Tony White’s Balkanising Bloomsbury project is supported by Arts Council England through a Grants for the Arts award.

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Ahead in the Line

Tony White

Diffusion Generator

It was quite muddy, so we walked on foot, two by two. We came to the bridge and the military police were there. We were an indistinguishable crowd, they were the lazy ones. Probably I was in love.

He thought he was onto a good thing.

But the mother took his clothes and hid them. She had probably slipped him a mickey also. That’s one of our tales. Anyway, I’m not telling the story very well, but it was a promise of things to come.

Mary Wortley Montagu, 1790. ‘Let. XXV

Montagu, Mary Wortley, Lady. 1790. Let. XXV


http://www.gutenberg.org/files/17520/17520.txt


If we had no respect at all. They would trash your name and the two of them ran away. That was it! And we were. Listen. I am still here. Talking to you now.

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and her daughter was quite a prize. Stunningly
could marry her daughter or something like that.
Perhaps she hinted that after all this was over, he
and somehow... I can't remember how. Ah!
expression when someone puts Rohypnol in your
his head was plucked. Do you know that
house, and probably thought he knew which side
before. And he knew there was no man of the
before. And he knew there was no man of the
confidence, perhaps they knew each other from
something like that. It's hardly credible, but
We came to the bridge and the military police
--
they put us up in the secondary school and they
didn't even have an APC. They didn't
told us not to walk around with ID cards. They
told us not to walk around with ID cards. They

But we had time to kill and people were telling
stories. One man from Bentley, I don't know his
name and I missed the beginning of his story, but
he was saying, 'My son is a natural. There were
not enough men in the town to hold him!' And we
all enjoyed this and felt as proud as if he was
talking about our own sons.

Someone else told us about a wedding party
where they forced the bridegroom and his friends
to dig a hole in the earth. Just like that. In his
own orchard. At a wedding. Or maybe it wasn't a
wedding. Maybe it was a funeral. Well, either
way. It's not important. But you know that this is
not something you want to happen to you!
Believe me, when someone with a gun tells you to
dig a hole you know what the outcome is going to

We waited there for a while, by the bridge, but
the sun was out and we could have been queuing
for a football match, or a concert. We were
talking amongst ourselves and someone ahead in
the line had a few cigarettes left, so he'd light one
and then pass it around, so those few of us
nearby would all take a puff, you know we were
quite the connoisseurs, taking extravagant puffs
from these knock-off cigarettes. But we felt lucky.
And we were. Listen. I am still here. Talking to
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beautiful. So she tricked him into thinking that she would let him see her daughter naked, first. As a promise of things to come, I suppose.

Anyway, I'm not telling the story very well, but the mother then winked and said to him, 'Listen, big man, if you are going to see her naked, then maybe she ought to see you naked as well.' So he took his clothes off and... She had probably slipped him a mickey also. That's one of our expressions when someone puts Rohypnol in your drink. So he went along with this, and was congratulating himself on what a clever man he was and thinking about the delights that awaited him. But the mother took his clothes and hid them. Did she hide them? I don't know. Maybe he was asleep by that time; drugged. But he was completely naked! And the daughter wasn't undressed at all!

So while he was sleeping, they threw his clothes on the fire and then they locked him in the flat and the two of them ran away. That was it! And there were only women's clothes there; beautiful lacy underwear and things. By the time he woke up, all his friends were long gone, and he had to put on a petticoat. And go looking for the rest of his unit like that!