



# Coldwater Reach

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## Coldwater Reach

# The Night Watch

The south side of the wharf held. She checked each mooring line from berth one to berth eight, working in both directions where the dock lamps didn't reach, and found nothing that had worked loose during the blow. Three lines on berths six, seven, and eight had wrapped around each other at some point in the past three days and would tangle the cleats come morning if she left them — she unraveled them, recoiled the tails, moved on. The harbor smelled of diesel and the seaweed the blow had pushed into the slips, and the dock planking was wet and cold under her boots in a way that was different from rain-wet, the particular cold of salt water that had come up over the edge and retreated. She noted it: the south slips had taken some surge, which meant she'd want to check the grid charts for the outer harbor buoys before anyone went out.

The clock in the harbormaster's office had read eight minutes past two when she came out. She had been awake since one-thirty, lying in the back room

listening to the wind work the north wall of the building. It had been out of the northeast for three days, building from the eighth, and she had been listening to it hold pitch and then, past midnight, finally begin to ease. She lay still for another thirty minutes to be certain, then got up, dressed, and came out.

Owen had started this routine — the post-blow check at 2 a.m. — in their first winter at the harbor, after a mooring line worked itself loose in a nor'easter and the lobster boat on it went aground on the channel bar before anyone noticed. He'd recovered the boat, paid for the hull damage out of the harbor fund, and instituted the 2 a.m. rounds. She had kept them after he died. Eight years, and she had not found a reason to change them.

She came around the landward end to the north side.

The dock lamps were on the south posts; what light the north side received was what spilled from the office window and what came off the water when there was enough sky to make it come. Tonight the cloud cover was breaking up to the northwest and

there was something — not much — reflecting off the harbor chop. She could see the shapes of the three lobster boats in the north slips: Gage's, Billings', the old *Maidstone* that Lester Hatch fished on shares. All riding on their fenders, all sitting right. The Lavoie dragger was at the far slip, its running lights off, the stern line still running short. She stopped and tightened the bight two turns. She would tell Rémi Lavoie in the morning, for the third time.

Past the last slip the dock ran another forty feet to the far mooring bollard, where the harbor's heaviest ground tackle was made fast to a ring sunk in the planking — chain and anchor for the seasonal marker buoy, coiled down and dormant until spring. Nobody used this end of the dock in the off-season. The planking was older here, worn dark and smooth. No lamp on the far post. She walked it by memory, and by the shape of the bollard against the harbor water.

She was fifteen feet from the bollard when she saw the man.

He had his back to her. He was not working on the lines. He was standing near the bollard — or in its

general vicinity; at that distance and in that dark she was working from his silhouette against the water behind him. Shoulders, a collar, the shape of a coat. The coat was wrong. Not an oilskin, not a peacoat, not the canvas jacket the dockhands wore. It fit at the waist in the way wool fits when the cut is right, and the lapels caught a faint light from somewhere off the harbor. She could see the lapels because the collar was not turned up. It was not a coat for a wharf. It cost something.

She stopped walking.

The wind was northwest at twelve knots, easing. The buoy at the channel entrance clanked at long intervals — she could hear it working out in the dark. She had been aware of her own breathing and was now more aware of it.

He did not move.

She had authority to hail him. Harbor property, 2 a.m., an unrecognized figure at the far end of the north dock: the job was explicit. She knew why she hadn't hailed immediately. She had stopped first — a fraction of a second's hesitation — and now the stop

was part of any exchange she could begin. She could not see his face. She could not see what he was doing with his hands. He was standing near the ground-tackle bollard at the far end of the north wharf in a coat that had no business on a dock, and that was everything she had, and it was not enough to name as a violation and not enough to explain away. She did not know what she would say if she called out.

She turned and walked back the way she had come. Same pace.

At the Lavoie dragger she stopped and checked the stern line, which she had already tightened and which had not changed. Then she went on to the landward corner.

She stood there for a moment with her hand on the corner post.

Then she looked back at the north end of the wharf.

It was empty.

She went inside. The shortwave was on the Portland frequency, a low hiss of carrier wave with nothing coming through. She sat at the desk and opened



the ledger to October 11, 1943, and wrote: *Mooring lines north wharf — all secure. Wind NW 12 knots.*

She blotted the entry and closed the ledger.

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The blow came back before dawn on the twelfth. By six in the morning the anemometer was reading eighteen knots from the northeast and the harbor was in full chop; she did the checks in daylight those days, since with the weather still up there was nothing coming in or out and the lines she'd set were either holding or they weren't. One outer-harbor mooring buoy had dragged thirty feet from its marker — she noted the position and wrote it in the log to be reset when the weather allowed. The Lavoie dragger went out on the afternoon of the twelfth despite her suggestion to the contrary and came back two hours later with nothing, which was what she had expected.

On the evening of the thirteenth the Portland weather advisory called for diminishing winds overnight and clearing by morning. She wrote it in the log margin and went to bed.

She did not think about the man on the north dock.

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She was at the desk at a quarter past six when Dakin knocked.

She knew his knock. He was sixty-one years old and had fished the Reach his whole working life, and there was nothing tentative in the way he usually knocked on anything. This was different — three times, careful, with a steadying interval between each that was not hesitation so much as preparation. She had heard that quality in a knock before.

“Come in,” she said.

He was dressed for the water. Boots, oilskin, his bait bag still on his shoulder — he’d dropped what he was doing when he came up from the dock and not thought to leave the bag on the boat. He had his hat in his hands.

“Found a man,” he said. “On the breakwater. North side.”

She looked at him. “Alive?”

“No.” He turned the hat once by the brim. “He’s been in the water. A while, I think. I didn’t know if I should bring him in. I left him where he was.”

“That’s right,” she said. She was already up, reaching for her coat on the hook. “You did right. How far out?”

“Middle of it, maybe. Closer to this end.”

She wrote *0617* in the margin of the October 14 entry and went out with him. She could fill in the rest when she had something to fill it with.

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The harbor road ran along the waterfront past the fish pier and the fuel dock to where the breakwater road branched off. She walked fast and Dakin kept up without being asked. The east wind was in at eight knots — she had expected it to come around after the blow, and it had. Cold and clean, with the deep-water smell that meant it was coming straight off the open ocean without any land between. She could see the channel bar from the road, the water breaking white across the shallows in the ebb current.

The breakwater was four hundred feet of granite blocks, four hundred feet she had walked too many times to count. She went first when they reached the stone, Dakin a step behind. The ebb was audible against the sea face — a steady pull of water against granite, the kind of sound that was always under everything out here, the sound you stopped hearing once you worked here long enough and then heard again when something made you listen. Low water at nine-forty. She had until then before the exposure made this section difficult to work with a vehicle.

She saw the body from sixty feet.

North side of the breakwater, above the kelp line, on his back. The tide at its highest — some time in the early morning hours, during the peak of the surge — had put him there, and the ebb had left him. He was not tangled in anything. Both arms were at his sides. His head was turned to the right.

She walked up to him and stopped.

The coat. She looked at it first because it was the first available fact: dark wool, fitted at the waist, the lapels and the shoulder seam cut in a proportion that

was not American. She had seen European clothing and could recognize the difference without being able to say precisely what the difference was — some quality in the relation of lapel to shoulder, the way the waist was shaped. This was European, or had been before the tidal work had done what it does to cloth. Charcoal wool underneath the water darkening. The buttons had tarnished green. The collar was turned up on one side and flat on the other, the way water left things when it left them.

His hands. Both turned up, fingers slightly curled — that was the cold water, not intention. The knuckles were smooth. No rope callus on the pads of the palm, no split skin along the outer thumb, no scoring in the web between first and second finger. Hands that had worked at a desk, or somewhere that didn't require pulling or gripping. Under the first two fingernails of the right hand there was something dark, dried into the crescent under the nail. Ink, or something that dried the way ink dried.

The face had been in the water. She looked at it for the time required. Forty, or fifty-five; she set the

range at forty to fifty-five and did not trust the estimate more than that, and noted the uncertainty.

She stepped back and looked at the granite around him. Kelp had accumulated along the high-tide mark in the normal way. A coil of kelp stem had wrapped around the near bollard base and dried there. Sea glass, worn white, half-buried in the grit between the blocks. Nothing showed on the stone itself — no blood, no sign of impact, nothing to explain how a man had arrived here. The tide and the surge had brought him in, and the ebb had left him above the kelp line the way it left everything that had been in the water during the blow.

She lifted the outer pocket flaps with two fingers, not touching the body beneath. Empty on both sides. There were inside breast pockets she could see the shape of, but reaching them would require turning him, and she did not do that.

She stepped back.

“Go up to the office,” she said to Dakin, who had been standing a few feet behind and to her left. “Coast Guard station at Rockland — the number’s on

the board above my desk, left column. Tell them we have a body on the north breakwater at Coldwater Reach and we need someone out here. Tell them low water's at nine-forty."

Dakin nodded and put his hat on and went.

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She took out her notebook and wrote what she had. The position: north side of the breakwater, approximately ninety feet from the landward end, resting at the high-tide mark. The coat and its character. The hands. The absence of papers in the outer pockets. The condition of the granite. Age estimate, with its uncertainty. She wrote no conclusions.

Then she stood with the notebook closed.

The light was up fully now, coming in level off the water, the low October sun that didn't climb much past thirty degrees before it started back. She could see the channel clearly, the ebb current marking itself in a dark line where the deep water met the shallows. The buoy at the channel entrance clanked at long intervals, leaning into the current.

The Coast Guard men arrived from Rockland at twenty minutes to eight. Two of them — a petty officer named Farris and a younger seaman whose name she didn't catch when he said it. She handed Farris the notebook. He read what she'd written, then looked at the body, then asked her four questions: when was the body discovered, who discovered it, had the body been moved, were there any papers.

She answered each question.

She did not mention October 11.

Farris asked his four questions and she had four answers, each accurate within its boundaries. October 11 was not contained inside any of the four. She had given him everything she had within the perimeter of what he'd asked.

They worked for forty minutes. The younger seaman produced a folded canvas; they got the body onto it with some difficulty, the granite being uneven at this section of the breakwater, and carried it back toward the harbor road. Farris told her they would be in touch once they'd been through things at Rockland. She said she appreciated it.



She stayed on the breakwater after the truck left.

The east wind was steady on the water. The buoy had swung in the slack of the late ebb, its chain visible above the surface. Low water in under an hour. The granite where the body had been was granite: the kelp stem still around the bollard base, the sea glass still there, the tide mark running in the place it always ran. Nothing about the breakwater had changed. She looked at it for what it was.

She put the notebook in her pocket and walked back to the office.

At the desk she opened the tide ledger to October 14, 1943, and wrote the entry below the margin note she'd made that morning:

*Body discovered on north breakwater, 0612. USCG notified and present 0740. Body removed 0830. Breakwater clear.*

She blotted the ink. She put the pen in the tray. The shortwave was on the Portland channel, and she reached up and turned the volume down until she couldn't hear it.

## Arrival

The barn at quarter to six was its own weather. Hannah came in with the pail and the stool and the dark outside still flat against the high window, and the cows were already restless — shifting their weight, breathing in that low insistent way that meant they'd been awake since five. The warmth hit her at the door. The smell of hay and manure and the flanks of eight Holsteins and the oiled wood of the stanchions. She was grateful for it the way she was always grateful for the barn's warmth in October: without deciding to be.

She went to the first stall and set the stool and began.

The rhythm of milking was its own kind of thinking. Her hands knew it and she let them work while her mind sat elsewhere, which was not an achievement but a condition she fell into the way you fall into a road you've walked until your feet know the dips. Dorothea stood easy. Outside the wind came off the ridge in fits, clicking the iron hasp on the west

door and releasing it, and she could hear her father somewhere in the east field — a distant sound of the disk harrow, then nothing, then the sound again. He had been out there since before she woke. Whatever the last row of fall work wanted from him, he was giving it in the dark.

She worked through the stalls. The second, the third, moving the stool and pail, her breath faint in the cold when the barn door swung open and warm again before it closed. The separator was in the lean-to off the east wall; she ran the first full pail through and went back.

On the nails beside the south door there was a row of hooks. Her own jacket was there, the brown oil-skin. Her father's canvas — the back of the collar worn through where it rubbed his neck. Magda's old wool coat from the year they first came here, which Magda never wore in the barn anymore but which hung on its hook all the same. And the fourth hook from the left, which was empty.

Will's hook. He had hung a canvas jacket on it when he was eight years old, and later an oilskin, and later still just the hook itself, since August of last year

when he drove himself to the county seat with a duffel bag and Hannah had stood in the road and watched the truck until the road curved and the tail-lights went out in the fog. The hook remained. She had considered hanging something of her own there, to stop the specific quality of having to look at it, and had not done it.

She finished the morning's work, carried the separator through, and went in for breakfast.

---

The county truck came at ten-thirty. Hannah was at the kitchen table running flour through the sieve for bread when she heard it come up the drive and stop. Through the window she could see a black Ford pickup with a county seal painted on the door and a man in a brown suit getting out with a folder of papers under his arm, looking up at the house.

She wiped her hands and went to the porch.

"I'm looking for Albrecht Pfeiffer," the man said. He was forty, maybe, with a narrow face and a pair of very clean shoes for a farm call. "Aldrich. County labor office."

“He’s in the east field,” Hannah said.

“Could you get him? I’ve got papers that need signing before end of business today.”

She went for her jacket and walked out through the yard and past the barn to where the east field opened up. Her father was at the far end of the row, working the harrow around the cut stubble of the last hay. He had not turned at the sound of the truck — he was used to trucks on the road, the sound of the county office’s various errands. He turned when he heard her boots in the frozen mud.

She told him the county man was here with papers about the prisoners.

He came without speaking. He left the harrow where it was and walked ahead of her, so that by the time she came into the yard he was already on the porch, reading through what Aldrich had handed him.

She went and stood near the fence post and listened.

Aldrich talked at length and without many pauses, which was, she had found, how people from the

county office talked — as though leaving space for questions was an invitation they preferred not to extend. The words *work detail* and *complement of four* and *Geneva Convention provisions* and *eighty cents per diem in scrip*. He covered the schedule — Reed would bring them at first light, have them back to the icehouse by five — and the arrangement for the county inspector's monthly visit, and the protocol for any infraction. Her father read and turned pages.

When the papers were laid out, Aldrich put a pen on the table and Albrecht picked it up.

He signed three pages. He set the pen down, aligned it with the edge of the folder, and looked at it for a moment. Then he said, without looking at Aldrich: "*Woher kommen sie?*"

Aldrich looked at Hannah.

"He wants to know where they're from," she said.

Aldrich nodded, as if this question had come to him before in some form. "Afrika Korps. North Africa. The camp at Houlton's had them since June."

Hannah watched her father. Albrecht put his hand flat on the folder and then took it away. He said nothing more.

Aldrich gathered his papers and said something about Reed being there first thing tomorrow, and shook her father's hand — Albrecht took the hand and released it — and walked down off the porch to his truck.

Her father went back to the east field.

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Aldrich wanted to inspect the icehouse before he left. He had been out twice in September when the county crew came to clear it, but he walked it now the way a man walks a checklist, confirming items to himself in order.

Hannah went with him. She didn't have a particular reason. Her father had gone back to the field and her mother was in the house and there was nobody else to go.

The icehouse was at the eastern edge of the property, where the pasture met the woodlot. It was low

and square, built of the same gray boards as the old smokehouse, the wood dense and cold to the touch. She pushed the door open.

The sawdust smell came first — cold and faintly sweet, the smell of three winters of ice storage baked into the boards and the floor. There was a newer smell underneath it: the iron stove in the corner, which had been used once or twice in the past weeks to test the draw and still held the memory of its first fire. The four cots were set up two to each wall, with the county's ticking-covered mattresses and two wool blankets each. A single electric bulb hung from a cord run from the rafter over the center of the room, not lit now.

She stood in the door and looked at it.

It was smaller than she had expected. Not inadequate — it had four bunks, a stove, a light, a basin. The county had done what they said they would do. But she had done the arithmetic standing outside and four grown men in this space was a different number once you were inside it with the ceiling where it was and the walls where they were. She thought about that for a moment and let it go.



“Looks good,” Aldrich said. He made a mark on his paper. “Reed’ll handle everything. You won’t need to do anything with them directly — that goes through Reed or through your father.”

“All right,” Hannah said.

“Prisoners don’t come in the house,” he said. “They work the fields, take their meals in here. Not to be spoken to beyond what’s necessary for the work.”

“All right,” she said again.

He looked at her once — the assessing look she sometimes got from men who had expected to find her father and found her instead — and then folded the paper and put it in his folder.

She waited until his truck reached the end of the drive before going back to the kitchen for the bread.

---

The Army truck came at half past four. The light was already going amber and flat at the tree line by then, the October sky pulling down toward dark from

the north, and Hannah heard the engine on the road and went to the kitchen window.

She was standing at the sink with a bowl that needed washing. She stayed where she was.

The truck came in and stopped in the middle of the drive. Behind it, forty yards back, was Lonzo Reed's Chevrolet — dark green, the kind of car that looked like it had been ordinary for a long time. Lonzo got out with the careful movement of a man whose joints had their own opinions about cold weather, and hitched his Springfield to his shoulder, and went around to the back of the Army truck.

Four men climbed down.

They wore the field-grey from the newsreels — the color of old metal, of November sky over the harbor. The letters *POW* were stenciled on the back of each jacket in white block print large enough to read from forty feet. They came down from the truck in the way of men accustomed to climbing out of trucks in unfamiliar places: careful, making note of the ground, not looking at each other.

Three were older. Late twenties or thirties — it was hard to judge from the kitchen window, at that distance, in that light. One had a dark beard. One was very wide through the shoulders. A third moved with the slight favor of a healed injury in one leg, barely there but there. They stood in a loose line by the truck and looked at the yard and the barn and the icehouse with an expression Hannah knew by its shape: a working person calculating what a place would ask of him.

The fourth man was last off the truck.

He was young — younger than the others by a plain margin. Blond, with the light coloring that burned in summer and by October had gone rough along the cheekbones and forehead. He stepped down from the truck and stood a moment with one hand still on the truck bed, then let go of it.

He looked at the icehouse.

Then at the barn.

Then at the tree line to the north, where the second-growth maples at the edge of the woodlot

were coming down yellow in the last of the afternoon light.

He did not look at the farmhouse.

Hannah stood at the window with the bowl.

Lonzo said something to the three older men and pointed toward the icehouse. They understood enough — of the English or of the gesture — because they picked up their packs from the truck bed and moved toward the icehouse door. The young one was the last to follow. He walked with his eyes ahead of him, not lagging, not hurrying. He went in through the door and it closed behind him.

Her father was in the yard near the fence. He had come out from somewhere while she was watching the truck and she hadn't noticed when. He stood with his arms at his sides and watched the icehouse door after it closed, and then he turned and went to the barn, and she lost sight of him.

She set the bowl in the drain and dried her hands.

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At dinner Albrecht said grace the way he said it every night: *Komm, Herr Jesu, sei unser Gast, und segne, was du uns bescheret hast*. Steady, the same inflection it always had. Her mother sat with her hands in her lap and her eyes down until the last syllable, then looked up and passed the potatoes.

There were more potatoes than usual. Magda had cooked the full pot and put it on the table, and she put two spoonfuls on her own plate and then sat with them.

Hannah ate. Her bread was on the table and it was good bread — she had let the dough go the full two hours under the cloth the way her mother used to, and it had come out right — and nobody said anything about it, which was the usual way. Outside the north wind was in the maples and the house made its sounds around them: the kitchen window loose in its frame, the third stair creaking with the cold.

From the direction of the icehouse she could hear — faintly, through the wind — the sound of men settling into a new place. Boots on floorboards. The metal complaint of a cot being moved. A sound she couldn't name at first and then could: the stovepipe

grate, being adjusted, then adjusted again, someone finding the right position for the damper. Then nothing. Then, once more, the tap of iron on iron, and quiet.

She had thought there might be voices. There weren't.

*Woher kommen sie.*

The question had been in her since ten-thirty, the way a word you can't place will sit under the rest of your thinking. Aldrich had answered it from his folder without pausing: *Afrika Korps, North Africa, Houlton since June*. That was a kind of answer. It was the kind that told you which column to put them in. She knew what her father had meant when he asked, though she couldn't have said exactly how she knew — it was in the weight of how he set his pen down after, in the deliberate quiet of him at dinner, in the way he'd stood in the yard watching the icehouse door after it closed.

She didn't know where the young one was from. She didn't know about any of them — not the town, not the farm or the street or whatever was behind the

answer. They had come from a place that was at war with where she was standing, and before that they had each come from somewhere specific, with particular roads and particular winters, and Aldrich's folder hadn't held that part.

She noticed she wanted to know. She looked at the wanting, the way you look at something you've found in your pocket and can't quite account for, and then she passed the bread.

Her father poured himself a glass of water and did not drink it.

From the icehouse: nothing, now. The stove had found its draw.

Her mother's potatoes sat in their pattern on the plate.

## The Question Nobody Asked

The furnace at the school had a specific sound on October mornings: a bass drone that lifted by a quarter-step when the oil pressure settled, and dropped again when the first classroom was unlocked and the cold air from the hall entered the radiator circuit. Marcus had identified this pattern in his first October and had not mentioned it to anyone, since there was no one to whom it would have been of interest. He had arrived in March of 1942 in a building that was already warm, and spent the summer months teaching to eleven students in a room that required three windows open, and by October he had been here long enough to know the furnace's particular complaints and to have opinions about them.

He arrived on that Thursday at twenty minutes to eight. He had walked the six blocks from the Crow house at the pace the weather required — his coat closed, his briefcase in his left hand, his right hand in his pocket. The wind was from the east and the har-



bor smell came in off the water with it: salt and diesel and the low tide smell of exposed mud and kelp. He had been told, in his first weeks, that he would stop noticing it. He had not stopped noticing it. He had simply incorporated it into the range of information the morning reliably offered.

He went down the main hall toward his classroom.

Wakefield and Mrs. Eldredge were standing outside the staff room door, which opened onto the hall, and they had not lowered their voices to any significant degree. Marcus noted this: not a private exchange. Something they did not mind being overheard, or which had progressed past the stage of caring.

“—took it to Rockland,” Wakefield was saying. He was fifty-two, taller than Marcus, with the scrupulous neatness of a man who had decided, at some point, to make his competence legible through his appearance. “I understand the family’s been notified, though I can’t see how they’d make much progress with it.”

“What family?” Mrs. Eldredge said. She taught history to the upper grades. “If there was family, there’d have been papers.”

“Could have lost them in the water.”

“Three days in the water and you’d lose them, all right. But he’d have had a ship’s berth number, an address, something on him. They always do.”

A pause Marcus did not hear the resolution of, because he had reached his classroom door and was turning the key in the lock.

He went in and hung his coat and opened the briefcase on the desk. He took out the graded exercises from Tuesday, stacked them, and left them on the far corner. Then he went to the board and wrote the day’s first conjugation — *portare*, present active — in the steady leftward lean that was the product of a Viennese schoolroom in 1907 and which he had never adjusted.

He wrote *porto portās portat portāmus portātis portant* and stood back.

In the hallway he had also heard — between Wakefield’s office and the staff room, at a distance

that made the words imprecise but the register clear — a fragment from another conversation: *not what you'd get at Sears*. The dead man's clothing. European, then, by someone's judgment.

He wrote the second conjugation on the board.

*European clothing*. He set out what this established and what it did not. It established that whoever had dressed the man had bought the cloth or had the cloth bought somewhere other than an American department store. This was not, in itself, significant as a finding — it applied to a considerable range of persons, for a considerable range of reasons. What it combined with was the absence of papers, which narrowed the range. A man in European clothing without papers, found on the Maine coast after a three-day blow.

The chalk was short. He took a new piece from the box and finished the second conjugation.

He had nineteen months in Coldwater. He had learned: the furnace; the harbor smell; that Henry Crow took his coffee without sugar; that the pharmacist's name was Doreen and she read the casualty

columns before opening the register. He had learned the particular silence that fell in a room when someone said the word *German* in a way that invited him to account for himself. He had learned to hear that silence before it arrived.

The furnace shifted into its higher register. The first students were in the building.

---

The first period class was nine students, between fifteen and seventeen, in various states of having prepared the assigned translation. He had this information within three minutes of distributing the exercise, as he always did — the unprepared students held their books at an angle that was intended to suggest reading while accomplishing something closer to staring. He had been a student himself and recognized the angle.

Three of the nine had actually prepared. One was Marion Coles, who sat at the end of the second row and had the habit of marking her margins in pencil with grammatical parsing — a habit that was either natural aptitude or careful performance, and which

he had not yet determined. Another was Hannah Pfeiffer, in the second row, center — her book open flat with no margin marks at all.

He had noted Hannah Pfeiffer in the first week. She understood the Latin not by memorizing its patterns but by something closer to hearing it, the way a person with any musical training hears intervals rather than individual notes. He had not told her this. It was not, in September, something he had a reason to say.

They were translating Caesar's *De Bello Gallico*, Book I, the standard text. *Gallia est omnis divisa in partes tres*. A sentence parsed by European schoolchildren for four hundred years. He called on students in order around the room and made corrections and wrote parsing on the board, and the radiator ticked, and outside the high windows the late-October sky held its particular grey.

A student named Rolfe raised his hand — the posture of a question he'd been holding.

"Did the Romans take prisoners? In the Gallic campaigns?"

“Yes,” Marcus said. “Though the disposition of prisoners varied considerably by circumstance and by the rank of the captive. Men of importance might be held for diplomatic purposes or for the public triumph in Rome. Common soldiers were typically sold into the slave markets.”

Rolfe nodded as if this confirmed something. “So it was useful,” he said. “To keep them alive.”

“In certain configurations, yes.”

Rolfe sat back slightly. “That’s what they’re saying about the ones over at the Pfeiffer place. The Germans. That they work the farm.” He said this with the authority of someone who had heard it from his parents and was now delivering it as current events. “Four of them. Reed brings them up from Houlton.”

Marcus set the chalk on the shelf. He said: “What is the function of *hostibus* in the following line.”

The girl on his left — not Marion Coles, someone in the back — began to answer.

He did not look toward Hannah. He did not need to. He was aware of her in the peripheral way he was aware of the whole room — not attending to her spe-

cifically but sensitive to the change in her, which was not dramatic. She had been reading when Rolfe spoke. She was still reading. The quality of the reading had altered.

He filed it.

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At noon he took his lunch to the staff room.

Hatch, the fourth-grade teacher, was already there — unwrapping a wax paper sandwich with the deliberateness of a man eating alone in public who has given thought to what the act should look like. Mrs. Eldredge came in at ten past, poured coffee, and sat down. Wakefield appeared, filled a cup, and left without sitting.

The body on the breakwater was the subject again, as it had been the subject in the staff room and at the pharmacy and at the post office and, Marcus presumed, in most of the rooms in Coldwater for the past ten days.

“Coast Guard man told the Schiffer girl it was most likely a merchant sailor,” Hatch said. “Makes sense, all the traffic.”

Mrs. Eldredge said: “Merchant sailors carry identification.”

“Maybe he had it when he started.”

She made a sound that did not commit to agreement.

Marcus ate his sandwich and thought about what he knew about merchant sailors’ hands — specifically, about the hands of the Latvian man in the bunk below his on the crossing from Southampton to Halifax in 1940. Eleven years of cargo ships out of Riga. The web of callus at the base of the fingers, the rope-thickened outer edge of the palm. The particular look of hands that have worked a deck in all weather since the age of seventeen.

He did not know what the body’s hands had looked like. He was forming a proposition about what they probably had not looked like, based on what the harbormaster — he still did not, quite, know her — would have observed and whether it was



consistent with the merchant-sailor explanation. The proposition was incomplete. He noted that it was incomplete and held it where it was.

He said: “Does anyone know the condition of the body?”

The room adjusted. He watched this: the fraction of pause before any sound filled it, Hatch’s sandwich stopping just short of his mouth, Mrs. Eldredge’s cup traveling down from its travel.

“Professionally speaking,” he said. “The cause of death. Whether it was the water or something prior.”

Nobody knew. Mrs. Eldredge said she understood the Coast Guard was not releasing information, and Hatch said he’d assumed drowning, which was the obvious conclusion. The conversation moved, with some care, back to a register that required no explanation.

He finished his sandwich. He poured a second cup of coffee that he did not particularly want and stood with it by the window that looked out on the side lot, where the leaves had come down from the single oak

and been moved by the wind into the corner of the fence.

---

After the last class he stayed to grade.

The building after students left had its own quality of quiet: the furnace running but the school no longer performing its other functions. He could hear Henry down the hall — the rolling squeak of the mop bucket, the footstep-pause-footstep of a man doing thorough work. He could hear the low mechanical response of the building to the wind outside: a loose pane in the high classroom window, the particular resonance of the 1927 brick when it faced northwest.

He opened the exercise books on the desk and uncapped his pen.

He was on the third book when he became aware that he was not reading it.

He set the pen down. He allowed himself to think it through, precisely, in the way he found it necessary to think things through when they had been running beneath the surface of the day's other work.

The dead man had been wearing European clothing. He had been carrying no papers. He had come in after a three-day blow off the open water, which meant the distance from shore at the time of his death was bounded. The Coast Guard had taken the body to Rockland. Nobody at the school knew the cause of death; nobody at the pharmacy, by all accounts, knew the cause of death. The information was being managed, which was itself a kind of information.

There was a category of person he was thinking of. He did not name it yet, because naming it was not necessary in order to continue the line of reasoning.

European nationals traveling through the Maritime Provinces without documentation in 1943. Not a large category, but not a theoretical one. He knew it in the way a man knows the smell of a room he has been locked in: by experience rather than description. The particular network of transit houses and forged permits and the organizations that operated in the space between what the law allowed and what circumstances required. The Atlantic crossing in the

wrong year, the wrong passport, the wrong surname on the wrong page.

He was aware of a door his thinking was approaching.

He took up the exercise book. He marked the third declension parsing that Strout had gotten right and the ablative absolute that Marion Coles had gotten slightly wrong — she had understood the construction but had not attended to the tense — and he moved through the remaining books with his pen and his notes and the furnace ticking down the hall.

At four o'clock he stacked the books, capped the pen, and put his coat on.

He erased the board. He turned off the light. He locked the door behind him and walked down the empty hall and out through the front entrance into the cold.

The wind had come around to the northwest. The harbor smell was gone.

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Dinner was at six: pinto beans with salt pork, cornbread, a jar of Lillian's summer put-up tomatoes. He ate what he was given and said it was good, which it was — she had the salt pork fat distributed through the beans in a way that was not accident, and her tomatoes had a depth that came from the herbs she grew along the south face of the house and from the particular attention she brought to the question of what a winter would require. He carried his plate to the kitchen and offered to wash up.

"I've got it," Lillian said, without looking up from the pot.

He had been told this for nineteen months. He accepted it the same way he accepted all the household's specific courtesies: with gratitude that did not quite know how to become speech.

Henry was in the front room setting up the board.

This was Thursday. The habit had begun in April of 1942, when Henry had seen the worn copy of *Tar-rasch's Best Games* in Marcus's box of books and had asked whether Marcus played, and Marcus had said yes, and Henry had said there was a board in the

closet, and that was how it began. It had accumulated the way such habits do until it was simply what Thursday evenings were.

Marcus brought Henry's coffee from the kitchen and set it beside the board. He settled into the chair across the table. The Zenith radio on the shelf beside the front window was on low — WBZ Boston, a news program, the announcer's voice in the familiar register of controlled urgency that had been the sound of the war since the first month.

Henry opened 1. e4. As always.

Marcus answered 1... c5. As often.

They played for several moves without speaking. Henry's approach to chess was what his approach was to the school and, Marcus suspected, to most other things: patient, attentive to what his opponent was not doing rather than to what he was. Marcus had found, over nineteen months, that this made Henry very difficult to deceive.

In the middle game Marcus moved a knight to d5 and left it there.

Henry considered the position.

He kept his eyes on the board. “Did you hear about the body they found on the breakwater?” he said.

Henry said: “Most everybody did.”

“Do you know anything about it? Beyond what’s in the paper.”

Henry looked at the board. He moved a pawn — not taking the knight. “Can’t make much of a body they’ve already taken.”

There was a pause. Marcus moved his rook to the open file and they played another move each.

“The clothing, apparently,” Marcus said. “The man’s clothing was European.”

Henry looked at him. Not at the board.

Henry said: “You thinking he was running?”

He did not look up from the board. “I don’t know what I’m thinking,” he said.

Henry took the knight. He looked at the new configuration for four seconds, then four more, and

some slight adjustment occurred in his expression — something resolved into something else.

He had seen it too late.

Marcus took the bishop.

Henry moved a pawn. He said: “Probably better that way.”

They played the endgame. Henry won — he always attended to endings, and Marcus did not always — and the radio said something about the Italian campaign and then something about production figures in the Midwest, and Lillian called from the kitchen to ask whether Henry wanted more coffee and Henry said no.

Marcus straightened the pieces on the board and left them there.

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He went upstairs to his room.

It was the back bedroom of the Crow house: a single bed, a desk placed to catch the morning light from the east window, a shelf of books in the order



he had carried them from Cambridge. He had brought two cardboard boxes on the train and had unpacked them onto the shelf in the sequence they arrived and had not moved them since, on the reasoning that to reorganize them would be a kind of permanence he was not yet prepared to claim.

A braided rug on the floor — Lillian had put it there — and a hook on the back of the door where his coat went each night.

In the history section of the shelf, between the *Annals* and its neighbor, there was a slim volume bound in blue cloth — a Festschrift from a Vienna colloquium he had attended in 1934. He had carried it from every city since Paris. He carried it because it was the right size to hold a photograph flat without bending it, which was the purpose it served.

He did not take it down.

He sat at the desk and opened the *Annals* to a passage he had read before, and read it again. The Latin was familiar enough that he did not need to translate it, which left the surface of his mind free

while the rest of it arranged the day into whatever order it would eventually settle into.

After an hour he closed the book and turned off the lamp.

He had been in Coldwater for nineteen months.

