

Carly (part 1)

By : **AmberLibra**

This is a true story. Honestly. But why believe what I say to be true? Why believe the truth of your friends, your lover, your mother or your father? This is a true story. Honestly. No, this is a big, fat lie. This is a twisting, a weaving of truth and untruth. Carly confronts tormenting phantoms of childhood abuse and then has to survive. A dark tale of woe, whipping and sexual savagery.

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Table of Contents

Reasons....

The First Day.

New Year.

Tattoo.

Deep.

Aaron.

Spunk.

Kick Boxer.

Searching and Secrets.

Who Do You Love?

Choking.

Unsent Emails and Bad Dreams.

A Bedtime Story.

Flames.

Things Concealed.

Hints.

Guilty.

Scapegoat.

Blood Clot.

Isolation.

Void.

Someone....

Carly (part 1)

Touched.

Suzanne.

Inside Out.

Nadir.

Winter Women.

Fall Down.

Imprisoned.

Impact.

Carly (part 1) Chapter 31

Chapter 1: Reasons....

I get called names. Yet I am not what they say. Not in my heart. I am not a whore. Or a slapper. Or a slag... A lover. I like that word. *Lover*. It is red, juicy and passionate. I am a lover yet I do not know if I have loved, if I have ever really loved anyone. I get called names: Flower, My Dear, Treasure and Sweetheart. B. Cheat. Bitch. Witch.

My name is Carly. I am a lover. I will be your whore. Please you, tease you on my tongue. Take you deep into my mouth, swallow you. Choking on your pleasure. I please you so that you will not leave me. Do not leave me. *Please*. Leave me.

So, you have met her, have you? Carly. There is something wrong. Leave her alone. He leaves her. Whoever that he may be. Well, she pushes him away. She falls in love and hates in equal extremes. Frequently, intensely and there is no in between. Her concept of love may appear shallow, unripe yet her feelings are true, if a little raw. Her emotions are like the elements. Like fire and storms. She always falls in love, her version of love. It is always unexpected, at the wrong moments, usually with the wrong people. Always she is hurt. Is weak. Is mistreated. There are always tears, hanging up the phone, childish sulks and insults. She falls to her knees to beg forgiveness. Turn away now, you know what Carly is doing.

She likes the word 'Lover'. It is dramatic, transcendent....

Then always she makes a vow. Carly vows that she will never have another. Never. She will never have another lover. She is less mad when alone and highly independent. Yet brief moments of calm are merely a lapse, a rare lull within the tempest. Calm, oh, that brief cool smouldering before the cavorting, the leaping of bright, new flame. Her volatile nature blustering, reeling within the turbulence of a new enticing coupling as she falls in love again, out of control again, too soon to ever heal. How can this be love, though? She is young, seeking excitement, kicks. It cannot be love. Yet she wants so much to be loved.

Something is wrong. I know and you know that something is wrong. Why does she turn mad when they tell her they love her? Why does she almost spit this love back at them? Why does she not believe them? Why can she never really trust them? Something is wrong. Deep down. There is a place somewhere beyond the fire, the flames. I will take you there. There, when Carly is alone in bed. When she can hear the night rustling, rattling against her window. Realisations rustle beneath her consciousness like leaves in the darkness. Shadows, secrets. Something is wrong. She knows she is pretty. People are always telling her so. Why does she feel unlovable, so unworthy of love? Deep down. Somehow isolated. Different.

Shadows, secrets....

The doll's eyes flick shut. It has a fringe cut way too short that will never grow back. The eyes flick open with a sticky sound. The doll's body is soft, pink and white swirly material. He is standing above her. Raising his hand. Always, a hand poised ready to snuff out her flame. Blue eyes that are hateful. Carly does not know why he is angry. Why did she never feel loved by him?

Shadows, tensions. Realisations beneath consciousness weave their way up, out. Tangled, growing, worming a path.

Something wrong. Just games. A little girl, laughing, laughing, catching a gulp of air. Laughing. Legs pulled up. Apart. Laughing, laughing. Something wrong. Tensions. Realisations. Stop. Stop. The eyes flick shut.

Chapter 2: The First Day.

Oh, I call it the Christmas of the revelation. Typically dramatic for Carly, yet somehow in truth it is underplayed by the characters involved. REVELATION. It is not Christmas day but Boxing day to be exact. A revelation, to reveal...what? All those things we, well they, try to keep hidden, crawling up, worming their way up to the surface, weaving, swirling. She can feel it on Christmas day. It is like a force, inevitable, unfortunate; like a dark cloud, a storm brewing, like a wind from the past that cannot be suppressed. Like a wind from the past, from the shadows which suddenly whips up, tossing lies and truth and hurt. The gust destroys all the nice things, all the presents, the tree her mother decorated and the pretty cards hung on a string across the wall. It knocks her down to the ground.

It is Christmas. So? Every family has arguments at Christmas. It is traditional. But my family is not like every other family. All the nice things are gone. Like the slippers I bought. Like the photographs we took. Like the wrapping paper we laughed at because it had 'Happy Birthday' printed all over it. Abuse. That is what it is. Tearing through the family. Taking all the nice things away. My brother. My brother too. I cannot believe it. He had kept it a secret since he was eight.

I hold the tissue to my eyes. It disintegrates in the tears. I am sitting at the kitchen table. I cannot stop crying. My brother has gone upstairs to the room that used to be his bedroom. Mother stands at the sink, far away. He is at the head of the table. His false smile strains beneath the surface tension. No comfort, no apologies. No empathy towards me. I am twenty-two but I feel like a girl again. I am just a stupid girl causing trouble again. Mum stares out of the window. Why is she so far away? Why no comfort? Surface tension breaks. Someone falls. Then waves, waves, waves. Shock waves. This is just the beginning.

Christmas is over. There is a faint vinegar smell of cider. Exposed turkey ribs. I will never have another Christmas again. Never be happy again. A wave turns, rolls, washes over grains, remnants of the past, of nice things and of innocence broken into pieces. These waves, waves, an angry force, violent waters are crashing over me and leaving behind, nothing. Yet only I can see this. Only I know this.

It is the first day. I have no father anymore. My Gods lie, defeated upon a desolate land within. All the things you are supposed to believe in. Dead.

On the slow coach journey, away from my childhood home. I watch the families together, cosy, safe, huddled around shop windows and doorways, shopping for bargains in the sales. Protecting each other. Caring for each other. Fighting for each other. The children respect their mother and father, who nurture and guide their progeny as they grow. This is what I believed in. This is what I thought was right. Then aftershock crumpled my Gods to the ground.

I will never be happy again. Never be happy again. Abuse is a force. A poison. It poisons memory.

I liked the play fights. The laughter. The attention. Now it is no fun. I never thought that it was wrong. As I got older the play fights stopped because I did not want him to feel my new shape. I did not want him to see how I was changing.

Back in bed I sleep. I have been making an omelette and my clothes and hair smell of eggs and brown toast. This is definitely desolate. It is a creeping death inside, doubt and self-blame smoulder, burning like a cancer. Can anyone see this death? Another new God, a wanton joker, is looking down on me from the skies, smirking, saying maybe I deserved it. I was just a silly girl causing trouble again and I deserved it.

Carly (part 1)

Carole will be here soon. I am a puppet. The joker God pulls my strings. Smirks as I continue to do ordinary tasks like clean my tiny corner kitchen and make my bed, then sit slack-limbed, staring. I am blank like a wooden puppet. Carole, though, will think that I am alive. I shall feign living. I look in the mirror. My pupils are darkness, emptiness. Not myself as I knew myself before.

It is the first day. They say that from death grows life.

Inside, daddy, a fibroid of pain, germinates. It is torture. It is the first day. "I love you," you said. Love is a feeling not only a word. The love that I feel from you is impure. *Not right.*

I see the blue of my father's eyes. I confronted him. I saw the lightening cross his eyes. The look I fear inside, deep inside, beyond memory. I threw an arrow of shame to the accused. Now all is doubt. All is shame.

"Would it make you feel less confused if I told you that it was true?" Yes, that is what he said. Tangling me up with words. Twisting me up. It would make me feel less confused if I knew the truth. Yet, is that a confession? "Everyone does it," he said at first. "Perhaps when I was bathing you." *Everyone does it. Perhaps, perhaps?* Is that a confession? I could not believe what I was hearing.

All I could do was look at him and say, "That's wrong."

Nothing is real. Nothing is true. I have always been an optimist. I am always thirsty for excitement. Experience. Life. Always wanting to grow, to be grown up. Always wanting to sparkle, to burn brightly. Yet now I flail in disillusion. I am lost.

From death grows new life. Within grows a flame, small at first, flickering. Then within rises a rage, sudden and murderous. Within grows a fire. Flames that will eventually burn away all doubt. Will exterminate all self-blame, that threaten to turn all love to ashes. A fire, strong, the only feeling that is pure. Flames are the blazing of a hate, a hurt. The only feeling that seems true. People say anger is wrong. I look in the mirror. My eyes contain darkness and a new, budding bitterness. Then all I see is the blue of my father's eyes.

Carly would watch him, sensitive and perceptive. She watched him at the head of the table, alone, eating ice-cream. He was watching the television, a frown on his big face and a line of ice-cream streaked across his face like a child. Mother was at the sink washing the dishes. That was her job. Carly watched him eating ice cream, alone, like a child. He stood up and put the empty bowl on the draining board for her mother to wash. It was her job. He put his arm around her mother and tried to kiss her but she pulled away, as usual, as always. "I'll tell you when you're older," her mother would promise when Carly wanted to know how and why he had hurt her. Sometimes, a lot of the time, they would talk about him, her mother, her brother and her sister. Well, her mother did not really have anyone else to talk to. They would all talk about him together, in a conspiracy around the kitchen table, about his arrogance, his lies, his annoying habits and unwillingness to listen. Carly would feel the guilt of their betrayal as he, in the other room, unknowing and alone, would sit in his chair and watch television.

But, no, it was before then, before that guilt. Memories wrapped up inside. Tight ball, knots. Some will untangle, weave to the surface. Some will stay. Stay forgotten, invisible, insidious. Poisoning her, she thinks-peering into her mirror as is for an answer- rotting, turning her bad.

Oh, now where is her fire? I know that anger is here, yes. But, now, look, she is rendered powerless. With a frustrated scream she has smashed the mirror to the ground.

Glass sticks to my skin. I lie and watch a spider, small, darkly crouching in the corner between the wall and the skirting board. Shadows. Carole will be here soon. She cannot see me like this. She is not that sort of

Carly (part 1)

friend. I will smile, say "Hiya!" then open a bottle of fizzy wine. I will look alive whilst really my mind is foggy with shadows, clouds across blue. The blue of my father's eyes.

When he was asleep his face was calm, unlined, like a kind man beneath the cruelty, the one she sometimes saw. Like when he made Carly and her sister biscuits in the shape of stars. When he taught the girls how to knit, wearing his own handmade, wool dressing gown. He is not that man now. No, all memory is poisoned by this nasty revelation. Yet she is no longer a child, his child. He cannot touch her now. Angry waves wash over doubt, self-blame, lifting her from a draining weakness. There is no mythical devil. Nor wanton God. Nothing. She is alone. That is what she thought. Smaller, sharper shock waves crash in frustration against something unconquerable.

Carole ignores my red eyes. She gives me a present. Bath oils in a tiny wooden basket. I place them next to the black, velvet box with the gold earrings inside, from my mother. I am sure that she notices something is wrong. I cried before she got here, suddenly wrenching in grief on all fours whilst picking up the pieces of the broken mirror. We met at *Talking Pages* whilst I was temping. We would have a laugh. She still works there, drinks with friends in the evenings, she reads glossy magazines, a few books, mainly chick lit. She has not had sex in a year and a half. She is aloof, sometimes icy and hard.

I am too quiet. I tell her that I am sorry. I have fallen out with my father. *It is difficult to love him. We do not get on. We always end up angry.* "You are probably alike," she answers, "Just love him. Say sorry and give him a big hug." She looks up from her magazine; blue eyes beneath long, long brown hair. Pale blue: yet once I saw a landscape of green and many blues, vast and beautiful, when I looked into her eyes. I cannot trust her. Perhaps I have inherited my father's misogyny, my father's fear.

I seethe, inside. *I am not like him.* I remain silent. I slipped my guard. Must remember to keep my problems to myself. Cry to myself.

Yet Carly knows that to her next lover she will cry. She always does.

The next few days are dark, yet dispersed by an angry force that is pure, undiluted. True feelings which cannot be altered or denied. Pure hatred. A hatred that feels good. She fantasises about killing him. Going back there with a loaded gun. Blowing out his brains. Years of suppressed emotion liberated; years of suppressed hatred. Then confusion intervenes. Overwhelming confusion. Soon creeps, seeps into her inner core, her self-belief and self-image. Guilt and self-blame elapse.

Then there is just general pain. She is alone yet he touches her from afar.

Chapter 3: New Year.

New year. New fear.

I wish that I could enter his dreams and haunt him. I feel so evil. Perhaps it is dark forces, that mythical devil has entered me, intervened between a father and daughter bond, and is lying to me, telling me that my father abused me. I feel so evil. You see, the family will never be the same again. I have wrecked the family, upset everyone. I feel so evil. I will do something bad. I will punish myself.....

When I was four. When I looked out of my bedroom window, between the slightly flaking white, wooden frames, the weeping willow in the garden had been transformed magically to gold. I ran downstairs shouting, "A magic tree, a magic tree!" My parents laughed. I ran outside, into the orange evening light to touch the leaves of this enchanted golden tree yet as I got closer the gold curiously faded back to green. By the time I got close enough to touch, it was just an ordinary tree.

Yet, oh, what it is to exist somewhere beneath the ordinary, somewhere low, distorted; how it feels to long for the ordinary. Everything has changed. Where can I turn? Everything I believed in is gone.

I drink vodka. I cannot hope for a future. I cannot see. It is too dark. New Year means nothing to me.

Hangover. Hang her. Hanger. Her anger. Anger. Anchor.

Chapter 4: Tattoo.

Carly is down to her jeans and vest top and she is telling the tattooist what she wants. She lies back on the chair. The tattooist starts the needle and penetrates her skin. The tip of the needle just under the top layer. The burn, burn, burn makes her feel better- no- normal again. When he has finished the design, he asks her to look in the mirror. A serpent twists around her bicep.

Chapter 5: Deep.

I call it THE REVELATION. That is what *I* call it anyway. Did I really wreck the family??? Is it just me who is broken, dislodged?

My parents act as if it is nothing. They do not take me seriously. I am deeply shaken by their reaction. Their non-reaction. Yet, how much have I really hurt them? Did they hear me? Did they hear me? Why is mother so far away? And that look in his eyes: betrayal, something twisted. Something far beyond memory that gives me fear.

Abused. I choke on the word. I cannot tell other people. Abused, like being hit. Like being raped. But I was not forced to have sex....

How dare I say that I was abused, like other people, those other people, have been abused?

Before that Christmas, before the revelation, an unidentified sense of negativity marred her; an instinctive sense of injustice and mistrust of lovers. A storm was brewing. Confusion. Then realisation. Confrontation. Then the illusions of parental love and care torn away and left flailing in the harsh light of adulthood. Then after that Christmas a great darkness fell. It clung to Carly like fog. Cigarette smoke mingled in the cloud. She was choking. And coughing. She was smoking too much. Smog blinded her, dirty and exhaling pollution.

She was supposed to go back to college for spring term but somehow never made it.

After that Christmas a great, great darkness fell. Carly met vice. Sold her body to demons for cheap pennies.

I am alone in the darkness. I cry. No one hears me. I cry. All love of men, scarred, charred, forever. In the scars there are lonely caverns. It is a mutation. My family, myself, the world, nothing is the same. I feel a lot of fear. There is no one who can take this fear away.

