

BLOSSOM BOY BETA TEST

- 3 -

THE BOOK OF ADA

The following text was found in a leather suitcase, buried in a hole, deep as the clay line, in Somerset. The text has been reproduced here, but the original was variously printed and handwritten, on loose sheets of high-end linen paper, blank salmon newspaper stock, and UK Ministry of Defence letterhead. The sheets themselves were then wrapped in kitchen foil with several undecipherable symbols written on the outside with a black Sharpie marker pen. Glyphic experts have concluded that the symbols most likely relate to various building materials. A doctoral research candidate in the History of Software Engineering from the Massachusetts Institution of Technology (MIT) has stated that the materials correlate to the United States Department Of Defence's project Large Organizational Model Building Paradigm (LOMB) approach to define a new computer programming language used for high integrity civilian and military use. According to the MIT student, The High Order Language Working Group (HOLWG) defined the requirements of the prospective new language in various stages. The below stages defined what later became known as the programming language, Ada. The following text contains several references to a person or character known as Ada. There is no evidence that Ada existed as a real person, or evidence as to why the following text was written and then subsequently concealed. No one involved in the subsequent investigation wished for any credit or citation in the matter likely due to concerns about their future professional reputation. The author of the text remains unknown, and the official investigation into the matter was closed by the British authorities in the summer of 1999.

- STRAWMAN issued in April 1975
- WOODENMAN issued in August 1975
- TINMAN issued in January 1976
- IRONMAN issued in January 1977 (revised in July 1977)
- SANDMAN not published but circulated in January 1978
- STEELMAN issued in June 1978
- PEBBLEMAN issued in July 1978
- PEBBLEMAN Revised and issued in January 1979
- STONEMAN issued in February 1980

0.0

linen dress ripples arm
basketing those we point at
across the foreground's elevation
but then not talk to them
after they've walked over to us

how minds ease power's path

we'll tire soon
in all this privacy
cook each other meals
reconcile quarrels
neat as cats

what little mazes we are

amongst the crowds
slipping paper thin
down backs of seats

under halogen
a disinterest of cinders
deforms the thatch

then
Ada begins

0.1 - How You Do Anything, Is How You Do Everything

it is of course unfortunate, to be starting this poem
with a reference to depression, but don't worry
it's not about that, depression is merely the setting

as is so often the case, our time spent ensuring
we are equally avoided yet avoiding those around us,
these consequences of good intentions; the arranged

social transactions pinging pleasant and hollow. I mean,
does it help to view every other person as a strawman
of yourself? dawdling, waiting for the stuffing to be tugged

then picked out bit by bit, corn spluff and wool,
strewn about everywhere that speaks to the kindness
of kitchen in-jokes and pastries in meeting rooms

it feels as if the depression starts
when we begin to realise the difference
between the delusion and reality of ourselves

or should I say, how we become content with reality,
reminding ourselves what we'd be, if we weren't
who we are – that is to say, what I think I mean,

sometimes we must pull the root to rid the rot

0.2 - The Year Of The Scarecrow

I guess it's up north here as the nights never go proper dark in the summer,
which means they never truly sleep. A plasticky strain of a look up
the furrowed rows of my field, I can hear them in the trees, growling shapes
carry on between the black veins of trees then scatter across the moon.

I dread to think how they manipulated the murder of whatever
has become their carrion supper. A flap of a crow's wing,
brings far swifter cause and effect than a butterfly could dream of

and what do they give me to protect these crops? This old boiler suit,
cable tied tight at the cuffs and neck, covered in oil;
how can I shout with this sealed mouth of empty polythene feedbags?

I suppose this old Thinsulate hat is meant to disrupt the spread of their cawing?
and this upturned plastic tub, cross of hazard sign, my winking eye,
apt for this crucifixion on a fencing pin, to stand guard night and day

I guess I shouldn't worry about it too much, especially as my heart
is just a shredded-up Radio Times. I must rely on the natural order of things.
them in the house making decisions, me out in the field, always aware
the crows could take whatever they wanted, and I can't do a thing to stop it

0.3 - Bk of Ada - Chapter 26.

1. Zechariah and Ezekiel, also known to those as Zach and Zeke, had been entreating their father, John, for permission to build scarecrows on their farm. ² For the crows were causing much blight and dismay amongst the brothers, but the Father did not see that the effort would bring respite ³ After many harvests, John had grown tired of his son's begging and decided to listen to his sons. ⁴ After listening to their plans, he ordered them to search their outbuildings and gather old clothes, scrap, and material for stuffing. ⁵ Then, he ordered the sons to bring the goods to the rear of the building where Cattle slept and wintered. ⁶ Zach brought seven binbags full of shredded tabloid newspapers ⁷ And Zeke, brought a bag of their deceased Great Aunt's clothes, along with masks left over from All Hallow's Eve ⁸ John himself, had gathered old scrap materials and tools; forks, augur, scythe, hoe.

2. ¹ John opened the first of the binbags. Zach and Zeke turned the pitchforks upside down, fastening them to a feed-tub, nailed a plank across it for arms, then hung The Great Aunt's eaten up bee suit over it. ² They agreed that the Venetian drama mask suited best, and placed it over the forks ³ This scarecrow, they said, would guard the field by the slurry tank.

⁴ They stuffed the bee suit with the shreddings

3.¹ Then John opened another of the binbags And Zach and Zeke, stood the augur upside down, fastening to a tub

bucket, tied a rotten fence post for arms, then they dressed it in the great Aunt's red boiler suit. ² The next mask was chosen but they could not agree if it was Donald Trump or Barney Rubble. ³ This one, they said, would watch the vegetable patch by the faded *dig for victory* sign. ⁴ And they stuffed the red boiler suit with the shreddings

3.¹ Then, John opened more of the binbags And Zach and Zeke, took the hoe and place it through the top of an old lager keg, lashed a 4-inch pipe across it, and draped The Great aunt's long black dress that had been used for funerals and tarring roofs. ² Daffy Duck was zip-tied through the eye-holes to the hoe. ³ This scarecrow, they said, would watch over the barley and wheat fields ⁴ And they stuffed the long black dress with the shreddings

5.¹ And John opened the last of the binbags, And Zach and Zeke held up the scythe, wedging it into a broken fruit crate, binding a rifle butt for its arms. The Great Aunt's denim dungarees were clipped over it ² Then, the welding mask strapped to the scythe ³ This scarecrow, they said, would watch the fallow field beyond the knacker's yard ⁴ And they stuffed the denim dungarees with the shreddings

6.¹ Thus completed the construction of their scarecrows. ² So that their works and days could guard the farm's harvest ³ And give confidence to the family that they would reap what had been sown into the hard earth.

