

Sara – 2nd April 2005

(Sara is sitting in a chair looking off to the side of the camera, as if someone else is sitting there talking to her. But hers is the only voice we hear. In fact, she's pretending to be interviewed for the TV. Occasionally she glances at the camera and examines something – she can probably see herself on a monitor. At other times, she forgets where she is and seems to be talking almost to herself.)

It's as if she's working out her own thoughts and feelings through this pretend interview.)

No, that's not true. I did love him, I really did. I still do. But it has to *work*. Love isn't the same as compatibility, I've had to learn that. It's a hard lesson. You'd think love would be enough. Mark was too different from me. It had to stop.

(She pauses as if she's being asked a question.)

Well, we seemed to get along so well but in the end, we're actually perfect opposites. He thinks, like, the sensible people are the ones who have it sorted. Like *they're* going to inherit the earth. *(Laughs.)* Like

sensible is *it*. Anything you do that's important, it has to be sensible, that's Mark, whereas me, I want everything I do that's important to be unexpected – just about ready to bend everything sideways.

I used to scare him, I think. 'You'll get hurt,' he used to say, but maybe what he really meant was, he'd get hurt. He used to talk about it as if it had already happened. I mean – as if he could sit down and work out the future with a pencil and paper. You don't work out the future! The future works *you* out. To see the future you have to be able to prophesy, and it's not the sensible ones who can do that – it's the people who don't know what on earth is going on, the ones who know absolutely nothing who can see into the future and see ghosts and that. I've done it. I may talk about it one day. He wants to make sure he has enough pants packed for the journey through life. Well, I might not even be wearing any pants at all. You think I know fuck all, but I know fuck nothing – that's me. I don't know who I am, I don't even know what I am. That's how I can see into the future. That's how sensible I am!

(She laughs, as delighted with her own words as if they had been spoken by someone else. She leans forward to the hidden monitor and fixes her hair, then leans back and sighs.)

Stick to the flesh, boy! I am the spirit.
He's the flesh all right, though. He does my head in

sometimes, I want him so much. That's what I miss most. Being close. He's someone you can get very close to.

(Sara looks down and fiddles with her shirt, frowning, as if she's forgotten where she is.)

We were lying on the sofa at his flat. We'd just been busy. Busy bees, we call it. I was lying there with a skirt on and just about nothing else and he had my T-shirt rolled up and he was sort of adoring my boobs. Boob adoration.

'Gorgeous. Like puppies. Like warm little puppies with hot pink noses,' he was saying, and he kept giving me goose flesh by breathing on them.

'Well, make the most of them, they won't be around much longer,' I told him.

'What do you mean, you're not going to put them away, are you?' he said. *(Laughs.)* He makes me laugh, I'll forgive him anything for making me laugh. I miss that about him, too. Yeah! A boy has to make me laugh!

'I've started saving up,' I told him. He knew what I meant. I was serious. I wanted to tell him because he's my boyfriend. He's involved. I mean, he ought to be my soul mate or something, but that's too much to ask from someone who's only sensible.

I knew we were going to have a row about it.

You ought to be grateful I've got my clothes on, it's such a mess underneath. Fat! Flab! I have more dimples than you can count . . . Lake Windermere on a rainy day.

This tit's practically under my armpit when I lie down. What good's that on a photo shoot?

'They use tit tape for that,' he told me.

Tit tape! I want to look like that naturally, anyone can use tit tape. And this one's bigger than that one, they both point sideways when I stand up and anyway – mostly, they're just too small and the wrong shape. They've got to go. I need new tits. I need a whole new body, actually. I tell you, I get fatter when I'm dieting. I get fat just by breathing. I can turn air into fat. It's a gift I have.

(She giggles at her own words.)

You should have seen his face! Like I was taking away his favourite toy car or something.

'You can't do that! They're mine,' he said.

I said, 'They're just on loan, buddy, and don't you forget it.'

He says they're lovely, but he's just saying that to be nice, I think. 'How can anything be better?' he says; but plenty of things are better than them. Too many things are better, that's the problem.

Up until that point it was just fun, but then he started to get all serious on me. 'You know what they do to you when you get that done?' he said. 'They cut you here – right round the nipple. They get it out on a stalk, man! They get your nipple on a stalk while they stitch bags inside your tits, it's like torture. And then you know what? You lose *feeling*. They cut loads of nerves doing

that and they never grow back. Sex will never be as good again.'

'I don't care,' I told him. I mean, if you want to be a work of art, you have to suffer a bit. That's all part of the package. But he pissed me off, then, going on about blood and cutting and things. That's not what I wanted to hear.

We used to argue a lot, about everything. It was fun at first, it was like a game, we'd make out that the other one was being weird. But then it got like I'm weird and he's just pretending. Like it's dawned on him that it's not just a game. He says he loves me. Baby! I got no time for love. Christ, I'm seventeen, I'm just practising. Love, what's that? I'm an obsessive, personally. Passion! He thinks he means so much to me. I don't know.

