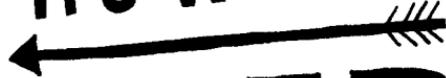




HOW TO



KEEP

A BOY



AS A

PET

HOW TO
KEEP
A BOY
AS A
PET

DIANE MESSIDORO





How to Keep a Boy as a Pet

First published in Great Britain 2012

by Electric Monkey, an imprint of Egmont UK Limited
The Yellow Building, 1 Nicholas Road, London W11 4AN

Text copyright © Diane Messidoro 2012
The moral rights of the author have been asserted

ISBN 978 1 4052 5816 6

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

www.electricmonkeybooks.co.uk

A CIP catalogue record for this title is available from the British Library

Typeset by Avon DataSet Ltd, Bidford on Avon, Warwickshire
Printed and bound in Great Britain by CPI Group

48736/3

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means,
electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise,
without the prior permission of the publisher and copyright owner.



EGMONT

Our story began over a century ago, when seventeen-year-old Egmont Harald Petersen found a coin in the street. He was on his way to buy a flyswatter, a small hand-operated printing machine that he then set up in his tiny apartment.

The coin brought him such good luck that today Egmont has offices in over 30 countries around the world. And that lucky coin is still kept at the company's head offices in Denmark.

For two extraordinary pet men

Didier Messidoro, my rock

Graham Cox, my star

And, always, for my mum, Christine Cox

and for her rock, Derek Banks

Totally *not* weeping under a willow

Posted Thursday 22nd July, 16:25

I'm smiling. Honestly.

Okay, if you stared really hard at me, you'd probably notice my teeth are showing slightly too much. If you were being extra picky, you might even say I'm doing a good impression of our neighbour's Shetland pony when she fancies a human hand-burger.

So, no, my smile is not the most woo hoo, let's party, relaxed kind of smile. But, still, I *am* smiling.

I'm smiling because my oldest best friend, Ben, is walking off down the lane with his arm around my newest best friend, Tash, and I do not mind at all.

I am beyond not bothered.

In fact, I'm blissfully happy for them.

Totally.

It's true that only last week Tash vowed to spend the summer with me, hunting down hot new boyfriend prospects. But I have now wiped her promise from my entire memory.

If she happened to glance back, she would be reassured by my 'Hey, go ahead, have fun' grin. Only she wouldn't be able to see it. Or me.

I'm at the top of the tangled garden that slopes up behind our patio, sitting under a weeping willow tree. It's like a giant grass skirt, so I'm completely invisible. But it's the perfect lookout, as with some cunning leaf plucking, I can survey my whole domain i.e. the lane, Sharon the Shetland's field and The Nook (the smallest cottage in the world, where I live with my mum).

All right, I can guess what you're thinking. If I'm so ecstatic about my friends getting together, why am I hunched under a tree gnashing my teeth like a psycho-pony? Good question. For which I have no less than four extremely logical answers:

1. As my plans to become an irresistible boy magnet are shredded into bitter pieces and lying around me in tragic ruins, I've decided to become a fabulously sophisticated journalist instead. So I've started this blog to practise reporting on totally hot topics and typing really fast.
2. According to *Teen Vogue*, the garden is *the* place to have an office. Ideally, you find an abandoned gypsy caravan then add the antique desk and funky leather chair you happen to have spare. I've got my lap and a wobbly deckchair at the moment, but plan to upgrade.
3. I'm being fabulously sophisticated.
4. I'm hiding.

I know, I know, hiding doesn't sound fabulously sophisticated at all. But it is, I promise. If I'd given in to my more basic teenage human instincts I would now be hanging out in the park with Tash and Ben, pretending to have a laugh when we all know they just want to get meaningful behind a bush. Instead, I sneaked past them at the school gates (not hard, they were snogging, of course, along with practically everyone else). Then I forced my thumbs to ignore Tash's text . . .

Missed U at gate???
B at yours in 5.
Fancy park?
PS Ben's with me.

