

Make-Up

The characters

by

Andy Moseley

© Andy Moseley 2019

CHRIS: 44

Chris is an only child. His mother had hoped he would be the first of many.

He was born on 12 July 1975. The son of Michael, a second-generation Irish immigrant, and Joan who, as far as he knew and she knew, had no relatives from outside the Midlands.

His birth was midway through the trial of the Birmingham Six, anti-Irish sentiment was strong at that time, but by the time Chris started school in 1979 the factories had been through a season of strikes giving way to the winter of discontent and the election of Margaret Thatcher. The Irish were back to being the subject of 'friendly' jokes, along with the Blacks, Asians and queers, only not disliked for taking their jobs or for being 'the other way.'

Not that any of this meant much to Chris.

The first political event that shaped Chris' life happened on 24 May 1988 although he didn't know anything about it at the time. That was the day that Clause 28 became law in the UK.

Chris still wasn't really aware of Clause 28 in September 1990 when he first started to wonder about his sexuality. He didn't say anything to any of his friends, but he did try to speak to a teacher or two who politely smiled and said it could cost them their job.

The one teacher that did speak to him did lose his job, after a suspension and investigation. This came after the parents of another child found out about similar conversations and reported the teacher. The suspension was in April 1991. It was one month after the Birmingham 6 had their convictions quashed and walked free. The teacher had initially spoken to Chris as he thought a reawakening of some anti-Irish sentiment was behind problems Chris was having with his GCSEs.

The teacher eventually resigned in 1992. Rumours abounded that he was sacked for being gay. It wasn't true, he was straight, but that's what kids, including Chris had thought.

As a result, Chris, then 17, changed his mind about going into teaching and did not apply to take a Bachelors of Education after leaving school. Instead he got a job in a local library. His dad felt it was a waste of his education. At the same time, he also thought working in a library was not a good job for someone without a degree.

While at the library, unsure of his sexuality, but feeling under pressure to get a girlfriend, he started a relationship with a fellow librarian, but knew it wasn't what he really wanted. He also became good friends with Rob, a male librarian from Birmingham Central library. When the relationship with his girlfriend ended, Chris went out for drinks with Rob on a regular basis. Rob was gay and, a few months into their friendship, told Chris. He also told Chris that he thought he was gay too. He took Chris to gay bars in Birmingham that Chris hadn't even known existed - why would he? - and this led on to weekend trips to Manchester, where there was a stronger gay culture emerging partly as a result of the council's defiance, or subversion, of Clause 28.

To Chris' parents, Manchester was just a place for music and football. Their main concern was that he didn't go to the Hacienda and take drugs - for them the two things were synonymous - although his dad did think he was spending too much time with that bloke, particularly as Rob was four years older than Chris.

In February 1994, a few months before Chris turned 19, the age of consent for gay men was lowered to 18. It didn't really change anyone's sexual behaviour, it just meant they were no longer criminals. It also made it easier for Rob to go into gay bars with Chris without worrying that anyone might see them coming out and think something.

Chris liked Manchester, partly because he didn't have to hide there or worry about anyone seeing him. In 1995 he applied to do a Media Studies degree there and was accepted. His mum was pleased he was finally taking a degree. His dad thought it was a Mickey Mouse course.

While doing the degree he saw his first drag artists, both as performers and people who were just 'on the scene'. He was interested in the dual identities of the drag artists and how they could separate the drag identity from their day to day selves.

Early in his third year he started going to clubs in drag, changing in toilets when he got there. He watched drag acts and invented the character Lady Christina. He tried it out once, but it was not a great success. The material was obvious - 'thank you for coming, you've made my whole week.' - and Chris as a naturally shy person afraid of rejection, decided not to put himself in the firing line again. His finals also meant that this side of his life was largely put on hold. He went on to get a 2:1 and in the summer of 1998 moved to London to work for an advertising agency. He moved into a flat in Mile End.

In a more anonymous city, he was able to resume and refine the Lady Christina persona and keep her very separate from his daytime self. He came up with the idea of her as a Northerner sent to educate the South about all things Northern. It still wasn't a great act, but it had novelty value.

On 30 April 1999 the Admiral Duncan pub in London was the scene of a nail bomb explosion that killed 3 and injured over 70 in a homophobic attack. Chris was not at the pub, but friends of his were. Two were injured. One could not admit the cause of their injury to their parents because it would have meant admitting they were in a gay bar.

