

WHEN SOMEONE TELLS YOU

By Harry Jivenmukta

Five

When someone tells you
That you are five and
It's time to start
Nursery school
You go
Because you have walked
Your older brothers there
For a long time.

I stood against the wall
And the children were
Playing with a big
Wooden train set.
I realised at once
As a five year old
I was not like them.

GCSEs

When someone tells you

To choose subjects

For GCSEs

When your parents say

We never went to school

We don't know

But you have to choose

And you choose what your

Friends choose

Even if you don't like

The subjects

Because it is a process

With a time limited choice.

So choose.

Music

We have to visit a
Music shop because
All young people are into it.
So I went along.
It meant nothing to me
But I was young,
A teenager,
And a boy
And that's what young boys do.
I bought any record
Because I didn't want any one
Really.
Dave Clark Five.
Who the hell are they?
But at least I bought one
That proved I was a
Teenager.

Concert

I went to see
Joe Johnson in concert
In Newcastle
Because all my friends
Were going.
I danced and jumped and
Sang along and
Drank
But it meant nothing
To me.
Maybe being young
Doesn't mean anything
But later in life I knew
It was all meaningless.

Marriage

When my father said
I should get married
And did I want to
And I said yes.
I cycled with my uncle
Whilst the others went in a van.
It's something you do
And I did it.
She had all the bumps in
The right places
And two arms
And two legs.
Yes, I said
And we were engaged.
It was a sunny morning
And I did
What was expected.

A Job

She told me to get

A job

Because we had to have

A home and then

A family.

I was a star pool player

But I got a job

And then another and

Others and never

Thought about them.

I was told you need money

And so I provided.

I never really cared about

Equal opps.

Teaching

Business

Administration.

She said

I did.

Children

It's important to have children

And especially a son

They said

And in line with the

Tradition we had a son

And then two daughters.

It was expected

That's what you did

And I did it.

Mortgage

You have to have
The millstone of a
Mortgage around your neck
I was told
And everyone else
Had in any case.
So we did it and
Borrowed more than we
Could afford
And never missed a payment.
And I had nightmares
And drank to hide them
Out of my mind.
I did everything and
Drowned the terror
In alcohol.

Religion

You have to go
To the temple,
The Sikh temple,
Every Sunday because
That's what you do.
So I did.
I never understood a word.
It didn't matter
Because no one else
Did either.
But you had to go.

Squiggly Line

You have to draw a
Squiggly line on your
Page and then
Put dots where the
Significant events in your life
Happened.
When your first memory came
When you went to school
For the first time
When you got your first job
Got married
Had children.
The problem I had
Was the dots never landed
On the line.
They were all over the place.
I had never been there.