

Introduction

Hello,

You're ~~listening to~~ *READING Sh**ged. Married. Annoyed.* ~~With~~ BY Chris and Rosie Ramsey.

And we're so happy that you're here!

This book is all about the ups and downs, the ins and outs, the highs and lows of life, relationships, families and everything in-between. This is not a self-help book. It contains no advice that you should follow yourself. We, like everyone else out there, have absolutely no idea what we're doing when it comes to life . . . we don't have the answers. But what we do have is the ability to talk about life and take the piss out of it. And that is what this is.

It's a piss-take.

The fact that Rosie Ramsey (formerly Rosie Winter) and Chris Ramsey (always Chris Ramsey) are even writing a book is a piss-take in itself. Our respective English teachers at school will be flabbergasted that this is happening. And we are too.

We started our podcast of the same name to have a laugh, vent at each other and at the world. We wanted to talk about the things we found interesting. The things we found funny. The things we found disgusting. We

had no agenda or plan, but it's spiralled into something we couldn't have imagined.

Millions of downloads and entertained ears later, we have a book. And you're reading it right now.

So welcome to the SMA gang. You're in now!

If you haven't heard the podcast, don't worry about it. You don't need to – you can still enjoy this book. (A bit weird that you would BUY this book and not bother listening to the FREE podcast, but hey ho, thanks anyway!)

So let's start at the top for all the new kids at the back . . .

We are a 33-year-old married couple with a child. We live in the North East of England and (among other things) we co-host a podcast . . . just as we have co-written this book.

Those other things include:

Rosie: Instagrammer, singer, actor, presenter . . . jack of all trades, master of about four.

Chris: Stand-up comic, presenter, Lego builder and best celebrity dancer north of Wetherby Services.

And obviously both: Podcasters and best-selling authors. ('Best-selling' not actually confirmed yet, so maybe quickly buy another copy of this for your mate or something? Thanks.)

We will each take the lead on different subjects and chapters in this book and the other will butt in whenever they feel like it. Just like real life.

INTRODUCTION

Chris will be in THIS font – Hi!

And Rosie is in THIS font – Hello!

Hopefully it will make sense as you go . . . and you know for a fact you'll all be reading it in our accents in your head as we argue in print form . . . so have fun with that!

So, whoever you are, wherever you are, we hope you enjoy this book.

Whether you are Shagged, Married, Annoyed or all three, thanks for coming.

Have fun.

Shagged

Saturday Nights: Getting Ready

This chapter is called ‘Saturday Nights: Getting Ready’, but I feel it should be renamed ‘Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Sometimes Even a Wednesday at the Beginning of the Month Nights: Getting Ready’.

In my late teens and early twenties I could easily bash out four nights on the lash, EASY. I could – and more often than not, did – function quite happily on less than four hours’ sleep a night. How did I do that?

Fast-forward to 33 years old and I struggle to go on one night out a month, let alone four a week. Not only because I can’t deal with the hangover the next day, but it’s so bloody difficult trying to get all my friends together on one night. Plus, there’s always someone’s fucking kid who’s ill.

I’m going to take you back to the good old days right now. It’s a Saturday night in 2003. You’re in my bedroom which I share with my older sister Kate. It’s in my mam and dad’s three-bed semi in South Shields.

The room is an average double-sized room at the front of the house. The walls are painted in a magnolia-type colour. We weren’t old enough to understand the lushness of a lamp just yet so we lived in big-light hell most of the time. My sister has put a rope across the floor of the room to divide us as much as possible. I say rope, it’s more of a really thick piece

of string. Like something you would tie around a Christmas present if you wanted to show off. I have no idea where she got it from.

Her side of the room is pristine, as per. My side of the room is a mess, as per.

Genuinely considering employing this in our house now . . .

There are two single beds. Hers is neatly made with a crocheted blanket covering the bottom half; there are three little floral-patterned pillows on her actual sleeping pillow, and Charlie her stuffed monkey sits on top. Pretty weird considering she's 20 and has a full-blown, real-life, grown-up boyfriend with a car who she SPOILER ALERT ends up marrying and having kids with two years later.

