Born Evil

Kimberley Chambers

Published by Preface Publishing

Extract

All text is copyright of the author

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

BORN EVIL

KIMBERLEY CHAMBERS



preface
publishing

A life is created
A child is born
A beautiful gift
Not one to mourn
A son for keeps
A love to gel
Unless that child
Belongs in hell

ONE

October 1990

'Look, Mum, there's no easy way for me to say this. You're gonna go mental, so I'm just gonna give it to you straight. I'm pregnant.'

June Dawson felt bile rise from her stomach and reach the back of her throat. Dropping the dishcloth she'd been washing up with, she clung on to the worktop for physical support.

For a moment, she thought she was going to pass out. Breathing in deeply and blowing out slowly, she somehow managed to steady herself. As she turned around to face her daughter, she felt every hope and dream she'd ever nurtured for her fly straight out of the window.

Trying to speak, June found that her voice sounded anything but normal. She usually spoke loudly, but her words came out in no more than a whisper.

'Is Billy the father?'

Debbie stood, hands on hips, staring defiantly into her mother's eyes.

'Of course he is. I love him, Mum.'

June fished around in the kitchen cupboards and found the bottle of brandy she kept there for cooking and medicinal purposes. She and her husband only ever drank socially.

June poured herself a large glass and downed it in one,

then immediately knocked back another. She was in that much shock, she could quite easily have swallowed the whole bloody bottle. With the drink going straight to her head, her voice suddenly came back and she decided to say her piece.

'You're gonna have to get rid of it, Debbie. You're eighteen years old, with your whole life ahead of you. Don't sell yourself short and end up with a no-good arsehole like Billy McDaid. He's a wrong 'un love, everybody says so, and far too old for you. He'll run a mile once he knows you're pregnant. You mark my words, he'll be off like a shot. Blokes like him are all the same.'

Blinded by love and obstinate by nature, Debbie glared defiantly at her mother.

'Well, that's where you're wrong, Mum. Billy already knows about the baby and he's over the moon. He's dying for it to be born and can't wait to become a father. I love him so much and I'm keeping the baby whatever you say. You're just gonna have to accept it, or you'll end up losing me *and* your unborn grandchild. As for calling Billy a wrong 'un . . .you'd know all about that, Mother, wouldn't you?'

June looked at her daughter with a mixture of pity and disgust. She needed to talk to her Peter. He would know how to handle the situation.

'Get out of my sight, Debbie. You wait till Peter gets home from work. I'm gonna tell him what you said to me and he won't be very happy.'

'As if I bloody well care! He's hardly me father now, is he?' Debbie screamed, and slammed the kitchen door.

June sat down at the table, put her head in her hands and sobbed. Both her children had now fucked their lives up, and she wondered where she'd gone so bloody wrong.

She'd disowned Mickey, her son, a while back, when he'd got caught hijacking a lorry load of cigarettes with

a gang of well-known villains he'd been knocking about with.

Her Peter had gone totally apeshit and demanded she wash her hands of the lad. It hadn't helped that the story was front-page news in the local paper. She and Peter had had to endure the shame, stares and gossip for weeks.

Unbeknown to her husband, though, June still discreetly enquired after Mickey. She'd heard through the grapevine that he was due out of prison in the next few weeks. He'd served his sentence in Wormwood Scrubs and had written to her from here a couple of times, pleading with her to visit him. June had tearfully read the letters that her first-born had sent and felt nothing but love and compassion for the son she still adored. But, after careful consideration, she'd torn them up and severed all contact with him.

It had been the hardest decision she'd ever had to make, but in her eyes it was the only one left to her. She'd had to choose her husband over her son.

Now the same thing was going to happen with Debbie, Peter was gonna go mad when he heard she was pregnant. Unless Debs agreed to get rid of the baby, June knew that he would make her daughter move out of the house.

Peter wasn't an ogre, just a strict, highly regimented man of integrity, with a high opinion of himself and his family. He was also preparing to stand as a Tory councillor in the forthcoming local election and certainly wouldn't welcome any bad press.

