

How She Kills

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A Monologue

## CHARACTER LIST

GILLIAN WILD - FEMALE, EARLY THIRTIES. SHE IS BRISTLING WITH NERVOUS, JITTERY ENERGY, BUT HAS A QUIET INNER STRENGTH ABOUT HER.

### SCENE 1

Gillian's bedroom.

There is a bed with the headboard pushed up against the wall on the left hand-side, on which Gillian sits with her hands clasped between her knees, facing the audience.

She is wearing plain clothes - ripped jeans, and an old blue top with a small hole in one side. Her hair is tied in a loose, somewhat untidy ponytail, and her hair looks knotted and unbrushed.

The room is sparse, with a chest-of-drawers opposite the bed against the opposite wall, which has a few things on the top, like a picture frame and a bottle of perfume.

There is a wardrobe next to the chest-of-drawers, and in the middle of the back wall is a closed door, next to which are two pictures, one either side of the door - one is a painting by Noah Buchanan called 'Kai', and the other is 'Haven', by Michael C. Hayes.

Gillian seems ever-so-slightly nervous, or tense.

Perhaps unsure of what she is about to say, or how she is going to go about saying it.

She clears her throat once or twice before she begins speaking, glances up at the audience, smiles nervously, and begins.

GILLIAN

(Quietly. She is avoiding looking up, speaking to her hands which she fidgets with in her lap, picking at the skin around her nails.)

For two years.

(Pause)

I was abused.

(Pause. We can tell by how she has said it all in one breath, that this is still not something she is comfortable admitting, or has fully acknowledged.)

I had my life. Stolen from me. By a woman who thought that it was hers for the taking.

(She begins to gain confidence and momentum. She braves looking up for the first time.)

She told me she loved me.

(Quieter, and again she glances down.)

And I believed her.

She...

(Pause.)

Told me she'd "give me the world", but instead she made me not want to be a part of it.

(Pause.)

Any more.

(There is a longer pause where she gathers herself, and once again braves looking up. She is still wringing her hands in her lap. Fidgeting and pulling the sleeves of her top down over her fingers.)

And I'm telling you this, because...

(She tails off. Considers what she is going to say.)

I'm telling my story. For all the other women. For all the women who will come after me. For all of the women who will find themselves trapped. With her. Or any other woman, who finds herself trapped. By a person they don't recognise anymore. A person they thought they loved.

(She becomes just a little bit emotional, but manages to contain it, and carries on, gradually building her strength and momentum even further.)

To all those women. I want to tell you. I want to say. You need to know that you are not alone. Please know that you are not alone. And I know it feels like it. I know that. I know it feels like sometimes you just can't. Keep going. But you need to know that you can leave. You don't have to stay. You don't have to keep doing what you are doing. Over and over and over.

(She hesitates.)

Any more.

You don't have to stay at all, and even though it feels impossible. Even though it might feel as though killing yourself is the only safe way out. Please believe me when I say it's not. Please believe me when I tell you that you can do this.

(She looks at the audience. Pleading with whomever is out there that needs to hear this.)

Because you can leave. And you will be OK.

(She desperately wants to get this point across, we can feel that.)

You. Will be OK.

(She blinks, gathers herself again and wipes her eyes haphazardly with the sleeve she has pulled over her hand.)

She was a narcissist. My ex-girlfriend. And that's what they do. They make you feel...

(She searches for the right words)

They make you feel as though your life is not worth living without them, but it is unbearable with them.

That's what I lived with.

(Pause. It feels strange to her to be talking about this so openly.)

And. I don't talk much about it, because...there's the cliché. The eye-roll when you start talking about abuse. Or some idiot that thinks I'm just the...

(Sarcastic, she halfheartedly raises her hands to make air-quotations.)

"Bitter ex". And I know. I know I'm just another one, in a long line of...other ones. I know that I'm just the next one on her list. Because they pick people like me. And you.

They seek us out. People who are sensitive. Nice. Kind. Or vulnerable in some way. And they prey on us. Tell us stories about how awful their lives have been. How terrible their ex-partners were and how badly they were treated by them. So when I do tell people. When I do talk about it, I find people don't. They don't really know... What a narcissist is? What it means. To be a narcissist.