The beds used to be bunk beds but due to one of us graffitiing and writing vulgar things about the other on the underneath slats of the bottom bunk, Sandra (my mam) and Kate both decided it would be better to separate them, thus saving themselves from any further graffitiing incidents.

The culprit is still unknown to this very day.

(It was me!! Ssshhhhh . . .)

Another reason for the necessary bed separation is there was this one night when one of us drank a little too much and accidentally vomited over the side of the top bunk, missing the other one who was sleeping peacefully below by mere inches.

It was just a little bit of splashback, honestly not that big of a deal, but anyway, they were separated soon after.

Hold on . . . Your dad (or let's be honest, it was probably Sandra) sawed the bunk beds in two and made two separate single beds?! Were they safe? Were they the same height from the floor? OR were they originally two single beds and the craftsmanship actually came when someone put them on top of each other like the sofa Emmet makes in *The Lego Movie*?! Then they were just separated again to make two singles?! I NEED TO KNOW, ROSIE!

Most bunk beds can be separated. Sandra and Derek were obviously having a flush month and decided to splash out on decent beds, or they bought them on credit. You would never have to know this as you were an extremely lucky 'lonely child' and never had to share a room, let alone a bunk bed. Our beds were separated into single beds and put back together as bunks on several occasions over many years.

Above my now single bed are hundreds of Polaroid pictures of me and my friends. Some old cinema tickets (no idea why) and a calendar which my nana bought me for Christmas and I had yet to write a single entry in. It was also three months behind, much to my sister's annoyance.

Above my sister's bed is a poster of a foot. I know that sounds really ridiculous, but it wasn't a picture of some random person's foot; it was in fact a medical drawing of the sole of a foot, with explanations of each area and how it connected to a part of the human body. Kate was studying to be a reflexologist at the time, so every day I would find myself staring at this picture of a foot above my sister's bed and wonder how the hell we were even related.

She also had a couple of dream catchers along with Charlie,

the stuffed monkey. Kate had had Charlie since she was born. She was really good at looking after stuff so he was pretty much still in mint condition.

Charlie was about the size of a baby orang-utan. He had black fur and a dark brown and orange stomach. His mouth was stitched into a smile and his eyes were beady and sweet. He was a very cute little monkey teddy. On the side of Charlie's stomach there was a small zip and when you opened it, inside there was a little pocket that you could put stuff in.

Ahhh, you're thinking, how lush! He sounds like the best teddy ever! I bet your sister put such cool, quirky little things in there!!

Nope.

Of all the things my sister could have put in there throughout her life – you know, hair bobbles, little letters to herself, sweets . . . So many things she could have chosen!

She chose to put the blue, see-through, unwashed nightgown our mother wore the day she gave birth to each of us in there.

So fucking weird.

It must have been washed since she had you both?! Jesus.

Don't forget Kevin too. Three labours that nightgown lived through.

Anyway, I've totally gone off piste, sorry. Where was I?

Oh yes, now picture this if you will . . .

It's a cold November night in 2003. I'm 17, getting ready for a night out in South Shields.

I wonder how many of you can relate to this.

5:30 p.m.

Ram some food down your neck. Nothing fancy, just something stodgy to soak up the alcohol that was about to be consumed. Absolute bonus if your mam has made a tea. Winner!

Have a glass of milk. (No idea why I used to do this. Someone once told me it stopped you from being sick, so I did it religiously every night before I went out. It never worked. I don't even like milk.)

Yep. I heard the same rumour. 'It lines your stomach!' they all said. To the point where our drink of choice for a while in my friend's house was Malibu and milk. Honest.

6 p.m.

Quick shower or a wash of your nethers over the toilet with the family jug. We called this a 'Victorian wash' in our family.