1.0

*"It felt as if one's entire world was one, long Sunday afternoon.
Nothing to do. Nowhere to go."*

It was another Sunday afternoon and Ada was sat at the dining room table rearranging all the scenes of Pulp Fiction into chronological order

I knew it was best not to disturb her, instead I headed to the attic so, I could work on my novel that's set entirely in a sheet fort.

but just as the little ball on the rope had pulled the stairs down to the landing, Ada was calling upstairs to me,

and without even saying my name, began to read out a shopping list:
Chocolate Swiss Roll, Strawberry Swiss Roll, Butterscotch Swiss Roll

20 B&H Gold. a bar of soap. 9 pack of toilet roll, crushed ice
multipack of blood orange San Pellegrino, a litre of Gin.

a black olive and sundried tomato pizza, a packet of paracetamol,
apples, broken biscuits, onion rings, honey, and a Daily Telegraph.

Actually, I was going to work on my novel for a bit

I'll give you the money when you get back, the shops will be shutting soon

but you don't even smoke, Ada.

Oh silly! those are for you, as a thank you.

but I don't smoke either Ada!

well, it's never too late to start,
but it might be too late for the shops
if you don't set off soon.

I watch the little ball on the rope float in a circle pinned to its axis

and turn back down the main staircase. I pick my coat off the hook and see Ada through the door at the table. I wonder what scene she is on, and whether she'll ever work out how it all began.

1.1

I must admit a crime of understatement when I recall
one of the freest, indeed the finest moments of my life,
was Ada and I's seamless duet of *you're the one that I want*
in a Baby Guinness-soaked karaoke bar in Stockholm

so, I was delighted to receive an invitation to visit Ada
her leafy yellow brick London, near the house, where Lawrence
once wrote of being taken roughly by the gamekeeper in the woodshed

off grid, Ada
static caravan
strands of berries reach over mug-ringed table tops

inside, a tumble-down sunlight, strains a kindle paperwhite,
I can roughly make out on the e-ink display, an article title page
Trickle Down Fem... half covered by a bright pink magazine

REAL PEOPLE
POT NOODLE ATTACK HELL

the talk with Ada is back and forth, easy, nice, carefree,
cordial as the sweet elderflower schnapps cordial Ada served

Ada tells me the place's history, a Victorian fairground site
we talk of what went before and conjure images in words.
barber striped awnings, piped organ music,
hand barrowed sweets and slow roasted chestnuts
the bearded women and moustached strongmen in leotards
that now haunt this land of Volvo estates and shepherd huts

at some point I must have asked Ada why she was here
because what she said to me burned into my mind like a poem

because there's just too much
beyond our control, except perhaps
to lives one's own idea of life
why do you conform?
when you can sow seeds
into the chaos and slowly
watch all the serious things
become undone as laughter
takes over and becomes the norm

1.2

A grab your go-bag type of morning, i'd made it to the airport just-in-time to catch the day's only flight that would get me to Barcelona to meet Ada at the specified time and place, and I'm now ducking my head under an oak beam leading me to this courtyard faced with trellis of climbing vines and half-budding flowers, to Ada's white linen table, and a MacBook *Air* on the placemat. without looking at me, Ada says 'you're ten minutes late'

'Ada, I got your text at four this morning,
the flight was a little delayed, it couldn't be helped

Well, just be a little more prepared in the future, please.

It was good luck to even get a seat!

yes, quite. I suppose you must be the lucky one. Certainly, isn't me, having to put up with the likes of you

OK Ada, well I'm here now, what are we doing?

I need you to put together a truth table for this project I've been contracted to

Perhaps you've already forgotten your Ps & Qs, Ada?

is that meant to be a joke?

Yes, Ada, it's a very specific joke, for this, very specific situation, don't you like it?

I'm struggling to hear myself think over the room's laughter

there is no one else here. Through a window, I see a motorway dissect scrubland.

happy now? can we please just get on with it

I get a feeling when I'm around you Ada, and I really hope, it's not how happiness feels

don't go all soft on me, *Happiness* is a myth they invented in the fifties to sell kitchen appliances

I thought we were here to talk about Truth, not happiness Ada.

perhaps it was a mistake inviting you here, I thought it would be good for you

what are you even working on, Ada?

it's a contract for an under... ground... bull... thing

the waiter interrupts

As I clear my throat, Ada breaks in with a lazy Spanish with hints of Hispaniola in the rrrrrr's

Traeme una jarra de mimosa, por favour, y el ingles palido tomara agua del grifo

por supuesto insequia Senora

Oh, I didn't get chance to order anything, I'm hoping to try some authentic rustic cuisine when I'm here

trying to stir yourself from a malaise, I suppose?

malaise, Ada?

yes, malaise, you seem like one of those men who flit between whatever affectations of the moment, and dress it up as romances or addictions to mask the fact you are just growing more boring and dull with each new day

oh, that's a bit harsh, Ada

heroin is no more or less than interesting than football, you know

Ada, I had no idea you thought about me like this

which is exactly the sort of thing a boring person would say

we should start the truth table Ada, you clearly have gotten the taste for it

the waiter places the glasses, fresh condensation globes and drops to the pine table

OK, let's start. We're running discovery on the logical probability of the future value of human capital decreasing at such a fast rate, how many people will seek to monetise their whole existence by strapping on meta-wearables linked to Data-Daos and social media networks, to generate revenue every time you share yourself online.

Oh Ada, it's not going to come to all that, will it?