(She takes a moment to collect her thoughts.)

People seem to think it's this, "self-obsessed delusions of grandeur"...way of being. But it's not. It's.. Worse than that.

It's...

(She can't quite find the right words to describe just how horrific it is.)

It's like being suffocated. Only you're letting it happen. Because you just don't have the energy left anymore. To fight. And you think it might be better. Just to let it happen. Just to let yourself go.

(Another pause, and she tries again to describe how it feels.)

It's like having your life. Stolen from you. But you didn't even realise it was disappearing. Until you have nothing left. Not even your own sense of self. Even reality doesn't exist in the way you always thought it did.

(She seems uncomfortable at the memory.)

That's the worst bit. It was for me. Anyway. I thought I was losing my mind. I would listen to her make-up lies about. Everything. Tiny little things that wouldn't make any sense. She would lie to people about what I did. For a living. She would tell people I was a lot more successful than I was. Or. She would take me to parties. I hated parties. I hated people. Her sort of people. And because she didn't want me to speak to anyone. Because she wanted to be the centre of attention. She told people I was deaf.

(She almost laughs at the incredulousness and absurdity of it.)

I know it sounds ridiculous. That's why I second guessed myself.

That's why I thought what she said must be true. I must be losing my mind. Because over and over and over again she would tell these stories to me, or to other people while I was there, listening, and she would tell them in such a convincing way, that gradually I just assumed that it was me. There was something wrong with me.

(Pause. Draws in a breath and speaks through an exhale.)

So she took me to the doctors. Dr. Smith. Who she made a point of telling me was far hotter than I could ever be.

(She laughs again. Ruefully.)

I sat in the office and Dr. Smith looked into my eyes, weighed me. Took my blood pressure. She asked me how I was feeling. My girlfriend told her that I wasn't myself. That I was withdrawn, that I wasn't interested in food or sex, that I seemed "mentally unstable", and she said what she always said when I was sad, she told the doctor, "I don't think I can handle being with someone who is mentally unstable." So she had to do something. Because of course she loved me, and she

(Sarcastic)

"Hated seeing me this way", so Dr. Smith prescribed me anti-depressants. Even though I said I didn't want to take them. I would have gone to therapy. But I wasn't allowed. My girlfriend wouldn't let me. I'd been seeing one just before we got together. But she soon put a stop to that. She told me if I was unstable enough to see a therapist, then we couldn't be together. So I stopped. Not because I was weak, or naive, or stupid. But because I was being manipulated, and I didn't see it.

(She draws in another breath, it all seems a bit too much. She stands up and walks to the chest-of-drawers where she has her things, there is a picture in a frame. She picks it up and smiles down at it. It is a picture of her with her family.)

I wasn't allowed to see them.

(She gestures briefly with the frame.)

My family. Before we were together I used to see my mum every week. We would meet-up in town and have breakfast at a little tea shop. Mrs. Pipers it was called. We would have a pot of tea between the two of us, and we would order two different slices of cake, cut them in half and have half each.

We would talk about everything. Anything. But then I met her. My girlfriend. And she would complain that I was too close to my mum. That we spent too much time together and it was “all a bit weird.” She made me feel like it was something unnatural. That I had to stop doing it to keep the peace in my relationship.

And because I was under her control. I did. I made my excuses every week. Said I couldn’t meet her. Said I was too busy. And gradually my mum stopped asking. It happened with my children, too. They’re five and seven. My son, the younger one, was so close to me. We would always hold hands, and cuddle, and he came to sleep in my bed most nights.

She was jealous of him.

(We see her anger begin to bubble beneath the surface, laced with upset and emotion.)

She wouldn’t hold my hand if he was holding my other hand. She would walk ahead and refuse to speak to me.

She told me I was disgusting. For letting him sleep in the same bed as me. She told me that if Social Services got wind of it, I’d be arrested, or I’d have them taken away from me.

(She can’t continue to speak about her son without getting upset so she moves on.)

Then I started losing my friends, too. One by one they’d stop calling, stop messaging me on Facebook...She didn’t like me seeing them anyway. She kept telling me that I should “always put her first”, that she should “always be top of my list.” Above my friends, above my family.

(She pauses for effect.)

Above my children.

