

The Right Order of Things

by Janie Reynolds

One

Two weeks ago, my seven year old daughter told me her father, Dan, had been molesting her. For about a year. She described acts and sensations she could only have known if it was real. When I called the police, she refused to speak to them. When they came round she did the same. Now she won't even talk to me. She gets upset. Rushes away.

Two

I hear the sound of the key in the lock. Kids' voices. School must be over. I try to get up from the couch but can't.

My friend Dee's been doing the school run for me. She appears in the living room doorway and looks at me closely. Her cheeks are rosy and her hair messy from the rain. Our five year old boys are pushing past her into the living room where I sit, and I can just make Paige out, slowly taking her coat off in the hall.

"Let me have a moment with Mummy," she turns and tells them. "Mummy's not well."

"You're still in your pyjamas again," she smiles. "Any developments?"

"Nothing can happen!" I bleat. "Paige knows it's her weekend with him tomorrow, and that she has to go unless she tells the police what she told me. But she won't."

"No more point in the lawyer?" asks Dee.

I shake my head. "Unless I have new evidence, the contact order stands. So, what am I supposed to do, then? Wait until he rapes her?!"

"I could kill him," says Dee.

“So could I,” I nod. “But if I was caught, both Paige and Alfie would end up in care. And if I prevent contact, or take them away somewhere, I’m breaking the law and he could get full custody.”

My mobile rings. It’s Dad.

“Issy, I don’t know where mum is. Is she with you?” he asks.

“No,” I say. “When did you last see her?”

“Dan collected her in his car this morning. She wanted him to show her how to use Photoshop on his desktop. How can she even speak to him, let alone visit him, after what he’s done to Paige! She’s been in a terrible state, for weeks, your mother. Crying in the night. All day. Off her food. About Paige. She loves that little girl so much.”

The doorbell rings. Dee goes. Three police walk into the living room with batons and walkie talkies. I tell Dad I’ll call him back.

“Isabelle Jacobs?” one asks.

“Yes.”

“Chief Detective Roberts. These are my colleagues from Newham police. It’s about your mother, Mary. Would you come with us to the station, please?”

“Do you mind if I stay in my pyjamas?” I ask them.

I look at Dee, pleadingly and she nods.

Three

I’m shown into a bright room. I’m so grateful to see Mum’s alive. She’s sitting very still, pale and small, wrapped in a thick blue blanket.

A police-woman gestures at me to sit.

“Where’s Paige?” Mum asks, looking up with tired, milky eyes.

“With Dee,” I say. “Both kids are with Dee.”

She smiles and nods.

“What’s going on?” I ask a police woman.

“He’s dead, Issy,” says Mum. “Dan. I chopped open his head with an axe. You can sleep now. So can I. And Paige can have her life back.”

“We have charged your mother with murder,” a policewoman says. “She demanded to see you before she was remanded in custody.”

Two police move towards Mum and lift her from her chair by the armpits before helping her towards the exit.

“Mum!” I cry, and run to hug her.

She turns her beautiful face towards me.

“It’s the right order of things,” she says. “The right order of things.”