

'The way people live' from Adolescing. Copyright © Hilary Leland 2014.

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The way people live

Julia is shorter than me but she takes up much more space. She is one of those short girls who is extra big below the waist and she waddles when she walks. At school she used to hang around Sandra and co. They were nice to her face but the minute her back was turned it was, 'Roly poly Julia, size eighteen and never been kissed!'

I don't mind old Julia. That morning I was waiting for my jobseeker's interview and it was her signing on day. I hardly knew her really but I told her what had happened. She gasped and then she hugged me. She said, 'It's all right, you can stay with me until you find somewhere of your own.'

I didn't know what to say. 'I don't know, Julia. Look, give me your address. I might come round later.' Then the woman called me in and went on at me about all the jobs at Burger King and Mothers Pride.

'You've been on benefit for nearly six months now Miss Churchill!'

'Yes. Um. Sorry.'

After that I hung around the arcade and spent more money. There isn't anyone, where can I go? so I caught the bus out to Plainmoor after all. Julia lives on the fourth floor up cold concrete stairs. I sat on the stairs crying. She might not be home for ages!

A lot of people shoved past me and an old woman said, 'What are you doing here?' 'Er, I was just going.' It's either get the bus back to the harbour or—Or, you can't spend time in Vince's company without learning a few tricks. When nobody was looking, I let myself into Julia's flat.

The way some people live!

A damp rug on bare floorboards, plastic chairs and table (garden furniture from B&Q!) a calor gas fire. It didn't seem right to light the fire when she wasn't there. She doesn't even have a stereo, just a telly and a sewing machine.

I wandered into the tiny kitchen, then her bedroom, no bed, just a mattress. Oh fuck, where will I sleep? (Back home to mother's? I'd rather die!) I started blubbing again, freezing cold in here.

I cheered myself up by snooping around. I rummaged through Julia's clothes. She keeps them in a suitcase and a Safeway bag full up ready for the launderette, big male jeans cut short and hemmed. I held up a pair. What a funny shape! Her red skirt, I looked at the label, Ann Harvey. With a slit at the side but she needs more room for legs like hers! She ought to make her own. I must admit I looked at her underclothing too. What will I do about my clothes? Then I heard Julia coming in through the front door. Yikes! Put them away quick but she had already gone into the sitting room. I heard her lighting the calor gas fire.

So I went to the door to say hi and she was spitting on

her fingers. Why is she spitting on her fingers? Have you guessed yet? The first thing Julia does when she gets home? She was standing by the fire. She had lifted her skirt up out of the way. Her knickers and tights were pushed down and stretched out between her thighs. She was bending over them with spit on her hand.

I was just about to fling my arms round her, a big smacking kiss, thanks Julia, you're a mate! Well, on second thoughts—! I quickly stepped sideways back into the bedroom doorway where it was dark. She won't be able to see me back here.

So? I had to find out what she was up to. I would have left her to get on with it if she'd been doing it with a bloke. Look, call me innocent but I never imagined doing, you know, all that with yourself! Unless it's because a bloke wants to watch or something.

She tried to undo her shoe, bending over and hopping on one foot. She laughed, easing herself down onto the floor by the fire. Then she rolled backwards with her legs up in the air and tried to reach her shoe that way. And pushed her tights up towards her waving feet. Roly poly Julia! Still spitting on one hand, the other hand. When she was sopping wet she let her wrist go loose. She started muttering to herself

Look at me! Hey! Don't ignore me

Grab me grope me finger poor me
Cuddle me and stroke my bum
Are your kisses French? Yum yum!
Soothe my pain. Relax poor stiff me
Tickle nibble lick and sniff me
Please don't go! I'm ripe I'm slimy
Two-time her and fifty time me
I'm a virgin I'm a slag
Save my life I NEED A SHAG!

She burst out giggling and changed hands,
Giggle, shriek, squeak
and changed them back again, limp wrists flapping,
balloon thighs wobbling.

Yip, yip, giggle, yippee!

Phew, pant.

Finished?

All quiet. She rolled onto her side and curled up tight, still giggling. Then she got up onto her hands and knees. She's looking straight at me, oh fuck! I fled back to her bedroom. I heard more screams so I tiptoed back. She was bent over on her knees. She jogged up and down, horsey, horsey.

I remembered her at school, clapping her hands on her ears if you mentioned even the toilet. You never know what people are really like.

Finished at last? Sod it! I'm not going to sneak around any

more. I took my chance when she was decent for a minute and went in, gate crashing her private party.

'Hi Julia. You. Left the door open.'

Inside the room the air was thick with shagging. Has she really never done it? (The way some people live!) I knelt down by the fire with her to warm up.

'Vic?'

Suddenly streams of wet sweat on her face. She looked around the room. Her shoes and knickers and tights were inside out on the floor and a hairbrush in her hand. After a minute I put my arms round her. We'll take care of each other Julia. Her big wet face panting against my neck and hair (scraggy old me!) I started to cry too. She stroked my back, ew! which hand? I think she has been using both of them.

We'll go back to normal now, a cup of coffee but I need this cuddle. Oh well, a few minutes longer. It can't do any harm.