

## Breaking In

I broke into God's bedroom last night.

I was drunk as usual. It's become a habit at the moment, too fed up with my life, too despondent to stop having that extra glass. And the one after that. So I wandered home and got lost. Found myself on the dark side of the city. Bespoke cars zoomed past me, thudding out the beat of the night. The younger generation, covered in bling rather than clothes, sat inside and eyeballed me, but no one stopped. So I wandered on. Past the night clubs and the dancing dens. The lights faded and I found myself staggering down side alleys littered with slumped bodies and broken needles. I crashed on past the bits of broken humanity hoping that I'd be ignored, praying that one of these snaking, godforsaken lanes would suddenly land me in my home street on the safe side of town.

And suddenly there it was. Right in front of me. Windows blazing, lighting up the dead, dark sky.

A massive mansion. Complete with expansive, manicured lawns and huge gleaming pearly gates. I climbed the fence. There might have been barbed wire on the top but I didn't care. There might have been dogs on the other side and guards with tazers and guns, but so what. I took the chance. There was no siren, no alarm, no barked orders or running feet. Somehow I slipped through a crack in their defences. Snuck across the grass and made it to the premises. Crystal ivy snaked up the walls so I took a hold and followed it up. I climbed for a while, past neatly curtained windows and tidy verandas, and eventually got to the top and the biggest French windows in the world. I climbed onto the balcony and tried one of the platinum handles. It turned easily, the door was well oiled and opened silently. I stepped inside and closed the door behind me. And there he was. The calm, sleeping figure in the four poster bed. The room was huge and lined with oil paintings. Beside the bed there was a menagerie of weapons in an antique umbrella holder. Swords, shotguns, rifles, baseball bats. Clearly he was taking no chances. I stepped closer. The figure stirred, turned over and opened his eyes. They were like fire, the eyeballs blazing and fixing my stare, breaking me instantly out of that drunken stupor that had so far fuelled my courageous attempts at intrusion. For moment we eyeballed each other. God in his safety and glamour, me in my stupor. My eyes eventually tore away from his to the umbrella stand.

'Go ahead,' he said. 'That's why I keep them there.'

I didn't move, so he sat up, rubbed his divine eyes and yawned. He looked tired.

'What do you mean?' I barked.

'You know what I mean.'

I looked at the bundle of lethal weapons. I wondered how soon it would be before the place was flooded with armed guards if I made a move for one. For a brief moment my drunken courage came back. I leapt for the stand, grabbed a shotgun and jumped back to a safe distance. I waited, eyes wide, sweat sitting up on my face. No one came.

'Go on then,' he said, his voice nothing more than a guarded whisper.

'Why?'

'The poison. It has to hurt somebody.'

I stared at him, wrapped my finger round the trigger. I wondered if it was loaded. Then I wondered whether the shot would do any damage anyway. The weight of my anger and frustration, disappointment and weariness was too much for that hair trigger. I hadn't meant to really go through with it. As the shot went off I caught the faintest of smiles crossing his lips, then he recoiled in the bed, slapped a hand to his side and let out a sound that was something between a guttural scream and a gasp. I let my hand fall, dropped the gun, stared. I really hadn't meant to do it. It wasn't meant to be possible.

He reached out his free hand. 'Help me up,' he gasped.

I took his hand and suddenly the guise fell away. The walls of the mansion, the décors, the four poster bed, the umbrella stand, the oil paintings and plentiful antiques... all crumbled to a strange, ghostly grey kind of dust and I saw beyond the front. Beyond the world my preconceptions had somehow created. He was a sick young man lying near a dirty, sodden doorway, in a dark needle-strewn alley, his body stained and battered, his face streaked with sweat and grime. Blood oozed from the gaping hole in his side. His wrists and ankles were angry wounds torn open. Beyond him, in the darkness, other eyes squinted in my direction. He leant back against a couple of the crouching figures. They took his weight. I moved and my foot crunched against something, a little pile of discarded, tarnished bling, lying there in the filthy gutter amongst the abandoned cash and lost car keys.

'What happened?' I muttered, my mouth coarse and dry.

'It goes on all the time,' he whispered, 'the blame comes my way. It all comes my way.'

Then he bowed his head and gave up the ghost.