The wash you have depends on how invested you are in the night out ahead, to be honest. A prearranged close friend or family member's party warrants a full bath or shower, whereas a night round the pubs possibly resulting in a club gets a Victorian wash. I wouldn't dream of doing it now. I didn't sweat much then and I never really noticed any sort of odour. Does that come with age, do you think? (Lie. That's a blatant lie. I definitely would do it now, sorry.)

Destiny's Child is blasting from the CD player I share with my sister, getting me in the mood. There were no iPods,

phones or Alexas back then, people! It was all proper Old School.

Make sure to tell whoever is in the house with you to keep an ear out for the door. Your mates will be coming round soon and they'll more than likely be dressed in hardly anything, and you don't need an 18-year-old with hypothermia on your mind, Dad. Not tonight anyway.

Try not to disturb your little brother Kevin because he'll only come sniffing around your mates, and nobody wants to see that. Especially me. No thank you.

Also, remember to shut his bedroom door before they come. It smells like someone has died in there.

I don't think I've ever related to anything less in my entire life. And the idea of the 'family jug' is giving me a panic attack.

6:15 p.m.

Lasses arrive!! Wooooo-hoo!! Lambrini in hand. We are ready to PARTY!

Sandra comes in to say her hellos, as usual.

'Eeeeh, girls, please be careful. It's blowing a frigging hooley out there, mind! Do you need a straw, babe??'

She's always been extremely hospitable has our Sandra, bless her.

6:30 p.m.

Whack some make-up on. Nothing fancy, just a bit of mascara and blusher. If you're lucky your friend might do your eyeshadow for you and curl your hair.

Make-up is so much more complicated these days compared to when I was younger. I really don't want to sound old and out of touch, I'm not even saying that it's a bad thing, I'm just saying it must take an age for young girls now to put it all on.

Also, their clothes must be covered in marks. Imagine hugging one of those lasses who has tons of make-up on? Goodbye clean shoulder, hello rubbed-off foundation . . .

Unfortunately, fake tan wasn't really a thing back in 2003, so unless it was August we were usually all rocking the pale and interesting look.

Oh, and natural hair colours!!!! EW!

7 p.m.

Two bottles of Lambrini and a Babycham (from Sandra) later, it's time foooooorrrrr . . .

'Beg your dad for a lift' time! YEY!! My favourite time of the night!! Not.

'Daaaad . . .'

'Rosie, I've had a can, man!'

'Dad . . . please????!?! I've got no money for a taxi and it's freeeeeeeeezing!!! The bus stop's miles away!!'

'Rosie, why do you have to do this every sodding week? Sandra? She's asking for a frigging* lift again!'

*Frigging was said a lot in my house. I could tell that my parents were DESPERATE to say fucking, but they never ever did. I have a lot of respect for them for that. I mean, it did fuck all as I swear all the time now, but, you know, strong effort, guys.

7:15 p.m.

Dad said no.

Bus it is.

The walk to the bus stop was always pretty grim. Goosebumps as big as a breastfeeding nipple. All of us struggling to walk in our three-inch heels (amateurs).

The fresh air would hit your young, inexperienced liver like a ton of bricks and one of you would inevitably stack it before reaching the actual bus stop.

‘One to South Shields, please.’

‘That’ll be 75p, petal.’

Seventy-five pence. Seventy-five pence for a one-way ticket to good-time city!

To be honest, I always quite enjoyed the bus downtown. It was a safe place. Our time to be able to plan the night ahead of us.

Which bars are we hitting? Who’s going to be where? Do you think we’ll see such-and-such? Did you know he fingered her last week? OMG! That kind of stuff.

Aaaaah, memories.

Wow.

7:30 p.m.

I just want to take a second to acknowledge the time here:

7:30 p.m.

Back then nights started at a reasonable hour. None of this let’s drink in the house and go out at 11 p.m. nonsense. NO. Why? Why are you all doing this now?

Have you walked into a bar at 9 p.m. recently? It's awful! Unless you're in a big city they're 8/10 times bound to be absolutely DEAD. Dead as a nun's chuff. It's soul-destroying and it makes me sad. I did not spend £40 on a new frock from ASOS to only be seen by three people, and that's usually just the bored bar staff.

