Lovereading.co.uk
Helping you choose your next book

You loved your last book...but what are you going to read next?

Using our unique guidance tools, Love**reading** will help you find new books to keep you inspired and entertained.

Opening Extract from...

All Is Not Forgotten

Written by Wendy Walker

Published by HQ

All text is copyright © of the author

This Opening Extract is exclusive to Love**reading**.
Please print off and read at your leisure.

All Is Not Forgotten

Wendy Walker



ONE PLACE. MANY STORIES

This novel is entirely a work of fiction. The names, characters and incidents portrayed in it are the work of the author's imagination. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events or localities is entirely coincidental.

HQ
An imprint of HarperCollins*Publishers* Ltd.
1 London Bridge Street
London SE1 9GF

This paperback edition 2016

1
First published in Great Britain by
HQ, an imprint of HarperCollins*Publishers* Ltd. 2016

Copyright © Wendy Walker 2016

Wendy Walker asserts the moral right to be identified as the author of this work

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: HB: 978-0-00-817361-6
C: 978-0-00-817362-3

Printed and bound by
CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY

All rights reserved. No part of this publication maybe reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, elecronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publishers.

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

Our policy is to use papers that are natural, renewable and recyclable products and made from wood grown in sustainable forests. The logging and manufacturing processes conform to the legal environmental regulations of the country of origin.

For Andrew, Ben, and Christopher

ALL

IS NOT

FORGOTTEN

Chapter One

He followed her through the woods behind the house. The ground there was littered with winter debris, dead leaves and twigs that had fallen over the past six months and decayed beneath a blanket of snow. She may have heard him approach. She may have turned and seen him wearing the black wool mask whose fibers were found beneath her nails. As she fell to her knees, what was left of the brittle twigs snapped like old bones and scraped her bare skin. Her face and chest pressed hard into the ground, likely with the outside of his forearm, she would have felt the mist from the sprinklers blowing off the lawn not twenty feet away. Her hair was wet when they found her.

When she was a younger girl, she would chase the sprinklers at her own house, trying to catch them on a hot summer afternoon, or dodge them on a crisp spring evening. Her baby brother would then chase her, buck naked with his bulging belly and flailing arms that were not quite able to coordinate with his little legs. Sometimes their dog would join in, barking so voraciously, it would drown out their laughter. An acre of green grass, slippery and wet. Big open skies with

puffy white clouds. Her mother inside watching them from the window and her father on his way home from places whose smells would linger on his suit. The stale coffee from the showroom office, new leather, tire rubber. Those memories were painful now, though she had turned immediately to them when asked about the sprinklers, and whether they had been on when she ran across the lawn to the woods.

The rape lasted for close to an hour. It seems impossible that they could know this. Something about the clotting of the blood at the points of penetration, and the varied stages of bruising on her back, arms, and neck where he'd changed his method of constraint. In that hour, the party had continued the way she'd left it. She would have seen it from where she lay, lights glaring from the windows, flickering as bodies moved through the rooms. It was a big party, with nearly all the tenth grade and handfuls of kids from ninth and eleventh making appearances. Fairview High School was small by most standards, even for suburban Connecticut, and the class divisions that existed elsewhere were far looser here. Sports teams were mixed, plays, concerts, and the like. Even some classes crossed grade boundaries, with the smartest kids in math and foreign languages moving up a level. Jenny Kramer had never made it into an advanced class. But she believed herself to be smart, and endowed with a fierce sense of humor. She was also a good athlete—swimming, field hockey, tennis. But she felt none of those things had mattered until her body matured.

The night of this party had felt better than any moment in her life. I think she may even have said, *It was going to be the best night of my life.* After years of what I have come to think of as adolescent cocooning, she felt she had come into her own. The cruelty of braces and lingering baby fat, breasts that were too small for a bra but still protruding through her T-shirts, acne and unruly hair, had

finally gone away. She had been the "tomboy," the friend, the confidante to boys who were always interested in other girls. Never in her. These were her words, not mine, although I feel she described them quite well for a fifteen-year-old. She was unusually self-aware. In spite of what her parents and teachers had drilled into her, into all of them, she believed—and she was not alone among her peers in this—that beauty was still the most valuable asset to a girl in Fairview. Finally having it had felt like winning the lottery.

