

ARTHUR: Close call, eh?

LIAM: Sneaks up on you.

ARTHUR: So, last night . . .

LIAM: I kept moving.

ARTHUR: And thinking.

LIAM: It was nothing. I was pissed.

ARTHUR: What were you going to do when you got home? How were you going to deal with that?

LIAM: Play it by ear. I dunno.

ARTHUR: There was a situation.

Silence.

What happened after you knocked on her door.

Silence.

What happened?

LIAM: There was no answer. So I opened it.

Silence. ARTHUR waits.

She was asleep. Passed out. Like I figured she would be. She'd been out all day drinking. Fell out of a taxi about five o'clock and went into her room. Not a peep since then.

ARTHUR: So . . .

LIAM: So I went over and shook her. Just to check, you know.

ARTHUR: She wake up?

LIAM: Na, she was completely out to it. But she was breathing.

Silence.

LIAM: So I . . . you know, her lying there like that. Made me feel . . .

ARTHUR: What?

LIAM: Strange. Like I had one over her. For once. I wanted to . . .

Silence.

ARTHUR: That's why you went in there.

LIAM: No. But she'd never know. And what you don't know won't hurt you.

ARTHUR: But you'd know. You were going to—

LIAM: Touch her. That's all. I just wanted to see what it . . . what she felt like. And to know I'd done it. Without her ever knowing.

Silence.

So I reached out . . . and she was watching me.

Silence.

ARTHUR: What happened?

LIAM: Something awful.

Silence.

LIAM: She said, 'Go away, Liam.' Real calm and polite. Like she was talking to a retard.

ARTHUR: What'd you say?

LIAM: I went away.

Silence.

I wasn't going to hurt her. She'd've never known. Nothing

would've been any different.

Silence.

ARTHUR: So you're walking. It's snowing.

LIAM: Na. Stopped by now. Sky cleared. Still freezing as, though.

ARTHUR: And all this knowing is in your head.

LIAM: The sky was full of stars. Yeah, it was in my head.

ARTHUR: And you were wired.

LIAM: I was something.

ARTHUR: You made it to the next station . . .

LIAM: Uh-huh.

ARTHUR: Deserted. Except for William Holly.

LIAM: I didn't do it.

ARTHUR: An easy target for an angry drunk with nothing to lose.

William Holly, enjoying a last cigarette before the train came. At least you allowed him that.

LIAM: Someone else did it.

ARTHUR: No one else was there.

LIAM: But—

ARTHUR: No one. Just killer and victim.

LIAM: No.

ARTHUR: Yes!

LIAM: No!

ARTHUR: The snow gave you away. It shouldn't have snowed.

Wrong time. Snow doesn't fall in spring. But it fell, and lay. A thin hard crust. You left footprints, Liam. And they scream the whole story. If someone else did it, where were their footprints? Yours. William Holly's. No one else's. Because no one else was there.

LIAM: No! Why don't you listen to me! No one ever fucking listens!

ARTHUR: You can feel it happening again, can't you, Liam.

LIAM: Everyone thinks they fucking know! Or they don't want to know. Don't care.

ARTHUR: The train comes. Not the three-o-five. A goods train. It's not stopping. William Holly steps away from the edge of the platform, turns his back on it, one last drag, drops the cigarette and grinds it out with his toe. Looks up. You see him clearly. Razor-edge focus. Everything you despise. The air is like crystal. And that wire finally snaps, comes slicing out. He goes over backwards. Face up.

Silence.

Why'd you do it, eh? Why? Do you know? I don't think you do. Now you're sobered up, you can see the futility of it. The waste. And that embarrasses you. Doesn't it. You've committed this act, this enormity, and now that everyone's finally listening you've got nothing to say. You never did. And that's pathetic. That's more pathetic than you can bear to think about.

LIAM: I didn't do it.

ARTHUR: Oh for Christ's sake, where do you think you are? If you didn't do it, you wouldn't be here! How long do we have to wait for you to stop kidding yourself?

Long silence.

ARTHUR: I'm listening. You hear me? I'm listening to you.

LIAM: Only because it's your job. You have to.

ARTHUR: I'm the only friend you've got.

LIAM: She had it off with Dean once.

ARTHUR: Go on.

LIAM: Just once. I could hear them through the wall. A lot of guys

pass through, you know? Usually don't see them. Only know them by the sound they make. Grunter. Gasper. Like Santa's reindeer. Then one night, Dean. I knew his laugh. First they were just talking, giggling. They knew I was there. I heard 'sshhh. I could guess by the way they were laughing what they were probably talking about. Later I could hear them doing it. Like they didn't care. I mean, Jesus, he's done time for rape, but she preferred him . . .

Silence.

Did she think it was dangerous, or exciting or something? What is it with women? A guy like him. Who'd done that. And he's higher up the list . . .

ARTHUR: Made you angry? It'd make me angry.

LIAM: 'Go away, Liam.' I'm always hearing it. Or seeing it, or feeling it.

ARTHUR: Home, work . . . out on the town . . .

LIAM: Everywhere.

ARTHUR: You only have to be a little bit different.

LIAM: They write you off.

ARTHUR: And that's why you did it.

LIAM: Yes.

Silence. ARTHUR touches LIAM. ARTHUR picks up LIAM's coffee cup, fills it, hands it back. LIAM takes it wordlessly, he sips hot coffee, seeking comfort. ARTHUR tidies the file, picks up the phone book and swings it, an appalling blow to LIAM's head. The coffee flies and LIAM crashes to the floor as ARTHUR gets in another glancing blow. He throws the phone book at LIAM on the floor. ARTHUR kicks the chair over viciously.

ARTHUR: By Christ . . . by Christ . . .!

LIAM: You can't do that.

ARTHUR bends to pick up the phone book, breathing heavily, angrily. LIAM cringes. ARTHUR puts the book on the desk, picks the chair up.

ARTHUR: Sit down.

LIAM: You can't do that.

ARTHUR: I said sit down, ya sick bastard!