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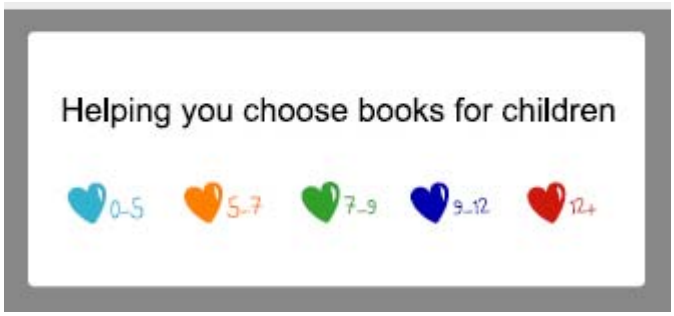

opening extract from

Sara's Face

written by

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Andersen

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Introduction

Just about everyone knows the story of Jonathon Heat and Sara Carter. It's common currency, revealed to us through a thousand newspaper headlines, magazine articles, news bulletins, TV shows and an endless commentary on the radio. Heat's sheer celebrity is one factor that made the story of such universal interest. While he still had one, his was perhaps the most famous face on the planet. We've been hearing about him for years but the strange nature of his crimes and his terrible fate have made this particular story his most lasting legacy to us.

Sara is different. She comes down to us as a mystery, a figure without explanation. Her refusal or inability to speak have led to endless speculation about her, but the story of her hopes and dreams and her role in the terrible way in which they were fulfilled, remains elusive. How much did she plan? Was she in control the whole time, or was she just the innocent victim of Heat and his surgeon, Wayland Kaye? It's the purpose of this book to try to cast some light on the girl herself.

As someone used to trying to create an impression of truth, investigating actual truth has proved to be a tricky affair. Both Heat and Sara seem to have been master

dissemblers themselves, with only very shaky ideas of who they really were or what they wanted to become. Heat, of course, is in prison. Sara's fate is more open to speculation. Since her failure to come and give evidence in court, rumours have circulated widely; madness or death, or the terrible nature of her injuries seem to be the most likely options, but to this day, no one is really sure. I'm a novelist doing a journalist's job, and my brief has been to get at what people thought and felt, and what their motivations were as much as simply to describe the unfolding of events. What goes on in people's hearts is a notoriously tricky thing to know. I've done my best to understand rather than speculate, but frankly, I've been amazed at how little positive truth you come across after even the most thorough investigation. Everything that happens is filtered through opinion and memory, and of course by how much other people want you to know. No two people remember anything in exactly the same way. I've done my best to verify everything before I came to write it. Most of all, I've done my best to be true to Sara.

I've been able to speak to almost all the people involved in the events that took place in Cheshire in 2005, except of course the two main protagonists. Even with all the contacts in my hand, Sara has proved to be incredibly elusive. She told so many different versions of what was going on to so many different people, it's as if she has done her best to extinguish her real self in favour of her own legend. Perhaps that's the nature of her tragedy. Like a religious figure or a character from

myth, it's nothing she ever said or did, but her story itself that forces her on our attention and inspires our imagination. In that sense, she more than achieved her ambition of making fame itself a work of art.

There is one great asset I've been given access to, however – the video diary that Sara kept on and off over the years, including during her stay at Home Manor Farm. This may be the only chance we will ever have of hearing her speak directly to us again, so let's start off with that right away. Here she is talking about her boyfriend, Mark, a few days before she went into the hospital where she first met Jonathon Heat.

Sara – 2nd April 2005

(Sara is sitting in a chair looking off to the side of the camera, as if someone else is sitting there talking to her. But hers is the only voice we hear. In fact, she's pretending to be interviewed for the TV. Occasionally she glances at the camera and examines something – she can probably see herself on a monitor. At other times, she forgets where she is and seems to be talking almost to herself.

It's as if she's working out her own thoughts and feelings through this pretend interview.)

No, that's not true. I did love him, I really did. I still do. But it has to *work*. Love isn't the same as compatibility, I've had to learn that. It's a hard lesson. You'd think love would be enough. Mark was too different from me. It had to stop.