So that thing about my tits, it went on to be a big row. I wanted to discuss with him what sort of op I was going to have. I wanted him to have some input, you know? I mean, your girlfriend wants to discuss her boobs with you, she actually wants to know what sort of tits you want her to have – she's actually offering you a chance to help design the perfect tits and all you do is go on at her! What's that about? What is he *on*? Who's the weird one, you tell me? Doesn't he know a good deal when it's handed to him on a plate? I offer him a dream ticket and he starts telling me what I can and what I can't do with my own tits!?

(She grabs hold of them with both hands. She looks outraged.)

My own tits! So that was it. I'd had enough. Tenancy over. Pack your bags and go. It really hurt me, but what else could I do? I hurt myself sometimes. He was heart-broken too, at least, that's how he made out. Just another week, give me a chance, it was just a joke, he said. But it had been going on too long. Every time I talked about my ambitions he'd get jealous and try to talk some sense into me. Well, that's just about abuse to someone like me, having someone force sense down your throat. Anyway, I gave him another week in the end, but he hasn't been in touch since then. I guess he must have realised, he's lost me.

I miss him, I do miss him. But let's face it. You meet him face to face, he's as nice as pie and then as soon as he gets behind your back, he does this – begging for another week, just one more week, give us one last chance, so I let him have it and then, guess what? What? I never see him again! I tell him OK and he leaves me! What's that about?

(She swallows back her tears and gets angry instead.)

Like it was him that couldn't be bothered! That's so mean. And now I expect he's sitting somewhere waiting for me to get back in touch. I expect he's breaking his heart for me, but fuck him. He humiliated me. No one treats me like that and gets away with it. If I never see him again it'll be too soon.

So that's why I wrote a song for him that I'm going to

sing for you tonight, about what a shit he was to me, so the whole world's gonna know what he's like.

(She produces a guitar from behind her chair and sings.)

Mark Gleeson is a big shit,
Mark Gleeson is a big shit,
Mark Gleeson is a big shit, fuck him.
His telephone number is 0161 352 7980
Ring him up and tell him what a shit he is.
He broke my heart,
He broke my heart and made me cry.

(Cries.)

But I'll get over it. I'm going to be famous. *(Wiping away her tears.)* I made up my mind about it, there's no point in trying to talk me out of it. Art on legs, Mark used to say, but that's not what I mean. People say I'm good looking like that, but there's loads of girls prettier than me, or sexier than me or whatever. That's not the point. Anyone can be pretty these days. Anyone can have nice tits and a pretty face. Talent – that's not it, either. Anyone can have talent. They train you up, they work on your voice. If it's no good they change it in the studio. The world's full of talent. Talent's cheap.

It's like, when people look at you and think, Oh, she's smaller than in real life, because, see, actually, you're not real life. It's when people start talking to you in the

street or on the bus because they think they know you, but they never even met you, or like you've got some secret that they want to know but they never can. Like you're a blessing. There's something about you that inspires them to be more than themselves. That's it. That's what I want to be. Just like that.

Some people want to be famous so everyone knows who they are. They don't get it. It's not about who knows you or who you are. It's about being more than who you are. It's not what you do – it's what you make other people do. I mean, I'm famous even when no one's looking. I'm famous even before I'm famous. I want it so when people look at me they think things they've never thought before – they think things they never even knew they were capable of thinking. It's art. You look at it, and maybe it annoys the hell out of you because you can never understand it. Maybe there's nothing to understand, but it's fascinating anyway. And all the time, right on the edge of your mind, there's thoughts lurking like wild animals, and feelings you never felt. You can't work them out, you don't know if it's monsters or angels and you're frightened of understanding because they might just burst out and change your whole life. Your whole life! Yeah. That's me. Your whole life!

Mark used to say I'm a wannabe, but I say, I'm a gonnabe. That's the difference.

I know. I'm arrogant. But it's true what I say, I can't help it. It's in my bones. And he could have been there with me. Now look at him. He just got left behind.

(She stares into the camera with a horrified expression. Then she catches sight of her expression and raises a hand to the lens.)

Cut.

(She wipes away her tears and turns off the camera.)

Voices

Sara seems to have been a very popular girl while she was at primary school and stayed that way for the first couple of years at High School. After that, her popularity wavered. Some people thought she was just plain weird, others that her behaviour was put on for effect. Either way, she was too strong a taste for many of her contemporaries, but those who did love her loved her dearly and were loved in return. Even when she rose above them, she never forgot who her friends were, or what friendship meant to her.

Sara and Janet Calley met each other in their first year at High School and that was it – they were friends for life. For a couple of years they did everything together, ran around the corridors giggling at the same jokes, read the same books, sometimes even wore the same clothes. Anyone who saw them would have thought of them as two peas in a pod, but Janet already knew that Sara was altogether different. When in Year 9, Sara suddenly turned into a different person, she wasn't in the least bit surprised.