He put his hands flat on the desk in the dark and held the thought at the distance where it was neither one thing nor the other, and then he went to bed.

## What the Ledger Holds

The northeast wind had been running three days. It was down now — fifteen knots, eighteen at the gusts — and the harbor had the scoured look the blow always left behind: the water dark and unsettled, the sky high and cold, the breakwater stones still wet from the height of it. The lobster boats that had come in early were starting back out. The Lavoie dragger was already gone from the north slip.

Eira had the office stove going before first light. She wrote the morning log entry at six and set the BC-1206 to Portland, low, while she worked through the mooring fee backlog the blow had interrupted. Portland was reading the weather and the shipping advisory. The harbor wind gauge on the northeast corner read seventeen, dropping.

At eight o'clock she heard the truck.

Farris came in with one seaman. The seaman was young and did not introduce himself; he took a position near the door and stayed there. Farris was forty

or thereabouts, in Coast Guard uniform, with the particular quality of attention of a man accustomed to rooms where people answer the question that was asked and not the one behind it. He put his cap on the corner of her desk, which told her he intended to stay a while.

He sat down across from her.

“Harbormaster,” he said. “We’ve had the analyst’s report from Rockland.”

“I’m listening,” Eira said.

He opened his notebook. He was thorough in the way of a man trained to write down what was said rather than what he remembered afterward. “The clothing,” he said. “The coat and the jacket underneath. Continental European manufacture. The quartermaster’s analyst placed it as probably French or German — could be either, he said, the cut is close enough in that period that it’s difficult to be certain. What he was certain about is that it wasn’t American. The style, the cut, the way the buttonholes were worked. The fabric is a wool blend not available in a standard department store here.”

“How old,” Eira said.

“At least five years. Possibly older. The lining had been replaced at some point — the lining was newer — but the coat body itself was prewar. His best estimate was made before 1940.”

Eira noted this.

“No papers on the body,” Farris continued. “No identification of any kind. No billfold, no documents, nothing in the outer pockets.” He paused. “We did find one identifying mark. A scar on the palm of the left hand, between the thumb and the index finger. Old. Well-healed. He had it a long time.”

She had not seen the scar. She had looked at what was there and kept her hands to herself. The inner pockets: she had not been able to check them before the truck arrived.

“Now,” Farris said. He brought his pen up and held it ready. “The days before the blow. I need to ask about vessel activity. Anything in the registry that gave you pause — unusual traffic, boats you couldn’t account for, any vessel not associated with a current registration.”

“No.”

“Transient traffic? A vessel that came in and cleared without using the fuel pump or the slips?”

“No.”

“Individuals on the dock or the wharf not associated with a registered vessel.”

“No.”

He wrote. He did not look up. “The north wharf specifically.”

“Routine check after the blow,” she said. “Nothing out of order.”

A pause while he wrote. The shortwave pulled static and came back to Portland. The seaman near the door shifted his weight and was still again.

“The body came in on the north breakwater,” Faris said. He said it without emphasis, the way a careful man restates a known fact to see what the other person does with it.

“That’s right.”

He wrote. He looked up. “We’ve had a revision to the time-of-death estimate. The medical assessment from Rockland. He was in the water for considerably less time than first believed. Closer to one day than three.”

Portland found its frequency. The shipping advisory continued.

“Which means,” Farris said, “that he did not come off a vessel during the blow. He died after it, or at its tail end, when the water had largely settled. The blow peaked on the twelfth. The tail end was the thirteenth.”

“I understand,” Eira said.

He studied his notebook. “They’re treating it as accidental death — probable drowning. Pending further inquiry, if anything develops.” He closed the notebook and took his cap from the corner of her desk. “I appreciate your time. We’ll be in touch from Rockland if there’s reason to.”

“Of course,” Eira said.

She stood when he stood. She did not follow them to the door.

She heard the truck start. She did not move until the sound of it was down the wharf road and gone.

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The harbor log was on the middle shelf, between the mooring fee ledger and the storm protocol book. She had kept logs in this brand of notebook since 1936, bought in threes at the hardware store, and they accumulated across the lower shelf in a steady row — seven years of them, thick with tide and weather and the daily accounting of a working harbor. She took the current one down and brought it to the desk.

She opened it to the first of October and read forward.

Her handwriting changed through the day: smaller in the early morning when she was pressed, larger in the afternoons when she had time. She read through October 1 without stopping. October 2. The Lavoie dragger in from a two-day run on the 3rd. A mooring renewal on the 4th — the younger Bilodeau, the one with the trap hauler. Fuel pump entries on the 5th and 6th.



She was looking for something she might have missed. Not something she had withheld — she knew what she had withheld — but something she had overlooked in the ordinary processing of the week. An entry made by someone else. A vessel she could not, on reflection, account for. A gap.

There were no gaps. Every entry was in her hand.

She reached October 11.

*Mooring lines north wharf — all secure. Wind NW 12 knots.*

She read it once. She read it again. She read it a third time.

The entry was accurate. She had gone out at two in the morning — a routine Owen had started after the mooring failure of their first February, and which she had kept since — and she had found the mooring lines on the north wharf all secure, and the wind had been north-northwest at twelve knots by the instrument on the office corner, and she had come back in and written it down.

What the entry did not contain: a man in a continental coat standing at the far bollard at two in the

morning, his back to her, his hand moving along the line or appearing to. The pause she had let happen before she decided not to hail him. None of that was in the entry, because the entry recorded what she had found and not what she had seen, and she had understood this distinction at the time of making it and had made it anyway.

She went on through the next three days. October 12: blow increasing, harbor secured, the Lavoie boat out against her advice. October 13: traffic suspended, all moorings holding, north breakwater checks at intervals. October 14: *Body discovered on north breakwater, 0612. USCG notified and present 0740. Body removed 0830. Breakwater clear.*

She put the log back on the middle shelf.

She checked the mooring fee ledger for the same period. Eleven transactions, all in order, all operators she could name. She checked the fuel log in the side drawer. Twelve purchases. She knew every name on the list.

She put the ledger away.

Outside, the chop in the harbor had come down another notch. The wind gauge read fourteen. Portland had moved on from the shipping advisory to something she was not attending to.

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She went out after noon.

There was work that had backed up during the blow: a mooring float on the south side that had dragged its chain, a cleat on the main wharf the Bilodeau boat had worked loose, a run of fender pilings along the north face that needed checking. She took the float first. The chain had dragged two feet and needed a shackle shortened. She set the marker, got the iron from the locker, and worked the shackle down.

Dakin was at the far end of the north pier, his pot hauler pulled up onto the dock planks, the gear housing open. He was examining a bearing in the way he examined all machinery problems: without hurry, giving it time to be itself before he decided what it was. He had been doing this since before she took the office.

“Same bearing?” she asked.

“Different one.”

“What did you put in last time.”

“Good one.” He didn’t look up. “Murchell’s’ll have the size.”

She looked at the housing. “You’ll want it before the end of the month.”

“Before the end of the month,” he agreed.

They did not talk about the body. They had not talked about it since October 14, when Dakin had found it and come to the office door and they had walked out together and she had looked at what there was to look at. The silence between them on that subject had set before October was out, and she did not object to it.

She left him with the hauler and went on.

The blow had knocked two facing stones loose from the middle section of the breakwater — not structural, not enough to affect the wave pattern, but a maintenance matter that the county needed notifying about before the freeze settled the gap further.

She walked the full length of the breakwater and made notes on the stones and their approximate position at the base. The granite was good. The 1890s work had been done well.

She came off the seaward end and walked back along the north face.

She did not plan to stop at the bollard. She stopped at it.

It was cast iron, set in 1908, painted twice in her tenure and in need of a third coat she had put on the spring list for two seasons running. The stone around its base was clean. Three days of blow and then a cold northwest had scoured the wharf surface thoroughly. If there had been anything to find — a dropped object, a mark left by standing, anything she might have named as different from the ordinary granite of the dock — it was gone. The water had worked over the stone and left nothing that hadn't been there before the blow.

She stood there for the time it took to establish there was nothing, and then she continued down the wharf.

She was in the office by four. The stove had been banking since noon and the room was cold at the edges; she fed it two pieces and let it recover. She wrote up the afternoon's work: the float, the cleat, the pilings, the breakwater damage. She drafted the maintenance note for the county and dated it.

She made coffee and sat with it.

What she had. She laid it out in her mind the way she would lay out a mooring plan — not written, not in the log, just arranged where she could examine it.

The body: European coat, prewar, probably French or German manufacture. Scar on the palm of the left hand, old. No papers. Smooth hands — she had noted that on October 14, the absence of callus, the desk-worker's knuckles. Dark matter under the first two nails of the right hand. She had not checked the inner pockets before Farris arrived.

October 11, two in the morning: a man in a coat that matched that description, or close enough that she could not say it did not match, standing near the far bollard on the north wharf. Doing something with

his hands at the mooring line, or appearing to do something. Gone when she looked back from the landward corner.

Farris: the man had been in the water closer to one day than three. The blow peaked on the 12th. The tail end was the 13th. He died at the tail or after it.

She put these things together.

If he died on the 13th, or early on the 14th, he had been alive through the blow — two days from when she saw him to when he died. Two days in which he had been somewhere, sheltering from a northeast blow that had topped thirty knots at its height, somewhere on this harbor or on this coast. He had come through the storm. He had not died in it. She had known this in some general sense, but she had not assembled it against Farris's information until now: he had been on the north wharf at two in the morning of October 11, doing something she could not name with certainty, and she had not hailed him, and he had lived for at least another two days after that. And then he had not.

She thought about the log entry. *Mooring lines north wharf — all secure. Wind NW 12 knots.*

The entry had not changed. It would not change. It said what she had found, and she had found what it said. This was the fact she had been carrying since October 14 and it had not altered in any particular.

She turned up the shortwave. Portland was into the evening weather: northeast wind diminishing overnight, temperatures dropping to the low twenties by morning. Fair through the weekend.

She turned it back down.

There was nothing to write in the log. She knew this. She put on her coat and went out to check the evening tide. The sky had cleared and was going dark at the edges, the cold settling in off the water. The lights from the draggers in the south slips reflected off the chop in long, broken lines. The harbor gauge on the northeast corner read twelve, steady, and she noted it as she went past and did not stop.



## The Bavarian Accent

The frost was hard enough to crunch under her boots at five-thirty in the morning. She could feel it through the rubber soles all the way to the kitchen — the ground giving that particular shallow give that meant the surface was frozen but only the surface, and you had to watch where you stepped along the slope behind the barn, where the draining had pooled and then stiffened overnight into something you could turn an ankle on.

She did the milking by lamp and then by the pale seven o'clock light that came in through the high ventilation boards. The cows were moving well. The cold made them close in on themselves; the brown one, the one her father called *die Braune* out of long habit, pressed her flank against the barrier with a steadiness that was either comfort or complaint — Hannah had never been able to tell. She moved down the row. The pails were cold at the handles. Her breath came out in clouds.

When the milking was done she carried the first load up to the barn and set the separator going and came back for the pails. The prisoners were already in the yard. This was not new — the last three weeks had established the rhythm of it: Lonzo Reed's dark Chevrolet coming down the farm road at seventy-three, the four of them climbing out in their field-grey jackets with the POW stencil faded by now to a lighter paint than the cloth, and then spreading to whatever work Lonzo directed. She was used to this. She was used to not looking.

She carried the two full pails from the barn toward the far trough along the east side, the one that ran the length of the fence between the yard and the icehouse lot. The cold made the pails heavier than they were. The mud was frozen at the surface and gave a little underneath so that each step was its own small collapse, which required your whole attention and gave you a reason to look at the ground.

She was looking at the ground.

At the near corner of the icehouse yard — the corner where the east fence turned, where one of the posts had been leaning since September — she was

aware, without looking, of one of them crouching. She heard the fence wire move. She heard the sound a hand makes running along a piece of split wood.

*Das hält keinen Winter mehr.*

She stopped.

It had not been said to her. She understood that. The voice was low and even — the voice of a man speaking to himself, or to the post, or to the fence in general, the way you spoke to something that was broken and required assessment. But she had stopped anyway, before she decided to.

She looked at him for the first time.

He was the young one. Blond, narrow across the shoulders, with a face she had been making a point of not registering since the truck came — and now she registered it: working and ordinary, the face of someone figuring out how bad a problem was. His hand was on the split in the post, his fingers spread along the crack where the wood had given in the frost heave. He was not performing the assessment. He was doing it.

“Then you’ll have to fix it now,” she said. In German. Without deciding to.

He looked up.

The silence lasted a moment — she watched him take stock, the way you adjust when something unexpected has happened in the vicinity. He was not alarmed. He was careful.

“Do you speak German?” he asked.

*Ich bin hier aufgewachsen*, she said.

He looked at her, then at the fence post, then back at her. He understood. She could see him understanding — not performing understanding, just taking it in, the same way he had taken in the split post: here is the situation; what does it require.

She bent and picked up the pails and kept walking.

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The whole thing had taken maybe thirty seconds.

She was twenty yards past the corner before she looked up, and when she did she saw her father in

the kitchen doorway. He was standing with one hand on the frame. His face was turned toward the east yard, not toward her — toward where she had been, or toward the icehouse lot, or toward the near corner of the fence.

He had been at the kitchen window.

She kept walking. The pails were pulling at her arms. The far trough was at the end of the east run, where the water line had been extended the summer before last, and it was a longer walk than she wanted with both pails full. She watched where she stepped. Behind her she heard nothing — no door, no call. When she came back past the barn corner and could see the house again, her father was not in the doorway.

He had gone back inside.

She did not understand what she had seen on his face. She turned it over while she went back to the barn to run the second separator load. It had not been anger. It had not been the tight, locked expression he wore when the county office sent letters in English or when a neighbor made the mistake of a

small joke that touched on something about the war or the farm. It had been something different — more like the expression of a man who has heard a sound from a room he thought was empty.

Lonzo Reed's truck was on the far side of the yard by then, the engine off. She did not know where Lonzo was. She did not look for him.

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School was three miles, which she did on foot until November, when the road froze hard enough that her father drove her in on Monday and Friday mornings on his way to the feed store, and on the other days she walked. Tuesdays and Thursdays she had German and Latin with Dr. Klein. She sat in the third row, beside the window that looked out onto the school yard. The radiator behind her ticked and hissed and smelled faintly of something metallic she had never been able to identify.

She did not think about the fence during school. She thought about it on the walk home, on the straight section of the road where the birch trees had gone bare and the sky was very wide and grey and

you could see a long way without seeing anything. She thought about how fast it had gone. She thought about the way he had looked at her — careful, adjusting, the assessment moving from the post to her and then settling somewhere practical, like: this is the situation now; this is what it is.

She did not know his name yet.

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The kitchen was warm when she got in. Magda was in the next room, not making any particular sound. The smell of soup on the back of the stove. Hannah put her coat on the hook and took out her books.

The geometry was straightforward — she finished it in twenty minutes and moved to the English composition, which was less so. Dr. Klein had assigned a short paper on a poem she found effortful in a way she couldn't account for: the words were plain enough but she couldn't get at what he wanted from them. She wrote two sentences, crossed them out, and wrote them again differently.

Outside, through the kitchen window, the ice-house lot was empty. The prisoners had gone in at four. The east fence post was still leaning at its angle.

She wrote: *The poem describes a landscape but it is not really about the landscape.*

She thought about *aufgewachsen*.

Her father's German was full of words like this — words where the literal meaning and the actual meaning sat at different angles to each other. *Aufgewachsen* was to grow up, but it was also just to grow — *aufwachsen*, to rise, the *auf* carrying the motion of rising up through something. She had learned it as a single fact before she was old enough to notice it was two facts stacked: the growing and the direction of it. You could grow up in a place. You could also simply rise out of it.

She turned back to the composition.

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Her father came in at five and washed his hands at the sink without speaking. He filled the kettle. He put it on. The usual order of things. He did not look



at her directly; he looked in the direction of her books, which was close enough that she could not tell if he was looking at them or past them.

She did not speak to him about the fence.

He did not speak to her about it either. He poured his coffee when the kettle came up and stood with it facing the window, and after a time he went back out to close the barn.

Magda had made *Linsensuppe* — it had been on the stove since the smell when Hannah came in. She set the table. She put out the bread. The lamp over the table was the good one; the overhead bulb had been out for two weeks and her father had not gotten around to replacing it yet, and the lamp gave the kitchen a pooled, particular quality that Hannah had grown up with and had lately noticed she would not always have.

Her father came back in. He washed his hands again. He sat down.

He bowed his head.

*Komm, Herr Jesu, sei unser Gast, und segne, was du uns bescheret hast.* The usual grace, in the usual

German, the same syllables every night. Magda sat with her hands folded. Then her father looked up.

He looked at Magda. He said: *Das Essen riecht gut, Mama.*

The food smells good.

Hannah looked at her spoon.

It had been more than a year since he had said anything in German at this table that was not the grace. She was not certain exactly when he had stopped — it had happened the way most household things happened, as an accumulation of smaller changes that you only recognized as a change after enough time had passed to see it from outside. He had spoken German less and less and then not at all, and now he had said a sentence, one sentence, and it was not a proclamation and it was not a decision — it was the observation of a man who had caught a smell coming off a pot on the stove and said the thing that came to him in the language the smell brought with it.

Magda reached for the bread and passed it across the table.

Hannah took a piece. Her father ladled the soup into his bowl and passed the pot to Magda. The lamp over the table put its light down on all of it: the soup, the bread, the three plates, the butter dish with the nicked corner that had been nicked since before Hannah was born.

Nobody named it.

They ate.

Outside, the temperature was dropping toward twenty, and the frost would be hard again by morning, and the east fence post would still be leaning at its angle, and the icehouse was settled and quiet across the yard. In the kitchen the lamp held. Her father ate his soup and broke bread over his bowl the way he always broke it, and Magda's spoon moved steadily, and Hannah did not look up from her plate for a long time.

She ate around the sentence the way you eat around something that belongs to someone else.

## English Only

The furnace was reliable now. That was November's one concession — by mid-month the building held its heat through the morning, which meant the children arrived to a corridor that smelled of chalk dust and radiator iron rather than the particular smell of a room that had been cold all night. Marcus arrived at seven-fifteen, as he had arrived at seven-fifteen since September. The mud outside had frozen in the night and softened again before he crossed Main Street; it was on the heels of his shoes, left in a thin paste on the corridor floor. He noticed this and considered whether to say something to Henry about the scraper, then let the consideration lapse.

He was fifteen yards from his classroom door when Wakefield stopped him.

“Good morning, Dr. Klein.”

“Good morning.”

Wakefield walked beside him rather than toward him — the stance of a man who preferred to deliver

news without appearing to deliver it. He was in his mid-forties, the principal, with a face that arranged itself easily into apologetic expressions and held them without visible effort. Marcus had seen the expression before, in various applications. He had learned to read what it meant underneath, which was: I am about to tell you something I was asked to tell you, and I would prefer that you not hold me responsible for the content.

“The board met last Thursday,” Wakefield said. “There was some discussion. Nothing alarming. But a specific thing came out of it, regarding your department.”

Marcus waited.

“They’ve asked that modern language instruction be conducted in English. Going forward.” Wakefield cleared his throat. “I want to be clear — this applies to all modern languages. French as well, in theory. Though we haven’t a French instructor at the moment, so in practice—”

“In practice it applies to German.”

“Yes.” A pause, and then Wakefield’s next word, chosen: “It is a wartime measure. They’ve put it in that language.”

Marcus stopped outside his classroom door. He said: “How shall I teach German pronunciation without speaking German?”

The expression on Wakefield’s face performed sympathy. “I’m sure you’ll find a way,” he said. “You always have.”

Then he walked on down the corridor, which ended the conversation.

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It was not a German class day. His first period was Latin — the third-years, who had been working through the *Bellum Gallicum* since September and were now somewhere in Book Two, moving through the Belgic campaign with the slow patience of people who knew they would be examined on it. Marcus went in, closed the door behind him, wrote three conjugations on the board, and heard the bell in the school yard and then the sound of the hallway filling.

He taught Latin for fifty minutes. It was a good class, or good enough — Strout had prepared, which was not always the case, and Marion Coles had filled her margins with pencil parsing. When the period ended and they filed out, he went to his desk and sat for a moment with his hands flat on the surface and looked at the board.

The instruction was legal. That was the first thing to establish.

It was defensible on its own terms. One could argue, with a straight face, that conducting a language class in the language of an enemy nation created a particular difficulty during a period of active hostilities. This argument was not convincing to Marcus, but it was the available argument, and it had been put in the available language, and he recognized it for what it was without requiring it to be something else.

What the instruction was also — and here his thinking required precision rather than grievance — was designed to make German instruction nearly impossible, or at minimum unpleasant. The two things were not in contradiction. One could justify a policy

on defensible grounds and intend it for an additional purpose, and both the justification and the purpose could be real simultaneously. Marcus had observed this mechanism in enough institutional settings to have learned not to be surprised by it.

The relevant question was what he could preserve.

He could teach vocabulary from English. Grammar was a system and systems could be described from the outside, so grammar from English as well. He could write German on the board without speaking it. He could call on students to read aloud — student speech was not his speech — and respond in English to what they read. He could conduct discussion of literature, history, and the structure of the language entirely in English. The class would lose something. He was not inclined to minimize what it would lose. But a fifth of what it might otherwise have been was still the remaining four-fifths, and the position was still a position worth occupying.

He wrote this up in his mind with the precision he reserved for problems he intended to act on. Then the next bell rang, and he went to his second period.



German met in the afternoon. Twelve students — second and third-year combined, which was the school's practical accommodation for a language most families had removed their children from since the war. A year ago there had been twenty-one.

He opened in English.

Today, he said, they would be working through the dative case and its applications in subordinate clauses. He wrote the heading on the board — *Dativ: Anwendungen in Nebensätzen* — and then the rest of the lesson in English. He called on students to read aloud from the textbook, chapter by chapter, and they did: the German came from their mouths haltingly in most cases, and he responded in English. “Correct.” “Close — try the second syllable.” “Again.”

At the twenty-minute mark he called on Hannah Pfeiffer.

She was in the third row, beside the window. She looked up when her name was spoken — not with the preemptive apology most students produced before reading aloud, but with the flat attention of someone

who had heard her name and was now waiting to know what came next.

“Would you read the passage on page forty-seven?”

She read it.

Her German was not halting. The passage was four sentences on the uses of the dative with certain prepositions — an explanation, in German, of when *mit* required the dative, which was always. Her pronunciation was not the pronunciation of someone who had learned the language from the textbook. The vowels were seated correctly. The consonants had their weight and no more. She read at the pace of someone for whom the words made sense before she said them rather than after.

When she finished, he said: “Correct.”

Nobody in the class appeared to notice anything.

He continued. He called on Pelletier, who read with the careful bafflement of someone deciphering a foreign system, and then on Marion Coles, who read competently and without affect. He taught the dative case from English for the remaining thirty minutes.

He did not say a word in German for the entirety of the fifty-minute period.

He dismissed the class. Most of them filed out quickly; there was something else pulling them, the hallway or the cold or each other. Hannah did not move immediately. She was looking at her book, at the page open in front of her. He waited. Two students passed around her and went out. Then the classroom was otherwise empty.

He said, in English: “Miss Pfeiffer. Your accent is very good.”

She looked up. “My father speaks German at home.”

A pause, in which neither of them said what the other one had understood.

She closed her book and left.

---

He walked home in the dark, which arrived now before five. The mud on the road had refrozen. His boots made a harder sound than the morning, each

step deliberate because the footing was unreliable and he did not want to fall.

The Crow house had its lamp in the front window. That was reliable — Lillian put it on at four-thirty when she came home from the plant, and it had not failed since the October the bulb blew and Henry had the replacement in his pocket before Marcus noticed the dark. He scraped his boots at the step and went in.

Henry was at the kitchen table with a coat in his lap — a woman's coat, dark wool, the hem let out and the lining pulling away from the left seam. He was working the seam with a curved needle. He did not look up when Marcus came in.

“Sit down,” Henry said.

Marcus sat.

Henry pulled the thread through. “Your name came up at the board meeting last week.”

“Yes.”

“Alderman Marsh asked whether the school had done a thorough review of all personnel with

European backgrounds, given the nature of the war.” Henry made two more stitches. “Wakefield said you’d been vetted by the committee and had your papers. Marsh said he wasn’t talking about papers.”

Marcus set his case down on the table beside him.

“Marsh said — and I’m giving you the approximate words, not the exact — he said he felt a thorough review was called for. He said *thorough review* twice, which in my experience means a man has a specific thing in mind and wants someone else to name it first.”

The kitchen was warm. The stove was going. From somewhere toward the back of the house, the radio at low volume — WBZ, probably, from the register of it, though he could not make out the words.

Marcus said: “And then?”

“Wakefield said you were the only German instructor within thirty miles. Those are the exact words: *within thirty miles*.” Henry cut the thread with the small scissors from his breast pocket. “Which isn’t quite vouching for a man. But it was what he said. Marsh let it go.”

Marcus looked at his hands. He said: “Yes.”

Henry folded the coat and set it on the empty chair beside him. He looked at Marcus directly, which he did not always do when he was giving information — it was a habit Marcus had come to understand as a kind of punctuation, the direct look arriving only when Henry thought the receiving of information mattered and wanted to know that it was landing.

“You knew something like this was coming,” Henry said.

“I knew something like this was coming.”

He was aware, in the way one is aware of a door in a room — its dimensions, its location — of the word *Sherbrooke*. The door was there. He had no intention of opening it. What Alderman Marsh had said — *European backgrounds, given the nature of the war, a thorough review* — had the grammar of a question Marcus had heard spoken aloud before, in other rooms, by men in different institutional positions with different authorities behind them, and he recognized the grammar without requiring the con-

tent to be new. The question, when institutions asked it, was the same question. Whether the particular institution was a Canadian military internment authority or a Maine school board altered the available remedies, not the nature of the question.

His position in Coldwater Reach was held together by professional utility. He had known this. It was useful to have it confirmed.

Lillian called them from the kitchen. They went.

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After dinner he graded papers at the desk in his room. This was an evening practice — seven o'clock to nine, no later — because experience had taught him that grading after nine o'clock produced marginal notes that were either too harsh or too lenient, and both were errors in their different ways.

The German class papers were short: a translation exercise and an optional composition question. Most students had declined the optional portion. A short translation was enough to render the knowledge they had; they saw no reason to offer more than was re-

quired, which Marcus considered a reasonable position.

Hannah Pfeiffer had not declined.

She had translated a short poem. He did not recognize it precisely — he recognized its type: the kind of short discursive lyric that filled the later pages of student readers, regionalist in mood, from the century before last. A river. Two banks. Someone standing on one side looking at the other. Simple diction, transparent syntax. Not a difficult translation. Her version in English was accurate.

He turned to the composition pages. She had written four paragraphs.

He read them once. Then he read them again more slowly.

She had not answered the prompt as set. The prompt had asked what devices the poet used to convey the distance between the two banks. She appeared to have considered this question and set it aside in favor of a different one: what happened to the meaning of the poem when it moved from German into English. Not whether the meaning moved



faithfully. What happened to it. What survived the crossing, and what didn't, and what you called the thing that didn't — whether it was meaning, or something else, or a third thing that neither word quite reached.

She had written: *A word does not mean the same thing when it is translated. It means the approximate thing. The approximate thing can be very close. But the poem is made out of the difference between close and exactly, and when you translate it the poem has to be made again from the beginning, which is not quite the same poem. I don't know what to call what is lost. It isn't the meaning, because the meaning comes through. It might be the home of the meaning.*

*The home of the meaning.* She had not put it in quotation marks. She did not appear to think she had coined a phrase.

Marcus read the paragraph a third time. He held what she had written for a moment without writing anything in response, which was unusual; he had opinions about student work and they arrived

quickly, and it was rare for him to sit with a paper and feel that his opinion had not formed.

It was not that he lacked an opinion. The opinion that had formed was not a teacher's assessment. It was the recognition one gives to an argument one has been making, in one's own mind, without adequate language for it, and has suddenly seen another person make clearly.

The home of the meaning. He had translated himself out of German and into French and into English, and the things he could say in Vienna at thirty were not all available to him in Coldwater at forty-seven, and the difference was not vocabulary — he had the vocabulary — but something prior to it, something the vocabulary housed. She was seventeen. She had not left the farm three miles inland. She was writing about a poem in a textbook, and she had the language for it.

He picked up his pen.

He wrote in the margin: *See me.*

He sat for a moment.

He crossed it out.

He wrote it again.

## December Protocol

At six o'clock the tide was at its lower third and the walkways were sheeted. Eira had put sand down the night before, knowing what the temperature would do, and the sand had kept most of the ice loose enough to scrape, but at the seaward end of the dock where the water blew up through the grating it had glazed over in the night and the footing was treacherous. She took it carefully. Her breath came in a visible plume. The harbor was dark except for the light at the breakwater's end and the running lamp of Dakin's boat, already out of the slip by the time she arrived. The Reach was flat in the cold, the chop laid down by the northwest wind that had been blowing for three days.

Ames was there before her. He had the summer buoys staged on the dock, the orange ones, the foam-core cans that marked the transient mooring field from May through October. They were done now. She counted them — seventeen — and counted the

winter-field markers in the cart behind the dock truck, and the numbers were right.

“Shep called,” Ames said. “He’ll be fifteen minutes.”

“All right.”

She checked the cart while she waited. Winter field was nine positions — the seven slips occupied by the lobstermen who worked through cold weather plus two she kept available for the draggers that sometimes ran late into December if the fish held. The markers were white cans, smaller than the summer set, with chain shackles she had replaced in September when the old ones showed enough pitting to concern her.

Shep arrived at quarter past, his hat pulled down to his eyebrows. He was fifteen and had not yet learned to dress for the dock rather than for a walk to school, but he came to work and he paid attention to what she showed him, which were the qualities that mattered. She put him on the stern line of the dock truck while she and Ames worked the buoy lines.

The work took two hours. Pulling the summer field required a boat — she used the tender, a twelve-foot aluminum craft with an outboard that was reluctant in cold weather but came around — and Ames handled the buoy lines while she ran the outboard. Shep received the cans on the dock and stacked them in the cart. The water temperature had dropped enough that her hands were stiff inside the gloves by the time they reached the seventh can. The harbor smelled of diesel and salt and the cold that had no particular smell but that you felt in your sinuses before anything else.

By eight she was back on the dock with the winter field set. Ames's work was mostly good, but two cans were short of their marks — the tide had moved while he was placing them. She noted it and did not say anything yet. There was other work first.

Owen's protocol listed the piling inspection third, after the mooring swap and before the fender checks. She had the paint in the dock truck: a quart of orange, a brush she cleaned each December and used once a year for this purpose. The vulnerable pilings were the six outermost on the south dock, where the

current ran hardest when the harbor froze above the waterline and the ice sheets came in on the tide. Every November storm pushed ice against the south dock. The pilings took the load. If they were cracked or checked at the waterline she would have a problem in January; if she marked them now and checked them again in January she could catch a failure before it became a casualty.

She worked down the six pilings from the dock level, painting an orange band at tide height. The brush was cold and stiff at first. She worked it on a scrap of wood until it came loose. The paint went on bright in the gray morning, each band the width of her palm, higher on the seaward side where the ice would hit first.

Owen had written: *Orange, December, vulnerable piles, south dock — mark at mean high, not at low. Ice comes in on the flood.* She followed the instruction. She did not adjust it because she had no reason to.

She finished the last piling and recapped the can and put the brush in the turpentine jar. The harbor was lighter now, the sky over the Reach gone from

charcoal to a flat winter gray, the breakwater's stones visible. One of the lobster boats was coming back in with bait, its exhaust white against the gray. She watched it find its slip, the engine going quiet, the stern settling. The lobsterman ran his lines without looking up.

She went to look at Ames's two floats.

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Hale arrived at noon.

She was at the desk writing up the morning's work in the maintenance log when she heard a car on the gravel. She heard cars on the gravel often enough — the license office two doors down drew regular traffic — but this one stopped in front of the harbormaster's sign, which she could see from the window, and the car was wrong. Not a Coast Guard vehicle. Not a county truck. The plate was a government issue but not the Rockland station's; the car itself was a dark sedan with a Portland registry she didn't recognize the format of.

The man who got out was in his mid-thirties, in a gray overcoat with a good cut. He looked at the har-



bor for a moment before he came to the door — not the look of a man who worked on or near water, but the look of a man making an assessment. He came in without knocking, which meant he had decided already that knocking was not required.

“Harbormaster Bowman?”

“Yes.”

He produced a card from the inner breast pocket of the overcoat and held it briefly and then put it back. She had seen the words *Naval Intelligence* and *Portland* and part of a district number and nothing more. He said: “My name is Hale. I’ve been assigned to a case your office has had some contact with. The man recovered on the breakwater in October.”

“Sit down,” she said.

He sat in the one chair that wasn’t stacked with coast survey forms. He had a notebook — not the standard government issue but a smaller, cloth-bound thing — and a pen in his hand, though he did not open the notebook.

“I understand you spoke with Petty Officer Farris. Coast Guard, Rockland.”

“In early November. Yes.”

“And before that, a team came for the body.”

“The fourteenth of October.”

He nodded as though confirming something he already knew. “Farris gave you the basics of what they found. European clothing, no papers.”

“He did.”

“I’m going to tell you one thing additionally,” Hale said, “and then I’d like to ask you some questions.” He had a way of constructing his sentences that was deliberate without being ponderous. “The working theory at the Portland office is that this man crossed from the Canadian Maritime Provinces by sea. Nova Scotia or New Brunswick. Probably in a small craft, probably not a vessel registered with any authority. The clothing, the physical description, and some information from the Canadian side all point that direction.”

She waited.

“With that in mind,” he said, “I’d like to look at your harbor log for October.”

She took it from the shelf and set it on the desk in front of him.

He read it the way she had read it: not quickly, but with the patience of someone who understood that a log was a document with its own architecture and that misreading the architecture was the same as misreading the information. He turned to October and went through it entry by entry. She could see, from where she sat, when he reached the eleventh. He read it and went on. He read through the fourteenth — the body, the Coast Guard call, the station's arrival time — and read through the end of the month and then came back.