(She pauses as if she's being asked a question.)

Well, we seemed to get along so well but in the end, we're actually perfect opposites. He thinks, like, the sensible people are the ones who have it sorted. Like *they're* going to inherit the earth. *(Laughs.)* Like

sensible is *it*. Anything you do that's important, it has to be sensible, that's Mark, whereas me, I want everything I do that's important to be unexpected – just about ready to bend everything sideways.

I used to scare him, I think. 'You'll get hurt,' he used to say, but maybe what he really meant was, he'd get hurt. He used to talk about it as if it had already happened. I mean – as if he could sit down and work out the future with a pencil and paper. You don't work out the future! The future works *you* out. To see the future you have to be able to prophesy, and it's not the sensible ones who can do that – it's the people who don't know what on earth is going on, the ones who know absolutely nothing who can see into the future and see ghosts and that. I've done it. I may talk about it one day. He wants to make sure he has enough pants packed for the journey through life. Well, I might not even be wearing any pants at all. You think I know fuck all, but I know fuck nothing – that's me. I don't know who I am, I don't even know what I am. That's how I can see into the future. That's how sensible I am!

(She laughs, as delighted with her own words as if they had been spoken by someone else. She leans forward to the hidden monitor and fixes her hair, then leans back and sighs.)

Stick to the flesh, boy! I am the spirit.
He's the flesh all right, though. He does my head in

sometimes, I want him so much. That's what I miss most. Being close. He's someone you can get very close to.

(Sara looks down and fiddles with her shirt, frowning, as if she's forgotten where she is.)

We were lying on the sofa at his flat. We'd just been busy. Busy bees, we call it. I was lying there with a skirt on and just about nothing else and he had my T-shirt rolled up and he was sort of adoring my boobs. Boob adoration.

'Gorgeous. Like puppies. Like warm little puppies with hot pink noses,' he was saying, and he kept giving me goose flesh by breathing on them.

'Well, make the most of them, they won't be around much longer,' I told him.

'What do you mean, you're not going to put them away, are you?' he said. *(Laughs.)* He makes me laugh, I'll forgive him anything for making me laugh. I miss that about him, too. Yeah! A boy has to make me laugh!

'I've started saving up,' I told him. He knew what I meant. I was serious. I wanted to tell him because he's my boyfriend. He's involved. I mean, he ought to be my soul mate or something, but that's too much to ask from someone who's only sensible.

I knew we were going to have a row about it.

You ought to be grateful I've got my clothes on, it's such a mess underneath. Talk about cellulite. It's

revolting. This tit's practically under my arm when I lie down. What good's that on a photo shoot?

'They use tit tape for that,' he told me.

Tit tape! I want to look like that naturally, anyone can use tit tape. And this one's bigger than that one, they both point sideways when I stand up and anyway – mostly, they're just too small and the wrong shape. They've got to go. I need new tits. I need a whole new body, actually. I get fatter when I'm dieting. I get fat just by breathing. I can turn air into fat. It's a gift I have.

(She giggles at her own words.)

You should have seen his face! Like I was taking away his favourite toy car or something.

'You can't do that! They're mine,' he said.

I said, 'They're just on loan, buddy, and don't you forget it.'

He says they're lovely, but he's just saying that to be nice. 'How can anything be better?' he says; but plenty of things are better than them. Too many things are better, that's the problem.

Up until that point it was just fun, but then he started to get all serious on me. 'You know what they do to you when you get that done?' he said. 'They cut you here – right round the nipple. They get it out on a stalk, man! They get your nipple on a stalk while they stitch bags inside your tits, it's like torture. And then you know what? You lose *feeling*. They cut loads of nerves doing

that and they never grow back. Sex will never be as good again.'

'I don't care,' I told him. I mean, if you want to be a work of art, you have to suffer a bit. That's all part of the package. But he pissed me off, then, going on about blood and cutting and things. That's not what I wanted to hear.

We used to argue a lot, about everything. It was fun at first, it was like a game, we'd make out that the other one was being weird. But then it got like I'm weird and he's just pretending. Like it's dawned on him that it's not just a game. He says he loves me. I got no time for love. Christ, I'm seventeen, I'm just practising. Love, what's that? I'm an obsessive, personally. Passion! He thinks he means so much to me. I don't know.

