

Shiny Black Boots

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This morning brings distant smiles, cuts and forgotten bruises. Their initial existence escapes me. I need help retracing foggy steps. Steps that lost innocence.

‘Least I reckon they did,’ I think out loud.

‘What’s that mate?’ Skin Jace asks.

‘Nothing, just talking to me self,’ I mumble.

‘Yeah, right then,’ he says.

Ah well, nothing quite like the fearful sensation of amnesia. Wonder if the fear I feel balances yesterday’s actions? Fear: its power is insurmountable. It brings an incredible gift of confidence. Yet its regret is a narcotic fuelled self-loathing. While there is joy in chaos, the anarchy given birth murders tomorrow’s normality.

‘Shit,’ I project unintentionally.

Where did I come up with that bit of philosophy?

‘Micky, you sure you’re right? You were fair off chops last night,’ Jace asks, concerned.

‘Yeah I reckon I’ll be sweet. Off chops you say though hey, how bad was it, then?’

As I struggle to concentrate upon my recalled misfortunes, I drift to another place. One not far from now. Both sensationalised and vague.

Those boots go marching in. Those big, black, shiny fucking boots. I can hear Jace rattle on about something to do with his mother and the love of hard leather and steel-caps... it’s just background music to uninterested ears. My mother always loved unity. ‘Find your place son,’ she’d tell me, ‘just don’t find trouble.’ But the lads are trouble. Ordinaries can smell it with animal instinct. Nothing beats a crowd of ordinaries parting like the Red Sea. Its adrenaline soaks my clothes. Meatdog has A.C.A.B tattooed on the back of his bald head. ‘All Cops Are Bastards.’ It’s a bit rash I reckon. ‘Fuck it’ is the attitude though. The beer on my boots makes dirt cling to them. They’re losing their shine. I take a sip of a warm beer and spit the sticky dregs at an innocent.

‘Do something about it!’ I scream with fearsome superiority. Take shit from no one, and expect them to eat yours.

There is a silence necessary before oblivion. My ears need rest before they are battered. Early acts are local and supported with glass shards and an unconditional love for the average. The boys are all stoked to see their mates play on a soggy stage; one that has no separation from the skinheads. No real stage, just a floor that makes us all equals. It’s pretty dark in here. The walls are black and bits of glass are stuck in their apparel. It doesn’t look painful. A prophet

for a minority walks onto the supposed stage. He has a bare skull and an agenda. This man is obnoxious; you can see it in the way he moves, the way he smiles. I like the fact that he is short but stocky, a powerful picture of a man. There's something in his bright blue eyes that tells me he is something extra, something special.

He is pissed, I can tell by the way he stands, leaning on thin air and struggling to keep steady. But he stands without nerves. Drunken, he yells and screams. I catch a couple of words. Something about 'Nazi's get fucked or I'll stomp ya.' Do not need to hear what he said though. I see swastikas frown, as the men who bear them dip their heads in shame. A man with bad breath and a cockney accent has pierced their pale armour of bigotry. This is much more than mere words. He sits around smoking, drinking and tormenting an impatient crowd of individual conformists who desire pointless misplaced aggression. I stand in waiting like the rest, ready to cave a man's face in to make him prettier. Bet he thinks the same.

'So Jace mate, when did The Business start playing? I mean I remember the music 'n' all, just not what went on, or when it happened,' I ask, lost in recovery.

'Well Micky boy, I've been tryna explain for the last ten minutes, so why don't you fucken listen alright?'

'Alright, we're The fuckin' Business, don't you tell us different. Just listen, dance if you like, arc up or sit the fuck down.' They open with *Death to Dance* and the irony spills on the floor.

Feeling the vibrations pound through the floor I lift my feet impulsively. Some call it stamp dancing. I never gave it a name. Just an emotional release of marginalised anger. Say that to the other skins though and next haircut I'll end up scarred. 'Death to Dance,

Death to Dance, get up boys 'n' show some tense romance!' We all sing without tune, especially the vocalist who sweats profusely. Drugs are flowing through his veins like the freedom he expresses with a primal scream. Without worry or rhythm, jerking bodies stumble and run as if they are being slapped by a father's belt. Fearless they continue, onwards, they bleed passion for the unloved; ragdolls chewed up, spat out and thrown around by the dogs. So many of you have choices, opportunities, a future, but not one of these people do and that's how they love it. Lost in a blurred reality, blindly pushing on, not for tomorrow or yesterday: for now.

After hours of anarchy the band finish with an encore to die for. *Nazi Punks Fuck Off*. It's barely music. Words smoke like fired guns. The only thing left of its meaning is the smell of gun powder, lingering to say 'it was me that killed you, it was me who caught you out, you cunt!' Rapid fire messages spotlight swastika patches on torn jackets that look dangerously similar to my own; but mine tells me stories of oppressed immigrants. Mine is Love and theirs is Hate.

'I was walking outside for a smoke, and I hear this singing right, screaming actually. So I walked towards the noise, wondering what was going on. I noticed a whimper too. And there you were, jumping round like a psychopath screaming the words to The Business so loud you were spitting on his face while you stomped on his ribs,' Jace informs me. 'He was just racist scum.'

Evil, Evil, Evil, Evil!!!! These words scream at me from all angles; a disapproving mother; an unforgiving boy in blue danger; some hospitalised Nazi; myself more than any. That voice in my head, those regrets in my heart, and my boots in the cupboard. I live to

be what I am, not an image of a pressured teen. I'll always love what I was. The freedom it gave me, the confidence, the attitude, and the lack of self-consciousness. No one that I cared about judged me. It was just one of my families; I miss them like a relative that has passed on. Still I remember with each day's frustration the passion of that life. The real strength I'm told is in the will to resist, not the power of resistance. Maybe the weak say that to help them sleep each night. I lay awake struggling to answer all these questions. I wonder if I'm strong now or if I was then. Life won't give me an answer, and I don't really want one to be honest.

I reckon tomorrow I'll walk down the shops. Put on my boots and bomber jacket. I wanna remember how it felt. I wanna remember how people looked at me. Every single person who walked past that stared but would never make eye contact. They'd look at my boots...

Guilty pleasures are an interesting thing. We all sit around guilty for so many reasons. Guilty for what we enjoy. Guess some of us are just ashamed of who we really are. Guess I am these days. Who knows why we all act so foolish, constantly berating ourselves on some sort of ridiculous pedestal. Picturing ourselves in our head marching in a parade pelted with all sorts and styles of unpleasant imaginings. Well guess what, I may have been a fucken skinhead, I might not have a shaved head now, I might not breathe anarchy, talk fear and emanate power anymore. But I can if I want. Tomorrow can be yesterday, today or something else. That's why I'm here and not there.