



Love a go-go

Steve Pear

Tipue Publishing Ltd

Love a go-go

Copyright © 2026 Steve Pear, all rights reserved.

First edition published in 2026 by Tipue Publishing Ltd.

The characters and events portrayed in this book are fictional. Any similarity to real persons, living or dead, is coincidental and not intended by the author.

No part of this book may be reproduced, or stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without express written permission of the publisher.

Tipue Publishing Ltd

Company Reg No: 12706027

tipue.com

Made in London

Sweet Thang

Fri, Jul 7, 1989

Janey flew into *Palma de Mallorca* Airport, and could taste the hot kerosene air as she left the plane.

It'd been raining in London, dull and greasy, and the stylish black spring dress that was loose at Gatwick was soon clinging to her like a gluey shroud.

She'd never see London again.

Janey arrived at the finca, a huge property that stood alone on an eroded half-rural road, at just after three. A high aged brick wall lined with struggling, sun-blighted lichen enclosed the estate, and a pair of large black metal gates opened electronically. She was greeted by a smiling Rachel, her host and sister from another bitch mother.

Once past the wall the taxi driver pulled her suitcase out from the boot of the white Toyota, while Janey was lost at the scale of the place.

'Fucking hell, Rach,' she drawled.

Janey saw the slight edge in her eyes, and then they were holding each other tight. Rachel often found her family's wealth difficult, and the property belonged to Harry, her partly-estranged father. Rachel led Janey to a bright

Moorish front door. The photos Rachel had shown her didn't do the finca justice.

The *Finca El Oso Salvaje* was a large villa with red *tejas curvas* on the roof and walls of beige brick and pink-tinged stucco. Some of the low brickwork was clearly very old and set within the foliage as if it was organic, and a tree had fused to a drainage pipe, growing around it like a close sibling.

Rach looked good, Janey thought. She'd grown out her short dark hair and it was going wavy while her skin had a caramel hint. Janey knew she'd arrived a few days earlier to prepare everything, and also knew she hadn't been here in years.

'C'mon hun, I'll give you the tour,' Rachel said, taking her suitcase.

It was a fortnight away for Janey hitting twenty six and the excuse for a reunion, of sorts.

Janey and Chloe had met Rachel during freshers' week at Durham University, and they were all in student halls.

Janey was born in suburban Finchley while Chloe came from Stepney in East London. Clo was a mathematical genius, and Janey was studying English Literature. Rachel was from West London and taking an Art History degree. They got pissed together on their first night and the die was

cast, and they moved into a house just off the Hill a year later.

Inside the finca a short hall opened out onto a lounge with a high ceiling and a large brown leather sofa before an ochre brick fireplace. There was a spacious kitchen behind a curved half wall. It was all very baroque Spanish with rough white plaster and Moroccan rugs scattered out on the terracotta tiled floor.

‘Jesus, Rach, this place is amazing.’

Rachel was smiling openly again. Janey could see this place was special to her.

Rachel explained how this was the heart of the original finca, and how the mezzanine floor was taken out by the previous owner, Jorge Juan Morales, a respected abstractionist artist. Harry bought the finca in 1967.

Sliding glass doors led out to a rustic timber beam and vine pergola with a long, vintage a-frame wooden dining table. It was all stunning in a vaguely hippyish way.

At Durham they shared lipstick, eyeliner and clothes and just about everything else. Janey knew who Rachel was sleeping with, and the cute boy Chloe noisily dry humped on the sofa. They bought blue counterfeit benzedrine pills in bags of a hundred for studying, but mostly they took the pills with cheap red wine from the local SPAR supermarket, staying up all night talking.

Rachel led her on from the pergola and out into the bare sun. There was the chatter of cicadas and a slight hint of rosemary and lemon in the air. The clear blue water in the kidney-shaped pool was glistening and rippling lightly.

Jasmine grew on the high whitewashed wall that enclosed the finca while large cacti and aloes sat haughtily in colourful pots. Tall cut palms on the edge of the decking offered natural shade and give the pool a vaguely Californian vibe.

Janey could see grass thickening to forest through a heavy wrought iron gate. It had all been gouged and chiseled out of the old land.

‘Harry had the pool built,’ Rachel said.

Rachel was living with George in a flat on the Portobello Road. George was the archetypal good looking hippy, with long shiny black hair and a dark beard, tanned skin and a flat, hard stomach. Janey saw a shark who smelled of incense, and Rachel had a big trust fund.

Janey hadn’t seen Rachel for a couple of months, just a few long phone calls. She’d said living with George had been good for her, and she was a vegetarian now. Rachel was volunteering a few hours a week for Release at their office on Elgin Avenue, just basic clerical stuff, while George had rented a retail space below the Westway and

was planning to sell trendy pre-worn clothing. He had an eye, Rachel said.

She knew Rachel was paying for everything.

‘It was originally a granja de toros, they bred bulls here,’ Rachel said.

Janey was an estate agent, starting in late 1986 at the Southgate branch of Johnson & Ball, the pretty young blonde thing put in the desk by the window, on show. She held her tongue, smiled and dressed appropriately with the slightest edge of slut.

Janey learnt fast, and was now a senior agent at the larger branch in Finchley with a 3 Series convertible on the way. She’d bought a first floor flat in Crouch End, a careful Victorian conversion that could only increase in value above the curve. She largely despised working at Johnson & Ball, but it was as if a serpent was offering her juicy, irresistible fruit.

She’d recently discovered the magic of Charlie, and had two grams of blow in a plastic baggie in her suitcase, nestled amongst her underwear in a box of Lil-lets tampons. She was still at baby steps.

‘Is Chloe still bringing Ari?’ Rachel inquired lightly.

‘Yeah, I spoke to her on the phone last night,’ Janey said.

The idea was that Janey, Rach and Chloe would spend the first week together and then Ari and George would fly in on the following Friday.

Ari was Chloe's first girlfriend, a banker at Credit Berlin. That was all they knew.

'George isn't coming. He had a last minute thing,' Rachel said.

'Oh, sorry,' Janey replied.

'It's okay, George is George.'

Rachel didn't elaborate and Janey was happy she wouldn't have to be nice to the leech. Janey didn't have a partner, so now Ari would be the only plus one.

'Have you met her yet, this Ari?'

'Nope,' Janey replied, saying she'd barely seen Chloe recently, which was close to a lie. Clo was insistent she didn't say anything to Rachel about the night in Bethnal Green.

'Then it'll be a cruise for us both,' Rachel said tartly.

They went back into the finca and Rachel led her up the oak staircase and along a wide white corridor, opening a door at the end to the left.

'It's the master, with the best working air-con,' Rachel said. It was several degrees cooler than downstairs, almost cold. The bed was a large double, with a heavy frame of dark wood and bright white bed linen. The walls were white

plaster. Rachel had partly opened the shutters on the three windows, filling the large room with light. It probably had a similar footage to the whole of her flat in Crouch End.

‘That’s a Morales, the past owner, the only one in the finca,’ Rachel said, referring to the painting over the bed. The canvas was relatively large, around two yards wide, a violent explosion in vibrant blue on stark, flawed white. The walls were covered in art, nothing that Janey recognised.

‘It’s gorgeous, more than fucking gorgeous. It’s wonderful.’ Janey was thanking her again. ‘Don’t you want to stay in here?’

Rachel said she was staying in her old room, back along the hall. A nostalgia thing, Janey thought, or she didn’t want to sleep in her father’s bed.

‘You want to go in the pool?’ Rach said.

‘Oh God yeah.’

‘I’ll get the drinks and see you outside. There’s fresh towels in the pool house.’

Janey all but peeled off her clothing, thinking she must smell ripe. She took out her toiletries bag and ran the huge old chrome and copper shower in the large white bathroom that smelled freshly of bleach, adjusting it until she found the right temperature before fully going under. The pressure was surprisingly strong.

A few minutes later she was pulling on a new white bikini. She lit a duty free cigarette and had a furtive blast of blow before going out into the sun.

Tue, Jul 4, 1989

Rachel was the outsider, her wealth saw to that.

She'd been offered a place at Magdalen College Oxford, but went with Durham, which annoyed her mother, who was an alumna of Magdalen. But it was more than familial spite, she didn't like the college or Oxford and knew she wouldn't fit in.

Durham wasn't exactly egalitarian, and it was mostly clusters of the privately educated, arrogant and lazy in their privilege, already in their tangle of public school networks that often went back generations.

They knew who she was of course, and where she sat in the hierarchy of the English caste system. She and Harry were both in and yet out, not that he cared with his rhino-thick fuck you skin.

'It's almost like we're Jewish,' he'd say smiling.

It was Janey and Chloe who'd saved everything, and if it wasn't for these insolent clever girls she probably wouldn't have lasted a fortnight.

Rachel loved her father, a louche man who drank too much and got obscenely stoned but was rich enough not to care. He'd left when she was fifteen, but in reality he'd

probably lost interest at least the year before. It was easy to love Harry, the distant idol over the water.

Her paternal great grandfather was a northern industrialist, and her grandfather a gifted player of the stock market, as was her father, albeit it in his own slightly haphazard, loose way. He'd often say he was a vulture capitalist, laughing.

Harry had such a large fortune that when he started again with a new wife half his age it had no financial effect on Rachel or her mother. Then he left the new wife after a couple of years and married for a third time at fifty-five to Frances, Fin, who was only a year older than Rachel.

Rachel'd been an only child, but now had two half-siblings, both under five years old. She knew George had already cheated on her at least once, he was that much like her father.

Her relationship with Harry was wearily complicated. In the past it could be a void while he was in New York, Spain or France, and then fleetingly intense in London. He'd leave again and she'd get that same feeling of rejection.

She'd long realised he was a bastard, selfish, vain and childish. He'd lost his soul somewhere along the road, but he was still her father.

Her mother mostly just despised Harry, but now he'd settled in St. Johns Wood it was easier, at least for Rachel.

She'd visit every few weeks or so, and once even babysat her young blonde half-sisters.

Harry was happy enough for her to have the Finca El Oso Salvaje before he, Fin and the girls arrived for a month or two at the start of August, and Rachel flew to Spain a few days early.

She arrived in the morning and found the photocopied set of instructions showing how to switch on the mains, turn on the boiler, use the washing machine, etc. The boiler controls were in the old larder off the kitchen, and soon she had it noisily firing, with pipes jumping and jerking into life.

The finca was remote, with only a few olive groves and vineyards scattered below the hills. There was a supermarket and a bar a few miles away but the nearest large town was Pollença, a half-hour drive. Harry had the same family on a retainer for years, and they'd be stocking the finca with meat and seasonal fruit and vegetables. Rosemary, bay and oregano grew wild on the property. The plan was that her and Janey would be doing the cooking. She didn't know if Ari cooked.

The Rubio family, who owned a taxi outfit and a bar near the *Església de Nostra Senyora dels Àngels* in Pollença's Plaça Major, were in almost their third generation of providing Harry with whatever he wanted. They looked after the finca

while Harry was away, and one of the younger Rubio daughters would be cleaning and changing the bed linen and the towels, along with bringing the fresh food every morning.

A first Rubio cousin serviced the pool, while another cousin took care of the gardening and landscaping.

Jorge Morales' old studio was on the first floor, to the right of the kitchen and above Harry's office. Chloe went there in the first few minutes of being back in the finca. It was a large white bare space, and decades later still smelled lightly of oil-based paint. The worn floorboards and white walls were splattered in multicoloured pigment, a large accidental and unaware Morales.

There was a leather sofa against the back wall facing the big windows, splashed in decades-dry paint with colour caught perpetually in the leather cracks. It'd been one of Rachel's favourite places in the Finca El Oso Salvaje. Harry had told her he'd left it as it was, in respect of Morales but mostly for her.

There was no air-con. Harry had bought her a large art book of Morales' work and she'd lay on the aging, sagging sofa staring at the pages, imagining him painting there.

Fri, Jul 7, 1989

Rachel changed into a sky blue, high waist fifties-ish Dior two piece and opened a bottle of Rioja. Janey walked into the kitchen in a white bikini.

‘Go on, darling, I’ll be out in a minute. The water’ll be freezing,’ Rachel warned her. She said how Harry liked the water cold. Rachel thought he was still the king of the thermostat, but in truth the pool filtration mechanism was aging and needed replacing.

She heard the flat splash of Janey diving into the water. Rachel put the bottle and two glasses on the table in the shade of the pergola, along with a bowl of green olives. Then she dived in with Janey.

‘Oh fuck, this is so good,’ Janey said, a few feet away. She was smiling, her blonde hair flat against her face, shining with chlorine in the light.

They splashed and swam for ten or so minutes, with Janey rigorously washing London and the flight away. The pool house was a half-open pine and oak shack with a toilet and a cold shower stall, the filters and thermostat for the pool, and piles of bright clean white towels and robes on the shelving.

Rachel and Janey dried off by the sun loungers and then sat at the table under the green vine pergola. They hit the wine and began to chill. Rachel rolled a fat spliff and took a couple of hits, passing it to Janey.

Rachel's senses were blurring nicely in the sun, and she was looking at the blue water of the pool oscillating in the light.

'We should lay off until Clo arrives,' Janey said, taking a big pull on the reefer.

'Yeah, I s'pose,' Rachel replied.

Janey went for another dip in the pool. Rachel had forgot to warn Janey that she'd need sandals, the blue and white tiles could get raging hot in the sun. Janey was so excited and giddy at being at the finca she didn't appear to care.

Rachel opened another bottle of Rioja, and after reading again the photocopied pages about using the aged and weird kitchen range, began cooking a basic Italian tomato sauce, heavy on the garlic, with fresh green oregano and dark basil to stir in at the last minute.

Fri, Jul 7, 1989

Chloe arrived at just before nine, tired and apologetic for being late, and Rachel opened a third bottle of wine for her.

It wasn't easy to get away. Chloe was working for Psion, and long hours were her norm. She started at ICL after a milk round offer at university, a proper and formal rather than real-world training in C, and soon went covertly freelance bug hunting the QL applications bundle for Psion on the side, and it paid well. ICL was going nowhere fast, so she went to Psion. Chloe was thinking of where to go next, and had a soft offer from Microsoft, which would mean a green card and a move to Seattle.

She hadn't told Ari or anyone else.

Chloe had brought a box of orange biro, black, fine point, and a couple of wire-bound A5 notebooks, along with her HP-27 calculator, the plastic keys worn. It was over a dozen years old and basic, but she could find all the functions without thinking and liked reverse Polish notation, which was similar in feel to a regex. Ideas often came to her out of the ether.

She'd bought a large neglected house in Bow a few years before, but had barely done anything to it beyond sorting

out the wiring and having a couple of the rooms renovated. Chloe had hated the intrusion of the electricians, plasterers and painters, even though she was mostly at work while they were there in the house. The kitchen was still a white painted-over relic of the sixties, with incongruous modern appliances and an expensive oak dining table. It was at least bright and airy.

There'd been a thing with a guy called Paul, a young insurance broker who worked in the Lloyd's building, and at one point they'd even been trying, haphazardly, to get pregnant. They were both working class over-achievers playing at being adults, she later realised.

He'd left and it was her mortgage now. Ari had moved in close to a year before.

The taxi driver from Pollença who met her at the airport was a good looking boy a few years younger than Chloe, with clean dark unruly hair and clear olive skin. He flirted with her in very broken English, and if she wasn't feeling so dirty from the flight she might have enjoyed the attention and flirted back.

Finally he said they were here, and even in the fading light the huge rambling villa was impressive.

Well played Rach, she thought.

They threw themselves around Chloe at the door, shouting and screaming, and suddenly it was the London girls on the North Road again, miles adrift from home. Janey was a California-ish blonde, a Barbara Crampton lookalike, though she wouldn't know who that was.

Rachel was still the rebel posh girl but less punky now, more retro cool, her dark hair longer and more girly. It suited her in a way.

'You okay hun?' Janey said, kissing her sweaty face.

'Yeah, I'm good,' Chloe said, smiling.

'You look great. C'mon, I'll get you a drink.'

Janey and Rachel were both half stoned, and Chloe was now so glad she came.

She had her first glass of wine and then Rachel showed Chloe to her large white room, next door to Janey. The hall had flat white walls, a sort of reluctant Iberian stab at being modernist. The starkness had been dialled back with art; an eclectic amalgam of modern, realist, abstract and surrealist prints. She recognised a Picasso, a couple of Mondrians and a Pollock, but most flew over her head.

Rachel said the wing was part of the 1949 renovation by the artist Jorge Morales. Chloe said she dying for a shower, and Rachel left her to it.

Then they were at the dinning table under the pergola, eating Janey's pasta and salad and emptying a bottle of Rioja.

Chloe was catching up after arriving late. Rachel had brought her Hitachi TRK-8190E ghettoblaster, and Blondie's Parallel Lines was playing in the background. It was by the wall and plugged into a two pin travel adapter, a wire to their past. They were reminiscing and laughing while Rachel rolled another joint.

'So, tell us about Ari.'

'You'll like her, she's cool. She's older,' Chloe cagily replied, saying they'd met at a work event. 'I don't know what else to say, you'll met her soon.'

'It's all very intriguing,' Janey said, high.

Chloe insisted it wasn't, and caught a flash of Rachel rolling her eyes. Rachel and Janey were open and liberal to their bones, and Chloe wasn't expecting it. But it was just their play bitching and she was being thin-skinned and hypersensitive over Ari.

Later Rachel brought out a bottle of gin, along with tonic water, slices of lemon and a bowl of ice from the tray in the fridge. She was smoking a blunt, a Cuban cigar hollowed out and stuffed tight with ganja. Chloe took a puff and found it too harsh. It was Jamaican bling, cool and flash in West London.

They were talking for ages, and finally went to bed at nearly four in the morning. Chloe didn't mention Bethnal Green and neither did Janey. It was still too raw, even though they were both high on the night.

Sat, Jul 8, 1989

Janey had a very intense, very visceral dream.

She was washing dishes at the large white sink, just as she did last night with Chloe, and she felt a hand on her right hip, so faint she could barely feel it through her shorts. At first she thought it might be Chloe but Janey was in the kitchen alone.

The hand moved to her right leg gently, with slightly more pressure, the fingers soft and moisturised, a female hand, young.

There was no one behind her, no pressure of a body, no hint of an arm reaching around. Now it was stroking low at the edge of her bare leg and moving slowly higher, teasing.

It's going to happen, Janey thought shakily.

The hand was feeling her through her clothing and Janey opened her legs slightly. She'd never been touched by another woman before and the illicitness was mind-blowing.

Janey clumsily unbuttoned her Levi's cutoff shorts and pulled them down along with her red underwear, until they were on the edge of her hips.

The ghostly hand moved between her legs and a finger slowly teased, not quite fingering her, wet before moving to her swelling clitoris.

Janey was moaning, pushing her buttocks back against nothing. She looked down and saw her shorts gaping open, but here was no hand there and she could see her clothing and flesh moving.

Janey woke. She was so aroused she rolled on her back and masturbated, coming fast in less than a minute.

Fucking hell, she thought.

It was growing light and just after six in the morning.

A few hours later Rachel sat with Chloe at the dining table under the green vine pergola.

No one had showered or dressed properly yet, and Janey was at the stove in the kitchen, doing her take on a vegetarian Eggs Benedict with crunchy lettuce replacing the bacon. Bagels rather than muffins, poached eggs, and a fresh hollandaise sauce, made with egg yolks and soft butter, dijon mustard and a squeeze of lemon juice. She'd finish it off with a rosemary drizzle. The rosemary, heavily crushed in the granite pestle and mortar with a pinch of salt

and a few drips of extra virgin olive oil to keep it loose, would hopefully be the killer.

Chloe didn't cook, so Janey was only being competitive with Rachel, who'd taught her how to cook in the first place.

'Janey is going to be mother. It's all very old school North Road,' she heard Chloe say.

'Yeah, I can live with that,' Rachel said.

'Fuck the both of you,' Janey called out from the kitchen.

Rachel stood and blew a kiss at Janey. 'Love you darling.'

Janey said nothing, concentrating on toasting the bagels and the water for her eggs.

Janey served the Eggs Benedict, and thought it was okayish, given the weird kitchen range. The eggs worked, and the rosemary sprung its magic, even better than the basil she'd normally use.

'God, this is so good,' Chloe said.

Janey watched Chloe put the tip of her knife in the cloudy skin of the egg, the yellow yolk spilling out into the paler hollandaise.

Rachel said it was lovely.

'Did any of you dream of a blonde girl last night, with black fingernails?' Chloe said.

'Eh, no,' Janey said.

'That's Lulu, or Lily,' Rachel stated. 'She's a ghost.'

Janey and Chloe exchanged looks.

She's been here in the finca for years, Rachel explained. 'Harry calls her Lily, I call her Lulu. She's benign, you could say. She won't hurt you.'

'Have you seen her?' Chloe said.

Rachel told Chloe she'd felt her presence, and heard her, but she'd never actually caught sight of her.

Janey wasn't going to reveal her horny nocturnal thing, whatever the fuck it was.

Later they cleared the table and Rachel was making coffee with a large moka pot. Rachel and Chloe would be doing the dishes.

Sat, Jul 8, 1989

At breakfast Chloe couldn't recall the precise details of her nightmare. It was a blur, but she was feeling jittery with a sour taste at the back of her throat.

She/it had black coarse fur, bristly and hard, black fingernails.

She took her first dive into the pool, and it was just as cold and startling as Rach had warned her. But she wanted jolting, and it was just the right thing for her now, and the dope, gin and nightmare hangover began to clear.

She was wearing a plain black swimsuit, the one she wore to swim at the Haggerston Baths in Hackney. Looking at Rachel and Janey she realised she had nothing to sunbathe in. She'd packed Bjarne Stroustrup's *The C++ Programming Language* but not a bikini. Chloe admitted as much over lunch, a light salad with balsamic vinegar and lemon, olives and bread, prepared by Rachel.

'I thought we'd be going mostly topless anyway,' Janey bantered.

'I'll roll it down for now,' Chloe said, feeling naive and fusty as well as ill prepared. 'It was work and I packed in a hurry.'

‘It’s okay, hun,’ Janey said.

Rachel saved her.

‘There’ll be a few bikinis in the room past the office, for the girls he brought back or whatever. Harry uses it for storage. Take what you like, he won’t give a fuck,’ Rachel said.

‘Thanks hun, I’ll have a look later,’ Chloe said.

‘I’ll come with you,’ Janey said, ‘for fashion advice.’

They cleared and wiped down the table and took a bottle of cava in an ice bucket to the pool.

Janey was laying on a sun lounger a few feet from Chloe. Janey had her blonde hair tied up and was wearing black Ray-Ban Wayfarer sunglasses. She took her white bikini top off, and with their pure teardrop shape and pale to dark pink areolae they were the glorious, perfect breasts of a Hollywood star. Chloe knew Janey would still look great at fifty.

Chloe told her she looked fantastic, and it made Janey smile.

Chloe pulled down her black swimsuit, and it left pale dents on her midriff.

‘I think your tits are lovely,’ Janey said, low.

Rachel sat at the table under the pergola rolling a spliff. She lit the reefer, took a few big hits and passed it to Chloe on the way to her sun lounger. Rach laid back, removing her

sky blue bikini top. Her sunglasses were Gucci, large, black and ornate. She wore bright red lipstick, her old punkish persona left in the distance and all but gone now.

She'd slid back into Harry's world with only a trace of hippy via George. It was a seductive, this wealth toxin. Chloe probably wouldn't be able to resist, and Rachel had been exposed to it all her life.

She felt the ganja hit and chilled in the sun. Her sunglasses were cheap Ray-Ban knockoffs, bought from a stall at Kensington Market. Her friends were glamorous and she wasn't, and she both cared and didn't care.

The door was the next one along from the office, facing the narrow white staircase that led up to the Morales studio. Chloe turned the handle and pushed the large door open, catching a waft of fragrant heat, gone in a second.

Indian?

It was in the old wing of the finca. The ceiling was low and there was no air-con, and the once pale blue patterned wallpaper was bleached a near bone white. The space was brightly lit but had a sickly shim, as if the air was greasy, while the windows were surprisingly clear.

Burnt clean by the sun.

'Fuck, it's hot in here,' Janey said.

A Spanish drawing room that'd been ignored and lost, Chloe thought. Harry's office had probably been a cloakroom.

There were a half-dozen old plywood storage boxes, and a thin dust coated everything, a beige-ish, white layer. There was a running machine, a Zenith. Janey was wearing her white bikini, stained lightly with Coppertone.

'I can't breathe very well,' Chloe said.

'Yeah, there's mould or something,' Janey said, pushing and then cracking a window open by striking the frame with the right palm of her hand. It let in a gust of fresh air.

'You're sure you're okay?' Janey said.

'Yeah.'

Janey knew Chloe was slightly asthmatic. It wasn't a big thing, and she wasn't on medication. It was mildly irritating rather than anything else, Chloe'd often insisted.

Janey dived into the storage boxes, and soon found the one with the neatly folded bikinis, just as Rachel had said. Janey found a crochet lime green number with a bright yellow trim.

'Clo, this is very you.'

'Oh fuck, I love it,' Chloe said, thinking it was very 1969, very Sharon Tate and Brigitte Bardot.

Clutching her green Bardot/Tate bikini, Chloe and Janey was idly and nosily looking through the boxes. Chloe found

the magazines under a few fading broadsheet editions of The Guardian. At the top of the illicit pile was *Loving Orgy*, with the strapline In Colour! It featured a hairy naked couple, his dark beard almost as bushy as her pudenda. It loudly shouted the early seventies.

‘Oh my God. Look at this,’ Chloe said.

Janey saw it and burst out laughing. Chloe pulled the first few out onto the floor, spraying up thin white dust. *Razzia*, *Love a Go-Go*, *Bizarre Love* and *Honky Tonky*. They were a few years old but still hardcore.

They were Dutch or Swedish but the text was in English. Chloe knew they’d be wildly illegal in Spain, as well as back in London.

‘Well, we all know what we’ll be reading tonight,’ Janey drawled.

‘Rach is going to so love this,’ Chloe laughed.

‘Honky Tonky. Fucking brilliant,’ Janey said.

Chloe was laughing but it turned into coughing, and for a second she couldn’t catch her breath. She saw a curl of white dust caught in the sunlight, and then it was gone, scattering in a soft waft of air.

‘Clo?’

‘I’m okay,’ Chloe said, but her nose and throat were burning, and her chest was tight and starting to hurt.

‘C’mon, let’s go. I’ll get the porn,’ Janey said, ‘you got your bikini?’

‘Yeah,’ Chloe said.

It was gone five and Chloe could hear Rachel preparing dinner in the kitchen. Chloe and Janey went off to shower and change. Chloe’s bikini fit almost perfectly and she fell in love with it right there and then.

So fucking cool.

Chloe came into the kitchen and Rachel had her flatbread and naan doughs resting while she cooked her lentil, cauliflower and chickpea curry. She’d brought her spice tin with her. Janey had come down before Chloe and was drinking a large glass of red. They watched fascinated as Rachel rolled the dough with a thin rolling pin.

‘It’s called a *velan*,’ Rach explained. She’d learnt to cook breads from a young Indian girl from Forest Gate, a friend of George. Chloe could almost hear Janey biting her tongue.

They sat down to eat outside, all drinking Rioja.

‘Rach, while you were cooking,’ Janey said, ‘we found porn.’

Chloe pulled out a copy of *Love a Go-Go*, which featured very early seventies fellatio on the cover, and laid it out on the dining table.

‘Oh my God, Harry,’ Rachel said, laughing.

‘We all love a good wank mag,’ Janey said.

They spent the next half hour flicking through the magazines, crying with laughter.

‘Oh fuck,’ Chloe said.

‘The curry was epic,’ Janey said.

‘No, this is better,’ Rachel retorted, laughing.

‘I’m taking *Loving Orgy*,’ Janey said.

‘It’s very you,’ Rachel stated.

For Chloe the best find of the day was her bikini, but she knew they’d all found the magazines arousing but no one was going to admit it. Porn worked so easily, Chloe thought, like garlic or MSG.

An hour later Rachel was playing a mixtape on her Hitachi ghettoblaster, and Janey and Chloe were dancing out by the pool to the Tom Tom Club’s *Genius of Love*. Rachel had put out a few tea lights she’d bought at Habitat and the blue black sky was cloud free and bright with stars.

They sat around the table, Chloe was drinking a red Estrella beer and Janey Rioja, while Rach was rolling another spliff. They’d turned the music down for while, and the tape beat low in the background.

‘Do you want to go out for a walk in the morning?’ Rachel said.

Back on the North Road Rachel would go out and walk or run for hours, often without saying so. It had a maniacal edge and they grew used to her going off without a word.

‘God, no,’ Janey said, and it was so direct Chloe snorted a laugh.

‘It’s your loss,’ Rachel smiled, taking a long hit from the joint. Rach never took offence at Janey’s acid tongue, and it was weirdly touching, a sort of love language. They were all as close as family, even if they’d go for months without seeing each other; it’d been that intense on the North Road.

A wiry twist of smoke began to drift from Rachel’s left nostril before she exhaled heavily and passed the reefer to Janey. Rachel changed the tape, raising the volume dial and pushing up the bass sliders, Grace Jones and reggae, including *Pull Up to the Bumper* and *My Jamaican Guy*, and most of the good Sly and Robbie stuff.

Rachel had packed over a dozen cassette tapes in with her clothing.

They were all up and dancing and then the lights went out in the finca. Everything went black and the Hitachi TRK-8190E fell with a slur into silence. The tea candles were nearly lost in the deluge of pitch black.

Chloe felt something move fast in the devoid black air, a flutter, probably a bat.

‘Fuck.’

‘It’s just the fuse, don’t panic,’ Rachel insisted. ‘Harry said the trip might go off. I just have to reset it.’

Chloe and Janey followed Rachel and heard her groping around in the oily dark until she found the kitchen drawer with the torch. The fuse box was in the old larder along with the boiler controls, and Rachel finally found the rocker switch.

Light flooded the finca and spread out to the pool, and the Mighty Diamonds slurred back into the last rocking bassy minute of *Right Time*. It made the real world return with a jolt.

Chloe and Janey were slightly freaked out, and no one wanted to dance now. They went to bed less than an hour later.

Sun, Jul 9, 1989

Chloe was having another nightmare, her id firing like a wild, galloping child.

It was day and with the sun bright and hot, and there was a girl in the pool, half treading water and half floating.

She was in her late teens with garish red lipstick, long blonde hair and bright orange nail vanish, the fake hippy girl from *Loving Orgy*, topless but wearing retro yellow bikini briefs. She looked up at Chloe and smiled, and it was a gaze that suggested they were intimate.

Lulu?

Chloe smiled back, confused and feeling the heat on her skin.

Chloe could barely see in the glare of the sun as the hippy girl crawled out or left the pool and stood on the blue and white tiles, wet and dripping and running her fingers through her hair. She was still smiling at Chloe, as if they'd long been lovers.

The girl struggled out of her yellow bikini bottoms, pulling the now tight wet material out over a growing bulge. Between her legs was a hard twitching cock, bright red and swollen at the tip, swaying at the root.

The girl began to howl, a high-pitched mating call.

Chloe turned but couldn't run, the decking was greasy and her bare feet were sliding and slippery, failing to get any traction. Chloe was panicking and crying and then the girl was on her. Chloe could smell something male and blackly musk, heavy with androstenol, goat-like.

The goatish girl pushed her over on her face and pulled her ankles out wide.

Chloe woke in a sweat, even with the air-con noisily on. She couldn't recall anything of her nightmare other than a vague hippy girl and something masculine and bestial.

A goat.

Later, after coming out of the shower, she was sure some of her underwear in the drawer had moved. It was out of place and not how she'd laid the clothing in, and there were a bunched pair of tan tights and some very seventies sky blue nylon panties that certainly weren't hers. They could've been left at the back of the drawer, Chloe reasoned. The blue briefs were cool though.

She had a slight sense of disgust at wearing another woman's underwear but it soon drifted off like a swirl in the air.

Rachel was an early riser. She wore white Lycra and a red adidas tracksuit, the top tied around her waist, white Reebok trainers. Her running gear.

She was in the kitchen at eight, opening the heavy moka pot Harry had bought in Milan. He'd taught her not push the ground coffee down too hard but create a full but tight pile. She boiled it on the stove. Rachel washed down a diazepam with her fresh near espresso.

She pushed the button and the heavy black metal gates opened, and then heard the door shut behind her. It would set off the alarm system if it was held open. Like Jorge Morales before him Harry was careful about security.

She took off towards the edge of the forest and then up the hill, bare apart from scrub and patches of short, hard wild yellowing grass. It was already growing hot and the cicada song was a vast scratching and clicking noise. Rachel knew the way up the hill well, the wood and the land were all part of the finca and Harry's estate, and half an hour later she was at the peak looking out at the view over the valley. The air was clear and she could see more than a mile of green hills and trees.

God, I'd forgotten how beautiful it was.