I crave those busy early night days. Clubs would stop serving at 1:30 a.m. so you would have enough time for some chips and garlic sauce before bundling in a taxi and getting up for work at seven.

I have a 4-year-old now. I can't be out all hours of the night, praying to God that it gets a bit busier before midnight. I would just like a little bit of atmosphere, people! Is that too much to ask for?

7:30 p.m. (It's still only 7:30 . . .)

First bar – FISHBOWLS!* There was literally zero alcohol in these, I swear, but we lapped 'em up! Three pounds each, job's a good'un!

*For those of you who have never experienced a fishbowl, I'll just describe it quickly to you now . . . Imagine a large, see-through Perspex bowl. It's not fancy, it's probably not been washed, to be honest. It has scratches all over it due to years of constant use, so it's no longer see-through but cloudy.

It is filled with shots of all sorts. Vodka, gin, rum, Pernod. Anything you want.

It is then filled with a mixture of fruit juices, making it go a disgusting vomit-like colour, usually a purpley green. Sometimes they would add milk, which would curdle. This was

genuinely a thing that people asked for. Not me though, nope – already had me glass of milk, hadn't I?

Smart.

They would then add copious amounts of ice so as to firstly fill up the bowl and secondly sober up the many – let's be honest here – under-age drinkers who were about to consume them.

Everyone would grab a straw and suck away! Beautiful!

They would vary in price. The most expensive one I ever partook in was £25 and it went between around thirty of us so it was proper good value for money, to be fair.

Fishbowls are probably still going somewhere in England, but I personally haven't come across one for about ten years. I might make one at the weekend. Why not, eh? Watch this space . . .

I genuinely think that the rise in people getting spiked on nights out put a stop to the classic fishbowl . . . people ruin everything! I'm going to invent a bowl with a spike-proof mesh or lid over the top, with up to ten straw holes around the side. (Copyright Chris Ramsey Ltd 2020)

8 p.m.

No messing about – we're straight on to the next bar.

It's heaving.

My bones have finally thawed from the cold November night outside.

There are bodies everywhere. Condensation drips down the windows like a scene out of a Britney Spears music video. I am absolutely buzzing.

I'm at the bar having my arse slapped by my mate while we're dancing to *NSYNC's latest banger.

This. Is. Class.

A round of orange Reefs and we are on FIRE!

Literally everyone from college is out.

My friend has just necked on with a randomer and she's now raging as he's rank and is kissing someone else on the other side of the bar.

My other friend is crying in the toilets because her boyfriend won't come and meet her.

I'm dancing like I'm in a music video. The tunes are amazing.

This is class.

I'm 17, in a bar, dancing and drinking. Check me out, man.

I fall down the massive set of stairs on my way out. Everyone sees from downstairs, but nobody really takes much notice as those stairs are lethal and almost every other person falls down them on a nightly basis. They should probably get them redone, to be fair.

9 p.m.

We make our way to the 'shot bar'. I don't know if this is a thing where you grew up, but in my home town there used to be a bar called Pukka Bar where all shots were 50p.

How they ever made any money I have no idea.

My next-door neighbour's son worked on the door so he always let us in, even though my friend Angela is well under age. She was large chested from a young age and could walk

really well in high shoes, so she always managed to fool the bouncers. Often better than I could.

I'd have a little catch-up with him, be horrified when he'd run off and manhandle someone down the stairs, down a couple of shots of rum and we're back on our way.

RUM!?! Are you a 50-year-old sailor?

Fun fact, a mate of mine once went into Pukka, put £20 on the bar, got forty shots, drank them then had to go to hospital. Fucking idiot.

9:30 p.m.

The drink jacket has well and truly kicked in now. Can't feel a thing. If anything, I'm a bit hot.

10 p.m.

Clubbing time.

I know what you're thinking – 10 p.m.? Bit early for clubbing, isn't it? Yes, you're right. It is extremely early for clubbing.

