

Opening extract from
The Penance List

Written by
S. C. Cunningham

Published by
AuthorHouse

All text is copyright of the author and / or the illustrator

Please print off and read at your leisure.

THE PENANCE LIST by S C Cunningham

Day three, Chelsea, London, England

Standing over the mattress, he took a leisurely sip of wine and stared down at her beautiful naked body, pinned out, star shaped, waiting his attention. The delicious vulnerability made his cock hard. He smiled; she was ready to be cut.

As she slept through the drugs, he had stretched her out on thick plastic sheeting and staked her limbs to the bedposts. He set up two spotlights; one at each end of the bed, their harsh light burnt directly onto her tanned skin, blanching it ethereal white. He gently stroked the length of her body with a wet cloth, bathing away the musky sweat of their sex. Her body glistened, she was beautiful, it was a shame, he would miss her.

He painstakingly applied makeup to her sleeping face; the finishing touch, a slash of whore-red lipstick dragged across her mouth. He stroked the blonde fringe from her forehead and fanned her soft tresses out onto the plastic sheet, gently combing through the tangles, trying not to pull on her scalp. The long blonde hair formed a golden halo around her head. She was his angel... fallen, but his.

The preparation complete, he fist-whipped her face. Knuckles smashed backwards and forwards until a snap of bone cracked the air; she gave a low moan through the drugged coma. Red welts crept across her skin, lipstick smudged her cheeks. It was time to wake up, time for penance; he had waited nearly twenty years.

Standing over her, he picked up the bottle of red wine and stretched his arm out high over her head, ready to pour. He waited patiently as she regained consciousness. The drugs were wearing off.

She woke to the heat of the spotlights burning her skin; their harsh light piercing her eyelids. Why was it so hot? She tried to move away from the source, but her heavy limbs barely moved. What was happening? Her mouth was parched, her throat locked tight, a searing pain ran through her jaw as she tried to swallow... *what the fuck!*

She rocked her head backwards and forwards, groaning with the waves of pain, trying to clear her mind. Where was she? Memories began to tumble back into place... *fuck!* Where was he? She knew he was somewhere near; she could smell his expensive cologne, could hear his agitated breathing; he was aroused.

She squinted through the light, her darting eyes anxiously trying to find him. On a bedside table, a few feet from her head, something glistened. She strained towards it, pulling the glint into focus. Her heart stopped. A neat row of surgical instruments lay on a silver tray, his tools of torture set out in an orderly fashion, soldiers ready for duty, their polished blades shimmering in the light.

“Jesus, David, what are you doing?” her rasping whisper barely audible, tearing her throat.

Her mind raced, the realization of what he had in store pumped sobering adrenaline through her body.... *fuck, how could she have been so stupid?* With all that had been going on, she should have known it was a trap? She had seen his work; she knew what he did to his victims. He didn't love her, he hated her. It was a lie.

She could hear the dull throb of traffic; she must still be in his flat, which meant people were nearby. Wincing with pain, she tentatively opened her mouth, took a deep breath, and yelled hard, praying someone would hear her.

From nowhere, a heavy torrent of liquid crashed down onto her face, filling her open mouth, silencing her scream to a gurgling splutter. She gasped with shock, drawing a mouthful of the vinegary fluid to the back of her throat, blocking, engorging, she couldn't swallow. She tried to cough up, but the liquid kept on coming, more and more. It tasted like red wine... *what the hell?*

Acidic splashes burnt her eyes. The overflow from her mouth quickly filled her nostrils and ran down her face, collecting in a pool beneath her head. Red liquid chased along the creases in the plastic sheet, cooling the skin of her back. Panic clambered through her, her heart thumped high in her chest; her lungs tightened, she couldn't fill them... *no air, he's drowning me, the sick bastard!*

She could hear him laughing out loud, as more liquid crashed down onto her face. She turned her head backwards and forwards to escape the flow; he laughed some more, enjoying her spirit, following her mouth with the bottle. She thrashed her limbs against the mattress to loosen the bindings but they were locked fast. He laughed again. She was suffocating, drowning, and he was loving it, he wasn't going to stop! Stinging tears slipped from the corners of her eyes, watering the wine to pink rivulets that ran down her cheeks. She stilled the screaming inside her head and started to pray... *please God let me live.*

As quickly as it started, the torrent stopped. She spluttered, snorted and gulped for precious air. Her breathing calmed as the panic subsided, then silence... *what now?* Opening her eyes, she strained against the lights; he was standing over her, smiling. His dressing gown had fallen open; the bastard had a hard-on.

