

Act Three

Heather's living room as before. **Carla** is sitting on a chair, hands and feet bound to the chair with plastic ties. She is gagged.

Heather is watching her, checks the time then produces some kind of smelling salt and waves it under **Carla's** nose. This rouses **Carla** though not instantly. As she comes to **Heather** settles down with the paper on her lap and pours herself a cup of tea from a set on the table. There is a sense that **Heather** is staging this action for effect. She reacts aggressively when she realises what is happening but is too restrained to have an effect.

Heather Don't knock yourself backwards love, you'll smack your head.

Carla looks at **Heather** with wide angry eyes.

Heather You've had a proper snooze, do you feel a bit better now? It's been lovely for me. I've had a bit of a tidy up and a potter around. I like to imagine this would be what it's like with a young baby. Them taking their naps while I get on with the housework. Is that how it is? Happy scenes of domesticity? Or is it fraught mayhem as you try and keep on top of everything including your sanity? I mean I have kept up with your Facebook updates on such things and it does seem that on a day-to-day basis things do change quite often. One day you may be blissfully in love with your 'babies' and thanking god for this precious gift and the next you're wishing you'd never had any fucking kids and that someone would come and take them the fuck away. It must be so trying. I can only imagine. I mean before the internet how did mothers vent? I suppose to their girlfriends, but what about the 2 a.m. posts during a sleepless night? Would mothers have simply cursed at the walls?

Would they have nudged their partners awake to give them a pithy couple of sentences that humourously gave insight into their

exhausted exasperation? And what about single mothers? Who would they have spoken to? It must have been so hard. I mean it must still be so hard. But it also must be worth it. This creature. This thing. Loving you. Needing you.

She drinks some tea and sits thinking. Carla seems frozen, unsure what to do.

Heather I got to a point where I thought there was something wrong with my body. We'd had ourselves checked of course and nothing was showing up but I knew for absolute certain that there was something going on. Like a switch hadn't been flicked. And I remember my mother saying to me that getting pregnant involved a whole lot of alchemy. That my body was in charge and actually I couldn't force it or will it on. My body would decide when the right time was. And this was the single most horrendous thing for me to deal with because I felt like I had no control over it. It was a problem I couldn't solve. But looking back on it all now I know exactly why it wasn't working. Do you remember the year nine disco?

Carla just stares at her.

Heather I wasn't going to go but by then I'd made friends with Ruth and that lot and they encouraged me I guess.

I wasn't going to go. I mean it was less than a year since you smashed my face in the school corridor and I was still suffering from panic attacks so my parents didn't want me to but I really, really wanted to be normal. I really, really wanted to be a normal teenager. You know? Going out. Doing the odd naughty thing. Staying with friends. So actually the plan was I would go for a couple of hours and then I would call mum and let her know if I either wanted picking up straight away or if I was happy I would stay longer. And the first couple of hours were fine weren't they? Because you weren't there. So I said to Mum, don't worry, pick me up at ten. And went back to dancing with my friends. But then you turned up. With the others. And I immediately wished I was no longer there. My friends were good but ineffective. They were as scared of you as I was. I was a pretty good shield for them. And the

teachers were hopeless as they probably all wanted to go home and were busy doing the bare minimum they could.

She pauses for a moment. Recalling. Carla is still.

Heather Those toilets. Black. Why no lights? All of us in there. The four of you, then the other three, can't remember them but along for the ride, then me. Crammed in but I don't think I've ever felt so alone. She said . . . who was that? . . . Was it Beth? Was it Beth?

Looks to Carla. Carla doesn't move.

Heather Whoever. She said. 'Strip'. You see last time, in the corridor, it was just ambush. It was just violence. I say 'just' but. It was just trying to hurt my body. So this time. I don't know man, what was it? You were wanting to hurt me but it was different. She said 'strip'. And I did. 'Open your legs, stand wide'. And I did. I think there were three girls behind me not doing anything, just watching. Not sure how they felt about it all but they wouldn't have rocked the boat. You and Beth and Joanne and Kerry were steering. I closed my eyes. It went very quiet. Then something went up and in. I mean not smoothly. Not just like that. You had to really feel around and get it in there. Shove it in. What was it? I don't even know, to this day, what it was you put in. What was it?

She looks at Carla.

Heather I'll remove the gag shortly. I will give you a chance to answer. I just want some space for my words first. Up and in. And then you all just stood there looking at me.

In the strange half light of the toilets. The skylight letting in some of the moon. Shadows making your faces seem more. I don't know. Strange. Laughing. And then it sort of petered out. And that's when you walked over to me, pulled out the object and whispered in my ear. Do you remember what you said?

She looks at Carla.

Heather 'Good girl'. And then you were gone. It was as if I had performed well. As if I had done exactly as I was supposed to. And I felt. I felt.

She wobbles. Then regains.

Heather I put my clothes back on. I left. I waited on the road until ten o'clock and my mum picked me up. I didn't tell her. I didn't tell anyone. I acted as if nothing had happened. And for some reason that worked. You didn't do anything to me again. It was as if you'd got what you wanted. What had you got? It was weird. It was fucking weird. But you seemed happy. I can't believe you didn't think that what you'd done to me at school was bad. Had you forgotten? How could you have forgotten?

She pauses.

Heather OK. So I was talking about trying for a baby.

And it got onto that. So. OK. What I meant was that even though there was nothing wrong with my body. I should technically be able to do it. Even though that was the case. I knew that I wouldn't because of that night. I could feel what I would describe as a blockage. Do you get that? I feel blocked up. Or maybe like a splinter that is in the perfect position to block something's way. A dam. A shut door. A log in the road. And actually whatever it was had some kind of fucking life to it. Like I feel life inside me. I mean this is fucked up but inside me I feel like there's this growth. It's growing. Not unlike, I assume, a baby. Or a tumour. Or a parasite. And I've had the scans. There's nothing there. But for me there is. A phantom growth if you like. It's really, really there. And recently I've been trying to work out a way to release it.

She stares hard at Carla. She breathes. Then stands up.

Heather (*brisk*) So what I'm going to do now is remove the gag around your mouth. This is your opportunity to speak. If you try to scream or shout the gag will be replaced and you will not get the opportunity again. Do you understand? Nod if you do.

Carla doesn't move.

Heather I said do you understand? I want to see a nod.

Carla doesn't move.

- Stop