Once upon a time, I was born: a large baby, weighing in at just under ten pounds of unconditional optimism and possibility. But it was all a mistake - every ounce. I don't mean it was a latex defect - no, they did decide to make a baby - I mean: they made a mistake; they made the wrong choice, like with curtains, that look great in fluro, but then outside, in the really, real light...

Perhaps it was because they already had color tv and new linoleum, or perhaps it was because, sooner or later, one is supposed to have children - because children 'make life complete.' Or maybe it was to have someone pay the rest-home bill. I really don't know. But I'm fairly sure that if mother had stuck with the pill, and spent the baby clothes fund on night school (or heroin), then this blasphemy need never have been written.

BTW: This all started in Australia, where the sun is bigger and the shadows deeper.

Dad sold shoes. Dad was mad. One day, when dad didn't get his own way, he threatened the use of explosives... He still didn't get his own way. So dad changed jobs, but he still sold shoes.

One day, he bought a car with eight cylinders - about twice what a normal one has. I don't know much about cars, but I do know that the more cylinders one has, the faster it goes, and the more shoes it needs. My father was so angry about this fact that he threatened the salesman whose fault it all was... It was a hot day, full of flies; and the salesman just couldn't be bothered with my dad; and so, that time, dad did get his own way.

I never did meet him - my father - so maybe my mother was lying about his weirdness, his criminality, and even his evil. She lied about a lot of things - my mother - but she rarely told material lies, such as: the sky is blue - when it isn't really. Her evasions were different: a well meaning tourniquet, of inference and
omission... And so, I've decided, arbitrarily, that this second hand data is true:

Daddy beat mummy. He slapped her, punched her, used a suitcase strap, a belt, a shoe... and, one day, he even picked up a dumb bell; and, to show that he reeeeeally meant business - this time - he used it to destroy a perfectly good chest of draws.

Note: A dumb-bell is used to make small muscles large.

My mother had an inferiority complex. She wasn't good looking, even when young - yet in her favorite movies the heroines were always good looking - with their sculpted hair; bespoke costumes; art department lighting; elegant mannerisms, which never appeared rehearsed; and a teenage glow, which they retained, surprisingly late into their forties...

She especially liked Olivier De Haviland and Ingrid Bergman, whom she may once have resembled - had she been better looking, and techi-colored...

So, for this and better reasons, mother had an inferiority complex. Later, this became a persecution complex; and her attitudes and reactions were confirmed by every thing that happened; and eventually she assumed that everyone was out to get her; or insult her; or 'pull the wool over her eyes,' etc, etc.

She was certain, that whenever someone didn't agree with her - failed to do, say, think, or even feel, as she would prefer - then it was because they were out to get her. And if they didn't show their 'true colors' early enough... then mother painted them herself.

She only married 'a man' because she thought that someone else would make her whole: would look after her, the way she never had been. She chose one in whom she recognized herself, believing such a reflection boded well for the future, or at least the obliteration of the past. And so the forlorn pair - my parents - set up flat in Melbourne; and, for a while, they pretended well.

His parents were 'cold' and 'aloof...'
They lived in Hobart, which is in Tasmania, Australia (an island south of the mainland); but they spoke, behaved and thought as many white Australians of
their vintage did - as though living in Bournemouth, England; and Queen Victoria was still on the thrown, of an Empire that was 'Great'; and all the heathens would be saved by God and the gunboat; and no one would abbreviate words such as telephone; and, ever so doing, would never, ever dare to call it 'a fone' - not ever - not even in jest.

Proper people, such as they, never daub the walls of their tradition, never employ a word such as 'living,' where a proper word is available - like 'residing'. And so, they spoke and wrote the Queen's English (not like I), and they did bear true allegiance to the 'old country' - just as the Aborigines should have...

But I shouldn't be too mean - about my grandparents - because this was financed by them.

They went away - as everyone does in the end - and we never met. All they had of me was a photograph - never knowing know where I was, or even if I was alive. And yet, they left me all that remained of their lives - their money.

I was twenty when I found out that a cheque was awaiting me; a sum neither large nor trivial; and I put it in a bank and left it there, for eleven years. I thought I'd better think about it, for a while. So there it lay: the decimalized summation of two lives - waiting for me to think about it. And now, of my benefactors, all I have is:

"The weather is most inclement, at present"

This sentence, written by my paternal grandmother, was quoted at me on every rare occasion when mother spoke of my father, or his 'aloof' parents...

Therefore, my brief description of them all is fictional, based on what my mother allowed me to know, and the intuition I hid from her.

sad bitches/lost dogs:

My father's parents were not as sympathetic, as I, to mother's allegations about their only child. Mother would have complained to her own parents, back in England... But she wasn't friendly with them either.
So, she called the police... And they came round and told daddy to behave himself and "leave the sheila alone..." And then they told mummy that 'a verbal warning' was all they could do because even if he had threatened to kill, until he actually did - or tried to, or pissed on a lamp-post - there was nothing they could actually do - not legally. And there was no current evidence of beatings, and so there was nothing to do about that either - not legally.

And then came the aforementioned day of the dumb bell. On this day, my daddy summoned up his frustration, disappointment and pain; and then, with a powerful flourish of free expression, he smashed something solid against something else solid; and he kept on smashing, until there were only splinters, and the sound of a three year old, crying.

For mother, this was the last straw - the really, really, last straw - last straw, in the fist of last straws.

And so she bought a restraining order; and then daddy had to move out of the apartment, and could not approach within a certain number of feet. So then he used to sit on the steps below, or stand about, like a lost dog: sort of wanting to fix things, but not being able - like a dog might regret causing a car wreck, yet not know how to dial the ambulance.

I think maybe he was bit pathetic, my dad. Not just 'bad', but a bit pathetic: like a stray dog that forgot to be shot. So, he waited on the steps; and when mummy would not 'just talk,' he went away and stopped paying child support. And then mummy went back to the court and got another order; and daddy snarled on the phone; and there were threats of violence; and it was all very complicated...

And then one day, about two thousand later, well out of sight, he died - a lone loser, in a hospital - courtesy of an aneurysm, out like a light.

There is a grave that I never visited, though at one time I lived not far away, and thought maybe I should... Perhaps I was afraid. I suppose his parents bought a proper marker, in marble, or polished granite. Perhaps it's there still. Certainly it was there, for many, many years: under the sun, or with rain down its face; and people walked past, to other graves, while
whole lives were begun, lived and marked; and now, in way, I've passed by too.

Note: Making a baby doesn't seem very complicated, and yet look at all that can come of it. I'm sure I couldn't have done anything that grown up. It's a very big thing to do - bringing a person into the world - and I'm sure I couldn't have managed it: I was my own child.

I have one memory of my childhood - my official child years. I must have been about three, or nearly four: I was standing up straight, like a new one does, standing near a blue painted fence; and I was holding a toy, not knowing anything, except toys and the sky. I only mention this to confirm that I was once an actual child. It seems like a dream now, but it was true: I once stood, under the sun, with a toy - and I knew nothing.

1 (and a bit)

When I was three and a half, the mother left the father. The mother took the uncommon post-coital precaution of moving to the opposite side of the planet. Thus she did return, burdened with born child, to the worst place on Earth where English remains the official language - England. (In spite of frequent attempts to correct the matter by France, Germany and MTV)

She told me, more than once, how she realized, as soon as she got off the plane, what a terrible mistake she had made. (Though, even as small child, I knew this was one thing not ever to agree with.)

The mother told neither the father, nor the inclement grandparents, where we were going. We simply disappeared. And all I can say about that trip 'home' - during which, so I'm told, I vomited copiously - is that I was terrified.

It was a DC10 - a species of plane renowned for being extra noisy. Its jet engines were of the type usually fitted to military aircraft of the period: not optimized for musicality and therefore positioned near the tail, in order that passengers' hearing might survive the trip.

Our seats, purchased at the last minute, were toward the tail....
I had never seen an airplane before, let alone heard one. I didn't know what was going on; so all I could do was be very, very afraid - for thirty hours - screaming when ever mother tried to take me the bathroom, which was positioned even closer to the engines...

Therefore, in a way, I hope my father was that evil, and really did have all those methods and contacts for tracking people down. I'd feel cheated if mother had been wrong, and it turned out that he was just some loser, who couldn't find snatch a brothel..

England:

England has nice features: the Lake District is beautiful (take a Geiger counter though) and the last of the Olde English Forest is peaceful. But England is no place for children: no place for baby humans - unless born with silver spoon or no choice. Truly, for the children - the poor children - England is a goddamn desert. I mean, God Damned; Damned, by God; forsaken by God; abandoned to chance, by whatever benevolence there may have been.

Or is that anywhere - any place, at any time, where poor children play?

It was raining, as my mother struggled to board a train, bearing her baggage. The train took us North - north to where my mother's parents resided; north, into the redundant power station of the old Empire, to where there are no mitigating features, save those imagined by the life convict, or one at home, lost on the moor. The train bore us north, into the used condom that was Northern England.

They were not pleased to see my mother: tanned, clutching a smelly child, sniveling. Mother's mother felt especially inconvenienced: reminded of affronts and ingratiatides. But, being the parents of the mother, they didn't feel much choice in the matter; and so we stayed there, for a while.

My mother's mother had a 'thing' about cleanliness - about smells and things. So when one day my bowel opened, at a time and place where it was not supposed, it was all a bit too much for her... The odor down memory lane
offended my gran's *almost-but-not-quite-middle-class* sensibilities; and there was, as was politely referred to in the *upper-working-class/lower-middle-class*, 'a scene.'

Note: Societies were divided into a system of strata, or 'classes.' This was to help every one to know their place, so that everyone could work together, and be happy - and not disrupt order and the niceness and tidiness. This was true in every country - especially those where the most equal said they were above all that nonsense. And so I lived in a world run by apes - who knew exactly what was important, and battered each other with the daintiest of china, in order to get as much of it as possible before their hearts gave out. That's not to say that money was a bad idea - I merely bow to evolution.

Mothers parents were never angry, or out of control. They may have been *indignant, or affronted*, but it was rare that they *shouted*. And so my gran carefully explained to my mother why she was an ungrateful, irresponsible, little girl. And mother wanted to tell some things back, but chose not to - feeling as she had when little: out-classed by mother. Instead, they exchanged peripheral resentments, till both sensed it was pointless to continue.

So then we were on another train, headed south - south to where the party had been: to where the orders are written, and the folks talk proper. And my mother never did speak to her parents again. And I never met them at all.

I was five years old. Twas the autumn before discontent, and we drifted between nanny/housekeeper jobs. And then we came to the house of *The Priest - Father M.* I imagine that mother gravitated toward that advertisement: drawn by respectability, piety, and an ever faithful hope of true charity. I remember his name, though not his face; and knew me - in the biblical sense only - for just a few weeks; and yet, bless me, someone, anyone, for he was my truer father - and I was ashamed, ever after.

It's disappointing, to me, to have been part of a social *cliché* - to feel so extra-ordinary, but be so mundane. But I suppose a *cliché* is where something happens so many times - over, and over, and over, and over - again, and again, and everyone knows it; and there's nothing to be done about it; and knowing is
too sad; beyond the point of pointless; and so they write it off, as passé, or cliché or another foreign word, meaning: please stop telling me this; just get over it; please change the channel...