Anger boiled inside her, he was playing with her. She spat at his crotch, took a deep breath and screamed again, stronger, louder, the effects of the alcohol numbing the pain in her jaw. Another torrent of liquid hit, heavier than the first, as he held the bottle higher over her face. She snapped her mouth tight shut and shook her head from side to side, trying to escape the downpour. She retched, bile rose in her throat, keeping her mouth tightly closed, she swallowed it back down. She retched again and again and swallowed.

The courage of his quarry amused him; she fought harder than the others. He finished decanting another bottle, admiring the trails of wine that ran through her hair and splattered her beautiful heaving breasts. He wondered if she would look as beautiful inside, once he had opened her up. He dropped the bottle on the bedside table and picked up his beloved camera. He like to document *before* and *after* shots of his victims.

Click, Click. The camera shutter hissed as he took a close-up of her angry face. His phone rang, he ignored it.

“Swallow, darling, swallow, it’s a delicious little Chateauneuf-du-Pape; you mustn’t waste it,” he moved to the end of the bed and stood between her open legs, he squinted into the lens and focused on the red stream of wine that trickled its way down through pubic hair to swollen, glistening lips.

Click, Click.

He moved back up to her chest, bent low over her right breast and put his mouth against her skin, chasing up a wine trail with his tongue. Her nipple jumped, hardened.

“Bastard,” she spat, pulling her arms and legs, the binding ropes sawing cuts into her skin.

Click, Click.

The intoxicating wine gave more courage.

“There’s no way you’re going to cut me up, you bastard,” she turned her face away from him and screamed as hard as her lungs could stand.

Growing bored with this game, he brought his fist down hard on her stomach. She heaved with pain; angry tears stung her eyes... *fuck you!* She wouldn’t give up; summoning strength, she tried again.

Click, Click.

She looked good when angry, but the screaming would attract attention. He smashed her hard and fast for a second time; this time his punch angled up and under the rib cage. It had the desired effect; she passed out, silence.

He opened the drawer of the bedside table and pulled out two screwdrivers, a staple gun, and masking tape. The screwdrivers were for the eye sockets, the staples to pin back skin, and the sticky tape to silence her mouth.

He took another sip of the exceptionally agreeable wine; although it was a tad cool, not quite room temperature. He inspected his tray of instruments. Teacher would be pleased, how neat he was... *top marks dear boy!* He picked up a remote control and punched the play button. A soothing Mozart violin concerto filled the air.

He pulled on a pair of surgical gloves, enjoying the clammy feeling of distance they gave between him and his patient, between him and his conscience. Humming to the music, he turned his attention to the tray of tools, his fingers danced along the row of blades, finally landing on the smallest one; he held it up to the light, inspecting the cutting edge.

“This will do for starters. I’ll open you up just a little at a time. You will be conscious, able to enjoy the fun, just like I was when he took me. But of course you knew that, didn’t you, my angel, you conspired with him.”

A painful image of himself as a seven year old boy flashed across his eyes. He was bent over the Headmaster’s desk, knuckles white with fear as he held on for dear life. Legs dangling, shorts hanging around his ankles. His tear-swollen face scrunched up, biting his lip, trying not to cry out and make it worse. He bore through the pain as his anus was being torn into by the old man’s swollen cock, praying desperately for the grunting animal noises to come quickly, so that he would stop.

“Now wake up dear, dissection time.”

He cheerfully shrugged away the memory, and knelt at the side of the bed, slapping her face with renewed hate. She started to come around. He leaned in over her for the first incision... *this would wake her up.*

Chapter One

Eight weeks earlier, Cellini's Restaurant, Chelsea, London

“Granted, it’s not everyone’s cup of tea, if you swallow, you are in the minority, it needs sugar or brandy or something,” Tara blew her blonde fringe out of her eyes, concentrating on her defence.