And then there was the boy. Doug Hastings. He had invited her to the party on a Monday in the hallway between Chemistry and European History. She was very specific about that, and about what he was wearing and the expression on his face and how he seemed a little nervous though he acted nonchalant. She had thought of little else all week except what to wear and how to do her hair and the color of polish for her manicure when she went with her mother Saturday morning. It surprised me a bit. I am not fond of Doug Hastings, from what I know of him. As a parent, I feel entitled to have such opinions. I am not unsympathetic to his situation—a bully for a father, his mother quite feeble in her attempts to parent around him. Still, I found it somewhat disappointing that Jenny had not seen through him.

The party was everything she had imagined. Parents out of town, kids pretending to be grown-ups, mixing cocktails in martini glasses, drinking beer from crystal tumblers. Doug had met her there. But he was not alone.

The music was blaring and she would have heard it from the scene of the attack. The playlist was full of pop mega hits, the ones she said she knew well, the lyrics the kind that stuck in your head. Even through the music, and the muted laughter that was wafting from the open windows, she would have heard the other sounds that were closer, the depraved sighs of her attacker, her own guttural cries.

When he was finished and had slipped away into the darkness, she used her arm for support, lifting her face from the brush. She might have felt then the air hit the newly exposed skin of her cheek, and when it did, maybe she had felt that her skin was wet. Some of the brush on which she had been resting stuck, as if her face had been dipped in glue that had since begun to dry.

Propped up on her forearm, she must have heard the sound.

At some point, she came to sit upright. She had tried to clean up the mess that was all around her. With the back of her hand, she wiped her cheek. Remnants of dried leaves fell to the ground. She would have then seen her skirt bunched up around her waist, exposing her naked genitals. Using both hands, it seems she got on all fours and crawled a short distance, possibly to retrieve her underwear. They were in her hand when she was found.

The sound must have grown louder because eventually it was heard by another girl and her boyfriend, who had sought privacy in the yard not far away. The ground would have crackled and popped beneath the weight of her hands and knees as she again crawled toward the perimeter of the grass. I have imagined her crawling, the inebriation hindering her coordination and the shock freezing time. I have imagined her assessing the damage when she finally stopped crawling and came to sit, seeing her torn underwear, feeling the ground against the skin of her buttocks.

The underwear too torn to wear, everywhere sticky with blood and dirt. That sound growing louder. Wondering how long she had been in the woods.

Back to her hands and knees, she began to crawl again. But no matter how far she moved, the sound grew louder and louder. How desperate she must have been to escape, to reach the soft grass, the clean water that was now upon it, the place she had been before the woods.

She moved another few feet before stopping again. Maybe it was then that she realized the sound, the disturbing moan, was inside her head, then in her own mouth. The fatigue came over her, forcing her knees, then her arms, to buckle beneath her.

She said she had always considered herself a strong girl, an athlete with a formidable will. Strong in her body and her mind. That was what her father had told her since she was a little kid. *Be strong in your body and in your mind, and you will have a good life.* Maybe she told herself to get up. Maybe she ordered her legs to move, then her arms, but her will was impotent. Instead of taking her back to where she had been, they curled up around her battered body, which lay upon the filthy ground.

Tears falling, voice echoing them with that horrible sound, she was finally heard and then rescued. She has asked herself again and again since that night why nothing she had inside her—her muscles, her wit, her will—had been capable of stopping what happened. She couldn't remember if she tried to fight him, screamed for help, or if she just gave up and let it happen. No one heard her until it was over. She said she now understands that in the wake of every battle, there were left conqueror and conquered, victor and victim, and that she had come to accept the truth—that she had been totally, irrevocably defeated.

