"It's the usual story," the man at the tiller reflected, regarding the beautiful derelict on the hill. "At the end of old money there is real estate."

There were three of them in the boat that Saturday in June. They had set out from Rockland, Maine, on a day's sail into the bay, and tacking into a cove of one of the many granite islands eight or nine miles offshore had come face-to-face with the great white house before them, some sea captain's pride, sitting squarely on top of a long lawn leading down to a boathouse and dock.

The house needed paint. The lawn needed cutting. The boathouse roofline sagged and the shingles slipped. Empty of boats, the dock in front of them had been patched and patched again.

It was magnificent.

"I'm waiting for it to go up for sale," the host of the weekend went on. "Low-hanging fruit."

"Whose is it?" the man sitting beside him asked.

"One of those families who used to run the world." The host stretched his legs, pressing his bare feet against the boat's hull. "WASPs."

"WASPs?" The other chuckled. "Do they even exist anymore except in their own heads?"

The host smiled. He had just made a fortune in health care.

"What happened?" the man beside him asked.

"The usual, I'd suspect. Drinking, apathy, dullards in the gene pool."

"What's their name?"

"Don't know." He jimmied the boom. "Milton? The Miltons?"

"Milton?" The third man, the man in the bow, who had been staring up at the house all this while, turned around. "As in Milton Higginson, the bankers?"

"Sounds right," answered the host, pulling the mainsail in so the wind caught, sending them on an angle out of the cove and back into the channel, running with the wind along the coastline of the island. The sailors fell into a companionable silence, punctuated by the host's "Ready about" and "Hard to lee," calling them to shift their weight from one side of the Herreshoff to the other, leaving room for the boom to sail unchecked over their heads.

"It's one of those tragic families," he said as they reached the end of the island's granite spine. "They say somebody drowned there."

"Where?"

"Just there, off those rocks." He pointed to a mound of white granite boulders humped high above the waterline, backed by a ridge of spruce rising into the sky.

There was nothing to see.

"Ready about," the man at the tiller said. And they tacked away.

The Anchoress

One

The fall had turned to winter and then back again without conviction, November's chill taken up and dropped like a woman never wearing the right coat until finally December laughed and took hold. Then the ice on the black pathways through the park fixed an unreflecting gaze upward month after month, the cold unwavering through what should have been spring, so that even in April, in the Bowery in New York City, the braziers still glowed on street corners, and a man trying to warm his hands could watch the firelight picked up and carried in the windows above his head and imagine the glow traveling all the way along the avenues, square by square above the streets, all the way uptown and into the warm apartments of those who, pausing on the threshold to turn off the light, left their rooms and descended in woolens and furs, grumbling about the cold—*good god, when will it end?*—until it turned without fanfare one morning in May, and spring let loose at last. All over the city, children were released from their winter coats and out into the greening arms of Central Park. *So here we all are again,* thought Kitty Milton, stepping into the taxicab on the way to meet her mother at the Philharmonic.

It was 1935.

She wore a soft cloche hat that belled below her ears, casting her eyes into shadow and making more pronounced the soft white of her chin tipped forward a little upon her long neck. Her coat swung easily around her knees, her upright figure swathed in a foamy green silk dress, the woolen coat just a shade darker.

The taxi pulled away from the curb toward Central Park, and through the window spring unfurled above her head in the elm trees, and down along the walkways the forsythia shouted its yellow news. She leaned her head upon the leather.

Life is wide, girls, Miss Scrivener had bid them all, years ago. *Cross it with your arms open.* And standing before the schoolgirls ranged in rows, all six feet of her—an old maid, her fiancé killed in the Great War—their teacher had thrown out her arms.

And Kitty hadn't known whether to laugh or cry.

Well, wide it was, Kitty thought now, spring begun and nothing ahead but possibility. Ogden would be home soon from abroad; the ground had been broken on their house in Oyster Bay. She was thirty. It was '35. Neddy was five, Moss was three, and baby Joan had just turned one. Her head filled with the delicious math of *life*—the word flushed up onto her cheeks and into her eyes, broadening into a smile as the taxi moved up Fifth Avenue.

She caught the driver's eye in the mirror and knew she ought to turn her head away so he didn't see her, smiling like an idiot, but she held his gaze instead. He winked. She smiled back and slid down on the seat, closing her eyes as the taxi plunged into the tunnel moving east to west, underneath the playgrounds in the park where her children were playing with a concentrated fury against the end of the morning, the arrival of lunchtime, crawling around the great bronze statue of a beloved Scottish poet, perching like little sparrows on the giant knee, climbing (if they were lucky, if their nurse wasn't watching) all the way up to his massive sloping shoulder.

But the Milton boys were not lucky that way; the Milton boys' nurse told them to get down, right now, get down immediately and come here.

Moss, the younger, who did not like when grown-ups looked at him with that distant, frowning attention that signaled more attention coming after, coming closer, slid off the statue, too quickly, and landed on one bare knee. "Ow," he mouthed, and lowered his cheek to the hot, scuffed skin. "Ouch."

