

FATE MADE HER A MONSTER

And Sent Her In Search Of Love



**FROM AN
ORIGINAL
PHOTO-LOVE
STORY OF THE
SAME NAME**

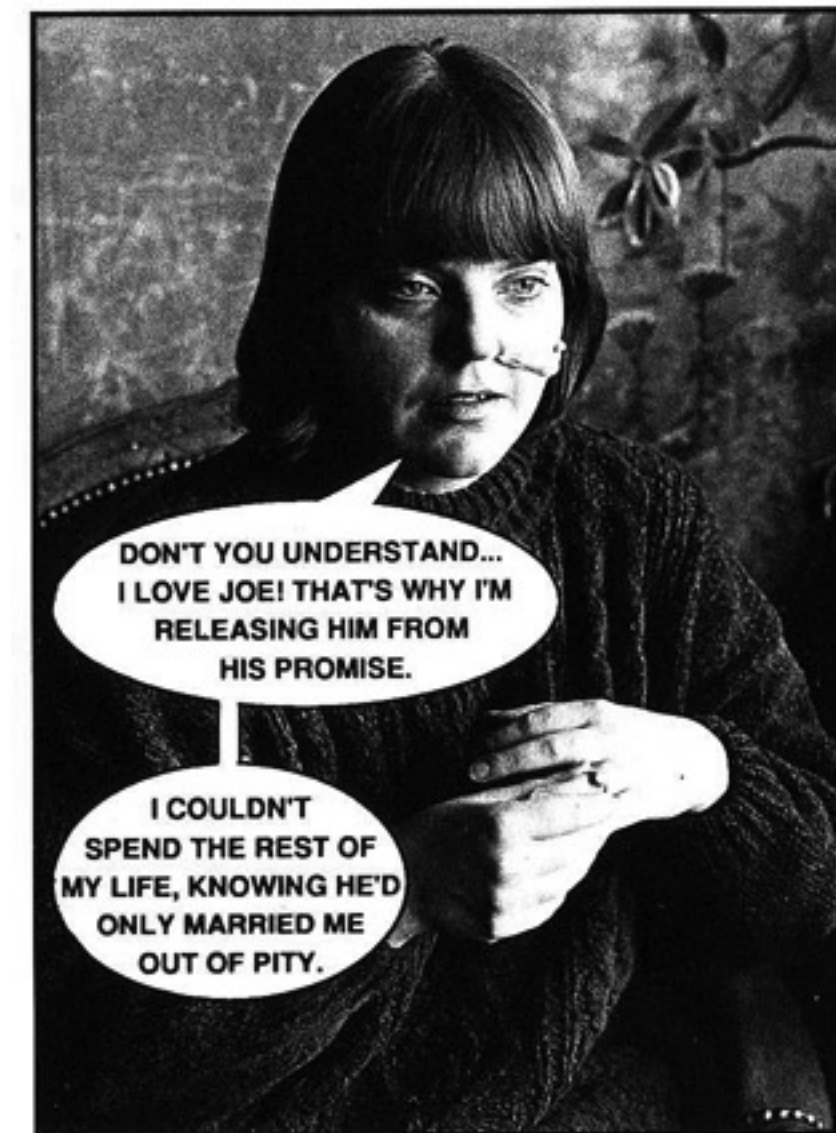
Once upon a time there was a very pretty young woman, truly one of the Beautiful People. But fate played her a terrible hand.

On the eve of her wedding to the man of her dreams, truly her match in beauty, a dreadful accident befell her. She was horrifically scarred, her unrivalled beauty marred beyond redemption. Now, being a nicely brought-up kind of a girl she realised the only honourable course she could take was to release her betrothed from his burden.

