

smoke: **cyrus** and louisa

PAUL: Has anything happened lately?
Anything unusual or unexpected?

AUNT EM: Well, one thing **I suppose**, but I **don't think** it has anything to do with this. A **friend of mine** called about two weeks ago and said **she'd spotted** Thomas's father **working at** some gas station **outside of** Peekskill.

PAUL: And you told your nephew about it?

AUNT EM: I **figured** he **had** a right to know. Thomas looked at me **straight in the eye** and said, "I don't have a father. **As far as I'm concerned**, that **son-of-a-bitch** is dead."

PAUL: Those are pretty **hostile** words.

AUNT EM: His father **walked out on** his mother a couple of months after he was born. Louisa was Henry's younger sister, and she **and** the baby **moved in with** us. Four or five years **go by**, and then one day Cyrus **shows up out of the blue, tail between his legs**, wanting to **patch things up** with Louisa. I thought Henry **was going to tear Cyrus apart** when he **saw him walk** through the door. They're both big men, those two, and if they ever started to **tangle**, you'd see some teeth jumping on the floor. I **guarantee** it... So Cyrus **persuaded** Louisa to go out with him to **talk things over in quiet**. And the **poor** girl **never** came back.

PAUL: You mean she just **ran off** with him and **left her little boy behind**?

AUNT EM: Don't **put words in my mouth**. **What I'm saying is** Louisa **drove off** in Cyrus's car and went with him **for a drink**. What I'm saying is that he **had too much to drink** and that when they finished their little talk three hours **later** and **got back** in the car, he **was in no shape to** drive. But he drove the car **anyway**, and before he could get her back **to where** she lived, the **damn fool ran a red light** and **went** straight into a truck. Louisa **got thrown** through the **windshield** and was killed. Cyrus lived, but he **came out of it a cripple**. His left arm was so **mangled**, the doctors had to **cut it off**. Small punishment for what he did, **if you ask me**.

PAUL: Jesus.

AUNT EM: Jesus **had nothing to do with it**. If **he'd been involved**, he **would have seen to it** that **things worked out the opposite from what they did**.

PAUL: It **can't have been easy on** him. **Walking around** with that **on his conscience** all these years.

AUNT EM: No, **I don't suppose it has**. He **was broken up like nobody's business** in that hospital when he found out Louisa **was dead**.

PAUL: And he's never tried to **get in touch with** his son?

AUNT EM: Henry told Cyrus **he'd** kill him if he ever **showed** his face **around our house** again. When Henry makes a **threat** like that, people **tend to** take him seriously.