



RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA

THE BEDROOM SECRETS OF THE MASTER CHEFS

by Irvine Welsh

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WARNING: THIS EXTRACT CONTAINS EXPLICIT LANGUAGE

Prelude

She Came to Dance, 20 January 1980

-THIS IS THE FUCKIN CLASH! The green-haired girl had screamed into the face of the flinty-eyed bouncer, who'd shoved her back into her seat. - And this is a fuckin cinema, he'd told her.

It was the Odeon cinema, and the security personnel seemed determined to stop any dancing. But after the local band, Joseph K, had finished their set, the main act had come out all guns blazing, blasting out 'Clash City Rockers', and the crowd immediately surged down to the front of the house. The girl with the green hair scanned around for the bouncer, who was preoccupied, then sprang back up. For a while the security staff tried to stem the tide, but finally capitulated about halfway through the set, between 'I Fought the Law' and '(White Man) in the Hammersmith Palais'.

The crowd was lost in the thrashing noise; at the front of the house they bounced along in rapture, while those at the back climbed on to their seats to dance. The girl with green hair, now right at the front centre of the stage, seemed to be rising higher than the rest, or perhaps it was just her hair, and the way the strobes hit it, making it appear as if a spectacular emerald flame was bursting from her head. A few, only a few, were gobbing at the band and she was screaming at them to cut it out as he - her hero - had only just recovered from hepatitis.

She'd been to the Odeon only a few times before, most recently to see *Apocalypse Now*, but it wasn't like this and she could bet that it had never been. Her friend Trina was a few feet from her, the only other girl so near the front that she could almost smell the band.

Taking a last gulp from the plastic Irn Bru bottle she'd filled with snakebite, she killed it and let it fall to the sticky, carpeted floor. Her brain fizzed with the buzz of it working in tandem with the amphetamine sulphate she'd taken earlier. She roared the words of the songs as she leapt, working herself into a defiant frenzy, going to a place where she could almost forget what he had told her earlier that afternoon. Just after they'd made love when he'd gone so quiet and distant, his thin, wiry frame shivering on the mattress.

- What's up, Donnie? What is it? she'd asked him.

- It's all fucked, he'd said blankly.

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She told him not to be daft, everything was brilliant and the Clash gig was happening tonight, they'd been waiting for this for ages. Then he turned round and his eyes were moist and he looked like a child. It was then that her first and only lover had told her that he'd been fucking someone else earlier; right there on the mattress they shared every night, the place where they'd just made love.

It had meant nothing; it was a mistake, he immediately claimed, panic rising in him as the extent of his transgression became apparent in her reaction. He was young and learning about boundaries as he saw his emotional vocabulary extending out in front of him, just a little too slowly. He had just wanted to tell her: to be straight with her.

She saw his lips move but heard little of the detail of his qualification as she'd got out of their mattress bed and pulled on her clothes. Then she'd taken his ticket for the gig from her pocket and ripped it into pieces right there in front of him. And after that she'd gone to the Southern Bar to meet the others, as arranged, then on to the Odeon to see the show because the greatest rock 'n' roll band of all time were playing in her city and she would see it and he would miss it and at least some sort of justice would be done.

A tallish guy with short dark hair dressed in a leather jacket, jeans and a mohair jumper, who had been pogoing next to her, was suddenly screaming something in her ear as the band went into 'Complete Control'. She couldn't make it out and it didn't matter as in an instant she was eating his face off, and his arms felt good around her.

The second encore began with the comparatively rare 'Revolution Rock' and ended with an incandescent version of 'London's Burning' repositioned as 'Edinburgh's Burning'. And she was too, melting with the speed in her brain, which pulsed in the frozen air as they got outside the cinema. The boy was going to a party in the Canongate and he asked her to come along. She agreed; she didn't want to go home. More than that, she wanted him. And wanted to show someone else that two could play at that game.

As they walked in the cold night he talked effusively, seeming fascinated by her green mane, and told her that this part of town used to be known as Little Ireland. He explained that the Irish immigrants settled here, and it was in these streets that Burke and Hare murdered the poor and destitute in order to provide bodies for the medical school. She looked up at his face; there was a hard set to it but his eyes were sensitive, even womanly. He pointed over to St Mary's Church, and told her that many years before Celtic in Glasgow, the Edinburgh Irishmen had formed the Hibernian Football Club in these very halls. He grew animated when he pointed up the street, and told her that Hibernian's most famous supporter, James Connolly, was born up that road and had went on to lead the Easter Risings in Dublin, which culminated in Ireland's freedom from British imperialism.

It seemed important to him that she knew that Connolly was a socialist, not an Irish nationalist. - In this city we know nothing about our real identity, he said passionately, - it's all imposed on us.

But she had other things on her mind than history and he would be her second lover that evening, though by the end of the night she would have had three.

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