Then, because I really didn't trust myself to ignore the actual Tash, I grabbed my laptopasaurus (prehistoric, weighs tons, roars menacingly every few minutes) and headed up here to my office.

I did the right thing anyway, because when she knocked, I had to grip the deckchair arms to stop myself charging straight back down to the cottage and throwing the front door open. And I felt odd, a bit hollow, and hungry, even though I'd just eaten a giant sticky bun. That's when I forced myself to smile. Mum says you feel happier automatically when you smile. And it's true, sort of.

I think I'll stop smiling now, my cheeks are aching.

Sigh. What is it with the newly smitten? Tash and Ben left ten minutes ago, but they're still only about twenty metres away. They're walking sooo slooowly. Not even walking really. Ben is kicking at the ground as he inches forward, Tash is taking teeny dainty steps in her baseball boots, making her hips about a thousand times swingier than usual.

'Ah, so sorry I can't catch up with you right now but I'm, like, totally busy.'

I just said that out loud. Risky, I know, Tash and Ben might only have eyes for each other, but I'm not sure what their ears are up to. Come to think of it, love is meant to be blind, isn't it? Does that mean your hearing works better, like a real blind person's hearing?

Luckily, the garden's quite noisy, so I should get away with it. The wind's making the willow whoosh. And all the birds are going bonkers because Johnny Depp's hissing at Daniel Craig and Jude Law (our cat and two guinea pigs – how sad is my mother?).

Wait. Ben's stopped. He's peering back towards the cottage. Now Tash is scanning the lane. She looks a bit flustered . . . Perhaps I've got it all wrong? I only introduced them last weekend. Maybe they don't feel that comfortable on their own? Maybe they're thinking about trying the door again, or even letting themselves into the garden through the side gate, Tash does that sometimes, but . . . Oh. My. God. What if the breeze is blowing *their way*? What if they're coming back because they *did* hear *every word I said*?

Quick. An excuse . . . That's it, I'm writing a play. Tash knows I want to be a journalist, playwriting's connected, ish, it involves words anyway. So, I'm writing a play about . . . a busy working mother – like mine, in fact, only much sneerier. And I was acting it out under the willow because . . . it's set in a cave. And I was so lost in my dramatic performance I didn't hear Tash hammering on the door, or calling through the letterbox, 'Cir-ceee?' (that's my name, I know, weird, more later).

Perfect, right, I'll sign off now then, put the laptopasaurus on stand-by so it doesn't roar itself into a flaming ball of fire . . .

Oh. Hold on . . . No – they're not coming back here.

They've just stopped for a snog.

Me. Blog. Thursday. Upstairs. Mum's pointlessly flirting downstairs.

Posted Thursday 22nd July, 21:07

Who? What? When? Where? Why? The five questions vital to professional journalists according to the booklet the school careers officer, Mr Dire, gave me today. He was full of encouragement.

'Oh dear oh dear oh dear . . . so you want to become a journalist, er, Kirsty?'

'Circe.'

‘Oh dear oh dear oh dear, Kirsty, you’ll need to brush up that grammar and be rather more civil to stand any kind of chance in an interview. Never start with, “Sir, see . . .” Open politely, replying directly to my question, “Yes, sir, I do.”’

‘No, sir, I mea—’

‘Oh, you don’t want to be a journalist, but my notes clearly state—’

Where do they get these people? It took at least five minutes to politely and grammatically correctly explain that my name’s not Kirsty, and that I do want to become a journalist. It then took him four minutes to find the appropriate booklet in his filing cabinet, leaving just one minute of our *Vital Year 10 Consultation Upon Which Your Entire Future Depends* to plan my career. First, he smoothed down the bristles of his eyebrows (which took at least another twenty seconds) so he could actually see to read the booklet. Then he peered back at me.

‘Well, young lady, you are fully aware, no doubt, that since joining us last September you have been, ahem, academically *unremarkable*. Journalism is a notoriously competitive field you know, especially for girls. Frankly, I think you’d be wise to sign up for a secretarial course.’