So that thing about my tits, it went on to be a big row. I wanted to discuss with him what sort of op. I was going to have. I wanted him to have some input, you know? I mean, your girlfriend wants to discuss her boobs with you, she actually wants to know what sort of tits you want her to have – she's actually offering you a chance to help design the perfect tits and all you do is go on at her! What's that about? What is he *on*? Who's the weird one, you tell me? Doesn't he know a good deal when it's handed to him on a plate? I offer him a dream ticket and he starts telling me what I can and what I can't do with my own tits!?

(She grabs hold of them with both hands. She looks outraged.)

My own tits! So that was it. I'd had enough. Tenancy over. Pack your bags and go. It really hurt me, but what else could I do? I hurt myself sometimes. He was heart-broken too, at least, that's how he made out. Just another week, give me a chance, it was just a joke, he said. But it had been going on too long. Every time I talked about my ambitions he'd get jealous and try to talk some sense into me. Well, that's just about abuse to someone like me, having someone force sense down your throat.

I miss him, I do miss him. But let's face it, I gave him another chance. There he was – begging for another week, just one more week, give us one last chance, so I let him have it and then, guess what? I never see him again! I tell him OK and he leaves me! What's that about?

(She swallows back her tears and gets angry instead.)

Like it was him that couldn't be bothered! That's so mean. And now I expect he's sitting somewhere waiting for me to get back in touch. I expect he's breaking his heart for me, but fuck him. He humiliated me. No one treats me like that and gets away with it. If I never see him again it'll be too soon.

So that's why I wrote a song for him that I'm going to sing for you tonight, about what a shit he was to me, so the whole world's gonna know what he's like.

(She produces a guitar from behind her chair and sings.)

Mark Gleeson is a big shit,
Mark Gleeson is a big shit,
Mark Gleeson is a big shit, fuck him.
His telephone number is 0161 352 7980.
Ring him up and tell him what a shit he is.
He broke my heart,
He broke my heart and made me cry.

(Cries.)

But I'll get over it. I'm going to be famous. *(Wiping away her tears.)* I made up my mind about it, there's no point in trying to talk me out of it. Art on legs, Mark used to say, but that's not what I mean. People say I'm good looking like that, but there's loads of girls prettier than me, or sexier than me or whatever. That's not the point. Anyone can be pretty these days. Anyone can have nice tits and a pretty face. Talent – that's not it, either. Anyone can have talent. They train you up, they work on your voice. If it's no good they change it in the studio. The world's full of talent. Talent's cheap.

It's like, when people look at you and think, Oh, she's smaller than in real life, because, see, actually, you're not real life. It's when people start talking to you in the street or on the bus because they think they know you, but they never even met you, or like you've got some secret that they want to know but they never can. Like you're a blessing. There's

something about you that inspires them to be more than themselves. That's it. That's what I want to be. Just like that.

Some people want to be famous so everyone knows who they are. They don't get it. It's not about who knows you or who you are. It's about being more than who you are. It's not what you do – it's what you make other people do. I mean, I'm famous even when no one's looking. I'm famous even before I'm famous. I want it so when people look at me they think things they've never thought before – they think things they never even knew they were capable of thinking. It's art. You look at it, and maybe it annoys the hell out of you because you can never understand it. Maybe there's nothing to understand, but it's fascinating anyway. And all the time, right on the edge of your mind, there's thoughts lurking like wild animals, and feelings you never felt. You can't work them out, you don't know if it's monsters or angels and you're frightened of understanding because they might just burst out and change your whole life. Your whole life! Yeah. That's me. Your whole life!

Mark used to say I'm a wannabe, but I say, I'm a gonnabe. That's the difference.

I know. I'm arrogant. But it's true what I say, I can't help it. It's in my bones. And he could have been there with me. Now look at him. He just got left behind.

(She stares into the camera with a frightened

expression. Then she catches sight of her expression and raises a hand to the lens.)

Cut.

(She wipes away her tears and turns off the camera.)