

ARTHUR:

I had lunch with my daughter and her fiancé. Beautiful mild spring day. The promise of a hot summer. You ever seen a woman in love? She already looked like a bride. Glowing. Just like her mother had been. Full of plans. And I thought, I'm glad, you know? I'm glad I'm out of it. I suddenly saw myself the way . . . the way you probably see me. Clear as crystal. And I felt so tired by it all. I wanted to be an old guy steering an honest company. Having a lunchtime beer in the sun. Visiting his daughter. Some day, playing with his grandkids. I had this sudden overwhelming feeling of . . . wellness. Escape. Something

had been avoided. Passed over. Forgiven. I felt I'd stepped back from the edge. There were still things I could salvage.

Silence.

Just after I got back to the office I had a call from my bank. My personal account was overdrawn. I got online, and sure enough, over the last couple of months, steady withdrawals. Withdrawals I would never be able to prove I hadn't made. That's when I felt the snow. I logged in to my other accounts. Same story. I was personally bankrupt. I checked the company's stocks. Dropping. Not plummeting, just gently falling, like the mercury in a thermometer. I didn't bother to check anything else. I knew. Life insurance, tax records, shares, investments. I knew. No trace. No proof. I knew how thorough they'd be. Then I thought of my daughter, and again . . . how thorough they'd be. Who could I tell? Who would believe? I went limp.

ARTHUR: I put the end of the barrel against my eye. You know what you see when you look down the barrel of a thirty-eight? The light at the end of the tunnel. The back door, wide open. The last thing I felt was snow. It was warm.