(She sets the picture back down and looks at herself in the mirror. She unties her hair from the messy ponytail it's in and runs her fingers through it. Then, she picks up a hairbrush and begins slowly brushing her hair.)

She knew the pass-code to my phone. And she used to check it. She never told me she did. Never admitted it, even though I asked her once, when I was feeling brave.

She made me change all of my passwords to one she said was better. Much safer.

Sometimes she would ask to see my phone. She would take it from me and read my Facebook messages, and then she would punish me, if someone had messaged me. If someone had said they missed me.

That's how I proved that she could trust me. Because of course she had been so hurt, by people in the past.

That's what she said. She told me her last girlfriend had cheated on her, so many times. And she'd caught them. In bed together, like an episode of Eastenders.

And the girlfriend before that. Rachel. She'd tried to kill herself, just to get back at her. To manipulate and bully her into doing what she wanted to do. And she told me that was because she was so emotionally unstable. And that's why she was why she was so scared, so traumatised. That's why she was so worried that I would "go the same way."

So she had to keep an eye on me. She had to check that I was OK. But it was only because she cared. Only because she loved me.

(She finishes brushing her hair, it's straight and shining. She sets the brush down and begins to wipe her face with a face wipe to get the mascara off from under her eyes, and the day old make-up)

I didn't realise then that the reason she was "emotionally unstable" was because she was living with a narcissist. Because she just couldn't bare her life anymore. There was nothing left to live for.

Instead, I felt sorry for her, for having to go through all of these relationships with people who treated her so badly. And I tried to show her. I tried to show her not everyone is like that. I wasn't like that.

(She throws the face wipe in the direction of the bin that is next to the dressing table, but it just misses and lands on the floor beside it. She doesn't pick it up.)

She took me to Bingo once. I hated every moment of it. She said we wouldn't go to the main Bingo hall in town because that's where she worked, Rachel. And that Rachel had banned her from going there. So we went to the other one, on the outskirts of town. We sat at sticky-topped tables and ate soggy, greasy chips and drank pints of warm beer.

(She pauses, smiles slightly.)

I won £150 pounds. Which would have helped. I thought of all the food I could buy, or things I needed to get for the children. Like new school shoes, or food for their packed lunch.

But when we went up to the counter to claim the prize money, the woman at the desk passed the money to me. And she, my girlfriend, held her hand out, grinning at me. Just standing there holding her hand out, waiting for me to give her the money I'd just won.

(She sets about getting the make-up out of a drawer and sets it down in front of the mirror, foundation and blusher and a brush and a sponge for the foundation. Mascara too. She says the next line as if she doesn't care at all, although we know she does.)

So I gave it to her.

(She dabs foundation onto the sponge and begins to apply it to her face.)

Because she'd conditioned me so well. To be obedient. So I gave it to her. And she turned to the woman at the counter and said, "I've trained her well."

And she had. That's exactly what she'd done.

But I didn't see it then. And still I didn't leave. I stayed with her. Convinced she was just hurt from all the other times with all the other women.

That I could help her, heal her. That maybe she wasn't actually that bad.

(She pauses occasionally, and makes sure the make-up smooths down her jaw to her neck.)

That's the worst thing. When people ask, "Why did you stay?" Because they don't get it. They don't get that the reason you stay. The reason you stay is fear. Absolute fear.

(She sets the sponge down and places her hands on the chest-of-drawers, looks at herself in the mirror for a moment.)

Fear of what might happen if you leave. What she will do. To you, your family, your friends. And fear of who you will find you have become, if you do leave.

(She picks up the make-up brush and begins to apply blush to her cheeks.)

I was scared of her.

(She pauses briefly.)

More than scared. And I was scared that my life would be destroyed if I left, because I was convinced that she would do everything in her power to do just that. I'd heard her threaten it about her ex. About other people. She'd said so to her sister one day when we were standing in the kitchen. She'd said, about her ex, "I know how to play the long game. I'll ruin her in the end." Sometimes I still hear that in my head. Even now.

(She starts applying the blusher again and then continues to face powder.)

So why would I be any different?

(Pause while she applies the powder.)

It's hard to talk about what happened in that time. It's hard to say it out loud. I didn't notice it in the beginning. Everything we did was her idea. Everything was. Done on her terms.