But his brother had paid no attention to Nurse below him, their baby sister, Joan, on her big hip; Neddy kept climbing, creeping to the top of the statue's head, and was—what was he doing?

"Edward." Nurse moved quickly forward. "Edward! Get down. This instant."

The boy was going to fall.

He had planted both feet, one on either side of the great head, the shaggy bronze hair covering the two ears, a foot on either shoulder, and was carefully, slowly, pushing himself up to stand, aloft.

The boy was going to break his neck.

"Edward," Nurse said, very quietly now.

The other children stopped their crawling, frozen where they were on the statue, watching the boy above them who had climbed so high. Now he was the only thing moving upon the bronze.

"Edward."

Slowly, carefully, Neddy raised himself, pushing off the poet's head, wavering just an instant, then catching steady, and stood all the way up. Steady and up so high. Compact, perfect, he stood on the statue's shoulders, a small being in short pants and a cardigan, now regarding the world of upturned, worried faces below him.

"Moss," he squawked. "Lookit."

And Moss tilted his head and saw up through the folds of the statue's jacket, the great thick hands, up past another boy clinging to the open page of that enormous book, Neddy far above, standing, grinning, and crowing.

If he'd held out his hand and said *Come, fly!* Moss would have flown. For when your brother calls *come,* you step forward, you take his hand and go. How can you not? It was always him in the front, going first.

His head tipped, his cheek still on his knee, Moss grinned up at his brother.

Neddy nodded and lightly, easily, bent again and slid from the top of the bronze lump, clambering all the way down, arriving with a little bounce as he dropped to the pebbled ground.

"Your father," Nurse promised, "will hear of this. This is going on the list."

She unlocked the brake on the pram and pushed the boy's shoulder roughly. "The list, Edward. You hear me?"

Neddy nodded. And started marching forward.

Moss stole his hand into his brother's. Both boys kept step, ahead of the pram, their little backs straight as soldiers. Smiling.

There would be no list, they knew. It was only Mother at home. Father was in Berlin.

INDEED, OGDEN MILTON had just turned off the busy Tiergartenstrasse, thick with its double-decker buses, the determined low-slung black Mercedes entering the wooded park at the center of the city and merging onto Bellevue Allee, which stretched through the Tiergarten in a quiet and solemn line to the spot where he was bound. Almost immediately, the city vanished behind him. He walked beneath the thick alley of lindens in bloom overhead, gathering him immediately in that scent he had tried but never managed to describe to Kitty. Through the black trees along his left, one of the park's vast meadows rolled all its green way to a distant, flashing lake. And everywhere out in the sunlight and air, in pairs and groups, on bicycles or on foot, there were Berliners turning their faces toward the long lovely end of the day, as they had done since the time of the kaisers.

With the easy grace of a man whose winning stroke was a sweeping crosscut from the back court, Milton made his way through the park, his lineage hanging lightly on his well-formed limbs, the habit of knowing just what to do in any given moment having been passed down from generation to generation. Descended as he was from one of the families to

arrive just after the *Mayflower* (*Aristocrats, Ogden, not refugees,* as his mother, Harriet, once corrected him), Ogden had been raised with every advantage and told so. There had been a Milton in the first class of Harvard College in 1642 and a Milton in every subsequent class for which there was a young man to offer. A Milton Library was tucked under the wings of the Widener.

With his open American face, his frank American voice, one might think to oneself, *There walks a good man. A noble man.* He appeared dashing and splendid. He had the place and the power to make good, to do good. And he did so. He believed one could do right. He had been raised to expect that one could. His was the last generation for whom those givens remained as undisturbed as a silk purse.

The third in a line of Miltons at the helm of Milton Higginson, a bank begun in 1850 that sat squarely at the center of the fortunes of his country and now, increasingly, of Germany's, this Ogden Milton had taken over the firm quite young, steering at first cautiously, then more and more easily before the wind into the broad, lucrative waters of the 1920s, advancing into Europe with the schoolboy's grin that would never leave him even as an old man, an infectious grin that seemed to say *Isn't this marvelous. Isn't this something.* Meaning life. Meaning luck. Meaning his world.

The Miltons had excellent liquor and an adequate cook, and it was around their table that the men who did not have a visible hand in Washington, but who in the shadows remained most useful to the president, gathered. Families like the Miltons had always pulled the levers of the country in quiet, without considering that quiet to be anything strange, passing down that expectation to their sons early on—in the schools, the churches, the places along the sunlit rocks of the East Coast where all of them summered, from Campobello to Kennebunk to Oyster Bay. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, after all, was one of them.

This was Ogden's second trip to Germany in the past nine months, certain, as he was, that good men, fair play, and the open sluices of capital pouring into the right coffers would combat the madmen and fools. It was why he had invested heavily in this country. It was why he was now

walking toward the party he could see ahead of him spread upon the lawn that edged the roses at the end of the broad walkway.

"You must come," Bernhard Walser had remarked that morning after the two men had signed the papers, the notary had left, and the ink was drying between them on the oaken desk in the enormous green damask offices of Walser Steel, overlooking the river Spree. "It was Gertrude's favorite spot in all the city."