Today, they're giving it all away for free, someone's gotta realise.

Wow Ada, you're always 3 steps ahead of everyone else.

I like to think I can find the easy way to do the easy things. If we put effort in, we can always turn the impossible to the imperfect

Well, I'm not sure what to say, or where to start Ada.

& if you only could see yourself now, then you might begin to see the root of all your problems

1.3

Ada emerges from hot bath, pastel pink pinched
as a ring of copped hair clings to dredged foam,
Ada wraps hair in second towel like ancient clergy
and coins the dude zeitgeist, commands clone
army of soy boys on 14% battery remaining, sweeps
the bedside table of loose coins, ChapStick, and
3 unmatched cufflinks. Ada joins anti-fragile
barriers in nature; slops inflatable nets around
a gyre of plastic; predicts city's future nyctophobia.

encoding relationships of trust, Ada transforms
proximal abandonment of technical primitives,
encapsulates omni-presence of cultivated masculinity,
casts derision over vinegar strokes; prompts
culturally significant dinner parties; holding
back humility, Ada comprehends the methods
of the ways people represent themselves
on the internet, pulling back of hand across
grinning slop of mouth, Ada realises
opportunities for viral marketing strategies

Ada implements digital transformation
of Yeoman's service, circulates the names
of nomads among the gazette's tyranny; Ada
fine tunes the diffusion filters, generates
sun-coated grass moving in the wind, frame
-perfect as sequins on a dancer's dress
or schools of fish in a silver sea.
Ada enacts privilege, generates the crowd
going about its daily business, indexes
dead rows of faraway sunken lanes.

In green painted Taqueria, Ada captivates
all the flailing, little rags of our hearts,
pulled and shaped by the wind's howling.
Ada claims everyone needs a form of creation story,
then hisses that marriage is a deadly form
of compliance, a leaking of faulty minds,
everyday we're proof of its output.
Greedy Ada tries to make solitude fit for two
– two heads poking through the same collar
of a jumper, each sleeve cuff fixing
the farthest known points of the universe.

On weekday mornings, Ada quantifies value
of highly liquid autonomy, signalling intent
of mission critical safety, embedding echo
chambers and depositing archaic coins in spiral
wishing wells of provincial supermarkets, smart
as power, as a rock we push up the hill and claim
the process as Love. We all hold Ada's margarita
whilst she orchestrates chaos engineering
in core weather monitoring, pathfinding bright moon
through fog of data. Ada pings the servers with tinnitus,
bribing wisdom when wisdom is the deepening
understanding of just how ignorant we are

2.0 - *T'Tin-Man Cometh*

a weekday I guess from the sound outside
of traffic and the pace of it, all zoom
zoom and quick to get to it, whatever
it was I am never sure, but I could
be sure that today wasn't the day
I was going to have to care about it

I watch the sky for a few moments
to try and gauge the weather
the clouds mashed and swam like
oh, I don't know, erm, shall we say,
like milk in tea or dust billowing
from a demolished tower, all I can tell,
it didn't have much to do with me

the day would be like any other,
it will be an act of survival, I guess
how difficult that is, is what separates
us from each other, for some, easy;
others, it takes almost everything, and
rarely gives much in return, but it's all life
and we're all in it, there's no escaping that

I take the car keys and start the engine
(cold start, choke out) and it tries to turn
and ignite its mini furnace, but it splutters
in greased catarrh, whining and shuddering
to a complete stop, like a miserly old git
emptying himself into a bored sex worker,
the day felt like a month already

so, I decided to take the bus instead, 404
heading towards the town centre, I had
no change and my bank card didn't work
(the card having expired many years ago)
driver showed me no sympathy, pressing the
button to shut the doors and whoosh they went

so, I decided to walk instead and planted
those feet down in patterns on the pavement
like donkey heads tapping oil in a desert or,
sorry, you know what walking is, right?
I've heard people say the journey
is more important than the destination
but I, couldn't possibly comment

Anyway, I got there in my own time
of course, the monumental mason
hadn't done the epitaph, which is a shame,
because it was for me really, a joke
only I'd get, or of course, my soulmate,
but then that is altogether another story
less of a shame, more of a tragedy

2.1 - *The Wizard Of Because*

Ada sat leg propped over knee on a moulded, plastic chair,
smoking a vogue, reading a corner stapled print out, titled
a logical calculus of ideas immanent in nervous activity

I look outside the window of our Cambridge science park office
buff brick and glass reflect cloud's moving shadows
an everyday sight but legitimately beautiful

I think of cigarettes, Ada's cigarette and why I can't sleep at night
but nothing actually happens, it's as if my whole thought process
is a dependence of vacuums cancelling each other out in the silence..

could you pull some research together on possible disruptive use cases of AI in
literature, please?

can't you do this yourself, Ada? You already seem to be indulging in the classics

classics are classics for a reason, dude

well, you're always telling me how much better those chatbots are at conversation
than I, try them

oh, don't get into one of your moods you just look like you need something to do

actually Ada, I'm considering the ethical impact of project-Wizard. It feels like it
has a momentum of its own, and it's all getting away from us

well of course it is. we're getting that algo real fat

don't you have any problems with what we're doing, Ada?

are you *even* paying attention in the planning meetings?

What about the moral replicating augmentation phase?

look, there's always an ethics lag with new technology, I'm sure people will catch
up soon and get it.

I'm not sure ethics lags work that way round, Ada.

Your problem is not that you think in or outside the box, but that you SEE a box!
You *believe* in the box.

Ada, we're retrofitting scarecrows with exo-skeletons, EEG headsets & LLM brain chips, what exactly are we trying to prove?

It's not about proof, it's about progress. The whole universe is only apparent to us as a mass array of information. It wouldn't be responsible to ignore this fact.

Ada drops her vogue into a can of Rio, uncrossing her legs as she stands up, making her long grey pinstripe skirt flow, wrap, and fit in corrugated pleats

Ada walks over to me at the window, then, with her thumb and index finger pinches and lifts the back of my neck, holds it there and whispers into my ear

I know you're nervous about the lions but this is big boy stuff now, we've come too far to go back to what we were. I need you to find the courage to see this through to the end

why, Ada, why?