Bloody, scars.

Chapter 6: Aaron.

Before Carly had confronted her childhood abuse, to herself or to her father, her sexual subconscious sought a lover that would dominate her. Tell her what to wear. A violent lover. He was a loner. An unknown writer of Gothic novels. A dabbler in the occult. An interest in Crowley, Tarot and the Ouija board. A reader of obscure philosophies and almost-buried religions. A hater of people. Shy? Somehow crippled by his own violent father. Aaron deeply believed that he could never be loved.

She had read the ticket over and over again deciding on what to wear. 'Strict dress code: rubber, leather, P.V.C, T.V, lingerie, tattooed, body pierced.' It would probably not be her scene but she was bored and brave. A familiar yearning for adventure and excitement flickered warmly within her as she dressed in a short, black dress and a long deep-red, fake leather coat. Swigging on a can of lager, she walked to the club alone. Coolly crushing the empty club in her hand she entered the club.

Dianna the full-time dominatrix (ex ballet dancer, ex junkie from New York) stood against the wall of a dimly lit alcove, surrounded by her slaves who ran around for her, took her dogs for walkies, fetched her nipple rings from London. "When I was a stripper..." in tiny silver dress and long, silver gloves, to hide the needle scars and poor, scratched tattoos, she began to tell another outrageous story of her life. A heavily tattooed and tusked savage danced in fur. Two transvestites in skin-tight red-rubber dresses, chic bobbed wigs and haughty arrogant manner posed almost back to back like still, silent mannequins. A bearded man, a teacher by day, and married, proudly displayed his phallus, encased in a black, studded P.V.C thong. He fell to one knee before a woman with cropped, bleached hair, who kicked him away lightly with the sharp toe of her thigh-length boots, laughing coldly.

Mechanical techno animated the small, low dance floor. There was a young dancer up high on a podium. She wore a diaphanous black dress, the sheer fibres floated around her like layers of web. She danced, offbeat, unpredictable around a pole. A small, spider-like woman, she climbed up the pole and stretched over and down, clinging on with her legs, arms towards the floor. A tall, spiky punk with a leather gun holster strapped over a muscular, tattooed torso leaned nonchalantly across the bar and frowned into his beer. A six-foot party girl, strong with no need for high heels, danced in bikini and feather boa. Her girlfriend, in pigtails, danced with her, wary, on guard, ready to warn intruders, "Hands off! She's mine!" She wore a pink, rubber skirt and as the lights moved with the throb of the music there was the illusion that she was wearing nothing on her lower half. A woman with neat, permed hair and sensible glasses wore tight leather straps over exposed breasts. Her companion, a tall man in a red wig, lingerie with suspenders bent forward on the dance floor and suckled her breast. Away from the office, they could do as they please.

'Spank! Spank!' was a place of metamorphosis. As Carly walked down those steps for the first time she saw the suits released from their suits. The bank clerk, the politician, the doctor became night creatures where the dowdy feathers of conservatism transformed into exotic birds. They left the smooth, slick and grey public image of respectability and professionalism folded up in a sports bag in the club's cloakroom. In suits, they are bound, authority within the workplace unquestioned, place in the social scale clear yet beneath the suburban drabness there sprawls an underworld where the suppressed libido writhes. Brogues swapped for stilettos. False eyelashes, breasts, a wig. Beneath the grey lies darker hues of sexual desire and brighter colours of the imagination contort. Where rules are not so straightforward. Where sexual roles are all important. Released from the suit, then bound again in fur, leather, rubber. Chains around ankles and arms. Clamps upon nipples and mouth. The attire reveals a desire for enslavement or domination.

Men and women stood back to back, forming a queue. Hardcore S and M fanatics, the curious first-time voyeur, the open-minded college student out to gain extra curriculum experience. Each massaging the other-man to man to woman to man- slowly moving to the techno rhythm. The barriers between fetishism and

Carly (part 1)

normality, sexuality and gender became indistinct. The voyeur became participant observer as he was urged to join the group massage; latent lesbian fantasies were comforted and fuelled by the women dancing in bra and suspenders; the young man with the recent tattoo recalled the curious sensation of the pain endured and soaring with adrenalin afterwards whilst admiring and comparing the body art of others.

In the foyer, a naked woman was helpless in wooden stocks. A crowd gathered as another woman got behind her, closed her eyes in concentration and used her tongue to torment and tease. A thirty-something catwoman was then lightly flagellating the bearded man. Back on the dance floor there was the smell of amyl nitrate and leather. A chartered accountant in animal face paint, leather shorts and collar bought two female slaves on leashes from a large round man in a rubber suit and sporran. Ruby, the middle-aged tranny, campily pranced around the dance floor, loudly proclaiming that he was a star. He was a television star in Malta. Black-skinned and dressed in red silk, he laughed, grating and devilish. Cawing like a crow, high on something or another.

We would go to the club where we met every Friday. Aaron loved to dress me beforehand. We would watch the pole dancer. She was like an acrobat, deftly twisting her body around the silver pole. I would hide my jealousy as his green eyes scoured her thin, muscular body and he would place money in the cup of her sequined bra. His look was that of worship, as if this dancer somehow possessed something, a sexual potion; something beyond mere prettiness or physical beauty; something that I could never have. I would go onto the dance floor and move to the heady jungle rhythm.

There was another room at 'Spank!Spank!' He would never let me enter. I would see lights, alternating colours and get a feeling of heady excitement. I would step closer and feel a deep bass sound vibrating through my feet, drawing me to the room, and just see glimpses, silhouettes of women dancing together against the walls of the corridor. Then I would feel his hand on my shoulder, or holding me tightly around my arm. He would hold my face in his hands. Rings on every finger. A leather clad dandy.

Aaron was handsome yet ugly. Deep olive eyes. Dark hair and dark moods. After the club he would dominate me in the bedroom. I would lie down on his blue velvet bed, waiting to be taken completely. Tied up, I had no responsibility. He asked me if I felt powerless. I once joked that he was the one doing all the work, all I had to do was lie back and enjoy it. His temper still lay hidden. He seemed kinder, then.

Soon Aaron would dominate me outside of the bedroom. He would criticise me. It seemed that I was not the person that he wanted me to be. First, small things. He did not like me smoking as his mother had died prematurely of a heart attack, herself a smoker. Each time that I lit a cigarette he would mention tumours of the blood, ask me to leave the room or ignore me. I stopped smoking (in front of him). He did not like my beloved biker jacket. Angry and defensive I argued that I would wear nothing but a sheet to shroud me and pulled the sheet from the bed, twisting it around my body like a robe. He stormed from my bed at two o'clock in the morning whilst I screamed that *I hoped-he would-crash-his-car-on-the-way-home.*

I would miss him. I was besotted no matter what feelings he had for me. He was my lone warrior, distrusting of everyone. Thinking himself unlovable yet needing love most of all. He was my sensitive cat. I found his arrogance and pride beautiful. I threw the jacket away. I would dress for him. He told me what to wear. He told me that my hair looked like rat's tails so I cut it in the style of his choosing. I died my natural brown hair blonde for him.

Carly looked into the mirror at the hair encased like dreadlocks in the bluey-white peroxide mixture. She could see the roots turning to the first lightening stage of orange. Then yellow. Then blonde bombshell. Stunner. Monroe. Sixties starlet. Baby. Bimbo. Bunny girl. Sex symbol. Sex object. "I'll make a good blonde," she thought and smiled wickedly at her conspiratorial reflection. Her eyes looked darker in contrast with her hair.

Carly (part 1)

Like my father, Aaron would get angry. Angry with me and irrationally so. He would accuse me of not listening to him, of flirting with other men. I fought back. He liked that. He would buy me flowers with quotes from Byron or Coleridge on the little card.

Eventually we stopped going to the club. We lost social contact with others. I would see him only. I was close to no one else. Yet, to someone like Aaron how close could I be? Isolated, obsessively fighting my lover, my enemy. Isolated in my willingness to be mistreated by him. I loved his arrogance, his arched brow. I would give him head. I loved him best after an argument, after his cruel taunts and degradations in public. After his walking away and leaving me stranded. After we had both spat the most venomous words that we could to hurt the other. After he had grabbed hold of my hair, thrown me face down on the bed and fucked me.

He would dress like the dandies in his favourite novels. Or he would be my Victorian stepfather.

Carly would cry, an incomplete woman unable to have an orgasm when they made love, or fucked, whatever the definition of their coupling was. When Aaron left her bed she would make herself come, wrapped within private crumpled sheets and her lover's scent. She would tell her friend, Carole, who I think that you have already met, she would tell of her arguments with Aaron. Somehow proud of the violence. Carole would ask her why she stayed with him. She could not voice her need for him. Her masochistic need.

He took off his black, leather belt. Long skirt around my knees, I lay on my front, on the bed, feeling the soft, royal-blue velvet beneath my hands. I could see the white of Aaron's shirtsleeve, ruffles around the cuff, his arm raised. He struck me once. The sting made me suck in my breath. He struck me again. *No more. No more.* He struck me again, the last time. So careful not to mark the skin. Leather clad dandy. He was a good abuser.

Afterwards, the criticisms began again. He criticised but he still wanted me. His poetic words of love had curdled sour, turned to cruel and sleazy. He told me what to do, never asked me. He would read me quotes from the Marquis De Sade. Aaron did not like me eating. At least, he did not like to watch people eating or for me to eat too much. He said it was what happened to the food once it was digested that he did not like, as if it was degrading. He hated me licking my fingers after snacking. Although very slim, he would call me a glutton.

Then, I could not sleep. I would have dreams of flying. I would be flying in front of a busy road, trying to get hit by one of the cars. Instead, I would drift out of the way as if something was pulling me from the oncoming car. In these dreams I would be depressed. I would say to myself that I was tired of reality. I would wake with the knowledge that Aaron had failed to ring me again. I did not want him as my lover. His darkness, distractions and restrictions held no attraction for me anymore.

Chapter 7: Spunk.

Always she denies that she is in love. Love. In the aftermath of every relationship she vows that she will never let herself be hurt again. She will never have another lover. Sometimes it feels that love is a sickness.

Love. Small Fatal worm. Ugly tainted sperm. Sticky silent germ. Never learn. Never learn. I drained you until you were empty like a one nightstand. Dried spunk on the bedclothes. I pleased you like a lover, like a whore so that you would not leave me. A cheesy rubber taste like yoghurt, all that is left now. That stain. Half a condom wrapper. Few hairs. And sore.

When I pee it feels like I am on fire.

Chapter 8: Kick Boxer.

I stared out of the window at the men playing summer tracks on the big, black beat box. A man in casual street wear stood up, changed the tune, unselfconsciously began to rave. He looked cool with coffee cup held carefully in one hand, joint in another. I was sitting in Herbie's cafe. Inside, staring out. I did not usually go there, I just wanted to get out of my flat. I had just phoned Aaron and his vagueness and distance had left a cloying frustration, a leering dissatisfaction. I felt heavy, weighed-down. I wanted to trust. I wanted to love and be loved. Just like him. Why? Why was it impossible for me to have a normal loving relationship with a man? I felt heavy, cheated.

I finished my hot chocolate. Dried white cream had floated down and stuck to the side of the cup. A song that I recognised pumped against the cafe window. It reminded me of fun times, young times, getting drunk and dancing. I left my empty cup and walked out of the door and passed the men sitting outside. A man leaned back in his chair, dressed darkly, anonymously in navy. As I crossed the road I could feel him watching me. "You're so sexy, you're so sexy," he raised his voice above the music, then louder as I continued to walk away, "I can almost taste you." I liked his confidence, his rude arrogance. Although shocked and embarrassed I felt flattered by his attentions. *What a caveman.* I turned my head quickly to see him leaning back in his chair, grinning. He was young, younger than Aaron. He was handsome and wild, promising fun. I felt slightly guilty of mental betrayal towards Aaron, but only slightly. After all we were not really seeing each other anymore.

Desire. A wish. A hope. Optimism and sunshine. A tingly feeling. Excitement, expectation. Sexual arousal. Tingle, tingle.

I saw him again. He walked towards me. Passed by me on the street. I looked away at the ground, shy. I could not help a smile slip across my face. He told me that I was beautiful. It was close, hot, my flowery hippy skirt floated around me, skimming my ankles. I felt small, feminine as he swaggered past like a sailor dressed in blue. His facial features were still indistinct, yet a well toned body, short brown hair.

Meeting him coincidentally and speaking and hiding and blushing within. His erotic astral body in her inner fantasy world still a tingly memory. Warmth. Tingle, tingle. Meeting him and speaking at last. Like a dream. His friendly, throaty laugh. Watching him, unaware. Looking into his eyes, handsome. Deep blue eyes. Not pale blue.

The next time I saw him he stopped me in the street. We went back to my flat whilst Aaron, in unknowing isolation, sulked. We liked the same music. I made him coffee. He was a weight trainer, kick boxer. Street fighter. He called me 'B' for Bardot. I liked that.

Playing the music that he plays. Hearing his voice in the interweaving of notes, key and melody and hoping that he can hear her murmur in the void of noise. Interconnections, meeting him coincidentally.

We did not make love that evening. There was no proof that I, B, was two-timing Aaron. I could free myself from that thought that I was still somehow tied to Aaron. No, he went home. It was past twelve and my head was buzzing from too much coffee, too many cigarettes. I could not sleep. I put my hand between my legs. As the pleasure heightened I saw the image of my kick boxing man in my head. He was nonchalant, willing me to orgasm. I lay back and enjoyed the contractions of my orgasm, an orgasm of desire for him.

Desire. Will it always be unrequited? Sweet frustration. If she treads the path of self-delusion- delusion of her image of him, self delusion- she summons the sacred idol she has built of him inside her mind. This idol will remain until her desire has led her to him. She uses her magic. Visualises herself in his home, on his bed,

Carly (part 1)

walking naked out of his shower after lovemaking. Witch-like, she sends a succubus to him in the night. Obsession. She sends a female demon to kiss his naked body in his sleep. Possession. If they became lovers, she would continue to think of him, yearn for him when apart. Her independence having to compromise with the longing to be with him, be part of his life. The myth she builds of him saves her from despair as she lies to Aaron on the phone. Carly makes excuses not to see him.

We met again. Smoked hash, ate pieces of fried chicken from the take away, went shoplifting for fun. Later, he told me that he had no mother. He showed me the one photograph that he had of her. She was very beautiful, glamorous crimson lips and long, blonde hair.

If they became lovers.....

"You are like a sailor, no a pirate. Wild and free, your spirit guiding you through seas both smooth and rough. If I were with you sailing, we would both be able to see above the waves and survive hidden currents. Your bed- an oaken boat. Desire. Desire leads me to your door. You are not there. I wait and hear the rustling of leaves on trees. Yearning. I never see you. Have not seen you for a week. Never see you. You in your parallel universe. I in mine. I am with other people and isolated. I am close to no one. If you were here, you would melt the ice. If you were here you would be on my side. I on yours. I never see you. Who are you with? Do you ever think about me? How significant am I in your life? When will you take me? Would I fear your penetration? Would you be afraid of my desire, this vacuum: my cunt, my womb and pelvic floor muscles pulling you in, eating your cock, sucking you in. Sucking you in until you came too soon. You would fear that you did not please me enough and be ingratiated by my desire."

Reading my diary now brings all those feelings back. I remember it now, so clearly. I went to his house. He was in. He seemed pleased at first. "Hello, Miss," he smiled as he opened the door and let me in. I began to talk, talk, talk, so pleased to see him and I began to take out the food which I had brought for us out of my bag, croissants, cheese, grapes. Talk, talk, talk.

"You've got to go, B," he said.

"Why?" I asked and looked at him, hurt from sudden, unexpected disappointment.

