

Prologue (Grime Mix)

Harry 'Bells' Bailey

When my April showers me with kisses
I could make her my missus or my mistress
but I'm happily hitched – sorry home girls –
said my vows to the sound of the Bow Bells
yet her breath is as fresh as the west wind,
when I breathe her, I know we're predestined
to make music; my muse, she inspires me,
though my mind's overtaxed, April fires me,
how she pierces my heart to the fond root
till I bleed sweet cherry blossom en route
to our bliss trip; there's days she goes off me,
April loves me not; April loves me
with a passion, dear doctor, I'm wordsick
and I got the itch like I'm allergic
but it could be my shirt's on the cheap side;
serenade overnight with my peeps wide,
nothing like her, liqueur, an elixir,
overproof that she serves as my sick cure,
she's as strong as a ram, she is Aries,
see my jaw-dropping jeans, she could wear these;
see my jaw dropping neat Anglo-Saxon,
I got ink in my veins more than Caxton
and it flows hand to mouth, here's a mouthfeast,
verbal feats from the streets of the South-East
but my April, she blooms every shire's end,
fit or vint, rich or skint, she inspires *them*
from the grime to the clean-cut iambic,
rime royale, rant or rap, get your slam kick.

PROLOGUE

On this Routemaster bus, get cerebral,
Tabard Inn to Canterbury Cathedral,
poet pilgrims competing for free picks,
Chaucer Tales, track by track, here's the remix
from below-the-belt base to the topnotch;
I won't stop all the clocks with a stopwatch
when the tales overrun, run offensive,
or run clean out of steam, they're authentic
cos we're keeping it real, reminisce this:
Chaucer Tales were an unfinished business.
May the best poet lose, as the saying goes.
May the best poet muse be mainstaying those
on the stage, on the page, on their subject:
me and April, *we're* The Rhyming Couplet.
I'm The Host for tonight, Harry Bailey,
if I'm tongue-tied, April will bail me,
I'm MC but the M is for mistress
when my April shows me what a kiss is ...

OLD KENT ROAD

Emily

Robert Knightley

In Chaucer's story there are two heroes, who are practically indistinguishable from each other, and a heroine, who is merely a name.

— J R Hulbert

Arc? Dead. And if you're sniffing for his body
you won't find nothing: ransack the Big Smoke
from Bow to Bank. Arc fell for Emily
ten feet deep ... I'm Pal, Emily's alter.
Think ego. Arc and me, we shared a cell
for months, it was a shrine to her, a temple.

I miss him, like a gun to the temple.
Too close. Two men locked in a woman's body,
her messed-up head. When I say shared a cell
I'm talking brain. *She* became *us*. Arc smoked
the Romeos, and me, I smoked all tars,
we breathed out on her name, ah! Emily.
Blonde with blacked out highlights Emily.
Our host, the goddess. Looks are temporal.
Who reads her diagnosis? It don't alter
the facts. She made me up to guard her body
from predators, the silhouettes in smoke.
It's when she wears the hourglass and plays damsel,
she lets *me* out. It messes with their brain cells,
my voice, her face. All men want Emily,
they think they have a right. It don't mean smoke.
She acts like growing up was Shirley Temple
and don't remember nothing, but her body

THE KNIGHT'S TALE

knows what happened happened on that altar.
Think bed ... Arc's dead. Broke his parole, an alter
crazy on id, he starved us all to cancel
me out for good. It's written off, our body.
He fought to win: I fought for Emily.
I'm dead beat, but I won up here, the temple,
the messed-up head. Sent her a ring, of smoke.

Having a big fat Romeo to smoke
don't make you Winston Churchill. Arc was altered.
He won the war but lost the plot. The temple
became his tomb. And me, I got the damsel.
She don't know yet. We're stitched up, Emily,
one and the same, one rough-cut mind, one body ...

*Must've blacked out ... This body ain't no temple
but what's the alternative, a padded cell?
Got anything to smoke? ... I'm Emily ...*

The Kiss

Robyn Miller

Get me a pint of Southwark piss!
It all took place in a pub like this.
My tongue is black as licorice,
my tale is blue an it goes like this:

I'm just eighteen an newly wed.
My husband's old an crap in bed,
my lover's fit, well hung, well read,
his rival's mad, a musclehead.

Three loves I have an two are thick:
My husband John's a jealous prick,
the rival, Abs, thinks with his dick.
My lover's French, il s'appelle Nick,

in his final year at Greenwich,
Engineering Astrophysics,
he's proposed but I'm a bitch,
I'd leave my husband, but he's rich.

A carpenter, an 'ancient oak'
with a heart tattoo, a real bloke's bloke,
crashed out on what he thought was coke
an fifteen pints of ale. Nick's joke.

THE MILLER'S TALE

John owns the pub. We live upstairs
an every night he says his prayers,
while Nick, our lodger, flirts downstairs,
where Abs, our bouncer, sells his wares.

This Abs comes on to guys *and* girls.
He pushes weights an class A pills.
Grey eyes, blond hair with baby curls
an a bod as hard as the drugs he sells.

He buys me wine, real ales an Pimms.
He likes his women weasel slim
with eyebrows plucked till they're pencil thin.
His gear is class: I put up with him.

But Nick's more subtle, tweets an texts,
no kiss-me-quick with a pint of Becks.
Belle femme, je t'aime, he says, an necks
those pills Abs recommends for sex.

Three men walk into a pub like this
but only one can kiss the kiss.
What is it makes my bottle fizz?
Je ne sais quoi my arse, hear this:

What's in a kiss? I'll kiss an tell.
My husband's kiss is Southwark ale,
my lover's 'baiser', 'fuck' in braille
an I'm his fucked-up femme fatale.