There is a time, after which the raped and the buggered, and the otherwise fucked, will not be heard. It is called the statute of limitations. Just in case though, the Catholic Church purchased insurance against legal actions brought by the once meek.

And society insured itself, by pointing out facts such as that - as though it was Catholics who invented child-use; as though the Catholic Church is a town club of denial junkies, child haters, and lovers of children.

But the truth is: it's not Catholics, or Jews, or Muslims, or even the Mormons. It's not even those who believe in something.

It's adults. It's all of them - in their big club called civilized society; and the worst of them will congregate, where the flesh is fresh, and the trust plentiful.

And the meek, may only seem so, as they, in their humble way, hate, sabotage, and destroy - because there is nothing else to do; because it can't be helped; because it's not on tv; because it's necessary - to make them pay, or someone, or anyone.

moving on

I think mummy found out what was going on in that room, the room with the wooden floor and the lattice window. I remember there was sometimes another child there; but, usually, I was alone with him. The floor was bare, wood, and well crafted - a darkish wood - I don't know what kind, but darker than pine. I lay across his lap, looking down at that floor. He was doing something: something special - something grown up, and necessary. I think there was something about it that I liked. I liked what he was doing to me - and he knew that - knowing it wasn't really rape.

Mummy rarely did anything in a hurry. But we left that place, very quickly. She got flustered easily - but flustering and hurrying was most unusual for my
mother.

"Why did you let him??"

After that, we free-loaded with some acquaintances. Mother did not have actual friends; she had a select group of people (two to four) who felt sorry for her; and she pretended it was respect.

It was a nice house, with a garden, a tire swing, and a sand pit. There was a big living room too, with color tv and deep pile carpets. I saw the Planet Of The Apes show on that tv, drinking ribenna, and eating cheese.

I really liked that house. I was given a model helicopter, which I kept for years, even after its electric motor stopped working, and the rotor blades fell off (weakened by gnawing). It wasn't even my birthday, but they gave me this neat helicopter, with working rotors, like it could fly away.

There was a father and a mother and two other children. It was for one of these that mother arranged to buy some birthday flowers. Mother was excited about this, and entrusted me with intelligence of the surprise - on strict condition that I carefully guard the secret: the secret that I immediately - and carefully - imparted to the relevant party. I only wanted something to make conversation, that's all - and I knew she'd love to hear about the nice flowers - daffodils.

We were all walking. It was a drizzly, grey day; and she was pleased to hear about the nice flowers, exclaiming loudly to her parents; and later, in private, my mummy ranted at me for betraying her trust. It was not that I'd betrayed her that amazed her - it was that I'd done it within minutes - and all to 'curry favor.' She said she would never forgive me, and indeed, she did not speak to me for the rest of that day, and never mentioned the matter again. I needed to be taught a lesson. I had hurt my mummy and I could not take that back. I had wanted to curry favor, with another. I didn't know what the words meant; and so I remembered them - buried, for the day when I would know the meanings: a day like this, when I know I never shall.

But that's not why I was caught playing with the electric sockets. It is a fact, fully proven and certified, that little children do not attempt suicide.
I'd seen one of those public information/warning 'adverts,' about electric sockets (most homes didn't have earth leak protection then). I was fascinated by what I saw. I think that's why I was caught, by the father of the house, sticking a match into one of those sockets; I just wanted to see the big flash.

So then we moved again.

Mummy didn't say much about it; but I knew it was my fault.

BTW: Earlier, I typed something about the autumn of discontent; a reference to a tag line in the English media of the late nineteen seventies: "The Winter of Discontent".

This was a media theme for stories about the industrial and social collapse that typified the period. (I did not realize until thirty years later that the phrase was first penned by William Shakespeare - to describe events that occurred hundreds of years earlier...)

first and last

During that brief stay, I was enrolled at an infant’s school. (Elementary school) I was soon caught kissing a girl in a coat locker. It was one of those large, walk-in coat lockers - roomy enough for two adults to have a good time. But we were six and we were caught kissing; and that was considered so naughty that the class teacher could not deal with it. And so she had to send us to higher teacher.

What we had done was a very serious matter indeed.

Naughtiness, apparently, is the first cobble on the road to perdition; or, perhaps more seriously: first step on the path to sedition.

I don't know if that is true; but I do know that it was a beautiful kiss, with no knowing of underlying psychology or learned behavior; or cause and consequence. It was just a kiss. Actually, it was the only one I ever wanted.

I don't remember exactly what the teacher's face looked like, when she interrupted us - apart from being old and disgusting - but I imagine that she was extremely and profoundly offended by the spectacle of children, kissing. I'm
sure her lips were fully pursed and her cheeks properly pinched...

*Oh! How Naughty!*

Perhaps she was in the closet herself...

Anyway, she sent us, *with a note*, to a whaler’s office. It never occurred to either of us to just *not go*; to maybe lie; to go home and make up a story about our teachers ‘doing something’ to us... No such fun occurred to us because:

a) We were little  
b) Our fun was a kiss, in a locker

Anyway, we arrived at the office complex; and there we stood, waiting, as little kids do - kids who’ve been naughty. We were waiting in the anteroom of doom. She was crying and I was tense too - and it was all because we’d been naughty - naughty *with a note*.

We were summoned. The punisher read the note. The punisher regarded us, sternly. Then the punisher made up her mind; and all in the proper order; and properly noted, in a dossier. She said something stern to us both, and then something about *that being enough* for 'a little lady'.

The *little lady* was told she could leave; and so she did; promising gratitude and obedience; forever and ever... and ever after...

I really don't know *what* I saw in her...

I'd certainly not known that she was 'a little lady.' I was really surprised to hear that - because, till then, I'd no notion of any difference between us, at all... But the teacher had said it was so; and so it was, ever after.

I wasn't *'a little lady'*; I didn't have beautiful blonde hair and a pretty blue dress; I didn't grovel to the teacher - I wouldn't even look the bitch in the eye. I was a dark thing. So, I had to stay. And I had to be spanked. And I had to be undressed. It was necessary.

My ankles were thin; my socks fallen to the smallest part of my frailty; and I
looked down at them, as the hand struck, and did other things, as a voice spoke. I was not looking at my feet due to bending over; it was through my shame, that I saw them. I was ashamed: of my nakedness; and my badness; and that the teacher had to do something nasty, but necessary - because of me.

She was speaking - not friendly, or stern - just words: words that I didn't understand, but felt, inside. They entered me; turning, worming, finding a place; a hiding place; warm and silent - safe in my frailty.

I was walking, back down the corridor. I was alone; and I cried, as I walked - even though, when in public, one is supposed to control one's self. But the corridor was empty; and the harder I tried, not to cry, the worse it became; and so, offending my shame, I did cry. I cried as though I'd seen the future; and the future was the last mother, weeping without a grave; and there was nothing to do, because we were dead already. I remember how hot my face felt. I was feverish. And I was ashamed; as they told me; I should be.

Some time later:

I was advised, by someone bearing 'The Good News,' that if the children are meek enough, they will inherit the Earth. I looked at him, a rare openness of heart, in me; and I said: "Then by all means, tell me The Good News". And he would have too, I'm sure; but I was walking away - having already heard, every word he had to say - every single word: over, and over, and over. That's cliché.

Some say there is a thing called destiny; some say this happened already; some say that, right now, we are either in heaven, or in hell, and that our true lives were in another place, at another time. Some say the world is on the head of pin. And some really don't give a shit, one way or the other.
setting the scene

East Anglia is a collection of flat counties in the south east of England, which, in composite, on a map, resemble a butt cheek - sort of jutting out there, into the sea, the southern most expanse of the North Sea, as though England is about to take a dump there...

This was the end of mother's line.

Orientation: East Anglia is somewhat northeast of planet London. London is in the south of England; slightly to the right of center; not far from the bottom. England is bordered by Scotland and Wales; these three states nominally referred to as 'Britain' (once 'Great Britain'); and Britain is stuck between Ireland and the rest of the European Union. And, in case you're an all American statistic of cost efficient, free education, or a senator whose new world view comprises a fishing lodge in Connecticut - I will mention that the European Union is approximately seven hours to the east of EST (or four minutes by ICBM).

East Anglia is largely agricultural land; pocked with some tenaciously tedious towns, colleges, administrative centers and dubious tourist attractions. Also, the US Air Force once used the place to store their nuclear bombs, missiles, and associated paraphernalia. Otherwise, hardly anyone would've known that there ever was such a forgotten tampon as East Anglia. Except for the Russians: because of the Americans, the Russians knew about East Anglia too; and therefore had it programmed into computers of their nukes. Oh, and I just remembered Dickens - Charles Dickens. He once visited Chelmsford (the town where we resided) and said of the place:

"...doth indeed suck sweat, from a dead dog's balls"

That's not verbatim. But he definitely didn't like the place.

Note: For some reason, there is no West Anglia; or any North or South Anglias either. There is only an East Anglia - and it's probably just as well...

Around that time, the BBC informed the realm of the dangerous incompetence of the Soviet nuclear missile forces; and how - at any moment - a salvo of independent war-heads might rain down on us; because of faulty wiring; or a hang over; or because a Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist had gone even more insane and mistaken Britain for the real enemy. I think the sub-text was that it might be more sensible if we - soberly and with full knowledge aforethought - nuked them first: sort of 'cut out the middle man,' so to speak. However, the BBC
never talked about 'nuking' anyone; and that was because it would have been 
slang; and the BBC never used slang. They employed only the Queen's 
English; and so they talked about - I mean, they debated - a pre-emptive strike.

Anyway, it was very important to impress on every one the patriotic imperative 
of the nuclear stand off; the vital import of not being left on the roadside of the 
cold war; the war we were saving up for. It was all about freedom; and the free 
market; and Alexander Solzhenitsyn... He was Russian; but apparently some 
Russians were okay. At least that's what the BBC was asked to say.

So, in the clock tick of my littleness, nuclear Armageddon was the subject of 
the day, week, month, and, as it turned out, the decade too - because I was the 
child of a civilization that chose to arrange its annihilation; calling it a struggle to 
live.

Meanwhile, some said that the Greenham Common women were 'misguided by 
their hormones' and should pack up their life, not death camp, and 'go back to 
the dishes.'
America might become the Fourth Reich - which I didn't get at all because I'd never seen any American goose-stepping, or even wearing leather, apart from General Patton - but he doesn't count because he was a whacko, and he was fighting the real nazis.

Between the ranks of their grammatically perfect banality, the BBC suggested that these women, as well as CND (Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament) were a bunch of 'communist sympathizers'; after all, only a 'communist sympathizer' would think bad things about America, let alone say bad things. Meanwhile, some said that all the lads - Good and Bad - should just jerk off, and get over themselves already. Some weaved flowers in the razor wire; others, placed rude words on it; and others even dared to attack it. This was called vandalism. And so the British police arrested everyone, 'in the interests of national security.' (Actually, that's an American term, but it works well anywhere)

It was all quite silly, really. And in the end it turned out that those traitor-hippie-commie-sympathizer-dyke-vandals were right - all along - because the Russians really hadn't wanted nuclear war at all. Not really. All they wanted were genuine Levis and Bruce Springsteen albums - because the price of bootlegs was killing them.

BTW: The vandals were a tribe of ancient warriors, noted for indiscriminate murder and mass destruction, who's hobbies also included gang rape, and the feeding of the damned to their dogs.