I couldn't say how much of this was true when I heard it, this story of the rape of Jenny Kramer. It was a story that had been reconstructed with forensic evidence, witness accounts, criminal psychologist profiles, and the disjointed, fragmented scraps of memory Jenny was left with after the treatment. They say it is a miracle treatment—to have the most horrible trauma erased from your mind. Of course, it is not magic, nor is the science particularly impressive. But I will explain all of that later. What I want to express now, at the beginning of the story, is that it was not a miracle for this beautiful

young girl. What was removed from her mind lived on in her body, and her soul, and I felt compelled to return to her what was taken away. It may seem the strangest thing to you. So counterintuitive. So disturbing.

Fairview, as I have already alluded, is a small town. I had seen pictures of Jenny Kramer over the years in the local paper, and in school flyers about a play or tennis tournament posted at Gina's Deli down on East Main. I had recognized her walking in town, coming out of the movie theater with friends, in a concert at the school that my own children attended. She had an innocence about her that belied the maturity she so coveted. Even in the short skirts and cropped shirts that seemed to be the style these days, she was a girl, not a woman. And I would feel encouraged about the state of the world when I saw her. It would be disingenuous to say that I feel this way toward all of them, the herd of teenagers that sometimes seems to have stolen the order from our lives like a swarm of locust. Glued to their phones like brain-dead drones, indifferent to any affairs beyond celebrity gossip and the things that brought them instant gratification—videos, music, self-promoting tweets and Instagrams and Snapchats. Teenagers are innately selfish. Their brains are not mature. But some of them seem to hold on to their sweetness through these years, and they stand out. They're the ones who meet your eyes when you greet them, smile politely, allow you to pass simply because you are older and they understand the place of respect in an orderly society. Jenny was one of those.

To see her after, to see the absence of joy that once bubbled up inside her—it provoked rage in me at all humanity. Knowing what had happened in those woods, it was hard not to let my mind go there. We are all drawn to prurient incidents, to violence and horror. We pretend not to be, but it is our nature. The ambulance on the side of

the road, every car slowing to a crawl to get a glimpse of an injured body. It doesn't make us evil.

This perfect child, her body defiled, violated. Her virtue stolen. Her spirit broken. I sound melodramatic. Cliché. But this man ripped into her body with such force that she required surgery. Consider that. Consider that he selected a child, hoping for a virgin perhaps, so he could rape her innocence as well as her body. Consider the physical pain she endured as her most intimate flesh tore and shredded. And now consider what else was torn and shredded as he spent an hour torturing her body, thrusting himself into her again and again, perhaps seeing her face. How many expressions had she given him to enjoy? Surprise, fear, terror, agony, acceptance, and, finally, indifference as she shut down. Each one a piece of herself taken and devoured by this monster. And then, even after the treatment was given—because she still knew what had happened—every romantic daydream about her first time with a lover, every love story that swam in her head and made her smile with thoughts of being adored by one person like no other in the world. It was likely those things were gone forever. And then what was left for a girl as she grew into a woman? The very thing that preoccupies the heart throughout most of our lives may very well have been lost to her.

She remembered a strong odor, though she couldn't place it. She remembered a song, but it was possible the song had played more than once. She remembered the events that drove her out the back door, across the lawn, and into the woods. She did not recall the sprinklers, and that became part of the reconstruction of the story. The sprinklers came on at nine and off at ten, having been set to a timer. The two lovers who found her had arrived in the back to grass that was wet but air that was dry. The rape had been in between.

Doug had been with another girl, a junior who found him necessary

to her plan to make some senior boy jealous. It is hardly worth the effort to elucidate the vapid motivations of this particular girl. What mattered to Jenny was that a week's worth of fantasies, around which she had wrapped much of her disposition, had been shattered in a second. Predictably, she began to drown her sorrows in alcohol. Her best friend, Violet, recalled that she had started with shots of vodka. Within an hour, she was vomiting in the bathroom. This had led to the amusement of some others, and then to her further humiliation. It might have been a script from one of those "mean girl" shows that seem to be all the rage now. Except for the part that followed. The part where she ran into the woods to be alone, to cry.

