

JODI MAY'S



HSA vs IT

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## FOREWORD & DISCLAIMER

First and foremost, I do not own the characters of 'IT' nor the original concept. All rights remain with the original author, Stephen King. It's important to note that this is a homage to the original story, which happens to be my favourite book. I was inspired by every single page and read it once a year, every summer, to be whisked away to Derry all over again. It occurred to me, after the two recent films (I prefer the 1990's television series) that a lot of people love the story and adore 'Pennywise the Dancing Clown' but they never get the chance to read the book. Put off by its length, they miss out on the magic of the tale as King wrote it. With this crossover homage fan fiction I wanted to bring a piece of that magic (and horror) to life and it's my hope, above all, that I'll be able to encourage just one person to pick up the original book.

Secondly, the '*Hillside Academy*' characters featured in this fan fiction are all my own. The only character I took from King's story was 'Pennywise'. The rest are mine and all belong to me by law. I will also add that much of the main characters' backstories have been changed to fit this specific 'alternative universe' and several of the minor characters of the story have also been altered. To conclude, there are no spoilers to the main '*Hillside Academy*' series. Rather, it is a way for me to highlight the main eight (Erika, Dominic, Sam, Anna, Emily, Will, Elivia and Tom) in this horror fan fiction that is dedicated to not only Stephen King for inspiring me to keep writing all these years, but also to the people of Lancaster, Lancashire.

Thus bringing me to the penultimate point of this disclaimer. Throughout the book, Lancaster is referred to not always kindly and sometimes in a negative light. This is fiction. I wanted to set this gruesome fan fiction homage in this city because for one, it's truly beautiful and has a rich, fantastic history, and secondly, because I love it. I moved here just over two years ago and fell quickly in love with the history and architecture. My babies were born here and in a way, so was I. By leaving the place I grew up and all its ghosts, I was liberated. This city has quickly become not the place I was raised but the place I was born. And the people? The people of Lancaster are wonderful. They're community-orientated, kind and generous, and during a rather arduous period, the community of Greaves specifically aided us greatly. My partner and I are eternally grateful for their generosity and kindness during this time and this is my strange way of saying thank you; of bringing Lancaster to the forefront again and displaying it in all its glory. So whatever you may read, remember it is fiction and that Lancaster, UK is my favourite place in the world. So to the people of Lancaster, thank you.

And last but not least, a disclaimer to say that the content of this chapter and all the following contain strong language, violence against children, sexual references, scenes of gore and peril and is quite frankly inappropriate for young readers or anyone easily offended. But if this is all to your taste, go ahead and read.

I hope you enjoy reading this 'alternative universe' fan fiction homage as much as I enjoyed writing it. All comments are welcome (though don't be mean), shares are encouraged and remember –

Once you begin this story...*you'll float too.*

# CHAPTER FIVE

## A Folly Thing

Emily woke up early that Saturday morning. While she was weary from the night before she had a mission on her mind. And so after a quick shower and skipping breakfast, she used some of her pocket money to take the bus from the bottom of Church Avenue into the city centre. She would only walk into the city if she absolutely had to – so for school – but today was not one of those days. She needed to be focused.

Last night, what she'd witnessed, what she'd done, what she and Erika had escaped from, was like something out of a horror film. One of those films she wasn't allowed to watch but didn't want to see either. She'd heard the kids at school talk about them enough to know. These things didn't happen in the real world. The creatures in those films didn't really exist. It was all just fiction.

Or was it?

What she and Erika had seen last night had been real. As real as its claws. As the blade it held. As the stench from its breath. The red strands of its hair. Its yellow eyes. It had all been too real and too close they had come to knowing real pain.

Emily could hardly believe what she'd done. From the moment she'd spotted the glowing lights in the forest, to seeing Erika pinned down by the Crone and screaming for help, to the moment she flung that flaming torch at it with such precision she could hardly believe it, to when they'd run through the thicket and out into the safety of the streetlight, Emily felt as though it was a dream. She wasn't brave. She couldn't even stand up to her bullies and yet, if last night had been real, if it hadn't been all one weird, terrifying nightmare, she had gone into the woods at night, alone, and fought off a ... a ...*It*...