Chris did not want his secret to ever emerge in this way and decided to tell his parents he was gay. He decided to do it in two stages, the first would be to tell them about his drag persona. A way of testing the water, he thought. He did it on the weekend of 10 July when he was at their house ahead of his 24th birthday on Monday 12th.

He told his mother first. She was amused, she knew he'd loved dressing up in school plays. Her view was 'that's fine, if that's what you want to do. I wouldn't dress up like that round here mind you, it's not like London. And I don't know as I'd tell your father.'

He told him on the day he was going back to London. His dad listened disbelievingly, then told him he was sick and disgusting and asked him if he was gay. When Chris responded with 'what if I am?' his dad knew the answer to his question, and gave Chris the answer to his, telling him he wasn't having someone like that in his house or his family.

It was the last time Chris went to the family home and almost the last time he saw his father. A couple of phone calls failed to result in a conversation as his dad repeated and developed his views to Chris. Chris gave up. The only other time he saw his dad was at his mother's funeral. His dad saw

him but didn't recognise him as Chris had come in an understated drag outfit and make up to avoid a scene.

A few weeks after his last phone calls to his dad, his mother rang him from a call box. She didn't want to call from home. Her husband checked the phone bills.

They started meeting (see Joan's story) and continued to see each other until her death in 2002. Chris moved from London back to Manchester, to be nearer to her and also because he found London lonely, not to mention expensive, at a time when he needed company.

While Joan was ill Lady Christina made few public appearances (see Christina's story). She was finally reborn on the stage at a theatre above a pub in Salford two weeks before Christmas 2002. Her new identity was a person from the shires forced to live in the cobbled streets of the North and determined to bring glamour to the masses, even if they don't want it (because, as she says 'they need it').

She has continued to perform since then, largely around Greater Manchester and Lancashire, but occasionally taking in London and the Midlands and with one costly, and not overly successful, Edinburgh Fringe run thrown in along the way.

Chris still works in the fragile world of media. He had a few years out when he first went back to Manchester, but the city's rise as a media hub has helped him get steady work, even though he does sometimes feel it's a young man's game and he's ceasing to be a young man.

He has had a few short relationships, but a fear of intimacy and rejection has meant that none of them have become long term. His work and personal life largely remain separate and only his small circle of friends know him as both Chris and Christina.

LADY CHRISTINA (His alter ego)

Lady Christina was initially born out of second-hand shops and costumes that Manchester Metropolitan University Drama Society would not notice were missing.

As with any child it took a while till her identity formed and she decided who she wanted to be. Also as with any child, when she dressed up and put on make-up she could be someone other than who she was and was liberated from her immediate surroundings.

When she first emerged, she was just Chris in women's clothes. When she first went on stage she was just a collection of cheap jokes and borrowed references drawing on the likes of Julian Clary and gay stereotypes from the 70s and 80s.

The first performance made her nervous before and made her feel like a failure afterwards. Unable to face other drag artists on the same bill, she felt as if she had insulted them and their trade by thinking it was easy.

In London her creator sought out other drag artists, trying to find out more about them, how they got their characters, why they did it, and how they developed their act and their material. He studied them meticulously, not to copy their acts but to copy and draw on their process to create his own invention and get the character who would be saying the lines and singing the songs.

Christina Mark 2 debuted in the Vauxhall Tavern on a Sunday evening in March 1999, telling people that 'Hit me baby one more time' was not something the women of Blackburn sang to their husbands when they got back from the pub, and that actually they were far classier than anyone in the South could ever know. It was pandering to stereotypes and playing to them, but it worked and a character emerged.

Christina Mark 2 ended shortly after Chris found out his mother had cancer and went to see her. She only made a few appearances after that time, although she did do some of her routine to Chris' mum, who smiled politely, laughed a bit but maybe didn't enjoy it as much as Chris/Christina hoped.

After the diagnosis switched to terminal, Christina Mark 2 left the London stage permanently. The appearances before Joan became more about Northern life as lived rather than Northern life laid on for the delights of a Southern audience. As someone who never really got Londoners, Joan liked her more. She also provided a temporary respite to her, a moment when her illness was not taking her life in a brutal manner. Joan joined in the conversations and the two swapped anecdotes and stories, which in Joan's case were real. As they chatted, Christina did Joan's make-up to hide what life was doing to her.

