

Mary Jones
mary@poetlady.com

60,000 Words

FOR A SENSE OF LOVE

A Novel

By

Mary Jones

Chapter 1: (Dark Delusions)

Sixteen-year-old Jenny McCalaster shivered and held her sweater closed, as clammy tendrils of night air passed through its thin white material. Her footsteps echoed softly on the fog-covered walkway and the smell of fresh flowers surrounded her, easing her fear for the moment. Ahead, in a clearing, was what looked like... *a burial ceremony?* In the misty darkness, she saw a small gathering of mourners. They were standing around a sinister looking, metallic colored casket. *Why was it dark, and who is in the casket?* She wondered.

Near the edge of the clearing, she could see her old boyfriend, standing alone, dressed in black. He stood next to an oak tree, smiling at her, his hand extended, motioning for her to come to him. Jenny was filled with a sense of relief and she quickly moved toward him. But suddenly, from behind the tree, an attractive, blonde haired woman, materialized. David saw her and draped his arm affectionately around the woman's shoulders. An ominous smirk appeared on David's face, and then he slowly looked back at Jenny, causing her to freeze with fear.

They began to laugh at her. Their laughter had a bizarre eeriness, which sent chills down Jenny's spine. Then, as if a switch had turned them off, they abruptly stopped. There was a cold blankness in David's eyes. He turned his head to the left, and Jenny's eyes followed his, as if he had willed them to. She saw a cluster of white plastic chairs, arranged in efficient rows, and filled with her relatives. They were all facing the shiny golden casket, which she now realized, held the remains of her father.

The scent of roses and gardenias lingered profoundly in the chilly night air. The sounds of people weeping could be heard from all directions. Jenny stood frozen, mesmerized by the scene before her. Guilty feelings engulfed her, as she remembered how she had accused these very same people of being heartless and uncaring. A woman's scream rang out, startling her out of her trance.

"There she is! She's the one that killed him!" shouted the woman, pointing an accusing finger at Jenny. The others fell silent and centered their attention on Jenny.

"You... you killed him!" they began to chant, over and over.

"No. It isn't true," Jenny screamed, horrified with the vision before her. She felt like the accused at a public execution. Was this repayment for having asked her father to come home early the day he died?

"It was an accident!" she wailed, feeling powerless to stop their accusations. Several mourners were now on their feet and starting to come toward her. The feeling of panic came back in a rush. Her heart was pounding rapidly in her chest, reacting to the sudden danger. She looked around trying to find an escape route. She took a few steps backward, then turned, and began to run. Her footsteps hammering on the narrow, fog covered walkway. She could hear the roaring chant of the crowd; "Get her! Get her!"

She looked back for a moment, then lost her footing and fell hard upon the ground. She quickly scrambled to her feet. Jenny felt tears gathering behind her eyes. But she resisted the urge to cry. Her only thought was to get away from the raging crowd. Suddenly, a hard hand clapped itself onto her shoulder. With a shriek, she leaped up, falling backwards, straight into the arms of a stranger. A deep, familiar voice boomed, "Jenny, My dear child, why are you running away? Why are you frightened?"

As she spun around, her sapphire eyes took in the blurred image of a tall, prominent looking man, standing in front of her. Immediately she recognized him and flung her arms around him with a vast sense of relief.

"Daddy? Oh Daddy, is it really you? I've missed you so much. Daddy I'm so scared, help me!" she cried and laid her head on his chest, letting the tears flow.

After a moment basking in the comfort of his arms, she felt his hand gently caressing her long dark hair.

"Everything will be alright, my pretty one," came the reply of an impious voice. There was something oddly familiar about the voice. In slow motion, she raised her head upward, letting her eyes gaze up at his face. As her eyes adjusted, she became horrified. The man had transformed into the psychotic serial killer, Roy Barker. She was certain that he had come back for her, for his final revenge. His cold hand found her neck and locked around her slender throat. His eyes glazed over as he started to tighten his grip. Desperately, Jenny began screaming and gasping for air. "Noooo!" she choked out, her small hands frantically trying to loosen the death hold on her throat. Jenny felt herself slipping away into darkness.

