

Echo & the Bunnymen videos. Abraham Lincoln would order a pizza, and Bell would offer everyone hits of MDA. That's how far back this happened, we didn't call Ecstasy "E." We didn't even call it "X." Louisa May Alcott would be rolling us a fatty.

I'd shake my head no. I'd whine, "Guys, I can't get high. I need to write my novel!"

And Harriet Beecher Stowe would say, "Dude, why can't you do both?"

You young people, you who think you invented fun and drugs and good times, fuck you.

That was my original plan for *Invisible Monsters*. Even after the reader reached the words "The End" she'd still sense she hadn't read it all. The book would still hold some lingering secrets. You could open it again and find something—as with the Sears catalogue or *Vogue* magazine or anyone you love—something that you'd never seen before. Think D. H. Lawrence's "Odour of Chrysanthemums" but scored with music by Bronski Beat. That's how I originally wrote this book. It was packed with jumps. Hidden secrets. Buried treasure. I gave the original manuscript to a friend, Monica Drake, the author of *Clown Girl*. She read it the way she had read every other book, from beginning to end . . . page one, page two, page three . . . and then, and then, and then . . . She told me that jumping was too difficult. "Readers," Monica warned me, "most readers, aren't going to want to work that hard." They'd get lost. Back then, neither Monica nor I had been published. We didn't want to make trouble. We just wanted for people to love us.

So I hammered the story into a nice, smooth, straight line. I

threw out the magic. A wonderful publisher bought the rights. It was launched in 1999 as a paperback. It's only ever been a paperback. End of story.

Still, Harriet's words kept echoing in my head: "Why can't you do both?"

Twelve years later, the publisher W. W. Norton suggested producing a hardcover version of the book, and I saw my chance. The Brandy Alexander Witness Reincarnation Program. I told myself: Here we go again. *Where you're supposed to be is some big West Hills wedding reception in a big manor house with flower arrangements and stuffed mushrooms all over the house . . .*

You might mark every page with a little X, like leaving a trail of bread crumbs, to make sure you read them all. Or don't. Me, personally? I hope you get lost. I mean, really, would that be so bad?

Now. Please. Jump to Chapter Forty-one