

Redfern



by Lola Morgan

PART ONE
Gloaming

1: Hoes Before Him

In prayers, in her subconscious, in writing, in her bed, she planned to make a masterpiece for the one she couldn't have. That's how she would make it up to the one she'd hurt so bad. Who could say how many failures she'd make, leading up to that. She wasn't sure that her one would be there to listen back. But she knew she had to do it before she was dead. To die before it happened, would make her followers so sad.

In the dark she clutched her pillow and thought about skin. She tried to imagine sleeping with them. By day she tried to tear apart what was real and fake. By night it felt so potent, it could not be explained. She tried to detach and no longer care. Her one sent in troops to claim who was theirs. Blood rushed and carved a moat round a corner of her heart. She built a bridge with song, hoping one would finally come.

Some nights she couldn't sleep because it hurt to be loved. She didn't think she'd ever been loved this much. They decided, around the same time, not to give this one up. No matter what fate threw between them. A burning love, beyond passion, never known by most adults. All by herself, the flames she felt, accompanied by terror. The closer it came to coming true, the bleaker her surroundings felt. If in real-life their flames ever met, they wondered if they could save more than them two selves. Because it took such courage, to finally touch the other one. It took such courage to be unimaginably loved.

It wasn't till many years after they actually met, that she began hearing rhythms. They popped up in her head, not quite fully formed, nebulous—but hard to dismiss. Her faith had been tentative, until that started to happen. Yes it was honestly like she *had* to write it down and she *had* to work until she felt sick. No she wasn't schizophrenic but she heard a voice somewhere close to God in her head. She didn't really feel comfortable, talking about it. It was something few people (besides her one) would ever get.

The rhythms she heard ebbed and flowed in waves. Wavelengths of fear reflective of those years. In her private life: a phase of isolation and unhappiness. She imagined and wrote better than she ever had. Sure their love had been a mess, but in retrospect, gorgeous. She couldn't have done it for anyone else. Not for recognition, only for a friend. Yet she knew some compositions sort of *had* to get shared, again and again. To hide them, would feel like a sin.

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What caused Catherine to question her faith, were the aspects of fame that weren't at all like a God dream. Say she was lucky—blessed, maybe. But fame wasn't like a music video featuring strobes and sexy extras. *People prayed for this? Why?* Even her slightly-less-famous friends seemed jealous of all the flashing lights. Fame didn't feel like a God dream, no. It felt more like standing in a freezer. A giant bright freezer that hadn't been washed out in a while. The people taking pictures were so ugly, inside. Why didn't they look in a mirror, instead of at her. The people forming opinions about the pictures were so awful, online. Why didn't they find a life with some self-worth. *Seriously, pathetic.*

Why did people crave celebrities so heavily. Why did people feed so hard. Though Americans weren't starving—not quite—they were starved of something inside, which they hoped Catherine and ex could give them. There was coldness all around. The least Catherine could do, was provide warmth. Warm white light, which seemed to deflect the flashes, for a fleeting minute, softer.

Catherine would feel victorious if she made it out alive—after all this. She was proud of how she handled the press, like an artist would be proud of any great performance. But she didn't feel like she got enough credit, for that.

From attending hot pilates frequently and eating clean, Catherine Delaluna possessed a body like a Whitewater slalom canoe, while most Americans were still crammed side-by-side in intertubes. On her way home from a

photoshoot for another article celebrating the overgeneralized genus of “strong women,” she was in a bad mood. *Who can I text??* She could stand another body to gnaw apart and lay siege to. She needed to have sex so mad it left her witless. She needed someone who could handle the worst of her, and not crack or collapse or but fight back for even more of it. Her greatest fear, besides betrayal and abandonment from lovers and/or friends, was that the worst parts of herself might accidentally burst out in public. And she seriously needed her violent feelings to be addressed.

