

## Tinchy Stryder

### "My Sister"

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Do you remember my sister? How many mistakes did  
she make with those never  
Blinking eyes? I couldn't work it out. I swear she could  
read your mind, your  
Life, the depths of your soul at one glance. Maybe she  
was stripping herself  
Away, saying

Here I am, this is me  
I am yours and everything about me, everything you  
see...  
If only you look hard enough  
I never could.  
Our life was a pillow-fight. We'd stand there on the  
quilt, our hands clenched  
Ready. Her with her milky teeth, so late for her age,  
and a Stanley knife in  
Her hand. She sliced the tyres on my bike and I couldn't  
forgive her.

She went blind at the age of five. We'd stand at the  
bedroom window and she'd  
Get me to tell her what I saw. I'd describe the houses  
opposite, the little  
Patch of grass next to the path, the gate with it's rotten  
hinges forever wedged  
Open that Dad was always going to fix. She'd stand  
there quiet for a moment. I  
Thought she was trying to develop the images in her  
own head. Then she'd say:

I can see little twinkly stars,  
Like Christmas tree lights in faraway windows.  
Rings of brightly coloured rocks  
Floating around orange and mustard planets.  
I can see huge tiger striped fishes  
Chasing tiny blue and yellow dashes,  
All tails and fins and bubbles.  
I'd look at the grey house opposite, and close the  
curtains.  
She burned down the house when she was ten. I was

away camping with the scouts.  
The fireman said she'd been smoking in bed - the old  
story, I thought. The cat  
And our mum died in the flames, so Dad took us to stay  
with our Aunt in the  
Country. He went back to London to find us a new  
house. We never saw him again.

On her thirteenth birthday she fell down the well in our  
Aunt's garden and  
Broke her head. She'd been drinking heavily. On her  
recovery her sight  
Returned, a fluke of nature everyone said. That's when  
she said she'd never  
Blink again. I would tell her when she started at me,  
with her eyes wide and  
Watery, that they reminded me of the well she fell into.  
She liked this, it  
Made her laugh.

She moved in with a gym teacher when she was fifteen,  
all muscles he was. He  
Lost his job when it all came out, and couldn't get  
another one. Not in that  
Kind of small town. Everybody knew everyone else's  
business. My sister would  
Hold her head high, though. She said she was in love.  
They were together for  
Five years until one day he lost his temper. He hit over  
the back of the neck  
With his bullworker. She lost the use of the right side of  
her body. He got  
Three years and was out in fifteen months. We saw him  
a while later, he was  
Coaching a non-league football team in a Cornwall  
seaside town. I don't think  
He recognized her. My sister had put on a lot of weight  
from being in a chair  
All the time. She'd get me to stick pins and stub out  
cigarettes in her right  
Hand. She'd laugh like mad because it didn't hurt. Her  
left hand was pretty  
Good though. We'd have arm wrestling matches, I'd  
have to use both arms and  
She'd still beat me.

We buried her when she was 32. Me and my Aunt, the  
vicar, and the man who dug  
The hole. She said she didn't want to be cremated and  
wanted a cheap coffin so  
The worms could get to her quickly. She said she liked

the idea of it, though I  
Thought it was because of what happened to the cat,  
and our mum.

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