

Interview with Christine Hart

by Tom Folland

Tom Folland Hey—it's Tom.

Christine Hart Hi...

TF Are you sleeping?

CH Yeah... it's alright though.

TF I called you earlier but you weren't in. I always forget how many hours ahead London is. Are you awake enough to talk?

CH Yeah, kind of...

TF Where should we start—when did I first meet you?

CH At the Primal Institute in Judy's group.

TF Right, that was '93?

CH No, '94.

TF Oh, right. I started in '92. Had you already written your book *The Devil's Daughter* at that point, when I met you?

CH Yes, it was already published.

TF What would you say the book is about?

CH Um, my life.

TF But it's also about Ian Brady, the infamous Moors murderer of the 1960s.

CH It's not really about him, it doesn't go into the murders. I dislike the fact that the publishers gave my manuscript that title, *The Devil's Daughter*, because I am an orphan who had a relationship with a murderer; there was no way I was related. They did this to try and make money.

TF What prompted you to write the book?

CH Um, people were saying in the press that I was related to Brady and I wanted to tell the story of how I came to be involved with someone like that. I mean, someone in the orphanage had once told me I was born the same year that Brady had apparently had a child and that I might be his daughter. I wanted someone to read it and explain to me why I had done something like that.

TF Something like that—you mean visit Ian Brady?

CH Yeah.

TF Had you written anything before?

CH No.

TF Really, that was your first writing?

CH Yes.

TF What were you doing before you wrote the book?

CH Working as an investigator.

TF A private investigator?

CH Yeah.

TF Really?

CH Yeah.

TF That's interesting. Were you nervous about *The Devil's Daughter* coming out?

CH No, not really, I think I was too neurotic at the time.

TF Really. 'Cause you'd kind of been through the mill with all the tabloids in England doing stories on you and I remember how you told me once that people were spitting at you on the tube. Is that true?

CH Yeah.

TF And calling you... what were they calling you?

CH I don't know, I can't remember.

TF I also remember when I first met you, you were staying at the St. James Club in West Hollywood because you were being interviewed.

CH Oh yeah, for the book, I sold the rights to an English paper.

TF Oh, like a tabloid paper?

CH Uh huh.

TF I also remember you telling me that Ralph Fiennes had tried to pick you up in the bar at the St. James and I was jealous—I never got that close to stardom in LA.

CH (*laughing*) And I saw Rod Stewart in the bar as well, oh, and Anthony Quinn; I used to see him at breakfast because he was living there at the time.

TF I saw Sally Struthers once at Helen's Bike Shop in Santa Monica. That was my first big brush with stardom. Oh, and I sat next to Morgan Fairchild at the Abbey in West Hollywood, the coffee shop. You have a very interesting relationship to tabloids and gossip because you were caught up in this whole thing in England because of the book.

CH Oh a lot of that happened before the book...

TF Your involvement with Brady.

CH Well because I was writing to and visiting a serial killer they [tabloid journalists] wanted to know why.

TF How did they find out about it before the book?

CH Someone at the prison told them I was visiting Ian Brady.

TF Did they talk to you before they ran the story?

CH Yeah.

TF What did they ask you?

CH Why are you writing to a serial killer?

TF And what did you say?

CH Because I thought he was my Dad.

TF And then when it hit the newstands, were you surprised at the reaction?

CH Ah, not really, no. I was surprised they believed it.

TF Oh, because half of it was fabrications.

CH All of it was fabrications.

TF I remember you once told me that there was a point at which you no longer believed that Ian Brady was your father but the tabloids still kept publishing that.

CH Yeah.

TF That was part of the reason you left London, right?

CH Yeah. But also to do Primal Therapy in California.

TF You went to New York for a while before you went to LA. I remember that from the book—that whole trip to New York. It's funny because it was a really sad story, not so much about Ian Brady but more about loneliness to me, a real existential loneliness.

CH You're kidding?

TF No, it really struck me. I remember when I first moved to New York how lonely and excited I was at the same time. I think it's the same for a lot of young people who move there from smaller places. There are all these great expectations, wanting to escape. It's classic. But yeah, I mean, the Ian Brady stuff was part of the book but more, to me, it was a really moving story about aloneness and alienation.