I suppose that should have been a sign. Now I look back on it.

(She looks at herself in the mirror again. She's tired and drained from it all. She begins to put on mascara.)

I was gaslit. That's another one of those terms that a lot of people don't really get. And I didn't really know it. Didn't know it at all, actually, until a friend pointed it out, and even then I didn't believe her.

I had to Google it. One night when I was on my own. She was out, with someone.

Georgie. I think her name was. Another one of her women that she was sleeping with behind my back. That she thought I didn't know about.

It said, and I remember it because I knew it made sense even though I couldn't believe it, it said: "gaslighting refers to a specific type of manipulation where the manipulator is trying to get someone else to question their own reality, memory, sanity, intuition or judgement."

And I hated myself for believing the cliché that she might get better. That it might just be coincidence that all of these psychological terms like "gaslighting" and "manipulation", and "narcissism" kept making so much sense.

(She finishes with the mascara and puts on lip gloss.)

So, I carried on living in that life. And she carried on changing situations. Lying about things that happened. Events. Or things I, or we, had done or said. And her friends and co-workers and strangers we met believed every. Single. Word.

(She sets the lip gloss down but doesn't tidy anything away. She goes to the closet that is next to the chest-of-drawers and opens one door so that she is not blocked by the door to the audience. She begins rifling through clothes that we can't see, pulling out a few things and setting them on the bed.)

And I would keep telling myself that the red flags and the little voice in my head telling me that I was in danger. Were wrong. And I would believe what she said was true.

Because she was in a position of power. She had a good job. People respected her and people believed her, so why wouldn't I trust her?

That's how she ended up making me clean and tidy her house every day. She told her mum that I was so good at tidying.

So good at looking after the house whilst she was at work. She listed all of the things that I did, to her mum. All of the things that were helpful. And I stood right next to her while she listed them, and I knew I didn't do any of those things.

(Pause. She stands looking at the things on the bed.)

I didn't live with her. I had my own house. My own home. But she wouldn't let me call it that. I had to call her house home. I had to call the house where I lived with my children, 'the other house,' and if I slipped up, she would punish me. She would say things like, "oh, so that's how you really feel, is it? Why don't you go back to your "real home", then? Huh?" So I did my best to show her that I thought of her home as a home, too. I did my best to convince myself of that, too. She wrote me jobs lists every single day. It had all the things she had told her mum that I did on.

(She dips a hand into the pocket of the old worn jeans that she's wearing and pulls out an old folded and refolded piece of paper that looks like it's falling apart.)

Here, I'll show you one:

(She begins to read from the paper, holding it with both hands and turning to the audience.)

- 1- Give both fridges (little one in garage and kitchen one) a good clean and de-frost. Make sure you use anti-bacterial spray on both.
- 2- Throw out all of the out-of-date food.
- 3- Find and put all of the iPads and other electronics on charge.
- 4- Change all of the bed sheets in my room, and the children's rooms, and make all three beds.
- 5- Deep clean and tidy the whole house - Hoover, dust, polish, sweep, bleach etc.
- 6- Wash and hang out the rugs. Make sure they are dry and put back down before I get home.

7- Clear the entrance to the garage/fridge side a little and pick up the dog shit in the garden. Walk the dogs, too.

8- Make sure dinner is cooked by the time I get home.

9- Tidy up all of the kids shit and make sure the whole house and garden are spotless.

10- Do laundry, dry the laundry, fold and put it all away and do the washing up. I don't want to see any plates out drying when I get home from work, so make sure that they are all put away.

(She re-folds it and puts it into her pocket.  
Takes a moment before continuing.)

But that's not half of it. That's not even the tip of the iceberg. Sometimes there would be other things. Like fixing things. Putting up new curtains. Or running errands to pick up medication for her.

(Pause.)

I didn't mind the gardening. But the things I found worst of all. The things I found the most horrific. The most degrading. Were walking into her house in the morning after dropping my children off at school, and finding that she hadn't asked her children to take their breakfast bowls through into the kitchen from the dining room. She hadn't asked them to tidy up or put any of their toys away.

More often than not the entire big box of Lego would be upended all over the floor. Cereal bowls with drying cereal would be left on the table with milk sloshed over the edge onto the table cloth.

