management. "Delay, Control," he had insisted. Delay, delay, *delay*. He even remembered his minute. But no: Control would have none of it. And so, inevitably, she had gone; a small villa near Antwerp, he understood. Control always had been the good European, the civilised aesthete, content with the simple things in life: a charabanc trip to Brighton, a Cuban cigar, a cosy half bot of Yugoslav vino shared with the Secretary of the Confederation of Health Service Employees.

* * *

Since then, a new light had appeared at the end of the tunnel. Cash limits. He admired that phrase. Nobody knew exactly what it meant. As much as he disliked Alleline, with his prissy way of programming the Review Body's computer, and his "Yes, Sir, no, Sir, three bags full, Sir," to the Chairman of the Royal Commission; as much as he disliked him, cash limits was definitely out of Alleline's stable, it had to be, it had the unmistakable odour of a Sauchiehall Street Scot on the make. "A genuine, copper-bottomed goldseam, George," Connie had whispered, her eyes brimming. Smiley had the true civil servant's mistrust of politicians, but even he had been forced to admire Control's footwork during the weeks leading up to the

election. No, there would be no cuts in services to the patient. Yes, more hospitals would be built. And so on. And then—Bingo! Brilliant, really. Overnight, a hundred ten-year strategies put through the shredder. It had been a triumph.

But Smiley's innate conservatism made him wary of nine-day wonders. His instinctive caution, nurtured by Steed-Asprey during those war years at the Min of Ag, warned him to question the obvious. There had to be something more. And now—there was.

* * *

"What's it all about, Alfie?" grunted Control in his Roedean voice.

"Remember that agent we had: source 'Gerald'?"

"The Witchcraft material?"

"Yes, Control. Witchcraft. *Witchcraft*. Don't you see? It's the answer. No more of their damned cutting-edge-of-modern-high-technology-medicine, no more sillybilly chips, no more primary care, no more doc. . . ."

Control reached for the scrambler. He regarded Smiley almost caressingly as if he were measuring him for a CMG.

"Get me the African desk," said Control.

Let me die a youngman's death¹

To acknowledge our debt to a lady old only in her years

D J JOLLEY, DIANE RING, PAT SMITH

She entered the life of our unit during a wintry week two years ago with an introduction that hinted we should find her outside the usual run: "Please see this confused old lady who is suffering from gross neglect. Do not call in the afternoon as she usually goes to the pictures." Thus it was that several visits were required before a meeting was effected and this success marked down to the persistent and warm attentions of the local authority social worker. By the Thursday night, therefore, her house was easily recognised and well known. Easily recognised as the blemish within a neat terrace where the privet hedge reached as high as the bedroom window, the decaying gate leaned invitingly ajar, and where the small front garden sported a collection of brightly labelled bottles showing clearly against the snow in the street light.

Even with the key loaned to us entry was not easy as the front door encountered a collection of hanging garments—dresses, coats, cloaks, and more dresses which prevented full exercise of its hinge. Deep inside, illumination from one of the two light bulbs that worked disclosed narrow corridors for foot use between precarious cliffs of collected, jumbled items. The front room remained an unbreachable mystery for that night; the back kitchen was awash with papier-mâché where melted snow and drifts of newspapers ran together. The stove was elderly but functional enough, while pots and pans in disarray provided a niche for early fungal populations. In what would be the back sitting room should there be a space to sit lay the

beginning of a trail of personal interest and history with scant regard for chronology or any other recognised sequence. Photos of mum, plastic flowers, empty bottles, hats, newspapers, various shiny hubcaps, shoes, and the occasional glimpse of a chair filled the space and led on toward the stairs.

* * *

She herself was upstairs and lying in bed for she wasn't feeling well. Indeed, this was the real cause for concern. The freezing winter with prolonged snow had weakened her resistance: she'd had flu and was still having difficulty in getting going again. Her bedroom was arranged as an act of worship to faded stars of showbusiness past with pride of place for showbusiness present. Posters on the walls bore faces and names of pop stars I hardly knew, the bed end supported Gary Glitter, and arrayed on either side of him was a host of adoring plastic dolls human and animal. More newspapers included the copy of the *Manchester Evening News* announcing England's World Cup win. Every item was a nugget too precious to discard. Behind the bed lay Starsky with Hutch—waiting to upstage the Glitter boy.

With some reluctance she agreed in a bizarre communication, wherein we established that both she and I could speak and hear yet used written messages, to leave her treasure house for the comfort of the hospital. She brought a few friends with her and within a few days was hale and hearty chatting us up and giving us a turn or two. She had come from the east of England, and believed herself to be of gypsy stock through a father she had never met. From leaving school she travelled the coastal towns, fascinated by the small theatres and taking part in any shows or public house entertainment that would have her. She had a lovely time but eventually settled to a steadier sort of

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life with her husband in Manchester. He had dropped dead at her feet half-way through decorating the sitting room some fourteen years before we met her. The contrast between his last added roll of wall paper and the stripped wall remained. She had been broken hearted but resolved that for her remaining years "I should do the things I like doing and leave the rest to look after itself." There were a number of monstrous understatements of philosophy in rationalising all this. Among the best was: "I've never really liked doing housework."