CH Really? Hmm... that's interesting. I've re-written it, as you know, and I've re-written that part and put it in one big book that includes my time in therapy and uh, it's written more from the point of view of an outsider... not concentrating on a serial killer. It's a story about, you know, not relating to others, and childhood stuff... it's more strongly about that.

TF About your time in the orphanage.

CH Yeah, and you know, being abused and shit like that. And how it causes you to feel alienated from others.

TF You essentially re-wrote the first book?

CH And the second one. An agent has read it and accepted it, and a publisher has read it and accepted it. It's called *A Few People Murdered by Their Parents*, because I include others in it. I think they will probably change the title.

TF That's interesting, I mean, you've reclaimed your identity from the first book and the tabloids by rewriting it.

CH Yeah, and my writing has matured, you know.

TF How would you describe your experience with Primal Therapy in Los Angeles.

CH Uh, I would say that it has gotten me out of a lot of darkness; it cleared my head of a lot of darkness. It's made me relate to others more. It's made me see things more clearly. It's gotten rid of a lot of neuroses, actually. I'm sure I've got a lot left but it cleared up a lot, it did, you know.

TF It took me awhile, I felt very fucked-up for the first two years. I mean I felt really bad before I started, of course, and then felt bad in a different way throughout the course of therapy. Then you get to this point where you realize you can't do this therapy without feeling bad. I had this fantasy that I would be "cured" in six months.

CH Yeah, so did I. Because of what Janov says in the book (Arthur Janov, *The Primal Scream*).

TF Yeah, because of what Art Janov said.

CH I like how it has helped me deal with life. I don't like the fact that I am older and wanting a relationship and how hard it is.

TF Well, I'm still not sure why I am attracted to the people I am, and when it doesn't work out, I have a hard time getting over it. Weren't you in love with an IRA Terrorist?

CH Which one?

TF Which one? (*laughing*). Maybe I'm thinking of the Irish farmer you told me about.

CH Oh he's down in Crossmaglen, which is kind of, well, I think they are all in the IRA. It's IRA territory.

TF Oh, so he's not active in the IRA.

CH Well, since he's down there, one can assume that he is active. He's Sinn Fein, which is the political wing of the IRA. Right.

TF You know, it's weird, I was reading this thing about Ted Kaczynski-- you know the unabomber in America --

CH Right, yeah...

TF It was an interesting case because his defense team, his lawyers, wanted him to plead insanity to avoid the death penalty and he absolutely refused, because he saw himself as a political radical and an insanity plea would undermine his politics. You know, he had written this manifesto about the dangers of science and technology and how they were destroy-

ing the earth. And it was these political views he feared people would see as insanity and here his lawyers were doing that very thing. Oddly enough the prosecution was claiming he was sane and that this was a rational political program—exactly how Koysiznki saw himself and so he essentially agreed with the prosecution’s view of him and not his own lawyers.

CH That’s interesting.

TF But, well, this was an interesting article because it was talking about his family’s attempts to come to terms with his insanity, and I was thinking about this in relation to that whole thing you went through with Ian Brady, wanting to see some sort of humanity in him, through all those horrendous things he had done, wanting to redeem him.

CH Yeah...

TF They interviewed his mother on *Sixty Minutes* and she described this incident when he was six-months-old and had hives and was hospitalized. Now, apparently in those days babies weren’t allowed to be touched in the hospital, so Ted Kaczynski was strapped to a table, naked, screaming, for a whole week and his mother has said that when she got him back, he was all limp and unresponsive. And so his mother thinks that a lot of his later troubles stem from this early trauma and you know I think that’s probably true.

CH How did you relate that to me trying to see humanity in Brady?

TF Well, everyone is always trying to figure out what makes someone crazy, right, or what makes people become killers or if killers are insane, and of course I think they are, but I think they are because of a reason, or reasons, and it’s that kind of trauma that does it to people.

