



SUE
TOWNSEND

The
Lost Diaries
of
Adrian
Mole



'A satire of our
times . . . very
funny indeed'
Sunday Times

1999-2001

The Lost Diaries of Adrian Mole
by
Sue Townsend

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1999

Friday, November 26, 1999, 2.30 p.m.

Wisteria Walk, Ashby de la Zouch, Leicestershire

I have not kept a diary since fire destroyed my house, furniture, clothes, books and life savings. The arsonist, Eleanor Flood, is residing in a secure unit, where she is doing an MA. Her dissertation is entitled ‘The Phoenix – Myth Or Metaphor?’ I know, because she writes to me occasionally.

I have protested to the authorities, but they are powerless to stop her letters, which are obviously being smuggled out by a corrupt prison guard. As I lie in bed at night, listening to the breathing of my sons. William, 7, and Glenn, 13, in their bunk-beds only inches away from my head, I often think of Eleanor Flood, and envy her. At least she has a room of her own, and time in which to think and write.

11 p.m.

Took the boys to watch Santa abseiling down the side of Debenhams in Leicester tonight on his way to his grotto. William was enchanted by the sight of Santa

swinging from a climbing rope, but Glenn kept looking around anxiously at the crowd of onlookers. He said, 'If anybody from school sees me 'ere, I'm a dead man, Dad.'

The queue for the grotto was at least 70 deep. It snaked through Toys into Bed Linens and Small Electrical Appliances. To placate us, Debenhams played Sir Cliff Richard's rendition of the 'Lord's Prayer', sung to the tune of 'Auld Lang Syne'. An old man with his great-granddaughter muttered, 'I didn't fight in two world wars so that Cliff Richard could line his pockets by exploiting the "Lord's Prayer".'

A Scotsman behind him said, 'Aye, and the bastard's murderin' "Auld Lang Syne".'

I left the boys in the queue, and went to Boots to buy some Nurofen and a packet of Starburst (I am mildly addicted to both). As I walked through the Foxhunter Shopping Centre, I passed a fat elf smoking a cigarette. I approached the elf and said, 'Forgive me, but are you one of Santa's little helpers?' He scowled and said, 'I'm on my break. Whadja want?'

I explained about the queue in Debenhams and asked for his help, citing Glenn's Attention Deficit Disorder. On our way back to the queue, the fat elf explained that he'd just been sacked from his job as an under-manager at NatWest. He said elf work was

harder than it looked – cheeriness didn't come easily to him. I sympathized.

‘Perhaps we can meet up for a drink one night,’ he said. I looked at his weak eyes and his beer gut spilling over his green tights, and gave him a false telephone number. The fat elf took us to the front of the queue by saying, ‘Make way, make way, for this tragic family.’ The queue parted with much speculation as to which of the three of us was terminally ill.

Santa was a disgrace: his beard was hanging off, and he'd made no attempt to hide his Reebok trainers. However, William was sufficiently deceived and asked for a Barbie Hairdressing Salon.

Saturday, November 27, 1999

Wisteria Walk, Ashby de la Zouch, Leicestershire

My mother married for the fourth time today. She is on the way to being the Elizabeth Taylor of Ashby de la Zouch. Unfortunately, her bridegroom, Ivan Braithwaite, had been encouraged by his night-school creative-writing teacher to write a ‘millennium marriage service’. I had to look away when he turned to my mother and vowed, ‘Pauline, my soon-to-be wife, I swear to love you emotionally, spiritually and physically, forever, plus one more day.’

When my mother replied, ‘Ivan, my soon-to-be husband, I swear to be supportive of your life choices, aware of your hidden vulnerability, and fully cognizant of your sexual needs’, I almost ran from the registrar’s office. My mother didn’t actually say ‘I do’, because she got a rogue hat-feather stuck down her throat and had a choking fit. Does this make the marriage invalid? I hope so.

2 a.m.

Work on my serial-killer comedy for the BBC, ‘The White Van’. It’s coming along nicely.

Wednesday, December 1, 1999

Wisteria Walk, Ashby de la Zouch, Leicestershire

I found a tin of Whopper Hot Dogs in my mother’s bed this morning. It was a disturbing image; reminding me somehow of my one and only visit to Amsterdam. I was intending to wash her bed-linen as a surprise for when she returned from her honeymoon in Pompeii. But in the circumstances. I simply pulled the duvet straight and plumped up the pillows.

Thursday, December 2, 1999

After waiting three weeks, I've finally got to see the new GP, Dr Ng. I asked him if he was related to the Dr Ng in Soho, whom I occasionally consulted. He said no. I said I was surprised, as Ng was an unusual name. For some reason, he took offence at this and snapped, 'There are millions of Ngs in the world.'

