

## Feature

# Daddy's girl

The daughter of the brilliant but tormented photographer Bob Carlos Clarke was 14 when he threw himself in front of a train. Four years on, Scarlett talks to **Janie Lawrence** about the devastation wrought by her father's suicide

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**L**OST in an oversized parka, and with her nails painted black, 18-year-old Scarlett Carlos Clarke is showing me her tattoos. There's the set of wings on her ankle, a heart and bones on her inside wrist, and a third that says simply, "Scarlett". It's her father's handwriting – she photocopied it from an old T-shirt – but were he alive today, Scarlett's pretty certain he wouldn't be impressed with any of her body art. "He'd like the idea of telling people about them but really he'd hate them," she grins. "There was a very old-fashioned side to him."

Four years ago her father, the controversial and celebrated photographer Bob Carlos Clarke, climbed over the crossing at White Hart Lane in Barnes and threw himself in front of the 10.53am train from Windsor to Waterloo. He had been admitted to The Priory – the well-known rehab centre for the wealthy – three weeks earlier, and was only 56.

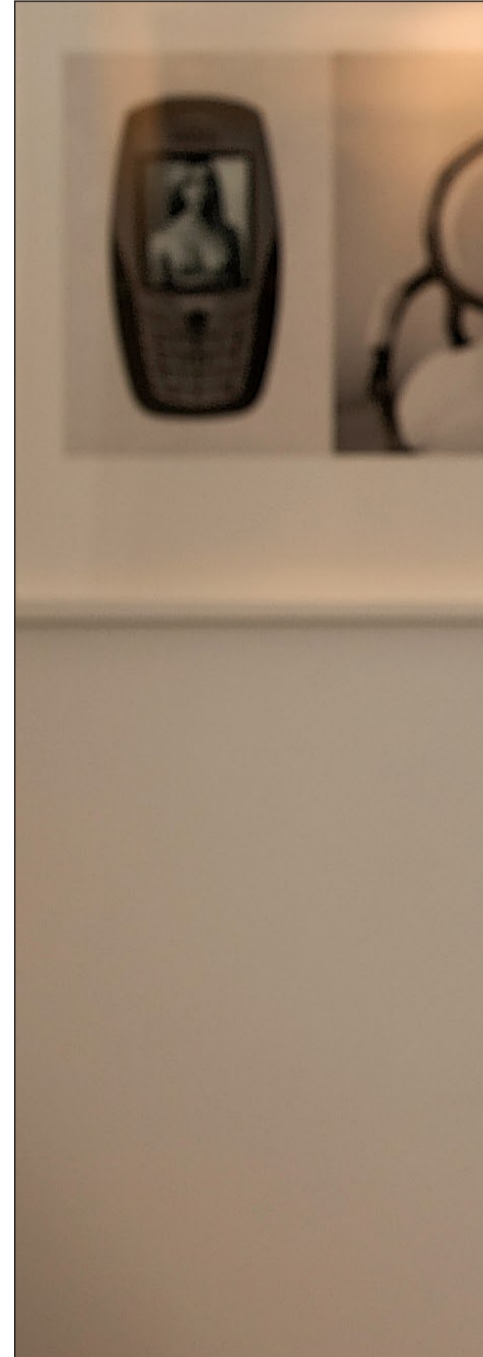
An unpredictable Irishman, obsessed with dying and considered by many of his peers to be a "tormented genius", Carlos Clarke was renowned for his pictures of rock stars and sexually-charged images of semi-naked models. Recently, one of his racier pictures, *Keeping Up With The Joneses*, featured prominently in ITV series *Married Single Other*. Starting next week, *The Little Black Gallery* in Chelsea is holding a retrospective of his work.

To talk about the death of your father is a big ask at any age, but to do so when the cause is suicide and you're still in your teens has to be a thoroughly daunting prospect. A petite figurine of a girl with large doll-like eyes, Scarlett could easily pass for much younger, and, on appearance alone, appears desperately vulnerable. "I was so stupid then, I didn't even think The Priory, any of it, was a big deal. I think I was too young to get it," she said.

She always knew her father was a complex, mercurial character – "not square" like other dads – but when he became ill she didn't appreciate how mentally fragile he was. Her mother Lindsey, a former model, was of course keen to protect her as much as possible.

Carlos Clarke was by all accounts a playmate as much as a father. "He was a big child. He used to buy me things like an electric scooter and I'd open it and say, 'This is actually for you.'" She was a daddy's girl, her father besotted with his only daughter from the moment she arrived. "He never told me off and I could really get anything out of him," she recalls. "Although if he was alive now he'd probably be the type of father that would follow me if I went out."

Scarlett began to be concerned when, even by her father's standards, his behaviour became increasingly out-



landish. "He started to act really oddly. When I got home from school I'd find him sitting with his head in his hands and slumped on the table."

A weekly boarder at Woldingham School in Surrey (actress Carey Mulligan's alma mater), Scarlett returned to the family home in Chelsea on the weekend of his death in March 2006. She expected to visit him at The Priory on the Sunday. The fateful knock at the door came early Saturday afternoon. She was upstairs having a bath when her mother opened the door to the police. "I could hear, 'Mrs Carlos



ALAN DAVIDSON

Family: Scarlett with mother Lindsey