

# Capricorn Cell

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# Capricorn Cell

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Cover Art by *David Dezzutti*

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## Chapter XVI



## Drownproofing KJ

The trip to Amblersburg mirrors the shorter one to Lemont Furnace. Aside from an occasional word, music dominates the sound in both Jeeps. On several occasions, Johnny reaches over and rubs KJ, who flashes a brief smile and turns her beautiful face toward him. The interaction between Garret and Anna as they drive to her home is not dissimilar.

Thursday is bright, sunny and hot. In the early morning hours Johnny receives a call from Allegany Metals. They offer him a part-time position, three days with ten hour shifts, mostly ferrying rigs and day driving. The pay cut is huge compared to his previous job and there are no benefits. He's not interested in benefits or retirement anyway. He accepts the job.

KJ restricts her activities to indoor exercising, household chores, and the use of her laptop. Johnny is due at around 4PM. The two will use the indoor pistol range at the Donnelly Place and then get ready for her return to the Core. Bill is having another meeting tonight, and he urged the two to attend.

After an hour at the range, KJ changes her t-shirt for a simple but attractive top. She leaves on her jeans and is satisfied with her choice when Johnny compliments her appearance. The two wait in the comfortable confines of the meeting room, where they sit at their usual places at the table. Johnny can see that she's a little nervous and he keeps the mood as light as possible.

The remaining members of the Core – sans Van Dyke and the Neely's – begin to arrive around twenty minutes later. First to enter is Cristian O'Toole. KJ hears him talking to someone and recognizes the voice. He greets her with a big embrace, and gives a comparable hug to Johnny. The young man who apparently came with Cristian is Kevin Toomey. He shakes KJ's hand as well as Johnny's, though his unfamiliarity with her causes him to limit his greeting. Austin Kelly and James Ford arrive. Kelly's hair is in a ponytail and Jimmy's wearing jeans and a short-

sleeve shirt. Austin embraces KJ as well as Johnny and lets them know how happy he is to see them in good health. Ford hugs KJ as well and assures her that he'll tell Paddy she's OK as soon as it's safe to do so.

Jesse and Rian come into the room and Jesse immediately runs to KJ. She squeezes KJ and holds on to her for quite a while, and when they separate Jesse has to wipe her eyes.

"I thought we lost you," Jesse says, "Don't ever scare us like that!"

"I'll try not to," KJ says with a smile and a sweet look on her face.

Glasses do not often enhance a man's look, yet Rian Donnelly has always been born to wear them. Without, he'd be a very handsome if not unique-looking young man. With glasses, he is both comely and out of the ordinary. Today he looks magnificent in a button-down shirt that fits his discrete yet strong physique with perfection. Rian's face resembles his father's and he has his mother's spark of life in his warm glance, which is turned toward KJ at the moment.

"Hello, KJ," Rian says. He shakes her hand and then pulls her into an embrace. "We were worried to death we'd lost you."

KJ is surprised and elated by the gesture. She doesn't tell him, or Jesse for that matter, how close they actually came to losing her.

Robert McKenna makes his appearance, looking all of his 230 pounds of muscle, though good taste commands him to dress in a shirt with a collar. He goes to KJ and shakes her hand as well as Johnny's.

"Something told me you'd be alright," Robert tells her.

Robert's voice is softer than she remembered. It is just as commanding, though.

"Thank God I was right," he says, "Is everything OK now?"

He looks at her and then at John Bowen. KJ nods.

"All's well that ends well," Johnny says, "Let's hope it all does."

"Let me know if you need anything," McKenna says.

KJ not only hears the sincerity, she sees it on his face.

"Thank you, Rob," Johnny says.

With vigorous motion and eyes fixed toward McKenna's, Johnny again shakes Rob's hand. KJ thanks McKenna as well. She knows a little about Dullahan and appreciates a white man who is at least trying to help his racial kin.

David and John Fox arrive at the Hall. For once, David is off duty. He's wearing a shirt and tie and is clean-shaven. KJ thought he looked cute with the moustache and thinks it's kind of a shame he ditched it, although he does look a little younger. His face, always gaunt, resembles Boyle's now.



John Fox is his opposite. He's gained weight, but not so much that it makes him repugnant. KJ has never known them well, but she liked David, who seemed a decent and dedicated man. John she could not read too well, having seen him sporadically at best. It does mean a great deal that he came and that his sympathies seem of the utmost sincerity.

Both Fox Brothers shake her hand.

"Thank God you're OK," David says.

He takes her hand in both of his own. Had she been found submerged in the water and slime, he might have seen a lot more than the rest of the group and he is well aware of that. In fact, he dreaded going to the station the last few days, before Austin Kelly visited and told him that KJ was, in fact, safe. Pictures of such victims have a way of circulating. David embraces Johnny Bowen. David Fox realized that there is much more than friendship between Johnny and KJ even before their first "public" kiss.

Mason Walker and John McShane enter the room. Mason gets a big smile when he sees KJ. She expects a long, drawn-out hug and perhaps a kiss on the cheek, but he shakes her hand instead. He mentions his relief that she is fine and asks a little about her escape.

She looks into his hazel eyes as he speaks. His dress and body language is typical Mason: t-shirt and jeans instead of a collar, with sandals on his feet and his thick, brown hair clean but uncombed. He hasn't lost his gleeful, almost roguish impression yet KJ cannot help but notice he seems more serious than he has been. She thinks that perhaps she's fooling herself. Without going into specifics, she tells him about her flight, but does mention that she had to walk out of the river. Now that the terror is gone, she's actually proud of accomplishing such a bizarre and demanding feat.

As Mason takes his seat beside Kelly and Ford, KJ wonders why he was so reserved. She does not know he has a girlfriend who has passed the test.

McShane does not approach. He is handsome and proud in appearance, and as usual distant in his manners. He sits beside Rian who does not send him over.

Garret, Anna and Gary Murphy precede Bill and Megan into the Hall. Garret wears a tie and dark gray shirt and, to KJ, is as beautiful as ever. Anna is simply gorgeous in her red-and-white top. Little ladybug patterns climb the sides and a few of them scale the front. Her hair is in a ponytail again. KJ sees the chain to the crucifix that hangs beneath the ladybug top.

When “papa bear” Gary sees KJ he charges like a father who hasn’t seen his child in many years. She braces for his huge and loving arms. When he arrives, he holds her tight and rocks her.

“My Lord, KJ,” Gary says, “Lord in Heaven, thank God you’re OK.”

“Thank you, Gary,” KJ says from within his mass.

“Don’t suffocate her, dad!” Anna says.

“I never suffocated you!” Gary says while still holding KJ.

He relaxes his embrace after much time passes. KJ never complained. The most important people in her life happen to love her dearly.

As the Core settles and begins catching up on the recent events in their lives, there are of course questions about KJ’s ordeal and inquiries into the health and whereabouts of those missing. Garret informs the others that Aaron Van Dyke is fine. In fact, he hopes to summit Gasherbrum II next May. The Neely’s keep in contact with Rob. They, too, are doing very well.

As is customary, Cristi serves everyone a drink. This time Megan brings a tray of wild strawberry pastries.

“I’m going to take a beer,” KJ says to Johnny, “Any suggestions?”

“Well, I like the premium but you might want something else to go with that pastry,” Johnny says.

“Lambic,” Garret says.

“Yeah, try one of the cherry lambics,” Johnny says.

KJ finds their suggestion to be spot-on.

One unusual aspect of the evening’s meeting is its relative brevity. Bill wastes no time in saying what he would like the Core to contemplate. He does not tell them the reason for the somewhat hurried nature of the gathering. Though he trusts the Core with his life, he cannot trust anyone save Johnny, Garret and Anna with KJ’s life. He does not believe that any member would talk; otherwise, they would not be present on his property. All-white crowds at private locales, especially locations where a so-called fugitive once worked, might attract unwanted attention. There is a chance, however slim, that the authorities will come looking for KJ, and might suspect her presence at a gathering such as tonight’s. For now, brevity is a necessity when the Core meets in one place.

“Who are ‘they’?” Bill asks, “I’ve heard that ‘they’ want to force all white nations to accept and assimilate non-white immigrants. I hear that ‘they’ want us to go extinct as a race. I hear that ‘they’ want to separate white men from white women. Who are ‘they’? Are ‘they’ part of a grand conspiracy? Are ‘they’ evil masterminds who embroil us with genius schemes?”

Bill looks at each of them. The Core is silent. Each member's attention is riveted on the elder Donnelly.

"No," Bill says, "They are not. Who are 'they', then? Traitors. They are the wealthy who make money off cheap non-white labor. They are elderly whites who support anti-white politicians in exchange for more pension money. They are hateful minorities with an imaginary axe to grind, for wrongs they never suffered and we never committed. They are Jews who support their own racial homeland yet at the same time demand open borders and ugly mulatto children for every white nation, and who despise and demean everyone but themselves. They are sexual deviants who loathe us for our ability to love like no other race can, and for being repulsed by their madness and perversion. They are women who hate a good strong man because he demands that his mate be a good strong woman. They are cowards who accept the anti-white and anti-male propaganda so that they might know the touch of a damaged female, one who will loathe their weakness on the inside. They are professors who worship the religion of political correctness and who are paid to enforce its beliefs. They are anti-whites who feel better about themselves when they hurt their own race. Left alone, they are worse than an organized conspiracy. They will surely condemn your children to extinction, because they will not cease flooding white nations with non-whites. They will continue dividing white men and women and encouraging our youth to become traitorous anti-whites like themselves. In the end, our race - the Europeans and the American whites - will be weak enough that non-whites, enabled by the traitors among us, will exterminate the pathetic remnant."

Johnny looks at KJ. She looks away from Bill, and then down before returning Johnny's glance. He leans over to her ear, which lies beneath her innumerable brunette strands.

"I remember when you said those things," he says, "It seems a lifetime ago, doesn't it?"

Johnny kisses the side of her head. She rubs his leg from beneath the table.

"White genocide is not a conspiracy," Bill says, "It is an open, undeniable reality. As long as it is profitable, as long as it is unchallenged and safe, the aforementioned 'they' will continue to promote our extinction. A conspiracy is defeated by its revelation or the removal of the key conspirators. This is no conspiracy. It will take all of our efforts to end this genocide."

Bill is direct and martial in tone. To some of them it is a mild shock. Most of the Core sits in silence for some time.

"We can't allow it to continue," KJ says.

"No," Anna says, "We can't."

Bill watches as Kevin Toomey shakes his head, as does Jimmy Ford, who mouths the word "no".

"We won't let it continue," Johnny says.

"The summer came so fast," Bill says. It's his way of moving on once he's said his peace. "I never remember time moving so quickly." He looks at McKenna. "How have you been, Robert? Any luck with Dullahan?"

Within the Core, a discussion of Dullahan does not need to be cryptic or censored.

"I'm well, Bill, thank you," McKenna says, "Honestly, Dullahan's been frustrating. But I'm not going to quit."

"Be careful, Rob," Garret says, "Whatever you can accomplish is more than we had before, even if you only reach one child. Just be careful, because the police will come down hard if they find out what you're doing."

"That's the problem," McKenna says, "Aside from those present it's so damn hard to find someone to trust. It's sad, really, and it's pathetic. Here we are, a nation of spies, one for all and all against our own. I have a few friends from the team who might fit the profile. I'll try and feel them out, see if there's any interest."

"Excellent," Bill says, "Let me know if I can be of assistance."

He doesn't need to tell McKenna not to mention any names.

When the meeting comes to an end and the taillights begin to shrink in the distance, KJ wonders how many more times she'll see some of these folks. Johnny squeezes her shoulders and she closes her eyes.

*Will I see any of them again?* KJ thinks.

On Friday morning, KJ times breakfast for Johnny's arrival. He brings a plethora of supplies, including foods and drink and two crates of carbonated and noncarbonated drinking water. He also brings her one bottle of cherry lambic.

After breakfast, Johnny sits at the table while KJ changes from her oversized tee into her usual Coalsack gear, including her gloves and long-sleeve button-down shirt. It will be torrid with high humidity and the necessary apparel, coupled with a heavy gun, will make for a sweaty day. KJ's backpack has more bottles of water than anything else.

Johnny grabs her hand as she walks to the sink.

"Angel," Johnny says, "I'm going to be working three days a week, starting next Wednesday. There might be a few days I won't be able to drop by. OK? You might have to drive to Coalsack now and then."

"OK, Johnny," KJ says, "Hey, do you know when you can start teaching me to swim?"

"Tomorrow," Johnny says.

"Tomorrow?" she asks, her eyebrows raised.

"Yeah," he says.

Johnny rubs her hand with his thumb. Johnny stands and takes the surprised KJ by her shoulders. She is so utterly beautiful; her face, her hair, her body and what she's done with it, and above all else, because she is KJ.

"Take off that shirt," Johnny says, "We still have ten minutes."

KJ removes her unbuttoned hunter's shirt. The olive t-shirt underneath is tight on both her arms and her chest. Johnny caresses her upper arms.

"Flex your bicep," he says, "Damn, you have awesome fuckin' guns. Fuck, look at that!"

KJ looks into his eyes and he looks into hers.

"Don't go," she whispers, "Ever."

"I love you too much to promise that, angel," Johnny says and KJ embraces him.

He feels the strength of her arms as she squeezes him tight, her eyes closed and her thoughts on a future that includes him.

Anna and KJ will be visiting Coalsack with higher frequency. They will alternate visits to Coalsack with the pistol range and forest around the Donnelly Homestead. Bill has offered them the use of his ammunition and ATVs. Today at Coalsack, Johnny patrols while KJ and Anna practice with the .30-06. Boyle, too, has begun to patrol, although on occasion he'll join them at the Coalsack rifle ranges.

A little before noon, the doorbell rings at the Donnelly Home. Bill, who was dressing in coveralls for a bit of work on the big Chevy, does not like what he sees in the door's spyglass. He opens the door to confront his unwanted visitor.

"Good afternoon," says the man in a state police uniform, "Is Mr. William Donnelly present?"

"Speaking," Bill says.

The policeman offers a handshake and Bill accepts.

"I'm Officer McCann of the Pennsylvania State Police," he says, "I'd like to ask you a few questions if you don't mind."

"Of course not," Bill says.

Bill invites the tall, lanky young patrolman into his foyer. McCann is the tallest man Bill has ever spoken to face-to-face. His facial features are

small and his cheeks thin and stretched. Like many police officers, McCann's head is shaved; in fact, fuzz is all that keeps him from being bald. Bill notes the automatic pistol at his side.

"Please, have a seat," Bill says.

Bill sits opposite McCann, who did not remove his shoes.

"I understand that a Miss Kaylee Jane Campbell was in your employment up to the 10th of June, is that correct?" Officer McCann asks.

"That is correct," Bill says.

"Do you believe she might return to the premises?" he asks Bill.

"I thought the poor girl drowned," Bill says.

"We're hoping that isn't the case," McCann says, "Would you mind if I looked around your property, Mr. Donnelly?"

"Just leave everything the way you found it," Bill says.

"Not a problem," McCann says.

Bill follows him outside. McCann stops at his cruiser to make a call on the car radio. Bill continues walking until he reaches the Chevy.

As the sun begins to set and the end of the day at Coalsack draws near, KJ and Anna sit on the porch of the cabin, away from the merciless summer sun.

"Thank God there are leaves on the trees," says a sweaty Anna.

"Too bad there's no fucking air," says a sweatier KJ.

Johnny Bowen is returning from a short recon mission along the entrance road. Boyle, now in shorts and his Pirates t-shirt, walks up to the ladies. His Armalite assault rifle is still on his shoulder.

"John," KJ says, "I'd like to ask you a question."

"Go on," Irish John says.

Boyle, who is wearing moccasins, puts his left foot on a cinder block that sits beside the porch. He leans toward the young woman warriors.

"Who's Roisin?" KJ asks.

Boyle doesn't respond for several seconds. He just looks at her. She does not look away.

"My father knew her when he was in the Provos," Boyle says, "She used to fight for us during the Troubles."

"Something happened to her," KJ says.

Boyle turns to leave.

"What happened?" KJ asks, louder, "Please, John," she says.

Boyle turns to face her.

"The SAS caught her unarmed and shot her in the head," Boyle says. His fierce stare meets her defiant one. "You remind me of what she was like when she was alive."

"I guess I'll have to be armed," KJ says.

Boyle says something to Anna in the Irish. Anna looks earthward and frowns, but then nods.

"What, John?" KJ asks.

"Not this time," he says.

KJ does not demand an answer as Boyle leaves for the garage, nor does she ask Anna.

Anna and KJ sit for a while, safe from the sun but not the heat, which is oppressive. When Johnny Bowen appears he takes KJ's hand and lifts her to her feet. She then pulls up Anna with enough force to startle the redhead.

Johnny looks KJ over.

"Christ, did you fall in the river again?" Johnny asks.

He exaggerates, though it's obvious that she's perspired from a day of concentration and lugging around the rifle and backpack. KJ fakes a look of outrage, which prompts Johnny to pull her to him and kiss her. When they finish, he looks at Anna, who is again sitting on the porch. Her smile is mischievous.

"What?" Johnny says to Anna.

He knows she has something on her mind. Meanwhile, KJ removes a bottle of water from her backpack and takes a long drink. It's warm and nasty, so she refrains from offering a drink to her sweetheart.

"She's still in high school, you know," Anna says.

Johnny starts to laugh.

KJ gasps. She flings water on Anna, who rolls and laughs. KJ looks at Johnny, who could not contain his laughter and does not try. KJ crosses her arms and looks to the side.

"It's OK," Anna says, "School is, like, hard," she says, emphasizing the last word.

Anna starts to laugh again, and Johnny laughs harder. Her arms still crossed, KJ turns her back to them. Johnny steps forward and scoops her off her feet.

"You're fuckin' strong but I'm stronger," he says.

Johnny sits on the porch with KJ now on his lap. She nuzzles him.

"I can't get angry with you," KJ says.

"I know," Johnny says.

KJ gasps again, but the outraged look disappears after a very brief while.

"Oh, fuck it," she says and kisses him, her hand on the back of his head.

At 9AM on Saturday morning Mason Walker is still asleep. He's off for the day and is a tad hung over from a night out with friends. His Salisbury apartment, normally clean and rather orderly for the home of a bachelor, is less than pristine. He woke at 6:30 and resolved to clean the place when his head quit throbbing. Instead, he fell asleep again.

Mason's fitful sleep ends with a knock at the door. He rises, rubs his eyes, tells the visitor to wait, and puts on a pair of shorts that were lying beside the coffee table. Outside the door stands Garret Fogarty, who is wearing shades and a pair of jeans. Garret couldn't convince himself to put on a t-shirt. It certainly is hot enough for one.

Mason opens the door while he is in mid-yawn.

"Did you forget?" Garret asks.

"Uh-huh," Mason says.

"Are you alright?" Garret asks.

"Yeah," Mason says, "Come in."

Garret walks past the mess to the bedroom, which isn't so disheveled. He sits at Mason's new desktop computer and turns on the power. Garret hears a coffee grinder come to life in the kitchen. Mason drags himself into the room after about fifteen minutes.

"I put on some coffee," Mason says.

"Good, thanks," Garret says.

Today's task is a bit of janitor work on Mason's computer. Blessed with mechanical skill, Mason is not computer-literate, though he hopes to be eventually. Garret completes the maintenance by the time coffee is done.

Mason doesn't need to convince Garret to remain for a cup. The brew is a quality French roast which is Garret's preferred type. Once their cups are filled, the two sit at the little wooden table in Mason's kitchen.

"How's Regina?" Garret asks. Regina Starkweather, Mason's girlfriend, is a very pretty blonde from Meyersdale.

"Good," Mason says.

He rubs the back of his head.

"Don't drink her away," Garret says.

"I won't," Mason says, "I fucked up last night, but I'm going to cut that shit out."

Mason opens a box of Stella D'oro cookies that were on the counter. Garret takes one of the anise-flavored delights.

"I was reading a website, you know?" Mason says, "There was an argument about how to approach all the anti-white shit that's goin' on."

"What do you think?" Garret asks.



"A lot of posters said we have to reject any violent response," Mason says, "And that anyone advocating violence is a narc."

"The first point is debatable," Garret says, "So is the second, but if I were to err I'd do so on the side of caution. I'm sure that most of those who advocate violence are either trolls or agents trying to entrap racially-aware whites. That's one reason forums like Stormfront are of limited use, but not the only reason."

"Yeah," Mason says, "I see that. The other groups were white nationalists and they say we ought to reject the Republican and Democrat parties and try to form some third party."

"There's some truth to that as well," Garret says, "but not entirely. I'm not a white nationalist so I can't speak for them. I'm not a supremacist either, or a Nazi. One reason I can't stand a lot of white nationalists is their habit of dressing-up in stupid costumes. I'm for our survival, Mason, not joining some nationalist movement and attending costume balls, or subverting our resistance to genocide by joining the anti-white Republican Party."

"You don't think the Tea Party will ever realize what's happening to white people?" Mason asks.

"I'm not on the left, right or the middle," Garret says, "I don't care for labels like that. I know what's driving us to extinction and I know we have to fight it, whatever the mainstream or vanguard have to say. I know both political parties and the Tea Party for that matter will not call anti-whites what they are, anti-white, and they will not call what's happening to our race genocide. They will recognize white genocide only after it becomes dangerous to be a traitor."

"I don't know," Mason says, "Some of them have been talking about discrimination against whites."

Garret looks into Mason's eyes. The young man is sincere; of that Garret has no doubt. He has many attachments to the status quo, however, and Garret is beginning to doubt that he'll risk much.

"Spread the Mantra, Mason," Garret says, "See what happens."

"I've been doing that," says Mason, who cannot look into Garret's eyes for very long, though he tries his best. "I've been posting it to YouTube comments and forums."

"Excellent," Garret says, "Keep it up," he says as he rises. Garret puts his hand on Mason's shoulder. "And my recommendation, Mason, as your friend, don't ever drink again."

Garret departs from the little apartment. Mason does not leave the table for quite some time.

By the time Garret is on the road to Jimmy Ford's private garage, Anna, KJ and Johnny Bowen have already put a dozen rounds into the targets at Bill's indoor range. Anna has always been accurate with the .45 and KJ has made great strides. Neither can match Johnny. During a pause, when it's safe to remove their ear protection, he tells them the rifle should be their focus, but it is important to be able to use as many weapons as possible.

"A shank too," Johnny says while looking into KJ's blue eyes.

"It's our responsibility, Johnny," KJ says, "to us, and to you."

KJ loads the next clip into her .45. A smile forms on her face and she rubs Johnny's chest with her left hand. KJ lays the gun on the flat shelf of her shooting position and then, as Anna and Johnny watch, she removes her t-shirt. Underneath is the sleeveless Phoenix Coyotes shirt that belongs to Johnny. She's tucked it in enough to fit a little tighter. She turns around and kisses his cheek.

"My hero," KJ says.

Johnny shakes his head and laughs. Anna sees that he's a little embarrassed but says nothing, as tempting as it is.

The three don their ear protection and resume practice.

During the early evening, as the low sun shimmers through high clouds, Johnny drives KJ to the Fogarty's house in Fox Chapel, Pennsylvania. KJ says very little during the trip and he catches her bouncing and moving her shoulders every once and a while. As much as she desires to learn to swim, there is trepidation and anxiety. She is as nervous as she's ever felt in Johnny's presence.

"We won't give up, angel," Johnny says, "We'll take as long as you need."

His words evoke one of her brief little smiles.

Anna had no intention of joining them and Johnny of course did not ask. Among the Core, his swimming prowess is surpassed only by Anna, and that is debatable. The two of them can swim by undulating like a mermaid or knife through the water like a porpoise. They can swim circles around even experienced swimmers like Garret Fogarty, who has two years of lifeguard duty on his resume. Instead of accompanying Johnny and KJ, Anna Murphy is visiting her cousin Michael, his wife and their son Bryce. A couple of days previous, Michael called and told Anna and Gary that Emily is pregnant again.

When she arrives at Michael's Connellsville home, Anna sees that her second cousin Billy Lynch is also visiting the little family. His gold '99 Taurus is parked close to the garage door. Anna looks into the mirror and

runs her hand from the top of her head to her ponytail. She rises from her Subaru and adjusts her blue blouse before climbing the cement steps to the front door.

Emily, who is not quite visibly pregnant, greets Anna at the door. Michael's wife is still her lovely self. Her long brown hair reminds Anna of KJ's, though it's not as thick, and her eyes are green like Johnny's. Anna removes her tennis shoes and Emily leads her through the kitchen and into the living room. Billy is sitting on the couch with Bryce on his knee. The little man reaches out and threatens to rip the artwork off of Billy's screen-printed shirt.

"Hi Billy," Anna says as she approaches him and Bryce.

Billy knows her well enough to get out of the way when she reaches for Bryce. Anna takes a seat beside her cousin, with Bryce on her lap. She's all smiles and lavishes little Bryce with affection and happy words. She lets him grab her finger and squeeze.

"Wow!" Anna says, "He's so strong!"

"He's a big boy now," says his adoring mother Emily.

"Where's Michael?" Anna asks.

"He went to Big Lots with Paul," says Emily, "He'll be back in time for supper."