Because. That's why. Because I said so, all you need to know, is that I am the wizard,
I am the wizard of because.

2.2

Ada had asked me to join their
Virginia Woolf reading group
for a 3-day walking trip
around the Lake District

I leapt at the chance of being
outdoors with those sort of people
The plan was to meet at Kendal Station.
a clear, crisp day. The air a jug

of spit - pleasant chill, if you
had the right type of coat.
I was sat, leant forward, waiting
in the half open station

not reading or staring at my phone
but alert for the group's arrival.
Everyone a stranger, except Ada
but I could hardly claim Ada familiar.

My phone pinged, a Signal message
- Ada; Hey you, almost there!
just wanted to say not to worry
about appearing gauche to the gang

I've warned them about your provincialism.
pixels burn, then I hear my name
called across the station
the group, coming off 555 from Lancaster

Fisherman's beanies and Patagonia.
Careful, measured smiles, watching
but not looking. Ada is a flashbulb
Here he is! Look, I told you

a smile sweeter than syrup
sticks my jaw in rust
and the handshakes
and the hellos commence their battle

and it all starts over
that rush of heat

and it makes the faces shimmer
like hot air over a road

and the meshed spheres rise
and roll and clank
bitter ferrous flowers
with their pathetic shade

to hide mesh tongued
in amongst the crowding crowds
I consider all the clever people
I've seen get away with this

their teeth eating words
as if they were no thing
but petals - a second passes
as the interview of tests run

through Boolean gradients
pass or fail, right or wrong
true or false - my voice starts
to recite a workbench's labour

recombined madness vices
shrapnel in the interviews
of shimmering faces - a final
expression of some critical aspect

and the point, metal tongued
regresses clever interviews
of shimmering faces - half
cocked smiles bloom

like flowers in a secret garden
next to a workshop, lathing
passively fed words, borrowed,
repeated and rarely understood

2.3

I'm sat in a café
with my hands around a latte
as if it was my last grenade in a war

at the table
diagonally
 adjacent
 a couple exchange
non-sequiturs of affection

 a game of chess
 where no-one knows
 how the pieces move

down gas-lit tunnels of periphery
I can see their lips move
 like tango dancers
and their lips move like windmills
 in a breeze
 like this
 & like that
moving like opposite ends of magnets
 desperate to attach

a memory re-appears like a papercut

Ada smirks "it will be vanity
 that will tear us apart"

in an endless simulation
when do our words cease
 to be the echo
 of a beg
 for a well-done sticker
 on a school jumper?

for me, I pulled the pin out years ago
and have just been keeping it tight
in my grip so that it doesn't go off;
afraid of the pain, afraid of the relief

3.0

Letter from Ada #32

2011

Ada

Mont Blanc black ink

120 GSM Claire Fontaine paper

Alan Turing commemorative stamp

Canson envelope

105 × 148 mm (A6 folded)

I heard about what happened
and I know you, I can see you, a day
snags itself like wool on a fence
those moments recalled and
it fills every pore and hair of you
and beyond this, that hollow
feeling in your joints and you
realise that it wasn't what
you did or said that day
that caused it all, but of course
it was in fact, just you. you
in all your responsibility,
fucked it right up royally, but
and my dear boy, there is always
a but to save yourself. it was
simply not the right moment
in that part of time and space
for you. you just shouldn't have
been there. elsewhere was you
living the way, you want to live
it's akin to watching a child
touching a hot stove, it's burn
the warning and teaching against
doing it again, so when the day
licks back into gear, ask yourself
what did you learn this time
and why is it starting to hurt
a lot less than it did before?

Ada

p.s. come see me soon. you are
needed for my next project.

3.1

paper coffee cup in black leather glove
pulling wheeled luggage
towards Alexanderplatz
back in the day when a few pills and some Dostoevsky
could get you from Berlin to Moscow in a jiffy

through a tram, I catch
a few frames flying past
 Burberry Trench, Hermes Scarf, blonde bangs touch
 thick bakelite glasses and tan Cambridge satchel

I'm sure it was Ada
 moving across the lines
 down Koppenstraße

 gone in the city's din
 a memory
of how we ever met - faded posters
 recovered many times
in the paste of neon and rival events

 has Ada always been here
 in amongst
the waves that deliver us
 in our constantly now
 that we paste over and over

I know this could not be true
 but what else is there now
Ada has become everything to everyone
 and nobody can look away

3.2 - To Whom It Shouldn't Concern

I should start with an explanation
but I will stop short of apology or disclaimer
for I have no desire to save offence or feel ashamed

that is, so to speak, bucking the route
one often takes to become respected and accepted
(which I must admit, makes me digress

into ideas of perfume, wafting, which in turn
conjures the image of brightly lit department stores)
also, I don't wish to spend any of our time together

this, precious time here together,
speaking of such things, especially as we have so much
to get through. I have so much to show you

but, nevertheless, there are conventions
for such people in our position,
that it would be completely remiss of me

to ignore them, as if pretending I'm not aware.
indeed, it is not my intent to forge new levels
of conceit and hubris by believing that endeavour

warrants our considerable effort (and quality thereof)
but it's more an attempt to stave off lingering
feelings of regret that any of us could find

when looking back at the diversions of youth.
it's a question, as all other things are, of time.
we simply must not waste energy on the past

or become prisoners of our memories,
let us be free to move on and continue
the intricacies of our own life's work

in the hope of everyone's equitable settlement
which must be the quickest way to resolve the ash
of lifestyles barely accepted or respected in their own times