At one time, the cruise missile was a daily discussion topic on tv and radio (nuclear Armageddon being very popular debating material). Indeed, the Cruise Missile and the F111 nuclear bomber became part of English youth culture, thanks to the "sensational number one smash hit": 'Love Missile F111' by Sigue Sigue Sputnik" (I'm not making this up) Quite appropriately, the piece is, in part, a homage to the penis.

It's probably as well that aliens didn't find that Voyager thing; they may have vaporized the lot of us - as a pre-emptive precaution...

So anyway, that's where we landed: an x on Dickens' scorecard - the co-ordinates in a rusty, red rocket.

The bunker - for that is what one calls a fortified hiding place - belonged to a housing association. I know the difference between a Housing Association flat and a Council flat, because my mother explained it to me, more than once. In England, anything prefixed with the word council was automatically unclean (like 'projects'). But a Housing Association flat was owned by private organization; and was therefore less loserish than a Council flat. Though I'm not sure which kind would have been colder.

The bunker was part of a complex of small, smart looking, two storey blocks. People called these maisonettes - in the cute way that Anglos will often describe something crappy, using a French word. But it was just a flat: in a block of flats too short to be called a block of flats.
We arrived there after a long and difficult journey on British Rail. It was dark and it was very, very cold - as it always is in England, when the poor arrive. There was no electricity. Mother fed me bread and jam; and we slept together, to keep from freezing. There were some suitcases lying about, on the bare floors; and everything else was empty.

It was not the worst place in the world, or even in England, where humans have been stabled. It had a roof; windows with glass; and there were no lice or old syringes. And I didn't mind the bread and jam.

It was difficult to sleep though because mummy cried a lot, and it was a bit cold. Later on, she would have Abba records, Daphne Du Maurier books, and wallpapering. But in the early days, there was only that empty, cold flat, and some suitcases, filled with the leftovers of a failed life.

First of all, there was the electricity situation. It took a while to get the electricity on; in England they want lots of documentation and assurances before they will connect things up. Then you have to wait for a work-person (who, in those days, was called a man). And if it was winter, then you had to wait a bit longer; they work more slowly in winter because of the cold. And if there was a strike on; or a 'work-to-rule;' or an unofficial 'down tools'; or an official 'day of protest' - then you may have waited a bit longer. It was hard to predict how long; it was a case of 'playing things by ear'; 'not counting one's chickens'; 'sucking and seeing;' and only trying cross that bridge when, or if, the train ever got there - hoping that someone had finished it in the meantime.

It seemed like months to me, but it was probably only a couple of days, before we had electricity. But it didn't get any warmer; and that was because when my mummy turned on the heat and looked at the meter, she almost collapsed. The little wheel of wealth was spinning so fast that it seemed we would have to be cold after all, and for ever more. And so she cried, again. She cried and she cried - on and on, like it was the nursery rhyme of the poor. But I did get baked beans on toast, which was almost as nice as bread and jam.

skeletaltons
Then winter stopped kidding around; it started kicking in the ice sheets; and mummy had to put a heater on. You really can freeze to death in England, very easily, and no one would know until spring... There were stories, on TV: old people, found frozen in their armchairs - because they couldn't afford the gas, or the coal, or what ever. They were found - frozen before the telly - their last companion - which conked out some time later, when that meter ran out too. Sometimes, there was a story where the old person was found as a skelington; and the coroner concluded that the little wheel must have stopped during the winter...

The remains were found the following spring, when the bailiffs turned up to recover the telly, and whatever else might have recoverable value: something that might pay the bill. I'm not making this up. I know it's crazy, but this really happened: it was called 'falling between the cracks'

Maybe that's why people were so terrified of the 'Soviet Union' - because if the BBC was telling the truth, and Communism really was worse than the Free World, then perhaps dead really would be better, than red.

Not that we were going to be found - frozen to death, or anything - it's just that we couldn't quite feel our feet or noses. So then mummy put on the heater - for short times only - and she cried even more than before because, although we were less cold, she had no idea how she was going to pay the massive, enormous, terrifying, bill, when it eventually smashed down on the floor - like the paving stone of doom.

None of this is exaggeration - you might be surprised at the panic going on in smart maisonettes.

And, meanwhile, outside, cars went up and down the street, and kids played in the snow - even the poor ones.

Next, my mummy went to the Department of Health and Social Security - the DHSS (Welfare) - or, as they were known more economically to some recipients, The SS. She signed lots of papers; and they said they might grant us payment, provided all our papers were complete, and in order, and we were
Deemed eligible under current criteria.... And so on, and so fourth, etc and etc.

They weren't as cruel as it seemed at the time; they just needed to show us who was boss. And who can say it wasn't fair? I mean, whose money was it anyway?

All alone, mummy cried and fretted, for weeks; but, as it turned out, everything was fine: the bills did arrive before the confirmation of eligibility - but only by days; and the electric bill wasn't very heavy, after all. In any case, they usually gave you a while before dispatching a work-person to disconnect you. First they would send a reminder; then a red bill; then a red bill/nasty-letter-combo; then a *this is your last chance, and we may have to send the bailiffs letter*; and lastly, a *this is truly, truly your last chance* letter. Only then, after all that, would they pick the red phone and order a priority disconnect mission. And then you may be certain, that whether there was hail or shine, industrial action, or a Russian sneak attack: the lights would be out in three minutes or less.

Perhaps mother didn't realize all this - but they preferred to delay cutting someone off, knowing, as they did, that someone was more likely to pay whilst they still had light and heat. They may have moved faster - as fast as mummy feared they would - but only if they'd known that she was young and alone, or old, and living with Larry Grayson*.

*game show host.

BTW: I was trying to remember Larry's second name, and in so doing I remembered an even more popular Larry of the day: Larry Hagman - a TV and movie actor - particularly famed for his work as J.R. Ewing, the charismatic villain/rake of the once sensational hit TV show Dallas. At the end of one season (one of many) JR is shot and left for dead - presumably by one of his multiple enemies/ex-conquests. This spawned an "I shot JR" craze, which lasted the entire off-season. There were mugs, tee-shirts, and joke debates on tv and radio. I think there was a song too - and the return episode smashed all known records. (I don't remember who shot him though.)

The first bills did get to red. I know mother worried about this - about being disconnected and freezing and things. And she also fretted about having her file stamped 'debtor.'

Mummy always wanted to do the right thing, and be well thought of, and have a good reputation as being 'trustworthy' and 'conscientious' - having things in order and under control, and neat and tidy, and clean. She wanted the bills paid while they were still black - before the meter of disapproval could turn red.
One had to be 'conscientious' and pay ones way, what ever one owes, and do so before due: so to be sure of never getting a red bill, and never being thought of as negligent or otherwise 'bad'.

Later on, she was proud to be paying all the bills before they were due. It was a matter of honor. I don't know much about honor; I imagine it's something like paying bills before you have to. Finance and 'pay later' companies called an honorable person 'a good risk."

Soon mummy was on file as 'a good risk'; and so she was able to get things that would fix the place up: new chairs; wallpaper; paint; linoleum; curtains. She rented a tv too: bigger than the average, and color; this was in the days when stores still had some black and white tellies. It's amazing what a bit of careful fiscal planning can do because eventually that flat looked like we weren't destitute at all. And always, right from the start, it was very, very clean. Let there be no doubt: my mother was an excellent tenant: one of the best.

At that time, I had 'a thing' about certain words, especially the words 'anoint' and 'anointing'. As a seven year old, and for a while after, these words had a very strong sexual meaning for me. I didn't even know the word 'sex'; but I did know the words 'anoint' and 'anointing.'

I would get aroused, just thinking of those words. I would rub my 'naughty parts,' thinking those words, or saying them, in a whisper; whisper, whisper... I didn't even know what the words meant, or where they came from; but I knew they were matters very important and private.

And I had some nightmares - the same thing, over and over; something was chasing me: a thing I could not see, could only hear; roaring, rushing; felt as much as heard. It was gaining on me, roaring up behind me; and then I woke, sweating, drenched in terror. It's surprising how much sweat a seven-to-nine year old can make. The dreams went on for a while: between two and twenty years - I don't know exactly how long because the dream changed. The dream
changed, though not the ending: every time, it got me; and never, ever did I see it - not even when it was too late.

I used to grind my teeth too. I'd be asleep, but my teeth would be grinding, grinding, grinding - the whole time. I know mummy worried about this. But it's not the sort of thing you can order a child to stop doing. You can't just say: X, I want you to stop grinding your teeth at night! or You'll wear them out! Actually, come to think of it, I think my teeth were grinding during the day too. But I couldn't help it. It was like my shoulders; they were always tense and scrunched. I didn't know why. And when I got them to relax; once I was properly relaxed, then they sneaked back up again, till they were all scrunchy again. That went on a while too...

Getting to sleep was tricky too. Sometimes, I had to rock myself a while. I'd be kneeling on the bed and rocking: as on a rocking horse: rocking, rocking, rocking, rocking, rocking... sometimes for a hour, sometimes a bit more, till I was tired enough to sleep, or too tired not to. I'm sure mummy knew about that as well, though she didn't say anything. I was never afraid of the dark - but I was very afraid of closing my eyes, and being asleep. So, the rocking helped me; and then, sometimes, I was so tired that I didn't dream at all.

Waking up was tricky too. It was almost always cold because there weren't enough coins to run the wheel at night; and England is a cold place - dark or bright - autumn, winter, spring and, sometimes, even in summer light. I wanted to stay in bed - almost asleep - just awake enough to enjoy being asleep.

But I knew I was waking and that it couldn't be helped. Still, I tried to prevent it; and then, once begun, I tried to prolong the waking - because, at that moment, I was still warm and snug: like that bug, in its rug; or the secret babe, in a secret womb. But it always happened - because it had to happen. So first I stared at the ceiling, without seeing it, thinking of this, that, and the other. And this is how I spent the days, months and years - and, as it turned out, decades too. I don't remember specifically what the thoughts were; but I remember thinking them very thoroughly; like a wall of thoughts, the individual nature of which is of no more import than the color of bricks.
Dear Mummy,
If I seemed a zombie, or in a trance, it was only because of the bricks, and not because I had "no soul." That was the void you needed.

*short regression*

*Soon after the time of my 'anointings,' we were at the residence of an acquaintance. I was briefly left alone; and when my mummy and the other lady returned, they saw me - half naked - vigorously assaulting the arm of the sofa, with my 'front bottom' (as mother referred to my genitalia). I think I was whispering my special words too; and my mummy was very embarrassed. As someone easily humiliated, she must have found that sight horrific. She must have been very ashamed. Or perhaps that was me. Anyway, as soon as mummy got me in private she did something as a lesson and a warning for my future conduct. I won't go into it here, except to say that it wasn't very nice. I didn't exactly understand why it was happening to me, but I did understand that I'd done something very terrible and that I had to be very careful in the future. And so I was, ever after.*

Pupil-X

The Bunker was in sight of a big green thing. It was brilliant, bright grass - and it belonged to the state mixed infants/primary school (elementary/grade school).