He put the log down. He opened the notebook, wrote something brief, closed the notebook.

“Standard practice,” he said, “you do rounds after a blow?”

“Yes. Standard protocol.”

“The storm built October eleventh, peaked twelfth, began to clear on the thirteenth?”

“Yes.”

“And you did rounds through the storm?”

“I walk the dock and the breakwater when the weather requires it. During the blow I checked the moorings twice a day, plus the breakwater lamp.”

“Alone?”

“Ames was out with me on the twelfth. The rest was mine.”

Hale made a note. He looked at the log again, not picking it up, just looking at it on the desk. Then he looked at her.

“Is there anything you observed on those rounds,” he said, “that didn’t make it into the log?”

A pause. The BC-1206 was on low, the Portland channel, the morning weather loop still cycling through. She heard the static between the stations.

She said: “I record what I find. If I’d found something significant, it would be in the log.”

He held that for a moment. His face was professionally even — she could not read whether he was satisfied or whether he was filing the answer in a

different category. He uncrossed his leg, recrossed it. He wrote something that she could not see.

“How long have you held this post?” he asked.

“Seven years.”

“Your predecessor?”

“My husband. He drowned in thirty-five.”

“I see.” He closed the notebook. “I may need to come back,” he said. “If the investigation develops additional questions. You’d be available?”

“I’m here,” she said.

He stood. He buttoned the overcoat — three buttons, the bottom one skipped, which was either habit or carelessness, and she suspected the former. He looked at the harbor through the window. She could not tell what he was looking for.

“Thank you for your time,” he said, and went.

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She sat at the desk and listened to the car on the gravel. She heard it turn onto the main road and diminish.

The BC-1206 cycled to its weather summary for the afternoon: northeast wind, increasing to fifteen by late afternoon, clearing by evening. Small craft advisory lifted at sixteen hundred.

A small craft, he had said. Probably not registered. Coming from Nova Scotia or New Brunswick.

She had known this. Not as certainty. The European coat, prewar. No papers. Farris's arithmetic about the time of death. A man on the north wharf at two in the morning in October, checking mooring lines or appearing to — not belonging to any vessel, not from any road. A man who had come out of the water rather than along it. She had carried the direction of the calculation without following it to the number. Hale had given her the number.

This did not change the log entry for October 11.

She put the log back on the shelf. She looked at its spine — the current year, the year before, the year

before that, going back to Owen's last log and then the ones before it, the handwriting changing, the harbor's record of itself going back to 1921 when the present dock was built. The November 1935 log was on the end. She had not opened it since she took over. She knew its last entry: Owen's hand, the fourteenth of November, a note about the storm's early signs, a mooring check, the tide height. Nothing after.

She put on her coat and went outside.

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Ames and Shep were eating lunch at the dock truck when she came back. She waved them on and walked the winter field herself, standing on the dock above each can and checking the position against the stake marks she had driven in September. Two were short, as she had seen from the water: Ames's work on positions three and seven. She got the pike from the dock truck and waded out to the knee on position three — the cold was immediate and total through her rubber boots — and repositioned the can by hand. Position seven she reached from the dock with

the pike, working the chain until the can came to its mark.

When she came back Ames had finished his lunch and was watching her. She said: “Three and seven.”

He said: “I know. The tide moved.”

“It does that.”

She ate the sandwich she had brought.

After lunch she got Owen’s protocol from the first log.

The protocol was in the back of the book, four pages in Owen’s hand, paper-clipped to the end cover. The document was titled, in Owen’s block lettering: *Winterization — Harbor — Coldwater Reach — Annual*.

The protocol ran through twelve items. She was through the first three before Hale arrived. She worked through four, five, and six in the early afternoon — the fender board inspection on the east dock; the fuel pump winterization (shut the line, drain the sump, cover the housing with the canvas that hung on the inside of the shed door); the winter mooring



fee posting in the window. Seven was the breakwater lamp: she had already checked it twice in the past week but the protocol said December first, check the lamp, note the bulb type and condition. She wrote in the maintenance log: *Breakwater lamp — standard 100W, good. 12/3/43.*

She went through eight, nine, ten. Shep turned out to have a feeling for the fender checks — he went along the dock at a crouch and pressed each board with his hand and called back when he found flex, which he did twice, both on the south dock's seaward facing. She noted the positions and added them to the repair list for January.

At four o'clock the light was gone. It did not diminish; it simply stopped. The harbor went gray and then darker, the water invisible below the dock level, the breakwater light coming on automatically. She could hear Dakin's boat coming in from the southeast, its engine at the low pitch of a man in no hurry. The northeast wind had come up, as predicted, and was running across the harbor at a good clip, cold and direct.

She checked the remaining items on the protocol — eleven and twelve, the storm drain clear and the harbormaster's office window latch secured. She did both. She locked the storage shed. She put the orange paint and brush in the lockbox and noted it on the supply log. She turned the BC-1206 off and locked the office.

Ames was done and gone. Shep was at the end of the dock, looking at the harbor, his hands in his pockets. He was fifteen and would be seventeen in two years and she assumed he would enlist the month he qualified if the war was still on. She did not say anything to him. She waited until he turned and came back.

“Done?” he asked.

“For today,” she said. “Tomorrow I need you for the seine shed.”

“What time?”

“Seven.”

He nodded and went to his bicycle. She watched him go and then got into the Ford.

She drove home on the main road, past the post office and the pharmacy and the consolidated school, its windows dark. The northeast wind moved the car enough that she kept both hands on the wheel. The heater was slow — it always took five minutes before it came to anything — and her feet were still cold from the wading-out at position three. She drove at the speed the road permitted and thought about nothing in particular. The harbor was behind her in its winter configuration, the moorings set, the pilings marked, the lamp burning at the breakwater's end.

Owen's document was back in the first log, paper-clipped where she had found it. Twelve items. All twelve checked. She would do it again in January, when the ice came in on the south dock, and the orange paint bands would tell her what she needed to know.

## Shorter Letters

The letter had come in August and she had read it enough times to know it without reading. She read it anyway.

It was V-Mail — not a real letter but a reproduction of one, the original photographed somewhere and shipped and printed at this end, so what she held was the size of a newspaper clipping and slightly blurred the way things looked through a screen door, the handwriting flattened and the ink gone from black to a tired gray. She had handled it enough that the creases along the fold were soft. The paper knew her fingers.

Three paragraphs, or what counted as paragraphs when the paper was this size. The first had a name blacked out by the censor, which left the sentence it belonged to unusable. The second:

*The weather here is something. I'm all right. Tell Pop the fence on the east side needs attention.*

The third: *Don't worry about me. I mean it about the fence.*

That was all there was.

She put it back in the shoebox and put the shoebox behind the mason jars on the pantry shelf, in a place she hadn't arranged and couldn't remember arranging, which was where it had been since September.

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The first week of December, nothing.

The second week, nothing.

She went to the post office on Tuesday and again on Friday and again the following Monday, which was more than she had ever gone, and more than she would have said she was going if anyone had asked. The post office was inside the general store, a window in the back where Mrs. Gaines stood behind a partition of glass and slotted wood. Mrs. Gaines had been postmistress for eleven years and knew who received what kind of mail and how often and what a person's face did when it received nothing.

She didn't say anything particular to Hannah. She said good morning, and she said *nothing today, dear* when there was nothing, and she looked at Hannah in the way of a person who has decided that what she knows is its own weight and that naming it would only add to the other person's share. Hannah went three times a week because she could not help going and because doing something was easier than not doing it and the walk was two miles and the cold was clean and she came back with nothing and that was what there was.

She didn't tell her parents she was going three times a week. They didn't ask.

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The milking was hers. Five-thirty, before light, the lantern hung on the hook above the stall dividers and throwing a yellow circle that didn't reach the far end. Six cows through the winter; two had dried off in November. She moved along them with her stool and her pail and did the work her hands knew by themselves. The cows' breath came in slow plumes in the cold. They were indifferent to the procedure in the

way they were indifferent to most things — an indifference she found steady rather than cold.

Her father was in the barn by six. He did the feed: cut the bales, measured the grain, saw to the calves. They worked without talking, which was not new; they had always worked in the barn without talking. The new thing was that the barn silence had spread, so that now it lived in the kitchen and at the dinner table and in the parlor when the radio was low.

Lonzo's truck came at seven-thirty. The four men got out, filed through the gate, and went to the ice-house for tools. Albrecht directed the work himself; he had stopped going through Lonzo because Lonzo had no German and by December not much patience for the relay either. Albrecht pointed, held up fingers, made the gesture of a hammer or a saw, indicated the length of fence that needed the next brace. The prisoners watched him and then did the work or did something close enough to the work that Albrecht was satisfied. She saw this from across the yard one morning — her father giving instructions with his hands to four men who did not share his language but who knew what a farm required, who

understood from the angle of his arm which fence post and from the way he looked at the ground how deep the footing had to go. She stood a moment. Then she went on to the house.

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The east fence was Karl's primary project through December and into January. Will had mentioned it in his letter — *Tell Pop the fence on the east side needs attention* — and it was true, the posts on the near corner had heaved in the frost and the wire had gone slack in two sections. The ground was too hard for proper reseating, so the work was temporary by necessity: bracing, tightening, stabilizing what could be stabilized until the thaw permitted something permanent.

She knew Karl's schedule the way she knew the rhythm of the barn in winter: not by watching but by accumulated proximity. When the work was in the east yard and she was moving between the barn and the house, there were mornings when they were at the same fence at the same time, on opposite sides, close enough to speak without raising a voice.



She had noticed something about how he spoke. He used the Bavarian *-erl* and *-la* for the small familiar things — *a Bröserl* for a crumb he was sweeping from a tool, *d'Hend* for his own hands — and then would shift without seeming to notice it into something closer to standard German when he was being careful. *Das habe ich gedacht*. Not *des hab i dacht*. When he was at ease the dialect came through. When he was choosing what to say, the German went careful and formal. She kept this to herself. She wasn't sure why, exactly.

He never asked why she spoke German. He spoke to her the way you speak to someone at work: about the fence, about the weather, about the cow that had been off her feed since Thursday. *Die hat Durchfall*, he said — the dairy farmer's word — *man sollte sie beobachten*. She said she knew, she'd been watching her. He nodded and went back to the wire.

One afternoon in mid-December, while he was tamping a temporary brace at the near corner, he said without preamble: *Hast du Geschwister?*

She stopped. *Einen Bruder. Er ist im Pazifik*.

He set the tamping bar aside. He looked at the brace and then at the fence post and then he picked up the bar again and went back to tamping. He said nothing.

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New Year's Eve, the three of them in the kitchen. WBZ Boston came through clearly because the air was cold and still and the signal traveled well on nights like that. The announcer's voice was festive in the professional way of voices paid to be festive, and there was music behind it, something with horns.

Albrecht sat in his chair.

Magda sat across from him with her mending.

Hannah had the *Downeast Courier* from that week, already read, but she held it for the purpose of having something to look at.

At eleven o'clock Albrecht stood and turned the radio off. He said nothing. He went to bed. Magda folded her mending into the basket, paused in the kitchen doorway, and looked at Hannah with an expression that was not quite apology and not quite

nothing — somewhere between the two, an acknowledgment that this was happening and she saw it — and then she went.

Hannah sat at the kitchen table with the radio off and the *Courier* open on the herring quota and the overhead light making its circle on the floor.

*Pazifik*. She had said it through the fence and the word had landed larger than she'd expected — larger than *Pacific* did in English, which was already a large word. In German it was the whole ocean. It was the distance between a fence post in Maine and wherever he was, and it did not fit in any sentence, and she had said it into the cold air and Karl had said nothing and that was what there was to say.

She sat at the table and held the word for a while without looking directly at it. Then she put out the light and went upstairs.

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January came. The cold was different from December's — less the bite of it and more the weight. The ground was frozen to a depth that stopped the fence work, so the prisoners spent their hours inside:

barn maintenance, stanchion cleaning, a broken stall board, wire-coiling in the icehouse. Lonzo sat in his truck in the mornings and stood at the barn doorway in the afternoons. His feet had been bothering him since November. He said so when anyone asked.

Her father moved through the days carefully. He was not ill. He was not gone. He ate breakfast, did his work, ate dinner, sat in the parlor for a while before bed.

She did not write to anyone about this. There was no one to write to.

The county required a production ledger for farms under the POW labor program: a record of what the farm produced, what assignments the prisoners carried, how many hours a week, what tasks. Her father had been keeping it since October, entering the figures in his careful small hand on Saturday mornings. The first Saturday in January, the ledger sat on the kitchen table and he had not touched it by noon.

She looked at it for a moment. She picked it up.

She found the last entry — December 28 — and found the column headings and looked at the previ-

ous weeks' figures to understand the system. Then she sat down and entered the first week of January in her own handwriting: cows' production by the gallon, prisoners' hours broken out by task, feed consumption, ongoing fence repair as an itemized line. Her handwriting ran at a slight rightward slant where his was vertical and small. The figures were correct. She filled in the total column and left the ledger on the table.

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Three days later she was carrying it back from the icehouse — she had taken it out to check the county's work-order assignments against what was actually in the record — when Karl came around the corner of the barn with a coil of wire over one shoulder.

He looked at the ledger.

*Was ist das?* he asked.

She told him: a record of what the farm produced, what work the prisoners did, what the county required.

He considered this. *Eine Buchführung*, he said.

*Ja.*

He shifted the wire coil on his shoulder and looked at the ledger for another moment. *Mein Vater hielt auch Bücher*, he said. My father also kept accounts.

She looked at him. *Was für Bücher?*

*Ein Eisenwarengeschäft. In Kirchheim.*

She stood with the ledger pressed to her coat. A hardware store in Kirchheim — thirty-five, forty miles from Amberg, from where her father was born. She thought of Albrecht as a young man, the village distances that had been nothing when they were simply Bavaria. She held this without knowing what to do with it.

From the barn door Lonzo called: *Reinmar*.

Karl shifted the coil on his shoulder and went. He did not look back.

She stood in the yard until the cold came up through her boots from the frozen ground, then went inside.

She entered the second week of January's figures that following Saturday, and the third, and the fourth. The handwriting settled into its slant. The columns filled. The county's form had a line at the bottom: *Authorized signature or designee*. She signed her name.

Her father did not mention the ledger. He did not take it back up, did not thank her, did not say anything about it at all. The ledger was on the shelf, filled, and the county would collect it in February. That was what there was.

She put on her coat and went to check the cows.

## What a Spy Would Say

What Marcus noticed first, on the first Tuesday of the new semester, was the ice film on the lower-left corner of the tall classroom window — a thin scrim of it that appeared by six in the morning and retreated as the furnace took hold but did not fully clear until past noon. He had noticed it every January since he came to the school. The furnace was reliable now, which Henry attributed to the new belt put in the previous September, but reliable was not the same as powerful, and the classroom at seven-forty-five, before the students arrived, held a cold that retreated slowly, in the same quarter-hour intervals, every winter morning.

He had added the Latin shelf in December. Six texts — the *Ars Grammatica*, the Oxford Latin Reader he'd had since Vienna, his own annotated Virgil, three more — arranged on the windowsill ledge to the right of the German titles. The school owned no Latin texts beyond one aging Wheelock's. He had written to a colleague in Cambridge in November for



the Oxford and the *Ars* and received them by return mail wrapped in brown paper, with a note asking when he was coming back. He had folded the note and put it in the drawer and not answered it.

The class settled at five past eight. Fourteen students now — two more than last semester, which he attributed to the fact that both of them had older siblings in the Army and appeared to believe that German might be useful. He had not discouraged this impression. The second-year students took the right-hand rows by convention; the third-year students took the left. This had been true since September and required no instruction to maintain.

Hannah Pfeiffer was in the front row. Left-hand rows: third-year. She had been in the third desk back last semester, which is where he had come to expect her, and she had moved herself to the first without notice or explanation. He had observed this and had not remarked on it. He remarked on things that required remarking. This did not.

He turned to the board.

The subordinate clause constructions he had been saving for January: *weil*, *obwohl*, *damit*, *wenn* as it functioned in the conditional as distinct from *als* in the past. These were the constructions that required verb-final order — the grammatical logic that moved the operative verb from second position, where English expected it, to the end of the clause. This was, in his experience, the distinction between students who understood German's architecture and those who had only memorized its pieces.

He wrote on the board in German. He had arranged this practice carefully in November, after Wakefield had delivered the school board's instruction: writing was not speaking. He wrote German on the board; he explained it in English. The class, after one period of adjustment, had come to find this unremarkable.

*Ich komme nicht, weil ich krank bin.* He wrote it. He said, in English: "The verb moves to the end of the clause. 'Ich komme nicht' is the main clause. 'Weil ich krank bin' is the subordinate. In the subordinate, the verb goes last — *bin*, to be, at the end. Not at the second position where you might

expect it. At the end.” He underlined *bin*. “This is not an irregularity. It is the rule. Every subordinate clause with these conjunctions — the ones I will give you today — follows this order.”

He worked through *obwohl* and *damit* by the same method. He called on students to read the examples he wrote, to produce the English gloss, to generate their own sentences on paper. He called on Pelletier, who read carefully and correctly and appeared surprised by this. He called on a girl named Agnes, whose sentence — *Ich schlafe, weil ich müde bin* — was grammatically correct and drew two quiet laughs from the row behind her, which he permitted.

He called on Hannah once, for the *obwohl* construction. She produced it without the half-second pause the other third-year students used to organize the word order. He said: “Correct.” He moved on.

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The question came twenty minutes into the class, from the second-year rows.

Rolfe was sixteen — a second-year student with an older brother in the Army. He sat in the third desk

from the right, a desk he had occupied since the first day of the semester, and he was not, as far as Marcus had observed, a difficult student. He raised his hand in the manner of a student who had been sitting with a question for some time and had decided, finally, to set it down.

“Mr. Klein.”

“Rolfe.”

“My father says that a man who speaks German and isn’t German is either a spy or he’s pretending not to be German.” A pause. “Which one are you?”

The class went quiet in the particular way that classrooms go quiet when something has been said that everyone understands they are now watching.

Marcus put down the chalk.

He turned to face the class. He took his time with it — not as performance, but because the answer, to be accurate, required the construction to be right. He had been asked this question before. He had been asked it by people who had more authority to ask it than Rolfe did and less justification, and he had answered it each time, and the answering had not

ended the question, which was one of the things he knew about questions of this kind: they did not end; they waited, and then they were asked again by someone else, in a different room, by different authority, with the same grammar.

He set that knowledge to one side. He looked at Rolfe, who was sixteen and had repeated what he heard.

“Neither,” he said. “I am Austrian, which is a distinction your father and I might have had a longer conversation about before 1938. I speak German because I was educated in it. I am here because this school needed someone who could teach it. If I were a spy, I would, I think, have chosen a more effective posting than a classroom in coastal Maine.”

Two students laughed — the kind of laugh that is also relief, the release of tension the room had been holding without knowing it. Rolfe’s expression moved through something he did not complete: recognition, perhaps, and the social discomfort of a person who has misjudged the register of the room. He was sixteen. He had repeated what he heard and had not anticipated what the room would do with it.

Marcus picked up the chalk.

“Subordinate clauses,” he said. “*Weil* takes the verb to the end. Let’s continue.”

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The class continued. He did not look at Rolfe again during it, not because he was avoiding him but because there was nothing further to address in that direction, and the grammar remained.

At the bell, the students gathered their things in the particular controlled haste of fourteen-year-olds to sixteen-year-olds for whom eight minutes between periods is never quite enough. Rolfe left without looking at him; this was correct behavior and Marcus registered it as such. The room emptied by the door in the usual order — the second row first, then the third and fourth, the students nearest the door last.

Hannah was last to leave. She gathered her notebook, stood, walked to the door, and paused in the frame with her back to the room.

“He’s wrong, you know,” she said. “About the German.”

She left.

He stood with the chalk in his hand. Then he went to the board and began to erase it, long strokes from left to right, the German disappearing in the direction of the beginning, the verb-final constructions reduced to gray dust on the tray.

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What she had meant: that a person could speak a language without being that language's people. That language was not blood, not flag, not loyalty sworn or withheld. That her father's household was the evidence, and she was carrying that evidence daily in both directions — into school and home again — and she knew its shape better than Rolfe's father, who had arrived at his conclusion without inconvenience.

Marcus knew this. He had been explaining it, in some form, since at least Paris, in three languages, to people who had more authority to disbelieve him than Rolfe did. He had explained it in English to Canadian bureaucrats in 1940 with a precision he had since looked back on as the closest he had come, in those months, to something he had no adequate

name for — a controlled state that was the near edge of its opposite.

He set that aside. He finished erasing the board.

What was notable was not the proposition — which was not new — but that she had said it, and said it to him, and left without waiting for him to answer, because it was not a question.

He set down the eraser and looked at the blank board for a moment. Then he went to get the Latin text for the next period.

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On Thursday evenings, Marcus and Henry Crow played chess in the front room while Lillian read in the parlor or, if she had nothing to finish, moved between the kitchen and the back room, setting something down near them occasionally without interrupting. The board lived on a shelf between the Farmers' Almanac and a brown bottle of liniment. Henry had built the shelf himself; he had built most things in the house that were built.



Marcus told Henry what had happened in the classroom. He told it precisely, which was how he told most things.

Henry listened. He picked up his bishop and set it back down.

“What did you say?” he asked.

Marcus told him.

Henry looked at the board. After a moment he moved the bishop. He said: “A more effective posting than coastal Maine. That’s a good line.”

“I thought so.”

“Did it work?”

“For today.”

Henry looked at the board. “What about tomorrow?”

Marcus considered. “Tomorrow I’ll teach subordinate clauses and we’ll see.”

Henry nodded, still looking at the board. He moved a pawn. Marcus studied the position and made his own move. Henry reached forward without

pause and took the queen. Marcus had not seen it coming. He looked at the board with the particular attention a person gives to a thing that has just changed its character irreversibly.

“The boy’s father,” Henry said.

“Yes.”

“He isn’t going to stop thinking what he thinks.”

“No.” Marcus looked at the board. “He isn’t.”

Henry was quiet for a moment. He reached for his coffee, took a sip, set it down. He was looking at the board, not at Marcus, when he said: “That’s the thing about a line. It works once.”

Marcus had no immediate answer. It was not a comforting formulation. It was descriptive — the account of a strategy Henry had been using for twenty years in this town, in this school, on this coast, and that had required from him an expenditure of a kind that the word *strategy* did not quite name. It was not a strategy. He had no better word for it.

He said nothing for a moment. Henry, still studying the board, said: “Elias wrote last month. Some-

where in the Central Pacific — he can't say where. Moving around, he says."

"No," Marcus said. "They can't say."

Henry moved a rook. Marcus played out the remaining position — it was lost, he could see by any sequence he tried — and played it out anyway, because the game was not over until it was over and because conceding seemed, tonight, like the wrong kind of practice.

Henry won.

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Walking up to his room afterward, Marcus passed the landing window that faced east toward the school. The January dark was complete; it had been in since before five o'clock. The street below was empty. The Congregationalist church steeple stood against the sky.

He thought: *you just keep showing up*. He thought about the distance between the sentence and what it named. Henry meant something specific by it — he meant: not running. Arriving, and then remain-

ing, and then rising the next morning and doing the work again, in a place that had not fully arranged itself to want you there.

Marcus had been showing up, in the strict sense, since Vienna in 1938. He had been showing up to Paris and to London and to Sherbrooke and to Cambridge and now to Coldwater Reach — successive arrivals, each one followed by another departure, until now, when the departures had stopped. Whether the stopping was arrival, he had not yet determined.

What Rolfe's father thought he would still think tomorrow. What Rolfe would carry of it depended on what Rolfe chose to do with what he'd heard in the classroom today, and Marcus had no control over that, and the answer was to be in the classroom tomorrow and the day after that. He had been answering this question since before Rolfe was born. He would go on answering it.

From the parlor below came the low sound of Lillian's radio program — not the news but something else, a drama she preferred on Thursday evenings. The smell of what she had made for supper still lived in the warm air of the stairwell.

He went to his room. He sat at the desk and uncapped his pen and found Hannah Pfeiffer's subordinate clause exercise near the top of the pile. Her handwriting was the same as it was in every paper she turned in — clear, slightly forward-slanting, confident in the way of someone who has been writing in more than one script since childhood. The exercise was correct. Nearly entirely correct, with one error in the *wenn*-construction that was the same error everyone made the first time, that came from translating too literally, that resolved itself once the underlying logic became native.

He wrote what she had gotten right. He wrote the correction. He wrote, in the margin beside the *wenn* example, the sentence that explained the error, and he wrote it with care, because she would read the margin and she would understand it, and tomorrow he would walk into the classroom and the window would have ice on it and the furnace would be working on the cold and Hannah Pfeiffer would be in the first row where she had placed herself, and that was what there was.

He capped the pen.

He moved to the next paper in the pile.

## Lonzo's War

Six-thirty. The cold came in under the window frame, the particular cold of February in a room above a hardware store. He dressed by the closet light — coat, gloves, the extra pair of socks — and his feet, when the boots went on, understood what the day was going to be.

The truck took a minute to clear. He sat with the engine running while the defroster worked on the windshield, a slow pale wedge from the bottom. The town was dark. The hardware store window below showed the same rakes and handles it always showed, the arrangement unchanged since September.

He drove the county road in the dark.

The satellite facility was a converted grange hall three miles east of Coldwater on the Houlton road, eight prisoners, two guards on overnight rotation. Lonzo handled the day escort. He had been doing it since October.

He signed in at six-fifty. Corporal Aldrich had the four ready at seven: Bremer first, then Wicke, then Fischer, then Reinmar. They came out in the same order every morning. Lonzo knew them by the way they moved. Bremer was oldest — a sergeant, they'd told him — and he moved with a deliberateness that Lonzo had come to read as either dignity or caution, or possibly both. Wicke was stocky, always the first to check the sky, always cold in a way that registered on his face and stayed there. Fischer climbed into the truck bed and sat with his hands in his lap and looked at things with the alert expression of a man who finds most situations funnier than the occasion requires. Reinmar was last. He was nineteen or twenty — Lonzo had been told nineteen — and he had the particular quiet of a young man who has resolved to make himself unremarkable. He didn't look at Lonzo when he climbed in. He didn't look at the others much either.

Lonzo drove to the farm.

He thought about his feet for most of the drive, which was what he had left when he'd run through the weather and the road. He had learned over the



fall to reduce the contents of his mind to manageable items and hold them one at a time. France was twenty-six years back and he had arranged his thinking around not visiting it — this was not difficult; it was a practice, like anything else, that held if you maintained it and went sideways if you didn't. He maintained it. He thought about his feet, the ice on the county road, the thirty-minute drive, and the farm.

Albrecht Pfeiffer was in the barn when they pulled up. He came out to the yard, pointed twice — once toward the barn, once toward the east side — and went back inside without speaking. Bremer went to the barn. Wicke followed. Fischer had the wood block; he went to it and started in. Reinmar took the east fence where there was still repair work on the frost-split post from December.

Lonzo backed the truck to face the yard and shut off the engine. He spread the blanket over his lap and took out the thermos.

His daughter Meredith had packed it when she'd visited at the end of January. She'd bought the coffee at the general store and packed it that morning be-

fore she drove back to Augusta, where she lived with her husband, who sold insurance. What was in the thermos now was Lonzo's own coffee, which was not Meredith's — Meredith's was better — but the thermos was hers, a heavy aluminum one with a green stripe, and he used it every day. He had not told her this. It was not the kind of information that needed to travel between Coldwater and Augusta. She had called last week to say she might visit in March. He hoped she would.

He drank his coffee and watched the yard.

Fischer's axe came down at the wood block in a steady, slightly-off rhythm. Bremer and Wicke were in the barn; he could hear movement in there, the shuffle of hay, the low sound of Pfeiffer's voice directing something. Reinmar worked the east fence without looking up — pulling the cracked post, setting the temporary brace, measuring for the replacement stock.

The morning went. It was cold and clear. The fields ran flat and white to the tree line. The sky above the tree line was the pale particular blue that

February made at this latitude, a color that meant the day would hold its cold and not change.

He poured a second cup.

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The girl came out at mid-morning with a pail.

She crossed the yard from the house toward the barn, not hurrying, picking her way where the snow had packed and iced over in the path between the house steps and the barn door. She was maybe thirty feet from the east fence when she slowed and stopped. Reinmar had looked up from the post.

They spoke. Lonzo was too far to hear any of it — two hundred feet, and the wind pulling the other direction. He watched. The girl set the pail down and said something. Reinmar answered. She said something more.

It went like this for maybe four minutes.

Not flirting — he had seen that, at checkpoints, in town, and this was not its shape. Not frightened either. She stood easy and talked, and the young man talked back, and their manner was—

He held onto the thermos.

The word that came to him was: *ordinary*. Two people on a farm in February, talking. He did not know what about. He had never known German. He had three words of French and all three were wrong.

She picked up her pail and went into the barn.

Reinmar went back to the fence post.

Lonzo sat with his coffee and looked at the yard. He counted back: he had seen this happen before. Six times, perhaps, since October — always brief, always at the fence or the near corner of the yard when the work brought them into range. He had not reported it each time, and he understood that not reporting something six times in a row was not quite the same as deciding, but it was close.

He thought about reporting it now. He ran through the sequence: he would say to Aldrich, *Corporal, the Pfeiffer girl has been talking to the prisoner Reinmar at the fence. In German*. Aldrich would make a note. The note would go to the county officer. The county officer would contact the farm. Then what: pull the detail, maybe. Give Pfeiffer a

reprimand he didn't deserve and couldn't absorb, because Pfeiffer was not managing without them — anyone with eyes could see that — and pulling the detail would put the farm in a position the farm couldn't manage, not this deep in winter. All of that, for what.

He thought briefly about France — canvas and lye soap was all it was, the specific smell of the field hospital tent in the dark — and he set it back where it belonged.

He thought: the girl was not giving the prisoner anything. Not military information. Not anything. He was a prisoner working a fence. She was a farmer's daughter on the other side of it. They shared a language that had gotten expensive in this country, and they were using it to talk. Four minutes. A fence post and a pail.

He turned the thermos in his hands, the aluminum warm from the coffee inside.

The word *ordinary* had come to him and it was the right word. He had found it and he was using it. Whatever the content of those four minutes was, its

manner was ordinary, and ordinary was not what the regulations were written for.

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The afternoon did what the morning had done. Fischer finished the wood and moved to stacking. Bremer and Wicke came out of the barn at two for the south-side fence work; Pfeiffer directed them by pointing, then went back inside. The sky held its color. Lonzo's feet settled into the steady, ignorable ache he had learned to keep company with over the fall.

At three o'clock he got out and called them in. Bremer first, then Wicke, Fischer, Reinmar. They came in the same order they always came. Reinmar was the last and a little slow — he was returning the tools to the storage lean-to, taking care with it, the way he always did, as though the tools belonged to him personally. He came to the truck without looking at Lonzo's face. He climbed into the bed and sat down.

Lonzo drove.

The icy stretch was where it always was, the shaded quarter-mile past the Draper place where the morning melt refroze before noon. He slowed to a crawl through it. Nobody in the truck bed said anything. The road cleared on the other side and he brought the speed back up.

At the facility he signed the escort log. Four names, one entry each, time out, time in, no incidents. He put the pen back. He drove home.

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In his room above the hardware store he sat on the edge of the bed and worked off his boots, right first, then left, and the relief was the same relief it was every evening — the specific ease of weight coming off — and he held it for a moment.

He put water on the hot plate and opened a can of soup from the second shelf. While it heated he hung up his coat. He washed his hands at the basin. He stood at the window and looked at the hardware store display below, the rakes and handles unchanged, the same arrangement they'd been since September.

He thought once about the girl and the fence. About what they had been saying to each other. He thought: it probably doesn't matter what they were saying. It was a fence and it was four minutes and it was two young people who had found a language in common, and that was what it was.

The soup was ready. He poured it into a bowl and sat down at the table.

He ate.



## Portland

She signed the log over to Ames at seven. He arrived on time, as he always did, and went through the current moorings without prompting — slip four vacant since the Hallett boat went out on the blue-water run, the aft mooring on Connelly's skiff likely to want adjusting before the two o'clock tide, the harbormaster's office phone expecting a call from the district licensing office in Portland that she would handle from Portland directly. He wrote it all down and asked nothing she hadn't offered. She was out by seven-fifteen.

The truck was in the yard. She scraped the windshield, started the engine, and let it run while the defroster worked on the bottom quarter of the glass. The coast road south was clear where she expected it clear and glazed where she expected it glazed — the low section past the river bend, the shaded half-mile on the approach to Thomaston where the morning melt didn't reach until ten. She drove slowly through both.

Thomaston at eight-thirty. Rockland at nine. Then the road bent south and the sea settled into the left window — flat pewter in February, the horizon line running clean, no weather in either direction. She did not look at it. She had the route in her head and the log renewal form in her bag and a question she had not yet found the approach to.

She made a list. She had been doing this long enough that she could not say when the habit had started.

What was established. What was inferred. What she could not verify and might never.

Established: A man on the north side of the wharf at approximately two in the morning on October 11. Not from the harbor — she knew every man who worked the harbor, and she knew the way a man who worked a harbor moved in the dark on a dock, and this was not that. A body on the breakwater three days later. European clothing, Farris had said — meaning the cut and the cloth together, not just manufacture. A scar on the palm of the left hand, between the thumb and index finger, old and well-healed. No papers. No identification. He had died

after the blow, not during it. That was not the assumption anyone would have made, and Farris had not explained what showed this, and she had not asked.

Inferred: The man on the wharf and the man on the breakwater were the same man. Hale's theory from December: a crossing from Canada, by way of the Maritime Provinces. The north wharf was where he had come in.

Not verifiable: How he had crossed. What craft. Where he had embarked. Whether he had been alone. What had happened between two in the morning on October 11 and whatever time Farris's doctor had placed the death. Three days. The blow had been three days. He had survived the blow and died afterward. This was everything she had in the unverifiable column.