Anna turns toward Billy. He's four years her elder and still looks like a string bean. His hair is a darker red than hers, though his eyes are blue. Unlike Anna, Billy defied his paleness and allowed the sun to batter his flesh. He's only 22 and his skin is already marred with dark patches and red spots that never return to white.

"How's Paul?" Anna asks Billy.

Billy signs.

"Irritable, as usual," he says, "His blood pressure was up last time he had a checkup, but you know how he is."

Bryce does not appreciate the momentary lack of attention and he lets Anna know it. She rubs noses with him and blows on his belly, which makes him laugh.

Emily returns to the kitchen to check on the casserole.

"Any luck with the job search?" Anna asks Billy.

He shakes his head.

"No," Billy says, "I'm still a temp."

"America's white slavery," Anna says.

Billy chuckles.

"Do you ever wonder where it ends?" Anna asks Billy while holding Bryce and looking into the tyke's blue eyes.

"Where what ends?" Billy asks.

"This war on us," Anna says, "The war to get rid of us for being working and middle-class whites."

"You've been reading too much conspiracy shit," Billy says.

"Why are only America and Europe forced to accept massive non-white immigration?" Anna asks, "One day there won't be any more children like Bryce." She hugs him and rocks him in her arms. "Or good jobs for white temps."

"You're the only girl your age who talks like that," Billy says.

"There's a few of us," Anna says, "Maybe just enough to help save our race."

Bryce sucks his pacifier. In Anna's loving embrace he is safe and warm.

KJ, who was reticent the entire trip, is completely silent from the I-76 turnoff to Fox Chapel. Johnny pilots the Rubicon past the lanes of smaller houses and beyond the high school football stadium.

The road takes them around a golf course and into an upscale area in the north. Here, woodland provides privacy for expensive houses, private tennis courts and numerous swimming pools. Down a long, winding lane flanked by perfectly-spaced pin oaks sits the Fogarty Place, among a few others.

"Damn," Johnny says, "Garret's folks are getting along pretty well these days."

The Fogarty's moved in to their current house just two years previous.

KJ looks out the window at the oaks that pass by in the twilight.

Johnny opens the gate at the long, curved driveway and is sure to lock it after they enter. He whistles in appreciation when they pull up to the huge L-shaped house. Johnny parks in front of one of the three garage doors and when he exits he takes a cooler out of the Rubicon. They won't be raiding the fridge, whatever delicacies it might contain. He walks around and opens KJ's door. She flashes him an affectionate look and a smile but then looks down.

Around the side of the house is the pool. It is even larger than he expected, and as Garret said, ends in a sizable section that is nine feet deep. Johnny leads KJ across the cement floor between the water and the rear of the house and unlocks the door.

"Go on and change," Johnny says.

KJ looks away from the pool and into his eyes and then nods. Johnny watches her carry her bag into the house.

KJ removes her jeans and Johnny's shirt and slides into the sleek blue swimsuit. It has full coverage in the rear, which she specified, though it's tight enough to show that she's wearing a thong underneath. It'll do.

When she returns outside KJ sees Johnny's already in his red-and-black trunks. Scar or not, his chest looks magnificent. She's not the only one who maintains a beautiful body.

KJ crosses her arms and looks at him. He's standing just beside the deep end. He can see the perturbation on her face and beckons for her to come. She takes a deep breath and walks to him. They walk around the pool to the shallow side, where KJ does not hesitate to enter. Once she feels his confidence and witnesses his gentle patience, she follows him wherever he might wish her to go. For today, they go through the usual motions and confine most of their actions to the shallow end. On a couple of occasions, Johnny swims as she ventures into water that is over her head. KJ holds on to the side at first and shows no fear.

"Excellent," Johnny tells her and she laughs in startled appreciation.

A little later he begins showing her how to float on her back. During this exercise KJ feels herself sink and she goes under. Ever prepared to help, Johnny lifts her back up to the surface. There is a look of hurt and frustration on her face.

"I suck!" KJ says, her words as much breath as sound.

"You don't suck," Johnny says, "You put on some mass. You're strong and that makes it easier for you to sink." He edges over to where the water is up to her neck and sets her on her feet. "But you're still a woman," he says, "You're so nice and smooth. It's not your muscles that pull you down; it's just that you don't know how to swim yet. You've got mass, so you're more prone to sink, but you've also got just the right amount of body fat, in all the right places." She smiles, a little embarrassed. He rubs her back under the water and then pulls her close. "But don't worry, you don't suck, you just need to learn. My muscles don't pull me down. I just know how to swim and so will you, I promise. OK? I promise. Have I ever broken a promise to you? Huh?"

KJ looks down and shakes her head. Then she looks into his eyes and the little smile disappears. KJ ducks under and kisses his scar before coming back up. She moves the wet hair from her face and embraces him.

"You've been keeping promises since before we met," KJ says, "Thank you, Johnny, my love."

"I'm gonna kiss you when we're done," Johnny says with all seriousness.

"Good," KJ says.

Johnny gets behind her and lifts her body in the water and then carries her to the side.

"We'll practice kicking again," he says.

It's 11PM when they finish the day's practice. They're careful not to make a mess when they use the shower. Before leaving, the lovers share a cranberry juice from the cooler

"We'll hit it again tomorrow," he says, "By the way, you looked really nice in that suit."

KJ laughs.

"Thank you, sweetheart," she says.

On Sunday, KJ and Johnny are last to arrive at Coalsack. He was at her place on time, but did not disturb her. When the light came on an hour late, he could imagine her scurrying to get ready. At that time he makes his entrance. Aside from KJ's two keys, Johnny and Anna each have a key to the place. He uses his to enter the living room after knocking and announcing his identity.

Before KJ can speak she raises a finger and then sneezes. Johnny can't help but laugh.

"I'll make breakfast, sweetheart" Johnny says to her.

"Thank you," KJ says as she runs about in her sleeveless top and thong bottom.

Unlike the oversized tees, this sleeveless shirt ends just above her waist. They're not so late that he doesn't have time to watch her run to the dresser. After KJ grabs her clothes she scurries off to the bathroom. His viewing pleasure over, Johnny makes a few pancakes and a pot of coffee. Beside her plate he lays a small tin of salmon that he planned on eating during his patrol.

"Hey, thanks," KJ says when she arrives at the table.

She lays her backpack to the side and takes a seat. Then she notices the absence of salmon beside his plate.

"Where's yours?" KJ asks.

"I don't need it," Johnny says.

Her brow furrows.

"I'm not taking yours!" she says.

"Eat it," he says.

His green eyes stare into her blue ones. KJ looks at him for a while but has to look down. A frown on her face, she eats the salmon.

KJ glances at Johnny a few times on the trip to Coalsack but she does not speak. Neither does he; the music and the tires on pavement

provide the only sound. Once they are past the entrance and the music of *7 Seconds* fades, KJ finally speaks.

"Are you angry with me?" KJ asks.

"No, angel," Johnny says, "I don't get mad at you."

He smiles at her as the Rubicon jostles them down the trail. KJ closes her eyes.

"I was worried," KJ says.

"Don't be, honey," Johnny says, "You can be nice and frustrate me by refusing to eat something I give you, even though you need it more than I do, but you know what? I'm not going to get pissed off and God knows I'm not going to quit loving you, not even if you cross your arms get all stubborn on me. I'm gonna keep on loving you. But I might have to hand feed you if you pull that bullshit again."

She laughs.

"That's such a fuckin' relief!" KJ says, "I mean, I knew you'd still love me, I didn't doubt that. But, I don't know why, I'm, like, nervous as shit for some reason. I'm sorry, I shouldn't get this way, but I do. I guess I can't help it."

"Angel, I love you," Johnny says, "You're just high-strung, and that's part of who you are. Honest to God, I wouldn't change you for anything."

"Thank you, Johnny," KJ says, "You're this bad-ass fuckin' warrior and you're so sweet to me. It's un-fuckin'-real." She does not temper the intense, loving look on her face. "And I love you too, Johnny," she says as she rubs his thigh with her gloved hand, "I love you too."

KJ sees him smile as the thick foliage and forest plants open up and reveal the Coalsack inner gate.

When KJ exits the Rubicon, Johnny remains inside for a short while. He watches her walk, the pistol and its holster moving with her left leg. She turns and blows him a kiss within full view of Anna and John Boyle.

That night Johnny continues the "drownproofing" of KJ. She wears the bikini that she bought when she wanted to show him her tattoo for the first time. When she comes out of the house Johnny sees what she's wearing. KJ turns her back toward him and stretches. Then she stands there. KJ hears the faint patter of Johnny's footfalls before she feels him caress her well-developed shoulders and trace some of her many feathers. When he squeezes her, his palms on her belly, he whispers in her ear.

"We better get started, sweetheart," Johnny says, "As much as I'd like to stand her all night, I can't let my angel drown."

Mondays used to be days of lassitude and dread. This Monday is a gorgeous cloudy day. It won't last past noon, but then it doesn't have to.

Johnny and KJ will visit Fox Chapel in the AM hours. Before they depart from the Amblersburg cottage, Johnny reminds her that she'll need to ride in the rear of the Rubicon. He's already prepared the place, which includes a throw pillow and a couple of sheets.

"I hate this," Johnny says before they exit the porch.

He takes her shoulder bag and rubs her back.

KJ rubs his cheek with her right hand.

"It's cool," she says, "At least we're together."

"You're not a fucking criminal," Johnny says.

"I am to the anti-whites," KJ says, "And I don't have a problem with that."

Johnny laughs and looks into her eyes.

"My woman," he says, "My fucking rebel woman."

At the pool, KJ wears the tight blue swimsuit. She decides to wear one of her other bikinis for their next session if the suits Anna ordered don't arrive in time. Today KJ takes a major step in her progress toward learning to swim. Although it takes place in the shallow end, she swims from one side of the pool to the other without touching the bottom. She does so several times.

"I'm not tired at all," KJ says, dripping wet and finally ebullient. "I think I could go the other way."

"No, no," Johnny says, "Not yet, angel."

She performed very well although he did have to guide her once or twice.

"Alright," KJ says.

KJ lets herself sink and tries to swim underwater, but winds up moving very little and in the end she has to stand so that she can breathe.

"One step at a time," Johnny says.

"OK," she says and smiles with a little embarrassment.

It reminds him of the time he let her play with the punching bag. It is euphoric to see her in such a lighthearted and playful mood.

Before they depart after the successful lesson, KJ and Johnny shower and dress for a trip to Bill's indoor shooting range. Again she'll have to ride in the back and try to hide as best she can as they drive through Pittsburgh and around Uniontown. Once the Jeep reaches Lemont Furnace and the woodlands beyond, she can remove the sheet and sit upright.

It's 4:30 in the afternoon when Anna arrives and the threesome begin practicing at the range. At one point between clips, KJ notices a sly little smile on an otherwise reticent Anna's face.



"What?" KJ asks.

"I'll tell you later," Anna says.

At a quarter till six, Bill makes an appearance. He looks quite the gentleman in his brown spring jacket and collared shirt. KJ wonders if he just arrived from some important meeting, or perhaps he and Megan went out for an early supper. He removes his tweed cap and asks the three to take a seat near the weapon and ammunition cabinets. Due to her proximity to the little chairs, KJ is first to sit. Bill smiles at her and takes her chin in his hand. He touches her cheek and then waits for the others to holster or reload and holster. When everyone's seated he begins to speak.

"I didn't ever imagine I'd be having this conversation," Bill says, "I can talk about anything in front of my dear wife, except this one thing, and I didn't think I'd ever share the experience with anyone else. But the winds have changed and now I need to have this discussion with the three of you. Johnny, this is nothing you don't already know. There's nothing I can tell you that you haven't found out, though I wish you hadn't suffered the terrible and painful lessons that you have."

Bill turns to the ladies.

"During the course of my life I've killed four men," Bill says, "Three of them I saw up close."

Bill's words chase away Anna's smile and leave both young women in silence.

"One of them was an informant," Bill says, "and, as such, I gave him a hard death. Two were Brits and one was a Protestant for retaliation. The specifics matter because all of them were human and all of them changed me. Don't believe the movies that the smut merchants throw at you. Unless you're psycho, killing a man is not something you'd ever want to do. Neither is betraying your people. I wouldn't change what I've done, but I'd give all the world's riches to change what lead up to it. I dream of what I've done and I know I always will. I'll always remember the sound and the smell."

Bill looks at Johnny who is silent.

"The first man I killed I shot with a pistol," Bill says, "It was in retaliation for one of ours getting shot and his wife with him." He looks directly into KJ's eyes. "I shot him twice and he fell. Then I walked over to him and shot him in the head. I did not know this man. I only knew he belonged to some paramilitary organization on the other side. I could see him die; see the effect on his body. I'll never ever be able to forget that. But there's something much worse, how easy it came to me, and how easy it could

get to pull the trigger. The anger and rage and pain are greater and greater and it threatens to destroy you. You must always remember the reason you fight and kill. Not because it feels good or because someone wronged you, but because you owe it to your children to fight for their future. I never, ever let myself forget why I fought. I never let myself forget that I was fighting so that my people could have peace. I was fighting for life, not to kill some man, and that thought made me go back to the war, time and again. It also made me hate what I did and pray for an end to it all."

Bill rubs his left arm and then looks up again at the others.

"I won't tell you not to fight," Bill says, "Your children need you, and I am sorry that we failed to give you peace. I am telling you to come home, but not just that. There's something more than just coming home alive. Come home with your soul."

Johnny rises and approaches Bill. He puts his hand on the elder Donnelly's back. Bill looks up at him and then grabs his left hand.

"God bless you, each of you," Bill says, "We owed you a chance in life, and may God help you get back what we've given away."

KJ looks down toward the floor.

"I'm seventeen," KJ says, "My Johnny's twenty-six. There was a time we'd be courting, and soon you'd take me as your wife. We'd have a life together and I might not succeed at what I'd like to do, but I'd be with you and our family, and I'd know they'd live in a world that doesn't obsess over their deaths." She looks at Bill. "How can a white woman not see that? The wealthy and powerful, and their establishment and their rules and all the non-whites and anti-whites they empower all want the death of the little lives that grow inside of our white bodies. They want a world without the little lives that are closest and dearest to us. When you look at your white baby, you don't see a mockery of you, you see a beautiful baby who you brought into this world and when he looks at you he sees his white mommy. When his hand touches your face and the two of you are together, you see that everything dear to you will go on. It will live. You see life, and what life's supposed to be about."

KJ looks at Anna who begins rubbing her dear friend's back. The angel returns her passionate stare toward Bill.

"I don't want to kill someone," KJ says, "I want to wait on Johnny to come home and kiss me," she breathes deep, "and I want to feel our son grow inside of my body. But it's not my choice anymore. They threaten any child I might have, and any child Johnny or Anna might have. I won't let anyone hurt my baby. What's the difference if they try to pry him from my

arms or kill him before he's even conceived? I'll pull the trigger for my baby." She takes a deep breath. "I'll kill anyone who tries to hurt him."

Johnny kneels in front of her. He takes KJ's hand and kisses it, and then he stares into her blue eyes.

"Angel," Johnny says, "Before they can hurt your children they'll have to come through me. As long as I live they will not touch your children."

These young lovers and fighters touch the heart of Bill the man, and stoke the flames of Bill the warrior. Bill the human feels a deep sorrow. He can see Johnny carrying KJ across a battlefield instead of a threshold. Bill the father does not want them to face the horror of war, though he believes they must, and the blame is his and all previous generations that left an ever more hostile world for the next generation of white youth.

"I've spoken to Garret," Bill says, "I'd like him to join you more often at the Hall and wherever else you might go."

Bill rises and after wishing them well begins to leave the range.

"Bill," KJ says as she rises to her feet, "Please, wait a moment."

KJ grabs her shoulder bag and hurries over to him. When she arrives she digs in the bag and takes out an envelope.

"Here," KJ says, "Could you see that a needy white family gets this? I would have left it with a note but everything changed before I could give it to you."

Bill takes the envelope but does not open it. He knows her. She's put more than she should have in the envelope. He touches her cheek.

"Yes, KJ," Bill says, "I'll take care of it for you."

KJ hugs him and returns to Johnny and Anna.

When the practice is done, Anna, KJ and Johnny Bowen walk to the Hall. There, they each have a juice from a cooler that Johnny prepared. Before Johnny and KJ can finish theirs, Anna goes to her car and returns with a bag.

"Hey, Johnny, me and KJ are goin' inside for a little bit, do you mind waiting here?" Anna asks.

"OK, sure," Johnny says.

When KJ isn't looking, Anna winks at Johnny. He smiles at her and then seems lost in thought.

Anna opens the door for KJ and closes it after they're both inside. KJ looks at Anna's silver crucifix as the redhead pulls three clear bags from the larger white one. Inside are articles of clothing of some sort; KJ assumes they're the swimsuits that Anna ordered. The first is a water-polo type suit, black in color and high-necked. It is going to be tight, of course, but has full coverage. The second is similar though the back is open.

"Let him see some of your wings," Anna says.

The third looks to be full coverage from the front, although the neck dips a little more than the other two. It, too, is black.

"Check that one out," Anna says.

KJ lifts it up and looks at the front. Anna, who can see the rear, has what is best described as the "cat that ate the canary" grin on her face. KJ turns the suit around. Her very slight look of amusement turns to unpleasant surprise. There's a single strap down the back, from the neck to the waist, where it joins the straps that go around the hips to the full-coverage front. Below the hip straps, in the rear, the suit plunges into a thong. All-in-all, the back of the suit covers very little, and not a bit of the rear.

"What the fuck?!!" KJ says, looking at Anna rather than the suit. "It's a thong!"

KJ lays the swimsuit on the table.

"What?" Anna asks, "You wear 'em all the time. Bend over in those jeans and I'll show you."

"No!" KJ says, "I mean, yeah, but not like that! I don't want to do that to him! I mean, I don't mind if...I...I'd like to have some fun, but we can't go too far right now!"

KJ gasps and huffs.

"Then don't," Anna says, "But let him have some fun, and you too, KJ! Enjoy each other."

"I'm not a tease," KJ says, "I don't want to do that to him!"

"You know," Anna says, "If we were talking about most guys and most girls, I'd agree. Most of the time it's up to us to control how far it goes, whether we want to admit that shit or not. But our men are fucking awesome! They're so strong they don't have to give in. Trust me, Johnny won't betray his promise to himself or to any white girl he might marry. He'll keep his honor, OK? Don't you trust him?"

"Of course I do!" KJ says, "But why trouble him?"

The memory of what happened on their second date is vivid in her mind.

"Would you wear that and not let him touch you?" Anna asks, "I don't mean fuck, I mean just touch, you know, being close. I'm not saying you should get undressed or go past making out, I mean just, you know, if he wanted to cop one."

"I'd expect him to if I wore that," KJ says, "why the fuck would a girl who loves a guy do that to him and not let him enjoy it?"

"Then what's the biggie?" Anna asks. "You love him, right?"

"No shit," KJ says, "You're saying it's OK, then."

"Yeah," Anna says, "It's not like you're breaking any vow and he's not either. You're just being close to the man you love, and who loves you. He deserves some fun, too! KJ, I may never see Garret again, and you might not ever see Johnny again. Just think about it. I'm not telling you to do it, or trying to guilt or push you into something. It's just there if you decide to, alright? He sees you wear shit like that anyway and you two ought to be close, just in case. Whether you can be with him or not, why not show him you love him? Let him be close to you. It's your call, KJ, maybe I'm not right, but I wouldn't say it if I thought I was wrong. We all feel like we're being pulled apart and it's good not to distance ourselves before we have to. I don't know about that suit, I thought maybe...I think he'd like it. I see him look at you, and he loves you so much. Maybe he'd like that. Just think about it, OK?"

KJ shrugs. She collects the suits and begins packing them in their clear bags. Anna walks over to the door and rolls down the sleeves of her gray shirt. She looks outside for a few minutes. KJ looks up at her. She's about to say how much she loves and feels for Johnny, and that it might not be a bad idea to wear the suit, when Anna speaks first.

"Damn mosquitoes are thick tonight," Anna says. "I saw a few of 'em while we were outside the range."

The other suits packed, KJ comes to the thong. She holds it up and looks at both sides before packing it.

"Hey Anna," KJ says, "Thanks for the suits. I really do appreciate it." Anna smiles.

"Sure," she says.

On the return trip to Amblersburg, KJ is quiet for most of the first half of the journey. Johnny can see that something's on her mind and he leaves her in peace. A little later, "Rainelle" begins to play on the iPod.

"Hey," KJ says, "How is David Hill? Is he alright?"

"He's good," Johnny says, "Ford talked to him on the phone and said he's thused about Friday's show. He can't wait to get back on stage."

"I'm so glad," KJ says, "I don't think I'll be able to go to the show, though."

"I'm sorry, angel," Johnny says, "I think it would be a bad idea."

"It's cool," KJ says, "All things considered, I'd rather be where I am right now. I'll let Anna catch me up on the show. Hey, are you going?"

"No," Johnny says, "I'll be busy most of the day."

"That's a drag," KJ says.

"What are you going to do?" Johnny asks, "Do you want to be alone or would you like some company?"

KJ looks at him and snorts, a look of impatience on her face.

"OK, I'll be over," Johnny says.

"You have got to come over for supper," KJ says with a little smile, "You brought me some stuff that I'd really like to make."

Johnny reaches over and touches her leg.

"How 'bout I help you again?" he asks.

"No, you're my guest this time," KJ says.

KJ awakens early the next morning. It's still dark outside. She curls up in bed and thinks about her next swim lesson. She's resolved not to wear the thong; at least not yet. There's a lot to think about, the pros and the cons, which seem rather absurd to begin with. She can imagine the hollowness and pain of having something that you desire with all your soul being right there in your grasp, yet never being able to experience it in totality. He's not the only one who is facing that agonizing possibility. Yet the desire to be close to this man, and him to her, is far more powerful than any hesitation or risk of bereavement. It's worth the future pain. Since the next lesson is by no means the last, she'll probably wait, but the thong will be with her for each session. When its moment arises, she'll wear it. When she sits up in bed she becomes acutely aware of the thong she's wearing at the moment. He's no doubt noticed on numerous occasions yet he's shown remarkable restraint. Her mind harkens back to the night of the Yates atrocity. There she was, in his arms, yet his hands remained on her back. KJ wouldn't have minded had he done more than tug her thong and she wouldn't have blamed him.

KJ turns on the laptop and checks Weather Underground. It's going to be hazy and the heat will be intense. Thunderstorms will move in by nightfall; some will be locally severe. She'll still have to wear camouflaged pants and a button-down camo shirt or hoodie over one of her darker tees.

*Great, KJ thinks, Another nasty-ass day.*

KJ is dressed when Johnny arrives. He takes her in his arms and kisses her. Her eyes closed as always, KJ feels his passion and returns it with her own. Johnny runs his hands through her hair and smiles at her.

"You like my hair?" KJ asks.

She knows the answer, but it feels nice to hear it.

"Um-hmm," Johnny says, "I love that sea of hair all around you, and plunging into it to kiss my woman."

Johnny plays some *Black Sabbath* on the iPod as the two depart in the blue Jeep.

Much of the landscape beyond Pruntytown, West Virginia, is field and pasture. Forested Copeland Knob rises on the left though the right is

open territory. Later in the day, the sun will beat hard upon the exposed fields.

Inside the Jeep the climate is cool and pleasant. Since the two will not be passing through any urban or built-up areas, KJ is seated beside Johnny. She's quiet again. Usually content to leave her in peace, Johnny notices the recent pattern and decides to get to the bottom of this particular incident.

"What's up, angel?" Johnny asks, "You OK?"

"I was just thinking about some things," KJ says. She chuckles though it's obviously out of nervousness. "I asked you once if I tempt you and you said yes, but you're, like, cool with it." She looks down. "Please, tell me if I'm making things harder on you. Is there anything I shouldn't wear? Anything that, like, gets you going and frustrates you? It fucks me up to think I'm doing that to you."

Johnny glances at her for a second.

"My angel," he says, "I wouldn't change you, or what you wear, or anything about you for that matter. You're fucking gorgeous, so, yeah, you do tempt me, but you don't frustrate me. I'll tell you if something's too much. I'll tell you before we go too far."

"I hope someday soon there won't be a 'too far,'" KJ says.

Johnny smiles.

"Do one thing for me," he says.

"Anything," she says.

"Wear whatever you want," Johnny says, "Act like you always do, be who you are, and one more thing. Be mine until we know you can't."

"That's easy," KJ says and smiles.

It's one of her typical smiles and does not last, though the feeling remains with her all the way to the exit at Lost Creek. Ordinarily, Johnny cruises by the off-ramp and the two continue driving to the Coalsack Site. Today he signals and turns on to the off-ramp. A surprised KJ looks at him.

"This won't take long," Johnny says, "We're going to meet with Jimmy Ford for a few minutes. He has some stuff for Coalsack."

Johnny turns around in the little town of Lost Creek and drives under the interstate overpass. He takes a winding country route that seems to lead to nowhere. As they round one of the many curves, KJ sees a familiar black Ram Charger parked on a wide area to the right. Jimmy Ford stands to the rear of the truck. The hour is 9AM and it's already hot enough for him to wear shorts. As often is the case with Jimmy, his red shirt has a collar and is tucked. He nods when he sees Johnny and waves to KJ.

