out)

Mother's adultery

Grandma (finding out)

Overdraft PS129.08

Skin

Middle East

Rosie's treachery

Dog will die soon

Knocking in pipes

Third world

Ozone layer

Hole in shoes

Fridge on the blink

Monday July 24th

The worst has happened! The fridge has broken down and two litres of ice-cream melted overnight and dripped through the cardboard wrapper onto the food below. Pandora came down to find me on my knees weeping into the salad crisper. She said, 'For Christ's sake, Adrian, get things into perspective,' but as I later pointed out to her, I can ill afford to throw food away, especially when I am already facing financial ruin.

'We're talking about a ten-day-old lettuce and half-a-pound of soggy tomatoes,' she said. She added, 'I hope you realise, Adrian, that you're well on your way to having a nervous breakdown.' She should know - most of her friends are having them, recovering from them or writing books about them. No word from Sharon Bott.

Tuesday July 25th

I received the following letter from Martin Muffet this morning. I have corrected the many multifarious spelling mistakes.

Dear Adrian,

OK, so you and me don't exactly hit it off, right.' I know you don't rate me because I'm an engineering student. Well I'll tell you something mate. / don't rate floppy-wristed so-called intellectuals who fart-arse about reading books all day, right.'

What's happening with me and your mother has got nothing to do with you. She is a grown woman.

I have put new washers on all the taps and re-hung the doors on the kitchen cupboards. Also I have bled all the radiators and mended the lawnmower, and your mother can now use the gas oven without stooping.

Your father is a lazy sod, and so are you. Do you realise that there was not even a screwdriver in the place when I moved in. It's a good job I have my own well-equipped tool box.

One day I will be your stepfather so we will have to get on, I suppose. Your dad is looking for a flat. We all had a talk last night and thought it was for the best. We are hoping to get married next December (not me and your dad, of course, I mean me and your mother). So I hope you will by then have thrown down your gauntlet and swallowed the pill.

Best wishes,

Martin Muffet (Lodger)

P.S. Wilbur Smith may not be Kafka but tell me this, what did Kafka know about the Laws of the Jungle. Also, would Kafka know which rifle to use to knock out an elephant at 500 paces. Like hell he would.

I read this moronic scrawl aloud to Pandora through the bathroom door. To my amazement she took Muffet's side! She said, 'I'm with Muffet there. I've lost all patience with Kafka, he lacks muscularity.'

Julian Twyselton-Fife passed by and whispered, 'Our beloved Pandora's on the turn, Aidy. She's been keeping company with those thick-necks at Rocky's gym! I smell trouble ahead.'

'She's your wife,' I snapped. 'Forbid her to go to the gym.'

'My, my,' sighed Julian. 'We are living in post-feminist times, aren't we.' You're getting quite Wilbur Smithish. You'll be marching about in a safari suit next.'

Friday July 28th

It's ridiculous that three sets of sheets are used every week. If I shared Pandora's bed it would save on washing powder. I've pointed this out many times but the last time I did so she replied, 'You're obsessed with the bloody laundry. Look at the fuss you kicked up over losing one single handkerchief.'

Julian said, 'If you're going to go on about that missing blue handkerchief again I shall go simply berserk.'

I shut up, but quite honestly, dear diary, I am still extremely annoyed. That handkerchief was one of a set of seven: a different colour for every day of the week. Pandora says that it's time I joined the Kleenex Culture. She said nobody uses disgusting snot rags these days: she should try telling that to Mr Brown at the Department of the Environment. His wife left him because Brown wouldn't let her use disposable nappies.

Saturday July 29th

Visited my father in his new flat today. It is very sparsely furnished. It has got a single bed, a stereo, a bamboo table, two plastic stacking chairs and one high armchair designed to be used by back sufferers. 'Might come in handy if I ever get a bad back,' he said.

I sat on one of the plastic chairs and tried to think of something to say to him, words of comfort, that sort of thing, but nothing came. He looked around and said, 'Not much to show for over twenty years of marriage, is it.' He offered me a can of Pils, but I declined. (After a few sips I can feel myself turning into a lager lout, no telephone box in my vicinity is safe.)

'Is there no white wine?' I asked.

'White wine?' he mocked. 'White wine? Of course there's white wine; I've got crates of the stuff; or perhaps you'd prefer champagne.' His tirade continued, 'And how about a bit of caviar to go with the champagne, and out-of-season strawberries and profiter-bloody-roles, and a good Stilton, and Carr's bleeding water biscuits?'

Later on we talked about last week's cabinet reshuffle. Mrs 'hatcher has cast Sir Geoffrey Howe aside, as though he were a used tea-bag. Sir Geoffrey is no longer Foreign Secretary. A bloke called John Major is. Nobody England has heard of John Major, let alone foreigners, so I predict that I won't last long. He looks like Mr Pratt, deputy manager of my building society. The one who refused me a hundred per cent mortgage.

Yeah, just wait, Pratt. When I am living in a country mansion with flamingos on my own personal lake I will invite you to take cocktails on the terrace. It will amuse me to see your jaw drop in amazement.

Also, Pratt I will take you on a tour of the house pointing out the many en-suite bathrooms, the fully equipped gym and the whirlpool baths. You will be sorry, Pratt, that you had such little faith in my poetic talent. Your claim that you 'had never heard of a rich poet' just proves your monumental ignorance. What about that best-seller Taking Cocoa with Wendy Cope by Sir Kingsley Amis?

One day I will be England's best known poet. The Restless Tadpole, an opus is nearly finished; and Lo! the Flat Hills of My Homeland, my experimental novel, is flowing nicely. My next step is to find a literary agent. I wonder who acts for Prince Charles?

Monday July 31 st

The Writers'and Artists' Yearbook tells me that a person called Sir Gordon Giles is our Heir's agent. I have written to him offering him my work.

Dear Sir Gordon Giles,

As you cannot fail to see, I have enclosed samples of two works in progress. The Restless Tadpole, an opus. And Lo! the Flat Hills of My Homeland, an experimental novel. I would like you to act on my behalf and sell the aforementioned work, I had in mind Faber and Faber for Tadpole and Weidenfeld for Lo!

About finance, I cannot afford to pay you the usual ten per cent. How about five per cent? My work will sell in great numbers so you won't be out of pocket. Please send the contracts to me at the following work address:

A.A.Mole
c/o Newt Dept
Small Amphibians Section
D.O.E.

18-21 Lord David Cecil Street
OXFORD
OX 1 7SD

P.S. Please do not telephone with your congratulations. My immediate supervisor Mr Brown does not allow us incoming private calls (unless it involves the death of a close relative). I do not have a telephone in my domicile at present, due to previous profligate abuse by my fellow tenants. Please excuse the purple ink that I have used to scribe this letter; I have run out of my usual green.

Thursday August 3rd

I received the following letter this morning:

Adrian Mole
Newt Dept
D.O.E.
Oxford

Sir Gordon Giles Associates
372 Doughty Street
London

Dear Adrian Mole,

Thank you for sending me your two manuscripts, the Restless Tadpole opus and Lo! the Flat Hills of My Homeland. As you cannot fail to see, I have sent them back to you. Frankly, Mr Mole, I found it enormously difficult to read your manuscript. Your miniscule handwriting and your use of green ink does not make for trouble-free reading. Did you know you had failed to put enough stamps onto your somewhat bulky (certainly heavy) parcel?