She passed a county road sign for Owls Head. She passed a fuel depot with its tank painted over in flat gray, the wartime regulation. She passed a farmstead where two boys were working a stuck fence post, one bracing while the other drove. She noted the road conditions and the mileage and nothing else.

The list ran out south of Rockland. She did not go through it again. She knew what was on it.

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Portland at ten-forty.

She found Commercial Street without difficulty. The federal building was two blocks from the harbor, a four-story brick with the flag moving in the wind off the water. She had been here twice before on registry matters, once in the spring of 1941 and once in the summer of 1942. The entry was familiar: a lobby with a guard desk, a visitors' log, two flights of stairs to the second floor.

The customs office occupied three rooms, the front one given over to a long desk and filing cabinets that had been added since her last visit — the filing had grown. The clerk behind the desk was a man named Colby, who knew her from the registry work. He was perhaps forty-five, slightly bald, his brown wool suit pressed. He looked up when she came in.

“Mrs. Bowman,” he said. “Coldwater Reach.”

“Harbormaster Bowman,” she said. “Registry renewal.”

He found her file and processed the form in under fifteen minutes. The renewal was standard — vessel count, mooring capacity, licensed operators, a certification of the channel depths she’d taken in October. He found a discrepancy in the vessel classification codes that turned out not to be a discrepancy; they checked their respective references and agreed, and the renewal was complete. He stamped it and handed her the certified copy. She read it through and folded it into the bag.

She did not put on her coat.

“I had a question,” she said. “Peripheral. The body that came in on the Coldwater breakwater in October — there was a theory, from a Naval Intelligence man, that the individual may have crossed from the Canadian Maritime Provinces. Is that a common route? For transients.”

Colby looked at her. His expression did not change. He was deciding something.

“Harbormaster matters don’t usually touch that category,” he said.

“No. I’m asking because I want to understand what I might see. For future reference. Preventative.”

He was quiet for a moment. He turned the certified copy square to its corner of the desk.

“The Maritime routes are a Customs matter, not ours,” he said. “I can’t really speak to that.” A pause. “The thing you’d want to know, for the kind of situation you’re describing, is that anything coming from the Maritimes tends to come in at night. Small craft. Not the commercial routes.” He paused again. “For future reference.”

She thanked him. She put on her coat and left.

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She ate at a counter two blocks from the federal building — soup and bread, which was what there was that day — and was on the road north by half past twelve.

The coast road ran back out of Portland and the sea moved to the right side, the fields to the left

running white and flat to the tree lines. She drove at a steady pace and thought through what Colby had given her.

*Small craft. Night.* She knew what this confirmed. The north wharf had enough draft for a dory and nothing of any size; it was sheltered enough on the inside face to come in without showing a light, and the freeboard at low tide was three feet. A man coming from the Maritimes by small craft would want the inside face of the north pier in the dark. She had been on that section of dock at 2 a.m. and seen a man she did not recognize checking the lines, or appearing to. These two things fit.

She had known this fit since December, since Hale had laid out his theory in the harbor office with the careful voice of a man who shared what he was authorized to share and no more. Now she had Colby's confirmation, oblique and deniable, delivered in the register of a man who would say he had spoken only about general Maritime crossing patterns if anyone asked. It was enough.

She drove through Rockland at a quarter to two. She thought: he made it across from Canada. He was

on the north wharf at two in the morning on October 11. He was alive. Then something happened.

She thought: a man does not cross from Canada by small craft in October for no reason. He was going somewhere or leaving somewhere or meeting someone or all three. He was not crossing the Bay of Fundy in a small craft at night because the weather was fine.

Then something happened.

She drove through Thomaston. The coast came back into view on the left. She thought: three days between the north wharf and the breakwater. Three days was long enough for a great many things to go wrong.

She was south of Rockland, on the straightening stretch before the road turned inland toward Warren, when she saw him.

He was on the road's east shoulder, walking south, away from her. A dark coat — not an oilskin, a town coat, wool by the weight of it, the collar turned up. She passed him at a steady thirty miles per hour. She watched the road ahead.



In the mirror she saw his figure before the curve took him from view: his back, his height, the way the coat sat across his shoulders, his gait. He walked with his head slightly down. The curve took him.

She drove.

She drove for half a mile before she stopped looking at the mirror.

She knew it was not the man from the north wharf. She had seen the October 11 figure in the dark, at distance, for less than thirty seconds, while she was still deciding what she was looking at. She had no confident recollection of how that man had walked or held his shoulders or what he had been wearing. Nothing she could set against the man on the road.

She did not stop the truck. She drove.

The harbor came in sight at ten past four and she took the access road down to the wharf.

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Ames had had a routine day. She could tell from the first entry. She went through his log: the two

o'clock tide check, the Connelly skiff mooring adjusted as expected, an inquiry from a fishing boat out of Owls Head requesting a Thursday slip reservation, a propane delivery signed in at three-twenty. His entries were correct. His handwriting was neat. He had not been required to make a judgment call.

She signed back into the harbor record at four-fifteen and Ames went home at four-thirty.

The office was cold. She put a piece of split birch into the stove and got it drawing and sat at the desk while the heat built. Outside the window the harbor moved in the last of the afternoon light — a fishing dragger working in on the tide, running lights coming on at the channel mouth, the breakwater dark and solid to the south. She looked at the dragger and then at the weather gauges and then at the window frame, which wanted recaulking on the north corner. She would do it Saturday if the temperature held.

The BC-1206 was on, weather band. Southwest wind, twelve knots, holding through the night. Small craft advisory lifted. She turned the volume down.

She could confirm the shape of the crossing. She could not confirm anything after it. She put it where she put things she couldn't verify. She kept it there.

The dragger was at the slip. The running lights went off. She could hear the engine tick down.

She drew the harbor log from the shelf and opened it to the day's date. She uncapped her pen.

She made the day's entry.

## Bread

She came down at half past five and Magda was on the kitchen floor.

She was sitting against the base of the sink cabinet, her nightgown twisted, one hand palm-up on the linoleum. She was not unconscious. She looked up when Hannah came in and said *Ach* — a sound less of pain than of embarrassment — and then said nothing more.

Hannah put the lamp on the table and crouched. Magda was warm to the touch, not rigid, her breathing even. Her eyes were focused. One hip was where the floor had caught her; she moved it carefully when Hannah asked and made a sound through her teeth, short, that stopped quickly, which was information.

“Bleib still,” Hannah said.

She went upstairs. She knocked on her parents’ door and opened it without waiting.

Her father was already sitting up. He slept the way some men did after a lifetime of early mornings — surfacing quickly, no confusion.

“Mutter,” Hannah said. “Sie ist gefallen.”

He was down in under a minute. He looked at the hip, at the cabinet edge, at the floor. He asked Magda to move the hip by degrees and watched her face while she did it. Then he sat back on his heels and looked at the floor again and arrived at an understanding he didn’t state aloud.

*Krankenhaus*, he said.

“Dr. Hastings,” Hannah said.

*Ja. Doktor Hastings.*

He got Magda to the bedroom chair and went upstairs to dress. Hannah built the stove. By the time she had it drawing and the water on, Albrecht was in his coat. He helped Magda into hers. Magda said nothing through any of this. She moved when moved, stood when helped to stand, and looked at the kitchen in the way of a person who has misplaced something there and cannot say what.

Albrecht said: *Die Kühe brauchen Heu um drei. Die Dokumentation liegt auf dem Tisch, falls Aldrich kommt. Die Abendmelkung ist um vier.*

Hannah said: *Ich weiß.*

He looked at her once — not the way he used to look at her, which she had stopped expecting — and then helped Magda out through the back door. Hannah heard the truck start, idle, pull out of the yard.

She stood in the kitchen.

The stove ticked. The water wasn't boiling yet. Outside the window the yard was dark, the barn was a shape against the dark, and above the tree line the sky was doing its slow gray thinking somewhere past six.

She picked up the lamp and went to check on the cows.

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The barn was warm. Four of the Holsteins were up; two were down in the straw, including the one who had been off her feed the last four days, and those two would need encouragement. Hannah re-

filled the water, checked the feed, put down fresh straw in the stalls that needed it. The work was familiar in the way a thing is familiar when you have done it so long you are no longer thinking about doing it — the same sounds, the same order, the same darkness at the far end of the barn that always lightened at the same pace as the sky outside.

She and Will had done the morning check together, the same rotation, since she was old enough to carry a full pail. Will had been faster at the water troughs, slower at everything else; he had a habit of stopping to talk to the cows, which was inefficient, but the cows had seemed to like him. She worked through the troughs at her own pace. She did not talk to the cows.

By the time she came back to the house it was past six. She made coffee and ate bread standing at the counter and by six-thirty had the kitchen clean and the day's register open on the table.

---

Lonzo arrived at twenty past seven with the prisoners in the county flatbed. She met him in the yard.

“My mother fell this morning,” she said. “She’s not badly hurt. My father took her to Dr. Hastings in town. I’m managing the farm today.”

Lonzo looked at her. He had a face that had stopped making unnecessary expressions some years ago — not unfriendly, just still. He said: “I’m here if anything comes up.”

“Thank you,” Hannah said.

The four prisoners went to the barn. She followed. She had directed pieces of the work before — pointing out what needed doing when her father was occupied with something else, clarifying when Lonzo’s German ran out — but today the whole of it was hers and she felt the difference the way you feel the weight of something only when you lift it without help.

She set them to the regular morning sequence: stalls, hay, the water troughs on the east side, then the fence post on the north pasture that had been listing since January. She addressed herself to Bremer, who was the oldest and the one who converted instructions into labor without extra steps. He



listened, nodded once, and turned to the others, and that was how the morning began.

Karl was at the far stall — the one whose door had been off its bottom hinge since before Christmas. She had seen him working at it on other days, the repair advancing in stages: hardware sourced from the barn's miscellaneous bin, an edge planed, a pin fitted and refitted. He did not look up when she came in. He worked. She went to check the feed store at the back.

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Mid-morning. Bremer and Wicke were in the east half, steady and methodical. Fischer had gone to the north pasture with the fencing tools. The barn had settled into the quiet of a place where everyone knows what they are doing — the cows shifting their weight, the low percussion of work, the cold outside pressing against the walls and failing to get in.

Hannah was coming back from the feed room — she had been counting bales, doing the arithmetic of what they had against what the week would need —

when Karl said, without stopping his work: *Geht es ihr besser?*

She stopped.

He was fitting the door pin, his back mostly to her, speaking to the door or to the air in front of it. She understood he had seen Albrecht carry Magda to the truck. He had been in the yard that morning at the right time, and he had seen it the way a careful person sees things: without appearing to.

*Wem?* she said.

*Ihrer Mutter.*

She was already speaking German; the language had come before the decision.

*Ich hoffe es,* she said.

A pause. He fitted the pin, tested the swing of the door. The door moved right for the first time. He set down his tool.

*Meine Mutter war auch einmal krank,* he said. *Lange Zeit.* A pause. *Sie ist wieder gesund geworden.*

*Was hat ihr geholfen?* Hannah asked.

He picked up the door again and re-tested its movement, as though the question required his hands to be busy while he considered. Then he said: *Gutes Brot.*

He said it precisely, and then he said more, because precision required it: not the dark bread — he was specific about this — not the Schwarzbrot. And not the soft white bread they had here at the camp, the bread that had nothing in it. Something between those two. Rye and wheat together, denser. His mother had made it on Saturdays. He could smell it from his room before he was completely awake, before he had placed himself in the morning; the smell reached him first. He said: *Ich habe seit der Einberufung kein Brot mehr gerochen, das so gerochen hat.*

He said it the way you say something you have arranged into its proper shape over time — not with self-pity, not with accusation directed at the camp kitchen or at Maine or at anyone. It was a fact he had arrived at. He set down the door and added, almost to himself: *Hier schmeckt das Brot wie Luft.*

Hannah stood with the feed numbers still in her head and thought, without deciding to think it, about her mother's recipe book. It was on the kitchen shelf, between the almanac and the preserve ledger. She knew the Bavarian loaf — a rye-wheat recipe, denser than the everyday bread, which her mother had made on Saturday mornings when Hannah was small and the kitchen had a particular gravity to it, a warmth and a smell that arrived before everything else and organized the day.

Her mother had not made it in two years. Perhaps longer.

She said nothing about this.

She said: *Mein Vater hofft, dass es Ihrer Mutter gut geht* — a polite placeholder, a way to close the distance between what had been said and whatever came next.

Karl said: *Ich auch*.

He picked up his tools. She walked back to the east end of the barn. Bremer looked up briefly as she passed and then looked back at what he was doing, which was the correct response.

The afternoon milking went correctly. Karl and Bremer helped without being asked — they understood the job and understood the sequence and moved through it without requiring direction. Lonzo was in the yard. Wicke and Fischer were at the woodpile. The milk came in at the right quantities and the recording of them took the usual time and the cows went back to their evening business without incident.

Hannah entered the day's totals in the county ledger. It was her handwriting in the column now — had been since November, when the numbers had drifted from Albrecht's hand into hers gradually enough that neither of them had marked the transfer. She checked the feed tally against last week's entry and found them consistent. She dated the labor log: *Bremer, Wicke, Fischer, Reinmar. Fence post, north pasture. Stall repair, east end. Morning milking. Afternoon milking. No incidents.*

She left the form on the table where the form lived, under the almanac.

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Albrecht and Magda came back at half past five.

Magda came through the kitchen leaning on Albrecht's arm and went directly to the bedroom without stopping, her coat still on. Albrecht stood in the kitchen doorway and looked at the stove, which was going, and the pot on the stove, and the table. He looked at the form under the almanac. He picked it up and read through it.

He put it down.

"Nicht gebrochen," he said. *Nur eine Prellung.*

"Ich hab die Abendmelkung auch gemacht," Hannah said.

He nodded. He went to look at the pot, the way her father looked at things — checking without commenting, which was the same gesture in every context. He came back to the form and looked at it once more.

*Gut gemacht*, he said.

She turned to ladle soup into the bowls. She heard him go through to the bedroom.

She thought about those two words. *Gut gemacht*, the way everything came now, in German or in silence. She turned the phrase over the way she turned things that were partly what they said and partly something not said underneath. He had not said: I should have found someone to come out, I should not have left you with this. He had not said: I didn't know you could do it, which would have been the wrong kind of thing to say and which he had not said. He had said the two words, which were enough, and which covered what he needed covered without opening anything that neither of them could close before dinner.

She set the bowls on the table.

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After dinner Albrecht sat with the radio on for the nine o'clock news and then turned it off. Magda was asleep. The stove had settled into its late-evening voice, low and reliable. Hannah washed the bowls and the pot and hung the cloth on its nail.

She stood at the kitchen shelf.

She moved the almanac and took down the recipe book — her mother's handwriting on the cover, the spine worn soft from use and from her mother's hand resting on it the way you rest your hand on something you return to. She brought it to the table and sat down.

She found the loaf on the third leaf inside the back cover. *Bayerisches Roggenmischbrot*. Her mother's hand, the ink faded to brown on the older measurements, the margin notes in smaller writing where she had corrected herself over years. *25 min. Dunkel braun*. The oven temperature in centigrade, the way her mother still thought in it. There was a note in the bottom margin, cramped, that Hannah had never been able to fully read: something about letting it rest before cutting, which she already knew without the note being legible.

She read through the recipe.

The yeast needed twelve hours to prove. The flour — she thought about the pantry; there was enough, she had checked it yesterday when she made the week's bread, but using some of it here would mean counting carefully and buying more before Saturday.



She thought about Karl's phrase: *das Brot wie Luft*. She thought about the Saturday mornings when she had been small enough that the kitchen felt enormous, and the smell had come down from wherever her mother was and gotten into everything before the day had properly started.

She read the recipe again, from the beginning.

She was not going to make it tonight. She knew this before she sat down. It was too late, and the yeast wanted time, and there were other reasons that were not about yeast or time, reasons she did not form into words at the kitchen table.

She closed the book.

She put it back on the shelf, behind the almanac.

She turned off the kitchen lamp and went upstairs.

## What Meaning Costs

The essay had come in on a Friday. By Sunday Marcus had read it four times.

He sat at the school desk — he had stayed late on Monday, the furnace doing less work now in March than it had been doing three weeks ago — with Hannah Pfeiffer's essay at the center of the blotter and his pen in his hand, though he had stopped using it. Outside the window the afternoon light was longer than it had been, the kind of length that registers as change before you can name what changed. The mud at the edge of the schoolyard road showed where the frost was coming out.

The assignment had been a translation exercise. Not the primary form of learning, but a useful diagnostic — and for German and Latin together, a way of asking students to think about what language *is* before asking them to use it as a tool. He had chosen Mörike's "Auf ein altes Bild": short, exactly constructed, the kind of poem that did not show its difficulty until you tried to do something with it. In a green

landscape's summer bloom, by cool water, reed and cane — and in the forest, quietly, the trunk of the cross already greening. The assignment was to translate the poem, then write one page on what was lost in the translation, and — the harder question, the one that separated the students who read from the students who completed tasks — what, unexpectedly, survived.

Hannah Pfeiffer's translation was correct. This was not unusual; she was the student who read. But the page that followed the translation was not what he had expected.

She had written: that what survived the crossing was not any word but the *relationship between words* — specifically, the way German holds together a compound noun that English has to unpack into two words and thereby makes less than it was. *Sommerbild*. The poem's central image — the summer, the landscape, the light held inside the picture's frame — was in German a single unified thing, a wholeness the word created by fusing its parts without seam. In English it became *summer image*, two words standing beside each other with a small

gap between them, and the gap was the loss: not of meaning but of *unity*. She had written that this was not the translator's fault, and not the English language's fault, and was not fixable by any choice a translator could make. She had written: *When you translate you do not move a thing from one room to another. You describe the thing to someone who has never been in the room.*

He had written in the margin, after reading this the first time: *Yes.*

Then, after rereading: *This is not the assignment.*

Then, below that: *See me.*

He looked at these three annotations now.

He drew a line through the middle one.

*Yes.*

*See me.*

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On Monday he held the third-period class through the bell — a translation problem involving a present participle he suspected Rolfe had guessed at rather

than worked through, which he corrected without naming as a guess — and when the room had cleared, Hannah Pfeiffer was still at her desk.

She was not sitting forward, not waiting with the look of expectation that some students produced when they believed they had done something right and wished to have this confirmed. She was standing beside her desk with her bag already on her shoulder, which told him that she understood the *See me* was not punitive but had not yet decided what it was instead.

“Sit down, Miss Pfeiffer,” he said.

She sat. Her bag went on the desk beside her.

He was holding her paper. He said: “Where did this come from?”

She said: “The poem. The compound word.”

“That is what you wrote about,” he said. “I am asking where the idea came from.”

A pause. She looked at him — not the way students sometimes looked at a teacher when they were deciding whether to be candid, but directly, the way

she had looked at him in October when he returned a Latin composition with a line he had underlined twice and she had understood immediately why it was underlined. She said: “My father speaks German at home. And some things in German I cannot think in English. And when I try, the thing becomes smaller.” She stopped. She said: “Is that wrong?”

“No,” he said. “It is a correct description of a real problem.” He put the paper on the desk between them. “You understand that this is not the translation exercise I assigned.”

“I did the translation first,” she said.

“I know. I mean: this other thing, the observation — where did you learn to do this?”

She appeared to consider the question as a genuine question, which it was. She said: “I do not know. I have been thinking about it since we started doing German.”

He looked at her. There was a category of student he had encountered perhaps ten times across a teaching life that had begun in Vienna and continued, intermittently, through Paris and London and

the Extension program and now here — students who could turn a language problem into a philosophic one without losing the thread of either. She was in that category. He was aware of the particular weight of having recognized this and of what recognition obligated him to do.

He said: “Have you thought about what you will do after school?”

She said: “My father needs help on the farm.”

He said nothing. He took the paper and wrote a note in the lower margin — two sentences and an address — and slid it back to her across the desk. She looked at it. She picked it up. She read it once, which was enough; the writing was legible. She put it in her bag without looking at him again, which was not rudeness but efficiency: the exchange had concluded, and the note was the thing, not the conversation around it.

“Thank you,” she said.

“Good morning,” he said, though it was afternoon.

She left.

The note said: *There are programs for students like you. Write to the address below.* Below this he had written the admissions office of the University of Maine at Orono.

He was not certain she would write. He had done what was available to him to do.

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The afternoon's mail had come while he was in the Latin section. He collected it from the school office on his way back to the classroom — two pieces, one the county educator's circular and one a letter from Cambridge, the return address in Ellenbogen's cramped hand.

He read it at his desk.

Professor Ellenbogen wrote from a building Marcus knew — the third floor of the Yard, the office that had smelled of pipe tobacco and old catalogue cards since at least 1941. Ellenbogen's handwriting was as it had always been: energetic, tilted forward, the letters leaning as though into a wind.



The letter was brief. Ellenbogen wrote that the Emergency Committee had been undertaking, in addition to its primary work of scholar placement, some supplementary assistance in tracing the fates of European nationals who might have passed through the Canadian Maritime Provinces in 1943. He referred to this arrangement, without elaboration, as the informal sponsored-passage program. He asked whether Marcus, in his current posting, had encountered or heard of any such cases in his vicinity.

Marcus read it twice.

He set the letter on the desk beside the blotter.

*Sponsored-passage program.* He knew the category. Not from description — from proximity. During the two years he had been on the Emergency Committee's rolls, the sponsored-passage work had been one of the arrangements that operated alongside the Committee's official programs and appeared in none of the Committee's official documents. Church networks, primarily — a Lutheran coalition in Quebec, a Methodist organization in New Brunswick, working in loose coordination with labor affil-

iates in Vermont and Maine. The purpose was to move people who could not afford to wait for the official channels: channels that, in 1942 and 1943, required patience that could run six months or longer and could produce, instead of a result, a revocation notice. The program existed because the official routes had been designed for a different volume of need, and the volume had changed, and some people understood that and were willing to work in the space the official routes could not fill.

He had not used it himself. The Committee had arranged his passage through official means, slowly, with considerable correspondence, because he had been in a position to wait. He knew what that distinction meant. He had known people for whom the distinction did not apply — people who did not have six months, who did not have the documentation that official channels required, who had come to Canada and needed, with some urgency, to continue further. He had known several such people well enough to understand what the program looked like from the side of the person using it.

He also knew, now, what it might look like from the harbor side of the crossing.

He did not think this through to its conclusion. He had a disposition — formed over several years of managing what he knew against what he could act on — to approach certain conclusions carefully, from the periphery, without forcing the center into view before it was required. This disposition had served him. He applied it now.

*This is what I thought it was.*

He had thought it since December — since the phrase *Maritime crossing* had passed through a conversation he had not been part of but had heard accurately summarized. He had thought it the way you think a thing you cannot verify and choose, for that reason, not to press further. A hypothesis maintained at a particular distance from certainty, because certainty required something he did not have and would not manufacture.

Ellenbogen had asked whether Marcus had heard of such cases in his vicinity. He had asked with the delicacy of a man who understood that Marcus's vi-

cinity was a small town, and that in a small town, anything put on paper by a man in Marcus's position would travel in ways that could not be undone.

Marcus had heard things. He had assembled things from what he had heard. He had a conclusion he had been holding at arm's length for five months.

He did not write back to Ellenbogen that evening.

He opened the bottom drawer of the desk — the one that swelled in damp weather and required a firm pull in March — and put the letter inside. He closed the drawer. The drawer stuck slightly on the closing, which he noted without acting on.

He marked a set of compositions for the second period class. He left the school at five past four.

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At the Crow house, dinner was salt pork and beans with the cornbread Lillian made on Mondays. She had worked the canning plant shift — seven to two, the winter schedule — which Marcus could tell from the particular quality of tiredness in her shoulders as she stood at the stove. The shift left a

specific mark; a different shift left a different one. He had been boarding with the Crows for two years and had learned to read these without being asked to.

Henry was at the table with the newspaper folded to the sports column, though Marcus had long since observed that Henry read everything else first and then appeared to be on the sports when someone came in.

“How was the week at the plant?” Marcus asked.

Lillian turned from the stove with the look of someone assessing how thorough an answer the question warranted. He waited. Henry turned a page.

She told him. The new section supervisor had altered the labeling procedure, a modification she described with a precision that implied it had produced, in addition to inefficiency, a degree of friction she was managing without complaint. One of the women on her line had received a letter that week — Margery Holt, who worked the station at the end — and Lillian mentioned this in passing, the way a person mentions something that is its own weather and needs no interpretation. She said the afternoon

count had come in by two o'clock, which was better than the week before.

Marcus listened.

He was practiced at this — at being present to a conversation without requiring it to carry what he was also carrying at the same time. The dinner table at the Crow house had been, for two years, itself regardless of what the day had produced, and this was something he had come to understand as specific and valuable: that the meal be what it was. That Lillian's account of the labeling procedure be received as precisely that, and not as the interval between pieces of something else.

There was a kind of discipline in it. Not the performance of attention — he was capable of that performance, had deployed it in rooms where his attentiveness served two purposes at once, and this was not that room.

*This is what it costs*, he thought. *No more.*

He took a piece of cornbread from the pan Lillian set on the table. It was good, the way it was always good — the same proportions, the same cast iron, the

particular quality of warmth that the pan held and gave back. The goodness of it was not nothing. He had learned, in the past two years, to receive small particular goodnesses without converting them immediately into larger propositions.

“More beans?” Lillian said.

“Yes,” Marcus said. “Thank you.”

Henry set down the sports column. Outside the window the March dark was already different from January’s — less total, lifted at the edges by the light that had been returning for six weeks now. The furnace was running, but not working hard. The stove ticked. Through the kitchen window the yard was dark but not yet fully dark, and that small remainder of light before the dark was the thing that March was, before spring was actually spring.

Henry said something about the furnace flue — something that had apparently happened on Thursday that Marcus had not been told about, which prompted Lillian to say that she had specifically asked Henry to mention it, which prompted Henry to begin the explanation. It involved a nest.

He was certain it was a starling's, though Lillian thought the construction was too compact for starlings. Marcus had no expertise in nesting materials. He said so, which Henry found satisfactory, and the question of the nest occupied them through the second helping and into the clearing of the table.

The letter was in the drawer at the school. Marcus did not think about it further.

He had not written back to Ellenbogen. In the morning he would teach the compound noun to the second-period class and mark the compositions he had left at the bottom of his bag. Tonight the dishes were washed in the Crow house kitchen, and the stove settled into its low voice, and Marcus sat with his cup at the table while Henry lit his pipe and Lillian put up what remained of the beans for tomorrow's lunch, and the ordinary weight of the evening distributed itself across the room in a way that was not relief exactly — relief implied a preceding tension that he was not willing to name — but was at minimum its own answer to the question of whether any of this mattered.

He thought it did.



He could not have been more precise than that,  
and he did not try.

## The Dory

The mooring registry for the spring season ran to four pages. She had the winter lay-up log beside it and was working through the columns — each berth, each vessel, each registered owner — when Dakin came in at half past ten.

He was the first of them back, that was his habit. His dragger had been in the covered slip since before Thanksgiving, which was earlier than most and also his habit. He came in with his mooring renewal already filled out in the close, careful handwriting he used for official forms. He set it on the counter.

She checked it against the registry. Berth 9, south side. The fee was three dollars and seventy-five cents.

He put three dollars and three quarters on the counter. She counted it, which was a formality and which she performed anyway. She wrote the receipt and handed it across. He folded it and put it in his shirt pocket.

“Setting gear this week?” she asked.

“Monday,” he said. “If the weather holds.”

She made the notation in the registry: *Dakin, A. — Alice D. — Berth 9S — Renewed, spring season 1944 — Pd. in full.*

Dakin picked up his cap from the counter. He moved toward the door. He stopped.

“I keep thinking I should have said something,” he said. “About the thing I saw in October.”

She put down her pen.

“Say it now,” she said.

He stood with one hand on the doorframe and looked at the harbor rather than at her. The harbor was clear today, the last of the winter ice gone two weeks back, the water running that particular gray-green that came with the longer days before the plankton had a chance to cloud it.

He said: back in early October, before the blow, he’d been hauling traps off the north beach at low tide. He’d come around the breakwater end on foot — the tide was low enough to make the beach pass-

able — and there was a dory pulled up on the beach rocks above the tide line.

“Not one of mine,” he said. “Not one I knew.”

He said: no markings he recognized. It was a small dory, built differently than the boats he knew. The planking was wrong — he’d looked at it a moment and the planking was wrong, the way the strakes were fastened, the angle; he couldn’t say exactly. The thwarts were in a different place than a Maine dory. It looked foreign to him.

He had thought someone was sheltering. He hadn’t thought beyond that.

She said: “When exactly in October?”

He said: around the tenth. Maybe the eleventh. He wasn’t certain.

“Before the blow,” she said.

“Before the blow,” he said. “The boat was there in the morning. I wasn’t back on that side of the break-water again before the storm came.”

She said: “Did you see gear in it? Lines, anything?”

He said: there was a canvas bag under the bow thwart. He hadn't touched it. He hadn't looked inside. He'd thought someone was sheltering — maybe a weekend fisherman from up the coast who'd come around the point ahead of weather and found the beach.

"Why didn't you—" She stopped. She said: "When did you put it together?"

"After they took the body," he said. "When Farris came around asking." He looked out at the harbor still. "I thought about saying it then. I thought about it again after the fellow from the Navy came by in December. By then it seemed — I don't know. Too long past."

She said: "Thank you, Dakin."

He nodded. He put on his cap. He went out and down the wharf toward Berth 9.

She watched him through the window until he was far enough that he wouldn't see it. Then she sat down.

---

The tide was falling. She had maybe two hours before the north beach closed back up.

She signed out in the log — *Office closed 11:10, Bowman* — and walked the long way around to the north side of the breakwater. The wharf was quiet. Ames wouldn't be in until noon, and the few boats back from the winter were moored but not attended. She went past the end of the wharf and down the granite steps to the low-tide path.

The north side of the breakwater was not part of the harbor proper. The harbor proper was on the south side — the wharves, the boat ramp, the storage sheds, the mooring field. The north side was what the breakwater was built to protect against: the open water, the approach from the east, the weather that came in from that quarter. The breakwater's north face was granite, bare, stained orange at the tide line with iron leaching from the stone. Below the tide line it went green with kelp.

The beach was a hundred yards of beach rock and shell debris, tucked between the breakwater's seaward end and the granite ledge that formed the north point of the harbor approach. You couldn't see it

from the harbor side. You couldn't see it from the road. You could see it from the water if you were looking for it.

She walked out to it.

Six months of tide had left the beach clean. There was nothing from October — no wood, no canvas, no marks in the rock. She hadn't expected anything. She stood on the beach rocks and looked at the water and then at the breakwater above her and then at the sky, which was clear and high and pale the way late March sky was, the color not yet back in it.

She looked at where the dory would have been. Above the tide line the beach ran fifteen feet before it met the base of the breakwater — a shelf of stacked rock and old beach material that the winter storms had consolidated into a reasonably stable surface. A small dory, pulled above the high-water mark. A man's gear in a canvas bag under the bow thwart.

She looked from that point up to where the breakwater connected with the wharf structure at its landward end. If you came off this beach and climbed the granite and came around to the harbor side, you

were at the north end of the main wharf. Which put you at the north mooring bollard — the one she had checked at 2 a.m. on the eleventh, the one near which she had seen the man she had not hailed.

These were the positions.

The north breakwater beach, where the dory had been. The north wharf, where she had seen him. The breakwater, where the body had come in.

All on the same side of the harbor. A line running roughly northwest: beach to wharf to breakwater, three hundred yards of coastline. The man had moved along this line from east to west — arriving at the beach, coming around to the wharf — over the course of three days that remained in the unverifiable column.

Or he had not moved. Or the blow had caught him somewhere between the wharf and the breakwater's end and the current had done the rest.

She was not going to know which.

She stood on the beach for several minutes. She was looking at the physical relationships between positions on the harbor's north side and holding what



they added up to. The water was doing what water did at this state of the tide: running, working at the channels below the rock, pulling at the kelp. The horizon to the east was clear. It was probably forty miles to the nearest Maritime landfall from here — Digby or Annapolis if he'd come from Nova Scotia, closer if he'd crossed from the Bay of Fundy. In a dory, in October, at night: possible. Not comfortable. Possible, if he knew what he was doing and the weather held for the crossing.

The weather had held for the crossing. Then three days later it hadn't.

She didn't know where the dory was now. The Coast Guard had come for the body and asked their questions and taken their records and had not mentioned a dory. Either they hadn't found it — the blow could have lifted it off the beach if it had been pulled barely above the high-water mark — or they had found it and said nothing to her, which was the Coast Guard's prerogative, which was possible. Or someone else had found it in the days between October 11 and the storm and moved it, for reasons she couldn't verify.

She would ask Dakin whether he had seen it again. The next time she saw him.

She turned around and walked back along the north face of the breakwater, back up the granite steps, back to the wharf. The mooring field was quiet. The water was gray-green and flat. The spring light was doing what spring light did — coming back, steady, without ceremony.

---

At her desk she opened the harbor log and held the pen over the page.

The last entry was this morning's: *Office opened 7:40 AM, Bowman. Dakin, A. — mooring renewal, spring season, Berth 9S — paid in full.*

Below that the blank line.

She wrote:

*Dakin, A. reports small craft (dory, non-Maine build) observed on north breakwater beach, above tide line, approx. Oct. 10–11, 1943. Not registered. Not reported at time of observation. Canvas bag un-*

*der bow thwart, unexamined. No remains of craft present on inspection today, 11:40 AM, low tide. B.*

She read it back. It was accurate. It was oblique — a reader coming to it without context would understand it as a minor harbor irregularity, an unreported transient vessel, the kind of detail that accumulated in any active log without much consequence. A reader who had the full record in front of them — the body entry from October 14, Farris's visit in October, the December notation about the Naval Intelligence inquiry — might assemble something different from it. She had not made that easier or harder. She had put what Dakin gave her into the record, six months late and second-hand, but in.