"I'll be right back," Johnny says, "Wait here."

Johnny exits and rounds the rear of the Jeep. He opens the rear cargo area. She sees him come around front and shake hands with Ford. The pair talks for a short while and then Ford opens the Ram Charger. He and Johnny Bowen remove four heavy-looking boxes from the Dodge and load them into the back of the blue Jeep. Johnny leaves the rear of the Jeep open and returns with Ford to his truck.

"Didn't you get my message?" Johnny asks Ford. "I can't afford it right now."

"Yes you can," Ford says.

"Jimmy," Johnny says, "It's a thousand fucking dollars."

"No, it's not," Ford says, "You'll have better use for this than I will for the thousand."

"You're not going to give me it for nothing," Johnny says.

"No shit, John," Ford says, "I'm giving it to you so you can fight. It's my race too."

"I owe you," Johnny says after a brief hesitation, "It's unmodified, right?"

"Yeah," Ford says, "I had it apart, cleaned it and fired a few shots. She's legal, except for the sale, of course. That's why it cost so fucking much. Now, I trust the guy but I'm still glad he doesn't know you and you don't know him. He said it's registered from some fucker from Indiana. I don't think they put more than ten rounds through it after they bought it."

Ford pulls out a long black case. Johnny carries it to the Jeep and, once it's loaded, closes the rear door.

KJ, who could not hear their soft conversation, watches Johnny shake Ford's hand a second time and then slap him on the shoulder. Ford waves again before leaving. Johnny enters the Jeep at the same time.

"OK," Johnny says, "Let's hit the road."

Johnny and KJ arrive at the gate to Coalsack just as Anna is about to lock the chain. She waves with vigor before swinging the gate open. KJ sees the prints that Anna's boots leave in the ground. It must have rained here during the night. At Amblersburg, there was nothing but crickets and heat.

"Thanks for installing central air," KJ says, "I don't remember thanking you for that."

"I knew you couldn't sleep well without it," he says, "What brought that up, anyway?"

"I don't know," KJ says, "I think because it rained here but not there. I guess I don't know." She shrugs.



"OK," Johnny says, "You're welcome, angel. Do you have enough water for today?"

KJ nods. Her backpack is more than half full of bottles.

Johnny parks beside the cabin. He begins unloading the boxes and KJ hurries to help him. John Boyle moseys over, his hands in his jeans pockets. He doesn't offer to help and KJ doesn't ask him.

"Way to be a gentleman, John!" yells Anna as she emerges from the cabin, her rifle on her shoulder.

"Never claimed to be," Boyle says. "What's this?" he asks Johnny.

"Ford and Kelly's shells," Johnny says, "Ford said we'll find these more accurate at a longer distance. He guessed 5 to 700 yards."

"We'll find out," Boyle says.

"When are you goin' swimming?" Anna asks KJ as the brunette approaches the redhead.

KJ looks at Johnny Bowen.

"Tomorrow evening," Johnny says.

He's hoping that Anna does not want to come along. It's nice to be alone with KJ.

"I'm diving tomorrow," Anna says, "I have an awesome silver suit that I'm gonna wear. It was a birthday present and it fits perfect."

"You ought to get something like that," Johnny says to KJ.

"Oh, she already has a good one," Anna says.

KJ stares at her and when Johnny isn't looking she mouths "Fuck off" to Anna.

"Hey, John," Johnny says, "Check this shit out."

Boyle approaches, as does Anna. KJ sees the gathering from inside the cabin. She loads her .30-06 and hurries outside.

Johnny opens the black case. Inside is an AK47.

"Semi-auto?" Boyle asks.

Boyle sees the factory name stamped on the weapon and the year "1970" on the opposite side. He's encountered WASR AK's before, back in the motherland.

"Yeah, semi-auto," Johnny says, "7.62 by 39."

Johnny gives the rifle to Boyle, who checks it out before handing it back. KJ walks over and watches her man. His t-shirt is tighter than usual and his arms look bigger than they ever have.

Anna strolls over to KJ, who is staring at Johnny, and puts her hand on KJ's shoulder. Johnny turns toward them, the AK in his hands and across his body. A mischievous grin on her face, Anna whispers something to KJ. KJ looks down and smiles, and then looks back up at Johnny.

"Alright," Johnny says.

He can imagine what was said. Anna winks at him from behind KJ. The redhead turns and walks away. Johnny shoulders the AK rifle. He shakes his head as he watches Anna, and then sets off toward the woods. While passing KJ, he touches her left arm. She turns and watches him disappear into the forest. A yellow swallowtail flits around KJ's head and almost lands on the barrel of the Remington that she carries on her shoulder.

The echo of rifle fire reverberates through the Clay County hills. The sound repeats many times over the next few hours, followed by periods of silence both short and long. Then the last shot booms and fades, and another day of difficult challenges and excellent performances comes to a close at the Clay County site. Both young ladies can be proud of their accomplishment even though success has become typical.

"I'm going to have to drop you off and then go on home," Johnny says as he and KJ drive down the entrance road to Coalsack.

"You can't stay for supper?" KJ asks.

"No," Johnny says, "I have to be at work by six."

"Shit," she says, "Fucking assholes."

"No," he says, "it's just the way it is." He looks down at the gas gauge. "You'll have enough gas for any emergency, but I'll get some tomorrow. I'll fill up the reserve tank, too."

"What about tomorrow?" KJ asks.

"We'll grab supper on the way back from Pittsburgh," Johnny says, "I know a little place where I can get some good take-out." He sighs. "I'd like to take you someplace nice, but you know your fellow countrymen. Half of 'em will call the fucking pigs when they see you."

"Seriously, Johnny," KJ says, "I don't care if we eat in the Jeep. All that matters is that you're here with me."

"You know, a woman can't make a boy become a man," Johnny says, "But she can make a man feel like a man, especially when the shit gets deep and he doesn't feel so much like one. Thank you for doing that."

KJ messes up his hair and smiles.

Beyond Weston, West Virginia, and the ever-muddy waters of the West Fork River, KJ rubs her hair with a towel that Johnny gave her before their departure from the Coalsack Site. It's been a hot and humid day. KJ is still wearing her gloves. Johnny likes them, and the boots that she wore long before they became practical. The vestiges of her old life are part of the person who he loves and he wouldn't have change them. KJ already purged the influences that would have driven him away from her.

Johnny reaches over and slides his hand between the seat and KJ's back. She leans forward a little so he can rub her for a minute or two. During the remainder of the drive, KJ rocks to the music of *Norma Jean* and *All that Remains*, and she even sings when the *Cro-Mag's* "Without Her" comes across the speakers.

It's dark when the two arrive at the cottage. KJ rushes out of the Jeep, leaving her door open. Johnny watches her run, her boots pushing off against the mud that remains from some afternoon cloudburst.

"Wait for me!" KJ yells as she unlocks the outer door.

Johnny sees her unlock the inner door and disappear into the house. She returns carrying a brown paper bag. KJ closes the passenger side door and then approaches his window.

"Here," KJ says, "It's not supper, but it's kind of cool. I was just thinking, it's like you're going off to work and I fixed you something for lunch."

KJ laughs before Johnny can say anything and then she leans through his window to kiss him. He puts his hand on the door frame above her to be sure she doesn't strike her head on the way out. When she withdraws, she bumps his hand.

"Thank you, Johnny," KJ says, "Shit, you're always... I love you so much!"

"You too, angel," Johnny says.

Johnny exits the blue Jeep and tosses the keys to KJ. He puts the bag and his gun into the Rubicon and then he walks up to KJ.

"Some things are better to do outside the Jeep," Johnny says.

"Show me," KJ says.

There is no smile on KJ's face, though she is not at all upset. Johnny kisses her with passion and willingly sacrifices more sleep time for several more kisses.

On Wednesday morning, Johnny begins his first day at Allegany Metals and KJ rises a little later than usual. His first job is to pick up empty trailers left at various sites around western Maryland and the Panhandle of West Virginia.

KJ eats breakfast and cleans the place; including the muddy boot prints she left on the floor last night. Then she continues her weight lifting regimen.

At 10AM, Garret Fogarty pulls up to the Murphy Home. He sees that the kitchen door is open so that air can enter through the screen. Garret looks in the mirror. His hair –longer than it's ever been – is perfect. He takes off his shades, verifies that his collar is proportional on both sides, and steps out of this Wrangler.

"Hi, Garret!" he hears her call.

Anna opens the door when he arrives at the top step. Garret kisses her hand and she hugs him. He checks her out as she turns and leads him inside. Anna's hair is down the back of her sky-blue blouse. She's wearing a snug pair of jeans and little ladybug flip-flops on her feet. He didn't notice if she'd painted her nails, since her jeans were too interesting.

Anna is all smiles and it's obvious from her greeting that she's in a good mood this morning.

"I'm so glad you could come," Anna says.

"Me too, sweetheart," Garret says with a smile.

Anna asks him to take a seat and he does so at the little kitchen table. The tablecloth has roses and clover on it. Anna pours two cups of tea and sets them on the table. She lays a wooden cutting board between them and sets the kettle on top.

"Mind if we have some tea before breakfast?" Anna asks.

"Not at all," Garret says. He smells the tea. It's Earl Grey, one of his favorite types.

Anna's already prepared the majority of the food for breakfast. She knows that Garret prefers a continental breakfast, but instead of purchasing all of the goodies she's made most of them herself –with a little help from Gary.

"You remember when we went to Cherry Springs last Fall?" Garret asks, "I was thinking about that. It's never that clear down here, not even on winter nights. Maybe one of these days we can go back."

"Dad loved it too," Anna says, "Or did you mean just us this time?"

She sips her tea.

"Maybe we could stay a couple of days," Garret says, "But I wouldn't want to go without Gary."

"We found mushrooms everywhere," Anna says, "All of 'em poisonous but the showers brought 'em out. Maybe next time Bryce will be big enough to come. We couldn't take him to Lyman, though, not yet. But he'd love to see the stars at night. You could teach him the constellations, like you tried to teach me."

She laughs.

"I love you, Anna," Garret says without averting his gaze.

Anna stops laughing but the smile does not fade.

"I love you too, Garret," she says.

"Would you consider going to Ireland?" Garret asks.

"Will you come with me?" Anna asks.

"No," he says.

In his mind he thinks of the war to come. Garret cannot abandon his race, nor can he find refuge in a white nation, as every such nation must accept non-white immigration and the horrors that await whites in America will arrive on every white shore.

Anna shakes her head.

"It's so nice of you to offer that to me," Anna says, "I know what this is. I can't abandon my race any more than you can. There are no homelands anymore, and no personal space. They brought the war to our own bodies. We can't even play or even have peace without this oppression and genocide hanging over us and our children. I won't leave Johnny and KJ to fight while I run off to some place that won't be safe for much longer, and I won't look for peace while they suffer. That peace is a lie anyway, and running is cowardice. We have to try, at least. We owe them a try. I owe mom and dad a try."

"I don't want a forever war," Garret says, "And I don't want you to have any part of one should it happen."

"It won't be," Anna says, "We're going to win. But someone has to start scaring them. If their betrayal of our children becomes painful, most of them will stop. When they suffer real pain some of them will quit pushing our extinction."

Garret nods.

"We see eye-to-eye, Anna," he says, "However, I still loathe the thought of you in harm's way."

Anna smiles again.

"It should be the same for a woman," Anna says, "And it is, Garret, I promise you it is. I'm not going to cheer. I'm not going to tell you to come home on your shield. When a woman truly loves a man how can she demand that of him? I know he'll give his life if he has to, because he loves her, but she has no right to demand it. We're not fighting some civilized white country, which we never should have done anyway, ever. We're fighting for our existence and our little babies. I'll be there with you, wherever we are. We won't be behind you this time; we'll be beside you when you fight, and that's where we should be. We're your women and like you, we will not crawl."

"I might never see you again," Garret says, "But at least I've urged the decision-maker to spare KJ and Johnny and unite them should she choose to fight."

"She will," Anna says.

"I can't ask him to do the same for me," Garret says.

"I didn't think you could," Anna says.

"Tell me, Anna," he says, "When we were talking about our dreams, would you be the one driving to Reese's Warehouse?"

"Tomorrow morning," Anna says, "while you make supper."

Garret looks into her eyes. Behind his stoic façade is warmth and desire.

"You know, Red," Garret says, "Don't ever underestimate the power of loyalty. If you give that to a man and you really mean it, he will be yours forever."

"Affection, too," Anna says, her cheeks leaning against her fists and her elbows on the table.

"Affection, too," he repeats her words. "Tell me, Red, what'd you make for breakfast?"

Anna gets a huge smile and rises from her chair.

At a quarter till four, Johnny pulls into the yard at Allegany Metals. The rig he drove is old and cranky, a far cry from the Kenworth tractors at Snyder Transportation. He's never had anything against Macks, he just always had bad luck with them, and this 1990 Mack daycab continued his streak of ill fortune with the brand. He pulls in alongside a much newer rig and parks the tired old Mack. Before he can shut off the motor, Johnny notices a police car parked beside the dispatcher's SUV outside the office. On the door he sees the words "State Trooper" and "Maryland State Police." John Bowen does not have a gun on his person. He does have a Cold Steel folding knife.

Johnny walks up to the office as if the police were a white man's friend. This might be related to the Reggie Smith case. It could be related to Mark Strader, whose career of profiting from damaged white girls came to an end with Johnny's well-placed shot. It could be about KJ. He walks into the office.

Dispatcher Gerald Zwicker looks up from his desk. The cop is nowhere to be seen. Johnny stands in front of the water cooler.

"Right on time," says the bespectacled Zwicker, whose sparse black hair is in need of a trim.

Johnny notices the morning's coffee stain on Zwicker's shirt, right next to his black tie. It's dry now and even more noticeable.

"How'd old 440 behavin'?" Zwicker asks Johnny.

"She ran," Johnny says, "That's about all I can say."

"That's the nicest thing I've heard about that piece of shit since we got it from ECT," Zwicker says.

Johnny hears the bathroom door creak open and footfalls begin to echo from down the hall. He waits for the culprit to arrive.

A thin patrolman enters the office. He is a lanky character who appears to be in his mid-to-late 40's.

Johnny assesses his potential adversary. The police officer carries himself with confidence. He is solid in build in spite of his seeming thinness. He has a scar on his chin that doesn't look surgical. His eyes are light blue like KJ's.

"Is this the new guy?" the officer asks Zwicker.

Johnny holds his knife in his fingers while his thumbs are on the outside of his jeans pockets. He could pull it out in an instant and open the blade just as quickly.

"No," Zwicker says, "That's the other one. Rusty's due in at five." He looks at Johnny. "Thank you, John, that'll be all for today."

The officer nods at Johnny, who acknowledges with a friendly gesture and then departs.

John Ashley Bowen has a heavy feeling in his chest as he drives to Deer Park. Had the patrolman attempted to arrest him, Johnny would have resisted. Not at first; he would have chosen the best moment and then struck. One of the two would most likely have perished. The thought of killing the man, necessary though it may have been, troubles him deeply.

At Deer Park, Johnny runs inside with the intention of changing, washing his face and checking his cell phone messages. It's not the cell he uses to talk to KJ or Bill; he's always checking that one. Once he's put on shorts and a sleeveless top, he dials the mailbox number and finds the message he hoped would be there. His second cousin and her family are interested in buying his Deer Park home.

Johnny calls and sets up a meeting with his relations. He cuts them off at the end, saying he has to leave, lest he be late for an important meeting. And he does; this evening he'll continue teaching KJ to swim.

Before he even enters the cottage, or says more than "hello", Johnny Bowen stares into KJ's blue eyes and pulls her close to him. He puts his forehead to hers and she closes her eyes. She doesn't say a word. When she feels his head begin to retreat, she squeezes him and lays her head on his chest.

"Are you OK?" KJ whispers, her breath giving sound to her worry.

"Yes, angel," Johnny says, "Thanks for the muffins, by the way."

In the brown bag were two strawberry muffins. KJ picked the wild strawberries from a woodland patch within sight of the cottage.

"Were they good?" KJ asks.

"I loved 'em," Johnny says.

He'd tell her the same even if they were only good. They were, in fact, excellent. KJ learned to make them from Erica, who was on very rare occasions quite useful.

Johnny and KJ end their embrace. She is also dressed in shorts and a sleeveless top. She sees his uncovered shoulders and kisses his black rabbit tattoo before he walks out to the blue Jeep.

"I'll be back in about twenty minutes," Johnny says.

When Johnny returns, KJ is still on the porch. The blue Jeep is now fueled. Johnny unlocks the doors to the Rubicon and lets her climb into the rear seat. Again she must sit in back for the trip to Pittsburgh.

"Bill told me they might not be falling for the drowning story," Johnny says, "We're gonna have to be careful for a while, at least until you're 18."

He doesn't tell her it's a good thing Yates survived, because he doesn't think so either.

"Do you have your pistol on you?" Johnny asks.

"Yeah," KJ says, "I sure do, Johnny."

Instead of wearing the holster, this time she's put the pistol in her shoulder bag.

"Good," Johnny says, "How about the 'cricket' knife?"

"Yeah," KJ says, "That too."

"The swimsuit Anna mentioned?" he asks, glancing into the rear-view mirror at her.

KJ doesn't respond. He perceives its meaning.

"Don't worry about it," Johnny says.

He hears her inhale deeply.

"Johnny, I..." KJ says.

"It's OK, angel," Johnny says.

He hears her exhale. It sounds like frustration.

Something doesn't feel right about her choice. KJ holds the thong swimsuit up in the mirror of the Fogarty's spacious bathroom. She lays it between the two sinks, strips off her clothes, and tries on the suit. It fits perfectly, as she expected. She looks at the front and the back. She turns toward the mirror and stands still, not knowing what to do.

"C'mon, angel," Johnny says from outside, "I have work tomorrow."

"Sorry, Johnny," KJ says.

KJ removes the thong and puts on her other suit. It was her second choice; the shiny black one-piece. It is very tight and he'll no doubt adore it. She checks herself out in the mirror and then folds the thong and puts it back into her bag. Its day will come, she tells herself.

Her hand on the doorknob, KJ looks back at the mirror one final time.



*He'll like this one*, she thinks. She's right.

"Wow," Johnny says the second he sees her. He's standing in the 4' deep section. "You look fucking magnificent!"

The lights around the pool shine on the sleek surface of her suit. KJ spins slowly to let him admire it in totality.

Tonight Johnny spends little time embracing, kissing and caressing KJ. He concentrates on the lesson. She begins to regret her choice of suits, but then, when the lesson draws to a close, he unleashes the affection he has for her.

When they climb out of the pool, Johnny pulls a chair out from one of the poolside tables. KJ takes the seat and Johnny begins to gently rub her hair with a towel.

"I know you're going to wash your hair again in the shower," Johnny says, "but I don't care. I just like this."

When KJ stands Johnny plays with her hair, pulling it over her face as she closes her eyes and laughs in that discrete way that stirs his soul. Then he takes her in his arms and sits with her on his lap. Their eyes meet as he brushes the hair from her face with his fingers.

"I knew a lot of girls before I met you," Johnny says, "I always had hope, and Anna kept a lot of that alive. She's special. She fucks with us because she's like a sister, and you know, it's nice. I'm glad she does. We've become part of her family, and that's dear to me."

KJ smiles and touches his cheek.

"Yeah," KJ says, "She is a sister to me."

"She's very special, and very, very dear to me," Johnny says, "But she was never meant to be my woman. Neither was Jesse or Sinead."

KJ kisses his cheek and nuzzles him. Johnny smiles and rubs her.

"You really ignited my old hopes," he says, "When I heard about you it was like everything was new, and it wasn't just our little family that gave a shit about the future. It was a lot more than that, though. Everyone had someone. Anna had Gary and her beautiful mother. Her family helped her, too. It's to her credit that she woke up, and I know it wasn't easy, it never is. But her family helped her. Jesse had her father, and Rian and the Donnelly's for that matter, and, shit, she had a lot of luck. Who did you have? No one."

KJ feels his arm squeeze her just a little tighter, and she does the same.

"You know what else?" Johnny asks, "If Anna had chosen to be a race traitor, she'd have displeased her father and her family. Your parents wanted you to be a traitor, but you refused, and for that they put you

through hell. You gave up so much that you could have had. They'd have helped you become a singer or a songwriter like you always wanted. They'd have pushed hard and got you on the inside, with all the important people in the business. You'd have had a house as big as this one. Bigger. You'd have found some dude with money or some indie band musician who everybody loves. He'd say that he'd fight for you, and you know what? He just might. You're that way. You can bring that out in a man, KJ, sometimes just with a glance, the expression on your face, or the sound of your voice. I recognized that the day I met you."

"Yeah, I'd have it all," KJ says, "and nothing in my soul."

She puts her hand across part of his scar.

"He might fight for me while he's fucking me," KJ says, looking at her hand and his chest, "but he wouldn't do it for my white children, especially if he didn't know that I existed."

KJ nuzzles him and then looks into his eyes.

"Johnny," she says, "Why did you kill that rapist? Was it vengeance?"

"No," Johnny says, "Reggie Smith really was a rapist. My cousin didn't fuck him and then regret it. That's not rape. Too many men get fucked over for that, and all white men get blamed for it. That's the fake-rape industry." Johnny sighs. "No, this was real rape. A white man who rapes is another kind of traitor, you know. I was young and I didn't know who 'they' were, or exactly why 'they' want our race to go extinct, at least the working white man and any white outside of the power structure. I did realize that rape is a kind of betrayal, and cheating on your spouse and all the other ways worthless pieces of shit use sex and violence to hurt and destroy fellow whites. Reggie Smith raped my virgin cousin, who from that point on would find it much more difficult to bond to a good white man. She still hasn't, last I heard. That's betrayal, that's fucking betrayal of a white sister on his part. I knew he could use a knife. He'd done time for it. He'd killed before, and I knew one of us would die."

"Johnny," KJ says, her face showing her love and the pain of having almost lost him before she even knew his name. "I love you."

Johnny rubs her side. KJ comes to tears and wipes her face.

"I love you too, angel," Johnny says, "You gave me hope when I was losing mine. You wouldn't follow their rules." He smiles. It's tired and wounded, but powerful and sentimental. "You wouldn't betray your brothers and sisters in race, even though the whole goddamned world seemed to be against you. You earned your wings, angel. You earned every fucking feather, more than any angel ever has."

"You helped me," KJ says.

"No, angel," Johnny says, "I helped you escape the cage they built for you. You earned those wings."

He rubs her back where the big and beautiful wings rest upon her body.

"I don't want any of that shit that you mentioned," KJ says, "It's all a lie. I know that I could have those things, but I'd have to surrender my identity. The traitors can have their big houses and phony friends. I'll take being KJ." She kisses his arm. "I'll take being Johnny's woman."

When the Rubicon reaches Washington, Pennsylvania, Johnny turns off the interstate. He parks far enough away from the little restaurant that KJ doesn't have to cover her head, though she still lies on the seat. He returns with a bag full of excellent-smelling food and two bottles of Perrier. At an empty lot beside a closed donut shop, Johnny and KJ have supper. Hers is a steak stuffed with herbs and cheeses, done exactly as she prefers. Johnny has the glazed chicken.

"It's good, huh?" Johnny asks.

"It's really good," KJ says.

"I've never been so glad that I found this little fucking hole in the wall," he says.

Once more, the pleasure of a meal with the woman he loves costs him sleep. In fact, Johnny will get less than two hours tonight. Fortunately, he only has one more day and then he'll be off until next Wednesday. This morning he'll be driving Cab 440 again, the white Mack whose list of defects seems to match its list of working features. By 8AM Johnny picks up a load of scrap parts. Once, those parts powered a Plymouth locomotive, back when railroads and American manufacturers employed men who looked like Johnny Bowen.

KJ rises at eight. She has a mineral water, washes her face, stretches and then begins her cardiovascular maintenance routine without changing her usual sleep attire. After her exercises, she takes a fast shower without washing her hair – that will come later. KJ eats breakfast before donning a pair of camo pants, a black tee and one of her usual green, button-down, long-sleeve shirts. Her Seahawks hat, a pair of gloves and lace-up boots complete her ensemble. It's cooler today and rain showers are a certainty. It's another day of "KJ weather." There are two muffins left from Tuesday and a tin of salmon that Johnny must have put in her refrigerator. She packs them for lunch, along with a bottle of water. Before departing on another hike, KJ packs a note pad and a couple of pens in her backpack. She has a few song ideas in her head, and would like to sketch the bouncing bet flowers she's seen near the railroad cut.

For Johnny Bowen, lunch is atrocious with one exception. The meal is a ham sandwich, packed in plastic and heated in a microwave in the driver's lounge. He didn't have time to make a proper lunch. The highlight is the bottle of lemonade that KJ made for him and put in the brown bag with the strawberry muffins. It's more-or-less the usual homemade lemonade, but there is one huge difference: KJ made it for him.

"So you're the new yard bitch," says one of two drivers sitting at the other table in the lounge, the one near a rack of donated books and magazines that includes everything Tom Clancy ever wrote as well as an interesting picture book about the Finnish Air Force.