Waving her arms wildly, she fought against the unseen force that restrained her. She opened her eyes and saw the sheets that had somehow tangled themselves around her neck, and realized, that it had all been dream. Another incarnation of the horrible reoccurring nightmare that had been haunting her these past few months. Ever since her father had died, and she

had almost lost her own life, trying to find her natural mother in New York.

Jenny kicked off the covers and lay breathless in the dimly lit bedroom. She felt as if she'd been running, as if her very life had depended on it. A massive sheen of sweat had surfaced on her forehead and around the back of her neck. She stared up at the ceiling, trying to regain her senses. The clock on her nightstand read 7:03 AM. This day was not getting off to a good start. She had overslept again. With a heavy groan, she moved her legs and forced herself to sit up. The morning sun streamed in through the bedroom window, warming her, relaxing her. She caught herself drifting off, but forced herself awake. *"Get your lazy ass out of bed,"* she told herself. *"Stacy will be here soon."*

Stacy was almost a year older than Jenny, a tall willowy brunette, who was quite popular with the boys at school. They had been best of friends since grade school. Stacy had recently gotten her drivers license. Which meant no more boring bus rides for Jenny. *"Ugh... School,"* she groaned at the thought. She hated getting up early. *"Why did school have to start so early in the day?"* she wondered.

She glanced around the room, thinking of the many times she had spent here, talking on the phone with her friends. The room was tiny. One entire wall had shelves, packed with books, art supplies, and magazines. She had a passion for reading and drawing. When she was not into her artwork, her nose was in a book. On the far end of the room stood a small desk, where she had spent many nights doing her schoolwork. Next to her closet, stood a white, antique dresser with mirror, that had been in the family for years. Posters of rock stars and teen heartthrobs filled most of the other walls; she still couldn't believe that she was back home.

Jenny's mind drifted back to her time in New York. She thought about Joe, her parents, and the dreams. *"Why have I been dreaming about that serial killer? Why?"* Her mind tried to sort through the conflicting emotions. Letting out a heavy sigh, she got up and dragged her tired body down the hallway and into the bathroom. She brushed her teeth and quickly showered.

The hallway was cold as she stepped out of the misty bathroom. She towel dried her hair, walked back to her bedroom, and dressed. There was a soft knock on her door, and Joan, Jenny's stepmother, poked her head in.

"Jenny, Stacy is here. Are you ready yet?"

"Tell her to come up stairs. I'll be ready in a few minutes."

"Okay, but hurry up. I don't want you making Stacy late for school." She paused a minute then added, "I don't mean to lecture you Jenny, but ever since you returned from New York, you've been waking up late and falling behind on your school work. I understand you went through a terrible ordeal, but you need to put that all behind you and get on with your life."

"Yes, I know mom," Jenny groaned. "You don't have to keep reminding me."

"Okay, I'm sorry I brought it up," Joan said. "I'll tell Stacy that you're almost ready."

Jenny was applying her makeup when Stacy came through the door. Stacy's eyes narrowed, and in a steely voice, she said, "Jenny, aren't you ready yet? We're going to be late again if we don't hurry."

"I'm hurrying, alright?" Jenny snapped back, turning to face her impatience friend.

"You don't have to bite my head off. I can see you... didn't you get enough sleep last night."

"Matter of fact, No. I didn't." Jenny said, looking on the floor now for her other shoe. For some reason, she could not seem to get it together this morning. And snapping at her friend was only making things worse.

"Here you go," said Stacy, retrieving the lost shoe from underneath the bed.

"Thanks" Jenny replied, with a look of frustration. She took another quick look in the mirror, grabbed her books and said, "Okay, I'm ready. Let's go."

Ten minutes later, they arrive at Central High School.

"Well we're here. Ready to face another day?" asked Stacy.

"Not particularly," sighed Jenny. Stacy could sense something was bothering her friend. She had known Jenny too long. So, when something wasn't right between them, it really concerned her.

"Jenny, what's wrong. Talk to me." Stacy said, looking at her friend.

"It's nothing really. Just another stupid nightmare."

"Again?"

"Yeah, and the thing is, its always the same dream. I'm being chased, and then I wake up breathless, as if I'm suffocating."

She paused a minute, then said in a low voice. "I think he's come back to haunt me."