For they didn't know what *it* was. It had been a witch; an old crone. The one from the tales they were told as children. But then it had been something else...not quite anything at all and also everything. What type of creature could take on this mutating form? Or had they imagined the whole thing?

Emily doubted it. The shakes she felt now as she sat on the bus, watching the edge of the Greaves neighbourhood flying by on her left and the edge of Bowerham on her right, were real. Terror. Fear. Utter fright. It was all too real.

With no way of asking Erika until later that day when they met down at the Burrow Beck, Emily was left with questions. Questions that needed answers.

The internet had been useless. When she'd Googled 'the legend of the witch' and 'Lancaster' it had come up with the Pendle Witches and nothing more. She needed information and the library hadn't let her down yet.

Getting off at Common Garden Street, Emily headed into the St Nicholas Arcades, a small mall, past Primark and New Look, along past Home Bargains and Caffè Nero and out onto Market Street. It was busy that Saturday morning, full of shoppers; adults and teenagers alike. Emily kept her head low and her thumbs hooked around the straps of her backpack as she hurried across the Market Square, past the grand Lancaster City museum and to the left corner where the library was situated.

Walking through its automatic doors was like stepping into a sanctuary. The smell of books and the musty scent of this place put a smile on her face as she stepped with ease inside and headed straight over to the counter. It was empty, as usual, just a few people working on the computers near the back and a handful of others dotted throughout, reading books standing by their shelves or sitting in the cluster of armchairs wearing headphones. Emily came here often. If she hadn't met Will, Erika and the others, she would have spent every day of the past week here – which was where Rupert thought she was. This place was her safe space. Nothing could hurt her here.

The librarians all knew her too and the one at the counter beamed at her upon her arrival.

"Emily! We haven't seen you in a week or so. Everything okay?" Hettie, as Emily had come to know her, asked, putting down the stamp in her hand and pausing in her job of checking in a pile of books.

"Yes! It's great! I, erm, I made some friends," Emily said in a low voice. She didn't want the entire library to know that she was usually Billy-No-Mates.

"Friends?" Hettie's smile widened. She was a young woman, only in her mid-twenties; she was kind too, like all the librarians here. Hettie was Emily's favourite. Fair blonde with a slim short frame and a soft expression for everybody, especially for Emily. "That's wonderful. I'm so happy for you. But of course, I will miss you," Hettie chuckled lightly, "No one enjoys the books quite as much as you do."

Emily blushed. That was true. Books were her escape. When she was fed up with the world – which was often – she could disappear into books where no one judged her and she could be whoever she wanted. She had experienced all of her adventures this way. Now, she was experiencing real ones. But the one last night had been too real.

Recalling this, her face became serious with thought. "Hettie, do you know anything about the legend of the witch? In the forest in Greaves?"

Hettie's face became grave; her blue eyes dark and her stance stiff.

"Why do you want to know about that, Emily?"

“I’m doing a project on the Pendle Witches and I remember hearing someone say that the legend of the witch was to do with Elizabeth? The matriarch of one of the families? That it’s her ghost –.”

“Emily,” Hettie said quickly, coming out from behind the counter. “You’re not from Greaves originally, are you?”

“No?” she frowned. She was from Bowerham; not far from Williamson Park. But why did that matter?

“You haven’t been in those woods, have you? Not at night?” Hettie questioned, one hand on Emily’s shoulder.

“I –.” She didn’t want to lie. She was already lying to Rupert. But this was Hettie. Her friend. “Yes.”

“Oh Emily,” Hettie sighed, “You need to see something.”

Emily sat in front of a large computer screen in one of the back offices of the library. It was dark in here, just the yellow light from the backlit screen illuminating her and Hettie’s faces as they sat side by side. Hettie used a small mouse in her right hand to pull up old newspaper articles. It wasn’t a mouse; it could scroll from left to right, up and down and all around. Emily had only seen these machines on television. She focused on the headline in front of her.

