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Kate, 1969

It was the day after her life had changed for ever.

Restless, mechanical in movement, Kate roamed through the rambling house, rearranging a cushion here, retrieving an ornament there and instantly returning it to its place. Buried in her subconscious was the realisation that in time, soon perhaps, all this feverish activity would stop; that she might experience the release of tears, even collapse in on herself; but that time was yet to come.

Physically exhausted by the effort of clambering up to the attic and down again via numerous diversions to check on this photograph and that wall hanging, she finally told herself, "Kate, for heaven's sake, try to calm down. Make yourself a mug of your favourite mint tea. Try to relax." Indeed there was no reason why she should not do just that. The children she had managed to farm out to willing and sympathetic friends acquired at the school gates over the years; and as for Genevieve, well so far she had succeeded in keeping her mother at arm's length, answering her telephone calls curtly with garbled reasons why she should not just fly down from their old Peak District home to descend busily on the Weald and her only daughter.

Her tea revived Kate, vaguely comforting as it was in its familiar astringency. All at once she resolved it had to be done. The one room in their large detached Edwardian home into which she had yet to step was Blane's study, known to all as "Dad's Den," but now she had to break the habit of married life and venture in.

Pushing open the heavy oak wood door, Kate was greeted first by the cling of pipe tobacco, Three Nuns she thought it was called. Blane had smoked his Briar for as long as Kate could remember, though confining the activity strictly to The Den, particular about shielding the habit from the children. So redolent of the man himself, the smell, she thought, would linger on for as long as she remained in the house, a constant reminder of the past.

Kate crossed to her husband's desk under the window, pulling out the