June poured herself another brandy, dreading what was to come. Without Peter she was nothing, a nobody. In many ways he'd been the making of her. He'd turned her from a rough East End girl into a respectable member of the community. He'd moved her from a shit-hole house

in Poplar to a nice little cul-de-sac in Rainham. He'd taken on her kids as his own and given her a purpose in life, a chance to better herself, and she'd grasped that opportunity with both hands. She couldn't throw it all back in his face by siding with Debbie, she just couldn't. Not when her daughter was making the biggest mistake of her life.

Debbie lay on her bed. She felt like crying with frustration. She bit her trembling lip as hard as she could and drew blood. The pain stopped the tears from coming. She knew there was going to be a showdown when Perfect Peter walked through the door.

Well, he wasn't her dad and she was sick of jumping to his bloody tune. This baby was hers, and she wasn't taking shit off no one. He'd been good to her, had Peter, but his attitude really wound her up. Both he and her mother were shoved so far up their own arses, it was as though reality didn't exist for them. In their world, dinner parties, Masonic events, local politics and golf club meetings were much more important than what was going on in the real world.

Debbie had never had the pleasure of meeting her real father. She'd been only eighteen months old when he'd kicked the living daylights out of her mum and brother and left the house for the last time. Her brother Mickey, who was seven years older than she was, remembered him well and said he'd been an out and out cunt, a total scumbag.

Johnny Fuller was his name and part of Debbie wished she'd had the chance to meet him. Just the once would have done the trick. It would have satisfied her burning curiosity to know exactly where she came from.

She had no chance of that now, though. Six months ago her father had been found dead outside a betting shop

in Whitechapel. He'd died of a single stab wound, a homeless alcoholic.

As Debbie heard the front door bang downstairs, she forgot about her real dad. Pulling the quilt over her head, she prepared herself for one of her stepfather's lectures.

Twenty minutes later, there was a tap-tap on her bedroom door, and a surprisingly calm Peter entered her room. Perching himself on the end of her bed, he came straight to the point.

'If you decide to have an abortion, Debbie, your mother and I will give you our one hundred per cent support. I'll pay, send you to the best private clinic available, and your mum and I will accompany you, so you won't have to go through this alone. However, if you are adamant about keeping the baby, then I'm afraid you'll be on your own. Your mum and I will have no option other than to wash our hands of you.'

Debbie took a deep breath as she pulled down the quilt and prepared to stand her ground.

'Look, Peter, I know I'm only young, and I appreciate your concern and Mum's, but I want this baby. I love Billy and he loves me. What can be so wrong about two people in love having a baby together?'

Looking at her disdainfully, Peter spoke slowly, clearly, in his most patronising voice.

'Debbie, Debbie, Debbie . . . you are so young and naive, my dear child. What am I going to do with you? Billy McDaid is not a very nice person, my love. He has a terrible track record with convictions for violence as well as drink- and drug-related offences. Eight years ago he was locked up in Pentonville for a vicious assault on an ex-girlfriend.'

Debbie's eyes were burning with fury as she leaped off the bed.

'I don't believe you – you're making it up! You're only

saying all this so I'll get rid of the baby. I bet my mother's put you up to this, hasn't she?'

Peter slowly shook his head from side to side and looked sadly into the eyes of this strong-willed girl bent on defying him.

'Everything I've told you is for your own good, Debbie. Your mother was so worried when you started courting this lad that I decided to have him checked out. I have well-connected friends, as you know, so getting the low-down on him wasn't that difficult. I can assure you, everything I've told you tonight is the absolute truth. He's also lied to you about his age. He's not twenty-nine, he's thirty-five years old. The ball is in your court now, and the decision is entirely yours. Get rid of the baby and Mummy and I will help you as much as we can. But, I have to be brutal about this, Debbie, if you decide to keep it, I want you out of this house by next weekend. Your mother and I have our reputations and also my standing in the community to consider.'