Johnny finishes his lemonade. The speaker is short and looks stuffed in his white shirt. He's a bit dark but most likely white. Johnny looks at him but says nothing. He could not gauge from the man's tone if his words were mockery or the usual banter. He figures it's the latter.

Should Johnny's interpretation be incorrect, and the man's words are, indeed, mockery, "darkie" might be counting on Johnny's fear of losing his job preventing him from demolishing the swarthy upstart's face. He might figure that Johnny has a family and cannot afford to risk their livelihood, no matter how much a coworker or manager demeans him. If "darkie" is being malicious and is counting on Johnny's passivity, he may be making a big mistake. In one way, though, he'd be correct. Johnny has someone who needs him, and who might need the money he's about to come into. He will not jeopardize her for the satisfaction of beating down an uninteresting cur. In a way, however, darkie is wrong. If he escalates, Johnny will not sit idle. If any threat of violence rears its head, Johnny will destroy his dark-hued opponent.

"What's your name?" darkie asks.

"John," Johnny says, "John Bowen. What's yours?"

He stares at the guy, who looks down for just a moment.

"Steve Burnell," darkie says.

The other guy shifts his gaze from Johnny to Burnell and back again. Burnell's acquaintance is fat and balding with huge arms and nothing else of interest.

"You know Chris Bowen?" chubby asks.

"No," Johnny says, "We're from around Deer Park up to Friendsville."

"Southern Garrett or Bishop Walsh?" Burnell asks.

"Southern Garrett," Johnny says, "Class of 2005."

"No shit?" Burnell says, "You know Philip Thomas? He's my sister's boy."

"Yeah," Johnny says, "I knew him."

Thomas, though not a nerd, hung out with them and assumed some of their negative traits. He was one of the sheep, so Johnny had little to do with him and no interest in getting to know him better.

"How's he doing?" Johnny asks, not merely out of politeness. Thomas was clearly white and there was always a chance he'd awaken, somehow.

"He's a Poly Sci major at Jacksonville University," Burnell says.

*I guess he hasn't changed,* Johnny thinks.

The half hour break ends and he's the first to return to the rigs.

KJ never thought she'd find real mistletoe, but high up in a huge white oak on the other side of the railroad tracks is a thick cluster. She decides to take her meager lunch in this location. KJ puts a towel on a flat rock and takes a seat. Beside her is a green caterpillar, which is crawling up a false nettle. She recognizes it as a swallowtail larva. A few years ago she painted a picture of one of them as it climbed an old fencepost. Her caterpillar was brown, being from the fall brood, but its features were the same.

The salmon goes surprisingly well with a bottle of Saratoga water. So do the muffins; they taste even better after aging a couple of days. A shower begins to fall and the drops tap the leaves high above the forest floor. A few drops escape the green aegis only to splash against her cap. KJ drinks her water without haste. It is beautiful in the spot she's chosen and there aren't any deer flies or mosquitoes to trouble her.

Most of her relatives and the people she knew in Washington would deny KJ this simple pleasure, itself bought at considerable cost. They'd call her life a colossal failure. They'd tell her she could have had wealth and a respectable mate; perhaps even some degree of fame. In their eyes she should have been the right type of "rebel", and raged against the appropriate targets: white men, white racists, white privilege, white religion. They'd pity and revile her for her choices. They'd say that she gave it all away. And for what? Ignorance, they would say.

If, in order to obtain treasures and trophies, she would have to be someone other than KJ, the proud white woman and lover, those bounties are of no interest to her. To a young woman who fought all her life to reclaim her identity, riches and false adulation are not worth having. KJ's parents offered her the chance to succeed in music. They offered to give her everything she needed to realize her dream. All she had to do was to be someone else; someone who would not risk her reputation, let alone her life, for the next generation of white children. Instead of a predictable surrender, KJ told them to fuck off.

KJ sees movement in the distance. She leaves her backpack and creeps around the huge oaks and tall poplars in order to find a vantage point. Far ahead, unaware of her watching eyes, is a coyote. He passes with great caution among the brown trunks and green stems. KJ watches him creep from left to right and finally disappear from view.

She could be in a house larger than the one in Fox Chapel. She could have her fling with a member of the band and lash out at annoying or unbalanced fans who would welcome her childish abuse. There would be fun times, no doubt, and comfort – or lack of comfort – whenever Kaylee felt the whim for either. Someday she'd marry her approved mate, and she might even love him. Someday she'd also hear of the man with the rabbit tattoo, the redheaded beauty, and the blonde astronomer. She'd hear of their fight and quite probably their sacrifice for her and her future children, even though they would be "white trash" in her world and they did not even know Kaylee Jane as a person. If anything remained in her soul, any shred of the real rebel that she could have been, the knowledge that they fought and probably died for her and her white children while she lived a comfortable lie would surely kill her. The angel wings are on her back for a reason. Kaylee chose to live her own life. She chose to be KJ.

On the way back, KJ grabs her bag. She stops at the railroad to sketch the pink and purple soapwort flowers. Later she'll show the art to the man with the rabbit tattoo.

Rian dresses in his finest for today's lunch. His father has given him the day off so that he can take Jesse to an upscale restaurant in downtown Pittsburgh. The place is noted for its excellent food, though the sentimental value is greater than its culinary quality. Near the restaurant is the Benedum Center, where Rian and Jesse saw *Celtic Woman* and where he kissed her for the first time. Now that they're engaged, and events in both their lives and in the lives of the Core are nearing a crossroads, it seems appropriate to return to that meaningful place.

Jesse hurries home from the downtown campus. She showers and dresses for on occasion that's no less significant to her. She puts on an elegant blue dress with same-colored roses along the right shoulder strap and a pair of slingback shoes. She lets her hair down, but pins it on the sides. Her use of cosmetics is discrete and skilled after years of modeling. Indeed, she still has the look of a model, owing to her height, the overall grace of her motion and the unique beauty of her face. Fluent in French, with her French characteristics more pronounced than her Irish ones, Jesse could easily pass as a healthier version of a Parisian fashion model.

Rian arrives at 11:30AM. Yesterday he washed and waxed his FJ Cruiser and now it shines in the sunlight. North of Uniontown, the skies are clearing. Jesse leaves her umbrella by the door of her apartment and, her bag in her right hand, descends the steps to her waiting beau.

At the restaurant, Rian requests two glasses of quality Pinot Noir and two orders of the house specialty, steak au poivre. Again he compliments the appearance of his beloved; she praises his own handsomeness, and mentions that he should wear a suit more often. Today's lunch is a joyous occasion. The two lovers recall the happy times and of course their first kiss. Lurking behind the joy and sentimentality is a strong sense of impending change, and not all of it for the better.

Jesse's green eyes are bright and the most beautiful that Rian has ever seen. Johnny and Garret can have the blues; Rian much prefers the soft green of Jesse's irises. Those eyes are playful and serious and full of life and depth. He takes her hand and rubs it.

"Someday I'll take you back to Clifden," Rian says.

"I'd like that," Jesse says. She sips the water that the waiter brought with the wine. She knows that Rian means forever. "The others could come, too," she says, "Anna and Garret, and Johnny and KJ, somewhere far from everything we've known."

"Could you be a fisherman's wife?" Rian asks.

"If he'll love me and our child," Jesse says.

She sees him look down for just a moment and then right back into her eyes. It's his equivalent of a gentle smile or a sigh.

"If we're successful here, I will go home," Rian says, "But it won't be Clifden, it'll be Tyrone."

Jesse knows what that means. It means he'll go to war.

"Are we going to leave the others?" Jesse asks, "At least here we have someone who's sympathetic."

"I'm not leaving as long as they'll stand," Rian says, "If they ask me to stand with them I'll remain here. But if not, or if we do stand and somehow we can have some sort of victory then I'll leave. But I agree with dad. It has to begin here."

Jesse glances around the restaurant. She sees the white patrons enjoying their meals. People chat and smile. A few laugh. Most are dressed in nice clothes; some in their finery. A young woman sits with her husband and small child.

The waiter, a stocky white fellow in his late-twenties, brings the entrees. Back in the kitchen area, he'll chuckle as a black greeter says something crude about Jesse.

"It's like a dream, sometimes," Jesse says soft enough for only Rian to hear. "To us it's obvious what's going on, but to them, most people, it's unthinkable. They'd call us insane. We can't even love each other with all our hearts, because I'm supposed to resent you for being a white man. You know, I've come to the same conclusion as your father. It's not some great conspiracy and that makes it worse, because a lot of people are just going along with it. It's all around us and we can't have peace, even in our homes. They even try to make me hate you, just for who you are. There's no decency anymore. Everything we are is ridiculed and we can't have peace and happiness unless we go somewhere far away."

"Where can we go?" Rian says, "Unless we make a stand the money-men and haters will follow us. They can't leave us in peace. They want to end the threat to their supremacy, once and for all. We're the only ones who might challenge them."

"It's not enough for our race to die out, is it?" Jesse says, "We have to hate life and hate each other."

"That's why I won't leave the others behind," Rian says, "Or you. You're not a runner."

Jesse smiles. The flags in front of the Benedum flutter in the midday breeze. Rian glances at them through the restaurant's picture window. There's Russia and America and France. There's Ireland as well, beside Romania and Denmark.

"I don't know what this silence is all about," Jesse says, "but it's not peace. Most people don't see it but the struggle isn't about them, is it? It's about us. We have no excuse if we remain silent."

After the meal ends, Rian asks for the dessert cart. For Jesse he orders a slice of red velvet cheesecake and a small glass of apricot brandy. Before leaving downtown Pittsburgh, the two stroll through Point State Park and along the Monongahela. The breeze off the river is pleasant and the view of the wooded slopes and the Duquesne Incline is superb.

"There's a little place in Clifden I wanted to take you to, but it was closed for the week we were there," Rian says, "Sinead told me it's opened again. I'm sure you'd like it. It's nice and quiet, an intimate little manor not far from the sea."

Jesse smiles and squeezes Rian's hand a little tighter.

"I'm sure I would, too," she says.

Just outside of downtown Morgantown, West Virginia, sits a small bar renowned for the size of its drinking vessels. The area is quaint if not too attractive, with giant hickory and pine trees contrasted against litter from cheap student housing. The bar, which advertises itself as a confec-



tionary, is a smallish brick structure built in a time when no man in his right mind would go to a bar to find a mate, and no woman who wanted such a man would hang out there.

Robert McKenna parks his new Jeep Patriot alongside the road in front. There's only one other vehicle there, and it's not his friend's diminutive red Pontiac. McKenna's trimmer than he's been in years, having concentrated on losing a little weight, though he's still powerful and his legs fill the bottom of his jeans. Inside the bar, small pieces of paper adorn the walls and even parts of the ceiling, and draw attention away from the tired 50's paraphernalia common to such places. On the slips are the passing legacies of those who've frequented the place. One is written in Cyrillic, another proudly claims an outrageous number of beers in an hour. Near the seat that McKenna chooses is a more recent example. It commemorates the Wheeling Nailer's playoff run, and is signed by a certain Robert McKenna.

Aaron Hopkins played one year for the Nailers before moving on to a hockey team in Trenton, New Jersey. During his stay in Wheeling, the Michigan native became good friends with McKenna. He happens to be visiting his sister, who married a West Virginia University employee. McKenna, who never lost contact, is passing through Morgantown en route to his camp near Seneca Rocks. Hopkins, who was a winger during his playing days, is thinner and a tad shorter than McKenna, as well as three years his senior. He's clean-cut and handsome when he doesn't smile and his brown eyes are bright and mirror his intelligent mind. He and McKenna have had frank discussions about race and the events that affect their peoples, and Hopkins has found little reason to disagree with Robert.

Aaron Hopkins arrives not long after noon. McKenna rises when he sees his friend and the two shake hands. The waitress, who McKenna asked to wait, approaches the table. One Guinness for Robert, one Bass Ale for Aaron; the waitress takes their sandwich orders as well. Robert takes the pen from his shirt pocket and points out the paper on the wall. Though not part of the team at the time, Hopkins signs the paper and puts the year of his one season in Wheeling.

Behind McKenna, in Hopkins' view, is a television set. It's mounted high enough for him to see. The sound is muted and closed captioning scrolls across the bottom.

"How's Julie?" McKenna asks.

Julie, Aaron Hopkins' niece, suffers from cystic fibrosis.

"Not too well," Hopkins says, "She's back in the hospital."

McKenna shakes his head. "I'm sorry, Hop."

"It's so fucking hard to watch," Hopkins says, "and you can't do a goddamned thing to help. You'd think they'd have cured it by now, but they're more worried about their pet diseases. Some faggot's life is more important than a white girl."

"You know, Aaron," McKenna says, "There's a reason I wanted to talk to you so bad. I'll let you know once we get our food."

On the television is an interview with a black football player from the Philadelphia Eagles. His starting position is in question and he blames "white racism" for the aspersions that may lead to his benching. There is a clip of the athlete's theatrics after scoring a touchdown. Hopkins doubts that non-whites would be so aggressive and audacious if the power of the state, law enforcement and the wealthy were not completely behind them.

The sandwiches arrive. On McKenna's recommendation, Hopkins ordered the fish sandwich. He does not regret the decision.

"I'm getting together a self-defense program for our youth," says McKenna, who leans forward to speak, "All this anti-bullying bullshit is going to make white boys even more feminine. It's all about teaching them to run to the authorities rather than take up for themselves."

"God help those who do," Hopkins says.

"Exactly," McKenna says, "They can't have white males showing any masculinity. Instead of getting tougher, boys are going to be encouraged to be weak and to squeal on people. You know as well as I do that it won't apply to steezers or nogs when they bully our own. I'd like to get some-  
thin' going for our children. At least teach them to defend themselves, maybe even help defend each other. What do you think?"

McKenna downs the last of his beer. Hopkins stares into his eyes.

"It's dangerous," Hopkins says, "You know what the government would do to you if they found out?"

"Are you against it?" McKenna asks.

"Not in principle," Hopkins says, "We needed it twenty years ago. I don't know what the hell we need now."

"How about keeping it between a few families?" McKenna asks, "Like yours and mine, and one or two trusted friends. They could carry it further without an attachment to the first group, and so on down the line. We'd help each other, and then one of our group would expand among his own friends and family without our involvement, like that."

"Maybe among us," Hopkins says, "But not anyone else. I'd be out if you involved anyone else."

To McKenna, it's a start.

"What's your training like?" Hopkins asks.

John Ashley Bowen arrives at KJ's Amblersburg place as fast as he can. Bill agreed to delay tonight's Core meeting for one hour so that KJ and Johnny will not be late. Johnny changed into a new pair of jeans and collared shirt upon his return to the driver's lounge. Then he left with the Rubicon and did not stop until he's parked behind the blue Jeep. Outside it's a bright summer afternoon.

KJ understands that Johnny cannot call often. It's a risk for her to talk on the cell or to text. It's even a risk for her to keep the batteries inside the phone. She's in the kitchen when he pulls into the driveway. KJ finished supper preparations a little while ago, and is making sure the main course is still warm. Now that he's here, she hurries to the living room and takes the sketch from her backpack. She lays it on the laptop and stands in front of the table.

Johnny knocks and then rings the doorbell. KJ hops over and unlocks the inner door. She hears him opening the outer door and retreats back to the table.

"Come in," KJ says.

Johnny opens the door and sees his angel standing in the middle of the room. She's wearing jeans and a plunging black tank top. On the bed are other clothes. She must intend to change after supper.

Johnny takes her into his arms. Her hair is down as usual and it smells very slightly sweet.

"How are you, angel?" he asks, his head still touching hers.

"I'm good," KJ says. She pulls back to look into his eyes. "And you?"

"Good," he says with a smile. His hands find their way up to her face and he kisses her.

"Hey, Johnny?" KJ says as Johnny removes his shoes, "What..." She shrugs her left shoulder. "What do you think of this?" She hands him the soapwort sketch.

"Nice!" Johnny says, "They're soap flowers, aren't they? You did this, right?"

She nods.

"Jesus, it's good," Johnny says and looks up at her, "Is there anything you can't do?"

"Swim," KJ says.

He laughs.

"You had that ready, didn't you?" Johnny asks.

"I kinda did, yeah," KJ says. She grabs his hand and pulls him toward the kitchen. "Supper's ready."

Owing to time constraints, today's meal is not elaborate. It is, however, delicious: individual beef wellingtons with a fresh salad in a large bowl from which both lovers eat.

Johnny vocalizes his pleasure.

"It's really good, KJ, thank you," Johnny says.

KJ takes the last bite of the salad since it's obvious that Johnny will leave it for her. When she looks up at him, he sees some consternation on her face. Johnny waits for her to open up to him.

"You know, sweetheart," KJ says, "Swimming isn't the only thing that I don't know how to do. There's quite a lot, actually." Then she gets to what was troubling her. "There's a lot of shit I deserved to go through, too."

Johnny looks at her for a moment. She is a living, breathing angel, and the oppression that America has forced upon its most precious daughter continues to wound her. Every triumph over evil has been full of pain and every stumble laced with regret.

"The second you awoke you no longer deserved any of the shit you went through," Johnny says, "None of it, not then, not before and not now."

"One time I belittled a decent white girl," she says, "I..." KJ sighs and looks down.

Johnny leaves his seat and walks to her.

"I'm not wearing a bra," KJ says.

"It doesn't matter right now," Johnny says.

Johnny steps behind KJ and grabs the top of her shirt. He lifts it up to her neck and she pulls it the rest of the way off.

"Stand up," Johnny says and she obeys.

Her back is turned toward him. KJ puts her hands on her breasts, though he cannot see her from the front. Johnny takes her hair and moves it until it flows down her chest rather than her back. He holds up the mass of strands that remains, away from her tattoo.

Before him, unconcealed by shirt, cloth or strap, uncovered by her thick mane of hair, are the angel's wings in all their glory. Only the tips of the two bottom feathers on each side are out of view, as they tail off away from her rear and dip beneath the waist of her jeans.

"You're the only woman I know with angel wings," Johnny says, "and the only one who fucking deserves them. You made up for all that when you woke up all alone, and when you fought them and refused to let that goddamned nigger rape you. I know you would have died before submitting to him. He would have never touched these wings while you still drew breath."

KJ whispers "no".

"Fuck that other shit," Johnny says, "You made up for that and so much more. You earned your wings, angel." He touches a few of the feathers. "You earned your wings."

Johnny lets go of her hair and hugs her, his hands on her belly. She still covers her breasts. He nuzzles her hair and kisses her neck.

"You're mine now, angel," Johnny says, "As long as time lets me have you."

Her arms drop. Johnny takes her shirt from the table and hands it to her from behind. KJ takes the shirt, but before putting it on, she turns toward him. He's leaving through the kitchen door as she does, his body facing away from her.

Since KJ and Johnny depart from the cottage a little early, he takes an alternate route around Uniontown which allows KJ to sit by his side in the Rubicon. She brings her shoulder bag and does not wear the holster, but the automatic pistol is inside the bag. Johnny's own sidearm is on his person as well, though it is not concealed.

The two have matching 1911A1 pistols; even the dull black color is the same.

Johnny's Jeep drives through Bruceton Mills and past a little country store that still has one of the old chest-style soda dispensers. Glass bottles of Coke and Orange Crush fill the chest.

"Angel," Johnny says as they near the Pennsylvania line, "I'd like to keep your drawing."

"I made it for you," KJ says, showing him a brief little smile.

Tonight at the Hall, Megan Donnelly makes bread pudding for the members of the Core. Cristi's already present when KJ and Johnny arrive and he has a cherry lambic reserved for her. Once the other members arrive, it becomes clear that Mason Walker and Robert McKenna are the only faces absent from last week's crowd. McKenna is fishing and canoeing in eastern West Virginia. Walker's whereabouts are unknown to both KJ and Johnny Bowen.

McKenna misses a conversation that would have engrossed him. Austin Kelly brings up Vancouver's recent Stanley Cup victory, and the jubilation felt by long-suffering fans like himself.

"It's the only sport I give a damn for anymore," Johnny says.

Johnny didn't have time to watch the six-game final.

"David Hill returns to Diamond tomorrow evening," Bill says. The others cease their discussions to listen. "Brave young man. I'm sorry you can't come along, KJ, I know his brand of music is much to your liking. I hope you can find some comfort in his return after such a terrible attack

on his very life. It was an attack on each of us, to be sure. He carries a guitar rather than a gun and his resistance is his voice, but the risks he takes are no less tangible and his impact can be just as great. There are a lot a ways a young person can help their cause. You can fight. James chose that path. You can speak and you can sing. With the internet at your fingertips, you can post mantras and reveal anti-white traitors. During our own struggle, one of our greatest young men, a man worth a million, fell into the hands of the enemy but did not allow his incarceration to end his fight for our people. In the end he paid a heavier price than those who resisted with violence. Forced to go on hunger strike, that brave young man suffered terribly, and in the end gave his life for his people.”

KJ looks down and puts her hand on Johnny’s leg. She looks into his face and then glances around the table and the room. She can’t help but wonder if this is one of the last times, perhaps even the last time, she’ll see this place or these extraordinary people. She doesn’t think about the possibility that Johnny might disappear with them, though she’s aware that it is real.

“Do not belittle or underestimate the contribution of those who spread the word,” Bill says, “When a cause grows and the tide begins to turn against an oppressive establishment, those who speak face the same risks as those who fight. The pen, the sword and the spoken word will require dedicated men and women. Those who speak often need to condemn violence, but they must never condemn the fighters. Our cause has precious few allies. If a man,” he looks at Cristi, “or a woman,” Bill looks at Jesse, “is sincere, we must never forsake them, though we may disagree with their politics and methods. We may need to condemn acts, but we must never condemn our allies. Or our brethren.”

Bill is quiet for a short while before turning to his wife.

“The pudding was delicious, thank you,” Bill says.

“Hey KJ,” Anna whispers, “Sorry you can’t come to Diamond. It’s not the same without you.”

KJ curls her lips and shrugs her left shoulder.

“Do you think you could get me the new songs?” KJ asks.

Anna has told her that there will be at least two new songs.

“I’ll try,” Anna says, “I’ll get them to you if I possibly can.”

KJ thanks her. Meanwhile, Gary observes that Garret is holding his daughter’s hand underneath the table. He does not disturb them.

Megan brings some pictures that she printed. The files arrived yesterday in an email from Sinead. When Jesse and Rian see the first image it inspires him to pull her a little closer with his arm. The very first photo

shows a home near the sea in the town of Clifden. When the pictures arrive at Anna, she and Gary take extra time to examine each one. They depict a land that is very dear to her and her father, just as their homeland America has great value to both father and daughter. For Johnny and KJ, the pictures are gorgeous reflections of a far-away land. To them, all white nations were homelands, and there are no homelands left.

Most of the Core remains outside once the meeting comes to a close. The night is pleasant and the stars are bright. Anna, Garret, KJ and Johnny form one small group, with Jesse and Rian joining them after exchanging well wishes with Austin, Jimmy Ford and the others who are departing. Bill also remains behind for a while. Before making his way back to his house and the comfort of a late-night cup of tea, Bill hugs the women and shakes hands with the men of Garret's little group.

Jesse suggests another camping trip, this one in the early fall, and there are no objections. She's not naive enough to get her hopes up for such an excursion, but it feels nice to dream. KJ feels the exact same way.

"KJ," Garret says. She looks down from the constellation Hercules and gives Garret her fullest attention. "I need to speak to Johnny for a moment, it won't be long."

Anna and KJ remain outside with Jesse and Rian while Garret and Johnny Bowen return to the hall. Rian yells to them that they're leaving for the night, and Garret waves and Johnny, his fingers in his pockets, nods.

"Have you told KJ about Capricorn Cell?" Garret asks.

"No," Johnny says, "Of course not."

"I think it's time we tell them," Garret says.

Johnny is surprised.

"Don't burden her with other details," Garret says, "but when the time comes she needs to make an informed decision."

"I trust her with our lives, hell, I trust her with the future," Johnny says, "Brothers and sisters like her will win it back for our race. You're right, Garret, she needs to know."

"I'm going to tell Anna," Garret says, "And I'll confer with Gary, though he already knows we're planning to fight."

Garret doesn't need to mention the Amboy safe house. Johnny and Gary worked side-by-side at Procyon.

"Anna knows it, too," Johnny says, "That's one reason she loves you."

Johnny slaps Garret's shoulder and then leaves him behind in the Hall. When Garret emerges, KJ and Johnny are standing near the Rubicon.

"I'll call tomorrow night," Johnny says, "Enjoy the show, Anna."

"You're not going?" KJ asks.

Johnny strokes her hair and shakes his head.

"We have swimming lessons," he says.

"You can't miss the show!" KJ says, "Not because of me!"

"I can and I will," Johnny says, "It's more important to teach you to swim. You're gonna need to know someday. You got really, really lucky and I'm not going to trust your fate to luck, not anymore."

KJ shrugs.

"I'm sorry," she says.

Johnny kisses her head.

"I'd rather be with you, anyway," Johnny says.

"I'm kind of, like, being a selfish bitch right now," KJ says just loud enough for him to hear, "but I'm glad you're not going to the show."

KJ backs up, a hungry little smile on her face. If they had a lesson tonight, she might wear the really sexy suit.