"Who? Roy Barker, the psychopath? Jenny it's been over two months since you were abducted."

"I know, its stupid, isn't it?"

"I'll say, especially when the guy's dead. Really Jenny, get a grip, you're getting obsessed with these dreams. Have you told your mom about them?"

"Are you kidding, she'd send me to a shrink for sure."

"Yeah, knowing your mom, she probably would," laughed Stacy.

"Come on, we better hurry, the second bell just rang."

Chapter 2: (Dreadful Class)

Jenny sat in the school cafeteria calmly eating her lunch. Her friend Stacy was rambling on about some guy she had met at Josh Andrew's party over the weekend.

"I'm telling you Jenny, this guy was like really, really hot. I don't think he goes to this school though. I heard someone say, that he was a college student."

"Stacy, how old is this guy?" Jenny asked, wondering why her friend would be interested in an older boy.

"Twenty-four. Isn't that, like so cool?" Stacy said, unable to maintain the excitement in her voice.

"Twenty-four? Are you nuts? You can't date a twenty-four year old guy. What would your mother say?"

"Well for one thing, I'm eighteen, legally that makes me an adult in the State of Texas."

"Yeah, but you turned eighteen like three months ago. And, you still live at home with your mother." Jenny replied.

"Hey what's up Stacy?" asked Lisa Morgan as she sat down at the table, momentarily interrupting the conversation.

"Hey girl!" replied Stacy.

"Jenny where have you been? I haven't seen you in ages?"

"I've been busy," Jenny replied, slightly annoyed with the intrusion. Lisa wasn't one of Jenny's favorite people.

She was the most popular girl in school, her family had money, and Lisa was always flaunting it. Jenny saw that Stacy was getting along quite well, with this girl that they had previously disliked. Ever since Jenny had come back from New York two months ago, she had noticed a change in Stacy. In her short absence, Stacy had developed a friendship with the dreadful Lisa Morgan.

"I heard you were, like abducted by some crazed maniac when you were in New York?" Lisa asked, interrupting Jenny's thoughts. Jenny ignored the question. The last thing she wanted was to discuss her personal life with this annoying girl.

"So? Is it true?" Lisa asked again, determined to get an answer. Irritated by Lisa's continuous questions, Jenny turned toward her and asked, "Is what true?"

"That you were abducted by some crazed maniac while you were in New York?"

"Yeah, what of it? Not that it's any of your business."

"It was just a simple question. You don't have to be a snob about it."

"Who you calling a snob? Are you calling me a snob?" Jenny replied, standing up from the table in defiance.

"Take it easy Jenny. She didn't mean to offend you," Stacy said, trying to calm Jenny.

"Did you Lisa?" Stacy added, giving Lisa a stern look.

"Yeah, I'm sorry Jenny. I was out of line. It was very rude of me. You're right, it's really none of my business."

"Okay," Jenny said, sitting down. "I'm sorry I snapped at you. It's just a very touchy subject for me."

A bell rang indicating that lunch was over. They all picked up their trays and placed them in neat stacks for the cafeteria cleaning lady. Then the girls went back to their lockers, to get ready for their next class. Jenny headed for her locker, which was in a building called Handle Hall. The school was made up of different buildings named after famous people, like Michael Angelo, and Sarah Bernhardt. Her next class was English Lit. A class she dreaded. She would have to hurry, if she wanted to get there on time.

Suddenly, Jenny wasn't feeling too well. She hated rushing after she had just finished lunch. Lately, it seemed like she was getting sick every morning or after her meals. For the life of her, she couldn't understand why. She could only assume it was due to the blistering hot weather, which was

very common in West Texas. She made it to class and was now listening to Mrs. Wincer, a short, heavysset, gray haired lady, with glasses, who was discussing business grammar. Jenny couldn't concentrate. She felt light headed. The nauseated feeling was only getting worse. Suddenly, her stomach lurched involuntarily. She only had time to hang her head over the side of the desk. As she held her stomach, a stream of vile fluid came out of her mouth, like some kind of sick demented fountain.