As he quietly shut the bedroom door, Peter said a silent prayer for the girl he'd brought up as his own and grown so very fond of. He was satisfied he'd done his utmost, his very best. Composing himself, he went downstairs to comfort his tearful, heartbroken wife.

'Wanker,' Debbie mumbled, as soon as he was out of earshot. 'Lying fucking bastard.' She was absolutely seething. Billy wouldn't lie to her about his age, and as for all the other shit . . . she didn't believe a word of it. It was definitely a ploy, just so she'd get rid of the baby. His standing in the community? What a tosser! Well, they could both go and fuck themselves. Perfect Peter and her drama queen mother deserved one another. As for the lies they'd concocted, she'd never forgive them for that.

Pulling her case out from under the bed, she started

to pack her clothes and belongings. They wouldn't have to wait till next weekend to get rid of her, she'd be long gone before then. She crammed in the last of her necessities, zipped the case and slid it back under the bed. She was seeing Billy tomorrow morning and couldn't wait to tell him the whole sorry story. He'd been asking her to move in with him for the last few months, but she hadn't wanted to upset her parents so had said no. Now, though, she couldn't wait to set up home with him.

Billy had a council place on an estate in Barking. The area was a bit rough and his flat was dirty with virtually no furniture. In fact, it was the complete opposite to the clean house and nice area that Debbie had become accustomed to.

All it needs is a woman's touch, a good clean, a bit more furniture and we'll be fine, she told herself.

The last night in her perfectly furnished bedroom with its pink wallpaper, hi-fi system, TV, video, and all her other personal belongings, wasn't an easy one for Debbie. She spent the whole night tossing and turning, unable to sleep. Ninety-nine per cent of her felt sure she was doing the right thing. Moving in with Billy and having his baby was what she wanted, wasn't it? There was only that one little seed of doubt at the back of her mind telling her that her choice could be wrong.

There's an old saying in life: 'Little seeds grow into very big trees.'

Unacknowledged by her, Debbie's little seed had already begun to sprout.

TWO

June sat on a floral-upholstered chair in the conservatory, a thousand thoughts spinning through her mind. She sipped her coffee and stared through the plate-glass window while Peter mowed the lawn. Watching her daughter leave home this morning, suitcase in hand, had broken her heart. She hadn't said a word as Debbie had walked away but kept schtum, to please Peter. What kind of mother did that make her? She should have shaken the girl, made her see sense, cuddled her and begged her to stay. Maybe even sat her down and told her the whole sorry story of her own younger years. Surely that would have been enough to make Debbie sit up and take notice.

Instead she'd done nothing, absolutely sod all, just let her daughter walk down the path and out of her life, with that no-good bastard Billy McDaid standing smirking by the front door. All she could do now was hope and bloody pray that her Debbie's life didn't turn out to be a mirror image of her own.

June Dawson had been only a kid, sixteen years old, in fact, when she'd had the misfortune to meet Johnny Fuller at the local fairground. Ten years older than herself, he was a handsome bastard. He had the clothes, the looks, the chat and the charm to impress a gullible teenager.

June had fallen for him, hook, line and sinker. She could remember the night she'd lost her virginity like it was yesterday. He'd looked so good in his black Crombie, tight trousers and winkle-picker shoes, she'd been overwhelmed with lust for him, putty in his hands.

Her pregnancy had shocked her parents to the core and they'd demanded she go away to a home, give birth to the child and have it adopted. Blinded by a mixture of naivety and love, June had ignored their request and chosen her own path. A brief spell living with Johnny's mother was followed by a council tenancy in a house in the back streets of Poplar.

Overjoyed at having her own home and determined to be a good mother and potential wife, June threw herself into a homemaking role where cooking, cleaning, scrubbing and lovemaking were all part of her everyday duties. Trouble was, as happy as she was in her new life, her Johnny wasn't. Within weeks of their moving in together, he was spending more and more time in the local pub.

