

Moira

The shitfaced baboon who is my husband went off a year and a half ago with you-know-who (I still can't bring myself to say her name). I was hopeless at first, crying and using up twenty-three hankies a day. My eldest boy, Mickie, he was the worst. He could have killed his father and he'd worshipped him before, well that fits doesn't it? The next one down, Shawn, he didn't seem too bad at first, but later he got to having bad dreams and he's still like that now. As for the youngest, he was only two when it happened so he's hardly likely to be breaking his heart is he? He's Frank by the way. Don't ask me why we called him that because it's a long story and I don't care to remember.

The names Mickie and Shawn give you a clue to the fact that at least half of us are Irish and that half is me. The shitfaced baboon is English but I don't hold it against the entire race, there's many decent Englishmen, I know. In fact I like the English very much, but the Welsh are very strange and I don't know much about the Scots at all. Live and let live I say.

I was brought up in a very nice house in Dublin but I'm not going to give you the long biographical bit because it's very boring and anyway there are some things even you aren't entitled to know. I'm telling you this for my own pleasure, if it is a pleasure, but more likely it's to get rid of this awful lump of hatred inside me. I may find though that instead of getting rid of it it'll grow and grow till it takes me over entirely and all that's left of me will be this lump and the rest of me will have disappeared. If that makes any sense at all. It's a risk

I'll have to take because now I've started I know I can't stop.

As I say it was hell at first and people didn't know how to look at me or what to say. It's a funny thing but the SFB was more real when he'd bugged off than when he was there. Before he left I'd just been me, and that was fine by everyone. I mean they just took me as I was and didn't think about me much. But afterwards they only saw me in relation to him, the SFB, even though he wasn't there. Do you see what I mean? It's a funny feeling and I'm not sure I'm making myself clear. It's as if I didn't exist as myself, only as half of me and the SFB. And now the SFB wasn't there they had a job seeing me at all. This happened even with friends, at least people I thought of as friends. But others I hardly knew at all were much better about it. There wasn't that funny look in their eyes and that false tone of voice. I grew to hate that tone of voice, all brittle and bright like the kind of Christmas present you buy for people you don't like very much. And they never even mentioned his name, that's the funny part of it, they never spoke his name though they were thinking about him all the time. It's a bit like the way you avoid mentioning the dead, as if they've suddenly become an obscenity. Not the physical obscenity of rotting flesh but a mental obscenity. The difference is that when you're bereaved you at least have some dignity, but there's no dignity at all in being an abandoned wife. That's just silly and humiliating and there's no point in pretending otherwise.

Of course I knew he was having an affair, but that was nothing new. He'd been having affairs ever since he started getting his name in the papers. It was part of his growing up, like growing a beard and wearing those awful roll-top sweaters that made him look like the top of a Skipper sardine tin. And when

I knew him first he was quite an ordinary-looking boy, no different from a bank clerk or plumber or practically anything you can think of. But as soon as he started getting his stuff on the telly, he changed. That's when he took to growing a beard and wearing cast-offs from Oxfam. You know the kind of thing – the pipe, the sweaters, the greasy-author look. Even his eyes changed. They'd been frank and open before, friendly eyes, but now they were furtive and hooded, like he'd grown an extra eyelid to shut out the truth. I'm not imagining this, you can ask anyone. You've changed, I told him. You've got wicked bloody eyes. That's when I'd found out what was going on, I wouldn't have said it otherwise.

They'd been working together, that was the trouble. Half the divorces are caused by male and female creating something together, and I don't mean babies. They may come later but it's the initial getting together I have in mind. When women all stayed at home, minding the babies or minding their own business it was all very simple. The men went out to work with other men, meeting other women surely but not in an intimate kind of way, they had to arrange things and they didn't often have the time or the energy for that, not to say the inclination. That's a lot different from going along to the office or the studio and sitting next to someone you begin to fancy and to regard as your soul-mate if you're the idealistic type or just as your bed-mate if you think of nothing above your crotch. It's a wonder anyone stays married at all, especially if all the taboos are down and you're made to feel you're a bloody failure if you don't have it away with the person you're obviously fancying. So it's not surprising the SFB started casting a hopeful eye in the direction of the bitch whose name I can't bear to say. But that's silly, so I'll tell you that she's called Tracy Hood. At

least that's her stage name, I don't know if she's got another and it's asking too much to find out.