

But the greatest of these is love

by Katy Walker

A tenement flat. Outside, on the stairs, the sound of muffled conversation. Door opens and in comes STEVEN, stepping over bin bags to get in.

STEVEN Yeah yeah sorry I will, I'll take them down in a bit just... got a lot on at the minute, some... some shit happened so yeah. Right got to- sorry.

He closes the door.

No fucking idea. *(shouts)* YOU'VE GOT NO FUCKING IDEA!!!

Silence. And then Steven starts to breathe, louder, faster until

Fuuuuuuuck.

He laughs, sort of. Quietly. Manic. A mixture of adrenaline and relief, building to full on, uncontrollable, hysterical laughter.

And you're chatting to me about bins. About fucking rubbish. Tell you what, there's more to clear up than a couple of bin bags I tell you.

He takes a can from the fridge. Opens it. Drinks.

Fucking hell.

Drinks some more.

Oh yes. You wanna educate yourself. More than a few manky pizza boxes.

You wanna get yourself online darling, then you'll see.

He logs on to a laptop. Can't believe it.

Yes! See that, bin lady? And that's just the start. You wait. Six million and counting. You ever trended worldwide? Eh? Eh?

Tell you what, I've done you a favour. You'll do alright out of this I'm telling you. Front page of the Mail, front page of all of them if you play your cards right, 'Exclusive: Neighbour tells all'. How much dyou get for one of them I wonder? Should be alright. And you can do the whole circuit then, get yourself an agent, sell whatever it is you want to sell, link to your etsy or your soundcloud or whatever, and I'll tell you what there'll be people queuing up. Here as well. Seriously you could make a fortune. Keep it just how it is, bin bags and all, like those places you go on a bank holiday with the table all set up for a posh dinner and the red ropes and the patronising old bitch in the corner telling you not to touch stuff, what are they called? National Trust, that's it, I'll be one of them. With an audio tour maybe, or like VR. 'Relive the day it happened, put yourself in Steve-o's shoes, literally even, I can, yeah, I'll leave them so you can do that eh? Wear my actual shoes. It'll be awesome. Six and half million now. You're going to feel so stupid about the whole bin thing I tell you.

Thought they'd have been here by now, wouldn't you? Amateurs. Kind of wasn't expecting to make it back here if I'm honest. Thought I'd be, I dunno, taken down. Full arms in the air, hit the floor stuff. So that's a cock up on their part. Disappointing.

Oh well. Might as well have another then eh?

He gets another beer.

Hang on. What the...? No no no no

He hammers the keyboard.

They've taken it down. The bastards have taken it down. Shit, could've been at 7 million by now, easy. Freedom of speech, that is, you bastards. Oh. No - you're alright, it's up again. Knew I could count on the retweets. Yes. Good game, good game. Look at that - someone's done an edit.

Footage plays on his laptop. Indistinct. But the chaos is clear, and the panic. Steven laughs.

Awesome. Steve-o, you've done it, you've fucking- Wait a minute. What....? What the hell is that? No, that's not right, what about the rest of it? Never mind about her, move on, move on, show us the End Game. This bit is just... Five minutes of carnage and that's the bit you choose? Why would you do that? Why would you..

Suddenly, he retches.

Drinking on an empty stomach that is. That's all.

He goes back to his laptop. Faint sounds of a news report - we catch the odd word here and there: 'chaos' 'tragic loss of' 'police are looking for'

That's better. Focus on the main man. Look at that. Look at all them all, that's a lot of ambulances. They've got their Police tape up already, that's something. Yeah never mind the victims, let's hear you talking about the suspect. No, not her again. She did it all wrong. Move on.

He mutes his laptop

Where have I seen her before? Come on Steve-o, think. Not that it matters much anymore though eh?

He laughs, but you can hear the uncertainty.

Tell you what, she's got problems, man, that's not normal. It's not what you do. I mean everyone knows that don't they? You know that, bin lady, don't you? If I came round there now... You beg. You beg for mercy. You're down on the floor and, I dunno, you know that's it, that there's no chance, but you do it anyway. Like a dog or something, cowering. You cower, that's what you do. That's what the others did, that's what I did every fucking Friday night for

years, waiting for him to come home, that's how it works. What you don't do is look them in the eye and smile. Who said you could be different? You get down on the floor and you...