CH Oh yeah, when I wrote about it again in the book and during therapy, I—as I was having therapy—I was, in the book, flashing back to the serial killer’s childhood and doing his memories and seeing his memories. I mean, I’m doing it using my imagination, from what he told me, and I’ve got some scenes from when he was a child and stuff, um, you know, how he would come to kill. It turned out pretty well, actually.

TF But he never told you about his childhood did he?

CH Well, he told me different bits, yeah...about his mother leaving his rabbits to die when he went away and stuff.

TF It’s a weird debate, that whole debate about what makes someone kill someone. I think it’s insane to believe a sane person could kill someone under normal circumstances...

CH I think he’s the same as Fred West, it’s the same type of killing. Fred West, uh, he uh, his mother introduced him to sex when he was eight and

his father buggered him and beat him and then he started keeping people in the cellar. Interesting thing was he used to bandage them all up and put straw in their nose and stuff and uh, yeah, well the only thing left of them was the straws in the nose, and I think it was kind of symbolic—that he wasn't seen as a person, but as an orifice.

TF By his parents?

CH Yeah, yeah... and he kind of re-created it. It's not facing it that causes all the, you know, the mental instabilities. I mean, it's bound to have some kind of effect, isn't it?

TF Oh yeah, it has to. I mean, I had an abusive childhood, not like that, but it was bad and it has taken me a long time to get over it. I know that lying to yourself about it doesn't help. I mean, I did that and it didn't work.

CH I was talking to this little twenty-two-year-old that I know who read the *Primal Scream* and he said, "I don't like this, you know, I don't like the way it's like 'Oh, you're neurotic, you're neurotic.' I don't like the way I am supposed to be neurotic all the time," and I was like, Well, you are, you are, you are...

TF You are neurotic!

CH Face it baby—you're neurotic! I mean, oh... and he said, "I don't think it's a good thing to dwell on your past."

TF Oh, so many people say that, I'm sick of hearing it. My family said that when I went into therapy.

CH It's so annoying. And so, well, all he was saying to me—I had a drink with him in the pub—and he said, "I am really out of touch with myself, I'm out of touch," and I said, "well, look—let me do a diagram, and I got a lighter, an ashtray and a cigarette package and I said, "There's you; there's your real self, right, here's the ashtray, that's your real self," and I put the lighter in the middle and said, "There's all your old feelings and it's the old feelings that are preventing you from being your real self. Get in touch with your old self (your self as a child) and you can start to feel." And he said, "No, no, I don't think you have to do that. It's just a question of me getting in touch with myself." And I said, "You can't understand me, there's something blocking it."

TF People have a lot of difficulty with the concept of feeling pain in order to feel better.

CH Oh, really?

TF Oh, I think so. I do sometimes myself, when I'm feeling really bad, I think it hasn't worked for me.

CH Hang on a sec, Tom, there's someone at the door, which is unusual. Can you wait a sec...

(Long pause)

TF Are you going to be in LA this summer?

CH I want to, yeah. If you're there we could share a place.

TF Yeah we could. I want to meet your friend Brent.

CH I want to see him. He sent me his address a while ago and I lost it. I'm going to have to write to Judy to get it.

TF Judy will give you his address?

CH Well she gave me Mike's, or she passed on a letter he had written me; this absurd letter; I didn't reply. But yeah, she passes letters on, she's okay that way.

TF I've thought about her recently. You know, she was my primary therapist there. I miss her.

CH Yeah, yeah... I thought about Barry the other day; I had this weird dream about this really aggressive guy with this Brooklyn accent who was, like, really awful and I thought, God I had a real connection with him, and then it was Barry.

TF Hey, did you know that Gretchen and Nick went out for a while?

CH Yeah I did.

TF I was talking to Gretchen about stuff, relationship stuff—you know, can you be friends with someone you're interested in—and she said, "Well you know I went out with Nick for years and now we're best friends." Although she had been telling me it's not a good idea.

CH I should go because someone's here.

TF Oh, okay, I might have...

CH Sorry I wasn't in earlier but someone phoned me and the sun was shining and I was like, yeah, I'll go... it's so rare for the sun to shine.

TF Okay, bye, I'll see you later.

CH Bye, Tom, I'll talk to you later.