

What am I supposed to be thinking about? My nightmare.

*She picks up a page she's written. Reads it.*

The horror.

*(Still to herself.)* You wrote down your nightmare, now build a bridge to it, a bridge of words...

*(Worried thought.)* Is it frightening enough?

MARY *looks at what she's written again.*

I'm frightened. I don't want to read this. I don't want to think about it. This *nightmare* that marched into my dreaming and made itself the monster king of my poor sleepy thoughts.

*(Re: the page.)* But I've *made* something of that! I've caught that dread with ink and industry. *Yes*, this is frightening. This is *good stuff*, Mary!

*She's setting up her work, paper, pens.*

*(Still to herself.)* So. I've a start but not a beginning, that can't be the beginning. That's the heart of the story. The horror.

*She looks at WALTON and the MASTER, frozen.*

And even this isn't the beginning. Set this story up, Mary... come *on*!

*(Idea.)* A Preface!

*She turns a dazzling smile on the audience, talking to them directly now.*

Preface!

Take flour and water – dead things, things without life – mix them together. Leave them in a cupboard. What'll happen? Life, oozing, greedy, clamouring life will grow on that saucer. The stuff of life, the power that makes dead things move, is all around us. You're breathing in that dark energy with every breath.

So. This is not a horror story. This is science.

This is fiction, but fiction holds up a better mirror to the world than any list of facts.

This work, writing this book, began as a game, a dare. I continued the work for many reasons, and, I'll admit, one of those was the hope that you might like it – that you might *pay* for this entertainment.

But, to be honest, whether you like it or not, I want to write something that shows its teeth at the kind of books you love so much.

(*Scorn.*) Soft love stories. Tales of happy families, and naughty, pretty children who always learn to be good.

No. This is a different story.

*She looks at the frozen scene again.*

In a moment you'll meet my hero.

You should know I don't agree with him, I don't say I even like him, but I will make him real.