I have no idea why we went this early. We weren't the only ones in there, it's already really busy! Everyone else has the same idea.

They've got a special offer on – all drinks are two for one before 11!

Aaaaah, that's why we went there so early.

Actually. On the rare occasion that I got into this club, it was because I got there at about 9 p.m. when the doormen weren't there. Rosie isn't aware of this because all girls used to get into

all bars and clubs all the time regardless of age, because the doormen were absolute fucking fascist, sexist perverts and can you tell I'm still really angry about it even to this day?!

I've got one word for you, Chris . . . boobs.

10:30 p.m.

We're a few blue WKDs in and the DJ is playing some of the best mega mixes I've heard to date. He's genuinely really talented. He isn't very good in bed, however, so I heard from one of the girls on my course.

11 p.m.

We've walked round the club at least twenty-five times.

There's nothing wrong with us, this is just what we used to do.

There's three sets of stairs in this place and we've had to queue on each of them at least twice as everyone else seems to be walking round the club too.

No wonder I was so bloody thin! Imagine if I'd have had my Fitbit then!

11:30 p.m.

Quick catch-up with an old school friend in the bogs before we hit the dance floor. Oh, hang on, one more walk round just for good luck.

11:40 p.m.

Handbags on the floor, let's dance.

The one old man (possibly only 45 but to me at that time he was old AF and disgusting) tries to dance with us.

‘I’ve got a boyfriend. Can you fuck off?’

Liar, you don’t have a boyfriend.

It baffles me sometimes that mothers used to worry about girls meeting older men on nights out.

I avoided them like the plague. In fact, I think everyone did. I can remember seeing them flit from one group of young girls to the next, each time being batted down yet still going back for more. You have to give them credit for their efforts. They were always on their own. Perverts don’t have many friends, I guess. He could probably cover a lot more ground on his own, to be fair.

Can I just say that as a man of 33 now, the idea of going anywhere near a younger group of girls on a night out and dancing or attempting to talk to them scares me so much that I just think this bloke should be commended for his efforts. HOW CONFIDENT DO YOU HAVE TO BE, MAN!?

No, I was all about the boys my age, thank you! Preferably good-looking ones with nice little six-packs who used too much Lynx. That’s my bag.

Here’s a little fact for you . . .

Chris and I often used to see each other while out clubbing as we went to the same college. Unfortunately we never hit it off romantically back then. It’s a shame, but I’m glad we didn’t officially meet until we were a little older and wiser.

You kidding?! You were never stood still long enough to have a conversation with! I can literally remember seeing you come past every fifteen minutes like a slag comet orbiting the DJ booth.

12 a.m.

Disco nap.*

*A disco nap is when you have a little power nap either on or over a club toilet. I used to have these all the time when I was younger – that's probably how I managed to get up for work/college the next day. Mystery solved!

This is tragic. Go home, you mess.

12:30 a.m.

Another toilet chat with a different school friend who you feel like you haven't seen in FOREVER. It's been a couple of weeks at the most.

You spot your cousin and get buzzing that you're both out on the same night, even though it happens almost every weekend.

12:40 a.m.

Quick chat to the lady who gives out the deodorant and chewing gum in the toilets in return for tips. God, love those ladies. How they can stand there all night and watch drunken, moronic girls talk utter shite is beyond me. They deserve a bloody medal!

1 a.m.

More dancing.

A possible sloppy neck-on with your current crush.

Back to dancing.

Avoid the creep.

1:45 a.m.

I'm drunk.

Not the good drunk but the I need to sit down, the room is spinning, I'm hiccuping sick and swallowing it back down my throat drunk. My friends are all drunk too. We decide that now is a good time to go home.

We make our way to the takeaway at the top of Fowler Street. One of us is crying so we all link arms and tell her why her boyfriend is a twat and how she should dump him.

She won't, we never do.

The takeaway is heaving, it's always heaving. It's like an extension of the night! I love it. I order my chips and garlic sauce (I was never a kebab fan and pizzas took too long).