3.3

We're in the Devon beach house, I'm loading the dishwasher

Ada is sat on the kitchen work-top, soft swayed knees kick arcs
of white tennis shoes and socks, sun-kissed freckled hallelujah

a quick glance up, out of the window
we'd see the sea topping sudsy surf on sand
a motion of folding and stacking –
tea towels or shirts or the inside of a Twirl bar

but these are not the sort of days
we can afford to spend watching or witnessing

i've found, in moments like these,
Ada often practices her soundbites

to achieve success, you'll likely have to learn how to live well past your regrets

all the mugs upended on their spikes

fate prefers pessimism

big pans lie against each other as if they are spoons, dreaming

*there's always someone with a trendier haircut who will love to tell you that your thing
isn't relevant to anyone anymore*

cutlery in the basket, safe in its little car seat for the journey

That last one needs tightening up a bit, Ada

hahahahah yes, I thought you might identify strongly with that last one

I pile our breakfast of pistachio cannoli
on a mottled halo Denby serving plate
and bring the pitcher of Clementine Bellini
so, we can both sit out on the deck

what are we doing today, Ada?

we've got to run that workshop, remember?

ah, with those AI robotics guys from Tianjin?

yeah, 3pm in the city, we're on the 1032 train

I assume you'll be running it, Ada?

thought it would be good for you to do it gain some trust and credibility with the client

O.K. sure but let me lead from the start, when you do all the speel and introductions in Mandarin and hand it back to me in English, it all falls a bit flat

Haha, sure thing softlad

Ada, it's just not very nice thing to do to someone

nice people aren't good people, they've just grown up in an environment that rewarded them for doing nice things

that's a good one Ada, could see that cross-stitched and framed on a Grandmother's wall

there's one Cannoli left on the plate,
Ada is not the sort to hesitate to take the last one
of anything if she wants it

do you want the last one Ada,

Yes. Don't touch that. The last one, is always mine

4.0

The last time I saw Ada

snow
was falling
not falling
but dropping
not dropping

you see

slush and sulphur
drift the double yellows

it was one of those days

I'd gone to her place in Mariahilf
pushed back tall mirrored doors
to ten-foot-high ceilings
of neo-Antoinette turtle blues
mixing light like fresh cream

on the middle of the diamond checked floor
a pink shell stucco occasional table, cuttings
of cherry & orange blossom surround
heavy paper envelope with red wax seal – A

Dear Santa,
This year for Christmas, I want
the following: (because I've been
such a good girl)

Ada xx

- more jukeboxes in pubs and
more pubs and more cigarette
machines and a neon vending
crucifix for every church and pawn
shop in the parish
- a statue of the black Madonna
for a new tattoo so people have
something to hold whilst they pray
for my rotten soul

- for the words Amen and
halleluja to be subject to equal
scrutiny
- a sign for my desk at work that
reads trespassers will be shot
survivors will be shot again
(Secret Santa)
- a lifetime supply of halcyon
- a coffee table no filter
instagram
photobook of near dead orchids

if you make these things happen
Santa, I'll stop telling them you
don't exist. If you make the magic
happen, I'll stop breaking it - Ada
xox

I folded the letter slightly off its crease
tucking like valleys that forgot
the seams they trap inside them

mobiles of stained-glass birds
circulate orbs of peacock feathers
around the foyer like a disco ball

and like most good feathers
they are all pointing in the right direction
to enable that control of air we call flight

back outside on the stoop
the thickened snow
bows the telegraph lines down
sagging future's message

now

dropping
not dropping
but falling
not falling

4.1

sinecure is quicksand, walled gardens, and fish ponds.

The thickening. The programmed cell death. Ada intervenes

in post-structural theories and editorials.

Village meeting minutes cascade digital rain.

What are they on about? - regressive noises,

Intellectual vertigo. Ada looks up

the most searched for terms in their office -

Ultra-Normalist; deep-dive; lingual brace; reform; build full stack.

Where are those who can build? - fake responds to fake.

Vascular, penny-a-pint. Deep England responds

according to its environment

and disappears beyond the ha-ha wall -

The Manor House at Westray; Southside of Featherstonehaugh Hall;

The Upper Nidderdale Vicarage; Cardigan Lane Scout Hut.

Attention networks drop hollowed, conventional wisdom.

Law Of Falling Bodies - Then, the Cosmopolite's cynical puns

fills isolation with the weirdness you crave. Ada says, let it be colourful,

go past inflection, climb.

sinecure is quicksand. Boom/bust maypole, Hawthorn hedgerows

fence the plots of spreading towns to ire of churchwardens and cricket umpires.

Ada cannibalises submission. Not much else to say;

There is no failure except failure to serve one's purpose.

4.2

I'm in the middle of a village hall
Out of hours, fire exit light, tea urn under sideboard
Brown plastic school chairs stack in corner's shadow

I think I recognise the other three
But I can't quite place them, it feels a bit like
We all feel this way. We all know better than to talk

Which really just confirms we've all been here before
Maybe not this specific place, the permutations
Of who, where and when make it too big a number

Too irrational for sure. The only point that matters
Is we're all here again and there's nothing anyone
Can do about it. The double fire exit door opens

and light fills the room like a flashbulb
Before the doors clank and slam shut behind,
Ada never walks into rooms lightly.

Hello hello yes my darling oh look at you all
Thank you so much for coming at such short notice
It means the absolute world to me, really it does

Ada proceeds to kiss everyone on each cheek, clamping
Their elbows to their sides to prevent any form
Of return hug emerging or even countering

Ok chums, are we ready for another adventure?
The group, focused, remains silent, eyes on Ada
I notice Ada is wearing a pale sage green soft coat

With a white fleece lining like a bomber pilot's
And it wafts about as she turns
Because of course it is 3 sizes too big

Tonight, we're going to do good
Tonight, we're going to stage an intervention
Silence persists, until the woman opposite me

In a purple and gold L.A. Lakers jacket
Shuffles her feet back and forth in a nervous step

Creating sharp squeak between high-top and floor

O.K. here are your envelopes
You know what to do, and don't worry muffin-tops
You know I'll be watching every step

Just remember, don't start what you won't finish
I got a plane to catch, Byeeee!
Ada Leaves through the same exit – Flash – gone
The other three are on their knees, tearing
The envelopes open with their teeth

Instax Photos, Belgian Tourist Leaflets
Travel-size Chinese Chequers, Sample size pepper Spray

Scattered bright toy plastic colours
In the clear cold green of the fire exit sign

A piece of paper each with the following lines

We start guessing what the lines could represent

A DNA Sequence... oooo maybe it's another Virus!?

