Transcript: 21 Revolutions Podcast

Podcast: Anyone Who Had a Heart by Zoë Strachan and Louise Welsh

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**Zoë Strachan and Louise Welsh**

Anyone Who Had a Heart, Zoë Strachan and Louise Welsh.

Everyone is made differently Olive is made with hair that grows and curls. She's good at hockey and running she gets picked early for netball usually second or third.

You're all so very different. Susan is average she gets picked fifth or sixth from last nobody says 'Aw Naw' when their team doesn't get her. Forget about those wretched words. Lemon are you a lemon Susan? You should go around with Gary because Gary’s an orange, Gary’s a fruit.

Think of yourself as a young woman because that's what you are. Susan’s mum bought her a training bra and a sanitary belt. Susan found them tucked into her drawer along with a little note that said just in case. It was part of being prepared Susan knew because her mum wasn't going to have a lot of time on her hands.

There was a pamphlet as well 'Girl's Questions Answered'. Susan didn't have any questions when she went downstairs she didn't thank her mum and her mum didn't mention it either, just said would Susan put the potatoes on to boil later as she was popping round to grans.

Susan decided to show Olive 'Girl's Questions Answered' when she came round for tea on Wednesday. Olive was good at asking questions. Some of the questions some girls ask. There were things her mum knew, things grown up women knew which was wrong, dirty to talk about. That was what the pamphlet was for to save anyone having to talk about these 'dirty things'. You're certainly not going to ask your parents. Are you hoping for a brother or a sister Susan? You're going to learn to be a good little mother too aren't you pet? Everyone grows up in a different way.

Susan has been keeping her scrapbook for the past two years ever since she's been allowed to watch Top of the Pops. Dusty is her favourite. Susan likes her dresses and the sad love song she sings. Her brother Brian hates Dusty but Brian doesn't know anything about pop music, all he thinks about is his Panini sticker collection. Of course no boy is going to look twice at you if you don't take trouble over your appearance. There's a craze for shiny lip gloss, black eyeliner and mascara that makes lashes so stiff and spidery they look like they might snap. Mandy even came to school wearing false eyelashes, a little bit like Dusty's, but Mandy is a skinny malink and she's ginger. Mrs Porches made her leave home economics and wash her face with soap. The school sent a letter home to parents. Susan’s mum said she was glad Susan wasn't silly that way and that wearing makeup gave you spots. Susan remembered the gloop of Olive's lip gloss, sugary sticky. Olive's curls sometimes brushed against it and stuck to her mouth. Olive said it felt disgusting. Of course. It was just a laugh Olive had been laughing too, both of them in stitches. Of course they had been practicing kissing. You didn't want to make a total fool of yourself with a boy did you? Olive showed her how you curled your thumb and finger together so they made a mouth and then you kissed it. Olive said that Susan was doing it wrong. Olive put her tongue between her fingers and wiggled it around it looked horrible, dirty moist and alive. Susan laughed so much that she thought she was going to wet herself. Of course. Olive said that there were better ways to practice. Susan pretended to be Donny Osmond and Olive kissed him... her. Oh Donny Donny. Then Olive pretended to be David Essex and Susan kissed him... her. Oh David David. Everyone did it Olive said otherwise how would you know? It was just a laugh.

It is perfectly all right to wash your hair. Susan isn't sure how Dusty manages to wash her hair. She must get it done by the hairdresser once a week. A shampoo and set. Susan wonders how it would feel to touch the candy flossy stiffness. Susan brought a kohl pencil with her pocket money and drew greasy lines around her eyes before bed one night, leaning in close to the mirror above the wash hand basin. She looked horrible, not at all like Dusty. It took ages to get off, so long that her dad complained and her mum knocked on the door and asked if she was all right. There were smudges on Susan’s pillow in the morning. You can put this rather painful thought right out of your head.

People have been extra nice to Susan since her mum started telling them the news. She says 'expecting' rather than 'pregnant'. Susan is glad of this, pregnant sounds rude, dirty. She didn't want anyone at school to know but Olive told them. Some of the boys made jokes but most of the girls have been okay.

You have been a child. Brian had Action Man and Susan had Sindy. Susan had been jealous of Action Man, but she could admit that now, and once had left him close to the fire deliberately so that his fuzzy hair caught fire. Her mum poured a mug of tea over action man, smacked Susan and sent her to her room. Brian had cried and later pulled off Sindy’s head and stretched her shoulders so the elastic between them snapped. The head popped back on and Susan tried to make up a story about a ballerina who had lost both her arms in a theatre fire but really Sindy was useless after that. The only danger is that: Susan wondered if her mum had ever kissed a girl, she couldn't imagine it but then she couldn't imagine her mum kissing her dad, not the way Olive said people kissed anyway. Maybe a peck, an anti-kiss. When she was on her own Susan tried kissing her hand again. Oh David David but it felt silly. Then she closed her eyes, oh Olive Olive and it felt better.