Sara shot up. In a few months, she put on over thirty centimetres. Her figure, which seemed to have been holding puberty at bay so far, suddenly bloomed. After a

brief spell of acne her face healed in a few weeks into the clearest skin, without blemish and so finely grained that not a pore was visible to the naked eye. Her flawless skin was one of the things that attracted the attention of Jonathon Heat, who had always had an open complexion.

At the same time she developed a scent all of her own.

‘I noticed it on her one day,’ said Janet, ‘and I asked her what she was wearing.’

‘Can you smell it too?’ she asked. ‘It’s not anything. I didn’t even wash this morning.’

They were both astonished by this trick of nature and went to lock themselves in the toilet so they could smell the skin on her arms, her legs, on her back and shoulder, and verify that it was her skin all over. It was true. She smelt all over of salted almonds and musk.

‘She never had to wear deodorant all day after a shower,’ said Janet, shaking her head in amazement. ‘I never came across anything like it. Her own perfume! She used to say she was fed up with it, she’d like to smell of something else, but really, she was very proud to be her own perfume. They could have made a fortune if they ever put it in a bottle.’

As a result of her height and her looks, Sara suddenly began to attract a great deal of attention from boys which she suffered with a kind of bemused tolerance, always keeping them at arm’s-length. Later, when her face was known across the world, the newspapers tried to make out that she slept with a great many of those

boys – that she was a sex-maniac, almost. Janet always maintained that it wasn't true.

'She wasn't like that at all. In fact, she used to have this joke about how she was going to be the last virgin on earth, because she was still holding out when all the rest of us were already at it. But I suppose it's her own fault. She liked it that people thought that about her. I had to promise not to tell anyone she was a virgin, although actually, she was very proud and wanted only to do it with someone special.'

'It'd be bad for my image if people knew,' she said. In fact, Sara was a virgin right up until she met Mark, a little after her seventeenth birthday and, as far as Janet's aware, she never slept with anyone else.

When the sexual attention got out of hand, Sara put a stop to it in a way that won a great deal of disapproval from her classmates. It happened like this.

It had started as a game of chase years before at primary school. The old story – the boys chase the girls and rough them up or put their hands under their clothes. The game had died down at High School, when people didn't know each other so well, but a small group of boys and girls had started it up again sometime in Year 8. They were good friends, all five of them, and spent time together out of school as well as in it. The three boys would pounce on one of the girls, drag her into the boys' cloakroom and have a quick grope with much shrieking and howls of laughter.

The girls enjoyed it as much as the boys; but there's a

fine line between rough play and bullying, and another again between bullying and sexual assault. It wasn't quite childish any more and it wasn't just chase. Once or twice, the boys tried it on someone else and just about got away with it. Their fatal mistake was trying it with Sara.

Sara was friendly with these boys – not close, just friendly. She was the most desirable girl in the school and it's a sign that more than fun or curiosity was involved that they tried it on with her. One day, as she was walking with her past the cloakrooms, they pounced, dragged her off out of sight and rummaged inside her clothes.

Janet was standing outside with another girl when it happened. She stood and listened to the boys grunting with laughter and Sara's shrieks of indignity, her heart beating furiously. It wasn't Sara she was worried about. The boys were going places they weren't welcome but she was in no danger – it wasn't real violence.

'They didn't ought to be doing that,' said the girl next to her. Janet remembers thinking how right she was.

It was over in a few seconds. The boys came running out, giggling and smirking, and Sara came staggering after them tucking her shirt in. She walked up to Janet, whipped out her mobile phone and dialled. She stared straight at them as she spoke.

'Police.'

The corridor, which had been a-buzz a moment before, suddenly froze.

'I've just been sexually assaulted in the boys' toilets

at Stanford High School by a group of three boys. My name's Sara Carter, I have the boys here. I'm with some friends so it's safe. There are witnesses. Please send a squad car round as soon as possible.'

She stabbed the phone and started another dialup.

'It was just a laugh,' said one of them.

'You can't do that,' said another.

'She wasn't even dialling,' said the third.

She didn't answer them. 'Hello. Can I have the news desk? My name is Sara Carter and I've just been sexually assaulted at Stanford High School. The police are on their way. Three boys. Yes. I'm only fourteen years old.'

'Bollocks,' said Barry. They were all looking really scared.

'It's a game, right?' said Joey.

Then she rang the Head. He was in a meeting at the time, so she spoke to his secretary. 'Tell him to get his arse over here, the boys' toilets near the maths block. This is Sara Carter and I've just been molested by some pupils from this school. The police and the press are already on their way.'

She turned off her phone and stared at the boys.

'Watch me,' she said. She crumpled up her face and began to cry.

'Oh my God,' said Barry Jones. By the time the Head came running down the corridor with members of staff around him like a herd of rhinos, they knew it was real.

'It's them,' said Sara. 'They nearly raped me,' she

said – which wasn't true. 'They touched me,' she said, which was. Then she burst into tears. Above the shouting and cries of complaint, they could hear the squad car howling in through the school gates.