"You've got to go. I've planned to go upstairs and train with Roz." I sat, insolent. Dressed in black. Bleached blonde hair and red lipstick, like the only photo that he had of his mother who abandoned him, *little baby boy*. I could hear Roz's weights banging from the upstairs flat onto the ceiling.

"Please," I pleaded, sitting on the floor, looking up and feeling hurt, *"please."*

"You can stay," he said, "but only if you take your clothes off and get into bed."

"O.K".

"Right. I'll go and tell Roz I'm busy. Stay there, B."

Chapter 9: Searching and Secrets.

So, even before the revelation, there was something already tangled up in a messy knot inside her. Slowly untangling, worming a path, coming up to the surface. Carly needed the excitement, the fire and the storms to fill in the emptiness and a feeling of being unloved, of being unlovable. She wanted to be mistreated. Part of her always craving a surrogate fatherly type of love. She wanted someone to love the person she felt could not be loved. But she got it all tangled up. Love is not sex.

She let herself be used. Always looking for a love that she felt she did not deserve. Oppressed by her craving, her search. As if there was someone, someone from the past, past lives, someone who she knew yet had never met. Yet her search was seemingly pointless. She would always be let down. She would find weakness and faults in boyfriends who were too kind to her. She wished for a Godlike man, someone to look up to, who was too strong for her criticism. She was drawn to the demon-like libido of the sadist, the outsider, and the bad boy. At least then she would not have to trust, as her lover would not trust her.

Mistreated. Mistreated by her daddy, mistreated by her men.

Carly wanted to be treated like a child. A young woman. A sexual woman. A womanhood that she had discovered for herself in the night. She willed lovers to her with secret incantations. She believed that a Romany spirit spoke to her in dreams. She was a gypsy woman in another life. She danced in the dark, felt free in her mind like a sorceress. Her desire pulled her to her lovers. Her desire was like a spell, a curse. In the middle of the night, alone, she vainly studied her reflection. Found beauty in certain angles of her cheekbones. She placed the mirror between her legs and was torn between honour and shame. Alone, in seclusion, fantasies untangled. She masturbated over secrets. Like a vampiress she entered this secret world and preyed upon the innocent.

Chapter 10: Who Do You Love?

Who do you love? He sang along crazy to the Bo Diddley song and looked at me over the candlelight. His eyes were deep, a brow strong and kingly. *Who do you love?* I wiggled, under the duvet and safe. He smiled, a mouth, kind. I wriggled, giggled; he made me feel like a little girl. I sensed that was how he wanted me to be. He was clean and smart in dark blue, navy t-shirt, dark blue trousers- clean cut yet a rough chin and dark around his eyes. I liked this. It looked as if he had lived. He held the joint in his fingers, shadow on his chin, which jutted out as he sucked deeply on the roach. He was strong. I felt overpowered. A demonic smile. Sexual danger.

"B", he sounded like a black man, looked like a black man in the shade, his brow smoothed and puppy dog eyes as he put out the spliff in the ashtray. He pulled down his tracksuit trousers and stepped out. His erection smoothed from his body, just another taut, tanned muscle. He held it in his hand, started rubbing, rubbing. Held it against his hard body builder's stomach and let go. It sprang out, straight and smooth. "B", he said again, looking at me, puppy dog eyes. Warm candlelight mixed with a heavy feeling of sexual stimulation and fear. A strong man, a disciplined man, weight training equipment in the corner of the room. A sexy, street fighting man.

He walked up to me where I was lying on the bed and pulled up, and off, his t-shirt. A wide chest, firm and defined from his workouts. And such a handsome face. Such a handsome face. Eyes dark in the candlelight. He transformed again. Italian eyes like a gangster from a movie. Holding his dick in his hands. He looked down at his erection then up at the ceiling with an exaggerated horny expression, comical. He flicked his dark, sexy eyes upwards as if he was doing something wrong. I laughed. He looked so naughty. He wanted it. I wanted it. He looked at me like an animal then smiled. Taut muscles like he wanted a fuck, like an animal. He pulled back the duvet. Still warm in the candlelight, I twisted my body. Lay on my side, wriggling my toes. Looking sexy for him. For him. *Little woman, for him.* I looked at him from beneath my tousled hair and we both smiled.

Naked, he lay next to me. I gently touched, then kissed his strong chest. "Get on top," he said. Not nasty. I jumped up, straddled his chest, pussy in his face. "Get on." My hand was next to his temple; the other guided the smooth muscle into me. Down, up, carefully. Moving slightly. I moved up and down, up and down and began to relax. I leaned forward; let him do the work, a thrusting pelvis as I moaned against his ear. Penis. Vagina. Cunt, prick. Indistinct, together, merging until androgyny, male, female, as one. *I have a prick and he has a cunt.*

I rode him, big strong man; his arms were behind his head. He was moaning softly, like a woman...

..."Don't flick ash on the bed," he brushed it off with his finger. *Fussy.*

"I didn't, it just fell," I leaned, dreamed, one arm against the pillow. *When he is angry he is like an Italian,* I thought. *I like it when he makes love to me. He likes me to wear make-up in bed. He likes my bleached blonde hair and red lipstick.* I brushed the bed where the ash fell.

"Don't do that, you're making a mess, B."

"Do you like me?" I asked, him, suddenly, intensely and put the cigarette out in the ashtray on the side, whilst the feeling of rejection, an old wound flared up, sore.

It's just sex. Just sex. I like his body, he likes mine but now I'm looking for something more. Love? And I don't even know him, he hardly knows me and I feel used and dirty and low.

Carly (part 1)

"Do I disgust you?"

"Do I disgust you?" he repeated, not asked, "what 're you talking about? Taking the piss aren't you?" and he lay back staring at the ceiling, "just get out."

He's had me, now he doesn't want me. Just a doll to play with and put down, a rag doll. Used, abused and all the old cliches.

The wound, rejection, flared up and bled; it bled into every crevice that could, should contain love, or at least an intimacy or warm high from sexual enjoyment.

The old cliché- he's just like all the others. Just get out? Used and abused. The bastard. God, I could just be anyone. Any old tart. Who the fuck does he think he's talking to?

I turned around and swiped his face, *smack*, then hit him hard in the chest. "You silly cow!" He grabbed hold of my arm. I fought back.

We're fighting. We're out of the bed, I'm naked, he's wearing his navy t-shirt and he's weaving, dodging, pulling me to the ground and I'm hitting and angry and dirty and used. I grab the stem of the yucca plant from the top of the television and flail it at him and we fall, fall.

I was lying in the corner by the door, him half on top of me, the soil had come out of the pot and the plant was next to me, roots exposed. I was crying. "I was never loved by my dad," I cried, "never felt loved by my dad." He had his hand on his chest, facing me, close.

"I was never loved by my mum," he said, voice straining.

And it's over. Too depressed to say sorry, to say anything really and it's over. I just get dressed and walk out, back into town towards my flat. Hollow and useless. It is over.

Chapter 11: Choking.

Carly ran. She ran to Aaron. His soft Welsh voice was distant on the telephone yet between silences he told her that he wanted to see her. That he had missed her. He had been writing the first draft of his next book. A collection of short stories called 'How My Father Taught Me to Hate.'

He sat at his computer, typing. She lay low, sleeping in his bed. Spending her day reading through the weird books on his bookcases. There were no bruises from her fight. Yet he noticed how she tensed when he touched her. How her smile seemed to falter. Aaron's journal lay by the side of his bed. She had never read it. It was his personal diary. For some reason, whatever reason, one afternoon, she picked it up and read it through. She knew they were similar in the way they both expressed themselves through words, through these private cathartic scribbles and etchings of memories.

He wrote about her. How she had annoyed him on this day or that. He wrote about the beautiful dancer he had seen at 'Spank! Spank!' How much he wanted her. He had underlined the word 'beautiful'. She remembered how he had watched the small, dark dancer in the club.

You must know Carly well enough by now to be able to guess what she would do next.

She told Aaron that she had read his journal. She had no shame about reading it. He said that the girl he had seen meant nothing to him. "I think you are beautiful," he said to her and added, "underlined." They continued to quarrel on and off.

She told him about the kick boxer.

I see his face now. Red and ugly. Arched brows. He grabs my throat. I choke. I see his face now. Red and ugly. Rings on every finger. He says that he wears them in case he has to hit me. My leather clad dandy. Glass eyes in the rings. Eyes staring.

....Can't breathe. My larynx is crushing, crushing. I think I hear it popping. Can't breathe. Can't see. Can't breathe.....there....There she is. Goddess. Goddess of power. I can't breathe. There she is....

The first time I saw her was on a postcard my sister had sent from India. She looks different from the picture. She might even have a different name. Yet I still recognise her. The blood looks fresh. She has been fighting. There is a war going on somewhere.

Kali. Her name is Kali. Blood drips from her swollen tongue. Blood on her teeth, blood in her long, black hair. One hand holds a severed head, the other, a sword. The blood from her tongue seeps down onto her necklace of skulls and her ears are decorated with faces. The faces of her devoted children. Serpents writhe, entwine her. They say she is divine. They say she is evil. They say she kills demons.

Kali. Hindi Goddess of death and destruction. Your bandit followers, Phansigars, sacrifice your victims. Thuggee, the act of strangulation. Like a thug, an ugly thug, he holds my throat. Kali: destroying all ego, displaying the bullshit. Destroying to reveal the truth. We are violent martyrs to your cause. His dignity gone in rage, my pride gone in humiliation. My feminine spirit disparaged by him.

There is a war going on somewhere. Male ego seeks to dominate and control. Kali will fight and maim to purge demonic, oppressing phallic power.

He lets go.

Carly (part 1)

....I'm just lying here crumpled up. I won't cry. I won't cry. I won't let him win. A sound comes out of my throat. Like a demon coming out. Like an orgasmic cry, like a demon coming out. I lie crumpled, stomach muscles heaving. Puking out the sound. Pins and needles all over me. Like I'm leaving my body. Pins and needles. I'm so ill, so ill, so low....

He just stands there in the doorway where he had me pinned up against the wooden frame. Dark hair falls over his eyes. He does not care. Supporter of Nietzsche. Superman of his own lonely turmoil. Dabbler in the occult. He does not care. Anal-retentive fascist. He does not love me, even like me, but admires my defiance, petulance, the way I fight him like I fought my father. Rings on every finger. Leather clad dandy. Supporter of Byron. Superman of his own lonely chasm.

I am gulping and choking tears. I lie until I can move again.

Chapter 12: Unsent Emails and Bad Dreams.

Hi Laura,

I hope you had a Happy New Year. I got your card and your email and I'm really sorry for not getting in touch sooner. I'm a bit messed up at the moment.

I delete it.

Hi,

I hope you had a nice Christmas and New Year. Sorry I haven't been in touch. I decided to write to you as I've something very important to tell you. Please don't be upset about what I am going to tell you.

I had an argument with dad on Boxing day. I told him how angry I felt inside and how I didn't respect him because of the way he mistreated the family in the past. There was a big row.....what's new? How can I forget all the rows that I had with him when I was a teenager with died red or blue hair and a nose piercing? This time it was different, though. Justin said that dad had touched him when he was 8 during a game they used to play and he'd been going to counselling. He said that he felt ashamed, guilty and confused for years afterwards. I mentioned the play fights I used to have with him, remember? He used to call them 'rough ups'. I thought that it was just a game. Now I know that he just wanted to touch me. There are things that I can't remember. There are things that you told me, too. Things that I didn't and couldn't acknowledge.

I don't know if I can remember. But I'm sure. It's so far away. It's too complicated to make sense of.

Justin tried to explain to dad that it wasn't a game. It was sexual abuse. Dad didn't get angry like I thought he would. He's nearly sixty so age has probably mellowed him. He said that he couldn't remember, that it was just a game. He even smiled. Even laughed with mum over some joke, saying that it's a pity you can't choose your parents. I told him that I felt confused. He said, "Would it make you feel less confused if I told you it was true." It was as if he was testing me. Trying to find out what I knew, what I could remember. Mum was there, silent, staring out of the window, listening.

I feel guilty about accusing our own dad of something so bad. I feel confused. There is no real proof. And I feel sad. Very, very sad. Justin said that he was pleased he'd got his feelings out into the open. I felt awful, dazed. I walked, drained, cold, through the snow to the coach station; it snowed the whole journey home.

He almost confessed. He admitted to the psychological abuse, the bullying. I saw him cover his face with his hands. "What have I done?" he said to Justin. He always wanted respect from Justin.

If he was a decent father I would have no reason to accuse him. I know that he had an unloving, unhappy childhood but that doesn't excuse him. He must be mentally disturbed. I don't care if I never see him again in my life. He should've known not to touch us that way.

I feel as if I have no parents anymore. Mum hasn't phoned me since. It is as if she doesn't realise the profound effect this has had on me. I don't feel like speaking to her. It's as if she doesn't care. I'm angry with her for staying with a bastard like that for all those years, letting him hurt her and her children. I do love her but I'm very confused. I don't want this self-pity. I want to somehow get better. I'll make an appointment with a counsellor. I feel different to other people, other women. Other women who have kind, good fathers and had a secure upbringing.

Carly (part 1)

I keep feeling nervous, then OK for a while, then sad, then angry, then self-blame. Maybe I shouldn't have shouted. Maybe I should've tackled the situation a bit better. Writing this has helped me come to terms with the situation and I've cried a bit. A tear has fallen onto the keyboard! I love you, Laura, please be my friend. You'd never believe how I'm feeling. Please, if you can, explain to mum how I feel.

Bye, lots of love,

The email seems contrived. Melodramatic. I will not send it.

I kissed my father on the cheek as I left that day.

My father humiliated me. He makes me hate. My father is a liar, a mutated image. My father is an evil monster twisting all love, all kindness. He is taking over. He has made a fool of me. Does memory wrong me? Am I going mad? He is in my head. It hurts and I scream, face down on my pillow. He is forced out, from my exploding head; he floats up into the air. A phantom. This phantom haunts me, an echo of his voice. His laugh haunts me. This phantom hangs around me, makes me ill. I am sick.

In the night, reality and imagination merge. I wake from strange dreams. I have a cigarette. Then sleep, wake. Barriers are unclear. I change from flesh to spirit. Human to animal. I am in the club that I used to go to with Aaron. It is quiet and empty. Tatty, in the absence of disco lights and preening dancers. A girl lays still, legs splayed, helpless, like a foal. It was I. I did it. Black paint peels from the corners of seedy walls. I fly from her. Her blood on my teeth. I fly from this room to the next. I breathe in the muggy scent of spilled beer and illicit smoke. The tattooist sits at the bar, his skin etched heavily with the inks of his trade. He is talking to a dark haired punk. They are smoking and drinking pint glasses of blood. I am hungry.....

I have a cigarette and a cup of instant hot chocolate. The bedside lamp shines onto the marbled window and I see dull shapes through the glass. I think of my father. I am sweating. His phantom hangs around the room.

...I am in a shop with Carole and she asks me what I want. There are two men in the shop, anonymous, tall and young. They are slightly intimidating but they seem OK. I say that I cannot remember what I wanted. The shop is strange, mobiles move mechanically from the ceiling and I am watching the dancing of the colourful sweets that are moving mechanically from the metal frames. I notice that the mobile that I made is there. It has yellow and purple paper flowers on it. I stand beneath it with Carole. She mentions to one of the men that I made it and takes off one of the flowers and puts it in my mouth like a Spanish dancer. I step outside and see a mutant. I know him from somewhere. He has to wear a mask. If he takes off the mask, his head will ooze out with no shape or form and if the innards touch you then you will be harmed. He speaks high up in a doorway at the top of some stone steps wearing the plastic mask that is half black, half white. He is saying that all his friends have died. He puts his back-gloved hands to his face and starts telling a gathering crowd how much it itches and hurts. "It's all right for you," he moans. "It's all right for you." Next to me, in the crowd, I see another mutant who tells me that he is homosexual and that he has been raped. His green jelly-like appearance is more repulsive than the masked mutant yet for some reason he disgusts me less. I look at the mutant on the steps, however, and feel sorry for him. Inside, I feel sad.

