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All the boys are waiting. It's a Mexican wave of side eyes and nervous shuffling. I'm up on the ceiling. Roy storms in and slams the door, drops his bag of bricks in the middle of the room, leans back and shouts what everyone here already knows; Shut isn't coming to club tonight. He circles his bag with hands on hips, and announces that Shut isn't going to be coming back, ever, he says. He says he's disgusted, disappointed, that he's fucking gutted. He's clapping between barks, head nodding from high blood pressure. Bum Head yawns (he does this when he's nervous) but Roy cuts him off, asks him if he saw what happened earlier, if Bum Head saw what happened on the golf course, if it was Bum Head that helped Shut steal the car bonnet from Glyn's garage just so they could get a cheap fucking thrill - just so they could get a cheap fucking thrill bombing it down in the snow like a pair of fucking yobs - like a pair of fucking idiot-yob-idiot-fucking-bell-ends - on a stolen car bonnet - for-fucks-sakes - fucking idiots, he says. He says it like this, 'Ffycken Ee-dee-yots'. Bum Head shakes his fat lips, no, and looks to his feet for sympathy. Bum Head burps that he didn't see Shut today. Bum Head is lying. He points down the line all nervous, saying he was with Mark playing Call of Duty. Mark stares straight ahead, shaking. Roy fakes a laugh and asks if he's supposed to believe that, on a snow day of all days. Tears circle Mark's eyes, he lifts his head back so the sockets absorb the wet. Bum Head gulps and swears down on his nain's grave he wasn't on the golf course at all today. Mark blinks and swears down on his taid's grave he was playing Call of Duty all day with Bum Head. Mark is lying. Roy flicks his head back and licks his lips lizard style, looks around the room for effect, stomps the snow off his boots and challenges Mark and Bum Head to swear down on my grave. The cold air starts to vibrate. Steam floats quiet off the ceiling. Swear down on Stevie's grave he says, lip dripping on his chin. Bum Head looks at Mark. Mark looks at Bum Head. Mark looks at his watch. Bum Head coughs. Bum Head licks his lips and swears down on my grave. Mark blinks a lot and swears down on my grave, all ashamed. A tear slips off his cheek and marks his shirt and I want to tell him I would have done the same. Roy, unsatisfied, laps his bag and looks desperately at his hands, he stretches them up and around the basement and stops suddenly like he's seen me. For a second I'm sure he's seen me, but he hasn't because he can't, because I'm dead, obviously. It's like he remembers what happened then and springs back at the line-up in a rage, threatening them all with a finger, gurgling now, saying A little girl lost her fucking leg today, boys - Do you understand - Lost her fucking leg - That little leg - That poor fucking sod - Can you imagine - Can you imagine what that poor little girl is going through - Her parents - Five years old - Five

years old - Fuck me, boys - If I found out any of you were involved in this - Then - Then that's it - That's fucking it - I'm serious now - No more Fight Club. He says it like this: 'Ffey-ut Ker-lub'. The boys nod all humbled and scratch their arms, some suck their lips, others breathe out loud all dramatic. Some soft cunt starts sobbing. Roy realises he's got his point across and claps the room quiet again. He pats down his brown-green cammo pants like he's lost his lighter and asks the boys if they want to hear a joke, a joke he heard today. The change in gear stuns the room. Bum Head hides a fart with a cough. I watch him watching Roy with his fat eyes, licking his mouth and creeping a grin. The punchline is 'Quack Cocaine'. Bum Head doesn't react. Neither does Mark. The rest of the row laugh to please him. 'Anyway', Roy sighs, 'Tops off, we're gonna warm up today with 'andbag'. Bum Head licks his mouth and marches over to the boombox, rapping under his breath, something about 'Eating pussy and an ass hole - a shitty fuckin ass hole - but such a juicy ass pussy - mother fuckers wanna try me - shit - hah - pussy ass mother fuckers - ain't shit - fuck - it's a Bum Head life' and presses play. It's chamber music or something, old man music, one note for ages and then a woman singing like she's crying. It's sad. The cover says it's German. The rest of the boys form a circle around Roy and take their tops, socks and shoes off. Roy picks up his bag and checks the weight. He pulls out a brick and kicks it behind. He kneels down. He asks if everyone's ready. 'READY!'. He begins to swing it. One by one the boys hop over Maggie Thatcher's Handbag. It looks so stupid from up here but it is fun, I promise. Mark is hopping with his eyes closed, trying not to cry. Bum Head is licking his mouth, using his tongue as a propeller. The bag clips Luke on the shin and everyone shouts 'YOU'RE OUT!' and points at him like their lives depend on it. Roy waves to the corner without looking up and Luke hops away backwards, bleeding, clutching his shin, trying not to cry and if I could feel anything right now it would be FOMO or whatever you call it but I can't, so I glide on down off the ceiling and put my arms around Bum Head and Mark. Roy asks if we're ready and we all shout 'READY!' and starts swinging the bag faster than before. It's a good rally. I'm wriggling between my two best friends, hopping as the bricks fly beneath me. I watch the bag spin all hypnotic and realise I don't actually need to hop but I'm too scared to stop, which is something, I guess.

Geng won and now he's bragging about it. No real casualties apart from Rhys who's in the corner sucking his thumb. Bum Head outlasted Mark but Mark did it all with his eyes closed, and he didn't make a sound when the bag full on tripped him up and landed on his face. Roy congratulates Geng and gives him two gold stars for the wall chart. Geng claps himself on as the rest join in slowly. Two stars for a game, five stars for a fight; Geng's in the lead because he's six foot four and the oldest. He's sixteen and still comes to these things. Shut is second. Bum Head is second from bottom.

