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# P E R V E

Part One

*Clara*

Part Two

*Prison*

Part Three

*That's the way the wind blows*

# The Trial

Aged thirty-three

Almost everyone in this court has some sort of say as to my future, although I don't get to tender a word. And yet, I'm the only one in the world who actually knows what happened. How does that make any type of sense?

My defence attorney wrapped up his closing arguments yesterday. This morning the Judge gave her instructions to the jury. That alone was an hour. It was all boring legalise but since then, the jury have been deliberating. I'm on edge. More than that, I'm scared. Truly. Perhaps for the first time. Not scared of what I've become. I always knew who I was. Well, from early teens anyway. Hell, most of us are aware of some sort of sexual feelings in childhood. Perhaps before we know what they actually are. We don't suddenly emerge into knowledge. It's a scattered, chaotic, struggle to understanding. Much like the coalescing cells that create life. Or the traumatic emergence from the womb itself. Do we ever recover from *that* shock?

I knew I had strong desires. And I somehow knew that I should keep them private. People rarely spoke about sex in those days. Not in public. Not in front of kids. I didn't know that adults talked about it all the time. Or actually did it. And masturbated. Indulged in pornography. Went to strip bars, sex clubs and did it with strangers in fluorescent bathed black corridors. I knew nothing. I thought I was the only one. That I was somehow indecent. That wanking made me a freak. A perve.

I know different now, of course. Many of us feel the same way. I grew to accept my interest in illicit, clandestine, sneaky sex, if you will. Consensual sex within the confines of a relationship is fine but I wanted it to be more exciting. More risqué. A stranger. Someone I just met. A pre-arranged hook up. A pick up in a bar or club. Someone who was in a position of authority over me. As I became older and more successful, I also wanted someone who was beneath me. Literally and figuratively. Sex with someone already in a relationship. Sex with someone married. Sex with someone I worked with. The thrill of the chase. The excitement of the unknown. All of that stuff.

Be careful what you wish for. It's what got me into this nightmare. Now I'm facing the strong possibility of no sex. Or even worse. Prison sex. I'm not opposed to man sex per se. I've done it occasionally. Usually as a last resort, when there's been no access to females. Especially when I was younger. And especially when I was drunk. I imagine that being inside Cell Block H isn't exactly a pool of potential quality partners. Oh Jesus. Why am I even joking about this? This is exactly why I'm freaking out. And for very good reason. My arse could soon be on a carousel.

I look to the empty chairs where the jury normally resides. I can picture all of their faces. I've guessed their ages and given them names. I've even created histories for them. I bet I'm close to the mark. You can tell an awful lot about a person from the way they dress. The way they hold themselves. The little interactions with others, even if it's just a hand movement or glance. The way some of them have looked at the public gallery. The relatives. That alone has told me how they're going to swing. The way they've looked at me. Or not looked at me, as the case may be. That's almost as obvious as those who have given me the holistic, evil eye. Especially when you collate all this information over three weeks. They're an open book. I am ninety five percent sure who has voted which way. I had a bit more faith prior to the trial. Yet, when I saw seven female and five males, I knew I was screwed from the start. What's with that anyway? That shouldn't be allowed. Given the nature of this case, that's incredibly prejudicial. A man can't get a fair go at all in today's world, let alone a fair trial in a sex case. People are supposed to be impartial or they have to excuse themselves from service. Please. No-one's impartial. Still, three of these guys are giving me a little hope. I can see that they're unsure. At least they're willing to give me the benefit of the doubt. For the rest, well, the vagina brigade had already fed my cock to the blender from the opening hour. A man can never accept impartiality from a woman. They always side with their own. Again, that's not all of them. There's a couple whom I think are actually on my side. A lady in her sixties and one around my age. Surprisingly. She seems like she's doing as instructed by keeping an open mind. The rest will stay loyal. The sisterhood. What's with that? They're barely nice to each other when their backs are turned. They'll turn on one another like teenagers at a dance festival for free ecstasy. Yet, when you throw a man into the mix, he's fucking ferret meat. May as well set him on fire and save the taxpayer the cash.

The court officer emerges from the door to the jury room. He delivers the obligatory three taps on the door.

I look to my lawyer, Stan. 'What's happening?' I whisper.

His assistant, a young woman, Miranda, looks through papers. As though she's still preparing for something.

'Could be anything,' Stan mutters.

The officer makes his way towards the judge. 'The jury has reached a verdict, Your Honour.'

'Very well. Send them in.'

The officer goes to the door and opens it. The jury begin to file back in. The same order as always.

'Already?' I whisper. 'Is this good or bad?'

'Sshh,' he says.

'It's only been two hours,' I say.

He doesn't reply. I know it's not good. It's too quick. How can they have had a proper discussion in two hours? Three weeks of testimony squeezed into a two-hour analysis?

I know what it means. They made up their minds long before now. All based on her word over mine. There was no footage of any incident. Only that we were together in the hotel lobby. That's it. No rape kit. Nothing. A trial based on hysteria, without facts. Still, there's a tiny part of me that has hope. Is that all it is? The human capacity for hope in the face of certain downfall?

The jury reach their seats, one by one and sit. There's a charged air. Everyone settles. There's a new silence. Not like on other occasions. An intangible but very real emotional thickness. My heart is pounding. It's fucking crunch time. I'm short of breath. I can barely stand it.

