

SLAM!

*Excerpt from Chapter 'The Slam'*

Chloe felt good up on the rostrum, looking down at a sea of expectant faces. 'Hello,' said Chloe, and several people Helloed back. 'This one's for my mum.' Chloe took the mic of its stand and kicked into one of her songs called 'Living' which was about enjoying the moment. She'd changed it slightly so it sounded better when spoken, with no musical accompaniment. She was glad that Liz was watching. She wished Shazza could be there.

'Living...' Chloe repeated for the fourth time, as she careered about the stage.

Some guy shouted 'Yeah.'

Some girl cooed, 'Go girl.'

Chloe was loving it.

Her last line was, 'Let's start living today!' Chloe raised both arms high in the air, then swept down with a big bow. The crowd went ballistic.

Chloe's hair is slightly wet with sweat; she sweeps it away from her face and grins warmly as she replaces the mic. Tammy's at her side holding the clapometer and making mock shock faces at the obviously high score being displayed.

Chloe bounds down the stairs, the applause continues. As she approaches her table Chloe sees her mum is stood up, applauding; crying with joy. Grace is stood up as well. Even Liz and her girlfriend are clapping and smiling. Chloe feels great.

While the next poet read their poem about the failing National Health system, Chloe sat in her moist cat suit, feeling squishy and delicious, and excited and satisfied. Chloe had never had sex, but she couldn't imagine it could ever feel better than this.

After Chloe was declared the winner, a young man, blond, wearing an anorak and baseball cap walked up to Chloe's table and congratulated her and offered to buy her a drink. 'You must be parched,' he said. He then turned to Chloe's mum, 'You must be really proud.' Chloe's mum nodded and the young man smiled a wholesome smile, as he raised his eyes and scanned the whole group, warmly acknowledging Grace and Liz and her girlfriend. 'Drink?' he said looking directly at Chloe's mum.

'I'll have a white wine please.' And Chloe's mum smiled at the man and Chloe smiled at her mum and her mum smiled back.

'Drinks?' he asked Liz and her girlfriend. Liz said, 'No thanks,' and acted aloof. Liz's girlfriend also declined. The man questioned if they were sure, but he didn't push the point, and then he pointed at Grace's half empty glass, 'Another coke for you?' Grace nodded and said, 'Diet.'

'And you Chloe? Oh, I'm Paul by the way.'

'Orange juice please.' Chloe looked at Paul and Paul looked at Chloe. Paul smiled, then turned towards the bar.

Chloe watched as the young man made his way through the tables.

'He likes you,' said Chloe's mum and Grace tittered. Liz lit another cigarette and after catching Chloe's eye, raised her eyebrows and looked away, exhaling smoke.

'Bollocks,' said Chloe, but she didn't mean it.