A habit which may be difficult to break: there's a picture of Dusty doing a show in America. She's wearing a maxi dress like the one she wore on the sleeve of 'Dusty Definitely'. The dress is white, it goes all the way up to the top of Dusty's neck and all the way down to her wrists. It is covered in hundreds of tiny tear-like beads. Susan imagines the weight of them the noise they must make when Dusty walks, swinging and shimmering all over her body. Susan looks at the picture for a long time before she turns the pages. The next clipping is a picture of the backing singers, there's a teeny wee girl in the middle, the bigger girl on the right and on the left the pretty coloured girl with the gap between her teeth. They look as if they're friends and have a good time singing with Dusty. Petting does not mean just a kiss. Everyone was talking about Julie and Greg; what they had done, if they had gone all the way. Susan joined in a bit but she couldn't come up with many suggestions about what Greg had done to Julie or Julie had done to Greg. Olive said that Julie had let Greg put his hand inside her knickers and that Julie was a slag. Susan wondered what kind of pants Dusty would wear, under the white dress, they would have to be tight and sheer so as not to leave a panty line. She showed Olive scrapbook and Olive had said that her brother had told her Dusty Springfield was a lemon. Susan said that Dusty wasn't and Olive laughed and asked if she was going to cry. Was she a big cry baby? Sexual thrills: some people had sexual intercourse Susan decided and other people had sexual thrills. Her mum and dad had had sexual intercourse at least three times. It's natural [singing] birds do it, bees do it. Susan’s dad turned the radio off. 'Bloody upper class poof' he said. Brian laughed and Susan’s mom said 'shh'. It's simply a question of the sort of girl you are: would marriage affect your popularity? The NME asked Dusty: 'probably' she said 'I’d never thought of it that way'. Why does the girl always get the blame?

Brian’s younger than you Susan, he's a boy, he doesn't know any better and let's not forget what happened to Action Man. Usually men who do this are mentally sick. Maybe Greg is mentally sick and that's why he and Julie went all the way. Is Julie mentally sick too? Will their baby be mentally sick? Susan’s new little brother or sister won't be, it'll be boring like Brian. Steer clear of men who have been drinking alcohol. 'The truth is I’m just very easily flattered by people's attentions' Dusty told the Evening Standard 'and after a couple of vodkas I’m even more flattered'. Avoid being on your own in lonely or dark places. 'There's one thing that's always annoyed me' she said 'and I’m going to get into something nasty here but I’ve got to say it because so many people say I’m bent and I’ve heard it so many times that I’ve almost learned to accept it. I don't go leaping around to all the gay clubs but I can be very flattered.

Girls run after me a lot and it doesn't upset me, it upsets me when people insinuate things that aren't true. I couldn't stand to be thought of as a big butch lady but I know that I’m just as perfectly capable of being swayed by a girl as by a boy. More and more people feel that way and I don't see why I shouldn't. Such a woman is sometimes called a Lesbian. [Playground chanting] Susan is a lemon. Susan is a lemon. Susan is a lemon.

Olive told Mandy that Susan fancied Dusty Springfield and then Mandy told Jennifer and then Jennifer told Greg and then the boys were all chanting at her at the school gates. Sexual practices between two men or two women: Susan walked the long way home from school on her own. 'Where have you been?' her mum said 'I need you to help me with things now that you're a big girl'. Punishable by law in the case of men. When Susan pressed her lips to Olives she could feel the softness, as well as the slight chapping. Her tongue was tingly but not like sherbet makes your tongue tingly. Susan’s mum and dad and Brian were downstairs watching the television. Most girls have crushes at one time or another. There was Mrs Bartholomew in Primary seven and Dr. Liz Shaw from Doctor Who and Donnie Osmond and Tony Al and cousin Kate, but only when she started wearing the Olivia Newton John trousers and Olive and of course Dusty. We all go through a stage: Susan’s school shirt rubbed against her chest now and her vest felt tight and itchy. She didn't want to ask her mum if it was time for the training bra or if that would make it worse?

A stage when we're specially attracted to one or two people of our own sex: The first time Susan remembers is when they went to the panto and Robin Hood was a girl. It wasn't her fault though that she expected Robin hood to be a boy, she thought he was at first and that made it all right. Cannot help being as they are: It was frightening, dirty, kissing Olive, strange, tingly. Often unhappy people: Susan’s mum had read the Evening Standard article as well. Susan had to retrieve it from the bin. She pasted it into her scrapbook and piled her other books on top to flatten the page out, there's a smudge of something that might be jam in the corner.

Sissies or pansies or queers: At lunchtime when they were all standing against the wall at the back of the gym Susan told the other girls that Olive had asked her to kiss her. 'It was disgusting' Susan said 'Olive grabbed me and pushed me onto the bed and stuck her tongue in my mouth, I thought I was going to suffocate or throw up'. 'Imagine if you'd thrown up' Dianne said 'if you'd thrown up in Olive's mouth'. All the girls laughed. Mandy asked Susan to tell them what had happened again. 'I told her she was weird, I said you're a freak Olive, you're a Lesbian, I’m going to have to wash my face now because it's all your slavers'.