Gasp. Isn’t there a law against that? Tash is going to check, she wants to be a human rights barrister (like a lawyer, but with a wig on top). I had to clamp my hand over my mouth to stop a major illegal swear word falling out.

I bet he didn’t say that to any of the boys, not a single one of them. Okay, he might have suggested that Tim Lough consider a career as a builder rather than an astrophysicist, as he failed all his mocks, even pottery. But at least if you’re a builder you can be your own boss. If you’re a secretary you just book appointments for other people to do exciting things. Like, whoopdidoo.

I felt like slapping his beige cheeks with his beige tie. I didn’t, of course, I’m far too sophisticated. I just stood to leave in a dignified way, raised both eyebrows archly (having tried, and failed, to raise one) and said, ‘No, sir, even though I’m obviously *a mere female* I won’t be training as a secretary. If journalism turns out to be too hard for me, I have a foolproof back-up plan to marry a footballer and become internationally famous for having extremely shiny hair and lots of different handbags.’

I bit my lip then, waiting for the inevitable, ‘Detention!’ This is a regular date for my diary since I started at Hell House, thanks to my ‘impertinence’ (asking questions) and ‘bad manners’ (pretty much anything that involves moving or speaking).

But it didn’t come. Instead, Mr Dire did an excellent impression of a shocked cod, then spluttered, ‘Ridic—wait—Kirst—paffaffaff . . .’ Which was a relief, but I think you’ll agree, was also both impolite and grammatically incorrect.

So, he was hopeless. But the booklet’s great. It’s called

Focus for Success: Journalism and if Mr Dire had bothered to read it he would have been shocked to find it packed with advice from a *woman* – Jess Bradley. Do you know her? She’s an über-cool professional journalist from New York who never, *ever*, lets anyone get away with putting her down. Actually, she’s so fabulously sophisticated I bet no one dares even *think* about dissing her, which is precisely the level I’m aiming for.

Jess wears eccentric vintage clothes that should look rubbish together but don’t, usually with a big floppy flower pinned on somewhere you wouldn’t expect one. And she always has vampy scarlet lips, even in the rain. She’s got a magazine column called *Hot Topicals* where she writes about serious women’s issues, but in a way that makes you laugh and think properly about things, instead of huffing and getting bored. And she’s on lots of arty TV shows, usually making men look a bit worried but sort of madly in love at the same time.

She says, *Your reader always needs to know the key facts*. So I’m always going to try to give you those, reader, if you’re out there, which you’re probably not because the chance of someone finding this blog among the gazillion on the web must be, well, one in a gazillion.

The facts now are that I’m stuck up here in my room alone unless I count you, or the snoring black rug otherwise known as Johnny Depp on the floor, or the ‘larger than afterlife-size’ Robert Pattinson poster on the ceiling. My

mum’s downstairs, giggling at the news with one of her ‘just friends’ men, Ralph.

Wait – the giggling just transferred to the front garden. Ralph must be leaving. Excellent. I can now go down and watch TV without being suffocated into an early teenage grave by *Smarmy Beast Pour Homme* aftershave fumes.

Night-night imaginary reader.

To swoon or not to swoon

Posted Friday 23rd July, 06:19

Good morning imaginary reader.

I know, up at dawn when I don’t need to be. Welcome to the countryside – it’s meant to be sleepy, but somehow it keeps everyone awake. It’s the same every morning. First, thousands of birds start nattering at the tops of their tweets, then Clarence the alarm cock goes off, doodle-dooing as if he’s personally responsible for waking up every hen in the entire world.

This morning, Johnny Depp joined in too, mewing proudly as he dropped a snail on my pillow, interrupting a delicious dream involving R-Patz and long grass. Then my mobile started beeping when Tash texted. She lives on a farm half a mile away (Clarence is her dad’s fault) and has eggs to collect and sheep to comb, so early rising is essential.

Her message said:

OMG U R BFF Ben = swoon! XO
PS Called 4 U where were U?
PPS Ooh did Jake phone re HW?