And all hell broke loose. The school, the press, the police, everything. The drama was played out in full public view, like so much of her life to come. The boys were arrested as the press cameras flashed; the Head granted a desperate interview while the police over-acted for the film crew. The story, as Sara had realised at once, was a beauty. It hit the local TV news that evening and was all over the papers the next day – Gang of teenage boys attempt rape of girl, 14, in school toilets. Fabulous!

Sara split the school neatly in half. Some thought the boys had it coming, they'd practically committed assault. Others thought she was using the situation. The papers were all over the place; the school was obviously a pit of sexual perversity and abuse, as if that sort of thing and worse had been going on for ages and no one had done anything about it. It was an object lesson on the nature of press truth.

Gradually, however, the hysteria died down; a consensus emerged. The boys were simply very immature. They needed to be taught a lesson, but a court case wasn't really it. Pressure built up on Sara. A number of people tried to get her to drop charges, including Teresa Dickinson, one of the original two girls who were friends with the boys.

‘They were just mucking around, you know that,’ she said.

‘I turned a bunch of potential rapists into decent citizens, that’s all I know,’ replied Sara. ‘No one gets to touch me unless I want them to – so tell that to your friends. And I’ve got plenty more where that came from.’

In the end, though, she did drop the charges. There was talk of expulsion, but the boys got away with a suspension for the rest of the term. Just as Sara said, they never did anything like that again. And they weren’t the only ones. The school did actually have a problem – not quite as abusive as the press made out, but there was bullying going on. It was big against little, strong against weak, the tough against the delicate in that place, and had been for ages. The staff had turned a blind eye to a lot of it – some of them joined in – but now, with the world’s eyes on them and their mistakes and failings reported in a suspicious press, they did something about it. They had no choice. Unfair she had been maybe, but Sara put an end to a lot of tears and fears by her action.

That was her. Whatever she did, she did it full on and only started thinking about it afterwards.

As Sara grew older, she developed fabulous ambitions. Janet had no doubt that she would follow her star and that she could never go with her to such distant places. But although the two girls were developing in different directions, they somehow never grew apart. Right up to the end, they loved one another like sisters.

Sara had been taking lessons at the Stagecoach performance school for years, but by the age of twelve she was already saying that she was going to become famous for being herself rather than for any skills she might cultivate. At the same time, the question of who exactly she really was became problematical. As a child, Sara had always enjoyed games of pretence, role plays, that sort of thing. But as she got older, instead of dropping them as most people do, she incorporated them more and more into her daily behaviour, to the point where it became difficult to separate what was real from what was make-believe.

It began with accents. She'd pick up on an accent and speak it for days on end. She'd turn up on Monday morning in Irish, or Brummy or with a faint Japanese accent, and that was her for the week. But it was more than that; the voices developed lives of their own. They became new people. Often, they would have completely different tastes from Sara herself. Janet recalls characters who loved things Sara always hated, like red meat stewed in red wine, scraps with her fish and chips or T-shirts that hung down to her hips.

Janet found it bewildering. Sometimes she didn't like the new girls, but mostly she fell head over heels in love with them, just as she had with Sara herself. Then – pop! – she'd wake up one morning and they'd be gone. It used to spook her out.

Once, Sara was a Filipino girl for three weeks non-stop. Her name was Maria and she was twenty years old.

She'd joined a marriage club back in the Philippines to find a western husband and her parents had got her to marry an older man who'd brought her back to live in England. Now, she had to get a job and send back money and support the whole family; but she wanted to get some education first. Her husband was forty-five years old, and because he was a big cheese in the civil service he was able to pull a few strings. That's how her passport said she was a fifteen-year-old English girl who was entitled to a free education instead of a twenty-year-old Filipino girl who wasn't. Maria was having to pretend all the time that she was English. She swore Janet to secrecy. She was prepared to do anything to get an education and look after her family. She said her husband was really kinky, hinting mysteriously at any number of weird sexual things she had to do without ever specifying them. She told Janet and her other friends that they were never to go with an older man because they were all pervs. But they all thought, because Maria was so innocent, it was probably something actually really rather normal; but no one ever liked to ask.

Maria stayed for three weeks and then disappeared, like all the others before and after her. Janet was mortified. She swore that while she was being Maria, Sara actually started to look Filipino.

'She had Filipino eyes, I swear it,' said Janet. 'It killed me. I really missed her. I couldn't believe I was so upset but that's how I felt. I made her do Maria one more time

so she could say goodbye to me – I couldn't bear it that she'd just gone. We even worked out a happy ending for her, where she left her husband and found a lovely Filipino boy who took her away to live in America and really respected her.'

As well as becoming other people, Sara, at the age of fourteen, began to have visions. Ghosts, apparitions, voices. She never said much about that, even to Janet, and Janet was never sure how real they were, either. Sara once claimed that she had seen Maria walking around her bedroom packing up her clothes.

'Freaky!' said Janet. 'What was that about? Seeing your own inventions as ghosts after you've just killed them off!'