It takes around ten minutes for Garret to arrive at the Murphy Home, too little time for more than small talk. The kitchen light is on when they arrive. Gary, who left the hall much earlier, is making tea for Anna's return. He hears Garret's Wrangler pull into the driveway and he waves through the window. Garret returns the gesture by raising his open hand, while Anna waves with the usual energy when she greets or bids farewell to a loved one. Gary lets the little blue curtains fall and cut off the view into and out of the window.

"I won't keep him waiting," Garret says.

Anna's hair is in a ponytail. Garret can't decide if he likes it better that way, or untied and free. He is pleased that she doesn't always do one or the other. The ponytail comes down the right side of her chest and over her orange blouse. Though her top has ruffles that flow around her arms and upper chest, it is tight enough around her lower chest and belly to show her tremendous physical beauty.

"What's up, Garret?" Anna asks, her hand now on his shoulder.

"I have something very important to tell you," Garret says.

He glances at the kitchen window and then stares into her blue eyes. Anna's look is serious and she is attentive to his every word. She knows this is not a joke.

"When I decided to visit the Celtic Society I did so in the hopes of finding kindred spirits," Garret says, "I could have never dreamt who I'd find there or how many like minds I'd find. Or what else I'd find there, for that matter. I think you feel what's coming. Those who profit from our



extinction can afford to talk. We have no more time. They can stall us, and they can afford to let us reach some of our youth, as long as they reach the rest and continue to bring more non-whites into white countries and communities. I always suspected we would need more than words to save our posterity. I know that now."

"You're going to war," Anna says.

The words bring her closer to tears than she thought they would. She thought her pride would overcome that, but the pain of reality is too powerful.

Garret nods.

"So is Johnny," he says as loud as a whisper. "We are going to form Capricorn Cell."

"I want to stand with you," Anna says.

"You have a life," he says, "Think about that. Think about Gary and your cousins."

"I do," Anna says, "I think about all of them, and little Bryce. I think about my mother, too."

Garret reaches over and strokes the back of her head. Anna closes her eyes and he pulls her nearer. He kisses her and then he takes her hand.

"Go to your father," Garret says.

Anna begins to exit, looks back and whispers that she loves him.

"I love you, too, Anna," Garret says, "Now go."

Gary sees her face, though she tries to hide it. He doesn't ask. Though she says very little, the tea and his proximity cheers her up a bit.

"Are you OK?" Gary does ask her and she smiles.

"Nothing's going to be easy, is it?" Anna asks.

"I wish you could have lived in boring times, honey," Gary says.

Johnny Bowen feels his recent lack of sleep. The crickets are chirping and a few late-night fireflies flash at the edge of the woods around the Amblersburg place. KJ unlocks the door and he grabs it above her head. She smiles at him and enters the cottage. Inside the house, he does not remove his shoes.

"I have to run, angel," Johnny says, "I'd love to stay but I better get to bed."

"Don't drive if you think you might fall asleep," KJ says, "You could have an accident. Johnny, please."

"I'll be fine, but I'd better go now," Johnny says, "I'll come around ten and we'll go swimming."

"I know you can't stay here with me," KJ says.

"No," Johnny says, "I can't."

KJ gets very, very close to him. Johnny holds her and they kiss. She turns and walks to the table, and then returns with the soapwort sketch.

"Thank you, sweetheart," Johnny says.

KJ looks down and a sad little smile shows on her face.

"Good night, angel," Johnny says.

Deer seem to be everywhere and the roads appear to be abandoned by other traffic. When Johnny gets to his Deer Park house, he lays the drawing on his desk, sets his alarm for 8AM and then falls into bed without changing clothes. He's asleep in minutes. KJ is preparing for the next day's activities. She lays out her second swimsuit. It's black and designed for sport swimming. It has crisscross straps across the middle of her back, and one around her neck, and although it has full rear coverage, it is very tight and most of her back is uncovered. She also sits the very sexy one on top of her bag. Before curling up under the sheets, KJ looks out the window toward the forest line. A large doe is nibbling on the lower leaves of a sugar maple.

The skies are mostly cloudy, with stratocumulus rolls and various shades of gray and white over the green forests and fields of western Maryland. Johnny Bowen cannot spare the time to sit on the porch and drink coffee in the refreshing morning breeze. Instead he calls an apartment complex near Oakland and, fingers crossed, finds that there is a vacancy. He takes the fastest of showers, changes into a gray tee, throws together his swimming trunks and other items, and hurries to the Rubicon. His first stop is the apartment complex where he leaves a deposit for the one-bedroom vacancy. Next, he drops by the farmer's market to buy produce and other items for Amblersburg. After filling the tank of the Rubicon, he hits the road toward the little cottage.

At 10:30, KJ hears the Rubicon pull into the driveway and park behind the blue Jeep. She puts the mop back in its place and peeks through the porch window. When she sees who's arrived, she unlocks the outer door. Johnny sees her as soon as he exits the Jeep. She's standing in the doorway, her right hand on the frame. She's wearing a black tank top and her arms and shoulders are simply gorgeous. He raises his eyebrows for a second and smiles. He then checks her out. She's wearing denim shorts that go down to her knees and hug her body every inch of the way. On her belt are the holster and the .45. That's almost as nice a sight as her thighs in those shorts.

Inside the porch Johnny kisses her and she nuzzles his chest.

"You didn't have breakfast, did you?" KJ asks.

"No, angel," Johnny says, "I was too busy."

"I don't like it when my man's too busy to eat," KJ says, "What would you like?"

"Something quick," Johnny says, "Now before you protest, I'm serious, we're going to be swimming and probably have something heavier later."

"OK, I'll put something together," KJ says.

Johnny returns to the Rubicon to get the supplies as KJ goes inside the house. Once he's carried everything inside the door, he locks the porch entrance. KJ's busy making French toast, which she tops with black mulberry jam that Johnny bought at the farmers market. Both of them eat slices of fresh cantaloupe.

"Is everything alright here?" Johnny asks her, "Do you feel good?"

"It's lovely, Johnny," KJ says.

"Do you have cabin fever yet?" Johnny asks.

"No," KJ says, "I take hikes into the woods. I've been past the railroad, and I've even been to the Cheat River."

"Shit, don't fall in," Johnny says and laughs.

KJ gasps in playful outrage but it soon disappears.

"So? I'll just walk out," KJ says.

"Yeah, that'll work," Johnny says, "By the way, I love that look you give when you act all pissed off."

"Who said I was acting!" KJ says.

The look is on her face again and her hands are on her hips.

Johnny rises from his chair and walks over to her. KJ maintains the peeved look on her face. With his finger he gestures for her to stand. When she does, he puts both hands on her cheeks as if he's going to kiss her. She closes her eyes, but then Johnny messes up her hair.

"You fucker!" KJ says.

Johnny sweeps her off her feet and carries her into the living room. She kicks her legs but holds on tightly to his body. He sits on the edge of the bed with her on his lap and they take turns kissing each other.

KJ doesn't change clothes before they leave for Fox Chapel, though she does take off her sandals and puts on one of her pairs of tall lace-up boots. She also dons her gloves.

"I'm going to bring the pistol," KJ says, "unless you think it's a bad idea."

"No, it's never a bad idea," Johnny says.

KJ not only rides in back, she wears the Mack cap, which Johnny notices but does not mention, and a pair of sunglasses. The trip takes

almost three hours and through Waynesburg, Washington and the entirety of Pittsburgh, KJ lays under the sheet with only her head exposed. She removes her hat and sunglasses and closes her eyes. As they enter Pittsburgh, Johnny asks her something and realizes she's asleep. He does not wake her until they pass through the gate at the Fogarty place.

The first time Johnny and KJ visited the Fogarty estate, he observed the surroundings and the geometry of the structure. The pool is well-hidden from prying eyes. Although it's bright outside, the cloud cover keeps the sun's rays off of KJ's pale white skin. It's 74 F outside; perfect weather for a swim.

KJ puts on the swimsuit with full rear coverage, yet does not cover most of her back. She's not embarrassed to wear the thong around the man she loves, and would not object to him caressing her bottom, but again she opts not to wear the suit. There seems to be something lurking in the background that may change their lives forever. Maybe the others have decided to resist, or have decided upon the nature of their resistance. It might be best not to push their already blossoming relationship so hard, so fast, lest they come so close to tasting the sweetest fruit, and then find out that they can never share it.

The boundaries of how far they can go do not recede, however, and when KJ emerges from the house she does a slow spin so that Johnny can check her out from front and behind. He tells her to stop when her back is facing him. The suit is very tight, and she doesn't know whether he's looking at her rear or her wings; probably both. Once she's in the pool, Johnny has her show him what she's learned, and then he corrects the few minor problems she has. The two push further and on occasion enter water that is quite a bit over her head. Johnny keeps a very close eye on her when they do, and on one occasion he pulls her a little closer to the pool's edge. KJ notices that after they begin training, his playful demeanor becomes a lot more serious, even a little reserved. There must be something on his mind.

At the end of the session, the two sit on the edge of deep side of the pool. KJ leans over and rubs against him. Johnny looks into her beautiful eyes and face. Water runs from her thick hair and down her forehead, nose and cheeks. Johnny stands and then dives into the pool. He swims underwater far out into the pool, surfaces, and immediately dives under the surface. Undulating like a dolphin, he rises again at her feet.

"I can't do that," KJ says, shaking her wet head and with a timid little smile on her face.

"You should see Anna," Johnny says.

Johnny climbs out of the pool and sits beside her again. He pulls her over to him and she hops on his lap. Their wet bodies embrace.

"I figured Anna was a good swimmer," KJ says, "I've known for a long time that she's a diver."

"Yeah, she's a mermaid," Johnny says, "But you're an angel. I'd take wings over a flipper any day."

KJ laughs and kisses him repeatedly. Then she looks into his eyes and smiles.

"What are you in the mood to eat?" Johnny asks as soon as she's showered and changed back into her shorts and top.

The hour is 4PM and it will be 7PM when they arrive at Amblersburg.

KJ shrugs.

"Why don't we make something together," KJ says, "Or I could fix something."

"Together," Johnny says.

KJ nods and smiles.

"KJ," Johnny says, "Sweetheart, honest-to-God, I wish you could go to Diamond tonight. I'd like to take you there, and then we could go somewhere to eat."

"And then you'd tuck me in," KJ says.

"No," Johnny says, "As long as we're dreaming, it doesn't have to end there."

KJ motions for him to come closer. Her expression is sympathetic and evocative, as are all her expressions. When Johnny arrives she rubs his right arm up to and under his sleeve.

The *Chironex* concert begins at 7:30PM. Anna is in attendance, her pistol concealed by her loose t-shirt. Mason Walker and Austin Kelly are present, as is Jimmy Ford. All three are armed. Cristi takes a break from his insane schedule to stay for the first hour. Rian Donnelly is in the crowd, although Jesse could not come due to her work schedule.

David Hill looks fantastic. The gaunt and haggard look of late is gone, replaced by an air of confidence and a somewhat more muscular build.

"I've heard they're considering a hate speech law in Congress," Hill says, "One that would make some of our songs potentially illegal. I talked with the guys about it and we all came to the same conclusion. Fuck their rules!"

Hill goes right into the song "Kleptopolis" a rousing number that would violate most of Europe's anti-free speech laws. The song would be catharsis for the smallish crowd of racially-aware fans if it were a simple

protest screed. Being a *Chironex* tune, however, the writing, arrangement and presentation of the song are excellent. When he finishes this, the first song of the evening, Hill must wait quite some time before the roar of the audience's approval dies down.

"You might have heard that some antifa fag tried to silence us with force," Hill says, "I'd like to dedicate this next song to the brave guys and gals who form the state-approved opposition."

The next song, "Cockpuppet", is a traditional hardcore beat with a seldom-used theme, that of the anti-white zealot being a tool. If they are not useful idiots, Hill asks, why do the self-proclaimed "rebels" always tow the government line on race?

As her favorite style of music shakes the walls of Diamond Crossing, KJ Campbell and John Ashley Bowen clean and slice vegetables and prepare the meat for their supper. While an apple-glazed chicken bakes in the oven, Johnny puts one of two bottles of Silver Palm Cabernet Sauvignon in the refrigerator. He won't leave it for long, just enough to lower the temperature a little. He watches KJ deftly tie one of the steamed bean bundles and decides to take care of the prawn cocktail while her nimble fingers complete the side dish. The meal takes two and a half hours to complete. It normally requires an hour, two maximum, but then there's the kissing and the silliness that makes meal preparation no different from a date. The taste of the end result is excellent and, together with the fun, well worth the extra time invested.

Gary Murphy dropped Anna off at the show and was very tempted to attend, not for the music but for his daughter's safety. He decided against it. Security at Diamond is excellent, and besides, Anna is a precise shot. He's reading one of Anna's books on knot-tying when he glances at the clock and sees that it's about time for her to come home. His eyes hardly return to the page when he hears Garret's Wrangler pull into the driveway. He told Anna to be home at midnight, and it's 12:04; close enough. Gary closes the book and goes to the kitchen to put on some "Bedtime Story" tea.

At her request, Johnny tells KJ about some of the good times from his youth. He tells her about the time he and Cristi went canoeing on the Cacapon and wound up going sideways down the cataracts, each occupant rowing in the opposite direction. Once, his cousin made a small explosive and lit it in a field near his Uncle Bob's house. The older boy lit the makeshift firework while the others stared at it in wonder, and ran away yelling "Don't fall down!" He remembered taking off on many occasions with Cristi and another friend who moved away after Johnny joined

the army. Once they disappeared for three days. They took Cristi's beat-up old Honda Civic – Cristi only had a learner's permit at the time – and drove all the way to Onego, West Virginia. They ditched the car, hiked to the Roaring Plains and camped for two nights.

He puts his arm around her as they sit on the edge of her bed. He mentions that he and Cristi have been friends since kindergarten. He tells her about a humorous attempt to scare Cristi with a discarded mannequin, an attempt with backfired. He was ten at the time and the coincidental appearance of a stranger where Cristi should have been resulted in a major scare for the stranger and two weeks grounding for Johnny. Then he becomes quiet and looks at the table. He rubs her shoulder as he does so. She lays her left hand on his right leg and waits for him.

"I'm going to war, angel," Johnny says, staring into her eyes.

KJ has known for some time that he would. In fact, he already is. She's expected this moment since before the camping trip, but it hurts bad to hear him say it. Her face shows that it does.

"You're leaving me?" KJ asks.

"I don't know where I'll be going," Johnny says, "Not with any certainty, at least. I know that I won't be leaving until I find out and I haven't yet. I know that I won't be leaving without saying goodbye, either, and I'm not saying that yet."

KJ looks down at his leg and rubs him a few times.

"You're not going to be alone, are you?" KJ asks, now looking him in the eyes.

It's close to unbearable to see the look on her face, yet it is stirring and incredibly beautiful to behold.

"No," Johnny says, "Garret and I are going to be one cell, Capricorn Cell. We'll be with a couple of others but we don't know who yet." He squeezes her hand. "It's not my decision, angel. The one making it will choose based on who's going to work best in the cell. He can't be sentimental when he chooses."

KJ looks into his eyes and her mouth remains closed. Johnny pulls her into him. He puts his hand on her belly and looks down at her body. She looks down at his hand.

"We're fighting for the future of our race," Johnny says, "So the life that'll grow inside of you won't face the darkness you face."

Without looking away from her belly, she speaks.

"I'll fight for him, too," KJ says.

KJ looks up into Johnny's eyes. The pain is still on her face but her determination is its rival.

"I will stand with you," KJ says, "whether I ever see you again or not. All my life I've heard that I'm a minority and that minorities need to stand together. It's a fucking lie. I'm a white woman, and I will stand with my white man."

Johnny sighs.

"If everything was good," he says, shaking his head, "My God, what we could have..."

"I..." KJ says, then looks down and shakes her head. Johnny doesn't press her for the rest. He just kisses her head and smells her hair.

Drizzle falls from the skies on Saturday morning but the power of the summer sun will burn it away by noon. KJ rises a little late as does Johnny. It's going to be a full day, with a visit to Coalsack and then another swimming lesson. While breakfast is on, KJ packs her backpack in accordance with Boyle's recommendation that she try to make it as light as possible.

"Quit trying to show me you're tough," Irish John said, "It doesn't impress me. Getting in, getting the shot, getting out, that impresses me." KJ wasn't actually trying to show him anything but she took the lesson to heart. She's gotten better at judging how much water she'll need in the "field" and leaves the rest at the cabin.

KJ also prepares her items for the evening's swimming lesson. She packs the tight blue suit. On top of it she lays the one-piece thong.

Johnny arrives at 10AM. He and KJ embrace inside the porch and she squeezes him hard. He kisses her and caresses her back.

"Sorry I'm late," are the first words he says.

"We needed some rest," KJ says, "Breakfast is done. We have time to eat, don't we?"

She's not ravenous in the least, but wants to share the table with him. His inner thoughts mirror hers.

"Yeah, we have time," Johnny says, rubbing her back, "It's gonna be a full day. I don't think we'll get back here until really late, so I'd like to leave Coalsack straight for Fox Chapel. Do you have your swimming stuff ready?"

"It's already done," KJ says with a smile.

Johnny strokes her back and returns her smile.

As the two make their way to Coalsack, Garret Fogarty arrives at a clear spot along West Virginia's County Route 73, which parallels Interstate 68 through the woods of Coopers Rock State Forest. Nearby is the Hemlock Trail. During the days of the Celtic Society, Garret and Aaron Van Dyke would hike this and other trails in the Chestnut Ridge area. A



few days ago he texted Van Dyke, hoping that the young mountain climber was up for one last walk.

Near to the agreed time Van Dyke pulls up in his orange Honda Element. Like Garret, he's wearing jeans and hiking shoes, though he's also wearing a loose t-shirt. Aaron looks wiry and tough as nails though his face still has its boyish and friendly look. His skin is tanned, not from vanity but from recent climbs that he hopes will prepare him for a much higher prize.

The young men shake hands and exchange some brief small talk. Garret grabs a backpack out of his Jeep and the two set off into the woods. If Aaron is nervous he does not show it, though he must realize the gravity of this meeting.

Garret mentions nothing unusual during the first leg of the hike. About a mile up the trail, there is a small bank of earth on the left; beyond is a sea of small pines. It is here that Garret suggests a short deviation from their excursion. Up the bank and among the trees, Van Dyke notices the beauty of the little place. It's a natural garden for Christmas trees, though it would be much better to decorate them where they grow rather than cut them and leave the forest bereft of their youthful beauty.

"Here, Aaron, take this," Garret says as he hands Van Dyke the dark brown backpack.

Van Dyke shoulders it without hesitation.

"This is it, Aaron," Garret says, his intense blue stare unwavering and unmoving. "I imagine you've given a lot of thought to our conversations. If you still have doubts or hesitation this is the time to air it. We can't go back, and we're going to need you to do the same."

Van Dyke looks around him, at the baby pines and tiny white asters that share the tranquil little place. Right beside him is a tiny pine, its form perfect and its branches adorned with row upon row of lush green needles. As he looks upon the one, the others seem to open up to him, each the rival of the other in beauty and perfection.

"I've heard they're using our forests to grow weed," Aaron says, "They say parks and reserves on the border are dangerous for white people. They might run into criminals growing weed and end up dead, or paralyzed like Denny." He sighs. Denny Chasteen was the cashier who worked at the Van Dyke's store. "They'd destroy all these pines to grow their shit, then guys and girls I know and grew up with smoke it and hand money to those bastards, pay them to grow more, to cut down more trees. People I know, who look like me, destroying their own minds with that junk. We're adrift, you know, without loyalty or love of our brothers, but

you know the beaners or whatever they call them, they have a purpose. They won't betray their own like most of us will, all for a goddamned joint."

Aaron looks at Garret.

"Surprise, surprise," he says, "I won't betray my own, either. I'm not a warrior, Garret. That's not in me and I'd be lying if I said it was. I deeply appreciate what you and the others are doing and whites like me will owe you everything in the end." He nods. "I'm in, and I'm not turning back."

"Thank you, Aaron," Garret says. "I realize the sacrifice this represents, and the danger. You're more of a warrior than you think. This war is going to require a lot more than guns."

Garret gestures with his head toward the backpack.

"Inside, there's a phone," Garret says, "Keep it charged but never make a call with it. Never. If you ever receive a call from a certain number, you'll know we've been compromised. At that point make out as best you can. The number is wrapped around the phone. Please memorize it and destroy the paper. Remember, Aaron, never make a call with that phone and never answer the phone, no matter the number. If an unfamiliar number comes in, do not answer and do not access your messages. If you do get a call from the number I've provided, do what you can to protect yourself, because you'll have to assume the enemy knows our identities and purposes."

Aaron expresses his agreement. Though he does not ask why, the bag is far heavier than it should be if it contains only a phone.

"There's money in there, too, all that I could put together. Hopefully it will pay for utilities and electricity at the safe house, at least for a while. There's a key to the house too. For all our safety, I advise you visit no more than once a year, if that. There will be a person making supply runs for us. They'll have the other outside key. If worse comes to worse, you can claim that you didn't know any of us. You could say an ex-girlfriend gave a key away out of revenge."

"Couldn't you use the money, Garret?" Aaron asks, "I'll take care of the utilities."

"It's rightly yours," Garret says, "There could be unforeseen expenditures that affect you as the owner of the property. Hold on to it. If it becomes unnecessary, help out a white family. Do as you see fit, Aaron."

"OK, Garret," Aaron says, "Thank you."

"There's one other thing in the bag, Aaron," Garret says, "For your protection I've packed a 9 millimeter. I know you've never had a great desire to carry, but it's a good idea. You're not guilty of doing anything wrong. What they call criminal isn't always what's wrong. Just hold on to it."

Van Dyke doesn't speak for a short while. He trusts that Garret and the others will not kill for the thrill of it, or be callous to innocent bystanders. He believed that since the moment he realized that some of the Old Core would be going to war for the survival of their race. And now that belief is no longer an abstraction. On his shoulder is a bag with a gun and money and a cell phone, given to him by a man who is going to war. The next time he hears of Garret Fogarty, his friend could be a bloody corpse.

"How long are you going to fight, Garret?" Aaron asks, "Forever? All alone, just the few of you?"

"That's out of my hands," Garret says, "But I pray our brothers and sisters grant us an eventual peace, or at least a pause."

"Is Anna OK?" Aaron asks, "Does she know?"

"She's fine," Garret says, "She's a very strong young woman. She takes after her father, you know. By the way, I've been meaning to ask you something. I know you're climbing Cho Oyu, so what's next? Do you mind telling me?"

Van Dyke's passion troubles Garret. Cho Oyu kills one in a hundred climbers and K2, a goal he knows Van Dyke covets, is much worse. But it's Van Dyke's life and no man has a veto on his passions. Aaron would never tell Garret to abandon a fight against near-suicidal odds.

"Gasherbrum II if we can pull it off," Van Dyke says.

"Nice," says Garret, who has a layman's interest in mountain climbing and recognizes the names of the 8000 meter peaks. "You know, Aaron," he says as he begins to walk away from the garden of pines, "I really enjoyed the times we spent rock climbing. I know it's child's play compared to what you've done, but I would have enjoyed getting together for a climb, just for fun."

"I hope we can someday," Aaron says.

They reenter the main trail.

"Four years ago I came through here in the winter," Garret says, "The stream was frozen and snow had drifted across most of the trail. You should have seen the pines. It was January but it should have been Christmas Eve."

Another mile up the trail Garret stops and they turn around. The time is coming for them to part ways, perhaps forever. There is a silence on the return trip, broken on occasion by a question unrelated to the future, or a remark about the damselflies that land on ancient pines or a black squirrel that crosses the path. Back at the vehicles, Garret Fogarty shakes Aaron Van Dyke's hand.

"Thank you, Aaron," Garret says, "God bless you, my friend."

Aaron embraces him and smiles. He lays the backpack in his Honda and waves as he pulls out on to the empty highway. Garret watches him drive away before heading in the opposite direction.

Aaron Van Dyke merges on to I-68 and begins to drive home. He can't help but feel he's left behind a happy and complacent part of his life. It was a fool's peace, he knows, but it was a kind of bliss while it lasted. He could keep driving, all the way to the coastline in California, and see the decline and replacement of his racial kin at each stop. That decline did not happen naturally. There are those, white and non-white, obvious and covert, who desire and rejoice in his race's decline. The bliss he used to feel was poison; the peace was false. Those who profit from his race's extinction declared this war a long time ago.

Garret drives all the way to Fox Chapel, where he looks over his parent's place, skims the pool for Johnny and KJ, and puts his parents' mail on the dining room table. He departs for his Washington, Pennsylvania apartment, with a feeling of resolution and peace that he hasn't felt in a while.

It's been a day of heavy training and practice at Coalsack. Anna's final task of the day involved spotting and pinpointing the location of a target and a shooter. For KJ, concealment was the pressing concern. Even though Anna finds her, KJ does much better this time. She succeeds in locating Anna, though never as fast as Anna can discern KJ's position. If it had been an actual duel, KJ would have fallen in battle.

On the way back through the woods, KJ asks Anna about Friday's show at Diamond. Anna doesn't temper her response: it was awesome, she tells her friend and sister-in-race. *Chironex* debuted four songs, none of which Anna had ever heard before. Next week she'll try and obtain the mp3 files.

