

H e L e f t , S h e L e f t .

When I think of me as a little girl, I think of my mom Carol. It's how I remember : I remember through her. When I was very young, my mom and I lived in a large, three storey house in Devon: she says we were very happy. "You used to wake up singing", she says, the way I sometimes do now. I used to gurgle in my cot, all the way down at the end of the hall, in a room all of my own.

When I think of that now, being "in a room all of my own", I feel scared. Later on, after Henry died, his presence used to haunt the house. Gilli, my step mother, said she saw Henry's ghost once on the stair-case, late at night. My child mind keeps that image as truth and I know later on my step-brothers and I would refuse to be separated and all slept in the same room. Gilli said when she would sit down to write on Henry's typewriter "things would come through" her that weren't hers. But Carol says now that Henry wouldn't have hurt me: he used to hold me and be "very protective" when I was little.

There are photos of us: my dad, Harry, Carol and Henry all lined up in front of the old wooden door of Henry's hut, and he is looking at me with his big, soft eyes but mine are closed. I'm so small and my hands reach out of my self, grasping at shapeless forms; destinies. Harry and Carol wear their hair so long, it touches their chests, they have gentle, blurry smiles that reach down to me. Carol's breasts are heavy with milk and she's ready to hold me close, after two weeks in the incubator. I am ready to feel her.

It was the 1970's and Carol and Harry were "hippies". They grew their hair long, fucked out of wed-lock and took acid that is much stronger than the stuff around today. They say that they were the first to do it: they were the first of the middle-class English gypsies that travelled the isles in trucks - roaming from festival to festival like all the "crusties" do now. It kept them occupied.

August 1976. Carol writes: *Bee celebrated 1st birthday in the truck at Rolling Stones concert, Knebworth.*

They make it sound like I celebrated at the concert, raging on, drinking champagne, but in fact they where doing that and I was asleep in the truck.

Later the truck was painted a dark green but then it was covered with rainbows, trees and flying-saucer. We all slept up the top on the mezzanine that Harry built. There was a stove underneath where they cooked porridge in the morning and where they cooked waffles with honey and cream at festivals. They'd open the back of the truck and have a canopy extending out from the door for people to

shelter under and I would be off, playing with all the other hippy kids. Once I got my face painted with a big purple and blue butterfly and I loved it so much I didn't wash it off. The next day I went back to the woman to get another done, but it wasn't so good and I was disappointed.



We didn't always live in the truck. Carol and I lived at Ox's Cross while Harry was away working on music with Ant Phillips, composing the music for the movie to be made for "Tarka the Otter", Henry's book. Carol says it was her first separation from Harry. It was the summer of 1977 and I was two. Harry had persuaded Carol to go back to Ox's Cross in order to keep the house in his hands. Henry died in August and Carol and I were living alone at Ox's Cross. She was running a cream tea business and when I ask her now, "Why cream teas?", she says with a shy grin on her face, "because it is a tradition in North Devon. Lots of people came and we served the best cream teas and coffee in the area".

She was very good at it. It's as if I should have known.

People came every day of the week and stayed all day, looking out at the view of the rolling meadows and enjoying the atmosphere. All I remember are the white sugar cubes that melt in your mouth if you suck on them hard enough. I would sit under the table with Tree, my German-shepherd (and best friend) and steal as many sugar cubes as I could or until I felt sick. Carol said some thought she was a bad mother for allowing me to eat as much sweet things as I liked.

I still like sweets. My step-mother always reminds me, saying what a "sweet tooth" I am, even though now I'm still trying to convince her I prefer Japanese food to anything.

Summer 1978. Carol writes: *Cream teas cut short by return of Harry with musicians and a girlfriend Debbie. I went to Wales and Ireland for a week's holiday in winter, leaving Bee at Ox's Cross with Harry, Debbie and friends. It's the first time I've ever been away from Bee.*

Harry arrived with all his friends: they talked of dropping acid in the Queen's tea, they smoked large joints that swelled in size as the days got colder. Their clothing was thick to keep out the whipping wind and chills from the ocean air. They walked the moors together, and the sand dunes or "burrows" at Braugnton. Some kissed and lay together to keep each other warm. There's a photo of us all together outside at dusk; I've got a thick coat on that reaches to the top of my

wellies and I'm standing next to Carol (who'd returned). There's a black man there called Andy who had a lazy eyelid and he was my friend. Carol says he was really lovely to me ("you know, one of those sweet Cockney black men") and that I stared at his eye. I probably stared because my own right eye was lazy and I had to wear a patch.

I think he gave me a teddy, the blue bear I've still got in my bed and that I push against my back at night, so it feels like a person: so I feel safe.

I always wanted to be black when I was a kid; for as long as I can remember I've mourned the loss of an innate blackness I felt inside. I loved Bob Marley and Stevie Wonder: their big, heart felt smiles and open voices, all the things I thought English-ness lacked.



