

MAGGIE



Maggie

Can you imagine what it feels like to lose a child? Most of us can't imagine that - a death too terrible to think about, impossible, unnatural.

Maggie is doing very well. Everyone says so. She's being brave, sensible. She'll be all right, just a little more time maybe...

The traffic lights changed to green. I sat up straight and looked in the mirror to check what was behind me. I was doing everything right - everything you're supposed to do when you take your driving test. Check the mirror. Be sure of your stopping distance. Are there pedestrians? Yes, a woman and two children. The road ahead, a thin white line, the other side of the road, a footpath. Hands on the wheel in the ten-to-two position. Everything correct. Strong, sensible hands. A thin white line, third finger, left hand.

Jessica's carrycot was on the back seat. Jessica wasn't in it. Jessica was dead. Ben's old A-to-Z street map was in the pocket of the passenger door. Ben didn't need it. Ben knew where he was going; he'd found the road that he wanted.

Probably not healthy? Carrying your dead baby's carrycot around. An empty carrycot isn't very heavy. Just thirty-three photographs. Married couples often break up after the death of a child. I know that. I'm not stupid. I have a university education. Studied ethics - life and death problems.

There are fifteen of you in a cave far underground, and the only way out is a hole in the roof. A fat man gets stuck in this hole. It's dark. There's not much air left in the cave. You've tried everything to get the fat man through the hole. You have a stick of dynamite.

She'd be six now. Jessica.

Don't shake your head at me, thinking I'm crazy, some kind of madwoman. Look inside your own head - the games and conversations that go on in there. Don't even begin to judge me.

No, I didn't pick up children's dolls and cry over them. No, I didn't want to steal other people's children. I just grieved. For Jessica. I did well. Everyone said so. They were really proud of me.

They became even prouder of me when Ben left. They told me loudly and often how proud they were of me.

I used to play that game, you know? You see a married couple walking in front of you. You imagine the woman gone. You just put your hand in his and go on walking.

I went to the beach one Sunday. There was a dad and his kids. A great father. Our eyes met. I knew I would be a great mother. The children would soon learn to like me...

But he didn't come back the next Sunday. Or any Sunday that summer.

I don't hate Ben. But I hate the person that he has changed me into. These lines around my mouth? When your heart starts breaking, you close your teeth, keep your lips tightly shut, keep the screams inside. It shows.

They say I'm still good-looking. Still a wonderful person. Clever too. Should continue my university studies. Studies in ethics. Are humans free to choose their path in life? Who decides what happens to us? Is everything written in the stars?

There's a park near my place. A play-area for children. I noticed this one man came with his little boy every other Sunday. The park, then a pizza, then home to Mummy, until next time. We got to recognize each other, just a look and a smile. Every other Sunday. Unchanging. His family and friends would learn to like me. Love me. Then one weekend he came to our park. With her. They went for a pizza together. Home together. A family. What a bastard.

Freedom to choose is frightening, don't you think? Do you get moments like that? You know, you're driving along, hands on the wheel, everything correct. Then a picture jumps into your head, out of nowhere. Two centimetres. If I move the wheel just two centimetres...

Of course, Ben married again. Had twins, two lovely little baby girls. Sometimes I saw them. A family. Together. The walks out with the pushchair. The days out to the zoo.

Then, I saw her on the footpath. Her, with a little hand in each of hers. Me, driving perfectly, doing everything right, not a wrong move.

It was dark, you see. So dark. I couldn't breathe. There was no escape. Just a stick of dynamite in my hands.

- THE END -

Hope you have enjoyed the reading!

Come back to <http://english-e-reader.net/> to find more fascinating and exciting stories!