Something of Christina from those conversations made it into, or even became, Christina Mark 3 when she appeared on a Salford stage in December 2002. But she could not be from where she was, she had to be a visitor, she had to be someone who belonged somewhere better. Her cover story was that she was a lady from the south who had fallen on hard times and had to come back to the council house where her Aunt Madge had

lived for all her life. She was appalled by the squalor she saw but determined to lift people out of it by telling them what they were doing wrong along with anecdotes of her wonderful life before coming North.

Her act was fuelled by the things Chris observed, by all the things and people that were frustrating him but that he would never want to say anything about. She could be brash and mouthy without fear of comeback, she could turn people and situations into caricatures and really have fun. She could be wicked and bad so that Chris never had to be. She was Hyde to his Jekyll, but the two could live in perfect harmony and didn't want to kill each other.

Lady Christina only lives in her clothes. When the clothes come off she disappears. Lady Christina lives on the stage and in the green rooms or toilets where she has to get dressed before coming on stage or going home.

She makes guests appearances at Chris' house when he puts her clothes on and lets go of himself to let her voice emerge and try out new material.

She would never do Drag Race or anything like it. Christina believes in illusion. Her audience should never see her off the stage or out of her clothes, because Christina does not exist off the stage and out of her clothes.

Christina has a reasonable following. She wishes it was bigger but knows that this is the way it is for most drag artists. Drag may be bigger than it was when she was starting out, but the mainstream remains elusive for most artists. The only real differences are that more straight people know about drag artists and come along to see them and expect to see the glossy TV version. Christina is one of the old school but even she's made some changes to her act to respond to the new kids and the TV version of drag.

MICHAEL (His father)

Michael was born in 1946 in the Nechells district of Birmingham. His dad was an Irishman who came to England in 1936 aged 20, three years before the second world war, together with his wife (Michael's mum). She was 20 and pregnant with her first child at the time. He was born in 1937. She had two further children (both boys) in 1938 and 1940 and may well have had more in the years between then and the birth of Michael had the war not intervened. She had two further children (one girl, one boy) in 1947 and 1949.

As the oldest of the second wave of children Michael felt excluded from the world of his three older siblings, but also saw himself as the spokesman and defender of the younger group. He wanted to be a hero to his brother and sister.

Michael's early exposure to music came through the radio, or the music of Elvis Presley coming through the bedroom wall from his brother's room before he left home and took the only record player the family owned. However, discovering pubs at an earlyish age, he also got into blues and rock. He never liked the Beatles but was into the Rolling Stones from the start and by the late sixties was into Hendrix, Cream and others like them.

Michael was hard working. He didn't want to live in Nechells all his life and a good job was the way out of there. He started work in a local foundry in 1961 and tried to learn the trade and be as helpful as he could be to his colleagues and bosses. He bristled at some of the jokes about the Irish they came out with, but knew he had to accept it if he wanted to get on. He even started to join in and came to silently resent his parents for their Irish ancestry. He would have left home were it not for him now having a room of his own, after his older brothers left to get married, and for his younger brother and sister still living there.

In 1964 his dad became ill. The illness was related to asbestos on the building sites he had worked on after the war, although they didn't know this at the time. He died in 1965. A large amount of Michael's money during this time and afterwards went on keeping the family afloat in the absence of his dad's wages. Michael was proud to help his mum and step into this upgraded family role, but at the same time, this was stopping him from getting the money that would eventually help him to move into a place of his own. He started to work more and more overtime even if some of the other foundry workers felt he was taking more than his fair share given that they had kids to support.

In 1967 one of his bosses decided to set up his own small steel company and asked Michael to take the job of foreman in the firm. Michael agreed. Joan was the wages clerk at the new firm. Michael liked her and asked her out. They got engaged in Easter 1968 and married almost a year later in 1969.

As a foreman Michael was a little confused as to where his loyalties should lie, to the workers he shared a shop floor with or to the boss who had offered him the early responsibility of the job. He tried to appeal to everyone but did feel that some of the older workers resented him for a job they felt they should have had. The truth was that any that

did resent him did so because they felt he was in the pockets of the management. They had a point.

Joan changed jobs, leaving the steel works to work as a clerk for a local firm of solicitors. They decided this was better than workers thinking she was reporting back what he said about them to the bosses.

