

Where there's Smoke

Extract

Inside the room it is even darker. It is like walking in ink. Blind, she feels her way through the half familiar landmarks of beds and bookshelves. And then there is the wall. She presses against it, trying to stifle the breaths that tear at her throat. Her heart thuds. Blood from the wound is sticky, and at her touch there is a white leap of pain that lightens the darkness. She hears the footsteps now, drawing closer. Along the corridor doors are opened, one at a time, until there is only hers left. The smell of petrol is sweet and heavy in its threat. She hugs her stomach, feeling the small pulse of new life inside, curled and vulnerable. The footsteps stop. A whisper of the door opening. Her name.

Some moments burn in the mind for ever.