I was angry. I won't apologize for that. I wanted justice for what had happened. But without a memory, without any forensic evidence beyond the wool fibers under her nails because this monster had taken precautions, justice was no longer on the table. Fairview is a small town. Yes, I know I keep saying this. But you must understand that this is the kind of town that would not attract a stranger to perpetrate a crime. Heads turn when someone unfamiliar walks the two small strips of our downtown. Not in a bad way, mind you, but in a curious way. Was it someone's relative? Someone moving here? We have visitors for special events, sports tournaments, fairs, things like that. People will come from other towns and we welcome them. We are generally friendly people, trusting people. But on an ordinary weekend, outsiders are noticed.

Where I am going with all this is the following obvious conclusion: Had she not been given the treatment, had her memory been intact, she might have placed him. The fibers under her nails indicated she had grabbed at the mask. Maybe she pulled it off, or up just enough to see a face. Maybe she heard a voice. Or was he perfectly quiet for an hour of raping? It seems unlikely, doesn't it? She would know how tall he was, thin or fat. Maybe his hands were old

or maybe they were young. Maybe he wore a ring, a gold band or a team emblem. Did he wear sneakers or loafers or work boots? Were they worn or stained by oil or paint or maybe they were perfectly shined? Would she know him if she stood near him at the ice cream shop? Or at the coffeehouse? Or in the lunch line at school? Would she simply feel him in her gut? An hour is a long time to be with another body.

Maybe it was cruel to want this thing for Jenny Kramer. Maybe I was cruel to pursue the wanting. It would, as you will see, lead to unexpected consequences. But the injustice of it all, the anger it provoked in me, and the ability to understand her suffering—all of it led me to a single-minded pursuit. And that was to give back to Jenny Kramer this most horrific nightmare.

Chapter Two

Jenny's parents were called just after ten thirty. They had been attending a dinner party with two couples from their country club, though the dinner was at the home of one of the couples and not at the club itself. Charlotte Kramer, Jenny's mother, had complained about this in the car on the way through town earlier that evening, how they should be dining at the club to use up their minimum and, according to her husband, Tom, because Charlotte liked the social scene there. Cocktails were always served in the lounge, so regardless of the company you had planned to keep during the dinner, there was a chance to mingle with other club members.

Tom disliked the club other than to play golf on Sunday with his usual foursome: a friend from college and two dads he'd met through Jenny's track team. Charlotte, on the other hand, was highly social and was aspiring to join the pool committee for the upcoming season. Any Saturday night not spent at the club felt like a lost opportunity to her. It was one of the many sources of marital discord

between them, and their short car ride had ended with silence and mutual irritation at the making of the usual comments.

They both remembered this later, and how petty it had seemed after the brutal rape of their daughter.

One of the nice things about a small town is that people bend the rules when it seems appropriate. The fear of being reprimanded, or even sued, does not loom quite so precariously as it does in a larger community. So when Detective Parsons called the Kramers, he did not tell them what had happened, only that Jenny had been drinking at a party and was taken to the hospital. They had been immediately reassured that her life was not at all in danger. Tom was thankful for this, for being spared the few minutes of agony as they drove from the dinner to the hospital. Every minute after learning of the rape had been just that for Tom—unrelenting agony.

Charlotte had not been quite so appreciative, because the partial truth caused her to be enraged at her daughter's carelessness. The whole town would surely know, and how would that reflect on their family? On the way to the hospital, they had discussed punishments, weighing the impact of grounding or having her phone taken away. Of course, when they did learn the truth, it was guilt that found its way into Charlotte, and for that she was resentful of the misinformation. It is understandable, having been presented with a reason to be angry at your child only to then find out she had been so viciously assaulted. Still, I identified more with Tom on this. Perhaps it is because I am a father and not a mother.