From the minute she recovered her strength she undertook to enchant us. A case conference with the professor of psychiatry returned her to a stage she had missed for many a year, and she was as sad as any attending when the curtain had to fall on her performance.

* * *

Returning to life outside she kept in touch with us by visits, and we would see her felt hat at various places about the town. She knew where to find glamour and activity at little cost. A regular frequenter of the airport lounges, she received special dispensation when they became crammed with hordes of delayed travellers in the strikes of last summer. The cinema retained its central place in her calendar, while Woollie's snack

bar overlooking the centre of Manchester gave an elevated view of life and a place to meet others. It was here among friends and no doubt fantasies unfulfilled that she died, one victim of a savage modern fire, sharing her death with many in their prime with lives and prospects unfulfilled. Described as "in her sixties" and notable for her "seventeen rings" it was a death I guess she would have chosen,

"not a clean and inbetween
the sheets holywater death"

And she leaves us with a grief unusual for professionals used to contact with old people and never far from death. For she had never left her youth, there remained excitement and possibility in every new day rather than achievement and reflection on the past. No winding up, no taking stock, no expectation of disappointment but a twinkling appetite for all the future would surely offer: we grieve for her as for a child, despite her 86 years.

Reference

- ¹ McGough, R, *The Mersey Sound in Penguin Modern Poets 10*. London, Penguin Books, 1967.

Once an alcoholic, always an alcoholic

PAULA WYE*

One day about 21 years ago I stood at the drinks cupboard pouring myself a stiff whisky and realised that something must be wrong about my dependence on alcohol. Six months before that my husband and I with our two children had returned from nine years in Malaya, and my third child was born soon afterwards. She was born with a faulty valve in her heart and we were told that she might need an operation when she was 4. In the meantime, she must not cry or get overexcited. At that time I was very spoilt, was used to a high standard of living abroad with plenty of help, and found myself up against it. I had never coped with domestic chores and the house was large. With the drink in my hand, I knew I was heading for trouble but reasoned with myself that if I could keep going until my child was 4, I could then go into hospital for a short time to restore myself to normal. Pride prevented me from confessing to my husband that I couldn't cope.

The way down

With such thoughts in mind, I felt justified in taking odd drinks during the day to keep myself going. Fears that my baby might die at any moment abated, and I had more energy and confidence. I convinced myself that my drunken state was not obvious. My GP was giving me drugs for anxiety, exhaustion, tummy trouble, and so on, but he didn't know about my drinking. My child was pronounced fit when she was 4, whereupon I collapsed and was admitted to the manic-depressive ward of a psychiatric hospital in Oxford. There, they said that my breakdown was probably due to stress rather than alcohol, treated me with ECT 12 times, and returned me to my family full of the horrors of what I had seen. By now I understood the impli-

cations of alcoholism, but was sure that my own drinking was under control. Even so, in Malaya most people drank heavily without apparently suffering the same effects; the odd hangover, maybe, but not the fear and anxiety. I was confused as to why this should be so. Only later did it become clear that it is not how much you drink but how and why that turns someone into an alcoholic.

By allaying my fears and anxieties with antidepressants, tranquillisers, and sleeping pills the doctors hoped that my drinking would become controllable; instead, I began the downward spiral to chemical addiction, resorted to drink when the pills ran out, and sometimes took both at once. I collapsed again and was admitted to a hospital for nervous diseases in Surrey, where I first experienced psychoanalysis—20 minutes a day with a man I disliked intensely. The other patients were drunk most of the time and I was confused about how the hospital could help. This time my problem was correctly diagnosed, and without psychoanalysis, they said, I would "die the death of an alcoholic"—an ominous and frightening thought. Physically, I was in poor shape—underweight with an enlarged liver—but fear of death is not enough to stop an alcoholic drinking.

On my discharge home, I was told that an analyst would be found for me, but when one did not materialise I was soon back on the bottle. Then an analyst saw me several times a week for two years and prescribed a mixture of Stelazine and Dexedrine; when he was there all was well, but if either of us was away I resorted to alcohol. He blamed my drinking on insecurity and fear in childhood when my mother had left me in a home at a critical time in my development. So now, she was to blame and that gave me another excuse for drinking.

By this time my body was gross, my arms and legs thin, I was very hairy, and my eyes looked heavy-lidded and dead. My husband arranged for me to see a doctor in London, who advised me to leave my analyst and stop taking Dexedrine—I had developed pseudo-Cushing's syndrome because of the drug. My analyst had helped me, but not cured me, and I left him

*PAULA WYE is not the author's real name: she does not wish to distress her family by publishing it.