Walser turned his head toward the high open windows as if he'd heard her, as if his wife, dead for years, might any moment be coming along the pavement.

"She would have been fifty-seven today," he mused now.

Milton reached for his pipe and tobacco, touched as always by the older man across from him. Bremen aristocrat, veteran of the Great War, chairman of the Walser Steel Company, in possession of one of the finest antiquarian libraries in Europe, and yet still a man who had wooed his wife, a famous English beauty—and a Jew—by reciting Goethe in a twilight garden in Mayfair. Walser was a man who wore his many jackets easily. A singular man one couldn't pin down, Ogden thought, tamping the tobacco in the bowl. Bigger than his britches.

No. Bigger than his cloth. The kind of man Ogden aspired to be.

Fifteen years ago, Ogden had walked out of the gates of Harvard Yard with the men in the class of 1920 and found his father leaning against a new Model T with a smile on his face. *Go on over to Europe, for a look-see,* he'd said. *Invest,* he'd said. *Find the right men and the good ideas and put our money there*. They had shipped the black car over, and through the summer months the lanky American had motored through England, down into France, and then to Germany, arriving in Berlin in the last golden days of autumn, the tremendous heady chaos of the Weimar Republic palpable in the narrow streets and cobbled squares and under the tiny lights embedded in the twining vines above men and women gathering in the open air of city biergartens. Refugees had poured in from the east after the war, and the new breath of strangers, perfumed with yeast and salt,

honey and garlic, blew through the city. Talk was plentiful, passions were high, but neither would fill a stomach.

These people needed jobs. And no one had seen what this meant for the country with more clarity or insight, thought Ogden Milton now, as he had at the time, than Bernhard Walser.

So it had been with a clear conscience that Walser had quietly broken the Versailles treaty very early on and, with the help of investors like Ogden, built back Walser Steel through the twenties, incensed by what he saw as a French and British move to keep Germany out of competition, disguised as a false pacifism. True peace was only guaranteed by jobs. The machinery needed to build a strong economy was the machinery of peace, no matter what that machinery made: faucets, hairpins, or, as the Walser Gruppe had begun to do, the wings for planes.

"You must come," Walser said again, returning his attention to the man before him now. "Elsa will be there. And some others you may know."

Walser looked at him a moment.

"But you have not seen Elsa this trip, I think?"

"No." Ogden rose. "I haven't."

Walser pushed across the desk a thick yellow envelope, emblazoned on the front with the Walser Gruppe letterhead, over which was stamped the Nazi seal.

Ogden took the envelope and smiled. "There we go, then," he said.

Walser nodded. "There we go."

ELSA HOFFMAN PULLED the door shut and turned around on the stoop, depositing her key in the basket on her arm. There was no one on the street. No one loitering, watching. No one walking past the house. She turned right, toward the shops on Friedrichstrasse, her heels clicking down Linienstrasse, the sun reaching its long arm onto her shoulder and resting there.

"It is the prelude," Gerhard whispered into her hair at night, the two

of them lying under the open window, the night breeze on their bodies, his leg thrown over her, his hand cupping her face. "These are the days of *tempo rubato*, the tempo off, but we can't see where the beat was stolen, we can't see the changes." Gerhard pulled the single sheet across them. "Wagner knew it—when you steal time from the ear, the body yearns for the order back, inside our chests beats the need to stop this, to resolve—the need to close the open chord."

"Like this." She lifted her head from the pillow and kissed him.

"Like that. Or like this." He pulled her close.

No one followed. She walked steadily, having grown more and more practiced at evading attention. At first the work was only to be carrying notes for Gerhard to the others in the group. Then it became a bit more complicated, though still it seemed like playing, like childhood games. That first time, Gerhard's brother Franz pulled her aside in the line for the champagne at the Philharmonie and asked if she might sit in the café outside the Hotel Adlon and take a coffee.

She had looked up at him and nodded. "*Und dann?*"

"*Und*—" He leaned to kiss her cheek in farewell, his hand on her waist and then sliding into her pocket. "Stand, and pay, and leave this money on the table," he whispered, pulling away.

Today she was to meet the S-Bahn at Friedrichstrasse at eleven and simply watch that a man and a woman were not followed.

"And who are the man and the woman?" she had asked.

"You do not know. You should never know."

She was to wait at the bottom of the stairs and follow the couple holding hands, the woman laughing up into the man's eyes. Like any couple.

"How will I know it is the right couple?"

"She will stumble on the stairs, and he will hold her tighter so she doesn't fall."

It was a play.

Elsa went into the butcher shop first, nodding from the back of the store at Herr Plaut, then to the grocer and the baker. Meat, eggs, potatoes, bread.

Above the street the cathedral tower rose, and the three-quarter bells sounded as they did every hour. As they did every morning at this time, she knew, because she was out every morning, just like this, walking, the basket over her arm. The fear, that was the difference. *This is happening. This is no game. You could be hurt. You could be arrested and taken away. For looking wrong. For catching the wrong person's eye on the train.*

If anyone watches you, let them see nothing.

