

13th September, 2005 - Heathrow Airport, London

I make it to Heathrow, check in and am sitting in the departure lounge. In all I would say that it was a very successful transfer from Manchester, but I do have one small question for myself. WHAT IN THE NAME OF JUMPING JEHOZAFAT'S HOLY TIT AM I DOING?!

China? Was I fucking high?

Why am I allowing the spiders of Google to dictate my fate like this? They're sending me to some communist Orwellian hell hole. It's a conspiracy I tell you! Here's everything I know about China...it's bloody big, it's capital is Beijing, the Olympics will be there in 2008, and parts of it used to be British colonies. Yeah, that's it. How am I going to communicate with anybody? I don't know a word of Chinese, and that's not an exaggeration, I literally don't know a single word, or even what it *sounds* like. Did those Chinese take-aways really have such an impact on me that I want to go and live there now?

I spoke to Simon a few minutes ago. As nice as he is and as much as he was my best friend during school, his advice is sometimes about as much use as a marzipan spatula.

"It's okay mate, just keep your head down, do your job and don't get arrested!"

And "China *is* pretty far, but you could be going further. Remember that."

Seriously, great guy, friendly smile, but a horrible, horrible advisor. I wonder, is there anyone else I can call at this point?

Might I be having some kind of episode? One of the people in this lounge must be a doctor. Maybe they can have me sectioned under the Mental Health Act. You need to be on a special level of crazy to think it's a good idea to go teach English in a place where we have no common language to communicate. I guess the kids' teachers must speak good English, but I doubt I can have one of them with me all the time!

Clock is ticking, I can see the plane now, Boeing 747, Air China, people streaming off it. I'm not surprised, I bet they couldn't wait to flee that rat-infested shit heap...and I'm RUNNING TOWARD IT! The pictures I found online of Dalian look pretty nice, but then so did all those posters with Chairman Mao on them. I'll probably offend someone on the first day and end up in jail or something. Don't they arrest you for thought crime out there? I think I'm in way over my head. Why am I leaving my life behind like this? I could have gone anywhere. France would have been nice, and I

can actually speak French! Even some pointless village in Macedonia could have worked. Oh God! Change my ticket, okay?!

2nd February, 2006, The Flat, Dalian

Was absolutely fuming this morning. I can't believe that gossiping minge-bucket Janet blabbed to my parents about me being gay. Got a call from Mum not long after I'd heard (very late back in the UK, and it's clear that wine had been had), where I was subsequently lectured on the virtues of "doing the right thing" and coming out to them first...and it got me thinking.

Why is that the right thing?

The only reason Janet knew is that it came up in our MSN conversation. She asked me if I had a girlfriend yet, I said no.

She asked "Why? Are you looking for a fella or something?"

I didn't make a point of telling her that I was gay. Why in the hell should I have? I just said "yes".

All this "coming out" stuff is bullshit anyway, utter hypocritical bollocks. Yes, that's what it is. I

don't remember my brother having a sit down with Mum and Dad and explaining to them that he, in fact, enjoys congress with the lower lips of the female anatomy. That would be a world-beater! "Hi Mum, hi Dad! I've gathered you here in this incredibly awkward and inappropriate situation so that I can inform you that I am a straight person. Yes, I do love to stick it to the flange every now and then. Cheers, see you at dinner!"

Dealing with being gay in a country that has absolutely no idea what to say or do about it is enough for any 20-year-old to deal with. I don't need the weird neuroses of Western convention coming along to further cajole and oppress me into humiliation. If in Britain we, by and large, agree that it's okay to be gay, then why do we insist on different treatment like this? If it's equality we want, then why can't my sexuality be talked about as naturally as anyone else's? When Ralph found out, he changed his entire tone as though he had just been indicted for some historical war crime for all the passing pejorative words he may have chucked about casually up until then. Argh, it's so ridiculous!

Can't things just carry on? I'm still Tommy, I still like beer and barbecue, I still have the same sense of humour, I still have the same outlook on life. Gosh, we really do let ourselves get so het up on all this sexual orientation talk. Well, let this be the guiding principle to save you from all the anguish... the clue's in the fucking term "sexuality" - all it dictates is which gender you are sexually attracted to. That's it. Why it needs a coming-out ceremony, oodles of therapy and big dollops of public outpourings is utterly beyond me. I mean, we're British aren't we? Keep calm and carry on, people!

14th July, 2006 - Home, Dalian

I'm writing this, glancing over constantly at the confirmation letter from Oxford. Like Faustus, I have signed a contract and the hour of payment draws near. Oxford will come for my soul and I will have no choice but to hand it over. Maybe it's for the best. I always knew that this was going to be just one year. A single year of overseas madness, and then back to reality...

But what if this place *is* the reality that I should be in? Was I ever my real self back in England? Is Oxford going to be the place that helps me be more...me? I could build a life out here. I really could, couldn't I? Mum and Dad won't be pleased about it, especially after I made such a fuss about taking this year out so I could get into Oxford. I do seem to remember I was very insistent on it being my ultimate dream; the pinnacle of the great peak of secondary education that I was resolved to summit. Perhaps it's for the best I leave China behind for now. Dalian will still be here for me in a few more years should I want to return. I can find Chinese students and keep up with my Mandarin. The end of this Oxford road is security, a solid career, money coming in, a respectable and meaningful life. On top of it all, I had to fight so hard to get in! I must be crazy to even question going there...

On the other hand, fuck it!

I'm staying here. I'm staying home. Not coming out.