I look behind me to the gallery. I see my parents. My mum doesn't look happy. Dad looks like he hasn't slept for weeks. I also see my wife, Catherine, at her usual place in the second last row. On her own. Away from my parents. I wait for eye contact but she does not look. It's as though she already knows. Don't look at me then. It's only my life here. Not yours. She's prepared to move on. After she's offloaded a bucketload of tears to all our friends, sorry my ex-friends, to console her. Milk those victim points. Forget the real victim here. Oh, she might come see me in prison. Once. Just to tell everyone that she made the effort. That she tried. Really hard. But it was just too much for her. Poor dear. She's got to think of herself now. She's got to move on with her life. Yeah, dump and run. It suits you best. Just like all the rest.

Stan is tapping my arm. I look to the front. The judge is talking. I think I missed something.

'You are required to stand please, Mr. Thompson.'

'Oh, sorry.' I get to my feet.

Stan rises too. Miranda doesn't.

The judge looks to the jury. 'Has the jury reached its verdict?'

The spokesperson, a woman, stands. 'We have your Honour.'

'On Count One, being unlawful sexual assault. Do you find the accused guilty or not guilty?'

'Guilty.'

There's a collective sigh amongst the gallery.

There's a knot in my gut. Like a constricting tree trunk.

'On Count Two, sexual intercourse without consent. Guilty or not guilty.'

'Guilty.'

I shake my head. That's bullshit. There was no sexual intercourse.

‘On Count Three. Of detaining a person against their will. Guilty or not guilty.’

‘Not guilty.’

‘Hang on,’ I whisper. ‘Will that affect the other counts?’

Stan holds my arm to be quiet.

‘On Count Four. Grooming a child under eighteen for the purposes of sexual gratification. Do you find the accused guilty or not guilty?’

‘Guilty.’

There’s an audible series of sighs and murmurs. Someone is sobbing. Not for me. Their emotions are based on an illusion.

I’m not looking. Only at the jury spokeswoman. I knew she hated me from the start. Fucking bitch. ‘What the hell?’ I state.

‘Thank you,’ the judge says. ‘You may sit.’

I look to Stan. ‘One not guilty. What does that mean?’

‘Shhh. Tell you in a minute.’

‘Members of the jury. I thank you for your service here today and throughout these proceedings. It is a most honourable and noble service. One of the most hallowed services in our community, is that of serving in our judicial system. I thank you for your time and efforts over these past three weeks. You will not be required for service for a minimum period of three years. You are now excused from the court. Thank you one and all. You should be proud of yourselves.’

‘No, they shouldn’t,’ I mumble.

Stan squeezes my arm again.

‘Did they attend the same trial as me?’ I ask, none too quietly.

‘Mr Thompson. You have been found guilty by a jury of your peers...’

‘Not my peers!’

‘... on three of the four counts. You will now be removed from this court and await your sentencing at a further date.’ He nods. The security muscle is already moving towards me.

‘Hang on. Did they even attend the same trial as me? They weren’t out there long enough.’

The security guard grabs my arm.

The jury are watching.

‘A three-week trial for that? Come on! That can’t be right!’ I look to the jury, who under the court officer, are being ushered out. ‘You didn’t do your jobs properly! You’re biased!’

‘That’s enough, Mr Thompson,’ says the judge.

‘And you’re a woman. You’re biased too! You shouldn’t be involved in a case like this. You hate men. Like most women!’

‘Malcolm, quiet,’ says Stan.

‘You’re a man hater!’ I yell at her.

The judge stares back with undisguised disdain in her eyes.

‘See? You can’t hide it! You’re a feminist too! Send a man to jail. A win for you! Tell all your squid loving sisters!’

Stan yanks my arm hard and leans into my ear. ‘This can hurt your sentencing. Stop it.’

The room is filled with sounds of people in mass movement as they rise to leave. There are coughs and half cheers and murmurs and it's all over apparently. I'm the laughing stock of the room. The entertainment.

'Just calm down,' Stan says, while tidying his folders along with the always detached Miranda.

Another guard reaches me. They have an eager, defensive look in their dull orbs, as though they're expecting trouble. I won't give them the satisfaction of proving what big men they are. My mouth is a much better weapon.

'Tell me to my face, Your Holiness. You're happy with this result, aren't you? How many innocent men have you condemned, huh?'

I can tell that everyone is looking at me. Most of them haven't left. They're enraptured by this unexpected, additional sport.

'You're doing yourself no favours,' murmurs my lawyer.

'You've done me no fucking favours at all! You're fucking useless!'

'I did my best.'

'If that's your best, I'd hate to see you on a bad day.' The guards take one arm each. I offer no resistance. I look to my lawyer. 'Where am I going tonight, huh? And where are you going? Back to your king-sized bed with your silk cum stained sheets. While I fester on a cockroach ridden straw mattress!'

'I can't talk to you when you're like this.' He packs up his papers. Miranda finally looks at me. They're probably fucking. I should have known better than to trust them.

'I'll get in touch soon,' he says. 'Hopefully you'll have calmed down by then.'

'Calm? What do you expect? This is hardly the situation to be calm!'

The guards are leading me to a door. On the opposite side of the court, the last jury members, two older men, whom I thought was on my side, are exiting.

'Traitors! You sold out one of your own, you pussy whipped, limp dicks!'



I can't see them anymore. I'm through the doorway and towards my fate.  
They've killed me. 'This is persecution. It's a witch hunt. It's McCarthyism!  
McCarthyism!'

## Part One

### *Clara*

‘I heard you give great head,’ she says with a mix of flirtatiousness, curiosity and scepticism.

I smile. ‘We all have our strengths.’

She smiles back.

I have her.