The earlier train hurtled along on the tracks overhead at Friedrichstrasse and the silhouettes of the waiting people on the distant platform burst free and moved like the figures on a music box.

She shifted her basket.

Meat, eggs, potatoes, bread. Now stamps to write letters. The newsstand at the bottom of the U-Bahn station stairs.

"Morgen." She nodded at Herr Josten.

Distantly, she heard the second train approaching. *Ja. Sehr schön*, beautiful, she answered Josten, opening her change purse for the coins. The rails above her head hummed.

"Bitte?"

"Your father," Josten asked. "He is well?"

"*Ach ja, danke.*" She smiled, handing him the coins.

The train pulled into the station on the tracks above.

She forced herself not to turn and look, to take the three stamps Josten held for her, to slide them into her change purse, to nod and thank him, smiling, just as she did every morning, turning away at last, and glancing up at the train only as one would check a blue sky suddenly crossed by clouds.

A couple descended the U-Bahn stairs hand in hand.

THE PICNIC MADE a pretty picture upon the lawn beside the circle of roses that ringed the alabaster statue of bare-breasted Venus bending over her flowers, at its center. The stark white uniforms of the Reichswehr punctuated the otherwise indistinguishable men in dark suits, and there were

two women in summer hats so wide they floated like birds in the evening air that hung delicious and lingered around them all. Ogden heard Elsa's laughter like a ribbon on the breeze before he picked her out in the crowd in a yellow dress the color of sunflowers and summer, quick, small, and urgent.

He slowed. For there she was long ago, in the box at the Stadttheater, sitting with her father, her dark head turned away from him that first night, her brown hair piled high. Ogden saw that, and saw the lapis blue velvet drapes in the box, the chipped gold of her chair pressed against the curve of her bare back. And Ogden, practical to his core, but impressionable, and in Europe for the first time, believed in the truth of serendipity. He was twenty-two. Elsa Walser was older, and German. All this flashed through him in the moments before Elsa had turned and seen the awkward American at the back of their box.

"*Entschuldigung,*" he'd managed. Excuse me.

Her father had introduced them, he had slid into the empty seat beside her, and the three of them faced the stage, where the first violinist had just taken his seat to the left of the conductor, and the hall fell silent. And when the man had touched his bow to the string, touched and then drawn the bow across, holding that long first note, Ogden had understood that every life had at its center a beginning that was not birth, a moment when the catch on the lock in one's life opens, and out it comes, starting forward.

And the memory of Elsa opening the door to him at Linienstrasse 32 the next morning flooded up as it did each time he saw her after an absence. If there are places that hold us, keeping us in them, surely too there are people, he felt, people who work like mirrors for the selves we have forgotten. The young Ogden stood on the stoop below Elsa Walser that day, stock-still, stuck and dumbstruck, staring back at the woman in the doorway, unsure whether to look or look away. In that instant, he imagined himself in love with her.

"*Ach*," Elsa had teased him. "The American. But he does not move."

The Mouse, she was nicknamed by the circle of friends she brought him into, though Elsa was not shy or retiring, not mousy at all. "I am"—she leaned over and tapped his shoulder at the end of a long late table littered with ashtrays and napkins—"how do you say? Undercover." And smiled.

"Milton!" Elsa called now, catching sight of him, her eyes resting on him even as she continued speaking to the woman beside her.

He waved.

And as he walked forward into her gaze, the gap between what he'd imagined and what was the truth appeared as it always did whenever they met. At first, he was a figure of curiosity to her, and then, fairly quickly, a figure of gentle fun: a man of property, an old man at twenty-two she teased. She had marked him as an American through and through—appealing and fundamentally uninteresting. She had married Gerhard Hoffman, the man on the stage that night Ogden first saw her, the principal violin for the Berliner Philharmonie, a genius. And like her father, she had married a Jew. Now they had a little boy. Ogden could never have been the man she needed. He would have always fallen just shy, just short. Though short of what, and why, still continued to elude him, and—if he were honest—to irritate, albeit softly, like a hole worn into his sock. He knew himself to be more than what she saw.

"Here is Milton," Elsa explained in her perfect, accented English as he arrived. "We pretend we do not know his Christian name."

The heavy German *r* tolled beneath her words. He leaned to kiss her on both cheeks, smelling the lilac in her hair.

"*Ach, so?*" One of the women in the little group around Elsa extended her hand from beneath her hat, ready to smile, unsure of her own English.

"I do have a name, as it happens," he replied cheerfully. "The Walsers refuse to speak it."

"My father likes to claim he's had a Milton at his table." Elsa had turned from him. "He is a great reader of *Paradises Lost*."

"One," Ogden retorted mildly, "is enough, I should think."

She smiled back at him, resting her hand on the soldier standing beside her, so inordinately proud of his uniform it seemed he would not bend for fear of creasing it.