### **YOUNG BOY FOUND BRUTALLY MURDERED IN GREAVES FOREST**

Emily blinked. She read the date beneath the article. 1981. Twenty-seven years ago. Below the headline there was a large article and a photo of a boy. Mouth of braces and white blond hair. He was smiling out of the camera in a school uniform, the crest of which belonged to the same primary school Rupert sent his kids to. The one in Greaves.

She read the first few lines.

*“Harry Becker was found last Friday by dog walkers in the GREAVES FOREST. Becker was just seven years old. Police have confirmed that Becker was killed by forty-eight stab wounds to the chest. His spleen and small intestine had been removed and police found traces of it in a rudimentary cooking pan in an extinguished fire pit. They believe it was the work of an Occult group who are rumoured to hold rituals in the forest. The community has been advised to be vigilant and not enter the woods. The police are doing all they can to trace Becker’s killers. His family...”*

Emily sat back in her seat with dismay.

“The legend of the witch? It’s not real, Emily,” Hettie said, “It was just something that started after the Becker boy died. I think it was a way for parents to stop their kids from going into the woods. It kept everyone away. I don’t know what it’s like now but that forest, it was dangerous. And since the asylum closed and now all these children dying? Like then? Like before? Promise me,” Hettie said, twisting in her seat and placing a hand on Emily’s shoulder once again. “Promise me, you won’t go back there?”

Emily nodded firmly. There was no chance she was going back to those woods after last night. This simply confirmed her fear. Something horrible had happened there, to that poor little boy. Whether it was the work of the Occult or a madman or even what had attacked them last night, something had murdered another human being. A child. Cut out his intestine and spleen and cooked it to eat. She felt sick; physically so as she left the library and burst out into the humid July air beyond.

Checking the watch around her wrist, she saw it was almost half eleven. If she planned on meeting Will and the others down in Hala at twelve, she would need to hurry. She had to speak to Erika now more than ever.

Crossing the Market Square, heading for the walkway back through the St Nicholas Arcades, Emily was so caught up in her thoughts, she didn’t spot the familiar faces from school coming to stand in front of her. The only thing she could be thankful for when she did come crashing to a halt, panting in shock, was that it wasn’t Samantha Rose. She wasn’t sure she could handle facing a monster and Samantha in a twenty four hour period.

“Emily, right?” the girl, who Emily knew was Anna Clearwater, asked.

Emily stuttered for a reply. Anna had never even looked at her before, let alone spoken to her. She was shocked Anna even knew her name. Unlike Samantha and her crew of bitches, Anna was even higher; like an angel, she didn’t trouble herself with people as lowly as Emily. Neither did her closest friend, Elivia Spencer. Both girls were from money. Both girls were beautiful.

Anna with her golden hair, hour glass figure and large bust; even at fourteen she was womanly and goddess-like as she stood before Emily, turning her head to one side and frowning with her perfect eyebrows. Her eyes shone an ocean blue, her makeup flawless and the hand on her hip manicured. She was tall, towering over both Emily and her friend, Elivia. Though that wasn’t hard. Elivia Spencer was barely 5ft. She was tiny like a mouse with white hair and piercing sky blue eyes that were fixated on Emily today, who still couldn’t find the words to reply.

Why were they talking to her? Was this some kind of joke or prank? Would something fly out and hit her in a second? Was she being filmed to be laughed at later? What would these revered girls want with Emily?

“Well?” Anna prompted, glancing to a quizzical Elivia beside her.

“Erm, yes,” Emily breathed, “Yes, I’m Emily.”

“Good,” Anna nodded.

Emily held her breath, ready for whatever horrible thing would happen next.

“You know Sam Robinson?” Anna asked next, confusing Emily further.

“Excuse me?” Emily frowned with a stutter.

“Sam? Sam Robinson? I’m sorry, are you like deaf or retarded or something?” Elivia spoke this time. The way she said it however, wasn’t as though it was an insult. She said it gently, with caution and slight embarrassment.

“No!” Emily exclaimed, making both girls flinch, “I mean, no, I’m not. Sorry, I just, I don’t really know him that well, he just hangs out with a few of my friends.”