“Depends on the guy’s diet of course, pineapple is meant to be good, no fast food, no ciggies, no drugs, and it could almost be palatable,” the two girls looked at her blankly, “it’s full of protein, low on calories,” she enthused, but no, they were still not convinced.

Click, Click. hidden in a cafe across the street, he focused the camera, fitting all three in shot.

As per normal for most Fridays, the girlfriends giggled through lunch discussing men, or the lack thereof. Tara, Helen, and Josie were single, beautiful, intelligent, best of friends. They had reached the age of thirty having avoided the three things that sap a girl’s energy; marriage, divorce, and kids. It wasn’t that they didn’t want long term relationships; they were sexually active and adored men, they had just never quite understood the workings of the male mind.

If you give them what they want, the chase is over and they move on, if you don’t give them what they want, you are a frigid bitch. If you give them the babies their egos crave for, they are out the door, financing as little as possible, and seeing their offspring at weekends, between the golf, football and their latest sexual conquest. They want commitment yet freedom, for you to be faithful, yet them to be free, for you to be a full-time mother, yet them a part-time father. You can’t win.

Sourcing a man that knows what he wants, is a balanced, reliable, trustworthy soul mate, a good father *and* sexy as hell, was a tough call. Maybe the girls asked for too many boxes to be ticked, their quality control too high. Maybe they shouldn’t even consider long term stuff until the guy was at least over thirty five, forty, settled in who he was and what he wanted. The trouble was a girl’s time clock ticked away. The choices were test tubes or older men. It

was a tricky one, can't live with them, can't live without them. Hell, did they need to have babies anyway? Weren't they overrated and oversupplied?

Tara had a particularly high setting on her quality control button, although highly sexed, she was extremely choosy, the consequences of which would lead to long periods of man-drought. She was currently going through a serious dry patch, climbing the walls as she had not been with a man for a year. She craved the relaxed laissez-faire attitude of Helen.

Helen had a lower par setting, 'love the one your with', she made do with whatever was available on the day, or rather, whoever actually showed an interest in her, which, because she was beautiful, was quite a lot of men.

Josie tended to laugh along with the girls stories of man-woe, giving advice and sympathy where needed. She seldom dated, was wary of men and was happy to be alone; she was more interested in her career, often working late.

However cynical they appeared, they each had the romantic seed of hope, that one day Mr. Right would come bursting in on his white charger, or gas-guzzling SUV, meanwhile they waited, grazing on titbits.

Tara and Helen had met as juniors at a convent boarding school for young ladies, upsetting a multitude of nuns in their wake. Josie had been adopted by them years later at college. Her cheeky up-front London cockney savvy and their self-effacing Sloaney wit made an entertaining mix. They had stuck together through thick and thin, enduring life's roller coaster; they were a good team.

Their bond was about to be tested. Evil was to enter centre stage of their cosy, comfortable lives. It had been sitting on the periphery for years, plotting, planning, patiently waiting. It was watching them now; they only had to look up through the restaurant window to see it, hiding behind the large black lens that focused directly on them.

Click, Click. *the shot pulled in tight on slender fingers wrapped around the stem of her glass.*

"I love it, but I totally understand those that don't, especially when you think about where it's actually coming from... so to speak," giggled Tara, "excuse the pun!"

“Yes, urrrghh!” Helen groaned, jumping on the gruesome fact with gusto. Although she loved sex, she was not an advocate of placing anything remotely live or squidgy in her mouth. Her retch-reflex was too sensitive, oysters, snails and egg white had the same effect.

“Think about it T, they urinate out of the same hole, it’s absolutely disgusting! ” she raised her hand to the front of her face, blocking out the image, “yuk! second thoughts don’t think about it, don’t even go there,” too late, she had gone there, her face scrunched up with disgust.

“But, so do we,” corrected Tara, levelling up the case for the opposition.

Helen grimaced; covering her face with both hands to push away two sets of visuals. Looking down at her wine glass, the yellowy chardonnay didn’t look quite so appealing.