The milk and juice bottle lids would be off, and half-way across the room.

There would be food on the floor. Their rooms would be a tip, with paper and pens everywhere. Their beds unmade and toothpaste spat in globs all over the sink in the bathroom.

(Pause. She glances again at the clothes on the bed.)

Her bedroom wasn't any better.

(She pauses again, touching the hemline of a black silk shirt she has out on the bed.)

She would take clothes out of the closet to try on in the morning, and if she chose not to wear it, she wouldn't put it back in the cupboard, she would toss it onto the bed, or the floor, for me to tidy-up.

She would never make her bed, and would leave make-up strewn across the dresser.

In the evenings, when we were in bed, she would make me bring her snacks, like Curly Wurly chocolate bars.

I remember once, she held the wrapper up over the edge of the bed, looked at me lying beside her, and said, "You'll get this in the morning."

And she dropped the wrapper onto the floor.

Despite the fact that there was a bin less than six foot away.

Because she thought it was funny.

That's the sort of thing she would do. To put me in my place.

(There are a few minutes of silence while she takes off her top, tosses it onto the bed and puts on the black top, she then strips off the old jeans and puts on a tighter pair that are that bright blue colour.)

I used to write.

(Pauses again.)

I was a writer. That's what I did. I wrote poetry, and fiction, I wrote stories about the world inside my head. But that world dried up. That world swallowed me whole and instead it became a twisted coping mechanism.

In that time that I spent with her I stopped writing. I stopped drawing. I stopped reading and doing all of the things that I loved to do because I didn't have the time, but worse than not having something as simple as the time, I didn't have the inclination either. After a while I no longer heard the characters clamoring with excitement in my head. I no longer heard their stories. It was just cold. Silent. Still I couldn't write because I didn't have time, and I couldn't draw because my hands shook.

I wasn't earning any money.

I ran out of money.

I ran out of time..

(She goes over to the chest-of-drawers again and gets out the perfume that she sprays on her neck and wrists and then looks at herself again in the mirror. Taking the time to really look.)

She bullied me.

(She turns back to the audience. Standing by the dresser and the open door of the closet. The room looks considerably more messy than it did.)

She humiliated me. She belittled me in private and in front of...anyone. Everyone.

And if you know how that feels, I am sorry. I am so, so sorry.

If you know how it feels to be taken down in front of people you barely know, or worse in front of your own friends and family, to have things said about you which aren't even true, in front of you and behind your back. But you can't do anything about it because you don't trust your own mind anymore...I'm sorry.

(She stares out, above the audience, steadying herself for what she is about to say.)

She raped me.

(There is silence for a moment. She clears her throat quietly, her eyes are glassy and she looks anywhere but at the audience.)

But how do you...how do you prove that? People are often surprised. Even doctors.

Even Dr.. Bloody Smith. Medical professionals seem. Suspicious. Or, or. Doubtful.

When they hear of a woman raping another woman.

(Speaks as though she is repeating the doctors words, incredulous. As though it is a ridiculous thought.)

How could sex between two women be violent enough to cause physical or mental pain or injury?

How was it rape. Even if sometimes. I never said no?

(She pauses again.)

Because I didn't say. Yes.

(Another pause. Longer this time. She moves to the bed, sits back down on the edge of it and looks down at her hands, in much the same position she had started her story in.)

Once, we went to Felixstowe. It's on the coast. A little town. We sat there on the beach eating a picnic that I had made us.

Her friend was there. Kelly. Someone she worked with. She was nice enough. And we borrowed a paddle board from her.

She made my son get on it. He's scared of water. Always has been. Since he was little. I remember taking him on holiday to a caravan park. He was only tiny. Maybe two? I tried to take him into the swimming pool. But the second the water touched his feet he screamed and wouldn't go in. He panicked. So I didn't make him. He's always been funny about water. Ever since.

So I never made him. He never learned to swim. And maybe that's my fault? Maybe if I had, this wouldn't have happened, so maybe she was right. Maybe she had been right all along. It was all my fault.

I should have taught him how to swim. Or taken him to swimming lessons. And then he would have been a fish. Just like her two children, "They're like fish", she used to say, to everyone near us on the beach. Whenever we would go. Boasting so much that you could see them cringe. But she would never see that.

