

NINE DECEMBER by William Cameron © 2019

On the day after John Lennon is murdered, Jack goes to see his older brother, Alan, hoping to take off work so he can drive up to New York City for a few days. Alan says no.

EXCERPT

JACK

You were a Beatles fan once.

ALAN

Still am.

JACK

No. You're not.

ALAN

Yeah, well maybe I figured out they're an old rock and roll band and not the second coming.

JACK

Jesus, Alan. Dad died and you picked up right where he left off.

ALAN

I know you mean that as an insult, but I don't choose to see it that way.

(JACK picks up a framed photo from ALAN's desk, talks to it.)

JACK

Marie, honey, your dad's gonna crush your dreams so watch—

(ALAN grabs the photo away from JACK)

ALAN

Get your hands off my daughter's picture!

(He sets the photo back on the desk as JACK angrily strides to the door, pulls it open.)

You can have Friday off. Take Dad's Buick. And be back here—

(JACK stops, slams the door, turns to ALAN)

Now what?

(Beat, standoff)

JACK

When's the last time you listened to "I Want to Hold Your Hand"?

ALAN

Oh, Jesus. Jack—

JACK

No, hear me out—

ALAN

I've been trying to /hear you—

JACK

/Just this one time, this one goddamn time hear me out!

(ALAN takes a deep breath, sits back and listens.)

"I Want to Hold Your Hand", when's the last time you listened to it, I mean, really listened to it?

ALAN

I don't know. What do you—

JACK

It's amazing. Everybody dismisses it as teenybopper stuff. Beatlemania. As if none of the music mattered until Sergeant Pepper. Bullshit. It's a masterpiece. Those opening chords alone.

(sings the opening chords of "I Want to Hold Your Hand")

Da-da-daaaa, da-da-daaaa.

Like Beethoven's Fifth, you know, only... fun.

Da-da-daaaa, da-da-daaaa, da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da-Oh, yeah, I-I-I, tell you so-omething...

Did you ever notice how it all goes down? Those opening lines, the whole pattern of the notes—and I'm not gonna bore you with music theory stuff, but the whole motion of those first lines, the whole pattern is descendent. Listen.

(As he sings, he demonstrates the downward pattern with his hands.)

Oh, yeah, I-I-I, tell you so-omething

I think you'll under—stand

See what I mean? See how low that goes there?

I think you'll under—stand

And it keeps going like that.

When I-I-I, tell you so-omething

And then what happens? It explodes

I want to hold your HAAAAANNNDDDD!!!

(JACK's arms fly into action, playing the drum fill on the back of a chair.)

Goddamnit! No wonder those girls went so crazy. Screaming, pulling their hair, crying. How could they not? And then it just keeps happening that way all through the song. Like in the bridge.

And when I touch you I feel happy...inside.

It's all real sweet and romantic and lyrical but then it happens again.

I can't hiiiide! I can't hiiiide! I can't hiiiiiiiiide!

(He pounds out the drum beat on the chair, takes a moment to catch his breath.)

JACK (cont'd)

It's a beautiful, beautiful thing. I still remember the very first time I heard it. Do you?

ALAN

Do I? The first time you heard—

JACK

You played it for me. Remember? You had that 45, orange and yellow label. You put it on that crappy little Mickey Mouse Club record player Mom bought us. You were so excited, smiling ear to ear, and I remember that smile 'cause you'd been gloomy as hell for two months, barely saying a word since JFK got shot, but then all of sudden, "You gotta hear this, Jack. Listen to these cats, man! You gotta hear this!"

(ALAN smiles, remembering. JACK sings the opening chords of the song once again.)
Da-da-daaaa, da-da-daaaa. And it came from these guys, these cool fuckin' guys with the hair and the jackets and the boots and the attitude and it...it flipped a switch. That's it, it flipped a switch and suddenly, shining through all that darkness...possibility. I feel like we've been living on that possibility ever since, know what I mean?

(Beat, sadly)

And then last night this kid, this Chapman, that's his name, Chapman, he comes along, points his gun at John Lennon...and flips the switch back. How could it be that easy? How could it be so fuckin' easy? All that possibility...gone. And so, I want go up to New Yor...no, I *need* to go up to New York so I can...so I...

(He takes a deep breath, unable to express it. He is close to tears as he sinks in his chair. Pause.)