Mark has no stars. He hasn't had a fight or won a game this year. Cubs became Fight Club when Rick left and the council got its funding cut and we had to move out of town hall and into the basement. It's Roy's basement. His Dad lives upstairs. They live together. They're both old. It properly, really, truly became Fight Club when Gez disappeared. An abduction, sexual predators, pedophiles, nonces, Roy says. That was a few years ago now. Then I died. Then Geng's mate Jake was found in a bush off the A55 last year with his arse blown out. Geng found him and won't stop banging on about it; how he saved his life, how he carried him up Mill Road in the rain with his guts dangling over his arms, 'like spaghetti,' he says. No one calls for Jake anymore. He shits in a bag.

Roy tells Geng to stop posing and double-claps us into a row on the wall again. We do jumping jacks, squats, crunches and push ups, in that order, over and over, for ages and ages. Mark is sweating buckets, his lips are stained grey from the scum off the floor. Bum Head doesn't sweat, he just drips from the hole in his face. I can't sweat. I'm dead. We used to call him 'Dribble' but his breath was so fucking stinky that we just started calling him Bum Head. Mark still calls him Dribble, but he's the only one. Bum Head's mum and dad, his brother, taid, his whole family, Chris at the news agents, his teachers, Clive the fucking postman, all of them, they all call him Bum Head. He is Bum Head. It suits him. If you saw him you would know. He has a bum for a head. Roy stops the drill and asks everyone to sit down. He writes everyone's name on an A4 sheet, rips it up and puts them in his pocket for the draw. This is how it happens. There are eleven of us including me, so ten names. 'The first fight tonight,' he says, 'drum roll-please-boys-c'mon, is...' The boys slap the cobbled floor. Roy pulls out two pieces of paper and raises his eyebrows all pleasantly surprised, 'Big Daddy Geng verrrr-sus...Mark! Good luck boys-lads, may the best man win and all that...' Everyone claps and whoops and Geng's shit eating grin is as wide as his fat head. Mark's eyes are still closed. . His head straight back. Bum Head yawns and licks his own face. I peep over Roy's shoulder. There are no names on the paper, just mad scribbles and drawings of weapons he's made up. One is an axe with a cock as the handle. Another is a tank with a cock as the cannon and tits for the roof. Geng springs up and punches the air, he poses for the crowd but no one cares. Mark gets up slowly and sighs, he looks at his watch, he takes it off and passes it to Bum Head. Bum Head pockets it. He rolls over to the boom box and switches the CD to the Ministry of Sound Trance Mix thing, the one with the orange cover, with Yomanda on it, ATB, all that stuff, the one he stole off his brother years ago. It's good. The rest of the boys make a circle, bigger this time, start clapping to the beat. Roy takes a perch on his stool in the corner. I'm back on the ceiling. Geng circles Mark with his chin down and his fists up but Mark just stands there. Roy shouts to shake hands and the crowd gets rowdy. Geng throws a few warning shots but Mark just

obbles with his arms swinging by his side. Bum Head's tongue is a windmill. Geng shouts 'C'mon-manfuck-sakes' and pushes Mark back into the wall of topless boys. Mark checks his watch that isn't there and I blink and there's a slap and Mark's head hits the floor with a clomp and everything stops dead. The shadow of Geng's fat back dances around in victory until Roy strolls up and forces him into the wall with an arm, like a proper referee, just like UFC. A cloud of cold steam hangs over Mark's blonde body. Roy picks him up by the hair and puts a finger under his nose, he pulls back his eyelids, he announces that Mark's fine, 'knocked for six,' but no one knows what that means. A slow, half-worried clap fills the room. Someone starts saying 'Well done, Mark' but stops halfway, embarrassed. Geng rips five gold stars off Roy and slaps them on the wall chart, laughing, declaring himself undefeated. Bum Head is pacing, yawning uncontrollably. I'm on the ceiling. I can see Mark breathing, his white belly going in-out-in-out, a line of blood from his nose runs off his top lip and if I could feel anything at all right now it would be jealousy or envy or FOMO or something like that. Outside, Bum Head complains that he's cold, that he can't feel his arse, that he's missing the next fight, that he can't afford to pay his fee tonight. Mark sits silent by the fence. Bum Head picks some meat from his teeth and reminds Mark that he still owes him a fiver for a Maccies he bought him months ago. Mark bows his head into the snow and starts screaming. Mark won't stop screaming. It sounds like this: 'Neee-eee, Neee-eee' going up then down at the end. Bum Head backs up against the basement wall. I'm hovering above him. Next door shouts to shut the fuck up. Geng bangs the basement open excitedly, saying it's the last fight now - come in if you want to watch - aren't you cold - what's Mark doing - Mark, stop screaming. Mark stops screaming. Mark starts to laugh. Geng looks at Bum Head and then at Mark and asks if Mark is alright. Bum Head yawns and licks his mouth. His mouth is red from rash. Geng says fuck ya then. I follow him back into the basement. Roy sits on his perch, side-eyeing us between the barrier of boys. He knows. Bum Head pulls Mark in and whispers some-cunts-told-roy-probably-geng-or-luke-maybe-rhys-I'm-sure-of-it-I-am-say-nothing, into his red ear.