"Private Müller—" she introduced him, and the man's arm shot up in the air with the greeting Ogden still found impossible to take seriously, but was everywhere, even here in the open air of a spring evening in the park. He had heard from Bill Moffat at the embassy that there had been American tourists beaten for not responding with the required gusto.

"And Colonel Rutzbahr," she continued, pointing to another man who had wandered into their group, this one genial, bowing, fluid. The stiff and the smooth—Ogden held his smile in check—a perfectly German pair.

"*Heil Hitler!*" He nodded, turning back to Elsa. "Where is your husband tonight?"

"He will be along," Elsa answered. "He had to meet someone."

"*Ach,* always the Someones for Gerhard Hoffman." Colonel Rudi Pützgraff appeared beside Elsa with a champagne bottle and glasses.

At her husband's name on the man's lips, a light shut off in Elsa's face as if a hand pulled closed a door at the end of a hall.

"Our national treasure," the colonel said as he pressed a glass into Ogden's hand, "is kept quite busy."

Ogden nodded his thanks.

"It is good to see you here, Herr Milton," Pützgraff remarked, tucking the champagne bottle under one arm and reaching for his cigarette case. "I gather you are to be congratulated."

"Am I?"

"American money and Nazi industry." Pützgraff offered the cigarettes. "You and Herr Walser."

Elsa slid one of the cigarettes free.

"German industry." Ogden shook his head at the case.

"But they are the same," Pützgraff replied. "*Natürlich.*"

Ogden didn't answer.

"Your husband will play the Wagner on the twenty-fourth?" Pützgraff

asked Elsa, leaning toward her cigarette with his lighter. She drew in the flame.

"Of course." Elsa exhaled, her eyes on him. "That is the program."

Pützgraff straightened. "He does not like Wagner?"

Elsa turned her smile up to him. "But I said no such thing, Colonel."

Ogden glanced at her. She was holding herself at attention, like a sentry in a box.

"*Prost*." He raised his glass to draw the man's gaze.

"*Prost!*" Pützgraff tipped his glass toward him and moved away.

The golden light caught on the lower branches of the lindens across the park, softening at the edges. Two rowboats on the lake raced across the flat, darkening water. In the growing dusk, the brilliant white statues glowed in a line beneath the trees. One of the uniforms and Elsa's friend, the hatted woman, wandered together slowly toward another fountain.

Dropping to the blanket on the ground, Elsa patted the spot beside her for Ogden to sit as well.

"Where is Willy?" he asked, lowering himself down.

"At home." Her face softened. "In bed."

"Poor fellow. My boys hate to be put to bed before sunset."

"Ah, but sunset lasts much longer here."

It was true. Even now, verging on nine in the evening, there was little sense of the end of the day. Twilight hovered in the grass and in the crushed petals of the roses, but the sky above stretched a sweet and endless blue.

Pützgraff strolled round the group with the champagne, dropping into conversations and moving along. Ogden was aware of Elsa beside him watching the man as well. A little farther along the pathway, he caught sight of her father deep in conversation with a German economist who had trained in Wisconsin. Beside them stood the director of the Reichsbank, an old friend of Walser's and, to Ogden's mind, a reasonable man. Ogden raised his hand in greeting; Walser nodded and held up his glass.

"You have signed the papers," Elsa said quietly. "That is good. That will be good for Father."

He glanced at her. She was looking past where her father stood now, talking to the economist.

"Have you traveled outside the city on this trip?" she asked.

"No."

She nodded and inhaled.

"Take a bicycle ride in any direction, on nearly any road, and you will see it all—plain as day."

"What will I see?"

"Training fields, airstrips, Brownshirts in the woods. We are all Nazis now."

"Elsa—"

"You don't believe me."

"Believe that all Nazis are the same?" He shook his head. "There are too many good men, too many with too much to lose to let the thugs rule."

"But which is which?" She turned to him. "How can you tell? How can any of us tell?"

He held her gaze.

"It started so slowly, Milton. Coming toward us like a river shifting from its banks, one centimeter at a time. One lie, then the next. Lies so big there had to be a reason to tell them, there had to be some purpose, maybe even some truth—Goebbels is not an unintelligent man—"

She spoke without seeming to care if he heard, thinking aloud in the dusk. "Perhaps a communist truly *did* set off the fire in the Reichstag, though it made little sense. Perhaps there was a *reason* so many people were arrested that night, in Berlin alone. Perhaps there was a danger no one could see yet." Her voice caught. "But now has come the slow awakening—this will not pass. This will not stop."

She looked at him. "But it must be stopped."

She was admirable, Ogden felt, but untempered. Too quick to jump to dangerous conclusions.

"Elsa—"

"They are beginning another phase," she said quietly. "Gerhard is cer-

tain they will demand he step down by the end of this year. They are talking of passing 'laws.'"

"But he is first chair." Ogden frowned. "He is one of the primary draws of the Philharmonie."

She flicked her cigarette into the grass before them.

