

## **An Ode to Adolescence**

*by Bella*

Only Age Eleven, seeking validation,  
"Boys like you" they tell me, for this childhood body,  
That they follow and then, they rate chunks out of ten,  
"Aren't you lucky, you see, I wish boys fancied me,"  
It isn't our fault cause it's just what you taught us,  
To crave being hunted, or never be wanted.

It's sex education, take this information,  
Forty kilos feeding, that's when you start bleeding,  
Becoming disgusting and becoming taboo,  
Because that's who you are, that's womanhood for you.  
Weighing myself tearful, of growing I'm fearful,  
I'll stay small like I should, stay in blissful girlhood.

Age Twelve and I know now, I've learned how it goes now,  
If you smile at him then, you're flirting and when,  
He corners you later, don't be a heartbreaker,  
If you dare to say no, then you lead him on so,  
If you want to have worth, just be gorgeous from birth,  
But don't smile at him.

Age Thirteen and somehow, my childhood is done now,  
My friends are all kids still, but against my fierce will,  
I've become an object, something to gawk at,  
Hide my body growing, I'll reap what I'm sowing,  
Counting the calories, but make sure noone sees,  
You don't want to weigh more, than the boy you adore.

Age fourteen, a school trip, and my name is on lips,  
Six boys in their wanting, a circle of taunting,  
They'd f\*\*k me if they could, I'm told as I freeze stood,  
Alone in the darkness, struck by the vastness,  
Of vulnerability, morbid fragility,  
Of compliments given, when you're trapped and hidden.

The morning brings group sports, "It's that girl in short shorts,"  
"Boys are all over you, one of the lucky few,"  
All over me like fleas, can't shower in peace,  
Trying to brush my teeth, and they're touching beneath,  
Hands gripped round my neck now, he loves me he says so,

"That boy over there says, that he likes your legs babes!"

Fifteen and this lesson, it's designed to deafen,  
This body's a prison, magnet for derision,  
A cage of flesh living, autonomy missing,  
A home that I've hated, writhed within and slated,  
Defining, limiting, "female" is crippling,  
The one power that's mine, sex withheld by design.

Sixteen on my way home, resigned to be alone,  
I'll never be dated, and never be naked,  
In front of someone, my problems to outrun,  
Each small imperfection, desperate for correction,  
Asking Google to help me, a cure to set me free,  
From tears in the mirror, breakdown creeping nearer.

Sitting with my best friend, and she's got news to lend,  
A girl slept with her man, didn't shave beforehand,  
And we're in awe and cowed, didn't know that's allowed,  
But wasn't she ashamed, was his tolerance feigned?  
It's safer to cower, crying in the shower,  
Over each small ingrown, shaving down to the bone.

For this is the grim truth, the horror in my youth,  
Of little white stretch lines, of scars and cellulite,  
Of redness and stubble, tummy rolls that double,  
These things men just can't see, protected they must be,  
From life that isn't fake - their delicate minds break.

But through this endorsing, this falsehood you're forcing,  
I've shattered to find Me, "monstrous feminazi",  
You've used and you've broken, you've crushed what I've spoken,  
Adolescence is war, you've lots to answer for,  
My dear patriarchy, how dare you decree  
Psychological siege, but I'm finally free.

And finally, I've accepted it, I'm a Woman at last,  
And there's nothing wrong with me. My body.  
MY body. MINE.  
Why don't you understand?