

PART 1

CHAPTERS
1-10

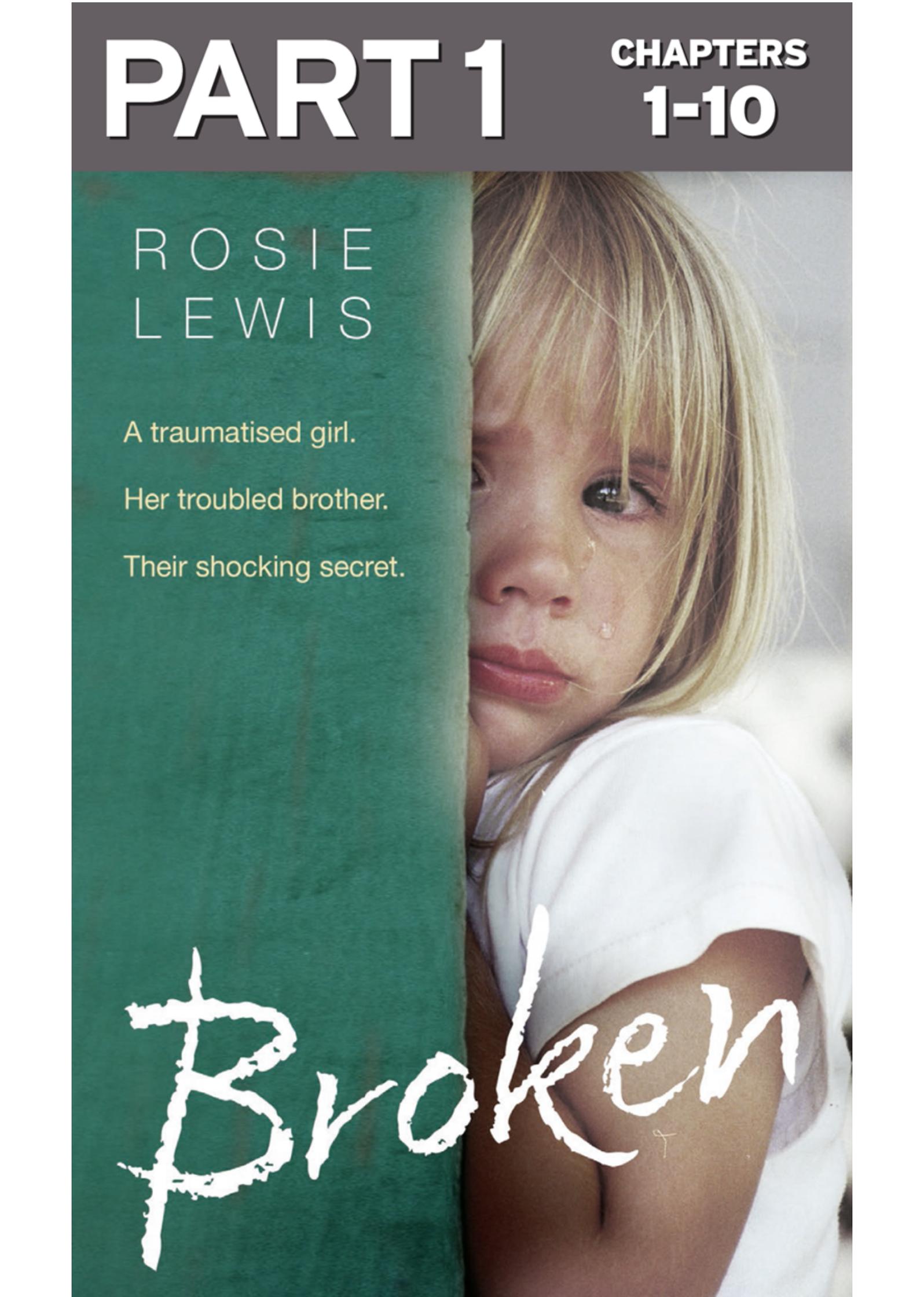
ROSIE
LEWIS

A traumatised girl.

