

LENNY AT 20

He had the heating on because immobility made him cold. The flat was recently built. Its windows and doors were all double-glazed but there was a keen easterly that had found a chink in one of the seals around the picture window and set up a wail. The whole flat was keening.

He was writing neat drafts of difficult letters to his mother and fiancée. Ex-fiancée. He kept getting the shakes, which spoiled his attempt at neat handwriting, and the unearthly noise was jangling his thoughts as effectively as a crying baby or a whining dog. He tossed down his pen and wheeled his chair to the window where he killed the noise by opening it a little. At once different sounds filled the room: traffic from the Ross Bridge, seagulls from the rooftops, the shouts of some hooded boys jumping their skateboards on and off a ledge in a corner of the harbour car park, one dog barking at another from the back of a pick-up.

It was sunny out but clean. Crisp. He liked that. With the boiler on and a window open he would be wasting fuel, *heating outside*, as his mother put it.

Sure enough, minutes after he wheeled himself back to the table and resumed writing, he heard the boiler fire up. There was a sudden blare of talking as Dilys next door, who was deaf, turned her television on. She watched the same programmes every day. As far as he could tell he was