Catherine was having a hard time deciding whether to look upon most people as losers, or whether to cooperate with them. The danger of too much sympathy was becoming one of them. Of saying, “it’s fine,” and falling into the same tired trap. As bitchy as this sounded, it wasn’t that bad, because the people she personally considered “losers” were often other celebs, like herself, worshipped by many millions of humans. Catherine felt obligated to filter through all the bullshit. Some people, TBT, were overworshipped.

She didn’t want to admit it, but each time someone revealed (often by accident) to Catherine, “I’m obsessed,” it worked against them. She was so, so sick of having her ass kissed. Not because she was full of herself (which, she was), but because she was sick of people’s weakness. It was unbecoming to grovel. She would almost rather be left alone or censored or flagged as worthless by the masses, than be worshipped by such dumbasses.

She was a star for being a lover like no other. She picked the right men. Actually she was a star for being a beautiful actress and singer—a famous *performer*—but it was all connected.

Catherine Delaluna had a lot to be grateful for, that much was certain. But when she considered her life so far, she felt the impulse to cross her hands over her cervix. There was just as much pain in her memories, as happiness. Sometimes it felt like the pain outsized the good moments. But she monitored the story she shared so well. The people, after all, needed reprieve from themselves. She gave them heaven, even when they gave her hell. She deluded them at the price of her own mental (and possibly, physical) health. Her family and friends wouldn’t believe all she put up with. There was a fine almost indistinguishable line between psychic and psychotic.

If she *did* bring it up to her family or friends, this is what Catherine would have said.

“I think I’m still in love with [II].”

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As typical as it was to find stars in California who believed strongly in love and God, it was common to find devout unbelievers among fine artists in New York. Selena Gray took it upon herself to bridge the gap between grandiose faith in oneself—and a certain entitlement to “blessings” which might actually qualify as curses to someone else—and the humility required to actually bow down to a higher power and cooperate with all (not some) of the human realm.

Her friends knew what it was like, waking up to get their hopes up and have them all stripped by the end of the day. They knew what it was like to feel homeless within their own bodies and minds and living spaces. They knew it was like to put so much faith in sex, because it didn’t feel quite right with an unworthy ex.

So much for that, was a common sentiment. They’d heard too many stories with unhappy ends. There was no fanfare when they got out of bed. Or when they went through a difficult event. You could be an amazing person, and still get no credit.

Selena wondered if this is how it would feel at the end. At heaven's gate, in a hospital bed, or wherever it happened. People were scared they had no free will. Selena was scared she had too much of it. And of how little control she had, in spite of that. What could she have done that would have been better than this.

What if Valerie hadn't made it, the last time she slipped. Selena would have thought, *so much for this*.

Selena didn't know who was to blame, so she blamed the devil for how people sinned. She blamed the devil for giving her such a hard time about her past.

Love wasn't like what the people were told. The *fine* New York artists had figured that out long ago. It wasn't a fable with horse-drawn carriages and handsome men. *No no...* But there were facets of love that still contained hope! Commitment, trust, and not letting go. Even if they tried (*and they had, ohoho*) they probably wouldn't be able to.

Staring at a TV behind the bar at her favorite steak place, alone, Selena laughed while watching Catherine Delaluna perform. She wasn't paying attention to Catherine but to the back-up dancers: specifically, that thing that back-up dancers got in their eyes and bods where they were so into the dancing that their focus became like violent—whereas Catherine had to appear focused but not quite to a violent degree; she just had to, like, play it cool and be tentatively obsessed with herself, because that's what it took to give a good performance—but no matter what she did, she had 'it' so she still pulled focus from all of the back-ups, even if they danced their souls all the way out their sphincters. It was more fun to watch the back-up dancers for this reason. They were good! Selena felt like a bitch, almost. Though she was touched by how almost every time Catherine said something in her speaking voice—not singing—she sounded like she was about to start crying. Selena wondered if she was hearing things, and this wasn't really so.