The hospital lobby was empty when they arrived. There had been some attention given over the past several years to fund-raising and upgrading, and the results, while more cosmetic than substantive to many minds, were noticeable. Wood paneling, new carpet. The lighting was soft and there was classical music playing from the wireless

speakers that hung discreetly in the corners. Charlotte "stormed" to the front desk (Tom's word). Tom caught up and stood beside her. He closed his eyes and let the music calm his blood. He was concerned that Charlotte would be too harsh, at least for what this moment called for, and he wanted to "balance her out." Jenny needed to sleep, to know her parents still loved her and that everything would be all right. The consequences could wait until they were all sober and clearheaded.

The Kramers knew their roles within the family. It was Charlotte's task to be the disciplinarian with their daughter. With their boy, Lucas, the roles were often reversed, likely because of his age (ten) and his gender. Tom described this arrangement as though describing a blue sky—it was as it should be, as it is in every family. And he was right in theory. There are always roles to be played, shifting alliances, good cops and bad cops. With the Kramers, though, the natural ebbs and flows seemed to have given way to Charlotte's needs, with the others taking parts she did not monopolize. In other words, the normalcy Tom attempted to ascribe to their family would prove to be quite abnormal, and untenable.

The nurse smiled at them sympathetically as she released the lock on the door to the treatment rooms. They didn't know her, but that was true of most of the support staff at the hospital. Lower-salaried professionals rarely lived in Fairview, coming in from the neighboring city of Cranston. Tom remembered her smile. It was the first hint that this was a more serious incident than what they had been led to believe. People underestimate the hidden messages in a fleeting facial expression. But think about the type of smile you would give a friend whose teenager got caught drinking. It would express a comical type of empathy. It would say, *Oh man, teenagers are tough. Remember what we were like?* And now think about the smile you would give if that teenager had been assaulted. That smile would

surely say, *Oh my God! I'm so sorry! That poor girl!* It's in the eyes, in the shrug of the shoulders, and in the shape of the mouth. When this nurse smiled, Tom's thoughts shifted from managing his wife to seeing his daughter.

They walked through the security doors to triage, and then to another circular desk, where nurses processed paperwork and files behind computer screens. There was another woman, another worrisome smile. She picked up a phone and paged a doctor.

I can picture them in that moment. Charlotte in her beige cocktail dress, her blond hair carefully pinned up in a twist. Arms folded at the chest, posturing for when she first saw Jenny, and for the staff who she would imagine were passing judgments. And Tom, half a foot taller as he stood beside his wife with his hands in the pockets of his khaki pants, shifting his weight from foot to foot with increasing concern as his instincts fueled his runaway thoughts. Both of them agreed that those few minutes they waited for the doctor felt like hours.

Charlotte was very perceptive and quickly spotted three police officers drinking coffee from paper cups in the corner. Their backs were facing the Kramers as they spoke with a nurse. The nurse then caught Charlotte's eye, and a whisper later, the officers turned to look at her. Tom was facing the other way, but he, too, began to notice the attention they were drawing.

Neither of them would recall the exact words the doctor used to tell them. There was apparently a brief acknowledgment by Charlotte of knowing *of* each other—the doctor's daughter being one grade below Lucas at the elementary school—which then made Charlotte increasingly concerned about Jenny's now tarnished reputation and how it might trickle down to their son. Dr. Robert Baird. Late thirties. Stout. Thin light brown hair and kind blue eyes that grew small when he said certain words that caused his cheeks to rise.

Each of them remembered something about the man as he started to discuss her injuries. *The external tearing of the perineum and anus . . . rectal and vaginal lesions . . . bruising to the neck and back . . . surgery . . . stitches . . . repairs.*

The words left his mouth and floated around them like they were of a foreign language. Charlotte shook her head and repeated the word "no" several times in a nonchalant manner. She assumed he had confused them with the parents of a different patient and tried to stop him from revealing any more to spare him the embarrassment. She repeated her name, told him their daughter had been brought here for "overdoing it" at a party. Tom recalled being silent then, as though by not making a sound, he might be able to freeze time before the moment continued down the path he had started to see.

