

John What's does it have to do with us, what she is or what she isn't?

Mary I need to understand –

John No. You want it to mean something. But it doesn't.

He gets up. Looks at Elizabeth.

John You should be ashamed of yourself. Feeding off people's grief. Telling them there's some nirvana at the end where it'll all *make sense* and we'll all understand –

Mary She never said that –

John (to Elizabeth) I'd like you to leave.

Mary I invited her here.

John OK, I'll go.

Mary John, please stay –

John I don't want to talk about this.

He goes out, slightly unsteadily.

Joe Dad . . .

He follows him out. Mary looks at Elizabeth, helplessly.

Mary I'm sorry.

Elizabeth You should have told them. You told me you'd discussed it.

Mary I meant to. I tried.

Pause.

I'm not asking them to excuse her. I'm not asking them to like her, or feel sorry for her. Jesus, I can't tell you some of the thoughts I've had. One night I dreamt I was chasing her along Old Compton Street, and I managed to grab her by the hair, and as she fell, her face looked up at me, white and smooth like an egg. So I stamped on her head and it *was* an egg, and there was a little bloody foetus there, amongst the yolk and bits of shell. What does that mean, d'you think?

Elizabeth Probably that you wanted to kill her. Reasonably enough.

Mary If it was your child who died, would you want to kill her?

Elizabeth Yes.

Mary Why d'you do this?

Elizabeth What?

Mary The prison stuff.

Elizabeth Not because I'm a saint.

Mary Good. I hate saints.

Elizabeth My brother was put away for dealing. I used to visit him. And I got to like prisons. His, anyway – which was fairly enlightened. Does that sound odd?

Mary Yes.

Elizabeth The people are great.

Mary The prisoners?

Elizabeth Lots of them. Yeah. Why shouldn't they be?

Mary I never thought of it like that.

Elizabeth The weird thing about prisons is, you walk through the door and there are all these people who've done terrible things, but also all these people who've done wonderful things. Middle-aged women teaching murderers about gamelan music. Vicars and rabbis and imams and shopkeepers, retired schoolteachers, minor aristocrats – plus fraudsters, killers, dealers, druggies, and people who won't pay their council tax – they're all there, organising choirs and photography workshops, book clubs, and God knows what else, for no money, no kudos, nobody knows about them. There's a whole world in there.

Mary So prison's a bit like the Women's Institute, is that what you're trying to say?

Elizabeth No, sorry, obviously, they're not all doing creative writing and anger management courses. Some of them are doing home-made tattoos and being thoroughly miserable. Just like the outside.

Mary Good. I'm glad. Why should she be singing her head off in a choir when Dan's dead?

Elizabeth I don't think she is in a choir somehow.

Mary D'you know, I've imagined beating her to death with a baseball bat. I've imagined setting her on fire, shooting her, running her over in a tank. Things that scare me, things I've never felt before, never imagined before. There's this kaleidoscopic rage inside me, and I realise I could kill someone. She kills my son, so I kill her, I wipe her off the face of the earth. I could do it. Truly.

Elizabeth I believe you.

Mary I felt if I knew a bit more about her I might be able to see her as a human being. Because it's no good feeling like this, it's killing me. Feeling like a murderer is killing me.

Silence.

Can I show you a picture of him?

Elizabeth I'd like that.

Mary *takes a photograph from a drawer.*

Mary John put all the photos away after the . . . after it happened.

She hands the photograph to Elizabeth.

Elizabeth He's very handsome.

Mary He was, wasn't he?

Elizabeth He looks like his father.

Mary We've still got all his clothes. My sister keeps telling me to give them away, but I can't. She thinks it's because I go into his room and stroke them, or something. But it's not that,