Whether you did or not, you owe my office one pound seventy-five pence. I will skip over the unpleasant objects that appeared between the pages of your manuscript as I flicked through it.

Bacon rind, bus tickets, a pristine packet of condoms, a pressed wild flower ... I fear that your novel is too experimental to be of any interest to the general public, and the fact that it lacks all vowels makes it incomprehensible at times.

I suggest you send The Restless Tadpole to the Natural History Unit at the BBC, Whiteladies Rd, Bristol. They may know what to make of it. I don't.

I send you my good wishes.

Sir Gordon Giles,
Literary Agent

So that's where those condoms went. I note he didn't send them back!

Friday August 4th

The Queen Mother is eighty-nine years old today! God bless her! A certain Ms Alison Watt has unveiled her portrait of the Queen Mother, Words fail me. The Queen Mother's head looks like a turnip. Ms Watt is twenty-three years old. Enough said, perhaps. I too am an experimental artist but I draw the line at experimenting with our most revered royal.

Oh Queen Mother
There will never be another
It is really true that your eyes are blue
Your charm and grace
And your lin-ed face.. . .
(Unfinished, got bored.)

2.00am

Pandora not yet back from the gym. If she is not careful she will have more muscles than Dublin Bay.

Saturday August 5th

At last! The Restless Tadpole opus is finished! I was lying in bed thinking about sex when the ending came to me.

So! Squiggling Squirming Sensuous one
Dweller of pond and canal
Stretch, stretch, to daylight and t'ward air!
Oh Creature of Darwin, leap, leap, onto land!
Hop Hop Hop 'tis England you inhabit!
Arise! Frog. Arise! A tadpole no more!
Your journey's done, your form is changed
Oh that I could do your trick
Transmogrified
Go! Go! Go! Croak your message to the world!
The End

I don't believe in false modesty, so I will state quietly, dearest diary, that I am certain it is a work of genius. One day schoolchildren will study it for GCSE. Perhaps I should send it to Andrew Lloyd-Webber. It would make a brilliant musical. Yes! Tadpole! would set the West End on fire.

Tadpole! cast list

Tadpole's Mother Julia McKenzie
Tadpole's Father Stephen Fry

Baby Tadpole Madonna

Wise Frog Bernard Levin

Query: has Bernard Levin got an Equity card?

Sunday August 6th

Visited my mother's house today. I can no longer call it home. Muffet has transformed the place. She has got more shelves than a reference library. Everything works. There is even a chain on the plug in the bathroom washbasin. Muffet has always got a tool in his hand, looking for things to shorten, lengthen, tighten or loosen. My mother follows him around like a poodle performing obedience trials at Crufts. It is sickening to watch.

They are still going ahead with their ludicrous plans to get married. Muffet asked me to be the Best Man! I gave as my answer an ironical laugh. Rosie has designed her own bridesmaid's dress. It is vulgar beyond belief. A paederast's delight: off-the-shoulder pink chiffon, held together with satin rosebuds. Nabokov, that you should be alive on this day!

I cannot bring myself to sleep under the same roof as my mother and Muffet, so I begged lodgings from my grandma. I hadn't been inside the door two minutes before I was dragged into the kitchen and forced to admire more of Muffet's handiwork, this time a set of fitted cupboards. Is there no end to the man's interference.' I preferred Grandma's old, unfitted kitchen, and I told her so in no uncertain terms.

She opened Littlewoods' catalogue and showed me the outfit she has ordered for the wedding. She is paying for it over two years. I wonder if Littlewoods realise the risk they are taking? Grandma is not in the best of health, she could go at any moment.

Nipped in to see Bert Baxter before fleeing back to Oxford. Bert was having his toenails cut by a peripatetic chiropodist. When Bert saw me he said, 'Well bugger me, if it ain't Master Mole. When you gettin' rid of them bleedin' spots?'

The chiropodist - a furtive-looking dwarf with dirty fingernails - asked me if I would like a pedicure. I declined with a shudder. When the dwarf had departed I made Bert's tea; a beetroot sandwich and a can of brown ale. He ate and drank with his customary lack of manners. Then he began to reminisce about his ex-dead wife Queenie.

We both got maudlin and Bert confessed that he 'couldn't wait to join his gel'. Sabre has lost his ferocity (along with his teeth). Even his bark is considerably reduced in volume. I've never seen a dog go so grey so quickly. And I was concerned to see how much weight he has lost. His collar hangs round his neck like the ring round Saturn.

Wednesday August 9th

FAX MESSAGE FOR THE ATTENTION OF: John Tydeman Esq, Head of Radio Drama

DATE: August 9th

NO. OF PAGES: 739

SUBJECT: Lo! the Flat Hills of My Homeland

Here is my novel, please read it immediately and then adapt it for radio. I will charge PS1,000. Please broadcast it before 8.30 pm. My grandma removes her deaf aid at 8.35 pm on the dot.

A Mole

Friday August 11 th

Broadcasting House

Dear Adrian Mole,

Have you gone off your head, boy? You clogged my fax machine up for eight solid hours. You don't fax 739 pages of manuscript. You parcel it up nicely and send it through the post.

Either you or my fax seems to have gobbled up the vowels of your novel, Lo! the Flat Hills of My Homeland. Your manuscript is awash with consonants, but vowels are very thin on the ground, thin to the point of non-existence. You expect a thousand pounds! This made me laugh quite a lot.

I do not adapt plays, my role at the BBC is Head of Drama. I dictate policy and encourage new writing etc. If you want your voweless novel adapting, you must do it yourself.

Yours (but only just) John Tydeman

PS I am going to Australia I shall be gone for some time.

Thursday August 17th

Tadpole has been rejected by the Bristol BBC. No reason was given. They will be sorry one day, the moronic philistines. I have sent it to Craig Raine, who is the poetry editor of Faber and Faber. He is a very hirsute man, and he is sure to understand that I am trying to move English Poetry into the twenty-second century single-handedly. I was lucky; there were only just enough stamps in Brown's drawer. Harry Corbett, the father of Sooty the glove puppet, died today.

Friday August 18th

I was working on a projection of newt births (1995) when Brown burst into my cubicle and started ranting on about postage stamps. He virtually accused me of theft! From now on everybody in the Newt Dept has to sign in a little book, and give the destination and reason before taking a stamp.

The stamps are now kept in a locked box, and only Brown has a key. I'm surprised he doesn't hire Securicor to keep a twenty-four-hour watch over his stupid box. All this is most inconvenient; Brown has a weak bladder and visits the lavatory at least ten times a day. His visits usually coincide with the times I urgently require a stamp. I will have to start buying stamps from the post office now. It is essential that my manuscripts are perused. It can only be a matter of time before I am discovered.

Wednesday August 23rd

The government is selling off our water, surely this is illegal? If a cloud bursts over my house and rains over my garden does the water belong to me, God or Mrs Thatcher? An interesting legal point.

Perhaps I will write to John Mortimer of Rumpole fame. It is sure to interest his legalistic brain. He may use the argument in one of his amusing TV episodes. I will have to protect my copyright of course. I really must get a literary agent.