She put the pen down.

She sat back and looked at the harbor through the window. Berth 9 was empty; Dakin had already gone out to check on his gear. The mooring field held six boats, which was six more than it had held in February, and by May there would be thirty. This was the ordinary arithmetic of spring, and she turned it in her mind the way she turned the numbers she counted when she needed a moment to be still.

The canvas bag. He'd carried it across from wherever he'd started. He'd either carried it up from the beach with him when he came to the wharf, or he'd left it in the dory. She thought he'd carried it — a man crossing like that, in October, didn't leave his one bag in an unlocked boat on an open beach. But that was inference. She didn't press it.

What was in the bag, she would likely never know.

She opened the spring registry to where she had stopped and picked up her pen. The column of boats and berths continued below the notation she'd left off at: Greaves, T. — *Evelyn M.* — Berth 4N — renewal pending. She found her place and wrote the next line.

Outside, the harbor was doing its spring work: the current running in from the east, the mooring buoys standing up in the flat air, the water working steadily at the wharves.

## Will's Letter

Thursday was the day she stopped at the post office on her way home from school, which meant going past it instead of through town and three miles stretched to closer to four. She didn't mind it. By April the afternoons were long enough.

Mrs. Gaines was sorting behind the counter when Hannah came in. She looked up once, looked back at the sorting. Then she reached into the W partition and came back with an envelope.

It was V-Mail proportions — small, squared off, the reproduction paper slightly grayish at the margins. The handwriting was Will's. She had not seen his handwriting on anything since August, and even then she had looked at the return address first, the way she always did, reading the smudged APO postmark as though it might tell her which particular part of the Pacific.

She thanked Mrs. Gaines. She went out onto the road.

She did not open it.

---

The walk was three miles, mostly flat, with one long grade up past the Haskell woodlot and then down again to the farm lane. In April the road was mud where the frost had come out of the ground and she walked the grassy shoulder where she could. The envelope was in her coat pocket. She could feel it as she walked — small, slightly stiff, lighter than it had any right to be. V-Mail was microfilm printed down to a quarter of the original page. Whatever Will had written had been made small to cross the ocean. She thought about that sometimes — the way the letters shrank in transit, the handwriting coming through the process slightly blurred at the edges.

She went faster on the downgrade.

---

The kitchen was empty when she came in. Her mother was somewhere in the house; no sounds of movement, which was the usual. Her father was in the north field — she had seen the prisoners working

from the road, the figures dark against the new April brown of the earth, the horses pulling the plow line.

She sat down at the kitchen table and opened the envelope.

The letter was one page, the reproduction small enough that she had to lean close. Will's handwriting, cramped as if he had been counting the space he had, the letters not quite touching. She read it through once.

*Hannah —*

*I am all right. I have been in a place I can't say where but I am all right. There was some action but I came through it fine. I hope the farm is well. Give my best to Pop and Mother.*

*There is a fellow in my unit named Briggs who showed me a card trick last week and I have been trying to work out how it's done ever since. I can't get it. He won't tell me. I think about it when I don't have other things to think about, which is not as often as I'd like.*

*Tell Pop I'm sorry I haven't written. Tell him it doesn't mean anything except that things have been going. He'll understand.*

*I'm all right, Hannah. I am.*

— Will

She read it again.

The second time through she noticed the things she had not quite caught on the first pass: the sentence that said *there was some action but I came through it fine*, built the way a sentence is built when the person writing it has decided the sentence is the limit of what will be said about that. The place he had been, which had no name. *Things have been going* — not *we've been busy*, not *it's been hard*, but *things have been going*, which was nearly a weather report. And then at the end: *I'm all right, Hannah. I am.*

She sat with it for a moment.

The kitchen smelled of yesterday's coffee and the mud she'd tracked in. From somewhere in the house a door settled on its frame.



She was still holding the letter when her father came in from the field.

He came in the side door, coat still on, and stopped when he saw her at the table. His eyes moved from her face to the envelope.

She held the letter out to him without speaking.

He took it. He moved to the counter by the sink and held it under the light from the window, still in his coat, coat collar turned up. He had the habit with English of moving his lips slightly as he read. She watched him read. He reached the end of the page.

He was still for a moment.

He put the letter on the table.

He pulled out his chair and sat down.

His shoulders moved. He brought one hand up over his face. The sound was barely anything — a brief intake, and then only the slight movement of his back. His hand stayed over his face.

Hannah turned to look out the window.

The yard was empty, the mud gray-brown from last week's rain. The dogwood at the corner of the fence had come out this week — white flowers against the bare wood, early this year. She looked at it. She did not go to her father. She had lived with him long enough to know the shape of what he needed to finish.

The refrigerator made its low sound. A board somewhere in the house.

After perhaps two minutes — she did not look at the clock; she measured it by the light, which had not moved — she heard him take his hand away from his face. She heard him set it on the table.

He said, in German: *Er lebt. Das ist genug.*

He said it to the table, or to himself, or to Magda's empty chair. Hannah did not know which. It did not seem to require an audience.

She said: *Ja.*

There was a sound from the doorway.

Magda stood at the kitchen doorway, her hands at her sides. She wore the blue house dress. She looked

at Albrecht — looked at him the way she had not looked at anything in the kitchen for months, which was directly, without the careful management of sight Hannah had come to expect from her.

She came into the kitchen.

She put her hand on his shoulder.

Albrecht put his hand over hers. Not looking up, one motion, and then neither of them moved.

Hannah picked up the letter from the table and folded it back into the envelope. She set it on the counter. She took her coat from the hook and went out.

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The south field ran down from the barn to the stone wall at the bottom of the hill — about three acres in grass still, not yet plowed, but the frost had come out of it uneven and left the ground ridged where the freeze-thaw cycles had worked the soil up from below. Her father wanted it turned before the end of the month. She got the hoe from the tool shed.

The frost-heave clods were dense. Not frozen, but compacted and reluctant, the kind that needed three or four strikes to break and then went all at once in a spray of dark crumbling soil. She worked in rows, starting at the stone wall end and moving uphill. The sun was still a couple of hours above the tree line.

From the north field she could hear the horses. The plowing was still going — she could hear the particular sound of the plow turning at the end of a row, the creak and reset, and then the horses moving again. She could not see the north field from where she stood. She worked and heard it.

She was not thinking about Will. She was thinking about the card trick.

Briggs had shown Will a card trick last week, and Will had been trying to work it out since. She had a specific image of it: Will somewhere she couldn't picture, watching another man's hands. The hands working a deck of cards. Will watching the way he watched things he wanted to understand — very still, leaned slightly forward. He was like that with machinery, with knots, with anything that had a logic he hadn't gotten to yet.

She did not know Briggs. She knew only that he did card tricks, that he was somewhere in the Pacific with Will, that he had a deck of cards and had used it. She tried to picture what he looked like and got nothing useful. She turned over another clod.

She thought: a card trick is what you mention in a letter when you want someone to know that the week had something ordinary in it. Not safe, not quiet — just ordinary, the way a card trick is ordinary. It was a thing that happened, a man with a deck of cards and Will watching his hands. It was proof of something, and she understood after a moment what it was proof of: that Will had been still long enough and safe enough to watch someone's hands. That was the week's evidence. That was what he had put in the letter.

She broke a clod and broke it again.

The muscles along her lower back had gone from warm to tight by the time the light started dropping behind the trees to the west. She had worked about a third of the field — the uphill third — the clods broken and the soil turned and the rows running

more or less even toward the wall. She stopped and straightened and stood with the hoe across her body.

She looked toward the icehouse.

---

Karl was standing at the fence.

Not working. Not walking the fence line. Standing at the post nearest the corner of the icehouse yard, facing the south field. He had been there for some time, probably — she had been in the field for two hours and the light was clear and he would have only had to look. He was standing with his arms at his sides the way a person stands when they have been watching something without meaning to decide to watch it.

He did not wave.

She picked up the hoe.

She started toward the barn. The path to the barn cut past the icehouse fence at roughly fifteen yards — close enough to hear, not close enough to require anything. She was not going to him. She was going to the barn.

She walked the line. She did not look over at him. The April air was still, the light gone from the south field but still sitting in the treetops. She passed the corner post.

She said, without stopping, her voice level, at whatever volume the fifteen yards of still air might carry:

*Er lebt.*

She did not look. She did not stop. She went through the barn door.

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Inside it smelled of hay and horses and the day's work. The cows were at their stanchions waiting, which meant she was three minutes ahead of when they usually got impatient. She hung the hoe on the bracket and stood in the barn aisle a moment with her hands still feeling the hoe's weight.

*Er lebt. Das ist genug.*

Her father's sentence. She had said the first half of it — to a fence she had not looked at, to a figure she

was not certain had heard. She was not sure about the second half.

She went down the aisle to start the milking.



# Licensing

The folder was school property — buff-colored, pressed-board cover, the kind issued to administrators at the start of each year. Marcus had used the inside of his for gradebook tabs and correspondence that didn't belong anywhere else. He had removed all of that this morning, replaced it with the boat registration forms from the district office, and put the folder in his coat pocket.

He was wearing his good jacket. He noticed this in the mirror by the front door — the charcoal tweed, the one he kept for the school board and occasional events in Portland, hanging now on a man who was walking to the harbor for a routine permit. He stood in front of the mirror for a moment. He did not change jackets.

The walk from the school to the harbor was fifteen minutes along Main Street and then down to the wharf. Late April had been tentative — cold nights, warm afternoons, the streets muddy by midmorning — but today the light had come in at the right angle

and the mud was drying. The harbor was visible from the foot of Main Street: the breakwater, the moored draggers, the harbormaster's office at the landward end of the wharf. He could see the office's chimney smoke from a block away.

He had been looking for a sufficient reason since October.

He carried the folder under his arm and did not think about that particular sentence. He thought instead about the rowing program, which was held in May on the Reach, which had been authorized by the school board three years before he arrived, which required annual registration of the two boats with the harbormaster's office, and which he had inherited from the athletic department because he was the one who had agreed to supervise the water when no one else wanted the early mornings.

The boats were twelve-foot aluminum-hulled shells. They were stored on the school wharf from September to April. The permit was straightforward.

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The harbormaster's office smelled of diesel and wet rope and something else underneath — the low-tide smell off the Reach, salt-mineral, the kind that deepened rather than dissipated the longer you were in the room. The wood stove in the corner was putting out a steady heat. On a shelf above the window: the BC-1206, its face turned toward the harbor-side wall, a voice coming through it at low volume, Portland identifying itself in brief bursts between weather readings.

Eira Bowman was at her desk with the mooring registry open.

She looked up.

She said: "Dr. Klein."

He said: "Harbormaster." He put the folder on the desk.

The permit application took approximately the time he had expected. She asked the standard questions: how many boats, what length, what hull type, where stored, who had authorization to move them. He had the answers — two, twelve-foot, aluminum shell, school wharf, slip C, district authorization held

by the principal's office. She wrote in a neat hand in a column on the form. She did not ask him anything he wasn't ready to answer. He sat in the chair across the desk from her, which was normal — the chair was there for the purpose — and watched her go through the form with the efficiency of someone who found the form neither interesting nor taxing.

He noticed the harbor log on the corner of the desk. He noticed the arrangement of the desk, which was organized in a way that suggested a person who knew where everything was and preferred it to remain where she had put it. He noticed the window, which gave onto the harbor — the breakwater visible at the far end, the chop on the Reach silver in the afternoon light.

He said: "Do you use the shortwave for the weather, mostly?"

She had been writing. She finished the line before she looked up.

She said: "Weather and harbor traffic. Occasionally Portland."

He said: “I have a Zenith portable at the Crow house. I use it for the news.”

She said: “The news is different from the weather.”

He said: “In what sense?”

She considered the question for a moment as though it had been worth asking. She said: “Weather is predictable if you know how to read it. The news mostly isn’t.” She signed the permit at the bottom. She slid it across the desk.

He took it. He looked at it. The form was complete. The boats were registered for the season.

He did not stand.

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He said: “May I ask you something unrelated to the permit?”

A pause. She did not look away. She said: “You can ask.”

He set the permit on the folder on his knee.

He said: “The body in October. I’ve been thinking about it — as someone who spent time in transit across Europe and Canada before the war. I have a hypothesis about how he came to be here. I recognize I may be wrong.”

She looked at him. Her expression did not change in any way that would have allowed him to use the word expression. She said: “What’s your hypothesis?”

He said: “That he came across the water from the Maritime Provinces. That he was moving without official documentation — or with documentation that was no longer usable. That whatever organization moved him lost track of him after the crossing, and that the blow caught him somewhere between here and wherever he was trying to reach.” He paused. He had thought about how to say the next part. He said it as he had thought it: “I think it’s possible that I know of the networks that arrange such crossings. Church affiliates, largely — Lutheran in Quebec, Methodist in New Brunswick — working with labor intermediaries in Vermont and Maine. I was not moved by them myself. But I know of them.”

He waited.

She did not move. She was looking at him in the way that Eira Bowman looked at things she was measuring.

She said: “Why are you telling me this?”

He said: “Because I think you may already know it. And because I don’t want to be the only one carrying it.”

The room was quiet except for the BC-1206. The Portland voice said something in weather language — southeast wind, twelve knots, slight chop in the bay — and then the voice went under static.

She reached up to the shelf above the window and turned the volume down.

She said: “I don’t know anything officially. The Coast Guard has the case.”

He said: “Yes.”

She said: “I appreciate you coming in for the permit.”

He said: “Thank you for your time.” He picked up the folder and stood.

---

He was at the door when he stopped.

He did not turn around. He said it to the door, or to the space between himself and the desk: “For what it’s worth — I think what happened to him was not anyone’s fault. Or not anyone here.”

He went out.

---

Main Street in the late afternoon. The tide smell off the Reach diminished as he climbed away from the harbor. A truck went past him heading south. The pharmacy had its light on, the soda fountain occupied by two women he recognized from the school board’s clerical office.

He walked.

He thought about what she had said and what she had not said. He thought about the BC-1206 — the weather coming through, the weather as predictable



as she had said it was when you knew how to read it — and about her hand going up to the dial, the volume dropping, the coast-station voice going to silence. She had done it cleanly, without hesitation, the way a person moves something out of the room when the room has become private.

She knew. She had known before he spoke. She had been carrying this since October, which was — he arrived at the arithmetic without intending to — six months and some days. The same length of time he had been carrying it, having formed his hypothesis in the first weeks after the body came in and carried it the way he carried most things: filed, in language, not spoken until now.

*Die Last ist real, aber sie ist nicht neu.*

He had not translated this into English before it came. German arrived first, sometimes — not because he was being imprecise but because this particular thought had a German shape: the weight is real, but it is not new. He had been carrying weight since 1938. He was practiced. He suspected she was practiced in a different way.

His final line — *not anyone's fault, or not anyone here* — he turned over as he walked.

He was not certain she had wanted the gift. He had given it anyway.

The school came into view at the end of Main Street, the brick front catching the afternoon light. He went up the steps and in through the side door. The building was after hours — halls empty, the furnace working against the April chill that came back in the evenings. He hung his coat on the hook outside his classroom and sat at his desk for a few minutes. He took the permit out of the folder and put it in the top drawer, beside the boat registration files from the previous two springs. He put the folder in the stack on the corner of his desk. He looked at the bottom drawer — the swollen one, the one that required a lift and a pull — and did not open it.

He stayed perhaps ten minutes. Then he locked the classroom and walked home.

---

Henry was in the kitchen when Marcus came in, working at something on the counter. He turned.

“Harbor,” Marcus said. “The boats.”

Henry said: “Did you get them permitted?”

Marcus said: “Yes.”

Henry nodded and turned back to the counter. Lillian was at the stove. The house smelled of something with onion in it, and the warmth of it reached Marcus in the doorway before anything else.

He hung up his coat — the good jacket, which Henry did not remark upon — and went to wash his hands.

They ate dinner. Henry had a story from the school day about a student and a stuck window. Lillian described a woman from the canning plant whose sister had been in from Bangor. Marcus ate what was put in front of him, which was good, and listened to what was said, which was ordinary, and did not use the table to carry anything from the harbor.

After dinner Henry poured two cups of coffee and Marcus followed him to the sitting room. The chess set was on the low table by the window. They sat.

Henry made the first move.

Marcus looked at the board. He moved a pawn.

Outside, the Reach would be going dark — the breakwater, the moored boats, the harbormaster's office at the landward end of the wharf with its stove and its log and its shortwave turned to low. He did not think about this for long. He looked at the board, at Henry's position, at what the next several moves were likely to require.

Henry said: "Your game."

Marcus moved.

## The Log Entry

The harbor in May had a different weight to it than the harbor in winter — more traffic, longer light, the smell of the algae bloom coming in off the Reach in the afternoons, green and low and not unpleasant if you were used to it. Eira was used to it.

The *Sainte-Marguerite* came in just after seven on a Tuesday morning, a small coastal freighter out of Moncton, New Brunswick — maybe a hundred and ten feet, carrying sawn lumber stacked on deck under chain and canvas, her waterline lower than Eira liked to see for the Reach's turning basin. She had handled the *Sainte-Marguerite*'s transit papers before, two seasons running: the captain was a squat man named Aubert who arrived with his documents in order and expected the same from her. She had no objection to that expectation.

She processed the transit at the dock while the *Sainte-Marguerite* was still making fast. Aubert handed her the manifest and the certificates — cargo, vessel registry, last port — and she went through

them in the same order she always did, which was the order on the form. Lumber, dry-framed, domestic species. Port of origin: Moncton. Destination: Portland. Nothing unusual.

She was noting the fender situation on the bow when one of the crewmen spoke to her from the deck.

“Excuse me,” he said. “The fender on the port bow — it is positioned too high.”

He was perhaps twenty-five, dark-haired, speaking over the rail. His English was correct but formal — the English of a man who had learned it in a classroom and was accustomed to translating as he spoke. There was a French shape underneath it, Acadian, the vowels slightly rounder than the Quebecois she occasionally heard in the harbor.

She looked at the port bow fender. He was right. The eye-bolt had been threaded too high on the cleat during the last adjustment, and the fender was riding six inches above where it needed to be to protect the hull from the wharf cleat.

She said: “Thank you. I’ll have Ames move it before you take on fuel.”

He nodded and went back to his work. That was the whole of the conversation.

---

She thought about it later, when the *Sainte-Marguerite* was taking on fuel and Aubert had gone below for coffee. She was at the dock with the transit form on her clipboard, watching Ames adjust the fender, which he did without being asked a second time. The fender was where it should be.

She had been around enough Maritime French in eight years as harbormaster to recognize the accent. The young man’s English was not unusual. What was unusual — she tried to locate it more precisely — was the quality of it. The grammar was careful without being stiff. He was building his sentences the way a person builds sentences in a language that requires effort. She had heard Marcus Klein do something like this, ten days ago in her office: the particular construction of a man whose thoughts were not in English and who was translating as he went, not

from inability but from habit, from having learned that the translation was worth doing right.

She wrote nothing on the transit form that required noting. She went back to the office.

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The *Sainte-Marguerite* cleared the harbor mouth by noon. Eira had the afternoon ahead — a dragger wanting to register an equipment change (the *Eleanor T.* out of Berth 6, a converted hauler that had been carrying cod all winter), two transient pleasure boats that had no business being in Maine in May but had their papers in order, the mooring fee ledger to post for the week. She did the work in the sequence that made the most sense, which was the dragger first because Captain Vose needed the updated documentation by end of day, the pleasure boats second because they were waiting at the dock, the ledger last because the ledger would wait.

Between the dragger and the pleasure boats she had thirty minutes. She worked on the ledger. The ledger was current by the time the next boat came in.

She was thinking about the log.



Not the body. She had run the body a hundred times since October and she had what she was going to have. She was thinking about the log entry — about what it said, about sitting in this office ten days ago with Marcus Klein in the chair across the desk and the BC-1206 at low volume on the shelf. About whether she had thought what she thought she was thinking, or whether she had been approaching something she hadn't arrived at yet.

The second pleasure boat was a 30-foot sloop out of Portsmouth, owner a tanned man in his fifties named Pratt who was delivering her to a buyer in Bar Harbor and wanted to know if there were any good places to eat. She told him the diner on Maple Street was the only option and it was adequate. He seemed satisfied. She noted the sloop in the transit register and gave him the fee receipt.

She finished the mooring ledger at four-thirty. She filed it. She made a note to call the Portland harbor master's office about the pleasure boat registration form, which had a line of data she hadn't been able to read through the carbon. She put the note in the wire basket and looked at the wall.

The harbor log was on the corner of the desk.

She picked it up and put it in her bag.

She had almost never taken the harbor log home in twelve years.

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The house was two blocks up from the wharf on Merchant Street — a cape, two bedrooms, the front room with Owen's reading chair in the corner, the kitchen where she ate most of her meals. She had lived here for twenty-three years and for the last nine she had lived in it alone.

She put the bag on the kitchen table. She started the stove and got the pan on for eggs, because it was Tuesday and she generally had eggs on Tuesday when she hadn't organized anything else. She made dinner. She ate at the kitchen table. She washed the dishes and set them on the rack to dry.

She stood at the kitchen window for a moment and looked out at the alley. The neighbor's apple tree was leafing. The alley was empty.

She went back to the kitchen table. She sat down with nothing in front of her.

She got up. She put the kettle on.

She got the harbor log out of the bag and set it on the table.

---

October's entries were in the middle of the book. She had filled half of this log since January, and the binding lay flat when she opened to the right page. She found October 11 without looking.

*Mooring lines north wharf — all secure. Wind NW 12 knots.*

She had written it. The handwriting was hers. The entry beside it was standard: fuel purchase at 0940, a lobster boat registered in Tenant's Harbor running south; mooring fee received from *Penobscot Girl*, overdue thirty days. Nothing unusual.

She turned the page. October 12: wind increasing, a skiff she had moved to the south mooring field before noon, a notice to the dragger fleet about the forecast. October 13: the blow in full, no traffic, her

own check of the south mooring lines at 0600, no damage noted.

October 14.

*Body discovered on north breakwater, 0612. USCG notified and present 0740. Body removed 0830. Breakwater clear.*

She had written this in the same hand as the rest of it. It read the way things read when you had put them in the record and the record had moved on: factual, complete, the event contained within it in the way that log entries contained things.

She read it again.

She went back to October 11. She read: *Mooring lines north wharf — all secure. Wind NW 12 knots.*

What she had put in: the mooring lines, the wind speed, the fuel sale, the lobster boat passing south, the *Penobscot Girl's* overdue fee. The harbor at normal business on a night with northwest wind at twelve knots.

What she had not put in: that she had been out to check the north wharf lines at two in the morning

because the northwest wind had picked up through the evening and she was concerned about the *Penobscot Girl's* line tension, which had been sloppy for two weeks — and that she had found the lines secure and also found a man she did not recognize standing at the far end of the north wharf, thirty feet from her, not moving.

The kettle started. She did not get up.

She had not put in: that he was wearing dark clothing, that he was standing with his back partly to her, that she had not hailed him because she was not certain of what she was seeing in the dark. That she had gone back to the office. That three days later the body came in.

She had not put in any of it because none of it was in the log.

*I think what happened to him was not anyone's fault. Or not anyone here.*

She had been carrying that for ten days. She had taken it out in the office a dozen times and looked at it. He had said it at the door, to the space between

himself and the desk, without requiring her to respond. She didn't know yet what to do with it.

She got up and moved the kettle. She made tea. She came back to the table and set the cup beside the log.

She looked at the front room from where she was sitting. Owen's reading chair was in the corner, the brown leather one with the worn patch on the arm where his elbow had rested. She did not look at it directly.

She picked up the tea. It was too hot to drink. She held it anyway.

---

She closed the log at eight-thirty. She put it back in the bag. She washed out the teacup. She set the lamp timer in the front room and turned off the kitchen light and went to bed.

The room was dark and quiet except for the harbor — she was close enough to the water that she could hear the lines on the nearest boats working

against the tide, a low sound, ordinary. She had slept to it for years.

She was thinking about the man on the north wharf.

She had run this before. The geometry of it: the north beach where Dakin had found the dory, the north wharf where she had seen the man, the break-water where the body came in — three points on the same northwest side of the harbor, three hundred yards end to end. She had run Farris's questions and Hale's questions and the Portland trip and what Marcus had said in the office. She knew the shape of it, most of it. The man had come across from the Maritime Provinces in a borrowed dory and landed on the north beach in the dark and come up to the north wharf and the blow had taken him three days later.

She had run all of that.

She had not run this: why he had not spoken.

Thirty feet apart on the north wharf at two in the morning. She had paused. He had not moved. She had not hailed him; she had told herself this was

because she was not certain enough of what she was seeing, because it was dark, because it was not her job to accost men on the wharf in the night. This was true. It remained true.

What was also true: she had been in her harbor-master's coat, the name of the office stenciled on the back. She had been carrying a lantern. She had been, to anyone watching from thirty feet in the dark, exactly what she was: a person with authority.

*He was afraid of me.*

She thought it once. It settled.

He had not spoken to her because he had not known what she would do — whether she was the person he was supposed to meet or the person who would hand him to a government. He was a man who had come across open water without papers and he was standing on a wharf in a country he had no claim to yet, and a figure with a lantern and official markings had come out of the dark, and he had gone still and silent.



She had been silent too. And he had not moved. And she had gone back to the office and written what she had written.

The log did not contain the man. She had made it that way. It was hers to have made.

She lay still. The lines worked against the tide. The harbor was predictable in the dark, if you knew how to read it.

She did not run it again.

She slept.

# The Columbine

She was eighteen before the cows were milked.

This was how she counted it: she lay in her room in the early light on the second of June and thought, *ich bin achtzehn*, the German arriving first the way it sometimes did in the gap between sleeping and waking, and then she got up and dressed and went down to the kitchen and by the time she had the milking pail off the hook on the wall she was eighteen and nothing about the morning had noticed.

Her father was already at the table with his coffee. He looked up when she came in. He said: "*Alles Gute, mein Kind.*"

She said thank you.

He went back to his coffee. He had the look of a man going through the field plan in his head — eyes not quite settled, one hand flat on the table, the other around the cup. The north field needed another pass with the harrow before the weekend. She knew this

because he had said it twice yesterday and would likely say it again this morning.

Her mother was at the stove. Magda did not look up. She was making oatmeal, stirring it the way she always stirred things now — with full attention, as though the stirring required everything. Hannah set the milking pail by the door and poured herself coffee and stood at the window with it. The tree line was the same pale that it always was before the sun cleared the ridge. *Der Morgen zieht sich*, her father used to say, when he still said things like that in English. Morning takes its time.

She drank her coffee. Her mother set the oatmeal on the table. They ate.

Lonzo's truck came at seven-thirty, same as always. Hannah watched it from the kitchen window — she was rinsing her bowl at the sink and she heard the engine turn into the lane and then she saw the truck come through the gap in the fence line and slow down at the icehouse. The four men got out. She watched them unload their tools from the truck bed. Karl was third off the truck. He didn't look toward the house.

She put her bowl on the rack and went out to the barn.

---

The day was full in the way that late-spring days were full on the farm — every hour spoken for before it arrived. She fenced the gap at the south corner of the lower pasture first, the one where the second calf had gotten through twice in April and her father had run out of patience with it. The wire was old and had rusted at the staple and she had to cut the bad section and splice in the new. She got it done before nine. She moved the calves to the upper pasture. She filled the water trough.

The prisoners were on the far side of the farm — she could hear the horses working somewhere past the line of birch that divided the north field. Her father was with them, or near them. She had a sense of his position the way you develop a sense of the positions of people you work with, without always seeing them. He moved north, then west, then north again over the course of the morning. She moved east and south. They were covering the farm the way

two people who don't need to discuss it cover something that needs covering.

She had not spoken to Karl in five days. Five days was not unusual. Spring pressed everything flat — the days started before light and ended near dark and there was too much between those points to stand at a fence for conversation. She had passed the icehouse fence a dozen times in the last week and he had been in the north field or she had been in the wrong place or Lonzo had been sitting in his truck in the lane with a clear view. It hadn't seemed like much, any particular day. Added together it was five days.

She thought about this while she mucked out the near stall. She thought about it the way you think about things while doing a job that doesn't require you — the thought moving around in the back while the hands worked. Five days. Before that it had been three days. Before that they had talked briefly about the east fence post, the one he'd repaired in the frost heave back in March — she'd asked him how he'd set it, whether he'd used the same post anchor, and he'd explained it in German with some gesturing toward

the ground, and Lonzo had been eating his lunch in the truck with his back to them, and the conversation had been about the post and also not quite only about the post, and then her father had called her name from the barn and she'd gone.

She finished the stall. She moved the barrow.

---

Albrecht called her to the north field at noon. The prisoners had moved to the far west section, and Lonzo was with them, and her father wanted her on the horse team for the harrow pass — three runs along the length of the field before the light changed, he said, and he said it in German, which she had long since stopped noting. She took the near horse and her father took the far. They went down the field together. The earth turned up dark and wet-smelling. Overhead the sky was a straight blue without cloud, the kind of sky in early June that made you feel the summer was actually going to arrive.

After the first pass she looked down the row and her father was already turning his horse for the second. She turned too.

This was enough. This was what eighteen was, on a farm, in a county that needed its fields harrowed. Her father had said *alles Gute* at breakfast. The horses were in good condition. The north field was two-thirds done before noon. She did not need anything different.

After the third pass they led the horses back to the barn and she sponged the near horse while her father did the far. He said: *Der geht gut heute*. The near horse was going well today. She agreed. They hung the halters and went back to the respective things they had been doing before noon.

---

The afternoon milking ran early because Albrecht needed her in the field again by three. She ran it at one-thirty, which the cows didn't particularly like but tolerated. She moved through it quickly — fourteen cows, the near stalls, the familiar resistance of each and then the release, the sound of the milk going into the pail. The barn smelled the same it always had: hay and manure and the particular warm heaviness of cows, which was not a bad smell if you had grown up with it.

She was taking the pails to the cooler when she remembered the ledger form.

There was a county feed supplement form she needed to return by Friday. She had meant to walk it to the mailbox at the road's end yesterday and had forgotten. She had three-quarters of an hour before her father needed her again.

She washed her hands at the barn tap, dried them on her work apron, and went to the house. The form was in the kitchen drawer where she'd left it. She folded it into its envelope, sealed it, and took her coat from the hook.

The road's end was a quarter mile from the farmhouse, down the lane past the barn and then along the field edge to where the farm lane met the main road. She walked it. The mailbox was there — the Pfeiffer name on it in the green paint she had redone two summers ago. She opened it.

No V-Mail.

There was a notice from the county agricultural office and a card from the creamery about summer pickup schedules. She put the ledger form in and



raised the flag. She took the notice and the card and put them in her coat pocket.

She stood for a moment at the road's end. The main road was empty — no cars, no one on foot. The birches at the fence line were in full leaf now, pale green against the sky. She turned back up the lane.

---

She was passing the east fence when she saw it.

The east fence ran along the property line between the main yard and the icehouse yard — the boundary Lonzo and the county had established when the icehouse was converted, a practical fence, post and wire, put in on a Tuesday in October 1943 by men who were not thinking about it as anything except a requirement. She passed along it fifty times a week. She knew each post. She had helped re-string two sections in April.

The second post from the north corner was the one Karl had repaired in March, after the frost heave had pushed it six inches out of true. She had watched him reset it from the kitchen window — the careful work of tamping the new base, checking the plumb,

getting the wire tension right before he restrung it. He had done it without being asked. The post had been fine since.

There was a flower in the gap between the post and the wire.

One stem. She saw it from ten yards. It was tucked into the space where the staple held the wire to the post — tucked in with some care, so it was held at an angle, facing up, not going to fall. The flower was columbine, the red-and-yellow kind that grew at the base of the fencerow on the eastern edge of the property, where the fence met the woodlot. She had seen those plants her whole life.

She stopped.

She looked at the flower. She looked at the ice-house yard. Lonzo's truck was on the far side of the barn — she could see the front quarter panel beyond the barn corner. She looked toward the north field. The four prisoners were visible as small dark shapes at the far end, a long way off, not facing her direction.

She stood at the fence and looked at the flower and thought about nothing in particular.

She knew the date Karl had put it there. She had mentioned June second once — in March or April, during one of the fence conversations. She had been talking about the spring planting schedule, about when her father wanted the north field ready, and she had said something about how she wanted it finished before her birthday and he had asked when that was and she had said June second and they had moved on to something else. She hadn't thought about it again.

He had thought about it.

She stood at the fence for another moment. Then she reached through the wire and took the flower.

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She carried it the rest of the way to the house with it held between two fingers, the stem down. She did not look at it on the way. She went in through the kitchen door and hung up her coat and stood at the kitchen table.

She set the flower on the table. She looked at it.

The anger came up specific and without surprise. She had been keeping the fence conversations in a particular place — practical, informational, not nothing but not this. Two people with a shared language and a fence between them. She had been careful about it, more careful than she had let herself notice, and the columbine on the post had walked through her carefulness without breaking it, just changed its grammar, the way adding one word to a sentence changes what the sentence is saying. *I know the date. I chose to mark it.* She had taken the flower because she couldn't not, and now it was on her kitchen table and she was angry about what that meant and angrier about the fact that she had no intention of throwing it away.

She stood there for a moment. Then she went to the shelf.

---

Her father's bookshelf was in the front room, beside the door: four shelves of books, mostly German, the ones he had brought from Bavaria and the ones

he had bought since, the ones her mother had boxed up in September 1942 and her father had unboxed without comment in the spring. The *Duden* was on the second shelf. He had had it as long as she could remember — a large volume, 1928, the spine gray from handling. *Duden: Die deutsche Rechtschreibung*. She had used it for school, for the German compositions Marcus assigned, for any time she needed to check a spelling or find a word she was only half-sure of. She knew which shelf it was on without looking.

She took it down. It was heavy. She carried it back to the kitchen.

She set it on the table and opened it roughly in the middle. The pages fell to the *K* section. *Kehren* at the top of the left page, *Klee* three entries down — clover, the word for clover, she had learned it from the pasture plants when she was six. She looked at it for a moment without meaning to.