Once upon a time, my mummy took me by the hand, and led me down a long path. The path ran along the edge of what was called 'a playing field.' In the office complex, I was duly enrolled as 'a pupil' (student). They didn't give me a serial number (which disappoints), but they did prepare, in my name, 'a dossier.' So then I was in 'a dossier' - I became *Pupil-X.*

And so I awaited the day when I would walk alone. I knew it would be bad. I knew something terrible lay in store; and, as I had also learnt, that there was nothing I could do to stop it; there was nothing I could say, or do, that would make that day go away. So I waited, alone, in my room. I sat in the middle of
the floor with my Leggo set (a plastic constructor set); and with this, I fashioned a 'probe'. I made a good job of it: aside from the obvious, it had switches and a sort of pistol grip. I made several versions, before settling on a final design. (I was quite ingenious - an obsessive perfectionist with Leggo and things.)

I didn't think the probe was either a good thing or a bad thing; I just knew it was something very secret and special, and that it was necessary to keep it hidden, but always ready.

I kept it for a couple of years, but only used it twice or so. It just wasn't as good as I thought it would be. It wasn't the same as the anointings...

...Before I could receive my 'anointing' I had to be cleansed. He did that for me, explaining that it was important and necessary. That was the best part - the preparations; and it did feel good - there's no point me pretending it didn't.

I struggled a bit the first time, but not after that. Eventually, I liked it. He said the special words, and it all felt so nice. And yet something still spoilt it; somehow, I knew it was wrong. I've tried to understand it: how I could have known, way back then, as a too small to know child, that what he did was wrong. Maybe I really was too young to understand; maybe all I felt was shame...

How do children know those things - shame and wrongness - and how never to tell their original sins?

How will they know their shame?

The funny thing is: Long, long after, when I was eight, a controversial movie was made called Alien. In England it caused much 'controversy' - which means that a lot of adults got very purse-lipped and knicker-knotty. Some said it was a dangerous film - they said it was too horrific. I think one person even had a heart attack whilst watching it. And some said that it was only a film and people had heart attacks all the time, and that others should just get over themselves...

But only the adults were allowed to see the Alien - and that was because all of them agreed that it was too much for the children. It was too much 'horror' for children. That's what they said and there's documentary evidence of it.

I saw the film when I was twenty; and there were, indeed, frights and gushing blood; and metaphors, intended and otherwise; and other ingenuity.

Then, years later - after I started to think, all by myself - I remembered what they'd said about Alien - about it being gratuitously 'horrific'. And so I watched it yet again, just to be sure. And even though I knew the plot, I
was still scared, all over again. But it was never too much for a child to endure. There is never too much for children.

Now, if some real Aliens landed, and were scampering about in LA, or Marseille, or even in Chelmsford.. Or a skiing resort, or maybe a mall... Maybe then there would be too much horror...
I mean - what would one do?

What to do, when cornered, to be eaten alive? Or reprieved a while: cocooned as living host for the next generation - like in the film...

That's quite nasty; and it's only a thought - not even an actual thing that can be regulated or certificated, as though it's all too horrible to even think about...

And, sometimes, I'd walk down a boring street, with everyone blundering along - blunder, blunder - and the entire place was grey, grey, grey... and I was bored, awaiting my death day; and I'd be thinking on what was needed - to tart things up. And I thought that maybe the thing was to have an Alien or two, sort of scampering about the place, just to tart things up...

And then everyone could see.

5

The gate was the low point of the perimeter wire. The gate was heavy gauge steel: a framework, with black, flaking paint and plastic coated link wire. At it's summit: barbed wire - rusty, but still useful looking, like an ancient artifact of war. Certainly, the gates lock could have secured an armory. Efficient after hours security was necessary at that school; since a good number it's enrolled were enthused to burn down, smash up, graffiti, or otherwise improve their venue of enlightenment.

There was a caretaker, who lived on site - not the funny old guy who care-takes in movies and books - but a military age guard. (No, he didn't do anything to me.)

The 'big kids' (aprox. 8 to 11yrs) part of the school was farthest from his post; so there was often a police car over that side, after hours: it was either that or the Fire Brigade would've been camping out. It was quite convenient for the police because at the same time as watching half a school they could observe half an oldster zone, which lay between my school and 'the comp' (a high school). At that time, the mugging and beating of old people was very popular. The official terminology, used at police press conferences, was: 'frenzied attack'. Whenever they said that some oldster had suffered a 'frenzied attack'
one knew that (s)he had been beaten beyond recognition..

Later, and long after the funeral, my mother learnt that her aunt had been mortally wounded in a 'frenzied attack'. Apparently, she survived two whole weeks: her fractured face full of stitches. I reckon two weeks is pretty plucky for an older, thoroughly mugged for £5 ($9), then left to the mercy of the NHS in Northern England.*

*NHS - The National Health Service was a state run, tax financed, 'free' health service.

Before WW2, many working class English did not have access to what one might think of as health care. Many people, especially those in the industrial cities of the north, did not even have running water or sanitation. VE day ('Victory in Europe') changed all that. Never before had the poor - male, female - voters - been so invested in war and victory. For example, Britain's munitions and aircraft industries could not have functioned without female workers - women who were usually under-educated and, after a double shift at the bomb plant, went home to conditions far inferior to those in the delivery zone. After the war, politicians who failed to promise social reform were simply not elected. This became a crypto-democratic avalanche, which the traditional power elite failed to control (having got fat and sluggish on the profits of the bomb factory). Therefore - in a way - English society, which hitherto had run along more or less feudal lines, was jolted toward social reform by Adolf Hitler - a person not noted for an interest in human rights... One of the results of all this was the NHS.

Initially, and for many years after, the NHS was the envy of the world. But then things began to go wrong... Corruption - unknown in the idealist phase - began to spread; drug costs climbed, as unofficial cartels took advantage of 'free' health care for all; and the public themselves made matters worse - taking what was unprecedented for granted: wasting resources, while demanding more and more and, at the same time, indulging in hard liquor, tobacco and over-eating to a degree they'd never before been able to afford...

During the 1980s the situation became critical, with many hospitals unable to maintain the simplest standards of hygiene. This occurred at a time of severe economic austerity, with reformists calling for the elimination the NHS from the public budget.

'Outrages' became frequent news. It was common for patients to be left in corridors - in cots, or on stretchers, because no ward beds were available. Sometimes they would wait for days: forced to eat, empty bowel and bladder, endure pain, and even die, whilst people bustled by. There were allegations of unofficial 'let die' policies - where priority of care was lower for someone who was not likely to survive anyway, or who was very old. Doctors fell asleep on double shift, or accidentally killed their patients by misplacing the proverbial decimal point. Many others gave up and applied for their green cards (emigration to USA). Also overworked and underpaid were nurses: sometimes forced to carry out procedures for which they were not trained. Lastly, medical experiment scandals helped finish off the reputation of free health care in Britain. (Most recent example - the 'baby heart' scam - circa 2000/01).

Throughout the eighties, disillusioned doctors and ambitious graduates chose other countries - especially Canada and the USA - thus compounding a general crisis with a lack of surgeons and specialists. Therefore, to be a poor, wounded, veteran munitions worker, in a 1980s NHS hospital, was like playing Russian Roulette - with an automatic. And that's why I say my mother's aunt must have been one tough old nag, to last two whole weeks at the gates of the knackers yard.

The pad lock on the gate was huge; you could have killed someone with it. You could have tied that lock to rope and used it to smash someone's skull in -
which is probably why it was locked to the post, whenever it was not locking the
gate to it...
Later, kids applied super-glue to its mechanism.. as they did to front door locks,
car locks, animals’ mouths, the hands of other kids...
*Kids will be kids...*

So then each morning, after opening the gate, the caretaker had to take the lock
back to his post. It seemed half the school's lockable space was used to secure
things with which children might have smashed windows, or each other’s skulls.

Part of the perimeter fence, that bordered some house gardens, had to be
raised. Eventually it would stand at over *twenty* feet - this to shield residents
from various expressions of childishness.

It wasn't *quite* that bad - not as bad as it reads; I've condensed here the
memories of two and half years, plus the 'vibe' of further years entrenched in
gave-up-ville, UK. It wasn't a proper urban war zone - like the 'west bank,' or
certain parts of Washington or LA. It wasn't even a *social* war zone. On the
contrary: it was a place where people had stopped trying, or even caring, and
were instead pretending that the results were 'normal'; that things would
somehow get better; that they would win the pools (lottery); that the government
knew what to do; that they, or anyone, anymore, believed in anything at all...

At such a time, a smart politician could have got elected wearing a red star, a
swastika, or the mark of the beast - if only persuasive that *hope* was okay, and
that the future was not a bed pan in a corridor.

Even though no literal bullets were flying, that school and that neighborhood
were no places for children, even if they were born bad. And so I was in good
company; I wasn't the only loony in the hood.

*proxy*

The school had some hamsters. The underlying purpose of 'pets' is to teach
children about life:  first you're cute, new and funny; then you're energetic,
disruptive and capable; then you're old, boring and in the way; then you get
cancer; then you die - someone snivels over a mound of earth then goes back
Anyway, one day a teacher came in and found that all the hamsters were dead - well before the cancer stage. Suicide appeared unlikely...
The whisper was that they'd been hung - hung from the bars of their cage; "hung by the neck, until dead" - with authentic little nooses and everything. I shit you not - there was an actual noose tying craze back then: any unattended piece of string was immediately transformed into a scale model of the ultimate sanction. There was going to be a school assembly about this 'outrage' - but it didn't happen. I don't know why - maybe they just couldn't be bothered; but they did decide not to have hamsters any more.

Kids came to school smelling of urine. Others did combat in class, ignoring teachers - who sometimes behaved like civilian bystanders... I remember one particularly useless bitch who just stood there - repeating the same pointless request: that one child stop throwing things at another. In the end I took matters into my own hands, relieving the teacher of further vocal stress by leaving the room...

And yes - I got into trouble: because what I'd done was 'against the rules.'

Some kids could not talk properly; others, such as I, stared blankly into space, pretending not to be there at all. And no - it wasn't a 'special school.' The place did have 'a reputation,' but it was just a standard, normal, suburban school - like a place where adults send children, to learn.

Normal. It's a funny word. I have no idea what it means. Even when I say the word... the sound is so strange, like the last word of a joke I didn't get.

Normal....

Nooooomal....

Hello, I'm Nooooommal...

They were only little, but smart as rats. They were seven-to-nine and they kicked, punched and denigrated like proper little grown ups.
But it was only a poor school, where the lunch was still free - and so the biguns said that it was all because *kids will be kids*; cruelty is normal; it's best to get used to it early on. It's called: learning to adapt.

Anyway, as far as exaggeration is concerned, I confirm that there was no little league-attempted murder while I was there. At least, not to my knowledge. But it did start a couple of years after...

I'm not sure what the term is now, but when I was wee they called it *bottling*.

There is/was a *how-to guide*, on the net, about making an A-Bomb - so I guess it's okay to briefly describe the basics of *bottling*. There's not much to that either...

What you do is: first find a bottle. Then you break the bottom part of it - small cola bottles are good. Then you get a kid wot you don't like - i.e. that little *fuker* wot didn't give over enough pocket money (allowance), or wot talks funny, or looks like a *girl/boy*, or 'stinks' or whatever.. Then you get that busted little bottle and you jab it, in the back of their thigh. No one sees what's happened till after you're walking away; and fresh broke glass cuts just as nice as any knife - which you aren't allowed to have anyway, cos there's laws about 'offensive weapons...'"

Twenty years later, there was a *high profile* 'incident' of the type I describe from the 1980s. I think it was *high profile* because the kid bled to death, just before a tv crew showed up.