Selena never used to take Catherine seriously, because Selena grew up doing homework and reading books—not paying attention to celebs. But then she started listening to Catherine's music, and realized, it wasn't bad! In fact it was like, really good!!! Every time Selena thought she found “the best song, this one's it,” she accidentally dug up something else, which (like the previous song) was so catchy she couldn't stop listening. These weren't always chart-topping hits, though Catherine deserved cred from a *real* critic, for her potential. Selena suspected that Catherine was sort of running the show on each of her tracks (i.e. she was the reason they were *good*, because sometimes the beats were decent-not-great no offense) and thus, could stand to be surrounded by adult artists—not profiteers on her young and vulnerable sexiness, who could care less about the depth of the music being produced. Catherine had started especially young in a mostly misogynist industry and had little agency as to how her most marketable traits were possessed. Selena's Q was whether this little girl singing songs was actually having the kind of sex she was describing in her lyrics. She couldn't even believe some of this music was marketed to twelve-year-old girls—or maybe it was Catherine's def-abnormal sex appeal making it all sound raunchy, to Selena.

Selena sipped her drink and turned away from the screen. She felt ready to switch up her ways and start being less mean. Also, healthy. Every exercise class she'd ever been to was too hardcore for what she was going for, besides yoga and pilates, which was no fun while she was still alone and a smoker and probably out-of-shape. She didn't want to gain muscle mass and had trouble trusting most instructors who were popular in Manhattan. She didn't care what she had to do, to make her dreams happen. She just wanted to feel as confident as she felt as a little kid. She wondered if this was an impossible thing to expect.

One of the exciting new aspects of growing up, and rediscovering an ability to love, was finding out that real love came in so many elaborate, distinct, one-of-a-kind incarnations—she couldn't keep track of them all but wanted to know as many as she could explore in this life. And though she didn't know what it was, it was clear—she and Valerie had somethin specially special.

She thought about finding the right word for what she and Valerie had, and “GFF” wasn’t it. They’d never quite been “friends.” “Sisters” was a good word, but that made their accidental passion sound like incest. So that wasn’t it either. “Hoes” might work, but she and Rose had already kind of taken that. Selena’s bond with Rose was probably closer to “GFFs” than her bond with Valerie. She didn’t really get mad at Rose; well, once in a while, sort of. But not like she got mad at Valerie. She was less possessive of Valerie than protective about who she spent time with, though she’d relinquished any claim on Valerie at this time. Maybe a person wasn’t something to own or control, but someone to watch over and guide.

Selena decided the best word, to describe what S and V had between them, was “bloodsluts.” No one else could understand that, unless they’d felt it themselves. Or perhaps, they were the only two bloodsluts left alive. An endangered species, too unusual to look away from—as soon as they got their bodies as fit as their brains, which you bet is gonna happen, *alright?*