She picked up the columbine and laid it flat on the right-hand page. She pressed it gently with her palm — the stem straight, the flower face-up, the small red-and-yellow petals going flat under the pressure.

She held her palm there for a moment. Then she lifted her hand and closed the book over the flower.

The book was thick enough that it didn't quite close flat. She pressed the cover down with both hands until the spine settled. Then she put the *Duden* back on her father's shelf, in its place.

She stood with her hands at her sides.

She did not tell anyone. She went out to help her father in the north field.

---

Dinner was late because the third run took longer than her father had wanted. They ate at six-thirty. Her mother had made potato soup — she had made it automatically, the way she made most things now, with the steady competence of a woman whose hands still knew how to do what her mind had stepped back from. The soup was good. Hannah had two bowls.

Her father ate and said very little, which was not unusual at the end of a long field day. His silences were different from her mother's silences — where

Magda's was a place she had withdrawn to, Albrecht's was the silence of a man whose body had done enough that day and didn't require more from him. He sat with his soup and his bread and his hands on the table, and Hannah sat across from him, and her mother sat between them, and the kitchen was the kitchen.

After the bread was gone and the soup was down to the last inch in the pot, her father looked up at the window and said: "*Heute war ein guter Tag.*"

Today was a good day. He meant the field. The harrow passes, the good behavior of both horses, the way the soil was turning exactly as it should.

She said: "*Ja.*"

He nodded. He got up and took his bowl to the sink.

---

She washed up after dinner. She dried the bowls and put them on the shelf and wiped down the table. Her mother had gone to the front room. Her father was on the porch, she could hear him through the

window. It was full light still, the long June evenings that made you feel the day wasn't finished even after dinner was done.

She hung up the dishcloth and went to the kitchen doorway and looked at the front room shelf.

The *Duden* was there, in its place, the spine a little fatter than the books on either side of it. You couldn't see anything different about it.

She turned and went to the stairs.

---

She lay on her bed in her clothes for a while and looked at the ceiling. The ceiling had a crack in it that ran from the north corner to a point above the window. She had been looking at this crack since she was seven. It had not changed.

She thought about the flower in the dictionary. She thought about *Klee*. She thought about the fence post and the way the flower had been placed into the wire gap at an angle — not dropped in, not pushed in carelessly, but angled so it would hold. She thought about the columbine plants at the base of the fen-



cerow, which Karl would have passed when Lonzo walked the detail out to the north field.

She would go to the fence tomorrow. Probably at the same time she usually did — mid-morning, when the work had settled into its rhythm and Lonzo was in his usual position and the farm's attention was elsewhere. She would go to the fence and she would talk to Karl about whatever there was to talk about — the north field, the plowing, the summer coming in, the ordinary things they talked about. She would not mention the flower. She would not thank him. She would not tell him what she had done with it.

This was the thing she was going to do.

She didn't know if it was the right thing. What she knew was that the flower was in her father's *Duden* and she had put it there, and that Karl would go to the fence tomorrow and see that the post was empty, and that he would know. She was eighteen years old and she had taken the flower and pressed it in the book and she was not going to undo it.

She closed her eyes. From outside the window the light was still coming in, thin and long, the kind of

June light that didn't know when to quit. Down in the barn the cows were settled. The farm was doing what the farm did at the end of a day that had been, as her father said, a good one.

She lay there until the light finally changed.

## Which End

The truck came at six-fifty. Karl was at the icehouse door.

Lonzo had the cab radio on already — a morning program, music and then the announcer's voice cutting in at the hour. Karl climbed into the truck bed with the other three and pulled the door to. Bremer was in first, his collar turned up. Wicke and Fischer came after. Lonzo started down the lane.

The radio came through the gap between the cab roof and the truck bed, words and then music and then words. Karl did not understand all of it. His English was the English you got from eight months of being watched and spoken at — he understood more than he let on and less than he needed. He heard: *Normandy*. Then: *invasion*. Then: *Allied forces*. Then the music came back.

He looked out the rear of the truck at the road unreeling behind them.

The bent pine was at the first turn, the one that had grown sideways out of the bank and then corrected and grown straight again, so it had a crooked elbow at seven feet. He had named it himself because it helped to have names for the fixed things. The bent pine. The stone wall that stopped and then started. The red mailbox at the fork. He watched the bent pine pass.

Nobody in the truck spoke.

---

The assignment was the west field — breaking up the compacted soil at the far end where the spring runoff had crusted it over. Hard work: first the disk harrow where the horses could go, then the hand mattocks for the sections too narrow. Karl took a far corner. The earth broke in large plates and then in smaller pieces and then it would not break further and you moved down the row and came back.

The sun came up behind him and then over him. The field steamed. He worked.

*Normandy.* He knew where it was. He had been there briefly — not in combat but on transport, a

truck detail in the spring of 1942, moving along the coast road before they sent him south to Africa. He had seen the beach. Wide and flat, the tide going out a long way. He knew what a landing on that beach required.

He thought about what a landing on that beach would look like now.

He thought about his sister Elsa. She had turned eighteen in April. He had not had a letter since February. Letters moved slowly and sometimes stopped moving entirely — this was known, this was expected. He thought about the pharmacy on the main street of Kirchheim where she worked after school, the smell of it, the glass counter. He thought about his father's hardware store two doors down: the arrangement of the bolt drawers behind the counter, each drawer labeled in his father's block letters. *M6. M8. M10.* He thought about whether the store was still there.

He moved his mattock into a crusted section. It broke apart.

He thought: if the Allies are landing on the Normandy coast — the coast he had driven along two years ago in a truck that smelled of exhaust and the other men's cigarettes — then the war was going differently than the radio had been saying. He had known this already, in the way you know things the radio doesn't say directly. From North Africa. From Italy. From the way the news from the east was given in language that didn't match what it was describing. He had known the shape of it. Today it had a name.

He worked to the end of his row. He turned and worked back.

Above him the sky was a straight blue without clouds. Early June, the summer fully arrived. The earth smelled good when it broke. He kept working.

---

At noon Lonzo called them in from the field.

The girl brought out the soup. She carried the pot in both hands and set it on the fence rail near the barn, and then the bread and the bowls beside it. She did not look at any of them directly. Her face had the

look of a person whose attention was somewhere past the yard.

Karl took his bowl and his bread and found a place to sit against the lower barn wall. He ate.

Through the open kitchen window the farmhouse radio was running. A man's voice, reading carefully: —*Allied invasion forces have established beach-heads along a fifty-mile front*—

Karl held his bowl with both hands. He ate his soup.

He looked at the east fence. The second post from the north corner — the one he had reset in March after the frost heave pushed it out of true. He had spent most of a Tuesday morning on it: pulling the old anchor, digging down, setting the new base, tamping it in stages, checking the plumb, restringing the wire. The post had been fine since.

He had put the flower there four days ago. The post was empty. It had been empty since the third.

He looked at the fence rail above the post where the wire ran straight.

She had taken it. He had thought she would. He had not been certain and then he had been.

He looked at the fence for a moment longer. Then he ate the rest of his bread.

---

They went back to the west field after noon.

Bremer came alongside him after the first hour. They worked without speaking for a while. The horses had been put up and it was only the four of them, the hand tools, the remaining crusted sections.

Bremer did not look up from his work. He said: “Did you hear the radio.”

It was not quite a question.

Karl said: “Yes.”

Bremer said nothing else. He worked his section and did not look up again.

Fischer was in a bad way. He kept stopping — lifting his head to look at the sky, scanning it the way you scanned for aircraft, then going back to his mattock, then stopping again. He had been this way



since the morning. Karl watched him from the corner of his eye and said nothing and Fischer said nothing and the afternoon went.

Wicke worked with his head down, steady and efficient, as though the day had come in the same as any other day and the only reasonable response was to finish your section. Wicke was always this way. Karl had decided some months back that this was not stupidity and not peace of mind. He did not know what it was.

The sun moved over the field. The shadows went long. Karl worked to the end of his row.

---

Albrecht Pfeiffer came out of the barn at three o'clock.

He stood at the far end of the field and looked at them. He did not call out. He made a short motion with both hands — toward the icehouse, twice. That was all.

Lonzo stood up from the fence rail and said: "All right. Come on in."

No one asked. They gathered their tools and walked in.

Lonzo loaded the truck and drove them back. They were at the icehouse by four.

---

That night the stove was lit. The single bulb went off. The icehouse held its dark.

Karl lay on his cot and listened to the stove tick and settle. Through the wall he could hear the light wind. He could not see the ceiling.

Wicke said: "What does it mean. For us."

A long pause.

Bremer said: "It means the war gets shorter."

Another pause. Longer.

Wicke said: "Which end."

Karl looked at the ceiling he could not see.

He said: "Both."

No one spoke after that. After a while Wicke's breathing slowed and went steady. Then Fischer. Then Bremer's, quieter.

Karl did not sleep.

He thought about Elsa. He thought her name: *Elsa*. He had no way to know and the not-knowing was an ordinary condition by now, a thing he had learned to carry without being able to set it down.

He thought about the Normandy coast and what it looked like. The flat beach. The long tide. He thought about what it would have looked like that morning, before the light was fully up.

He thought: the war was ending.

He thought this carefully, the same way he had turned it over all day in the field, working the mattock into the crusted ground. It was ending. He knew the shape of it. He had known the shape of it for some time. Today it had a landing site, a name, a fifty-mile front. He lay on his cot in a timber building in Maine and held it — a thing that could not be acted on, could not be changed, that was simply true.

He thought about direction. Southwest across this state he did not know, across a country he had seen only from a prisoner's distance, across an ocean, across France — south and east: Kirchheim. He knew the direction. He had always known the direction. What he did not know was whether *home* was still what he was traveling toward.

He did not think about the girl. Today was not a day for that thought.

Outside, the farm had gone quiet in the way it did after dark — not silence, but the sounds that filled the space the work sounds had left: the barn walls settling, the cows shifting in their stalls, the intermittent low wind moving through the birch trees at the property line. Karl lay on his cot and listened to all of it. The stove ticked once more and then it did not.

He waited for sleep.

## Paris, 1940

He had assigned the descent that morning.

*Aeneid*, Book VI, lines 268 through 316 — the approach to the underworld's gate: the vestibule, the old griefs waiting in the forecourt, Minos at his court, the shades in the Mourning Fields. He had written four questions on the board and set the class to work. Third row, fifth seat from the window — Hannah Pfeiffer's desk — was empty. She had not sent a note. Wakefield's office had received nothing from the Pfeiffer farm. It was a Tuesday in early June. The seat was empty. He would mark her absent and leave a space in the ledger for whatever explanation eventually came.

The passage began: *Hic locus est partis ubi se via findit in ambas*. Here is the place where the road divides into two paths.

He had not written the Latin on the board. He had given them the book and the line numbers. He walked between the rows while they worked, and at

the far end of the room he turned and faced the window: the playing field, the elm trees at the eastern boundary, the pale summer sky at ten o'clock.

He knew the passage well enough that the Latin arrived in complete sense-units, not in words. He had first read it at nineteen, in a seminar on Augustan epic at the University of Vienna, in a classroom with tall windows and long wooden benches. The professor — Engel, his name had been, Engel with his black coat and his habit of quoting without attribution — had said that Virgil's underworld was not a place but a grammar: a way of organizing what had already been lost.

Marcus had been twenty-three years old the first time he understood what Engel meant.

He walked back between the rows. The students were working. He returned to his desk.

The bell from the PA system came at 10:15. Not the lesson bell. The PA tone, Wakefield's signal that what followed required attention. Marcus looked at the ceiling — the reflex of a man still learning not to

respond to institutional announcements with his body.

*—news this morning of Allied landing operations on the Normandy coast of France, and in light of this development, the school board has determined that classes are dismissed for the remainder of the day. Students should proceed home in an orderly manner—*

He stopped listening.

He watched his class. Several of the students had put their books away before Wakefield's voice finished. A few were already at the door. Proulx, in the second row, was looking at Marcus with a question he hadn't asked. Marcus said: "You're dismissed. Go home carefully." They went.

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He stayed.

He could hear the hallway: the school's usual sound, heightened and then diminishing. Locker doors, voices running up the register with the freedom of unexpected release, the sound of thirty stu-

dents becoming sixty becoming two hundred — the whole building emptying into the June morning. He heard Miss Atherton's class dismiss next door, Atherton's voice at the back of the general noise, something about going directly home. He heard the hall empty. He heard, at some distance, the bus doors.

Then the school was quiet.

He had not heard it quiet in precisely this way before. He had heard it in January at six in the morning, before anyone arrived, preparing the day's lessons in the cold classroom while Henry started the furnace one floor below. That was a thin quiet, a waiting quiet, the building holding its breath before the day began. This was different: a quiet that had expected a different kind of noise and found instead only the furnace running in the basement, its familiar low burn audible now that there was nothing above it.

Wakefield came to the door. He knocked on the door frame with one knuckle before looking in.

"Doctor Klein. You can go, if you like."



“Thank you,” Marcus said. “I have lessons to prepare for tomorrow. I’ll lock up when I leave.”

Wakefield looked at him for a moment. Then he nodded and went.

His footsteps went down the hall. The outer door opened and closed. Marcus listened to the silence fill in behind it.

---

He sat at his desk.

He had not opened the grade book or the lesson plan folder. He had placed them in front of him when the class left — a displacement, a performance for no audience, the action of a man who intended to work and had not yet admitted he would not. He put both hands flat on the desk.

Out the window: the elms at the east edge of the playing field, the sky above them. In early June the elms were fully leafed and the green they produced was a particular dense green, almost heavy, that he associated with this northern latitude — nothing like the thin shade of southern trees. He had come to

know these elms over two years. He knew the way they looked in January, bare, the branches articulate against a white sky. In March, the first tracery of bud. In May, the leaf unfurling, chartreuse before it deepened. And now in June: full and dark and simply present.

He had not meant to accumulate this knowledge. It had accumulated anyway.

He thought about the Aeneid passage his class had been reading when the bell came. *Hic locus est partis ubi se via findit in ambas*. Here is the place where the road divides. He thought about Aeneas standing in the forecourt among the old griefs — *Luctus et ultrices posuere cubilia Curae* — Grief and avenging Cares laying their beds there in the vestibule at the gate.

He did not think about that for long.

He thought about the other thing.

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June 1940.

He did not enter it. He went to the edge of it the way one approaches a high ledge — not to look over, but to know where the edge lay, not to be surprised by it. June 1940. The quality of the light that month, which was a bright uncomplicated summer light, early in the season, the kind of clear day that made the smoke visible from a long way off. The road south. The road south of the city was a specific road and he knew its specific character: the trees along the verge, the color of the dust, the sound of the people on it, which was not so much a sound as an accumulation of individual sounds — feet, wheels, a child at some distance, the particular scrape and drag of loaded carts on gravel — that resolved into a collective sound that had no name in any of the four languages available to him. He had been on that road. He had carried a bag. The bag had certain contents: the minimum contents for being a person who is moving and does not know where to.

He did not go further than that.

He opened the bottom drawer and took out two things, setting them on the desk beside the closed grade book: the letter from Ellenbogen in Cambridge

and the receipt from the harbor office — the spring licensing receipt for the school's two boats, which he had picked up in April and not yet delivered to Wakefield's files, which had been in the drawer since. He looked at both of them lying on the desk in the quiet classroom.

The Ellenbogen letter was dated March. It concerned the sponsored-passage network and a query about whether Marcus had any remaining contacts in the European academic community who might benefit from the Committee's intervention. He had read it three times and filed it. The question it asked was one he had been answering for years in one form or another; the letter differed only in that it asked it in writing and expected a written reply. He had not sent one.

The harbor receipt was a bureaucratic document of no significance: four lines, a stamp, a fee of six dollars and twenty cents, the names of the two boats — *Alderman* and *Reach Runner* — Eira Bowman's signature at the bottom. He had gone to the harbor office to get it. The trip had been, in some way he

would not precisely state, sufficient. The receipt had been in the drawer since April.

He put both documents back. He closed the drawer.

---

He opened the grade book.

The most recent quiz had been Thursday — eight questions on Book IV vocabulary, a translation passage from the Dido episode. Seventeen students. He had marked the quizzes Friday and the marks were in his pocket notebook; he had meant to enter them into the grade book Friday and had not. He took out the pocket notebook and opened it to the marks.

He entered them in order by name. His handwriting was precise; he had been told this as a child and it had remained true. The quill-cut letters his father had made him practice on rainy Saturdays in the apartment on the Prinz-Eugen-Straße: each letter completed before the next began. *Gründlichkeit, Marcus*. He had carried the handwriting into adulthood the way one carries habits formed without choice, and it was now simply how his hand moved.

He wrote each student's mark. He wrote them in the column. He turned the page, entered the figure in the running total column, turned back. He did this seventeen times.

When he was done he closed the grade book. He placed the pocket notebook precisely parallel to it.

He looked at the door to the hall. He looked at the window.

The elms were in the window. The playing field was empty. The sky above the elms was a clear summer sky — the same sky the men on the Normandy coast had come in under this morning before the light was fully up, though what it looked like from below was not something he had the information to know. He had crossed no beaches. He had traveled by road and by train and by ship and by the slow machinery of papers and committees and the timed expiration of one permit and the slow arrival of the next. He knew roads. He knew, in the way of a man who had sat in institutional waiting rooms across four countries, what it felt like to wait for a decision made by people who did not know his name and had no obligation to learn it.

He looked at the elms. He looked for some time.

---

At three o'clock he heard Henry's toolbox in the hall.

He knew it by sound — the specific weight and rattle of the metal box, the particular scrape on the floor tiles that meant the casters on the lower left corner were wearing differently from the others. He had been hearing it for two years. Henry had been in the building all day; Marcus had registered, around noon, the sound of him somewhere on the south side, the furnace-room corridor, something with a pipe coupling. He had not gone to see.

Henry appeared in the doorway. He looked at Marcus. He set the toolbox on the floor just inside the door.

He said: "You've been here all day."

"I had lessons to prepare," Marcus said.

Henry was quiet for a moment. He did not elaborate on his observation and Marcus had not elaborated on his response, and they both knew the dis-

tance between what had been said and what the situation was. Henry's face conveyed neither judgment nor sympathy. He had a way of regarding Marcus that Marcus had come to rely on: a steady, particular attention that neither required explanation nor offered any.

"Lillian put down a chicken this morning," Henry said. "She's making something with it. Come home."

Marcus looked at the closed grade book on his desk. "I'll be a few more minutes."

"Five," Henry said.

He picked up his toolbox and left.

Marcus heard his footsteps go down the hall. He heard the far door open and close.

He sat for five minutes.

He thought about the word *Europa*. He thought about it as a word — the way a word is a container for a thing, and sometimes the thing changes and the word has to be recalibrated to hold the new shape of it. For four years the word had meant a place that was closed. A place of a certain kind of light and a



certain kind of road and a road south and the sound of people moving on it, all of it locked behind the fact of what was happening there. Since November 1942, since North Africa and then Sicily and then the slow northward grind up the Italian coast, the word had begun to change: almost imperceptibly, the way a damaged thing changes before you can point to the change. And now today. The landing in Normandy. Fifty miles of beach. The word was changing again.

He had been waiting, in one form or another, for four years. He had organized his waiting carefully, organized it into a life: a classroom, a grade book, a furnished room in Henry's house, the Latin in Book VI.

He stood. He put the grade book and the lesson folder in his bag. He put the pocket notebook in his coat. He took his coat from the hook behind the door — he had worn it this morning and then not needed it; it was warm now, June. He put it over his arm.

He turned off the classroom light.

He walked down the hall. He locked the door with the key Wakefield had given him in March of 1942,

the key he had carried on a short brass ring since. He tried the door once. He walked to the main entrance and out.

Henry was sitting on the stone step with his toolbox beside him, waiting.

They walked home.

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Lillian had used the whole bird. There was a pot on the stove and the smell of it was in every room — chicken and the last of the stored root vegetables, the onions she kept in the cellar, dried thyme from the garden she'd put up in August. Marcus washed his hands at the kitchen sink and dried them on the cloth that hung there and sat in his usual chair.

Lillian ladled out two bowls and set them down. Henry sat. The radio was on — WBZ, a program Marcus didn't know, which resolved after a moment into the particular register of a special broadcast: the careful cadence of a man reading news that he understood the weight of. The landing. The beachhead. Casualty figures not yet confirmed. The President's

statement. Marcus listened without looking at the radio.

He ate.

The stew was good. Lillian's cooking was always good in a way that Marcus had learned not to take for granted, because he had eaten for too many years from his own impoverished preparation, or from institutional food, or from the indifferent competence of boarding-house tables. The food at this table was good in the way of someone who understood what food was for: not fuel, not performance, but the practical daily act of keeping people sustained and present. He ate it.

Henry ate. Lillian sat with her own bowl and ate. The radio continued.

The man on the radio read the names of the beaches. Marcus listened to them. He knew the Normandy coast from maps and from the Latin geography he had taught for two years — the Roman coast road, the estuary systems, the ancient names for the settlements there. He knew it was possible, by tomorrow or by next week, to know more about what

had happened there this morning. He knew that this was, in some sense, the beginning of a process that would end the war — not soon, not cleanly, but directionally. He knew this.

He was not certain what he felt about it. He was aware that the uncertainty was itself information, something he should attend to carefully and not hurry. He had been waiting. Now the thing he had been waiting for was not over, not finished, but begun in a different way. The direction of waiting had changed.

He put his spoon down.

He said: “Thank you. For —” He gestured at the table, the pot, the kitchen. He stopped. He found he could not assemble the sentence.

Lillian looked at him. She looked at the pot on the stove. She said: “It’s chicken stew.”

She said it in the same tone she said everything: direct, without ceremony. Not a deflection and not a brush-off. A statement of fact. It was chicken stew. Whatever it was, it was also chicken stew — and that

was not a lesser thing. That was, this evening, precisely the thing.

The radio continued. The man named the beaches again: Utah, Omaha, Gold, Juno, Sword. The names would mean something different in a year. Marcus was not certain what they would mean to him. He was not certain what he would mean to himself when he tried to say the word *Europa* in a year and the lock was different.

Lillian got up to ladle more into Henry's bowl and offered more to Marcus and Marcus said yes.

Outside the window the June light was going slowly — this far north in summer the days lasted — and the elms at the edge of the yard stood in it the way they had been standing in the light when Marcus looked out his classroom window at three in the afternoon, and before that, and the summer before, and the summer before that. He was in a kitchen in Maine where he could name the trees.

He ate his stew.

## The Stranger at the Dock

The mooring float on the east face of the inner basin had been listing since the end of June. She had noted it in the log on the twenty-seventh and again on the third. Aldous Cutter had said he would get to it. She had given him until the end of July.

In July the harbor ran at its summer pitch: two Gloucester-registered draggers back from three days on the banks, a pair of lobstermen with licensing renewals that needed sorting, and the usual irregular parade of transient boats working their way up and down the coast. The regular fleet was out by five in the morning and back by mid-afternoon, the traps set and hauled and the catch transferred and the ledgers tallied and the whole thing begun again the next day. By mid-morning the guest moorings on the north face were full and someone from Rockland who hadn't arranged a permit in advance was waiting at the office door. She dealt with him and went back to the vessel log.

The kelp on the outer breakwater baked in the midday sun and the smell of it reached the office by eleven. She kept the door open and the window open and it made no difference.

She was working through the transit entries when the man knocked at the open door frame.

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He was perhaps fifty. He wore a dark jacket — not a work coat, not quite a suit jacket, something in between — and what she registered before she registered anything else was the cut: the shoulders were narrower than American clothing ran, the collar button sat differently, higher. He held his hat in one hand at his side. He had the manner of a man who had been managing official conversations for some time and knew how to enter a room so that the person behind the desk did not immediately want him to leave.

He said: “Mrs. Bowman? The harbormaster?”

She said: “Yes.”

He introduced himself as Werner Kahl. He was in Maine on business — he said this without elaborating on what kind — and while he was in Portland he had spoken with the harbormaster's office there. They had directed him to Coldwater. He was asking about the body found on the Coldwater breakwater in October of last year.

His English was practiced and smooth, but not native. The origin of it was somewhere in Central Europe — she heard it not in any single vowel but in the shape and weight the sentences made when assembled. German underneath, or close to it.

“What can I help you with,” she said. Not a question.

He reached into the breast pocket of his jacket and produced a photograph. He placed it on the desk between them.

It was a formal portrait. A man, perhaps forty-five, dark-haired, in a dark suit with a white collar. The background of the photograph was plain, a pale studio gray. The quality of the paper and the tone of the image — the particular way it had aged — were



different from American photographs, not deficient but done differently, by different hands. She examined it without picking it up.

The man in the photograph was composed, looking slightly left of center at nothing the camera could see. He might have been a lawyer, or a university professor, or a manager at some professional firm. His expression was the careful expression of a man sitting for a photograph that would be used for official purposes.

“I am looking for my brother,” Kahl said. “Josef. He was traveling from Canada. I have not had word from him since September of last year.”

She looked at the photograph. She gave it the time a person would give it when genuinely trying to match a face to a memory.

“The body was taken by the Coast Guard in October,” she said. “The case is in their files. Have you spoken with the Rockland station?”

“Yes,” he said. “They were not able to give me any information.”

“Then I would suggest you go to the Portland district office. The case was referred there.” This was accurate.

He nodded. He did not take the photograph from the desk. He said: “Did you see the body yourself?”

“I’m the harbormaster,” she said. “The body was discovered on my breakwater. I was present when the Coast Guard arrived.”

He looked at the photograph, then at her. He said: “Did it look like —” He stopped. He picked up the photograph and held it without looking at it, and then looked at it. He said: “Was there any identifying characteristic you remember? Anything at all.”

She said: “I wasn’t able to examine the body. The Coast Guard was on-site quickly.”

This was true. She had been on-site before the Coast Guard arrived. She had crouched beside the body for perhaps four minutes in the early morning before she heard Dakin on the wharf and then Farris’s truck coming down the road. The face had been in the water. She had looked at it. She had not been certain of anything except that he was a grown man,

not young, dark-haired, and his clothing was not American. She had not been able to give Farris a useful description of the face and she could not give one now.

The man in the photograph was dark-haired and of the right age. That was the extent of what she could confirm.

Kahl put the photograph back in his breast pocket. He said: "Thank you for your time."

She said: "I hope you find what you need in Portland."

He thanked her again and left.

---

She went to the door of her office and watched him walk back along the wharf. He moved at a deliberate pace, looking ahead. About thirty yards out she noticed the unevenness in his stride — the right leg carrying its weight differently from the left, not badly, but distinctly. She had not seen it in the office. A limp of the kind a man doesn't show when he is standing still.

He was wearing shoes. Black leather, polished. Not boots. Not a man who walked working wharves as a habit.

She watched him reach the landward end and turn toward the street and go out of sight. She went back inside.

She sat at the desk.

Werner Kahl. Fifty, or near it. A jacket cut in a fashion she could not place to any American city. Accent that was Central European, German underneath, smoothed by time or by intention or both. He had been in Portland on unspecified business. He had spoken with the Portland harbormaster's office. He had come to Coldwater.

He had found Portland. Portland had sent him to Coldwater. Someone in Portland had told him her name.

The case had moved further through the official system than she had known. The Coast Guard's Portland district file had reached the point where a private inquiry — a man traveling from somewhere to look for his brother — was being routed to the

point of origin. Nine months after the fact. Kahl had not given up. He had resources enough to navigate the system, or he knew someone who had.

She thought about the photograph. The man in the photograph was looking slightly left of center.

She looked at the vessel log, open to Thursday's entries, half completed. She looked at it for a moment and then picked up the pen and went on with it.

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After lunch she walked the mooring field — the float inspection she had meant to do all week. The east float was listing, as noted. The outer basin float was sound. On the north face she checked five transient boats: two Rockland lobster boats running south, a dragger out of Gloucester, a smaller boat from further up the coast she hadn't placed. She checked lines, noted a frayed fender on the second Rockland boat, wrote it in her inspection log and left a note for the owner at the office.

She went to the north end of the guest dock and crouched to look at a cleat she'd noticed that morn-

ing. The mounting was working free on one side — a common failure on the salt-weather wood, the bolts loosening in increments over years. She would send Shep with the wrench before four.

She worked through the afternoon. Between the mooring check and the supply boat that came in from Thomaston needing a temporary berth and the *Sainte-Marguerite* transiting in from Moncton with her usual deck lumber, riding low with the load — she worked the question.

If the man in the photograph was Josef Kahl, and if Josef Kahl had crossed from Canada in the autumn of 1943 through the kind of arrangement Marcus Klein had named in April — the sponsored-passage program, the church networks in the Maritime Provinces, the informal passage by small boat across the Bay of Fundy and down the Maine coast — then Werner Kahl knew things she did not. You did not track a crossing that unofficial without knowing the people who had organized it. You did not know where to look without someone who knew the route.

If Kahl knew the organizers, he knew who had sent Josef south in September of 1943. He knew the names she didn't have.

She thought: should she contact Marcus Klein. He was at the school — or, in July, at his room at the Crow house. They had spoken properly once, at the harbor office in April, when he had come for the boat permits and set his hypothesis on the table and she had heard it and said nothing. She knew where to find him.

Shep went to fix the north-face cleat. The *Sainte-Marguerite's* mate came to the office with the transit papers. Aubert stood on the deck in the heat and shouted something in French at a man on the dock, laughing about it. She initialed the papers and handed them back.

She did not contact Marcus Klein. Not today.

She did not contact the Coast Guard either.

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At six she made the log entry.

*10 July 1944. Wind: SW, 8–12 kts. Tide: high 09:22, low 15:48. Vessels in: 4 transient (2 Rockland reg., 1 Gloucester reg., 1 Moncton), 7 local fleet. Guest moorings: 5 occupied. Sainte-Marguerite — transit papers cleared, Aubert master, lumber cargo south for Portland. Float, east inner basin — repair due from A. Cutter by 31 Jul. Cleat, north face, dock 2 — reset 16:30 (Shep). No incidents.*

She capped the pen.

She read through the entry. It was accurate. It was complete. She put the log on the shelf.

She sat for a moment with the quiet coming in. The harbor was settling into the long northern evening — the engines stilled, the lines moving their slow adjustment to the outgoing tide, someone on the far side of the basin making a sound she couldn't identify, and then not. The smell of the baked kelp was fainter now as the air cooled off the water. Through the open door the sky above the breakwater was a clear, deep July blue with the light going out of it slowly.



Someone's brother had crossed from Canada in a dory in October and come to this harbor and died on this breakwater. And someone else had come nine months later, in polished shoes, with a photograph, looking for him.

The photograph was in Werner Kahl's breast pocket, on some road between Coldwater and Portland.

She had not been able to say: yes, that is him. She had not been able to say it because she did not know. His face had been in the water and the man in the photograph had been composed in a studio, looking left of center. She could not say they were the same man. She could not say they were not.

The picture was almost complete. The man on the north wharf at two in the morning on October 11. The body on the breakwater on October 14. A brother in a jacket with the wrong cut, looking for him now. The crossing from Canada by small boat. The sponsored-passage network. The whole of it assembled in her mind across nine months, one piece at a time, until the shape of it was clear.

What was missing was the three days. October 11 to October 14. Where he had gone after the north wharf. Where he had sheltered, or not sheltered. What had happened in that middle, in the dark, in the cold harbor town that had no record of him except a body on a breakwater and one entry that was not in any log.

She put on her jacket. She turned off the lamp.

Outside: the harbor going quiet, the water against the pilings, the smell of salt and the summer-warm kelp and the diesel that never quite left the air down here regardless of the season. She pulled the office door shut behind her and walked to the end of the wharf.

The breakwater was black against the water in the low light. The kelp on it was dry and still.

She walked back to her truck.

## Southern France

July was haying, and haying was the work that had no end to it.

You cut and you turned and you waited on the weather and then you cut again, and then came the baling, which was the part that got into everything: the chaff under your collar and behind your eyes, your forearms reddened, grit in your teeth at the day's end no matter how well you kept your mouth closed. The hay smelled like summer in a particular way — not the flower-summer smell but the hot-cut smell, something almost medicinal, something that made you thirsty in a way water couldn't fix.

The prisoners worked from seven to six. Lonzo drove them out before the dew was fully off and by nine the work had turned serious and by noon it was punishing. Albrecht had rigged a canvas shade over the water pails at the east field edge, and they all drank from the same tin cup in turn. Nobody said anything about it.

She worked alongside them. This was different from the fence — different from the thirty seconds at the break or the question about a fence post, the exchange after lunch that lasted until Lonzo looked up from his truck. In the field they were all just working, all five of them in it together. Karl was near her some days and on the west field entirely on others, arranged by the work's logic, not hers. The haying had its own grammar.

In the breaks, when there were conversations at the east fence, they stayed in their register. She had told him about Will — as much as she had, which was enough — and he had told her in the winter about his father's hardware store and in the spring about his sister Elsa. In the haying those conversations went shorter. You drank your water and sat on the cut grass and your body was something that ached and the break was for that.

Albrecht directed the haying the way he had always directed it: position, gesture, the particular slap of a hand on a fence post that meant *there, now*. Some of his directions went to Karl in German — not through Hannah, directly — and Karl answered him:

Bavarian-inflected, nothing wasted. Albrecht listened to the answer without looking away too quickly.

She thought: *Das klingt wie zuhause*. Her grandmother's phrase, and not Albrecht's, but something in the same family.

She did not ask.

---

The Paris liberation was a Friday.

She and Karl were at the east fence — not talking, just both of them working the same length of wire — when Albrecht came out of the barn with the portable radio tucked under his arm. He walked to the nearest fence post and set it on the flat top and balanced it there and turned the dial. Static. Then a voice coming out of the static, resolving.

The announcer was speaking English. The signal drifted and came back.

*Paris libérée*. Someone said it in French — a clip of something heard across the ocean and relayed back. *Paris est libre*.

Karl had stopped working. Fischer and Bremer and Wicke had stopped. Lonzo had come down from the truck and was standing at the field's edge with his hat in his hand.

