

CHRISTMAS 2007

Six pm Christmas Eve 2007. Thompson's dinosaurs lay silent, heads lowered after munching their way through Ildon Square; opposite, the 'Gate Centre' flashed cascades of blue festive lights swallowed up by that dark demolition site.

Inside and above the Gate's cold ground floor, eighteen year old Ralph Pearson, five feet four and hovering around fifteen stone munched his way through a twelve inch pizza, side plate of chips, two portions of ice cream, all washed down with a large Coca Cola. On completion he belched in front of the cashier who he engaged with cold piggy eyes before following his distended stomach to Northumberland Street.

Buskers had gone home to count their earnings while quiet revellers were yet to have their inhibitions swept away by alcohol and Ralph attempted to engage the attention of any girl for a night of passion, ambitious for a young man who had never dated a girl. His mother, who idolised and waited on him hand and foot had prevented any other female from sharing her son, but that night she and her subservient husband were visiting relations until the early hours.

'Hi, you're out early-Going far?'

Ralph was not surprised that an attractive young girl should address him in a familiar manner, he was, as his mother repeatedly told him, 'A lovely boy.'

'I'm going home, want to join me?'

Mary Leighton looked at the, overweight, over confident boy with disdain, but having just been thrown out of her bed-sit leaving the prospects of spending Christmas on the streets said, 'Yes why not, it should be fun.'

The taxi drew into the drive of a large detached house overlooking Jesmond Dene. As they entered Mary was amazed that all the lights were blazing and it was gloriously warm. From then onwards she realised Ralph was utterly spoilt. He went straight to the kitchen and came back holding a ham sandwich prepared by mother, while Mary stood in the hall still in her coat.

The lounge was beautifully furnished and decorated for the festive season. Nuts, sweets and drinks of all kinds stood on a mahogany table. Mary draped her coat over a chair, sat down hoping to be offered food and a hot drink, but while the fat boy devoured chocolates one after the other none came her way and it was almost an hour before he sat beside her, his stomach full he turned his attention to carnal desires. The clumsy oaf groped and fondled, his breath sweet with the smell of chocolate and after ten minutes he sighed deeply and walked off without speaking.

Mary sat in silence waiting for the pig to return, but from a room upstairs music started playing; she had served her purpose and was surplus to requirements, probably almost forgotten, which hurt and infuriated to the point that she poured herself a large whiskey and armed with Dutch courage wandered through the house. Ralph had shut himself in his room, so she strolled round enjoying mother's luxury perfume and make up, sitting at the dressing table like a queen, then for no reason other than sheer nosiness she opened the top drawer beside the bed and just inside was a wallet bulging with twenty pound notes. Without any feelings of guilt she slipped the wallet into her pocket, walked out of the house and into town.

Seven hundred pounds ensured Mary enjoyed the best Christmas of her life.

John Frostick.