Dr. Baird stopped speaking and glanced at the officers. One of them, Detective Parsons, walked over, slowly—and with visible reluctance. They stepped to the side. Baird and Parsons spoke. Baird shook his head and looked at his black shoes. He sighed. Parsons shrugged apologetically.

Baird then stepped away and returned to stand before the Kramers. Hands folded as if in a prayer, he told them the truth plainly and concisely. *Your daughter was found in the woods behind a house on Juniper Road. She was raped.*

Dr. Baird recalled the sound that left Tom Kramer's body. It was not a word or a moan or a gasp, but something he had never witnessed before. It sounded like death, like a piece of Tom Kramer had been murdered. His knees buckled and he reached for Baird, who took hold of his arms and kept him on his feet. A nurse rushed to join them, offering assistance, offering to get him a chair, but he refused. *Where is she! Where is my baby!* he demanded, pushing away from the doctor. He bounded toward one of the curtains, but the nurse stopped him, grabbing his forearms from behind to steer him down the hall.

She's right over here, the nurse said. *She's going to be fine . . . she's asleep.*

They reached one of the triage areas and the nurse pulled back the curtain.

My wife has told me ever since we had our own daughter, our first child—Megan is her name, now off to college—that she projects scenarios like this one onto herself. When we watched Megan pull out of the driveway for the first time behind the wheel of our car. When she left for a summer program in Africa. When we caught her climbing a tree in the yard, what feels like a hundred years ago. There are so many more examples. My wife would close her eyes and picture a pile of metal and flesh twisted together on the side of the road, or a tribal warlord with a machete, our daughter sobbing before him on her knees. Or her neck snapped and body lifeless beneath the tree. Parents live with fear, and how we deal with it, process it, depends on too many factors to recite here. My wife has to go there, to see the images, feel the pain. She then puts it in a box, loads the box on a shelf, and when the nagging worry creeps in, she can look at the box and then let the worry pass through her before it can settle in and feast on her enjoyment of life.

She has described to me these images, sometimes crying briefly in my arms. What is at the heart of each description, and what I find so compelling for its uniformity, is the juxtaposition of purity and corruption. Good and evil. For what could be more pure and good than a child?

Tom Kramer set his eyes upon his daughter in that room and saw what my wife has only imagined in her mind. Small braids laced with ribbon falling next to the bruises on her face. Smeared black mascara on cheeks that were still puffy like a child's. Pink polish on broken nails. Only one of the birthstone stud earrings he'd bought her for her birthday, the other missing from a bloody earlobe. Around

her were metal tables with instruments and blood-soaked swabs. The work was not yet done, so the room had not been cleaned. A woman in a white lab coat sat beside her bed, taking her blood pressure. She wore a stethoscope and offered only a fleeting glance before looking back at the dial on the black rubber pump. A female police officer stood unobtrusively in the corner, pretending to busy herself with a notepad.

Like life "flashing before your eyes" just before death, Tom saw a newborn in a pink swaddled blanket. He felt the warm breath of a baby on his neck as she slept in his arms; a tiny hand lost inside his palm; a full-body hug around his legs. He heard a high-pitched giggle come from a chubby belly. Theirs was a relationship unspoiled by the pitfalls of misbehavior. Those were saved for Charlotte Kramer, and in this respect, I could see that she had, however unintentionally, given them both a gift.

Rage at her attacker would come, but not then. More than anything, what Tom saw, felt, and heard in that moment was his failure to protect his little girl. His despair cannot be measured nor adequately described. He began to weep like a child himself, the nurse at his side, his daughter pale and lifeless on the bed.