The announcer said: Allied forces entered the capital on Friday morning. French partisan forces. General de Gaulle. The names of streets she didn't know. The bells of Notre-Dame.

Albrecht was standing with his arms at his sides. His hands were open. She looked at him the way you look at someone when there is nothing to do: close enough to act and not acting. He was fifty-eight years old. He had left one country for this one in 1922. The country he had left had been remade into something else entirely while he stood in this field.

He did not weep. He said nothing. He stood there and the announcer's voice came out of the radio and the field was quiet around it.

Bremer had turned away.

Fischer said something in German, too low to hear. Then he stopped.

Karl was looking at the ground.

After a while the announcer moved on to other things. Albrecht reached over and took the radio from the post and tucked it back under his arm and walked back toward the barn without looking at anyone.

She watched him go. The barn door closed.

For a moment nobody moved. Then Lonzo said something about the afternoon hours and Fischer picked up his rake.

---

The day after Paris she and Karl were stacking at the east end of the field. The morning had come in cooler than July — something drier in the air, the season turning in it. Lonzo was at the west end, watching Bremer and Wicke work the baler. Too far to hear a conversation kept low.

She was lifting bales into position when Karl said, in German: “Before Africa, I was at a posting in the south of France. Administrative. We were assisting with transportation.”

He paused.

“Transportation of people.”

She set the bale and reached for the next one.

He said: “I did not drive the trucks. I wrote in a ledger.” He stopped. “I wrote in a ledger.”

She said nothing. She stacked.

He said: “I wanted you to know. Because you asked me once why I was there and I said I was conscripted. That is true. But it is not all of it.”

She looked at him then. She said: “What else is it?”

He said: “I didn’t ask where the people in the ledger were going.” He stopped. “I knew what I was writing. I didn’t ask.”

She lifted another bale and set it. After a moment she said: “I know.”

He went back to his end of the row. She went back to hers.



She did not go to the east fence break for the rest of that week.

She was in the field every day — the haying did not stop and she did not stop with it, seven to six, cutting and baling and stacking through the heat and into the evenings when the air began to come down off the woods. She did not avoid the field. She just did not walk to the east end at break time. She drank her water at the shade canopy near the barn and watched the distance of the field and went back to work.

In the evenings the county feed ledger was on the kitchen table. She filled it after supper: hay count, grain consumed, milk weight, the farm's official record in numbers and dates. She had taken over the column from her father the previous winter when his figures had started drifting from their rows. Her handwriting was even. Each number stood for something she had lifted or poured or measured with her hands.

After she finished the entries she sat with what he had said.

*Ich habe in ein Buch geschrieben.* Said twice. He had said it twice because it was the true thing and the true thing hadn't gotten smaller the first time he said it.

He had been assigned a column to maintain and he had maintained it. He had not asked the question that would have required him to stop. And now it was summer 1944 and the war was shortening on the radio every evening, and in a field in Maine he had told her.

Not Bremer. Not whoever heard confessions at Camp Houlton if anyone did. Her. Because she had asked him once why he was there and because he was the kind of person — she had known it before she knew she knew it — who needed the account to be honest if he was going to stand in it.

*Er hat es mir gesagt.* He told me.

She had said *I know* and she had kept stacking hay. She had not meant: it is finished. She didn't know what finished looked like. She wasn't sure it looked like anything.

She had not thought less of him for what he had done. She was not certain she was allowed to think less of him for what he had done. He had been a boy given a ledger and he had used it and the people in it had gone somewhere and there was no amount of telling her about it that changed that fact.

There was a distance between knowing something in general and having a specific person tell you their specific part in it.

She closed the ledger. The kitchen was quiet. Through the window the field was dark.

---

By Friday she went back.

Karl was at the east fence — the wire needed constant attention in August, the deer pressing through at night, the staples working loose from the heat's expansion. She came to where he was working and stood on her side of the wire.

She said, in German: "You didn't have to tell me."

He said: "I know."

That was all. He went back to the wire and she picked up the post mallet leaning against the fencerow and drove the loose stake while he held the wire taut. When it was set she carried the mallet back toward the barn.

The field behind her was mostly cut — the windrows gone to bales, the grass already beginning its slow return at the stubble ends. She could smell the cut hay and the warm soil and something else in the late-August air: the particular dryness that meant the summer was past its center and the year was starting to turn toward what came next.

She went in for supper.

# The Photograph

The window in Marcus's room had been sticking since the Fourth of July.

Henry had noted it in June, when the humidity came in off the water and the whole house expanded the way old houses do, settling into the wet. He had put a note in his head: *sill, Marcus's room, before September*. The school started up again next week. He did it now.

Marcus had left by seven-thirty. Henry waited until Lillian was up and the coffee was on and the house had taken its morning shape, then he carried his toolbox up the stairs at eight.

The room was in order. Marcus kept it in order the way a person keeps things in order when the keeping is a habit older than the space. Books on the sill, on the small table, on the floor beside the bed in a stack that was not disorganized — the top book had a slip of paper marking a page. Henry set his toolbox down by the window and looked at the frame.

The white pine sill had taken on the summer's moisture and swelled at the south end, which was where it always went. Standard repair: block plane, two or three passes, oil the tracks. He had done it in this house and in the school and in a dozen other places before this one. You looked at the problem and you did the work.

The books were on the sill for the morning light. He moved them to the bed, left to right, to put them back right.

There were more than you'd expect from a man who had been moving since 1938. But Marcus had been in several places before Coldwater, and the books told you that if you looked at the spines and not just the titles. Some carried a stamp on the inside cover — he saw them only when he set the books down and they fell open — an old Viennese bookseller's mark, a French address printed on a sticker worn thin at the edges, an English pencil mark with a street number in a hand that was not Marcus's. The Vienna books were the oldest ones, corners gone soft. The Paris and London books were newer,

crisper. He could read where a man had been by what he'd carried out of it.

He set the last of the sill books on the bed. As he turned to position the block plane along the south end, his elbow caught the spine of a thick cloth-bound volume on the bookshelf beside the window — one of the Vienna books — and it tilted and fell. Something slid from between its pages and landed face-up on the floor.

He picked it up.

A photograph. Black and white. Perhaps four by five inches, the paper substantial — not a drugstore snapshot but something made with care, printed by someone who knew the work. Twenty, perhaps twenty-two men standing in a line in what appeared to be a courtyard. Stone walls. A building behind them: institutional, high-windowed, nothing on the facade that told you a city. The men were not in uniform. They wore civilian clothes — coats and hats, what you would put on for a long journey, what you would be wearing if you had been told to dress for travel and then not told anything further.

At the right edge of the frame, partly cut off by wherever the camera had been pointing: wire. The coiled, heavy-gauge, layered kind. Not the kind you ran on a fence line.

The men were looking at the camera. They were looking at it the way you look at the next thing required of you when there have been many things required and you have learned to look at each one in turn.

Henry looked at the photograph for perhaps twenty seconds. He did not look for Marcus among the men — he did not know what Marcus looked like in 1940, and the men were small in the frame, not clearly distinguishable at this distance. He looked at the photograph to understand what it was. He understood what it was. He put it back in the book, face-in, at the page it had been between, and set the book back on the shelf.

He picked up the block plane.

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He had come north from Norfolk in 1924. He had been in Coldwater since 1927. In that time he had



watched a good many people move through the town's architecture of welcome and its other architecture — the one that ran underneath, quieter, that sorted people according to categories they had not chosen and could not leave behind.

He knew how a person moved when they had learned to take up exactly the space that was permitted. Not less — that called attention too. Not more — that invited cost. Exactly the amount that passed without incident. He had been making this calculation since boyhood. He was good at it. It had served him, and it had also required him to be good at reading the same calculation in others.

When Marcus arrived in March 1942 he had the practice. You could see it in the way he walked the school's hallways, in the way he entered a room when there were people in it, in the way he answered questions that were friendly on the surface and something else underneath. The particular economy of a person who has learned, by consequence, what the wrong calculation costs.

The situations were not the same. Henry knew that. The particulars were different in ways that

mattered. But the practice was the same practice, and Henry had recognized it the first week.

He had known since then that there was something Marcus did not talk about. You could hear where the English went more careful — and Marcus's English was already careful, it was the English of a man who had chosen it and trusted it and would not allow it to fail him — but there were subjects where it went more careful still, and one subject where it went entirely still. Henry had never pressed that subject. It wasn't his to press.

The photograph confirmed a shape. He hadn't needed it confirmed. He had needed to do the window sill.

He worked the plane down the sill in three passes — light strokes, taking off only what the problem required. The shavings curled white on the floor. He tested the sash. Better. One more pass at the south corner, where it was still catching. He tested again. The sash ran clean. He took out the oil and worked both tracks.

By noon the job was done. He put the books back on the sill in the order he had taken them — the Vienna books, the Paris books, the London books — checked that the cloth-bound volume was back on the shelf where it had been, and ran the sash up and down twice. He left the window open an inch. September air came in, dry and cooler than August had been.

He went downstairs.

Lillian was at the stove, putting up the last of the garden tomatoes. The kitchen smelled of vinegar and hot glass. The jars were lined on the counter, sealed, the tomatoes dark and still moving slow inside them. She was working through the last of the pot.

Henry said: “Window’s done.”

She said: “Good. It’s been sticking all summer.”

He said: “I know.”

She lifted a jar from the counter and held it out — still warm enough to feel through his palm. He put it in his jacket pocket. He went to the back step and ate his lunch there, where the September sun came

around the corner of the house, and sat with the jar of tomatoes and his bread and the quiet.

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Thursday evenings, the chess board.

Marcus came in at half past four, the school smell on him — chalk and the particular indoor warmth of a building holding forty children's worth of heat. Henry had the board set up at the kitchen table. Lillian was in the other room.

They sat down. Marcus opened as he always did, Sicilian. Henry answered. The game settled into its shape — Marcus building position, patient and thorough, not moving until the reason was clear. Henry played his own game alongside it, matching tempo, watching the board and watching Marcus across it.

This evening Marcus was here. Some evenings you could tell the day was still in him, the way he'd hold a piece a moment longer than the decision required, the way his eyes moved when they weren't quite seeing the board. Tonight he was seeing it. He played with his usual precision — the slow accumulation, each piece placed where it had a reason to be.

They played for forty minutes. Henry had a strong position — his rooks doubled on the open file, his pawns connected across the center. He moved the queen's bishop to d3. The correct square was e2. Not a conspicuous error; the kind that opened a diagonal you didn't want opened, that made itself clear four moves later when someone was looking.

Marcus saw it in three. He took the diagonal, pressed the advantage, and won the exchange. Henry let it resolve. Marcus took the game.

Marcus looked at the board. He said: "You made an error on the bishop."

Henry said: "I got distracted."

Marcus looked at him. He said: "You weren't distracted."

Henry said: "No."

Neither of them looked at the other. Henry began resetting the pieces, pawns first.

Marcus said: "You fixed the window."

Henry said: "It was sticking all summer."

Marcus said: “Thank you.”

Henry set the last rook in its square. He said: “The books are how you left them.”

A pause.

Marcus said: “I know.”

Henry turned the board around. His move to open the second game. He put his king’s pawn out.

Marcus answered it. This game Henry did not give anything away — he played his position correctly, developed his pieces correctly, and when Marcus’s error came, in the middle game, Henry pressed it the way it wanted to be pressed. Marcus looked at the board after the twenty-third move and tipped his king.

Henry said: “Good.”

They put the pieces in the box. Marcus said good night and went upstairs. Henry heard his footsteps in the room above — the third board from the window gave its familiar report — and then nothing, and then the quiet sound of the house at the end of the day.

He folded the board and put it on the shelf.

Lillian came in and turned down the lamp.

## Contract Review

The faculty meeting ended at four-fifteen. Marcus gathered his papers from the table — the syllabus revisions, the supply request for three reams of examination stock, a note from one of the junior teachers about gymnasium scheduling that had nothing to do with him — and was sliding them into his case when Wakefield paused at the door.

The other teachers went out. The room settled into the particular silence of an emptied meeting: chalk dust, residual body heat, the single west-facing window letting in September's late-afternoon angle.

Wakefield said: "Marcus. A moment."

Marcus set his case on the table and waited.

Wakefield was a contained man, and he contained himself further when he had something to say that he did not relish saying. He folded his hands at belt level. He said the school board had asked for a contract review of all personnel hired under wartime



conditions. This included Marcus. The review would take place in October.

Marcus said: “My contract is not due for renewal until June 1946.”

Wakefield said: “This is a review, not a renewal. A formality.”

Marcus looked at him. Wakefield held the look, which was itself a form of decency — he did not look away and pretend to be studying something in the corner of the room. Marcus said: “What criteria will the board be using?”

Wakefield said: “Performance. Student outcomes. Community standing.” He paused. “That sort of thing.”

Marcus said: “I will prepare a statement.”

Wakefield said: “That won’t be necessary.” He paused again. “But it might help.”

Marcus picked up his case. He said: “October, then.”

Wakefield said October, and Marcus went down the hall and out the side entrance. The furnace was

running for the first time since April — Henry had turned it on that morning — and the school smelled of its first hours: the iron-throat warmth of the heating system, summer's settled dust shifting now that the air was moving. He walked home.

---

He prepared the statement.

He began it that evening and worked at it for three weeks, in the hour after dinner when Henry was in his chair with the radio at low volume and Lillian was in the back of the house doing whatever she did after dinner that it was not his business to track. He sat at the desk with the angle lamp on and he prepared.

He had appeared before institutional bodies before. The forms changed; the logic of the thing remained constant. What you brought to the table was the only part you controlled, and so you brought everything that could be weighed and measured, in an order that made the weighing simple.

He assembled his teaching record: two and a half years at Coldwater, enrollment stable, the senior

German examination pass rate ninety-one percent in June 1944 against a county average — which Damariscotta alone was holding up — of sixty-three. The Latin figures were stronger. Coldwater's Latin students held the highest scores in the county by a margin the county office had noted in writing in spring of 1943. He put the written notation in the file.

He assembled his credentials: the Vienna degrees, the documentation of the Emergency Committee's sponsorship, the appointment paperwork from when the school board hired him in March 1942. He had copies of all of it. He had always kept copies.

He assembled documentation of his English-only instruction compliance. The memo from the November 1943 board meeting had specified that German could not be the medium of instruction; Marcus had made the adjustment without comment; he had a note from Wakefield acknowledging same, dated December 1943.

He wrote to two parents of current students — brief, formal notes — and asked whether they would be willing to write the board in support of the

school's German and Latin program. He did not ask them to write in support of him. He understood the distinction. Both wrote within the week. He had not explained to them why he was asking.

He did not prepare a speech. He prepared facts.

He knew why the review was early. Alderman Marsh had been at the board meeting where the English-only policy was adopted, and the one before it, and the one before that. Marsh was not malicious — not precisely; he was a man who did a particular kind of arithmetic about what the town could tolerate and who was expected to be tolerable and who was not. The arithmetic had a long history. Marcus knew the history. He had come through longer versions of it with less preparation.

He thought about this, and he filed it, and he went back to the documents.

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The letter from Ellenbogen arrived in the first week of October.

Marcus had written to Ellenbogen twice since arriving in Coldwater — once in January 1943, a brief note confirming he was settled and employed, because the Emergency Committee kept contact records and it was courteous to update them; once in May 1944, a longer letter he had not sent, replaced at the last with a shorter one. Ellenbogen had replied to both. They were not friends; they were men who had been through related versions of the same experience and understood each other's circumstances without requiring explanation. The understanding was itself a form of knowing.

The letter was two pages in Ellenbogen's steady hand. A position had opened at the Cambridge Extension School — the Massachusetts one, not the English one, though the name would have been enough of a joke to sustain them both for five minutes if they were in the same room. Junior appointment: German and Latin. Starting in January. The Emergency Committee had recommended Marcus. The salary was better than Coldwater's. A city, colleagues who shared his frame of reference, a university library, the basic infrastructure of the academic life he had been trained for and had not had

since Vienna. Ellenbogen said he hoped Marcus would consider it seriously. Reply by November first.

Marcus read the letter. He read it again. He put it in the desk drawer.

He did not tell Henry.

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For three days he did not open the drawer.

He went to school, taught his four classes, ate dinner, worked at the board documents, went to bed. The drawer was there. He was aware of it the way you are aware of a problem you have deliberately tabled — not because it has been resolved but because you have assigned it to a category called *later* and placed it there with some intention.

On the fourth day he opened the drawer and read the letter a third time.

He thought about what Cambridge offered. He could list this with the precision he brought to any problem: a return to the life he had prepared for, colleagues whose frame of reference was his own, the infrastructure of an institution large enough to shel-

ter one more displaced scholar without requiring his presence to be justified term by term. The war ending now was a question of months, not years; a position in Cambridge would mean returning to Europe eventually with institutional standing, with a post, without arriving again as a man whose papers had to be produced for each successive authority.

He thought about what Coldwater offered. This list was different from what it would have been a year ago, or two years ago. The difference was not easily characterized. He did not try to characterize it. He held it in mind as a thing with a weight that was not the same weight it had previously had.

He put the letter back and closed the drawer.

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The board room was on the second floor of the town hall, beside the selectmen's office. Three selectmen and Wakefield. Alderman Marsh sat at the left end of the table — not a position of formal authority but of presence; a man who has decided to be in a room has already made a decision about the room. Two others: Frye, who ran the hardware store, and

Coombs, a retired mill supervisor who wore the expression of a man waiting for the shift to change.

Marcus sat at the far end of the table. He had his documentation in a folder, organized by category, with a one-page summary at the front. He placed the folder on the table and did not open it until asked.

He said he had prepared materials for the board's review and would provide them. He said he was happy to answer questions.

Frye asked about the examination scores. Marcus told him. He had the numbers memorized but he opened the folder and read them from the page, because numbers read from a page carry more authority than numbers produced from the air; this is a rule of institutional presentations that holds across countries and languages. Frye made a note.

Coombs asked whether Marcus had received any complaints about the instruction. Marcus said Wakefield had received two, both in the first semester of 1942, both regarding the use of German in the classroom; both had been addressed by the Novem-



ber 1943 English-only policy. He produced the documentation.

Marsh asked, in the tone of a man arriving at the question he had come for, whether Marcus had any connection to European political organizations.

Marcus said: "The Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Foreign Scholars is the only organization to which I have belonged since leaving Vienna. Its purpose is the assistance of scholars displaced by the Nazi government. I was displaced by the Nazi government. The connection is accurate."

A pause. Marsh made a note of some kind. Marcus had observed, across a number of such encounters, that the note a man makes upon receiving a precise answer is often a note about something else entirely.

Marsh asked whether Marcus planned to return to Europe when the war ended.

Marcus said: "I have not made that decision."

Marsh said: "If you returned to Europe, the school would be left without a German instructor."

Marcus said: “If I returned to Europe, yes. The school would need to hire someone.”

Another pause. Marsh said: “That’s all we need.”

Wakefield thanked Marcus and he left.

---

He walked out of the town hall into the October street. The trees along the Common had gone full color — the maple nearest the iron fence was orange at the top and still green at the base, the change working down slowly, the way it always did. He walked back to the school. The afternoon session was over; the building was quiet except for Henry somewhere below running the furnace through its evening checks. Marcus looked in his office box — an order confirmation for the Latin texts he had requisitioned in August, nothing else — and went home.

He went to his room. He sat at the desk. He opened the drawer and read the Cambridge letter one more time.

He held it perhaps a full minute, longer than he generally allowed himself with an undecided question. Then he put it back.

He went downstairs.

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Two weeks later, Wakefield stopped him in the hall before first period. He said the board had reviewed the materials and found Marcus's performance satisfactory. His contract would continue as written.

He held out his hand. Marcus shook it. The handshake was genuine — not the social handshake of a man discharging an obligation, but the handshake of two men who had come through something awkward together and were acknowledging that fact in the only available grammar.

Wakefield said he had better get along. Marcus said yes and they went in opposite directions.

---

That evening he went home and opened the drawer and read the Cambridge letter one more time. It said what it had said the previous three times. He put it back.

He went downstairs. Lillian had gone to her sister's for the evening. Henry was in his chair with the radio on at low volume — the BBC news, whatever the seven o'clock broadcast was, the Allied advance still moving across France and into Belgium, the announcer's voice beneath Marcus's attention but in the room.

Henry said: "How'd the review come out."

Marcus said: "The board found my performance satisfactory."

Henry said: "Did you think it wouldn't?"

Marcus said: "I wasn't certain."

Henry looked at him over the paper. He said: "That's different from thinking."

He set the paper down on his knee and reached over and turned the radio a quarter-turn down,

where it murmured without asking anything, and left it there.

Lillian had left dinner on the back of the stove. Henry served himself and Marcus served himself and they ate.

## One Year

She opened the harbor log at seven-fifteen. The date at the top of the ruled column. She wrote the weather — northeast wind, twelve knots, sea state moderate — and the state of the harbor. Three draggers in overnight from the grounds, two already gone back out. The *Agnes Maud* at berth four, where she'd been since Tuesday getting her winch coupling repaired. No arrivals expected. Ames had come in at seven with the fuel delivery slip and gone back to the south wharf without conversation.

She did not note the date for any reason except that it was a date, and dates went in the log.

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Mid-morning she went out to the breakwater.

Low tide at nine forty. The breakwater was at its longest in the low — four hundred feet of granite, stained orange-brown from the tide line down to where the water had pulled back, kelp laid flat in the

cold air. She walked the length of it without hurrying. The mist had burned off by now except at the water's surface, where it moved in patches with the chop. The wind was from the northeast, as the log said, moving steadily without gusting.

She had not told Ames where she was going. She had put on her coat and gone.

The granite at the north end looked the same as anywhere else on the breakwater. Same orange-brown stain. Same kelp, cold and loose. There was no mark — she had not expected one, but she looked. Rock did not record what happened to it. Neither did the water.

She stood where she estimated the body had been.

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She had been doing this for a year without deciding it.

The method was familiar: when she was uncertain she made lists. She was not uncertain now. She was assembling in order to know that she had assembled, the way you run a final check on a mooring not be-

cause you doubt the knot but because running the check is part of the work.

A man had crossed from the Canadian Maritime Provinces in a small dory — foreign build, she had concluded from Dakin's description; a dory of Maritime Province construction wouldn't have drawn comment twice from a man who had been on the water for forty years. He had pulled the dory above the tide line on the north beach sometime around October 10 or 11. The dory was gone when she went to look for it three days later.

On the night of October 11 he had come up the north side of the wharf at two in the morning. She had seen him from the office window. She had not gone out, and he had not spoken.

She understood now why he hadn't spoken.

She had not understood it in October. She had understood it in January, and more clearly in March, and it had settled by summer into something that no longer needed to be understood because it was simply what it was. He had seen someone on a government wharf — the harbormaster, a figure of offi-



cial function — and he had stayed silent because he had been made, by whatever had brought him here, to stay silent when he saw official function. He had made the calculation quickly, at two in the morning, cold and on a dock he did not know, and he had stayed silent. He had been right about most of the categories and wrong about this one.

That was not a thing she could change now.

Over the next three days — the blow, northeast wind, nine-foot seas — he had been somewhere. Not in the dory; the dory was gone. He had found shelter of some kind, cold shelter in October, without anyone to ask and without anyone to offer. He had been too cold for too long, or that was the most she could make of it; she was not a coroner and Farris's finding had been only that the man died at the tail end of the blow, or just after it.

The body came in on October 14 on the breakwater, in the kelp line, after the blow had dropped. The Coast Guard took it. Lieutenant Farris had come to her office with questions. She had answered them accurately and left October 11 out of it. The case had been opened and closed. Formally closed.

Werner Kahl had come in July with a photograph. He was looking for a brother. He had asked whether she had seen a man — a description, European-dressed, age roughly forty-five, scar at the left jawline — and she had answered technically: she had seen the body when it was found, she had helped direct the Coast Guard boat. This was accurate. The photograph: a man about the right age, European-dressed, with a face she could not confirm because the face of a man she had seen at a distance in the dark at two in the morning was not a face she could identify in a photograph in July.

Marcus Klein had come to the office earlier in the spring with the hypothesis: sponsored passage, European nationals through the Maritime Provinces, an established network of helpers moving people through to the United States. She had not confirmed or denied it. He had left, and said at the door that it wasn't anyone's fault, or not anyone here. She had turned down the radio so she could hear herself think.

What she did not know: the man's name. Who he was supposed to meet in Coldwater, or whether any-

one in Coldwater was part of what had moved him. What was in the canvas bag Dakin had described — he had not had it when he came to the wharf; she had not seen it. Whether the face in Kahl's photograph was the face she had seen at two in the morning.

She could not check this list against anything. She had run it often enough to know its shape exactly.

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A guillemot rode the chop twenty feet off the breakwater's edge, doing nothing in particular. The wind had backed slightly north since the morning entry.

She stood there for a time she did not count.

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She was not going to tell anyone what she had seen on October 11.

She had thought about the argument for telling it: Farris, or his supervisor in Portland, or someone official who would do something with the informa-

tion. She had thought about what that someone would do. The case was closed; Farris had filed it. Reopening it with her testimony — she had seen a man she couldn't identify, on a dock, at two in the morning, and hadn't spoken to him — would accomplish nothing for the dead man and might create official interest in the network that had moved him. That interest would fall on the people who had tried to help. Not on anyone who had done harm.

The argument held. She had tested it in March and again in July and it held.

She was also aware that it held conveniently.

The convenient part was this: she had not spoken in October. She had not spoken to Farris. She had not spoken to Hale from Naval Intelligence, who had asked her directly whether she had recorded everything, and she had said *I record what I find* and let the answer be what it was. She had not spoken to Kahl in July. At each juncture there had been a reason not to speak, and the reason had been good, and the silence had compounded itself the way any unaddressed entry compounded — it became part of the record by virtue of its absence. Speaking

now would require her to explain the silence. She could not make that explanation honestly without admitting that she had begun the silence as uncertainty and let it become a decision without deciding.

These were not the same argument. The good argument was true; the convenient one was also true; and she could not separate them because they had been running alongside each other for twelve months and had knotted together in a way that could not be undone by inspection.

She had stopped trying.

The man was dead. The case was closed. What she knew would not change either of those facts.

That was the closest she could get to an honest accounting. She had written more dishonest log entries than this. She had written more honest ones.

She turned and walked back along the breakwater toward the harbor.

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Ames had left a note on the hook about the *Agnes Maud's* winch. The machinist from Damariscotta

could come Thursday or not until the following week. She wrote back: Thursday, hold berth four, and put the note back on the hook where he'd find it.

She made tea on the hot plate and sat at the desk.

The harbor log was open to today's page. She picked up the pen.

Wind northeast, twelve to fifteen knots, building. Three-foot chop in the outer harbor, one to two feet inside the breakwater. The *Agnes Maud* at berth four, winch coupling under repair, machinist Thursday. The *Sainte-Marguerite* expected from St. John in two days; berth two clear. The *Edna N.* cleared at seven-fifteen with the tide. The *Mabel Connors* and the *Roy B.* returned from grounds at nine and nine-twenty, respectively. No incidents to report.

She blotted the entry.

The winter mooring schedule began in three weeks. She had the draft from September, and she'd go through it again now that she knew the *Sainte-Marguerite* was running late in her seasonal haul-out — if the captain wanted to stay through Novem-

ber again that would shift the outer mooring assignments, and the outer assignments were already complicated by the nor'easter that Portland was calling for the end of the week. She pulled the draft and went through it column by column: outer berths one through three, inner berths one through four, the mooring ball assignments for the draggers that wintered in the water, the dry-stack positions for the smaller boats.

Berth two for the *Sainte-Marguerite* assumed a haul-out on the twentieth for Dakin's trawler. She didn't know if the twentieth was solid. She called Dakin: inner berth two needed to clear after the twentieth, *Sainte-Marguerite* expected shortly after, weather coming end of week. He said he'd do his best. She told him Thursday and put the phone down and made the note in the margin of the draft.

At three she went out to the south wharf to check the mooring hardware on berth six. Ames had flagged one of the cleats as suspect in September and she hadn't made it out before the weather changed. The cleat was sound; the flange beneath it had a hair-line crack that hadn't been there in August. She took

the measurements and wrote them on the palm of her glove to bring back to the log.

Back at the desk she entered the flange note: berth six, south cleat flange, hairline crack measuring approximately  $3/8$  inch, recommend replacement before November 1. She added it to the winter maintenance list.

At four she locked the office.

The harbor was going gray in the late-afternoon light, the sky the color of the granite, the wind moving the water steadily from the northeast. The breakwater ran out from the wharf to the north end, four hundred feet, the same as it had been in October and December and March and July and every tide since.

She looked at it for a moment.

Then she walked to the truck and drove home.



## Last Day

Two weeks before, her father told her at breakfast.

The county had confirmed the schedule. The first week of November, no later. The detail would be re-assigned to a cannery operation in Rockland for the winter months. He told her the way he told her about equipment that needed replacing — a fact, and then a pause, and then the next fact. She nodded. She poured her coffee and drank it.

After breakfast she went to the barn and started on the fall equipment check. She did not go to the fence to tell Karl. She assumed Lonzo would know already — Lonzo always knew before she did, or seemed to, his information arriving from the county at the same time theirs did but without the same weight. She worked through the tack room and the tine inventory and the chain loops for the sledge, and after an hour she had stopped thinking about it long enough to keep working.

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The last weeks of October were ordinary. They had the fall cleanup work that came every year: the summer fencing equipment cleaned and oiled and put away, the last repairs on the outbuildings, the hay stowed in the far barn, the root cellar checked and the door fitted with new weatherstripping that her father had cut from a piece of rubber belting. The prisoners worked alongside them the way they had all summer — steadily, without conversation except about the work, Lonzo watching from the truck or the barn door with his flask of soup and his air of enduring patience.

She spoke to Karl at the fence twice in that last stretch of October.

The first time was about the east fence's condition for the winter — whether anyone would maintain it when the detail was gone. He had looked along the line of posts toward the wood lot, the way he did when he was thinking about the fence's particular problems rather than the fence in general.

She said she and her father would manage.

He nodded, considering this. *Ja*, he said. Then: she should watch the posts in the low section, near the creek, because when the ground went soft in the spring the set would shift and the wire would slacken before the fence looked like it needed work.

She said she knew about the creek section.

He said: yes, he thought she did.

The second time was a Thursday afternoon, the light going early now, the November cold already coming through the October days. She had the wire stretcher and was working the south line, and when she came around the corner where the icehouse was visible he was at the fence already, for no clear reason, his hands in his jacket pockets, looking at the sky. They talked about the weather that was coming. He had learned to read the Maine sky over a year. The clouds built differently here than in Bavaria, he said. Without the mountains to tell you which direction they meant.

She agreed that the sky was different here.

Neither of them named the end that was coming. There was nothing to name, or there was, and they

had both decided without talking about it that the remaining work was just the remaining work.

---

At night she thought about it in the ordinary way that things presented themselves before sleep — going over the day's inventory as she lay in the dark, sorting what still needed doing from what was done.

She had not written down her address for him. She had not asked for his. There was nothing practical in that direction: his address was a camp, and when the war ended he would be sent back, and she was eighteen and in Maine, and these were complete facts that did not require other facts to arrange themselves around. She understood this.

What she had was a year of conversations at a fence. They were hers — not the farm's, not her father's management of the county program, not the town's judgment about what a German dairy farmer's daughter was permitted. She had walked to the fence herself, the first time, and every time after. No one had told her to.

*Was ich habe, ist genug*, she thought, which was something her father said about certain things, and then she was asleep.

---

The last day was a Thursday.

Clear and cold, the sky already thin with November blue. Her breath made a shape in the cold air when she went out at six to the morning chores, and the frost lay heavy in the low ground near the creek and in the shadows at the tree line where the sun had not yet reached. The cows were already moving at their stall doors and she worked through the feeding and watering in the usual order, filling the pails from the pump, carrying them in two at a time, the cold handle of the pump slick with ice that she warmed with her palm before she pressed down.

The work of the morning was stacking: the last of the feed bales going into the far barn for the winter store. She worked inside with her father, accepting bales as the prisoners passed them up from the wagon, stacking them row by row up the loft ladder. Albrecht worked without speaking, which was his usu-

al, and she stacked without speaking, and the bales came in steadily. The far barn smelled of old hay and cold wood and the particular dusty sweetness that came when the chaff was disturbed and hung in the low light. She had stood in that smell her whole life. She was standing in it now.

At one point she looked out through the gap at the top of the loft doors and could see Karl at the wagon. He was passing a bale up to one of the others, his shoulders set against the weight. He did not look up.

At midday Lonzo brought them in for the noon break. She ate at the kitchen table while her parents' voices came from the back room, her mother's low and even, her father's with the Bavarian cadence that came through in English now as well as German. They had been talking more, these past weeks. She had noticed it without remarking on it, the way you notice a door has been left open in a house where it was usually closed.

She went back out at one o'clock. The prisoners were already at the barn.

---

At two-thirty the county truck came up the road.

She was in the far barn, at the top of the stack, when she heard the engine and then the truck door and then Lonzo's voice calling from the yard — *all right, boys, time's up* — in the flat unceremonious tone he used for the end of the workday. She came down from the loft and got to the door.

By the time she was in the yard the prisoners were already moving from the barn in a line toward the icehouse. Lonzo stood at the truck's running board, counting them with his eyes.

She stood in the yard.

The prisoners filed into the icehouse for their things. It took ten minutes. She stood in the November cold with her hands in her coat pockets and heard the truck idling at the gate and heard the crows at the wood lot edge calling back and forth to each other the way they did in the late afternoon.

An hour early. She had expected three-thirty. Someone's schedule had shifted. This was the thing that happened with government schedules.

Karl was last. He was always last.

He came out of the icehouse and crossed the yard. She walked to the east fence. She stood on the farm side and waited.

He came to the fence. They stood on opposite sides of it in the cold.

She said, in German: *Ich hoffe, deine Schwester ist in Ordnung.*

He looked at her. *Ich auch*, he said. Then, after a pause: *Ich hoffe, dein Bruder kommt heim.*

*Das wird er.* She was not entirely certain of this. She said it.