In the following spring of 1979 Carol writes, *I worked on house, laying floor tiles on the ground floor and in the bathrooms, and cataloguing Henry's books. Harry's in America with Gilli. Maureen and kids stayed with me in summer and helped paint the kitchen and run cream teas.*

Now I write in my journal: *Harry came back with his new lover Gilli and her two sons. It was the 1970's and Harry was a "free thinker". He thought we could all live together. As Carol says, "He thought we would all live happily ever after but it just didn't work."*

Carol and Gilli didn't really get on. Carol felt her space, (for Ox's Cross had become her home and mine) impinged upon by Gill's order of doing things.

Gilli's two sons Orlando and Tali came with her from Majorca, a small town near Ibiza, Spain. It was hot there and they had scorpions in their house. They had wells to get water from and blue, blue water to swim in. And a father. The two boys were adrift in cold, drizzly England: their tanned skin fading with the light in their eyes and with the hope that their father would come back and take them home. Like many hopes, it wasn't to be and they stayed on, forlorn and clinging to their mother, while their skin faded.

I was a brat, Gilli said later. Mostly because she disapproved of how much sugar Carol allowed me to have and how much Harry doted on me. Tali, Orlando and I threw acorns at each other.

I've got acorns next to my bed, in a wooden bowl buried in sea-shells.

Harry, my father: the enigmatic, handsome English musician from Devon, had called Gilli back with him. She, who's also English, had been making music with her lover of fifteen years Daevid Allen (the father of the boys) and it was ending, changing, shifting. All of Gilli's love affairs have lasted fifteen years. She says that it seems we have about three long relationships in our lives, and that even though normal marriage doesn't account for this kind of love, it happened to her and seems "healthy".

Harry left Gilli and Carol to "get on with raising the kids" pretty quickly after he and Gilli arrived and went off with his friends to invent crazy new ways to harness cosmic energy from standing stones (or something like that).

Much later on, when we were in Australia and Harry had broken with Gilli and was with his new girlfriend, we'd all go out together for dinner and he'd say, "Look, aren't I lucky, I've got all my favourite women around me!" and we'd all cringe.



Carol writes, July 1979: *Maureen and kids left. I went to London for working holiday (2 or 3 weeks) as Harry and Gilli wanted me to decide what to do about*

leaving Bee with them. I returned, took my driving test, and made arrangements to leave for Wales and Ireland with Bee, to find somewhere to live. I knew I was committed to being with Bee, but I was always determined that Harry would be a father to her. I did not want to cut him out of the picture.

I was four. I started wearing glasses: + 5 on my right, + 4 on my left. I also got a patch to wear on my left eye to make my lazy, right eye 'work'.

Later on, when I was at school in England, I'd go to school with this patch and I would end up being the last: I was always the tortoise, far behind the boys. I'd walk very slowly trying not to trip over. "Always cautious" Gilli says.

Carol writes: I discovered Bee's eyesight had deteriorated and she was squinting nervously. I felt it was due to insecurity . . . I remember the harrowing experience of trying to put a patch on her eye, before school, with the tears pouring down her face. I was living next to her school, and it seemed to cause her more confusion my being there, so I decided to go back to Ireland. Before I left I took her to a

healer to find out her opinion about the cause of the eye trouble. She felt that it was partly insecurity, but that she was basically o.k. .

I'd cry and cry, begging Carol to take my patch off so I wouldn't have to be so blind and awkward at school and so I could walk home in pace with Tali and Orlando and not be left behind. It seemed a long way back from Ilfracombe, the little village we walked to every morning, down the narrow, English country lanes. The hedgerows towered over me, and in winter, together they would create a concave of snow. We made igloos and tunnels trying to search inside them to see where they met the dead twigs and leaves of the 'rows. In winters like these we would have to use a sledge to get to town and back.

Once Harry took me to Ilfracombe on the sledge to get supplies, because the house and roads were snowed under. We went flying down the lanes so fast that we lost control and smashed into a rock on the side of the road. We came hurtling of into the grey, dirt-ridden snow on to our soft winter bums. Laughing through tears s from the fright, we decided to walk the rest of the way. The lanes seemed like rivers of ice and the fields forgotten and deserted glaciers.

I have visions of these fields - the muted grey-greens of a landscape that appears only in dreams. Every tree was covered in icicles that used to sing in the wind - a quite unearthly, an eerie tinkling.

I used to break the icicles of and suck till they melted.

Later, during a particularly treacherous winter, our geese were left outside. Harry and Gilli still say it must have been minus 20 degrees. At dusk, with gale force winds raging around the house, Gilli found the geese being blown across the frozen lawns, their wings iced over and helpless.

She had to take them inside the house and thaw them out in front of the fire.



In September of 1979 Carol and I went back to Ireland and Wales, retracing her earlier journey, as Carol says "trying to see if it was the right place to live". She says: *Returned briefly with Bee to pick up more of our stuff. Bee seemed to resent me when we left Devon this time. She started school in Ireland part-time, learning to write, and I taught French in evening school.*