Pandora was seen getting into Rocky Armstrong's Cadillac last night. My informant was Mr Brown. He disapproves of Cadillacs because of their high fuel consumption.

Monday August 28th

I have sent Lo! to Ed Victor, who is Iris Murdoch's literary agent. He will appreciate it, I am sure. After all, me and Iris are both concerned with the metaphysical world.

Thursday August 31 st

Princess Anne's marriage is over! Captain Mark Phillips has moved out of the main part of Gatcombe House and into a sort of prefab in the grounds. I expect he has taken the stereo with him.

A point of interest: 'Captain' is the name of Jack Woolley's dog in 'The Archers'.

Wednesday September 20th

When I got home from work today I was astonished to find Rocky, tm monolithic body builder, sitting at the table holding a cucumber sandwich between his massive cruise-missile-like fingers. He rose to his feet as I entered the room, but I hastily urged him to sit down. I had no wish to be dwarfed by his six-foot-four frame. Pandora said, 'Rocky and I are in love.'

Rocky dipped his head bashfully and then looked at Pandora, and I swear, dear diary, there truly was love-light in his eyes. I somehow managed to croak out, 'I'm very happy for you,' before stumbling from the room and throwing myself onto my bed. I fantasised about Rocky choking on a piece of

cucumber rind (Pandora never cuts the skin off). Or of him being allergic to cucumber and dying hideously swollen, surrounded by baffled helpless doctors.

Saturday September 30th

Three hundred thousand Scottish people have failed to pay their Poll Tax. Mrs Thatcher will never dare to introduce it to England. It would be political suicide. Pandora is in her bedroom. I can hear Rocky pleading with her in his surprisingly high-pitched voice. 'But it's been ten days, I fort you loved me. Pan.'

I can hear her saying, 'I do, Rocky, but I prefer to keep my body to myself, now go to sleep.'

Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha!

October 1st

Julian was furious this morning, he couldn't get into the bathroom where his creams and lotions were waiting for him. Rocky could be heard floundering in the bath like Moby Dick. Julian came into my room and sat on the end of my bed. He confessed that it was no longer amusing being married to Pandora. He said, 'I may divorce her.' I urged him to do so.

Monday October 2nd

A letter from Barry Kent:

Yo!

I get my parole next week so lme coming too see you ok? Get some beer in. Have you heard of a bloke called Blake he has wrote some real hard poems. Tiger Tiger is one. Nigel come to see me last week. He is not a buddhist monk now, he is joined the Socialist Worker he made me buy a magazine. I am writin' a poem for it.

Yo!

Baz

Barry Kent may be well known on the poetry reading circuit (Baz, the Skinhead Poet) but he is still a moron. Anyone who is remotely educated knows that Rupert Blake's poem is entided 'Tyger! Tyger!' A 'y' not an 'i'.

I have sent a Telemessage via the phone at work ordering Kent not to come here next week.

Yo!

Baz.

Regret, have to go on newt ringing expedition next week So won't be here. It is Tyger not Tiger.

Yo!

Aidy

Monday October 8th

Our household now consists of Julian Twyselton-Fife, Pandora Braithwaite, Rocky (Big Boy) Livingstone, Barry Kent and me, Adrian Mole. It is prison regulations that prisoners cannot receive Telemessages or something; also I had forgotten to tell British Telecom to put Barry's prison registration number on the front of the envelope, so he turned up.

We are all squeezed into one living room, a kitchenette, two bedrooms, a box room and a bathroom. I am a person who needs my personal space. Sharing a box room with Kent is abhorrent to me; he takes up all my remaining floor space. There is nowhere to put my slippers. Also he reads all night.

But, dear diary (I would got mad without you to confide in!), what is sending me insane is that he has been taken up by the Oxford literary crowd! Those weak-chinned knobheads have invited him to every function going. He, Barry Kent has dined in hall at Pandora's college!

Pandora said the dons thought him an 'absolute darling'. Also he has been spouting his vile poetry to crowds of impressionable undergraduates at PS75 a session. Thank God he goes back to prison tomorrow. This is what he ranted at the finest in the land last night to tumultuous applause and requests for his autograph:

education

So what?

So you know things

So you're clever

So what?

Know how to put the boot in?

Steal a car?

Slop out?

Start a riot?

You know nothink!

Nothink!

Nothink!

You. No. Think. No. Know. Think!

Friday October 13 th

My mother telephoned the office this morning, Brown came into my cubicle to tell me that he was allowing me to take the call because it was a 'matter of life and death' that my mother speak to me.

Life or death? If death, who had died? If life, had Sharon Bott decided I was the father of her unborn child?

The colour drained from my face, Brown had to help me to my feet and guide me towards the instrument of my fate, namely the telephone. As I picked it up I hesitated before speaking, savouring for a moment my innocence, my ignorance, my former carefree existence. Oh how sweet life was! Oh how I had wasted those so few precious moments!

Brown barked, 'Well go on. Mole, speak!'

mother:(weakly) Hello? Who's that?

ME: It's your son. Who's dead? Is it Grandma?

mother: Nobody's dead.

So, it's life.

ME: She swore she was on the pill. . . I'll pay maintenance towards the child's upkeep, but I won't marry her. . .

mother: For Christ's sake, what are you wittering on about? All I wanted you for was to ask if you want a carnation or a rose.

ME: A carnation or a rose?

mother: Yes.

Brown jiggled the change in his pocket impatiently as I tried to understand the significance of my mother's horticultural ravings. Had she gone mad? Had I? A rose? A carnation? Was she speaking in code?

mother: Hurry up, Adrian, Martin's under the sink shouting for the mole grips.

ME: Mole grips?

mother (screeching): A carnation or a rose!

ME: How can I possibly decide? I don't know in what context. . .

mother (berserk): Buttonholes! Buttonholes! What do you want in your sodding buttonhole?

ME: I haven't got a buttonhole.

mother: Don't be ridiculous, of course you've . . .

ME: My duffle coat is fastened by toggles.

mother: You are not wearing that vile duffle coat to my wedding!

Brown sat down behind his desk and pretended to read a report. The Effects of the Destruction of the Ozone Layer on the Newt Population of England, Scotland and Wales.

ME: I have to go now . . .

mother (going barmy): A carnation or a rose?! . . . Answer me! One or the other?

ME: I can't possibly decide right now, aesthetics are involved . . .

mother (screaming): Answer me!

Brown frowned and cleared his throat. He doodled on the cover of the report. The doodle looked like a cruise missile, it was aimed at a circle. Inside the circle Brown printed: 'AM'. Did this mean 'a.m.' as in morning, or 'A.M.' as in my initials? Was the significance of the doodle that Brown wished me dead?

ME: All right, a rose!

mother: Thank you!

I put the phone down and Brown pounced on me (not literally pounced, not like a jaguar or a lion would pounce) and said, 'From now on you are forbidden to touch that phone, and should your whole family end up in intensive care you will enquire of their relative conditions via a public phone booth!'

Saturday October 14th

I couldn't face staying in my flat tonight, so I went to the cinema and watched Aliens (a sign of my desperation). I ate two giant tubs of popcorn, three Bounty bars, one drink on a stick, one choc-ice, two Jumbo hot dogs and a quarter pound of Devon toffees. My skin will react tomorrow but I don't care.