*Friends.*

How odd to say. It brought a smile to her lips even then as Anna Clearwater and Elivia Spencer stared back at her.

“But you *do* know him?” Anna asked again.

“Er, yeah, I guess, yeah.”

“Good,” Anna said with a relieved sigh. “Do you think you could give me his number?”

Emily frowned. Did Anna Clearwater fancy *Sam Robinson*? That pig? Emily had heard Anna dated older guys, ones from the Boys School on Quernmore Road. Why on earth would she be interested in a chubby fourteen year old with spots and braces? He may have golden hair and stunning ocean eyes but he was a – as Erika put it – a dick.

“Erm –.” Emily didn’t have Sam’s number. She had a mobile but she didn’t possess any of their numbers. If she did, she would have already called Erika. “No, sorry.”

“Right,” Anna huffed. She turned away from Emily, who stood limply, unsure whether to leave or not, like a student waiting to be excused. “What do we do?” Anna asked Elivia.

“I don’t know, erm, ask her where he lives maybe?”

Anna turned back to Emily who snapped up to look at her. “Do you know where he lives? Could you give me his address?”

Emily breathed nervously. “I’m sorry, I don’t know where he lives. He just hangs out with us down at the Burrow Beck.”

“What’s that? Is that a pub?” Anna frowned.



“No,” Emily resisted the urge to giggle. The idea of *her* at a pub was hilarious. “No, it’s the stream? In Hala?”

Anna looked to Elivia who shrugged, none the wiser. “Could you tell us where that is? We need to speak to him.”

“Well erm,” Emily hesitated, “I’m going there now? He’ll probably be there, he usually is.”

Anna looked to Elivia. There was a moment of silence as the two girls seemed to speak to one another mentally. Emily took another deep exhale to stem her anxiety and glanced around her. It was then she spotted Samantha Rose.

Dread filled Emily as she caught sight of her shining red hair emerging from Starbucks across the Market Square. She was laughing loudly with her friends, Topshop and River Island bags hanging in the crook of her elbow and her designer bag in the other. There was some fruity, icy drink in her hand and a violent smile on her face that turned Emily to stone when Samantha spotted her.

But she didn’t come over. She didn’t move as Emily stood beside Anna and Elivia who finally turned to face her.

“Are you getting a taxi?” Anna asked, a flash phone in one hand and a similar, if nicer looking handbag in the crook of her arm.

“I was going to catch the bus,” Emily started.

“Let’s get a cab. I hate the bus,” Elivia groaned.

At that, the two girls started off toward the St Nicholas’s Arcade, leaving Emily stood confused and dumbstruck. She glanced again to where Samantha was sneering in her direction and looked ready to pounce when suddenly, Anna called out to her.

“Emily? You coming?”

“Oh! Right! Yes!” she scurried after them, shooting Samantha one last look that was almost a grin. If she dared.

The taxi journey out of the city to Hala took less than seven minutes, or so Emily’s watch told her. But it felt like a lifetime. Crammed into the backseat, her backpack on her lap and trying to hold her belly in as she sat alongside Elivia and then Anna on the other side. Elivia didn’t fidget and said nothing to Emily as she and Anna chatted to each other. The entire ride, Emily had wondered how she’d ended up there; sitting in the back of a taxi with the two most popular girls in her year, on her way to meet her friends. It was too surreal and Emily feared that at any moment she would wake up from this very peculiar dream. Perhaps

she was still lying unconscious in the forest after being chased by Samantha? Perhaps indeed...

“We usually hang out just around the bend of the river,” Emily explained, leading the way down the grassy bank and walking briskly as Anna and Elivia followed behind.

It was odd to see two confident girls look so out of depth. Like fish flailing on land or nervous children on their first day school, the two hung close together and looked warily around at their surroundings as they followed Emily along the grass, around the bend, across the natural bridge and to the shaded patch of long grass where, much to her relief, sat Sam.

“Alright, Smelly Emily,” he cheered, and then paused upon noticing the girls behind her.