Rachel had first come here with Harry when she was nine, and now she sat burning the edge of a thick inch of Harry's hashish with a plastic disposable lighter, her red Rizla

papers balanced on a knee, her legs tightly closed. She drank water, sat on the hill in the sun and got high.

Harry could be both cold and loving but everything could change in a day. She understood now how he'd grow bored, and having the whiff of a sociopath didn't have the capacity to flatten out his emotions. It was all black or white, and you could play with your toys until you lost interest and drifted off.

They couldn't talk about it and Rachel still both hated and loved Harry the total inconsiderate shit.

Rachel thought she'd take a different route back, down through the forest. As a child she'd lose herself in the woods just beyond the finca. She'd build dens while hearing her parents arguing on the wind. She'd stay there for hours and they'd never come looking.

On the way back, Rachel caught a glimpse of a young teenage girl in the distance, looking almost feral in dark green shorts, topless and barefoot. Rachel saw her again, closer now, and the dirty blonde girl looked back, seditiously poking out her tongue.

It didn't feel menacing, it was more satirical and rebellious. Rachel smiled at the girl's funky arrogance.

And then she was gone, running back into the heavy cover of the trees. She was clearly Spanish and local.

Later they were all around the pool, drinking cold bottles of red label Estrella beer. Chloe was laying in the sun in her retro Bardot, Tate-ish bikini.

Rachel said she'd found some dried magic mushrooms in the kitchen. They grew in the forest, and she knew they wouldn't be too strong. Janey and Chloe both said they'd never taken mushrooms before, and Rachel promised she'd stay straight and watch over the girls like a mother.

'It's great in the sun,' Rachel said. She told them about a mind-blowing trip she'd had on Ibiza with George.

'Okay,' Janey said. 'The hippy shit aside, I'm in.'

Chloe took a bit more persuading.

'I don't know,' she said.

'C'mon, babe. It'll be fun,' Janey said.

'I'll look after you, I promise,' Rachel said.

'You'll be fine,' Janey said, 'I'll be there, hun.' It was just about enough for Chloe.

That evening Janey made a spicy pasta with a fresh green salad. Rachel had taught her how to cook, and how to prepare fresh garlic rather than use garlic salt, how to toast her spices first and how not to burn her butter in the pan.

'There's a video player and Harry has *Scarface* on tape,' Rachel said with a grin. Harry had a large black Sony Trinitron in the lounge, and they'd seen the film well over a

dozen times before, quoting along with the juicier lines of dialogue.

Back on the North Road Rachel had a silver JVC VHS video recorder, and they'd often play punk, reggae or punk-ish music and a film on the screen with the sound off, more often than not pirate copies of *Taxi Driver*, *A Clockwork Orange* or *Apocalypse Now*, running like a vivid smear of colour in the dark with the lights out. Rach loved The Slits and they'd always get up and dance to their reggae-drenched version of *I Heard It Through the Grapevine*, and it became their song.

Chloe, cross-legged on the floor, relit a spliff and nearly missed her cue.

'The world, Chico, and everything in it,' they all called out, howling and laughing.

Mon, Jul 10, 1989

Janey was horny going to bed but her beige plastic vibrator was missing from the drawer. She found it in the suitcase, in the tangle of her worn underwear, the two C batteries flat. Had she left it on when she was stoned? She'd put in fresh batteries when she was packing for the holiday.

Rach would know where the spare batteries were in the finca and say nothing. She was good like that, trustworthy

and genuine, the George fuck-tart apart. Janey knew if she was ever in real trouble she'd go to Rachel first.

She used her fingers and thought of accidentally watching a girl that looked like Chloe being wanton and noisy with a faceless whoever guy.

Rachel woke a few hours later and there was a ripe BO smell, a trace in the cotton of her sheets, barely anything at first but Rachel couldn't ignore it, and soon it was overpowering. Rachel changed her bedding and turned up the plastic white dial on the air-con. She fell back to sleep with the bedside light on.

In the morning the white sheets she'd flung into a pile in the corner still had a whiff of body odour, even though they'd only been on the bed a day. She'd get the Rubio girl to put the white sheets in the wash with a cup of very heavily diluted bleach, just as Fia, the maid who worked for her mother for four or so years, had taught her.

Fia was young, probably only a few years older than Rachel, and always smelled lightly of astringent cleaning products. Fia was Portuguese with perfect light coffee skin that made Rachel feel privileged and very white.

Rachel went into the shower.

Mon, Jul 10, 1989

It was seven in the morning, and Rachel opened the sliding glass doors in the lounge to let out the stale air. They'd all been doing ganja and both she and Janey had been smoking cigarettes.

The sky was a clear blue with not a trace of cloud and it was going to be a relentlessly hot day. This might not be a good thing. She took the net from the pool house and fished out the dead black insects. The Rubio girl was meant to do it every morning but she'd occasionally forget, or just didn't like doing it. The Rubio pool guy would be coming once a week to check the filter and the balance of chemicals.

Rachel told Janey and Clo they should have a light breakfast, so they all had cornflakes and coffee. She made high Earl Grey tea, having soaked the dried mushrooms overnight. Rachel gave the girls a light dose, so the rush wouldn't hit too hard too fast. She'd gauge the effect and give them a little more if they weren't getting a proper high. She didn't know how long the dried shrooms had sat on the kitchen shelf, it could be for years. It wasn't like they had a sell-by date.

Rachel had found the jar looking for spices Harry had bought in India and would've barely if ever used. He liked the idea of cooking but never put in the shift, the hours. Not sticking at something was pure Harry, but then she too could be flighty. She'd started learning French but her enthusiasm had drifted off into the ether before the year was out. It could be a genetical curse, like being impatient and her overly large earlobes that no one had ever noticed.

They all went outside by the pool, and Rachel said it'd take twenty minutes or longer to kick in, and they should just let it come and be swept along. She'd be taking pictures with her Polaroid SX-70 Land Camera, and they'd love the trippy photos later.

'I don't feel anything yet,' Janey said impatiently after fifteen minutes, bratish but more excited than she let on.

'Just give it a fucking chance, darling,' Rachel retorted. Janey said she was going in the pool.

The water was rippling lightly, glistening blue and white and flashing in the bright sun. Janey kicked off her flip-flops and dived in. The water was almost icy coming out of the heat, and she floated on her back for a minute before turning and starting a slow breaststroke, ducking her head below the surface. She noticed the chlorine water had begun to shine. By the time Janey got out of the pool and sat bunching and drying her hair she was high. She saw the

corona of the sun had a blurry hint of colour at the edges, a bright exhaling blue.

‘Don’t stare at the sun, honey,’ Rachel said, rolling a joint, and Janey looked away, blinking. Soon she was fixating on the colours of the decking, the traces of green moss and the patterns it made as it grew, the white where it’d fed and moved on.

Chloe was feeling it too now, a rising tingle in the back of her legs.

‘Oh wow,’ Chloe said.

‘Just let go,’ Rachel said.

Chloe was fascinated by Rachel’s delicate and lightly tan skin, and the way the colour was slightly darker on the knuckles of her hands. Her hair was glossy and Chloe saw there was a blueish tint that appeared to oscillate with every slight turn of her head.

Chloe told Rachel she was incredibly beautiful.

‘You’re beautiful too, hun,’ Rachel said, lifting her Polaroid camera and the dull whirl and then lighting her spliff. Chloe saw the flame from her lighter leaving curling wisps of yellow and orange light, faint in the sun.

She saw the photo later and thought she looked crazed.

‘So beautiful,’ Chloe said, then realising she was ignoring Janey, and the guilt was jarring and strange. She put her

hand out and Janey took it. Janey's fingers were lovely and soft, her fingernails red and dancing.

'Can I stroke your hair?' Chloe asked.

'Yeah,' Janey said.

'So bright,' Chloe said.

A few minutes later Chloe said she was feeling sick.

'Drink a little water, hun. It'll pass,' Rachel said hazily, at a distance.

Chloe was looking at Janey and vaguely thinking of the Royal Oak in Bethnal Green. She touched Janey's wet face and it was so soft.

Janey thought they were out by the pool for an hour before Rachel suggested they should go for a walk in the trees, unlocking the heavy back gate past the pool house.

Janey could hear the low noises in the trees, like the wet neolithic moss was verbalising. Janey found it fascinating and near precise.

The tea was a little strong, Rachel realised. Chloe said she didn't want to go into the woods, but Janey took her hand. The Goat Girl was there, Chloe thought.

She looked up at the ageless trees and their contorted branches, and the green colours that bled as they swayed lightly in the breeze. Chloe noticed how the bark on some of the larger trunks had been worn flat in places, as if licked away by a giant.

Janey and Chloe had walked off in different directions but Rachel saw they were no more than twenty feet apart. Rachel knew the forest well and it'd barely changed. They couldn't really get lost.

Chloe heard something move in the foliage below and it gave her a woozy start. It was a fox, twitching and looking at her from the foot of an elm tree. The white fur on its cheeks and snout were a bright blur, and as it moved it shot sparks of rainbow light into the air, fading in the yellow sun. Chloe barely took a step before it was gone in a short burst of dry decaying leaves.

Later Chloe saw a black spray of mushrooms in the dark earth moving like sea anemones. They made a hollow spitting sound as they fed, and she saw a hard white moving spot at the end of each polyp, like a beak.

Rachel was there, and Chloe heard the dull click and slow roll of her Polaroid instant camera. She heard Janey close by, saying how everything was so beautiful.

Janey saw something move in the corner of her eye, a nervy jiggle of a brown and white pelt. It was a large hare, but with curling long wood-ish antlers more than half the length of its body. The claws on its back feet were a vacant black and hugely out of proportion, while its front paws were hairless and pink, like the hands of a child. It was

looking at her with monkey smart eyes, and then it leapt with a twisting blur in the air and was gone.

They were in the forest for a couple of hours, but for Chloe and Janey it felt more like days. Finally Rachel led the girls back to the finca for some water. Hydration was important while tripping and Rachel realised one bottle going into the trees hadn't been enough.

Janey and Chloe sat on the edge of two sun loungers facing each other, laughing and touching. Chloe was stroking Janey's hair again, her fingers lightly brushing her ear and neck, the light bouncing off Janey's hair as it slowly fell.

Janey was closing her eyes and saw the hint of wavy orange light behind the lids.

'Janey?' Chloe said, vaguely. She was looking at Janey's fingers.

'Yes hun?' Janey replied.

'Your fingernails are so red,' Chloe declared.

'It's Dior Rouge,' Janey responded.

'It's like they're filled with swirls of light,' Chloe said.

Janey looked at Chloe's short dark hair.

'Black like the sun,' Janey said.

Chloe didn't respond. She was watching a teenage girl playing by the pool a half dozen or so yards away. The girl was around fifteen, and had long almost bright yellow

blonde hair. She was barefoot and wearing a red swimsuit a size too large for her.

The girl was dancing, and saw Chloe watching. She opened her mouth and slowly ran her right index finger along her tongue. The gesture was purposefully obscene.

Lily.

Chloe looked away and back at the finca, and all the windows and shutters were like the eyes of the lascivious girl, heavily-lid but bright and alive.

I'm looking through Gary Gilmore's eyes, Chloe thought.

The air chilled as the sun fell, and they went back inside just as Janey and Clo were starting to crash. Janey went to her room, and Rachel heard the boiler bang and hiss. She was taking a shower. Rachel hoped she'd be alright and not slip and fall.

Chloe had collapsed on the large leather sofa in the lounge. She'd taken off her blue Converse All Stars and was wearing the green and yellow bikini, pulling her knees up to her chest. She looked tiny and vulnerable, swallowed by the huge couch, Rachel thought.

Rachel poured a glass of red, sat at the table outside and rolled a fat joint. She'd put Chloe to bed later.

She looked through the stack of photos she'd taken during the day. She'd used two packs of SX-70 film, and there were a couple of really cool photos of Janey by the pool that

looked like an early seventies modelling session. Clo wasn't as confident at having her picture taken, but Rachel had caught her in one good candid shot, her dark hair hanging sweatily over her face. It was evocative, real and beautiful.

The forest pictures were a little more blurry and haphazard, telling the story of the day. Rachel was two or three spliffs in by then.

There was a photo of Chloe trying to pet a wild hare that was skittish and not even in shot, and another of Janey with her hands in the air and her eyes closed, high and abandoned.

There was one hazy and fantastical shot of Janey smiling at the lens, her hair flying and out of focus. It was a bad exposure with a burnt flash of white and yellow on the left of the print, a blur that could be another figure close to the lens. It had the feel of found abstract art.

Tue, Jul 11, 1989

Janey woke with Chloe laying close to her. She was still sleeping, and must've crept into her bed during the night. They were facing each other, and for a few minutes Janey just looked groggily at Chloe, her short dark hair and pretty elfin features. She was still wearing her retro yellow and lime green bikini, it was gaping slightly and she could see the edge of a soft dark nipple. They both had light red scratches from their hours in the forest.

The bed smelled of Chloe, there was spice and something floral in a trace of fragrance but mostly it was her. Clo still wore the lipstick from the day before, bright red and cracking at the dry edges.

'Hun,' Janey said gently.

Chloe half woke. 'I'm sorry. I was feeling weird and didn't want to be alone,' she said drowsily.

'It's okay, I was freaking out too,' Janey responded.

Chloe shifted into her and they held each other for a while, both still spacey. Janey had her face against Chloe's hair, a light smell of coconut, her skin hot and soft. She'd slid her left leg between Chloe's thighs, and was trying to control her breathing and not move her hips.

The air-con was on at full blast, and the white noise made it easier for Janey to ignore her quivering inner monologue. She was wearing a white vest and yellow floral pyjama shorts, and had removed her makeup, while Chloe was as effortlessly beautiful as ever. It was the same on the North Road. Chloe would put on eyeliner and lipstick, pull on black tights and in five minutes she'd look amazing. Janey had to work at it, and she'd always followed her before bed regimen of a shower and cleansing, no matter how high she was.

'I think Rach is making breakfast,' Chloe breathed softly. It was well after nine in the morning.

'I s'pose we should get up, but I don't want to,' Janey said.

'I don't either,' Chloe said, a soft voice close to her, in her arms. 'Just a few more minutes.'

Janey was in the toilet and Chloe looked around the room, now lit brightly in the sun. Mostly Modernist art lined the walls, and Chloe recognised a Pauline Boty print, and a photo of a Jeff Koons inflatable that was signed in blue marker. There was a poster for the Galerie Louise Leiris exhibition in 1957, featuring an inky blue Picasso drawing. It was worn and creased behind the glass with a slight tear, and Chloe thought it might be an original print.

She saw a striking painting of a pan-like figure or satyr seated against a tree on the bank of a stream. The print was tiny within a foot wide framing. In the background right of the painting was a ginger-haired girl in a red dress, possibly wearing a crown of flowers. There was a typewritten label below the image.

Faun and Nymph study 1867 by Pál Szinyei Merse.

The large oil canvas over the bed was a blue and white abstract, heavily influenced by Yves Klein. She could be wrong, she wasn't as knowledgeable as Rachel or indeed Harry, but it did look a touch derivative.

Janey's pillow was on the floor.

Rachel knew they'd be wiped out and still a little high from their trip, so she baked bread.

Janey and Chloe came down to the kitchen together.

'Morning,' Rachel said. The bread had cooled enough to be sliced, and she began making toast.

'There's butter, marmalade, and fresh orange juice,' Rachel said. The butter was *Mantequilla de Soria*, rich and left out of the fridge for a few hours.

Chloe was groggily appreciative.

'You should hydrate, and eat,' Rachel said. There were two large bottles of cold Vichy Catalan mineral water on the table.

'Okay, yeah,' Janey said.

The range had a large metal toasting rack that easily took six thick slices. The two girls leapt on the toast and butter.

Over coffee, Rachel noticed they kept exchanging glances. Still slightly off and away, she thought.

Rachel said she'd clear the breakfast things away and wash the dishes. Chloe thanked her and Janey said she needed a shower.

'Me too,' Chloe uttered flatly.

Chloe went back to her room and showered, washing her hair. She rinsed the lime green and yellow Bardot bikini and wrung it out tightly over the sink. It had no label and not even basic washing instructions, and was probably bought at a market stall for a few pesetas. Chloe didn't care, it made her feel cool.

She sat in front of the mirror and put on eyeliner and lipstick, wearing the crochet bikini wet. She thought of being in bed with Janey, and how high they were that night in Bethnal Green. She realised there might be nothing going on. It might all be in her head and they were just stoned.

She didn't know what to do.

It was just before noon with the sun rising yellow hot, and there was a tinnitus-ish low drone of insect noise. Rachel was out by the pool in a bright red bikini, her sunglasses on her head.

Rachel looked up. 'You okay sweetie?'

'Yeah, I'm fine,' Chloe said.

'Just chill today. It's normal to feel a bit off.'

All Chloe felt was ill. She'd brought a thick paperback out with her, *The Executioner's Song* by Norman Mailer. She hoped to get lost, that it'd take her mind off this morning.

Janey was wired. She'd snorted a line of blow along with two paracetamol and a swig of evian, tasting the Charlie harsh at the back of her tongue. She lit a cigarette.

Before going into the shower she'd cut the sales tag off a new white bikini and laid it out flat on the barely straightened bed. Janey came out of the bathroom bunching and drying her hair with a towel but her bikini was now as loosely disheveled as the white sheet.

She barely cared with all the other stuff going on in her head.

It was either the ghost or those fucking shrooms.

In the shower all she could think of was Chloe.

Chloe had a partner and Janey worried she'd misread the signals, just like that night in Bethnal Green.

She'd have to say something.

Chloe would say no. She'd be nice and smile but it'd be over with, done.

Janey went out to the pool in her new bikini, her blonde hair tied in a ponytail.

‘I’m never doing that again, I feel like shit,’ Janey said.

‘Sorry darling,’ Rachel said, blowing her a kiss. Janey glanced at Chloe before diving into the pool. Chloe was reading.

The cold water in the pool cleared her head a notch, and she heard a splash behind her, Chloe. Janey turned and they looked at each other for a second.

Janey did a length of the pool, dunking her face full in the cold water. Chloe was waiting, her dark hair flat and her mascara starting to slightly blur below her brown eyes in perfect black slutty perfection.

Janey could barely breath.

‘Can I sneak into your room later?’ she said quietly. She’d practiced it in the shower but still it came out hesitantly with a lack of any confidence.

‘I’d love that,’ Chloe said, smiling.

The relief, the lack of rejection, caused Janey’s skin to shiver. Janey saw Rachel wasn’t looking and kissed Chloe lightly on the mouth, tasting chlorine and lipstick.

They were all out by the pool.

Janey’s sun lounger was just a few feet away, and she was wearing her black Ray-Ban sunglasses, listening to her Sony personal stereo and smoking. Chloe could hear the

leaking rhythmic hiss, and thought it was either Philly soul or David Bowie's *Young Americans*. Janey was topless.

Chloe had stopped shaking and was in something like a loved-up stupor, euphoric. Her hangover had loosened her inhibitions.

Ari?

She didn't care. She didn't feel any guilt or self-reproach; that'd come later. Ari hadn't done anything wrong but Chloe just wanted Janey.

She was trying to read her Norman Mailer but none of it was sticking, and she'd read the same long paragraph twice.

She rolled over and saw Rachel on the far side of the pool, half under one of the large white parasols while reading and moving around a thin Kashmir shawl to stop from burning.

Chloe drifted off in the sun.

She was in the storage room on the ground floor, where Janey had found the Tate-ish green bikini and she'd found the porn.

There was the thin beige layer of cotton dust but the light was artificial and wrong, like a Klieg light diffuse and bleeding into the sun.

She couldn't tell if it daylight or at night.

The teenage blonde hippy girl from *Loving Orgy* was laying on her back on the worn floorboards, teasingly edging her engorged and wet greasy cock.

Lulu. The Goat Girl.

She'd used lube and was spread with one leg bent at the knee, and her short perfect orange toenails were like claws running back and forth along the bare wood flooring. The scratching was foul yet intoxicating.

'Suck it,' Lulu said, breathing hard and pleading, 'please.'

Chloe woke. She saw *The Executioner's Song* open on the ground, the spine up and the pages splayed out.

'My book fell over,' Chloe said, confused. She reached down and picked it up. The cover was hot.

'You okay? Do you want some water?' Janey said.

Chloe took the large blue bottle of *Solan de Cabras*. 'I was dreaming.' It was gone now, and she could barely recall anything. There was the goatish hippy girl with orange fingernails again, but everything else had drifted away in the bright sunlight.

Goatish?

She was feeling weird along with greasy from the suntan lotion she'd panic bought near work, and vaguely wondered if Janey would mind sharing her Coppertone.

Rachel was still laying out with her novel and her Kashmir shawl on her legs. She was a shade off, vague, and Chloe thought it was pills, something like Seconal.

Tue, Jul 11, 1989

It was just after seven and Janey was cooking dinner, chicken parmigiana but with manchego shavings replacing the parmesan. It was a simple dish but Janey knew the rich tomatoey sauce was the thing, it had to be oily with red wine. She was pan-frying portobello mushrooms with garlic and rosemary for Rach.

Chloe sat in the kitchen with her, drinking Rioja. She'd put on lipstick and mascara but was still wearing her crochet Bardot-ish lime green and yellow bikini.

Janey had another line of Charlie after coming out of the shower. She smoked a cigarette while applying her bare to less make-up of eyeliner and lipstick.

She wore a white shirt and a new dark pair of Levi's 501 shorts, her blonde hair still shaggy and wet.

Janey was showing Chloe how to make a basic Italian tomato sauce, sweating the onions and celery first, adding the thinly sliced garlic, then a glass of red wine to deglaze the pan. She poured in a tin of plum tomatoes, along with seasoning and a splash of Worcester sauce. She left it on a low heat to slowly reduce, and would add oregano and basil

at the finish. Janey was also teaching Chloe basic knife skills.

Rachel sat outside by the pool with the sun lowering, smoking a spliff to the soundtrack of *The Harder They Come*.

Janey was going to flatten and season the chicken, and then after half an hour in the oven, smear each breast with a couple of spoonfuls of the thick tomato sauce, and then grate over a layer of manchego. It would go back into the hot oven, and she'd serve it with a sharp, lemony salad. As she prepared the salad she fed Chloe slivers of radish and garlicky olives.

'I want to eat you,' Janey said quietly.

'I want to be eaten,' Chloe replied, low.

Jack was a client at Johnson & Ball, looking to buy property for his pension portfolio. He was a banker in his early forties, blondish and well dressed, good looking. He had that slight edge of being hapless, and he'd have been looked after. It was and wasn't fake.

Janey and Jack flirted on and off for weeks, and he'd call for no reason. She knew he was married, he'd come in early one Saturday morning for a viewing with his young wife and infant daughter.

She and Jack were alone in a narrow two bed terrace house in Southgate, with the seller wanting a fast sale with no

chain. He'd painted it white and laid carpets of a sickly oatmeal, trying to rid it of any soul.

They kissed in the bland white plasticky kitchen and she vaguely thought of Kubrick and the milk-bar. They had near feral sex in the larger room upstairs on the white double bed. She'd pulled her flared black skirt up to her waist and her underwear and black opaque tights were around one ankle. She'd only taken her shoes off. He pulled out at the last minute, finishing on her warm bare thigh with his hand. She touched herself, looking him in the eye as he leant over her, spent and dripping on her stomach.

She had the devil in her that day, Janey thought.

He'd didn't call for a few days and she thought she'd lost a client. Then he showed up at work, took her out for coffee and said he couldn't stop thinking about her.

He said he couldn't blow his life up again. His second marriage was all but over but he loved his young daughter. He'd stay for her. It was what it was.

'I'm a bastard but at least I'm being honest,' Jack said, as if it was an apology.

'Okay,' Janey replied flatly. She didn't want anything serious, least of all with this vainglorious reptile. But he was good in bed and unselfish, but that was his self-regard again, his arrogance in pleasing her.

Jack had a client-facing role and being away was the norm, so every month or so they'd have a night together at a West End hotel.

She'd let Jack come inside her, and for Jack it was a really big turn on. He didn't know she was taking a contraceptive pill, and was assuming she wasn't.

She didn't care about Jack then and cared even less now.

They ate outside under the green vine pergola with another bottle of Rioja. Chloe and Janey were glancing at each other again, Rachel noticed. She was playing The Man-Machine by Kraftwerk on her TRK-8190E ghettoblaster as background music.

'What's the dressing, hun?' Rachel said, referring to the salad.

'Lemon, pepper, thyme and olive oil,' Janey said.

'Sweet,' Rachel said.

It was only that Kraftwerk was on so low that Janey heard it.

'Rach, turn the music off,' Janey said.

Rachel pushed the stop lever and the night went silent.

'What is it?' Rachel said.

'Listen.'

It was distant and light, the sound fluctuating on the wind, shouting and then laughter. It was in the distance but they'd all caught the tone, the anger and the vitriol.

Rachel stood at the black iron gate but at first couldn't see anything, it was close to a full moon and bright above the trees, but the noise was from below, in the greasy darkness. They heard glass breaking, a bottle, and a man howling like a wild dog.

They were shouting again and Rachel heard the word *putas*, whores.

'I think I can see a fire,' Rachel said. They all stood around her at the gate, and saw the small flickering orange light, a fluorescence in the dark.

Rachel told Clo and Janey they should go inside and she'd call the police.

'Fuck this shit,' Janey said.

'It'll be okay hun,' Rachel insisted, saying the old walls surrounding the finca were high and there was an alarm system covering the walls, doors and windows. Harry had been careful securing the property. Rachel told the girls it was probably just pissed locals, kids.

She found the number for the *Policía Municipal* in her photocopied notes, along with the instruction booklet for the house alarm. She'd go through the test procedure to

make sure it was fully working, but first she dialled the police from the phone in the kitchen.

It rang out.

Harry had a shotgun, a Browning double auto. She found it by chance the week before, while she was preparing the room for Janey's arrival. It was pushed back under the bed along with four boxes of a dozen shells.

Harry had showed her how to use it when she was eleven, when they'd hunt foxes in the forest. They never actually shot a fox, and Rachel now realised Harry was never intending to kill anything.

Rachel'd hid the shotgun in the kitchen, in the old pantry with the Hoover and the cans of tomatoes, dried pasta and the like.

'Don't worry, they can't get in, we're safe,' Rachel said, explaining how the alarm was linked by another phone line to the police station in Pollença, and how the *Policía Municipal* were paid privately to come over no matter how it was set off.

They all slept in Janey's room, in her large *cama de matrimonio*, the big bed, or barely slept.

Wed, Jul 12, 1989

At Durham Rachel would use William Burroughs' *Naked Lunch* as a sort of I Ching. She'd randomly open the book

and read a paragraph. It would act as a die, a signifier, and could even influence her day. She'd snorted heroin backstage with the pretty boy guitarist of some forgotten New York Dolls/Johnny Thunders-obsessed band and now here she was, thinking of a breakfast of *omelette au fromage* with gruyère and chives. It was a thing she made for George.

Rachel woke first. The sky was blue and clear and the finca was full of bright sunlight, and last night didn't feel real. They'd done a lot of drinking and drugs since Friday. Janey and Chloe were still sleeping in a foetal position, spooning, and they'd all slept in largely what they were wearing. She left and went back to her room to shower.

There was no fresh linen or towels by the front door, so the young Rubio girl hadn't been in yet. The girl would try to be as quiet as possible but Rachel would hear the door go at around six, the Rubio girl knew the four-digit security code, and then Rachel would hear her scuttling around in the kitchen before watering the jasmine and cacti out by the pool.

Rachel didn't know who'd been out there in the forest, if there'd been anyone.

Rat Brigade.

They were called Rat Brigade, she recalled. The boy with the Johnny Thunders thing. She'd seen them three or four

times, and they had one good song. It was their first single, on Rough Trade, and their following release died the death. There wasn't an LP as far as she knew.

She pulled on her trainers. She had to see what had happened last night, or if it was all just post-hallucinogenic or drug paranoia.

In the woods it was easy to see where they'd been, they'd lit a small bonfire, and there were empty bottles of San Miguel and Estrella, broken glass and crushed cigarette ends.

The bark of a tree was burnt. The ash was dry but still tepid in the chill of the morning air, so they hadn't put the fire out. The ground wasn't weeks-long dry yet, but Harry had told her over and over about the danger of forest fire.

Fucking idiots.

She'd call and get one of the Rubio people to clear the glass and debris away.

Chloe woke and gently pulled herself away from Janey, not that she stirred in the slightest. Chloe felt dirty and her head was pulsating with a mild ache. She'd take a couple of paracetamol and have a cold at first and then hot shower. That and a strong coffee would wire and liven her up for the morning. She could doze later by the pool.

Rachel made her *omelette au fromage* and fresh coffee and they all sat outside by the pool. Janey had changed into a white bikini while Chloe was wearing the retro green with yellow trim bikini she clearly loved and would never take off.

‘This is lovely,’ Janey said, and Chloe agreed.

Rachel said she’d been in the forest, and found traces of a small fire. It was probably just local teenage boys.

‘The police didn’t pick up the phone last night, and that’s fucking scary,’ Chloe said.

‘It’s okay,’ Rachel stressed. ‘I think our losing it was partly the drugs, we’ve been going in pretty hard.’

‘I don’t know,’ Chloe said.

Janey said fuck it, she was going for a swim.

‘Okay,’ Chloe said, distracted.

Wed, Jul 12, 1989

They spent the day in the bright sun, smoking ganja on and off, and were all half high. Janey and Chloe were drinking water and beer, while Rachel was on gin and tonic, albeit with a ton of ice. Chloe was trying to get back into *The Executioner's Song*, but with the dope and Janey being so close she wasn't getting very far. They were now sharing Janey's Coppertone suntan lotion. The sky was so clear and blue it was like she could touch the sun.

'I'll cook tonight if you like,' Janey said to Rachel. It was Rachel's go, but she looked in the mood to get stoned, not cook.

'The girl didn't come with the veg, or anything else,' she said.

Henry had a block of North African hashish, fruity and half the size of a house brick, stored and heavily wrapped in clingfilm. He'd written the rules of how to keep it fresh and moist in his set of photocopied instructions for the finca. You'd cut a slice and then reseal it back religiously, airtight. Rachel had a preference for ganja and the Rubio girl would bring it every day.

‘I saw a packet of interesting Italian tagliatelle in the larder,’ Janey said.

Later Chloe was in the kitchen while Janey was cooking a lemon and garlic pasta dish.

Rachel was outside at the table by the pool, listening to Tom Tom Club’s debut LP.

There was a print of Botticelli’s *The Birth of Venus* on the kitchen wall, framed in baroque gold-painted wood. It was probably there as much for the daedal frame as the painting. Chloe noticed that all the figures in the painting had Morton’s toe, where the second toe is longer than the big toe, just like Janey.

Janey was smiling and slipping her hand around Chloe’s waist. No one had bothered to change, and Janey was still in her white bikini. Chloe was trembling and almost stoned with it, and Janey pulled her close, kissing her and put the tip of her tongue in her mouth, teasing. Chloe wanted to swallow her, to crawl into her sweet prefect skin.

They agreed they’d go to Janey’s room that night, to get away as soon as they could. Chloe didn’t know how she’d wait.

It was all a bit crazy, like they were different people.

They ate outside to Bob Marley low in the background, and Rachel was rolling her post-dinner spliff as soon as

Chloe started clearing the white plates away. Later, Rachel put on a David Bowie mixtape, and they sang along to *Drive-In Saturday*.

‘Be careful, darling. There’s no falling in love at the El Oso Salvaje,’ Rachel said to her while Janey was in the kitchen. ‘Harry once called it the house that eats women.’

Chloe didn’t think anything of it then, and could only dimly recall it later in the morning. They were all very high.

Chloe started the evening just wanting it to be over, to be alone with Janey, but in the end it was okay. She liked looking at Janey and it was horny to wait with this sweet urge, and with Janey looking so good. Her unruly half-wet blonde hair was intoxicating.

They had more wine and reefer, and Rachel was singing again. Chloe was the first to call it a day at just before midnight, glancing at Janey who smiled back at her.

Thu, Jul 13, 1989

Chloe cleaned her teeth, washed the red wine stain from her lips and re-did her lipstick. The air-con was close to chilly and she put on her lacy La Perla black bra, with red pink pyjama shorts. It was the best she could do at short notice, as she didn’t know what Janey liked. She daubed on a little Chanel Coco.

‘Hun?’ Chloe said at her door. She didn’t have to be quiet, as Rach was still out by the pool, playing Bowie’s *The Jean Genie*.

Janey was shaking, her breath short. Chloe saw *Honky Tonky* and *Loving Orgy* on the table by the bed, along with worn read paperbacks of *Anna Karenina* and *Pride and Prejudice*. Janey loved the canon and it had always been her ambition to work in publishing.

They looked at each other and then they were kissing and Janey clumsily pulled off her white bikini and they were in bed in a minute. Janey was so aroused and breathing so hard Chloe was frightened she might faint.

Lily, the goatish girl, was watching as a curl of dust and masturbating, and without realising making the clothing move on the floor.