Even when my skin is relatively unblemished it doesn't seem to make any difference to my life: women do not seem to be attracted to me, and men do not seem to notice my existence. What am I doing wrong? Have I got halitosis? Should I use an underarm deodorant? Am I without dress sense?

Should I stop wearing plastic shoes? I walked past a public house which was full of uncouth men laughing and backslapping, and talking in confident voices of masculine things. God, how I envied them. None of them gave a toss about the future of English poetry.

I have never been into a pub on my own. I feel that I am trespassing somehow. Am I a normal man? Perhaps I am a bisexual? Will I be buying my underwear from the Marks and Spencer's lingerie range in future?

Sunday October 15th

How I laughed at last night's entry regarding my sexuality! I could never wear women's underwear. It takes forever to iron; all those frills and lace bits! Rocky doesn't wear underpants, 'Y' fronts or boxer shorts. He wears thongs; there were ten of them on the bathroom towel-rail the other day, and there was still room for Pandora's 'NO POLL TAX' XXL T-shirt.

Wednesday October 18th

Julian's sister is a qualified solicitor, her name is Davina Belling. She has informed Julian that his marriage to Pandora can be annulled on grounds of non-consumption. Pandora will have to be medically examined to prove that she is still a virgin. Davina Belling is not giving her services free: she is giving her brother a ten per cent discount.

According to Julian this is because he threw Davina's Tiny Tears doll over the cliffs at Beachy Head fifteen years ago. My God! Women certainly have long memories. Mr Honecker, the East German Communist Party leader, was thrown out of office today. The East Germans are sick of him. They want the Berlin Wall to come down.

Poor idealistic fools! The Wall will never come down in their lifetime or mine.

Thursday October 26th

Sabre is dead, knocked down by a milk float. Bert telephoned the office this morning. Luckily, Brown was in the toilet at the time and I knew he'd be at least five minutes because he'd taken the Daily Telegraph in there with him. So I was able to give Bert my sincere condolences. I promised to go and visit him at the weekend and I said I would personally bury Sabre in Bert's little garden.

He will be kept in the vet's fridge until I arrive. Pandora was distraught when she heard the news. It brought us together, briefly.

Nigel Lawson, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, has resigned. He had a row with Mrs Thatcher at breakfast. He is jealous because a certain Professor Alan Waters has been hanging about.

John Major has got Lawson's job. Apparently John Major's father was a knife-thrower in the circus. I wonder if John Major stabbed Lawson in the back. Ha! Ha! Ha!

Friday October 27th

Rocky has broken Pandora's pine bed. She is extremely angry. He is already responsible for the springs on the sofa going, and all the cupboard doors have lost their knobs. The man just doesn't know his own strength. Teaspoons crumple in his hands. Curtains and curtain tracks fall to the carpet. Doors are wrenched from their hinges.

Saturday October 28th

Pandora and I picked up the box containing Sabre's deep chilled body from the vet's. We then drove in a taxi to Bert's bungalow where my mother and Mrs Braithwaite were waiting for us. Bert was in his wedding suit, I could tell he'd been crying because his nose and eyes were the colour of cough linctus (Halls).

While the others had a cup of tea I went out to the garden to dig a grave. There was no spade, naturellement, so I was forced to grovel in the dirt and hack at the earth with a Garden trowel. It wasn't long before I was filthy, sweating and totally exhausted. A horny-handed man of the soil I am not. My skills are intellectual and artistic.

Bert came out to the back door in his wheelchair and shouted, 'Hurry up, yer lazy bleeder. Sabre's starting to go off.'

I cursed the day I ever set eyes on Bert. He has caused me nothing but grief. It's because of him I failed my 'A' Levels. When my fellow classmates were revising under their anglepoises, I was helping Bert by cutting his corns, or taking his bottles back to the off licence. Why, God, why? Why me?

Anyway, I eventually got the hole dug. It took all three of us to carry Bert out to the garden. 'Looks like a bleedin' artillery shell's exploded,' said Bert nastily when he saw the hole. 'I wanted a proper, oblong grave.'

I choked back comment, though my eyes filled with tears of self-pity. Luckily, Pandora took my glistening eyes to be a sign of grief for Sabre, and she took my hand and squeezed it and said, 'There, there, my pet, I think it's a splendid hole, I mean grave.'

I was almost glad that Sabre had died. I love Pandora. She released my hand and we put Sabre in the hole, then everyone took it in turns to throw earth onto the corpse and Mr Braithwaite emptied a bag of John Innes Compost on top.

Then my mother pressed some daffodil bulbs into the mixture and that was that. We went inside and had a drink; vodka and Slimline tonic for the women, and a can of Newcastle Brown for the men. I hated leaving Bert but on the other hand I also hate Bert, so I did.

Pandora promised that we would call round again tomorrow. Jesus! When is Bert going to die? He must surely be one of the oldest men in Great Britain by now. He was eighty-six when I first met him and that was years ago.

Sunday October 29th

How could I have written the above? Bert was sad and pathetic today, I don't really hate him. It's just that he disgusts me. I have written a poem about Sabre, I hope Bert likes it.

sabre

Fearless Sabre, vicious, faithful, furry friend of man,
you really should have looked, and seen that quiet Co-op van.
I know this is a terrible poem, but Bert won't know or care.

Monday November 6th

A letter from Ed Victor, the literary agent:

My dear Mr Mole,

Are you serious? Is this some kind of joke? Your novel lacks vowels of any kind. Is this deliberate or do you have a rare form of dyslexia? You send me a handwritten manuscript in green ink, which is bristling with consonants, yet utterly devoid of vowels, and you expect me to read the goddamn thing?

Listen, I'm a busy man. I have houses to furnish, planes to catch. Douglas Adams is one of my authors. My hands are full, OK? Buy yourself a typewriter, kid.

All my good wishes,

Ed

Wednesday November 8th

I have seriously burned my hand on a rogue Catherine wheel at tonight's belated Bonfire Party. It is all Rocky's fault, he is very religious and said, 'It won't be right to have it on a Sunday.'

I said, 'I doubt if God gives a toss if we earthlings let off our fireworks!'

Rocky shouted, 'Hey, less of the language, man! I mean 'e can 'ear you, you know.' He looked up to the sky as if expecting to see God frowning down because an earthling had said 'toss'.

Friday November 10th

As I have been predicting for some time, the Berlin Wall has come down! Both types of Germans, Communist and Non-Communist, danced in the streets. Sprayed champagne (a waste, in my opinion) and stayed up late.

World leaders are ecstatic, except for Mr Kohl, the German Chancellor, who is worried that the East Germans will go mad in the shops. Talking about shops; there are Christmas trees in all the shop windows. This is a bad sign. By Christmas Day I will be Martin Muffet's stepson.

Saturday November 11th

A report was released today that England's cattle feed has been contaminated by lead. I have emptied the fridge of all cow-related products. I poured the milk down the toilet. (The sink is blocked up again.)

My fellow tenants went mad because there was no milk for their tea or cornflakes. I received no thanks whatsoever for my life-saving actions. I am looking forward to alternative accommodation. Rang Rosie to wish her a happy birthday, but she was out at the cinema with Muffet.

