

ALMORA

The bubbles streamed through the child's wand while I was living in Buenos Aires to remind myself of her. One or two of them reflected the entire city and these were the hardest to catch. I imagined that in the half century since I last saw her she'd have stopped wearing falling down socks, grown up and gone through a phase of fudgy lipstick. Would she be wearing it in the breezeway now? Probably even if she stood up in my soup I'd never recognise her skewed mouth today that would still look right to those who knew her more recently. Life seeps on, while memories lead back to a taped place. Restraints didn't necessarily mean restraint, and the whammy of that faraway Ealing summer was that interpenetration meant entrance to worlds of unforeseen sensibility and beauty.

THIS SIDE UP

Combatants had to tag their name on their opponent using a big marker pen during a boxing bout, and the loser found death was not so clear cut, as killing yourself is like beating down an unlocked door. It's a real ethical mess, a compendium of all the worst moments in a person's life when he's misaligned the grid and ended up with the equivalent right after tea and cake (which was nice) of leaving with a work of art comprising of two bottles of fizzy water that explode in your suitcase, ruin all your clothes and make you wonder is it still a work of art or just broken bottles? Best not moonoggle. Ace it by tagging a live blue whale.

BRAZILIAN

I can't wait to see your new hairdo.
I won't hold my breath and if you keep walking I'll not lose
my worm's eye view of what the horn blowing mechanic saw
when he passed by, glanced in and witnessed a fleet
of the event. By then I'll figure out how to turn the trick.
It can't be everyday that such an abundance of stolen moments
are discovered stacked right in the middle of the room
for any joker on stilts to see. I doubt if *I'd* have the front
to do it. But I might photograph your underwear
before it got snowdropped from the washing line
smelling of hyacinths.

GHOST #5

The feeling engendered by the image of a disused underground car park in the heart of London lingered long. You couldn't buy it in the super-market. That's what the handcuffed suspect told the police – his all night crime spree was about grabbing things that were not for sale, anywhere. The girl victim said a gas drive-off, fleeing and eluding, seeing the city more playfully, entering it freely disconnected from their usual reality in a pale-grey cutaway, so vast, it fell to the floor in corkscrews. Her hands were dazzling. Nails the colour of wet blood. The whole landscape was torn, scratched, creased and smudged. No dream then.

ALMORA:THE MUMMY

Afterwards he checked into a four star hotel next door to a plastic surgery facility in Buenos Aires. Half the guests had their faces bandaged. He bandaged his own face and lived high on his winnings. There was a woman working there, old, but still beautiful. Her hair hung loose and disordered on her shoulders, her unbandaged face looked sleepy and dark in the half-light. Sometimes in the lift there was the cool damp smell of the bathroom and of almond soap about her and, if more people crowded in, their bodies touched. Other times he'd sit in the lobby and watch for her coming and going through the slits in his bandage.

He'd survived thus far on technique alone and the risks he'd taken had seldom exposed him to the dangers of emotional compulsion. But there was tango music in the hotel and he began to feel a stone in his heart begin to dissolve. Focusing on memories of other rooms carpeted with geometric designs and bars of sunshine, the distant hushed roar of traffic and a vase of Delphiniums supercoded up for other purposes unknown, he waited for the cistern to fill up before he unwrapped. Once he became visible she'd be unlikely to associate him with himself. Liberties were there for the taking, but could he believe she was the girl from half a century ago, the mistress of whatever-may-happen?