"Is he OK?" I ask. My question is unanswered as he begins to chase us. The mutant takes off his mask and pink tendrils, entrails of brain spurt a deadly bloody cloud across the shrieking, running, ducking crowd. It is sickening, so vile. We are in someone's house sheltering from the mutant. Someone says that it will be all right because the mutant will come in, watch television and laugh. He will forget that he ever chased us. Yet I am scared when a large figure enters the room.

I am sitting on the lawn in the summer. A big, hairy dog is running around. My father picks up my doll from the grass and gives it to the dog as if it were a bone. The dog chews it up and I start crying. He says, "That's

Carly (part 1)

what you get for being naughty. Shut up, it's only a doll." He is wearing a pair of black, national health glasses and looks like a pervert. He holds a piece of paper towards my face with a look that tells me that he has a hold over me. He knows my secrets. He waves the piece of paper then puts it in the pocket of his jacket. Then he is sucking my toes. I am scared and it hurts.....

Chapter 13: A Bedtime Story.

It is February, poor Carly is grieving. She meets an artist, Harvey. I like this one. He is nothing like her other boyfriends. That Aaron. No, Harvey plays the flute and sketches her with charcoal and crayon. He admires the artwork of her tattoo. It looks good with her new wardrobe of black clothes. Carly feels a strange kind of nervousness, which was not present before. A strange kind of constant fear. She is grieving for the loss of her mother and father. Grief takes up all available energy. Leaves her shaky and weak. Harvey is too weak for her rages.

I wake from a nightmare with my blue-eyed lover beside me. He listens whilst I cry and recall the dream. He holds me in his arms. He comforts me and I watch the sunrise.

He reads me bedtime stories. Dirty stories. But.... he runs from my rage. He makes me feel as if I am bullying him.

Making love blue eyes blue eyes like my father's a flashback just a flashback no can't remember no no have to stop now blue eyes like my father's sorry can't remember don't know why I stopped don't know....

Anger after sex; I taste blood where I bit him. Harvey is weak. He paints watery portraits of me. He reads me bedtime stories.

The trees bowed beneath the weight of the fruit. The people of the village sat beneath the trees in the long grass. All around, laughter and love were as abundant as the luscious fruit on the trees as the families talked and played together. All was pure. All was good. All was simple, as it should be. Except.....in the highest branch of the tallest tree an imp's jealous eyes peered down through the branches. The jealous imp with the darkest soul watched. Beneath his tree, a father and his daughter indulged in the joyful merrymaking in the purity and light. Naked, like the others, paying homage with their beauty to the sun. The envious sprite listened to the daughter and cursed them. The imp had the blackest, darkest soul. He could not, would not understand love, whilst this purity repulsed him. He watched them pick the fruit from the trees. Then his dark soul concocted the notion for the dark deed.

That night, the imp poisoned the fruit from the tree under which father and daughter played by pouring poison from his evil soul into the purest peach. He resumed his place at the top of the tree and waited and watched. In the morning sun, the father and his daughter ran joyfully in the sun, running, dancing freely. As the sun's rays fell onto their skin and warmed the air, they began to thirst for the taste of the fruit on the trees. "Now it is time," whispered the imp as his spiteful eyes peered through the leaves. He watched as the young girl picked the poisoned fruit from the tree, bit into it, then offered the flesh to her father. They ate the fruit with innocent relish The dark imp peeped through the leaves of the tree and suppressed a wicked chuckle as the poison began to weave its evil.

The soft skin of the peach touched the father's lips and the poison began by clouding his eyes. His sight was suddenly constricted by the thrill of vice, the yearning for the forbidden, the torture of a new and unnatural lust for his daughter. He threw away the peach stone, which still held the rest of the somewhat sour tasting fruit.

He must have her, take her.

Through the infected haze, he eyes her smooth limbs, her beautiful naked skin. Just as the poison had invaded his body, now he must invade hers.

Carly (part 1)

The poison made the girl feel confused, tired and she now yielded to him as he pulled her to the ground.

He is her father, *she knew*, yet somehow he is different, something hostile now. Touching her.

The poison had made her tired. She yielded to him upon the soft grass beneath the trees, oblivious to the lecherous eyes of the imp who sniggered as he watched.

Afterwards, they slept for a while and the poison lost its potency. Waking and looking up, the father saw a pointed face peering from the tree. The imp was smiling wickedly. The daughter awoke soon after and followed her father's gaze towards the imp. Remembering how he had taken his daughter, he realised that the imp had played a trick. The girl was sore and bloody.

"You have committed the greatest misdeed of all!" cried the imp. "Hee, hee, I will tell the villagers of what has happened here beneath the trees. You'll cause so much outrage that your family will be torn apart, you'll be banished from the village!"

The man recalled the forbidden pleasure. It was beyond his control, he rationalised and he could not blame himself for the deed, the misdeed. No, no, it was neither his fault nor responsibility. The girl's soul, tender, tainted by a bruise, retained innocence. She did not understand yet she vowed to carry this secret, carefully, loyally. She took her father's hand.

As father and daughter walked back to the village, the imp followed, like a storm cloud. Like a shadow. The evil sprite followed them for days, weeks, ready to whisper rumours throughout the community. Days, weeks, a month. His black shape, present wherever she moved taunted her and the secret hung heavily about her. She did not know whether the villagers had heard rumour of what had happened but every time someone uttered something which she could not quite hear, or glanced in her direction, she was sure that someone had found out. At night she dreamt of the imp's sharp, sneering face and felt him pinching her, heard him laughing and laughing and laughing.

Eventually after much thought, she decided that she would break her vow and confess to the villagers. She could bear the situation no longer. Her affliction was too great.

"What?" stared the chief of the village in disbelief, "you are lying. Why make up such a story? How revolting your mind must be, child, to accuse your father, a most honoured and respected member of our community, of something so abhorrent!" There followed a meeting among the villagers, her father was called and denied everything. It is her colourful imagination, he claimed. Or perhaps she is sick. Some villagers agreed that his daughter must be mad.

And only she saw the imp smirking from high up on one of the roofs. "Ha, he leered, no one believed her!"

There was a cry to banish the girl from the village. "No, she is infirm," announced the chief, "she will stay. Perhaps her madness is only temporary." So, the daughter remained in the village, yet grief and shame destroyed her happiness. Her father's betrayal destroyed her trust. Everyone thought she was mad, or a liar, impure, and so she remained silent, keeping her anger hidden inside. She became ashamed of her body, her nakedness. She was confused. She began to think that perhaps the villagers were right, perhaps it was her imagination. Yet every time she saw the imp's face taunting her she was reminded of the truth.

And a peach tree grew from the stone of the poisoned peach.

Once, Harvey said, "I can really talk to you."

Carly (part 1)

Once, Harvey said, "When you sleep with me it's as though..." he paused (I was prepared for the usual let down as my ego crouched within the shadows, between the clouds) "...afterwards you become sort of, witchlike." He looked relieved, "I can really talk to you," he smiled. A tingle of anger whizzed through my head. I was tempted to throw the coffee cup that I was holding to the wall, smashing it, exploding and telling him: *Look you will never understand. My father destroyed my foundations. You will never know what it's like.* Yet my ego crouched within the shadows, waited for the storm to pass. He never fights back, anyway. He just leaves. Goes back to his mother. Or two weeks in Turkey. Or backpacking in the South of France. It is frustrating. He says that he knows that I am unhappy but what can he do? When we argue he says, "You're full of shit." His blue eyes are unnaturally bright against his newly tanned skin.

I tell him that I do not want to see him anymore. "I mean it," I say, as he walks out the door and looks back, quiet and frowning suddenly as if I still have hold of his heart in my hand and I am wrenching it from his chest. I have pushed him, pulled him and now he slips away soon to become a memory. I will not miss him. Perhaps, one day I will look back and regret the day that I lost him. For now, though, I am already too lonely. In shock. My tattoo snakes around my arm. I will never regret this snake.

Chapter 14: Flames.

.....sex is dirty sex is dirty sex is dirty sex is dirty they only want you for one thing sex is dirty you are dirty dirty dirty sex I feel bad I am bad I am bad I am bad I am bad I am bad I am dirty I am bad he is a thief they are thieves my parents robbed my trust stole my.....

Certain emotions are inappropriate. Love is good. Love is allowed. Jesus loves. Good people love. They hug, they share, and they care about one another. Hate is not allowed. To hate your family, your parents, is particularly inappropriate.

I must hide this hate, this anger, and this betrayal from the world. I must not express my anger. My rage is deemed invalid, undignified, lacking maturity and femininity. Too disturbing and too real. I must not react with aggression but with complaisance. That way, I can be controlled. That way, I cause no uproar. That way, lies and abuse and domination can continue to soil my passive form. I must not react to abuse. Just suffer quietly. Smile. Be *nice*. Live a submissive existence.

This forbidden rage. I hardly dare let it escape. I fear the uncontrollable, unexpected blaze of rage that is present, flames creeping, hiding within me. My rage is like a volatile gas ready to be ignited and which will destroy-annihilating a friendship, a lover, belongings (mine and other people's) and chances. A rage inherited from an abusive father and borne of forgotten maltreatment, past indignities and frustration. Frustration at other people's attempts to understand me, or undermine me. My true feelings trivialised. My mother would always say that I was the strong one.

I am OK because I am the strong one.

They never listened.

When I am undermined, when my foundations begin to quake and shake, I feel that my rage is a killer's force. I feel murderous. Beyond the point of caring. Yet I care enough to want to kill, rave, rant and destroy. I fear the rage inside. Sometimes the anger implodes, rather than hitting out at another person, a loved one, I turn the energy in on myself. I cry and collapse and flip on the floor, as weak and helpless as a captured fish. But, no, I am the strong one. I am OK. Keep it in. Keep it all in. I am OK

Sometimes I scream. Not that I am crazy. Not that I want to attack the person to whom it is directed. It is frustration. It is a primeval, frightened, confused and desperate reaction. The lowest ebb. The only reaction, like a maimed animal. People maim my senses. They are unable or unwilling to understand. I am too over-sensitive. Too not-what-the-other-person-wants-me-to-be.

Do not come near me! Do not touch me! You want to hug me after goading me to collapse? How dare you? I feel so exhausted. Don't touch me! I feel physically sick!

The rage sometimes builds up inside, vines spring up, out, from the soil of past abuse. I shout and swear and hit out, fighting through the tangled vines. Showing my lowest, low, worst side. The side that I hate. So aggressive, so ugly, stupid and reactionary. The rage is so strong but at the time I am numb. A killer. I hate myself more and more. A self-perpetuating hatred. I fall. I fall into a negative void.

But I try and keep it in. I try and keep it all in. Smile. Be *nice*.

Once I was nearly burnt by anger. Someone else's anger. Anger and jealousy. It was my eighteenth birthday. Jimmy was my boyfriend, he sold hash and acid, and I slept in his room with the hippy wall hangings and the

Carly (part 1)

dropouts that would sit around all day with their bottles of cider. Kieran was our friend who shared a room in the dilapidated Victorian terraced house. Jimmy and I had fallen out and he began to push me around in the bathroom. That night I slept with Kieran. Jimmy came into Kieran's room the next morning and saw us in bed together. Jimmy went into the kitchen and put a chip pan on the stove. Someone else came into the kitchen and stopped him from throwing the boiling fat over us.

Anger burns, explodes, seethes and erodes. It is never far away.

Chapter 15: Things Concealed.

Lying in bed. The white lamb in my hand. Careworn, white fur and friendly eyes. A doll with a soft body and pink plastic head and hands. Half of its acrylic hair missing where I had tried to cut a fringe. He is watching television downstairs. He laughs like a mad man. Takes over the whole house. I can hear the television through the ceiling, a low bubbling of ghostly conversation. They are far away, downstairs. My door is open onto the big, empty landing. Sometimes he comes up to the doorway. Peeps his head round and makes scary faces. Then laughs. A witch's laugh. I hear it through the ceiling, through the thin, creaky bedroom floor. Sometimes he comes upstairs to tell us off when we have got out of bed. He always gets the most food. He always spends a long time in the toilet. He reads a newspaper in there and does a crossword.

All good memories are lost. Why did my father tell Laura that she was "Just an experiment" when she was a little girl? Why did he frighten her and make her cry when he tried to kiss her neck with his rough face?

Such an alien mind. He has no empathy and imitates social behaviour. He wears a mask. A disguise. A controlled public image. A respectable outer being yet a corrupt inner mind. It is a self-perceived mask of perfection. The mask lies for him. He lies to himself.

I would watch him. I would see the mask slip, disappear. Quick like the snap-shut reflex of a false smile. Like a look that crosses the eyes. One moment there, then it is gone. The mask disappears and his insecurities flee out from where they have been held. Hurt from his past, shame, hatred flees out from behind the mask like poisoned worms harming other life where they touch.

I would watch him. A big, solid man with curly brown hair. His mask gone, he would crumble. No control anymore. He tried, he tried to control us. Snapping or slapping if I dared answer back; if I played too loudly or too late at night. He was unpredictable, snapping or slapping when he felt like it. His thoughts, his self-projections, projected fears, his lies would flee out, harming, wounding and leaving a scar.

In my mind leaving a shadow. Now, an adult, I am not scared of being hit by a man. It is the subtle, more underhand, harder-to-see things that scare me.

I would watch him crumble. He wanted control. So, more lies. And jealousy. He disliked my attempts to become independent of him and his view of the world. Although he always encouraged me to do well at school, when my academic qualifications excelled his own, he actually became resentful. When I passed my exams with top grades at the age of eighteen, he would not even speak to me. He stared ahead, sulking like a child, watching television.

My father dominated the whole family. He would gain the attention that he craved. I would watch him.

Then his ego would renew his mask. Covering over the memory of his cruelty and low self-image. His self-perceived mask of perfection would deceive him again.

I can only remember closeness, a kindness, with my father after an argument. One that would have left me screaming. I would be crying, shaking, belittled. He would put his arms around me and kiss me. He would be right, of course, and I would be wrong. "You are just like me," he would say, "you are just like me."

Chapter 16: Hints.

At night, pop tunes drifted from the disco at the cricket club. Leaves in darkness rustled from the trees above as Carly lay on the cold wooden bench outside. The boy put his fingers inside her. It hurt. The other girls were doing it. Rumours would whisper around the school. How many fingers? Two? Three? It hurt her. She wanted to go back inside and dance with her friends. She began to stand but the boy lifted her up and tried to carry her round to the side of the building, from the bright music, towards the blackness of the cricket pitch and the pine trees. Carly struggled a little and freed herself from the thin boy's grasp and went back inside to the disco and to the half-finished bottle of martini that her friends had bought. But she could not see her friends. She sat alone on a table in her gaudy makeup and high heels, ignoring the boy. On the way home she took the pink, paisley scarf from her hair and tied it around her neck so that her mum would not see the love bites. However, at school, she proudly showed the marks on her neck.

Carly knew that she was not ready for sex. Only if she fell in love. Her mother began to warn her to watch herself, to keep her legs closed, that boys only wanted her for one thing. "Sex is not a game," her mother would warn her, accusingly, angrily.

On rare occasions, Carly found herself alone the house. She would go into her brother's bedroom and take out the magazines from the bottom of his wardrobe. She thought the women were beautiful. Long bleached hair, red nails, tanned thighs. Always looking over her shoulder incase she got caught, excited yet nervous; she would then have to put the magazines back too soon. She tried to emulate the style of the stories in the magazines. She lost the yellow sheets of paper on which she scribbled her own stories. She was sure she had them, folded between the pages of her diary.