(She draws in a breath to ready herself for telling this particularly hard part of the story.)

Anyway. She bullied him in to going on the board. Told him he was a big baby. He was a wuss. And I'll never forget his expression, like he knew, he knew if he didn't his mother would get punished.

So he went on it. Even though I said you don't have to. I told him that. But he knew anyway. And he didn't want me hurt. So he sat on it. I went on with him, just to be sure he would be OK.

Even though I was there it wasn't OK, because I wasn't strong enough to say no, because I was so low, so abused that I couldn't say it. I couldn't even stick up for my own children. When they needed me the most.

And then. Somehow. Somehow the board tilted. Tipped. And he fell off, just slipped right into the North Sea.

(Pause.)

The water was cold. And you know how it is, you can't see. It's grey and brown and cold and strong. I went in after him, I could feel the board on top of me. Bumping up and down on the top of my head. I couldn't see. I couldn't touch the bottom.

I was screaming his name underwater. I was reaching out for him. Throwing my arms around under the water to try to find him. To try to grab hold of anything at all.

(Pause. She's getting emotional again. Trying to hold back the tears, and her voice is strained. She whispers.)

It seemed too long.

(Clears her throat. Finds her voice again, although it's strained and quiet.)

But then I touched something.

I grabbed him.

I pulled him up.

I pulled him up. The weight of him pushing me back under. And I pushed him out towards the sky. And he was breathing.

(She has to stop again. Momentarily. She's crying now.)

Somehow I got him to the shore. Out of that fucking sea.

He was blinking and gasping. Like he didn't know what had happened or who he was, and when I said his name and held him against he wouldn't or couldn't say a word. My daughter just sat staring at us, terrified.

You know how you see in the news, children dying a day later from drowning, delayed drowning? Whatever they call it? I was terrified that would happen.

That I would wake up tomorrow morning and he would be dead.  
I wanted to take him to the hospital, or a doctor. But she wouldn't let me.  
She was the driver. And I was trapped there. With nowhere to go.  
Instead I had to spend the whole day sitting on the beach, cradling my terrified child.

(Pause. Choked.)

Thinking that my little boy was going to die.

(She takes a moment to get herself together.  
Then says through tears.)

I e-mailed the police.

(Then, louder, more controlled.)

My therapist said she felt like I was strong enough to. I'd been seeing her for about eight months.

So I did. I wrote an e-mail to them, and I put everything in it.  
Everything she did to me.

I had to go to a special building and be interviewed on video. I had to sit in a room, on a sofa. Like a pretend sitting room, and I had to tell this policewoman everything that had happened. I had to go into graphic detail. About the rape. About my son nearly drowning. About the weeks and months of abuse.

(Pause. Then full of rage, as if she is possessed briefly.)

What I didn't tell them was that I would have killed her. If I could. I would kill her. Given the chance. If I didn't have my children. I would kill her. That's what she did to me. I wanted her dead. Then, finally, she would be able to see how I felt. How she made every woman to ever end up in her bed, feel.

(Pause. She goes back to what she was saying originally, slightly shocked that she has admitted that she would like her dead.)

They were perfectly nice. The police. Told me they'd support me. Told me there were resources available for that.

But they don't tell you. They don't warn you that when you tell them, you're going to have to tell them everything. And the detail, going through that. Is...

(She trails off, before continuing.)

I told them though.

The policeman said she had been his teacher. At High School.

She'd taught him PE, and he knew her. Remembered her.

I'd been speaking to her ex. The one before me. We had swapped stories. I'd spoken to her before I e-mailed the police. And we had so many similarities. She had taken us both to the same clothes shops, because we had to wear what she wanted us to wear. What she thought was appropriate or presentable.

We were both taken to the same hairdressers. A girl she used to teach called Amy. She worked in Ipswich. I was taken there one night after I was told my hair was brassy, and she made me feel ugly. More ugly than I already felt.

She forced me to have my hair cut. Because she bullied me into it.

Then she took me to the doctors again, just like she had her ex. When we started acting a bit funny. A bit...

(Again she puts air quotations around the words.)

“Unstable.”

She said at first that I wasn't remembering things right.