It was strange. The text made me feel happy and sad and guilty and innocent and just a tiny bit angry all at the same time. Maybe it was because Tash mentioned Jake, my latest Official Crush (who for about a split second really seemed to want to be my Official Boyfriend). I know she's only trying to make me feel better, as if I still stand a chance with him. But it's two weeks, three days, sixteen hours and . . . thirty-eight minutes since Jake winked at me after English Lit., then whispered (really close to my ear and holding my elbow), 'Hey, what you said in class about Shakespeare's ego was well smart. Want to hook up over the homework one night? Suss out all the rhyme and rhythm?'

Those were his *exact* words, I wrote them in the back of my exercise book for accurate daydreaming purposes. And the homework he was talking about wasn't just some boring essay, it involved analysing a deeply meaningful love poem (including a line about pale breasts).

As he purred the word 'rhythm', my ear started fizzing, which made my throat close up, so I couldn't really speak. I did manage a nod and an 'Mmm' though and quite a friendly smile, I think. And Jake smiled too.

But since then he's been out with Joanna Hawtree and Mita Vinod (both in Year 11 and gorgeous) snogged Charlotte Floyd (admittedly, everyone has snogged her) and done something very unmentionable with the hippy girl from the chemist's who scares the vicar because she has a tattoo on her shoulder of a Greek God with a huge spanner.

It's fair to say then that Jake hasn't exactly been sitting indoors pining for me. And now, in a twist straight out of the most tragic kind of soap opera, he's dating my form captain, the Oh So Lovely And Charming Portia Thornington. And if she *even suspected* I liked him she'd laugh her pretty head off for the rest of her entire life. At least.

So I am now Officially Getting Over Jake, which involves accidentally being in the same places as him in order to identify serious defects. I've started a list:

Jake's Most Major Faults (Visible)

- * *Hair not dark enough and a bit too wavy at the back.*
- * *Eyes the wrong sort of blue.*
- * *Shoulders far too broad compared to his hips.*
- * *Rubbish at rounders, especially bowling (maybe his arms are too long?).*
- * *Doesn't play guitar.*
- * *Rides his bike with no hands, which is a bit naff (though it might, I suppose, have something to do with his too long arms).*

As you can see, Jake is actually deeply unattractive. All I need to do now is stop my heart blocking my throat every time I see him and I'll be back to my usual perky self.

Sorry, I've wandered right off the subject. What was the subject? Tash's text. Yes. So, I read it, felt like all my emotions were crashing into each other inside my head, then squeezed my eyes shut to try to get back into my dream. But R-Patz kept morphing into Jake, so I gave up and started wondering in an intelligent journalistic way about vampire lips and whether they're cold etcetera. That got me thinking about Ben and Tash's non-stop snogging, and how weird it is when the two people you feel closest to in the world start to get closer to each other than you'll ever get to them.

I've only known Tash since my second week at Hell House, but it feels like forever. We're in different forms, but we bonded when I crashed into her in hockey, scored an own goal and collapsed in hysterics.

I actually have known Ben forever, though, since I was five and he was seven. His family lived in the flat above ours in London and our parents babysat for each other when we were small.

It's dead easy being with Ben as he knows the basics about me, like the kind of spooky rock I'm into and how sherbet makes me sneeze. We used to see each other all the time, to listen to music or bike to the park or just knock about somewhere. And even if Ben was busy being sporty or

dating or something, we'd still bump into each other in the front garden or at the corner shop up the road.

Anyway, I've missed him like mad since we left. So I was ecstatic when he called to say he was moving to the nearest so-called town, Dullford, because his parents had come over all organic and needed a garden big enough to keep hens and carrots.

In case you're wondering, I really did want Tash and Ben to get on, so we could hang out together sometimes. But I never dreamt they'd fancy each other, as Ben always goes for fair floaty girls and Tash likes dark tragic boys. And, okay, I admit it, I never would have introduced them before the holidays if I'd known they'd fall head over trainers in split seconds.

I also admit that it was my idea to spend the summer urgently hunting down hot new boyfriend prospects because – well, let's just say it's been a quiet year, romantically. Again. But Tash was totally into it too, as there's a limited supply of dark tragic boys in our area. She finished with her last one, lean Lee, at Easter because he kept nagging her to do something far too meaningful involving black ribbon on a gravestone behind the scout hut.

