

# 4 girls the first letter e

by maguire wilder

*The Man in the Window sits in a chair staring straight ahead. The light on him is blinding and bright and harsh and aggressive and singular. He doesn't seem to mind.*

## THE MAN IN THE WINDOW

If you're lucky...if you're lucky like I was. And you look up at the sky on a clear night, you'll see one star that doesn't blink. One star that just sits there, way up high. Unwavering. Quiet. Silent. That star's a planet. Sturdy and unknown. The alley off Marlborough Street always felt like that. If you were headed south towards the Liffey you'd end up there. In that alley there was a spar on each side, always competing for business, and an unmarked door in the back. The cobblestones were always wet, even in a drought, and reeked of lemonade mixed with something stronger. Something more sour than sweet. Streets like this one, streets that don't have names, encourage a...a...a—a recklessness. A dizziness. Eyes rolled all the way back in your head, just pure white for the world to see. If you're lucky, and you look up at the sky in the corner of the alley on Marlborough Street, you'll see a million stars, pure white. None of them twinkling. A million little worlds. A million eyes rolled back.

*We hear ice clinking in glasses of lemonade. A giggle. 4 young voices, a children's song mixed with laughter mixed with hope. But the song is eerie, distorted. Dissonant. Slow. As the song continues, the voices get louder and more boisterous, like it's getting closer. The man hums along*

EVIE, ESTHER, ELISE, EMALINE

*(singing)*

EVER HEARD OF OUR LIL FRIEND SHHH  
HE LIVES UNDER THE TREE  
GOT BIG WHITE HANDS AND BIG WHITE FEET  
8 ARMS 2 LEGS AND 3 MOUTHS  
COMIN TO EAT ME  
EYES THAT ARE BLACK  
NOT A HAIR ON HIS HEAD  
HIS FINGERS LOOK LIKE SPIDERS  
AND FEEL LIKE DREAD  
YOU'LL SENSE HIM GET ALL CLOSE  
AND START TO CLOSE YOUR EYES  
THE SOUND OF A RUSTLE  
LETS YOU KNOW HE'S ARRIVED

*Towards the end of the song, 4 young girls, all 12, come onto the stage, holding lemonade. They're dressed for summer. It's hot outside. Steaming. None of them are wearing shoes. They're humming, come to sitting, lounging, laying on the ground. Quiet. They look up as they're introduced, cock their heads. Like they know someone somewhere is talking about them.*

## THE MAN IN THE WINDOW

They were always l o u n g i n g? All night long. Comfortable. Talking. Hushed voices, whispers. I don't know how they could stand the ground like that. Hours on end. Their parents must've had to do laundry

every morning just to get rid of all the stickiness. Their names were Evie, Esther, Elise, and Emaline. Evie—curly brown hair, a small face and a sharp chin. Esther—long hair, always by Evie’s side. Elise—short blonde hair always pulled back. Emaline—the one with the backpack. 4 girls, all first names that start with E. If you didn’t listen carefully enough, it’d be hard to tell the names apart. That’s why I always listened carefully. I’d turn my light on so I could see better. And hear better. Funny, the way the senses work. Do you happen to have a cigarette?

*Evie is drawing. We hear the scratches of her pencil on the page. She’s drawing some sort of symbol. It’s big and bold. She has to go over the symbol like 100 times in pursuit of a dark thick line. It’s a child’s heart, sloppy and uneven. There’s an eyeball through the middle of it and inside of the iris are teeth. jagged and rough teeth. When she’s done, she places it in the center. Each girl puts a finger on the paper. They bow their heads. Begin.*

EVIE

Good night.

ESTHER, EMALINE, ELISE

Good night.

EVIE

This meeting is called to order. Does anyone have news to report?

ELISE

I had a dream last night. He was in it. He was standing in the middle of a big field. And he beckoned to me like this, and I walked over and he whispered in my ear.

EVIE

What did he say?

ELISE

I can’t remember. I woke up.

EVIE

Next time, try to remember please. Any communication with the king is very important. Anyone else?

EMALINE

My mom wants me to be home before 8am tomorrow. She’s making pancakes.

EVIE

Well it’ll cut this session short, but I think, if we just concentrate, that we should be okay. There should be plenty of time.

ESTHER

Plenty! Your mom makes the best pancakes Emaline

EMALINE

I can text her and ask if you guys can come, I’m sure she’d love/to have you

EVIE

Did you bring the computer, Emaline?

EMALINE

I brought it. And I charged it all day once my mom got home from work so it won't die.

EVIE

Should we play?

*Emaline pulls out a computer and a case covered in crude little sharpie drawings of the heart. She hands them both to Evie. Fastens the case onto the screen. A collective breath. They open the. We hear a start up sound. The typing of keys. Creepy game music.*

EVIE (Cont.)

Are we ready to begin?

THE MAN IN THE WINDOW

When they huddled around the computer, that was when it really got interesting. *(pause, he laughs)* The rules of the game? I really couldn't tell you. They said was 13 levels. They played it almost every night. That game was their life. Stay positive, beat the level. Failure wasn't an option.

*Lit by the light of the computer, the girls hover around the laptop. The girls are silent, focused. They point swiftly. Put their fingers away. The kind of focus you wish kids could have during a math lesson. The kind of focus they can only really have playing a video game. The video game song sounds similar to the song that the girls have been singing*

EVIE

Follow the king, Esther. Oh! Do you see him? Over there!

ESTHER

I'm trying

EVIE

You're doing great.

*Esther smiles. We hear a sound. Game over.*

ESTHER

Dang it.

EVIE

It's okay, we can try again. Don't worry. Just, be better this time.

*Esther takes a deep breath. Evie puts a hand on her shoulder. Esther relaxes. The game sound plays again. The sequence repeats, almost exactly as it was the first time. We hear a sound. It's a version of the game loss sound combined with something natural, something inhuman. A rustling. Only Evie seems to hear it. The rest of the girls continue playing the game.*