One of Janey’s dirty white socks folded in and out like a worm, inching slowly towards Chloe’s lacy black bra. A leg of Janey’s bunched ten denier black tights she took off mid-flight in the aeroplane toilet was reaching in the air, like the blind feeler of a deep sea predator. It found Chloe’s pink pyjama shorts and the nylon struggled to be stiff as it slid in at the waistband, while one of Chloe’s blue Converse All Stars fell over, and a white lace was reaching out and yearning for something to feel, shivering with lust as it slid to Janey’s discarded white bikini top. The clothing had a

sudden dance of rapture and elation as the Goat Girl finally came and then everything fell still.

Chloe was the first to fall asleep at around four, and they both half-woke two hours later, holding each other, faintly startled but not knowing why. It was light but the sun was barely there, and only the small crow-like black birds were making any noise, flying fast over the finca.

There was a loud bang from the ceiling, as if a large fist had punched the roof above. Chloe yelped groggily in shock.

‘It’s just the heating pipes, love,’ Janey said thickly. They were both sleeping again a few minutes later.

Chloe woke close to Janey at just after eight, and gently untangled herself. Janey didn’t stir. It was near icy cold in the room and she turned down the white air-con unit over the door.

She found her La Perla black bra in the scatter of clothing. Janey had said last night her bra was hot, and she was going to put it back on in the bathroom. Chloe peed and gently applied a smear of Janey’s lip balm, not enough to further spoil what was left of her red lipstick. Her lips were sore from kissing and her shoulders and collarbones were slightly burnt.

The window shutters were closed and throwing thin lines of early sunlight on the tiled floor. She got back into bed with a dozing Janey.

Later, at close to twelve, they agreed they'd have to show face. The morning had been long, unhurried and loving, and they'd used the beige vibrator Janey had bought in a sex shop on Brewer Street in Soho.

They wouldn't say anything to Rach, at least not yet, and they were both ignoring the Ari issue.

Janey drifted off again and Chloe decided to make her breakfast. Toast with the good Spanish marmalade and coffee. She pulled on her red and pink pyjama shorts and went back to her room, changing into her Bardot/Tate bikini. Chloe knew she must've smelt heavily of sex so planned to dive in the pool before getting too close to Rachel.

In the kitchen she found a note, Rachel saying she'd gone out for a walk to the supermarket. Chloe went for instant rather than the moka pot, and just as she was filling the kettle there was a large and loud bang, and the heavy vibration swung the fridge door open. It was as if the kitchen had been slapped by a giant.

Chloe cried out.

She saw a coil of white dust for a couple of seconds, a reecho of before in the room where she found her bikini and the porn.

Cotton dust, Chloe thought. *How the fuck do I know that?*

Then Chloe saw the air change, like a shim of oil on water. The light was almost greasy now, reflecting and moving around a chair in a wave.

For a few seconds, in a weird rainbow blur, she saw a young blonde girl, smiling and dancing with orange fingernails and vivid red lipstick, her feet dirty. It was the hippy girl she'd seen in the porno mag, *Loving Orgy*.

Then she was gone, leaving a thick waft of something like ripe BO.

Like the chimpanzee enclosure at London Zoo.

Chloe shut the fridge door without thinking.

She went outside into the bright sunshine, the decking hot, and dived into the pool. The shock of the cold water cleared her head and washed away the smell of fucking and the monkey odour in her nostrils. She looked back at the finca from the pool and everything was entirely familiar. The insect noise, the fast, black blur of small birds high overhead. The fiery sun on chalk blue.

Lulu, or Lily. The ghost or whatever it was in the finca.

She always knew there was something here.

Chloe climbed out of the water and took a white towel from one of the sun loungers. It was dry and stiff after being left out overnight. It smelled lightly of Coppertone.

She saw the ashtray and the red lipstick traces on a half-smoked spliff. Yeah, she thought. She took the reefer and

went back inside for a light, knowing there was a large box of matches by the vintage range.

There was nothing off in the kitchen now, everything was normal. Strangely she wasn't expecting anything else, it was that fast. Chloe thought of a film from a different era being projected on the kitchen.

She'd approach it like a wild, unexpected bug in some code and trace it. There was a memory leak in the Psion word processor for the QL, a legacy hunt, but she chased it down when no one else could, eventually finding a bug in the Sinclair Microdrive logic.

She lit the spliff, took a bottle of water from the fridge and went back out into the sun.

Thu, Jul 13, 1989

A few hours earlier, Rachel was waiting for Chloe and Janey to show, smoking a joint by the pool.

She was wearing a blue on white God Save the Queen Sex Pistols t-shirt, an original Vivienne Westwood design from Boy on the King's Road, along with white adidas shorts and her Reebok trainers. Her Lycra top had been uncomfortably clingy in the heat.

Rachel was worried by the Rubios going dark. They weren't answering the phone, had Harry not paid the bill? It was the sort of thing he'd do for some half-imagined slight, a wealth paranoia twitch, the fear of being exploited.

They had a ton of essentials like pasta and rice, garlic and tins of tomatoes for a month or longer, at least until Harry flew in, but were relying on the Rubio girl for the fresh stuff. The freezer was mostly there for bags of ice and Harry's Polish vodka, but it did hold some frozen veg.

Rachel was going to walk stroke run to the supermarket, and was waiting to see if anyone wanted to go with her. She'd run if she was going alone.

Earlier, she'd seen the doll by the edge of the pool.

It was a blonde Barbie with a glued on lurid red plastic phallus way out of proportion, the hollow piping something an electrician would use. The lips on the doll's face were painted red to look more whorish.

She was ten when she first saw similar clumsily painted wood dolls on sale at the supermarket in San Clare. A couple of years later Harry explained they were fertility icons, local folklore. Harry didn't speak Spanish beyond a few words and never bothered with most of the locals. They were way-out fucking peasants, he'd say. Catholicism was the religion of the poor and ignorant, and it made the women fat and the men docile.

She tossed the mutilated doll in the kitchen bin, but what really bothered her was someone was close enough to the finca last night to throw it over the wall.

Rachel gave up on the girls and set off alone.

The road was cracked grey asphalt with beige soil and stones flattened in aging potholes, so it wasn't an easy run. Rachel hoped she could get a taxi back but had seen only one car the whole way there.

The thing going on between Clo and Janey, she'd seen it coming as far back as the North Road. Janey would get moody if Chloe had a boy on the go, and they were always fey and non masculine. Janey had a brief fling with one of

the lecturers, a married guy in his forties, and Chloe's huge disapproval blew through the house like a hurricane.

Rachel wouldn't say anything unless they told her outright. And Ari was coming on Friday, and that'd put the kibosh on it, or not. Either way it'd be bitter and could get ugly. She didn't want to see Janey or Chloe get hurt.

She saw the four teenage girls from the road, a half-dozen or so yards away at the edge of the trees. They were wearing a mix of bikinis, t-shirts and shorts, all barefoot, giggling and standing around a tethered goat, with a girl supine below the goat's belly, pulling at a swollen teat. She splashed her face and then moved out of the way for the next girl's turn. The first girl had milk spilling down her lower face and neck and it was a clear metaphor for male ejaculate.

Rachel ignored the girls and walked past quickly with her head down, hoping they hadn't seen her. It was fucking weird and clearly Harry hadn't lied about the crazy folk Catholic shit.

She thought of the dirty blonde girl she'd seen before, the one who poked her tongue out at her.

The village was called San Clare, but it was barely more than a few shops on a populated road. A few high and narrow terraced houses, all built in heavy dour brick with dark iron balconies and painted shutters, led to the

supermarket and the bar along with a post office, the window full with lurid posters for the *Lotería Nacional*. There was a huge campaigning advert for a politician on the side of one wall, the paper sun-bleached and peeling, a male candidate with jet-black dyed hair smiling and looking almost stupidly duplicitous in front of a yellowing image of a field and farming machinery.

The supermarket was brightly lit with fluorescent tubing and it didn't have trolleys, so she carried a wire basket. It was smaller with the aisles narrower than she'd remembered. Rachel came out with three bags of mostly fresh vegetables, and was mildly startled she could now pay with her Barclaycard.

Only one till was open.

She'd come here with Harry in his hire car and her father would moan and bitch that there was nowhere to park.

Now there were only a couple of cars out on the street, and a few of the tired houses were clearly unoccupied and/or abandoned. San Clare looked worn out.

She went to the bar a few doors away. Harry would buy her a drink here that was mostly lemonade with a little cerveza, and all around her were tall, loud and aggressive male voices. Football would be playing on the silver Japanese television high in the corner, more often than not Barcelona.

It was the afternoon and the bar was dark and quiet. There was a large metal fan wheezing noisily at the end of the bar like a dying cancer patient. The tables had chairs of blue moulded plastic on metal legs, and there were just a few customers, rhino-ish middle-aged men sitting alone in work clothing, nursing short glasses of beer and smoking.

‘A *grande* beer? Big?’ Rachel said, pointing at the red San Miguel tap.

‘Si,’ the bar owner replied, and then said something about Harry in fast Spanish, and she smiled in ignorance while he smiled back. He clearly recognised her as Harry’s daughter, and Rachel realised they must be the wild subject of local gossip, the *putas* at the *Finca El Oso Salvaje*. There’d be nothing else to talk about. Did he know what those people, or their teenage sons, had done in the forest? Surely not, with the regional fear of wild fire.

He was probably her father’s age but looked older, his eyes creased white at the edges against the radioactive light of the sun.

He said his name was Hector, and the men were staring openly as long as they thought Rachel wasn’t looking.

She sat at the bar with her bags on the worn yet clean tiled floor and ordered another beer. Rachel was lost in bitter-tinged nostalgia, and Hector was smoking while reading a newspaper at the far end of the bar.

'Taxi por favor, the Finca El Oso Salvaje,' Rachel said.

'Si, yeah,' Hector said.

'Factura, the bill?' she said.

He wrote a number on a scrap of paper with a pencil, realising now her Spanish was rather slight. It didn't matter, she was Harry Fournier's daughter, and he was the big shot. Rachel left a large tip mostly out of guilt.

The taxi arrived at the bar ten minutes later, an aged green Datsun.

'Cuídate por favor, be careful,' Hector said.

'Okay, gracias,' Rachel said, smiling as she left.

Rachel paid the driver at the finca, again tipping generously.

He got out of the car and opened the passenger door for her.

'Buenos días.'

Rachel smiled politely in return.

Chloe and Janey were in the pool.

'I have fresh food,' she smiled.

'Halle-fucking-lujah,' Janey replied, laughing.

'Well played, hun,' Chloe said sweetly. They both climbed out of the pool and Janey went into the kitchen with Rachel to unpack and pour her a glass of Rioja as a reward. Janey was telling Rach what she'd cook that night.

'Janey and I will go tomorrow,' Chloe offered.

‘It’s okay, I like to run,’ Rachel replied.

Chloe dried off in the sun. They’d got down earlier in the pool, with Chloe’s bikini slapping wet out on the blue and white tiles before Janey used two fingers on her. Chloe was trying to be quiet even though no one could’ve heard her.

She wondered if the goatish girl, Lulu, had been watching.

Later they were sitting out at the table as the sun began to set. Janey would be going off to make dinner soon. They were drinking another red from the cellar and Rachel had rolled a spliff.

Janey was making garlicky chicken thighs with roasted tomatoes and peppers on a bed of lettuce. Rachel came down and Chloe sat outside with her while Janey was cooking.

‘I think I’ve seen Lily, the ghost in the finca,’ Chloe said.

‘For real or as a metaphor?’

‘No, a real ghost.’

‘Fuck,’ Rach said.

Rachel told her she’d heard a few frightening noises in the past, and thought it might be Lily. It was probably just Harry and her mother either arguing or high. Chloe told her about the kitchen and the blonde hippy girl over the pool. Rachel said okay, they’d talk about it in the morning.

Chloe didn't think they would, and if they did Janey at least would see her as crazy. She decided not to mention it again, not unless one of the girls said something.

After dinner Rachel rolled a reefer and put on one of her reggae mixtapes, with *Police and Thieves* by Junior Murvin along with Lee 'Scratch' Perry and 'The Upsetters' *Grumbling Dub* version. Chloe and Janey were dancing close to *Sitting and Watching* by Dennis Brown and Sly & Robbie. Rachel said she'd be going for a long walk in the morning and they could join her if they fancied it.

'I think I'll just chill in the sun,' Janey said, and Chloe apologised, saying she'd have to hang around as she didn't know when Ari was flying in, and she saw Janey lightly flinch. They couldn't ignore it any longer, Chloe realised.

Later they were all up and dancing by the pool to *Uptown Top Ranking* by Althea & Donna, with Rachel passing a fat joint around.

'Nah pop no style, I strictly roots,' they all sang out, with Janey the only one ending close to the right key. They were all laughing and hugging.

'Fuck off to bed you two. I'll be happy enough on my own,' Rachel said.

'You sure?' Janey said.

'Yeah, go on. I'm good, honest,' Rach said.

‘Okay,’ Chloe said, kissing the side of Rachel’s head, her dark hair. Rach smiled at her.

Chloe and Janey went up the stairs in the finca, Janey first.

Fri, Jul 14, 1989

Chloe woke at seven and it was bright, the air-con unit over the door gently fluttering. They'd kicked the thin white sheet, creased and beaten like old white skin, to the foot of the bed.

Janey had her back to her, having rolled over onto her side, her mouth slightly open. She could sleep for the devil, Chloe thought.

Her pillow was on the floor again. Janey slept easier without a pillow, and said she'd done so since she was young. Chloe didn't get it.

Chloe got out of bed and pulled on her Tate-ish bikini. She cleaned her teeth, washed her face and ran wet fingers through her hair. She had a couple of hours at least, as long as Rachel had gone out for her run. She checked the kitchen and Rachel wasn't there.

Chloe had been wondering if the recording theory, the Stone Tape, might have a sliver of justification. The finca might not be haunted but there were painful and emotional events stored and left in the brick and plaster and walls like a traumatic recording, but Chloe realised it didn't make any scientific sense. Polyester tape or alloy platters had to have

a magnetic coating. It was how tape recorders, floppy disks and hard drives worked.

There was an office on the ground floor, along the corridor to the bathroom and below the studio, and she'd seen a typewriter, a duck-egg blue Olivetti Lettera 32. There was a black business phone on the desk along with a beige Xerox fax machine.

She fed a blank white page into the Olivetti. If the ghost, the Goat Girl, Lily or whatever can move a fridge it can press a key. Then she went into the kitchen to make coffee and find something other than bread to eat, like fruit or cereal. All the overt cooking and carbs had left her feeling bloated.

An hour later Clo was reading in the sun and had got to the long, relentless jailhouse and death row section of *The Executioner's Song*, and was fast reading and skipping over paragraphs.

She'd checked the office but the Olivetti was silent.

Chloe woke Janey with coffee and heavily buttered toast with a thick smear of the gingery orange marmalade, how Janey liked it.

'Oh God, you're the best,' Janey said, stirring groggily. Chloe had been in the pool, so just rinsed her hair in the shower and was now applying her lipstick in the bathroom.

‘Come back to bed, and put the tights on again, yeah?’

Janey said after a few minutes. The tights were the tan pair Chloe had found in her drawer.

There was a slight edge of urgency under the playfulness, Chloe thought. She knew everyone had a kink and she’d happily dress up for Janey. Then Chloe heard a noise in the kitchen, Rachel coming back from her walk. She’d have been to the supermarket and would be eager to show off her spoils.

‘It’s Rach, so it’ll have to be later, freak. Eat your toast,’ Chloe said, smiling at Janey from the bathroom door.

‘Killjoy,’ Janey said with an exaggerated but still dozy pout.

‘We’ll sneak up later if Rach nods out, okay?’ Chloe went over to the bed and kissed her slowly. Janey had drunk a mouthful of coffee and it’d diluted her morning breath. Chloe loved how she tasted when she woke, how raw it was: lit with wine, the cigarettes and reefer, and the spice of her.

‘Yeah, okay,’ Janey said softly.

The noise in the kitchen wasn’t Rachel, and Chloe thought it was either air banging in the pipes after she rinsed her hair, or the ghost.

Rachel had her diazepam and espresso breakfast and was out the door at just before nine, jogging carefully on the potholed road to San Clare.

The young Rubio girl clearly wasn't coming now, and she'd try calling the family again later to find out what the fuck was going on. She was even thinking of phoning Harry in London, the nuclear option. She walked past the bar, the name El Olivo in peeling and cracked white lettering on a now sickly green agricultural hoarding, and into the supermarket.

San Clare was fading long before Harry bought the finca. In Jorge Morales' day it would've been a busy agricultural village, albeit grindingly poor, with the narcotic vaseline of the Catholic Church to soothe its pain.

There was a church, *Parroquia Católica San Clemente*, a few yards along the road from the supermarket, and Rachel was shocked to find it was closed and clearly had been for a while. The facade was decaying, with the paint on the huge and imposing black door desiccated and flaking, while the intricate ironwork gate with its central cross that'd always been open for Mass and the liturgy had been unbolted at the hinges and stolen.

The young Rachel had always found that black metal Crucifix on the gate particularly strange and haunting, as in

a certain light it appeared that the Christ figure was smiling in his agony.

But it wasn't just neglect. The church had been vandalised, with a word or tag in green spray paint on the wall.

'*Mentirosos.*'

Jorge Carlos Morales inherited the *Finca El Oso Salvaje* as one of his wealthy father's assets. His father was a Falangist and nationalist who died in 1937.

Rachel had read that Morales had a younger brother who died fighting on the republican side in 1939, during the failed defence of Barcelona. The finca was a long way from the hand of Franco.

Jorge ran out of money and died in a rented flat in Madrid in 1979, still painting. Five years ago one of his larger canvas sold at auction for close to twenty million pesetas, nearly a hundred thousand pounds. It was the peak of his career.

She told Harry and he laughed like a vampire. He'd been long advising her that capital was malignant and soul-sucking and how much he loved it.

'Leave it alone darling, if you don't have the taste,' he'd say.

On this occasion he'd seen the pain on her face.

‘Fuck, that was brash and cruel. Your father’s a stupid arsehole,’ Harry said, apologising.

Rachel said okay, agreeing but aware he was far from stupid.

Rachel bought vegetables in the *supermercado* along with fat purplish heads of garlic, aubergines and basil. They were for Janey and her Sicilian *pasta alla Norma*. It was one of Rachel’s dishes and even Rach agreed that Janey’s take had the edge. It was more garlicky, Rachel thought, but there was something else going on and cooking could be like voodoo.

Rachel had the card from the taxi driver and called him from the tired and worn yellow phone box. He was there in ten minutes.

Janey found Chloe laying on her front with her green and yellow bikini strap open, leaning over the edge of the lounge, reading with the spine of her book on the decking, the last few pages of *The Executioner's Song*. She sat on the sun lounge next to Chloe and touched her back, her skin soft and hot. She’d have to be careful not to burn. Chloe turned her head and smiled, sweaty and open.

‘I’m going in the pool in a minute, do you fancy it?’ Chloe said.

‘I need a drink first,’ Janey said. ‘Do you want anything?’

Chloe held up the empty bottle of Estrella by her sunglasses.

‘Okay.’

Janey went into the kitchen, hoping there’d be cold beers in the fridge.

A teaspoon by the sink rattled for a second like a snake, and then fell in with a noisy metallic clatter. Janey vaguely thought it was a breeze, or the heat. She didn’t really care.

Rachel was back and they spent the remain of the afternoon in the sun. Chloe exchanged a few glances with Janey, who was looking particularly cool behind her black Ray-Bans, her personal stereo hissing like a languid viper.

Chloe had finished *The Executioner's Song*, and the finca was full of books, but Chloe wouldn’t take anything other than a paperback out into the sun. She’d found a worn English edition of Joan Didion’s *The White Album*, a paperback third reprint. It was a book she should’ve read but hadn’t got around to.

Janey was cooking dinner again, the Sicilian thing with aubergines she’d learnt from Rachel. The meal was a North Road staple, a nostalgia thing.

Rach went off to shower. Chloe just washed her face and redid her lipstick and eyes, staying in her retro Tate bikini. She knew Janey liked it, and knew Ari would too. Chloe joined Janey in the kitchen, and they kissed while Rach

were getting changed. Janey put her hand between Chloe's legs and a finger inside her bikini, only pulling away when they heard Rachel's bare feet on the stairs. Janey would cook the pasta and put the dish together once Ari got there.

They all sat outside drinking Rioja with Rachel's Bob Marley tape playing low.

There was a weird, subdued atmosphere and Rachel was trying to jolly everything along. She was worried for Janey.

Then they heard Ari ringing the buzzer at the gate.

Mon, Jun 11, 1973

Lulu didn't know how old she was, nor could she recall where she was born. She was just there, and at first she didn't know how long she'd been anything.

It took years for her to even gather anything like basic intelligence and realisation.

She'd flutter in and out of existence, one minute a glistering replica and then vapour. She spoke to Harry in his dreams in a cockney dialect, so it was Harry's assumption she was a Londoner.

He wasn't far wrong.

It was Harry who gave her the name Lulu, neither then aware it was regressive with a slight hint of music hall.

She struggled into flesh and it was painful for Lulu to take on an even illusory form, and she'd couldn't hold it for more than a minute. The body she bent into, young and blonde, was for Harry, a colourful lure.

The *Finca El Oso Salvaje* was her gaol, held here by the Church, but she was beginning to have broken splinters of recall, a few seconds of blindingly hot desert, her brethren flying free in the air, and the singular odour of the East London docks, the river.

She was slowly healing but still struggling to tell Harry anything.

Harry thought she was a ghost at first, a dybbuk, but had begun to realise she was something different, something more. Lilith the harlot, a demigod.

Lilith.

She was a lost god, captured in the finca.

Harry now called her Lily.

Lilith didn't care about being called Lily, oblivious to the inherently masculine disrespect. She'd been abused by the whole Catholic Church.

There's others, she told Harry. In London there's a river of filth and desire, sweet in the dirty water. Lily was blindly influencing Harry, and he vowed to be her familiar and set her free.

Fri, Jul 7, 1989

It'd been his idea to bring his daughter and her plus ones to the finca. They were completely unaware Lily was there, but something about her proximity was changing their perception, bending it like gravity curves light.

She didn't know what she'd do with her lab rats, only that they wouldn't be leaving.

Until she met Chloe.

The Black Heart of the Sun

Fri, Jul 14, 1989

Ari had a hire car waiting at *Palma de Mallorca* Airport, but couldn't find the Ma-13 motorway coming out of Palma. She must've missed the turn off.

Jesus, fuck it.

She finally found it on the third try, but by then she was sweaty, flustered and swearing. She was looking forward to her first cold beer by the pool.

The car was a nearly new white SEAT Ibiza with only a few hundred miles on the clock but no air-con, so she had the front windows wound down.

Ari went abroad with work two or three times a year and would be met at the airport by a driver and a car with air-con and taken to the local Marriott, Hilton, or Four Seasons. She hadn't travelled independently for years, at least a passport ago, and she couldn't find a business or first class flight to *Palma de Mallorca* Airport.

Ari first met Chloe at an investors event for Psion, and Chloe was attending as one of the developers of EPOC, their forthcoming innovative OS. She was the brunette ingenue in a tight black dress, like a show horse that hadn't quite yet got its legs. Her thin black tights already had a slight run

inside her left knee, and she wore shiny open toe high sandals and had the most beautiful feet, with red painted toenails. Ari noticed her fingernails were short but red.

Ari was there as a senior officer of Credit Berlin but couldn't stop looking at her. Either way Psion lacked any heat, it wasn't chic or trending like NeXT Inc.

Ari had been married, even though she was well aware of being gay deep to her soul. Her husband was a foreign journalist at Reuters, working mostly from Beirut. It was all self denial, and she even thought she might have children one day. Nathan was a nice, decent guy, morally upstanding.

They lived for a year in Istanbul and another year in Beirut, Lebanon. She spoke French, Turkish and street Levantine Arabic. It was wasn't an easy divorce.

Ari had started at Credit Berlin as an entry-level trader, in Middle East and emirate trades, bonds mostly. She was learning Najdi Arabic. Ari was alone on her floor in understanding the Saudi clock.

She'd worked hard to be in her current position, the only female executive officer at Credit Berlin.

She finally got to speak to Chloe for a few minutes, and they exchanged business cards, with Ari struggling to stay cool and together. She was used to being in control but Chloe had the most luscious dark eyes, and she was half-

smiling at Ari, playing absently with her hair. She looked frail, Ari thought, and that smile had a bruise of melancholy. Ari didn't know if she teasing, hurt, playing for a potential investor or just bored.

She called Chloe on the Tuesday, inviting her out to lunch later in the week at Quo Vadis on Dean Street, but Chloe said she wouldn't be comfortable and would prefer something more casual. She suggested a place in Fitzrovia.

Ari thought she might be queer as early as thirteen, and then saw Bowie on the BBC in 1972, playing *Starman* on Top of the Pops, and it was close to a religious experience. Bowie was androgynous but there were no other role models for her then. He was at least queer girl adjacent, and that was close enough. Her love for Bowie lasted for the rest of her life, but not far beyond *Heroes*.

Ari saw *The Nun and the Devil* and then *Emmanuelle* at the Palace in Notting Hill Gate, going alone. She had Ziggy Stardust on a copied cassette tape, but *Aladdin Sane* was her soundtrack to coming out, and by then she was in her first year at the LSE.

She flirted with and then fell in love with a straight, het girl. She was a year younger than Ari and they slept together just the once, after a party in Pimlico. It was gauche, unsteady and wonderful and the girl cried in the morning. It took a while for Ari to get over her.

Lunch was at a Turkish cafe stroke restaurant. It had orange plastic seating and worn metal tables, all close to each other. It was a bright spring day and the door was open, and with the traffic noise and the young clientele, they had to lean in to talk, making it strangely intimate yet open. It was Chloe's turf where she felt comfortable, and a few people passed by, saying hello. Fitzrovia was a few minutes walk from Psion's London office.

The food was cooked on a long coal grill, with burnt red peppers, onions and heavily charred chicken with chillies and cumin, all on a bed of bulgar wheat and fried rice. It was rough, garlicky and inexpensive. The cafe didn't have a licence, and a few of the young assistants and bike runners sat with cold bottles of beer from the mini-mart on the other side of the street.

'Do you like your chicken?' Chloe inquired hopefully.

'Yeah, it's good,' Ari replied, not saying she'd lived in Istanbul. It was decent enough but lacked the real black spice charring and heat.

Chloe wore a fifties-ish black dress and light red lipstick, her hair looser. She looked very hip and girly, Ari thought. Ari wore Levi's and a tight white vest. She had a tiny blue nautical star tattoo on the inside of her left wrist. A sailer

star tattoo on the wrist was a signifier for lesbians in the fifties, and could be covered by a watch strap.

Ari explained the tattoo and Chloe thought it was super cool.

They were soon flirting and laughing, leaning in over the metal table. She was less confident than Ari was expecting, less chilly, and she saw the bruise again, the vulnerability. And Chloe had a lovely smile, open and easy, real.

Ari said she was thirty-one but was actually thirty-five. She spent an hour early every morning in a lavish glass-walled gym near her office, the grotesque fees a Credit Berlin perk. Chloe said she was twenty-four. The age difference didn't appear to bother her.

It was all very easy and chilled, and they didn't mention Psion. Chloe was intelligent and creative, and had a beguiling habit of brushing her dark hair behind her left ear while concentrating.

They were leaning in close now, the rest of the noisy cafe distant.

'Can't you skip going back to work?' Ari said quietly.

'Okay,' Chloe said.

They left the cafe and kissed for a few seconds on the street.

Ari rolled a spliff at her flat in Chiswick and then they were kissing, high. She asked if Chloe had done this before

and she said no. Ari was very aware of how young Chloe was, and if this went anywhere it'd be at her pace.

Then were laying on the sofa, their legs tangling and shifting together, kissing. Chloe's sweet, perfect tongue was in her mouth and her yellow dress was almost at her waist. Ari's left thigh, Levi's clad, was rough and hard at Chloe's groin. They shifted, and Chloe put her hand between Ari's legs. Ari was breathing hard, lost now.

'Open your jeans,' Chloe whispered. Ari unbuttoned the fly buttons of her Levi's and Chloe put her hand inside, touching her over her black underwear. Ari let out a light moan and Chloe smiled.

'Is that nice?'

'Yeah.'

'Am I doing it right?'

'Yeah,' Ari said again, smiling.

Ari pulled her Levi's down almost to her knees. She didn't think they'd be going this far so soon, it'd be a big thing for Chloe at any age, and Ari could wait, but Chloe had pushed a finger past the gusset of her underwear. Ari was very wet and the finger went in easy. She pulled her knees in involuntary for a second and then opened her legs against her jeans. Then two fingers, and it was like a juicy soaking heaven, and she could smell herself.

'Put your fingers in my mouth,' Ari said, begging, wild.

‘Does that taste nice?’

‘Yeah, oh God.’

Chloe was buried into her, over her, and Ari’s head was back against the arm of the sofa, with Chloe kissing her, her soft wet tongue moving and slippery, octopus-ish and olivy. She wanted it inside her, and she was yearning to taste Chloe, to gorge on her, to crawl into her skin.

Ari had thought earlier that Chloe would want to take it slow, but thirty minutes later they were in bed.

Ari had an older mentor during her early days at Credit Berlin, Frank Gastrell. He ran the European front office and was a newly aware feminist, having fathered two young daughters with his third wife.

Frank was older than her and Ari was wary at first but he never put a hand on her, while others did regularly in that first year.

‘Take a breath to catch the fucking monkey, or the fucking goat or whatever,’ he’d said over a glass of red at lunch, smiling and bruised. Frank ran every morning but other than that barely ever left his office.

‘Do it slower,’ he’d said.

It was insightful and astute, and being obsessive was a good thing until you were wrong. Ari was a strider and

hungry but never forgot Frank's advice. So it was impulsive of her to be living in Bow with Chloe after only a month.

Ari and Chloe worked long hours, and Ari ran almost every night on the oily black streets around the old Bryant and May match factory. Bow was very different to West London and she struggled to adjust. A few of the streets were almost stained black, a diesel hangover.

She sold her period flat in Chiswick in a few days, making nearly a twenty percent profit on a property she'd bought only the year before.

Ari was a regular at Chain Reaction, a lesbian S&M-as-art club that ran every Tuesday night at the Market Tavern in Vauxhall.

The membership card featured a graphic of handcuffs with the tagline Permission to Play. It was young and punky, while Ari was more fem-adjacent in a black leather jacket and red lipstick. The windows were taped over with black bin liners and it had the feel of a New York leather bar, the air full of wild oestrogen and cigarette smoke. There was a sense of playing at S&M and not getting hurt, but some of it was real. Ari, along with two other women, watched a straightish looking girl openly getting three

fingers in the toilets. For Ari it eroticised the smell of bleach.

Now on most Friday nights Ari would get off the tube at Stepney Green for the Hong Kong Garden on the Mile End Road, Chloe's favourite Chinese takeaway. She'd get a black cab back to Bow with the hot foil cartons in thin white plastic carrier bags. They'd eat beef chow mein, egg fried rice, Sichuan chicken and spring rolls while watching a rented video with a bottle of wine chosen by Ari. Later Chloe would roll and light a spliff.

The order might change but never Chloe's beef, noodles and beansprouts. She was that way.

Ari knew a dealer popular in the City who'd deliver by bike courier within the hour. She'd buy mostly ganja for her darling, along with a few pills depending on her mood and inclination, but nothing outlandish. Ari preferred to be in control.

Frank Gastrell died of a sudden coronary thrombosis, gasping for air at his desk. Ari cried at the funeral.

Ari wasn't wild about the week ahead but she'd make the best of it. She'd be nice, for Chloe.

She found the *Finca El Oso Salvaje* just as the light was fading. It was imposing and she pushed the guest button on the metal keypad and after a wait the iron gates opened.

She got back into the white SEAT and parked in the drive.
There were no other vehicles.

Ari pulled her hard black work travel case out from the
boot and then Chloe was there to greet her, smiling.

Fri, Jul 14, 1989

Ari was older than Rachel expected, with a slightly equine face and the perfect hint of a tan, her long straight hair dark and shining. She was very attractive but sort of cold, and Rachel thought of Alaska from Lou Reed's Berlin. She was taller than Chloe, and whippet-thin, a body of hard workouts, G-Y-M.

Ari asked if she could go in the pool before dinner, and Janey said it was fine, she only had to boil the water for the pasta.

Chloe took Ari upstairs and they were back in a few minutes and in the water, Ari in a dark navy bikini, her stomach religiously hard. They'd brought out bottles of red Estrella beer from the fridge, left cold and beading on the blue and white tiles while they were in the pool.

Ari hadn't showered before going into the pool, Rachel thought reproachfully.

Chloe and Ari splashed and swam a few strokes. Rachel and Janey sat watching, drinking Rioja and sharing a joint. Rachel held her hand.

'I'm okay,' Janey said.