Anyway, whatever. The important thing now is to think up a topic hot enough to keep me busy for five weeks. I've decided to channel Jess Bradley to inspire me, so I'm flicking through my journalism booklet . . . Ah, this could be good. I've found a picture of Jess staring out of the window of her

loft apartment in Soho, biting on a leopard-print fountain pen. The caption under it says, *Jess always likes to be able to see the sky when she writes.*

Excellent. I'm going to climb back on to my bed and type while I look up through the skylight.

So whas a totttaly h ot top igg tha woujld be intrrestng?

Oushc mebbe if I squin t ?

Norr, this snit goong ta worm, the sun's shininbg on thersc reeen,, cand"t see it priply give ma a secc;

Jess Bradley come in please . . .

Posted Friday 23rd July, 06:24

Okay, better, I'm now jammed into the tiny ledge of the tiny curved window at the end of my tiny room.

My bum's a bit folded up, which doesn't feel that classy and, unfortunately, I haven't got a floppy flower to pin somewhere unexpected. But my hair is long and curly like Jess Bradley's (though it's a huge uncontrollable frizz in a glamorous shade of mud pie). And I've put on my *Forbidden Scarlet* lipstick, which Mum has actually forbidden (and confiscated) but which I just liberated from where she hides it in her own make-up bag. I'm also biting my biro in a quite fabulous and sophisticated way for a beginner (I practised in the mirror first).

So, any second now, I will channel Jess and think of a

totally hot topic. Or at least something so wise and insightful it will make girls laugh and cry and be able to fulfil their wildest romantic dreams and most stratospherical career ambitions all at the same time.

Um

Posted Friday 23rd July, 06:29

Hmm

Posted Friday 23rd July, 06:42

Sigh

Posted Friday 23rd July, 06:57

I can't think of anything. I can't even think of a totally rubbish topic, unless you count, *How does Jess keep her lipstick on her lips when mine ends up all over my pen, T-shirt, laptop, curtains and cat?*

I think I'll take the pen out now, my cheeks are aching again.

Perhaps it's my room? Perhaps I'll only ever have tiny ideas in this tiny space? You probably think I'm exaggerating the size of The Nook. I wish. It's like some kind of sixteenth-century practical joke. I virtually have to tuck my nose

between my knees to get in the front door, even though I'm only five foot three. There's one living room on the ground floor with a kitchen in the corner. Mum's room takes up the whole first floor (she has to flatten against the wall to get round her bed). And up here, in the attic, the same space is divided in two. The front half's my room with a high bunk and just enough space underneath for a chest of drawers and clothes rail. The back's our excuse for a bathroom, with a miniature hip bath, which Mum insists is the 'in thing' but means one end of your body's always cold. If you slide down to soak your shoulders your legs stick out, and if you keep your legs underwater your top sticks out. That's also a problem because with the garden sloping up into the woods behind the cottage and the window in the roof sloping down, you can find yourself being ogled by rabbits/ramblers/Mum and her animal rescue friends (who are liable to wave).

The Nook is even more ridiculous because, apart from the row of tiny cottages on the high street that have been turned into Ye Olde Curiosity Shoppes, every other house in the area looks like it's fallen out of *Pride & Prejudice*. Think towering gates and crunchy drives leading to grand mansions with columns and turrets and tennis courts and swimming pools. Though I guess they didn't have pools in Jane Austen's time. Can you imagine? *Heavens, Mr Darcy, I couldn't possibly flutter my fan in your direction, but could you do my back with factor fifteen?*

The cottage comes free with Mum's job, working for a

horse trainer, the Right Honourable Henry, and we moved here a year ago. 'Here' is The Middle Of Absolute Nowhere, deep in a home county, which means it's close enough to London to commute to work if you fly a helicopter or want to spend nearly your entire life on a train. But it's not close enough to commute to my old school or hang out with my old friends. And it feels like it's on a different planet, all trees and hills and nothing to do.

