Let’s be clear about something from the off: small cats share the same instincts as large cats. The same impulses. I read that somewhere. And I’m sure of it now. Absolutely sure. It’s depressing. And, before we start, it’s lies that kill relationships, not affairs. That’s important. And it’s important that all these bits and pieces of lies are out in the open. It is. We need to be clear on this. And we just have to hope it’s enough.

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Maddie’s bits and pieces were all over the floor. The upturned bedside table, the unmade bed, the memory of last night. There it all was. This is what Harry says. Picture it. Maddie Harper’s bits and pieces of lies all over the floor.

‘Maddie,’ Harry would have said, hopeful she might be there somewhere.

He would have opened the curtains, Harry would, he would have seen that outside it had stopped snowing, but the sky sagged grey. To him, the street might have seemed dead. He would, most likely, have seen his footprints crunched into the snow; uneven marks approaching round the corner, past the neighbours’ houses, past the lamp post, across the garden, right up to the door. But from his high angle he would certainly have been able to see another, smaller set of footprints leaving the house and, at the kerbside, where Maddie’s car should have been, a shaded, snowless rectangle, and tyre marks where she’d driven away.

At first, he says he thought she’d left him, again. Says he couldn’t help himself. This was always his first thought. His first fear. He says he tried to stop himself from reliving that moment fifteen or so years back when he’d come home and she wasn’t there. She’d gone, left him. He’s insecure, Harry Logue is. That’s one of his problems. So, when he came home and her bits and pieces were all over the place, he says the thought crossed his mind that she might have found out about what he’d done, that she’d put two and two together. All that guilt. And what was going on in his head – all his thoughts, guilty thoughts, bouncing around his head like a fly against a light-bulb. All those thoughts mixing up and coming to the conclusion that she might have left him, again, like she did before.

But it wasn’t about that, or Jonathan any more, this was about Harry, and he thought she’d gone.

And who could blame her really?

When he looked, though, he could see their suitcases were still balanced on top of the wardrobe and her shoes were still piled in the corner of the room. When he opened a drawer, he says it was still brimming with her underwear. He says he pulled out a pair of her knickers and felt the material – not silk but something like it – and brushed it against his lips, feeling it catch on winter-dried skin. He remembers reaching into his back pocket, getting his mobile phone out, calling her. She still has the message he left on her answerphone, his voice stringy, forced: ‘Hi, Maddie, it’s me. Where are you? Come home. I’m home now. We’ll talk. I want to talk, I do. We can sort it all out. Come home. I’m here now. Just come home.’

He says he sat down on the bed - their bed - and the screen of his mobile phone faded to black in his hand.

And he would have sat and waited, praying, in his own way, that she would come back.

But Maddie was with me. Where else would she be?

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