So John's upstairs an proper pissed.
 I'm in the bar with Nick. We've kissed
 in English, French an every lisped
 linguistic twist, you get the gist.

High on the pills that kick like tabs,
 we crawl around the floor like crabs,
 Adam, Eve, on hormone jabs,
 we got The Knowledge like black cabs.

Nous faisons l'amour all night,
 an by six o'clock it's still not light
 when Abs knocks on the window, tight,
Kiss me, babes. I say, *Alright.*

Window's open, total geared
 he's tongueing me but something's weird:
 too right, cos I ain't got no beard,
 stead of my lips, he got my rear!

Fuck you! Storms off down the alleyway.
 Then tap, tap, tap on the central bay,
 Mr Am-I-straight-or-gay?
 back for his petit déjeuner!

À moi! Nick winks, bares his behind
 for Abs's probing lips to find:
 then farts a fart, the deadly kind,
 a blast that almost makes Abs blind!

THE MILLER'S TALE

We laugh, but Abs laughs last, the sod,
Abs has a hard-on, like his bod,
he grabs Nick's arse, I swear to God,
in goes his red-hot iron rod!

Bordel de merde! Well sick, that kiss
cos Abs is built like an obelisk.
John wakes, falls headlong, slips a disc,
slurs, *What in great God's name is this?*

My husband's so in shock to see
the men, he sobers instantly
an doesn't even notice me
until I'm dressed. So I'm Scot-free

but Abs an Nick, he throws them out.
It's made him even more devout.
Now, when I see them, *Kiss?* I shout,
raise my eyebrows high, an pout.

So, I got fucked; John's a fuckwit;
an Nick my lover, fucked to shit;
an Abs scored hard, he's fucking fit;
both men were fucked by the fucked-off git.

If you drink your beer in a tulip glass
an kiss the air cos you think you're class
but draw the line at this French farce,
bon appétit – French-kiss my arse!

Tit for Tat

Ozymandias Reeves

Retro-Glasto-Dogs-on-String:
I'm *Bad Dog*, me, with dykes on speed,
musky, milky, masculine,
Butch Al, Fem Jen and Little Weed
pitch Magic Mushroom, down some mead,
and Weed were whizzing, off her tits,
Gimmegrassordieyoushits!

Off we sped in sniff of grass
from Psycho's Psychedelic Plants:
he guards wife, bairn and Moll, his lass,
with Stanley Knife in underpants.
With boxer nose and bulldog stance,
sells dried-out lawn as Purple Haze
but stoned, he'd share whole spliff with gays.

Women's Lib stands for libido!
Fist in air, a Goldsmith First,
our Al; our Jen, a Frida Kahlo
femme with fist to outshake Hirst;
best mates, they oil and lock my fur,
I'm in good hands, me, sniffer dog,
laid off, *Bad Dog*, for sniffing drugs.

THE REEVE'S TALE

I scent the gorgeous and grotesque
at mudbath where all hips hang out.
There's Mrs Psycho, Rubenesque,
her six-month bairn; I roll about,
Dog's paradise, I want for nowt.
There's Molly, *Venus at her Mudbath*.
Psycho, sober, on the warpath ...

Tent? More yurt, is Psycho's yard.
They tie me up outside front porch,
sweet smell of Purple, I keep guard,
bark twice to rate this grass top notch.
Psycho bags up. Like hawks, they watch.
Keep cash, while he leaves tent for change,
tugs at knot that keeps me chained

and I'm unleashed! I'm off, *Bad Dog*
Seeks Dirty Bitch for fun blind date
but don't let cat out of the bag
to dykes, I've not come out as straight ...
They find me fields away, gone eight,
no strings attached, up to no good,
drag me through seven field of mud

back for grass (now switched for grass).
A Psycho spliff ... their heads, their feet
turn Alice-Through-the-Looking-Glass
till Psycho offers bite to eat
and feeds me scraps of veggie meat.
Dykes guess he freed me, swapped our batch:
Psycho beware, you've met your match!

Sleep, they slur. Three blow-up bed:
 dykes first; Psycho and spouse take next,
 bairn's cot stands at end of bed;
 Molly takes third. But I smell sex
 and Dog in dark has X-ray specs ...
 While Psycho and his wife snore phlegm
 like philharmonic, Al pokes Jen:

Got an itch I gotta scratch!
 I noted way she eyed that lass,
 no psychedelic psychopath
 will stop Butch Al when high on hash,
 she's on that Molly in a flash
 who's up for owt and understands
 and yields like putty in her hands ...

And look at Jen, our lump of lead!
 The wife gets up to piss, Jen grins
 and moves bairn's cot to foot *their* bed.
 So on way back, wife bangs her shin,
 confused, she mounts *their* bed, gets in:
 Jen mounts her, wrists her, hard and deep,
 mad as a dog while Psycho sleeps!

Still dark, when Al yawns, stretches, wakes.
 Moll tells her that our dope were muddled.
I swapped it back, made cosmic cakes.
Check the porch. Then, one last cuddle,
 Al gropes round for cot, befuddled,
 jumps inside the cotless blow-up,
 pulling Psycho's earlobe. *Wake up!*

THE REEVE'S TALE

*Three times I've gloved up Psycho's lass
whilst you've been having purple dreams.*

Psycho roars, pull out his cutlass,
missus hears him shouting, screams,
Si, there's a man on top of me!

Meaning Jen. Grabs Shepton Mallet
in pitch dark and raises it,

strikes down on what she thinks is Jen,
and hits her husband! Jen and Al
grab dope, the space cakes, t-shirts, jeans
and me – I leave a parting growl –
and run through site, au naturel,
to tent to tell our saga of
free food, free dope, free cakes, free love.