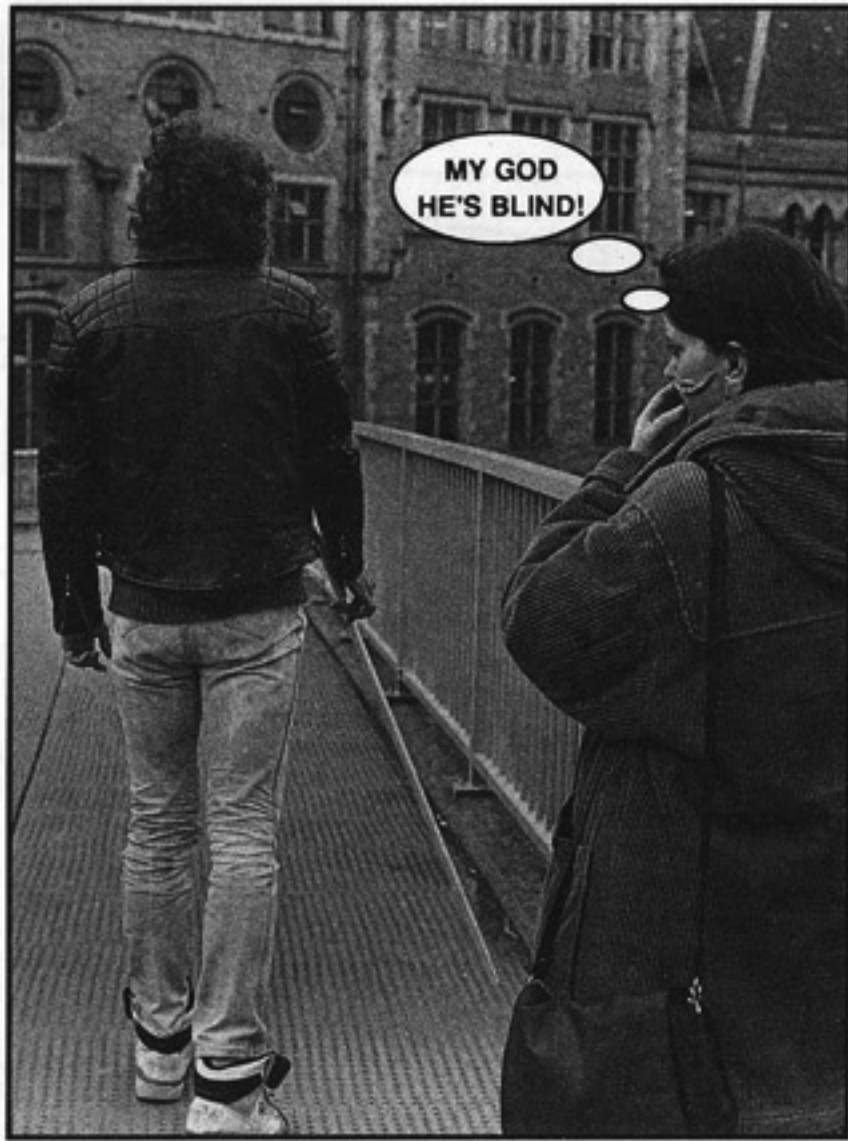
Indeed, so well brought up was she that she forsook her love, her family and her life as she knew it and took



herself off to a strange town many miles from home which had a very high bridge and a very low parapet.



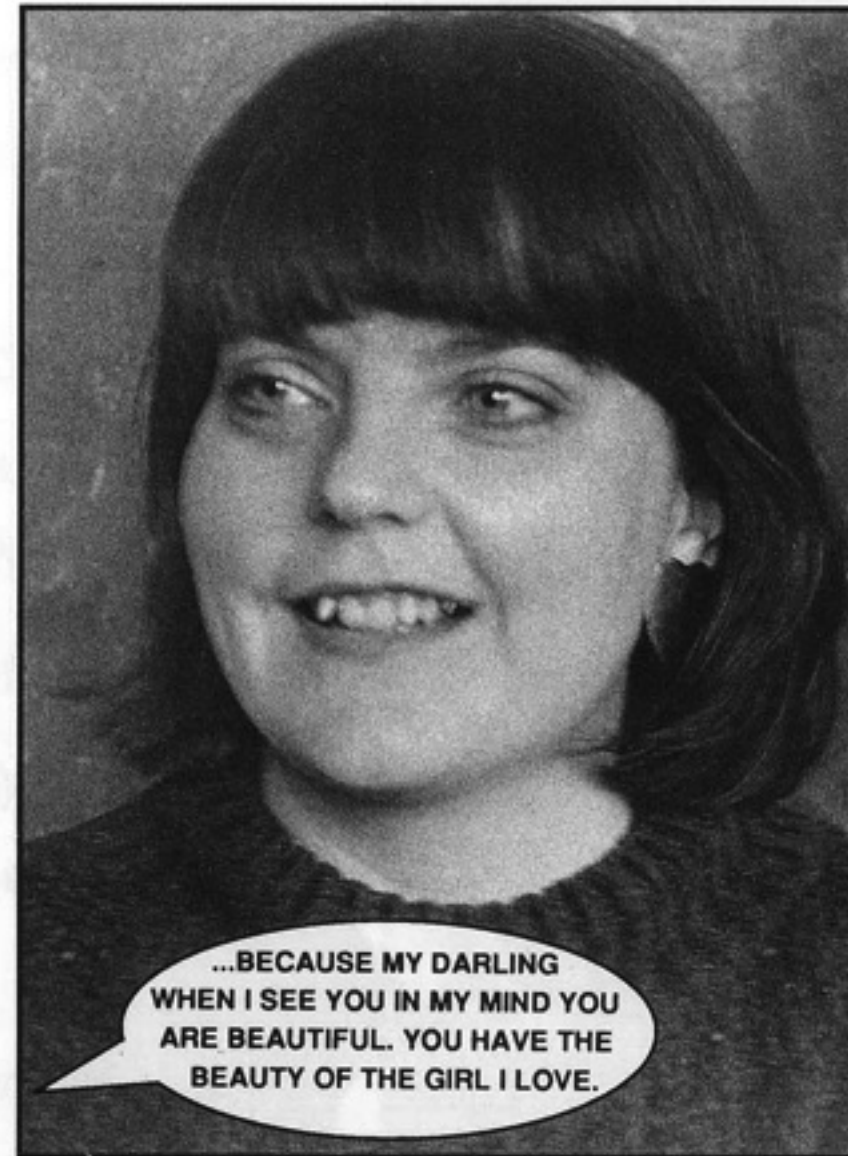
But sometimes, even fate can have a change of heart. And as she stood preparing to take the plunge, she heard the tap-tap-tap of a Blind Man. Seeing him so (and remember the kind of upbringing she had) she could not help but rush to his aid, and in so doing she was diverted, at the moment of death, towards Life.