They ate casually in bikinis with Ari and Clo's hair still partly wet. Chloe lent forward with a towel on her lap, clearly not comfortable with her slender but not perfectly flat stomach. Earlier Chloe had told her Ari preferred white over red, so Rachel had chilled a couple of bottles of Verdejo for her.

'This is really good,' Ari said, eating Janey's pasta. She didn't go near the garlic and olive oil bread.

She ate like a bird.

Janey was very off, flat.

'You the girl,' Rachel said quietly in her ear, and Janey smiled. Ari didn't notice, but neither did Chloe.

Rachel rolled a fat post-dinner spliff, licking the seam of a Marlboro Red and breaking it at the filter, neatly tearing the cigarette open. She put one of her reggae tapes into her Hitachi ghettoblaster and pushed the bass sliders up a notch. The first song was *Best Dressed Chicken in Town* by Dr Alimantado. Ari took the joint and pulled on it hard. A few songs in, Chloe asked Ari if she wanted to dance.

'I'm good, darling, you dance with Janey.'

Had she caught a vibe?

Over the Rioja, Verdejo and ganja, Rachel had been telling Ari how Harry had bought the finca from a Spanish artist. Ari was clearly surprised that the villa belonged to Harry Fournier, and that Rachel was his daughter.

Janey and Clo were stepping to *Push Me In The Corner* by Cornell Campbell and The Eternals, and Rachel noticed they were staying carefully and knowingly apart.

It was close to one in the morning and Ari apologised, saying she was tired. She told Chloe she could stay but Chloe insisted on going up with her. Janey had to watch Chloe and Ari go off to bed together.

Sat, Jul 15, 1989

Chloe had changed the sheets and tidied a few hours before. Ari said she loved her retro crochet lime green and yellow bikini, and told her not to take it off just yet.

‘It’s slutty,’ Ari smiled.

Ari said she wasn’t tired but was very stoned, and pulled a laughing Chloe onto the bed.

She used her fingers and her tongue to make Chloe come fast, not edging at all. Ari asked Chloe to look her in the eye and kiss her while she masturbated. Ari could be loose and inventive, Chloe thought. It felt strange being so submissive again after being with Janey.

Ari said Harry Fournier was a face in the City, notorious for his sharp market nose and a taste for risk, a bear. He had a fund based in Singapore and liked to dirty short, but was seen as slightly old-school now. She hadn’t disclosed that market perception with Rachel.

Chloe said Rach didn't say that much about Harry, just things here and there, his libertine past, but mostly how he'd left when she was fifteen.

Chloe told Ari almost everything about her week at the finca, leaving out the affair with Janey. She told her about the ghost, the goatish girl.

'It's a girl with a cock. How Freudian do we want to go?' Ari said.

Chloe said it was ridiculous. Ari wasn't taking the Goat Girl seriously, and Chloe struggled to hide her annoyance.

They spent the day out at the pool. Rachel rolled a few reefers and they drank mostly cold beers. Everyone was on their best behaviour and it was a shade subdued by the standard of last week. Chloe and Janey lay a few sun loungers apart while Ari was at the far end of the pool hitting it off with Rachel, and she could hear the two laughing on the loose breeze.

Chloe noticed Janey had her copy of Anna Karenina with her, a book Chloe knew Janey would get lost in if she was agitated or feeling low, her comfort blanket read. Chloe was reading her Joan Didion.

Ari had told Rachel last night she'd heard of Harry, and how he was close to a legend.

‘I hope it isn’t all bad,’ Rachel had said cautiously.

Ari said the concept of good and evil wasn’t really a thing in the City.

Now Ari was expanding on how Harry had this maverick rebel cowboy thing going on. He couldn’t actually move the market but still had influence.

‘He’s good at bear with a win record, and people notice that,’ Ari contended.

Rachel thought she might be flattering Harry, and by extension her.

Rachel was cooking a Kashmiri curry with chapati breads. They ate along with white wine and Rioja and Rachel’s post-dinner reefer, her Blondie tape playing in the background. Rachel told Ari about the Sunday market in Pollença, and how it started at eight and closed at around one. Ari was in, as was Chloe.

‘We can pile into my car,’ Ari said.

‘The parking is shit, by the way,’ Rachel said.

‘It’s okay, you lot go,’ Janey insisted.

Ari asked if she was sure.

‘God, yeah. I’d rather hang out by the pool and chill.’

Chloe wasn’t surprised. Janey had weirdly never got off on shopping, while the teenage Chloe would get a dopamine shot from just poring over the Littlewoods and Argos catalogues. She even had her favourite sections and pages.

Rachel was worried Chloe would cry off like Janey, leaving them on their own for a few hours. Rachel loved Janey and Clo but was just starting to like Ari, and was feeling torn. She'd learnt from Harry and now George how much infidelity hurt.

Janey went in for another bottle of Rioja while Chloe was in the toilet, and they kissed, fleetingly and intense for less than a minute, with Chloe emerging out first.

Rachel said there was a tape of *Heathers*, a word of mouth film not yet released in London, so they relocated into the lounge. Harry had bought the pirate VHS cassette on Berwick Street Market for her, and it was a surprisingly good copy. It had a time code so it was probably an editor's leak, and easy to ignore after the first few minutes. Chloe sat on the sofa between Janey and Ari.

Rach was on the other black sofa, her legs swinging over the leather arm. She'd watched it already, a few days before the girls arrived.

Janey and Clo would touch each other casually as if by accident.

Later they all wanted to be Veronica Sawyer but Chloe was closest, being elfin and dark but cruelly not Jewish.

Sun, Jul 16, 1989

In bed, Chloe kissed Ari with the taste of Janey still in her mouth. Ari was drunk and they just spooned, Ari holding Chloe with the air-con on high, the cold breath and noise comforting. Ari rarely went to bed in her make-up, she was normally a long cleanser. Ari dully asked her about George.

She told Ari she'd met George only the once with Janey, at a bar in Maida Vale. She thought he was a flake, but Janey angrily hated him on sight. Ari, drifting in and out, stoned and tired, wasn't really listening.

Later Chloe dreamt she was tied to the frame of her bed in the finca, her arms and legs bound tightly apart. She was wearing her crochet green and yellow Bardot/Tate bikini and blindfolded. There was a hand gently stroking and teasing her over her bikini, edging her, and she could hear breathing. She knew it was the blonde hippy girl from *Loving Orgy* or something that was a parody of Janey.

The goatish girl.

Then it was a blur of wild fucking, of gorging, with jumps and skips in time; Chloe in a hazy, stoned cloud of fingers, tongues and bodily juices, the hippy ghost or Janey inside her, slowly and carefully fisting her. Chloe's fingers in Janey or the fake hippy girl, licking and tasting and snorting Charlie, the sweet chemical scent, the bright sheen of heavy sunlight from the window. Chloe hog-tied in some of Janey's lingerie, and the tan tights and light blue retro

panties, Chloe with the counterfeit Janey, the Goat Girl, grinding wet on her face, with Chloe struggling to breath, excited with her chest heaving.

Lulu.

Chloe woke with a yelp, close to Ari.

Later in the shower Chloe couldn't stop thinking of how horny it all was, not that she could recall it all. It could be Janey or the Goat Girl or a delusion, a projection of Janey. She'd read her Freud.

She could be her own fucking Lily or Lulu.

Ari shouted out she was going down to the kitchen to make coffee.

Chloe was still turned on, and listening out for Ari, took Ari's vibrator under the white sheet where the Goat Girl couldn't see.

Sun, Jul 16, 1989

They all ate an early breakfast together, yogurt and fruit and cornflakes, with Janey forgoing her usual lie-in.

They left at half-eight in Ari's white SEAT Ibiza, Rachel in the front passenger seat with Ari driving. Chloe was in the back with the canvas hippyish shopping bags, clearly Fins.

After a rocky start Rachel had begun to like Fin, her favourite of Harry's recent wives and girlfriends. Fin was real and didn't appear covetous, more into yoga and being a mother.

Janey waved them off as the black gate at the front of the finca as it closed automatically.

It was a twenty minute drive to the edge of Pollença, and they parked while the locals slowly edged their aging German vehicles along the streets mostly too narrow for pavements. Pollença was founded in the thirteenth century and the houses had heavy bones. Rachel led the girls on foot to the market at the *Plaça Mayor*, subjugated at the northern end by the *Església de Nostra Senyora dels Àngels*, an imposing proto-brutalist church.

The market had the emotive smell of fresh vegetables and fertiliser, cigarettes, BO and stale alcohol. Heavy working men bought bottles of cold beer they'd drink while walking the stalls.

Ari and Chloe were enraptured by the native ambience. They saw the teenagers flirting in the alley outside a noisy bar, the girls laughing in a pack leaning against the wall and the boys on mopeds and aging Vespas, the air full of astringent petrol and testosterone. Rachel and Ari were interested in the fruit and vegetables while Chloe was happy enough to stroll along and take it all in. There were a few stalls selling jewellery and clothing and another with paperbacks in English and German.

Ari was about to inspect a string of garlic bulbs when Rachel told her touching the produce was seen as disrespectful in Spain.

'Fuck, sorry,' Ari breathed.

'It's okay, it is fucking weird,' Rachel replied.

'So you can't feel if it's fresh?'

'No, that's insulting,' Rachel retorted.

There was a celebrated fishmongers just off the *Plaça Mayor*, and Rachel thought she'd come back to Pollença later in the week. She might be lucky and find fresh *langosta* on ice, for the last night of their stay. Rachel would make a garlic butter dip for the lobster. She'd pay for the

extravagance, and Harry had a ton of Pol Roger in the cellar.

Before leaving for the market Rach had given Janey a couple of pre-rolled spliffs. Janey was lousy at rolling a joint.

‘Everything will work out. She loves you, not Ari,’ Rachel stated. Janey thanked her and they hugged tight.

Once they’d all left Janey went back upstairs and snorted a line of blow from her face mirror, wetting her finger and rubbing the Charlie dust on her gums. She loved how it fired the nerves to the left of her nose, a nagging yet dull flat itch.

She’d bury the fucking Chloe and Ari angst in yayo.

Janey took a swig of bottled water and went down to the kitchen, pulling a cold red Estrella from the fridge. She put her Sanyo player on a sun lounger and dived into the pool, bright and wired.

Later she laid back in her sunglasses and lit a spliff, pushing play on her personal stereo, buzzing on a reggae tape with the volume rolled on full.

Janey caught a lucid flash in the corner of her eye but thought it was just the reflection off the pool.

Rachel saw Chloe buy a thin gold chain bracelet, and knew it’d be for Janey. Ari was looking at fresh vegetables a few

stalls down, and Chloe slid it into the left pocket of her cutoff Levi's, pulling her white Born a Bad Seed t-shirt down. It was a risky move but Rachel was sure Ari hadn't seen her.

It was Janey she loved.

They decided to go for a cold beer, and sat outside the bar with the flirting teens and the scooters.

Rachel and Ari had several bags stuffed with fruit, bread and veg. It was clearly the cool place to go in Pollença as they were playing reggae interspersed with offbeat classics like Roadrunner, and someone in the bar had a love for Lou Reed.

Ari went inside to order. Chloe said she'd like to come again, or at least stay longer. Rachel said she didn't have to leave on Friday, Harry wouldn't be coming for at least another fortnight, and she'd be happy for Chloe and Janey to stay.

'Janey has to work on the Monday,' Chloe stated. It was all that mattered, Rachel thought. Not Ari.

Ari came out of the bar and said a bartender would bring the beers out. They stayed at the bar people watching for well over an hour, with Rach and Chloe having two more San Miguels.

Rachel offered to pay the bill but Ari insisted and they were close to arguing. A stupid passive-aggressive wealth

face-off, Chloe thought, faintly annoyed. And Ari could never be as wealthy as Rachel with her old money.

Janey was sweet and nicely high now, half-wired from the blow with a woozy chill from the reefer. She was also on her third Estrella. It all took the Chloe edge off, but she thought there might be a blonde girl in the pool.

She'd seen a glance of blonde hair and a hand with orange fingernails, a young smiling face in the water. She pushed the stop button on her tape player and took her sunglasses and headphones off.

Everything was silent and bright. The pool was clear with the water barely moving. Janey noticed a pungent waft on the air, agricultural, like horse shit.

The girls got back at four. Rach had found some fat lemons at the market and Janey went off to make dinner. She cooked a light pasta with the lemons, along with garlic and manchego. Chloe went into the kitchen and gave Janey the thin gold bracelet she'd bought at the market.

'I was thinking of you all day,' Chloe said and Janey was trying not to cry. They kissed softly. They were out of sight but Janey didn't care if Ari saw.

Everyone had showered and changed for dinner and Rachel noticed Janey was wearing the gold chain bracelet on

her left wrist. They ate outside to Rachel's soul tape, mostly Stax and Motown, on her Hitachi TRK-8190E.

Ari said she ran at night in Bow and Rachel asked if she wanted to go for a run in the morning. Rachel realised later she was high, and didn't think.

Janey looked at Chloe while Ari agreed, saying she loved to run.

'I'll go as hard as you like.'

'You're on,' Rachel said.

'Fuck, we have another one,' Janey said dryly.

Mon, Jul 17, 1989

Chloe woke with Ari getting dressed into her white Lycra top and shorts. Ari had her water bottle and asked Chloe if she should fill it from the tap. She'd tied her dark hair into a tight ponytail and it made her look older.

'I'd use bottled,' Chloe said groggily.

'I don't like to unless I have to,' Ari said, while tying the laces of her adidas trainers. 'You don't mind, do you? I don't have to go.'

Chloe said it was fine.

'Okay. I'll see you later,' Ari said, kissing Chloe on the cheek.

Chloe cleaned her teeth and waited until she heard Rach and Ari leaving before going to Janey's room. She'd put on

Ari's underwear from last night, the lacy translucent white bra slightly too tight on her. She knew it'd blow Janey's mind.

Ari was stretching before they set off, and they stuck to the road and ran to the right, in the opposite direction to San Clare and Pollença, and into largely agricultural land. Rachel knew there'd be little of anything for miles.

It was deceptively uphill and hard on the thigh and calf muscles. The sun was still low but the air was sultry and close, and there was almost no wind. Rachel was wearing her God Save the Queen t-shirt again.

After a hard two or so miles the slope eased, and Rachel, running in front of Ari, gestured a stop with her right hand.

They sat on the edge of the road, drinking water and catching their breath. Ari was barely sweating. Rachel dug her fingers into the back of her left thigh, the muscle a weak point. The wild forest in the valley below was broken by artificial yellow rectangles of small green olive trees. It used to be a loose zigzag of family holdings but was edging towards the industrial now.

Ari was tightly retying her long dark hair, and told her she'd recently been on a work trip to Hanoi, and how she'd left her hotel for a run but had to turn back after a few minutes, coughing in the polluted air.

‘This couldn’t be any more different,’ Ari said.

She told Rachel she could imagine Chloe and her living in a place like this in a few years, Spain or rural Provence. Rachel had a chill of guilt. She was stoned last night and shouldn’t have suggested a run. Chloe was clearly infatuated with Janey, and had probably been in love with her for years. And Janey loved Chloe. Rachel couldn’t change anything, even if she wanted to.

Chloe spent over an hour in Janey’s bed and it flew by, being no time at all. Janey was wildly excited by Chloe wearing Ari’s underwear, and later told Chloe she loved her, which was slightly mad. Chloe said they had to be careful, and she’d sort it out but not now. It wouldn’t be right or fair on Ari.

Chloe would have to wash the bra and briefs along with some of her own. Ari always carefully hand-washed her good underwear.

Later Chloe went out into the sun, and dived into the pool before drying off and checking the office.

don t go

Don’t go, the all lowercase words on the white page in the duck-egg blue Olivetti Lettera 32 had been followed by a carriage return.

She stood before it trembling, knowing for sure now the vaguely goatish young blonde girl she'd seen in the kitchen was real.

Lulu.

Chloe saw the words as menacing then, a threat or a warning. Later she thought it was more of a plea.

Mon, Jul 17, 1989

Rachel and Ari started the run back. They were less than a mile from the finca when Rachel felt her thighs starting to burn, and asked if they could take a stop. The grass was hard and defiant of the coming months of no rain and a sucking unruly sun, and they walked down and sat on the ground in the shade of the trees.

Rachel reached into her rucksack and took a reefer from a vintage tin box, smiling. They smoked it while drinking from their water bottles, and were both soon high and giggling at nothing.

‘You take a spliff box with you on a run?’ Ari said, laughing.

‘I live near the Westway, darling.’

Later they walked slowly up the harsh grassy hill back to the road. Rachel was still slightly stoned and careful even though her trainers gave her a good grip on the slope. The sun was high now, and Rachel realised with her head clearing it must be late morning, or even close to noon.

Chloe hand-washed Ari’s white bra and panties along with some of her own white underwear, hanging the lingerie

over the shower rail. Her forensic alibi in place, she went back out into the sun with a full glass of red wine.

Don't go.

It nagged at her, being so vague. And in truth she still had an issue with the whole idea of ghosts, or God. Chloe was a rationalist, a believer in the solid truth of science, and how they were a collection of atoms and mostly open space, carbon and proteins and water.

She'd left Janey in bed, dozing in a foetal position with the thin white sheet pulled in around her. It gave Chloe a chance to get further into Didion's *The White Album*. But first she'd go back to the storage room while Rach was out.

She'd seen and heard the ghost in the kitchen but had her first strong sense of Lily/Lulu in the storage space.

The white dust, the mould and fungi, was at the back of her throat and nose again and she thought she'd have to work fast.

She found the VHS tape on the top of one of the plywood storage crates, a TDK 180 cassette with the name Agnes written on the white paper label on the black plastic spine. She hadn't seen it before and was sure it'd been left out for her to find.

The Goat Girl?

Chloe took the video to the VHS player in the lounge.

The tape showed a blonde girl in her late teens, laying on a white bed in black underwear. Chloe thought she looked Scandinavian.

The camera was a few feet away and static, and she recognised Harry as soon as he came into shot. He was way older than the girl. His hair was a black dye-job and he had a dark beard flecked with purposeful grey. He was very tan and Chloe thought he looked like a lizard, but he was physically fit for a man of his age. He was naked and achingly erect, moving lightly on his feet, eager. The date info on the tape had been set to off. Harry was being careful.

Chloe pressed fast forward on the corded remote, not wanting to watch the girl being exploited. The figures on the bed moved like angry ants on the lo-res tape before it ran to a rainbow smear and static. The foreplay and fucking was vanilla but consensual, of a sort.

It was twenty minutes long and he finished on her blonde hair as she turned her face away.

The girl was clearly a tourist, and young. Probably not illegally so, but teenage enough for Chloe to find it wrong and disturbing. She thought of Rachel seeing this.

Chloe hid the tape in her suitcase. Harry was clearly a freak, nasty and exploitative, and Lily/Lulu wanted Chloe to know it.

Ari and Rachel got back very late in the morning, and Janey was out now, sunbathing.

Ari didn't really lay out in the sun. She knew it was damaging and aging for her skin, and spent most of the day under one of the white sun umbrellas.

She'd be thirty-seven in less than two months and could only work so hard. It'd all catch up with her eventually, with Chloe and at work, and it kept her awake at night like a mute banshee.

Rachel was a few feet away in a fashionable light blue, high-waist bikini. She looked chilled in the way that only the young and wealthy can pull off, a sort of languid ease. Ari was Jewish, female, gay and aging, and ease wasn't a thing at Credit Berlin.

Chloe was laying close to her in her slutty crochet yellow and green bikini, her top casually off, reading.

Janey was on the other side of the pool smoking a cigarette and Ari could only really see the soles of her bare feet and her black sunglasses.

Was there something going on with Chloe and Janey?

Janey was very pretty and looked younger than her age, and though she could be spiky there was a sort of guileless innocence there, but Ari thought she was snorting blow on the quiet. She knew the cagey tells from work.

It was as if they were being remote on purpose.

Janey just wanted to be left alone, at least by Ari and Rachel. Clo had finger-banged her earlier so slowly and well, edging her and using her tongue, and she was almost giddy with love and lust. She hadn't showered or dived in the pool, wanting to keep the smell of Chloe on her as long as possible, their mingled scent, but it was becoming lost in her sweat and the Coppertone.

She finally relented and went into the pool and the cold water, gliding in a slow breaststroke, and caught Ari watching her.

Chloe stood and pulled her bikini top on, struggling with the thin plastic clasp. She went back into the finca, feeling the chill of the air-con. Chloe checked the office but the Olivetti had gone silent again.

Later that night Rachel cooked another veg curry with heavily grilled aubergines, and a stack of thin soft garlicky roti breads. They ate outside at the table under the vine-wired pergola with Rioja and white Verdejo.

Rachel asked Ari if she fancied another run in the morning, feeling she had to now, but Ari gently cried off, saying she just wanted to chill out with Chloe. They'd go later in the week.

Ari saw Janey shiver, like she had less skin.

Tue, Jul 18, 1989

The noise of the heavy door closing woke Chloe. Rachel leaving for her run, she realised dozily. The low red glow of the electric alarm clock read seven. Chloe pulled the white sheet up over her shoulder and spooned Ari, hungover. The air-con was on full and Ari was snoring gently.

Later she carefully got out of bed leaving Ari to sleep, cleaned her teeth and pulled on her retro Tate-ish bikini in the bathroom, still partly wet from her rinsing it in the sink and hanging it out overnight.

Chloe ran her fingers through her hair from the water of the cold tap, her skin feeling hot and burnt. She'd have to go easy today.

She checked the office and then went out into the early morning sun. The page was still blank.

Ari woke alone and lay in bed for another ten minutes looking up at the ceiling, then went into the shower. She was sure that Chloe and Janey were sleeping together.

It was largely a gut feeling. Janey couldn't hide her disappointment when Ari said she wouldn't be joining Rachel for another run, leaving her and Chloe alone.

She saw the way they looked at each other. Perhaps it wasn't anything new, and they'd been doing it on and off

for years. Chloe might be less callow than she let on, and they'd had a thing in the past.

Ari was so sure she'd been Chloe's first, but now she was questioning everything. Chloe had caught on fast from a standing start, and might have been more experienced than she'd let on.

No, she was shaking and barely able to control herself, lost. You can't fake that, Ari thought.

Rachel would know.

Ari was sure Rachel would tell her, or at least give it away. It was probably just a stoned holiday love affair. Did it matter?

Ari wasn't sure, but didn't like the subterfuge and the lies, the thought of Chloe and Janey doing it behind her back. It didn't feel like a fling.

It did matter.

Tue, Jul 18, 1989

Chloe was alone in the pool doing her well-practiced methodical crawl, as she did at least four mornings a week in Hackney. Janey would still be sleeping and Rachel was out on her run.

Ari came out in and sat on a lounge with a glass of orange juice and a peach sliced in a bowl. She ate the peach with the skin on, for the fibre.

‘Hey,’ Chloe smiled. She was wearing the crochet retro green bikini and not her regular black Hackney swimsuit, and it was baggy and even more slutty wet. It’d turned Ari on at first but she saw it as a flag now.

‘I’ll come in with you in a minute,’ Ari said, and after eating half the peach dived into the pool. The cold had her coming to the surface gasping.

‘You do get used to it, I swear,’ Chloe told her. Ari wasn’t so sure.

‘Janey not up yet?’

‘She’s not a morning person,’ Chloe said.

‘But you’re close, yeah?’ Ari was still near shivering in the water.

‘Yeah, of course,’ Chloe replied.

‘Do you love her?’

‘Of course I love her, it’s *Janey*,’ Chloe said.

‘She’s doing blow, you know that don’t you?’

Chloe was comfortable in the water and could float for hours, her body barely moving. ‘I don’t know why you don’t like her,’ Chloe said flatly.

‘I don’t *not* like her,’ Ari said. ‘I just worry that you’re so close close.’

Ari was hanging onto the coping of the pool, her white forearm out of the water, Chloe’s skin in contrast tan. The tiles were hot even in the morning sun, dry. She stared at Chloe, and it took a moment for her to get it.

‘God. Fuck no,’ Chloe said, outraged and laughing.

‘I was just wondering.’

‘God, no,’ Chloe said again.

‘You act like you’re fucking and hiding it.’

‘We’re not, Okay?’ Chloe insisted. The smile had left her face now and it grew tight with annoyance.

‘Okay. I’d get it if you were.’

‘We’re not.’

‘Did you have a thing in the past?’

‘No, never,’ Chloe said flatly.

‘Okay, I need a reset.’ Reset was banking slang and Chloe knew the jargon. Ari got out of the pool, saying she needed to clear her head. She’d go off for a run.

‘Good,’ Chloe said as Ari left.

Rachel had taken a sniff at her God Save the Queen t-shirt and decided it’d be good for another wear before stuffing it in the suitcase or hand washing it in the sink.

She ran to San Clare, now aware of the nastier potholes to avoid. She had a mild sense of relief she wasn’t running with Ari, and could go at her own pace. She’d often get so lost in her head she’d talk out loud to herself, but there were too many loose grit and scars on the road surface for it to be truly meditative.

It was easier on the Portobello Road, she thought wryly.

She was cooking later and had all the ingredients, so wouldn’t be going to the supermarket. In truth it wasn’t nice seeing San Clare so shrivelled and weary.

She rested for a few minutes, drinking from her water bottle, before starting back. She pushed until her left leg hurt, strolling the last few hundred yards. Rachel thought she’d call the Rubios again and if she didn’t get any joy she’d call Harry. Enough was enough. Harry wouldn’t like her to be passive.

Rachel saw the main gate was open and that Ari’s car was gone. The Chloe and Janey thing had exploded like a grenade and Ari had left, Rachel concluded instantly.

Fuck.

Chloe and Janey couldn't hold back, and it was going to happen before long. It was inevitable. Rachel closed the black iron gates.

She hoped Chloe was okay.

Ari set out and started fast on the road to San Clare. She heard the gate close automatically behind her with a mild grind of grease on metal. Harry and that artist were certainly keen on their security. It was all a shade overkill.

She was mostly placated by her conversation with Chloe, and was now close to being sure Chloe and Janey weren't lovers.

At work Ari had negotiated with leathery and cynical clients and was aware of all the tells and ruses. That hoary speaking softly so you'd lean in thing that should have been retired decades ago, and Elvis was dead. The glance over your shoulder. Ari read books on psychology to stay ahead. Freud's *Introduction to Psychoanalysis* wasn't an easy read but it gave her an edge.

She could feel their tell before they showed it.

Chloe was either entirely innocent or a truly virtuoso liar. It was both a relief yet slightly dull. Janey was very pretty.

She'd have to be nice to Chloe later, and might have to apologise, hating the notion.

Ari saw the feral teenage girl at a distance at first, weaving and moving on the edge of the forest, in and out of the trees and the hard foliage. Her legs were dirty and thin, and she was naked but for her tight green shorts and she had something on her face, a mask?

Ari was curious as to what the girl was doing and slowed down to a jog and finally a walk, skirting the line of the trees, only a few hundred yards or so from the finca and still on the land belonging to Harry.

Now the girl was gone and Ari could hear young female voices, giggling and excited, loud. She'd stopped to listen and then crept closer into the sparse forest. Ari wasn't sure what she was hearing but it had a wild, abandoned edge.

There was a clearing and several naked girls, all with roughly-crafted floral masks of twigs and vines and flowers, were waiting. There were no men here, and they were all staring at her.

Ari was confused for an instant and then ran for the road, and the masked girls ran after her, shrieking and laughing. The girls were barefoot and Ari was wearing trainers, and the dry ground was abrasive and Ari ran almost every day. Then something caught her ankle and for a long second she was flying in the air and looking at the forest floor and the bright sky and then her back hit the ground hard, driving the air from her lungs.

Rachel went out to the pool before changing. Chloe was on a sun lounger alone.

‘I didn’t see Ari’s car out front.’

‘She’s off on a run,’ Chloe intoned, half dozing.

‘The car’s gone,’ Rachel replied.

‘You sure?’

Chloe was confused. It wasn’t right. Had she gone to Pollença? Chloe stood casually, slipping into her sandals. She still wasn’t really worried as such. Not at first. She walked up to their room and saw that Ari’s black travel case was gone.

She’d packed and left.

Fuck, Chloe thought, feeling sick. It didn’t make sense. It wasn’t like Ari.

She went back to the pool where Rachel was waiting for her.

‘It isn’t like her,’ Chloe said. Rachel thought she looked vacant.

‘Did she find out?’ Rachel asked gently.

‘No, you don’t get it. If she did she wouldn’t do this. She was hinting at it in the pool this morning but she wasn’t angry, if anything I thought she wanted to join in,’ Chloe insisted. Ari was overly confident if anything, and would rather die than run. She was born confrontational.

‘It isn’t what she’d do.’

‘You sure?’

‘God, fuck, yeah,’ Chloe asserted.

‘Perhaps she was more hurt than you realised,’ Rachel said softly.

Chloe sat on a sun lounger in shock. Ari had clearly left and was probably on her way to the airport.

‘I don’t know what to do,’ Chloe said flatly, her eyes wet.

‘It’ll be okay,’ Rachel said.

Chloe looked genuinely startled, aghast, Rachel thought, as if this wasn’t happening.

How did she imagine this would go?

Chloe was shaking and cold and Rachel held her.

Ari was dazed and panicking. There were so many of them, women and girls of all ages, mostly naked but for the masks, holding her as she struggled. Her left ankle hurt but she didn’t care now.

They tore Ari’s white Lycra top and her sports bra off and then bound her to a tree with silver gaffer tape, leaving her short white leggings hanging at the end of her left leg. They pulled off her trainers leaving her in her socks, and taped over her mouth. A girl groped her bare breasts and another put a hand between her legs, feeling her through her underwear and giggling.

Ari was dizzy and hyperventilating behind the gag, and her hands and legs were duct-taped wide apart at either side of the tree.

She was being crucified. Ari couldn't believe it was real.

The gag was tight at her mouth and she couldn't cry out or yell. Her lips weren't quite closed and she could taste the acrid glue from the gaffer tape on her tongue. She thought she'd choke.

A young girl bent over, lifting her flower and vine mask to kiss her feet through her white socks. Ari's head was gaffer-taped back and she could only see green trees and the bright clear torment of the sky.

'Te encantará la santa mujer,' a girl said in her ear, and she heard another girl say *'y su gran polla.'*

Ari feverishly recognised the word *polla*, cock, and *gran*, big. Santa she thought hurriedly was holy. They were all laughing and singing, and there was a wanton edge that Rachel realised was insane. A young girl, at the proud and zealotry urging of her elders, cut Ari's high white briefs at both hips, pulling the material away and leaving her exposed to the air.

A hand smeared something cold into her genitalia, a greasy lubricant of lavender and turmeric that Ari could smell even over the tape on her face. The girl wiped her oily hand on Ari's thigh.

Then they all left her.

Tue, Jul 18, 1989

Janey was in bed sleeping with the creased white sheet kicked away and the air-con rattling gently. Chloe kissed her neck and gently stroked her blond hair and bare shoulder until she woke.

‘Ari’s left. She’s gone,’ Chloe said quietly.

‘Eh?’ Janey said dozily.

‘Ari has gone back to London.’

‘Fuck,’ Janey said, startled awake now but her voice still gluey. ‘God, are you okay?’

‘I’m fine, really. It’s okay, it’s over with now,’ Chloe said. She regretted not being honest enough to tell Ari, but the whole thing was a few minutes of raw panic, and she’d lied stupidly. Chloe wanted to be better than that, but love could be violent and psychotic and bulldozer over anything good.

Chloe wanted to be a good person, and wondered what God would make of it? It was a crazy and absurd thought that had its roots buried low in Chloe’s upbringing. Her mother.

Ari had left and would catch whatever flight she could back to London. She’d move out of Bow and Chloe would probably never see her again.

‘It’s okay. We can be together now, if that’s what you want,’ Chloe said.

Janey looked at her, half-smiling. ‘Of course it’s what I want, bitch. I fucking love you.’

Chloe kissed her, while being both melancholic and crazily thrilled all at once.

Rachel waited in the kitchen and soon Janey and Chloe joined her. She thought of saying they’d been blatant and selfish, less so for Janey, but held her tongue. It could wait for another day.

Janey said she was sorry. She knew Rachel had liked Ari.

‘It’s okay, hun,’ Rachel said. ‘If you’re good I’m good.’

‘Yeah, we’re very fucking good,’ Janey said laughing, taking Chloe’s hand.

‘Okay then,’ Rachel said. ‘I’ll cook eggs for brunch.’

They all hugged and Chloe thanked her. Janey was glowing. Rachel didn’t think she’d ever seen her so happy, and while it’s been cruel on Ari she loved Clo and Janey.

Rachel made a hollandaise sauce and toasted three bagels. Once the girls were seated at the table under the pergola she fried eggs with a ton of black pepper and salt, turned over delicately for a few seconds, the pepper throwing off a whiff of acrid smoke. She put an egg on each half-bagel with a heavy smear of the lemony hollandaise.

Chloe and Janey sat close together. Chloe said the eggs were stellar, while Janey said sorry again, for Ari. It was strange, the girls as a couple, Rachel thought, but they looked so joyous and free it couldn't not be infectious.

