

Terminus - Audition piece - A

And so, I confess, I consider just quitting this shit altogether and splitting home right away. However, my duty decrees that I stay till the end of my shift, which is only fair, I guess.

So, until nine, it's back to my chair, my desk, my phone, to take more calls, which come as a stream of imprecations, hopeless tales and despairing petitions until a petition in particular gives me pause or rather the voice which imparts it, because it's a voice I'm certain I recollect, someone I taught in school, I suspect, then am sure of.

Yes. A girl called Helen I had for maths. A fucking mess. Though that's a tale best told at a better time. For now, she's saying she needs an abortion. Fine.

I ask her how many months she's gone, she says, 'Nine.' I say, 'what?!' She says, 'Sorry. Eight.' I say, 'Jesus, either way, that's way too late. Now, look: a baby doesn't have to be the end, you know? And, understand, there are people you can go to who...'

And here she screams so loud my eardrum seems to perforate, and in the calm that follows calmly states that whether I help or not, it's happening.

'What?' I say. 'Helen?! What does that mean?!' She hesitates having heard her name, then - click! - the line goes dead.

She's gone.

Terminus - Audition piece - B

My shepherd's pie beeps and I take it, make to unwrap it. The covering jams so I jerk and unjam it with too much force, so it flips and falls - face first, I predict, and am proved correct - the plummet's conclusion a meeting of meat and floor, in effect, aborting my dinner.

I stare at the mass a moment, unmoving, the checking of tears proving fruitless. Doubtless a symptom of self-isolation, the crushing frustration that ushers one night to the next.

Tonight more pronounced, the attack unannounced; my reaction surprising me equally. 'Fuck it,' I utter, and phone Lee back, tell her I've changed my mind in fact.

She says, 'Great. How's nine?' An hour. Enough time to shower and so forth, check before I go forth, for keys. Pockets. I can't leave without them. Empty. Now, where the hell did I put them? The kitchen, the counter, swipe them, stop. The slop. I won't bother cleaning it up.

Terminus - Audition piece - C

I pop a locket in my mouth, suck, then bite into the shell and - fucking hell! - the spill of honey? I *never* fail to find it yummy.

Putting the packet back in my pocket for later, I manoeuvre my body out of the motor, meander over and, as I enter, am shouldered aside by three wankers as they swagger past, and the last, thinking it's fucking gas, looks back and, like a roguish retard, laughs.

I pay at the counter and enter this community centre doubling as a disco. This copious Cashel congregation of middle-agers, country-livers, sundry lonely lovelorn fuckers looking for partners.

Though I remark there's plenty of younger stuff as well, and it's difficult enough to quell this desire to leer or stare, provoked by the barely legal bodies soaking, arses jolting, nipples poking, evoking so prevailing a craving, I'm quaking.

Control it, you fuck. Hold it in check lest you wreck any chance of a dance in the slow set, reserved as it is for the nervous, the cautious, such as I, the intensely shy.