When the two ladies return to the cabin from the deep woods, Johnny emerges from the forest to their right. He crosses the little clear area and approaches them at an angle. He'd been shadowing KJ and then the both of them after they met up and began walking together. The two young women sit on the porch as Johnny comes over to the cabin.

"You didn't wear a cap," Johnny says to KJ. He lays his AK on the porch and kneels behind her. Still wearing her floppy hat, Anna watches with interest. She knows what he's about to do. Her years of experience in the woods and being the daughter of a father who loves her have given her that insight.

"I really didn't need one," KJ says, "The sky's all cloudy and the air's a little cooler and drier."

"It's OK, angel," Johnny says, "We just have to take precautions."

Johnny has her remove the long-sleeved shirt she's wearing over her tee. He runs his fingers through her hair, around the back of her neck, and then across each inch of her head and scalp.

"That feels so nice," KJ says.

She, too, knows what he's doing. She's read of the dangers present in the woods of Appalachia and has checked herself many times. It's a necessary and ordinary thing to do, but it presents an opportunity for KJ to play with her beloved Johnny.

"This is so fucking funny," KJ says, "You're checking your woman for ticks! This is, like, fucking surreal, dude."

"Hey!" Johnny says, "Lyme disease didn't just go away, you know. Neither did spotted fever, and that shit can fucking kill you."

KJ tries to speak but can only laugh and shrug.

"Wait, what's that?" Johnny says, "Stand up!"

"What?" KJ asks. She does not rise because she suspects a ruse. Johnny lifts her by her arms until she's standing, her back still facing him. Then he smacks her ass.

"Got it," he says.

KJ turns and looks at him. He pulls her close.

"Who else is gonna check you, huh?" Johnny asks, "Who else gives a shit?"

"I was just fucking with you," KJ says and then rubs his chest. "I'm glad you do. It's so nice that you check me ... for ticks."

KJ closes her eyes and laughs prompting Johnny to shake his head. Then KJ gets serious.

"Alright, you've had your fun," she says, "My turn."

"Oh, OK," Johnny says. He turns his rear toward her and bends a little. Anna laughs.

"I meant your fucking hair!" says KJ, who then shakes her head.

Johnny sits and KJ runs her gloved fingers through his hair. He wore a boonie hat but neither of them minds the chore.

"I did have one on my sleeve," Johnny says, "So be careful, angel. Both of you, make sure and check your bodies."

KJ kisses the top of his head and sits beside him.

"I will," KJ says when their eyes meet, "Or maybe you'd rather check me?" She bats her eyelids.

Johnny looks at her, eyebrows raised. Indeed he would like that. KJ notices Anna trying to act nonchalant. A movement by the door draws KJ's attention.

"Don't mind me," Boyle says, "I won't say a word. Go on, then."

Irish John sips the tea he made while the others came in to camp.

Johnny looks at Anna and shrugs. Then he reaches for KJ's t-shirt, which is tucked in, and he pulls it from under her camouflaged pants. KJ leans back and away, and gets an exaggerated look of vexation on her face. Johnny sits up straight and beckons her with his index finger.

"Come here," Johnny says.

KJ scoots over close to him and he puts his arm around her and they kiss.

"Lame," says Boyle, who disappears into the cabin.

In Oakland, Maryland, Carl Bowen has just finished cutting the lawn around his two-story home. He steps inside for a cold Stella Artois. He finds his bottle opener beside the little figurine of a farmer and the ceramic fish that holds toothpicks. His parched throat yearns as his nose smells the aroma and feels the cool mist of the opened beer. Through the window he notices a green Toyota pull in behind his black F150. Johnny's father takes a swig and waits for the occupant to emerge. He knows the car and on any other day he'd be somewhat annoyed to see its driver. Today the feeling is much worse.

On Friday morning, a police officer asked if he could look around the premises. Carl refused and the officer departed. He figures they'll be back. The individual in the green Toyota is Carl's neighbor, Bill Knipe. Knipe is overweight and bald on the top of his head, though he insists on growing the ring of hair below his crown. Carl, whose hair hasn't thinned, is ten years his senior. Bill has never been a confrontational neighbor, though he has the annoying habit of borrowing items for long periods of time. Bill Knipe also happens to be a police officer.

Once, Carl Bowen looked much more like his son John Ashley. He was shorter but very strong, and he, too, became even more muscular as time passed. Unlike Johnny, Carl often grew a moustache and for a few years a beard as well. Now he's no longer trim and fit; his belly is round from far too many beers and his arms are becoming flabby from less and less strenuous exercise. Carl's hair, still as thick as it was, is white and gray as is his moustache. The sight in his green eyes is still excellent but his mind, battered by increasing alcohol use and the devastation of his wife's betrayal, is no longer sharp or resilient.

Once, Carl Bowen would have told Bill Knipe to "fuck off." Today he answers the door with a much more pleasant greeting.

"Hi, Carl," Knipe says, "I hope you don't mind if I hold on to your Husqvarna for a couple more weeks."

He edges a little inside the door. Once, Carl would have stepped in front of him and virtually forced him out the door. Once, Carl would have told him to bring the saw back at that very instant. Once, Carl would never have lent it out in the first place. Once upon a time, Carl didn't think about putting a pistol barrel in his own mouth and pulling the trigger.

"OK, Bill," the defeated man says, "You want a beer?" Carl asks when he sees Bill eyeing up the cold one in his hand.

"Thanks, Carl, I sure would," Knipe says, as if there were any doubt.

Carl returns with another Stella. Bill Knipe's already seated in the living room. Carl sits on his easy chair in front of Knipe. He looks down and notices the grass on his socks and legs. First his thirst, and then his asshole neighbor distracted him while he tracked the little slivers of grass around the house.

"How's your son?" Knipe asks.

He's never, ever asked about Johnny before. The ambiguity of the question scatters a few of Carl's personal demons and allows him to concentrate.

"Fine," is all that Carl tells Bill Knipe.

"I don't see him come around much anymore," Knipe says.

"He works," Carl says.

Once, he would have told Bill to flee the premises. Any hesitation on Knipe's part would have resulted in an ass-beating.

"Yeah, I bet it's tough with gas prices as high as they are," Knipe says.

Carl has never told Bill Knipe what his son does for a living.

"Crude's down and prices keep going up," Carl says, "Goddamned oil companies don't even make excuses anymore, just jack up the price and tell us to go to hell."

It's Carl's form of pathetic resistance to Knipe's inquiry. He knows that Knipe is a huge Limbaugh fan. When Knipe washes his car or his massive Ford Explorer, chores that he seems to relish, he'll blast Limbaugh on his radio.

Bill Knipe resists regurgitating the words of the talk radio shills and ignores Carl's statement.

Carl Bowen never liked blacks. His opinion did not come from his parents, but rather from personal experience. Many of them were inclined toward violence, brutish and piggish behavior and vulgar and overt sexual gesturing. He worked with a few at the shop in Cumberland and knew well of his brother-in-law Robert's encounters with blacks in Baltimore and around Washington, D.C. His sources for news are "mainstream" and his

internet use is minimal. He never gives a thought to white genocide, or how someone might profit – rationally or not – from the extinction of his race. Still, he does not like this authority figure asking questions about his son, especially in light of the recent visit by the Garrett County police.

“Where does John work?” Knipe asks, “I got a friend who’s a driver and he’s looking for a new job, maybe your son could help a guy out?”

“I don’t know, Bill, I got to get back to the lawn,” Carl says, “I wish I could sit down a while, but you know how it is.”

“Sure,” Knipe says, “Hey, thanks for the brew,” he says. “Could you mention my buddy to John next time you see him? See if he can help a man out.”

“OK, Bill, I’ll try to remember,” Carl says.

Bill Knipe struggles to escape the soft couch. Carl watches him shuffle out the door. When the Toyota Camry pulls out into the road, the house suddenly feels empty again.

Carl heard about his family’s attempts to match Johnny with Madison Krause. They didn’t ask Carl’s opinion. He knows something about Madison. One of the younger guys at the garage used to date her. His stories, if they’re even one-quarter true, would indicate that she is piggish and treacherous. He hopes Johnny does better than he did, and his girl won’t betray him in the deepest manner that a person can betray another, as his wife did to him. The wound never healed, and will not ever, because he did love her. He was heartened when he heard that Johnny had rejected his family’s suggestion. He doesn’t want his son to be alone, though it’s worse to be the victim of such intimate betrayal.

Carl removes his socks and starts picking up the blades of grass from the floor. There seem to be too many. He’ll get the vacuum in a little bit, after another beer.

As soon as KJ and Johnny Bowen arrive at the Fogarty’s Place, Johnny calls in an order at the little grill in Washington, Pennsylvania, whose fare they ate on Wednesday. He tells them the time to begin the meal, factoring in practice and the drive from Fox Chapel. They’ll be arriving at Amblersburg too late for supper.

“Let me pay for this one,” KJ says.

It’s one of the few words she’s spoken during this trip. Johnny noticed how nervous she’s become since leaving Coalsack.

“No,” Johnny says.

“OK, fine,” KJ says, “I’ll leave the money back here.”

“No problem angel,” Johnny says, “I’ll just put it in with the groceries.”

“Johnny!” KJ says.



"Are you my woman?" Johnny asks.

"Yes!" KJ says.

"Then listen to me," Johnny says, "You're not one of those self-absorbed bitches my family wants me to date. You're different, and I fucking love you. So, no, you're not paying. Not now, and not ever. Got it?"

She's quiet for a moment.

"I love you too," KJ says.

"C'mon," Johnny says, "Let's get wet."

KJ grabs her shoulder bag. Inside is a change of clothes for after she swims and showers. There's also a pair of flip-flops, in case her feet are wet. She does not want to dampen the inside of her boots. There are two swimsuits as well. Johnny changes into his trunks while KJ removes her Coalsack gear in the bathroom closest to the pool. She takes out her swimsuit and dons it without hesitation. She washes her face and fluffs her hair with a towel. There's a splash from the pool. Johnny must be enjoying a swim before she makes her appearance. KJ checks herself out in the mirror. From behind, she can see her angel's wings. Only the strap across the center of her back obscures them, and it only covers a small part of the middle feathers. She can see the lowest feathers of her wings, the ones that curve to her side and away from her rear, and whose tips normally disappear under jeans and full-coverage swimsuits. Today she can see every feather and every feather tip. KJ opens the door and walks out to the pool.

Johnny's standing in the shallow end when she emerges. He walks to the side and climbs out of the pool. As usual, he approaches and then stops near the close edge of the water, waiting for her to do her customary spin so he can see her entire body. This Saturday she does not.

"Goddamn, that's nice on you," Johnny says, "Turn around."

KJ shakes her head.

"Come here," Johnny says.

Johnny walks to her. He tries to look into her eyes, but she looks down until he's close, and then looks up so their eyes can meet. He takes her head in his hands and kisses her, and she embraces him. His hands touch her mostly-uncovered back, one high and one low. He looks into her eyes and gets a mischievous little smile. KJ lays her head to his chest again and nuzzles him. He's about to tell her to join him in the pool, and without grasping or swinging hard he pats her rear with an open left hand.

As the second tap touches her behind, Johnny realizes that her skin is uncovered.

"Whoa!" Johnny says, "Whoa... I don't feel any fabric down there."

"There's just a thong," KJ says, "I..." She sighs.

"What's wrong, angel?" Johnny asks.

His left hand is now on her lower back. KJ looks at him again.

"I want us to have fun," she says, "and I want you to feel good with me."

"I do, angel," Johnny says.

"I'm not trying to push things too far," KJ says, "I struggle with it, Johnny, the feeling gets so strong, and I love you so much. I don't want to go too far, but...fuck...I fucking want to! I really want to."

The expression on her face, together with her words and her body's movement in his arms stirs him at the deepest level.

"We've been feeling this out," Johnny says, "KJ, angel, I don't think there is a line you can keep behind, not when it's love and it's this powerful. I do know that there's too far, right now there's too far, and we can't go too far. There's part of me that wants you by my side when everything starts to happen. There's a part of me that wants you a million miles away. Both parts love you."

"I love you too, Johnny," KJ says, "and no part of me wants to be a million miles away."

KJ looks down and closes her eyes, and then looks into his face.

"I said I don't want to tempt you," she says, "I know I do, but I mean, do I tempt you so much it hurts? Am I doing that to you? If you have to leave, Johnny, I don't want what we have to cause you any pain."

"I don't care how much it hurts me if I leave," Johnny says, "I'm not cutting you off even if I never see you again. I'll never cut you off from my soul. If I knew I'd leave tomorrow and never, ever see you again, my angel, I'd be right here, and I'd hope you'd wear a suit like that."

Johnny brings his hands up to where he knows her wings begin, and then slides both hands down to her rear. When each reaches its destination, he does not merely rest his hands upon her, but caresses her behind in a most gentle fashion.

"We don't go any further right now," Johnny says, "But we don't go back, either. This doesn't hurt me and it won't hurt me, no matter what. Nothing we share is going to bring me any pain. Is this OK for you, angel? Because that really does matter to me."

KJ smiles.

"Yeah, this is good," she says, "Thank you so much, Johnny."

KJ plunges into him, laying her head on his chest and nuzzling the bare skin. He kisses and smells her hair. His hands rub her back and pass gently over her wings.

"My angel," Johnny says.

They hold hands for a while, and share a few kisses.

"Let's go swimming," Johnny says.

"OK," KJ says and smiles.

She gives him a peck on the lips.

"Wait," he says before they enter the shallow end, "You didn't show me your wings."

KJ laughs and turns around. Johnny does look at her wings, but requests a second spin so that he might look elsewhere.

Johnny walks over to her and sweeps her off her feet. He carries her into the water. They do manage to practice a little, but most of the time they remain close, and give their affections through kisses and nuzzling and soft caressing. Both of them know that intimacy will make their potential separation all the more painful. Neither would withhold such intimacy nor would they hope to lessen its impact. Before departing the pool, Johnny holds her tight and KJ presses her head against his chest.

"Thank you, Johnny," KJ whispers, "for giving me back my life," she gets a half-smile and looks into his eyes, "And for asking me to be your woman."

"Thank you, angel," Johnny says, "It's an honor to know you and it's the most beautiful thing in my life that you are my woman. I knew I wasn't a fool for believing in you."

KJ showers and changes into a pair of shorts and the *Celtic Frost* tee that she wore when she took her plunge in the Monongahela. Johnny holds her hand as they walk to the Rubicon. Once inside, she rubs the place where the rabbit leaps across his shoulder. On the return trip to Amblersburg, KJ sits up front. She remains there at Johnny's request, even when he stops at Washington to pick up supper. On a lonely road outside of the city, Johnny finds an open spot that a row of large pin oaks shields from the highway. The gap between trees is just large enough for a Jeep, though there is a clear space beyond.

"I hate eating in a car," Johnny says, "I figure you do, too."

He opens the door and comes around to open hers. They go around back of the Jeep, KJ holding the bag of edibles while Johnny folds the seat and creates a space at the back of the Jeep for the two of them to share their meal. Beneath the brightest stars and the clouds that obscure the others, the two dine in close proximity and the inexorable march of time slows just enough for them to savor the moment.

Johnny Bowen returns to KJ's little home at 9AM on Sunday. It's the last day of June, and the air will be heavy and hot, with evening thunder-

storms rumbling over northern West Virginia. At 9 the sky is partly cloudy and the air is warm and already becoming unpleasant.

KJ is already dressed in jeans and a t-shirt, and her bag is already packed. When he enters he's carrying a bag, which he sits on the floor so that he might embrace and kiss his energetic and loving woman.

KJ does not tell him not to spend money. It won't work, and although the urge is great due to her selfless and giving character, she knows it will spoil his joy. As Johnny lays the bag on her bed, KJ simply thanks him.

Today Johnny helps her make breakfast. It's a light offering, owing to yesterday's heavier supper and the fact that they'll be in the water in four or so hours, though they both make sure that the food is nourishing. The experience that KJ gleaned while living in Washington and in the Campbell House has made her skilled at improvisation and aware of the nutritional value of various food elements.

"You're going to stay a while once we get back, right?" KJ asks.

"Yeah," Johnny says, "I'd like to take you somewhere fun if I could," he says, "Would you go on another date, if we could?"

"Yeah!" KJ says, "That's what tonight is, isn't it? A date?"

"That's what I want to hear," he says as he takes her in his arms and looks into her eyes.

KJ sees the strength and dominance in his green stare. Many thoughts cross her mind, all of them pleasant, and all of them related to their lives and dreams.

"Angel," Johnny says and she returns to Earth, "Grab something you don't mind getting wet, something that covers all of your skin. The roof should be enough but there might be glare a little later, and off that water it could get pretty nasty."

KJ knows exactly what to take and packs the items without unfurling them.

Johnny takes the blue Jeep. Since it's daylight, KJ must ride in the rear seat.

"Garret and Anna would go to Ireland if shit was different," Johnny says.

Johnny slows down to traverse a section of the interstate that is under construction. KJ lies down in back without Johnny having to tell her.

"I'd take you somewhere where there's KJ weather," Johnny says.

"KJ weather?" KJ asks.

"Yeah, nice clouds and drizzle and a little rain most of the time," he says, "Maine or Washington, Coastal Oregon. Somewhere I could watch you strut in the rain."

KJ is quiet for a while. Why hold back? What she feels is the truth, and as he said, it doesn't matter if it hurts if and when they must part ways, it's going to be agony anyway, and it's worse to hold back.

"Could we have our little home in the mountains?" KJ asks, "Would you give me your love, Johnny Bowen, and make my belly grow?"

"Yes," Johnny says, "As God is my witness, yes."

The Jeep is quiet for the rest of the trip.

There is no glare off the pool, though there is sunlight. The roof does its job and the clouds prevent the sun from sneaking under the roof later in the afternoon. Though there is no need, KJ dresses as if it's already bright. She wears a tight long-sleeve t-shirt that is a tad small but just the right length to reach her waist, and a pair of black snakeskin leggings.

"Jesus Christ, I'm glad these fucking trunks fit me as well as they do," Johnny says, "I think they were made for when you wear shit like that. Get the hell over here, angel."

KJ has a wicked grin on her face as she walks alongside the pool. Johnny can tell that she's up to no good. She fills her lungs with air through her nose and hopes he doesn't notice. Half-way the distance to her man, KJ puts her arms to her side and hops into the 7' deep section, disappearing in an instant under the surface.

"I fucking knew it!" Johnny says out loud.

Johnny swims as fast as he can out to her. He dives just in time to see her rising to the surface. He swims back up and arrives a moment before she emerges. Her swimming was not a fluid motion nor was it at all graceful, but she manages to regain the surface and stays afloat. He swims up to her and she looks at him with a big smile on her face. He pulls her toward his body and then helps her swim to the section of the pool where the water is up to her neck. There, they stand.

"OK, angel," Johnny says, "Now that you scared the shit out of me, can we get back to your lessons?"

KJ throws her arms around him and kisses him with passion.

"You came for me," she says.

"Of course, angel," Johnny says, "Of course I did."

"Thank you, Johnny," KJ says, smiling, "I love you."

KJ touches his cheek and then kisses him again. As she does, Johnny lets his hands slide down her back, all the way to her rear.

On the way back to Amblersburg, Johnny makes a single stop. He plans on fueling the Rubicon and buying some fresh food items for tonight's supper. Before leaving the Jeep for the supermarket, he looks back at KJ and hesitates, and then he exits. She curls up under the sheet.

Anna does not keep Garret waiting. She knows when he'll arrive and she is ready when he pulls up to the driveway. Earlier, she completed all the preparatory work for her father's supper so that he can eat once he gets home from the weekend overtime shift. She leaves a note, letting him know she'll be back by 11PM. She drew a smiley face at the bottom of the note and requested that he have tea ready at 11.

A large white bow binds her plentiful red hair into a long ponytail. Anna's dress is likewise white, and her arms and much of her upper back are exposed, such that one can admire their smooth, strong form as well as the ivy that winds around them. Anna has her own pair of opera gloves, though hers are white, and she decides to wear them tonight. They cover some of her ivy, which winds around her upper arms once before plunging beneath her long gloves.

Anna knew that Garret would be dashing in his suit and tie, yet she cannot help but stare like a smitten schoolgirl from the moment he enters. He presents her with a dozen red roses and a larkspur corsage. It's the same choice that Gary made the evening he proposed to Mary. He's never told another soul.

The wind is light and the herd of altocumulus clouds that grazes on the blue sky is broken in places, without a trace of the thunderstorms that the meteorologists promised would arrive in Pittsburgh by nightfall. At six in the afternoon Anna and Garret arrive at Bona Terra in Pittsburgh, a restaurant of formidable reputation. Anna's heart sings at the thought of dining here with the man she loves; it weeps because of what this event might signify.

As is customary for a gentleman like Garret, he orders for the both of them: seared *foie gras* with wine for an opener, followed by roasted duck breast with wild mushrooms for him and swordfish with jasmine rice for her. Garret orders her a mineral water and a glass of Burgundy for himself.

"I'm really glad you could come," Garret says.

Anna wants to run her fingers through his long blond locks.

"How's Gary?" Garret asks.

"He's fine," Anna says, "Thank you for asking, sweetheart."

"Of course," Garret says, "He's a dear friend of mine, and the father of someone who means a great deal to me."

Anna smiles.

"Do you still go diving each week?" Garret asks.

"Yeah," Anna says, "I'm going on Wednesday."

Garret wants to promise he'll be there. He cannot.

"I've always been impressed with your skill," he says, "I have no doubt it took a great deal of discipline and drive to accomplish what you've done."

"Thank you, Garret," Anna says, "I'm pretty good, but there are other girls at the center who could beat me."

Anna's a little too modest. Perhaps in Pittsburgh there are such girls, but none of the regulars in her age group could outscore Anna on the springboard, unless she had an off-day.

"They might make a smaller splash on entry," Garret says, "but none of them match your grace."

Anna looks down and smiles, a little embarrassed and a whole lot flattered.

"Can you come on Wednesday?" Anna asks in the Irish.

"I don't know," Garret answers.

Anna looks down again. Her expression, though confined to her mouth, is unmistakably sad.

"Things were simpler once," Garret says in English, "Before I woke up to the reality we face as a people."

Garret never alters his gaze from the beautiful creature opposite him at the table. Anna's head is aimed downward, though she looks up with her eyes and returns his stare.

"Most people who know me wouldn't believe it," Garret says, "but I miss the feeling of peace we used to have. It was a lie, a grand lie, and it's meant to be a lie, so that..."

A waiter walks by the table and Garret hesitates a moment. He looks up as the man slowly passes by and into the next room of tables.

"So that nothing ever changes," Garret says, "But it's a nice feeling and I do miss it."

"I know you do," Anna says in the Irish. "I knew that before I fell in love with you."

"I would never ask for a false peace," Garret says in the Irish, "I'd like to have a real one, but I'll take you having it, or your children. That means more to me than my own tranquility."

"I know," Anna says in the Irish, "Dear Garret, I know."

The restaurant earns it accolades with the main course and the dessert. The *Sfogliatelle* is magnificent, filled with orange ricotta, and each leaf baked to perfection. Anna finishes with a cup of coffee; Garret, with tea.

Garret does not park at the Murphy place. He parks along 3rd Street and they walk, hand-in-hand, toward her home. The stars are out and the

moon is fading. Garret looks up toward Corona Borealis. The Blaze Star still sleeps in the darkness. Garret kisses Anna when they arrive at the driveway. She looks at him and smiles. There's a light in the kitchen and one in the living room, but no face in the window.

Anna's smile fades. Garret can just see a tear making its way down her cheek.

"Is this goodbye, Garret?" Anna asks, "Am I losing you?"

How he wishes he could lift her in his arms and squeeze her, and tell her what a silly thought she's had.

"I don't know," is all that Garret can say.

They embrace and he feels her grip tighten around him. She closes her eyes and nuzzles his chest. Then she breaks away and flees up the steps. Garret watches her enter the house. The walk back to his Jeep is agonizing and silent.

Since there's a little more time tonight, Johnny and KJ prepare a more elaborate meal. He bought a bottle of Korbel Brut at the supermarket and puts it in a bucket of ice to chill.

"We never drank to your freedom," Johnny says.

There's the usual play in the kitchen, though it is reduced in frequency if not intensity. Both look forward to the dinner and that which follows. When the meal preparations are finished, Johnny retrieves his clothes from the Jeep and dresses in a collared shirt and jeans. KJ tends to the meal while he does, and then she changes into her outfit. Johnny puts their plates on the little table in the living room, which is replete with a lace cover, spotless silverware and a red rose in a vase.

"Dinner's ready, angel," Johnny announces.

The sight of the food is pure culinary seduction. Johnny has grown accustomed to such sights when KJ has a hand in making a meal. He is also accustomed to the taste surpassing the beauty of the food and its arrangement. Today the entrecote, in its redolent sauce and covered with mushrooms, is cooked to perfection. He noticed the sumptuous pink coloration of the sliced meat when he returned after changing clothes. The anticipation rose ever more when he spied the side dishes, which were as much a product of his work as hers, and showed the result of their collaboration. On an earlier visit, Johnny had brought, among many other supplies, a pack of dried cepes. Following her suggestion, he put them to good use, making a rice dish with the dried boletes that also included white wine. And last, there are the stuffed tomatoes Beaulieu, which he'd made once during his days of French language classes. As he waits for her to appear he can't imagine how good tonight's meal will be.