When Olive walked towards them the girls all screamed and shouted. Olive's face went red and she turned and ran away. 'Look at her' Diane said 'she did it, you can tell from her face, the dirty leszer'. Are homosexuals dangerous? Susan's dad turned the television over when up Pompeii came on 'I can't stand that big poof' he said 'oh I like him' Susan’s mum said 'he's harmless'. 'The kind of harmless that would get him three years in the jail if he wasn't on the telly' Susan’s dad said. Remember that your attractive appearance may make him think you're egging him on. Thunder thighs that was what Gary shouted at her when the girls run past to go to the hockey pitch. Susan doesn't think she looks right in shorts, she's too pale and her legs have grown recently. They wobble where they didn't before. All they want is a loving husband and family. Olive must have cried all the rest of lunch time. When she came into class her nose and her eyes were red. She arrived a couple of minutes late and went straight to her seat. The teacher told Dianne to keep quiet and concentrate, unless she had something to share with the rest of them. For a second Susan thought Dianne was going to tell but she just winked at Susan and then went back to her verve conjugations. Furtive, snatched in dark corners: When the bell rang Olive said 'I’m never going to speak to you again Susan, I hate you'. Love, warmth, kindness, understanding unselfishness and sheer fun: 'I want to be honest very much' Dusty said 'the image of being a sad neurotic lady worries, me. Of course I have sadness in me everyone does'. Sheer fun. In the picture Dusty is so beautiful with her dark eyes and her long eyelashes. Probably the best person to ask is your mother: The baby due in June. There will have to be a few changes, Susan knows. She's been told lots of times now, so much that she's bored of it. Perhaps there's a specially understanding friend of the family or your doctor or minister. Susan paused when she saw Olive in the corridor after assembly but Olive shoved past without speaking. Walking so fast that her curls bounced on her shoulders.

You may find it easier to talk to a stranger: Hearing a noise Susan leans out of her window to look into the back garden, her dad is trying to teach Brian to fight. Dad's a bit heavier on his feet now than when he did boxing at school, Susan guesses. 'You have to stand up to bullies' he tells Brian, jabbing him in the ribs. Bullies are just cowards, you know, they pick on people they think are weaker but you can be strong. All that over a few Panini stickers Susan thinks!

Some of the questions some girls ask: One day Susan would like to be a backing singer for Dusty. They'll do shows all over the world and she'll stand in the middle between the gap-toothed girl and the big girl, wearing a black shift dress and perfect flicks of eyeliner. They'll dance together and laugh and none of them will ever cry or call each other nasty names. Susan flicks through her records until she finds her favourites. She lifts the lid of the record player and slips the 45 from its sleeve and places it on the turntable. There's a click and it starts rotating. Susan leans in close to get the needle in the right place. She hates the noise it makes when it bumps the edge and it's no good if it starts too late, not with this song. The music begins, Dusty sings and Susan joins in, hiding her thin voice behind Dusty's deep melancholy notes. 'Anyone who had a heart' sings Dusty, the needle sticks.

[both voices in unison] Anyone who had a heart, anyone had a heart, anyone who had a heart..

[Louise Speaks] There's a wonderful booklet in the archive from the National Marriage Guidance Council and we're not quite sure when it's dated, it might be about 1970 or 1971, and it's called "Girls Questions Answered." And when we read through that booklet we were quite inspired to use some of the the advice that it offered young women that that may have varied somewhat over the decades between the 70s and today.

[Zoë Speaks] And we sat down and chatted a lot and bounced a lot of ideas around. But you'd also found some stuff on Dusty Springfield. Well we had and one of the the quirkier items in the collection is a pack of sweet pea seeds that are Dusty Springfield branded sweet pea seeds. And finding that we thought it was just a lovely item, and we're both kind of fans of Dusty’s music anyway, um so we looked up, um information biographies of her, interviews with her in the press and and used her as one of of the crushes for Susan in the story.

[Louise Speaks] I imagine that for young boys and girls nowadays it isn't so different, I know that the internet is meant to answer everything but I don't think it does. I think there'll still be that currency of myths and um embarrassment still.

[Zoë Speaks] Yeah definitely you know and obviously in this story where you know there's a humour to some of the the questions and the statements and the pamphlet but um but there's also that kind of strange I suppose strange misinformation or I mean it shows you how much times have changed that you know it's very well meaning the National Marriage Guidance Council obviously did want to help young girls with with these questions but in doing so well they give them effectively a vocabulary for name calling, whilst telling them that it's it's really horrible to call gay people names they then list names that for example you shouldn't call gay people.

[Louise speaks] Yeah and I guess um every all of the the questions or the statements that Zoë read out are all taken from the pamphlet "Girls Questions Answered" and now we employed the cut up technique um made famous by by William Burroughs and mucked about with that a little bit. So we get, I suppose that patchwork that childhood or adolescence is, that intensity between moving towards a young woman and still a child um the school life the home life and tried to reflect that in the structure of the story.

**Laura Dolan**

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