28th July 1982

Today's events started when Jane and Pete went out. Despite everything that has happened this week, they just walked off down the drive, arms around each other, laughing, as if they didn't have a care in the world. To look at them you would never have guessed that they both work in a house that is becoming eerier and more silent by the day, supervising two girls that no one wants.

Are they allowed to just leave us like that?

Is that right?

It didn't feel right.

It left just me and her. Alone in Thornhill.

I decided to get out too.

Now I think back on this morning I realize how unusual a decision that was. It had never occurred to me to walk out of Thornhill before – to just walk off down the drive and out of the gates as Jane and Pete had done. I decided to go to the library in town . . .

But it never happened.

Instead I am back up in my room. My hand is steady but my mind is racing.

I think I have done something important.

I think something has shifted.

I packed a bag. Two apples, this diary, the tiny clothes I have been stitching for the puppet family I am making and some pens. I locked my door behind me as quietly as possible, crept downstairs and headed for the main door. And there she was.

We were face-to-face.

Her eyes were red. Her face was blotchy.

I stepped to one side.

She stepped in front of me.

I stepped aside again.

She stepped in front of me again. She was crying.

'You can't go, Mary. Stay.'

She made to grab hold of the strap of my bag and I swung it away from her, not wanting to be touched by her, not after everything she had done. She lunged at my bag again. I spun it away from her. The contents scattered, skittering across the floor.

I scrabbled around at her feet, picking up the odd pen and my diary. She stood back, completely still and watched me on my hands and knees. She said, 'God, Mary, you're pathetic.'

And then it happened. I had a flash of . . . I am not sure . . . Anger? Frustration? Whatever it was bubbled up inside me. The unfairness of it all. How horrid she was. How unkind Jane had been. I was there on my knees at her feet but I knew *she* was *wrong*.

'No!' I said. 'No, I am not. I am Mary Baines and I work hard and make puppets and I love books and I do no harm to anyone. I have put up with this house and you without having to be unkind and spiteful and mean. But you . . . *you* have not! It has made you a monster. It is *you* who is pathetic.'

My voice shook, trembled and sounded odd, loud, in the space of the entrance hall. I hadn't picked up everything, but I had my diary – so I ran past her shocked, blotchy face, out of the main door and round to the back of the house. I hid by the kitchen door, huddled under the porch, catching my breath. Sitting there under all the girls' names scratched into the brickwork, where I had previously felt so alone, I realized I felt something completely different. It was a feeling of . . . power, of triumph.

And it felt good!

OK – the fumbling around on my hands and knees hadn't been great but I had achieved something. I had spoken.

Out loud. And for a fraction of a moment I think she was shocked.

And she had let me go.

It had worked.

Maybe this is the start of something new.

Maybe I can face her.

Maybe I can tell.

Maybe I can speak out.

I sat there under the back porch for most of the morning and into the afternoon. I ate my bruised and dented apples and absent-mindedly read through the pairs of names on the wall.

When I heard Jane and Pete come back in round the front of the house, I waited a while and crept back in, just as I have so many times before.

But some of the fear has gone.

I know tomorrow will be different.

Tomorrow I will speak out.

29th July 1982

I knew this was going to be my big chance and that I had to get it right.

I made a list of all the things I wanted to say. I wrote down the things that she had done to me, here at Thornhill and at school. I wrote down about Jane, about Sunny Rise. I wanted to make sure that, if words failed me, I would have something I could show them to make them understand.

Dr Creane's surgery was full. I had to queue behind harassed mothers with wailing babies and old men with hacking coughs. It was hot and everyone was irritable. I wanted to turn back. But I had got this far, this close to getting help.

I wasn't quite sure what to do. I thought that having Dr Creane's note meant I could see him whenever I wanted.

I rehearsed in my head the words I was going to say and how I was going to say them. I was going to say how miserable I was. That I was lonely. That I was being bullied and that I needed help. I was going to say that I couldn't go to Sunny Rise with *her* and to ask Dr Creane to speak on my behalf to get me rehomed somewhere else.

We shuffled forward in the queue.

I rehearsed it again . . .

I am miserable.

I am being bullied.

I need help.

Don't send me to Sunny Rise with her.

I *had* to get it right. I was almost excited about the idea that I was going to do this. That I *can* speak out and change my life.

The queue was so slow. I shuffled forward a few steps more and ran through it all again.

Then it was my turn.

'How can I help you?' asked the receptionist.

I opened my mouth to speak but couldn't. So I fumbled in my bag for Dr Creane's details.

'Dr Creane? Do you want an appointment? He is fully booked today. What's it about? Can you see someone else?'

I went red. I shook my head and pointed at the card. Someone behind me in the queue tutted loudly. But I was determined. I *had* to see him. I *had* to speak while I felt strong enough.

The receptionist was saying something like, 'You can't just walk in off the street and expect to see

someone without . . .' when there was a click of a door and Dr Creane stepped out into the waiting room.

But then I saw *her*.

Her cheeks were red and her eyes were too, as if she had been crying again. Dr Creane walked her across the waiting room towards the door of the surgery. As he passed us I could hear him say, 'You're a very brave young lady . . .' She looked up at him and nodded forlornly as a lone tear rolled down one of her beautiful flushed cheeks. Then she looked past him and straight at me.

A slight smile played at her lips. Then she was gone.

How can *she* be here too?
Dr Creane is *my* friend.
He was going to help *me*.

The receptionist was talking at me. People behind me in the queue were grumbling. I left.

And now I write this back at Thornhill in the gardens under the begging girl statue. The sky is clear and white

with heat, the air is hot and sticky. It is no day to stay outside, but I don't want to go in. I can't bear the idea of being anywhere near her. She contaminates everything.

Yesterday I thought I could do it. I could speak out. Tell. I could take control.

I knew I couldn't go to my teachers, like Mrs Davies, they don't want to see what is under their noses. Kathleen would help me, but she is not here. Jane thinks I am weird and is only interested in Pete. Dr Creane was the only person I could go to, that I could trust, but how can Dr Creane believe me if he also believes her? How could anyone take me seriously when she is so radiant, so shining? How can he believe that *she* is a monster?

Maybe there is someone else I could go to, but I really can't think who. And the more I think about it, the more my confidence seeps away.