Or that I was day dreaming too much. And I don't know. Maybe I was. I was day dreaming more, and I wasn't feeling right.

I lost so much weight no matter how much I ate. One day I went to the bakery in town. I bought a box of four jam doughnuts and I ate them all.

I didn't even taste them.

I tried to put on weight but it didn't happen. Would not happen. Instead my hair carried on falling out in hand fulls..

I lost two stone and my boobs were “flat and ugly”, she said. And she “didn't want to be with a piece of paper”, she said.

And my jeans wouldn't stay up no matter how tight I did my belt up.

I was sick, sick in head she told me, and I believed her.

So she took me back to Dr.. Smith.

She said I was unstable, again. And she wasn't sure if she could be with someone who was mentally unstable. Again. And on the way to the doctors she told me how much she wanted to be between Dr. Smith's legs.

How she wished she was free to fuck her. Because of course she said Dr. Smith fancied her too. She was sure of it. And if I wasn't careful. If I didn't sort myself out and stop being mental. She would leave me for her.

So I sat there, again. And looked at Dr. Smith. With her neat, brushed, bleached-blond hair, and her neat plucked eyebrows, and her highlighted cheekbones, and her plain, smart, expensive looking clothes.

And I looked down at the split ends of my hair against the blue top I was wearing with the hole in one side, and the ripped jeans with the stain on the knee done up with the brown leather belt with a crack in one side, and my shoes with the worn out soles.

And Dr. Smith looked in my eyes, just like she did before, but this time I saw more in hers than she would ever see in mine.

She took my measurements and checked me over. She asked me how I was and I didn't even try to speak. My girlfriend answered for me.

I was put on more antidepressants. Stronger ones this time. And she asked for some diazepam, to keep me calm, if she needed to calm me down.

But when we got home and I asked for one, she said they weren't for me at all.

She had taken so many the doctors wouldn't prescribe them to her anymore. So they were for her. And she kept them. They were just for her.

(Long pause.)

She cheated on me, too. Several times. More than once. More than I know. With...

(She tries to remember how many there were.)

Three women. That I knew of, anyway. There were probably more. There was one. Sarah. Who, right from the very beginning. We were kept apart, never allowed to meet, or talk, or...

There were other women, too. She'd hide her phone from me, tilt the screen away so I couldn't catch a glimpse of a name or a message.

Once, I managed to look through her phone. We were at the beach, and I went back to get something. To the car. I saw her phone on the seat, and I looked at it.

She'd have called me paranoid. If she knew. "Unstable and paranoid."

I called it intuition. And if she had caught me it would have been worth the silent treatment.

It was all there. Messages from Sarah dated way back. To when she was with her ex-girlfriend. Graphic messages of sex.

(Pause. She finds this particularly hard to say.)

Then there were the messages about us. The messages about me. It made me feel as though the inside of me was on fire. When I read them. As though I had been set alight. I couldn't breathe. I couldn't think, or, or speak. I didn't have time to read them all. But I saw enough. Declarations of undying love.

And there were so many lies, about me, about her, about her life.

(Pause, takes a breath. She is speaking quicker now. She is re-feeling the anger and frustration she felt all those months ago.)

And what shocked me the most was that she lied about things just to make me out to be a bad partner. A bad person. She made me out to be this. Monster. This person she could barely stand to be around, who didn't buy her enough gifts, didn't put her first or make her top of their list. She told her that I never did anything around the house. That I was lazy. She told her she had to do everything. Tidy, clean. Everything. She told her about my unnatural bond with my own child.

(She doesn't want to begin talking about that again, so she changes the subject yet again. She is still standing by the chest-of-drawers, her hands balled into loose fists by her sides.)

Once, in the very beginning, she told me she was allergic to bee stings, and she told me this story. She said, "once I was stung by a bee, and it swelled up so much that I had to go to hospital, and they drew a line around the bit where I was stung. In blue pen. To track how much it was spreading."

How awful. I thought.

But then, months later, her friend Russell came over for dinner, which I cooked.

Begrudgingly. After an argument we had over me being late to her house because I was caring for my children, when I should have been caring for her.

Russell came and he could see that I had been crying, but he dutifully ignored it. Because he was her friend, not mine, and he knew his place.

