

The first foggy waking thoughts, emerging through dappled gauze, were of Fern. The memory of the baby girl made Jess big-eyed with wariness at first, then it captivated her. She started off thinking about how tiny Fern had been, how fragile and moonlight pale, and then she realised with a shock that she, too, must once have been like that.

Exactly like that, in fact.

She held her hands up in front of her and tried to imagine them as pudgy little fists; tried to create a continuity between a time when she didn't know herself and now, when she was all too aware of her Jessness.

Had her mother held each of their hands, acted as a link between the child that was feeble and limp, and the one who kicked and screamed?

Had her mother —?

Jess abruptly tried to turn away from thoughts of her mother when she remembered that terrible, dark thing that TillyTilly had said.

*It was your mother's fault.*

Heartless.

Was her mother heartless?

It seemed like it. She laughed and acted as if everything was normal, and surely you had to be sad for ever if your baby died, it was such a sad thing?

Instead, Jess tried to imagine what it would have been like to share this room with Fern, her . . . sister.

Jess shifted and felt the sun on her face; someone must have come in and drawn her curtains open while she slept.

Fern would have looked just like her, and the similarity would have given Jess that confidence to connect and *tell* her things . . . confide in her instead of screaming out her fears. Could it be that simple? *I scream because I have no twin.* Jess doubted it, distrusted the way that it came out so smoothly.

Her line of thought was interrupted by her mother coming in.

Her mother was a shadowy lady, strange and dark, gro-