

And Now, And Now!
Was then, back when
Our politicians Labour men
Gave grants to Irish lesbians
Standard headline '85
No exclamation but a point and then
pointed again, again, back then
Gay mayors, gay groups, gay books, FRIEND
The Milkman's On His Way
Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin
Now the headbangers are handing over ratepayers cash
to help Irish lesbians!

And then, and then
Well Then. She said.
It gets better hun, It gets better!
She said
But did it? Does it? Will it? When?

Little did I know
the all female baby raising commune
I dreamed up with friends
Had already existed
Lesbian Strength March On and a
Live-in babyfather, not even in South London
But right here off the Essex Road, near that street, the street that runs all the way to Dalston
Englefield Road, unthinkable now
What was is Islington lost?

Gay capital of London
As long as people keep themselves to themselves
A sherry party and a guided tour.
Such a costly coming out dance
And it's on the rates. On the rates. The Loony Left. The Socialist Republic of Islington
I can just imagine the scene
If any of them turn up at our local pubs
It's asking for trouble
Serving the open sandwiches and frothy coffee.
People will stay away in their thousands

It gets better hun, It gets better!
She said
But did it? Does it? Will it? When?

And now, And Now!
Still Then, Back when
Leroy House housed us
Held us, fighting for rights
Galop and Lager
Switchboard and Pace
Names like detectives
Logos like superheroes
Abseil Against Section 28!
We meet every Tuesday at 8pm
Upstairs, just ring the bell
Lesbian swim-in, Gays Against Nazis
town hall, pizza hut, shell garage, FRIEND
Help run the Coffee Bar
Fig Rolls, voices in the dark.

And now, And Now!
And then, Well then
The nineties, the noughties
not-so naughty
Parents living room, Late at night,
finger on the remote
We just really liked the storylines
We were out
in the streets, the streets on screen where all our
Dramas played out
We lived for each new episode
Our community of tiny tv friends
LESBIAN KISS EPISODE!
We hadn't heard about our past, the things we were missing
We were taught
to look forward not back

It gets better hun, It gets better!
She said
But did it? Does it? Will it? When?

Well then, back when
In out or pending, come for tea at the Fallen Angel
But then, back then
Bricks through windows
and that one time when
They tried to have a women's only night
but the gay men sued the pub
And the gay liberation front fell apart because really,
did we ever all agree
on what we want to fight to be free from?

So then back then,
The women underground,
Back to the Essex road,
Basement bar carved red lion,
Women seek women, men some men
On a dance floor fit for almost eight couples.
For so long, lesbians have been what they read.

It gets better hun, It gets better!
She said
But did it? Does it? Will it? When?

And Now! And Now!
And then, just then,
Marriage equality, the 2010s
We won our rights
And lost our lefts
Where's our women's centre? Commune? Festival of Strength?
What's left? What left? Of the loony left?
Where Islington now, that was here, was then
We dream of grants for lesbians.

I saw Jeremy Corbyn once
2013
At the acoustic cafe, in Newington Green,
Where we all lived, before the rents went up
A club sandwich, working through breakfast
He shared his chips

It gets better hun, It gets better!
She said
But did it? Does it? Will it? When?

AND NOW! AND NOW!
And when? And when?
Brenda, Tinder, HER, clicksend
Homes for Queers and online FRIEND
Underground, though the basement's gone
Lesbians and gays support
the migrants now
Still Hope in the air, gaining momentum

It gets better hun, It gets better!
She said
But did it? Does it? Will it? When?

And Now! And Now!
And when, oh when?
Who would believe it? beyond our ken
Could politicians labour men?
Give grants to irish lesbians?