There are one or two other characteristics of Sara's that must be mentioned here, since they have an important bearing on what happened later on. One is Sara's reputed anorexia. Anorexia is a word much bandied about these days, in an age where thinness and beauty are more or less the same thing. Sara was never a lollipop-girl, never in any danger of starving herself to death, but she did feel fat – always, throughout her life, no matter how slim she really was. She was permanently several kilos overweight, no matter what her weight actually was, permanently on a diet that she was never able to stick to and permanently disgusted with her own perceived weakness – in short, she felt permanently ugly. The briefest glance at any photograph would tell anyone else that none of this was true.

At the same time that this incipient anorexia became apparent, her desire for cosmetic surgery developed as well. It would seem that both urges had the same psychological root. As, perhaps, did one other characteristic.

It's this: Sara had accidents. That would come as a surprise to many people who knew her, since she had tremendous grace and precision in her movements. People describe her as moving like a dancer just when making a cup of tea or leaning across to listen to someone speak. But she had accidents – not with things, but with herself. She spilt hot drinks down her front on several occasions, and had to be treated for burns. By the time she was seventeen, she had broken her arms and legs no less than four times, each time by falling down the stairs. Another time, she dropped a brick on her foot the day before she due to enter the final of a dance competition, and spent the next two months in a cast, hobbling round on crutches.

These accidents have come under much suspicion. The suggestion is that Sara engineered them herself; in other words, that she was self harming. It is a charge that she always denied, but as many people have pointed out, Sara saying that something was true or false doesn't always mean much at all.

It was one such accident, incurred just after she split up from Mark, that took her into the hospital where she first met Jonathon Heat.

A Brief History of Jonathon Heat

Jonathon Heat is a man whose fame has many roots – as a multi-platinum-selling pop idol, as a creative artist, an art collector, a billionaire charity worker; as a human chameleon, fashion victim and, finally, as a heartless criminal, one of the monsters of our time. He has taken on so many forms, some beautiful, some bizarre, as his early natural good looks succumbed under endless rounds of surgery to a series of increasingly mask-like and beastly faces. But none of the many images we've had of him has been as striking as the recent ones from inside Strangeways Prison, taken when fellow inmates tore his protective mask off – the bared, mirthless grin of the death's-head, the bleeding skull, the terrifying spectacle of a man with no face.

The phenomenal global success of his early music – 'The Heat is On', 'Burning Heat', 'Endure the Heat' and so on – was followed by a lull, that looked like the end of his career. At that point, Heat might have been no different from a handful of unusually successful chart-toppers. But within a year, he returned with a dramatic reinvention of his music, his image and himself. The boy-band jeans and T-shirt were swapped for a skin-tight black suit and bootlace tie; the round, wistful face

and blue eyes exchanged for a long chin, an arched nose and patchy black stubble. Most remarkably, gone were the chubby legs and meaty bum, replaced by long, razor-thin shins and an electric dance style that seemed to turn him into rubber. Heat's ability to reinvent himself encompassed not only his clothes, but his looks; not only his songs, but his voice; not only the way he moved, but even, apparently, his physical shape.

And the new look was not just skin deep; Heat changed his life along with his image. The following years saw a series of transformations that were personal as well as theatrical – his life-style, his relationships, and even his sexuality changed over and over again, until change itself became his image. His second form was even more successful than the first; the third almost as successful as the second. After that, however, Heat's success began to wane. His older fans preferred the music they had first fallen in love with, his new morphs attracted fewer and fewer listeners. Newer styles and younger faces overtook him. Heat's star had made him as fabulous as a unicorn, as famous as Christ, but finally, at the age of thirty-one, even he was becoming a thing of the past.

Heat turned his attention to other things – his art collection, his own experiments in film and graphics, his charity work abroad and at home. For a few years, he hardly appeared as a performer at all. But the surgery that had been the cornerstone of his transformations continued. At this point, most of the procedures Heat

had done were performed in London's Warehouse clinic, and for a long time he seemed perfectly happy with the service they offered – fiddling with his nose and chin, sculpting his cheeks and forehead, tucking in his creases and lifting the flab – the usual sort of thing.

Things changed in his early thirties, when an outbreak of flu badly affected the staff at the Warehouse and, for a short period, they employed the services of the controversial surgeon, Dr Wayland Kaye.

In his thirties and forties, Kaye had been a rapidly rising star in the field of cosmetic surgery, pioneering new techniques and doing research into tissue transplants across blood types, across body types, even, in the end, across species. For a while he had been a fashionable target for funding from all directions, but as his theories grew more and more outlandish and his claims increasingly extravagant, the money for research began to dry up. Kaye by all accounts felt betrayed and reacted badly; there were a number of very ugly scenes, some of them in public. As time passed, Kaye became increasingly willing to put even his more bizarre ideas into practice without the kind of data or research to back them up – and, it was hinted, without the necessary legislation allowing him to go ahead. Prosecutions were in the pipeline, but nothing was ever proved. His skill remained unquestioned, which is why, after a suitable period, clinics still occasionally brought him in in emergencies.

