

# Anything can happen...

## *After the End*

Enjoy this sneak peek of  
Clare Mackintosh's new novel.  
Available to pre-order now.

### PROLOGUE

Leila looks around the courtroom. Only the handful of press given permission to attend are moving, their pens making swift marks in shorthand, recording every word the judge speaks. Everyone else is quite still – watching, waiting – and Leila has the strange sensation of being frozen in time, that they might all wake, a year from now, and they will still be here in this courtroom, waiting for the ruling that will change so many lives.

Leila swallows. If it is this hard for her, how impossible must it be for Pip and Max to listen to the judge's words? To know that in a few moments they will hear their son's fate?

Before the break, Max and Pip Adams were sitting at opposite ends of the long bench seat behind their legal teams. They are still on the bench, but the distance between them has contracted, and now they are sitting close enough to touch each other.

In fact, as Leila watches, and as the judge draws closer to his ruling, she sees movement. She could not say if Max moved first, or Pip. She can't be certain they even know they are doing it. But as she watches, two hands venture slowly across the no man's land between them, and find each other.

Dylan's parents hold hands.

The judge speaks.

And a courtroom holds its breath.