To be friends with the workers and appear to be one with them, he made jokes about gays and minority ethnic communities. He was not a fan of Larry Grayson, was unsure about Dick Emery and had grown up in a family and society that thought homosexuality was wrong. He had never questioned this view. He knew some of the workers were worried about Asians taking their jobs or moving into their neighbourhoods and, in spite of coming from an area that already had Asians living there, he could see their concerns. It was a status thing.

As a result, he saw no harm in his jokes and also thought it was better if he did this rather than have them make jokes about the Irish that he would have to join in with. They did this behind his back instead.

At the start of 1970, Michael and Joan brought their first house. It was a small three bed end of terrace. Michael promised Joan that one day they would move into one of the nice semi-detached houses nearer the park.

At the end of 1970, Michael's mother came to live with them after her youngest son got married and she was in the house by herself. It was the first time that Michael and Joan had an argument. Joan wanted to extend their family with a child not with a mother-in-law.

Six months later his mother met another man and although Michael did not approve of the relationship and the thought of someone taking the place of his dad, he was not really in a position to object when his mother said she was going to move in with the man - separate beds of course - at the start of 1972. They got married at the end of that year. Michael was not happy. Something in him blamed Joan for this, but she never really knew this at the time, she only suspected it when she thought about it several years later.

With the house once more to themselves, Joan again dreamed of the semi-detached and the children. The miners strike and the blackouts of 1974 started to put paid to the former as the factory operated on a three-day week and no overtime so any chance of saving went out of the window at least for now.

Children were still an option. They began trying for a baby, not that they hadn't really been trying before, or had any real idea what trying for a baby meant other than having sex, which had always seemed to work for Michael's mother.

When Joan got pregnant with Chris, Michael was delighted. They got the news on 21 November 1974. He was going to tell everyone at work the next day, but that evening the IRA planted bombs in two pubs in Birmingham. The next day that was the only conversation at work. Michael couldn't share his enjoyment, and the comments he heard all day about Irish bastards, sometimes followed with 'not you, obviously' and sometimes not, only made him resent his Irish heritage once again.

Things eventually seemed to settle down at work after the trial of the Birmingham Six brought the matter to a close and saw it slip away from the headlines. After a hot summer in 1976 attention turned back to the state of the economy, the IMF bailout and the rise of unemployment and left wing trade unionists intent on striking as Michael saw it.

He was increasingly out of touch with a militant work force, as he tried to make the case for his bosses. Strikes failed to materialise until the late 1970s when a newly appointed union shop steward worked with colleagues in other steel companies and foundries to argue for better pay and guaranteed overtime.

The loss of income from the strike was again a barrier to moving home. Joan had started to accept that her dream was likely to be over.

The 1980s were a time of troubles for Michael. The factory closed in 1982 around the time of the Falklands War. Michael had a year out of work. When he found a new job in 1983 he was back on the shop floor, remembered in some quarters as a strike breaker. His old boss joined the management board of a small steel conglomerate. Michael hoped to get a job with him, but no offer came. Michael felt betrayed after all the help he had given him. He decided from now on he would only ever look after number one, perhaps failing to realise that this was what he had been doing for large parts of his life before then.

He disliked the rise of left-wing comedians and alternative comedy and became more right-wing in his views. In a divided work place he sided with those who believed that the lack of job security they were now facing was not a result of Government economic policies but of all those daft idiots who sought to strike too much and who had only themselves to blame for what he and they were now facing. He tried to steer clear

of conversations about the Birmingham six as demands for an appeal against their sentence grew. He now saw himself as a Brummie first and foremost, Ireland was something associated with his parents. Perhaps all he retained of their Irishness was a belief that Homosexuality was wrong, although that wasn't just an Irish sentiment and nor was it a view that all Irish people held, so it was a view that probably came as much from the Midlands as from his parents.

He was horrified in 1991 to find out that one of Chris's teachers was gay, even though he wasn't, and had been trying to tell kids about how great it was to be gay, even though he hadn't. He never failed to let Chris know that he was glad the teacher had been suspended and that he would be 'the first one at the gates of that school protesting if they let that queer teach you that filth again.'

Finding out his son was both a drag artist and a homosexual felt like the biggest personal insult and perceived injustice in a life that had been full of these things in Michael's opinion. He couldn't deal with it. He didn't want to talk about it and wouldn't have been able to understand it or talk about it even if he tried. It was easier to cut his son off and have no more to do with him.