Sunday November 12th

It is Remembrance Sunday today. I watched some old men march past in Oxford town centre. I removed my balaclava as a sign of respect.

Saturday November 18th

Barry Kent is out of prison. He turned up here today, trying to sell pieces of the Berlin Wall. Rocky bought four pieces. When asked why he said, 'It's 'istory, man. I'm gonna give 'em to my kids.'

Pandora looked up from her Russian language edition of Tales of the Underground by Dostoyevsky and said, 'Kids.'" It was only one word, but it was the way she said it. It chilled us three men to the bone.

Rocky was the first to recover, he said, 'Yeah, I sorta' want kids one day, Pan.'

'Not with me you won't, dearie,' she said. 'No sex, I'm British.' Then she gave a wild laugh and went back to her book. I've got to get out of here.

Thursday November 23rd

Barry Kent has appeared on television. The great big oaf was interviewed by a big-eared woman about his cretinous poetry. It was only a pathetic regional arts programme but the woman carried on as though Barry was the new Messiah!

Kent swore twice and the words had to be bleeped out. But we viewers could clearly see that Kent's lips had formed the letter 'F'. I have written to the TV company asking them to ban Kent from our screens.

Friday November 24th

A picture postcard of Leningrad came back from Craig Raine. I quote the remarks on the back in full:

Mr Mole,

The Restless Tadpole is effete crap.

He did not send my manuscript back.

Saturday November 25th

Woke up in a sweat. What if Craig Raine intends to keep The Restless Tadpole and publish it as his own?

Sunday November 26th

Wyoming Homepride has flouted the Sunday Trading Laws. I am strictly against Sunday trading. However as I happened to be passing a branch of W.H., I nipped in and bought a sink plunger.

Monday November 27th

I have been severely reprimanded by Brown. British Telecom have squealed on me regarding the Telemessage I sent to Kent ages ago. I took the reprimand like a man. But after he had dismissed me from his office I went into my cubicle and had a good cry. Janice Conlon (Ozone Dept) heard me and came in and patted my shoulder. This made me sob louder and she put her arms around me and squashed me to her (not inconsiderable) bosom. I felt my manhood stir and come up for air.

About time! Who needs you, Pandora Braithwaite? Janice has asked me out for a Chinese meal. I've got one day to practice using chopsticks.

Tuesday November 28th

Practised all morning, using two pencils and a piece of cheese covered in Branston pickle.

Wednesday November 29th

I will never talk to Janice Conlon ever again. She has blabbed to the whole Ozone Dept that I drank the contents of the finger bowl and washed my fingers in the saki cup. I will never live this down.

Thursday November 30th

The newt dept were in convulsions today as the news reached them about my gastronomic faux pas. Even Brown gave me one of his hideous half

smiles when we met at the gents' urinals before lunch.

He said, 'Don't forget to wash your hands after you've been to the toilet, Mole. I believe we have a cup of saki somewhere on the premises.' Ha! Ha! Ha! Brown. Ho! Ho! Ho! What a wit! Cor strike a light, guv! You ain't 'alf funny! Stand up. Brown, and accept your award for Funniest Quip of the Year! Move over, Les Dawson, your successor has arrived!

Friday December 1st

Quite frankly, dear diary, I wouldn't give a toss if all of the newts in the world disappeared overnight. I am sick to death of them. I have asked Brown for a transfer. I have got myself in a rut lately.

work (boring)

sex (none)

home life (dull)

intellect (re-reading Black Beauty)

I have got nothing to look forward to in my life. Rocky suggested I become a member of his gym, but how can I possibly display my body in public? The suggestion is laughable. Would Kafka pump iron? Would A. N. Wilson jostle in a Jacuzzi? Would Osbert Sitwell flick his towel in the shower?

No, gyms are not for literary men like me. Sometimes I envy Rocky, he has only ever read two books in his life. (Roar! by Wilbur Smith, and The Highway Code by HMGP). He lives in a world of sights and sounds only. He does not lie awake at night worrying about the Palestinians.

Saturday December 2nd

A letter from my mother:

Dear Adrian,

Have you decided what to wear to the wedding yet? I warn you, kid, if you turn up in that mangy duffle coat I will personally tear your head from your shoulders. Why don't you use that virgin Access card of yours and buy a new suit: navy-blue, three-button jacket, no vent, trousers with pleated front and turn-ups. A pale-blue suit with discreet stripe and a silk tie (red or pink). Black slip-on shoes, black socks?

Have you written your speech yet? You must remember to tell the Bridesmaid and Maid of Honour how pretty they look and thank the guests for coming and read out the telegrams. Don't ramble on about bloody Kafka or the Norwegian leather industry. Do welcome Martin to the family; a hearty masculine handshake would be certain to earn you a round of applause and help to convince his parents that he is doing the right thing.

(He hasn't told them I am forty-five and got kids.) I meant to invite Pandora, Julian and Rocky. Will you do this for me? .And if you run into Barry Kent, ask him. It will be exciting to have a celebrity at the wedding. Did you see him on television the other night talking to Melvyn Bragg? Wasn't he brilliant? (Kent not Bragg.) I was thrilled to see that his book, So?, is number five in the Sunday Times Best-Seller List. You must be so pleased. It was you who encouraged him, wasn't it?

Yours,

Pauline (Mum)

Sunday December 3rd

Jason Donovan, Kylie Minogue, Bros, Bananarama and Wet Wet Wet have recorded a new version of 'Do They Know It's Christmas?' All the money from this record is going to the starving of Ethiopia. I would pay good money not to hear this record. I have sent PS5 to Oxfam. I requested a receipt.

Monday December 4th

I am in bed suffering from the flu that is sweeping Britain like a bush fire (Australian). Julian has been very kind. He went to Boots and bought me a bottle of Night Nurse and a packet of Tunes (blackcurrant). I have already used two Andrex toilet rolls in blowing my nose. Julian also rang the office to inform Brown of my incapacity. Brown was not sympathetic. He asked Julian to tell me that I may be 'prosecuted for stealing postage stamps belonging to Her Majesty's Government'. A new worry.

Tuesday December 12th

9.00am

4.00pm

5.00pm

Too ill to write. Four Andrex toilet rolls is the latest update. Query: I must have expelled at least two gallons of snot. Where does it all come from and where is it stored. Managed a rich-tea biscuit.

Crumbs in bed but too weak to brush them out. I have been deserted. Pandora is at a tutorial. Rocky is at the gym, and Julian is doing his Christmas shopping.

A playwright is in charge in Czechoslovakia! A bloke called Vaclav Havel was sworn in. Let's hope he doesn't make a drama out of a crisis.

Friday December 15th

Ate a little Readybrek for breakfast, and now feel that I will pull through. It has been touch and go. I have been near to death and yet have pulled back from the brink. I am a better person for the experience. A calmness has descended on me. I have put things into perspective. I am now above caring about the petty things of life.

3.45pm

Where is my brown comb. Who has had it? I have looked after that comb for six years, man and boy.