I sensed that I had committed a faux pas and changed the subject to that of my health. I explained that, for some five years, I have *needed* to consume at least five packets of Opal Fruits a day. He furrowed his brow. 'Opal Fruits?' he checked.

'They've since changed the name to Starburst,' I said, unable to keep the bitterness out of my voice. I told him about the panic attack I had recently when I discovered there were no Opal Fruits in the house. Of how I had walked to the BP garage in the rain at 3 a.m. to buy some. 'Do you have any advice?' I asked.

'Yes,' he said turning to his computer, where my records were displayed. 'Buy them wholesale.'

I had booked a double appointment, so I took my time while I filled him in about my latest phobia – falling in the crater of a live volcano. Should I seek help? 'No,' said Dr Ng, 'you should keep away from

volcanoes.’ For the first time in my adult life, I left the surgery without a prescription. On my way out, I asked Mrs Gringle, the receptionist, what the yellow sticker on the front of my medical records denoted. ‘Time waster,’ she said coldly. She has never liked our family since my mother called the doctor out on Christmas Day after my father swigged a decanter full of Stolichnaya vodka, believing it to be Malvern water.

Friday, December 3, 1999

An awkward moment at breakfast. Glenn said, ‘I reckon you should tell William the truth about Father Christmas, Dad.’ Apparently, William has worked out on the computer at nursery school that it would take Father Christmas 15 trillion hours to visit every child in the world. Should I continue the charade that the toys are made in Greenland by elves, or should I confess that the plastic rubbish he craves is shipped from Taiwan, then brought to Toys ‘R’ Us by container lorry?

Saturday, December 4, 1999

William is confused about the Blair baby. He's got it into his head, from watching the news on TV, that it will be the new Messiah. How Glenn and I laughed! Though when I asked Glenn what he knew about the Messiah, it turned out that he'd never heard of him. 'I was just laughin' to keep you company,' he said.

Sunday, December 5, 1999

Went to The Lawns for tea today with my father and his newish wife, Tanya. To my joy, Pandora was there, looking ravishing in pink cashmere. I told her that I had overheard complaints in the Post Office that she was neglecting her constituents. 'I'm talking to you, aren't I?' she said, angrily. I took this opportunity to ask for her help with jumping the council house queue. She said 'Are you mad, I couldn't possibly be seen to be helping my half-brother.' She pressed speed-dial on her mobile and left a message. 'Ken, darling! Dobbo's camp are telling the press you've caught a fatal fungal infection from the newts.' She dialled again: 'Dobbo darling, Ken's people are telling

the press you've been seen in B&Q buying a noose.' She always was a stirrer.

Tuesday, December 7, 1999

Wisteria Walk, Ashby de la Zouch, Leicestershire

My mother returned from her honeymoon tonight, she complained about the cold weather in Pompeii and talked about suing Cheapo Tours. She has already filled in one of their official complaint forms with the lie that she was forced to buy a cashmere sweater, pashmina shawl and a Gucci leather jacket in an attempt to keep warm. When I pointed out to her that it was ludicrous to have expected blue skies and hot sun in December, she said that she was led to believe that Vesuvius's would give off 'some residual heat'. 'By whom?' I asked. 'A geologist I met on the net,' she replied. I advised her to drop her claim.

Wednesday, December 8, 1999

William has changed his mind about the Barbie Hairdressing Salon. He is now demanding the same present that Brooklyn Beckham is getting – a £45,000 toy Ferrari from Harrods.

I admit to feeling bitter and resentful about this. Beckham junior is nine months old and has never done a stroke of work in his life, yet he'll soon be driving around in the lap of luxury. Whereas I'm an involuntary pedestrian. Where is the justice in that?

Thursday, December 9, 1999

Job Centre New Deal appointment, 10.15. Catherine Root is my personal job adviser. She is personable enough, though somebody should tell her that it is possible to cure a squint these days. Ms Root wrote down my work experience and qualifications:

Librarian, civil servant with responsibility for newt and natterjack toad statistics, offal chef and TV presenter. 'Quite an eclectic mix,' I said, anxious to impress on her that I was not just any old job-seeker but had an extensive vocabulary and would be wasted sweeping leaves in the grounds of an institution.

'Do you have a degree?' she enquired, almost looking me in the eye. 'No,' I admitted, 'but I did once share a flat in Oxford with Doctor Pandora Braithwaite MP.' This was a mistake, Mr Root turned out to be a critic of Pandora's, remarking coldly that, in her opinion, she had lost touch with her constituents. When I asked for proof of this, Ms Root said she

turned down a request to open the Job Centre's new toilet block, disappointing many. I left with an appointment to see a Mr Nobby Brown of Brown's Poultry at 11 a.m. tomorrow.