When Joan was diagnosed with terminal cancer he did think of letting Chris know, but Joan didn't mention it to him, so he decided it was best to do nothing. When Joan died he decided he did need to tell him. Michael wouldn't admit it, but it wasn't just a sense of duty that was the reason for his decision. It was also the sense of loss he was feeling that all the nice words from brothers, sisters, nieces or nephews couldn't make up for and actually made worse.

In a pre-Facebook age, he sent a letter to the last address he had for Chris. He didn't know that Chris had moved back to Manchester and so also didn't know whether the lack of a reply was because Chris hadn't got the letter or just didn't want any contact with him. Michael being Michael, his instinct was the latter.

JOAN (His mother)

Joan would have been 71 if she was still alive. She was born in 1948. She grew up in Walsall and was a fan of the Beatles, but also liked The Move, Wizard and ELO. She didn't really get the hippies. They didn't happen in Walsall. She was also not a big fan of Slade even though they were local. Rod Stewart and Elton John were more her thing.

After a couple of jobs in sewing factories she applied for a job as a wages clerk at a new company opening up on an industrial estate near here. She wanted to get this job because she was good at maths and it was different. She didn't want to be just one of the factory girls.

She met Michael after she started the job. She liked him. He was young and ambitious, He was already a foreman and he was only 21. He would surely get on. Together the two of them could have a future together that would not be council houses and holidays in Paignton and Great Yarmouth. They married in 1969.

She wanted three, maybe four, children. She wasn't sure. She also wanted a nice house. The sign you had made it was if you could get one of them semi-detached houses that backed on to the big park. That was her dream. The working-class dream.

Joan was working class. She was Crossroads and Coronation Street. She was never EastEnders. She was Dallas, not Dynasty. For Joan, John Thaw was Inspector Morse, he was never that bloke off the Sweeney.

Joan's mother had also been aspirational. Her ambition was end of terrace house, talking over fences but having a back garden you didn't have to cross an alleyway to reach. For both Joan and her mother the stars were out of reach, but the trees offered fruit if you had someone to help you climb them.

Joan achieved her mother's dream with the end of terrace house. A big achievement and the first step on a ladder she never got to climb. Life intervened. Michael's mother moved in. Thankfully she only stayed for a while, but although she was glad she moved out, she also thought that Michael shouldn't object to her being happy and getting married again, but she never told him. She didn't want to rock the boat, and now they had the house to themselves they could start to plan and have children and get the bigger house.

Michael said the time wasn't right, 'some of the factories are in trouble, we can't get caught with a bigger mortgage we wouldn't afford.'

Joan's parents had been a bit unsure about Michael. They didn't know that it was a good idea for their daughter to marry an Irish man, even though Joan told them you would never really guess he was Irish unless you met his mother, or his three older brothers, who all seemed to have inherited their parents fondness for Ireland even though they hardly ever went there when they were kids.

Around her parents friends and community, the news that she had married an Irish man was also a bit of a shock. 'Aren't they terrorists' some had said, while others just said 'no, they just drink and rob people.' All of this meant that when Joan found out she was pregnant on the day of the IRA pub bombings, she knew that her parents might not take the news in the way they would otherwise have done.

They were worried for her and they were worried about what people would say to her. By people, they meant the people near to them who knew Michael had an Irish background. By her they also meant themselves.

They were right to worry. And not just about their neighbours. Some of Joan's own neighbours who had met his mother were a bit colder with her after that day in 1974 and when she told them she was pregnant, there were perhaps not as many gifts and cards as there could have been, and the ones she did get weren't as nice as they might have been.

And when the pregnancy really started to show, she decided not to go round to her parents house, she told them they had to come to her. They thought this was sensible. One of their neighbours had lost someone in the bombing and a woman walking round pregnant with an Irish man's baby wasn't a good idea.

She gave birth to Chris on 12 July 1975 the midway point in the trial of the Birmingham 6. Again, the amount of cards and flowers and good will messages were lower than they seemed to be for other people in her ward at The Manor Hospital.

No longer feeling as welcomed and settled in her end of terrace home, she was keen again to move. Michael was still worried about the risks of a bigger mortgage and needing to make sure they had enough money to raise Chris seemed to become another reason not to move, as well as a reason not to have another child just yet.

She began to give up hope of moving or of having any more children. She began to give up hope on Michael.

He wasn't much of a father to Chris with the hours he worked. Parenting was her role and she loved her son so it was easy to do. He was the thing that kept her sane. That and her work, when she got another job after Chris started school.