He leapt to his feet and brushed the grass from the back of his jeans, adjusting his sunglasses and putting on that stance Emily had become accustomed to whenever Erika was around. If it was only Emily, the façade would disappear. She wasn't worth his charm.

“Hey, this is –,” Emily started when Anna leapt into action, that popular girl act returning.

“Anna, Anna Clearwater.” She held out her hand to Sam whose eyebrows shot up from behind his lenses. He grasped her hand and shook it.

“Pleasure,” he smirked, “What can I do for you?”

Emily waited then. This was the moment Anna would make some coy proposal of a date, though it seemed a bit desperate to Emily. To take a taxi all the way out to a strange place just to ask out a boy? And Sam Robinson, no less. Didn't Anna know she could do better? Emily didn't even know the girl personally and she knew Anna was better than Sam; the boy who had once burped along to the Blue Peter theme tune.

Emily watched curiously as Anna glanced at Elivia who reached into her handbag and retrieved a thick wad of cash. Emily frowned;

*Wait... what?*

“You selling?” Anna questioned.

“Depends what you want?” Sam said, his arms folding and that charming exterior hardening.

Emily wanted to walk away. If this was a drug deal, she wanted no part in it. Yet her feet were frozen to ground. She couldn't move as the exchange continued.

“A quarter? And some pills?”

“What kind of pills?” Sam asked.

“I dunno, whatever you’ve got.”

“And how many pills?”

“I don’t know, like a bag? You’re the drug dealer,” Anna scoffed, suddenly impatient.

“You’re buying from *me*, not the other way around, love. Tell me what you want and I can get you the pills. Money up front though,” Sam said, holding out his hand.

Anna looked abhorred. “You expect me to just hand over my money to you and *hope* you get it?”

“That’s the way I work. But I can give you the weed now if that helps?” he grinned again.

“Fuck you, Robinson,” Anna scoffed and pushed Elivia’s hand full of money away. “We’ll buy from someone else.”

“Wait wait wait!” he hollered as they went to walk away.

Emily took this opportunity to move back a step. Glancing around, they were well hidden here in among the trees but she still feared being caught. Would she be arrested too? An accessory to a drug deal? What would Rupert say? Suddenly the memory of the night before and the terror she and Erika had faced went flying out the window.

“I’m good for it,” Sam said.

“I don’t know *you*, I don’t *trust you*,” Anna tutted.

“I –,” he hesitated. He glanced over his shoulder at Emily. “Her! She can vouch for me.”

“Me?” Emily stammered, looking from each of their faces. She viewed Sam’s again, his back to the girls and his expression pleading with her. “Erm –.” She couldn’t vouch for him. She didn’t know him and she certainly didn’t like him. How did she know he wasn’t going to take their money and run? If that happened and she had vouched for him, it would be hell for her at school come September. How dare he put her in this position?

“Yeah, *you*. Come on, Ems,” Sam said, sidling up to her and wrapping an arm around her shoulder.

She felt the weight of it. The pressure. It was crushing.

“Erm.” She looked to Anna and Elivia again, both watching her closely.

If she didn’t vouch for him, what would he do? Would he tell the others? Would they say she’s a snitch? Boring? Would she lose her new friends right when they’d just started getting along? Erika? And Will?

She didn’t want to risk it.

“Yes, I can vouch for him,” Emily said thickly.

Sam slapped her on back with thanks, sending her forwards. She righted herself just in time as he walked back to the girls, took their money and handed over a small bag. Then, with one last look at her and after getting Sam’s number, Anna and Elivia hastily walked away, leaving the two alone.

“Cheers for that, Emily,” Sam said, pocketing the money, “I really can’t get the pills without the money –.”

She held up a hand to silence him. She couldn’t believe her audacity to silence someone like Sam Robinson but didn’t stop nonetheless. She shot him a severe stare. “If you’re lying, this will all fall on me, do you understand?” she said fiercely, surprising them both.

“Why?”

“Those girls – they’re *Anna Clearwater* and *Elivia Spencer*. They’re the richest girls at my school and some of the most popular. Everyone wants to be friends with them.”