When KJ emerges from the bathroom Johnny forgets every notion of an upcoming feast. The sight of her steals his words. Her hair is down as usual, draped over a tight orange top. KJ brushes strands of hair from her face with her gloved hands, and he can see the blue eye shadow and pink lipstick she's wearing, as well as the gorgeous white skin that is free from any other makeup or rouge. Johnny gazes at her body from the waist down. She's wearing the black leggings that she wore on their second date, the pair that hugs her like a shiny second skin. From her feet to her lovely calves she wears the lustrous boots that he bought her for their first date. Their laces and high tops go over the leggings and owing to their color and shine they almost look to be connected. KJ watches him, and then turns and pauses before returning to face him.

Johnny says nothing as they approach and meet. He takes her in his arms and kisses her. His hands remain above her hips. He tells her how beautiful she is, and KJ looks down with a beautiful and sincere smile on her face. They take their seats, but not before he pours her a glass of Merlot.

The food is every bit as good as it looks. The two of them let their weary souls enjoy each moment.

"Tell me, angel," Johnny says, "If we ever make it out to your old homeland, where would you like for us to go?"

"Rainier," KJ says, "I told you about it before. You'd love it. We'd go to St. Helens – I was there once, and it was fucking awesome. And then we'd go to Vancouver Island. I've been to Victoria and it's really beautiful. One other thing, would you mind going on one of those little boat tours to Alaska?"

"Hell no, I wouldn't mind!" Johnny says.

KJ laughs a little at his energetic response. Then she gets quiet. She looks at him, and though her face gives only the very slightest and ephemeral hint, she feels a sharp urge to weep. In his heart of hearts Johnny must know that she's on the edge.

"Please don't," Johnny says.

KJ smiles.

"I wouldn't think of it," she says.

She sips the glass of wine she was holding as they spoke.

After the sumptuous meal, Johnny opens the champagne. They drink to each other's health and happiness, to the little cottage home, and to her liberation from those who hate her for loving her race. Then KJ pours another glass and makes a silent toast. Johnny opens his mouth to speak.

"Shh..." KJ says, her gloved finger upon his lips, "I'm just going to hope it comes true."

The laptop, sitting on one of the cabinets, provides the music via iTunes. The little speakers are adequate for their needs. Pink in color, she finds them adorable. *Leaves Eye's* leads the musical procession with "Les Champs de Lavande" followed immediately by "Landscape of the Dead", one of the songs that Anna gave to KJ a few days ago. KJ set up a playlist for this exact occasion, and she knew they'd start with a slow dance. Later there will be more aggressive and energetic music, and the appropriate movements for such tunes. In the end there is music for a final slow dance. During the course of the last song, Johnny finds out just how nice her bottom is in those skin-tight leggings.

The evening ends with a custom that both of them have come to adore: KJ sits on his lap, sharing thoughts and tales of desires, enjoyment, and hopes for a future they can't help but doubt. They speak French for a while, and she tells him she loves him. In the end Johnny pats her leg and they rise.

"Don't forget the bag I brought for you," Johnny says.

"Johnny..." KJ says after shaking her head.

It's his turn to put his finger to her lips.

Johnny gives her a long kiss goodnight, and then departs for the evening, desiring more than anything he's ever desired to stay the night with this beautiful young woman, yet knowing they both deserve more than just one night together.

KJ steps over to the bag. Inside are an iPod Touch and a Kindle. The iPod Touch is loaded with music. There's a note, asking her to give the Kindle to Anna so she might load it again, and for Anna to put her music on the iPod Touch, whatever will fit. KJ lays the items on the table and changes into her usual sleeping attire. She folds the leggings with great care, even though she now has eight similar pairs, and she'll wash these before wearing them again. Once the bed is clear she climbs under the sheets. Instead of weeping over the possibility of losing her one true love, she imagines them strolling around in Victoria, the sky a patchwork of grays and whites and peeking blues, and she's dressed exactly as she was tonight. There's one other difference between this past evening and her dream. In her dream, John Ashley Bowen does not drive away.

## Chapter XVII



## Garret's Trial

The next morning, Johnny has KJ drive the blue jeep to Coalsack. He does not take the wheel, not even when they arrive at the entrance road. At the campsite KJ pulls in beside Anna's Outback. She shuts off the motor, looks at her beloved and flashes him a smile.

"Listen, angel," Johnny says, "If you spend any time in the brush, wear your cap or toboggan. I don't care if it's warm, OK?"

"OK," KJ says, "I..."

A movement behind the Jeep silences KJ and prompts her to look to the rear. Garret Fogarty's Wrangler enters the gate. Anna and John Boyle, who were talking on the porch, walk out toward the visitor. Garret steps out of his Jeep. He's wearing a typical button-down shirt and a pair of jeans. He's also wearing a holster and accompanying automatic pistol.

Anna walks up to Garret. He touches her cheek and she smiles, her eyes closed for a moment. KJ and Johnny exit the blue Jeep. They greet Garret as a pair, with Johnny's arm around KJ's shoulder.

Boyle clears his throat.

"Attention, ladies," Boyle says, "Get your guns and get to the range."

Boyle's shorts and "Buttermilk Biscuits" t-shirt contrast the obvious seriousness of his commands. KJ and Anna, decked out in their camo gear and black army boots, shoulder their rifles and walk to the range. The men remain at the cabin. Boyle returns to the porch and Garret follows. Johnny Bowen sets his AK47 on a bench that's sitting near Boyle and he goes inside for a beer. Along the left-side wall is a row of bottles. He selects a bottle of Yuengling, opens the top and returns to the porch.

"Help yourself then," Boyle says.

"I brought it for you, John," Johnny says, "You know I can quit anytime."

"Humorless fuck," says the stone-faced Boyle.

Johnny ignores him.

"John, what's your opinion of those two?" Garret asks Boyle.

Garret motions toward the range.

"Who first?" Boyle asks.

"Anna," Garret says.

"She's fast, she's accurate, she can hide very well and she's a fuckin' hell of a scout," Boyle says, "She's got decent accuracy with the fifty. I think she'd be effective but the Remington's her natural weapon and she's damned impressive with it. I do think the enemy might be able to get to her emotionally. I wasn't able to affect her, but then I'm not willing to do certain things. They will be. I'm not certain they could get to her and affect her performance but she is a woman, and they will try to fuck with her if it comes to that."

"KJ?" Garret asks.

Johnny looks at him and then at Boyle. He drinks down the beer.

"I've not seen anything like her," Boyle says, "She took to the art faster than anyone I've ever seen or heard of. Her accuracy is excellent, with the .30-06 and the fifty. She can use the Leopold scope without a sign of trouble and when she has time, she does not miss. There's a lot of talent in that lass, a tremendous talent for the art."

"I thought so," Johnny says, "What does she need to correct?"

"Her concealment skills and her choice of a nest needs work," Boyle says, "She's not as good as Anna when she faces timed shots, and Anna is even better at snap shots. Her scouting skills are very good and her skills at observation are as good as Anna's, but without improving her concealment skills, a sniper with Anna's abilities will take KJ every time."

"Thank you, John," Garret says.

"Are you staying, Garret?" Boyle asks.

"Yes," Garret says, "I have something to discuss with Johnny."

"Good," Boyle says, "You'll get the chance to see 'em in action."

"Nice," Garret says, "First, Johnny and I are going to take care of some business. Please excuse us, John."

Boyle nods and heads off to the range.

Johnny dons his long-sleeve shirt as Garret gets close to his space.

"When can we scout the target?" Garret asks, looking into Johnny's green eyes.

"Tomorrow," Johnny says.

"What do we drive?" Garret asks.

"I talked to Jimmy Ford," Johnny says, "He's already dropped off a black Dodge Stratus at Markleysburg. Drive it when you pick me up in the morning."

"What time?" Garret asks.

"Leave at 5," Johnny says.

"What's the weapon?" Garret asks.

"I work later in the morning on Wednesday," Johnny says, "I'll visit Ford and ask him to drop off the weapon on Thursday morning, in Markleysburg. You'll be there, right?"

"I'll spend every night this week at the flat," Garret says, "I can stay until he arrives on Thursday."

"Good," Johnny says, "Your weapon's a .308 rifle with suppressor and subsonic ammo. We got to try it sometime. Jimmy says he's tested the weapon and never had a problem."

"Fine," Garret says.

"Garret," Johnny says, "This is gonna put you close. I'll have your back but take the shot only if you really think you can hit. By close, I mean a hundred yards maximum."

"Fine," Garret says, "When do we take him out?"

"It's subject to change, but I'm thinking Friday," Johnny says, "Remember, once you pull the trigger there's no going back."

"I don't intend to," Garret says, "We didn't start this war on our race. We just have to fight it."

"Oh, we will," Johnny says.

Johnny shakes Garret's hand and walks over to the forest, his AK47 on his shoulder. Before entering the woods he readies the rifle in his arms.

Boyle has the ladies practice speed and extraction. They take a shot and he times how quickly they return to the camp.

"Getting tied down or getting trapped will be the death of you," Boyle says, "So don't let it happen."

Irish John Boyle sends them back out, but this time he tells Anna to cover for KJ as they make their way back to the cabin. Anna follows the higher hillside as they advance, and then darts for the parking area once KJ passes.

For the final hour of training, KJ and Anna practice range estimation and spotting. At 3:30 PM, today's session comes to an end, and all save Boyle depart from Coalsack. Garret hugs Anna and kisses her softly on the lips. Anna looks into his eyes, though the only words they share are gentle farewells.

KJ and Johnny kiss and then leave together, with KJ driving.

"Do you think you can get here by yourself?" Johnny asks, "I have something I have to take care of tomorrow."

"Yeah," KJ says, "Yeah I can, Johnny."

KJ is silent for a while, wondering if tonight might be the last time she'll see him; hoping, pleading within herself that it will not be so.

At a quarter after six in the afternoon, Johnny and KJ arrive at their Amblersburg cottage. She parks the blue Jeep to the side of the house, as Johnny requests.

"Sweetheart," Johnny tells her, "I'm going to be very busy the rest of the night and most of the day tomorrow. Are you sure you can get to Coalsack alone?"

KJ nods and unbuckles her safety belt.

"If there's any trouble, call Anna, OK?" Johnny says as he strokes her head and shiny mane of hair.

"OK, Johnny," KJ says. Her expression turns to one of concern. "Is everything alright?"

"As well as it can be," Johnny says. He caresses her thigh. "My angel," he says, "I'll see you Wednesday afternoon."

They exit the Jeep and she comes around to him. Johnny kisses her and she runs her fingers through his hair. Then KJ returns the kiss, which becomes urgent and intense. She grips his body and the back of his head; he holds the back of her head as well, and his left hand lies upon her bottom. They kiss for longer than he intended to stay, but he does not regret.

"I love you, Johnny," KJ says, "Please be careful."

"I will, angel," Johnny says.

He'd like to see her wings again, or her body in the leggings, or that swimsuit. Johnny rubs her hair and cheek and leaves her with a smile.

At 8PM Johnny arrives at his Deer Park home.

He makes a call to his second cousin and takes a quick shower as he waits for her to arrive. A half hour later he's thrown his Coalsack attire in the washer and is wearing shorts and a tank top. His cousin arrives ten or so minutes later.

Cynthia Thomas née Warner is a young woman of above-average looks and physical strength. She was a member of a swimming club in Hagerstown and is married to her high school sweetheart, bearing one child thus far. Her hair and eyes match Johnny's in color. Recently, she's let her hair grow longer than shoulder-length. Cynthia is one year Johnny's junior.

"Why are you selling so cheap, John?" Cynthia asks over a cup of coffee, "Are you in trouble?"

The soft glow of three long panel lights illuminates the kitchen. The bright overhead lamp is off. The indirect glow makes Cynthia's skin seem less tanned and much more beautiful than it currently is.



"It's time for a change," Johnny says, "Ted has the money and you say you want the place. I just don't want to wait for payments or the other bullshit that goes with selling a house through an agent."

"OK, Johnny," she says, "Just remember if you need anything let us know, OK?"

"I appreciate it," Johnny says, "But I have what I need."

He smiles.

Cynthia's husband Ted works at one of the last union factories in north central West Virginia and he has over forty thousand in savings. For him and his family, a house like Johnny's in Deer Park is a godsend.

Garret Fogarty spends the night at the Markleysburg flat that he bought with Johnny Bowen. He arrives at 8PM to find Jimmy Ford's black Stratus parked in the driveway. The keys are inside the house, pushed through the slot in the front door. Garret retires at nine. He sets his alarm for 4:30 AM and, surprisingly, has no trouble falling asleep.

KJ Campbell climbs into bed at 8:30PM. She sets her little alarm clock for 3:30AM. Johnny urged her to head for Coalsack in the pre-dawn hours and to take it easy as she drives. There will be no reason to rush if she leaves early enough. At 4:30, after a simple but filling breakfast, she's on the highway with the blue Jeep.

Garret Fogarty rises at 4:30. He dresses in brown hiking pants and a similar-colored long-sleeved shirt. On his feet he wears his best hiking shoes. Before departing at 5AM, he loads his backpack and the back seat of the car with mundane items he deems of potential use. In the front, within easy access, he lays his .45-caliber pistol. At a quarter till six, about ten minutes before sunrise, Garret pulls into the driveway of Johnny's Deer Park house. To the right, his friend and brother-in-law emerges from the shadows and opens the passenger door. Johnny is wearing a white tee under a camouflage-pattern long sleeve shirt. His pants are brown like Garret's. After a short hello he lays his own backpack and gun case in the rear, with the case being on the floor. Inside is a 12-gauge pump shotgun. On Johnny's person is his Smith and Wesson .45.

"Pop the trunk," Johnny says.

He disappears into the shadows and returns with an object that Garret correctly guessed to be the cover for his Rubicon. It is fashioned exactly as a military vehicle cover. Johnny bundles it in the trunk and then hops into the passenger seat. By six they're on the road to Ohio.

James Ward still feels the itch. The psychiatrist who supported his parole told him that he always will. They told him that he'd want to repeat the act that got him six years in prison and his face on various sex offend-

er websites. Even buying a small home in rural Ohio and driving a snack delivery van did nothing to abate the desire. Ward's victim was white; he is black. The closest he's come to repeating his crime of violent sexual assault and battery happened in Akron three years ago. At that time, the would-be victim, who was black, escaped only because of the fortunate arrival of her brother. Since then Ward has prowled and stalked but advancing age has diminished his ability to overpower his prey. On Sunday, James Ward turned 65 years of age. Always promiscuous in spite of certain masculine failings, Ward has for the last three years contented himself with prostitutes.

Ward rises at 8AM. He'll leave at 8:30 and return at around 2, after he finishes his rounds at a small store in New Concord. Ward is short in stature but strong for his age and height. He lifted weights in prison and became even more combative. His rape career did not pause behind bars; he merely traded pussy for asshole. As is typical for black prisoners, he raped other male prisoners for reasons of pleasure and dominance. Once, he managed to assault and to sodomize a small white prisoner. Even black inmates who loathed Ward joined in on that rape. The itch is still strong, though Ward hopes to satisfy his perverse lusts with whores. He will probably succeed. His job gets him enough money for even the drugged-out white prostitutes, and those who don't mind giving the oral sex that he craves. His job pays his bills and buys him food and enough weed to spend an hour on his front porch, smoking and reading the paper or just sitting there, staring at nothing in particular as the chemicals numb his brain. For an ex-felon who has ten times the number of porno films as he does books, or even magazines, he lives a comfortable existence.

By 9AM the skies over Coalsack are mostly clear and the heat is rising. July, which according to Cristi is called the "oven" on Romanian church calendars, lives up to its name. This is only the second day of an always-sweltering month. KJ is wearing her usual camouflaged clothing, as well as boots and gloves. She brought the Mack cap rather than suffer with the toboggan. The humidity will be brutal, and relief in the form of sporadic thunderstorms will not come until sunset.

KJ parks beside the cabin. Boyle watches her drive into the site and waits while she exits the Jeep. He strolls out on to the porch, a cup of tea in one hand and a pair of sweet biscuits in the other.

"You beat your sister today," Boyle says, "Must have been eager to see me."

"I just couldn't resist," KJ says as she removes her pack from the Jeep. "That's how awesome you are, John," she says.

"Have you fucked him yet?" Boyle asks.

KJ pays him no mind. Instead, she bundles her hair into a long, thick ponytail.

"Poor bastard," Boyle says.

KJ walks up to the porch. She intends to go inside and retrieve her Remington rifle.

"Sit on the bench," Boyle says.

KJ looks at him for a moment before obeying.

Boyle pulls up the other bench and looks into her eyes.

"I'm going to assume you're doing all this because you're dedicated," he says, "Which we both knew, and that you love your Johnny, with all your immortal soul and you've got it in your mind to be his and only his, like we talked about. That's my assumption. Is it accurate?"

"It is," KJ says.

"If I thought you were lying to me I'd tell John Bowen to dump your worthless ass," Boyle says, "But I don't think you're lying, so listen well. They're goin' to say all sorts of shit about him and about you, and they'll try to break the both of you with words, and worse if they can. You're gonna need to use what you have inside you to stay strong and not be broken. It's easier to break a woman. You can start bitchin' at me about hearing you roar but that's a fantasy, a bunch of fuckin' shite, and all those years of white women denying the war on our race made it easy to deny reality, too. Truth is, you're vulnerable because you're a woman. Now you can hate me for sayin' it, but if you fight reality, it'll get real on you and it won't be pretty."

"I'm not going to argue with you when you're right," KJ says, "Men and women aren't the same. Most of us forgot that we're part of a whole."

"I'm glad you have some sense, Roisin," Boyle says, "I don't want Johnny to fail. I don't want you to fail. I want my people to survive and that means my race has to survive. If it was my choice, I'd pair you with your Johnny and Garret with Anna, and I'd have Anna cover your backs."

"So I'd be the shooter," KJ says.

"Can you live with that?" wolf-faced Boyle asks her.

"Traitors live with the blood of our race on their hands," KJ says, "so I can live with trying to stop them."

West of Cambridge, Ohio, the forest becomes thick in places, alternating with fields and small rural homesteads in mazelike fashion. Today the wind is blowing in advance of a cold front that will rage over Ohio and then fall apart before reaching the Appalachians. Along a lonely north-south highway, the labyrinthine hedgerows and copses of trees hide one

of the fields from the view of nearby farmhouses. This field is the perfect place to park – and hide – an automobile.

A blue Ford Fusion is approaching in the opposite lane, so Garret continues past the field and turns around at the first opportunity. When he returns, he finds a flat, easily accessible patch, where he parks the black Dodge. Johnny opens the trunk and retrieves the Rubicon's cover, using it to camouflage the Dodge. In minutes he and Garret Fogarty set off on their reconnaissance mission.

At 10AM Anna Murphy arrives at the Coalsack Site. Like KJ, she's wearing her camo gear and army boots. Unlike KJ, she's wearing a boonie hat, but no gloves. KJ watches her approach the porch and notices her blue fingernails. KJ hasn't painted hers in over a year.

"Hi, KJ," says a smiling Anna.

Anna's outfit is a little tighter than usual, excepting her camouflage hoodie, and she looks magnificent even in the hunter's clothing. KJ rises to her feet as her sister-in-law comes closer. They hug, with Anna squeezing tighter this time. Boyle waits inside the cabin. He lets them talk and relax a little. About the time he thinks he'll have to order them, the two young women enter the cabin and find their weapons. Anna greets Boyle in the Irish.

"KJ wants us to speak English," Boyle says. "Besides, we'll talk later, Anna," he looks at KJ, "In the Irish."

To the west of the Cambridge area, the skyline shows signs of unrest. Johnny Bowen and Garret Fogarty choose a tranquil moment to cross the roadway. Along a second north-south highway is the double wide trailer that James Ward calls home. Between the two roads – that is, between the field where Garret parked and the location of the Ward home – are two fields and a treeless spot, with the rest of the area between being forest. A clear trail, cut by the gas company, runs just south of the fields and allows for a rapid traverse on foot from the first highway to near the second. Rows and masses of trees border the gas line for the entire distance. Garret Fogarty, with Johnny in the lead, moves down this fortuitous pathway in the direction of Ward's trailer. The hour is a little after 10.

Owing to the recently-cut gas line, the men's advance is rapid. Neither carries a conspicuous weapon, though each is armed with a concealed pistol and a KA-BAR knife. If discovered, they have a plausible story: being July, they're looking for a good blackberry patch. Half-way down the trail they notice a treeless spot and the foundation that remains of a house consumed by flame. Judging by the growth around the dead structure, it must have burned years ago.

Near the hour of 11, Johnny leads Garret around a wide but empty field and closer to Route 209, the road closest to Ward's trailer. He finds a spot where they can hunker down and observe the structure with a minimal chance of being observed themselves. Then they wait.

"This was a good choice," Johnny says, "This fucker shouldn't be that hard." He waits for a moment. Garret hears the buzzing of a huge bumblebee. "But you never fucking know," Johnny says.

Johnny Bowen surveys the trailer, which is located down a short drive and at an angle to the main road. The porch juts out to the front. There's a lawn chair under the flimsy roof. Its legs are stained red from rust spots. If Ward sits on the chair in its current position, he'll expose his apricot – the part of the brain that often serves as a target for snipers – to a relatively short-range shot.

In the yard of the trailer sleeps a black mongrel, some sort of Rottweiler mix. It has not smelled or heard either Johnny or Garret.

"The dog could be a problem," Johnny says, "When we come back to take this motherfucker, if that dog goes nuts, hush the fucker before Ward comes out. I hate that kind of shit too 'cause the dog didn't do shit, but it's not like we have a choice. Try not to wing him, though, or he'll raise holy fucking hell and we'll have to scrub the mission."

Garret nods. Outside the Ward trailer is an old Jeep Cherokee that's seen its last miles. Closer to the driveway is a silver LeSabre that is probably functional. Other than the dog and the silent cars, the place appears bereft of life.

"Now we wait him out," Johnny says.

Johnny creeps through the bushes until Garret can no longer see him. Garret doesn't ask what Johnny's up to; he knows that for this scouting mission, and the combat mission that follows, Johnny Bowen will be his sentinel.

On occasion a vehicle passes by Garret's well-concealed hiding spot. None of them stop or even slow down. During one of the longest quiet spells, Johnny returns and tells Garret he believes he's found the perfect place for a shot. It is across the road, and around 75 or so feet from Ward's front door. If all goes well, no one will see Garret taking the shot and Ward will not live to tell about it. If all does not go well, Johnny will be there to cover the retreat. Johnny Bowen returns to the woods to the right and somewhat behind Garret. A short while after he disappears, a white, box-like delivery van rounds the curve at Garret's far left and begins driving down the straight stretch of Route 209. This is the part of the road that passes in front of Garret and which includes the turn-off to

the Ward trailer. At first Garret does not believe this is Ward's vehicle. The driver, whose appearance Garret cannot discern through the windows, does not flash his left turn signal. Nonetheless, the truck makes the turn at the entrance to Ward's winding driveway. Garret watches with intense interest. The truck parks in front of the house, obscuring the LeSabre and the Cherokee. Two minutes later a short black male, wearing a white uniform, comes around the front of the vehicle.

At around 3PM, Anna and KJ return to the cabin from the shade of the woods. Inside, they clean their weapons. Anna secures her rifle inside the cabinet. KJ shoulders her clean Remington, and walks out to the porch. Anna watches her in surprise, and then follows. Boyle, who's attached the ATV trailer to his Ford Ranger, sees them emerge. As the two young ladies converse, KJ turns her back toward him. Boyle sees the rifle. A little smile forms on his face, but he squashes it with a cold and hard glare.

"Didn't you clean your fuckin' gun?" he yells as he walks at a brisk pace toward KJ.

KJ, her hair down and her hat on her belt, turns toward him and nods. She does not speak.

"Aren't you forgettin' something, then?" Boyle asks.

"No," KJ says.

"Put the gun back in the cabinet," Boyle says with a straight face. He turns to leave, his smile trying its best to return.

"No," KJ repeats.

Boyle turns to face her.

"They might take Johnny and everything else away from me," KJ says, "but not without a fucking price!"

Irish John Boyle looks at KJ, from head to boot.

"Don't forget to bring it next time," Boyle says and points at her, "I'm not fucking lending you one."

Boyle walks back to the ATV trailer. His back toward KJ, he lets his smile show.

KJ lays the rifle in the back of the blue Jeep and covers it with one of the sheets she uses to hide herself during the trips to Fox Chapel. She hugs Anna a final time before departing for Amblersburg. Anna goes back to sitting on the porch. Boyle watches KJ depart, and then comes over to Anna. He takes a seat beside her and stares into her lovely face. She looks up and returns his stare.

"Your friend is an amazing young woman," Boyle says in the Irish, "So are you."

Their entire conversation will be in their ancient maternal language.

"Her family almost destroyed her," Boyle continues, "and her world's been dark and merciless. She's hurting and so is Johnny. I'd say they have to choose this life, because they refuse to be traitors and they're certainly not cowards. But this doesn't have to be your life. Are you sure you want this?"

"Would you tell the ladies in the IRA not to fight?" Anna asks.

