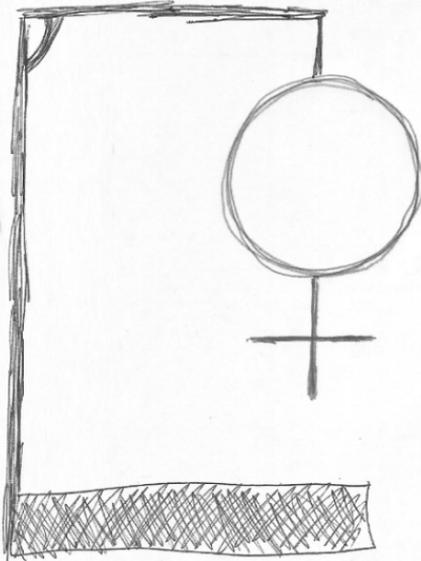


EVIL WOMEN

Excerpt from novel



GRAEME LARMOUR

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Jesus wouldn't bother coming back. He wouldn't even give it a second thought. Peeking through the pearly gates of his kingdom, he'd look down upon the planet and think *it's bad enough in a First World country*. Then he'd have retreated to the comforts of heaven, making sure St Peter locked those pearly gates behind him, and found something better to do. Even if *something better* was simply watching daytime TV.

Rainer Crossan was not Jesus. And he *had* come back. Back to Britain. Back to his hometown. Back to a life of gum-littered pavements and hungover grey skies. And back to school. A place he never expected to find himself again.

Standing at the front of the classroom at Bridesgrave High, attempting to interest 3-dozen bored adolescents in the scale and scope of mountain ranges, the wisdom of his latest move seemed somewhat suspect.

He could remember how it felt to be learning this kind of crap. All those dull lessons and punitive homeworks. Despite those drawbacks, Rainer could remember being happy aged 15, even though he hadn't had a great deal to be happy about. He had still been happy at 18, and by that stage had passed some exams and even got his driving test. On the second attempt.

By 21 he was still predominantly happy, though increasingly he was being visited by a gnawing sense of frustration. Some of this he attributed to the fact that, although he had some experience of life, he had seen nothing of the world.

By the time he turned 23 Rainer was actively putting this right, finding that not only did travel broaden his mind, it also kept his frustration at bay. So, aided and abetted with some credit cards and guidebooks, he set about exploring all those areas on Earth that interested him.

By the age of 27 he had wandered around every peninsula the planet presented. Satisfied by his travels, Rainer was ready to face up to more adult concerns and think about his future. A decision was made to cease travelling and concentrate on finding his way in the world of grown-ups.

Careers. Mortgages. Relationships. *Thinking long term.* With his days of adventure behind him, Rainer felt ready to settle down to some sense of normality. It had been a big decision, but one he was happy with.

Happy, that is, until that future became the present. And Rainer Crossan's present was the inevitable outcome of a year of teacher training. Teaching. It hadn't seemed like such a bad choice at first; the holidays were good and the money was enough to pay back some of the debts he'd accrued.

But – and this was a crucial *but* – it hadn't been such a good choice either. Teaching wasn't what he wanted to do. It was simply what he planned to do while he thought about what he really wanted. But so far no further thoughts had been forthcoming. So it seemed that teaching was something he was stuck with for the foreseeable future.

This wasn't even his own class he was taking. By rights he should be in the staff room, marking homework or preparing notes for Monday's lesson, while Bob Cod taught geography.

However, sometime after lunch Bob Cod had been struck down by one of the many mystery ills that ailed him and taken to A&E, a place he now regarded as his home-from-home. When Principal Lawford was looking for a volunteer to provide cover, Rainer's name was the one pulled out of her hat.

Considering some of the delinquents and fun-sized psychopaths he could be teaching, this lot weren't too bad. And thankfully this was also the last lesson before the week turned to weekend.

Holding this thought in his mind like a Holy Grail, Rainer asked the class a question and watched as one or two attentive hands rose into the air. Not many, admittedly, but it was too late in the afternoon to start picking on the ones who obviously weren't listening. Rainer pointed to a pupil with her hand raised and asked her name.

'Abigail, sir.'

Rainer looked down at the roll sheet. Abigail Silverman. The

name was familiar, though Rainer couldn't remember it ever coming up in staff room conversation. Abigail Silverman... Abigail Silverman... Abigail Silverman...

Then he remembered.

During his own schooldays there had been a girl called Abigail Silverman whom he had admired from afar. She had been one of his many hormonal desires, at an age when any thoughts of selectivity had yet to form.

Although he and Abigail had been in the same year, they were in none of the same classes and Rainer had never found the nerve to engage her in conversation.

Actually, it wasn't that he never found the nerve. It was that the right moment had never arisen. Yeah, that was it. *The right moment had never arisen.*

All these years later, he could remember very little about Abigail Silverman. There was just a single incident that stuck in his memory.

Rainer had been the first to arrive for his maths class that day, reaching the classroom just as Abigail was walking out. She must have been kept behind since the rest of her class were nowhere to be seen. As Abigail passed him, Rainer instinctively looked at his feet. He had no idea whether she even noticed he was there.

But someone had noticed he was there. For, as Rainer entered the room, the teacher to whom Abigail must have been speaking, looked at him gravely.

