



Letter to My Younger Self

Clare Fisher

DEAR CLARE

You're fifteen and every morning you wake up extra early to practise piano and quadratic equations before school. You are top of every Top Set. The only subjects you don't like are PE, because you're terrible at it, and creative writing, because there's no right answer, no wrong answer, no clear notion of what constitutes an 'answer,' all of which makes you feel terrible.

On Saturdays, you go to music school. On Saturday nights, you put on a miniskirt and drink (and often throw up) vodka orange in various south London living rooms and parks. You kiss boys. You stay up all night whispering to your girl friends about kissing boys. You do not think that you are thinking about kissing girls. You do not think that all this thinking about the wrongness of your body re the rightness of other girls' bodies has anything to do with you not thinking about kissing girls or about not quite being a girl. Every time you do one of these things that confirms your normality (according to the mid-2000 British pop cultural framework) you hear a DING, much like the one you'll hear when you killed a monster in the MS Dos computer games you do not play anymore. You have a plan and it's going well; you are just going to keep on doing everything right, getting every answer right, and one day, soon, you will feel right, too.

There is well over a decade, a lot of bad indie music and worse skinny



jeans, between us; there is no way that you'll hear me; if you could, you'd not be the you that turned into the me that is writing this letter; yet I want you to hear me.

I want you to hear that you don't have to be top, because top isn't a thing you can be: it's a position, and one that is temporary, shaky, and held in place by a value-system that is absolute bullshit. You'll discover this the long, slow, hard way. But in the speculative fiction that this letter perhaps is, I want you to pull out a plain piece of paper. You've got loads of coursework, and you will, eventually do it, but first, I want you to do whatever you *want* to do. Scribble. Make a mess. Make a story that makes no sense. Scrunch up the map of right and wrong; then chew it to a pulp and spit it out, out, out. Roll around in the earth until there's mud all over your school blazer; fill its pockets with earthworms, stones and dirt. Laugh into the stupendously boring middle of every school Assembly. Cry. Cry like you wanted to cry when you played that Chopin Nocturne to your piano teacher that time. Say what you want, not what you think everyone else wants you to want. Say nothing. Say everything. Say it whether anyone hears you saying it or not. Keep saying it. Stare at the soil until all you see are the clouds that are the same strange shape as your heart.