Now, she argued with her father until she screamed or he hit her or both. Otherwise, they did not speak. Perhaps he had found the stories. After all, her parents had found out about her stealing a condom from a shop, and they could only have known that from reading her diary. She had no intention of using the condom, or 'sheath' as her mother had called it. It was taken as a joke with her friend at lunchtime, just something to laugh about at school.

When she had just turned sixteen, Carly fell in what was the closest she had ever felt to love. In a small town. With nothing much to do. He took her down to the railway embankment. They walked by the railway track, pulling off the ends of pieces of wild grass. He was seventeen. Her hazel hair was just long enough to put behind her ear as she talked and she was getting brown from the sun. They got to the disused railway hut where the signalman, or someone, used to be. Grass and hawthorn surrounded the door with a little bit fenced off around the boarded-up door. He sat down on the wooden boards and as she walked towards him he put his hand on her belly, up her skirt. She moved forward, put her hand on his shoulder, he had his other hand on her backside.

She fell in what was the closest she had ever felt to love with this small-town boy. She liked driving around in the stolen mini, too fast, the smell of burning rubber, with his small-town friends. She wanted to wait, still, to have sex. She was not ready. "What's the point in us going out together," he had asked, "if I can't fuck you?"

He was supposed to meet her in town. Carly waited for an hour but he did not show up. She saw him later that day in the park with one of the travelling girls from the caravan site, who let boys do anything. The travelling girl swore and threw stones at her.

When Carly was sixteen, with that dull, unfamiliar ache, that sadness, pervading her every thought, her defences were built to try and rectify a deep pain. This scorned lover, hurt more than she even realised, already felt abandoned.

Carly (part 1)

At seventeen she wore ripped jeans with colourful patches just like her friend, Joanne. Joanne was exotically older, around twenty, knowledgeable and confused. She was not oriental, yet her fine black hair, pale china doll complexion and moon-shaped eyes made her look as such; everyone said so. She was moody and wild. They kissed, touched and held. They were thrown out of a party for- shock, horror- kissing open mouthed, with words of scorn and disgust and a glass of cider thrown after them. She admired Joanne, with her deep voice and Japanese aloofness, who soon fell in love with a man of her own age. Her admiration for Joanne excelled the rejection.

At seventeen Carly lost her virginity. It was drunken, forgettable.

Chapter 17: Guilty.

The first consignment; they did actually arrive in a brown paper envelope. Carole was there when I picked up the thick package from the pile of mail on the floor. I put it to one side. Later, I blushed as I took the glossy magazines from the package. Bumper back issues. One magazine, black girls only. I blushed, again. Black girls. I never thought. Beautiful ebony erotic dancers dressed in leather and red stockings. One magazine flipped open to wet, pink closeups, some shaved, two women stood with breasts touching. I turned the pages and stepped into the hidden theatre of my sexual mind.

I know, I could get this for free on the internet, but those cyber images are just not the same. The shiny paper and the smell of the new, illicit magazines are all part of the thrill. They are mine. No one will walk in on me reading them, I do not have to look over my shoulder and hurriedly hide them away. I can take my time. Go back in time. Peering with wonder and excitement into unknown adult territory. Feeling as if I am doing something wrong. But these women know that it is not wrong. They are smiling, proud and sexy. They are more than photographs. They become real. Their nipples change from smooth to hard and dimpled beneath my fingertips. A look of desire flickers across a brunette's eyes and her smile is understanding, welcoming. I want to touch her shining mouth and smooth skin.

No feminine imagery of flowing waterfalls, or love within the trees of a deep forest, leading to a climax of spiritual elevation for me. I become a man, a dirty old man with the mind of the misogynist, the perversion of the abuser. He lies and manipulates to get what he craves. His driving force is lust. I become an innocent girl, pure and unknowing. Then an omniscient observer, like watching a film. He is ugly, unwholesome, corrupting. His rasping breath upon her soft cheek.

I turn the pages: hardcore images, two way action and lesbians with dildos. I close my eyes. I am in charge, the director and the storyteller. I am in control at every moment. I can delay and heighten my own orgasm. I am the guilty voyeur of my own sexual creations. The orgasm rises and rushes with a shudder, a psychological spiral of fantasy emerging from somewhere within. I feel nothing but the orgasm.

Later, I feel shame. Guilt. Guilt of the abuser.

The guilt of the abused.

Chapter 18: Scapegoat.

Perhaps I am using my father as a scapegoat. Blaming him for my problems, my anger and madness. Using him as a scapegoat for hidden guilt over those hidden sexual fantasies. Shifting the responsibility from myself to my father. Blaming him for my violent relationship with Aaron.

No, no. I have thought it through. He is a liar. I have tried to write to my mother, to explain in an email how I feel. It is no good. Everything that I write turns into the confusion that makes it so hard for me to comprehend or to prove. Hard for me to prove to them that I have been denied the ability to trust men. Denied a father. And now denied the support of my mother.

"A scapegoat," she is saying over the telephone, *a scapegoat.*

I am using my father as a scapegoat.

It is because she is denying the abuse. "Justin has got over it. Why can't you?" she adds. At the same time she is not denying it. Every time I try to talk it through with her she changes the subject. Tells me that she was wondering about Laura or worried about Justin. Never me. Never me. She tells me that I am different. I am the strong one, the most outgoing.

She does not know how much this is killing me. How I am suffering now for accusing my father of a crime so bad. "The way you're talking, Carly, you'd think that he'd done something, you know, sexual." I can imagine her expression, indifferent, far away, slightly irritated with my intrusion into her soap opera reality which is safely devoid of any real emotion. "Aren't you taking this just a little bit too far? Justin has got over it. Why can't you?"

Justin has got over it, has he? Taking it too far, am I?

The flashbacks, the nightmares, the underlying sense of humiliation. I remember the games we would play. His hands feeling, groping in my underwear. I was laughing as he twisted and turned my body around. His eyes and hands exploring, violating.

I hear his voice in the background. Just his tone of voice suddenly triggers something off inside me. I scream into the receiver. *"Bastard!"* I am screaming, *"bastard!"*

The anger has finally surfaced and erupted. After every argument, after every lie, after I had left home, I really tried to love him. Now, all hatred is condensed and focused on my father. For now, the anger, beyond reason or moral, is pure. A fire burns inside my head and heart. I wish that he was dead. I wish he was dead. I wish he was dead. My fire will turn his evil to dust and he will choke upon the dust. No one will miss him. Just an ugly corpse. He is too selfish to care about me or anyone. I have been humiliated by his cowardice and ignorance. I am denied the pleasures of love. He has denied me. Pale blue eyes. Evil. He has denied me. I am alone. I scream. I scream, I never want to hear his evil voice again.

My father says that it is just my imagination. Then he is walking off, out of the door. Who will believe me? I feel like a patronised child.

"You know nothing," he would say, standing over me at the kitchen table. My school books open and his finger pointing at me. I would be sitting in my navy school uniform staring defiantly into small blue eyes, which held that flash of madness.....*You know nothing. You know nothing about life. Don't answer back. You are a verbal bully. You are so aggressive. STOP BEING SO AGGRESSIVE! You ARE a bully. You are a*

Carly (part 1)

verbal bully. You are just like me.....

The force of my hatred is too strong. My anger is trapped inside me. Fire twists and writhes. I burn on the flames. Charred fragments reel and swirl within. Fever. Fever.

Chapter 19: Blood Clot.

I am alone.

I screamed. I scream. No conscious lapse between thought and action.

That anger, that pure hatred, has cooled now. I am left with sadness. I just needed somehow to tell him. I did not want to be malicious. Afterwards, my mother said, "He's ill again. He's got a bad leg." What she meant was that his thrombosis had reoccurred. I can see him, now, limping off out of the kitchen with a swollen calf.

I was eleven when he first had thrombosis. He would not go to the doctor so mum and I had to cajole him, force him to go. He has a dislike of doctors and hospitals and no matter how ill, would rather have stayed at home and hoped the ailment would heal itself. His leg was inflamed and painful to walk upon and I was afraid for him. I told him that he must go to the doctor. When he got back from the surgery he said that it was a blood clot, that there was a chance that if untreated, it would have travelled up the arteries to his heart. I began to cry because I thought that he was going to die. I remember him sitting in his armchair in front of the television and saying, "Well, I've had a good life." He did not comfort me. A few years later the clot returned, followed by a slight stroke. For a while, one side of his face was paralysed, with one cheek and eyes drooping down.

Now the thrombosis has returned. How can I say such cruel things to my ill father? How can I accuse him of molesting me? Why? *Why?* Am I mad? Am I evil? I am disgusted. Degraded. I am a scapegoat using him as a scapegoat, an abused liar. An abuser. I am abusive, tearing the family apart. Taking all the nice things away. I take the deodorant can and fold a towel over the top of the aerosol; a teenage habit, an easy way to get high. I press down whilst inhaling. My lips are cold and there is a metallic, tangy taste.

I am disgusting. Ugly. My thighs, wide and white, untoned.

I press down the top of the can and breathe in through the towel.

I am ugly and big, an engulfing abuser. They say that the abused grow up to abuse others. I want to die. But I do not want to die. I am a coward. Too weak to escape from the life-force, through the invisible film, that separates life from death.

I take the aerosol. Press and inhale through the towel. I inhale until I die inside. Numb. I have no feeling in my mouth and tongue. High.

He is floating, almost invisible. Here is the phantom; like the phantom voice on the telephone that I can only scream at. He is the oppressor. The epitome of everything I hate. He is saying that I am just like him. He is laughing because he knows that he is tricking me. He is not really here. I shake the can. I have pins and needles in my hands. I am high.

Then I start to choke. Choking on self pity. I know I am selfish.

I am. I am. I am.

I am wasted and frail. I go to the chip shop and get a portion of thick fries, wrapped, with salt and vinegar. The Jamaican man with gold teeth smiles widely as he shakes the vinegar over the chips. I am taut. Clinging together with pieces of invisible fibre. The fibre pulls my facial muscles, allows me to smile politely. Yet I hurt inside, like I am somehow clinging together. A joker controls the fibres. The joker leads me like a puppet.

Carly (part 1)

He moves my larynx so that I can speak to others. The joker squeezes my lungs. Moves my epiglottis so that I can eat. I have no taste, as my mouth is still numb. The food travels down, into my windpipe, rattles my lungs, the joker holds the epiglottis shut. My lungs constrict. I cough; the joker is trying to kill me. He wants me to die a glutton's death, choked by a bolus of food. And gluttony is what I wallow in. Gluttonous self-pity chokes me. My mouth is dry.

I do not want to hurt my mother. I have never wanted to do that. But she is lying. He *did* touch me in a pervy, underhand way. What other lies has she told me, what other lies does she live with? My mother, my father, they lie to themselves. They lie so much that they begin to think that it is the truth. Perhaps the truth will kill my mother if she let it take hold of her. Perhaps it will kill us all.

No one will believe me. It will all be covered over. When Freud first heard stories of abuse from his women patients he chose not to believe them. He covered up this corruption within these apparently normal, white middle class families with his own learned opinions. People will say that I have false memory syndrome. They will say that I am lying. Or that I just made a mistake.

Truth. Philosophers throughout the ages have questioned its nature. Perhaps there is no truth. Just half-truths. I am fluxing between polarities. Right. Wrong. Truth. Lie. The woman inside of me, the woman that I am, tells me that I treated that man, my father, with the contempt that he deserves. The frightened little girl inside of me wonders how I could ever have said such bad things. After all, he had a bad childhood.

Maybe I did imagine it. My dad said that he could not remember. My self-belief is dying. I just get high. Want to die. The deodorant can is empty.

I am the shamed accuser. What right do I have? I do not want to hurt my mother. I imagine her crying in her bed. Asking herself if she has failed as a mother. Then I hear them judging me, frustration, pressure, builds up inside my head. I hear them judging me, my parents blaming me. Saying that I am just causing trouble. I must be on drugs. I am mad. Making it all up. Yet it was my mother who helped turn me against my dad. She always pulled away from him. When I asked her why she would say, "I'll tell you when you are older." Now it is her against me. My parents are now a united force. Her denial masks her own confusion. His lies support her denial. I remember. *Pale blue eyes*. I remember. Let her cry in her bed. I do remember. The wave of anger lifts me up, up. I run my fingers over the slightly raised skin of my tattoo. For a moment I feel strong as if I can cope with this. *As if*.

If my mind doubts me, if imagination poisons my mind and tints my memory, please, please let some truth remain. Let this suffering be for the sake of the truth. My brother suffered too. The paradox is confusing me. Where is the truth? I am possessed. I can hear voices. Unknown sounds inside my head. Everything.

Everything.

The traffic, the wind, words snatched from passers by outside, the sound shapes itself into insults. *Evil bitch. Troublemaker*. The sound shapes itself into derisive laughter. There is laughter inside my head.

Shhh. Shhhh. I listen to the wind. It hushes, hushes. The sky is purple as the night arrives. Perhaps I will return to normality by tomorrow, the opposite polarity.

I have booked a counselling session. That will help. I need someone to listen.

When it is very black, in the middle of the night,

I cry.

Carly (part 1)

If I am wrong let the phantoms that haunt, the vampires that prey, let the birds and bats that encircle me, let them tear out my heart. Let them rip it out.

Chapter 20: Isolation.

The March sky is hard and grey. This winter seems so long. Beneath the greyness and on the greyness, the sharp figure of a young, slender woman walks across the concrete bridge where the pigeons pick. Dressed in black, Carly is deep in thought. She is remembering her dream.

There was a house; a wooden house. She opened the solid, oak door and stepped inside. The building was rocking and shaking, about to collapse about her. It was built on water. The wooden planks that made up the floor of the house were floating, and then sinking with no foundation. Beams and splinters were falling about her. Beneath the house's apparently ordinary and structurally safe shell, its contents were shattered. The whole house was disintegrating amongst the waves.

There is an opening in the sky where blue peeps through. Looking up at the blue, from the grey concrete, the black silhouette walks across the bridge, through the precinct towards a building where Angela sits reading her files.

Angela. Angel in disguise. She is making notes in her file. She asks me if I want a coffee. I sit throughout the counselling session with the cup held in my hand.

The coffee remains untouched, until an hour later I take a sip of the forgotten, cold liquid.

An outsider's view: mother, father, three children, semi-detached house in a quiet cul-de-sac, gravel drive and car. It was a big house on a new estate made of new red bricks. We were the first people to live there. My parents had cultivated the land from lumps of earth and buried animal bones to a beautiful garden. The weeping willow on the lawn that looked like a lady with long, flowing hair. That shone magically in the evening light. White statues of little boys and curvaceous mermaids. My parents were so proud of their garden, that which they had created from a mess of rubble and piles of churned-up dirt, they looked down upon the neighbours as if they were the king and queen of their new castle. We used to play on the lawn in the summertime. Running around, screaming with the hosepipe. Spraying water over ourselves and each other in the sun. Laughing and brown. Reading in the sun. Making ice cubes out of orange cordial and sucking out the orange flavour until the ice cube turned white. Caching sticklebacks from the pond and watching the slim, silvery fish, swimming in the jam jar. My mother would lie in the garden with her large, square sunglasses on, the smell of the freshly cut and watered grass, my mother's suntan oil and the creeping of the neighbour's cat onto our territory as my mother laughed holding tangy orange peel to the cat's nose to repel it. She was always kind to us. I always loved her so much. Summer after summer. Such long holidays. Surely I should think of these times and be grateful that I was so lucky?

