

The Only

Love, obsession, possession.

The screams of a mother, murdered in front of her twelve year old daughter, pierce through the night. They, in turn, pierce through the life of affluent architect Oliver Carsten. For it transpires that the all but orphaned twelve year old girl, Avery, is also his own daughter, a love-child from a clandestine near forgotten one night stand years earlier.

Already distraught by his infidelity and betrayal, Oliver's wife Vivien and their nineteen year old son Gabriel, are driven to an even deeper level of hurt and resentment when they realise the otherwise orphaned Avery has no other place to go or relative to turn to and so must move in with them.

Life for the newly formed family of four is claustrophobic as a coffin within the Carsten's pristine opulent home – Avery's presence kicking off and exacerbating a series of deep routed jealousies and emotional wounds that run deeper than death between husband and wife and father and son.

It is only when Gabriel, more forgiving and understanding, than his wronged mother, begins taking a genuinely compassionate interest in his fragile emotionally besieged half-sister that things begin to settle and calm.

However the new bonds and comfort don't last long. For on a black and stormy night while the Carstens are away working on repairing their marriage, and Gabriel is alone with Avery entrusted to his care, they are convinced by a visiting friend to play with an old Ouija board.

Their adolescent game gives way to a moment of terror when it seems their meddling in the occult has brought a presence very dark and very uninvited into their home.

Knowing their actions would enrage his parents, his father being staunchly conservative, Gabriel hides the Ouija board in Avery's bedroom closet and makes her vow not to breathe a word about what they've done.

However it isn't long before the Carstens begin to suspect that something very unsettling and very strange is going on in their house. For the already emotionally brutalised Avery begins exhibiting some deeply worrying signs and developing extremely disturbing behaviour. Along with night terrors, fits, acts of violence and screaming episodes, she begins regaling her new family with tales of a dark stranger watching her, hiding in her bedroom closet, coming out to breathe over her as she sleeps at night.

The analysis of Avery's episodes is different for all the members of the Carsten family and their associates. Oliver holding the steadfast opinion that the little girl has been through so much her wild moods and hallucinogenic delusions are perfectly understandable. Her case worker and doctors speculating the development of a dissociative personality disorder or schizophrenia.

Vivien daring to suggest the innocent girl actually is not quite as troubled as she seems and capable of extreme manipulation and playing them all like puppets. Gabriel, guilt ridden by their interference with the Ouija board, wondering if he's plunged his family into a nightmarish experience of an 'older' kind. Traumatized by seeing his new little sister suffer such horrors he keeps his troubles to himself. Silently he endures not only his own guilt, but also his own hell as

his already fractious relationship with his father reaches breaking point and the boy suffers, lost and alone, while all eyes are on Avery and her more outwardly noticeable torment.

But things take a progressively downwards turn and the lines between love and jealousy and the various other savageries of the human heart become increasingly blurred when Vivien seemingly loses control of her emotions, venting her anger and frustration on the child she has come to resent so much. A child whose presence has burrowed under her skin, a child who symbolizes a betrayal that has been lying unseen and unknown like a slumbering wolf behind the last twelve years of her marriage.

Oliver, alerted to his wife's actions, races home and breaks the door down to save his youngest child, scooping her up in his arms and carrying her away from the inhuman insanity she has just endured.

Whether it is her doctors and medication, or just her father's act of protective love, something does indeed save Avery in that moment. From there on things are different and Avery's mind, body and dreams settle back to being those of a normal twelve year old girl. But the Carsten marriage is broken and Vivien leaves her house and her family.

However, it is on another evening, when Gabriel and Avery are again alone at home that the embodiment of sin once more is made manifest in their lives. Stairs creak, strange noises are heard, something is rustling in the attic, the whole house throbs with a pulse of mesmerizing evil, and the now calm and measured Avery sees the same shape of a man watching her from her bedroom closet – only this time Gabriel is there to see it too.

With a few insidious hairpin turns the entire Carsten family discover that the evil that exists in hell is nothing matched to the evil one human being can bring down on another. But that evil is something none of the Carsten family were able to see coming until, for them, it is far too late.