It's amazing how much blood there is in a nine year old; but people didn't seem to understand that till they saw it splashed over a sidewalk; and the stairs of an apartment building; and the landing where a *plenty more where he came from* heart beat its last.

He was an immigrant kid, with a funny accent, who liked to sing and skip about. From the way things were described, I knew why he'd been 'done'. His parents were 'foreigners': which meant they came from a less civilized part of earth, where they knew about dysentery and the moods of snakes, but didn't expect to bury their son for lack of 90 cents.
And in the papers, and the polls, and on the debate shows: all was shock! and horror! - and other exclamations, all documented, like evidence of something. Some of the adults were even sniveling about it. It was hilarious - snivel, snivel. It's all on tape.

I couldn't understand it: why they were so surprised - when the shit had been stiff for at least twenty years. Maybe things were different where the shocked and horrified went..

So then they had an enquiry* and there were recommendations; a new program; new measures - to deal with the new problem that had shocked and surprised everyone. And nothing changed because nothing ever changes - because there's always some little fuker wot needs a good bottling - because, literally, "there's one born every minute."

*I refer to events that followed a later incident, in which a child died of multiple torture injuries suffered over a period of several months. A 'shake up' occurred after it was discovered that child protection services had had the girl on file for some time before her death - and had even seen her. Those who did the actual killing - the messy part - got life, and the government added some more words to the statute books, and set something new up. "New, and improved!" - all documented in the press. And then every one went back to sleep again. But I know there will be more little girls covered in cigarette burns, years before they know how cool smoking is (or isn't) It's because no enquiry will deal with the real enemy.

At this time, 'blaming' is not considered cool; it's not helpful to society. Well, I'm not here to help society; and so I blame adults - every last bastard-bitch of them.

Twenty years before the day my comrade unknown made print - years before even he was made - by a mummy and a daddy who did love him - there was little me, creeping about another school, trying not to be noticed...

I don't know if it was because I was retreating to the corner at every opportunity, or because I was a bit underweight and weird looking, or if it was because all new humans must be tested by battery; but my school pals soon discovered a new sport...
It was about a quarter mile from the last building of the complex to the gate. A quarter mile that may as well have been a whole mile, to little me. It was a wide path, of concrete slabs, with the playing field on one side and the ten-foot fence on the other (the one growing toward twenty). The sport was to catch me before I got to the gate - and then smash my face in.

"Smash your face in" was a catch all phrase, used to describe any type of assault: physical or psychological. It was rarely meant literally. It was usually pronounced:

"SMASH YA FACE IN!!"

It was very important for little boys and little girls to be able to shout this phrase with proper diction and venom, so that the words fitted close together, one against the other, like teeth in a jaw.

"SMASHYAFACEIN!!" "SMASHYAFACEIN!!" "SMASHYAFACEIN!!"

I was not very bright: a bit backward, with learning difficulties; so I took everything literally, and knew that everyone was out to get me, and that the gate was my salvation. Even the hardest seven-to-nine year old demurred to continue combat beyond the wire; so all I had to do was reach that gate - then, I knew, everything would be fine...

Everyday, twas the same: waiting most of the afternoon; getting psyched; watching that minute hand; catching looks from the hunters (cuz they looked forward too). Then, at last, that bell did ding-a-ling-a-ling, and the day was officially over.

I scurried up the path and they went to cut me off: sweeping in across the playing field. Their success varied according to how enraged they were, or how overloaded they were with the fatty and over-cooked school food issued back then.

Sometimes I stayed back somewhere, to spoof them - as though I'd already escaped (heh, heh). I hid in the bogs (toilets). I hid in the bushes, or behind the
climbing frame (heh, heh), and I employed other camouflage techniques, which you may assume were equally pathetic.

It was risky too: sometimes they left a roving patrol in the area. They used screams as a signal system; and, because kids have good directional hearing, they were able to quickly converge on the target. Couple a times, I tried to use the other exit from the school - the one where the police sometimes sat about. But that was way over the other side of the complex - a half mile across territory infested with big kids - those who would properly beat any little kid that violated their buffer zone: any little kid caught in big kid central would be home for the next couple of days. And that phrase: "I didn't see anything.." - I didn't learn that from tv.

So, most of the time there was nothing for me to do but go straight up that path, toward that gate - And that's when I discovered my main m.o. - I could run very, very fast. In fact, and with only slight exaggeration, I could run the ass off a sulphate cheetah. I was a Mig25 on burner; the lightning from Saturn's bow. Shit - I could even outrun ten year olds - and that's fast...

The air burned in my little lungs; my little legs did burn; and I did feel great, and alive - leaving them far behind. Outside the wire I'd be sweating like a grown up, and shaking like an insane eight year old - but I still say I felt great; it was like I was some kind of winner, after the ribbon.

The flip side was that on those occasions when they did get me - then I had to pay... I had to pay - good and proper...

I stood there, with my back to the fence that was too high to climb; I was standing slightly side on, my hands hovering near my groin - cuz there was a crotch kicking craze at that time. They were slapping me and laughing. They couldn't understand why I neither blubbed nor hit back. I didn't even look at them. I just wanted to be somewhere else. That's what I was doing - always trying to do - to be some place other than my body. They were fascinated by that - that thing called (my name), like I was a rabbit on a string. Couple of times they didn't pay proper attention; and then I slipped away. They could never get me in a stern chase.

They once 'hired' a big-kid, and even he had trouble catching me.. (too much jam roly-poly - heh, heh)
Eventually though, they got so organized that they no longer needed contractors; and so it got harder and harder to get through a day without a slapping/laughing session. Then, after a while, they started punching and kicking. They were angry and bored because the chase wasn't as fun; I wasn't doing it properly; it was my fault. So they hit, and they hit, and they hit.

And they screamed in my face: things I didn't understand, like:

"YOU'RE A USELESS MOUTH TO FEED!!"

..and other things that they didn't learn from 'Starsky and Hutch.'*

*A shoot-'em-up/cops and robbers tv show

But even then I didn't hit back; it was because violence is what bad people do - bad people like my dad. It's what my mummy taught me.

Sometimes, I faked being seriously wounded, or having a fit. That worked for a while - scared them off with fear of the biguns, and investigations and things. But I was a "temporary hero": one step ahead, while they were always catching up, one step at a time.

So then, with my back to the wire, I tried to talk my way out of it. And lo, I found I was good at it. It was easy: all I had to do was agree with everything they said, and debase myself a bit more than they seemed to require. And because it was all just words, and there are so many thousands of those, I was able to make it different every day - all done in the same way, yet still fresh, every day. So then, many a time, I didn't even get hit. (Sometimes they punched me anyway - but then there's always the unexpected...)

Then there was a solar plexus phase. Some one read 'solar plexus' in a karate book and, thus having a name for that button, little boys and little girls went about hitting each other in the 'solar plexus.' Perhaps I could have defended myself better; but the appropriate posture for defense would have looked like I wanted to fight, thus giving completely the wrong signal. So I half held up my hands before me, in a mongrel pose of gestures: surrender, prayer, and tentative deployment for defense. And they
laughed and they laughed because it wasn't like the book at all.

They could easily have smashed my face in, just as they were always screaming they would:

"WE'RE GONNA SMASH YOUR FUCKING FACE IN!!"

And they laughed at that too. I could never understand why they found it so funny. I suppose it was my face: a stupid trembling face, with my eyebrows scrunched up - sloping roves, above my cowering shame - a stupid face they had no intention of smashing in.

In that age group, they only slapped a kid's face because smashing in would "leave evidence" for the biguns. That's what they told me: they weren't going to leave evidence for the biguns. So they just went for the body. And so, sometimes, I would say my piece - grovel like Paganini on his violin - and they'd still leave me on the ground, gasping; and I thought I would die because I just could not seem to breath...

Yeah, that solar plexus craze was a real bastard.

Note: "Temporary Hero" - song, sung by Pat Benatar.

Note: A foxhunt was where rich people chased a fox and then killed it. They dressed in beautiful, traditional clothes and rode horses. They had hounds to help - sometimes a hundred of them. They said it was tradition, and a sport: a part of country life... I don't know much about those things, and I never did see odds on a fox; but I do know that if there was someone on their first hunt, then when the fox was caught, its blood was wiped on their face. It was called 'blooding.' It was tradition.

I liked to imagine scenarios: I liked to image that a fox has run by, and then one of those traditional types rides by, alone; an especially experienced and arrogant type; one with many a kill chalked up; a real proper sort of gent, or lady. But they fall off their horse and, before they can get back up, a bunch of foxes comes back at them. They start biting and tearing at the hunter. I wouldn't help the foxes or anything. I'd just be watching - I mean, if there was a pack of vicious foxes then what could little I do? There's a law about 'giving aid,' but if there was a bunch of vicious foxes and no telephone, then what could I do? All I could do is watch. I'd have to watch, cuz there'd be nothing else to do. I'd just have to watch that hunter get ripped to shreds. They'd be screaming, I imagine. And I'd be smiling - there 'aint no law against that. Not yet. It's just a bad thought: it's in bad taste.

But someone's got to like them foxes - even if they are 'vermin'

I know it could have been worse. They could have cut pieces off me, like what
happened to the kids on tv, who'd been nabbed by the child murderers. That's why I had to stay in at weekends. Mummy said she had to keep an eye on me.

But all those kids ever did was slap me about a bit; and punch me a bit; and sometimes give a few kicks.

I was the one doing the cutting; because on those days when they did let me off, when I talked funny for them, what I was doing was cutting myself up. I didn't know it, but I was cutting myself up; every day, another piece off; just one piece more; one little bit more - so they'd laugh; so they'd let me off a bit of a slap and a punch, and maybe a kick.

After a while, I didn't feel like any kind of winner at the end of the day. I didn't understand why. I just felt horrible and worthless - all the time. And I did want to die - even though they say that children never feel that way.

I did want to be run over, or get my head kicked in. I wanted them to take care of it: kick and kick - till I wouldn't have to worry about it. I saw myself helping them. I saw myself kicking and punching my own skull: smashing it, over and over, and over again - smashing it - clenching my teeth, eyes wet with hatred. Sometimes, I actually was hitting myself, or striking my skull on the ground - though not as hard as I could have - and I never cried - at least not proper crying.

Mummy was always crying. I could hear her, at night, and I didn't want to do that... Even then I was trying to distance myself from her - to be separate from her in whatever way she might not notice. I felt bad about that too because I knew I was all she had in the world; she'd said that if it wasn't for me she'd have no reason to go on; she said how we were very close and would always be. But I couldn't help it: I wanted another mummy or, ideally, to be alone. I didn't understand any of it, so I kept it locked up - safe and secret. It's called: 'keeping things bottled up.' Mummy said it was a bad thing.

I was never like a seven year old, or a nine year old, or like a twelve year old, or a twenty year old, or even a thirty year old... But always I was like a five year old. That's how I remember me, at every stage of my life: a mucky pup; a spoilt toddler; running about; running away, with the stupid, stumbling steps of a toddler; I was fleeing a scene of naughtiness. I was running: running away from
a dirty botty, and my shame. That's why, when I was seven-to-nine, I understood why they had to scream at me - even if they didn't - even if none of us understood the words, upon the meaning. And I never wondered why my mummy was irritated, without stating the reason. It was not necessary to say why; we both knew, like people who don't need to say "I love you."