On the surface, a tame, ordinary and ordered family nucleus. I am sure that I was not unhappy. Now I have taken all these nice things away. My memory is poisoned. I have taken all these things away from my mother too.

I feel sick. Yet I remember at night. I could hear the leaves rustling outside my window. Underneath there was chaos, lies, dark stuff, isolation and deception. We hardly ever saw any other members of the family and they all lived so far away. I never spoke to them on the phone. My mother had no friends at all and my father had a few who would come to the house and my brother, sister and I would peer shyly at them and hide.

On the lawn my father was playing with me and put grass into my mouth until I was choking and sick. He wrapped me up in a bed sheet and I was scared. And in winter the house was cold. Cracks began to appear along the walls. The estate was soulless. When we first arrived I found a bone amongst the piles of debris in the garden. My father picked it up and told me that it was a pelvic bone. I think it was from a cow. He held it

Carly (part 1)

up to his own hip to show me.

My father had planned out the garden, sketching it out on a piece of paper and then painting it over with watercolours. He drew lilies in the pond, which was then just a dug-out hole in the ground. He depicted the apple and pear trees as larger and more bountiful than the fruitless saplings that had just been planted. "You will be here, in years to come," he envisioned, pointing with the end of his pencil, "running underneath the trees with your boyfriend."

No. I will never go back to that house. Never go back to him. Never. Never ever.

Angela handed me tissues for my eyes. She listened. Angela said that I am not using my father as a scapegoat and that I do not have to love my parents. Angela said that the source of my anger was my childhood. Shouting and screaming were the only ways I could be heard. My voice was raised as I told her about my father. Angela mentioned that I was sounding aggressive. It was the only way that I could be heard. Angela was not criticising, merely mentioning, as she recognised my anger.

I feel ashamed. I feel ashamed of my aggression. I feel ashamed of my childhood. I can never be like other people as my foundations tremble and shake me into madness and rage. Someone or something will touch my foundations. I will shake and fall into madness, wake up after the shock in isolation. It is like a disintegration of my inner security. I will always feel that isolation.

Thank you Angela, angel in disguise, I cannot go back and see you again.

I do feel calmer, though. Maybe that is all I needed, to talk things through.

Yet, this calmness is easily destroyed by a telephone call from my mother. She says that I am bringing it all up again.

Why did she stay with him? Was it because she was too weak to leave? Now, she seems so weak that she is fading away; just a voice on the telephone. She says that children need a father. No, she needed a man. To her, any man, this man, is better than no man at all.

I wait in isolation. I have no points of reference. Flailing in darkness. I am lost. If this was a problem written in a letter to an agony aunt in a magazine it would be simplified. Edited. Clear cut problem and answer. But this is real life, not a magazine. There is no one to place boundaries, no one to judge where the boundaries lie. I am out of context and hurting. I turn on the computer, I read the email that I wrote for Laura but never sent. I read it over. It is my new point of reference.

Chapter 21: Void.

"Death trip. Death trap. Keep your trap shut slut. There's nothing there. I'm looking and there's nothing there. Shit. I'm sad."

"Look, just go away. We've got problems of our own. Just go away."

"I'm sad."

"So what? Everyone's sad. We've all been misused at some point or another."

Everyone has got his or her own problems. I do not talk to Carole about mine. Once, I gave too much away. She said, "You can't blame everything on your father." I never mention anything now. I remain in the fog of general malaise- the dark cloud, a cloud of condemnation, shifting from myself to my father, swirling around me like a phantom. I see its shape in the thick cigarette smoke when I am alone. I try not to listen to its voice.

Everyone has got their own problems. Carole's brother was wild like James Dean. He used to speed, on his motorbike and on amphetamines. He was killed when he was twenty four; knocked down at the busy junction at the top of their street by a woman, a friend of the family. By unlucky coincidence, or due to the shock of the accident, her car ran into someone else in the same week. She committed suicide soon after. The dead woman's daughter still lives near Carole. They go out for a drink together sometimes, yet never mention the accident or the suicide. Some things are buried so deep, some problems so complex and tangled, that it would be too painful to bring them to the surface.

Carole says that it is funny how things are connected, interconnected. Then she sips her martini and ice and is distant, humming along to a background pop tune as if she had never said anything at all.

I have my own problems. Perhaps I will always be alone. I could become a Buddhist, avoiding all close relationships as inevitably the loved one will die, run off, get run over or lead one to bad influences. Everyone is on their own, individual path to Nirvana. That is, if there is a Nirvana, or any pathway at all.

My path is lonely. Carole's path is lonely. Yet we meet occasionally, drink martini, and shout niceties from the void. I hide a lot from Carole. Sex, passion, anger. She hides a lot from me.

Here she is. Carly. She is having a drink with Carole. Just a drink. A normal drink in their normal bar. She smiles, she laughs with the sexy bar tender, yet beneath the jollity something hurts. Ow. It feels like a raw nerve, exposed and sensitive. She feels damaged on the inside. Solvent abuse? Too many cigarettes through too many desolate nights? 'Desolate' is a word that she uses when she writes in her diary, when she writes poetry. When she writes about how her father has killed her love. When she writes that it feels like forever.

She sips and drips of alcohol fall, forming a cavern. Beneath, she can say now, she almost knows what is buried. Beneath, the sides of the cavern are hard, loveless. She is hollow, something missing, something worn away by drips of alcohol and grief. There is a scar that feels almost inhuman. This scar mars, marks her inner beauty. Her tattoo is outward proof of the pain she has bore. Her young, bright smile belies her pain and confusion.

She has a babyish face, which men seem to like. And others do not. Men are always telling Carly that she is attractive. Just men, strange men, random men in the street. Some whistle and call her a babe. They beckon her, stare at her. Shout out at her from a passing car. She does not invite the comments, the low mumbles of strangers as they pass by, the calls of 'Get your tits out!' and other inane disrespect. She endures them.

Carly (part 1)

The exposed nerve ending juts, pulses, like a flower made of blood.

Carly goes into the ladies room. She does not feel much like a lady and she is drinking too much. It hurts when she pees. She remembers to wash her hands. Her hair is all tangled and the strip light reveals dark sockets around her eyes. She combs her wet fingers through her hair. She wants to leave. Smoke a cigarette. She wants to be on her own. It is still afternoon.

Back in the bar, she smiles, she laughs. Then she tells Carole that she must be going. They promise to stay in contact and go out together one evening soon.

Alone, she walks down the street slowly, in a fog of deep and private thought. "Cheer up love, it might never happen!" The words puncture through the fog, irritating. The men in yellow hard hats stand around like pack animals. Staring. Then over the sound of the drill comes the noise. That noise design at the exact pitch and frequency to attract her attention. A whistle from the wolves. It may have been almost flattering to be whistled at like that, maybe once when she was thirteen, but now it just angers her, hits the raw nerve.

"Piss off!" she spits to the man leaning on the side of a van wearing overalls and back to front hardhat. "Just fuck off!" she shouts. His face could be anyone's face. Like the anonymous face of the kick boxer. They are still staring at her. She is wading through a fog and can hardly move her legs. Everyone is staring at her in the street. Crazy woman. Swearing in the street. Common and low. Then that whistle again and laughter from the wolves. Then she is screaming. "What's so funny?" She screams and screams, "you make me sick, the way you treat women, you make me sick!" She screams and screams and screams. Doubled over. Like being sick. Like choking. But this feeling is not from the stomach or the throat. It is from the heart. Not a kitsch consumer heart-shaped heart from a valentine's card. But a human, pumping, complex, bloody heart. A female heart.

They just stand and stare until the foreman, the man in the back to front hardhat, walks over and switches off the generator that operates the drill. Silence. She walks away.

She marches, contemplating her victimisation with every step. If she were a man she would not have these unwanted comments and insults in the street. If she were a man she would be able to fight them. She wants to fight, fight. A dark cloud is around her, a phantom, her father. She is oppressed. Misunderstood. An enemy with an alien mind is taunting her, goading her. A patriarchal figure pointing a patronising finger. Like she is a child, with no personal path or inner sense of her own, trying to control her and belittling her in the process. Dragging her down. Making her scream, making her mad. Blaming her for it all. Accusing her of its lies and hypocrisies. It cannot control its own warped desires and it represses truth, turns its fear outward. A racist, fascist, sexist, hypocritical liar. Like her father. A demonic ego, which wants to control purely for the sake of control. Like Kali, she is misunderstood.

She feels as if evil forces are oppressing not just her, but the whole world. Her will to fight is in conflict with a sense of powerlessness. There is nothing she can do. She is tired and weak.

...Next time keep your trap shut slut.....

I begin to cut the skin. It stings in torment. I do not want to do it. Half-heartedly, cowardly, I cut the top layer of skin. I cut over the lines on my wrists so that the scars will not show. What a fool. What a fool. I cut a little deeper with the razor. The blood gives me unexpected encouragement. They will find me.

To everyone,

I have to kill myself before I harm anyone else. There is a rage inside which cannot be purged. The more I let it out the stronger the fire grows. Everyday I suffer the persecution of others. People shouting out of their cars

Carly (part 1)

at me as if it is their right. Everyone has got their own problems, they say. Yes, that is part of my problem. I have to kill myself before I harm anyone else. My father abused me and snatched my trust. Now he tells me that it is his imagination. He makes me suffer to protect himself. There is a rage inside.

But now I am tired. Just tired. Warm brown eyes. Romany spirit. Hello. She looks a bit like me. She is wearing gold hoop earrings. She is strong and free, freedom blows a storm around her colourful skirts. Hot tempered and unashamed, she curses those who cross her. Maybe I could dance and dance and someone would see it. Maybe I could sing a song and someone would hear it.

Carly hides her wounds. A secret. "Why did you do it?" they would probably ask, if they were interested.

"Just everything," she would say, "oh nothing." Her mother had told her that the family will never be the same again. She does not really want to die, does she???

Jagged lines of skin heal. She did not cut deep enough. Perhaps she will try again, another time.

Chapter 22: Someone....

Don't do it yet

Wait until I get there

Before you go I'll do your hair.

Don't do it yet

With my hands around your

Neck

Wait until you're wet.

Don't do it yet

Wait until I come round

Evil's when youre coming down....

...Down...

....Down.

Don't do it now

Wait until the tables turn

Try to enjoy the burn....

...Burn.

Chapter 23: Touched.

A stormy lover? No, Carly has changed. A turmoil that has no outlet grows malignant, swirls inside her. Fluxing in the polarities between truth and non-truth. She had no-one to talk to. Pure anger has become contaminated. There is a cavern inside. She has tummy ache. What is it? Is it the ache of her inner core? There is something decaying, spreading, touching emotion, sense of perspective and perception. Into the cavern seeps decay. Seeps scraps of love. There is a stagnant pool where remains of guilt and self-blame have fallen. She is polluted. They are touching her.

First, there is Luke. Luke the Puke. His kisses taste like sweet corn. A slimy laugh as he pulls at my clothes. Pulls at me until he gets what he wants. Back at his flat, on my stomach, staring out of the window as he does it. It is hardly rape. It does not hurt. I do not feel anything. He laughs with denial when I say, for him I am just an alternative to a wank.

Then, Phil from the cafe, with pink, shaved head. He wears an old fashioned white jacket. He is tall and loud. Something about him makes me shrivel up inside. In his car on the way to his girlfriend's house he asks for a kiss. I say, *no*. He grabs my jaw between his big, fat fingers and tries to kiss me. I wait for the traffic lights to change. Amber, confused, red, frightened.

Gerald stops me in the street. He appears to be open and friendly at first. He is thin and camp, *is he gay?* He has a whiny, high voice. A bandanna and glasses obscure his features. He says that as soon as he saw me he knew we could be friends. He says that I am his sister. He gives me a lift to the city centre in his car. Inexplicably he leaves me with a kind of foul aftertaste of dislike. He is not the sort of person I want to be with. He is pervading my flat with a lingering depression and a smell, patchouli oil. He buys me flowers. A card with a picture of a cat on the front when I tell him that I am not feeling well. I realise, reason, that he, like the others, just wants sex. I stop answering the door. I ignore him when he says, *hello*. I see his blue car everywhere. He sees me and trails the car slowly, watching.

I have no protection. I have no protection from my father. He seems evil to me. He is destroyer of happiness. Stealer of trust. Betrayer. Abuser of the innocent.

My sexual hell.

Take it, my body. There is no barrier between want and flesh. Between desire and hurt. Tears and sweat mingle. I have no barrier between right and wrong. I do not know what is supposed to be right. I do not know what is wrong. He touched me. Wronged me. Nobody told me that my body was my own. Nobody told me that they need permission to touch me and that I was in control.

Tears. Ignore me. Such a small thing.

Just touched me that is all. With his hands. With his mouth. With his eyes. No harm, is it?

So funny. So funny. Tickles me so hard that tears fall down my face. I try and catch my breath. Blows raspberries on my tummy. Then down between my legs.

They touch me. I am different from others. They touch me. Why do I let them touch me? I did not know that it was wrong then. I do not know what is wrong now as I let them touch me. Is my body my own? No barriers.

Chapter 24: Suzanne.

Sunday, April 5th, 10am-4pm

Woke early this morning, put on black trousers and t-shirt, hat and sunglasses incase anyone recognised me going in. Got there twenty minutes early. The doors were chained. Black bars enclosed the front part of the parlour. Huge billowing clouds moved across the sunny sky. Went for a walk to pass the time. I was in a depressing, industrial part of town. Metal fences, barbed wire and 'KEEP OUT' warning signs were everywhere. There was a small scrub of grass with swings and a small slide on it. Began to walk back to the massage parlour and came across a flea market. On one stall, piled high with second hand clothes, there was a 50s style pink dress made of soft, silky fabric with a delicate, ballooning skirt. The perfect princess dress. I saw a couple that I recognised from Herbie's Cafe. I don't really know them, I just know their faces. I walked away before they saw me. Anyway I don't go in there much incase I see the kick boxer.

Zoe (not her real name) unlocked the doors of the massage parlour. Tall, with auburn, shoulder-length hair. She had split up with her husband after finding out that he had visited the massage parlour. One of her friends saw him going in. She now works in the massage parlour. She wears her wedding stockings for the clients.

I'll shower now and wash remnants of Suzanne from me. Almost all. Afterwards, I still have a stale smell, clinging to my skin, from the first customer...

"I know him," said Paula as he came through the door, "got a thing about animals. Mention horses. He'll come in no time."

He pointed to me. Seemed like a simpleton. "Her," he said, "I like blondes." My first customer...and he had a thing about animals. I showed him up to the room with the shower, video and TV high up on the wall playing blue movies, wicker shelves with extra towels, bottles of almond oil, talcum powder, air freshener for afterwards, shaving foam, razors and the massage table with the dirty magazine open provocatively. Waited downstairs for five minutes, as was the rule, to give the customer a bit of time alone. When I went back upstairs he was naked. He was a fat, middle aged, greying truck driver. His manner was pleasant enough yet his stale smell reminded me of cigarettes and death. I noticed a sore on his lip like a small flyblown blackberry.

"Just sex," he said. No massage. I took off the shiny red dress that I'd borrowed from Marie and the black French knickers. Undressed, just high-heeled shoes, the gold earrings my mother had bought for Christmas, lipstick, tattoo and my watch. The video showed women giving blowjobs. "I don't believe in kissing and all that business," he put his arm around me and played with his dick, "you're lovely," he said gruffly and continued to play with his dick. "I know someone who's got one up to here," he said as he touched his fat stomach. Felt numb as he guided my hand to his balls. I was acting. Empty. His penis remained flaccid. "I'll be ready in a minute. I'll be ready in a minute," he kept repeating as he tried to have sex with me from behind.

Then I lay on the massage table and he tried again. He couldn't get it up. Thought about mentioning the horses.