(Pause.)

We were talking about summer, or perhaps bees, I don't remember, but I do remember how he stood in the doorway to the kitchen, and he told me that exact story that she had told me, only in this version of the story it happened to him, he was the one in hospital. With the blue pen drawn around the sting.

(Pause.)

That was one of the first times it happened, one of the first times I realised. That despite the fact that she was constantly talking and talking about how honesty was what she thrived on. That honesty was the most important thing to her. That she never ever lied. Despite all that. She was lying. All the time. All. The. Time. Everything was a lie. And I realised it then. All at once. All at fucking once. I realised who she was. I realised how SHE, the very being of her. Was a lie. The people she called her friends were nothing but people under her control. Her family hated her. They placated her. Tolerated her. But they didn't love her. She. Was a lie.

(Pause.)

And gradually I noticed more things, over and over again I noticed the inconsistencies of her stories that added up to be someone else's entirely. But the scary part was that she believed these stories. Absolutely. She truly believed that this was who she was, and that other people believed her. She doesn't see how we, how everyone, sees through her lies...

(Pause.)

I took the antidepressants only for a week or so this time. But they made me so sick, and dizzy. And I didn't want to be on them. So I stopped taking them. And I lied. I told her I was still taking them. And she believed me. Or at least I thought she had believed me. But later. Ages after. When she was long gone and out of my life, I called the doctors. A routine call, just a medication review. With my new doctor. And I discovered that the tablets had been picked up, on my behalf, and without telling me, she had given me the tablets in secret, crushed them into my food or a drink when I wasn't looking and kept me on them. Kept me feeling worse than I already did.

(Inhales. She is coming to the end of her story and she is emotionally and physically drained and absolutely exhausted from having to retell everything.)

And I know.

(Pause.)

I know she will tell so many people the same stories she told me about her ex. But she will tell them about me. Instead.

She will cry and tell them all how she is the victim.

(Pause. Firmly.)

She will tell them how I reacted. But she won't tell them what she did to cause that reaction.

(Pause. Quieter.)

I was scared. I was lonely. I lived in the fight or flight response. Always ready to apologise. To make something better or diffuse a situation by immediate defeat. I had become a non-person. I was afraid to reach out for help for the same reason I was afraid to leave.

Because I was terrified of the consequences.

(Pause. Looking directly at the audience.)

I was no longer the woman I was before.

(Pause.)

You could see it. Everyone could see it.

Except me.

(Pause.)

They way she screwed herself into me, bit by bit. Burrowing under my skin, into my flesh.

Into every single bit of me.

Until I was possessed. By this woman, who would pick me up like a puppet when she wanted me, and throw me aside to exist as nothing but a shell, the next.

And the awful thing is. Maybe the worst thing? Is that when she was pulled out of me.

When I ripped her out of me.

There was this hole, left behind. This wound.

(Pause. Dream-like.)

But I didn't miss her. I felt relieved.

In fact. I didn't feel much at all, because she had taught me not to feel.

But I could feel the slow rotting of it, the gaping flapping of my flesh around that hole, and the cold air that would rush in to fill that space that she had left, like a cork plucked from a bottle.

I was suddenly vulnerable. Suddenly exposed. And I had to deal with this. I had to exist, somehow, on my own.

It was like coming back to life. That's how I imaged it.

(Pause.)

Because that's how it felt.

I had been living as a ghost. I had moved about the house but I wasn't really there. I never had been. I was dead, I was acting out a part, day in, day out, but I wasn't there, not really.

And of course, time went on and I forgot who I was. The children grew, birthdays came and went, every day I would wake up, I would go through the list, and then I would sleep. Nightmare filled sleep.

(Pause.)

I was suffocating. I was dead, before I even realised I was dying.

(Pause. This is the culmination of everything. The room has morphed from a neat room, to a messy room, with clothes tossed on the bed, make-up strewn on the chest-of-drawers, drawers and doors left open, and the face wipe on the floor. And she has morphed into someone new, someone physically unrecognisable from when she began. She sits up straighter, no longer nervous, and looks out from her place on the edge of the bed into the audience.)

But then that's what we do. Isn't it. Narcissists.

(Pause.)

That's how we kill.

CURTAIN