family was able to put aside that brief hiccup in their here-to-fore and hence-forward un-rippled existence. And what of our plucky heroine and hero? Why, in their new life together, undisturbed behind closed doors, they could enjoy the unblemished visions of their destiny.

And what came to pass, but a marriage made in Heaven. For whilst she was able to feast her 20:20s unswervingly upon his good looks, he was able to give the hour-glass perfection of her figure the intimacy of his fingertips that it so richly deserved.

And faraway, in the land of her heritage, her X-man was released to select for himself another (disposable) blonde beauty from the pool of the unmarried, and her



The End

Monstrous Themes

Disabled people living happily-ever-after amongst their own kind, without impinging on the (able-bodied) world is just one story amongst many. In the modern-day fairy tales of photo-love, able-bodied people have fun and Disabled people get serious. Within the formula, there are many variations of the basic theme. There's the Disabled woman cured through the love of a good (able-bodied) man; and the Disabled person who remains alone but willingly counsels (able-bodied) peers on affairs of the heart. Then there's the brilliant Disabled scientist who sublimates sexual feelings in the chemistry lab whilst (able-bodied) others canoodle; and the Disabled man, embittered by his lot, who seeks revenge by seducing innocent (able-bodied) young girls. And of course, more usually, there's nothing: no Disabled people at all.

Monstrous Thoughts

Variations on a theme are accompanied by variations on a stereotype. I hardly need point out that it's all boy-meets-girl: anything else would be far too risqué. Mostly it's the woman who is Disabled. After all, she can afford to be dependent, passive and fey without bending the rules. She provides her (able-bodied) man with unrivalled opportunities to defend, rescue and cure her as masterfully, and, once cured, she no longer poses a threat to his masculinity. And the characters all wear their impairments with inexorable clarity. There's never any doubt as to whether or not they are curable, or what they can and can't do. And whilst photo-love confines itself strictly to romantic love, should anyone ever be inclined beyond platonic, there's nothing that could possibly prevent their most exhaustive involvement in oh-so traditional sex.

Monstrous Turn-about

But it's only a photo-love! It's only a bit of fun!

But meantime, far more Disabled people remain unwillingly alone and experience more relationship breakdown than their non-Disabled peers. And far more non-Disabled people regard Disabled people as asexual, dependent, passive and infantile, than as sexual, attractive, autonomous and self-determined.

Photo-love: whose bit of fun?! We have to start taking images like these seriously. By manipulating our own and other people's perceptions of ourselves, they restrict our opportunities every bit as much as the inaccessible transport, housing, education and leisure facilities we are campaigning to replace.

What can we do? Find out more about the images. Whose images are they? What are their messages? How do they compare with images on non-Disabled people? Why

are they like they are? How do they affect Disabled people? How do they influence non-Disabled people? How do the themes and their effects differ for different groups of Disabled people? How do they compare with images from other media advertising, charity posters, documentary photographs, etc? What connections are there between the way Disabled people and other social groups are represented. Start to undo the effects of the images. What about creating your own new images or organising a campaign group to lobby the image-producers? Why not use photography to explore and undermine the effects of traditional images, or how about composing a series of posters showing Disabled people away from the stereotypes?..

Liz Crow