

# Being that person



## Danni used to

Danni used to take baths so hot  
I couldn't get in after her.  
Danni used to call me 'shit fuck'  
and I used to say, "you what?"  
You what? Shit fuck?  
What's that mean?"  
and we'd laugh.  
Danni used to be able to see my lies  
better than I thought she could.

Danni used to be in my life so completely  
I sometimes felt a bit claustrophobic.  
Danni used to tickle me,  
it seemed, just to piss me off.  
Danni used to be hot in bed.  
I mean, she used to chase me across the mattress  
trying to cuddle up to sleep,  
and I would roll and roll away  
because I couldn't take the heat.

Danni used to cook pasta and pesto  
and didn't bother much with meat.  
Danni used to be funny  
about touching the toilet seat.

Danni used to dance like a mermaid would.  
Danni used to cry and I never could.  
She would want to talk;  
I would want to walk.  
Danni used to stop at green lights  
and sometimes go through red ones.

## Being that person

She said, "Why the fuck did you do that? I *told* you."  
I said, "Okay. Okay."  
because I tend to repeat myself  
because I don't trust it enough to say it just once.

She said "Don't say 'okay' like that; it sounds like 'shut up'."  
I said "Okay."  
She said, "You never listen to me."

And I was standing there  
and I could feel the earth crumbling underneath  
because although this wasn't anything new in the relationship  
it actually was.  
And I could hear myself saying,  
"I do listen to you. I just left it for, like, 10 seconds  
and when I came back it was cold,"  
because words slip in times of distress.

Meanwhile there were pans of water on the stove  
and the bath was losing heat by the second,  
so she went and got in.  
And I poured in the first kettle  
as she shivered in the outside chill of the bathroom  
and told me once more that I should have listened to her.  
I should have listened.

But by then it was too much  
because this wasn't just about then,  
it was about two and a half years of passive resistance.  
It was about being that person in the mirror  
who doesn't deserve to be trusted.  
It was about not being listened to.

So I said "no, I don't want to get in with you,"  
so she stood up and stepped onto the cold floor  
and I said, "come on, get back in;  
I want you to have a bath,"  
but she wouldn't  
and I grabbed hold of her  
and she shouted "GET OFF ME,"  
so I did.

I went through to the bedroom and packed my clothes  
into my rucksack.  
I put my coat on at the banister  
and pulled on my hat as I walked down the stairs.  
She said, "If you leave you're not coming back."  
I said "I know," and I opened the door.  
She said, "Olly."

I sit on the top step with my head in my hands,  
I'm still wearing my coat and hat.  
She strokes my head and rubs my shoulder with one hand  
while the other one holds my arm.  
She says, "I don't want you to go,"  
and I don't want to go  
but I won't take my coat off  
and so we sit on the top step,  
in a space in between,  
while the saucepans boil over and the bath goes cold.

## **That night**

I remember that night,  
the drive to Leicester  
along the A6  
takes forever.

I remember it's dark when I leave the car  
half on the kerb and  
carry my bags up the driveway.

I remember you meeting me there  
and taking me inside  
and up the stairs  
to the room we've bought for the night.

I remember you've already ordered the pizza  
and I hang my suit up  
and throw my bags onto the floor  
and you sit me down at the foot of the bed.

I remember you kneel down  
to unlace my shoes  
and take them off my feet.

I remember I try to stop you and  
I try to lift you up,  
to hold you,  
and you ask me what's wrong.

And I remember that  
I can't really speak,  
and then I start to cry.

I remember that I start to cry.

## **Parts**

This is the part where  
she sits and picks at her cardigan  
and asks me questions I can't answer.

Where silence stretches between us  
and we don't know how to broach the gap.

This is the part where  
a lie starts to snowball  
and before you know it  
I'm wishing I was out of this;  
out of this and far away.

And she can tell, and that's just great.

This is the part where,  
after everything, I'm still trying to make it better  
because it's me that just can't let go.  
But this part I play myself,  
and the others,  
they're out of it.  
Out of it and far away.

### **This one is for you**

Since the first one came to nothing,  
and all I've offered since then is excuses,  
this one is for you.

This is for the time we had that argument in town and  
I stormed off and you followed me home and  
we slept in separate beds that night,  
this one is for you.

This one is for Greek camping sites, for the glass floors of  
Dubrovnik,  
the hostel on Korcula, the inflatable mountain in Lake Bled, for  
gondolas,  
and for coming home and realising that nothing really changed  
that much;  
this is for Tring in the summertime,  
this one is for you.

For the arguments over money, and the stress and the heat  
and the fact that no-one tells you the truth in Bangkok,  
this is for all the air miles we accrued,  
this one is for the room in Luang Prabang,  
this one is for you.

For cooking together in that little kitchen in the flat that was yours  
but felt like ours,  
and watching *This Life* and *House* when really I should have been  
writing stories, for the times I drove you to work,  
for chipping the ice out of the freezer because the door didn't shut  
properly,  
for a mattress on the floor;  
this is for that life that's difficult to leave behind,  
this one is for you.

This one is for the morning espressos  
and for the moments in between when I watched you get dressed  
or when you pulled me in for one last naked cuddle before work;  
this is for the video we made but we don't know where it is.  
This is for what I can't fully articulate,  
for actually the best years of my life,  
and these pieces I dare not forget,  
for the dreams I don't want to have,  
and this package  
of that time into this time,  
this is for something I'll never do, someone I'll never be,  
again,  
this one is for you.