Kaye's ideas were wide-ranging, from simple surgical

techniques for flesh sculpture, to drugs that would promote healing, prevent scarring and even apparently help flesh grow into the desired shape. They included the use of artificial skin, skin grown from other species and finally to that holy grail of cosmetic surgery, the full face transplant. It was by all accounts, Dr Kaye's ambition to be the first man to carry one out successfully.

Heat and Kaye immediately recognised each other. Each had what the other wanted – Heat, fabulous amounts of money, a fascination with his own appearance and a willingness to experiment on his own person endlessly, whilst Kaye had the skills to perform the surgery and the vision of how things were going to be when the future came.

In 1998, Kaye set up his own private clinic with funds provided by Heat, who became the subject – some might say the victim – of many of Kaye's early experiments. And it has to be said, that at first, they were astonishingly successful. Kaye began by trying to reverse some of the problems with Heat's previous surgery – scarring, muscle tone and so on, as well as removing many of the natural effects of age. The result a few months later was that Heat seemed to have lost twenty years. If there was a problem it was not that his face looked overworked; it was that it looked too young for the rest of him.

Heat now re-launched his career as performer – in a small way at first. But his plans were bigger than ever.

As his confidence in Kaye grew, so did Heat's ambition. He believed that Kaye was at the beginning of

a revolution in facial surgery. People would soon be able to design faces for themselves almost as easily as they wore clothes. Mistakes would be rectified easily with no damage done. Kaye, it appears, encouraged him in this belief. In 2000, Heat built a surgery into the basement of his own house in Cheshire, where he and Dr Kaye began a series of startling experiments in cosmetic surgery that caused shock waves around the world.

The first introduction to the world of Kaye's new techniques and Heat's commitment to them, came with the release of Heat's 2001 album, 'The Mark of the Beast', in which Heat appeared at first on video, then on stage with his face stretched out into a beastly snout, a doggish look, complete with hair and canines. His appearance on 'The Jonathon Ross Show' caused a sensation, when the chat show host jumped up in the middle of the interview and tried to pull off Heat's doggish facial hair, with the result that it proved to be completely real. Heat compounded the moment by jumping forward and snapping at Ross's hand; the clash of his hard white teeth was heard right around the world.

Heat maintained the illusion that his dog-face was real for years, but the reality was amazing enough. The dog hair on the sides of his face and chin was for real, as Ross had inadvertently revealed. Amazingly, so was the snout – but it was not a part of Heat. That is to say, not a permanent part. Kaye had removed the snout of a half-breed terrier and kept it alive with an artificial blood flow, until it was transplanted onto the front of Heat's

face. No one could see the star's real mouth underneath it, and the nose, teeth and lips of the dog were obviously genuine. In fact, it was not a part of him at all, and clipped on around the back of the head, but no one knew that at the time. Dressed immaculately in a dark, double-breasted pin-stripe, with a grey shirt and a big, soft knot in his tie, Heat looked for all the world like a dog. Women found it attractive; men copied it as best they could.

Heat gloried in it. Sales rocketed.

A number of other changes took place over the following years, in which Heat appeared as a cat and then as a demon, complete with horns and a forked tongue. No one was ever sure exactly how much trickery was involved, but a lot of the trickery itself was surgical. Kaye had taken surgery to places it had never been before. Looking young, or beautiful or even normal was no longer the aim.

And yet... As far back as 2002, there were rumours of things going wrong. The rumours reached a crescendo in the year 2003. Heat responded with a move that utterly confounded his critics by suddenly appearing as himself, looking exactly as you might expect his thirty-nine-year-old self to look, if only he had not been through so much surgery. For a while it really did seem that it was now possible, using Kaye's techniques, to appear and reappear in the flesh, in whatever guise you wanted.

Heat went on tour again and released a new album, 'As I Am'. Looking back, we can see blemishes on

Heat's skin as far back as his first chat show appearances to publicise the new tour and album. Stills taken during the tour illustrate the progress of the disintegration. In New York, there was heavy make-up on his face that close-ups reveal covering sticking plasters. In Los Angeles, hardly an inch of skin was showing under the make-up. In Moscow, his hairline slipped and it was obvious he was wearing a wig. In Sydney, he was wearing a half mask. In Hong Kong, it was a full mask. By this time, the entire structure of his face had collapsed. The tour was abandoned before he even reached Europe.

Under the mask, the wreckage was terrible. The skin had peeled off, the blood supply dried up, the nervous system gone haywire. Flesh had begun to die and to grow and to bleed without order. The muscles detached themselves from the bone and cartilage and sagged inside his skin – ‘like a bag of butcher’s meat’, as one ex-staff member put it. Masses of scar tissue began to form at an accelerated rate and within a few months, Heat began to look more like the elephant man than an international idol.