He retches again.

Shit-

Moves across the room to the sink, vomits into it. When he's finished, he runs himself a glass of tap water.

Adrenalin. Hardly surprising.

He goes to the window.

Still no sign. What the hell are you doing guys? I'm here! Waiting!

He paces the flat.

Or else you get angry. Why wasn't she angry?

Lidl!!! That's where I've seen her. I normally do Tesco cos Pete's a mate, well, sort of, he was like if you get any you've got to cut me in okay, and I was like yeah cos I'm not gonna say no am I? But then he's got done hasn't he, for the feed in the Ladies toilets the dick, and there's this new guy, fucking Asmir or Imran or whatever, all 'Excuse me sir can I help you with anything' like he's the

managing director or something the jumped up little.... Tesco was shit anyway, all the women who go there are like twenty stone and minging, but Lidl... Well, Lidl's like a weird mix. There's still the mums with the trolleys full of screaming kids in their dressing gowns but you get these classy ones too, popping in after work. They buy the fancy stuff, smoked salmon and wine from the special selection bit. I hang out in the fruit and veg, like I'm choosing carrots or something, cos they always get the avocados and the little cartons of blueberries. You have to pay attention, especially if it's busy. It's quite stressful. If they're on silent it's harder, obviously, cos you don't get the ping, so you're relying only on your eyes. This one, this..... I think she was probably expecting a text from someone else cos she like did this little smile when she took it out of her pocket. Then I watched her face change. Watched the red come right up, like that -ometer thing on the telly that tells you how much money they've raised. Right up her neck, up her whole face, bright red. I did that. Without even touching her. And she's like all embarrassed and you can tell that even though she's pressed 'decline' she wishes she hadn't, but I mean you know, I think it's difficult for her cos it's a public place and everything and I respect that, I mean the kind of girl that clicks 'accept' on a random airdrop dickpick is.... well, not the most classy, let's put it like that. Ana, that was it. 'Ana's iphone'. I mean if she wasn't up for it she'd have turned off her bluetooth wouldn't she?

She had no idea it was me. When I got in her way so that she'd bump into me she looked me straight in the eye and she was like 'Sorry' with this smile, not fake or anything. Not used to it, people looking me in the eye. Or being... I

mean I'm not the sort of person that happens to. Anyway, she won't have had a clue. No way would she have known it was me.

He clicks his computer, finding the bit of footage he wants. Watches it.

Nah, no way. And what are the chances anyway?

SILENCE. Then he watches it again.

But why's she looking at me like that though? Why would you do that? That's not how it works, lady. And what the hell's it supposed to mean, anyway, 'You are loved'? What sort of a stupid thing is that to say? Especially to me. You don't get to do that. You don't get to feel sorry for me! And it's not about love, it's about eleven million views and counting. What have you ever done, eh? Who's the man, eh? Who's the fucking man?

There's a tentative knock on the door.

Shit.

Steven waits. After a few moments, the sound of bin bags being dragged down the stairs.

What the...?

He goes to the door and shouts down the stairs.

Oi! What are you doing?

The door at the bottom of the stairs slams shut.

Those are mine! What are you doing? Why would you do that?

He steps on something. An envelope.

What the hell's this?

He picks it up, opens the envelope.

'Dear Neighbour, I'm sorry you're having a hard time. I didn't mean to-'

He can't speak for a moment. When he does, he's choked.

No. No no no you don't get to do that. Uh uh. I mean seriously why would you..?

He goes back into his flat and moves to the window. Tries to open it. Can't.

Fuck.

Hammers on it.

I don't want your fucking card alright? Who does that? Why would you do that? No-one has ever, ever... Why would you do that to someone you don't even.. You don't just go around being fucking nice to people, that's not how it works. You get angry, you don't... You don't know me!! You don't even know me!! You don't, you don't.....

He's sobbing now.

You don't know.... what I've done.....

In the distance, police sirens.

END

