

NAT. Your husband.

DIANE. He's a writer. We're both writers.

NAT. Really?

DIANE. Yeah, really.

NAT. What do you write?

DIANE. Books... you know. I haven't written one for a while but...

NAT. Well, I'd say it's tough enough to... to write a book, I mean...

DIANE. Do you have any children?

NAT. Well, I... no, they're my... the children of my ex.

DIANE. Ex-wife?

NAT...My... ex-girlfriend – or partner, I suppose. Not wife. We were living together. But not... not recently.

DIANE. Right. (*Short pause.*) Well, you were a family.

NAT. Yeah.

A loud smash somewhere makes them spring up. NAT grabs a hammer and wields it like a weapon.

DIANE. How old are they?

NAT. Six and eight. But I haven't seen them in about... ten months, a year.

DIANE. Right. Well, that's hard.

NAT. Yeah. And the break-up was... you know...

DIANE. Mmm...

NAT. It was... (*Looks at the shutters where some wings are heard flapping, birds bang against the glass.*) difficult, so...

DIANE. Yeah. Well, that's...

NAT. Yeah.

Pause

DIANE. Was this Sarah?

Pause.

NAT. Yeah, how do you know?

DIANE. Because you were talking to her.

NAT. What do you mean?

DIANE. You were talking to someone called Sarah. You pushed me right across the room.

NAT. Are you serious?

DIANE just gives a little wry smile and raises her eyebrows.

Oh, I'm sorry. Did I hurt you?

DIANE. No – (*Beat.*) just my finger.

NAT. Oh, no. I'm sorry. Is it bad?

DIANE. No, it just got bent right back, you know when that happens.

NAT. Oh God... Listen, I'd never do anything like that. I mean...

DIANE. I know.

NAT. I'm sorry.

DIANE. No, it's okay.

Pause. A concerted effort by a bird to fly repeatedly through a window makes them fall silent. The noise passes.

NAT. I can't believe I did that. She's absolutely crazy. I mean, she had me locked up, you know?

DIANE (*looking at him standing there with a hammer in his hand*). Who?

NAT. Sarah.

DIANE. In your dream?

NAT. No, like really. In real life. She's crazy.

DIANE. What do you mean 'locked up'?

NAT. Not in prison. She signed me into a... hospital. And she's the one who's nuts! That's the... that's the sick... irony.

DIANE... Right. Was this recently or...

NAT (*putting it down*). No... About a year ago?

DIANE....Right.

NAT. I mean, I wasn't well. I'm not saying that I wasn't. I certainly wasn't a hundred per cent. I was just suffering from a... a form of exhaustion really. But the way she decided to... to deal with it was... it was hugely disproportionate.

Pause.

DIANE. Right. *(Pause.)* What... happened, I mean, I'm...

NAT. Oh no, it's nothing to worry about.

DIANE. Right. No. *(Pause.)* You don't mind me asking. I'm just, I don't want to...

NAT. No, no, it's fine. No, just... There were just... a lot of arguments – you know how that... is...

DIANE. Mmm.

NAT. And a lot of criticism, coming my way from her family. About money, about other things... And I'd started getting these headaches and I wasn't able to sleep.

DIANE. Right. *(Pause.)* Do you... still get headaches, or...?

NAT. No. No, not for a long time. Yeah. No, I'm okay. I was always okay, really. There was just a lot of, you know *other* stuff going on there. You know. Certain agendas. But I still... I mean, you worry about people. I mean, I just... that's where I was going when all the... the birds started to happen. Probably a stupid fucking thing to do really.

DIANE. Oh, I don't know. You know what they say.

She gets up, tidying away her cup.

NAT. What?

DIANE. The first cut is the deepest.

NAT. Mmm.

He sits, looking into firelight of the stove.

END

Scene Three

The lights bring us to daylight. The door is open. The shutters are open, revealing boards up outside the windows. NAT comes in.

NAT. Listen, em... I think someone's been outside.

DIANE. What?

NAT. The padlock on the shed door was on the ground out there.

He shows her.

DIANE. Is anything gone?

NAT. I'm not sure. I thought I saw a can of kerosene in there a few days ago. It's not there now. And a shovel, I think, is gone.

DIANE. When do you think it...?

NAT. I think maybe just this morning when we were at the gas station. I mean, it might have even just been while we were down at the lake. I don't know.

DIANE. Just now?

NAT. I don't know!

NAT walks restlessly into the hall, looking around and comes back.

DIANE. Who would it be?

NAT. I think there's someone in that house across the lake.

DIANE. Where?

NAT. On the other side of the lake. I saw him yesterday morning when I was scavenging in the gas station. I think he had a gun, or a shotgun. He stepped back in behind the wall when he saw me.

DIANE. Why didn't you say anything?

He shrugs.

He must be watching us.