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What [III] thought about this morning in case [I] might care to hear [III] out: I don’t wanna go to that godawful gym alone but it’s Sunday so I can sleep in longer anyway and hopefully find my mind in a better mood for it. I don’t want to live at home anymore, but I need to save some more money before hitting the road for a coastal city. If you were a boy, you’d be different but you would be really good for me; you’d be soft and safe and probably wouldn’t be able to make me laugh but would think I was really funny and have a dark side brought out by me sexually. If I were a boy I probably wouldn’t be as hard on myself about how I look, but I’d want a girl who makes an effort to look good and also gets on my case if I didn’t start dressing like an adult man, and not one just rolled out of bed. That said I wouldn’t be hard on the girl version of me about her rough-edged early twenties because all girls worth having as long-term lifemates (as opposed to flings) start out dorks, and everything I’ve explained about my circumstances having a harsh effect on my life is actually really true. And it’s sort of the same with most boys worth having; they start out gayish or not that nice, but it’s because they haven’t learned about these things and then either made an effort to be one of the good guys or conformed to how the world is. That’s how I assess a man. If I were a boy and you were my girlfriend, I’d rather you be healthy and happy and safe than anything—oh but I’d also want to see you find your wings and be a swag goddess. This would involve complimenting you in ways that weren’t just like generic compliments, but actually thoughtful and encouraging remarks that revealed respect. If I were the best woman I could be, I’d bring out a more mature affectionate side in all my male following. But as a public figure, I’d ‘figure’ out how to be funny in a girly way that’s never been done—that’s somehow seductive and a little less deadpan than the old depressed me! I think I’ve already found this voice but I have to execute it performatively. Not gonna be easy. I’d be pretty in a way that’s not like ‘she’s pretty’ but more like intimidating because it’s so mature and oddly sexual and never-before-seen. If we were *both* girls, then we’d bring out the other girl’s repressed crazy side and also work hard to be the finest bitches we could be! Like ballerinas on crack. At the start, maybe more like the kid-version of ballerinas. (But on *crack!*) And as a girl you *would* be able to make me laugh... well probs but I’m not sure yet. We wouldn’t be mean about bad habits or trauma or other obstacles, but actually work hard to get away from that shit, because we want to get revenge on all the bitches who dared to cross you or me. If the best of my prose work were published online, most comments about it would be like “this is trash, anyone could write this” (*not true!* no one could write it, but me) ... But I don’t want my eventual movies to be that way please. I want my movies to be like “say what you will about Lola Morgan, but she’s a great filmmaker.” And for the people I cast I want the same to be said about their acting: “say what you will about [*so-and-so*], but [*he or she*] sure gave a good performance. Amazing.” If we get to meet in real-life it’ll be awkward because we’ll never know how much you’ve actually read or seen about me, and vice versa. The internet is weird and magical that way, how it allows for unlikely relationships. (*Blessed!*) But the shy early part of a lasting bond can be quite beautiful, if two can make it through the deep nerves. I hope we can get to know each other like strangers and take it slow and easy. I’ve never believed in hooking up and I’m excited to get away from people who just wanna fuck me [up], which for a while, ruined and killed me. Lucky 4 everyone, it’s a new day.

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Cleo Williams wasn't sure what she expected from a meeting with Xavier, her first love and high school boyfriend. But she didn't feel comfortable enough around him to speak unselfconsciously or snap pictures or let her guard down for him. It wasn't that either person felt unattracted to the other (he called her "cute") or even unaffectionate (she called him a "sweetheart"). They just felt more like, friends, than anything else. Cleo didn't feel motivated to get all primped up for him. Xavier didn't feel motivated to get his flirty game on. They wanted to be a good friend to the other person, which meant being honest and not disingenuous this time around.

"How long are you in the area," Xavier asked at the coffee shop where they met for their first time in years.

"I don't know," said Cleo, who felt like her mind was moving faster but not her heartbeat. Her adrenaline was totally in check.

"You don't?"

"I mean," said Cleo. "I don't feel well enough to live by myself."

That was the mistake. She shouldn't have spent so many years alone. She should have had roommates who would have been appalled by her self-destructive actions. She should have dated a college boy who was in it for the sex—then forcibly stayed with him after college! She shouldn't have done it like this! Cleo had *so* many regrets....

"Why do you look so confused?"

"I don't know," Cleo said back, slowly.

The truth that Cleo didn't want to admit, was that she didn't even like Xavier that much, even though he was perfect.

Just, not for her. For another girl. Or guy, perhaps.

He wasn't a good fit for her, that was it!

And she was wondering how she ever got her hopes up, about a future for them.

While Cleo wrote this scene [not actually lol she wrote it later], Xavier played video games on his laptop. Cleo wore all-black winter clothing and kept on her beanie cap. She didn't notice what he was wearing, or care. Come to think of it, she didn't care much about looking good for him, ever—which probably explains why, *she didn't!* Xavier didn't feel pheromonally attracted to her. He was thinking about his own image, more than hers. The whole ti

And it wasn't that awkward. And they were still probably soul-mates. And maybe they could never quite end what they had. It just wasn't written, in this life, between her and him.