"I like to watch the monkeys doing this," he said, unsuccessfully trying to put his penis up.

"You like animals?" I asked, standing up, off the massage table.

"Oh, yes, yes, do you?"

Carly (part 1)

"Yes. Especially horses."

"Yes, I do. Have you ever watched horses doing it? It's best if you separate the mare. You can see the horse's cock. Have you seen a horse's cock?"

"Yes."

"Huge isn't it?" he asked, "Have you ever seen a horse come?"

"Oh, yes," I lied.

"But you've got to separate the mare. Makes me berserk."

"Do you like sheep?" I asked him. Numb.

"Yes and goats. Tried it on a bull with a stick, he wasn't having any of it." He bent over the massage table. I stood near and watched him humping. He humped the table whilst watching the film on the screen. He touched my vagina. I was dry. His hands were rough. And that smell. Stale. I sat on the massage table and opened my legs. "Oh, that's pretty," he leered. He started humping the table again. I held his buttocks from behind. The video and music over the speakers played. Then his time was up.

"I can go on for hours, me," he lied, to himself. I wrapped a towel around myself and left him to get dressed.

"You were right about the animals," I said to Paula in the downstairs room. Borrowed some of her hand cream. Calm, like I did this everyday. Went back upstairs. The customer looked sly.

"What's the matter with you?" he tried to smile, as if I was a suspicious spouse. He's probably never had proper sex before. Just blind fiddling about and fumbling.

Got my money and gave a percentage of it to Marie, the manageress.

Downstairs, watched *Eastenders* on TV. Its banality was refreshing, the familiarity reminding me of a previous normality. Marie sat down with us and spoke of how she went on an 800 pound spending spree in London the day before and lost a 50 pound hat. She was glad that it wasn't the 250 pound suit. I waited for an hour, an hour and a half. Some war celebrations or something came on TV. Pompous arseholes with moustaches doddering along with their medals. Marie made fun of them to pass the time.

Marie went home. Paula and Zoe were pleased as they said that it created an atmosphere when she was there. Zoe said that Marie is temperamental, and that I'm privileged that she's spending so much time with me. Zoe's been working at the parlour for four months and she hadn't seen Marie for three of them. The ballad, 'Lady In red' was playing on the TV, quietly in the background. Looked down at the borrowed crimson false-silk dress that I was wearing. Lady In Red. Funny. A irrelevant detail on the TV yet relevant to me. The connotations of the song had a meaning, now, far from its romantic origins. Perhaps it was a message. Perhaps giving my body to dirty bastards had killed all romance.

Perhaps this is the sacrifice I've made.

Zoe gave me a cigarette. Was trying to give up but I needed a cigarette.

The next customer. A small Chinese man, around 30. Showed him to the room upstairs and went back downstairs to put his 10 pound entrance fee away and to write his name in the book. Didn't know his name. I

Carly (part 1)

called him Jimmy, wrote it down in the book along with the time. I massaged him for 10 minutes whilst he wore a towel, then massaged him with the towel off. He wanted to go to the toilet so I showed him where it was. "Sorry, I been drinking," he said. When he got back, he wanted sex. He lay on his front and I continued to massage him. He turned around and I touched his small, soft penis. I looked at my reflection in the mirror on the wall. The red dress. The contrasting bright green, blue and yellow of my snake tattoo. My strong arms, good muscles. *You're a prostitute*, Suzanne's reflection echoed back.

I got a condom, took the dress off and lay on the floor. Don't know why we were on the floor. He tried to kiss me. I kept moving my head away from him as he squirmed on top. Kept looking at my watch behind my back. His penis was still limp. The video had switched itself off as the tape had reached the end and all that remained was the black and white fuzzy screen. "I finished," he said and wiped sperm from his stomach where the condom had slipped. I shared a shower with him; he kept asking when I was working again. I had to explain to him over and over again. I went downstairs and left him to get ready.

When Zoe saw my neck- the black bite marks- she told me to ask Jimmy for an extra 5 pounds. I went back and asked him. "It's only a small mark. I pay next time." I let him out the front door and he moved his cheek for me to kiss him. He went out of the door and hesitated. His eyes looked sad. Did he feel sad for me???

At home now, still numb. I wash my clothes, tidy my room. Going out tonight with Carole. A band is playing at the Arts Centre. Don't know what to wear.

Will wear the black 'n' silver polo shirt to hide the marks on my neck.

Just come back from the gig. Local band called 'Mammal'. The front man was an Indian dancer and rapper. A DJ played hip-hop beats with an Eastern edge with a laid-back bongo player adding rhythm. Heavy bass boomed from the bass bins at the front of the hall. Danced with Carole and her friend in front of the speakers, holding our drinks in plastic glasses, laughing as the watery beer spilt over my shoes. Closed my eyes. The heavy, safe bass soothed me. The rapper's hard lyrics punctured through me like a hit of street reality. Tried to forget my day but could still smell the stale odour of that first customer. It drifted around me with the chemical scent of the smoke machine. Didn't even think of the second customer.

Tonight I danced until I was tired, drenched with perspiration. Dancing, away from Carole, away from everyone, in front of the large black speaker. Wanting to hug the speaker, and become engulfed by the music, to be cradled by its strength and purity. To disappear in the sound. To become a particle like the particles of sound vibrating through the air, through my head.

Has prostitution touched my spirit? Am I tainted? My mind was fractured beforehand, before I decided to sell my body. There are still the marks on my neck, a reminder of Suzanne that cannot be scrubbed away. In a strange way I feel stronger with my secret. Outside, I look at the street lamps. The darkness. Just black as I stare into the sky. Then a faint glimmer of blue. A blue glow in the darkness. Like hope. Hope for my future. I think about the Chinese man now. Kissing my ears. The smell of beer. He kept asking me questions in the shower. I told him that I didn't have a boyfriend. That I lived out of town. Kept looking at my watch. The clock in the room at the massage parlour had stopped. I saw blue reflection in the broken clock. Hope? My future?

"When I started, I imagined that it was a film, that it wasn't really happening to me," Marie had said. It's strange that I too feel like a character in a film. Some part of me watching and detached. Some part of me watching as I danced like a warrior at night.

Perhaps my sadness will disappear. A viscous circle of fleeting emotions-anger, psychosis, ecstasy, calm.

Carly (part 1)

A bitter beer belly God. I sit on your knee. Abuse me.

An imbecile lorry driver with a sore on his lip and a penchant for bestiality. Dirty, low-down manifestation of my subconscious mind. Degraded? *Me?* It's a karmic self-punishment. I have entered this seedy underworld. It's not sex. It is a masquerade, devil's players in human disguise. All being watched by a bitter beer belly God. It's not erotica. The girls have to scrub and tidy the rooms afterwards. Put the towels in the washing machine and wrap the used condoms in kitchen roll and put them in an empty bottle of conditioner. Marie said to think of my body as a hole in the wall cash machine. I can get money whenever I want.

Selling my body like a cheap, cheap, low whore. Selling my body. Am I trading in my sex life forever? Will I ever be able to make love again? Selling my body, inflicting the soul with something its fragile senses cannot cope with. Selling my body. Hole in the wall. Just a hole. Selling my soul????? Can they reach right down inside, right deep inside? Can their cocks penetrate my cognitive cunt? My womanhood? My evil, female ego?

Evil? No, just misunderstood. Somewhere deep inside, there's a recollection of respect.

Somewhere, there's the crying of a forgotten Goddess.

Tuesday, April 7th, 4.30pm-10.30pm

Only two customers today, which apparently isn't the norm. The second customer was a 'straight', just a massage. The first man was bald, middle-aged. Seemed kind and calm. He said that he was a bit shy. He wanted 'everything'. The oral was not as unpleasant as I thought it would be. He had trouble entering me. He said that it was his age. First, I bent over the massage table, but then I got on the floor, doggy style, after taking off my heels. He came straight away. I wanted to go to the toilet the whole time. I cleaned the shower as the man got dressed and even made a joke that "a clean workplace is a happy workplace." The thing is, I feel sad. The pornographic videos depress me. It was nowhere near as vile as my first experience on Sunday.

The second customer, the straight, was a largish Asian man who owned the restaurant next door. He'd only brought his 10 pound entrance fee and his cash card. Cash cards are not accepted. I still had to pay out money to the massage parlour for this customer, which I resented. He asked questions as I massaged him. He wanted to kiss me but I said, no, that it was the rules, not him personally. He said that he wanted a girl to look after him in his house. That he wanted a girl to love him. He asked if I would love him. I said that I thought love was irrelevant. "What?" he asked. He didn't understand and he wasn't listening anyway. He kept saying that I was strict. I suppose that he wanted to be dominated or something, I didn't think I was strict.

When the men ring up we have to describe each girl as if she is a package to be bought. 'A tall busty blonde in her late teens' (although she is really in her twenties) or 'slim Afro Caribbean lady.' Someone phoned and asked for domination, "I will," said half-Italian Stella, "it's all acting."

Having sex with other people's partners. Marie told me that some men just have oral, as they don't feel that they're being unfaithful to their wives.

I read a magazine (NOT a porno) whilst waiting in the downstairs room. I looked down at the page and the words 'devil in a blue dress' caught my eye, some kind of second-sight highlighting the words from the page. Marie wore a blue dress on my first visit to the massage parlour, at the interview. The first time I saw her I was surprised as she was wearing no make-up and had unmade-up sandy coloured hair. She looked very plain and ordinary, not as I expected. However, she was wearing a cheap shiny blue evening dress and matching stiletto heels. Closer, I could smell the stale sweat clinging to the fabric and her bad breath.

Carly (part 1)

Any sexual relationship that I have turns into a chaos of mistrust in my mind. Working at the massage parlour seems to be a logical conclusion to this period of my life and state of mind.

Wednesday, April 8th

Stella told me that she had a university degree and could go into a career but at the moment she just wants the quick money. She gains no other thrill, she said, just the quick money. "I think it's a hoot," she laughed, sitting in the downstairs room in tight beige mini-dress against coffee coloured skin. Her boyfriend knows what she does. She said there were 'recriminations'. What recriminations??? Stella vacuumed the downstairs room, in clothes that she would never wear in ordinary life, her stockings beginning to sag down her thin thighs.

I fear that I'll be recognised entering or leaving the parlour and I always tell the clients that I'm from another town. "We don't care anymore," joked Zoe.

If you want me you must but me...if you want me you must pay!!!

Thursday, April 9th, 10.30-4am

Again, a slow day. An Irish businessman. Nearly told him my real name. The experience wasn't really that bad yet it lowers my spirits entering the room upstairs, smelling the almond massage oil and seeing the magazines lying open, after waiting downstairs talking and watching TV. The customer had a bath and I got in with him. I massaged him, then he massaged me. "Massage my arse," he said. I massaged his buttocks and also gave him hand relief, oral and sex. He stuttered and appeared shy when he asked to have sex, and asked if I had a 'French letter', in contrast to his previous confident act.

The thing that I hate is when they go down on me. I'll start asking extra for that. He kept telling me that I had a good body. He asked me about my tattoo and asked me what it meant to me, if it meant anything special. "No, it means nothing," I said.

Stella said that I was one of the few people that worked at the massage parlour that she could see herself becoming friends with. I wouldn't want to get involved with the girls I work with. Whilst waiting for a taxi, Stella complained about Sharon, the Afro-Caribbean girl who slept most of the evening and didn't do any housework.

Got to wash his smell from my body. Feel alright though. It wasn't that bad. I'm all right. Sitting in the shower at 5 in the morning as water rains on me. Rub soap in my skin. I'm all right. Just got to wash his stale smell from my body. Marie. Cheap electric blue dress. Plastic pointy heels. Coming down the stairs. Oddly, no make-up, a piece of black sleep in the corner of her eye. "They tell me I'm the sexiest thing on two legs and I get paid for it," she said then gave me advice on how to give a blowjob. Always use a condom. When she first started she thought she could never give the clients a blowjob yet she was surprised at how easy she found it, "I didn't seem like someone's dick after a while. I just saw it as a thing, sucking on a lollipop."

Marie, are you a devil in a blue dress? Or a cohort of Aphrodite? Capturing love in a whore's grasp. Like the book I read at Aaron's house. Psyche, the soul essence enslaved yet searching for Eros.

Friday, April 10th, Evening

WHAT'S GOING ON??? Went to the shop to get milk and cigarettes. Was coming into the flat when I saw a red car drive up and stop outside my door. Someone inside was waving at me. Couldn't see who it was so peered into side window and waved, peering at whoever it was as I looked for my keys and went into the flat. The doorbell rang and I answered. Standing on the doorstep was....THE BALD MAN FROM THE

Carly (part 1)

MESSAGE PARLOUR ON TUESDAY!!! He took off his hat and said, "Hello, remember me?"

"Yes," I said quite calmly, "But don't ever come here again. If you do I'll call the police." I shut the door. Stunned.

What's going on? Now he's crossed over from that world to this. There's no barrier between them and me. They can see inside. Inside my flat. See me sitting here on my bed with my head in my hands. Was it a set up from the massage parlour? Is he a pimp? Are they trying to frighten me? Is it something that he and Marie had conspired to do?? Did he follow me home on Tuesday? Is it an unlucky coincidence?

Disbelief...I hate men. But I know all men are not like that. Like him. Like the sort to visit a seedy massage parlour. Or like my father. I sucked the bald guy's ugly little dick. Little bald fucking shit. I remember, before he put the condom on, he ripped it. I noticed in time and asked him if it was torn, like talking to a child. An ugly bastard dangerous child. He seemed to think that it would be OK to use it like that. He wouldn't have even mentioned it if I'd not noticed. He tried to invade my body with alien sperm and then followed me home and knocked on my door. Next time I see him I'll strangle him, I swear.

Marie said that some of the women she's spoken to compare their job to nursing, as the prostitute also deals with the body. If I were a nurse he wouldn't have rang my doorbell and frightened me like that. I told him I lived out of town. I hope he'll stay away from me. I told him. I told him to stay away. I am scared. Paranoid.

Saturday, April 10th, Late

After this cosmic prompting, I leave the massage parlour. Marie apologises and offers me an extra shift. But, no, I heed this cosmic warning. I'm dirty, unholy, unwhole. I wish I were pure. I'm unclean. Pieces of dirty me flake off, falling dust upon my carpet, my mantelpiece and my furniture. Dust in my throat chokes me, so I stop speaking. Dust in my soul. Dirty.

I wanted to travel the world. It's too late, too late. Where are my sunsets? Sunsets have turned to grey. I wanted to see the world. Too late. This is like killing myself.

Suzanne, my secret. No one will ever know. Suzanne, my secret. I wish I could forget you.

Chapter 25: Inside Out.

dark black

grey inside

Do you like my poetry?

inside-out

Like a psychic, a medium, the words flow from an otherworldly plane, into my brain then onto the page in automatic writing. I like to imagine this is so. It is just something that I do. Writing poetry that no one will ever read.

maybe the colours of the outside

are there

beyond this sphere

no light no light

it's like waiting

always waiting.

I am suicidal, like Woolf and Plath.

Chapter 26: Nadir.

Have you ever been followed home? Have you ever been abused? Have you ever been scared of being alone? Have you ever been alone? Huh?

The two girls who occupied the flat above Carly had just moved out, leaving behind a sudden, empty silence where there had once been sounds of youth and life. Soon, though, the young, blonde mother with the gap between her two front teeth moved in and began to fill the upstairs room with homemaking and babies. As she was cleaning out one of the cupboards she found a Ouija board hidden in the back of one of them. Bad spirits had been conjured, once.

It feels like I am in a castle. Some lost part. The wind carries magic messages, whispers my name. It is the evil part of the castle where the bad men want to catch me, trap me. All the good ones are far, far away. I wish I could tell them somehow that I am lost, that I need rescuing from here. I close my windows and lock my door. I want the bad men to stay away. I want them to stay away from here.