Medical photographs leaked recently show Heat's face in various stages of disintegration. They reveal a shocking record of science gone horribly wrong. The effect on Heat, a man who was used to personal beauty, a vain man, someone who had relied on his looks all his life, was devastating. He entered a deep depression, was suicidal and at times apparently psychotic. He tried at

least four times to kill himself and on several occasions attacked those around him. It has been suggested that if it were not for his huge wealth and the power that goes with it, he would long ago have been confined to a mental institution. As always, he survived; but not as he was. That was nothing new for Heat, who had changed himself so many times. But this time, the change was more than he had bargained for.

Kaye's experiments had finally gone wrong as his critics had always claimed they would, but Heat had nowhere else to turn. He clung on to the hope that the old man – Kaye was over eighty by this time – could still pull off another miracle. He poured money into new experiments, growing skin and flesh in culture, transplanting the faces of dogs, pigs and monkeys from one to the other, even, it's rumoured, from species to species, in an attempt to find a way of fixing what had gone wrong. Rumours abounded. There was something so gothic and monstrous about this partnership – on the one hand Heat, who had taken beauty so far and at last destroyed it, and on the other the old man who had brought him to it, searching with his knife in the flesh of so many creatures, cutting and slicing, throwing away life after life down there under the mansion, in his attempts to undo his own work. Ambition and faith had taken both men to this; the first they could never surrender and the latter they did not dare to let go.

Kaye proclaimed himself confident of success. His aim, apparently and astonishingly, was actually to grow a

new face for his protégé. That was some years off, and in the meantime, he was in contact with hospitals all over the world. He still nurtured his ambition to perform the first full face transplant in history, but to find one that matched Heat's genetic make-up wasn't going to be easy.

The world was certain that at last Heat's fabulous career was at an end. It's a measure of the man that from the ashes of his destruction, Heat managed not only to salvage something, but to create one of his most successful incarnations.

Heat was nearly forty when he launched the now famous Night of the Mask Tour. Every paying customer got a free mask as they entered the stadia and concert halls. Heat later described the sensation of seeing sixty thousand people all wearing the same face – his – as a terrifying but formative experience. Over and over again, he had the cameras trained on the audience so they could see themselves and made his famous statement: 'In real life, you are the performers and I am the audience.'

Dressing in the same way as Heat did had been a habit of his fans, both male and female, for years. The next day, the newspapers were full of the arresting image of all those people looking exactly the same as the man on stage – the same thin black trousers and short jacket, the same diagonally-stripped, red and white T-shirt, and now, finally, the same face. It was everyone's opportunity to become Heat himself, for a night at least.

The records outsold anything he had done before, and the mask caught on everywhere he went. Of course at this point, no one had any idea just how terrible the damage under the artificial face really was. The masks sold in their millions all around the world – some costing just a few pounds, some hundreds, but all looking the same. They were deliberately devoid of emotion or expression and were, as one newspaper suggested, a kind of living death-mask. It's estimated that Heat made several million pounds from mask sales alone.

As that first tour began with a series of gigs in Heat's home town of Manchester, a few miles away a teenage schoolgirl was looking in amazement at the rows of faces looking out at her from the newspapers. What made the whole experience so remarkable for Sara was that the mask so closely resembled her own face. For a while at least, she thought that Heat might have based the look directly on her. It was only later, when she saw earlier photos of him, that she realised he had based the face on an idealised version of what he had looked like years before. The fact was, she and the young Heat were so similar, they might have been twins.

Sara bought herself a mask that same day and began wearing it as often as she could get away with it. She dyed her blonde hair black and wore it in the loose ringlets Heat wore. She wore his clothes and imitated his walk and his accent. Like millions of other boys and girls the world over, she did everything she could to become Jonathon Heat. But like all fashions, this new

version of Jonathon Heat had its shelf life. The sales of masks declined; the third album, 'Who We Is', didn't sell well. For the fourth or fifth time in his career, Heat was yesterday's man. But for Sara, the fascination with him had only just begun.

Over the years there had been a good deal of 'behaviour' from Sara, as her mother referred to it. A lot of it was normal enough – tantrums, shouting and swearing, breaking things around the house – stuff not uncommon in people her age. But there were other things that might have indicated that Sara's sense of identity was becoming shaky. At the time, they seemed bizarre, but not bizarre enough to indicate actual illness – more like exaggerated personality traits. Her use of accents is one example. The way she used masks is another.

Sara had always been fond of masks. When she found one she liked, she would often wear it for days. Included in the list of masks she had worn as a girl were a witch mask from Halloween, a Guy Fawkes masks from November 5th, a Cherie Blair mask she had once kept on for two whole days, even in her sleep, and a number of animal masks she had when she was little. When she got old enough to use make-up, she liked to apply it thickly, even though it wasn't the fashion. In the years prior to the Heat mask, she developed a habit of doing self portraits that bore little or no resemblance to herself. These portraits did not have any set of features that stuck. There might be a period of a few months when they all looked like the same person, but then they'd

change, overnight. The pattern was repeated many times with other faces.

Partly because of all this, and partly because the craze was so common in girls of her age, her mother Jessica wasn't particularly bothered by the mask at first. Sara wore the mask when she was out, but at home she rarely bothered with it. Sometimes she'd put it on when a friend came round – but then, quite often the friend was wearing one as well. It was weird, but no weirder to her mother's eyes than a lot of things girls do at that age – no weirder than a lot of things she used to do herself.

