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Opening extract from

Jon for Short

Written by

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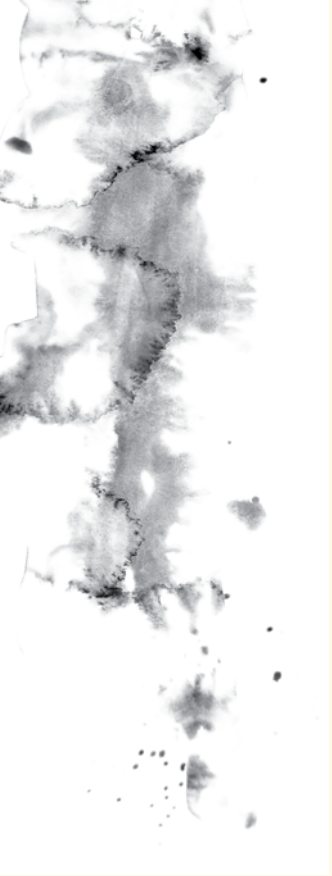
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For Neil and Lizzy, with love



1

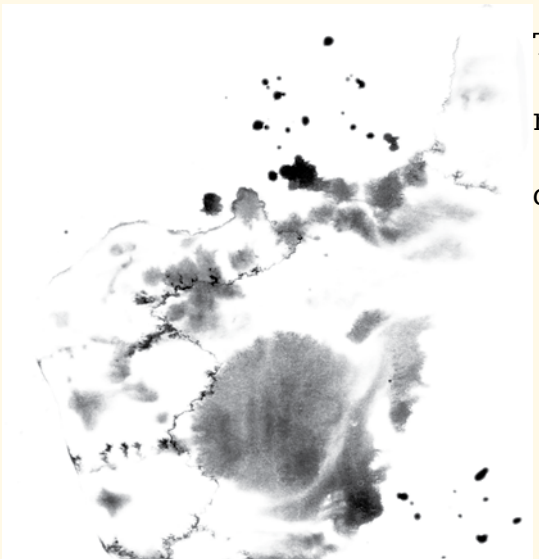
Soft footsteps sounded in the dark bedroom. The dim light of a torch danced across the walls. The footsteps slowed as they came closer to the bed. With great care and without a sound, the torch was placed on the bed-side table. A bright flash of metal glinted in the torch beam. The glare of a knife-blade ... And as the blade flashed down in the dim light, it seemed to wink, wink, wink ...



2

A woman spoke.

"Of course not!" she said. "To tell the truth, I feel kind of sorry for him. It would be better for him if he had died ..."



At first I thought I was still in a dream. Then I became aware that the voice was outside my head for once – not inside. So I had to be awake.



I turned my head to where the voice was coming from and opened my eyes. A nurse jumped back and stared at me. She must have thought I was fast asleep. She was really old – over 50 at least – with grey hair. The hair was tugged back into a pony-tail that was so tight it pulled her eyelids out towards her ears.



“I just came in to make sure you were all right,” she said. Her voice was steady, but her lips were a thin slash across her face. “Can I get you anything?” she asked.

I shook my head. She left the room without another look at me. I closed my heavy eyes and in an instant I was asleep again. The bad dream came at once and washed me away like a tidal wave.