"There are thousands of jobs for the taking now. Jobs that belonged to Jews, even Jews like Gerhard. Thousands. So it is Christmas morning here in Germany," she said, shaking her head, "and here is Papa Deutschland. Papa with the Christmas goose, Papa with presents—

"And no one asks *Where did the presents come from, Papa? Whose tree did you rob?* Because Papa hasn't robbed anyone. Only Jews. Those jobs—those houses—those belonged to Germans all along. And all Papa needs to do is join the Party. Then it is Christmas morning, everywhere. That's all."

He masked his impatience. "The Nazis are nothing but thugs. It cannot last."

"*Milton*." She shook her head and turned away. "You are not listening."

"I am listening very hard."

"We have been . . . purloined," she said. "In plain sight."

He cast a brief, considering gaze at her.

"*Frau Hoffman! Herr Milton! Meine Freunde,*" Colonel Pützgraff called. "*Ein Foto! Kommen Sie hierher.* On the blanket, there—" He pointed to where Elsa and Ogden sat. Good-naturedly, the others began to move toward the blanket as Pützgraff busied himself.

"We need you," Elsa said to him swift and low beside him.

"We?"

"Gerhard." She nodded. "The others."

"Elsa—" he protested. "What can I do?"

"*Ach.*" She turned her face from him. "Still the man with the courage of his conventions."

Ogden pulled away from her, pricked.

"Closer." Pützgraff frowned playfully. "Much closer."

Ogden drew his knees up and wrapped his arms around them.

"You should not condescend, Elsa." He stared straight into Pützgraff's camera. "It does not become you."

"*Eins, zwei*—" the colonel counted.

"Become me?" A thick, unhappy laugh burst from Elsa in the moment the flash went off.

"*Sehr gut!*" Pützgraff raised his fist in satisfaction.

KITTY HAD CROSSED out of Central Park at Seventy-second Street and was walking steadily east toward the river. It had been a lovely afternoon. The Philharmonic had played the Mendelssohn, and Kitty and her mother had run into Mrs. William Phipps and then, unexpectedly, into the Wilmerdings. She had put her mother in a cab and decided to walk the rest of the way home. She stopped on the corner to wait for the light.

Across the street, protected by its green awning and polished brass railings, stood One Sutton Place, one of the many unremarkable granite squares on the Upper East Side whose address did all the work, as nothing about its unadorned face suggested the wealth inside. This had been entirely purposeful. When the building went up in 1887, there was a general sense among its first occupants (all of whose apartments commanded corner views of the East River) that the thick-shouldered, rather showy mansions of arrivistes such as Frick and Rockefeller on Madison and Fifth did not bear repeating.

And certainly had not been repeated here, Kitty mused, delighted by the old building, stolid as an uncle. Delighted by it all. By everything. By the light. By the day. She raised her eyes and counted up fourteen stories to where the windows of their apartment stretched.

Even now—seven years after Ogden had bent without a word and picked her up in his arms on the day they arrived back home from their wedding trip, carrying her, wrinkled traveling suit and all, straight toward the double brass doors out front, straight over the threshold and to the elevator, where he leaned her against the satin-covered wall waiting for the elevator to open, and kissed her—even now, she had the short, sharp

sensation sometimes here, on the street outside where they lived, that she was playing at house. She had tripped along the pathway set down for her life, footsteps light on the flagstones—there went Kitty Milton, arms full of flowers for the front hall, there again at lunch, and again later beside her husband, her arm snugged under his elbow, the three children born every two years in perfect, healthy succession, proof if anyone was ticking off the boxes (as she knew they were; she had grown up beneath the myriad eyes of dowagers and gossips who occupied the stiff-backed chairs in front rooms and back gardens between East Twelfth and East Twenty-eighth streets) that Kitty Houghton had gotten it right.

When she had vowed to love, honor, and obey, she'd never have guessed how easy Ogden would make it. Or how much she would want to. How she wanted what he wanted. She moved through the world with a natural reserve. The longing to speak out, crack open, start up suddenly did not run in her. Cool, calm, observant, she knew it was these very things that had drawn Og to her. And yet, when he had come to her on their wedding night and slid his hand down her bare arm, her body rose under him as if another girl had lain there coiled and waiting. She shivered now with the memory.

And the thought of the children in their baths up there, the drinks set out on the bar in case anyone dropped in, the single place setting at the long table ready for her dinner, the bed turned down at the end of the evening and the curtains drawn, gave her a happy jolt. Her rooms were full. She was not playing at all.

The light changed and she stepped off the curb and toward two little girls walking toward her in their crisp dresses, faces forward, holding on to either side of the pram in which a new baby lay. "Up you go," the nanny breathed, raising the front wheels to take the curb. Wordless, the little girls climbed up onto the curb, still holding on to the pram as on to the straps of a rope tow.

"Do we have to go to the park?" the biggest one asked as Kitty passed.

"Yes, Miss Lowenstein, you do."

Jews, Kitty noted, making her way toward the dark green awning that

shaded the well-polished door, straightening her back without thinking. Little Jewish girls. And up here, on the Upper East Side.

"Hello, Johnny." She inclined her head toward the doorman with a smile.