Saturday December 16th

The Wedding is next week and I have got nothing to wear. Should I buy or should I hire? Pandora has bought a new Gothic outfit from Miss Selfridge. Rocky has got nine suits already and Julian is going in his nineteen-twenties blazer, Oxford bags and cravat. I have asked him not to wear his monocle. If there is a fight at the wedding it could prove to be a hazard.

Monday December 18th

Pandora has had her beautiful treacle-coloured hair shaved off. She hasn't got a hair on her head.

She ran into the bathroom and slammed the door, but I clearly saw her bald bonce shining under the ceiling light as she passed by the kitchen door. She has been sobbing in a heartbroken manner all night, but she refused to unlock the door. I slipped a note under the door, 'Dinner is ready; do you want tinned pears after?' but I received no response. Why has she emasculated herself in such a manner? Julian, Rocky and I are baffled. Her ears will stick out more than ever now.

Went back to work today. Brown is away with the flu. I hope he is ill for a long time, develops complications etc. The police haven't been to the office to question me about the stamps so perhaps Brown has decided against prosecution. I have sent him a 'Get Well' card. The queue in the post office was snaking out of the door, so I went back to the office and took a stamp from his box, put it on his card and ran to the post box to catch the four o' clock post.

Tuesday December 19th

Bought a suit with some difficulty. The salesman said I had 'unusually short legs'. I hadn't signed the back of my Access card, so there was a ridiculous fuss at the cash till. The manager was called. The shop was full of women buying boxer shorts, but they all stopped to watch my humiliation.

After I had given my grandmother's date of birth and my mother's maiden name, the manager agreed with me that I was indeed Adrian Albert Mole, bom in Leicester, and he deigned to allow me to purchase a navy-blue suit, blue shirt and red silk tie. He said, 'We have to be careful, sir.'

I said that I would be careful not to come into his shop again. But I said it quietly, to myself. He could easily have snatched my goods back. He looked the type.

Pandora is wearing a woolly hat with a bobble. Her ears, as I feared, look like halves of pancakes stuck to the side of her head. She refuses to give a reason for her mad action. Apart from saying, 'It's something I had to do.'

Wednesday December 20th

My scalp is very itchy. Scratched all night.

Mr Patel our newsagent came round with his bill early this morning. He said he wouldn't leave until it was paid. To my horror I found it to be one hundred and forty-three pounds, nine pence! It is Julian's responsibility to pay the bill every week; he has obviously been derelict in his duty. I made Mr Patel a cup of tea and sat him in the kitchen, then I knocked on Julian's door, entered and asked him where the paper money had gone.

'Spent, dear boy, spent. On a pair of Gucci loafers. I couldn't resist them. Sorry.'

I asked Mr Patel if he would accept the Gucci loafers in lieu of payment, but he looked at me as though I was an idiot and said, 'I got enough shoes it's money I need.'

Julian appeared in his Noel Coward dressing-gown and said, 'These are not shoes, Mr Patel, they are works of art. With these on your feet, you will be the king of Oxford's newsagents. You will probably end up as the Chairman of the Newsagents' Federation or something.'

Mr Patel said, 'One hundred and forty-three pounds, please. I will forget the nine pence.'

'No can do, old darling,' said Julian with a smile. 'All my spondulicks are gone, I haven't a bean, I'm flat broke. In Cary Street.'

The toilet flushed and Rocky appeared, his left trouser pocket was bulging. Was this evidence of early morning sexual excitement or did the bulge mean money? I explained the situation to Rocky in words of one syllable. Rocky said, 'So Julian's a fief, what's had our money and spent it on some Guccis? That ain't on, Jule,' chided the Neanderthal, 'I ought to give you some serious grief'

Julian fled into the bathroom as Rocky approached him. Then Mr Patel cowered in the corner under the hanging spider plant as Rocky turned and approached him. 'Woss the damage, Mr Patel?' he asked; and took out a large roll of banknotes.

Mr Patel left, but not before I had cancelled the majority of our magazines and papers: the Spectator, the Economist, the Listener, Body Builder, The Stage, Punch, Vogue, Elle, Fast Car, the Guardian, the Sun, the Daily Mail, Interiors.

They have all gone. We are left with the Independent, the Mirror, the London Review of Books, Viz and Private Eye. Pandora agreed to read Marxism Today, Interiors and Vogue in W. H. Smith. Julian had the nerve to loaf about in the Gucci loafers today. He is entirely without shame.

Saturday December 24th

my mother's wedding day

The first shock was that my father had been invited to the Registry Office and the reception. The second shock was coming eye to eye with the dead fox hanging round my grandma's neck. Rocky drove us over from Oxford in his flash car. It is so big that, had we so wished, we could have played a game of badminton in the back. We parked outside the office on double yellow lines and went inside to wait. Grandma produced a handkerchief, spat on it, and used a corner to wipe a smut off my face. She said, 'You look a proper bobby dazzler in your suit.'

Everyone took a step back as Rocky (Big Boy) Livingstone stepped into the wedding room, only to step back yet again when Julian appeared, wagging his cigarette holder about. Pandora's parents were there with Bert Baxter. Mr and Mrs Singh were talking to Mr and Mrs O'Leary about the dustbin men's latest outrage and Martin Muffet's parents stood at the back of the room looking sad.

He is their only child. My mother's parents were invited but didn't turn up. They were busy slaughtering turkeys in Norfolk.

The Registrar came into the room, a nice-looking bouncy woman in a purple leaf-printed dress. She indicated towards the doorway and my mother and Muffet appeared with Rosie behind them (she looking like a petulant Lolita). I saw several faces crumple: my father's, Mr Muffet's and Mrs Muffet's.

Muffet was dressed in an appalling suit (salmon-pink), a white shirt and a red polka dot tie. Given his height (tall), and weight (thin), he looked like a stick of Skegness rock. My mother looked old, quite frankly, diary. She had done her best with make-up and clothes; cream suit, black accessories, floppy hat etc, but nothing could disguise the ravages of time. She looked like Martin Muffet's mother. I stepped forward and joined the wedding party.

I was conscious that all eyes were on my back, so I tried not to scratch the back of my scalp (which had been driving me mad with irritation for some days). The Registrar droned on and before I knew it, it was time to sign the register and give my mother and stepfather my hypocritical good wishes.

Mrs Muffet wept quietly at the back of the room. Bert Baxter said loudly, if I don't have a pee soon, I'll wet myself And Rosie, whom I had picked up in order to show her the register, screamed and said, 'Look, Mummy, Adrian has got insects in his hair.'

People moved away from us, except for my mother, who started to examine my hair, tuft by tuft. She said quiedy, but venomously, 'Your bloody head is infested with nits! And some of them have got wings! Keep away from Rosie.'

So, while the rest of the wedding guests were roistering in the Function Room at the British Legion, I was sitting in my grandmother's house having a foul-smelling lotion - Prioderm - applied to my hair. Grandma was wearing rubber gloves and a nasty expression on her face.

I am not in any of the photographs. Julian read my speech out and was rewarded with loud laughter and applause. (He failed to give me a credit.) There was a small fight in the gents between my father and Mr Muffet senior, but it was not personal; they were fighting over the last piece of shiny toilet paper.

Rocky, Julian and Pandora picked me up from Grandma's. We drove back to Oxford in silence. The car was full of foul fumes from the lotion which has to be kept on for twenty-four hours. I have decided not to carry on with my diary. Why catalogue such misery? What purpose does it serve?