'That girl will go far,' he remarked on the pupil who had just left.

Rainer could remember the teacher's exact words, although what really left an impression was the tone of his voice. Striking an unnatural note somewhere between admiration and contempt, the comment was clearly intended to go no further than Rainer and his teacher. And that was as far as it had ever gone.

As those words came back to him, Rainer couldn't help but wonder whether the teacher had been right after all. Had Abigail Silverman gone far? Had she gone anywhere at all? What might she be up to now? And if he saw her again, would she still appear as attractive as she seemed when Rainer was covered in the confused acne of adolescence?

Mulling these thoughts over, Rainer suddenly realised the other Abigail Silverman – the one who'd answered his question – had

finished speaking. And Rainer hadn't heard a single word she'd said.

'Who agrees with Abigail?' he asked the class.

The class mumbled in general agreement.

'Well done, Abigail,' Rainer confirmed, hoping the girl had given the right answer after all.

For all he knew she could have told the class that their stand-in teacher for the afternoon was merely chancing his arm as a learned educator.

Had she said this, she wouldn't be too far off the mark. Unperturbed, Rainer went on to elaborate on the rock formations of the Himalayas.

But his mind was not on such lofty concerns. No matter how hard he tried to concentrate, he kept wondering about the other Abigail Silverman. Would she even recognise him if she saw him now? Would he recognise her? More importantly, if he were to run into her again, would he now be able to summon the courage to speak? Or find the *right moment* to speak to her?

Then the bell rang and he stopped wondering. Friday's final lesson was over and school was out for another 48 hours. But Rainer Crossan had not been saved by the bell. No-one ever is. The best it can ever do is delay the inevitable.



Elsewhere, Christian Gibson had also been trying to delay the inevitable, but hadn't been able to delay it for long enough. He seldom could these days.

Beneath him, Abigail Silverman groaned and even Christian must have realised her sigh was borne of exasperation rather than pleasure.

'Well, you better finish me off then,' she grumbled.

Christian obliged, his hand sliding between Abigail's thighs as he rubbed in the disappointment. With his lacklustre attempt to stimulate not offering any satisfaction, Abigail began doling out a list of instructions for him to follow.

'Up a bit, up a bit...'

He moved his hand further up.

'No, too high... down a bit, down a bit...'

He lowered his hand again.

'Faster... faster...'

His movement took on a newfound sense of urgency.

'Not that fast!'

He slowed down.

'Harder...'

He began to apply some elbow grease.

'Jeeeee-SUS! Not *that* hard!'

This was followed by an irritated sigh and Christian's hand slowed to a stop.

'Watch and I'll show you how to do it.'

Christian turned over on his side, as Abigail tried to make the best of a bad job. She knew sex couldn't always be mind-blowing. She could accept it usually being moderate.

But Christian was something else. After 14 months together she could count the number of times they'd had great sex on one hand and still have 4 fingers and a thumb left over. Most of the time it felt like he used her as a living blow-up doll, or that Abigail was an open centrefold over which Christian pulled himself off without having to use his hands.

He would often fondle one of her breasts clumsily, jerking

himself off with his other hand until he squirted and spurted across her belly and breasts. On the odd occasion he attempted foreplay, his tongue flicked out like a lizard swiping Abigail's nipple, an act that tickled rather than caressed.

She could even tolerate this if afterward he made some effort to satisfy her. But he never did. Instead he would fall breathlessly onto his back, muttering *you're the best* before rolling over into a sweaty sleep. Tonight he hadn't even done that.

Turning his back on Abigail, Christian knew something was wrong. Very wrong. He had always supposed having a girlfriend meant he could have sex without effort whenever he wanted, and would never again have that gnawing doubt that he might be going without sex for a long time. If not forever.

Abigail was the perfect girlfriend. He knew that. For a start she was stunningly beautiful. She could easily be a model if she wanted. Her beauty was all the more important considering Christian himself was moderately unattractive. He knew this because people regularly told him so.

And the more attractive his girlfriend was, the more this impressed his friends. Even more importantly, it impressed his enemies – of which there seemed to be many – in the outside world.

Abigail was also alarmingly popular. This was good for Christian since it lifted him out of the ranks of unpopularity. And he knew he was unpopular because no-one really liked him much.

Abigail had good taste. This made up for his own lack of taste, and Christian now let her choose all his clothes. Before meeting Abigail he never understood why people turned their noses up at his beige cords. He still didn't know why they turned their noses up, but it didn't matter now, as he no longer wore beige cords.

And Abigail could talk to people. Christian always found it difficult to interest people in what he had to say. He would talk to them about subjects he thought were interesting, only for them to nod patiently, then walk away at the first opportunity.

Abigail had the perfect body and kept herself in great shape. Christian often thought about getting into shape himself but never quite got around to it. And he knew he was out of shape because the T-shirts that once hung on his shoulders now clung to his belly for protection.

But there was one factor above all others cementing Abigail's status as the perfect girlfriend. She let Christian sleep with her. No other girls let him do that. Well, no other *good-looking* girls let him do that, and he tried his best to forget the few bog-beasts and breath-monsters who had obliged.

Yes, Abigail Silverman was the perfect girlfriend. In every way she was the perfect girlfriend. Except that when they were alone, their relationship felt somewhat less than perfect.

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