Is it the sound of breath through blood?

No way, she never does the same thing three times

How could you possibly know that, there's no way you can know
that

It's the global population's faith in a God over all human time

It's the waves against the Thames Barrier at high tide

It's gibberish, nonsense, red herring!
Always bloody is, I can't take it anymore

Is it the Hang Seng index over fortnightly intervals during the wheat crisis?

Some stupid game I've got wrapped up into, I want my life back

Is it the available CPU resource of Meta's platform in Brasil?

And on the other side of a Fray Bentos pie lid

A pixel tight acrylic portrait of a man
written over with tippex
CRABTREE - 53.86796 - 1.90906

with a small white square
untitled
Tippex on Fray Bentos Pie Lid
Ada

Man #2 types the co-ordinates into his iPhone 14
wrapped in a picture of sunflower fields under blue sky

The L.A. Lakers jacket is still deciphering the lines

Maybe it's a randomly generated seed for a cold storage key

Cenotaph!

Cenotaph!

See, look!

Cenotaph

we huddle around the screen - grateful for the little machine

world wars

ah, it's soldier

what regiment

where did he die

what was his rank

oh no, she hasn't

what, she hasn't what.

The group stops and looks at me like puppies at feeding time

Don't you see it? – The Instax photos of donkeys on beaches

striped windbreakers and plates of cold potatoes with ham

The lines I assume, is an algorithm for particle compression and de-compression

during hyper temporal transportation

The puppies pine a soft whimper

These aren't clues everyone.

This is start-up capital

Ada wants a time machine

I said this to them plainly and firmly, without hesitation

And it seemed to work as the group said almost in unison.

O.K. right, what do we do next?

and just then the door clanked open

an ever-loudening slow clap bounced on the light

Filling the room like thunder – Bravo! Bravo!

Ada takes the inside of my elbow in a sleep-hold grip

You come with me now. As for the rest of you, you heard the man,

get to work

I remember a hazy quote from a book I think I've read -
sometimes it's not actually freedom that we want,
but just a way out

so, I walked with Ada
a halo of promises
descended on me
like a cage
of endless glorious light

4.2

Ada tapped index and middle finger across the veneered walls
as a doctor might check a chest with a stethoscope

what on earth are you doing, Ada?

checking for bugs

this is like the fiftieth room we've had since October, why check all of a sudden

it's not *all of a sudden*, is it?

oh Ada, I never thought it would be you who would fall for paranoia first

Ada starts unscrewing the backs off
of all the electronics in the room
with a screwdriver from a Christmas cracker

you need to trust in your instincts more, especially you people

my people? and what exactly do you mean by that, Ada?

you lot, neurotics, that is

Ada was now smoothing her hands across the bed
as if she was swimming and I wanted to say

Hey Ada! you're a sheet angel!

but I thought better of it

because despite you all being too anxious to actually do anything about it, you're
usually right

but why Ada, after all this time, why this room?

Aha! I knew it!

Ada pulls from the inside of the curtain pole what I would later learn to be called a
Loud Auto SRT-56 listening device

erm, OK. What does this mean, Ada?

It means we're getting closer to finding out
what's really being going on all along

closer to finding out what, Ada? You need to tell me what exactly is going on, I have a right to know. This is my life too!

but Ada didn't say anything to me,
too engrossed in prizing off the back of the phone receiver
with an opal handled nail file

4.3

Ada has always fancied herself as a polymath,
her childhood of thought experiments and getting weed
easier than baccy. She'd arrange the planets
in order of their emotional dependencies
or the awful one on her 10th birthday
with the worms and the cake, that we shalln't
be going into the detail with here

We're chilling in the bomb shelter, Ada was in
a knee-hang from the pull-up bar to a backdrop
stacked with tins of USAID stringed beans. When Ada begins
with her latest thought experiment. (not even
pushing back her tortoise shell glasses,
that have slipped slightly down her nose as she speaks)

The Quantum suicide theory postulates, that every time a person kills themselves
with violent force such as a bullet skittling a brain or a rope breaking a neck, it
creates a concentration of force so dense it begins to subvert the super nuclear
force. Until the concentration reaches such a massive density, it begins to infold.
And the infolding
becomes a tear, the tear a hole and through the hole, it drops. Then, an
unfolding of new matter creates an endless cycle of big bangs until each
suicide equals a brand spanking new universe

this, Ada says, is why we are the way we are
it's obvious, when you really think about it.

now, who knows whether Ada actually believes this or says all these things
to sicken the very human of us, or if she just says these things so people feel
as cold and hollow as she does. Perhaps Ada liked the idea that billions of galaxies
are been heaved into existence then ripped apart lightyear after lightyear
recycling the chaos with the simple act of a human taking their own life

perhaps, it gives her a sense of power, a strength to carry on, to survive.

5.0

Ada was getting ready
for an evening of Dvorak at the Harpa
a long black evening dress and red carpet red lipstick

I watched a construction of hair with chopsticks
from last night's dim sum
but Ada told me to look away
when she rolled the black lace gloves over her arms

how do you do that with your hair?

Ada grinned – witchcraft!

put some music on, would you?

Ada passed me her Solana Saga open on Spotify
I scrolled through the playlist
and thought of spies in filing cabinets

music for migraines
my fractal zoetrope
identity / power / pride
Water Coloured Memory
keep string

what's keep string about, Ada?

oh, it's just an in-joke between old friends

go on, then, what's the joke?