2. 00am

Pandora has just confessed to me that the reason she shaved her hair off was because her scalp was infested with head lice. I will never, ever, forgive her for passing them on to me. Never, ever. My love for her has gone. Kaput.

Monday January 1st 1990

These are my New Year's Resolutions:

Finish War and Peace

Go to the dentist with aching molar

Take driving lessons

Change job

Make a diary entry every day

Tuesday January 9th

Brown ordered me to take down the Christmas decorations in my cubicle today. He said he was 'sick of living under the dreadful spectre of Christmas'. Brown doesn't believe in Christmas. He spent Christmas Day classifying seaweed in Dungeness.

Friday February 16th

My first driving lesson today. My instructor is a woman called Vanessa Partridge. She is no relation to my former best friend, Nigel Partridge, who is now in the army. I was expecting to spend my first lesson driving around a deserted airfield or something, but instead Ms Partridge ordered me onto the roads! Busy roads.

I felt like an Iranian on a suicide mission. At least Iranians have their religion to comfort them, but, being an atheist, I had nothing. As I came to my first roundabout I prayed to God to protect me from all the nasty cars and lorries.

Friday April 6th

I am getting the hang of the gears now, but I have a horrible suspicion that I am probably one of life's pedestrians. Pandora passed her test first time last week. She drives Rocky's car as though she is taking part in a Grand Prix race.

The inmates are still on the roof of Strangeways prison. Mrs Thatcher is having to be restrained from climbing up there and beating their brains in.

Friday April 13 th

Vanessa has got absolutely gorgeous legs. When she operates the dual controls (which is quite often), I can't take my eyes off them. I asked her

when I can put in for my test. She looked shiftily and said, 'Not for a while yet.' Why not? I have had seven driving lessons at ten pounds a time. I have very limited financial resources. I am still paying for my suit. In fact Access are hounding me for this month's payment.

Friday April 27th

Still can't manage the clutch, and I can't stop driving too near to the kerb. I nearly wiped out a pensioner's shopping trolley today. Vanessa has had streaks put into her hair - either that or she has gone grey more or less overnight.

Friday May 4th

Brown was waiting for me when I got back from my driving lesson today (gears better but still can't bring myself to overtake anything. I was quite happy to follow that silage spreader, but Vanessa was, I thought, rather impatient.)

Anyway, Brown said that two reams of Conqueror A4 paper had gone missing from the stationery cupboard since the last audit in 1989 (March). Did I know its whereabouts? I quipped, 'Perhaps it's gone on holiday, perhaps it's sick of being stationary.' Brown was not amused.

Friday May 11th

Received the manuscript of The Restless Tadpole back from Craig Raine; after many letters and telephone calls, I might add. The manuscript was in a dreadful condition and was littered with Raine's notes in the margin. 'Laughably pretentious' and 'numbingly philistine' being two of the less offensive and non-obscene terms.

My novel, Lo! the Flat Hills of My Homeland, is currently in the office of the chief bloke at the National Theatre, David Aukin. I have suggested to him that it could easily be adapted for the stage.

The Olivier would be ideal. There would be 144 in the cast and I would need a full orchestra, a lake, and a deer park, plus half-a-dozen live deer. But I don't see why it shouldn't be done - English theatre needs spectacle. I photocopied the script using A4 Conqueror. I hope Mr Aukin is impressed.

Thank God for the warmer weather. Vanessa has discarded her black woolly tights and taken to wearing sheer stockings. I could hardly control myself today, let alone the lousy stinking car.

These driving lessons are doing my head in.

Saturday June 2nd

Lo! came back today. Mr Aukin's note was kind.

Dear Mr Mole,

Thank you for sending me your manuscript, Lo! the Flat Hills of My Homeland. I read it with considerable interest. However, we are operating under difficult financial constrictions, and therefore it would be impossible for us to employ a cast of 144 actors, plus six live deer.

I do wish you good luck,

David Aukin

P.S. There seems to be something wrong with your word processor. Does it object to printing out vowels?

I am restless today. Yesterday's collision with the tar spreading lorry has upset me more than I realised. I am suffering from delayed reaction. Phoned Vanessa, she was at the chiropractor's trying to get her neck back to its original angle.

Sunday June 3rd

Perhaps I should put the vowels back in. The world of literature is obviously not ready for another James Joyce. Barry Kent has been asked to do 'With Great Pleasure' on Radio Four. I wept when I heard this. He has asked me to join him for the evening - in the audience.

Friday June 15th

I can now steer in a straight line. Vanessa is still wearing the surgical collar. She hates it but I quite like to see a woman with a bit of white next to her face.

Friday June 29th

Pandora is now entitled to call herself Dr Pandora Braithwaite. And she will, dear diary, she will.

Did a three-point turn. It took fifteen goes. I asked Vanessa if she thought I was near to taking my test. She said, 'How near is Jupiter to Earth.' I had no idea she was interested in astronomy.

Sunday July 1st

Dr Pandora Braithwaite and Rocky (Big Boy) Livingstone have gone to Barbados to meet Rocky's parents. Rocky's dad is a bank manager, and his mother is an expert on marine life. Rocky is the only one out of four children not to go to university. He is also the only millionaire. Rocky opened his fifth gym yesterday, in Grantham. Somebody from Coronation Street performed the opening ceremony. The one who serves in the shop.

I Not the grocery shop, the other one. I can't remember her name, anyway.

II A thousand middle-aged women blocked Grantham's traffic trying to catch a glimpse of - Mavis? Doreen? Bet? It will come to me.

Friday July 13th

M1 carriageway. Got up to forty-five mph!

Thursday July 19th

OXFORD PLAYHOUSE, 7.30 PM TONIGHT

Bany Kent rambled his way through the BBC recording of 'With Great Pleasure' tonight. He had a famous actor and actress to read his favourite works of prose and poems. The actor used to be the big one in that television series to do with a Dutch policeman. The actress was the one who was always crying in the one about Victorian servants. To finish, Kent bellowed his own poem, 'Earwig'.

earwig

How to measure earwig poo?

How to find how much they do?

Are there scales to measure it?

Those tiny piles of earwig shit?

The BBC have agreed to transmit the word 'shit' providing they can bleep out the more obscene words used throughout the programme. I fear this points to a lowering of standards. Kent will be on 'Desert Island Discs' next!

Friday July 20th

Did a three-point turn in five goes. I am absolutely thrilled with myself. I have started looking at second-hand cars with a view to purchasing one. Got a postcard from my mother and Muffet today, they are in Spain.

Dear Adrian,

Sun, Sand, Sex and Sangria! Salutations!

Mum and Martin

Saturday July 21st

Went to visit my father today, he has received an identically worded postcard from his ex-wife and Muffet. He is furious because my mother has dumped Rosie on him. Rosie is even more furious because she was not invited to go to Esparia. My father has made no attempt to amuse Rosie, apart from buying her a packet of felt-tip pens, and a dot-to-dot book.

She was going 'stir crazy' so I took her to see Bambi. She broke down and wept in such a heartbreaking manner that an usherette shone her torch on her heaving shoulders and ordered her to be quiet. I snapped, 'My sister is a sensitive, sweet little girl, how dare you try to repress her emotions!'