Her troubled brother.

Their shocking secret.

Broken



Rosie Lewis

**Broken: Part 1 of 3: A
traumatised girl. Her troubled
brother. Their shocking secret.**

«HarperCollins»

Lewis R.

Broken: Part 1 of 3: A traumatised girl. Her troubled brother. Their shocking secret. / R. Lewis — «HarperCollins»,

Nine-year-old Archie and his five-year-old sister, Bobbi, are taken into emergency police protective custody after an incident of domestic violence at their family home. Rosie collects the children from their out-of-hours foster carer on New Year's Day and instantly recognises Archie from a domestic violence workshop she helped with. Rosie remembers that when asked what he enjoyed most about the course, Archie said: 'the biscuits'. Social workers are concerned that Archie and Bobbi have been neglected. As Rosie gets to know the children, she begins to suspect that something far more disturbing lies in their past. Archie, jovial and polite, bats away Rosie's attempts to talk to him about anything serious with witty one-liners and sophisticated distractions. Bobbi reacts violently, lashing out and throwing herself around. Rosie has never seen a child as young as Bobbi behaving so viciously, but it is Archie she is most concerned about as the weeks go by. After a worrying incident at school, Archie tearfully discloses the truth – a shocking secret that has left him and his sister traumatised. Horrified at what she learns, Rosie is determined to help the young siblings find a forever-home that will provide them with the love and care they deserve.

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PA

ROSIE



Copyright

Certain details in this story, including names, places and dates, have been changed to protect the family's privacy.



HarperElement

An imprint of HarperCollins*Publishers*

1 London Bridge Street

London SE1 9GF

www.harpercollins.co.uk

First published by HarperElement 2017

FIRST EDITION

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Cover layout design © HarperCollins*Publishers*

Cover photograph (posed by model) © Images by Tracy/Alamy Stock Photo

A catalogue record of this book is available from the British Library

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Source ISBN: 9780008242800

Ebook Edition © December 2017 ISBN: 9780008242831

Version: 2017-11-14

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Prologue

July 2014

Archie opens his eyes and blinks. For a second he wonders where he is, then he realises and his tummy flips over. Something hard is digging in his side. It feels cold and pointy, like one of his Transformers. There's something wrong with his back as well. Not an ache exactly, but it feels funny and wrong.

Cold, that's what it is. He tries rolling over but a pain shoots down his shoulder and his head begins to hurt. It feels as if his skin is stuck to the wooden floor. Where's his top? He can't remember taking it off but his brain is fuzzy. He shakes his head and tries to think. If he can just get back to his room, maybe he can work it out. There's a clinking noise as he tries to roll again. He freezes and holds his breath. As his eyes adjust to the half-light he realises there's a pile of empty glass bottles wedged between his body and the bed.

He begins to ease himself away but stops suddenly and cocks his head. Someone is snoring, someone close by, and there are other sounds as well. Softer sounds. Like people breathing in and out. How many, he can't tell. He tries to keep track but all the sounds keep tripping over each other and mixing him up.

If there are just two or three of them he might risk creeping back to his room – he wants to check that Bobbi's okay – but if there are more and one of them wakes up ... no, he can't chance it. Not after what happened before.

If only he could decide what to do.

And then it starts. A stirring. A swishing noise, then a thud. A wire of fear flashes through his tummy. Strange scary shadows rise above him and he holds his breath, shrinking back into the cold floor.

The shapes move over one another, two, then three, then more. All making a tangled, groaning mess. There's a strange smell as well. Sweat and booze and something musty that makes his throat burn. Then he hears a woman's voice. She sounds sad, frightened. His stomach lurches and there's a vile taste in his mouth. All he wants to do is run back to his room and to Bobbi. With a stab of shame, he realises that he's too frightened to move.

The shadows and the noises, they make him feel sick, make his tummy roll. Somehow, though, he can't tear his eyes away. Biting down on his lower lip, silent tears roll down his cheeks.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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