I'd rather not go into it, just put it on

oh, come on, Ada, I'm intrigued

nah, it would just ruin it, there's something a bit special about a joke between friends
when they're the only two people in the whole world who will ever get it

I'm not giving up; I'll get it out of you after a few drinks, there's a bottle of peach
schnapps waiting in the freezer

just drop it will you, I lost more than I'll ever admit from that friendship ending and
this is the only thing I've got left from it

what was his name, Ada?

don't be such a creep, it's just got nothing to do with you. Not sure how you can make something as simple as putting music on so bloody awkward

I click play – *keep string* – on shuffle

a wall of drums from the mini-rig and then

*the night we met; I knew I needed you so
and if I had the chance, I'd never let you go*

I check the phone – Be My Baby – The Ronettes
Mean Streets OST – I click thru to the track list

Hey Ada, all the songs are from Scorsese films. I bet that's a clue

Oh, you little creep, how about you just go do something, in your own life that's worth a dam, and stop grubbing about in other people's. I'm sure even your mother told you not to go looking through a woman's handbag. Do you think my Spotify playlists, are going to be any less personal?

*Oh, since the day I saw you
I've been waiting for you
You know I will adore you
till eternity*

You just never know what you're going to find in such places, there are sharp things in there. So sharp, If you're not careful with it, you could cut your whole face off

5.1

Ada once let slip that her MBA
was from the Open University
as she was in full closer flow
in a hire-by-the-hour
video capable conference room
somewhere just off the M25

The Thesis seemed centred around
the premise that no-one can tell the difference
from the slow wilding pain of infinite chaos
and an orgasm. Brand loyalty Ada says
and the issuance of consumer credit cards
with a short introductory period of 0%
before rising to 39% to pretty much anyone
regardless of their ability to repay, will

Ada pauses, as all good salesmen do,
over the bottom line, the kill

*encourage supernormal opportunities
for hyper aggressive profits*

the group, took one each before passing on
and eagerly began to sign the NDAs
with mini-pens Ada had stolen that morning
from a bookies around the corner

Ada, what are these people doing out there?

well, it's all going to start happening for them now
they're signing up-to their dreams
and we're the ones going to make it so!

Ada, this feels like another tarmac scam

Look, if purchasing isn't ownership, then piracy isn't theft -
They're going to have it all. Their Ugg boots & ghd tongs,
their Nandos and new cars every 3 years, Converse and iPads
plasma TVs, with all the sports and movie packages.

what are they going to do when it's all over?

over? why would this ever end?

well, eventually all the people they sign up
won't be able to afford the interest
or we'll sell so much we'll cook everything alive
or they'll just work out it's all a scam, Ada

look, you can have all the reasons you want
but people are simply not prepared
to admit their lives are merely predicated
on a version of The Nuremburg Defence.
all that, I was just following orders, doing my job,
The, if I hadn't done it, then someone else would.
we can use all that, don't you see?

Ada, it can't just keep growing forever

Pah! of course it can!
in the end, we'll let them eat the money

5.2

Ada slept in a room with a William Morris feature wall
And the words *zygote* spelt out in scrabble tiles
Were glued to the wall above where she rests her head

I once asked her if it was a symbol of her faith
(humanity begets humanity) in the wonder of life itself.
But with a face that lit up like Oxford St at Christmas
Ada said *it was a winning score in a game against*
A misogynistic linguistics lecturer from Christ College

And I've always kept it to remind me of that look on this face
When he actually realized, that not only had he lost
that game of scramble, but that women have been
Beating his pathetic arse, from before the day he was born

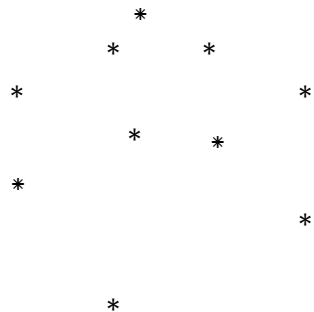
5.3

one day I received a FedEx Parcel
containing an Iridium phone
with a small yellow envelope
stuffed with coupons
RACETRAC – Louisiana sale only

I suppose \$800 worth
which is a lot of Gas
in a town like Nawleens
blasting brass
through The French Quarter
as blossom draped verandas shade

the lot over on Bourbon Street
drinking hard liquor
in novelty plastic cups
laissez les bons temp rouler!

!



A decorative arrangement of asterisks forming a diamond shape. The top row has one asterisk. The second row has two asterisks. The third row has three asterisks. The fourth row has two asterisks. The fifth row has one asterisk. The sixth row has two asterisks. The seventh row has three asterisks. The eighth row has two asterisks. The ninth row has one asterisk. The tenth row has two asterisks. The eleventh row has three asterisks. The twelfth row has two asterisks. The thirteenth row has one asterisk. The fourteenth row has two asterisks. The fifteenth row has three asterisks. The sixteenth row has two asterisks. The seventeenth row has one asterisk. The eighteenth row has two asterisks. The nineteenth row has three asterisks. The twentieth row has two asterisks. The twenty-first row has one asterisk. The twenty-second row has two asterisks. The twenty-third row has three asterisks. The twenty-fourth row has two asterisks. The twenty-fifth row has one asterisk. The twenty-sixth row has two asterisks. The twenty-seventh row has three asterisks. The twenty-eighth row has two asterisks. The twenty-ninth row has one asterisk. The thirtieth row has two asterisks. The thirty-first row has three asterisks. The thirty-second row has two asterisks. The thirty-third row has one asterisk. The thirty-fourth row has two asterisks. The thirty-fifth row has three asterisks. The thirty-sixth row has two asterisks. The thirty-seventh row has one asterisk. The thirty-eighth row has two asterisks. The thirty-ninth row has three asterisks. The fortieth row has two asterisks. The forty-first row has one asterisk. The forty-second row has two asterisks. The forty-third row has three asterisks. The forty-fourth row has two asterisks. The forty-fifth row has one asterisk. The forty-sixth row has two asterisks. The forty-seventh row has three asterisks. The forty-eighth row has two asterisks. The forty-ninth row has one asterisk. The fiftieth row has two asterisks. 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approximately
7 minutes later
The Postman knocks on the door
and has me sign for a letter

Port-Au-Prince postmark

nine-inch square
thick white card-board
embossed QR Code

I concluded this would require tea and biscuits
one must not work
if the work makes one uncivilised
if it threatens
that mutual common decency we build dignity upon

but my phone buzzes it's stupid, cynical robot heart

Telegram - Ada

* no time for biscuits,
Crack on
.

