

school with Lori. And she didn't — know, of course, and she said, being polite, so how's Lori getting on, and I said — I mean I just couldn't — I couldn't bring myself to — and I just said, good, good, she's grand. I mean what was I supposed to say?

CLOVER. Yeah. I don't know. *(Beat.)*

PHYLLIS. I'm sorry, love.

CLOVER. No, Mum (it's alright) — *(Beat.)* Hey — look Mum — d'ye want a hand tidying, because, because we could do it now, I mean — *(Beat.)*

PHYLLIS. It's getting late, love. I think you should go to bed.

CLOVER. What?

PHYLLIS. School tomorrow and all that.

CLOVER. But — if I gave you a hand and that — it wouldn't take long —

PHYLLIS. Thank you love, but — *(Beat.)*

CLOVER. Mum — *(She doesn't say what she is going to say. She stands for a second then leaves the room. Phyllis remains with the book on her lap, staring at it.)*

Scene 3

The living room. Poppy is under the dining room table. The story of Peter Pan is open beside her. She is holding a jotter which she closes and hides behind her back. She freezes and tries to make herself as small as possible. Clover has just come in.

CLOVER. Don't think that because you're under the table I can't see you. Don't think that you can hide from me. What are you doing under there anyway? *(Beat.)* I asked you a question, dickhead. *(Beat.)* You're so weird, Poppy. You know if you're not careful you're going to grow up to be really, really weird. *(Clover bends down.)* Oh my God. You're reading *Peter Pan*. *Peter Pan* is a kiddies' book, Poppy, in case you didn't know. God. You weirdo. *(Beat.)* POPPY. Mum was reading it to me. It was sort of nice. It was like being little again.

CLOVER. You shouldn't encourage Mum.

POPPY. It wasn't my idea. I was just helping.

CLOVER. Encouraging Mum doesn't help anyone, Poppy. And you can't let her treat you like you're little. You're not. You're almost twelve, for God's sake. *(It's unhealthy. ~~Silence~~.)* I need to talk to you, Poppy. Come out of under there.

POPPY. I don't want to.

CLOVER. What?

POPPY. I don't want to.

CLOVER. God, you're weird. I could tell the boys in your class at school. Is that what you want me to do, Poppy? *(Beat.)* God, Poppy. *(Beat.)* Mum's still in Lori's room. And Dad's smoking in the garage. *(Beat.)* Does that mean anything to you, Poppy? Does any of that mean anything to you? It's so pathetic the way you're acting as if you're the only one. *(Beat.)* It really is. *(Beat.)* What are you writing? *(Beat.)* Give me.

POPPY. No.

CLOVER. Give it to me.

POPPY. No.

CLOVER. Give it to me now. *(She snatches the jotter from Poppy. Poppy does not move. Clover begins to flick through the pages.)*

POPPY. Give it back. *(Beat.)* Please, Clover. Please give it back.

I'm sorry. *(Beat.)*

CLOVER. "A list of reasons"?

POPPY. I'm sorry, Clover.

CLOVER. "We didn't phone her enough." "We should have visited." Why have you written all of this down? That isn't even how you spell suicide anyway, stupid. *(She breaks off. Beat.)* God, Poppy! Here. There'd better not be anything I said in here. I mean it. What I say is my business and it's not to go in your stupid little diary. Alright? POPPY. Words don't belong to anyone.

CLOVER. What? I'm warning you, Poppy. You're not to write down anything that I say or do in here, OK? *(Beat.)* I said —

POPPY. OK. Clover. OK.

CLOVER. 'Cause, God, Pops. Mum'd better not see this. I'm serious, Poppy. *(Beat.)* "There's no smoke without fire." What is that supposed to mean? *(Beat.)*

POPPY. It's — There's no smoke without fire is what Mum said. It was just afterwards, after the phone call, when she and Dad had that big argument about who was to blame. When Dad said that no-one. And Mum said — That was what Mum said. And then

Dad said —

CLOVER. “Big fish, small pond.”

POPPY. Yeah. Big fish, small pond syndrome.

CLOVER. Which is a stupid thing to say anyway. And I don't think it's true. I think Lori would've been as clever as any of them.

POPPY. Yeah. Me too. *(Beat.)* Clover. Imagine, right, imagine what it would feel like if she was dead.

CLOVER. Why?

POPPY. *(Thrown.)* Well just imagine. What would it be like. 'Cause I keep on trying to imagine, but I can't.

CLOVER. Well — Well if that's what you “keep on trying to imagine” then you're stupid, Poppy. Because she wouldn't be — dead. No way. *(Beat.)*

POPPY. Don't cry, Clover.

CLOVER. *(Fiercely.)* I'm not crying.

POPPY. I cry sometimes, too. Everyone does. Even Dad. That's why he goes to the garage, so no-one can see him, and he thinks no-one knows. *(Beat.)* It's alright, Clover. Things are going to be alright.

CLOVER. How can they be, Poppy? How can they ever be?

POPPY. They will. *(Silence.)*

CLOVER. Hey Pops, can I come in under there with you?

POPPY. What?

CLOVER. See what the room looks like from there? Well can I?

(Poppy stares at her. Clover waits for a second, then kneels down and crawls in underneath the table. The two sisters sit side by side, not looking at each other.) It does look different from here, doesn't it.

POPPY. Yeah. That's why — *(Poppy suddenly leans her head in her sister's lap. Beat.)*

CLOVER. Lori used to make hideouts for us under the table.

POPPY. Really?

CLOVER. Yeah. With blankets and torches and everything. *(Beat. Suddenly sings.)*

Come little leaves said the wind one day
come to the meadows with me and play

put on your dresses of red and gold
summer is gone and the days grow cold.

POPPY. What?

CLOVER. It's been going round and round in my head all day.

POPPY. Sing it again.

CLOVER. It's stupid.

POPPY. But sing it.

CLOVER. No. It's just a stupid nursery rhyme. I think we used to skip to it. I don't know what it's doing in my head.

POPPY. Did I used to skip to it, too?

CLOVER. I don't know. I forget. And I forget how the rest of it goes. *(Silence.)* Poppy.

POPPY. Yeah?

CLOVER. Why do you think?

POPPY. I don't know.

CLOVER. Me neither. *(Beat.)* You know what Mum said, about Belfast.

POPPY. Yeah.

CLOVER. Well I think that's a stupid thing to say.

POPPY. Yeah. *(Beat.)*

CLOVER. “Ring the bell and run away fast.”

POPPY. What?

CLOVER. Bell-fast.

POPPY. Oh. *(Beat.)* You got in so much trouble for that.

CLOVER. Yeah. *(Beat.)* Pops? In school and that — have things been — and don't tell me things have been fine for you because they certainly haven't been fine for me.

POPPY. *(Reluctantly.)* Yeah. Teachers keep keeping me behind

after class and asking if I'm OK.

CLOVER. What do you say?

POPPY. “Yeah.”

CLOVER. Me too. I hate it when they do that. Like they have any idea what it's like. Nosey fucking parkers.

POPPY. *(Giggling.)* Clover. *(Beat.)*

CLOVER. And, Poppy — Have any of those girls said anything lately?

POPPY. No.

CLOVER. Are you sure?

POPPY. Yeah.

CLOVER. You promise?

POPPY. Yes.

CLOVER. 'Cause, swear to God, Pops, if any of them says anything else /

POPPY. It's OK, / Clover.

CLOVER. No, Poppy, it's not OK — and I'm serious — if any of them says one word to you — stupid wee milles that they are —