Mum's a vet, and when she's not rescuing random animals, she looks after horses. So we lived in a smart area in London, beside a huge park surrounded by stables, but as we were in a flat, we didn't stick out so much.

Anyway, I'm wandering off the subject again, which I don't think is a particularly good journalistic speciality. Also, Friday is the only school day Mum doesn't start work at six, so I have to go down to breakfast early as she insists on a 'proper catch-up'. Back in five.

Neigh

Posted Friday 23rd July, 07:35

Mum's catch-ups feel more like consultations, as if I am an actual horse or something. This morning, she ran her hand over my head like she was checking for ticks, peered into my eyes, then rattled off, 'How are *you*? How is *school*? Any *problems*? Anything you need to *talk* about?'

And, between mouthfuls of porridge, I answered, as usual, 'Fine. Fine. No. No.' To be honest, I doubt she'd even notice if I said, 'Terrible. Dreadful. Millions. I got rampantly meaningful on a trampoline with my PE teacher yesterday.' (Who Tash and I have decided is quite cute if you squint to blur his very close together eyes.)

Right. Must phone Tash now and kill the Jake idea so she doesn't blurt out something lethal at school. Tash doesn't know quite how poisonous Portia can be. Nobody does.

Not being totally honest without lying is a bit tricky and tiring

Posted Friday 23rd July, 08:12

I was so fixated on the Jake crisis, I completely forgot about the hiding under a tree situation.

'So – where were you then – didn't you get my message?'

'Oh, um sorry Tash . . . yes I – I popped out – left my phone at home.'

This was true. I deliberately left it in my room so it wouldn't reveal my secret location if she called.

'But didn't my text show up when you got in?'

'Um . . .' I had no choice but to play dirty, 'How's Ben?'

'Ooh . . .'

Result.

'And how was your evening together – *all alone*?'

' . . . ooh, swoon, it was totally dreamy . . .'

So much for the super-sharp legal brain.

' . . . aah . . . more than dreamy . . . ooh . . . he's so fit . . . aah . . . his arms are so strong . . . ooh . . . his shoulders are so broad . . . aah . . . his stomach's so hard . . . ooh . . .'

I felt slightly suicidally bored out of my mind after ten minutes of Tash's non-stop drooling. But at least it got me out of confessing I'd deliberately avoided her.

Not being totally honest without lying is also dangerous

Posted Friday 23rd July, 18:44

Thanks to the hiding under the tree situation, I completely forgot about the Jake crisis, right up until our last lesson. Drama. How appropriate.

We were all cross-legged on the floor of the acting studio, watching Portia perform the vile school anthem. Our teacher, Mrs Stave, was crashing away on the piano and everyone (except me) was swaying as Portia warbled through vomit-inducing lyrics like, 'Hail to Hell, the beauteous illumination shines from every hallow-ed window,' while shaking her boobs as much as possible.

Tash was taking the opportunity of sitting in the shadows, behind the spotlight shining a halo on Portia's swinging blonde hair, to whisper to me about Ben.

‘He’s a spectacularly good kisser, Circe – even with tongues!’

As I can remember Ben sticking his tongue out at girls, this was a bit weird to hear, but I had to admit it was rare.

‘God, Tash, that’s dead lucky, so many boys kiss like puppies or hoovers.’

‘Ooh – how many boys have you snogged?’

‘Um, quite a few.’ This was true. I’d also practised extensively on my own hand and several ice creams.

‘Wow. Ben said he never met any of your boyfriends in London – I suppose you kept them apart, in case they got jealous of him, he’s so fit.’

I just shrugged, hoping Tash would interpret my silence as homesickness for London – and all the adoring boys I’d left behind. Big mistake.

Tash linked her arm through mine. ‘Ah, Circe, don’t be sad – Portia gets bored so easily, I’m sure you’ll be with Jake soon.’

I flinched and remembered I needed to tell her my Official Crush was Officially Over.

‘Ugh! I wouldn’t snog him if he was the last boy in The Middle Of Absolute Nowhere.’