“*Them?* Why? They’re just stuck up bitches. Why would anyone want to be friends with them? They act like they’ve got rods up their fannies,” Sam joked, nodding over to where they were disappearing around the bend. “See! Look at how they walk! A rod or a silver spoon, it’s definitely something.”

“You’re rich too aren’t you?” Emily scoffed.

“Yeah,” he replied as he counted the money. “But not rich like *that*.”

“What’s the difference?”

Sam paused. Tucking the money away, he faced her with a deep frown, all humour and joking gone from his face. “Do you know who my dad is? Wait, actually, of course you don’t.”

“Don’t assume things.”

“Alright, Benjamin Robinson? You know him?”

“No,” Emily said begrudgingly.

“That’s what I thought.”

“Should I?”

“A nice religious girl like you?” He lifted the gold necklace from her chest and inspected it. She batted away his hand, scared by her own defiance and confidence. Sam smirked. “Nah, you shouldn’t.”

For a minute or so neither of them moved. His gaze was unfaltering and Emily's unyielding. She wouldn't be the first to look away. She wanted Sam to know she couldn't be pushed around. She wasn't sure where this foreign confidence had come from. Perhaps last night? Her bravery for racing into that forest to save Erika from whatever it had been was lingering on her like the stench of the creature's breath.

Whatever it was, Emily stayed still and staring until finally, something broke them out of this peculiar moment.

"Hey, hey, hey, fuckers!" Tom cheered.

Sam grinned over at the four arriving on their bikes, skidding to a halt and chucking them aside, Erika riding on the back of Dominic's. Emily softened, backing down from this odd standoff. She touched her damp forehead. She hadn't even realised she'd been sweating.

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Emily Fox's dark piercing eyes stayed with Sam for the rest of the day and all the way home. Unlike his friends, it was a long pedal home. Up through Bowerham, along the steep roads and then through Williamson Park. He didn't mind the ride and usually smoked most of the way, his dirty-blond hair blowing in the breeze as he cycled along the footpaths which wound through the large park.

He had always liked Williamson Park. The great Ashton Memorial, which could be seen from miles around, was an eyesore in Sam's opinion, but the park itself was his favourite. With its footpaths which led deep into the forests and the strange ruins of old buildings dotted throughout. Plus, it had once been Gallows Hill, the sight of many executions. The macabre part of Sam who loved horror films and all things gory was thrilled by the idea of cycling past an old execution sight where so many, including the infamous Pendle Witches, had met their end.

That night was no different. He cycled in through the iron gates, along the footpath past many other walkers; some with dogs, and some in couples looking cosy.

*I know what they're planning.*

A few times he'd heard couples in the thicket going at it. He'd even seen it. But for the most part, once dusk fell, the park became inhabited by the homeless, the drug addicts and other rough types. Types that didn't frighten Sam – not the great Sam Robinson – but none he would particularly like to meet.

Taking the north footpath, he cycled past the front of the memorial which towered over him, casting him into an even deeper shadow. It was cool, suddenly very chilly, since this was the highest point in all of Lancaster. He'd been to the memorial; stood on the highest

lookout point and been able to see as far as Blackpool Tower in the south, Barrow-in-Furness in the west and the mountains of the Lake District to the north, and the rest of the city presiding in its shadow. He'd felt like a king.

Coming to a halt at the bottom near the fountain, which never seemed to run, Sam placed one foot on the ground and looked up; craning his neck back to view the entire 150ft folly. It had been commissioned by one of the Lord Ashtons all the way back in 1906, or so Sam remembered from when he'd visited with his primary school all those years ago. It had been for Lord Ashton's late wife.

*Made for love*, his teachers had said whimsically. Even at that age, Sam had scoffed at the notion of love.

*Pfft, love. What a ridiculous fantasy.*

For Sam had never seen it. Not in his fourteen years.

Viewing the memorial again, his eyes landed, as always, on those statues. Set high above, positioned decoratively around the tower just beneath the blue green copper dome, four women sat looking out at every direction. Each with wings. It was these that Sam had always disliked. Something about them that sent a chill down his spine.