‘How was Ari when she left?’ Rachel asked gently.

‘She was fine,’ Chloe replied.

‘But was she okay to drive?’

‘Oh, yeah.’

Rachel knew they'd probably want to spend the rest of the holiday in bed, being so loved up. She'd met George in Ibiza and they barely left her hotel room for days.

‘You two do what you want, I'll be okay. I get it, the whole love thing,’ Rachel said, and in truth she'd be fine chilling alone.

Harry, Fin and the children would be arriving in a fortnight and it'd be noisy enough then. The plan was she'd spend a week or so with Harry and her half-siblings before flying back to London.

George was meant to be there with her until his last minute no-show. He didn't get on with Harry, who'd called George a fraudulent prick to his face.

He might be hung and good looking but you can do better, Harry had coldly and obscenely told her.

‘He isn't good enough for you.’

The idea was that George would try again with her father, but he'd lost his balls like a coward.

'God no, we'll go for a long walk in the morning,' Chloe said, and Janey agreed fast.

'You don't have to,' Rachel said.

'I want to, we both do.' Chloe insisted.

'Okay,' Rachel said, knowing full well they were doing it for her. She'd go along with it for now and tell Chloe later it wasn't necessary.

It was nearly two in the afternoon and Chloe could barely believe what had changed in a mere few hours, how her world had been spun and rearranged. Her betrayal of Ari hurt, but she also thought idly of stranding Janey on a desert island so no one else could have her.

Janey and Chloe went into the finca hand in hand. A siesta, Janey said with a smile.

'Okay whore,' Rachel retorted, well out of earshot of Chloe, and gave an exaggerated roll of her eyes.

Janey blew her a kiss but then halted, walking back. She held Rachel tight for a second before hurrying off after Chloe. I'd been a collaborator, Rachel thought dryly.

Later Chloe was back out by the pool drinking Estrella beer and Janey was in the kitchen. Rachel rolled a joint in the shade of the green vine pergola while drinking from a large

glass of Rioja, and Chloe went into the pool before moving under a parasol and reading, as ever.

‘I was going to cook,’ Rachel protested.

Janey made a light pasta with tomatoes and garlic along with a fresh, vinegary salad. It was pretty good, Rachel thought, staying out by the pool until late, long after Janey and Chloe had turned in.

Wed, Jul 19, 1989

They were all up and out early for their walk, eating cereal for breakfast. Rachel thought she’d take the girls out past the trees and off the road, a gentle hike along a well delineated path. It was a walk Harry would often take after an early dinner as the sun began to set. There wasn’t much to see other than a few olive trees but it was a pleasurable stroll in the worn yellowing grass.

Chloe wore her Born a Bad Seed tee and Janey was in tight blue Lycra, making Chloe want to jump her sweaty bones as soon as they got back. She thought of Janey keeping her socks on. They were holding hands for most of the walk.

Rachel had rinsed through her God Save the Queen t-shirt in the sink and hung it out overnight, wearing it unironed.

It was almost a perfect morning with a light breeze and a string of cloud that’d bubbling overnight and would burn off in an hour. They chatted idly without seeing another

soul. A grey and white goat stood in their path and stubbornly wouldn't move until Rachel shooed it off, and they were all laughing.

Back at the finca they spent the rest of the day out by the pool. Rachel had filled the fridge with beer but mostly they were on a Rioja day.

Rach had lit and shared a few reefers and Chloe was high and stoned in the sun, barely able to read her Didion. Janey was close to her, listening to her cassette player, her hair and skin wet from the pool.

It was a vision of five or so seconds, no more.

The blonde hippy girl was there floating over the pool, her presence lit bright and glowing yellow in the sunlight, as if she was an angel, her painted toes a foot above the blue chlorine water, the pool shining in the pious golden saffron light.

Her cock was rigid and prominent, swaying slightly against her shaved groin. It was tight and smooth and strangely feminine.

Lulu was smiling at her but then she gone in an instant.

Janey and Rachel didn't react, and clearly hadn't seen her. Chloe had let out a low unaware yowl but neither of the girls noticed. She had no idea if it was real or just a ganja illusion, a Goat Girl mirage.

Rachel cooked dinner and they all sat at the table listening to Blondie and then soul and disco. Rachel kept changing tapes. The air was fresh and Rachel danced with Chloe and Janey and it was a good night.

Chloe barely thought of Ari.

Thu, Jul 20, 1989

Chloe dreamed of the goatish girl again. Lulu. The ghost had quietly slid under the sheets and into their bed while Chloe was spooning Janey. Janey was sleeping heavily, stoned, and Chloe felt the goatish girl's cock hard and wet with pre-ejaculate or lube against her lower back.

The blonde Goat Girl had her hand on Chloe's shoulder and then on her right breast, teasing and pulling her nipple just how she liked it. Her cock was now pushing against her buttocks and Chloe felt Lulu's hand gently part her cheeks. She thought she was going to be sodomised but the Goat Girl was just teasing her before sliding the head of her cock into her vagina. Chloe gasped and pushed her groin back as it went further in.

'You like it, don't you?' The goatish girl said in her ear while stroking her hair. She smelled wild like nature, the earth.

Chloe gave a slight nod of her head, not wanting to say it.

‘You’ll have to be quiet,’ Lulu whispered while pushing her full length in, her hand firm on Chloe’s hip now. It was slow, not thrusting, as if it was for her.

Chloe put her hand down and felt the stiff wet cock and slid a wet finger over her swollen clitoris. She was struggling not to be loud and verbal.

‘Can I come inside you?’ The blonde goatish girl said, low and breathing hard now. Chloe said yes and she felt Lulu spurt inside her and could smell her ejaculate, like a dog.

Chloe woke and she was very wet. She’d been masturbating while still half holding Janey and could smell herself.

Thu, Jul 20, 1989

Rachel woke and thought she'd run to San Clare but she'd shower first. She smelled of reefer and there was that weird trace of BO again. She'd change the bedding.

She wondered how many sheets she had left and knew the towels in the pool house were running low.

She'd have to do the laundry.

Rachel called the Rubio number again but there was still no answer. It was strange, Harry would be here in a few weeks and it was baffling that the family were now fucking with Harry, the guy. They'd worked for her father for years and surely knew how brutal and vindictive he could be. He could ruin the Rubios in a heartbeat and it wasn't as if he'd care.

She called and left another indignant message on their answering machine.

Janey woke first and nuzzled into Chloe under the single white sheet. Chloe woke slowly and told Janey she'd hadn't slept well.

'Is everything okay?' Janey said, wondering if it was something she'd done. She was deliriously happy being

with Chloe but petrified she'd blow it. It was all so new and the magic with Clo might be left behind in Spain.

If only they could stay here forever.

Chloe had washed and hung her retro Bardot bikini over the shower stall last night and it was dry enough to wear. Janey had thrown her bikini somewhere on the floor, she was preternaturally untidy.

'Yeah, it's fine. I just had a bad night, that's all,' Chloe said gently, kissing her.

'Did I snore?'

'You snore like a fucking donkey but it's cute and I like it,' Chloe said. It was true. Her snoring was like white noise, and she normally slept easily with Janey.

'Do you want to sleep in?'

'No, I'm okay.' She kissed Janey again, smiling. Chloe assured her that she didn't have to worry.

'I've loved you forever, and that'll never change.'

At one point last night the ghost, the goatish girl, had insisted her name was Lily, not Lulu.

Chloe couldn't recall anything more other than it was all wildly horny, and she'd done something hot and probably wrong while Janey slept heavily beside her.

Janey offered to make coffee.

'No, I'll go,' Chloe insisted. 'It'll wake me up. I'll make toast.'

Chloe checked the Olivetti Lettera 32 in the office but the page was still frustratingly blank. She'd largely given up with the typewriter hack, and padded barefoot into the kitchen.

Rachel picked up the large dirty pile of towels from the pool house and carried it to the laundry room in the finca. It was a bare space with no natural light and three white industrial machines with denuded metal handles. A pile of light blue plastic baskets sat on the bare working table. Rachel had never been in the laundry before.

She had no idea of how much detergent to use but at least the large operating icons were clear. One machine was a dryer so vast Rachel could crawl into, and there was a shelf with a large, non-domestic electric iron, featureless apart from a tin label of a brand she didn't recognise.

She'd wash all the sheets after mastering this first wash. Chloe, Ari and Janey would soon be low on clean bedding, and it'd be nasty and impolite if they didn't have anything fresh. Fia, her housemaid as a teenager, wouldn't approve. It was strange how she still thought of her.

Rachel heard or more felt a breath at her ear, and turned, startled.

For a second she thought she saw blonde hair and the blur of a female face in the two inch void between the washing machines, pushed and bent, which wasn't possible.

It was the dope. She'd seen things that weren't there before.

But Rachel wasn't stoned. It was the morning and she was sober.

It was the ghost Harry called Lily. Rachel had never seen her before. He'd told her Lily wasn't threatening, but while the crushed face was smiling it was intensely strange and frightening. She was glad she hadn't seen the ghost as a child.

She was probably hefty on the washing powder, spooked and rushing now, but the machine started noisily working. She'd ask Chloe or Janey to help her in future, Rachel thought. She didn't want to be alone in the laundry again.

She heard either Janey or Chloe in the kitchen and smelled fresh coffee, the moka pot in action.

They were gone before Rachel could say she going off on her run.

Rachel ran and it was good to be out pushing hard and filling her lungs. She'd talk to Hector at the bar, he'd know the Rubios. There might be something that justified their no-show.

Lily. The face in the laundry was like a blow up porno doll.

She got to San Clare and could feel the discordant change in the air. The streets were deserted and there was the dead silence of a power cut, with no electronic sigh or voltage twitch.

The supermarket and the post office were closed and the El Olivo had its bruised metal shutters down. It was eerie seeing San Clare so bleached of people.

It was then she heard a howl long off in the distance, male, and it could've been a cry of pain or anger. It set a dog off barking. She thought of the shouting and the fire last week in the forest. *Putas*.

There was a weird burning heat and a scent of game in the air, like an abattoir.

Rachel ran back to the finca, occasionally stopping to listen and look over her shoulder. Everything was frightening her in a place she once felt so safe and protected.

Janey had Chloe wear the tights and they were tribbing. They used the vibrator. Chloe had fingered Janey and put her fingers in Janey's mouth.

Chloe was in the shower and Janey came in to pee. Chloe was smiling at her and after Janey flushed the toilet she joined Chloe in the shower stall.

It was all very close and loving and Chloe had a white sponge full of Janey's Clarins Eau Dynamisante shower gel and washed them both, and they kissed softly in the hot running water, with Janey still faintly tasting of cigarettes from last night.

They went back to bed only half dried off.

Lily, the Goat Girl, was watching everything.

Rachel got back and found Janey in the kitchen cooking omelettes.

'Go in the pool and I'll make you one for when you get out. Spinach, yeah?'

Rachel went off and changed into her blue high waist Dior bikini. She brought out her personal stereo, a Sony.

She dived into the cold water. Janey was becoming a devil at the stove and had flash fried the spinach first with a few slices of garlic, translucent thin. She hadn't taught her that.

Rachel ate her omelette just after drying off, her skin hot in the feral sun. She was explaining to Chloe how she couldn't get any food.

'Sorry hun, everything was closed,' Rachel said. 'It might be a holy day.'

Chloe was raised atheist and religious holy days weren't her thing. Janey had told Chloe her mother was Jewish but

her parents were secular. Rachel was born Catholic but Harry was far from being a believer.

Harry's father had caught religion just before the end. He had lung cancer and died before Rachel was born, leaving a donation in the millions to the Papal Basilica of Saint Peter in the Vatican.

Harry was still left incredibly and unendingly rich at twenty-five.

Rachel didn't mention the howling and the dog, or the disturbing feel of the place. It might not be anything other than a coincidence, a violent domestic row.

Rachel said she was going to Pollença in the morning, and she'd get the groceries then. She'd call a taxi but had a few things to do for Harry, and it might take a while and it'd be a pain in the arse waiting for her.

Chloe and Janey said they'd be fine staying at the finca.

It was something of a ruse. Rachel's idea was still to surprise the girls with lobster and champagne for their last night on Saturday.

Later they were all out by the pool and there was almost no breeze. Janey was warning Chloe she was starting to burn, but was careful not to be mother.

Rachel had taken a yellow, a Nembutal, and was drifting off in the shade of a palm tree, not having slept well the night before. She was a veteran at the finca and wasn't

bothered by the cockroaches in the palm leaves. They'd only come out in the rain.

Janey dived into the pool, pushing down a foot into the cold water. She was strong like Chloe but didn't have her elegance, emerging out of her dive in a strong crawl, her shoulders high. She turned on her back to see her love.

Chloe caught the hint and was already standing and laughing. She'd spent half her life as a young teenager at St George's swimming baths on the Highway, with a bus ride or a long walk to Shadwell, but it was new and clean.

Chloe waited until her balance and toes were right before diving in, sliding gracefully into the water with barely a splash, like a lurid mermaid, Janey thought.

Later Janey chilled in the cold chlorinated water. It was all so perfect with Clo in the sun.

Janey cooked again, pasta with a roasted tomato, rosemary and lemon coating, the garlic punchy. Rachel swore she'd cook on the Friday after going to Pollença, and she'd cook again on their last night.

Rachel had the instruction manual for the alarm system and quietly went through the test procedure to make sure it was fully working. Then she changed the four digit security code. You can't be too careful, she thought.

Fri, Jul 21, 1989

Rachel was outside at the pool well before the others, and distractedly ate her cornflakes. There was less than a litre of milk left in the fridge and it was on its *uso por*, its use by date.

It could all be nothing; her imagination going haywire in the laundry, and San Clare was this morning filled with people in working boots and smelling of dung.

Rachel was in her bikini and poured another cup from the moka pot. She'd shower and dress before phoning for a taxi to Pollença.

The insects were largely inactive this early and she clearly heard the loud growl in the forest. It was probably a wild boar, too coarse and flat to be a goat.

She'd heard locals claiming to have seen wild boars but Harry had said it was bollocks and nonsense, as they weren't indigenous to the island.

It could be a wild pig or a goat. There were large Balearian *bocs*, wild goats.

She looked through the iron gate bolted to the wall but couldn't see anything, before seeing a flash of a large black figure moving in the trees.

Rachel knew Harry had a vintage pair of Nikon binoculars, and she'd recognised the worn black leather case on his desk. Rachel slid on her plastic sandals and took the binoculars from Harry's office. She opened her window and had a view from her room that overlooked the pool and the wall.

She couldn't see anything but heard it again, a low screech mired in the forest. It was surely a pig but the noise was strangely apelike, or human-ish.

Was she being anthropomorphic?

She thought of the shouting and the fire last week in the forest.

Rachel knocked on Janey's door, asking if she could come in.

'Yeah,' Chloe said dozily.

They were both in bed mostly under a white sheet, and the sole of Janey's foot was dirty. She'd been dancing barefoot by the pool last night.

'Look out the window. In the forest,' Rachel insisted. 'I saw something, and I heard it howling.'

Chloe pulled on her retro Bardot bikini while Rachel turned her head to look away. Janey crawled out of bed with the sheet loose around her.

'I can't see anything, what am I looking at?' Chloe said. Rachel told her to listen.

There was a cry more than a howl, closer now. Chloe thought it might be a sick dog. 'Do they have rabies here?' Chloe said to Rachel.

'No, not that I know of,' Rachel said.

'Is it a man?' Janey said. 'It sounded manly.'

'Even if it is, he can't get in,' Rachel stated, saying he'd need the security code for the back gate and she'd just changed it.

They went downstairs, Janey now wearing a white bikini.

Rachel was sure she'd seen something out there in the trees.

'Didn't you say they bred bulls here?' Janey uttered to Rachel, who wasn't really listening.

Rachel called the *Policía Municipal* but heard a high tone she didn't recognise. She tried the Rubios by habit but got the same signal, a long high whining tone.

The telephone wasn't working.

Chloe and Janey looked worried and Rachel was explaining how the phone service was unreliable and often went in and out. Rachel was cool but she'd swallowed a diazepam with her cornflakes.

Janey went for a snort of yayo, saying she had to pee.

'I have to get changed, I'll be back in a minute,' Rachel said, and Chloe replied she'd wait for Janey out at the pool. Rachel ran to her room and put on her cut-off Levi's over

her red bikini bottoms. She pulled on her trainers, wearing the day before's socks that were stuffed into her shoes. Rachel went to the pantry and took out the shotgun, the Browning double auto.

Janey was back and Chloe saw she was high and itchy with blow. She was out in her white bikini but with her sunglasses on, and clutching her personal stereo. Her hair was loose and wet from being under the tap, signalling she was feeling low-key, Chloe thought, but her lipstick was very red.

She'd been hiding it from her but Chloe could barely be irritated now. They'd been so close for so long even before the finca, and they could argue without a filter, like siblings.

If Janey got fucked up on blow then why not? It wasn't as if she wasn't doing a shitload of wine and ganja.

'You okay?' Janey said, half-smiling.

'Yeah, I'm good,' Chloe responded.

Rachel came out to the pool holding the shotgun.

'Fuck,' Janey said.

'If worst comes to worst, we're not defenceless,' Rachel declared.

'Do you know how to use it?' Chloe said.

'Oh Yeah. I first shot it when I was eleven.'

Rachel said she was going outside, and loaded the shotgun with two cartridges. She pushed another four cartridges into the back pockets of her Levi's.

So very Ripley, Chloe thought.

'It's probably a wild boar or something. I don't know,' Rachel said. 'I'll fire a shot to scare it off.'

'You don't have to do this,' Chloe argued, 'are you high?'

Rachel said she'd be fine. The locals hunt. She was just doing what the locals do.

'Just be careful,' Chloe said, not sure if Rach wasn't trying to prove something. Harry wasn't a local and she wasn't a local.

Janey had lifted a beer from the fridge and they went to their window to watch.

They saw Rachel open the iron gate and step out, closing the gate behind her, and then they watched her walk slowly out into the forest.

Rachel was breathing hard, with the shotgun facing out, tucked into her right shoulder. It was a light gun, a classic, accurate. She thought of how she might have to reload fast, the Browning ejected the cartridge casing after firing, and then she was a few feet from the tree line.

The sun was no longer on her skin and there was the slight whiff of rot in her nostrils, decaying foliage. She was walking lightly, slow and careful on the forest floor.

Rachel heard a crackling rustle, something she'd barely register while in her London head, and she halted, silent and waiting. The cicadas were growing noisy as the sun rose, and she began to edge closer.

Rachel heard breathing that was very feral pig, and was sure the noise was coming from behind a gnarled tree.

It was just a fucking pig.

She could hear her own breathing and her heartbeat. She'd have to be careful, a wild pig could be large and aggressive, but she also had a feeling of relief.

The creature flew out in a blur and hit her hard on the shoulder. Rachel struggled to stay on her feet and turned, firing off into the trees, blowing bark to dust in the air. The noise of the gun was harsher than she was expecting and it made her ears ring brightly, the trees enclosing the burst.

She'd seen a thin bare horselike leg with a long cloven foot and the glance of a fur torso, apish and black.

A big chicken leg.

The beast was fast, it was there and now it'd hid again, shy.

Come on you fucker.

She wiped the sweat from her face and noticed she was bleeding. It'd slashed her left bicep. She didn't feel any pain.

There was a random foresty noise and she fired at it. Her left hand was sticky with blood and it'd run thinly down to her midriff. Rachel reloaded in a wild panic and misinserted the second cartridge before it finally slid in.

She fired again near blindly, and there was a high wail more of shock than actual pain, a realisation of danger, that the noise could hurt. It was the reaction of something like a chimpanzee.

She heard it run.

The forest fell silent and she waited stock still, listening. Nothing.

She paced further into the trees, the wet undergrowth slippery. 'Hey, fucker!' Rachel shouted out.

Still nothing.

Had it run or was it just hiding? It might be smart and it was stalking her.

Her arm was bleeding heavily now, and it'd dribbled onto her white trainers. She began to feel dizzy, and the thin shafts of sun that fought bright through the trees was hurting her eyes.

Rachel walked back fast to the finca, shouting out aggressively and aware of her space.

She was sure she heard it or something moving behind her.

Fri, Jul 21, 1989

Chloe and Janey had heard the gunshots in the distance, and a few minutes later they saw Rachel emerging from the trees, staggering and bleeding.

Chloe had seen the Red Cross emergency medical kit and pulled it down from the shelf in the kitchen. They ran down to the iron gate.

‘I need a fucking beer,’ Rachel said, for certain faking a smile.

‘You’ve earned it babe,’ Janey responded, shaking.

Chloe could see at first glance it wasn’t that bad, what with the blood running into her sweat and the dirt. Rachel wouldn’t need stitches. There was a suture pack in the medical kit but Chloe couldn’t imagine piercing her skin.

Janey went to the fridge to get her a cold Estrella and when she got back Rachel had taken off her socks and trainers. Chloe was cleaning her arm while Rachel had lit a spliff.

Chloe was a first aider at ICL so volunteered to clean and dress Rachel’s injuries. She’d barely done anything since her two days of training and that was over four years ago.

Rachel wanted to take a shower before Chloe put on a bandage. Janey would stay out by the pool, she wasn't good with blood and was feeling sick already.

Rachel had come out of the shower encased in a large white towel flecked in blood, but her arm was barely bleeding now. It was closer to a fierce deep scratch than a mauling and it could've been far worse.

'It was more like an ape, not a pig,' Rachel stated, saying it had goatish feet. 'Or it a huge pig. I don't know.'

'Not now,' Chloe said. She put on a antiseptic dressing and a plasticky bandage.

'It'll fuck up my tan,' Rachel said, half-joking.

'It will, or you can just start bleeding again.' Chloe read the leaflet and the hydrocolloid bandage was waterproof.

'You can go in the pool.'

Rachel thanked her, saying she needed ganja and a beer.

They were all out by the pool. Rachel sat at the table below the vine pergola and rolled a fat reefer. The jasmine was wilting and she'd have to water the plants with a spray for the cacti.

Janey thought Rachel looked battered in her blue high waist bikini but it didn't appear to bother her in the slightest. *Bravo.*

Chloe opened a bottle of Rioja while Janey dived half-stoned into the pool. They'd pushed three of the sun loungers together and Chloe looked at her toes, realising her red nail varnish needed a re-do.

Rachel put on her reggae tape and there was a howl from over the wall, in the trees.

'The pig is alive,' Janey drawled. Rachel was laying on her sun lounger and took another tug on her spliff. Her bandage was itching.

'Fuck, you don't say,' Rachel said, self-mockingly.

Chloe went up to clean her teeth at around one in the afternoon. She peed, washed her face and put on lipstick. She was high and would have to slow down.

Later Chloe and Janey were in the pool. It was still clear but the water had a slight greasy edge, a smear. Rachel said she knew how to clean the filter, but hadn't yet.

Rachel got out of the pool and Janey and Chloe were playing with each other, smiling with their hands all over.

'I want to lick you raw,' Janey said, low. Rachel was stoned and drifting on her white sun lounger, listening to her Sony cassette player.

'Come here,' Chloe said, and they were close in the water and she put a finger inside the gusset of Janey's bikini. They tried while tangled together but Janey was too stoned to come.

Later Chloe could feel her shoulders burning even with the Coppertone suntan lotion, while Janey's skin was turning to coffee, flawless.

There was another howl in the forest, the pig, and Janey didn't flinch.

They ate the last of the cheese, olives and bread as the sun went down.

Sat, Jul 22, 1989

Chloe and Rachel were up early.

Rachel was still convinced there was something out there, and Chloe appeared to agree. They had coffee and fruit.

The telephone was still out of order with a dull analog pulse.

Rachel had to know that real life was going on, out past the finca and San Clare.

Rachel tried the television but the channels were all static. Harry didn't have a dish so they only received the regional channels, and they were often disrupted by local weather conditions. The Sony Trinitron was only really there for playing films on video.

She went outside and could see the broadcasting tower was still there on one of the higher hills a few miles in the distance.

There had to be a radio in the finca, and it'd receive the World Service on shortwave or a local station.

Harry had a typewriter in his office and a Xerox fax machine that'd yellowed slightly in the sun. There was a ton of financial detritus on file, but no radio. It was barely credible he didn't have a computer and just a phone. He had a Quotron back in London, showing green stock prices live on a black screen. He'd shown it to her, marvelling flatly at its very modernity.

It'll be a different world now, Harry snorted, less creative. This sort of truth will kill the industry, he'd said.

She found the paint-splattered Soviet bloc radio in the storage room. It didn't work but took the Soviet equivalent of C size batteries. Rachel had seen a couple in the junk drawer in the kitchen, and hoped Clo could get it working. Old basic circuitry was all but indestructible, Chloe had said one night, it runs so cold. Chloe would often lose Rachel when she talked electronics and something coming called the internet but that cold circuit board thing stuck in her head for some reason. Did the radio once belong to Jorge Carlos Morales?

They'd wait for the authorities, and it clearly wouldn't be long, they'd been paid off for years. The finca would be high on their list. Harry was on his way as well. He'd save her.

Rachel was fishing the bugs out of the pool, and Chloe offered to help Rachel clean the filter. Rachel showed her how to remove it and wash it out gently with the hose in the pool house. They tested the chlorine and pH levels with paper strips and the water was good to go.

Chloe made Janey tea and toast with the Spanish marmalade she liked, and she'd probably be in the shower.

Later Chloe was trying to get the radio to work, the sort of challenge she enjoyed. She'd changed the C batteries but it was still lifeless. They weren't that old and should have at least a trickle of charge. Batteries didn't like the cold but were generally okay with heat.

Rachel was there with her in the kitchen and was quietly suggesting there might be more than one creature in the forest and it might not be just here.

Janey was thankfully out of earshot by the pool.

Chloe thought of George Romero's *Dawn of the Dead* but with wild pigs. Rachel was tired and stressed-out, her imagination on fire with too much dope and too many pills.

Chloe was cleaning the battery casing and the connectors. If that didn't work she'd have to open the casing and then she'd probably need a soldering iron.

Earlier she'd had a horrible nightmare, the first she could fully recall since she'd arrived at the finca.

She was floating in the sea, she thought Ibiza, with grey eels in the water, slivering around her legs and smelling of piss and biting her. It was a memory of Rathbone Market as a child and the fish and eel stall. She'd go back on the 15 bus with her aunt with at least one of the eels still moving in a plastic bag. The survivors would have their heads dashed against the stone surface on the edge of the ceramic white sink before being boiled, mercifully not alive. Chloe had been frightened of eels every since.

She could still taste it, the fishy eel piss stench that wasn't dissimilar to the BO smell.

She'd been in bed with Janey and the nightmare left her felling icky and nauseated. She didn't want to be touched and luckily Janey was still sleeping and oblivious.

They had enough canned food for weeks, Rachel realised, at least until Harry flew in. They'd be light on a few fresh vegetables but had a ton of essentials like pasta, rice and tins of tomatoes. There were boxes of fresh fruit in the cold cellar, oranges and grapefruit, along with onions and garlic, and stuff in the freezer, like cheese, tomatoes and peppers. They'd eat better than most people locked in.

Locked in from what?

Janey had been quiet all day, stoned out by the pool.

Later Chloe managed to get the radio working, spitting out static. She found the World Service on shortwave, and they were playing a piano recital probably first broadcast on Radio 3.

The AM band was mostly Spanish disco in a close fog of stations. The Radio didn't have FM and they finally found the RNE, the national broadcaster.

It was mundane politics as far as they both could gather, and there wasn't anything like an emergency broadcast. The world was going on as normal without them.

Later Rachel made spiced roasted cauliflower with a salad of apple and chicory. Chloe thought she could go vegetarian if she had to.

Sun, Jul 23, 1989

At close to one in the morning they all went in to watch a film, *Dangerous Liaisons* with John Malkovich and Michelle Pfeiffer. It was one of Harry's counterfeit tapes. Rachel hadn't seen it but Janey had read the novel.

'No spoilers, I promise.'

Chloe sat with Janey and snuggled into her lap with her lids half-closed, not caring. She'd rolled into a ball and Janey stroked her feet. Rachel realised early on that things weren't going to end well for Isabelle de Merteuil. It'd be more interesting if she won.

Rachel went to bed imagining a more intriguing and subversive ending where the clever antagonist prevailed, before drifting off.

Sun, Jul 23, 1989

Chloe woke smelling male ejaculate.

She half lifted the sheet and felt for the wet patch on the bed. The odour made no sense and it was gone now, a weird post-nightmare olfactory mirage. She snuggled into a sleeping Janey, who didn't stir.

They were meant to be leaving today for London but that wasn't going to happen, not with the phone out. Chloe and Janey hadn't even bothered to start packing.

Chloe was still on edge and couldn't get back to sleep, finally giving up at just before seven. She showered and put on lipstick and eyeliner, with Janey rolling and nesting in the white sheet.

Last night Janey insisted they turn the air-con down, claiming it was too cold. Chloe thought it was more her wanting to be aware of any noises from over the wall.

Chloe went down and fished out the dwarf black flies and the biting insects from the pool. The air was placid and silent, with the water barely moving. Chloe subconsciously felt the hush unsettling.

And then there was noise, with Rachel and Janey being out by nine. Janey's hair was wet from the shower.

Janey had poured milk on her cornflakes but no one else would risk it. It'd be too close to going off, and Chloe and Rachel stuck to fruit. There was a ton of oranges and grapefruits in the cold cellar.

Rachel said she'd cook brunch, and they'd graze later. The sun was low but bright and the sky was fiercely blue without a hint of cloud. Rachel thought it's be another unseasonably broiling day.

There wasn't any noises from the forest, and perhaps the boar thing had left, while Janey was gently suggesting it'd never been there in the first place. It could just be a wild pig, and they were all tired and fatigued. Stress could be a liar.

Rachel knew what she'd seen and heard. She went to her room and opened a window, leaning out to scan the forest and the long grass with the binoculars, looking for anywhere the beast could be hiding.

Rachel didn't see a thing, not even a twitch in the trees, and the self doubt crept in.

Janey could be right. It was a wild pig or a deer or what the fuck ever and she'd overreacted.

Janey and Rachel were out by the pool, both dozing in the sun, so a fidgety Chloe strolled into the office. She typed a line on the Olivetti Lettera 32, followed by a carriage return.

Lily?

It was an impulsive gesture, she hadn't thought of doing it until right at that moment, and hoped it was clear and direct. They were in Spain and English might not be Lily's first language.

Lily as a nomenclature still didn't feel right for the Goat Girl. It was Lulu in her nightmares, and something in Chloe's head was redacting Lily/Lulu.

She'd thought of taking notes as soon as she woke, before her mind wiped out most of it in apparent disgust.

Either way there was no Olivetti action. It sat there waiting with not even a breath of noise in the office. The beige air-con unit over the door appeared to be broken, so there wasn't even that. Surely Harry could have had it repaired?

Chloe went off to the kitchen for coffee. She was waiting for the kettle to boil when she heard the irregular slow clacking. She ran into the office, her plastic sandals slapping against her soles and the floor tiles.

clo

The word on the white page in the duck-egg blue Olivetti typewriter had been followed by a carriage return.

The ghost was aware of her as a person, a connection between her and Lily. Chloe was sure of it before but there it was, authenticated on paper and real.

Chloe sat at the brown leather office chair and pulled it close to the Olivetti. There was no sense of there being anyone else in the office, no feel of anything corporeal.

Are you a ghost?

There was no response, the keys falling silent. Lily might not see herself as a ghost, and the term itself could be regressive. She might not know what she was.

Have you been here a long time?

Nothing.

Do you know where you are?

yes

The carriage return was hard and almost aggressive, frustrated.

Have you been watching us?

yes

Jesus, Chloe thought.

Do you enjoy it?

yes

The keys clacked regularly, fast in lowercase.

Are you lonely?

There was no reply.

Lily, you can say anything

The keys didn't move for a few seconds, the air still and waiting. Chloe could hear herself breathing.

here love time wrong

Chloe was confused.

The time is wrong?

mite same

Same time. It was a letter inversion, like dyslexia, Chloe realised. She had the feeling she was talking to someone who wasn't at her best. Perhaps it was just how ghosts were, Chloe thought, faded renditions of their former selves.

How is time the same?

everything same time

Everything happens at the same time?

Something had changed in the air, a faint easing of pressure, Chloe thought, and her left ear popped, like on a descending aeroplane coming in to land.

Lily, the goatish girl, was gone.

Chloe took the page from the Olivetti and fed in a new blank sheet of paper.

Chloe sat out on a lounge in the sun, reading over and over the ghost words. Janey was laying out at the far side of the pool. Chloe opened a bottle of red Estrella, not caring that it wasn't even ten in the morning. She'd found a lever arch binder in the office and read the page through clear plastic. She put the don't go page into a separate sleeve.

She'd gone back to her room and took one of her wire-bound notebooks and an orange fine point black biro.