Tash frowned. ‘Really? But when we voted last week you said he had the second most kissable lips in the world, after R-Patz . . .’

I flinched again, this time because Portia was trilling out an ear-piercing, ‘Hall-ellullah aaaaaah-men!’

‘I’ve changed my mind – I just hadn’t looked at him properly.’ I was hissing urgently now, determined to get Tash to believe me, but she just widened her eyes and squeezed my arm so hard it hurt. ‘Ouch. Honestly, I have now worked out that Jake is deeply unattract-’

It was then I realised the music had stopped – and everyone was gaping at me. Except Mrs Stave, who was glaring. Oh, and Portia. Portia was smiling sweetly at me – and clenching her hands into tight white-knuckled fists . . .

Totaliuss ridiculousicuss schoolium

Posted Friday 23rd July, 18:56

Oops, forgot to mention a key fact – I got detention, hurrah, for bad manners (specifically, Disrespecting The School Anthem). So I enjoyed yet another delightful hour in the ‘Dungeon of Doom’, a creepy classroom under the assembly hall which smells of cobwebs, and me, probably, as it’s practically my second home.

Oh, if you think I’ve also skipped a key fact from drama, sorry, but it’s really not worth wasting any typing energy on Portia, she’s so pathetic. Basically, she hissed some of her usual rubbish at me as soon as Tash was out of earshot. But I just ignored her and huffed off to detention. Then, as I copied out a passage on obedience from the Hell House Handbook (in Latin – how pointless is that?) I

decided to wipe the whole unimportant catastrophe from my memory.

Mr Dire was on Dungeon duty and drummed his beige fingers on his beige tie for sixty exact minutes, which made me grin as it reminded me of my one and only detention at my old school (after a bunch of us pretended to fall asleep in RE). Our teacher got bored after about three seconds and let us out, which made us feel a bit wildly untamed. So we all bundled into the Fancy Dress Emporium on the High Street and bought cheapie fangs and glitter wigs, then hit the Rockarolla Diner and bopped round the jukebox vamping in smouldering undead ways at the cute Italian waiter.

Good job Mr Dire didn't let me out early, if I came over wildly untamed here I'd have to sit and watch a blade of grass grow until it wore off.

Is The War Against Extreme Frizz a totally hot topic?

Posted Sunday 25th July, 11:35

Tash thinks it is. I'm not so sure.

Ben managed to detach his lips from Tash's for long enough to play tennis at his new club yesterday, so we had a lovely girlie afternoon. Her mum made us a picnic and we bought pink sparkly elderflower at Ye Olde Minimarkete.

Then we climbed the hill behind the church and lay in the grass, chatting like mad, barely even taking breaths between different subjects.

Tash told me about some new clenching exercises she's trying to reshape her bum, which she thinks looks oblong (it doesn't). Then she asked me about Ben's girlfriends in London and I said none of them were as gorgeous as her, which is true (she's all glossy black hair and dusky skin). Then she talked about Ben's muscles for a while, of course. Then she said, 'Circe, you know, this doesn't change anything. I mean, we're still BFFs and Ben's still your BBFF even though he's now my BF and really I think it's just a total plus that you're also my BFBGFF as well as my BFF – and we both *sooo* want you to hang out with us in the holidays. Really.'

I got a bit confused, but Tash looked so worried that I bit my lip to stop saying what I wanted to say, which was, 'So, BFF you're still up for hunting down new BFs with me, are you?' and instead said, 'Ah, thanks Tash, but I really *do* want to get ahead on the journalism thing this summer. I've started a blog to practise, so I'm going to be pretty busy a lot of the time.'

And she didn't say, 'But what about our vow to spend the holidays together hunting down new BFs?' which proved Ben had snogged it from her memory. She just said, 'Ooh, your own blog – can I read it?'

Yikes. I hadn't thought of that. 'God no. You'd be bored

out of your mind.’ I yawned loudly to emphasise my point. ‘There’s nothing much on it yet and when there is it will be very journalistically technical – it’s just for me to learn from really.’