"Mrs. Milton." He nodded, holding open the door for her, Neddy's stuffed bear in his arms.

"Oh lord, they've done it again?" She smiled, taking the battered bear from the doorman's hands. "It's a game, you realize," she said. "You only encourage them."

"Keeps me busy." Johnny's eyes danced. "Out of trouble."

"Is that so?" She cocked an eyebrow by way of her thanks. Beneath the uniform—any uniform—men all just wanted to play ball.

I must speak to Neddy, however, she promised herself, making her way across the black-and-white tile to the elevator doors. He oughtn't to presume on Johnny's good humor. Johnny had a job to do, and it didn't include retrieving the stuffed bear that Neddy had tossed from the open window, fourteen stories up, to see if Bear could fly.

She smiled. Neddy, who wouldn't sit still, Neddy, whose hand she had to keep a tight hold on—he had a tendency to go off and explore. No one had prepared her for boys and their impulsive wandering, setting off this way and that, a creature on some scent, following their noses into trouble. Little ferrets.

She waited as the machinery of the lift hummed its way downward and bounced lightly before the grate was pulled and then the door slid across.

"Hello, Frank," Kitty said to the elevator man as she walked into the lift.

"Mrs. Milton." Frank glanced at her and pushed the grate across.

They rode in silence up the fourteen flights, both pairs of eyes watching the light on the dial as the elevator rose through the numbers. At her floor, Frank spun the gear, slowing the elevator until it stopped just at the lip of the threshold. He pulled the gate back and waited.

"Thank you," she said, catching sight of herself in the mirror hung in the center of the tiny elevator hall. She had a flush on her cheeks, and the pleasure of the afternoon still shone in her eyes.

The light was on in the library. To the right the early-evening sun lit up a swath of the living room, out of whose windows Kitty glimpsed the bright green spring waving in the treetops. She slipped out of her coat and reached for a hanger in the cedar closet, tucking the wooden shoulders into the cloth and hanging it back upon the rod, where it hung now beside Ogden's. *Mr. and Mrs. Milton*. She smiled at the cloth couple, touching the sleeve of his coat, and then leaned and buried her face in its neck, possessed by this wild, irrepressible love of the coat and her coat and the hall and— *Oh, I am ridiculous*. She smiled. Absurd. But the sense of joy that had begun that afternoon in the taxi and had carried through the music in the hall, back out into the park, that sheer abundant light in her heart as she had walked home, open windows, *oh*, she wanted to burst out of her body, she realized, pulling herself out of the closet and shutting the door on her coat beside his.

Ogden, she thought, *come home*.

The afternoon her cousin Dunc Houghton had first brought Og, newly returned from Germany, to one of her grandmother's interminable soirées—one moment there she was, Kitty Houghton, standing next to her sister, Evelyn, just inside Granny's library door, bored and perfumed, but ready and on hand to be the girls at yet another musical evening, and the next moment, there she was, quite simply, not.

She was something else entirely. Standing there with Evelyn, she'd heard the commotion in the hall behind her as the street door was thrown open and men's laughter clattered over the yellow silk settee and the two Queen Anne chairs—*Hello, Barker, hello, sirs, may I take your hats*—and crash-banged right into the front room, where Granny's guests were busy finding chairs.

Go and see what that is! her grandmother's face had commanded Kitty silently. And Kitty had slid round the door, emerging into the hall just as Dunc crowed, "See, Ogden. This is what I'm talking about—"

Dunc was pointing to the John Singer Sargent portrait of her grandmother hung (*too high*, the little curator from the museum had sniped when he had stopped by one evening) above the entrance to the library behind her, but the man next to him was not looking at the painting.

"I do see," he said.

She blushed.

"Oh yes." Dunc turned to his friend and clapped his hands appreciatively. "Yes, my cousin Kitty. The flower of an altogether different age."

The young man had crossed the rug between them and taken her hand in his. "I'm Ogden," he'd said.

One of the Pierpont Place Miltons, he was a catch in anyone's book, though he was quite a bit older and had traveled, and there had been whispers of a woman somewhere. But the man in front of her had blue eyes and a lean face ending in a grin that seemed to her right then, her hand in his, to shine on her alone. He had experience. Very well. She hadn't been frightened in the least. She was not her mother. A man's life stretched into all corners, ran like water where it was tipped. The past was, simply, past. He had come to her with his arms wide and his heart full, and they had begun.

All her life Kitty had moved hand to hand forward, lightly holding on the line strung between signposts for a woman's life. As a girl, it had been firmly set down that one ought never speak until one was spoken to, and when one did, one ought not speak of anything that might provoke or worry. One referred to the limb of the table, not the leg, the white meat on the chicken, not the breast. Good manners were the foundations of civilization. One knew precisely with whom one sat in a room based entirely on how well they behaved, and in what manner. Forks and knives were placed at the four-twenty on one's plate when one was finished eating. One ought to walk straight and keep one's hands to oneself when one spoke, lest one be taken for an Italian or a Jew. A woman was meant to tend a child, a garden, or a conversation. A woman ought to know how to mind the temperature in a room, adding a little heat in a well-timed question, or cool a warm temper with the suggestion of another drink, a bowl of nuts, and a smile.

