

SALTER *and* MICHAEL BLACK, *his son, thirty-five.*

MICHAEL Have you met the others?

SALTER You're the first.

MICHAEL Are you going to meet us all?

SALTER I thought I'd start.

MICHAEL I'm sure everyone will be pleased to meet you. I know I am.

SALTER I'm sorry to stare.

MICHAEL No, please, I can see it must be. Do I look like?

SALTER Yes of course

MICHAEL of course, I meant

SALTER no no I didn't mean

MICHAEL I suppose I meant how

SALTER because of course you don't, you don't, not exactly

MICHAEL no of course

SALTER I wouldn't mistake

MICHAEL no

SALTER or I might at a casual

MICHAEL of course

SALTER but not if I really look

MICHAEL no

SALTER no

MICHAEL because?

SALTER because of the eyes. You don't look at me in the same way.

MICHAEL I'm looking at someone I don't know of course.

SALTER Maybe you could tell me a little

MICHAEL about myself

SALTER if you don't mind

MICHAEL no of course, it's where to, you already know I'm a teacher, mathematics, you know I'm married, three children did I tell you that

SALTER yes but you didn't

MICHAEL boy and girl twelve and eight and now a baby well eighteen months so she's walking and beginning to talk, I don't have any photographs on me I didn't think, there's no need for photographs is there if you see someone all the time so

SALTER are you happy?

MICHAEL what now? or in general? Yes I think I am, I don't think about it, I am. The

job gets me down sometimes. The world's a mess of course. But you can't help, a sunny morning, leaves turning, off to the park with the baby, you can't help feeling wonderful can you?

SALTER Can't you?

MICHAEL Well that's how I seem to be.

SALTER Tell me. Forgive me

MICHAEL no go on

SALTER tell me something about yourself that's really specific to you, something really important

MICHAEL what sort of?

SALTER anything

MICHAEL it's hard to

SALTER yes.

MICHAEL Well here's something I find fascinating, there are these people who used to live in holes in the ground, with all tunnels and underground chambers and sometimes you'd have a chamber you'd get to it through a labyrinth of passages and the ceiling got lower and lower so you had to go on your hands and knees and then wriggle on your stomach and you'd get through to this chamber deep deep down that had a hole like a chimney like a well a hole all the way up to the sky so you could sit in this

chamber this room this cave whatever and look up at a little circle of sky going past overhead. And when somebody died they'd hollow out more little rooms so they weren't buried underneath you they were buried in the walls beside you. And maybe sometimes they walled people up alive in there, it's possible because of how the remains were contorted but either way of course they're dead by now and very soon after they went in of course. And

SALTER I don't think this is what I'm looking for

MICHAEL oh, how, sorry

SALTER because what you're telling me is about something else and I was hoping for something about you

MICHAEL I don't quite

SALTER I'm sorry I don't know I was hoping

MICHAEL you want what my beliefs, politics how I feel about war for instance is that? I dislike war, I'm not at all happy when people say we're doing a lot of good with our bombing, I'm never very comfortable with that. War's one of those things, don't you think, where everyone always thinks they're in the right have you noticed that? Nobody ever says we're the bad guys, we're going to beat shit out of the good guys. What do you think?

SALTER I was hoping I don't know something more personal something from deep inside your life. If that's not intrusive.

MICHAEL Maybe what maybe my wife's ears?

SALTER Yes?

MICHAEL Because last night we were watching the news and I thought what beautiful and slightly odd ears she's got, they're small but with big lobes, big relative to the small ear, and they're slightly pointy on top, like a disney elf or little animal ears and they're always there but you know how you suddenly notice and noticing that, I mean the way I love her, felt very felt what you said something deep inside. Or the children obviously, I could talk about, is this the sort of thing?

SALTER it's not quite

MICHAEL no

SALTER because you're just describing other people or

MICHAEL yes

SALTER not yourself

MICHAEL but it's people I love so

SALTER it's not what I'm looking for. Because anyone could feel

MICHAEL oh of course I'm not claiming

SALTER I was somehow hoping

MICHAEL yes

SALTER further in

MICHAEL yes

SALTER just about yourself

MICHAEL myself

SALTER yes

MICHAEL like maybe I'm lying in bed and it's comfortable and then it gets slightly not so comfortable and I move my legs or even turn over and then it's

SALTER no

MICHAEL no

SALTER no that's

MICHAEL yes that's something everyone

SALTER yes

MICHAEL well I don't know. I like blue socks. Banana icecream. Does that help you?

SALTER Dogs?

MICHAEL do I like

SALTER dogs

MICHAEL I'm ok with dogs. My daughter wants a puppy but I don't know. Is dogs the kind of thing?

SALTER So tell me what did you feel when you found out?

MICHAEL Fascinated.

SALTER Not angry?

MICHAEL No.

SALTER Not frightened.

MICHAEL No, what of?

SALTER Your life, losing your life.

MICHAEL I've still got my life.

SALTER But there are things there are things that are what you are, I think you're avoiding

MICHAEL yes perhaps

SALTER because then you might be frightened

MICHAEL I don't think

SALTER or angry

MICHAEL not really

SALTER because what does it do what does it do to you to everything if there are all these walking around, what it does to me what am I and it's not even me it happened to, so how you can just, you must think something about it.

MICHAEL I think it's funny, I think it's delightful

SALTER delightful?

MICHAEL all these very similar people doing things like each other or a bit different or whatever we're doing, what a thrill for the mad old professor if he'd lived to see it, I do see the joy of it. I know you're not at all happy.

SALTER I didn't feel I'd lost him when I sent him away because I had the second chance. And when the second one my son the second son was murdered it wasn't so bad as you'd think because it seemed fair. I was back with the first one.

MICHAEL But now

SALTER now he's killed himself

MICHAEL now you feel

SALTER now I've lost him, I've lost

MICHAEL yes

SALTER now I can't put it right any more. Because the second time round you see I slept very lightly with the door open.

MICHAEL Is that the worst you did, not go in the night?

SALTER No of course not.

MICHAEL Like what?

SALTER Things that are what I did that are not trivial like banana icecream nor unifuckingversal like turning over in bed.

MICHAEL We've got ninety-nine per cent the same genes as any other person. We've got ninety per cent the same as a chimpanzee. We've got thirty percent the same as a lettuce. Does that cheer you up at all? I love about the lettuce. It makes me feel I belong.

SALTER I miss him so much. I miss them both.

MICHAEL There's nineteen more of us.

SALTER That's not the same.

MICHAEL No of course not. I was making a joke.

SALTER And you're happy you say are you? you like your life?

MICHAEL I do yes, sorry.