Friday, December 10

I am now employed as a turkey plucker. For £3.50 an hour, I pull the feathers out of recently deceased birds. I work with six women in an ill-lit shed. The noise and cackling is indescribable and the turkeys being butchered next door kick up their own hideous din, too.

11 p.m.

Went to Glenn's school tonight to see their Christmas musical, *Jesus-In-Las Vegas – A Star is Born*, written by Roger Patience the headmaster. Glenn played a croupier who helped at the birth.

Some of the audience were obviously taken aback when Mary made her entrance in a strapless sequined evening dress, to be joined by Joseph in his tuxedo singing 'All Shook Up', but I took it in my stride. I am conversant with avant-garde theatre. I have been to the Royal Court Theatre in London several times.

Sunday, December 12

I asked Costas in the kebab shop why he was in such a bad mood tonight. ‘S’that bleddy Tony Blair,’ he said, hacking angrily at the doner turning on the spit. ‘Ebroke is bleddy promise init?’

On what?’ I asked. ‘Onna bleddy Elgin Marbles, init?’ he snarled. I mentioned to him that Turkey was about to join the EU, but not until I was leaving and was safely through the door.

Friday, December 24, 1999

Wisteria Walk, Ashby de la Zouch, Leicestershire I thank God that my work at Brown’s Poultry is seasonal and therefore over. I managed to keep my turkey-plucking job a secret from my family, though tonight my mother asked me why I had feathers in my hair. I made up the ludicrous story that a pillow had burst as I walked through Debenhams Bedding Department while Christmas shopping. She narrowed her eyes and was about to speak when Ivan called from the kitchen that the Sellotape had run out. This led to a row, with various members of the family accusing the others of wasting, hogging

or using too much Sellotape while wrapping presents.

Being the only one sober, I was forced to drive to the BP garage. The shelves were empty of stationery goods, but my friend Mohammad, the manager, took pity on me and gave me some sticky-tape from the back office. It was an act of Christian charity. Later, I was blowing the feathers out of my underpants with a hairdryer when my mother barged into my room. She said, 'If you're going to indulge in bizarre sexual practices, you should put a bolt on that door.'

Christmas Day

William quickly tried of his main present, the Barbie Hair Salon: the rollers were fiddly and Barbie kept slipping out of the chair until I fastened her in with a lump of Blu-tack. My father arrived at 11 and sneered when he saw William brushing the doll's tresses with a tiny plastic brush. 'He'll end up a bleedin' poofter,' he laughed, before thrusting an ill-wrapped present into William's arms. It was an Action Man, riding a motorbike armed with a rocket-launcher and enough ammunition to annihilate China. I said, 'I specifically requested that William was *not* to be given any gender-targeted toys.' Later, I watched in disgust as my little son made Action

Man rampage through the hair salon, kidnap Barbie and subject her to various indignities.

Boxing Day

The Moles took tea with the Braithwaites today. The atmosphere was strained to start with, and was made much worse when my mother ridiculed the Dome, saying it looked like a female porcupine about to mate. Pandora snapped that she had been invited to Millennium Eve in the Dome. I asked to see her ticket. She said it was ‘in the post’.

Friday, December 31, 1999

I borrowed my mother’s car and spent the evening driving Glenn and William around Leicestershire in a fruitless search for beacons and fireworks. Eventually, in Victoria Park, we came across a brazier on a pole fuelled by a cylinder of British Gas. A kindly Hindu man handed out samosas to the few spectators. When the Town Hall clock began to sound the hour, we celebrated the New Year by sharing a bottle of Morrisons bucks fizz with a party of drag queens dressed as Sleeping Beauty, Cinderella, Snow White,

etc. William asked to be introduced to the ‘beautiful princesses.’ He didn’t appear to notice that most of them had severe five-o’clock shadow.

When the clock struck 12 I kissed my boys, then we linked arms with strangers and attempted to sing ‘Auld Lang Syne’. Some rowdy elements in the crowd sang the tune but improvised the words, bellowing scurrilous and defamatory things about Sir Cliff Richard. Later, at home, we watched as a family as the guests inside the Dome criss-crossed arms. Glenn said, ‘Flow come the Queen don’t know now to do “Auld Lang Syne” proper, Dad?’ For once, I didn’t correct his appalling grammar, though I have resolved to do so in the year 2000.

As I went up the stairs to bed, Ivan drunkenly whispered, ‘Your mother told me about your feather fixation. Do you want to talk about it?’ I resolved, at that moment, to move into 7 Scrag Close, the council house I’d previously, arrogantly, stupidly, turned down.