My particular purchase from this establishment was an onion bhaji . . . that's right, this place did the lot! Pizza, chips, burger, curry! It was two for £3 and me and my mate used to walk home eating them like apples. Farts the next day were SOMETHING ELSE!

We decide to walk home because we're irresponsible and the buses have stopped, plus back in the day none of us could afford taxis. They were a total luxury. Wow, my steps on the

Fitbit would have been through the roof! AGAIN, this is how I was so thin.

We stop off for a wee and a cigarette in the local park (sorry, Mam, I know you hate smoking).

The urinating part was never intentional but when you gotta go you gotta go. It eventually became a bit of a ritual. Couldn't not end the night with a wee in the park. I'd often still see the little lines of it while I was walking to college the next morning. Unfortunately, due to my Bambi-like, alcohol-induced state I almost always weed on my feet. Honestly, I dread to think what my shoes must have smelt like.

So easy to wee in public as a bloke that I regularly get annoyed that it's illegal. We can get it into a can, a bottle, a drain, someone's letterbox . . . anywhere!

After the wee and cigarette it was bedtime.

I had to be deathly quiet so as not to wake Kate up. God forbid you wake Queen Kate, Mrs Foot Fetish, goody two shoes, from her slumbers.

One night when I got home having gone a little too hard on the two-for-ones at the club, I somehow ended up with the hallway radiator cover on top of me, waking my parents and siblings in the process.

I don't remember this at all, but my parents assure me that it's true. They said they thought they were being robbed and panic-stricken ran down the stairs, only to find me half-cut lying on the floor with the radiator cover on top of me.

My sister tutted, my brother laughed, my dad helped me up and my mam muttered profanities under her breath and went straight back to bed.

For the record, I could have really hurt myself.

My drunken returns home used to almost always end in me being sick somewhere in my mam and dad's house. If they were lucky it was the toilet, slightly less lucky if it was the bathroom floor, bad luck if it was down the side of my bed, and once I opened my bedroom window and was sick on to the roof of the dining room . . . so glad it was an extension and not a conservatory. Imagine seeing that the next morning when you're having a cuppa. I did have to get up on the roof the next day and hose it down though. That was a bad day.

Night out in 2020, post kids.

Nice top and jeans.

Food.

Wine.

Bed.

The end.

I feel it's my duty here to elaborate on just how different mine and Rosie's memories of nights out at this age were.

When I was in college, at 16 and 17 years old, everyone started going out on the lash of a night. The days of hanging about the street on your bike or playing football in the park quickly disappeared, and the days of talking about how amazing and mental and class last night was were here.

Some lads I knew started going out to pubs and clubs WHEN WE WERE STILL AT SCHOOL! Unbelievable, I know. A lad called Jamie once came into GCSE English HUNG-OVER! Telling tales of places he'd been the night before with such exotic names as 'Evisia', 'Coast' and 'Vogue'.

I couldn't believe it. We were kids. And he has been out . . . CLUBBING! I say kids – him and the other lads he went with hadn't looked like kids since we were in Year 8. You know the kind of lads I mean – had a beard since he was nine and a full set of pubes since he was three. The lads who answered to their name during the class register with a deep, booming 'YES, SIR' that sounded like builders backing up in a cement truck. The kind of lads who squared up to the teachers in Year 11 rather than take the telling off.

Cunts. The word I'm looking for is cunts. Fast developers who left the puny, weak, smooth-tiddlered Chris Ramseys of the world in their uber-masculine dust.

(Just on the subject of pubes, lads . . . how utterly terrifying was it when you spotted the first lad in your PE class to get his pubes?! There is no greater feeling of devastation and inadequacy in this world. It's the ultimate FOMO. Your crotch is as pure as the driven snow and a lad who is supposed to be the same age as you looks like he's wet his genitals and rolled on a barber shop floor. It's not fair. You imagine word will get out and everyone will know he has hairy man balls and you are a pubeless wonder. All the girls will fancy him and you'll die alone. Genuinely, I once had a girlfriend when I was 12 and a bigger boy said to her, 'Do you like hairy armpits?', while rolling up the sleeves of his Newcastle away shirt to show off said armpits, and

she said YES. Right in front of me. I knew right there and then that she was probably not marriage material . . . she'd probably ditch me at the altar if the driver taking her to the church had a thick mane of jet-black arse-crack hair she could get hold of.)