Chloe was working on the assumption that Lily would return to the Olivetti.

everything same time

Chloe thought of Einstein and the Special Theory of Relativity. A ghost could be outside of velocity, cut free of the direction of the universe and time wouldn't be anything. It burnt her brain trying to think of it logically, and how it would be experienced first-hand. The past and present would be a walled-in bubble, surely. Nothing in or out.

But now it wasn't so walled-in. The ghost could see Chloe, and probably Rachel and Janey. It could be messier than Einstein had predicted, an extra-bubble.

Lily could only talk for a few minutes, and it might hurt. Chloe would leave it for the rest of the day and try again in the morning.

Would it be a day for Lily?

Chloe had a paperback of Max Born's *Einstein's Theory of Relativity* on her bookcase in Bow, and she'd found it a hard read. She could really do with it now.

She wrote what she hoped were logical questions for their ensuing dialogue. Lily would be back and Chloe wouldn't be caught cold again.

Chloe thought of telling the girls but decided against it. Janey wasn't in a good place to find out Lily had been watching everything.

Rachel came over in her light blue high waist bikini, sunglasses on.

'Hitting the beer early?'

Chloe put down her notebook and biro.

'Just a little work.'

'Okay hun. I'll stay out of your way.'

'I'll be done soon,' Chloe said.

Chloe thought of the ejaculate odour on the sheet this morning. She was convinced it was Lily fucking with her head again.

Was she likewise fucking with her on the Olivetti?

Chloe took the binder and her notebook upstairs to her room and then next door to the room she was sharing with Janey, who'd half-straightened the bed. She'd left the wet white towel on the white sheet, and Janey had left the air-con on.

Fuck, Chloe thought, exasperated. She didn't want to nag as Ari was a neat freak, but still.

Chloe picked up Janey's dirty clothing from the floor, shoving it into the corner being at least half-tidy, and turned the air-con off.

For brunch Rachel cooked a vegetarian *Huevos Rancheros*, baked eggs with tomatoes, thin translucent slices of garlic, with peppers and onions. Janey sat in her white bikini next to Chloe at the dining table under the vine pergola, her hand often drifting onto Chloe's right bare thigh.

That evening Janey and Chloe were dancing to Grace Jones and reggae, as if they didn't have a care in the world, Rachel thought.

Janey didn't. They hadn't left today and probably wouldn't be leaving anytime soon.

Mon, Jul 24, 1989

Chloe woke with the alarm set for seven, and quickly hit the off button. Janey was in a foetal position with her pillow on the floor. Chloe kissed her perfect bare back with her skin cold, and slid silently from the bed, turning the air-con down a notch.

She cleaned her teeth in the bathroom and pulled on her crochet green retro bikini in the pale early morning light, quietly closing the door behind her. She took her wired notebook and orange biro from her room and went down to the office.

She sat before the duck-egg blue Olivetti Lettera 32.

Lily? Chloe typed. She could just about read what she'd written in the half-light. The sun would be rising soon. The typewriter clattered in response, fast.

it won't hurt you

Lily was here, back in the office, but her sentence was baffling at first, and then Chloe got it. The pig man in the forest, the beast.

The pig?

Nothing, with the keys still. Then Chloe had a horrible thought.

Will it hurt Janey? Chloe typed out, worried and cold.

Again the keys didn't move.

Lily please

But Chloe knew it was futile. Lily had been there for barely a minute and now she was gone. There was no feel of her in the air of the office now.

She thought of *don't go* from last week, back when Ari was still at the finca. She wondered again if Lily was fucking with her.

Chloe opened the glass doors out to the pool and stood on the patio. It was quiet and the sun was still low, bouncing faintly yellow light off the water in the pool. If the creature was still here it was in the forest, hiding. It didn't look any more threatening than last night, but she still thought she should warn Janey and Rachel.

Something rattled in the kitchen, a tang of cutlery.

'Okay hun, I'll be careful,' Chloe said out loud, to Lily.

Chloe was about to go upstairs when she suddenly felt very tired, almost to the point of fainting. It was like a fast wave of exhaustion and she closed her eyes for a second and almost fell, dizzy and losing her balance. There were starbursts of very bright light behind her eyes and her stomach felt low. She had a deep sense of paranoia, of threat. It was cold to her bones.

Lily had doped her.

Janey came down and saw Chloe sleeping on the leather sofa in the lounge. She was wearing her retro bikini and looked super cute. Janey decided not to wake her and let her have her early siesta.

Chloe woke with a start and both Janey and Rachel were out by the pool, chilling in the sun. It was late, Chloe thought.

She had to warn the girls.

She stood but her legs were weak like jelly, and she had a hard cramp in her left foot. She sat back down with her head floating, stretching out her leg, holding her toes.

More of the cutlery was gently rattling in the kitchen, warning her.

don't go

Chloe stood again gingerly. She felt better on her feet now, the fog in her head lifting and clearing. Chloe went out to the patio and Janey was smiling.

‘You okay hun? I left you to doze,’ Janey said.

‘Yeah, I feel a bit spacey.’

She had to warn her.

Rachel was sunbathing on the far side of the pool in her blue high waist Dior bikini, wearing her black sunglasses and listening to her Sony personal tape player, lost. She had a reefer on the low wooden table by her sun lounger, as yet unlit. Her disposable pink plastic lighter was by the ashtray.

A bottle of Red Estrella beer growing tepid in the sun, less than half-full.

‘Later I thought we’d-’

The alarm began screaming high and the beast was suddenly there, and it weren’t piglike in the least.

Chloe saw it, real and Bosch-like, in bright sunlight. She randomly thought of Blake’s *The Ghost of a Flea*, a monster.

It was the Minotaur, with the head of a bull. Black fur.

Rachel was out there in the open, on the far side of the pool, wearing her headphones and Gucci sunglasses.

It couldn’t be real.

It felt like long seconds before the attack but it was probably nearly instant.

Rachel had only turned her head before the Minotaur was on her. It was a born predator and it was fast and violent, brutal. Rachel’s arms and legs were pulled by claws and teeth into unnatural positions while she was still flailing and the beast, close to seven foot tall, bit hard on her slender neck until she was twitching and prone.

It began to eat her.

Chloe, revolted and in despair, hoped feverishly she was dead.

Rachel.

It was all so fast, barely a couple of seconds, and Janey had run past her and into the finca. Chloe followed her in

and shut the glass doors, pulling down the metal lever that locked the patio doors. It was a panic response out of nowhere and it saved her.

The oscillating alarm was howling, loud and filling the air.

Chloe shouted out for Janey, having no idea where she'd ran to in the finca.

Chloe fell back scrambling on her hands and heels, losing a sandal.

Then she saw the Minotaur, hunched over and sniffing at the glass. It was huge and wasn't naturally bipedal but something halfway, apelike.

She thought wildly of Guy the gorilla at London Zoo, the large beloved figure benign behind dirty translucent plastic.

It looked at her, but Chloe didn't want to look back. It was the thing that'd brutally torn at Rachel, ate at Rachel.

Chloe had a sense that the creature was female, and her erect two-inch cock might be more of a clitoris.

She touched it with her very anthropoid left hand, only partly clawed. There was a hint of ginger in the black fur.

She had a hunk of meat in her other hand that she held in the air regularly like a trophy. The black fur on her bull-like face was thick and sticky with blood.

She had eyes like Guy.

Fuck you, bitch.

Chloe wiped her face with her hand, not realising she was crying.

The beast suddenly butted the glass, hard and probing, once. It appeared to reason it wasn't allowed in.

The Minotaur left a dirty black red daub on the glass, a smear of blood and hair. Not her hair.

Chloe shouted out for Janey again, but the undulating noise from the alarm was close to deafening, and Chloe didn't have the code to shut it off.

Chloe went into the kitchen, looking for the largest knife she could find. It'd probably be useless and she'd be torn apart like Rachel and eaten. It would be best if it was fast, like for Rachel. She'd had no warning of her fate.

There were a few twitches from the pulled out and open cutlery drawer but the Goat Girl was irrelevant now. Fuck her. Lily knew what was coming and could've saved Rachel.

The alarm cut off, which was a relief. The finca was silent now and Chloe called out for Janey.

She'd be hiding and couldn't hear her.

She had to find Janey.

Chloe was soon frantically searching the finca for her. She called out and then called out again, louder. Chloe was trying not to panic, her stomach hollow and the fear growing like a black cancer. She was shouting, her voice shrill, and breaking as her dry throat grew sore. Chloe was

alone and the *Finca El Oso Salvaje* was glacially silent apart from her own breathing.

Chloe waited for a long ten minutes before shakily reading the instructions Rachel had left by the fridge and calling 112. The phone was suddenly working now, with a recognisable dial tone. She was put through to the Policia Municipal.

Chloe was crying, but over the language barrier she was told the police in Pollença were already on their way. They were bought and paid for by Harry.

The alarm phone line to the local police station, just like Rachel had said.

The police finally came a few minutes later, a young and English speaking officer, his creased unironed blue shirt open at the neck, the dark uniform loose and casual.

The beast appeared to be gone, hiding again.

Was it ever there, or was it Lily?

No, it didn't make sense.

The cop wore a fierce cologne and had a black gun low at his waist in hard black leather. He said his name was Juan, and Chloe tried to explain what was happening. He kept her in the finca while his partner, an older police officer, grizzled and smelling of ripe morning alcohol, went outside to the patio.

She didn't trust the young five-o or his older colleague out by the pool. It felt like there was a conspiracy going on, a pact or something, but it was irrational.

Chloe could just about see the remains of Rachel by the pool, and it was heartbreaking and surreal.

There was a shattered red and white ribcage, a few nubs of flesh and bone and a broken head closer to a skull.

Strangely most of a forearm and a hand had been left untouched. Her left hand. The blood had been licked at and that suggested wolves. She heard it from the shaking older cop on his radio.

Lobos.

A few more officers were sent to the finca, and they searched the villa, and the forest.

There was no sign of Janey.

Chloe had been allowed to pack but wasn't chaperoned, and they clearly weren't treating the finca as a crime scene. She had the pages from the Olivetti typewriter and the photos Rachel had taken with her polaroid instant camera.

She took some of Janey's stuff. None of it was proof of anything other than being a thing for her.

'Mierda rara,' Chloe heard a cop say.

Juan was waiting, and drove her to a hotel in Pollença.

She spent a day sleeping, in shock and near catatonic, unable to leave her hotel room or do anything. There'd be other people.

She'd showered twice, and barely ate.

Chloe had left Janey behind.

The white sheets were like a bunker, and she slept with a light on and the curtains open.

After less than forty-eight hours Chloe was told there was no reason for her to stay and she was free to go.

They'd never even taken her passport.

Her one interview had been perfunctory and over in less than twenty minutes.

Had they found Janey? Chloe argued. Nothing else was of any significance, at least for her.

She finally said they'd been attacked by predators and she didn't know what they were. She didn't see anything. The detective was suggesting a wolf pack, and the back gate had been left open.

She said Janey had run into the finca and then they'd hid, while Chloe had lost Janey. It was nearly true but for the Minotaur, but then they'd think she was crazy.

'Lo siento,' the detective said respectfully.

Chloe flew out early on the Thursday, the first day there was a seat available.

The case was passed to the *Policía Nacional* but no trace of Janey was ever found. Chloe had the feeling there'd been no real investigation after they found drugs and porn all over the finca, but not Janey's passport. Janey's suitcase and most of her clothing was still there.

They'd found a shotgun in the larder and it'd been fired recently, but there were no signs of a violent struggle, and a shotgun couldn't explain the injuries to Rachel Fournier.

A *juez de instrucción*, the coroner, recorded a *no probado* verdict, open. It was judged to be an extraordinary animal attack, though never explicitly so in writing, and the remains of Rachel Fournier were released to her family.

Harry put the Finca El Oso Salvaje up for sale in early 1990.

The Grave Maurice

Mon, May 6, 1991

In 1989 Chloe left Psion and went freelance, and at first worked for BT on something called the Merlin Tonto, chasing crusty bugs in the ICL/QL microdrive code. Grunt work, Chloe knew, but it took her mind off Janey, and was better than laying in bed desolate and crying.

She'd been silent on the flight back from Spain, controlling her grief with an obstinate will, and didn't cry again until she was in private, back in Bow.

She finished the Didion in short spurts, laying in bed at night, awake with her mind racing and unable to concentrate. Chloe realised later in her grief that she'd casually stolen the paperback from the finca, and it bothered her.

But every now and then, even in her bleak and low sad nadirs, Chloe would have a surge of euphoria. She'd survived the finca, and she'd been the Final Girl.

She realised it was primal and tried not to feel guilty. Other than that, she spent most of her days in a low level depression, her new normal.

Chloe knew Janey wouldn't have left her, not as the Policía Nacional were suggesting. But she was sure Janey was dead and there was no hope.

She'd been prescribed sleeping pills and while they did work her brain was like sludge for most of the following morning. Her doctor had also suggested an anti-depressant but Chloe wasn't going there. She wanted to feel the pain, otherwise it wouldn't be real.

She found a few glasses of wine, a spliff and a single pill, half her dosage, was just about okey-dokey. It killed most of her nightmares and the visions in the dark.

Ari had returned to Bow but had left all her stuff, including her clothing. Her keys were in the kitchen. Chloe could feel her rage and disgust.

Chloe had put her all her clothes into black bin bags and stored them in a spare room, along with her beloved kitchen knife and her Italian cast iron garlic press. Ari's furniture was still in the garage. They hadn't lived together for very long.

She'd wait but eventually she'd have to get rid of it all.

Chloe had gone back to Psion and was there but not there, and the clatter of her colleagues writing code were like short bursts of worn teeth. It was suggested she take extended leave with a phased gentle return, but Chloe said

no. She was apologetic but had to work alone from now on in. She couldn't lead a team, and could barely look after herself. She tried to explain the damage.

Now Chloe was working as a contractor on a bespoke encryption algorithm for the Deutsche Frankfurt Bank, something stronger than DES, and the money was crazy. She'd heard about early research on regular patterns in large primes, suggesting they might not be as randomly distributed as theorists had at first thought. Very large prime numbers, in the tens of millions, were in the void then, like a slippery djinni.

She'd had her first tattoo, a nautical sailer star on the inside of her left wrist, just like Ari. She was very careful on what she wanted, and it hurt at the tattoo parlour in Dalston refreshingly.

Her hair was a shorter, enraged yet soft Vidal Sassoon-ish pixie cut. Mostly she wore a battered vintage black leather biker jacket she'd bought in Kensington Market. She was edging towards a look that was her, still feminine but with a strong hint of something else.

On leaving the finca Chloe had packed the balled pair of tan tights, the retro bright blue panties and Janey's beige plastic vibrator. They had emotional clout, things Janey liked and got off on. Chloe kept it all in her suitcase, along with one of Janey's white bikinis and some of her

underwear, the retro Tate-ish crochet lime green bikini, the photos Rachel'd shot with her Polaroid SX-70, and the Olivetti Lettera 32 pages.

She'd also taken the VHS tape with Harry exploiting the girl, Agnes.

Where was she now?

Later, Chloe digitalised the video tape to H.261 at the lowest level of compression, and it took well over an hour on her beefy Compaq Deskpro 386/33 with its huge RAM, the fan roaring like a lion.

Antonio Alfonso had called Chloe, he was the only detective in the *Policía Nacional* who'd speak to her now.

He'd told her on an earlier call that Ari wasn't in London. She'd made a short call to a colleague at Credit Berlin saying she wouldn't be coming back. Her bank accounts had been closed, but as far as Antonio could see she'd never left Mallorca. Her hire car was found the day after Chloe flew out, a mile from the finca.

Ari hadn't left Mallorca.

Or she had, and was living in Beirut or whatever. She'd fled a husband before.

Antonio thought there was something bad in San Clare and there was weird shit going on with the *Policía Municipal*. He knew they didn't do well by Janey, or Ari.

The theory in Palma was that with Janey, Ari and Chloe being *homosexuales* Ari and Janey had run off together. It was a love triangle, and Janey and Ari had taken their passports. It was crazy shit but normal on a tourist island where the locals held their tongues and went to church.

The coroner in Palma had concluded that Rachel's death was *indeterminado*, and wolves were obliquely and cloudily suggested. There was no wild wolf or bear populations on Mallorca, as far as anyone knew. There'd been the occasional insurance claim of wolves attacking livestock but they were widely seen as bogus, a con.

There were other bestial incidents at and around San Clare that month but few locals were willing to say anything beyond a shrug. It was the *Voluntad de Dios*, the Will of God.

It was an unfortunate coincidence that was left with the local authorities.

Antonio's big issue past the wolf *mierda* was that neither Janey Clark or Ari Fischer were on the manifest of any flight back to London. The Inspector's theory was Son Sant Joan airport could be chaotic at the start of the season. Well, yeah, Antonio said, but it'd be rare for those two particular passports not to be checked.

It was another coincidence.

Antonio was ignored. He knew he had a reputation of being difficult, and it'd been stated more than once he was

only still there because of the union. Either way, there was no evidence of a crime, and the Inspector said they had other, more pressing cases.

He'd started by telling Chloe that HFOU Holdings GIB, a company based in Gibraltar but a vehicle for Harry Fournier, had yet to sell the finca. He didn't think it was genuinely for sale.

Antonio had noticed the Rubio family were suddenly back, tending the pool and watering the plants and cacti.

He told her that Fournier had a solid alibi for the disappearance of Janey. He was in London.

'He's a slippery *cabrón*, this fucking pig,' Antonio said. He was being left alone as he was close to retiring, but could only push it so far. Harry was a big fish, and he'd lost a daughter.

Antonio was sure Harry was behind everything, a degenerate.

'There's been accusations for years, but no charges. People, both *fiscales* and police, have been paid off,' Antonio stated.

Chloe said she was hugely grateful and he said he wouldn't be doing it if there was any chance he'd lose his pension.

Chloe thanked him again.

She thought it was more than he let on. He'd seen a photo of Janey, smiling and posing in a white bikini. It were taken by Rachel with her Polaroid instant camera, and Janey looked younger in the soft emulsion blur. Antonio had let slip he had a daughter.

In a strange juxtaposition Lily was gone and forgotten as soon as Chloe had lost Janey. The Goat Girl didn't register now. She was way off in the past.

Chloe had created an imaginary life, a world with Janey, where they were living and loving together, and she could dive in and out of these real or newly invented memories at will. They weren't sugarcoated but authentic, and she'd often picture them arguing.

She'd lose herself in Janeyland while she was walking or exercising.

Chloe would pull out the suitcase and lay on the bed with Janey's white bikini or the tights, which she'd often put on, but only with Janey's underwear or the nylon blue panties. She'd use the beige plastic vibrator and the imaginary Janey would encourage her, saying how horny it was to watch.

Chloe had replaced the two C batteries in the vibrator more than once but kept the flat sacred Sanyo originals in the suitcase.

Two months later Chloe cleared out the garage and gave Ari's furniture to charity, along with her clothing.

Chloe kept a few small things.

Thu, May 23, 1991

Chloe first met Lou at a coffee shop on Poultry in the City of London, just after the lunch hour rush. Chloe was on her way to what'd probably be her last visit to Deutsche Frankfurt, and Lou had mistakenly taken Chloe's cappuccino rather than her own latte, she'd seen the scrawled black marker on the beige paper beaker for Clo as Lou.

She was young and very pretty in tight grey and white Lycra, and sweaty with her mid length blonde hair tied back. Lou walked out the door and Chloe caught up with her on the street, saying she'd taken the wrong coffee.

Chloe was sure she'd seen her before but didn't know where. She really was very beautiful.

'Oh God. Sorry. I don't wear my glasses when I'm running,' Lou said.

'It's okay.'

Lou apologised again, smiling, and Chloe smiled back.

Chloe took a shot, asking if she could take her out to lunch. It wasn't so outlandish, she could see how Lou was looking at her. Never the less, Lou paused before saying she was a student at Central Saint Martins, and had an

afternoon lecture tomorrow. Rather than lunch they could go for a drink once she was done. She knew a place, a pub in the West End, the Rose & Crown.

‘Is five okay?’

Chloe said she was looking forward to it. She had one of her wire-bound notebooks and they exchanged phone numbers clumsily, each glancing at the other, and then Chloe said she had to go.

Chloe was trying to stay nonchalant as Lou ran off, with Lou turning briefly to look back at her.

Chloe went to her meeting which was largely technical, with Chloe having to run through her code and explain how a block cipher with her primes shift idea worked, and how it would confuse any back engineering. She wasn’t sure if it was a practical solution, having seen the firm’s existing infrastructure. She’d delivered her algorithm, written in C++ and extensively documented, and the bank could roll it out later or never. Either way, she’d be getting paid.

She was on her game but thought of Lou every now and again.

It started slowly, like a vine growing into the light.

There was a power cut in Mile End in East London that closed the tube station for most of a day, with London Electricity and the National Grid struggling to find the

fault. A few days later a power-out in Poplar lasted for three hours. Electric trips had fried for no reason in Aldgate but a failsafe circuit had kept the electricity running.

It was barely noticed by the national press and Chloe read about it in the East London Advertiser.

Fri, May 24, 1991

Chloe arrived at the Rose & Crown early. It was a pub just off the Charing Cross Road, narrow and a little scruffy at the edges but its age gave it a certain allure. Somber edges of red and brown were the predominant colours, the lighting low. It was clearly popular with students and most were cloistered in small groups standing around the bar, smoking.

Chloe saw Lou in a cluster of people. She was laughing in a unadorned black shift dress under a white jean jacket. Blue Chuck Taylor All Star trainers and red lipstick, her blonde hair a tousled bob. She saw Chloe and smiled. Chloe thought she was amazingly pretty and stood out like a beacon, kinetic. She was clearly in a tight crew of student comrades, just like Chloe had been with Janey and Rachel.

Chloe stood in her dark blue Levi's and a plain white t-shirt under her vintage black leather biker jacket. She wore eyeliner and pale lipstick. It was a brand new white t-shirt.

‘Hey. Can I get you a drink?’

Chloe said she'd have a pint of Heineken, and waited uncomfortably while Lou was at the bar. A few of Lou's crowd were glancing at her, not being hostile but not being very congenial either.

Chloe found later it was first date with a girl, and they were being protective and ill at ease rather than chilly. Lou gave Chloe her pint and said they'd find somewhere to sit.

They sat at a table with worn red leather seating along the wall, with Chloe facing Lou on a stool. She took off her black biker jacket and with the ambient noise they were as private as you could be at the Rose & Crown. They had to lean in to hear each other.

She told Chloe she was born and still lived in Stepney Green, with her parents. Lou said she was twenty and in her second year at Saint Martins, studying fashion and design. She liked to run, obviously. Chloe stated she didn't actually work in the City, but was a freelance software engineer.

'I was only dancing with the devil.'

'Thank God for that,' Lou said, smiling.

Lou said she'd never done this before, not saying outright they were on a date.

'It's okay,' Chloe said. She was about to say we'll just see how it goes, but that was probably too far.

Lou was smiling but she was clearly nervous and skittish. It wasn't that Chloe was confident and they were sort of circling each other in a mating bird-like dance.

Chloe said she was twenty-eight and Lou didn't react, negatively or otherwise. Chloe had worried the age difference could be an issue.

Chloe stood and went to the bar, a Heineken for her and a gin and tonic for Lou. They'd been drinking fast. It was probably the gin kicking in but Lou began to chill, and they were talking easier now and laughing.

The crowd began to thin out at around eight, and a few people came over and said goodnight. One girl winked at Lou. There was more space they were sitting together on the red leather bench, close.

Lou was far more sporty than Chloe and her musical tastes were geared to rave and Chicago house, but they at least both liked reggae. Punk was a retro thing for Lou.

But then Lou confessed she liked classic Hollywood, and the *Sweet Smell of Success* was probably her favourite movie. Chloe countered with Stanley Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove*, and Lou touched Chloe's bare forearm. Her fingers were ridiculously soft, and Chloe thought of kissing those red lips and her face, stroking that perfect hair.

Lou was clearly intelligent but mostly she was optimistic, despite her cynical taste in vintage film. She smiled and

laughed often. There could be life after Janey, Chloe thought. Chloe decided there and then she wanted to be optimistic, and it was surprisingly refreshing, freeing.

Lou liked David Bowie, but who didn't?

'And *Casablanca*,' Lou said. That was more like her, Chloe thought, a sort of positive vibe with a strong anti-existentialist message.

'Kiss Me Deadly,' Chloe retorted.

'*I haven't seen it*,' Lou said.

'Oh God, you should. I have it on video,' Chloe replied. She was being careful, not wanting to come on too strong.

'I could watch it with you, if that's okay, if it's what you want,' Lou said, low.

She wasn't being coy, Chloe thought.

It was crazy that she worried Chloe wouldn't want to see her again. Chloe wanted to hold her tight and merge into her, to eat her alive.

'I'd love you to watch it with you,' Chloe said. 'I warn you though, it doesn't have a happy ending.'

They kissed on their walk to the District Line station, out of the way and where no one would see them, and Lou was smiling but also apprehensive. Chloe understood, and their first kiss was wonderful, heartbreaking and pure.

Tue, May 28, 1991

Chloe took Lou to the Tate Gallery on Millbank. Lou had been to the V&A more than once but never the Tate. Chloe showed her the Francis Bacons, and the Henry Moore sculptures.

They walked along the river in the sun before going to lunch.

Chloe invited her back to Bow, but Lou was soon apologising.

‘I want to, but I’m not ready yet.’ Lou tried to explain how it’d be a big thing for her, and how there was loads of people at Saint Martins who were openly queer and no one cared, but they were all boys. It was all so worrying and different for her, a huge change. She wasn’t even sure if she was gay.

‘Sorry, but it has to feel right.’

Lou said she thought about her all the time and couldn’t concentrate on her work. She was apologising again.

‘It’s okay hun, I get it. I can wait,’ Chloe said.

Chloe had been offered a new contract by Deutsche Frankfurt, to update and secure their login code. An unspecified bank in Hamburg had been hacked via their in-house, internal sign in and Frankfurt wanted to be *kugelsicher*, bulletproof.

Mon, Jun 3, 1991

Chloe and Lou went for lunch near Saint Martins, with Lou having an hour. They ended up kissing for a wild ten minutes in a toilet stall, pressing against each other.

Fri, Jun 7, 1991

Chloe met Lou after a lecture and they went to the Rose & Crown again, and Lou introduced her to a few of her friends. Chloe was open and cordial, trying hard for Lou and smiling.

Chloe had struggled with social interaction post the finca, something that was once so natural to her and easy.

Lou whispered in her ear that she had her toothbrush in her bag.

Lou had told her she'd only ever slept with her boyfriend, and they'd split up close to a year ago. They were young and she was in love.

How did the stupid fuck let her go?

Chloe always knew she'd have to take the lead and that was fine.

'It'll be okay, and we'll go as slow as you want. It can be whatever you want.'

Lou was at least smiling now, albeit cautiously.

'It'll be okay,' Chloe insisted again.

'Okay,' Lou retorted softly.

They were both eager to leave but had another drink, after Chloe ordered a black cab over the bar to Bow. It'd be a half-hour.

Lou got into bed in her new black lacy underwear and Chloe thought she was perfect, like a trembling angel.

She was emotional and cried later while apologising, and Chloe held her, kissing her wet face.

Lou couldn't wait to leave in the morning, and Chloe knew she'd have to give her a ton of space.

Mon, Jun 17, 1991

Lou hadn't called her and it felt like a clear rejection, but Chloe couldn't let it go, the feel of her soft skin, how she'd come so quietly while shuddering, holding it all in. It'd been so lecherous and exciting.

Lou either realised she wasn't gay and the whole experience was mortifying, or she was too frightened to go any further. Or Lou just didn't like her, Chloe thought ruefully. It could be that.

The day after Chloe had a raging nightmare of the Goat Girl.

They were back at the finca, in Janey's bed, the sheets finely cotton white. Chloe's hands and feet were tied apart and she was gagged, while Lily showed her cock to her, lubing it blatantly. The whole feeling of being there again and so vulnerable was wildly intoxicating.

Lily slid inside her.

The Goat Girl was facing her, whitely missionary and silent. Chloe tried but Lily wouldn't look her in the eye. The Goat Girl came inside her, fast like a boy, and Lily had left her frustrated and still bound.

Chloe woke with her hands free and used her vibrator to finish. It was all nasty and obscene and Chloe felt dirty.

The Goat Girl was here, in Bow, and Chloe was being harshly punished for sleeping with Lou. Chloe had seduced her up to a point, and she thought it might all be in her head, a manifestation of her guilt.

And Janey and Rachel was her fault. Rachel would've been safe in the finca, and possibly Janey too.

It was growing light, and it'd be a clear bright morning.

Tue, Jun 18, 1991

Chloe went out to search for a manual typewriter.

She bought a charcoal grey Olympia SM9, finding it in a second-hand shop on Bow Road. The typewriter was dated on the attached label as 1971, and in full working order. No case.

It was vogueish enough but not as elegant as Harry's duck-egg blue Olivetti Lettera 32, but it'd do the job. She put it in her office and fed in a white sheet of printer paper. It was thin and not really suited for a typewriter, but Chloe supposed a touch of modernity wouldn't be an issue.

Lily? Chloe typed, and waited.

Nothing.

There was no feel of Lily being in the office, nothing of that slight tightening in the air.

She'd wait. Chloe turned and booted up her Compaq Deskpro PC. She had work to do, the login gig for Deutsche Frankfurt.

Chloe saw the spate of big cat sightings in East London as the sort of kitsch tabloid nonsense that'd be gone in a fortnight. It was clearly absurdist.

A woman with her identity obscured gave an interview to the BBC on Newsnight, claiming she'd been stalked by a large predatory cat in Hoxton. It was late at night and the cat, large with dark fur, silently hid and moved using the parked cars for cover.

The tone of the broadcast was off somehow, Chloe thought, like there was something being left unsaid.

Thu, Jun 20, 1991

There was nothing on Chloe's Olympia typewriter. The page was blank and pristinely white, unsullied.

Lily wasn't here in Bow, Chloe thought. It was just her and her guilt. Lily was in Spain, in the past.

Chloe had so wanted Lou to call but that wasn't going to happen now, it'd been too long.

Chloe had convinced herself she was better off alone. It was her happy space and she was free to be with Janey in her head whenever she wanted. Her Janey would be there

forever, smiling and never aging. Chloe would grow old with her.

Antonio from the *Policía Nacional* called and told her he was retiring in a week.

‘Is it what you want?’

‘I could stay on but a few people might make life difficult. *Es lo que es*. It is what it is.’

Chloe could almost hear the detective shrug over the analogue wire.

Chloe said she was sorry.

‘Don’t be. I have a good pension and Isabel is *lleno de alegría*, happy to be moving out of the city. I bought a house in the *campestre*, rural,’ he said. Chloe knew Isabel was his wife and they had a daughter at university.

‘San Clare?’

‘*Mierda*, no,’ Antonio laughed, ‘near Sant Joan, where Isabel was raised. I have a few last things to say.’

Harry Fournier was involved in Janey’s disappearance, Antonio was sure. He was a predator. Harry was the beast, but he had no evidence.

Harry had a London office, half of a one storey floor of a building on Threadneedle Street. The office was rented through a shell company registered in Zurich. Harry had

left London months ago and Antonio had no idea where he was.

‘I still have nothing on Harry, and I can’t find Ari Fischer,’ he said.

‘Okay,’ Chloe said, thanking the ex-cop again.

Antonio took a breath. ‘I don’t think Janey ever left the finca.’

‘I don’t either.’ Chloe had the feeling they were fuelling a shared obsession with Janey.

‘Don’t go back,’ Antonio said.

‘I won’t, I swear,’ Chloe stated. She’d considered it and he wasn’t aware of the Goat Girl, Lily.

Antonio said he’d call after the move with his new phone number. Chloe thought he’d forget Janey and she wouldn’t hear from Antonio again. He’d be content growing olives or something and moving on. Chloe was happy for the guy.

Fri, Jul 26, 1991

Chloe was becoming more than finically okay, and she’d been recently signed to a recruitment agency on Fore Street, on the London Wall.

She’d been told she could get four or five short but very lucrative contracts a year with her expertise in encryption. It was a niche market for now but had a high predicted growth.

If so it wouldn't last forever, and a recognised standard would eventually emerge. Chloe paid a slightly higher contract fee for not being exclusive to the agency.

Chloe was also working on a low-level driver for the London office of a PC manufacturer based in Austin, Texas. She found assembly language tedious and couldn't get into the flow. The C language was like sailing on a clear blue ocean.

Chloe thought of Lou every now and again.

She now saw it as the great one night stand, and had almost forgot the crying, and how uncomfortable it was in the morning.

The imaginary Janey, always there, said how Lou was wrong for her.

'She didn't get you, hun,' Janey argued. 'It wasn't your fault.'

Janey liked to watch but implored Chloe not to forget her.

'That'll never happen,' Chloe swore. 'I'll never forget you.'

Chloe saw the Plaistow faun video tape on the BBC.

There'd been a ton of sightings of strange beasts in East London. It started as another tabloid story but slowly bled into the reputable broadsheets and the BBC.