“Urrrh... STOP... I’m eatin, do ya mind?” moaned Josie, her cockney accent shouting over the two girls. She punched them both smartly on the shoulder, secretly loving it when they got into full debate on the endless subject of men and their ever-fascinating appendages.

The girl’s discussion mainly flowed in this vein; their witty banter moved at a gallop, sprinting through sentences that didn’t need completing, interspersed with giggles, tears and hugs. They ‘got’ each other with intuitive precision. When a man joined the table, the conversation would politely shift a gear to less risqué subjects. Men were sensitive souls; they may not be able to cope with the intense level of, utterly pointless, discussion given to their private parts.

Tara did sometimes wonder how they could talk such utter rubbish for hours on end; she put it down to a necessary form of free DIY therapy from those who actually loved, cared and understood you. Knew how to make you laugh and what made you tick. She believed in avoiding shrinks whenever possible, buy a friend lunch; it was cheaper and didn’t keep the drug trade in business. Too many unnecessary pills out there.

“I hate BJ’s; I hate the taste, the feel, the pressure. I am SO useless at them, they make me gag, which is SO not such a good look,” complained Helen, pulling a very unattractive gagging face.

The girls giggled; Josie put her fork down, giving up trying to eat.

“No, seriously,” continued Helen, “I try really hard, but I can’t swallow to save my life, and my hand jobs are a nightmare. I get into a nice rhythm; everything’s going fine, then it starts; the insecurity creeps in. Am I doing it right? Am I holding too tight, too hard? Am I yanking too fast? He’s not saying anything, not helping, except the odd sharp intake of breath or animal-like groan. Was that a *‘pained’* intake of breath or a *‘pleasurable’* intake of breath, a *‘yeah, good’* groan or an *‘ouch! fuck that hurt’* groan; how the hell do you know? You have to be a mind reader. My hand gets tired; my knees ache; my jaw starts to lock; my teeth get in the way; I remember that he pees out of it and ...”

She takes a slug of wine, soldiering on with her regular moan about her disastrous sex life.

“... whoosh!...I lose it; hand-to-mouth coordination gets all out of sync; and I go into a blind panic, knowing that he knows, that I know, that I’ve lost it. It’s like reverse parking; start analyzing it and I mess up, every time...”

The girls look at her quizzically, trying to keep up with her line of thinking...*reverse parking?*

“And, to make it worse, he’s looking impatiently down at me, like, *‘come on, babe, get a move on,’* probably waiting for the footy to start, spotting my roots need doing, and trying not to laugh at the farting noises my mouth is making...urrrgh!! It’s all SO unattractive.”

She sighs, serious faced, topping up wine glasses, the girls trying not to laugh.

“How do you know if you’re doing it right?” she pleaded.

“Hey relax gal, you don’t ‘ave to do it, it’s not mandatory. Some guys don’t like blow jobs, having a set of gnashers around their privates fills them with terror, and some guys don’t like to go down on us for the same reasons; we pee out of it, and the little ‘panic button’ is hell to figure out,” Josie tried to calm her, but she wasn’t listening.

“And why the hell is it called a ‘blow job’? Granted, it’s a bloody job, but there is no bloody blowing involved, unless I’m doing it wrong,” she stopped in her tracks and looked quizzically up at the girls, “do you blow in the hole?” they both shook their heads, trying not to laugh.

Thankfully, the morning bell rang announcing the start of class. He dismissed the assembly hall. Two sixth formers heaved open the large wooden exit doors and the boys obediently marched out row by row, relieved that the tedious standing in silence was over. Noisy chatter filled the room.

As the teachers began to leave the stage, the Headmaster remained seated, his beady eyes followed David's small frame. A satisfied grin pulled across his face as he contemplated the afternoon's pleasure. He particularly enjoyed the boy in his choirboy robes.

David prayed each morning that the Head would tire of him, move on to someone else. That he would become a normal, innocent, carefree boy again. He spent hours in the school chapel tirelessly chanting the holy rosary, kneading the worn string of beads in his small hands. He didn't understand the meaning of the words he was saying, but knew that they were important, what God wanted to hear, so he prayed and prayed over and over, begging for help.