Ew.

Anyway . . . nights out.

I never regularly got served in pubs until I was 18. Literally the day of my eighteenth birthday was the day I stopped getting asked for ID by bouncers. Infuriating. I was an August baby too, so my eighteenth birthday came just before most of my mates' nineteenth birthdays . . . and they had already been getting into the clubs since they were 16.

I had a beautiful collection of fake IDs ordered from the back of *FHM* that did get me through the doors now and then. A national identity card, fake student card and one particular card that a bunch of lads managed to convince every doorman in South Shields was a Fire Brigades Union card. We got in for a while, but the entire place would have been fucked if a fire started and they called on us to help. We'd have probably just thrown glasses of Vodka Red Bull on it and burnt the whole place down.

So my memories of 'Saturday Nights Getting Ready' are very different from Rosie's. While hers may have been excitement and doing each other's make-up, mine were nerve-wracking and worrying. I genuinely used to get ready at home, and before taking my carrier bag of cans (or bottle of milk) to my mate's house, I would march around the house, trying on all manner of

shirts and trousers while repeatedly asking my mam, 'Do I look eighteen, Mam?'

'You look lovely, son!'

'That's very nice of you to say, Mam, BUT DO I LOOK EIGHTEEN?!'

Tragic this like, Chris.

I don't think I looked particularly young, to be honest, not when I was 16 or 17. I knew lads who were smaller and younger than me who got in all the time . . . I think I just had a shit poker face.

I must have walked up to those doors looking like I was literally filling my pants with shit. Terrified of the big bald men either side who held the key to your night's success in the palm of their giant meat shovel of a hand.

There was nothing like the castrating feeling of getting knocked back from a bar that all of your mates from college AND the girl you fancied were inside of, having a brilliant time . . . probably shagging on the dance floor by now. I bet it's brilliant. And here's me in a back lane swapping shirts with my mate and getting up the courage to try again.

We would swap shirts, jackets, shoes, pants – the lot. Once a club were absolutely FINE with our age, they just said we needed shoes not trainers . . . so we went in the back lane, put our black socks OVER OUR TRAINERS and went in. Unbelievable. They looked like Teletubby feet.

I cannot believe that this actually ever happened. Those door-men must have had a right laugh that night.

Not that I regularly wore trainers, to be honest. I had it in my head that black dress shoes, black dress trousers and a black pinstripe shirt with white collar and cuffs made me look older, so that was my regular going out attire. No wonder I kept getting knocked back. I must have looked like I was in fucking *Bugsy Malone*.

We would try everything to get in. Sometimes someone who was already in would open the fire escape for you. People used to say, 'Walk in with a girl and you'll get in', which, considering I didn't know any girls and was out to specifically meet girls, always seemed a bit harsh.

Another rumour was that if you were smoking, you looked older. (You could smoke in pubs then. How old do we all feel now, eh? Can we just take a moment to talk about how much your pillow ABSOLUTELY STANK the next morning after a night out? Like it had been used to douse a bonfire. Horrific . . . although, sneaky casual smoker Rosie probably woke up and sucked on her pillow to get a little hint of tobacco. Minger!)

Those were the days . . .

I remember walking up towards a pub, and seeing doormen on it, a guy we were with said, 'I don't have any ID', so one lad handed him a lit cigarette and said, 'Hold that, it'll make you look older.' He replied, 'But I don't smoke.' 'JUST HOLD IT!'

So he did. He attempted to walk past the doormen with his arm outstretched in front of him, with his middle and index finger pointing to the sky and his brand-new cigarette (his first one ever) wedged between his skyward fingers. He looked like