It wasn't the same firm she worked in before she got pregnant. It was a bigger firm in Wolverhampton that one of the solicitors had gone to. It was a good job and they were nice people that she worked with. But Joan felt she was not as well off as the others who worked there. They had bigger houses and

bigger families. She worried about inviting them round to hers. She worried about their husbands meeting Michael, particularly after the factory he worked at closed in 1982. He was bitter, more hard-done-by, the ambition he had when they met and for the first few years they were together seemed to have been finally kicked out of him, particularly when his old boss hadn't offered him a job at the new company he went to.

She wasn't sure if she still loved Michael. If she'd stopped to think, she'd have realised that love had turned to tolerance, and tolerance had turned to habit and routine, offset by the twin distractions of work and motherhood.

Chris's academic success pleased her. She hoped he would be a teacher. It was such a shame when he decided he didn't want to be one. She really didn't know why but did wonder whether it had something to do with his favourite teacher getting suspended for being gay. If he was gay. Someone at work, a young gay solicitor, explained clause 28 to her and she understood more about what it meant. Maybe he wasn't gay, but it still didn't explain why Chris didn't want to be a teacher anymore and he didn't want to tell her.

In a way she was glad, because it meant he stayed at home and got a job in a library. She was pleased he had friends although she wondered why they kept going up to Manchester and worried that Chris might move there. She was both happy and sad when he left home to do his degree there. She hoped he would come back home at the end of it. He went to London. She secretly hoped he wouldn't like London and would return to the Midlands. He seemed relatively happy there.

At least he came back some of the weekends. Like the weekend before his birthday in July 1999 when he told her about what he had been doing. She knew what his dad was like and she knew it wasn't a good idea to tell him. Unfortunately Chris didn't.

After the row with his dad, she couldn't ring him, she didn't have a mobile and Michael always checked the phone bills to make sure they weren't being overcharged. He also always answered the phone when it rang. She decided to call Chris from a call box. They established contact again and Chris used to travel up to meet her in Birmingham every couple of weeks. It had to be midweek so Michael didn't know, and it wasn't always easy, but it was always nice. A highlight of her week.

She started to think maybe she should just tell Michael. But it would cause a row, or a protracted silence, and she didn't like either of those things. She could keep it as a secret that she shared with her sister. Her sister asked her why she didn't just leave Michael. She didn't have to live with him

anymore, their son had left home and, if she was being honest, Michael hadn't been the man she'd married for years.

Joan wasn't sure. She could see what her sister was saying, but where could she go. Her sister told her she could live with her for a while till she got herself sorted. She said no, said that she couldn't do that forever, didn't have the money for a place of her own and didn't know if she had the energy to start again.

But it was tempting, and each time she saw Chris the feeling grew that maybe she should do it. She had pretty much decided to make the leap when, in June 2001, she learned that she had cancer.

She told Michael. He was superb. He said all the right words, told her they'd beat this, there was no way cancer would take her from him. It was as much to reassure himself as it was to reassure her. His dad had died young, he didn't want to lose another person he loved at an early age.

She didn't tell Chris. She hoped a planned course of chemotherapy would be effective and he'd never have to know. She put off starting the course until after his birthday so that he wouldn't see the hair loss when they met.

From August to December, she didn't call him and as it was always her ringing him, he had no way of getting in touch unless he rang home. He tried it a few times, in the daytime when he knew Michael wouldn't be there, but no one answered. Eventually Chris found out from his aunt what was happening. She had cancer. It had spread. She was due to start a course of high dose chemotherapy in the new year and would be in hospital for a few weeks. Chris came to see her. It was the first of many visits, all timed for when Michael wouldn't be there.

In April 2002 she was told the cancer was terminal. The doctors weren't sure how long she might have left. She went back to hospital for further treatment, but they were fighting a losing battle. Michael came to see her as often as he could, he always tried to be positive, even though she could see how much it was hurting him. As a result Chris had to try and bribe the nurses to let him visit outside visiting hours. He usually managed to do this.

She never told Michael she had been seeing Chris. She would have done, but she knew he would be annoyed and he had been so kind in those last few months. She almost loved him again, and worried how he would cope without her.

She died on July 4, 2002, ten days after her 54th birthday and a week before Chris's 27th. The funeral procession went from their end terrace house to the church going past the nice detached houses that backed on to the park along the way. The cemetery she is buried in overlooks the park and the houses.