*Das glaube ich auch*, he said.

Lonzo called from the truck.

Karl turned. He walked to the gate. He did not look back.

She stood at the fence and watched the truck go down the road. It curved around the bend where the birches leaned over the ditch and was gone. She stayed a moment after it was gone. The field ran out to the east, the frost still white in the shadows along the tree line. The fence posts ran away from her, one



after the other, down to where the treeline began and the field ended.

She went inside.

---

She was quiet at supper. Her mother passed the salt without being asked. Her father said the machinist from Damariscotta had called about the tractor coupling and would come Monday. She said she would be here Monday. He nodded. They ate.

After supper she walked to the icehouse.

The county would send someone to clear it out later in the week. The door was not locked. She opened it and went in.

The smell was old sawdust and cold ash from the stove. The single bulb on its cord, no pull chain — she had to take the glass envelope between two fingers and twist it into the socket. The light came on. Four cots, stripped down to the blue-and-white ticking. The cold stove. A small can of stove blacking on the inside sill of the window, which she had not known was there. The room had been occupied for

fourteen months and looked as though it had not been touched.

She stood in the middle of the room.

The floorboards were the old wide-plank pine, the same as the rest of the building her grandfather had put up. She had not been in this room in three years before the prisoners came. She stood in it now and it was four stripped cots and a cold stove and a smell that had been in the wood before she was born and would be in it long after this winter.

She stood for a minute.

She twisted the bulb off and went out and closed the door behind her.

---

The next morning she walked the east fence line.

She started at the gate and went south along it toward the wood lot, checking the posts as she went — pressing her weight against each one, running her hand along the wire to feel the tension, looking at the staple work. There was the fence her father had always maintained and there was the fence the prison-

ers had worked on, and within that there was the work Karl had done specifically, and she knew the difference by the age of the wood and the set of the staples and a quality she did not try to name, the quality of a person who had thought about what the fence was supposed to do and then done the thing that accomplished it.

She found the first of his posts about forty feet down the line. New cedar, the base cut clean, the wood still pale where the old stain hadn't reached yet. The wire run tight, stapled twice at each angle the way you did it in soft ground. She pressed the post. It did not give.

The second post was sixty feet further on, at the corner where the line jogged toward the creek. He had done this one on a day she wasn't watching. New wood here too, and the wire angled correctly, which it had not been before — the old post had listed a few degrees and she had thought it was just the way that post was, but he had reset it true. She checked the angle with her eye.

The third and fourth were in the low section near the creek, where the ground went soft every spring

and posts needed resetting more often than anywhere else on the farm. Both set in new holes, tamped down and packed tight with clay from the creek bank.

She went through all four and they were solid. The work was the kind that didn't ask to be noticed because it was doing what it was supposed to do, which was hold the thing in place. There was no excess in it and no show. It would hold through the winter. In the spring she would check it again and it would still be holding.

She finished the fence line at the far corner and came back to the gate.

The east field ran away from her in the morning light. The frost was heavier today, the grass white all the way to the tree line.

The four Karl had repaired would not need work.

She noted this.

Then she went back across the yard and started the morning chores.

# Cornbread

The second letter came on a Wednesday.

Marcus was at his desk during the third-period break, marking Latin prose exercises from the senior class, when he found it in the faculty post. Wakefield's secretary delivered the stack each morning to the main office and Marcus collected it when he thought to, which was not every day. Ellenbogen's secretary still used the Committee letterhead, even now; he recognized the envelope before he had turned it fully over.

He opened it, read it, put it on the desk beside the Latin exercises. He read it again.

Ellenbogen wrote with the consideration he brought to everything. He hoped Marcus had received his letter of October. He understood that Marcus might be weighing the decision carefully, which was only right. He wished to say, with genuine warmth, that the position needed to be confirmed or released by December the first. He said Cambridge

would be glad to have him. He said he hoped Marcus was well.

All of this was in the letter and took six lines. Ellenbogen was not a man who used more space than a thought required.

Marcus had the first letter in the desk drawer at home. He took it out each morning before breakfast, considered it, put it back. He had done this for forty-one days. He folded the second letter and put it in his jacket pocket and returned to the Latin exercises. The class would be back in fourteen minutes, and the exercises required marking before they did.

---

The Crow house was warm when he came in. Lillian had been cooking — dried beans and the tomatoes she'd put up in August, the particular sweetness of them. He hung his coat in the hall and went upstairs.

At his desk he took both letters out and set them side by side.

He read them in order. The October letter first, then the follow-up. The total content of what was being offered: Cambridge, a junior appointment in the German and Latin program, a salary one hundred and twenty dollars a year better than Coldwater's, institutional life, colleagues, the city, proximity to the eastern ports and the first passage back to Europe when Europe was safe for passage. Ellenbogen had written the October letter with care, neither underselling the opportunity nor pressing it. He was giving Marcus a door, not pushing him through it.

Marcus took a sheet of school stationery from the drawer. He uncapped his pen.

He had known what he was going to say since sometime in October. Since the fourth day after the first letter arrived, specifically, when he had read it a third time, sat with what each posting offered, and put the letter back without answering it. He had not been uncertain about the answer since then. He had been uncertain about the reason for the answer, which was a different problem, and not one the letter could resolve even if he tried.

He wrote:

*Dear Professor Ellenbogen,*

*Thank you for your letter of October, and for your patience in awaiting a response. I have given the Cambridge appointment considerable thought. I am grateful for the Committee's continued support, and for this specific opportunity.*

He stopped. Read what he had written. The first paragraph was accurate and cost nothing. The second paragraph was the one that mattered.

*I shall not be accepting the position. I have made a commitment to this school and to this community that I do not wish to leave prematurely. I believe my work here is not finished.*

He set the pen down.

*I believe my work here is not finished.* He had been unable to write this sentence for forty-one days — not because it was untrue, but because it was incomplete. As a proposition it held. As the full account of what kept him in Coldwater, Maine, in December 1944, at forty-eight years of age, in the last year of the worst war the century had yet produced



— it was a category error. His work here was not finished. This was also not the reason.

The difficulty was that Ellenbogen knew him from another context: Vienna, the Philological Society conference in 1932, two years of careful correspondence during the worst of the Committee years. Ellenbogen had last seen Marcus as a man in transit, a man between cities, a man who had been accommodating his own displacement for so long that the accommodation had become a posture indistinguishable from character. It was difficult to write to that context from this one, because the distance between them was not a distance Ellenbogen could be expected to traverse in six lines or sixty.

He continued:

*With warm regard and gratitude, Marcus Klein*

He read the letter through. Three sentences and a closing. It said what it needed to say, and it did not say everything, and this was the nature of letters. He folded it, put it in an envelope, and wrote Ellenbogen's Cambridge address in his deliberate cursive. He would mail it in the morning.

He went downstairs.

Henry was in the sitting room with the newspaper open across his knee, not reading it — his eyes somewhere in the middle distance. He looked up when Marcus came in.

“I’ve decided to stay,” Marcus said.

Henry looked at him for a moment. “Did you think you weren’t?”

Marcus sat down in the other chair. “Yes,” he said.

“When?”

“Since October, probably. Possibly longer.”

Henry’s eyes returned to the newspaper. He turned a page, not appearing to read it.

“Lillian made cornbread,” he said.

---

Lillian was at the kitchen table with her mending — one of Henry’s shirts, the collar worn through where it had rubbed the coat hanger. She had the

shirt spread across her lap and was working by the overhead bulb and the small lamp she kept for close work. The cornbread was on the counter, wrapped in a dish cloth.

“I’ve decided to stay in Coldwater,” Marcus said. “I turned down a position in Cambridge.”

Lillian looked up from the mending.

“You’ve been here nearly three years,” she said.

She set the shirt on the table and stood and went to the counter. She cut a piece of the cornbread and put it on a plate and set the plate on the table in front of the chair nearest him.

He sat down.

The cornbread was still warm. He had imagined, on the way downstairs, that there was something he should say — some sentence proportionate to what he owed. He was a precise man; precision was available to him across a range of subjects for which language had been constructed. He had used it across cities and bureaucracies and rooms full of men who were waiting for him to say the wrong word. He thought that if he tried, he could find words ad-

equate to what this kitchen was — the warmth of it, the smell of the put-up tomatoes and the dried beans, the order of a household in which two people had built something across thirty years in a town that had not always been glad they were in it — and that those words would serve as an honest account of one of the reasons he was staying.

He looked at the cornbread on the plate.

He could not find the words. It was not that they didn't exist. It was that the ones he had were not proportionate to the thing he was trying to measure, and he was not willing to use imprecise words for this.

He ate the cornbread.

Lillian sat back down with the mending. The needle went in and came out in the steady repetition she gave to all necessary work. The lamp made its small circle on the shirt collar. Outside the wind had come up — he could hear it working at the window frame — and somewhere down the street a door latched shut against it.

Neither of them said anything more.

The kitchen was warm.

The German counteroffensive began on December the sixteenth.

He heard it on the Zenith in his room, the BBC evening service: a large German force through the Ardennes, the American lines giving ground, the situation fluid. He sat with the radio long after the broadcast ended.

Since June he had been carrying, very quietly, a version of the war's ending that he had not permitted himself to call certainty but that had come to feel, in the way of things one has stopped testing, like certainty's near relation. The German front retreating, the Allied advance through France and Belgium, the language of *when* rather than *if* that had worked its way into even the careful phrasing of the BBC bulletins. He had noticed himself doing this. He had adjusted, very slightly, the internal calendar — the question of return, which had lived for years in the category of the theoretical, beginning, just barely, to move.

December the sixteenth moved it back.

He did not take out the letter he had drafted in October to reconsider it. There was nothing to reconsider.

He went downstairs.

Henry had the radio on at low volume — not the BBC, the Portland station, a program he kept on for the background rather than the content. He looked up when Marcus came in.

Marcus sat in the other chair.

After a while Henry said: “It’ll hold.”

“Do you think so?”

Henry considered this. “I don’t know,” he said. “But it’ll hold.”

They listened to the radio. The program ended and was replaced by the coastal weather report. Wind northeast twelve to fifteen knots, backing north by morning. Small-craft advisory through the weekend.

Marcus listened.

Outside the window the wind found the frame  
again and held it for a moment and then let go.

They sat.

## Filed

The letter was in the morning's stack from the Portland office — district correspondence, a requisition form, the monthly mooring fee receipts for review. She set it aside and dealt with the other items first.

The requisitions went to Ames for countersignature. The fee receipts she checked against the November ledger and found one discrepancy: a half-day rate applied where a full day had been logged. She corrected it in ink and initialed the line. The stack took forty minutes. When she was done she made a note about the Agnes Maud's registration renewal, due in March, which she would not remember in March unless she wrote it now.

Then she opened the Portland letter.

The envelope was standard government stock. The return address read *United States Coast Guard, District One, Portland, Maine*. Her name and the harbor office address in the typed heading. She opened it with the letter opener from the right-hand



drawer — the brass one with the dull edge, Owen's, kept because she had never thought to throw it out.

The letter read:

*SUBJECT: Case No. USCG-PD-43-2291 —  
Notification of Closure*

*To: Harbormaster, Coldwater Reach Harbor Office*

*The above-referenced case has been formally closed without identification of the deceased.*

*Case No. USCG-PD-43-2291: Unidentified Deceased, Coldwater Reach Breakwater, October 14, 1943. Cause of death: accidental drowning, circumstances undetermined. Classification: European national, country of origin unknown, entry status undetermined.*

*No further investigation is planned. This letter serves as official notification to the Coldwater Reach Harbor Office for its records.*

*This office thanks the Harbormaster for cooperation and assistance during the investigation.*

She read it. She read it again.

There was a second sheet — the district Form 1140-C, Notification of Case Disposition. The same information in tabular form: case number, date of incident, disposition, date of close. The date of close was January 19, 1945. She had received the letter on January 28th. Nine days from Portland, in the winter mail.

She set both sheets on the desk.

She opened the second drawer of the filing cabinet. The tabs ran in order. She found *Coast Guard — Communications, 1944–1945*, put the letter behind it and the Form 1140-C behind the letter. She closed the drawer.

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She opened the harbor log to that morning's date.

She had already made the morning entries. She turned to the next available line.

*Received official USCG close notification for Case No. 43-2291 (October 1943 body, breakwater). Filed.*

Three words after the case number.

She set the pen down. The entry was in the record — correct, complete. The harbor log held what she wrote in it.

She turned the page. She made the rest of the day's entries: weather, northeast wind, fourteen knots and dropping through the morning, sky clear, temperature twenty-two at seven and seventeen by noon with the wind coming off the ice. Harbor ice condition: inner harbor frozen to six inches from the western wall to the floats, outer harbor clear. The Agnes Maud at berth three, no traffic expected.

The shortwave at 0715 had brought in the Portland weather channel: a front from the northeast expected Thursday, wind building to twenty knots, some snow possible, three to five inches inland. She noted this in the log. She noted the one piece of other business — Ames's nephew, the winch motor short, the call to the Rockland marine electrical yard, the part shipping with Thursday freight, berth assignment pending his arrival.

She read back the entries. They were accurate. She closed the log.

The BC-1206 was pulling in Portland well. She sat with it for a while. The weather channel gave the same forecast at quarter-hour intervals: northeast front, Thursday, wind to twenty, gusts to twenty-eight possible, small-craft advisory beginning Wednesday evening.

She thought about the letter.

*Accidental drowning, circumstances undetermined. European national, country of origin unknown, entry status undetermined.*

This was what the official record held. It was not wrong. It was as complete as the investigation had produced, and the investigation had proceeded carefully from what was available, and what was available had not included October 11, 1943 — the man on the north wharf at 2 a.m., whom she had seen and not hailed, and who had not spoken and had no reason to.

Nor had it included Werner Kahl, who had come to the harbor office in July with a photograph. A man of about fifty, in European-cut clothing, who had said he was looking for a missing brother, a photo-

graph of that brother in his hand — a dark-haired man of about forty-five, European studio portrait, the background not quite identifiable. She had looked at the photograph with attention. She had answered every question technically and correctly. She had not written his visit in the log.

Nor had it included the hypothesis Marcus Klein had brought her nine months ago, carefully and without pressure, as one gives something to someone and does not ask for it back. The sponsored-passage network, he had said. Maritime Provinces, small craft, the coast, European nationals who needed to be somewhere other than where they were. She had listened without confirming or denying. He had said, at the door: *What happened to him was not anyone's fault. Or not anyone here.*

Nor the dory. Dakin had told her about a dory on the north beach in early October 1943 — a foreign-built hull, high-sided, pulled above the tide line. A canvas bag under the bow thwart. She had walked the geometry of it: north beach to north wharf, the crossing it described, the distance from the Canadian shore. The dory would be long gone, rotted or

salvaged. She did not know what was in the canvas bag and would not know.

None of this was in the letter. None of it was in her entries. It was in her, the way the harbor log held what she chose to write and did not hold what she chose not to write.

The case was closed.

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She stood up. She put on her coat and hat and gloves and went out.

The mooring floats on the outer side of the main dock were the first concern. In a northeast blow the chop ran into the harbor at an angle that could put wave action over the breakwater's low end. She secured the floats as she had secured them before every northeast blow for eight winters: additional lines, chafe protection on the cleats, the bridle arrangement she had worked out after the 1938 November storm caught two floats improperly rigged. The work was cold. The granite underfoot was dry above the tide line, the kelp frozen in pale brown plates where the spray had touched it. She

worked methodically, in the order she had always done it.

The pilings on the north side of the dock had ice stress on the fenders — the inner harbor's freeze-thaw cycle was working the rubber flanges. She examined six pilings and found two where the fender logs had shifted. She hammered the wedge plates back and added a bolt below the water line where the ice had drawn back enough to let her reach. By Thursday the ice would press the new position correctly. She noted both pilings for the spring inspection list.

Ames's nephew — Gerald, she had his registration papers in the file — was tinkering with his dragger while the real repair waited on the Rockland part. She leaned over the gunwale and told him to move to berth two before Wednesday night: the northeast wind would come off the main wharf and give him some shelter there. He said he appreciated it. She said it was the sensible berth for a northeast blow.

She walked the breakwater. No one else was out here in January. The light was going early — half past three and the sky already pale gray — and the

outer harbor lay flat and empty under it, the horizon clear, no haze yet that meant the front. She walked to the north end and stood for a moment. The same granite, the same kelp, the same orange-brown stain at the tide line.

She turned and walked back.

---

At four she returned to the office. She wrote the final entry for the day.

*Prepared harbor for incoming front, Thursday. Inner harbor secure. Float dock moorings reinforced, north piling fenders reset at two points. Agnes Maud advised to berth two before Wednesday evening.*

She locked the filing cabinet. She put on her coat. She locked the office.

The truck was cold. She let it run a minute before she put it in gear. Behind her the harbor was dark, the wharf lights reflecting on the ice. The shortwave was still on inside — she had forgotten to turn it off. It had been Owen's habit: keep the shortwave run-



ning through the night, he said, and you get some warning before the official forecast catches up. She had never confirmed this worked. She had also never stopped.

---

At home she made dinner: white beans she had soaked overnight, the last of the December salt pork. The kitchen was warm. She ate at the table.

Owen's chair was in the corner. She had moved it there in the autumn of 1936 to make room for the new table, and she had never moved it back because there was no original position left to return it to. It sat at the edge of the lamplight.

She thought about the letter. *Entry status undetermined*. The man had crossed from somewhere and died in a three-day blow without shelter and without anyone knowing his name, and that was what would be in the Portland district file if anyone ever went looking, which no one would.

She had not done that work again since October. She did not need to do it again.

What she had done with Marcus Klein's line was a different matter. *Not anyone's fault. Or not anyone here.* She had carried this since the spring and had decided, sometime over the summer, that it was useful. Not that she had decided it was true. She had not decided whether it was true. The difference between *useful* and *true* was a difference she understood from harbor work: a tide table was true; a tide table was also useful; the two were not the same. She had been relying on Marcus's line in that manner. It was not nothing. It was enough for what she needed it for.

She washed the bowl and the pot. She dried them and put them away. She turned off the kitchen light.

The harbor had a front coming Thursday. The moorings were set, the pilings were sound, Gerald's part was on the Rockland freight. The entry in the log was three words and they were accurate.

She went to bed.

## The Good Cloth

The telegram came on a Thursday morning in the first week of March, when the snow was still on the north-facing slopes but the south fields had started to show brown through the crust. Hannah was in the barn when her father came to the door and stood in the opening without speaking. She put down the currycomb and came.

He was holding the yellow envelope. He had already read it. He read it again while she watched, and then he held it out to her.

Western Union. Thin paper, thin print.

*SERGEANT WILHELM PFEIFFER WILL SEPARATE BOSTON MARCH TWENTIETH EXPECTED HOME MID-MARCH —*

She read it through. She gave it back to him.

He said nothing. He went inside.

She finished with the cow she had been brushing — it was wrong to leave it half-done — and came to

the kitchen. The telegram was on the table. She could hear her father in the other room, speaking quietly to her mother. After a minute the voices stopped. She waited by the window and looked out at the south field, at the place where the frost line was retreating, the brown grass showing through in patches.

After a few minutes Magda came out of the pantry. She was carrying the white linen tablecloth, folded into a square the size of a bread loaf. It had not been on the table since Christmas of 1941, the last Christmas before everything shifted and the Pfeiffer household shifted with it. Magda set the folded cloth on the kitchen table beside the telegram. She didn't unfold it. She smoothed the top of the folded square once with her palm, slowly, and went back to the sink.

Hannah understood: when he came, the cloth would go on the table.

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She drove to Rockland to meet the bus on a Tuesday in the middle of March, the Ford's heater slow to warm, the road grey and damp where the morning

fog had settled and not fully burned. She had learned to drive the previous spring — the farm needed it and she needed it and her father had handed her the key one afternoon without preamble and stood back while she worked out the clutch. It was not a skill anyone had offered her.

The bus was twelve minutes late. She waited on the sidewalk in front of the drugstore that served as the Rockland stop, watching the street go quiet and then quiet again. The air smelled of the harbor — low tide somewhere in the distance, diesel from the commercial dock two streets over. A woman came out of the drugstore and looked at Hannah with a polite, incurious expression and went on. The town did not know her here.

When the bus came and the passengers began coming off, Hannah crossed to the near edge of the opposite sidewalk, close enough to see faces. Three passengers ahead of him, and then Will stepped down.

She saw him before he saw her.

He was thinner — she had been preparing for this, the letters and the months of fewer letters and the months of silence had prepared her for thin and changed, but the specific quality of it was something she had not managed to imagine in advance. It was not only the weight. It was the way he stood on the sidewalk with his kit bag at his feet and looked at the street around him — not looking for her, not yet, but looking in a way that seemed like measurement. Taking the dimensions of the space, finding where the sides were. He was in his uniform, the overcoat over it, and his left hand was in his coat pocket.

She called his name.

He turned. He found her across the width of the street and looked at her for a moment and then he picked up his kit bag and came toward her.

He said: “You drive now.”

She said: “I do.”

He put the kit bag behind the seat and got in. She started the Ford and pulled out onto the main road north. The sea was out to the right, flat and grey, the March light not yet strong enough to do anything

useful with it. The coast road curved inland after two miles and the fields came back — brown, mostly, the frost still in the grass, but in the low places the ground had already softened enough to show a faint green through the wet.

Will looked out at the fields.

He said: “It looks the same.”

She said: “It mostly is.”

He said: “Good.”

She drove the rest of the way without either of them speaking. He watched the road and the fields passing, and she watched the road, and beside her in the passenger seat he was present in the way that only the long-absent are present: taking up more space than a person ought to.

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Her father was standing in the kitchen when they came through the door. He had been standing there for some time, she thought — the table was clear, no work out, no coffee cup. Just standing. When Will came in through the low doorway Albrecht did not go

to him. He stood where he was and he put his hand on Will's shoulder and held it there, his hand still.

Will said: "Pop."

Albrecht said — in English, the English he had not chosen at the family table in more than two years: "I'm glad you're home, Will."

The words were right. They were the right words in the right order.

Will said: "Me too, Pop."

Magda came from the sitting room. She went directly to Will without hesitation, and she reached up and took his face between her hands — she was small and he had always been tall, taller than her by the time he was fourteen — and she looked at him. She looked at him for a moment and then she said, very quietly, in German: *Mein Kind*.

That was all. It was the first thing she had said without being spoken to in longer than Hannah could fix a date to.

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That evening Magda unfolded the white linen cloth and laid it across the kitchen table. She worked from the center outward, flattening the crease that ran down its length. The crease came out slowly. The cloth was good linen, heavy and white, and the table looked like itself in a different season.

They sat: Hannah and Will across from her parents, the arrangement they had always used.

Her father said grace — *Komm, Herr Jesu, sei unser Gast, und segne, was du uns bescheret hast* — and then he paused, long enough for the pause to be deliberate, and added in English: *And thank you for bringing William home.* The English was the English of a man who had assembled the words one by one with care. Nobody corrected it.

They ate. Albrecht asked Will questions in English — whether the bus had been long, whether he was hungry, whether he needed anything from the store in the morning. Will answered: it was fine, he was fine, no thank you. His answers were shorter than they used to be and he watched the room while he ate, not restlessly but steadily, the way a person

watches a room they are still taking the measure of — the distance between walls, where the windows were.

When he reached for the bread his left hand came above the table. The tremor was small: a slight unsteadiness in the hand when it should have been still, lasting less than a second. He took the bread. He put his left hand back below the table.

Magda passed the butter. Her father asked whether Will had slept on the bus north.

They ate around it, and the conversation moved on, and the good cloth was on the table.

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After dinner Will said he was going out to check the barn. Hannah went with him. They had always done this — she had followed him to the barn after dinner since she was small enough that he had to unlatch the door for her, and the habit had never entirely lost its early shape.

The barn was warm from the animals, amber in the lantern light. The smell was the same as it had always been: hay and the cows and the cold air com-

ing through the east wall's gaps. Will walked the length of it without hurrying, pausing to look at the new water line, the stall repairs from November, the calf that had been born in February and was growing into something not quite a calf anymore. He stopped at the tack room and opened the door and looked in. He closed it.

At the east wall he stopped.

He said: "The east fence is new."

He couldn't see the east fence from here. He must have seen it from the road on the way in, or from the yard when he arrived, or he had simply noticed the paler posts and the tight wire without knowing when he'd noticed.

She said: "The POW labor. They repaired it."

He looked at her. "Prisoners? Here?"

She said: "Last year. German prisoners, from Houlton. Four of them, for the spring through fall."

He was quiet for a moment.

He said: "What were they like?"

She had thought around this question without deciding on an answer. She had turned it over during the drive back from Rockland and again while she helped her mother lay the table, and she had found that what she was going to say was not complicated.

She said: “Workers. They knew what they were doing.”

Will nodded. He bent and picked up a short length of baling wire from the barn floor — the kind that ended up everywhere in barns, always underfoot — and turned it over in his hands, examining the ends.

He said: “I used to do this. Pick up stuff. Whatever was on the ground.”

She said: “You still do, I guess.”

He said: “Yeah.”

He set the wire on the edge of the nearest stall rail. Then he turned and they went back to the house.

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Later, in her room, Hannah sat at the edge of the bed.

She had expected the thinking to be harder. She had expected something with more edge to it — something thornier. What was there instead was quieter and more settled.

She thought about Karl.

He had been at the fence for a year. He had placed a columbine on the post she passed and she had taken it without entirely knowing what she was doing with it, only that she was not going to leave it on the post. He had told her something true about himself in southern France, something she had not asked for, and she had sat with it for a week before returning to the fence, because returning was the honest thing to do. They had said goodbye in four sentences.

She had not written her address. He had not asked for it. There was nothing practical in that direction and there had never been, and this was not a sorrow, it was the shape of what it was.

She got up. She went to her father's shelf and took down the *Duden* — it sat between the agricultural

almanac and the German-English dictionary he had used for the county forms before he stopped using it. She knew the place in the spine: slightly thicker than the pages on either side, a small resistance when you opened to it.

She opened it.

The columbine was still there. Pressed flat, entirely dry, entirely brown — the color gone out of it completely, no blue remaining, no purple, only the pale brown of plant matter preserved past its season. The stem was intact. The shape of the petals held. It was exactly as she had put it there, the summer before last, her eighteenth birthday.

She looked at it for a moment.

Then she closed the dictionary and put it back on the shelf.

## All Moorings Secure

She was testing the lead line on the last spring buoy when the woman came down the wharf.

The buoy was number seven — northern tier, outermost mooring line — deferred from the November closing, noted in the winter log, come back to now on the third morning of the harbor opening. The splice had weathered but not parted. She tested the thimble and the swage fitting, found both holding, and made a note on the clip board: *Buoy 7 — splice sound — recheck June*. She would transfer it to the log when she got back to the office.

She had been at the opening since Monday. The floats on Monday, the dock cleats and piling fenders on Tuesday, and Wednesday morning the mooring chart and transit forms and then out here to finish what the winter log still owed her. Ten years of this routine, nine under her name and one under Owen's, the last spring before the gale. She knew it well enough that she could run it with most of her atten-

tion elsewhere, though she didn't, because attention was the point of the routine.

The harbor was ready. The mooring chart was updated and tacked to the board above the log desk. The transit forms were in the second drawer, six deep, blank and waiting. The BC-1206 was on and running on the Portland weather channel. The first registered vessel of the season — a fourteen-foot skiff, fiberglass over wood, local make — was tied at the registration dock and would have its forms completed when she returned to the office. The buoy was the last of it.

She heard footsteps on the wharf: the step-and-slow of someone unfamiliar with the south section's loose board, the way a person stepped onto the give, paused, and came on. She looked up.

A woman, perhaps fifty. Dark coat — good wool, American in its cut. She walked carefully on the wet planking, not with hesitation but with the attention you gave a surface you hadn't been on before. She carried a small handbag. Her hair was dark and lightly grey at the temples.



She came to within two yards of Eira and stopped.

She said: "I'm looking for the harbormaster."

Eira said: "You've found her."

The woman looked at her for a moment — a brief reckoning, not unfriendly — and said: "I was told at the postal office on the main street that you would be at the dock."

"It's all right," Eira said. "What can I help you with?"

The woman gave her name. Eira registered it and moved on.

She said: "I'm looking for information about a man who may have come through this area in the autumn of 1943. October."

She opened her handbag and took out a photograph.

Eira took it.

It was a studio portrait. A man, apparently in his thirties, wearing a suit jacket, looking slightly past the camera in the way of formal European photo-

graphs — the sitter’s attention directed just off-axis, the face composed. The quality of the print, the particular grey of the background, the cut of the jacket: European. The left edge of the photograph was slightly ragged, as though it had been cropped from a larger print.

The same man. Or very like. The same pose, the same quality of light, the same slightly off-axis look.

She looked at it for the appropriate time.

She said: “I’m sorry. I haven’t seen this man.”

The woman said: “He was my brother.” She paused. “He was trying to come to America. We were told — we received word, through the organization that helped him — that he had made it across. That he had arrived.”

She said this in the way of someone who had made the information into something that could be stated.

Eira said: “I’m sorry. I don’t have any information that would help you.”

The woman looked at her. Her eyes were dark and did not waver.

She said: “The Portland office sent me here. They said the local harbormaster would have more detail about what came in from the water. That autumn.”

Eira said: “The Coast Guard handled the case. I gave them everything I had. The case was officially closed in January.”

A pause. The harbor moved beneath the float walk — slow, cold, the tide still coming in.

The woman said: “I see.” She held out her hand and Eira returned the photograph. “Thank you for your time.”

Eira said: “I’m sorry I can’t help you more.”

The woman nodded. She turned and walked back down the wharf, stepping deliberately over the loose board this time, knowing where it was.

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Eira watched her reach the head of the wharf and turn up toward the main street.

She walked straight. She did not have Werner Kahl's limp.

*Brother.*

She had a name for the relationship now, and not for the man. The photograph was the same man, or near enough that the question of nearness was not one she was going to answer today, or anywhere outside the accounting she had been running since October 1943. She had not confirmed the photograph. She had not confirmed the body. She had not confirmed the night of October 11. She had said *I'm sorry, I haven't seen this man* — and this was true in the way she had arranged it: she had seen a figure at distance, at 2 a.m., for perhaps thirty seconds. She had seen a body that had been three days in the water. She could not confirm, with any accuracy she was willing to stake her record on, that these two things were the same man, or that either of them was the man in the photograph.

The information she had would not help the woman. It would not locate a body or a grave. It would not explain what had happened in the three days between October 11 and October 14. It would not

close the distance between *we were told he arrived* and whatever it had cost.

She had told her: *I don't have any information that would help you.* This was true.

She picked up the clip board and the kit bag and checked the swage fitting on the buoy once more. It hadn't shifted. She made the notation and walked back to the office.

She completed the registration forms for the skiff — owner's name, vessel dimensions, mooring assignment. She filed the forms in the third drawer and entered the assignment on the mooring chart. She sat for a moment with the log open and read back through the three days' entries, looking for anything she had missed.

There was nothing she had missed.

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At four in the afternoon she locked the office and walked out to the breakwater.

This was her own addition to the protocol. Owen's protocol covered the pre-season inspection by boat,

the walk of the dock face, the review of the winter log, and the preparation of the mooring chart: everything practical for the harbor's opening. He had not included a walk out the breakwater and back. She had begun doing it the spring after he drowned, the first spring when the protocol had been entirely hers to run, and she had kept it without examining why. It was on opening day. That was the practice.

The breakwater ran four hundred feet north by northeast from the harbor mouth, granite block on nineteenth-century riprap, maintained by the Corps of Engineers. The March inspection report was in the third drawer: no significant settling, mortar joints holding, north face in good condition. She walked the length of it now and confirmed the report in person — the actual stone, the actual mortar, the actual condition of the surface after the winter.

The afternoon was cold and clear. Southwest wind, eight knots. The light came at a low angle and reached the western faces of the blocks and dried them. The eastern faces were still damp. At the tide line the kelp had come back — dark and heavy, mov-

ing with the current, the season's growth already established in the warming water.

She came to the north end.

The granite face was intact. There was minor aggregate loss on the northeast corner — she had noted this in March and logged it as a normal seasonal loss, no action required until the fall assessment. The mortar joint on the second course from the bottom was sound. The kelp growth was heavier on the north face than the east, which was consistent with the current direction through the harbor mouth.

She stood at the north end for perhaps thirty seconds.

The water below was gray-green, cold, its April color. The harbor opened to the south — the skiff at the registration dock, the mooring buoys in their numbered rows, the float walk, the office window catching the western light. The coast curved away to the east. The tide was turning.

She turned and walked back.

The office was warm. She had the woodstove going and it had run all day; the room held the heat well. She hung the kit bag on its hook and sat at the desk.

The log was where she had left it. She drew the line under the afternoon's notes and found today's date — *April 30, 1945* — and began the entry.

Behind her the BC-1206 was running. She had turned it over to the Portland news channel after the two o'clock weather report. The announcer was talking about Germany: Berlin, Soviet forces in the eastern districts, the German military's position. She had stopped registering the specific words. The German government had moved north, she had heard in the morning. A city on the Baltic coast. The Allied armies were somewhere in the middle of the country, approaching from the west and south. The German army was described as — the word the announcer used was *disintegrating*.

She wrote:

*April 30, 1945. Harbor open for spring season. All moorings secure. Mooring chart updated. Trans-*



*it forms ready. BC-1206 operational. Wind SW 8 knots, clearing. Skiff, fg/wood, 14 ft., assigned mooring 7-A — first vessel of season.*

She read the entry back.

She wrote:

*Harbor open.*

She put down the pen.

He would have written the same entry: *Harbor open. All moorings secure.* He would have sat at this desk at the end of the opening day and written it and put down the pen and looked at the water.

She looked at the water.

The BC-1206 said something more about Germany. The harbor moved. The log was open on the desk beside her, the entry complete, the pen on the blotter. The breakwater was orange at the waterline where the sun caught the wet granite. The tide was going out.

The season had begun.