The night her Mickey was born would stick in June's mind forever. At just turned seventeen, she knew nothing about having babies. On the night her waters broke, she thought she'd accidentally wet herself. When the contractions started she put it down to an upset tummy, blaming the bread and dripping she'd eaten earlier. For four hours she lay on the floor, crippled with pain, hoping and praying that Johnny would come home. Finally, unable to stand it anymore, she crawled on her hands and knees to old Lil next door.

Lillian Wade had lived through two world wars. After taking one look at June, she grabbed a towel and a pair of scissors, and forty-five minutes later young Mickey Dawson let out his first cry.

Johnny Fuller arrived home five days after his son was

born. Unbeknown to June he'd met some old scrubber, eighteen years his senior, from the Whitechapel area and had been staying at hers. After spending less than an hour with his first-born, Johnny headed off to the pub to wet the baby's head.

Life grew harder for June from that moment onwards. Money was scarce, and as time wore on she was left more and more alone with her son; Johnny was usually nowhere to be seen. But June, being a fighter, learned how to cope on her own with her boy. Her neighbours were wonderful, and whenever her so-called partner stayed away for long spells they helped her out with Mickey, making sure that both of them were okay. Many a cold night June and the boy sat huddled around a neighbour's coal fire for a bit of warmth; the rest of the time, they sat indoors with their coats on and a blanket over them.

As the years rolled by, June and Mickey settled into a nice routine. By now, Johnny hardly came home at all. If he popped in twice a year, he overstayed his welcome. Working up North was his excuse, but truth be told he was living with a bird over in Dagenham, playing Daddy to her two kids.

June's pleasant routine ended on the morning of Mickey's sixth birthday. Lily had baked him a cake, all the neighbours had chipped in to buy him a second-hand bike and a party was planned for him that afternoon. Hearing the front door open and slam shut, June thought it was Lily bringing the cake in.

'I'm in the kitchen, Lil.'

To her horror, it wasn't Lily at all. It was a drunken, unkempt, old-looking Johnny carrying a bin liner full of belongings in his hand.

'I'm home, darlin',' he slurred. 'For good this time, there's no more work up North.'

Life got a lot worse for June from that moment on.

Nursing a broken heart and an alcohol addiction, Johnny drank for England, refused to work, and took out all his frustration on her and the boy.

The beatings started within weeks. First it was just the odd clump here and there, but within months he was knocking seven colours of shit out of her.

June hated him, wished he was dead, but she was trapped.

Due to his drink problem, he'd stopped wanting regular sex but she dreaded the nights he beat her. It wasn't the pain, she could handle that, it was the aftermath. The violence seemed to arouse him and he'd then force himself upon her. It was on one of these nights that Debbie was conceived.

A couple of weeks after June's pregnancy was confirmed, Johnny did another disappearing act. Money was still tight and life was tough, but once again the neighbours helped out and June began to smile again.

Debbie was just over a year old when her father returned from his last jaunt. This time his behaviour was worse than ever and the beatings became more frequent. Things came to a head a few months later when, instead of just knocking his wife about, he started beating the living daylights out of Mickey boy as well. After a particular vicious attack on her son, June confided in her neighbour Lily, who knew exactly what to do. The lad was rushed to hospital and the police were called.

June did not clap eyes on Johnny Fuller again from that day onwards. A year later she met Peter at a wedding and had not looked back since. He had loved her, supported her, and made her financially and emotionally secure. Which was why, whatever happened, she had to stick by him. He had rescued her from a living hell and she would always be indebted to him for that.

'Are you all right, my darling?'

Peter wiped his muddy boots on the mat and sat down opposite his wife. Taking her hands in his, he spoke softly.

'Everything will be okay, June, trust me. Debbie will come to her senses. But meanwhile we have to stick to our guns, be strong. What's meant to be is meant to be, my love.'

June looked into his eyes. He was so sincere, so sure of himself. Squeezing his hands, she smiled. 'I hope you're right, Peter, I really do.'

Her husband kissed her gently on the forehead. 'Believe me, darling, I'm always right.'