Note: I had a time machine fantasy too. I'd go back to those days written of above - to that school. I could be that little kid again, but I'd be knowing what I know now, hiding among the bushes that the council let grow near the school. I'd step up behind the worst of those bullies, JC, and I'd drive a broken bottle in his leg and then hurry on. All the way to the bone. I'd be knowing he was probably used at home, and was just acting out of his own pain and fear. But I'd still bottle him - good and proper. And I'd be feeling great - because then I could finish being a kid, and walk the path to the gate.

It's extra crazy because if I really could go back in time - and if I was going to kill anyone - then surely it would be fairer to find whoever fucked up kids like JC and me - find those adults and kill them instead, before they could hurt us. I'm not saying it would be fair. It wouldn't be fair at all; but it would be a bit fairer than bottling another kid. But I suppose all kids can really do is fuck up other kids.

Secrets

One day I was attacked in class and, momentarily, it was too much. So, I ran home. I was eight, but I ran up that path like a dirty bottied five year old. My mummy persuaded me that I should go back. She said I could stay home the rest of the day; and then she told me that I should not 'keep things bottled up.' So then I knew that she wanted my secrets - the things that were mine. And so I kept them extra-careful-quiet. I kept them under my bed; and even though my mummy sometimes searched my room, she never did find them - my secrets.

Mummy was drying me, after a bath. She held up my arms, to dry under them. She fed me lots of food, but I would not grow properly. My ribs showed like matches in a puddle, and it was difficult to know what to do. After all, if you feed a kid lots of food, but they won't grow properly, what can you do? And as for the bruises: she asked why I couldn't be more like the others at school. And I answered. It was a good and honest answer - just like you're supposed to do - but she sighed and didn't want to continue with it; it was a sigh that told me that although my answer was a good one, it wasn't the right one. And so I knew not mention them, at school, ever again. In fact, it seemed safer not to talk about anything.
BTW: Jam-Roly-Poly (rowly-poely) was an allegedly authentic English pudding. It was a disgusting fatty, sugar crammed desert: a sort of stodgy cake thing, that would give any olderster a coronary on contact, or a diabetic instant brain damage. Healthy kids just got slowed down a bit. (I'm convinced the school menu was arranged on the basis of anesthetic effect.) I was never very hungry; I was happy with a little potato and baked beans. I liked things with cheese too. And Apple pie. I really liked Apple pie. Then, one day, some old bitch dinner warden forced me to eat something grey, hard and stinky that was called liver. I didn't know what a liver was for, but I did know that it had came out of an animal who could not have survived its removal. But the warden seemed very angry with me; so I tasted a bit - a tiny bit. My instincts had been right - it was gross. They cooked all meat till it was an homogenous mass of grey cell wall matter (litigation anxiety), which made it even worse. But that bitch stood over me and made me put a whole piece in my mouth. I saw some sort of tube thing in it, which I guess was a blood vessel or something. I chewed, trying not to think about the tube part... But I wretched anyway; I nearly puked just thinking about the next piece... The warden was not impressed. She made me eat more, warning of dire consequences if I refused. My mummy once tied my legs to a chair, cuz I wouldn't eat peas - but this was worse... This time there were other kids watching - and laughing. All I wanted to do was leave and be sick somewhere, but that warden wanted me to eat even more of the dead animal. It was like a nightmare, and she only stopped when it seemed I really would spew - all over the wood-effect-Formica table that's cleanliness was her responsibility. So she said I could stop; and then, as she relented, she shook her head and gave a little laugh because I was silly to get all upset over a bit of liver, which "is good for you." She was about sixty, I guess. She's dead now. I hope it was exactly as she always feared it would be. It's not nice to want things like that. It's not forgiving or empathetic...

But I hope she was utterly alone, the way I was, at that table, chained to a dead animal.

The second (and last) time that I was sent to someone's office I tried to get out of it.
I was told that I'd not been paying attention properly and therefore had to go to a higher teacher's office. I pleaded with the teacher not to send me.. I would be good, or better, or whatever.. etc, etc.
I tried all the stuff I'd learnt - every twist and turn - but all to no avail. I just wasn't good enough to fool a bigun. I tried even harder; but I just made things worse; and she was adamant then that I had to go to the office. She even started writing a note. So then I started screaming at her - basically the same words as before, but screaming - as if showing I was afraid would make a difference.. I think I was begging too, and blubbing - which was embarrassing - and it was all to no avail.

I was about to go out the door, with the note..

I was only eight, but the teacher was dismayed when I turned and spoke to her, loudly and clearly. I said that I hated her and hoped she would soon die. I didn't plan those words to come out; it was an accident; it was like a reflex. But I did hate her. I hated and feared them all.

So I went into the office of the learned, and there I was enclosed with another
bottom-feeler. And guess what happened? Nothing.... I just got told off for not paying proper attention (!) And I was told that a letter would have to be sent home to mummy - and that it was very serious because I was naughty. That's all that happened.

And then, when the letter arrived, it said I'd not been paying attention properly; it said it was a serious matter, and a disruption to the class. That's all it said; Mummy didn't have to go to the school or anything.

So everything was all fine. I had been a little worried, waiting for the letter. But then, when it turned out fine, I was really happy, though not too happy...

It was important to mummy that I be happy - that's what she said. But she preferred a more reserved happiness: a mature sort of happiness. I didn't understand all that; but I knew how to act; I knew how to be happy without annoying my mummy.

And that teacher didn't like me at all - not after that day. I think I gave her the creeps. (heh, heh)

Years later I still hated her. I couldn't even remember her face; and I knew it wasn't her fault; but I still hated her.

It's madness: how can there ever be justice while people like me are allowed to walk about - and even write things like this, and put it on the internet to spoil things for others?

Just now, I want there to be a God, or at least be able to believe in a god - just so I could ask forgiveness for the thoughts I have: the things I'd do to them, to all of them.

And yet, just yesterday, I considered a question regarding 'Satan'. I wondered under what circumstances I might give over my soul. I could not think of any; but the closest to an acceptable deal - where I might agree to consign my one and only soul, to hell eternal - was if that hell could be me; and in me they would exist, eternally.

Girls don't think this way, do they? No matter what anyone does to them...
Here's a thing: I couldn't read. Being able to read was the lowest acceptable standard in England's schools. Any other dysfunction was permissible, but all children had to be able to read their P-45 and sign on.* So my teacher was vexed indeed to discover that I was not learning to read properly. I'd managed to get to a very advanced age before they noticed that I was only pretending to read. I was always staring into a book, you see - so they thought I was reading, when all I was doing was hiding. They also found out that my writing was pretend too - having more to do with drawing and mimicry than linguistic dexterity. So then the school sent another letter home to my mummy. They told my mummy that there was something wrong with me because I wasn't reading and writing properly. They said they would try to help; but there were no guarantees because if there was something wrong with me, then it was hardly their fault... It all went in my dossier. They thought maybe I was dyslexic, or it was because I wasn't paying attention properly... They asked if everything was all right at home.. It all went in my dossier. Mummy got quite angry.

*Welfare lingo

At the time, mummy was occupied with Abba, John Denver and twenty cups of tea a day and hunting down every spec of dust that dared enter the bunker.. She just needed a bit of a breather; get things sorted; back on an even keel; a place for everything, and everything in its place.. She was going to get things organized, and things; but the letter really upset the plans because it interrupted in the initial breathering process.

Why? She demanded of me, was I not reading properly. What was I doing all day at that school??

I didn't know what to say. I couldn't even guess the right answer - or any answer. I just couldn't think at all. And anyway, what ever I said would not have changed the fact: a correctly formatted document of the state said I was illiterate.. It was appalling, and deeply humiliating, to my mummy because she
knew, from the radio, that very few mummy's had illiterate children. It was appalling - and no way was my mummy going to be like those others... It was like having dirty underwear, or smudgy windows.

The only time I ever saw my mother motivated to sustained action (other than cleaning) was when she made me read. She had a thing about books. As with Abba and John Denver - with books she could leave the bunker without actually having to step outside.

She was always saying how she was born too late, and how things were much nicer back in the 1800's and so on. So mummy read a lot of Daphne Du Maurier books and other books about dead people, who'd had intense lives and romantic endings. Mummy was good at reading: she could get through two books per week - not weedy, pretend ones, like this - but proper books: books that would take most people a month to read; books big enough to kill rats. She had two library tickets, which meant she could get eight books per visit. (She was very efficient like that.) The funny thing is, even after she got TV, she still kept up with the reading. She had a thing about not watching daytime TV - because it was what typical females did.

So, anyway; the day after that letter arrived my mummy sat me down and put a book in front of me; and she said to me that she would not let me go until I'd started reading it; and she didn't care if we're here all day and all night!!

I looked at the cover. But I did not want to read a book because that was like being in school, inside the wire. Besides, I hated stupid books. Also, I could see that she was really upset about something; and that something very serious and bad must be connected to the whole book issue. I just didn't want to go through that as well as the gate and all the other stuff. So I started to cry. I cried and I cried, but it did no good; I even let out some extra tears that had nothing to do with books. But it was all to no avail. My head throbbed and my cheeks burned, but mummy would not let me go - not till I read.

So I did.

I learnt to read - better and better, over the weeks - till mummy stopped being scared and cross; till she seemed not to care about testing me no more. So then she got back to her routine; and I could read. I suppose that not long after
I could have read Dickens or Brontë, but always, and ever after, I hated books, and reading. The only books I would read were fact books.

That annoyed the school - almost as much as not being able to read at all. In my dossier reports they advised that I needed to read more 'fictional materials' because it wasn't normal just to read factual books: it wasn't "balanced." A smile I had, recalling the 'best years' of my life: My reading: it wasn't balanced.

I liked books about airplanes, space travel and stuff like that; I liked anything that could fly fast. I was going to be an astronaut. They didn't like that either because it wasn't normal - like with the dyslexic thing.

8

Here's a thing: I was eight and I couldn't wipe my own arse. At home, I had to call for mummy - "Finished!" - and she would come along and take care of it. I'm sure it was irritating, but after all it's just a bit of shit, right? And no one knew else knew that I couldn't wipe my own arse - which would have been embarrassing all round... Besides, she had to make sure it was properly clean.

Even though no one knew, I still felt as though they did; and so I was ashamed; and all I could do about it was pretend that it was normal, or that I never took a shit. I walled those thoughts off; I put them off till later - just as I did with the actual shitting. I used to store it up, for one good dump, every couple of days. I could even manage three days. But usually it was just two.

This worked well until the day I needed to dump, while I was at school. At first I wasn't too worried; but as the day wore on, I realized that I couldn't hold on to it. I needed to go home. However, they don't let you out of school just to take a shit. That would be silly. Even if I could have asked - thus admitting that I did dirty things with my botty - I knew they would say 'no' because that was their job. They may have laughed at me too. So, I went in the bogs and looked. I looked at the bowl; the seat and the lock; and I cried because I didn't know
what I would do.

But I did know that if a kid was ill, then they had to let you go - it was 'the law,' or something. So then I faked being ill. I didn't like to do that, but I had no choice because I had to take a shit. I'm not sure they fully believed that I was ill: they wanted to call my mummy first; and it took a while to make them understand that we didn't have a telephone, and that I lived less than half a mile away, anyway.

Eventually, they gave in, though they weren't happy about it - I could tell; I was eight, but I wasn't stupid. There was a form to fill in, and then they had to find someone to take me home (rules); and so I had to wait, while they tried to figure out who that would be. Meanwhile, I was fighting in my guts: it was a battle: my private battle, on the field of my shame; and, having presentiment of the outcome, I was terrified.

