

THEY SENT ME BECAUSE I AM THE BEST

Suit straight, I stride through the glass into the corporate tower. A girl with great legs admits me, with encouraging words takes me

THEY SENT ME BECAUSE I AM UNAFRAID

to the lift - it's all in my head, rehearsed for days - which I ride alone and incongruously downwards, until the doors open onto a black conference room with a lone spot-lit table, around which are positioned not people, but ten pairs of mechanical rubber-skinned hands, seemingly waiting for my pitch.

So I start, but each of them *click* starts to uniformly,

THEY SENT ME BECAUSE I CANNOT BE INTIMIDATED

robotically twirl thumbs. Faint whirring in the sapping gloom. Confused, astonished I *soldier on*, through impatience, ignoring the ungraspable blackness, but then *snap* one set of thumbs stops rotating, remains still; though alarmed I continue, voice straining with stress; I should skip that joke but don't dare deviate and I'm answered by delayed, crackling murmurs from unseen, broken loudspeakers. Shudder: another pair stops, then another; I'm in a race that I must win; I rush, falter;

I AM AFRAID AND INTIMIDATED AND I NEED TO RUN

down to four hands, three, last thumbs left now, almost there, but I look away for an instant and I lose: twenty false hands now lay frozen, on a grey table in a boundless dungeon. I no longer wait for the outcome and run to the lift, which opens promptly; I backtrack from memory upward, across hallway, out; off marble threshold onto pavement, back to humidity and mortar and sounds of the filthy city that mean sweet home to me.