

HAZEL. Further down the coast

ROSE. But, so the farm is... inside the exclusion zone? - Isn't that / quite -

HAZEL. Robin is deeply attached to the cows.

ROSE. I see.

HAZEL. I'm deeply attached to them too. But I'm more attached to not getting cancer.

ROSE. But every day. / Isn't he

HAZEL. Believe me, we have had this conversation. I promise you, that conversation has been had, but he's always been sentimental, you know that.

ROSE. So the house is okay?

HAZEL. No the house is a wreck.

We were lucky. When the wave came, the house was flooded but not destroyed. The fields and the garden were destroyed but the house was just stinking and full of silt it was cosmetic you know but I can't describe to you the stench. I waded through it up the stairs, the carpet squelching and something else, something dreadful, a smell a feeling a hopelessness. Like the infinite sadness.

ROSE. ...

HAZEL. It's a film, the children used to, the never-ending whatsit you wouldn't know it.

HAZEL *gathers the salad leaves into a colander and washes them in container water.*

Anyway, I couldn't cope with thinking: how are we going to clear it up? and I cried, Rose, I just sank down at the bottom of the stairs where the pencil lines mark the children's heights and I / was just

ROSE. Your poor thing.

HAZEL. *crying* (thank you) because the mess the mess was just overwhelming

ROSE *takes the salad from her and shakes it dry.*

It was overwhelming Rose.

HAZEL *blows her nose.*

And then I had this amazing thought: we don't have to. We don't actually have to.

ROSE. Sorry, have to what?

HAZEL. To clear it up. It was like e equals m c squared, one of those exquisite pieces of thinking that's so simple, you feel like Archimedes running naked to the king, screaming 'eureka!' Because when I told Robin, the relief on his face.

And you know all our lives we've been those kind of people, when we have a picnic or, camping we don't just clear up our own litter, we go around and pick up other people's too. I have a little stash of plastic bags in my cagoule, that's just our policy, leave a place cleaner than you found it but but but so you see we'd *earned* it.

We'd earned the right, on this one occasion, just to say: at our time of life, we simply cannot deal with this shit.

And we decided to leave that night. And we went down to the barns and we fed the cows for the last time and I just wept, I honestly, to think what they'd been exposed to, their big brown eyes looking back at me but what choice did we have? They always say you shouldn't name them, but of course we'd named them, you can't not name them, so I'm leaning out of the taxi like a mad woman, 'Goodbye Daisy! Goodbye Bluebell! Goodbye Heisenberg!'

We drove away and we knew they'd all be dead in days.

ROSE. That must have been. Very hard.

END