I lectured the usherette on the dangers of internalising others feelings, how it can lead to constipation, ulcers and mental illness. The usherette said, 'Yer a bleedin' loony yerself, if you ask me. An' if you don't shut yer big yap you'll find yerself in the manager's office.'

Sunday July 22nd

Rosie clung onto my legs today and begged me to take her back to Oxford with me. My father made no attempt to restrain her outburst. He carried on watching Songs of Praise out of the corner of his eye. He enjoys mocking the congregation. From today onwards I am going to make a daily diary entry.

Drought conditions prevail. England looks like the parched part of Tunisia.

Thursday August 2nd

Iraq has invaded Kuwait. I'm not sure why. Something to do with oil.

Friday August 17th

Practised doing a hill start. Rolled down the hill as often as the Duke of York's men in the song. Vanessa has developed several nervous mannerisms, she is obviously a deeply neurotic woman. Why do I always get them?

Friday August 31st

I am coming to the (reluctant) conclusion that Vanessa is an incompetent driving instructor. I am making very little progress. I may defect and go to the British School of Motoring. I will miss her, but the facts must be faced. She is no good at her job. I'm still nowhere near to taking my test.

Saturday September 1st

Julian has got a job as a researcher at the BBC. He is working on documentary called 'Living with Failure'. He has asked me if the producer can have a quick chat with me. Don't ask me why.

Sunday September 2nd

Wrote to Vanessa this morning, telling her that I have decided to be a pedestrian. This is a lie but I don't want to hurt her feelings. It must be terrible to be such a failure.

Friday September 7th

First lesson with 'Quick Pass' Driving School. My instructor is called Dave Crooks. My God! Talk about impatient! Talk about irritable! Talk about lack of self-control! He shouted at me constandy, and never took his foot off the dual controls. When I kangaroo'd to a halt outside the D.O.E. he wiped his brow and said, 'Who taught you to drive like that?' I told him and he said, 'I don't understand it. Vanessa Partridge is a brilliant instructor. Her pupils have an incredible first-time pass rate.'

Friday September 21st

Dave Crooks and I have parted company. He said, 'I'm sorry, Adrian, but I am leaving Quick Pass: it's too dangerous. I am going to teach free-fall parachuting instead.' Why is it that nobody has got backbone in England any more.'

Friday September 28th

First lesson with 'Sure Pass' Driving School. Instructor an old git called Harold Wainwright. Lesson stopped half way through. Wainwright drove off, leaving me stranded in an outer suburb. What is it about driving instructors? Are mad people attracted to the profession or are they sent mad by incompetent pupils.' I rang 'Sure Pass' to report their employee's unprofessional behaviour, but Harold Wainwright answered the phone. It is his firm.

Friday October 5th

'Drivepass', first lesson. 12.00am to 1.00pm. Instructor's name, Dave Singh.

Friday October 12th

'Drivesure', instructor Mr Chan.

Friday October 19th

'Upass', instructor Mr Abdul bin Salman.

Mr Salman has advised me against buying a second-hand car. He said, 'It would be somewhat premature, Mr Mole.'

Saturday October 20th

Rocky has gone off with another woman! Pandora is devastated. I pointed out to her that Rocky is a red-blooded man who needs to feel that he is desirable and sexually lusted over. 'In short,' I said, 'Rocky wants sex, you won't give him any, so, not unnaturally, he has gone elsewhere; namely to Carly Pick, the receptionist at Rocky's new gym in Market Harborough.'

Pandora rang for a taxi; there was murder in her eyes. When asked for the destination she snarled, 'Market Harborough, and make it snappy, I am a doctor and this is an emergency.' She didn't tell the taxi firm she is only a doctor of philosophy.

Sunday October 21st

My plans for a quiet time at home putting the vowels back into Lo! the Flat Hills of My Homeland were thrown into disarray when Carly Pick turned up at the flat with Rocky, who had come round to pick up his thongs. Pandora came out of her room looking like a harridan.

She threw curses at everyone in the room (including me, unfairly I thought). Then she threw the thongs in Rocky's face and told Carly Pick that she had a face like a warthog's armpit. And that she was welcome to Rocky (Big Boy) Livingstone because he farted in bed. Hey Ho, Hey Nonny No. Such is life. Or is it Heigh Ho? Hay Ho?

Monday November 5th

Remembering last year's incident with the Catherine wheel (I still have the scar), I decided to stay in and work on the last chapter of Lo! Pandora is out at a bonfire party given by Professor Cavendish, the notorious drunkard and womaniser. How he does it I don't know. (I saw him in the office, he looked at least forty-five). He is scruffy and has got a battered-up face.

His third wife has just left him. She has written a full account of her reasons for doing so. It appeared in the News of the World last Sunday under the headline CLEVER CLOGS PROF SEVEN TIMES A NIGHT 'TOO MUCH FOR ME' - WIFE.

Seven times a night! I've just reckoned it up. I've only done it five times in two years. From now on I am going to make a daily record of my doings in my diary.

Some people are predicting that Mrs Thatcher will resign. As if!

Monday November 12th

A letter from my mother:

Aidy,

Saw Sharon Bott and son today. He, Glenn, looks exactly, but exactly like you: lips, nose, ears, mad hairline - everything.

I know this is awkward but am I a grandmother or aren't I? I think I should be told. Are you keeping something from me? Martin sends his best and asks when you are coming to see us? Why aren't you on the phone like normal people?

Grandma is using a walking frame to get to the shops now ... Do you miss Mrs Thatcher.' I wish John Major would do something about his hair. It would look lovely brushed back. Grandma has found three World War II gasmasks in the shed...

The rest was driven apart from a bit at the end about the dog missing me. Which is a lie. On my past visits the dog has completely ignored me. Two can play at that game, dog! From now on I will make a daily entry in my diary.

Monday December 24th

I have just bumped into Sharon Bott in Woolworths in Leicester, where I was purchasing Christmas presents. She had a strange-looking moon-headed toddler with her. 'Say hello to Adrian, Glenn,' she said. I bent over the buggy and the kid gave me a slobbery smile. Is Glenn the fruit of my loins.' Did my seed give him life? I must know. The kid was sucking the head of a Ninja Turtle. He looked fed up.

Monday December 31st

The Prime Minister, Mr John Major, is trying to negotiate with the bloke in charge of Iraq. Some alarmists are predicting war. How absolutely ridiculous! We live in modern times. War belongs to the Middle Ages. There is no need to go to war. Not now we've got fax machines. Must go now. Professor Cavendish has just come out of Pandora's bedroom. He has promised to read Lo! and Tadpole.

Tuesday January 1st 1991

THESE ARE MY NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

1. I will become a published writer
2. I will win the Booker Prize
3. I will marry Pandora
4. I will change my socks every day
5. I will resign from the D.O.E.
6. I will stop emptying tea leaves down the sink
7. I will work for world peace
8. I will return the videos on time
9. I will pass my driving test
10. I will change to skimmed milk
11. I will grow a beard
12. I will untie my shoelaces before removing my shoes
13. I will try to be more tolerant towards the thick and disadvantaged in our society, especially my parents
14. I will decide whether there is a God or not