What Kitty had learned at Miss Porter's School—handed down from Sarah Porter through the spinsters teaching there, themselves the sisters of the Yale men who handed down the great words, *Truth. Verity. Honor*—

was that your brothers and your husbands and your sons will lead, and you will tend. You will watch and suggest, guide and protect. You will carry the torch forward, and all to the good.

There was the world. And one fixed an eye keenly on it. One learned its history; one understood the causes of its wars. One debated and, gradually, a picture emerged of mankind over centuries; one understood the difference between what was good and what was right. One understood that men could be led to evil, against the judgment of their better selves. Debauchery. Poverty of spirit. This was the explanation for so many unfortunate ills—slavery, for instance. This was the reason. Men, individual men, were not at fault. They had to be taught. Led. Shown by example what was best. Unfairness, unkindness could be addressed. Quietly. Patiently. Without a lot of noisy attention.

Noise was for the poorly bred.

If one worried, if one were afraid, if one doubted—one kept it to oneself. One looked for the good, and one found it. The woman found it, the woman pointed it out, and the man tucked it in his pocket, heartened. These were the rules.

She could hear the children in their bath and Nurse's steady scolding, like a drum beneath the children's patter. She shouldn't bother them, she thought. She should let them be.

But a squeal and then the delighted laughter of Neddy drew her back, and she turned the knob on the bathroom door.

"Mummy!" Moss cried.

Two wet heads turned to her, standing on the threshold.

"You've got Bear," Neddy crowed.

"I do." Kitty stopped herself from smiling. "But we must have a talk—"

"Indeed, we must." Nurse turned on her stool, her face quite terrible. "I've told the boys I would report their behavior today."

Behind her, Neddy grinned and held his nose, sliding under the water. Moss stared.

"Very well," Kitty said, knowing she was meant to be stern, knowing she was meant to speak. But here were her two boys in the bath, their hair

wet and their faces shining—Neddy rose back up out of the water, with his yellow car that he took everywhere in his hand. "Plonk," he said, running it along the rim of the tub. It was too sweet, too delicious.

"We'll have a talk after the bath," she promised Nurse. "Send them down to my room when they are out." And she turned from the steaming room to hide her smile.

Oh, she thought again, hurrying down the hall. *Here it is. Again.* Life.

The wide bed with its white bedspread tucked precisely beneath the two pillows appeared wider in the late sun. The windows were shut against the evening and she set the bear down on the window seat and shoved one of the windows all the way up, wanting all the air in, the city in, the sound of traffic and far below the click of someone's heels on the pavement. The smell of heat reached all the way up to her, with the deep dark of spring.

She turned, stripping her wrists of her charm bracelet and her gold watch, slipping out of her flats, and walked into the bathroom, the green tile cool beneath her stockinged feet, and opened the china knobs in the sink. A hard cold gushed out of the tap. Startled, she pulled her hands out and caught sight of the grimace on her face in the mirror. The woman looking back smoothed her frown and studied herself. She had the Houghton lines, the Houghton nose, the high cheekbones above a curved mouth that now smiled back at the glass and at the generations.

"Born a Houghton and married a Milton," her father had crowed appreciatively, raising his glass at their wedding. "Kitty has exchanged one 'ton' for another!" Then, chuckling to the room around them, he finished—"And she's shown the great good sense to remain in the same weight class!" And the long bare arms of Kitty's bridesmaids lifting their champagne glasses lazily upward in the toast had reminded Kitty of swans at twilight, swimming effortlessly, beautifully curved and silent.

"These are the best years of your life." Mrs. Phipps leaned across the white tablecloth to her, putting a hand on Kitty's for her attention. "You don't know it, but it's true."

Kitty had flushed, nodding at her mother's friend, knowing she ought

to thank her, knowing it was meant well. But old women were thieves. They wanted to steal possibility, put one in one's place and snatch the time they had lost back into their own baskets. Even here, on her wedding night.

Well, she had declared to herself that night, she wouldn't do it. No matter how wise she grew, she promised, curving her lips into a smile for Mrs. Phipps, she'd never tell a girl like her *at the end of every meadow there is a gate*.

She buried her hands and then her face in the thick towel and then, lowering it, saw in the mirror that Neddy and Moss, freshly bathed and now in their wrappers and slippers, their hair combed, had come silently into the room behind her, where they had found Bear and had climbed onto the window seat.

Her heart stuttered.

The window was pushed high above their heads. There was nothing at all between them and the air.

"Get down, boys," she said into the mirror.

They hadn't heard. Moss was on his knees, perched against the sill. Neddy was standing above him and leaning out, leaning out way too far, about to launch Bear over the sill.

Kitty spun round, moving to get to him. "Neddy!"

Startled, the little boy turned. And Kitty saw that she would never get to him in time. There would be nothing to save him from the open sky.

And then he simply fell.