

## **There, now and in-between**

or: 95 to wait, 95 to despair, 95 to get together

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### **Jack**

There is darkness. Bitter cold.

A lonely child, then a lonely boy, then a lonely young man.

By himself at Christmas, year after year, watching the snow fall outside a frosted window. Never the same.

Smoking a cigarette, growing a smile to offer (to whom?) when the time and the place will be right.

That they will, some day, he doesn't doubt. Not often.

Meanwhile, he waits, he watches, he –sometimes—allows himself to wish.

Joy comes at the strangest moments, unannounced.

He knows it always comes at a price.

He's willing to pay it.

### **Patrick**

Lights too bright, rooms too warm.

Dressed to go out (shirt, stockings, trousers, jacket, silk tie, fur-collared coat, calf leather shoes, chamois gloves, duck-billed umbrella, and he can't be bothered with the damn hat) -- but nowhere to go.

Where, if he has the devil on his heels?

Where, if the devil is himself?

He wears his clothes like a prison.

He looks from under his forelock like through a barred window.

Completely insulated from the world, only his face is naked: a face he'd rather not have, a face he doesn't feel his own.

### **But then...**

But then there is a room with a fire going, warming two men in love after a walk on a windy December night.

Port being poured in one corner by long, steady hands; in front of the fireplace, coats and jackets being shed, silk lining gliding off the smooth texture of a shirtsleeve, the cuff shifting down to cover half the back of a hand before being impatiently pushed back up, and the scent of warm male bodies through clean cotton as ties are loosened, collars unbuttoned.

A long sigh. A clink of glasses.

Christmas.