Charlotte Kramer stayed behind with the doctor. Shocking as it may sound to you, she saw her daughter's rape as a problem that needed to be solved. A broken pipe that had flooded the basement. Or perhaps worse than that—a fire that had burned their entire house to the ground but left them standing. The key fact was the last bit—that they had survived. Her thoughts turned instantly to rebuilding the house.

She looked at Dr. Baird, arms crossed at her chest. *What kind of rape?* she asked him.

Baird paused for a moment, not sure what she was asking.

Charlotte sensed his confusion. *You know, was it some boy from the party who got carried away?*

Baird shook his head. *I don't know. Detective Parsons may know more.*

Charlotte grew frustrated. *I mean, from the examination. Did you do a rape kit?*

Yes. We're required to by law.

So—did you see anything, you know, that might indicate one way or another?

Mrs. Kramer, Baird said. *Maybe we should let you see Jenny, and then I can discuss this with you and your husband in a more private setting.*

Charlotte was put off, but she did as she was asked. She is not a difficult person, and if my descriptions of her indicate otherwise, I assure you most vehemently that it is not by design. I have great respect for Charlotte Kramer. She has not had an easy life, and her adaptations to her own childhood trauma are surprisingly mild—and reflective of the fortitude of her constitution. I believed she truly loved her husband, even when she emasculated him. And that she loved her children, loved them equally, even though she held Jenny to higher standards. But love is a term of art and not science. We can, each and every one of us, describe it in different words, and feel it differently within our bodies. Love can make one person cry and another smile. One angry and another sad. One aroused and another sleepy with contentment.

Charlotte experienced love through a prism. It's hard to describe without again sounding judgmental, or causing you to dislike her. But Charlotte desperately needed to create what was taken from her as a child—a traditional (I believe she even said "boring") American family. She loved her town because it was filled with like-minded,

hardworking people with good morals. She loved her house because it was a New England colonial in a quiet neighborhood. She loved being married to Tom because he was a family man with a good job—not a great job, but great jobs pulled men away from their families. Tom ran several car dealerships, and it's important to note that he sold BMWs, Jaguars, and other luxury cars. I was informed that this is quite distinct from "peddling" Hyundais. Whether Charlotte loved Tom beyond all of this was not known to either of them. She loved her children because they were hers, and because they were everything children should be. Smart, athletic, and (mostly) obedient, but also messy, noisy, silly, and requiring a great deal of hard work and effort, which provided her with a worthwhile occupation and something she could discuss at length with her friends at the club over luncheon. Each piece of this picture she loved and loved deeply. So when Jenny got "broken," she became desperate to fix her. As I've said, she needed to repair her house.

Jenny had been sedated after arriving to the ER. The kids who found her described her as floating in and out of consciousness, though it was more likely the effect of shock than inebriation. Her eyes remained open and she was able to sit up and then walk with minimal assistance across the lawn to a lounge chair. Their description was that she sometimes seemed to know them and where she was and what had happened, and seconds later was unresponsive to their questions. Catatonic. She asked for help. She cried. Then she went blank. The paramedics reported the same behavior, but it is their policy not to administer sedatives. It was at the hospital, when the examination began, that she became hysterical. Dr. Baird made the call to give her some relief. There was enough bleeding to warrant concern and not wait for consent to prescribe the medication so they could examine her.

In spite of her outward appearance, Charlotte was deeply affected

by the sight of her daughter. In fact, it was my impression that she came quite close in that first moment to feeling what Tom felt. Though they rarely touched outside their bedroom (and there only to perform the mechanics of intimacy), she took Tom's arm with both her hands. She buried her face into the sleeve of his shirt and whispered the words "Oh my God." She did not cry, but Tom felt her nails digging into his skin as she fought for her composure. When she tried to swallow, she found her mouth to be bone dry.