Evil. It taints everything. Adds toxins to the wind. It comes pawing and wining at the glass, flicking at the thin curtains, bringing dark phantoms of the imagination in its flow. Evil taps on the pain, like disembodied fingers. Like a disembodied face that presses against my window, peering in, disembodied eyes that are cold like a killer's. This is an inverse world. Not even blackness, but grey. It is so harsh that my head aches. I lie on my bed and breathe slowly, consciously. Sirens in the distance, shooting through the sound of the wind, through the streets, like a wild city animal after blood.

It is an inverse world, loneliness. It could be just next door to you. In the apartment across the street. Anywhere and nowhere. A greying man in a gloomy bedsit prepares himself for bed. A bulb without a shade lights the room where he eats and sleeps alone. There is a plastic bottle of home-brew and nicotine net curtains. No ornaments or photographs or telephone calls from friends. One decorative plate, hung high above the door, which reads 'Mother'. She died long ago. Alone, there is no one to hold him. There is no one to make his sandwiches or cups of tea. He cleans his teeth then pulls back the sheets as he did as a child. The room smells, faintly of toilets, fish and chips, old newspapers. He has no connections. No one would notice if he disappeared. No one cares about him.

All those sad, sad, lonely people, who, like me, have fallen. Fallen below, invisible.

This room. This flat. *Flat*, more like a large bedsit. It is between a pet shop and a butcher. A pile of pale dead chickens and red worms of minced meat in the butcher's window. Hand-written cardboard signs: 'Do Not Mistake Our Prices!', 'Lean Mutton'. A corner kitchen with a window looking out onto the pet shop's backyard and the streets beyond. A portable stove. A room with a bed, a stereo and a marbled glass window like the sort you get in bathrooms where the outline of the bags of cat litter and dog biscuits can be seen. There are no animals though, just food and pet accessories, dog chews and collars for sale, just enough to keep the business ticking over. In the day, the sound of scooping and scraping into bags. Talking. Dull, depressive subjects, old, used and everyday. Outlines of people and echoes. Dim, intruding irritation.

I think I was happy here once but evil colours, discolours everything. The rainbow rag rug has faded, my psychedelic-print throw cushions, my cheery techno tunes, are now background noise, everything is washed out, grey. Slugs are crawling silently in the damp bathroom, leaving trails. There are red bugs riding on the slugs' shiny black backs. Weird. Woodlice, too. Then a may bug, and another, bashing against glass. At least I have a home. But this room. This flat. How depressing. Just big enough so that I do not flip my lid and smash up the place in a torment of claustrophobia yet somehow small enough to confine and inhibit.

Carly (part 1)

Maybe it is the window that lets in meagre light from the pet shop's storeroom next door. The window only lets in second hand light and serves as an invasion to privacy. The thin, brown carpet should be in an office or a shop, not a home. I can try and hide it with my arty mats of geometric patterns and splashes of colour on the walls. I cannot disguise it. Evil is seeping through, leaving its slime in my bathroom and curled up brown lice.

In the day, through the glass, I can see the white hair of the woman next door bobbing about amidst the sound of her scrabbling in various boxes or bags for the cat biscuits and dog chews. Before, it was her husband, Bernard, before he became ill. I prefer the white cloud of her hair and her chattering to Bernard. I have not seen his looming silhouette at the window since before Christmas. I would see him, just a sheet of marbled glass to separate me from him. He would stand at his shop door, always smiling, always looking at me for longer than was comfortable as he asked my name, asked me where I worked, my age. When I entered my flat, I could still see him next door, a bulky silhouette infiltrating my vision, blocking my light. I could still hear his slow, dragging, booming voice, which seemed to oppress my privacy. Now it is just his wife. I hear her talking to her friends, calling from the storeroom into the shop at them. I was almost glad when I found out that Bernard was ill. Evil taints everything.

This room. This flat. It is more like a mobile home or a caravan. Yet there is no scenery. No freedom. Aggressive cars and trucks rumble along the road outside the front door and I am hidden, a nothing, a nobody in this room at the end of the thin, brown corridor.

The Romany spirit, my previous incarnation, speaks to me. She tells me that I will travel. *It is but traffic now. Just traffic.* My spirit is trapped. Between the pet shop and the butcher. A place characterless and obscure. Lacking all charm. What dark forces have led me here? It seems as if a dark will has led me to this oppressive atmosphere. I think someone once died in here. The ghost remains, a puking, crying image in ether haunting the mobile-home type bathroom, behind a flimsy, sliding fake-wood door. A cat howls outside. *Eerie.* One cat is fighting another. It is fighting my invisible enemy. Or it is being strangled and the sound is there to torture me. One cat falls with a sinister screech. The slugs crawl on the bathroom floor. A cat howls in deep sadness. Perhaps this room, cold, and with no garden outside its walls, was once the storeroom for the butcher. I shiver. Ectoplasm swirls around me, fogs reason. I imagine the carcasses hung on hooks against the walls, slabs of dead meat. Perhaps there were others who did not escape here and were compressed and forced into suicide by the forces. I see their ghosts hanging around me. A man with receding hair, dirty-white plimsolls, and another, middle-aged, greying, with a blue shirt, hanging around for a moment, touching me with cold fingers. Hanging about me, as if I, a living human, a spiritual survivor, should escape from here and somehow avenge their deaths. Hanging for a moment then disappearing, leaving a lingering smell, which taints everything.

A fog. Fogs positivity, blinds me from normality. All hope is gone. Cannot reach out. To friends. To anyone. Just lie still. Forces are coming from outside, falling onto me. I cannot move. It is an evil man's spell conjured up from his ego. Conjured up from his desire to dominate and oppress, no matter what, and it holds me down. I want to kill myself. I want to jump in front of a fast moving train. I imagine the thrill of dying like that, those final grand moments, the adrenalin and fear.

I think I was happy here once. Sometimes. Loneliness changes everything. It is a disease, something shameful and secret, raging, feverish through a gun-cold mind. I am lonely and have no father. Just a deep pain and hate. I am lonely and I have no mother. Just confusion. I am lonely, lonely, lonely. I am lonely and I am mad. No one must know of this madness for I will be locked away, misunderstood. I hide this madness amongst all the other family secrets. "*Do not tell anyone,*" my father would say, "*do not tell anyone about our private family business.*" I wish I had someone to tell. I wish that I could tell Carole. But I cannot. I am living a lie. She does not really know me.

What has happened to my life? My mind? I am possessed. This possession my only companion.

Carly (part 1)

I wake from the dream. A family argument and it is ALL MY FAULT. The sun is grey. Light does not quite touch me. I am somehow shut out, distant. Life does not touch me. There is no magic. There is no way out. Disillusioned. Is this life? Is this my life? I am weak and bullied. Those with the biggest mouths and the cruellest egos win.

I do not feel like a woman. A sexuality gnarled by my past. A silent womb that only I can make speak within a private world of fantasy. I am ugly. Femininity punched out of me by male hands that have rudely pummelled my vagina, ignorant of my sensitivity, of my clitoris. Devoid of any knowledge or care for my pleasure. Dry and gouged by selfish fingers into my flesh. Just a piece of meat. Femininity punched out of me by my father, by his treatment of me. I was his child yet somehow a threat to him. Somehow a fear. So he hurt me. I am ugly. Nobody's little princess. I am not a lover. I am a whore. Yet I will never give another blowjob again, ever.

I wash and clean my teeth. As I brush my hair I think, *no one loves me anymore*. I step outside. There is a faint smell of meat in the summer air.

Interconnections. In the night a woman had been knocked down outside Carly's flat. A young woman, also twenty-two. There were flowers taped onto and around the pelican lights. 'To our darling daughter, Kate' read a card on a bunch of blue flowers placed by the side of the road. A hit and run driver. Hit on the Tuesday, died on the Sunday. "Killer Road" on the front page of the local free paper with a quote from the woman at the pet shop. "It's a busy road, they drive too fast, bound to happen sooner or later."

A bunch of flowers drift off, cars rush by, a dried bouquet outside the door. A child walks past holding hands with his mother. "Didn't she look where she was going?" he asks.

Chapter 27: Winter Women.

Winter woman

The sun is here

To brighten your clouds,

Watch the sadness

Glow

In embers of dark depression.

Winter woman

The sun is here

To cast contemplations

Onto beautiful brows.

Winter woman

Nights are long

And you hold the summer

Like a burden

In the secret walls of your lonely room.

Winter woman

Days are stark

And frost bites.

Winter woman-

Were we born to selfish sufferings?

Were we born to 'selfish' sufferings?

Chapter 28: Fall Down.

How I long for the rain.

I am pale like a forgotten yet familiar winter day; one of those cold, overcast days in November, in February. I walk through the park and the green of leaves, the warmth of the summer sun does not bring pleasure. In fact, I can hardly see or feel them as I disappear, invisible into my pale, grey cloud. And something hurts so much. Something hurts so much. A pretty girl in a blue dress walks by. She is tanned and smiling, like a flower she seems to be flourishing. This is her summer This is her season. Someone loves her. She is light, crystal, sun. I am bad, a dark and heavy soul. A vampire girl. No, not even that. I am no one special.

The girl is smiling as she crosses over the grass to her friends who are drinking cider, playing ball. They laugh as a black and white dog runs around and jumps his front paws up at her. A boy calls sternly to the dog to come away. She has people who protect her. They are free. They have abandoned their mundane daily routines to play in the sun. Yet the sun compresses me, saps my energy. I have nowhere to play. My sight is distorted. My parent's sight is blind as they deny the abuse.

I feel as if I am living a prison sentence for someone else's crime.

The sky is harsh. The smell of almond oil makes me sick. I am sick. Sick. Sick. How I long for the rain to segregate these carefree people from their happy group. They all have someone and I have no one.

In summer I die.

I am hurting. I wait for the rain to come. Then it is my turn; my turn to feel less lonely.

I long to be having fun with a group of friends, drinking warm cider, laughing, rolling on the grass, as a dog shakes water over me, whilst it pants pink-mouthed, smiling and bedraggled from the lake. I long to be on a beach. Yearn for the smell of a sea breeze. I yearn to be free, like them, to enjoy the sun. Jealousy? Not really, just sadness. I long to reach out and touch the summer, to feel young, to be with friends lying in the park in the sun.

A father plays beneath the trees with his children. I walk past youthful laughter, alone, withering, towards town, breathing in fumes. Alone. I get old. Die. In summer I die.

The streets are too crowded. No dens to hide. Death dry dust on the dog shit, dried out and stinking in the sun. Muggy and closeted, I walk through the traffic. I take off my black denim jacket and hold it under my arm. A wolf whistles whilst a loutish yell, nebulous words, from a passing bass-bin car drifts towards me. Drip, drip, drip, like dirty raindrops, into my brain. Like insults seeping into my vulnerable inner core that is on close acquaintance with my ego; my ego that can create or destroy. I walk past a dingy corner pub, where a pink, lumpish group of men stand. Sweating, in a beery, gaseous atmosphere, chests and backs exposed to the sun, they laugh together and call at me. *Look at them, dumb little shits. Can't even fuck properly. Can't even fuck.*

When you laugh, you laugh at me. You laugh at the female sex. You mock me. When you laugh you laugh at her, the woman in the pornographic magazine. Preening and made pretty for you. Legs spread and smiling submissively at you. At the cameraman. He is laughing to. He will try and screw her afterwards.

Sex object? Just an object. They want sex. Sex object? Then how come I feel so ugly? Ugly. Nervous. Nervous.

Carly (part 1)

I feel weak. That is when they start to pick on me. Pick at me. Pull me apart. It is like an extra human sense that detects weakness, moves in, wants to dominate, maim, kill. When a lover appears weak I begin to despise him.

"You look a bit lost," calls a voice from the crowd, invading me, mistaking my sensitivity to the environment for being lost. Like a helpless girl, a lost little lamb. Even if I were lost would he care anyway? They are just patronising bastards. No respect. Invading me. *Can't even fuck properly. They'll see. They'll see.*

It is so hot. I cannot breathe and the fumes and the dust and the stink weigh me down, drowning, drowning. Nervous. Breakdown. Pieces break. Fall down. I walk on past impersonal faces, cold hostile glances, and the tears come. *They all have someone and I have no one.* And a moan from my throat. Then crying in the street. People ignore my tears, of course, and I do not want any heroic attempts of help. I do not want their attention, for I would be misunderstood.

Crying in the street. Cars like black beetles. White ones. Black beetles. Lorry turns its head, termite, emerging from a side street. The cars shove through, wait, scream, and impatiently rush by. At that moment, the crux of desperation, an answer. Seeing an oncoming car, walking in front of it and curling myself up on the ground (I fear my rage-it can destroy others or myself). Pieces break. Fall down. *Pieces of my heart my love my trust my guilt my hate my soul.* Down.

In summer I die.

Chapter 29: Imprisoned.

Denial of sweet breath-

Sweet wind of valley

Pure air of hope

Or smell of grass on mountain.

The scent of the sea

A memory,

The cry of a gull

Above the sewage-city river

Taunts a desire.

And I miss you,

Trees

Grass

Air

Lakes, valleys

As I do my family-

All denied me.

Here-

My sentence before me

Is my life.

Chapter 30: Impact.

My knees are on the concrete. My arms cover my head to somehow protect myself from the impact. The end. Please. The end. She guides me from the car. She is maternal, calm. Yet, about the same age as me. She helps me over to the curb where I sit and flail, screaming, crying, to the sky. *Hear me scream. Sounds like a battle cry. This world reduces me to this animal. This underdog. This mad cow. This scapegoat. This savage. Hear me scream. Hear me scream. Hear me scream.*

I cannot speak, I will be misunderstood.

I yell to the sky, to mysterious deities hiding, watching, within the folds and layers of an unknown cosmos. "Let me out!" I am angry and bitter and hurt. Empty caverns, scars and blisters where my old Gods once stood. My angry energies burn a bright flame around me. A flame so strong, so bright, that I can either shine or destroy. I just need to escape to release the pressure. And the Gods, the Goddesses gaze down onto Planet Earth, down towards the perpetual pattern of birth, work and death of the human race and suddenly see me. Bright and dirty and low down and angry. Kicking up such a big fuss, such a tornado. They sprinkle a little hermetic powder onto my burns, give me a push, a lift and flip me onward. Whatever. They notice me way down here and give me a little help.

I do not long for death. I hope for life and a future, yet suicidal confusion taunts me. Crippled, maimed, why should I fight? I am used and bloody and dirty. Do not get too close, friend, sister, for you will trigger a mine in my minefield. Another silent implosion or unexpected, destructive explosion. All you can see is what is on the surface. Surface wounds, this anger, this insanity. Hungry and aching, do I care anymore? I did not plan to end my life. It was an upset urge with no forethought or planning. An unexpected attempt to escape.

The unknown woman remains silent, peaceful. Sitting on the curb between cars I arch back, cry up to the sky, the side of the tall buildings at a weird angle behind me. We go to the river and smoke a cigarette. Sitting on the wooden bench, we pass the cigarette back and forth. She has got peaceful, clear eyes and thick brown hair tied back with rainbow-coloured string. She is holding a dried blue flower in her hand and stares thoughtfully at it whilst she twirls it between her fingers. "I believe you," is all that she says and gives me another cigarette to smoke later. Perhaps she is another angel in disguise. I watch her walking between the concrete office blocks towards the sun on her way to her next mission. I light the cigarette and walk by the river.

I am wearing the gold earrings that my mother bought me for Christmas. I unclip them, hold them tight in my fist, then watch them fall into the water.

Carly (part 1)

Chapter 31

This is the end of part 1. Please read part 2.

Carly (part 1)

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