At last, a nice lady from the kitchen agreed to walk me home; and so then the other biguns had to let me go. They weren't happy about it, but they didn't seem to have any choice - so then they let me go.

She was very kind, that lady who walked me home. I'd seen her be nice to other kids too, and so I knew it wasn't a fluke, or because she was in a good mood. She used to smile and give extras of dessert - even though it was against the rules. The weird thing is: you were allowed to have extra liver - almost as much as you liked - but not extra apple pie - even though dead animal is much more expensive than apple pie.

Anyway, this particular dinner lady would give extra dessert; and she would only stop when there really was "none left." She walked me up the path, through the gate and over the street; and I admit that I would have liked to have gone home with her - just for a while.

Unfortunately, I filled my pants just short of the bunker. I had so nearly made it but... I had failed - and very seriously, this time. I felt terrible. It was my fault. I really was as 'a mucky little sod' - just like my mummy said.

I was extra ashamed, since I knew how that dinner lady had volunteered to take me home. She hadn't been obligated at all; she just wanted to help. But I didn't cry; I did manage to stop that, mostly.
Mummy opened the door. Suddenly, on the fly, she had to talk to a stranger, while I was standing there, smelling of shit. It was very embarrassing, all round.

Mummy wasn't angry though. Mummy could get very angry, but she was rarely angry directly at me. Or if she was angry - at something I'd said or thought, or wanted to do - then she would say things to explain why I was selfish, or whatever. Sometimes, she wouldn't say anything at all, but just give a special look; and I could always tell that I'd done something wrong. But she never hit, and rarely shouted.

I'd been expecting her to shout that time though... I mean, if you shit your pants...

But she hardly said anything... All my clothes were made of polyester (a kind of plastic textile) - that meant they could be bleached, then hot washed; and then it was like nothing happened at all.

From the kitchen came the sound of The Archers (BBC radio show), while I enjoyed a second bath. It was almost fun - a change of routine. And I didn't have to worry about the gate that day.

rude awakening

One day, not long after, I called for mummy "finished" but she said I had to do it myself... I called again, saying that I couldn't do it - but she still said no; and then she wouldn't answer at all....

It was terrible because it meant that I had to clean my own botty - all by myself - and that was a very important thing for little me to take care of, all by myself. I cried for her, but she just would not come and wipe my botty any more. It was like that reading thing, all over again... I sat on that toilet; and my head span, in the immensity of what I had to do.

But, of course, I managed it - after all, it's just a bit of shit. And one has paper to use... I soon learnt how. In fact, I became so good at it - so very good - that I was soon able to keep my little botty cleaner than ever mummy had. Right in, and up there - cleaner than a communion cup. It became a sort of pride thing; and then it was an obsession; and then, ever after, it was a habit - true as
breathing.

Father would have been proud, if only he'd known.

I sensed that the whole dossier/reflection-on-mummy thing was very important to my mummy, and so I dreaded report day. I dawdled around at school - risking a slapping session - just so I could be a little later home on report day. Or I'd open the envelope; it was the kind that closed with string - in a way they thought kids would not open. But it was always okay. There was never anything in those reports to upset my mummy. I knew the teachers were going easy on me. But I never felt grateful - just ashamed.

I had a learning problem, it's true. The school didn't have a proper word for it - a word that could prove it wasn't their fault - so they just put in my reports stuff like: bright, above average.. but would benefit from better concentration... or shows promise in English.. but would benefit from more balanced reading...
Sometimes mummy was actually pleased with the reports. Especially when they said I was 'mature for my age.' Mummy liked me to be mature for my age.

bad news

It was some bad thing in the news... It was something like an earth-quake or something; mummy told me about it and I didn't know what to say; so I sort of smiled instead. It wasn't a real smile, but it offended her. So she looked at me, shook her head, and she said:

"x, you have no soul"

I didn't know what she meant, but I knew I'd done the wrong thing. So I was extra quite that day. It was summer; it was another Saturday, when I looked out the window. I sort of knew there were no child killers out there; but I didn't mind staying in. At least the other kids wouldn't get me.
Disruptive Influence

It was playtime, at school. I lay on bright green grass, under a deep blue sky, and the nearest star, while two of my playmates took it in turns to try to break my legs. They were jumping up and down on them: *Boing, boing*. I lay there and let them. It's amazing how springy a kid's legs are: *Boing, boing* - and still those pesky things would not break.

So then two of them decided to try it - *simultaneous*.

But I wasn't simply letting them... I *wanted* them to do it. I didn't understand why, but I wanted them to hurt me; they could have slit my throat and I would have let them. Anyway, they didn't know about that - they were just having trouble synchronizing their jumps.

A bigun hurried over and stopped it.
With lips-a-pursed, she wrote irritatedly in a notebook carried for the purpose of inscribing naughtiness. Then we were dispersed, with orders to *play nicely*. Obediently, I pulled myself together and found somewhere better to hide. I was pathetic. I was a pathetic ‘thing,’ but bright as the near star; and so I knew it was my fault. I knew it was meant to be.

There'd been other incidents of this kind; including *the earth bath* and *the tack attack* - but it was the *leg bouncing* that was seen by a bigun... That was the one written down in a notebook; the one taken to an office for discussion about what to do. They looked in my dossier. They consulted the guidelines... And then they typed up another letter.

Mummy had been listening to Abba and the radio talk shows. Outside, it was summer; the morning was cool and fresh; the sky was clear; and the envelope had the crest of Essex County Council (three swords across a shield); and so she knew it was very serious, even before opening it. Mummy could get nervous just *looking* at an envelope.

I was at school while mummy read the letter. She worried about it, all day long. The sun rose and warmed the earth; crickets sang in the tall grass, at the edge of the playing field - where the mower couldn't reach; and electric waves sprang between everything that was living. I never realized stuff like that was going on,
but it was - all the time.

Anyway, it was a usual day for me; and when it was over, I returned to the bunker, in the same old way...

I secured the front door behind me, and checked it was properly locked - just as I'd been shown.

My mummy was very agitated. It was because of a letter. It was because she had to go to the school to discuss me - because of an urgent matter - because of me... That's what the letter said. She wanted to know what it was all about. I had no idea - so she tried to find out from a different angle. What was I playing at? I didn't know. So then she said not to worry about it. So I nodded and went to my room - and tried not to worry about it. And mummy had to go to the school without knowing what it was all about. Mummy hated to go some where without being properly prepared.

It was strange because then I was in a bunker all alone, for the first time. I felt fine about that. But not too fine, of course...

My mother came back from the 'meeting' and she was still agitated. Not since the reading thing had I seen mummy so concerned and upset - but this time it was not because of me. (Phew!) At the school, they'd told her about the leg-bouncing thing. (Whoops..) Then they said that I was a disruptive influence. Then they said it was a serious matter, and that I might benefit from psychiatric treatment. It was all in my dossier. Mummy took affront at that. She launched some polite, provisionally combative words - without the benefit of proper preparation - and then came back up the path. She came up that path, absorbing the seriousness of the phrases I would pretend to understand. She came up the path that I knew so well; and I wonder how it seemed to her, that summer evening, so many ago.

She came in and described the basics of the situation. It was like a military briefing. I liked stuff like that. Then she asked me what I thought; she said she wanted to know if I needed to talk to a stranger. I was used to being treated in an adult way, and was even a little stuck up about it... For example: other kids didn't know how bad certain politicians were, or how certain un-met relatives were not trustworthy either. But I did; I knew all kinds of proper and mature
things.

So although I didn't know what she was talking about, I still knew the correct answer. I'm not sure that I exactly answered in words; but I somehow managed to get the right idea across: that I certainly didn't need a child psychologist; I was fine; they were making a mountain out of a mole hill, just like they always were. Besides, if the psychologists were brought in, they might not understanding everything; and then, being in a hurry, they might 'put me into care....' Mummy told me how difficult it was to get kids back once they'd been 'put into care.' And so she cried. And so I said it wasn't going to happen. I even promised her: no way would they take me away. So then she cheered up a bit; she even got a bit feisty, as she described to me how nasty and rude they'd been to my mummy.

And she explained that it was insulting to me too, for them to say that I might be a bit curly-whirly in my noodle-woodle... And it all reflected very badly on mummy; and that wasn't fair because mummy always took care of me - much better than those others could. Other mummies beat their children, and went out nights to the pub and things; or they worked all day, so the kid was then a 'latch-key-child.' And yet they, at the school, had dared to 'imply' that my mummy wasn't a good mummy...

And so I said that she was the best mummy in the whole wide world; and I knew, as children know the sky is blue, that every word we said was true.

action plan

So then we decided - together - just like grown ups - that mummy would tell those others to let it drop; she knew her rights; she would write her Member of Parliament if they tried to evade their responsibilities and so on. She said it was all the fault of those other kids' parents, and that the school should sort that out and do their jobs properly...

Sounded good to me. So I agreed.

My mother was good at writing letters to people she didn't like. She had a typewriter and had been a top secretary, before I was born; she knew all about
words and paragraphs and being succinct and things.
At one time, she'd even been a legal secretary - so she knew special
terminology and sentence structures - the kind of stuff that can surprise an
official man - the sort who's used to scaring crap out of people with three cocks
on an envelope...

It's surprising how many nasty letters a maisonette can receive during thirteen
years - cuz there's always some horrible man, trying to over-regulate, or
overcharge, or suggest hereditary insanity.
But in letter to letter combat, my mummy often did get her own way: Welfare,
Electricity Company, School - many huns fell to her guns.

She kept every official letter she received, and she kept a copy of every well
crafted repost; and, if she had to write more than three times, she started
putting in polite threats about her MP, or current affairs tv. That's called
programmed escalation. Eventually she had a big file of these letters and
reposts - like gun camera film.

In a way, I was kind of proud.

The thing was though: most official letters were merely form-letters, carefully
composed by some pin-stripe-ass-lapper, then mass printed, to sit in various
piles on the desk of some patsy, who's mission it was to choose the appropriate
one, then fill in the pesky name and address, then sign it - just like a boss
would, with a flourish and a stab - before dropping it in the dispatch bag, on the
way home: addressed to a hovel where they didn't understand official
terminology, or have their own type writers, or legal sounding words in their
heads...

Later they computerized it: to increase officiancy, while maintaining personalization, with a fancy gif of an
original, human signature. All the patsy then had to do was choose which file. And then a high-speed printer,
installed in the post room, spat out the required bombshell. That's called progress. But, rest assured: always,
somewhere, there is a pin-stripe-ass-lapper.

Mummy's technique was simple: If one of those letter signers has to write a
specific letter, to one specific nut, then they're at a disadvantage - time
efficiency wise - especially if a specific nut can spend whole days, craftying
their reposts, and searching out precedents and things...
So, one day the teacher took aside certain kids, and told them to stop beating me and calling me names.

And lo, they took no notice at all.

But I never told.

Christmas interlude

It was very important to mummy that I have fond memories of childhood. She once hinted that she hadn't had a nice childhood herself - because her sister bit her or something - and so she was determined that it wouldn't happen with me. Sometimes she would ask me, a little too emotionally, if I was 'happy.' And I would say, most earnestly, "yes, mummy."

But I'm not sure she believed me...