Detective Parsons could see them through the curtain. He remembered their faces as they looked down at their child. Tom's was contorted and sloppy with tears, his agony painted upon his flesh. Charlotte's, after the brief loss of composure, was determined. Parsons called it a stiff upper lip. He said he felt uncomfortable observing them in this intimate moment, though he did not look away. He said he was taken aback by Tom's weakness and Charlotte's strength, though anyone with a less simplistic understanding of human emotion would understand that it was actually quite the opposite. It requires far more strength to experience emotion than to suppress it.

Dr. Baird stood behind them, checking a chart that hung on a metal clip at the end of Jenny's bed.

Why don't we speak in the family lounge? he suggested.

Tom nodded, wiped his tears. He leaned down and kissed the top of his daughter's head, and this brought on a series of deep sobs. Charlotte brushed a stray hair from Jenny's face, then stroked her cheek with the back of her hand. *Sweet angel . . . sweet, sweet angel,* she whispered.

They followed Baird and Detective Parsons down the hall to a set of locked doors. Through the doors was another hallway and then a small lounge with some furniture and a TV. Baird offered to arrange for coffee or food, but the Kramers declined. Baird closed the door. Parsons sat down next to the doctor and across from the Kramers.

This is Charlotte's account of what happened next:

They beat around the bush, asking us about Jenny's friends, did we know about the party, did she have any troubles with any boys, did she mention anyone bothering her at school or in town or on her social media? Tom was answering them like he was in some sort of fog, like he couldn't see we were all just avoiding what needed to be discussed. I'm not saying that those weren't legitimate questions or that we shouldn't have answered them at some point. But I had had it, you know? I wanted someone to tell me *something. I try really hard to let Tom "be the man" because I know I can be controlling. No one complains when the house is in perfect order and the fridge has everything they all need and their clothes are washed and ironed and put away where they belong. Anyway . . . I do try because I know it's important in a marriage for the man to be the man. But I couldn't take it. I just couldn't!*

So I interrupted all of them, all of the men, and I said, "One of you needs to tell us what happened to our daughter." Dr. Baird and the detective looked at each other like neither of them wanted to go first. The doctor drew the short end of the stick. And then he told us. He told us how she had been raped. It was not what I had hoped—that it was some boy she liked and he got carried away. Oh God I know how bad that sounds. The feminists would have my head, wouldn't they? I'm not saying that that kind of rape isn't really rape or shouldn't be punished. Believe me—when Lucas is older, I'm going to make damn sure he knows the kind of trouble he could be in if he isn't absolutely sure he has consent. I do believe that men have a responsibility, that they need to realize that when it comes to sex, we are not on equal footing. And not just because of the physiology. It's the psychology as well—the fact that girls still feel pressure to do things they don't want and boys, men, have very little understanding about what girls go through. Anyway, it was not what I

had hoped. And actually, it was what I had feared most. Detective Parsons filled in this part. He wore a mask. He forced her to the ground on her face. He . . . I'm sorry. This is hard to say out loud. I can hear the words in my mind, but saying them is another thing altogether.

Charlotte stopped to gather herself. She had a particular method, which she used without deviation. It was a long inhale, eyes closed, quick shake of the head, then a slow exhale. She looked down first after opening her eyes, then nodded in confirmation of the control she had wrangled.

I'll just say it, all of it, quickly and then be done. She was raped from behind, vaginally, anally, back and forth apparently, for an hour. Okay. I said it. It's done. They did the rape kit. They found traces of spermicide and latex. This . . . this creature wore a condom. They didn't find one hair either, and the forensic people who were brought in from Cranston later that night said he probably shaved himself. Can you imagine? He prepared for this rape like an Olympic swimmer. Well, he didn't get his gold medal, did he? Every physical wound healed beautifully. She won't ever feel any different from any other woman. And emotionally, well . . .

She paused again, this time more to take stock than regain her composure. Then she continued in a voice that was irreverent.

I remember thinking, thank God for the treatment. Everything he did to my little girl, we undid. So, I'm sorry for the bad language, but I thought—fuck him. He doesn't exist anymore.