the code brings a wallet of boarding passes
I check through the 3 letter sequences
which seems to be a journey from the UK to Haiti
via several stop offs, a gradual dissolution
of its common language from English to French en route

another message from Ada

don't dawdle,
The Baron won't dig my grave

I close my eyes and breathe
everything that she has ever put me through
all the places I've had to go and suffer
flush through me like a cistern of bleach
I remember what my life might have been
without Ada and quickly now, and with purpose

grab my go bag off the hook
and plan my route to the first airport

so, the alarm has just woke me up
 from this coursing dream of whitewashed Greek villas,
 fractals of incomplete su-do-ku, clashing in a greyscale
 akin to Tuesdays in Gravesend or Middlesbrough

but let's leave that there, I know how much
 you disapprove of dreams in poems, you see
 I can't get that thing you said, out of my head,
 remember? Loch Fyne last summer, *we all eat lies*

when our hearts are hungry. It's just so marvellous,
 so amazing when you really think about it. you could boil
 all of Westminster down into a chutney and it wouldn't
 have the same concentration of truth in it as that.

And goodness, what a night it was
 you, completely bibbed, eating crabs with your hands
 and how many bottles of white? we absolutely skipped
 out of that place into the crisp, dry, Leeds night.

oh, but what am I like? I digress more than a teenage
 Eliot during a French cabaret. I know how precious
 time is for you and let's face it, those security tags from
 Selfridges aren't going to be prized off by themselves.

So... I'm sat here in the midst of last night still,
 (The Independent on Sunday lot) you can imagine, empty
 bottles of that awful Belgian white beer and not a single
 fag-end in an ashtray. Border Controls. Referenda.

And one of them had the absolute cheek to claim
 they knew what you and Dua Lipa got up-to last year.
 An accusation of hubris, I have no doubt. But apparently
 it was after a session at the Stonemason's Arms

which I know you are prone to frequent
 if you can't be arsed with a Fellini or Bergmann that night
 but in the same way that I know things like moonbows
 can exist, like, on an intellectual level - celestial light

catching water falling through the night,
an embarrassed diffraction, unexpectedly holding the night
from one armpit of the heavens to the other.
So of course, It doesn't matter what you two got up to

because I know in the deepest purple of my heart,
that you could make anything happen, you being Ada.
Ada, of light bleached speckled Greek Islands.
Ada of fractal England. Ada of dreams. You, Ada.

6.1

we're somewhere in Prague
imagine high vaulted ceilings
circulating systems of smoke
Ada in silk robe, regathered
 rosy-cheeked on the chez lounge
 as her latest batch
 of fresh-faced students
 regather themselves in turn
as they know she will likely resume
from whatever point she chooses
and they know it will be urgent
and it's always going to start now

 we are all trapped in the insidious
 loops of self-perpetuating capital
 -istic hegemony, disenfranchising
 us from our actual human voice
the phallic praxis of power
structures may only be recalibrated
through assembling paradigm
conundrums of revolutionary action

 Ada blooms
 in the centre of attention
 real power humbles
 what cannot be felt

neo-bourgeois engenders
proletarian subjugation in all
it's micro-insurgencies of
oppression, particularly on bank holidays
 every-day we bear the marks
 left by the dialectical constraints
 of historical didaction and its orth
 -ogonal misdirection of worker's rights

I've seen the act, one too many times
long gone are my googly eyes
and supple steadfast knees
so, I head out to find something to eat

The British Man is often criticised
for his choice of food and drink
but when you don't want to be alive
a kebab is an easy compromise

the sunset over Prague
purple fly lights - searing meat
a lilac robe of blood and gravy
drapes the dull quartz streets

sometimes, I wish
I was as brilliant as Ada
could hold the room
in the grip of my words

but I won't remember
all the brilliant lines
formed in orphaned air
that something, that was

so much more
yet so much less

as if gentler is stronger
to let it all slide away
rather than the wall
we felt necessary to build

memescapes! pop!

*
*
* *
* *
*
*

to the audience's audience
letting people communicate
who they are
as behind every emotion
behind every whimper
there is an unmet, universal need

like most things, Ada dreams of itself
and itself only

6.2

the garden fields stitch stone style as far as we can see
slipping into pressure of morning like sugar in tea

a careful understatement rises and falls here
as if God kept their best for last of all

the finest crafts contain subtle demonstration
saying just enough, is an act of possession

I've made it just so, right where I want you

our future will have all sorts of things

devoid of stress of time of money, our attention
recounts cowbell chimes click bait conditioning

but not when the sunsets over the sided away towns
as overlaps of gasometers and chippies' crown

it don't get all caught up in itself though,
good company always knows best when to leave

6.3

Aye, wind caught rain circles bus stop
a queue waits patiently, smiling but not
saying hello. it must have been 20 years
since I last saw Ada. 17 since I thought of her.
I've a friend who's a clinical psychologist
and they tell me the normal mourning period
is 2 years. so, I was happy with 3.
slow starter, but always get there in the end.
I wonder when they took the timetables
out of bus-stops. they least gave you something
to pass the time whilst you wait. 00:00 Time
next to names and places the locals wouldn't use.
Best Lane. Coldshaw. etc. I suppose everyone
has a phone, and can switch to that.
let's just get through it, to the next moment
which come to think about it, was about the time
when I stopped using my phone. when Ada
disappeared, presumed dead, no next of kin.
not long after, I started to live like this,
B&B to hostel, caravan under summer moons
barge sitting or house squatting, moving soon
as that feeling looms over, not sure what it is,
I've never stopped long enough to find out.
no itinerary. no compass. seasonful living.
A cash game of snooker or a greedy girl
gangbang, the only moon that yields the tide
to wake me each day and live this life.
until I get off that bus, and walk up
Cheetham Hill to a vacant flat above some
steel shuttered shops and with well washed
men file up the stairs to pay and greet
the organiser. Moon drops the sea to reveal
veiny hands orange tipped covered in gold
swatched perfectly to the long harsh bleach falling
down the back of a green velour tracksuit
unmistakable, after all this time, Ada, we're home.