But from school a different story began to emerge. Heat masks had been tolerated in the playground and at breaks but soon, mask-wearing began to spread beyond Heat fans into the general population. There was a suspicion that they were being used by gangs to hide their identities when committing crimes. Newspapers began to carry shock stories; the street fashion of wearing hoodies over the mask began to spread to school; the school became alarmed and the masks were banned.

There were some complaints. A few students tried to sneak them in, but it was all dealt with fairly easily – except for Sara. She seemed completely unable to comply with this simple instruction.

Her teachers were alerted at once – it wasn't like her at all. Ellen Simpson, her art teacher, said she hardly recognised her behaviour when she tried to get her to take it off.

‘She just said no. Then when I insisted, she almost threw a fit,’ she recalled. Sara was normally a well-behaved girl – talkative and often over-excited, but thoughtful and keen to do well. She loved imagery of all kinds and could get very excited at artwork, and she had a good relationship with her teacher. Now, suddenly, her behaviour was so disruptive that Ellen had to take her out into the corridor to try and calm her down.

‘It was hopeless,’ she said. ‘Eventually she just stormed off. I had to report her to her head of year.’

Things went from bad to worse, with neither Sara nor the school prepared to back down. For the first time in her life, Sara was missing lessons. She tried to come back with her face bare and then put the mask on in school, hiding it with her arm during lessons – she obviously didn’t want to miss school but simply could not bear to have her face exposed. At home, once the letters began to arrive and the problem was out in the open, Sara took to wearing the mask indoors all the time as well. Suddenly, she would not be seen without it. She wore it in bed, she wore it watching TV or reading. She wore it when she was eating, lifting it up to tuck mouthfuls of food underneath. She even took to bathing and sleeping in it. It was round about this time that her mother heard her shouting abuse in her room. When she ran up to investigate, Sara was there alone and claimed she’d had the radio on loud, but eventually Jessica got to the bottom of it. Her daughter was shouting abuse at the mirror.

‘The next time I crept upstairs to listen. “Who’s that

girl? Who's that girl? Get her out of here," she was shouting – at her own reflection! It made my hair stand on end.'

It was at this point that Jessica made an appointment with a psychiatrist. Sara was just fifteen years old. She was unable to go to school and spent most of her days mooching around the house in her mask on her own while her mother went to work. It was during this period that most of the accidents happened. Still, things got better fairly quickly. She was attending school again nine months later, although she was doing very little work and was being a great annoyance to her teachers. She'd missed a sizeable chunk of the GCSE course and obviously had no intention of catching up. As she said to one teacher, 'The only bits of paper I want in my hand are recording contracts.' As soon as she left school she got a part-time job and spent the rest of her time supposedly practising her dance and singing – although in fact, according to her mother, she spent most of it lying in bed. By the time she met Mark, some eighteen months after she first got into trouble at school, she was hardly wearing the mask at all.

I've mentioned Sara's accidents before. There were several over the years, starting when she was twelve, when she spilt scalding tea down her front, reaching a crescendo during her years of mask-wearing and fading away in her sixteenth year. By the time she was seventeen, like the masks, the accidents seemed to be a thing of the past. Then came the most bizarre one of all.

Sara was ironing her clothes and somehow managed to get her feet entangled in the flex. She tripped and fell onto the ironing board, which twisted around under her weight. Sara somehow got her arms stuck in between the legs and the board, stopping her from protecting her face as she fell. She struck her head on the bookcase as she went down, temporarily stunning her. She landed face down with the hot iron pressed firmly against her left cheek.

How long she lay like that no one can tell, since she was on her own, but it was long enough to brand her face with an indelible mark, a red triangle rising from her jaw line and pointing to the middle of her brow. She came to with the smell of burning flesh in her nostrils. Her mother came rushing up the stairs to the sound of her screams and found her staring in the mirror, the iron in one hand, the board in a tangle on the floor and clothes everywhere.

‘Don’t worry,’ exclaimed Sara, as her mother rushed to hold her. ‘I can get it fixed at the same time as my nose.’

The accident, as Sara herself pointed out, was hardly credible. Certainly neither her mother nor her psychiatrist believed her story, although Sara insisted it was the bald truth right to the end.

The doctors calculated that the iron must have been pressed against her face for a good five seconds or more for the heat to have penetrated so deeply. There was much they could do with creams and other treatments, but surgery apart, Sara was scarred for life.

As a result of this, Sara was sent to hospital for a few days, ‘under observation’. Whether this was to watch her burns, or for fear that she might hurt herself more, the information protection act forbids us from finding out. It was there, in wards of the Manchester Royal Infirmary, that she started to wear her Heat mask again. And it was there, too, that Jonathon Heat came into her life. It was like a dream come true for Sara. We all have dreams, we all hope they’ll come true for us but they rarely do. For Sara, tragically, this one did.