There wasn't much that frightened or even spooked Sam; not Freddy Kruger, not Jason Vorhees or even the mask in *Scream*. Not spiders, not the dark, not even the eerie colliding of the two mists over Lancaster; the dampness of the moors rolling off and oozing into the salty fog of the sea to create the most beautiful smell of earth and the sea, but the effect was startlingly strange. Nope, not even his own father, infamous drug dealer and thug, scared Sam the way these statues did. Their dead eyes and blank expressions.

He gave a shudder and with last look, he put one foot on the pedal and cycled away.

Home wasn't far. Once leaving the grand gates at the other side of the expansive park, Sam turned right and pedalled up the final part of the long steep Quernmore hill before it dipped back down into a decline. Lifting his feet from the pedals as he did every evening, Sam allowed the bike to wheel by itself, picking up more and more momentum as he raced down the hill; swerving to the right down into Parkgate Drive, an estate so new, some of the houses still had for sale signs up outside.

He didn't live far into the estate and was soon coming to a halt outside the gates of his house. Pressing on the intercom, he waited for the usual buzz. With it, the gates opened and he walked his bike up the long gravel drive and around the right of the house to the double doored garage. After tossing his bike inside, he headed into the house.

The three storey new build set on a couple of acres of land was truly hideous inside. Decorated by one of his father's previous girlfriends, it was a monstrosity. His bedroom was the only thing saved from her terrible interior design skills. His father, Benjamin, was far too

lazy to change it and didn't seem to care. There would be another girlfriend soon and the whole house would change again. Sam would be the only thing that was left untouched.

For with every new girlfriend, his father changed. Drug dealer by occupation, he could be a salsa dancer, a bird watcher, a man who loves antiques or a man who adored holidaying in Ibiza. His father was a chameleon – a creature that could change its appearance to fit whatever background, or in his case, *woman*, he was on that week. This week was one of the few occasions where his father was single. Relatively. He always had 'women'. They came to the house late at night and proceeded to scream and grunt loudly in the bedroom along the hallway from Sam's. He had once masturbated along to the idea of having sex with these beautiful, well put together women but upon hearing his father yelling with pleasure one night, Sam had started wearing headphones to bed.

He didn't need to live vicariously through his dad. There was always the internet. And lately, there had been Erika.

This thought brought a grin to his lips as he headed over to the fridge and grabbed a can of Coke. Closing the door, he came face to face with his dad.

Benjamin was tall. Just like Sam's four older brothers, they all possessed a head of dirty-blond hair. But their eyes were dark. Sam had inherited his mother, Riley's blue eyes. Benjamin seemed to act as though this one fact meant Sam wasn't his own. Benjamin often liked to joke that Sam, his chubby fourteen year old son who hated football and was a runt in comparison to his strong, handsome older brothers, was in fact the milkman's. A child from one of Riley's many affairs. Sam wanted to point out that his father probably had tons of children from his affairs also but he usually stayed quiet. There was no point arguing with his brute of a dad. Benjamin was ruthless.

Staring at him now, wearing a smart suit, his collar hanging open to reveal his dark chest of hair, the hair on his head neatly groomed and his stylish stubble trimmed neatly at the edges, Sam lowered the can from his mouth. His father had a way of washing all the colour from his life.

"Where you been, lad?" Benjamin asked, his Geordie accent thick.

Both of Sam's parents had Newcastle accents, though Riley's was softer. She was originally from Northumberland after all. Which was where she was now after another break up and mental breakdown. It was her alcohol addiction that had caused the courts to give Benjamin custody of Sam and not Riley. With his older brothers already at university, only Sam had to endure this messy divorce where he was used like a pawn along with the old family home, the cars and even their villa in Italy. He was nothing more than a commodity. Proof that Benjamin had won. And that Sam had lost.

"Out with some mates," Sam replied.

"Lads from school?"

“Yep,” he lied. He wasn’t going to tell his dad about the group of misfits he met last summer in Hala when he’d cycled as far away from home as he could, crying into his t-shirt and wanting to be anywhere and nowhere. He’d found them sat by the Burrow Beck, smoking and laughing. He’d been drawn to them. But he daren’t tell his dad.