Anyway, Christmas was the main event, memory making wise, and so she planned it like D-day. Everything had to be precisely perfect. And, in the run up to the big day, she could get quite agitated if things didn't go smoothly. Sometimes she said she hated Christmas and that it should be abolished... But I knew she didn't mean it; her Christmas deployments always proved it.

It was amazing because although there was only one and a third of us, there was always a vast surplus of chicken, stuffing, crispy bacon, roast potato, mince pies and Christmas pud and things. And on Boxing-Day (December 26) she would complain, in a sort of proud way, that she always did far too much food. I never questioned eating dead animal. I didn't even think about that.

She always got me lots of presents, which she loved to wrap up, even though there was some post-opening regret at how quickly all the lovely paper had been reduced to shreds. Nonetheless: mummy loved to photograph the opening of the presents. I loved every single one. I knew mummy liked wrapping them and then seeing my face light up when I opened them. Actually, I would have been just as happy with big cardboard box. I had a thing about cardboard boxes - especially any box big enough to get into.

At one stage I even wanted a coffin to sleep in. I'm not making it up. I wanted an actual coffin; and my favorite toy was a rubber skeleton that I'd bought at a
jumble sale. I treasured that thing.

Note: jumble sale: a large, formal version of a garage sale. In those days 'Jumble' sales and 'Bring and Buy' sales were very popular. One sometimes had to queue for an hour to get in the door. The local papers would announce them - like they were 'news'

The present acquisition procedure: was that I chose the 'main present' (cuz mummy didn't want to make a mistake with the dearest item) and then she chose the others.

Sounded good to me..

Then, one night, not long before I was ten, I had a kiddie size epiphany...
Twas the night before Christmas; the fold away tree was again propped up, bedecked in tinsel, bell and light, with a plethora of beautifully wrapped pressies bolstering its wire roots... A dead chicken awaited the final rite; the mince pies were deployed, like Rommel's mines, before El Alamein; and, in the relative privacy of my sub-bunker, I realized that I didn't want the battery operated robot, with rocket launcher and fully poseable arms, which I'd picked out of the HP (payment plan) catalogue. I didn't know what I should have chosen instead, after so many winter evenings of deliberation; but I knew that I didn't want that robot.

I think it was the first time that I was aware of a feeling that was not fear. But the emptiness I felt was not due to wanting one thing and not another. I felt empty, simply because I didn't want anything. Twas the night before Christmas: I was nearly ten years old, and I didn't want anything. I didn't even want Christmas. I didn't know why I had that feeling; and I felt worse because I knew Christmas was very important to mummy. Despite all the complaining and bitching, I knew Christmas was a very important time for her.

And so, somewhere, for some time, there was a picture of a kid grinning - wide 'n' toothy - on a Christmas morn, many, many past. I was clutching a motorized robot and a fake smile.

self-harm

The only 'thing' I ever wanted - aside from a washing machine carton - was a
I saw lots of kids on bikes and I wanted to do that too. Mummy told me that she'd once briefly worked in a hospital; and there she'd once seen a kid who'd come off a bicycle. The kid had a horrible open head wound, or something; and they were never the same afterwards.

She said she didn't know what she would do if anything ever 'happened' to me. She often said I was all she had in the world. She once even said she might have killed herself if it wasn't for me - meaning I was life itself. So I never looked at the bike pages again. At least, not when she was about.

I did have a pair of kiddies' binoculars. They were plastic, but they worked fine. I'd heard something about how dangerous it was to look at the sun - and how looking at it through binoculars could cause immediate and permanent damage to eyesight. So, I had just a quick look at the sun through my kiddy binoculars - not long: just til it hurt. And yes - that time, the biguns were absolutely right.

But I never told.

"You can tell me anything, if anything's worrying you"
She asked me, less and less, over the years. And then one day, it was the last time; it was the day I'd perfected:

"I'm fine mum"

We both knew
And we never told..

Note: I wanted to put in some funny stuff - because this is all a bit nasty and un-unremitting. But I just couldn't think of anything: I couldn't remember anything that was properly funny. Take a break. Go find something funny - not sarcastic - just something that's plain, simple funny. Go have a laugh, for me?
One day, mummy was crying. There was bad news, again. Some actress had died; it was one that my mummy had really liked. She was crying and crying because it was cancer and "damn that fucking disease!"

I'd never seen mummy cry that bad; I'd never heard her swear that savagely either. I sort of stood there, not knowing what to do. I can't remember who it was who'd died that day. I know it wasn't Natalie Wood - she drowned.

"You have no soul"

So I went to my room, without having to be told. I closed the door quietly; and I tried to understand what it all meant. But I never did manage it.

**snails**

There was one kid that wanted to friends. Actually, he forced me to be friends: I was scared of him. He used to get snails, but instead of crushing them on the sidewalk, like I was expecting him to, he threw them up - into the air. He could do a dozen snails in a session, one at a time.

It was a hot afternoon; and he laughed hysterically at it: a little snail, reaching up into the sky, hanging there a moment, at its summit unknown, and then smashing down on the concrete. And they didn't die quick, either... They bubbled and squirmed, among their broken shells...

I wanted to stamp on them because I felt squirmy just looking at them; it was like they were wondering what had happened. I wanted to stop that; but he wouldn't allow it. They were *his* snails; he'd found them; he would decide if they could be stamped on, or not. But he didn't stamp on them. So they just had to stay there: bubbling and squirming, among their pieces, till the sun dried them out.

**big kids**

We were growing up fast. We would soon be double digit. We were the big kids. Boys were big enough to smoke; pick locks; and sniff glue - just to try it
out (ha, ha); and be beaten properly; and to properly beat. And girls were big
effort to be fully fucked - with *no apparent injury* - as long as he was real
gentle about it... And girls will often wet the bed anyway - because of 'no
apparent damage' - and stink of piss; and cry in class; or faint; or chew their
nails to the bone; or doodle on their arms with needles; or show no sign at all.
Because kids will be kids...
Go ask the biguns: they'll tell you all about it.

So let's not forget: I was one of the lucky ones.

But the rules of engagement had changed; and, before I even understood the
first set of rules, the cease-fire at the wire was cancelled.

There was a row of trees and bushes outside the gate. They started hiding in
there; and one day, as I shot out the gate, feeling quite pleased with myself -
*whamo!*

I managed to break free; I almost made it to the road, across which was the
bunker - to which I would have fled, without looking, either way.
But they got me down. This time they got straight on with the kicking. They
kicked and kicked; and it even started to hurt. Some adults, from a nearby
house, came out and said they should stop; but that's all they could do; they
still had to live there afterwards; and there was always the *we'll getch-ya factor.*
Kids would mutter that phrase, as they slunk away from adults who'd
temporarily got the best of them. Then they might - or might not - make good on
the mutter, with petrol and match. (In England they don't usually have
mailboxes. One just sticks the letter - or petrol - through a slot in the door...)

Another adult, out walking her dog, seemed to want to do something; but if
there's a lot of vicious kids about, then it's not easy to know what to do. So she
hung about, in case something really bad happened. I remember she looked
quite worried - which was sort of nice, since it wasn't really her problem.
That was someone I'd never seen before, and never saw again; but she
interrupted walking her dog, to worry about a kid she'd never seen before, and
never would again.

Then, suddenly, I heard my name being called. The kicking stopped and
someone was calling my *name.* No one used my name at school, so I knew it
had to be my mummy. And sure enough, there she was - standing across the street - at the door of our marionette block.

She was wearing her nylon sari and plastic sandals, and calling me in a way that almost sounded like she was annoyed - like I was late, or I'd been caught tramping through mud or something. My attackers realized it must be my mother; and they seemed to find that very hilarious. They even gave a few more kicks, to see what she'd do... But she just stood there; and she called my name even more irritatelly.

I didn't want to risk getting up; but when she took a step forward, the others started to leave. So then I did get up.

They left with mirth, promising things for next day. They knew where I lived... I'd managed to keep that secret for so long, but they'd found out. Everyone finds out in the end. I got up and walked across the road, rather dejected. Mummy was already half way up the stairs - the stairs about which she sometimes muttered because it was left to her to bleach them, though she didn't see why it was up to her to keep everything clean. She bustled up them stairs, and I followed; and although I seem like a broken old phonograph record, I must say that I felt very ashamed and pathetic just then; guilty too: because I'd just had a disloyal thought about my mummy...

I stopped that.

There was some other reason why she'd just stood there. I didn't know what it was; maybe it was the sandals, which were her house gear; but whatever it was... Well, I just stopped thinking those thoughts; I put them behind a lot of other thoughts: thoughts that meant nothing at all.

escape

That incident, as well as a fractured foot thing (too boring and pathetic to go into), persuaded all parties that although I was absolutely sane - just as my mummy had typed it - I would, perhaps, enjoy a change of scene.
But even with all the directly related/liable parties in total agreement, arranging a pupil transfer takes time, in Britain. There are special forms to fill in; exceptional approvals to be applied for - things like that. And then someone in a central office has to consider it all: to decide if it's all appropriate and properly done, under current criteria, etc.. And then, lastly, when satisfied that all is in order, and proof against scrutiny, etc, etc, and so on... only then will it be approved - Stamp! - and then sealed in an envelope, with three swords, and a partridge in pear tree.

(They still used a rubber stamp in them days.) Stamp!

And so my dossier was stamped; and though I was pleased to go, I did kind of know that the stamp said: reject.

During the wait, my fellow pupils found out that I was going to another school. What surprised me was that they didn't swarm on me, like it was a free lunch time. I was terrified of that. But they ignored me, like I'd never been there, like I was the ghost in which they no longer believed. That's how I left.

The new school was much nicer: the kids were nice, and the teachers were good too; they actually liked teaching. But I was nearly ten, and so I knew not to trust any of them; and I knew that anyone who liked me must have something wrong with them, or they wanted to do something to me - 'lure one into a false sense of security.' So I took precautions against them. In plain sight, I hid from them all. That's how I carried on.

The school was about thirty five minutes walk from the bunker. I'd only just learnt to wipe my arse, but I managed to walk to and from that school without ever being nabbed by a child molester. It was quite a hike; and sometimes it was a bore; but at least it was exercise that made up for the weekends, and not having the gate anymore.

lucky

Despite the inward curling of my noodle, the only near fatal incident during my time at that school, involved a car, an icy road, and a loony moi, flying through the clouds, as usual. It was just before another Christmas... The poor lady got
out of her car - which had halted at an angle - and stood trembling, grey as gutter snow.

I stared at her a moment, as she tried to say something; but I heard nothing, as I ran away. I was ten, and I ran like a five year old, only much, much faster - and getting faster, every day.

And that's the end.

Note: Obviously, there were more years to my life; but they were pretty much the same as these - except that I did eventually get away, from everyone. I suppose that's not a proper good thing. Anyway, if you got something out of this, then that's one good thing. Bye.

To the littleun, who shouldn't be here,

I don't like postscripts. When something's over, it's over. (That's what they told me.) But when I read this thing back - to check my speeling was proper - I nearly went off my noodle, that is, I nearly went further off. And I started to worry: that maybe some naughty, dirty, ashamed, littleun - "too sensitive" - might read what I've done here, and then feel even worse than before.

Unfortunately, there is nothing I can do or say to help you, except to mention that no matter how warped, alone, disgusting or doomed you may be, you are not really alone. In both time and place - you're in good company. You can take my word on this because I've seen. In any case: Good luck on your journey.