

It's dark outside and the rain and the moon have turned the streets to glass. On the short drive from JP's back to Waifer Avenue, Bessi looks out through the car window and there are questions in her head. Is it you? she asks. Her ribs are aching now, as I shift and climb, as I struggle to arrive completely. She begins to feel hot and asks, Am I going to die too?

Ida is sitting in her rocking chair and all the lights throughout the house are off except for the sunlounge. We come in through the back door and the bells ring. 'Dammit!' says Aubrey, because Ida doesn't like the bells now. She says they're too loud. The house should be quiet. It is no longer a real place with real sounds. When someone speaks, it is as if they have spoken in their sleep.

Aubrey turns on lights.

'The funeral's next Tuesday, Mum,' says Bel.

'We're doing the make-up ourselves,' Bessi adds.

Ida shakes her head. 'You bring her to me.' She is wearing a headscarf and lots of layers of fabric, a wrapper, a dress, a black crocheted shawl. Baba's walking stick is leaning against the radiator next to her.

Behind the rocking chair, I can see a stooped figure with an

ancient face. Her shrivelled hand is resting on her daughter's shoulder. She is hazy but I know her immediately. Nne-Nne leans forward, and squints at me.

'All on her own,' Ida whispers. Bel steps out of her heels slowly, and goes into the kitchen to make tea.

Nne-Nne says to me, How did you come?

I try to tell her, about the forest and the running and how it was just like Baba said, but I am weak still, and my words will not reach her.

Aubrey asks if Kemy has phoned from Trinidad and Ida says no. He is full of coconut macaroons. He sits down and does not switch on the television.

Bessi leaves the room and goes upstairs to 26a. She wants to see.

The beds are stripped. The saloon door has finally fallen off. It smells musty and there is nothing in the wardrobe except for the two white corduroy coats that Dad said to keep because of wasting not and wanting not. There are beanbag ghosts in the alcove and a smell of strawberry that is not a real smell.

Bessi looks in the mirror. Her eyes flicker. She almost sees me and she shrinks back from the glass.

Is it you? she thinks again, and crawls back towards the face. It is her face, as much as it was ever her face.

Is it? You?

I lift her hand to the glass because I am not yet strong enough in her eyes. We touch the cheek with the fingertips. I am tired. I am so very tired. The hand drops and Bessi gasps.

There is more to climb. The aching in her ribs gets stronger. The heat is filling her head and throbbing inside her fingertips which begin to dance of their own accord. I move up towards her shoulders where it is tight and I cannot quite enter. I push and clamber around the bones. Inhabitation is not an easy thing.

From the staircase below comes the sound of footsteps approaching the loft. Bessi stands up and concentrates on keeping her fingers still.

Bel puts her head round the door. 'Dinner's out.'

'I'm coming,' Bessi says. I can smell rice and fish. I can smell the tomatoes soaked around the fish.

Bel waits. She is staring intensely at us. In a swing of light as Bessi turns towards the door, her eyes catch mine. She suddenly seems as if she is about to cry. 'For a moment,' she says, 'you looked just like Georgia.'