"Ewww... gross!" came the disgusted voice of the girl sitting across from Jenny, when she saw the vomit splattered on her shoes. "Ughhh... Ewww! Mrs. Wincer, she threw up all over my shoes!" the girl whined. Jenny felt completely embarrassed. Wiping her mouth, she turned to the girl and tried to apologize. "I'm so sorry, I didn't mean to do it."

"Jenny, are you alright?" asked Mrs. Wincer, walking over and handing her a tissue. Jenny looked pale and said nothing as she looked up at her teacher, and then took the tissue.

"I think perhaps you should go to the nurse's office."

Jenny nodded and started to gather her books.

"Hold on a minute," Mrs. Wincer said, walking back toward her desk. "I'll need to make you a hall pass." Jenny waited as Mrs. Wincer quickly called the office to report the incident, and then made out her pass.

"Here you go." said Mrs. Wincer, handing her a small pink piece of paper.

"Thank you," Jenny said, and then quickly took her books and left of the classroom.

On her way to the nurse's office, Jenny decided to take her books to her locker, since it happened to be in the same building. There was no sense in carrying them to the nurse's office. She knew she would be sent home, which meant, making another meaningless trip back to her locker.

She opened her locker and dumped her books inside with no intention of doing any homework. She then continued on to the nurse's office.

"Excuse me, I'm here to see the nurse," Jenny said, as she walked up to the counter. She handed her pass to the lady behind the desk, and then was told to take a seat. She watched as the office lady walked over to the nurse's station and disappeared behind a door. A moment later, she came back to where Jenny was waiting and said, "You can go in now."

Jenny got up and went into the nurse's office. She was greeted with a friendly smile. Mrs. Larson was a cheerful middle-aged lady, who had a way of making you feel at ease.

"Well Hello Jenny, What seems to be the problem today?"

"I'm not sure," Jenny said shrugging her shoulders.

"I got sick after lunch in Mrs. Wincer's class."

"I see. Well, have a seat." She then took Jenny by the arm and guided her into a nicely padded chair.

"I'll take your temperature and see if you're running a fever."

Jenny sat quietly while her temperature was taken. She really had no idea why she was feeling so lousy lately. Normally, she rarely got sick. But, with all the stress she had been under in the last few months, she could understand why she was feeling so poorly. Maybe it was the medication she was taking for the leg injury she sustained in New York. Maybe it was the nightmares and the lack of sleep. It also didn't help having her best friend now hanging out with someone she didn't care for.

"Well Jenny, you are running a slight fever. I'm going to ask that you take a few aspirin when you get home. With all of the new laws, we can't give out any medicine, unless we have consent from one of your parents." Mrs. Larson told her, as she filled out a form for her files.

"I've been having trouble sleeping lately. Do you think that's the problem?" Jenny asked.

"Well, that could be a symptom of something more serious. I think you should make an appointment to see your family doctor as soon as possible. I'll have the lady at the front desk call

your mother and arrange for you to get a ride home," Mrs. Larson said. Jenny thanked the nurse and then went out to the front desk to wait for her mother.

The visit with the school nurse hadn't helped the queasiness in her stomach. Suddenly, she realized that she had left her purse back at her locker. Another walk across the campus might help take her mind off her mother, who would insist that she follow the nurse's advice about seeing a doctor.

"Excuse me," Jenny said, trying to get the attention of the lady behind the reception desk.

"Yes, may I help you?" replied the cheerful lady.

"I forgot my purse in my locker in Handle hall. May I go get it real quick, before my mother arrives?"

"Sure, if your mother shows up before you get back, I'll have her wait here for you."

"Ok, Thanks." Jenny replied, and then left the office.

Arriving at her locker, she opened it and saw a small piece of paper fall out. She picked it up and was stunned. The note, which had been badly scribbled, said: **"All whores must die."**

And it was signed: **"Roy."**

It was obviously Someone's idea of a cruel joke. Anger swelled up inside her. She crumpled the paper into a tiny ball and threw it on the floor. She retrieved her purse and slammed

the locker. Jenny didn't have time for these stupid games. It wasn't the first time that she had found little notes of this sort. It was no secret. Everyone knew about her abduction in New York. It had been in the papers and on TV; how Roy Barker the killer of hookers and whores, had been convince that she was one as well. Jenny wanted to put it all behind her, but was finding that hard to do.