

The Truth

by Marc Lowe

I want you to tell me the truth, she said. The whole fucking truth. The man scratched his stubbly beard, rolled his eyes. What do you want me to say? he said. That I killed him? Is that what you want to hear? The woman squinted, bit her lip until it bled. I want you to tell me the truth, she repeated, then took a knife from the edge of the table and plunged it into the wooden surface, so that it stood erect. I'm tired of your evading the question. You did kill M—, didn't you? The man looked at her askance. Is that what you believe? he asked. If so, then yes. If not, then no. The woman stood up, slapped him across the face. I want you to tell me the truth, she said, looking into his eyes. Tell me, or I'll kill you. The man laughed. Do two wrongs make a right? Is that your logic here? The woman slapped him across the face a second time. I'll fucking kill you, she said, pulling the knife out of the wooden tabletop and thrusting it into his face, so that it cut him just below his left eye. The man flinched, unconsciously pulled at the rope binding his wrists to the back of the chair on which he was seated. The wound below the eye began to weep red. The woman flashed a sadistic half-smile, curling her upper lip like an angry cur. Now, she said. Tell me the truth. Did you, or didn't you, kill M—? The man inhaled deeply, exhaled. He gritted his teeth, tilted his head left and right so that his neck let out popping sounds. What if I say I did? he said. The woman narrowed her eyes to slits. Well, did you? she said. I'm asking you *what you'd do* if I said that I did, the man responded. I'd kill you, she said. And if I say I didn't? he said. Well, as that's obviously a lie, I'd have to kill you for lying. In that case, the man said, here's the truth: I killed him. He's dead. The woman grabbed the knife and plunged it into the man's chest. The man's head slumped over, blood spreading across the front of his powder blue shirt. A few moments later the door opened, and in walked M—, wearing a tweed jacket and looking quite exhausted. M—! she

cried. You're alive! M— did not respond to this but, seeing his dearest friend tied to the chair, looking quite dead, hung his head. After a long pause, he said: Tell me the truth. Did you kill him? What would you do if I said I did? she said. M— pulled a gun from the inside pocket of his tweed jacket, placed it to his temple, and said: Well, I guess I'd have to believe you. Then he pulled the trigger.