They weren’t like the kids at his private boys’ school. They were losers. Like Sam. And his dad didn’t want a loser for a son. That much he’d made clear time and time again.

“Good. Play a bit of footie?” Benjamin asked, crossing the kitchen to peer out the back window at his array of flash cars waiting for him to pick one tonight.

“Yep.”

“Good.”

As a diehard Newcastle United fan, football was everything to his dad. Sam daren’t tell him that he was part of the rugby team instead; something he’d only done out of spite.

“Can I go now?” Sam said, hinting to the door.

“Sure, sure,” Benjamin waved him away dismissively. “I’ll be back late. I’ll put the alarm on.”

Sam nodded in reply and exited the kitchen. The alarm, of course, wasn’t for Sam’s safety. Benjamin didn’t want any of his drug dealers or even his customers sneaking into his mansion and stealing his goods.

*No, we can’t have that, daddy.*

Stomping upstairs to his room, Sam closed the door behind him and set his Coke down on his desk. Slumping down on his desk chair, he opened up his MacBook and signed straight into MSN. He scrolled down the people on his list. None of these people were friends. Lads he knew from school, a couple of girls he knew but not friends. The boys didn’t like him; they teased him, pushed him around and made him the butt of all their jokes. And the girls? Well, he wasn’t like his dad; slim, muscular and built strong. He was fat. Fat like his mum when she was a kid.

Fat like Emily.

Shaking his tight jaw from side to side, he recalled her dark eyes again. Defiant. Stubborn. Brave. She wasn’t at all like he’d imagined. Because of course, he’d seen her before; skulking around town, head always down and her shoes scuffing along. He’d heard the boys of his school taking the piss out of her, calling her piggy and making squealing noises whenever she passed. He’d seen girls do it too. He’d never thought much more about Emily. He hadn’t even known her name until she turned up alongside Will, Erika and the others.

*Erika...*



She wasn't like Emily. She wasn't like the girls in town either or the ones on his MSN. She was unusual, like a cat amongst dogs. Erika made his cock twitch and his heart beat faster. Only one of which he enjoyed.

She didn't have MSN or Facebook or even MySpace. She didn't even have a phone. All these things only made Sam like her more. She wasn't vapid and stuck up like those bitches from the Girls' school on Regent Street or chavy like the ones from Ripley on Ashton Road. She was different.

But there was a sadness there. One that made Sam uncomfortable. One he didn't understand. One he wasn't sure he wanted to either.

He thought back to yesterday and his excitement at the prospect of seeing her breasts. Would she have shown him if they'd been alone? He'd heard the stories about her; the blowjobs for money, the sex for drugs, showing her pussy to anyone who asked. The older boyfriends. He'd heard about it all. Was it *that* which attracted him to her?

Maybe at first but now, spending time with her, sharing joints, tasting her tongue on those roaches, it was about something more. Something which frightened Sam.

But he wouldn't think too deeply into it. It was just lust. Just yearning to see her bare breasts. To see Erika Waterstone's pussy. What he would do if he got the chance, he wasn't sure. He only knew what porn told him and that was he needed to fuck her –

*And kiss her lips.*

Sam frowned at this random thought. It hadn't sound as if it had come from his mind. His mind was full of only sordid thoughts of bending Erika over and losing his virginity to that pussy. His virginity; a great big red light above his head.

But this thought? Kissing?

*Her mouth...those sore lips, kiss them better.*

He blinked and even swivelled around in his chair, concerned that someone else was whispering these thoughts. These absurd folly thoughts.

*Loving thoughts.*

“Love,” he scoffed.

What did he know about love? It didn't exist. How could it? In this world, it was eat or be eaten. Love was just another name for lust and anyone who believed differently was an idiot.

Clicking off MSN and onto Redtube, Sam unbuttoned the top button of his jean shorts, unzipped them and shuffled them and his boxers down. Clicking onto the first video where the girl had dark hair and pale skin – *like Erika* – Sam sat back and forgot all those stupid thoughts.

*Love. What a load of bollocks.*