It was ridiculous, Chloe thought, an early stupid season story and it wasn't even August.

A redtop newspaper had suggested it might be the return of Spring-heeled Jack, the Victorian folklore legend of a male, devil-like creature.

The tape was shot by a Granada Television crew, a freak accident. They were there to shoot background video for a feature on East London's emerging black hardcore scene, the forefather of jungle.

The tape showed two creatures that were apelike and crawling along the roof of a house in Plaistow. It was fuzzy but the tech people back in Manchester had done their best to enhance the low resolution video, shot at a distance.

They could be the children of the Minotaur, Chloe thought for all of a second.

No, it was fucking crazy.

A beefy-sounding Hoxton resident, who'd insisted on remaining nameless with his voice disguised electronically, gave a vivid description to the Telegraph newspaper and the BBC of beating off a creature with a baseball bat on the balcony of his high-rise council flat. It ran off hurt and squealing, leaving splashes of blood on the bare beige concrete.

The creature had the legs of a goat with harsh ginger black fur, with hairless ankles and hoofs. It's upper torso

was male and heavily muscular, bare. His face was thickly featured with a hint of the Neanderthal, and snub horns in its hair. It was short, probably no more than five feet tall.

Sat, Jul 27, 1991

It was soon identified as a faun, a half-human and half-goat creature from Greek and Roman mythology. There was also a suggestion of the Greek satyr, with the erect or semi-hard phallus.

Chloe felt cold to her bones when she read it in the Guardian, the broadsheet half folded on the District line. She'd walked to the nearest M&S and was taking the tube back with her shopping.

But it wasn't the Minotaur, these creatures were short and goatish, and it didn't make any sense; that was Spain and this is Bow in London.

Later that morning Lou came to her door.

Sat, Jul 27, 1991

Lou was standing at her front door, upset and close to tears.

She was in her running gear with her blonde hair tied back.

‘Hey,’ Chloe said, trying to be neutral, flat.

‘Can I come in?’

It’d been well over a month.

‘Yeah, of course,’ Chloe said.

Lou was wildly apologetic about not phoning her. Chloe had only called Lou the once, leaving a bland and inoffensive message, aware she lived with her parents.

‘It’s okay,’ Chloe said flatly. She made her tea with the Earl Grey teabags she’d bought for her.

Chloe could see that Lou was nervous if not close to aghast, shifting her legs while she sat at the oak table in the kitchen. She looked hot in her tight running gear.

‘I was scared but I couldn’t stop thinking of you,’ Lou said. ‘I’ve ran past here a dozen times, trying to gather the nerve to–’

‘It’s okay, you’re here now,’ Chloe said, cutting her off gently. ‘I don’t think I was that frightening.’

‘God, you are.’

Chloe sat opposite her. She smiled and tried not to look threatening or even confident. She wasn't sure how to look.

'It was wonderful,' Lou said. 'I loved being with you, you're wonderful. But it's a big thing, and it's confusing. It isn't that you're scary, but all of it is.'

Chloe was silently thrilled. Lou wanted to be with her. The other stuff they could get over, they'd work out it.

'I get it,' Chloe said, 'it's okay.'

'My father won't. He hates almost anything gay.'

'Hush, we can hide it if you want. You don't have to tell anyone,' Chloe said, 'or you can lie. I don't care. I won't be offended either way.'

Lou sipped at her tea, her hand shaking.

'It can just be us, here,' Chloe said. No one has to know anything.

'Okay,' Lou said softly.

'We'll keep it at your speed, hun. I won't push you,' Chloe declared.

'Okay,' Lou said softly.

Lou stood and sat next to Chloe, and they kissed. Chloe thought Lou's lips were sweet like acid strawberries. She dipped her tongue in and Lou all but sucked at her.

It was hot and she'd run that morning, and she'd smell truly of her with a whiff of her deodorant. Lou pulled her black hairband off and her mid length hair spilled out.

They spent the rest of the day in bed. Later Chloe cooked a Rachel-influenced curry she couldn't get quite right. Chloe hadn't thought of Rachel in a while.

Sun, Jul 28, 1991

They agreed it'd be casual at first, and they'd get together every few days. Chloe was open, saying that while everything was great and she really liked her, they should keep it low-key for now. Lou agreed, saying it was okay by her. She wasn't close to being ready to come out yet.

'I might only be queer for you,' Lou said.

'I fucking hope so,' Chloe laughed.

Lou was still worried about how her family would react if they found out.

Chloe's mother had moved to Kent while she was in her first year at Durham. Her father had left when Chloe was four, before she could even recall his presence or his smell.

Her mother was Catholic, and had become increasingly religious over the years. She said she was coming back to God, and now she went to church every Sunday and often during the week. Chloe's grandmother had died early of breast cancer, and her mother was sure it'd get her too.

Chloe had told her mother she was gay and her mother pretended to be nonchalant, but eighteen months later she

was still distant, and barely called her now. Chloe had to phone her first and it hurt.

‘They think I’ve been obsessing over a boy,’ Lou said, smiling in Chloe’s bed.

Tue, Aug 6, 1991

There was a picture of Janey on the mantelpiece, the Polaroid Rachel had taken of her at the finca, the one Antonio had seen. Chloe had caught Lou glancing at the photo more than once.

‘It’s okay, I’ll tell you about her if you want,’ Chloe said.

‘You don’t have to,’ Lou said.

‘It’s Janey, and it was all a bit weird,’ Chloe warned her.

Lou said she was okay with weird.

Chloe told her about the finca. She didn’t spare any details, how the *Finca El Oso Salvaje* belonged to Harry, Rachel’s father, the wild affair with Janey, the vibrator and the tights and the banging on the walls. The Goat Girl, don’t go, and seeing the *Loving Orgy* girl in the kitchen for a hazy instant and the zoo-ish, bestial odour. How Ari had left her and how she’d lost Janey.

She didn’t tell her of Rachel and how she’d been eaten by a fucking Minotaur. That’d be too much and too far.

Chloe asked Lou if she believed her, and Lou insisted she did, saying how sorry she was. Chloe looked her in the eye and could see she wasn't lying.

'Did you love Janey?' Lou said, low.

'Yeah, I think so,' Chloe said.

'Okay,' Lou said, looking away and blinking.

Thu, Aug 8, 1991

Lou came straight from Saint Martins at four in the afternoon, while Chloe was working. It was her last day of being evaluated, and school was out.

Lou didn't have a key. Chloe had never once thought of Lou moving in, even post-fucking with the hormones roaring.

'That thing with Janey,' Lou said. 'You wearing tights.'

Chloe said she didn't think she had any tights, but Lou said she bought a tan pair for her at M&S on Oxford St.

'Okay,' Chloe said, her breath shortening.

The tights play was hot. Lou was inventive and full of surprises, Chloe thought. She was spreading her wings.

Fri, Aug 16, 1991

Lou had gone away to Brighton for a long weekend with the people she'd met at Saint Martins and a few others. She'd be back on Monday.

‘Stay safe, darling,’ Chloe had said. Lou was still young.

Chloe went for a swim at Haggerston Baths and then went shopping in Hackney. She walked back to Bow, listening to a reggae tape on her Aiwa personal stereo, the volume rolled on full. She thought of Janey fingering her in the pool at the finca to *Sweet and Dandy* by The Maytals. They were smiling together in the cold water and the sun. It was almost how it happened but this version, Chloe’s Janeyland version, was canon now.

Chloe went to bed at ten.

She felt the soft female hand stroking the hair from her face while she was still half-asleep. It was Janey.

Chloe was wearing her Blondie yellow Vultures t-shirt and nothing else, and she vaguely sensed the hand on her neck moving to her shoulder. The windows were open and she heard a car drive past, arbitrary East London street noise.

She sensed a body laying on the bed with her, and a slight whiff of BO. Chloe dozily rolled over onto her back and a light finger traced her breasts though the cotton. Her mouth was half-open now and she wasn’t sure if she was awake. The white duvet had been pulled back and she felt fingers on her bare left hip, and then a hand on the inside of her knee. Chloe parted her legs. The fingers slid along her left thigh, teasing.

A finger and then two slid inside her. The bent fingers were moving and feeling and pushing and not thrusting like a cock. Her fingers hadn't been near her clit, and then she felt the weight of the girl that wasn't there shift until she was kneeling between her thighs. A wet tongue licked her for just a second causing Chloe to moan. Then it was wetly lapping and licking and tasting, and those expert fingers slipped back in, one oily wet and touching at her anus. A voice she thought was in her head asked in a breath if she could push it in a little, just a fraction, and Chloe nodded.

The tongue would lift away and or the fingers would stop moving, and she was edged until she was writhing. She had to beg before she was finally allowed to come, noisily.

Sat, Aug 17, 1991

Chloe slept in, hiding and not wanting to face something that was so confusing.

She went through her regular routine, going to the toilet and then carefully cleaning her teeth. She flossed for a dull minute in the mirror and then stepped into the shower, closing the sliding glass door behind her, all the while thinking of what had happened in bed last night.

Chloe waited all day on heat, she thought sardonically. She wanted to masturbate but held off.

She had a spliff and a beer or two to chill, and had tried to read but couldn't concentrate. She'd watched *Taxi Driver* and the first half of *A Clockwork Orange*. Then another reefer. She'd tried but she couldn't get lost.

She got into bed at ten, wearing her black La Perla bra she wore for Janey on their first night together, and the blue nylon panties under the tan tights. It was a lure shouting the past and the finca. She was stoned and thought the ghost might be Janey and not the Goat Girl. It felt more like Janey.

But Janey the ghost didn't show. It was frustrating and she fell asleep at around three, after pulling the panties and the tights down and off, leaving them in a rolled ball of eight at the foot of the bed.

Sun, Aug 18, 1991

Chloe woke, and put the sacred underwear back in the suitcase.

She was so sure it'd been Janey the night before.

Chloe used her vibrator and then showered. She'd clear her foolish head by spending the day working.

She was at her desk and heard a noise, a bang, in the kitchen. It was late morning and she thought it might be a burglar. It wouldn't be outlandish in Bow.

There was a shop on the East India Dock Road that sold fishing tackle and shotgun shells, and she'd bought a hunting knife with a four-inch blade. It had a heft and felt comforting, and hostile. She kept it under her side of the bed, close.

Chloe was careful now, post-finca.

She stood in the kitchen with the knife, and all the doors were locked and bolted. She briefly thought of the finca but again this was Bow, not Spain. Lily wasn't here. The old heating and the boiler would normally be the culprit of weird noises in the house but only the hot water was on.

It was all in her head. it wasn't the Goat Girl.

Lily and Janey were back in Spain.

Mon, Aug 19, 1991

The sun was out and Chloe thought she'd spend the day reading out in the garden, sober.

She had a gardener now, Eli, a retired guy who'd come over every four days or so, more in season. He'd designed the garden so it was his too. She wanted white as the standout colour and he was as good as his word. She paid Eli ten pounds a week and whatever it cost and slowly it grew as Jewish as Eli; he'd planted jasmine and other plants and flowers that wafted faintly of lemon and the Levant. The grass was flat and the loose borders were green and largely

white, but it had a feel of not being authentically English. Chloe had fallen in love with it.

There could be ghosts Eli had brought back from Eastern Europe, but the Goat Girl wasn't here.

Mon, Aug 19, 1991

Lou got back at just before five, looking scruffy and exhausted, blown. She could smell the ganja on her.

Lou promised she'd go to Bow first, and then to her parents in the morning. Chloe had made a beef ragu sauce with a ton of tomatoes, garlic and red wine, her favourite. Chloe was guessing that Lou wouldn't have eaten properly. She put the water on to boil for the pasta.

Lou raved how Brighton was so gay friendly it made her feel like coming out, and Chloe bit her tongue.

Lou stayed the night and they'd fucked hungrily, even though Lou needed a shower. Lou left first thing in the morning.

Chloe was making the bed and found a used paper tissue on the floor, where Lou had taken her clothes off.

Lou had said how she hated tissues and they made her feel dirty. There was a black smear of eyeliner and a trace of vivid red lipstick, while Lou went for a brighter and less obvious pink shade.

It made Chloe suspicious for all of a minute but she trusted Lou. She knew Lou was crazy about her and there was no way she'd ever cheat. It wasn't her.

But then the thought of Lou being high and loose and going off with another girl was wildly arousing.

Fuck, I'm getting so like Ari.

Tue, Aug 20, 1991

Chloe bought a strap-on from Eros on Frith St, a featureless bright pink rubber cock and not overly large, with a black harness. She had a sports shoulder bag for her illicit purchases and also bought poppers, a small bottle for three quid. Lou might like it.

A day later Chloe told Lou she had a surprise, and Lou nearly lost her mind. She loved Chloe wearing the strap-on, and the poppers.

Chloe imagined using the prosthetic cock on Janey, or Janey using it on her, forcing her to bottom like a fem girl.

Fri, Aug 30, 1991

Lou was staying over and they watched Hitchcock's *Psycho*, which bizarrely Lou hadn't seen. Chloe lit a reefer and Lou was giggling at first.

'God, he really hated her,' Lou said. She was referencing Janet Leigh as Marion Crane.

'Yeah, Hitch was weird,' Chloe said, 'but look at the photography, the framing of each shot. The work isn't the artist.'

Lou wasn't so sure.

They got to the shower scene and Chloe said it was all suggestion, you never see the knife penetrating the nude Marion Crane. Janet Leigh wasn't actually naked during the shooting of the scene, they used a body double.

'Look at the fear and pain, the lingering on her face. She's exposed and defenceless. It's a rape metaphor,' Lou argued.

'You could say that about any slasher,' Chloe insisted, '*Friday the 13th. Just Before Dawn.*'

'No, this is different and nastier.'

Sat, Aug 31, 1991

Chloe slept in and finally got up at nine, leaving Lou dozing in bed. The window was open with the fresh chill morning air roving in, and it was silent outside. Chloe pulled on some clothing and went out to buy fresh bagels.

Later she woke Lou with coffee and a lightly toasted bagel with butter. Chloe got back into bed and teased Lou while she ate. Chloe went down on her and post-orgasm Lou drifted off again, spent with her bagel half-eaten.

Chloe hadn't come and she liked the idea of waiting for Lou, the sweet ache, and how she'd be so horrified and regretful when she woke. It was very horny; Lou would be so eager to rectify for her sin. Chloe laid close to her, Lou's skin hot with the white sheet at her waist.

The sun was out but there was a cooling breeze so they went for a walk in Victoria Park. Chloe went to hold Lou's hand unconsciously but Lou gently pulled away, still reluctant to go public, even when there were so few people around.

Later Lou was quiet, and finally apologised.

'It's okay, hun,' Chloe said, half-smiling and teasing.

'Fuck you.'

'I'll be there when you're good with it, really.'

Lou went back to her parents at eight that evening.

Mon, Sep 2, 1991

Chloe had bought her copy of the Guardian, and it had a feature on the fauns in East London.

A senior officer with the Metropolitan Police in East London spoke off the record, saying the force was being inundated with reports of sightings and often stalkings, at least a third of which he thought were genuine.

A man was leaving a club in Dalston early in the morning and saw two bent figures who he at first thought were vagrants, and saw a hint of something gold, a can of Special Brew. It wasn't unusual to see people sleeping rough on the streets of Hackney.

But as he drew closer he saw they were naked but with dark fur below their waists, and they began to growl

aggressively, like apes. They had short horns. The guy thought they were hesitant of the yellow sodium-bright streetlights, and backed away fast, still trying to maintain eye contact.

‘They didn’t like the streetlights,’ he suggested.

It ate Rachel in the sun.

It was more likely they just didn’t want to be seen.

The fauns or satyrs were still feeling out their territory, as the Minotaur did at the finca while it was hiding behind the wall. They’d lived somewhere else and had to adjust to their newfangled urban world. The Minotaur had to adapt to being in the wild, in the forest.

It was all real, Chloe thought.

Thu, Sep 5, 1991

Lou stayed over in Bow. She’d been told that the Saint Martins building in Soho would be closing at five in the afternoon, with no exceptions. It wasn’t unusual.

Supermarkets and petrol stations had slowly begun to close earlier, mostly by an hour or so. It was a gentle contraction that few noticed at first.

The government was officially quiet and the silence held, but there were stirrings of discontent in the op-ed sections of the broadsheet press.

They'd laid in bed close and facing each other and Lou said she was worried about her parents. Her father worked for Tower Hamlets Council as an accountant and there was talk of redundancies. He'd been there for decades and Lou didn't know how they'd cope if he lost his job.

'Everything is getting so fucked up,' Lou said quietly.

'I know hun, but it'll all work out.'

There were large leathery black birds flying high over East London, and they were targeting pigeons and rats at night. It was said their wingspan was well over a yard and they looked almost prehistoric, with sparse, hard black feathers.

They'd pecked at and fought with London's hardened Hackney fox population, with the creatures largely backing off.

They were being seen as the root bird of gargoyle lore.

It was just another day now.

'You'll be okay here, darling, and we can look after your parents if we have to. But it won't come to that,' Chloe assured her.

Mon, Sep 9, 1991

Lou slept lightly and would be going back to Central Saint Martins in the morning.

Chloe heard a huge bang in the kitchen, so loud and corporal she could feel the wall angrily shiver.

It was so like the finca. Lou stirred but didn't wake.

Chloe walked down to the kitchen and the cutlery drawer was open, and she watched her knives and forks rattle as if they were alive and suffering.

Like in the finca that dreadful fucking morning.

And then they were still in an instant, and there was a light waft of BO left in the air.

Fuck.

There was no disbelief now, no edge within her psyche for doubt. Chloe didn't want to face it but Lily was here, living and present in her house. The Goat Girl and/or Chloe's id, the past and Janey and Rachel.

And the fauns or whatever were on the East End streets, waiting.

She wondered if Lou was safer here.

Fri, Sep 20, 1991

People in East London and beyond had begun panic buying.

Aspirin and paracetamol, tins of tomatoes and dried pasta, toilet rolls and flour were fast disappearing off the shelves. Chloe had beat the rush and her garage was filled with dry goods.

Chloe had bolt locks installed on her heavy front door, and she already had black Victorian iron railings on her first storey windows. The house was set back a few feet from the pavement, with steps to the front door and the basement. Heavier black iron railings enclosed the property. It was part of a terrace and there was no outside access to the garden.

Chloe also had the locks on the gate for the door and the garage replaced. It was expensive, being so high in demand.

The East End had gone to hell before, and the house was built in 1887 with that in mind. The preceding years to the construction of the house were filled with civil disorder and near riots, with the threat of burglary, assault and murder rising.

Middle class Victorian East London was tense.

There was a shift in faun and goat attacks at night, with people being hunted on the darker streets. A man was torn to pieces in Hornsey and another in Bethnal Green, which was too close.

Chloe had a modern burglar alarm installed and the cost was outrageous. She paid to be at the front of a long queue.

She'd begun withdrawing cash from her two accounts as she wasn't sure how long her branch would stay open, or even how long the banking infrastructure would last.

It had started in East London, on the river, but surely it would spread.

Chloe had a heavy safe installed in the basement flat she'd largely ignored since moving in, bolted to the foundations. She hid it behind a few wooden moving crates.

It wasn't really the fauns, the goat creatures, she was fearful of.

Lou was in Bow for most of the week, and Chloe wanted her to move in proper, the danger outside was becoming greater than the Goat Girl within. She thought she'd be able to control Lily.

But Lou couldn't leave her parents alone in Stepney Green.

Chloe wasn't sure if her house was safe but it was more sheltered and protected than a council flat.

‘They’d know I was gay,’ Lou said.

Lou was so scared of coming out, Chloe thought, even as East London was shrinking in.

Sun, Sep 29, 1991

There was a faun under every bed now, and in truth they were being seen often, even during the day.

A faun creature was shot dead by the police in Stepney on Globe Road, in front of several witnesses, at just after nine in the morning. The tube station was closed and there were sirens blazing. Legions of five-0 were on the scene in white vans within minutes, with a few police in white and orange biohazard suits and wrapping the half-goat thing fast in plastic.

The London Underground was barely running in the east of London, with the District, Central and Hammersmith & City line trains terminating at Liverpool Street station, with the drivers and staff refusing to work.

The food situation was so erratic there were reports that the government might be forced to introduce rationing. Chloe thought it was largely scaremongering, but rumours flew around East London like birds.

Mon, Oct 7, 1991

A teenage girl lost her lower arm and was only saved by her neighbours in Forest Gate. A group of incredibly brave women dragged her away, kicking out and shouting violently and swearing at the squatting faun beast.

The black market had begun to thrive, and Chloe half-knew a guy from the Red Lion, a pub near her house.

She wanted a gun. He'd said it'd be cash only, no jewellery or gold.

Later, a young guy in a blue adidas tracksuit showed up at her house and passed over a battered and peeling red sports bag. He gave her a half-nod and left.

Chloe opened the sports bag at the kitchen table and lifted out a brown cardboard box with a Colt logo. It was a stainless steel snubnose revolver with a dark wood grip held in Styrofoam.

At first she didn't want to touch it, fearing illogically it'd go off, and it took a few seconds before she lifted it out. The gun was achingly phallic but lighter than she was expecting.

There was a brown card saying it was a Colt Detective Special, 38 SPEC and giving the manufacturing date as 1974. The packaging came with a thin instruction booklet and cards proclaiming Handling the Handgun, Shooting

Suggestions and Special Instructions. It had a prepaid Business Reply Card for the National Rifle Association.

There was also a shoebox in the sports bag containing five boxes of .38 Special loads, the branding from the US.

The gun had cost Chloe over a grand. Market forces, Chloe thought. She didn't care.

Chloe was also thinking of buying a shotgun from the East India Dock Road.

Chloe realised a full petrol generator wouldn't work in Bow. It'd generate noise and attract attention.

She went for a portable folding fire pit stove, a gas stove and battery powered lights. She bought a ton of gas cartridges, batteries and sleeping bags. Chloe also bought a Red Cross medical emergency kit, wind-up lights and a hand crank radio with a solar panel. She stored the stuff in the otherwise disused basement flat.

She was close to becoming an East London survivalist.

Thu, Oct 10, 1991

The large supermarket chains, after putting a limit on essential purchases, were now closing their East London branches at four.

Chloe practiced in her garden, firing off a few shots with the Colt Detective Special. The kick wasn't as hard as she

was expecting, and the noise was more a roaring dull flat crack, but it was very loud and her ears were ringing.

Her garden was private and few of her neighbours could see anything, but it was super noisy. She didn't want anyone calling the police.

Tue, Oct 15, 1991

Things were moving faster than Chloe had expected, and the Guardian, the BBC and the Telegraph were reporting it all, often against the wishes of the establishment. The Guardian had even been threatened with prosecution for ignoring a D-notice.

A pack of fauns attacked a housing estate in Hackney, killing eight and injuring more than a dozen. It was the most frightening raid for the authorities, as the goatish creatures went from door to door, suggesting a level of planning and intelligence, hunting like chimpanzees and then hiding their kills to eat later.

A young black guy described seeing a faun devil, its ginger fur like an orangutan clotted and sticky with blood, feeding on a rip of entrails. It angrily caught his gaze and he was smart enough to run. He heard a strangely child-like cry or shriek over his shoulder but he managed to escape, hiding behind a cluster of tall aluminium rubbish bins at the foot of tower block, hoping it'd mask his scent.

His father was killed and left half-eaten in their flat.

The faun goats were gone before the police arrived, clearly recognising their sirens.

It was enough and she had to get Lou safe, to move her into Bow, but she was still a refusenik.

‘I can’t,’ she’d say.

Thu, Oct 17, 1991

Chloe had collected her shotgun from the fishing and tackle shop on the East India Dock Road. It was a secondhand Beretta Silver Pigeon, with four boxes of 12 gauge cartridges.

Lou had come to the house at the end of her early morning run, and told Chloe her parents were fleeing to Worthing on the south coast. A cousin lived there and they’d be safe. Her mother was terrified by the noises on the streets at night and was barely sleeping. She was drained and exhausted. It was enough.

Lou refused to go to Worthing, telling her parents she’d be staying in East London. There was a huge row but they couldn’t force her to leave. They accused her of staying for this boy they’d never met. Her mother was begging her.

Lou was crying as Chloe held her.

Even with all the shit going on she still hadn’t told her parents the truth.

‘I want to live here. If that’s still what you want,’ Lou said, dabbing at her eyes with a tissue, her mascara streaking and ruined.

‘God hun, of course I do,’ Chloe replied, stroking her tied-up blonde hair.

She’d book a taxi to bring Lou’s stuff from Stepney Green.

‘No, I’ll do it. They don’t know when they’re leaving yet.’

Chloe didn’t care. She’d have her Lou.

Mon, Oct 21, 1991

There was a scare of half-ape men in the north of the Lake District west of Rowrah, and dark sparrow-like birds were going feral and attacking mostly children in rural Bigrigg. Fathers were firing at the black birds in the air with shotguns. The Cumbria Constabulary threatened the local ringleaders with prosecution but were ignored. No arrests were made and the phenomenon, real or not, was over in a couple of days.

People were now fleeing East London, and many from London in general. Touts were selling train tickets at railway stations such as King's Cross and Paddington, and the airports were unseasonally busy.

There were other sightings now, of more exotic creatures than the fauns or goat men.

A beast that resembled a horned black boar walking upright, with strangely manlike and bare muscular arms, was witnessed at night walking the streets of Bethnal Green.

North Finchley saw a tree full of bird-like men, no bigger than sparrows, scuttling up branches and exploring the

bark for insects. They were aggressive and let out a high cry of hisses when approached.

They were finally burnt off the tree by Barnet council, with the creatures squealing and pleading. A council worker was caught on video vomiting heavily at the foot of a steel ladder.

Chloe wondered if the faun were like harbingers, the first infantry hitting an ill-prepared and disbelieving beach.

She wrote a sentence for Lily on the grey Olympia typewriter, not really expecting a response.

What's going on?

But the Olympia remained silent.

Chloe hadn't heard a word from Lou since the Saturday, and then she pitched up at her door in an aging red Toyota Celica hatchback. The Indian driver patiently helped her pull her stuff out of the care, while Chloe waited at the gate.

They put everything in the hall, and it was just a garish orange suitcase and a half dozen black bin bags. Chloe paid and gave the driver a fat tip, telling him to be careful.

'Fuck, I need a beer,' Lou said. Chloe was well stocked with beer and ganja.

They sat in the kitchen, and Lou drank her fridge-cold Red Stripe. Chloe lit a reefer, pulled and passed it to Lou.

Lou told her how her parents had left that morning, still pleading for her to come with them, her mother kissing her while she was crying.

Chloe said she was sorry and held Lou's hand.

Later they moved Lou's stuff in, and it was almost all clothing. She had a wooden box, and Chloe thought it'd be photographs and other keepsakes, jewellery. They put it in the bottom of the huge Victorian wardrobe that came with the house, so large and cavernous it must have been constructed where it sat.

Lou said she'd locked up the flat and might go back for some more stuff later. Chloe said it'd be fine, whatever she wanted, she had a ton of space.

They drank Red Stripe beer and Chloe lit another spliff while they watched *Double Indemnity*, a film noir from 1944 directed by Billy Wilder, and part written by Raymond Chandler. Lou hadn't read any Chandler, and Chloe thought she'd put that right. She flirted with her on the sofa and talked dirty and it all appeared to make Lou feel a little less sad.

Thu, Oct 24, 1991

A blur of huge sweeping figures had been sighted at night over Central London, angels within the blue black clouds.

The BBC footage, shot from the roof of Broadcasting House, was eerie but inconclusive.

There was talk of people seeing wild albino horses with blank white eyes, as if they were blind with cataracts. A few people attested they had the stub of a shot horn on their foreheads, like a rhino.

Lou was as semi-nonchalant as ever, worried but not truly frightened. She called her parents almost every other day, to be sure they were safe, and to tell her mother she was okay.

She's so confident that I'll protect her.

But then Lou hadn't witnessed Rachel being torn apart.

Tue, Nov 5, 1991

The first couple of weeks after Lou moved in were intimate and loved up, but Chloe was worried it wouldn't last.

It hadn't lasted with Ari.

The thing with Janey didn't have the chance to fade, the juncture being so short, a mere fortnight. She hoped given more time it might have had a chance at being something more real.

Lou was just as untidy as Janey, and Chloe silently held her tongue. She could live with it, get over it. Not getting

excited and compromising was the mature thing to do. She'd pick up stuff for her.

One night they'd watched Paddy Chayefsky's *Network* on video, with Chloe sitting on the sofa and Lou laying out, her head in Chloe's lap. Chloe thought she was prettiest girl she'd ever seen. She put her hand inside the waistband of Lou's Umbro shorts with the blue piping she'd loll around in, and Lou was giggling at first and then fell silent.

Chloe fingered her slowly until Lou was wet and writhing, and Chloe dribbled spit into her mouth. It drove Lou crazy.

Lou was proud of the peppery scrambled eggs on toast she'd begun cooking for their breakfast.

The fresh bread was Turkish and came from a corner shop close by. Lately Elif, the owner, had kept the door locked until he recognised a customer or could look them in the eye, clock the *göt delikleri*. Chloe knew he was smart to be so cautious.

That morning he saw Chloe and smiled. Elif had kept a bag of basmati rice aside for her, a thing she'd bought often. Chloe thanked Elif as if it was something she'd desperately wanted, even though she had bags of the rice in her garage. She bought the rice along with the bread, a copy of the Guardian and a pint of milk. Chloe asked if there was anything she could do anything for him.

‘I’m good, darling.’ There was more than an edge of cockney in his voice. He’d been here long before Chloe had bought her house in Bow.

‘Tell me if there’s anything you need. Really,’ Chloe said, and Elif insisted he was fine while thanking her profusely.

Chloe knew he was married with a teenage son, who Elif was proud of for doing so well in school, at least until now. His school, like so much else in London, had closed. He was now working with his father in the shop, a polite and very good looking boy. She hoped he’d be okay if he shacked up with a white girl, knowing the son probably would.

‘Trade is fucking stonking, and I’ll be fine,’ Elif said, laughing and showing her his baseball bat behind the counter.

‘Okay big dog,’ Chloe said leaving, and Elif was laughing again. He was real and emoted openly with his eyes.

‘Stay safe,’ he said, locking the door behind her and smiling through the glass. Stay safe had become a sort of mantra, and Chloe heard it everywhere, even from the chisel-faced and hard black market guys, cold.

She hoped he’d be okay.

Thu, Nov 7, 1991

Chloe woke with Lou, deep in the bone white duvet. There was a chill in the bedroom. Chloe went downstairs to turn

the heating on, low and for no longer than an hour. She knew Lou felt the cold. She'd been putting it off irrationally, as if it was her gas.

She cooked fried eggs she'd heavily seasoned with black pepper and a pinch of salt, and served the eggs on a crispy salad each with a half-slice of wheat toast. Salad was becoming an indulgence, and she'd dressed it with Italian olive oil and mustard. She brewed fresh coffee in her moka pot, having bought one post-finca.

Chloe carefully took their breakfast upstairs on a tray.

Lou was only half-awake, her eyes barely open on the white pillow.

'Morning darling,' Chloe said.

She saw a flash of light through the window in her peripheral vision. It wasn't strong but it was unusual and confusing. A second later the shock of wind hit, a thud of a wave that Chloe felt striking the house. There was a sudden cacophony of car and house alarms, loud and discordant. A baby or a cat crying.

'Wha-?' Lou said, groggily.

'I don't know, hun,' Chloe replied. She was frightened but couldn't let Lou see it.

Chloe pulled on some clothing and walked fast downstairs, turning on the radio in the kitchen. It was always tuned to BBC Radio 4 but now it was silent, with not

even a pre-recorded message saying they were having technical issues. Just dead air.

Thu, Nov 7, 1991

Chloe turned on the television. All the stations, including BBC1, were off-air.

There was another grinding flat noise in the distance, heavy and close to an echo. She heard the crack of roof tiles falling on the black tarmac of the street.

Chloe went out and opened her front door. A few other neighbours were standing outside their houses, some half-dressed. Chloe recognised one man by sight. He'd walk his annoyingly yapping dog past their house every morning.

They could see smoke rising to the east.

Another roaring crack, followed by a blast of dirty air. It tasted of concrete.

Then Lou was standing beside her, barefoot and wrapped in Chloe's white dressing gown.

'What is it?' Lou asked her.

Chloe shook her head.

'I don't know, hun,' Chloe said again.

There was a flash of light, a fire low in the rising smoke.

The dust was catching in Chloe's throat.

'Go inside,' Chloe told Lou, flat and insistent.

Lou went back in, and Chloe followed.

They left the radio and the television on, but there was nothing. Chloe had the startling realisation they were being isolated on purpose.

There should be static, not black and flat silence.

Chloe went upstairs to clean her teeth. She brought down the breakfast tray and emptied the cold eggs and hard toast into the bin. Lou had only pulled on a pair of socks and sat silently on the sofa. There were thin traces of grey concrete dust caught on her white cotton robe.

Chloe kissed her head, her blonde hair. She tried to hold Lou but she was cold and unresponsive. Lou was clearly terrified.