He was a good boy; he didn't steal, swear, lie or hurt anyone. He cleared his plate at mealtimes and completed his homework. He regularly attended early morning mass, sung his heart out in the choir, and lit countless candles, but to no avail. He began to doubt there being a God. If there was one, he had been abandoned. Why? He obeyed all the rules, kept quiet, seen and not heard. Why was he not good enough to be loved by God? Surely God loved everyone?

The Head summonsed him regularly for 'private acts', he frightened him into submission by telling him that he had the Devil in him, that he was a lost soul going to hell. The Head would graciously save him by exorcising the Devil and preparing his path for heaven. The exorcism occurred when they met in the Headmaster's study, it was their 'private act'. Their meetings were to be kept a secret; if anyone were to find out he would suffer the wrath of the Archangel. He would be tied to a wooden cross, slashed with a thousand knives to within an inch of his life and left to burn in the cauldron of hell. David often wondered in whose hands was the worse fate... the Archangel or the Headmaster.

He had thought about going to confession, telling Father Michael, the school priest, but the fear of the Archangel got the better of him. Even if he did find the courage to tell, he doubted the priest would help; he and the Head were best friends; they always sat together in the dining room at meal times, laughing and joking. He had a suspicion that Father Michael knew of the 'private acts'. Sometimes he would be aware of another presence in the room, someone watching from the cupboard. He would hear a moan come from behind the door, the same type of animal groan the Head would give as he jerkily completed the exorcism ritual. He was alone, frightened, dirty and ashamed.

Recently he had been asking his Religious Education professor about the teachings of the Bible, about the fear people had of the Devil. It seemed to him that the Devil was as strong as, if not stronger than, God. If God did not love him, maybe the Devil would, he was certainly strong enough to protect him from the Archangel and the Headmaster. It would be pitting a demon against a demon; the nightmare would finally stop.

He wondered if he could change sides for a little while, just until the pain ceased. One day he would be as tall as the Head and could protect himself, then he could return to God's side. Like supporting Man United whilst he lived in Manchester, but really he supported Chelsea, it was just to survive.

Plan B would be suicide, but he wasn't brave enough for that.

As they marched out of the hall, a few of the elder boys glanced back at him. He lowered his head, he was sure they knew of his shame, of why he got extra attention from the Headmaster. He wanted to scream out that it wasn't his fault, that he hated it, that it hurt when the Head tore into him, that he would do anything to make it stop. Did they know because the same had happened to them when they were small? Surely someone would speak up? Was everyone frightened of this man? Why did he have so much power?

And why had he been chosen? He had been told that he had a cherubim face, whatever that meant; should he put a blade to it, cut it up? Should he cut his body, his willy? Would that stop the Head calling him 'his special boy'?

His shame kept his head low, unable to look students and teachers in the face. He had learned to dress and undress alone, cried off from swimming and PE, any activity that exposed his bruised, beaten, vile, ugly body to their pitying eyes. He concentrated on surviving from one day to the next. Blocking out the pain. He had changed from an innocent, cheerful, loving little boy into a lonely, degraded, dirty being that was going to hell.

His sister was a bitch, his father distant, the only person who truly loved him was his beautiful mother; he feared that if she ever found out what he was allowing to happen, that he would lose her also. He tried to keep up an academy award performance in his letters home. Inventing news of winning sports cups, gold stars, prefect badges, that he was a popular and studious pupil, but he no longer had the stomach for writing.

He was as much to blame for keeping the guilty secret. The shame of people knowing was as bad as the act itself. He began to form a scarab shell, keeping up the pretence, hardening his emotions.

During the assembly's closing hymn, he came to a decision, one that would change his life. He scoffed as he sang the empty words 'The Lord's my shepherd'... *oh no he isn't, he's got the sack, the Devil is replacing him; things are gonna get better.*

With renewed strength, he stood tall and puffed out his small chest. Chanting his new plan under his breath, he marched out of the great hall, staring straight ahead, ignoring the serpent eyes that bore into him from the stage. The Devil would help him now, he would be loved, he was no longer afraid. He pushed through the heavy oak doors, defiant, caring less for the cusses from fellow pupils as he knocked them out of his path.