‘Oh, okay – what’s it about?’

‘That’s the problem. I don’t know yet – I need a juicy subject, something I can get my teeth into . . .’

‘What about something useful, like . . . *How to Save the Planet?*’

Tash is quite ambitious, can you tell?

‘Um, that might be a bit too much for a first assignment – maybe next term.’

Tash stood up, paced twice around a tree, sat down again, frowned at the sky and crunched through an entire apple before she replied . . .

‘Hair.’

My mouth actually dropped all the way open. This is the girl who hopes to get into Oxford, study law then do ‘one of the most important jobs in the world’ saving humans from death and fates worse than death, whatever they are. If Mr Dire heard her he’d insist she switch to flower arranging.

‘Hair?’

‘Yes, hair. Think about it, you need a subject you’re passionate about, that you understand, that you can learn from, that will inspire others . . .’

‘Oh. And you think I’m passionate about hair?’

‘Yes! But not just any hair – specialist hair, *your* type

of hair. You’ve tried tons of different taming methods, haven’t you?’

‘So?’

‘Well, write up the results. Do more research. Expose the lotions and potions that fib about miracles. Interview hairdressers, other victims . . .’

Victims? I think Tash may have confused bad hair with actual torture. Okay, it is on rainy days when I bump into Jake in a corridor and he can barely squeeze by because my hair has doubled in size. But, most of the time, it’s just annoying.

I was thinking all this when Ben turned up, looking very London with his irritatingly manageable sandy hair spiked up into a mohawk.

‘Hey, Tash . . . Witchy.’

Ben’s called me ‘Witchy’ since I was six and my so-called dad explained my name to him. I guess it might irritate some girls, but I don’t mind it. It reminds me of being young and not caring about anything but who could run faster or climb higher. Or it did remind me of that, now it makes my heart clench a bit, because of the twisted ideas Portia’s tried to plant in my head. But I’ve sworn I’m not going to let her get to me, so I managed to grin at Ben, as usual, and he fake-punched my shoulder.

And, yay, we really did all have a laugh together, about Mr Dire’s ambitious plans for me and about Ben’s über-competitive Canadian tennis partner, Chuck (really), who

shouts ‘Yesss-sirrr’ every time he serves. And when he told Tash he’d won his match, she whooped and kissed him, but not a proper snog, so I didn’t have to pretend I was suddenly fascinated by my feet and/or entirely invisible.

A jolly good fun abuse of our teenage human rights

Posted Monday 26th July, 20:22

The Hell House Head, Professor Potts, interrupted registration this morning (or rather his belly interrupted and the rest of him turned up a few minutes later). He announced that as Year 11 is going to be ‘tough’ and ‘a shock’, we have to do ‘jolly good fun tests’ all day on Friday to prepare for it. We’ve got to revise practically the whole of Year 10 again and learn some totally new stuff about jolly subjects like banking and war. Oh, and anyone who fails will get a jolly good fun detention – *on the last day of term*. How warped is that?

Comment

Posted Wednesday 28th July, 15.55, by your Studybuddy!

Hey *Circe!*

Cramming for end of year tests at *Hell House*?

Rather be having a blast with your mates or out on dates?

Don’t get stressed, get a **studybuddy!**

Studybuddy.com helps you revise every subject from Archaeology to Zoology. All for the special introductory offer price of only \$3.99 a month!!!

So for the easy way to get straight ‘A’s [click here now](#)>>>

Dear Studybuddy

Posted Wednesday 28th July, 16.52

If you were any kind of decent friend you would know I have nothing better to do than study. My mates spend their entire lives snogging each other and I don’t have any dates. Unless you teach Boyfriendology, please do not darken my blog doorway again.

Deep sigh

Posted Wednesday 28th July, 16.55

I am the epitome of frankly disappointed. When I saw ‘New Comment’ pop up, I thought my imaginary reader had actually turned into a real one. I’ve switched on all my anti-spam security blocks now as it’s quite spooky when you realise an internet robot has read your blog and thinks it knows personal things about you.