‘It’s okay darling,’ Chloe whispered in her ear, trying to be reassuring. It was a few minutes before Lou spoke.

‘Do you think it was an IRA bomb?’

‘No. I don’t know,’ Chloe responded. She’d thought of the IRA but it didn’t feel like any of the previous incidents. Chloe was ambivalent about the Irish struggle. The television and radio were off-air for a start, and it didn’t feel like the explosion of a car bomb.

It was over and Chloe asked Lou if she wanted coffee.

‘Yeah, okay,’ Lou said distantly.

Chloe was coughing again. She couldn’t get the dust out of her throat.

It took an hour before the radio burst into life.

Buildings in Central London and Canning Town to the east of London had been attacked. The BBC had no other real information, and were speculating that there could be hundreds if not thousands of fatalities.

BBC1 was now broadcasting from Television Centre in White City, to the west of Central London.

The first video film was broadcast.

It wasn't clear, with a blinding light that blurred everything, but something solid and hard within the moving cloud of light, a flash of a building being cut in half. Chloe realised with a start it was a high-rise tower block. She recognised the distinctive high-rise from seeing it on the A13 bypass in the passenger seat of Ari's car. Canning Town was full of council housing and was in the beginning of regeneration with new residential housing.

Later the BBC could confirm that the Fitzrovia area of Central London had been attacked, with four buildings being destroyed including the Post Office Tower, with scores of others suffering modest to severe damage. The rescue efforts of the police and fire services went on for days.

Lou had at last come back to life from her shocked torpor. They watched the coverage for hours as it bounced between BBC1 and BBC2. Chloe rolled a reefer.

People had been buying camcorders but it was early technology with a wild confusion of formats, with VHS, Beta SP, Hi8 and VHS-C and no emerging standard. Few were close to approaching broadcast quality.

They showed the angels as vastly huge creatures moving in a blur against a bright white light. There was a later video from Reuters that showed glistening leathery white skin and a flash of what could be a bat-like snout.

The angels flew back high into the sky and were gone.

A third of the surviving casualties were left with minor or more lasting eye damage due the blinding light of the angels. Four were left totally blind.

The clean up was expected to take months if not years, and the wearing of face masks in the City, along with the growing financial district of Canary Wharf and the newly opened One Canada Square, was being advised for the dust that still hung in the air.

People drifted back to work, and there were arrangements to use the tube and half-built stations as shelters if the angels hit the Isle of Dogs peninsula, and Bank station if they struck at the City.

Chloe thought she saw an angel later, a black dot passing in front of the sun.

Mon, Nov 11, 1991

There was noise outside on the street late at night, drunken shouting. It was four white men, probably in their late thirties.

They broke car windows with a baseball bat and the alarms were oscillating loudly, out of unison. They found almost nothing worth stealing. A neighbour who came out protesting was beaten and roughed up but it was cuts and bruises rather than anything serious. They didn't use the baseball bat.

It was frustration, a display of theft and vandalism out of anger. They were losing their jobs and struggling, scared and dangerous, and they'd get more frightening later, Chloe knew. They'd be protecting their families.

Chloe showed a nervous Lou her Colt Detective Special handgun, the clean metal caught in the yellow streetlight.

'I'll protect you, we'll be okay,' Chloe told her. She'd tell her about the Beretta Silver Pigeon shotgun later.

Chloe knew it'd get worse, but she didn't tell Lou that.

Tue, Nov 19, 1991

Chloe heard a military fighter jet flying loudly over East London, while Lou was sleeping.

There was a low rattle of cutlery in the kitchen. The Goat Girl was now more annoying than anything else.

'Fuck off,' she drawled, absently.

Lou got up and they decided against going for a walk. The fighting outside on Monday had unnerved Lou, and Chloe understood. Chloe'd had the full finca experience and this was Lou's first go around.

They'd go shopping on Thursday morning and get fresh vegetables and fruit, whatever they could find. Chloe had a chest freezer in the garage mostly full of frozen vegetables, but that was for later if things really went to shit.

Chloe cooked breakfast, and they didn't really have lunch, other than a banana or an apple. Chloe would read, and Lou would either read with her but mostly she'd watch television. They were showing a ton of classic movies on BBC1 during the day.

Thu, Nov 21, 1991

There were fewer stalls on Roman Road Market these days, and they had less fresh fruit and veg. Chloe and Lou would always get there early but everyone was wary after Canning Town.

Prices were noticeably rising but there wasn't any real price gouging, at least not yet. A few of the stalls were close to half bare, with very little canned food, rice or pasta. The supermarkets were worse.

The sun was shining and Lou appeared to be happy being out again with people. They held hands as they walked

through the crowd and Lou wasn't bothered by it now, and barely even noticed.

There were a couple of stalls selling Christmas decorations, strange beacons of wild hope.

They bought a bag of large salad tomatoes, that'd keep in the fridge, and fresh leeks.

Chloe had read that sea freight to the country was well down, along with lorries carrying fresh produce from Europe. The EU were pressurising the logistic companies but many of their drivers flatly refused to cross the Channel into Dover.

The East London beasts were becoming a thing.

Sat, Nov 23, 1991

Chloe had been teaching Lou chess, and she was promising but for the odd lapse of concentration. Lou beat her once in a wild flash of inspiration that Chloe wasn't even close to see coming.

Chloe went to the kitchen and started to make dinner at five, her near authentic carbonara, just eggs, black pepper and parmesan, with a splash of the pasta water. Chloe sinned by including garlic.

She'd bought books on regional Italian recipes, and it was Janey at the finca that'd encouraged her to start cooking.

Janey was always there with her in the kitchen.

They ate the pasta with red wine to the video of *Casablanca*. Thankfully there was little noise from outside to spook Lou.

Mon, Nov 25, 1991

The BBC reported that most of the private jets and helicopters situated at Heathrow or on private airfields around London were gone.

London City Airport was closed indefinitely.

For the wealthy London was now a weird haunted desert full of monsters.

‘I’d rather work in Iran,’ one managing director of a merchant bank was reported to have said.

Sat, Nov 30, 1991

It was the first really cold day of the year. The heating came on with the timer but they could still feel the chill in the air for an hour, the house didn't have great insulation.

It was growing light, and Chloe padding out in her bare feet from the bed and into the bathroom. She peed with the door open, a concentrated flow. She heard Lou stir.

'Clo?' Her voice was low and gauzy, half-asleep.

'In here,' Chloe called out.

She got back into bed and spooned Lou, interring her in the white cotton duvet. Chloe dozed and vaguely thought of doing bad things to Lou later.

They were sleeping in more now, often until ten or eleven. Chloe had never been a particularly early riser and eight to nine had been her par when she was working at Psion.

When she was alone she'd often sleep with the BBC World Service on low in the background, broadcasting overnight as a sort of verbalising white noise.

Chloe woke again with Lou running the shower. She heard the Goat Girl breathing heavily in the corner of the room, by the laundry basket. It was just a flash of Lily being

present and a guileful reminder. Chloe wondered if the Goat Girl was playing with their underwear.

It'd be something she'd do.

Chloe got out of bed and began straightening the duvet. Lou's pillow had fallen to the floor, and she put it back in place without a thought.

She pulled on her white Born a Bad Seed t-shirt and went down to make breakfast. There was the last of the fresh chives they'd bought at the market and Chloe was thinking of a French omelette thing with tarragon and spinach.

Sun, Dec 1, 1991

Chloe and Lou went out for a walk. They'd often go out for an hour or so, but were wary now of not straying too far from the house.

Chloe had her Colt 38 Detective Special in the right pocket of her Levi's. The handle jutted out but she wore her leather jacket and it didn't show.

She'd lost her fear of the gun now, and barely thought of it being there other than when it occasionally chafed against her groin.

Lou said it made her feel safe. Chloe had a suspicion the gun might turn Lou on.

Elif's shop was closed, with the worn and battered steel shutters bolted down. He was always open on a Sunday.

‘Fuck,’ Lou said.

‘He’s probably low on stock. He’s a trooper, he’ll be back.’

Lou looked at her, her blonde hair under the hoodie sticking out of her jacket.

‘He’ll be okay,’ Chloe stated. She wasn’t sure if she was convincing herself but Elif was a tough and together guy.

The air was dank and grey and Chloe thought it’d probably be raining again soon. She hated winter, the low grey London skies and the constant rain. Her plan was to hibernate with Lou until spring, hiding while the world went to shit. Her, Lou and the Goat Girl, Chloe thought sardonically.

They were walking under a long railway arch when Lou saw the faun in the near dark.

‘Clo,’ Lou said, the fear bright in her voice.

‘Fuck,’ Chloe muttered quietly. She’d seen the goat devil now. Chloe pulled Lou behind her.

The goat was well over fifty yards off in the distance, at the other end of the tunnel but out of the light.

They’d heard the fauns at night but this was the first time they’d seen a goat man, real and in the flesh.

It was half crouched in a ball as if it’d been caught sleeping. Chloe had always thought the fauns were pack creatures.

Had it been left behind?

Even given the distance Chloe could see it was vigorously masculine. His goat-like legs with covered in black ginger-hinted fur, and above the waist it was near human, albeit with an apelike gait.

‘The fucker’ll run off,’ Chloe predicted, but she was wrong.

Chloe saw it bend and sniff and then it was half running towards her and Lou, its cracked hardened hoofs initially sliding and slipping on the wet greasy road.

It let out a shrill high howl like a chimpanzee, echoing off the old Victorian brick.

Fuck, it was so fast.

Chloe pulled out the Colt revolver and braced, holding the gun out with her fingers entwined, and fired. A gut reaction, loud.

She’d hit his left shoulder and the goat faun yelled out and momentarily stumbled, but it soon regained its stride.

He was probably less than ten yards away now.

Chloe fired again, twice. The sound in the brick tunnel was like echoing loud roars.

The goat devil fell, the second bullet hitting the faun high on the left side of his forehead. The creature lay twitching on the black tarmac, his face in the gutter.

Chloe told a crying and frightened Lou to wait there, and Chloe gingerly walked up to the faun beast, the Colt raised.

The aberrant smell alone was incredible, like a market butcher at the end of a hot day. And there was piss in the brew somewhere.

The creature was still conscious and staring at her, though as Chloe grew closer she could see the stare was vacant. It appeared he couldn't focus, and if so it was a blessing.

His eyes were dark but weirdly anthropomorphic. The faun was at least partly human but the features were slightly off, and Chloe had heard all the half-goats were facially similar, male and female, as if they were related.

Chloe didn't want to look it in the eye.

There was blood flowing into his tangled dark hair from the head shot just below his left horn, running into the rain in the gutter.

Chloe put the gun close to the goat's head and pulled the trigger. The noise was an explosive crack, the bullet exiting his skull and ricocheting off the concrete of the curb with a loud high screech.

Chloe pulled back involuntary, her ears ringing.

There was a twitch and then the faun stopped moving.

Chloe went back to Lou and they walked fast out of the wet tunnel and back to the house. The police might be on their way and Chloe didn't want to lose her gun.

It felt like a sort of revenge for Rachel. Lou was quiet, saying she felt dirty. 'I'm going off for a bath.'

'I had to do it,' Chloe said. 'It wouldn't be right to just leave it there to die. It was the humane thing to do.'

It was an excuse, and both knew it.

'Okay,' Lou said.

Chloe was still excited and also brutally nonchalant, not caring.

It was a fucking faun, not a person.

She was getting on with cleaning and reloading the Colt Detective Special revolver. Chloe was aware of pulling high and hard to the right on pulling the trigger. It was her and not the gun and she'd have to practice and fuck the neighbours. Most were gone now anyway, ill-prepared and running.

She hadn't heard any police sirens even with the railway arch being only a few hundred yards away. Five-o weren't coming out in a hurry for mere gunfire.

Later they both chilled out with a spliff and red wine, close on the sofa. Lou said she was sorry for being so freaked out, and Chloe apologised for being so offhand. Lou wanted to talk, and Chloe not so much.

Chloe knew it'd been frightening for Lou but she'd had seen all this bad shit before, in Spain. But Lou was making

her worry about her lack of empathy for the half-goat faun, and how she'd done something so absurdly violent.

'It is what it is now.' Chloe said flatly. She was saying it for her as much as Lou.

'Okay,' Lou said reluctantly. 'But I had to watch you kill it.'

'I did it to protect you,' Chloe argued.

They were both silent for a few minutes, but still close. Chloe wasn't sure what else she could say. Lou didn't get it, or how they'd have to do things that were repulsive and/or selfish to survive.

'So you're the bad mother,' Lou said coyly, and now Chloe was confused.

Lou's disgust didn't last long, Chloe thought cynically, but it was a weird sea change and bewildering.

Lou leaned over and kissed her. It got heavy fast and they went to bed.

I'll be a better Final Girl this time. It won't be like the finca.
She'd save Lou.

Mon, Dec 2, 1991

Lou was being clingy but that was fine. It was alluring and Chloe liked being so loved and relied on. Janey was Janey and they knew each other for so long and so well, and they

had few illusions. They were in love but not unaware. Ari in contrast was often cold.

Lou would look at her like she was a goddess.

Still, last night had been very strange, Chloe thought. Lou could be in shock, she was very young. The hibernation thing wouldn't work unless they both recognised the threat and were honest with each other.

Their closing off from the world, their lock in, would almost certainly get worse and the danger would be people and scavengers rather than the half-goats, and they'd most likely be killed by something very non-supernatural.

She had to learn that killing a goat thing didn't matter. They might die for water, or for a few cans of tomatoes.

She hoped Lou would get it.

Chloe had been half-expecting a call from Antonio, the retired detective at the Policía Nacional. She thought he might be at least curious at what was going down in London, but it didn't happen.

He was getting on with his new life, Chloe figured. She was happy for Antonio, good on the guy.

Tue, Dec 3, 1991

Chloe woke before Lou and they were entangled under the white duvet. It was late, past eleven in the morning.

They were close and Lou's blonde hair was sweaty and caught on her face, and Chloe brushed it away while Lou snored lightly. The heating had kicked in.

They'd barely been able to sleep for hours, both still jittery and agitated at four in the morning, and it was Lou who finally gave in to exhaustion first.

Chloe turned the bedside light on, the viscid navy curtains shut, and selected one of the books on the cabinet by the bed, ignoring her current novel. She was so stressed she could only reread.

The night before they'd heard the half-goat devils gather on their street, a nauseating yet mealy blend of yelping and growling. It was their signature cry, and Chloe had to again assure Lou they'd be safe.

'I swear, hun,' Chloe insisted, 'they can't get in.'

They'd long turned off anything close to a bright light at night. Lou had at least understood that.

Chloe brought out her loaded Beretta Silver Pigeon shotgun and pulled on her socks and trainers. She sat on the

stairs facing the door, cradling the shotgun with the Colt Detective Special tucked into the waistband of her Levi's.

She gestured for Lou to be quiet.

They heard the goat fauns beat at doors and there were menacing noises off of cracking and breaking glass. The creatures ran and howled impotently through a couple of abandoned houses.

The last few remaining residents on the street had long secured and barricaded their properties, and certainly they'd stockpiled food and provisions. Chloe barely ever noticed their presence, so they'd been smart.

It made Chloe wonder if she wasn't as clever and exceptional as she'd thought, and it frightened and nagged at her for a few minutes. What if she'd forgotten something absurdly basic?

The beasts rattled at Chloe's locked iron gate, twice.

Lou insisted on watching the faun goats from an upstairs window, whispering to Chloe that she'd be careful, and she should trust her not to be seen.

Later Lou said how they began to grind at each other under the orange sodium street light in a weird parody of fucking. It was stiffly performative and Lou had the sense of
of
an ancient ceremony they'd done on a thousand occasions before. It had a feel of being religious, a rite.

The faun devils left after an hour, not looking particularly frustrated and as if it was a regular occurrence.

It was like they were here to feed and if they couldn't they'd ritual, and that alone was a threatening gesture and a signal they'd return.

Chloe and Lou ate a late brunch of cornflakes. They played chess with Lou losing heavily. She wasn't concentrating, Chloe judged, and it was more than fathomable.

They gave up and Lou watched a film on video while Chloe read, both laying on the sofa together.

Lou offered to cook. She made a very decent Italian tomato sauce, garlicky and rich, with anchovies. Chloe was teaching her the basic knife skills that Janey had started showing her at the finca.

Fri, Dec 6, 1991

They decided to risk it and go for a short walk. It'd be good to get out, and they stuck mostly to Campbell Road, which was wide and open. They both dressed for the cold, with Chloe again hiding the Colt revolver in her Levi's.

Lou breathed in her ear that she was wearing her best underwear and tights under her jeans, clearly in the hope of titillating Chloe, and it was working.

It was nice to see Lou being so playful, Chloe thought. She'd been melancholy and shrinking in, and it'd gotten

worse since last Tuesday. Chloe hoped it was real and Lou wasn't just making an effort, but if it wasn't authentic Chloe would still go along.

'I'm going to fuck you stupid when we get back, okay? Two and three fingers,' Chloe said low, and Lou giggled, smiling.

'Okay.'

The sky was grey but the air felt clear and clean. The absence of cars, Chloe thought. The streets were quiet and all but vacant of people, but then it was early. They were flirting and walking hand in hand.

'You'll have to be easy on me,' Lou teased.

The howl they heard was brutal and ferine, low, muscular. Not a goatish faun.

It was a louder and larger anthropoid than a satyr, and its cry was a full-throated guttural roar, lionesque.

A Minotaur?

No, bigger.

It could be nearly a mile off in the distance, and they didn't see anything moving on the street. It was Bow and surely it couldn't smell Lou or Chloe in particular, not against the locale.

They waited still and silent, not moving. There was no other noise and nothing more of the distant monster.

It broke the mood and they walked back to the house fast, with Lou constantly looking back and over her shoulder.

Sat, Dec 14, 1991

Chloe was suggesting they go to Roman Road Market but Lou was reluctant. They didn't need to go, and Chloe said it wasn't about groceries. Lou accused her of not sticking with the whole hibernation plan.

'We can start again later, but let's get some air while we can. It isn't that noisy out,' Chloe pleaded.

Lou finally gave in.

The market was busier than Chloe was expecting, and less convivial. People were barging and shoving, and the atmosphere was close to aggressive.

There were far more stalls than on their last visit and the price gouging was now rudely evident, in particular for fresh fruit and vegetables. There was shouting and swearing, with a charge in the air that could easily tip over and turn violent.

Chloe held onto Lou in the half-crush and rude pushing.

She had her revolver, and wasn't really worried. She'd blow the piss out of anyone who threatened her girl.

They both heard some openly racial slurs and Chloe couldn't see any stall-holders who weren't burly and white. She'd been coming here for years and barely recognised a

face, and there were few Indian or Afro-Caribbean people in the market, like they'd worked out the score and the ground.

Chloe and Lou left without buying anything, and Chloe knew they wouldn't be coming back.

The house in Bow, with the two women alone, would now be even more their safe space.

Tue, Dec 17, 1991

Lou got up early at eight and Chloe heard the boiler shudder as the heating went on with the timer.

Lou wanted to make Chloe what she was now calling her dirty fried eggs, cooked on a high heat with crushed black peppercorns, on the last of the recently defrosted brown rye bread.

There were only two loaves left in the freezer and Chloe knew they'd have to be super frugal from now on in. She had a ton of frozen milk, along with cornflakes and musli.

She'd read a book years ago at Bow Library on surviving a nuclear attack, and while most of it was absurdly hopeful there was a practical section on food storage. She'd read it over and over.

Chloe had poured out a spoonful of milk before freezing the three litre plastic bottles, having learnt the water in the milk would otherwise swell to bursting.

She'd stacked the plastic bottles upright in the chest freezer.

Chloe dozed while Lou made their breakfast.

She stirred and began to worry after half an hour. Chloe couldn't hear anything from the kitchen, and there wasn't any smell of cooking.

Janey.

It was irrational but the lingering fear was always there on the periphery, a disquieting threat. And the Goat Girl was here, just like in the finca.

She pulled on her white Born a Bad Seed t-shirt on and a pair of shorts and went downstairs.

A young girl sat chilling out on her sofa, with mid length blonde hair touching her shoulder.

She was petite and wearing Chloe's Bardot/Tate crochet lime green bikini with the bright yellow trim. Her fingernails were painted orange and she wore vivid red lipstick, her mascara heavy.

Chloe recognised her instantly, but it couldn't be real.

It was the pretty hippy model she'd seen in the Scandinavian porno mag, *Loving Orgy*. The girl from the kitchen at the finca. She was smiling but it was like she was being paid to smile.

The Goat Girl.

‘I’m Lily, or Lilith, or Lulu. I prefer Lilith,’ she said. Her voice was level and blandly casual, with a slight hint of cockney. She was younger than Chloe, probably twenty or so.

The rest of the house was silent and felt benignly devoid and vacant. Lou wouldn’t have left but she was gone.

‘Where’s Lou?’

Chloe was confused and coldly fearful, her stomach hollow and low to her bones.

‘She isn’t here, not Lou as such. Lou was a construct.’

Chloe just stood there cold, staring at Lily, Lilith.

‘Sit,’ Lilith said, smiling. She smiled just like Lou but a hint more slutty and cold.

There was a bottle of Jack Daniel’s on the fifties glass coffee table. She’d bought the retro table for Lou, who’d seen it on the Portobello Road. It was a good repro but it wasn’t genuine, not that Lou cared.

Chloe didn’t know what was real now.

Lily had poured a fat inch into Chloe’s cut crystal glass tumbler.

‘You’ll need it, darling,’ Lilith told her benignantly.

Chloe sat stiffly on the sofa. It was the end.

She shot back the bourbon but it wouldn’t be enough, it wasn’t exactly morphine and she’d feel the pain. She’d die like Janey and probably Lou.

But Lilith wasn't going to kill her.

Chloe was confused but it all fell into place later, every detail and happening.

Tue, Dec 17, 1991

Lily was telling Chloe her Lou was never really her Lou, and Lilith had the good grace to apologise.

‘But I did create her out of love, for you,’ Lilith said, and begun to explain.

‘Her name really was Lou, but she wasn’t your Lou.’

Lilith knew what Chloe wanted, beautiful with delicate perfect features and that hint of need and subservience. Blonde like Janey but not Janey.

‘Just the right side of young,’ Lily drawled, with Chloe flinching.

‘So you created her too,’ Lily declared bluntly. Chloe had played her part.

Chloe’s eyes were wet but the outrage and resentment was holding off most of the tears.

‘You had no fucking right,’ Chloe spat angrily.

‘No, I didn’t. It was wrong and I apologise,’ Lilith conceded. ‘But you were depressed and spiralling and I couldn’t watch it anymore.’

‘Fuck you,’ Chloe said.

‘But didn’t it bring you joy? You were doing it already with ghost Janey and her vibrator and bikini and tights, and you were in Janeyland and I just made it real.’

‘But it wasn’t real,’ Chloe protested.

‘Reality is fluid,’ Lilith said.

Chloe swallowed the rest of her drink with her hand shaking.

‘It’s *your* reality, distorted and bent by your id and super ego. Your perception is fluid.

Chloe was dazed and bewildered, like a pugilist being nailed at the back end of a fight. She wiped ineptly at her wet eyes with the back of her left hand.

Lily passed her a couple of tissues from a box of Kleenex, and poured her another inch of Jack Daniel’s. Chloe took a long gulp.

‘Lou hated paper tissues,’ Chloe said absently, quiet.

Lily softly corrected her. ‘No, you hate paper tissues.’

Chloe stared at her.

‘You see?’ Lily said.

‘So where’s Lou?’

Lilith looked uncomfortable, a first. ‘You don’t want to know.’

‘I really fucking do.’

Lily was all but begging Chloe not to push it, but Chloe was persistent.

Chloe knew she was being manipulated, but weirdly she found Lily's power over her intoxicating, and they were all but playing now.

'Okay,' Lily sighed. 'She's in the shower.'

Chloe walked fast to their room hoping irrationally she'd hear the shower running, but Chloe knew by now that anything so hopeful wasn't Lily's thing. She was the Goat Girl, and was likely to be taunting her as well as flirting.

The bathroom door was ajar and Chloe pushed it open.

Lou was there, crushed at the bottom of the shower stall, her legs and arms broken and jutting obscenely to fit flatly a foot high in the enclosed space.

Chloe howled out in shock and half fell, her head almost hitting the washbasin, and she crawled and scrambled fast until her back was against the tiled wall.

Chloe saw Lou's face pushed against the shower glass. It was of a young blonde girl who clearly wasn't *her* Lou. The deceit was now a fucking atrocity.

Lily was a monster.

Chloe had to stand but her legs were shaking. She splashed water on her face and rinsed her hands in the washbasin while being careful not to look at the poor broken girl in the shower stall she didn't recognise, the not Lou, the never Lou.

There was only the faintest odour of bodily waste. Lou had clearly voided her bowels and bladder as she died and Lilith, the crazy fucking bitch-ghost, had washed her. Chloe found the washing appalling, the act being so cold and psychotic.

Chloe realised it'd been done for her.

Chloe closed the bathroom door behind her and sat on the edge of the bed.

She could see the traces of Lou in the room, her clothing tossed in and around the washing basket. The water glass by her side of the bed greasy from the moisturiser on her fingers, her casually discarded cotton buds and makeup wipes.

She was chaotic and horny and cluttered like Janey, but then Chloe had created her that way.

Chloe had to breath and gather herself before facing the Goat Girl again.

Lily was neat and orderly; she'd washed Lou's cadaver in the shower. Chloe was orderly.

The Colt Detective Special was in the kitchen cupboard. Chloe might be able to take Lily by surprise, to blow that deranged near-real smile all over the sofa.

It was delusional and she knew it, and Chloe had questions first.

Lily was noisily working in the kitchen and Chloe could smell onions and garlic. She'd set the table and opened a bottle of Rioja.

Chloe had to know.

'Janey, was that real?'

'Yeah, it was,' Lilith insisted. 'Very real.'

Lily was wearing one of Chloe's blue and white chefs aprons over her retro Bardot Tate green crochet bikini, and the bikini fit her perfectly. She was barefoot, her nails and toenails orange.

'I had nothing to do with it, I swear, honestly. I watched and fed off it, and that was exciting enough.'

'How did she die?'

Lily ignored her. 'I've put a full red chilly into the sauce. I hope it isn't too spicy.'

Chloe stood staring at her.

'Sorry. It isn't as if I don't know what you like,' Lilith teased her, smiling.

'Janey.'

'Look, it was fast, and she didn't see it coming. She didn't suffer.'

'And what about Lou?'

'Less than Lou.'

They sat at the dining table and ate Lily's linguine, facing each other. It was delicious and Lily was beautiful with that California light tan, even though Chloe knew it was all fake and fraudulent.

Lily could really look like anything from a goat to a fucking lizard.

'Nothing is real, hun,' Lily said. 'You suck on ganja and wine and fuck and it makes you feel happy. Is any of that real?'

Chloe felt woozy, disjointed.

'And you don't need a guru or a priest. I've never seen God, ever. There's no great creator,' Lily said flatly. 'It's just us, flawed and struggling.'

'You killed Janey and Lou,' Chloe said, torpid and lethargic. She felt stoned, close to being back on psilocybin, the shrooms. Lily had done this to her.

Lilith put her knife and fork down.

'It's all sort of fluidy and loose, and things don't always happen in order. It isn't a constant.'

everything same time

The duck-egg blue Olivetti Lettera 32 in the finca.

'Janey and I, what was our future if you weren't there?'

'It didn't work with Janey and the fallout was a real horror-show,' Lily said starkly. 'You hated her at the end. It's better how it is now.'

‘I could never hate Janey,’ Chloe said, groggily.

‘You did, or would or whatever.’

Lily rolled a spliff, and Chloe struggled with the Goat Girl’s dope-induced malaise.

‘Fuck off,’ Chloe uttered, trying to be aggressive but hopeless and obedient.

Lily reached over and held her hand. ‘It’s okay darling, I love you.’

Nothing is linear, Lilith told her. They were on the sofa now and Lily was playing with Chloe’s hair. In the low light Lily would look like Janey and then Lou. It’d won her over to an extent, seducing and nullify her.

‘Is it you? The monsters being here?’ Chloe said gently, confused but stoned and nearly loving.

‘Fuck no. The Finca El Oso Salvaje was a gaol. I was being held hostage by the bugging priests of the Church, and I had no idea,’ Lily insisted.

Chloe was high and believed her, entirely sure Lily wasn’t lying.

Lilith kissed her, and it was so evoking of Janey. And Lou, but Lou wasn’t real.

‘There’s a rising every couple of thousand years or so, but it’s too stark and bright and cold for most of the brethren. They’ll shrink back before long, below the river. It isn’t very agreeable here.’

Chloe got it, sort of. She was chilled on the sofa and high, like being with Janey.

‘There’s a rising every couple of thousand years or so, but it’s too stark and bright and cold for most of the brethren. They’ll shrink back before long, below the river. It isn’t very agreeable here.’

Chloe got it, sort of. She was chilled on the sofa and high, like being with Janey.

‘I’ll show you how to go back, hun,’ Lily said quietly. ‘Close your eyes.’

Lilith put her hand on Chloe’s face, and Lily’s fingers smelled of garlic and reefer.

Tue, Dec 17, 1991

Chloe's vision and existence convulsed and she was back at the finca and out by the pool, and the bright Spanish light alone was startling.

It couldn't be real but she could feel everything: the heat of the sun on her skin, the scent of lemons and rosemary and sun lotion in the air, the low hiss of cicadas off in the distance. All and everything that was so redolent of the finca.

The air, Chloe tasted the air.

She felt the hot tiles below her plastic sandals and it was wonderful. She saw a blur of Lily amid the hills shining yellow in the sun.

Her skin felt slightly burnt from the day before. Chloe saw Janey in the pool smiling at her, and that first few seconds back was heartbreaking and painful and breathtakingly happy.

'You coming in?' Janey called out.

It was the day after Ari had left, and they were free.

Chloe was astonished and smiled back at her, intoxicated and shaking. She slowly lost, or subconsciously ignored, the sense of anything being artificial or not real.

It was nearly gone, and Chloe thought all the emotions of her having left here was a shrooms thing.

Chloe kicked off her Brazilian sandals with her toes before diving in.

(Did she own a pair of Havaianas then? She wasn't sure.)

It was a strange thought, gone in an instant.

The water was as icy cold as ever and they put their arms around each other and kissed gently and slow, Janey's bitter reefer tongue in her mouth and she could taste her and Chloe was wildly high and ecstatic.

Janey was touching her through her Sharon Tate crochet lime green bikini, her fingers gentle and then arching hard. She felt brave and open.

Chloe was happier than she'd ever been in her life.

And then she was back in Bow.

'Fuck, fuc-, ' she cried out in shock, her legs shaking and jerking and smashing against the glass coffee table, half tipping it over. Lily was there holding her, waiting.

'You're okay, it's all good hun, I'm here for you.'

They were together on the sofa, and it took a few seconds for Chloe to readjust. She could taste the chlorine, sense the heat on her skin. She'd been there.

She could still feel Janey.

‘It was a first trip, darling. I can do it for you. You can relive everything, from arriving at the finca until right before the end.’

Lily was stroking her hair lovingly, soothing her and bringing her down, back to the real.

‘How the fuck?’

Lily told Chloe it was a taster. She wouldn’t be able to take it all in at once, and it could fry her psyche.

Chloe would have to be high, with a muscle relaxant like benzodiazepine, and that was the thing, ‘a spliff won’t touch it,’ Lily said.

There was a spell close and in her ear, Chloe recalled vaguely, a harlot brew whispered low in Hebrew and Hasaitic.

‘I could save Rachel,’ Chloe said, woozily hopeful.

‘You can’t change anything, it doesn’t work like that,’ Lily retorted. ‘You don’t have free will, darling. You’ll forget the now and get lost in the finca, and you’ll feel hunger and joy and pain just like you did then. You’re there but you can’t do a rewrite.’

‘Okay,’ Chloe said, dazed.

‘You can be gone for a fortnight but it’ll be just a minute here in the now.’

Chloe said okay again.

Lily said how she was weak in gaol and it was Chloe who restored her. It was love.

‘It’s a gift in return, for you.’

‘I don’t know what’s real,’ Chloe urged.

‘No-one does,’ Lilith said.

Lily proposed a deal.

She’d let Chloe collapse into the past as long as she’d reciprocate, and be there for her. Lily could be either Janey or Lou, or a blend of both.

She could be anyone for Chloe: male, female either or both.

‘I know you hate me now, but you’ll forget and it’ll pass,’ Lily said.

‘Okay, you have a deal,’ Chloe said flatly. She didn’t really have a choice, and she’d have Janey. Nothing would ever feel like Janey again.

‘I love you,’ Lily the Goat Girl said. ‘I know you can’t say it back right now, but you will eventually.’

‘I know,’ Chloe said softly, and she believed it. Hadn’t Lou been Lily and Lou? It was the free will thing again, the present as a ghost.

Soon they went upstairs to bed in Chloe’s new reality.

