

Bachelor, 38

The Monologue of Bryan Bale

You can't misbehave in Cardiff, to this very day you can't – because everybody knows everybody else.....you have to be on your best behavior shall we put it like that!

I must have been about 10 and I saw the most beautiful man I'd ever seen in my life, and I thought ooohhh, I like you, and it suddenly fell into place, why did I like the boy that lived over the road, why did I like Rex Pengelly on his motorbike, it was because I was awakening.....I didn't like ladies.... I really liked men.

When I was first in London in 63.... it was illegal to be gay, I used to go out in Soho there was gay bars which were rough gay bars, there was bars which they used to call piss elegant, with men in three piece suits or there were tough east end boys that were jack the lads ---it was dangerous but you were secretive about it.... there were little codes, there were pinky rings, there were hankies up the sleeves so you could suss people out...

Well of course I had a sex life but it was with people I knew thorough my work, or people I knew though going to private clubs and I met a very, very well known musician, who shall remain nameless and he took a shine to me and he lived in Holland Park, terrible posh, and so he invited me to tea on a Sunday....

I met this group of people and they knew how to network in those dark days - oh don't you know...it' all happening on the back page of the Sunday Times, in the small ad's – ah you don't only have to know the people that you happen to come across, you can actually met plain, un-garnished strangers through the small ad's in the Sunday Times.....

So I started buying the Sunday Times and it was amazing. Everything from a bedsit to a fortnights holiday in Marrakesh could be yours if you, fitted in so to speak, or you were prepared to fit in so to speak

I was living in a small bedsit and I thought I'd like something better than this, I'd like to have a little flat – and there's always little flats recommended, there may be strings attached to these flats but I will go for it.

And so I wrote a letter one Sunday evening after I'd seen the adverts, it was a gentleman who had a top floor of his terrace house available...

Bachelor, 38 good disposition with own flat, West London seeks similar to share in Notting Hill Gate, that'll be lovely.

First of all I wrote it in pencil so this letter looked perfect with the address and everything and the date it got to the Sunday Times and then they would have posted it on to him so-nearly two weeks past and then I got a phone call and it was a gentleman saying I've just read your letter, would you like to see the accommodation? Perhaps we can have fish and chips.... and so I agreed to do that....

The house was the last house on the right hand side...

I got there and he opened the door and he was so terribly attractive – a kind of mixture of Montgomery Clift and Richard Burton in a David Niven blazer.

It was love at first sight... and that was how I met John Harrison....

The thing that endeared me to him most of all was the way people from different social circles enjoy fish and chips – he'd buttered some bread and I proceeded to make a chip sandwich and he said to me what are you doing, I said I'm making a chip sandwich aren't you making a chip sandwich? Oh he said, I've never seen anybody do that before..

It sealed the deal....It was the chip sandwich! He could see that I may have ideas of being refined and sophisticated but deep down inside there's a just a simple lad from Rumney village making a chip sandwich.....

I didn't go to the upstairs accommodation...I went to the accommodation on the first floor in a nice luxurious double bedroom!

There was a spark to fill the dark that Friday evening and it was wonderful. And he was the first person I really loved - he became my partner for 9 years.

He used to introduce me as his cousin - I was his Welsh cousin and that was what they said in those days....

We had lovely times, Venice, Paris everything and at the time I didn't realize how this good fortune that I had I found would inevitably be short lived.

It was November the 11th 1974 - Armistice day – I remember it well....

John was ill – and he had gone to the hospital and the surgeon talked to us then and I said well I'm supposed to go to Edinburgh and he said well you don't have to worry because he will be in intensive care until Thursday. We talked, and I was there as late as they would allow me to be....

I said farewell I flew up to Edinburgh and Colin, who was my colleague met me and he said there has been telephone call from the hospital and they won't discuss anything with me, they want you to ring them back immediately....

I'm a born optimist and my cup is always half full, never half empty and so I rang them back and they told me he had died on the operating table....

We had been together 9 years by the, almost year and I had to arrange the funeral and it was enormously difficult because I'm only the friend and why are you doing it you are only the friend.....

So I sorted it all out, I thought to myself it's over, what am I going to do now, who am I going to love? And there is a play by Tennessee Williams called *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore* and the character in the play is the 'Angel of Death' and he says 'Some people worry when they are not cared for, but the Angel of Death says I worry about not having somebody to care for', and I think that has been my problem down the

years. I've always needed somebody to care for, somebody that needs maybe the enthusiasm that I can bring to a relationship.

I was on my own for quite a long time but I've always thought that you must never make do. Some people think anything is better than nothing, but I think really nothing is better than making do with just anything for the sake of it!

We are all on loan to each other and it's like you have your time with them and that time fate says is up now and you must part and you think the world has fallen apart around you. It has up to a point. But we mend, we are very resilient human beings are. There we are..... I tried not to cry....

I'm not crying because I'm upset, I'm crying because I'm happy, because now it's all happened again and I'm brave enough to allow it to happen. Because I'm not young anymore and I think how long is it going to last this time, but I don't care whether it lasts 6 months or 6 years, I've put my toe in the water and now I'm going to do the nose dive and let he devil take the hindmost basically! I don't care. Life is for living – this is the performance, it ain't the dress rehearsal!