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No I don't feel ignored I feel you with me like always. I don't know how this stuff works but I trust all is fairly well. That said, it might be a while till we meet again.

So went the closing lines of a monologue from Benny Bluman to his ex-girl Selena Gray, which he never intended to share beyond his brain. He was on the road again. On tour, *fuckahs!* In the wake of an unexpected shot to fame and

fortune, he was thinking often of Valerie—not as a lover but as a friend. He wondered if she'd managed to wean herself off the villainous substances.

What Valerie had, that neither Selena nor his new girl Catherine possessed, was an awareness of human nature that reached far beyond her royal realm. He figured Val's experience as a girl of her stature was not altogether (though still slightly) different from what he'd been through as a black male.

Benny would be lying if he didn't admit, he still harbored some unsatisfactory feelings toward Selena for what an indifferent bitch she'd been to him. But, *you know*, he'd never been the type to let a woman's bitchiness prevent sex with him.

On a tour bus, breathing the smell of gas exhaust and female musk, Benny Bluman took Catherine Delaluna in his arms and ran his teeth along her neck as he kissed her. He wanted to make her fall for him. He had a touch that made women roll over like obedient pups. That was the best sight in the world to Benny. A pretty girl, beneath him.

Catherine had honestly never been fucked like this. She felt herself getting clingy from the moment they met. And maybe she chose him to make her ex jealous. And maybe Benny was a bit more ratchet, at present, than the type of guy she usually blew. But now she was hooked like a pussy to catnip. And she wanted to hook him back. To win.

The moment she fell back on was closing her eyes and feeling it all come together at a point high up inside her like a river's tip. Where it began. When she felt that point sharpen like an arrowhead, a fossil deep inside there already. The moment she insisted to herself, *that love song was for me, not Benny's ex, it better have been even if it was an accidental prophecy*. And when she felt temporarily convinced, she sent arrows raining back all over her target.

When Catherine Delaluna lost all faith in other humans, which was often, she turned to money and devoted her whole battered black heart to *that* and no one else.

She loved money so much she would use it to wipe her wet sweaty pussy, after *hot* pilates (with a trainer who probably did a better job for her as a client than they'd ever done in their life for anyone) or to wipe down her pussy after *cold* pity sex (with someone *rich* who was so desperate to fuck her that he'd agree to hand over a shitload of cash). *Stupid motherfuckers ahahahaha*. She loved money more than men! At moments, *yeah*, she'd rather sleep with it in bed. Maybe her love of money was an *issue* that she should deal with, or maybe the real fuckin *issue* was that—she didn't have very strong feelings for most men, other than lust for what they held beneath the waistbands of their pants.

But then, *oh then*, she started paying attention to some poor bitches and *as noted*, she envied a certain nuance in their artistic temperament that her Hollywood peers didn't have. They valued art that made them feel something, even when they were dead within. They didn't benefit as much from art that was designed to make cash. And for Catherine—it was hard to get close to anyone when they all had dollar signs in their eyes, and just didn't understand.

What they didn't understand, was how power works!

If you start giving it away, it can get out of hand... !

Like for example, if Catherine hit the "follow" button on everyone's pathetic Instagrams, people would get all full of themselves!!!! *For shit*.

As they say in this military: *Earn* this (bitch.)

That said, Catherine was not ungenerous and if she wanted to treat someone she loved to a good time she knew how to do it (*so she thought but she was quite full of herself and creativity/cleverness counts for plenty*) but anyway she didn't want anyone spending her change, especially not men who had their own change to spend! It wasn't about the money: it was about etiquette.

In fact—nothing was about the money until someone made it about the money. That was part of why she got so weary of all these fake pussyass lovers and friends. They either brought it up when she didn't want to discuss it, or they said too much to *everyone else* about the money! If they had class, they would know to shut up about what she revealed. Now they had really messed it up with Catherine, and once the messing was done, it was a done deal.

Chapters 2-17 of 'Redfern' = withheld by author for later day