Billy carried Debbie's case as they walked towards the tower block on the Gascoigne Estate. Gagging as she stepped into the lift, Debbie held her nose to block out the smell. She had been in the same lift plenty of times before, but the stench seemed far worse now that she was pregnant.

Billy lived thirteen floors up, which gave Debbie plenty of time to study her surroundings. They consisted of graffiti, spit, fag butts and stale urine. Noticing her expression, Billy smiled.

'Aye, lassie, you'll get used to the smell after a bit, you will.'

Debbie pretended to agree, but made a mental note to use the stairs whenever possible.

'Now, make yourself at home, hen. I have to pop out for a wee bit, to pick some money up. I willnae be long.'

Debbie took a good long look at her new abode and felt increasingly depressed. 'An absolute shit-hole' was the best way to describe it. She'd been here before, lots of times, but always after a drink and of an evening. Her mum and Peter had never let her stay out all night, so she'd never had a chance to see the place in daylight. The flat itself was okay, quite big for a council place, it was

just so bare and desperately in need of decorating and some furniture.

Debbie looked into the bedroom and found there was nowhere for her to put her clothes. The one small wardrobe was full of Billy's stuff. As she sat down on the mattress on the bare floor, which served as the bed, Debbie started to sob. She would have to have a serious chat with Billy, she told herself. She wasn't coming round here once a week now, bladdered like before. She was a pregnant woman and needed comfort, a proper home.

Billy arrived back two hours later. Listening to Debbie talking between her sobs, he hugged her tightly.

'Shhh, now. Hey, come on, everything will be okay. I've got plenty of money. We'll get some paint tomorrow, spruce the place up a bit. There's a second-hand furniture place down the road – I'll take you there and we'll kit the place out. I didnae bother with all that shit before, living here on my own, but now you're here it's different. Now come on, stop crying, we'll get it sorted, I promise.'

Billy woke up early the next morning. Debs had been tossing and turning all night, she'd kept him awake for bloody hours. He glanced at her, and was surprised to see that she was now fast asleep. He hoped he'd made the right decision, letting her move in with him. Her performance last night, with all the tears and shit, wasn't his scene – dramatics had never been his game. He'd thought Debs was different, a laugh. He'd never seen her cry before, she'd always been so happy-go-lucky. He really hoped she wasn't about to change. For some reason or other, he always attracted nutty women. The last three had been all right until he'd moved in with them. Within weeks they all seemed to turn psycho on him.

Sighing, Billy slung his arm round Debs. 'Wakey, wakey.'

As he rubbed his erection against her leg, he willed her to respond. He was fucked if he was going to stand painting for hours, buy furniture he didn't want, and get nothing in return.

Stirring, Debbie reciprocated his kisses. She'd been silly last night, all emotional. This was her new life now. She loved Billy and was determined to make it work.

Billy was as good as his word. He bought a couple of tins of paint and then took Debbie to a tut shop where she chose a sofa, coffee table, small wardrobe, lamp and a chest of drawers. She refused to sleep in a second-hand bed, which pissed him off as he had to fork out for a brand new one. She also demanded saucepans, utensils and a big shop at Tesco.

'Fucking women,' Billy muttered, as soon as she was out of earshot. Three hundred and sixty pounds today had bloody well cost him! He just hoped Debs was worth it because if she wasn't she'd go the same way as all the others had.

Billy took a deep breath as he fought to keep his temper in check. In the past he'd made the mistake of lashing out at women, but he was determined to put all that shit behind him now and make a fresh start.

He really loved Debbie, but prayed she didn't push him too far. The others had all taken the piss out of him and he wasn't the type of geezer to take shit off anyone, especially a woman. His mum was to blame for the way he was, he knew that. She had fucked him up. He had tried desperately to forget his damaged childhood, but sometimes when women pissed him off, it came back to him. As he terrorised them, all he could think of was his whore of a mother.

Billy put the last of the Tesco bags in the kitchen, then

rummaged through them and opened a can of Strongbow. Greedily gulping the cider, he calmed himself down. This was a new start for him and he had to make it work. If he didn't, his evil bitch of a mother would have won.