"No, and I'm not telling you that, either," Boyle says, "I'm telling you to think and to be sure. Are you sure? Wouldn't you rather leave this war to us? You won't be a traitor if you choose another method of resistance. You love your race and your people, and you refuse to do anything that harms them. You'd still perform a great service for the rest of us."

"If I didn't have this skill," Anna says, "or if it was thirty years ago when we still had a little time, then I might consider your words, John. But we don't have time anymore. This war's my war, too."

"That doesn't mean that you have to be there when the shooting starts," Boyle says.

"My mother gave her life for me, John," Anna says, "and my father dedicated his life to me. I needed her life or I would have died, and he gave up his happiness to raise and protect me once I was born. Do I abandon my obligation to my future children, because I might have to give my life or my happiness so that they might live?"

"You could easily die before you have them," Boyle says.

"I'd rather die than give them this world, where a child suffers because he's born white," Anna says.

"They'll do horrible things to you if they catch you," Boyle says, "Because you're beautiful and you're white, and you dared to stand up to them. Don't forget that."

"I won't, John," Anna says, "That makes my decision easier."

James Ward emerges from his trailer about an hour after he arrived. A newspaper under his arm and a cigarette between his lips, he sits on the porch and lights up. The breeze has died down for the time being and crickets begin to chirp in the shadows of the undergrowth. The air is still but the atmosphere is lying; its heavenly face indicates that storms will be arriving in a few hours, regardless of the deceptive calm.

Garret is still in his spot, waiting and observing Ward with supreme patience and attention to detail. Through the binoculars he sees Ward begin reading the sports page. He sees him almost nod off, and he's a tad alarmed by the prospect of Ward burning to death from a lit cigarette as he sits sleeping. Ward nods sharply and awakens, and then turns the

page. The side of his head faces Garret. In the binoculars, his wrinkled and sunken black face seems inches away.

During the hour before she leaves the Coalsack site, Anna practices archery in the clear area and in the nearby woods. In between mundane housekeeping chores and building a small fire for his supper, Boyle watches her take a few shots. She might think she knows how hard it will be to leave behind her father, should she choose to go to war, but he knows that she truly has no idea. He sees her nail another bull's-eye on a little target that she brought. The shot was at an angle to the target and no doubt required a great amount of skill.

Boyle tends to his fire and then goes inside to prepare some basil pesto and a cabbage salad to go along with the smoked venison sausages Jimmy Ford brought a couple of days ago. When he brings the pesto out to the flames, Anna is loading her Subaru. They both go about their respective tasks.

Forty-five minutes after Ward exited his trailer he lights up his fifth cigarette and folds his paper. He returns to the inside of his double-wide. A light comes on in one of the interior rooms.

"Garret," says a voice from the thick vegetation, "let's go."

The first heavy raindrops from an approaching thunderstorm begin to pound against leaves and pavement.

Johnny and Garret halt at the margin of the road that lies between them and the field with the camouflaged Dodge. They observe the field and the road and the tarp-covered car. The rain begins to come down in a more serious manner. When he's sure no one is coming, Johnny leads Garret across the highway and, after a second check confirms that the road is still empty, he pulls the camouflaged cover off of the black Stratus. At around a quarter after four they're on their way home.

Near Wheeling, West Virginia, Johnny asks his brother-in-race to stop at the Cabelas store.

"It'll just be a little while," Johnny says when he sees that Garret is a bit nonplussed by the request, especially considering the nature of the trip. "It's important," Johnny says, "When the fuck am I gonna get a chance to drop by here?"

Garret exits the interstate and drives to the store. Johnny is true to his word, and is back in about twenty minutes. He made some kind of purchase judging by the large bag that he brought, though the exact nature remains a mystery to Garret. Johnny doesn't tell, either.

Heat lightning flashes on the horizon around Amblersburg and the outside air is muggy. Inside her cottage, KJ lies on her bed and fiddles



with her Kindle. The air she breathes is cool and pleasant. Two hours ago she began her scheduled exercises, which she finished before making supper. Now, washed and dressed in her usual t-shirt and thong, she relaxes in bed and reads.

At 9PM her cell phone rings. KJ steps over to the table and takes the phone. As soon as she sees the number she answers the call.

"Hey," KJ says with a look of relief and a gentle smile on her face.

"Hi, angel," Johnny says, "How you doin'?"

"Good," she says, "What about you?"

"I'm good, sweetheart," Johnny says, "I think I mentioned I have work tomorrow but I'll come over around 7 in the evening."

"OK," KJ says, "What do you want for supper?"

"You're choice, angel," Johnny says, "Surprise me. Hey, don't forget on Thursday we'll get together with the others at Bill's place. Make sure you bring your Kindle and iPod and we'll have Anna replace what you lost."

"OK, cool," KJ says.

There is a pause.

"I missed you," KJ says, "I know it was just a day but I don't give a fuck. I still missed you."

"I missed you too, angel," Johnny says, "Get some rest tonight, OK?"

"OK, Johnny," KJ says, "I love you."

"You too, angel," Johnny says.

KJ connects both the Kindle and the iPod Touch to the surge protector for charging and climbs into bed. She glances over at the wall above the cabinets. She hasn't decided what to put on the nail that is obviously meant for a picture. KJ rolls on to her side and wraps the sheet around her body. On the cabinet beneath the nail lies the Remington, a shell in its chamber and four in the magazine.

As often as she can, Anna rises before her father and prepares breakfast while he gets ready for another day at the deep mine. Today she makes an herb omelet, slices of slab bacon and cinnamon toast to go with the Sumatra coffee that Gary bought over the weekend. When Gary enters the kitchen Anna is in the process of serving their breakfast. She's in her black robe and her hair is in a ponytail. He kisses her cheek and takes his place at the little wooden table.

For the first half or so of the meal neither says much; Anna in particular. The she looks at her father. He's as strong as ever and his face shows little weariness. His red hair is still thick and wild like the flames of his mighty soul.

"The food's really good today," Gary says.

"Yeah, I think so too," Anna says.

"There's a lucky man out there who's gonna rise to one of your breakfasts, one of these days," Gary says.

Anna looks into his eyes.

"I..." she says, and then looks down, "I don't wanna leave you," she whispers.

"Nothing lasts forever, honey," Gary says, "Except real love and your immortal soul. I'd say try for the one and take care of the other, no matter where it takes you. Or what you have to leave behind."

"Nothing's easy anymore," Anna says, looking into his blue eyes again.

"It never is, when you have good things in your life," Gary says, "And you do have good things, and those good things matter. But it's not enough to just to enjoy the good things."

"I know," Anna says, "Not when you can lose them forever. Give them up or lose them," she says, "or just pretend everything will be alright."

"Anna," Gary says. Their eyes meet again and neither looks away. "I won't tell you what to do. No father worth anything's gonna tell his daughter to risk her future, or her life. No man's gonna put his son or daughter in the position you just said, give it up or lose it or make believe nothing's wrong. But that's exactly what we did to you. We let you down, honey. We didn't do a damn thing to help our white brothers and sisters even when we didn't even have to give up the good things in life. My generation just went along with the bullshit, because it made them feel good. They were proving they weren't racist, that we were better than other whites. Now young people like you have to face the results of all that anti-white insanity, and your children depend on you doing the right thing."

Anna nods.

"I still don't want to leave you," she says.

Gary smiles. The smell of cinnamon from the toast and the rich aroma of the coffee mingle and entice the senses.

"One way or another you'll have to leave," Gary says, "I wouldn't keep you from what you need to do with your life, no matter what you decide."

"I can't live the American life," Anna says, "I just don't know how to fight what's happening to us and what'll get so much worse for my children, and I know that it will get so much worse."

"You'll have to decide that, honey," Gary says, "I'd tell you to go somewhere safe because I love you. There is nowhere like that anymore."

"What I said isn't entirely true," Anna says, "I think I know what I have to do, but I just, I don't want to leave you behind, or never see Bryce again or Michael, or Hannah! God, I haven't seen her in, what, over a month?"

"Maybe you ought to pay them a visit," Gary says, "You could drop by after practice. Are you diving today?" he asks.

Anna nods. "Yeah," she says before she looks up at him.

"Good," Gary says, "I wish I could be there, but I can't, sweetheart."

Gary rises from the table. He rubs the top of her head as he passes on the way to his work shoes.

"I know KJ can't come," Gary says from the door, "so why don't you invite Garret over for supper? If he can come at six I'll help you make somethin' special."

"OK, dad," Anna says.

Anna watches him leave and does not depart from the window for several minutes. The sky is mostly clear, except for the thick cirrus that graces the heavens like angel's wings.

For KJ, Wednesday provides her with an opportunity to relax with some music and catch up on the myriad interests that she has not had time for in recent days. She plays around with lyrics to the song she once longed to complete and, if possible, perform. Instead of a shower she takes a bath, and plunges under for as long as she can. She tries on some of the clothes she's not worn since making her escape and some that she hasn't worn since well before leaving. Among the latter she rediscovers a stylish golden-brown dress that she bought about a year ago, in the hopes she'd wear it to some concert or similar event. It has tassels at the bottom of the skirt and is strapless. Together with the dress is a darker-colored blazer. She tries them on and checks herself out in the mirror. It's a good combination for supper.

John Bowen arrives right on time. He can see a light on in the house, which must be coming from the kitchen. He smiles and shakes his head. "Don't beat yourself up," he whispers to the young woman behind the doors and walls.

It will require four trips for Johnny to bring in all the supplies and other items that he's loaded in the Rubicon. First he walks to the porch entrance. Before going to the farmer's market after work, he washed and changed into a simple collared short-sleeve shirt and a nice pair of jeans. Although she sat her blazer on the back of her chair, KJ is wearing the gold dress when she opens the door for him. He shakes his head.

"I fucked up this time," Johnny says.

"No, you didn't," KJ says, grabbing his arm, "Come on in!"

She's wearing the pink lipstick again and her hair is in that massive ponytail she sometimes wears.

Johnny stops just inside the inner door. He kisses her and she hugs him tight.

"I have some stuff for you," Johnny says, "I'll go get it."

"I'll finish supper, OK?" KJ says.

His nod sends her back to the kitchen. Before stepping out, Johnny glances at the room. He sees that on the table is a lit candle in place of the laptop. He sees the Remington on the cabinet.

Supper consists of grilled pork chops, grilled vegetables with rosemary vinaigrette and a tomato salad. As usual, the two lovers eat their salad from the same bowl.

"I wish I could have grilled those outside, with chips or a smoker" KJ says, pointing to the chops and the veggies, "but I didn't think it was a good idea to be out there with, like, this pall of smoke, and me being a fugitive." She shrugs. "I think it came out alright."

"It's really good, angel, thank you," Johnny says.

Before he must depart, Johnny asks her for a slow dance and a cheerful KJ complies. Afterward they kiss. Johnny grabs the bag he sat by the door and begins laying items on the table beside the extinguished candle. Among them are three boonie hats, three caps, new toboggans and other clothes suitable for Coalsack. He also bought her a pair of new hoodies, one brown and the other a dusky blue.

"That's so nice, Johnny," KJ says, "Thank you."

She resists telling him not to spend his money, though her thoughtful expression is not so reserved. He plays with her ponytail and kisses her head.

"I'll come over right after work," Johnny says, "We're going to Bill's tomorrow evening. You might want to pack your bag tonight, so you don't forget the iPod Touch or the Kindle."

"Yeah, that's a good idea," KJ says.

KJ looks into his eyes. Johnny takes her by the shoulders and kisses her for so long and with such intensity that her breath is rapid when the embrace finally ends.

On Thursday afternoon, Johnny and KJ arrive at the Long Hall an hour before the Core assembles. Since he came via Brandonville and Chalk Hill there was no need for KJ to sit in back. At the Hall, the two engage in a little self-defense training that is more review and outright play than an intense lesson. Afterward, she dresses for the meeting and Johnny changes from a t-shirt to something a little less informal.

"Nice," Johnny says when he sees her button-down shirt. It has long sleeves, cuffs and a collar, and is tucked into her leggings. Although black, these leggings aren't quite as shiny as the other pairs, though they are still very pleasing to the eye. KJ smiles when she notices him checking her out. Her long hair is down as usual and adorns the front and back of the blue and white pinstriped top. As Johnny looks down, he notices that she's changed from her tall black boots into a pair of sneakers.

KJ shrugs.

"I forgot I had some of this stuff," KJ says, "I went through this phase about a year ago when my parents told me to buy some different clothes. They said mine were 'too militant.' So they gave me the credit card with the stipulation that I couldn't buy anything racist or right-wing or too militant. Funny, they never let me use the card after that."

Johnny laughs. Six pairs of jeans and ten pairs of leggings – all snug then and snuggly now – were among the clothes she purchased with their card.

"You look awesome, angel," Johnny says.

"Thank you," KJ mouths and bats her eyelids.

Aside from Johnny and KJ, Rian and Jesse are the first to appear for the meeting. They arrive quite early, just as Johnny and KJ take seats in the meeting room. The four greet upon Rian and Jesse's arrival, and then Rian grabs four bottles of water for the little group as they chat and wait for the others.

"How's motocross?" Johnny asks Rian.

"Good," says the often reticent son of William Donnelly.

Rian's short-sleeved, dark green top shows the lean muscle of his arms. Not massive like McKenna or Gary Murphy, or as well-defined and solid as John Bowen, years of riding and the inevitable battering he's taken from his chosen hobby have made him tough as nails.

"He's better than good," says a smiling Jesse. Her brown hair is unfettered except on the sides, where she's pinned it back. "He came this close to beating Phil Stranger."

Johnny looks at KJ. He whispers in her ear.

"Who's that?" he asks.

KJ looks down and chuckles, and then looks at him and tries to shrug without Rian and Jesse seeing.

"He's the points leader," Jesse says, "He won five races in a row, and right before Rian scared the hell out of him, I heard some of his crew saying that no one could come close."

"Nice," Johnny says, "So, do you two have a date yet?"

"September," Rian says.

Rian looks at Jesse and squeezes her in his left arm.

"Congratulations," Johnny says.

"That's so nice," KJ says.

"Here or there?" Johnny asks.

"We're not sure yet," Rian says.

Anna and Gary appear not long after Rian and Jesse. Garret, who was at Bill's when Rian arrived, waits for the Murphy's and accompanies them to the Hall. Anna's hair is down tonight, and she's wearing a ruffled white blouse that dips a little in the front and more in the back, but stops just short of revealing any cleavage. In Anna's case, fewer and fewer dresses can achieve that feat. Garret is spruced up as usual, and Gary, too, looks sharp in what some might call casual attire, though the meeting is informal and his clothing is respectful of himself and those present. His blue shirt and dark dress pants are just large enough that he avoids a stuffed or bloated appearance, yet the short sleeves do not hide his massive arms. Anna guessed he'd wear this shirt or one of the others like it, so she took extra care ironing it for tonight's meeting.

Bill and Megan arrive, and in time the rest of the Core appears, though everyone is present before the hour of eight. Only John Fox is missing from the remaining group. David makes his appearance and KJ can hear him expressing his regrets that John could not come, since he's on call at the ER.

The conversations begin as usual, with someone inquiring about someone else's health, a fishing trip to Elk Creek and a vacation to the Finger Lakes. Tonight there will be few grave concerns or bellicose words; in fact, the mood is reflective and the tales of mischief and merriment are more humorous than serious.

"Mr. McShane," Bill says to his relation, "I hear that Steve Donnelly sends his regards."

KJ has no idea who that is, but she sees a devilish smile on Bill's face. Bill seems calm, perhaps a little serene, as if he's completed some vial and possibly painful task.

"So does Aoife Kennedy," Bill says after a delay.

"I guess you're going to tell everyone," McShane says, "Go on, get it over with."

McShane shakes his head. No one can tell whether his cheeks are flush or not. Unlike Anna, redhead John McShane has ruddy cheeks.

"Must have been twelve years ago," Bill says, "Before Mary Kennedy was born, when John McShane came to visit us in the old country. We all

met at my Uncle Sean's place in Donegal. It's such a beautiful place, too, like something you'd dream of, and being in Donegal it's no surprise it's so beautiful. Aoife Kennedy's a year younger than John and she's become a lovely young lady. Back then, John was like most young lads, interested in dogs and toy guns and getting into trouble, which he did if I recall with accuracy. Anyway, it came as a shock to her parents when little Aoife told them that John McShane, our own John McShane, had kissed her!"

McShane smiles and shakes his head again. Taciturn, often downright cold, McShane's little flash of humanity makes KJ smile for a second or two.

"Of course the Kennedy's are stunned," Bill says, "The nerve of the young lad! So Mrs. Kennedy asks Aoife how such a thing could happen, and Aoife told them. Two other girls helped hold him down!"

The lighthearted theme thus established, the evening proceeds with similar stories.

It turns out that Kevin Toomey, John's friend, never knew the story of Aoife Kennedy. Well-known is the story of Kevin's inebriation and his dramatic attempt to dance near a table full of glassware.

"Johnny," Cristi says, "Remember the night we went swimming in Deep Creek Lake? What were we, 12? Yeah, 12, 'cause it was the summer Dan got married."

Cristi notices that he has a little audience at the Murphy Table.

"We went swimming by some private property," Cristi says, "where we weren't allowed of course but the beach was packed that day. So we get busted of course and some cops come by in a boat. I said screw this, gave up and climbed aboard. But not Johnny, no sir, he'd have nothing to do with cops. So what does he do? He tries to swim across the lake. You have to picture how it was. The cops cut us off from the straight line across the lake, so he had to swim lengthwise if he wanted to escape. So here we are, cruising beside him, the cops telling him to get in and between panting for breath and swimming like a muskrat, he's yelling 'No way!' After a loooooong time he gets tired. He looks at the other side and it seems further away than ever, so he says 'OK' and gets inside the boat."

KJ looks at Johnny with a little smile on her face.

"You never told us that," Anna says.

"I bet you were so cute," KJ says.

"I'm not anymore?" Johnny asks her.

A shrewd look is on his face.

"No," KJ whispers, "Now you're just hot."

His eyebrows raise and he gets a little smirk.

"Damn right," Johnny says as he rubs KJ's back.

Austin Kelly explains the reason he took his first ever job, cutting the lawns of everyone who'd pay him. It seems that he had to pay for repairs to his parents' car, which he wrecked when he was 14. David Fox learned not to play with matches. At the age of 13, he and his brother John lit a small patch of dry grass to see how fast it would burn. Burn it did; the flames grew far higher and faster than either brother intended, until they threatened a house and a swath of woodland. The two managed to stop the flames, at the cost of David's penny loafers.

"So I became a fireman," David says.

"How did Garret's ribs get bruised?" KJ whispers into Johnny's ear. She doesn't want anyone else to hear, in case the event was an actual fight.

"Ask him," Johnny says.

KJ looks at Garret.

"Go on," Johnny says.

"Garret," KJ says, "You mentioned Johnny bruising your ribs once. I was curious about that, if you don't mind my asking."

"No, that's fine, KJ," Garret says, "When Robert started his self-defense program among the Core, we used to do a lot of full contact."

"You used to," says a smiling McKenna.

"Me, Johnny, Kevin and Jimmy, Austin, too," Garret says, "but you're right, especially Johnny and I. We wore gloves but we didn't pull our punches, and it got pretty rough. And one time Johnny caught me – pow – right in the ribs."

"You are the toughest dude to hit in the face," Johnny says.

"Seriously?" KJ asks, "It was really like that?"

"We kept it real," Johnny says, "But it was kind of stupid, so we don't do that anymore."

"I always wondered how you made it look so easy," Jesse says, "Some of the training was really hard for me, but you two made it look easy."

"There's a lot of history," Garret says, "And a lot of pain."

KJ sees Anna looking at Garret. She must have known for some time, yet she's hiding some sadness or angst, though not as well as she might think. Garret notices as well.

"We have to be tough," Garret says to Anna and she nods.

It was natural that after each story comes to completion, and laughs or gasps or both fade to silence, that eyes would turn to a hitherto quiet Mason Walker. It's somewhat striking that the young man hasn't offered



any tales as of yet. Even his appearance is unusual: he's wearing a nice shirt that's not unlike Garret's and his hair isn't as wild as it usually is.

"What's up with Mason?" KJ asks, soft enough that only Johnny and maybe Anna can hear.

"He found a girl who passed the test," Johnny says to KJ, "Looks like it's doing him some good."

"Mr. Walker," Bill says, "Would you like to add your voice to the storytelling or shall I proceed with one of my own?"

"Where do I start?" Mason asks, "the bubble wrap on Jimmy's toilet, or Austin's car not starting at 3AM and a bunch of drunks after us..."

"After you," says Kelly who laughs as he recalls the event.

"No, Mason," Jimmy Ford says, "Tell 'em why you sold your .30-30." Anna laughs.

"I didn't have enough money to pay old man Shaffer," Mason says.

"For what?" Johnny says.

"A cow," Mason says, "I was twelve, OK? I saw a buck in a field. Technically, I was supposed to hunt on the other side of the hill, but it was the biggest buck I'd ever seen."

"What happened?" Johnny asks.

Cristi shakes his head. They can all guess what happened.

"I missed," Mason says.

"Your dad could have strangled you," Ford says.

"You were there?" Cristi asks Ford.

"Oh yeah," Ford says.

"It wasn't a milk cow. He was butchering 'em anyway," Mason says, "I just made his job easier."

"He hit it right in the damn head," Ford says.

After the inquiry and the inevitable remarks about the "deer" being even bigger than Anna's non-typical monster, and the obligatory comment that deer don't normally have black and white spots, it's time for Bill's story.

"When I was a boy," Bill says, "We used to go fishing in Fermanagh, me and my cousin Peter. He had a motorcycle at the time, which we'd take on occasion, though it was a beat-up old thing. One day we were fishin' on the lake and he's having the time of his life. Fish after fish, and I've caught nothing. So after some complaining that I'm not proud to admit to, he changes places with me. Problem is, he's a better climber, and had put himself out on some roots that arched above the water. I finally manage to get on top o' the roots and here he is, sitting on my old rock, catching a fish right where they wouldn't give me a second glance. Now that I'm

upset, I decide to go back and crowd him, but not being sure-footed at the time I took a tumble off the roots and right into the lake.” He looks at his wife. A humble smile is on Bill’s face.

“Peter’s father lived about 5 kilometers from the lake. The journey wasn’t nothing for the old motorcycle, and I was looking forward to leavin’, owing to my miserable luck and overall wetness. So I convince Peter that we should be going, and what happens? The motorcycle won’t start. Won’t even turn over. For five kilometers we pushed that heavy thing, me soaked through my trousers and Peter laughin’ at me every time he caught sight of me.”

Bill clears his throat and raises his eyebrows, then takes his seat.

“I miss ol’ Peter,” Bill says to Megan, “I’ll drop by his place if I can manage it.”

KJ catches what he says and looks at him. Bill sees her and winks.

“Bill, dear,” Megan says, “I have my own story I’d like to tell. It was years ago, back in the old country, when I knew a young man most dear to my heart. This man was going off to war, you see, that much I knew. He was courting me at the time and I came to realize that a man has to make a stand, and a woman shouldn’t get in his way when he does. Nor should she abandon him, because that kind of man deserves a good woman to be his partner, and he deserves to have her at his side when he comes home. It was an evening in May, a lovely May, and he was going to take me to his parents’ home for dinner. I had an idea what he wanted to ask me that evening and as you can imagine I was beside myself with joy and excitement.”

Megan, who is standing, wears a lovely red dress and her body language shows all the grace and inner strength that KJ has come to expect from her. She is the wife of a warrior; a loyal and powerful figure in the Donnelly Family.

“The time comes and goes,” Megan says, “and I’m beginning to worry about him. Did he have an accident? Did he have to go and fight? There was one thing I did not doubt. I never doubted he’d come if he could. Something was wrong and it chilled me to the bone. Two hours later, his old wreck bangs and sputters to the gate. When he left the front seat I could see he was filthy with grease and soil. I found out later that he’d worked four hours without break to get the car working, just enough so that he could come and propose to me. I also learned that the next day he’d join my brother John and the other men and go off to war. He could have postponed the moment and come by two weeks later, in his clean shirt and finery, but this was important enough to him to spend hours slav-

ing over a broken-down car the day before going and risking his life. A girl would have to be a damned fool to turn away a man like that.”

Bill touches his wife’s hand when she takes her seat. Rian holds Jesse’s hand a little tighter underneath the table. Many of those present wish for a little peace so that they might enjoy the bigger moments in life, though very few think that they’ll have it.

Johnny traces a couple of the pinstripes on KJ’s shirt, from her shoulder to her wrist.

“Tell me, angel,” Johnny says, “What was the best time you had before you came to us?”

KJ looks down and shrugs with her right shoulder.

“I don’t know,” she says, feeling her old shyness returning.

“Come on, tell me” he says, “How ‘bout just a fun time? Anything?”

KJ stifles a little laugh that’s born of embarrassment.

“Three years ago, my grandfather took us to Crater Lake,” she says, “We camped for two nights, which was really nice. I’d been taking singing lessons and it was so beautiful there that I felt, like, this urge to sing. When I sing I usually close my eyes, sometimes the entire song. It’s just how I do it. When I opened my eyes, I could see that people from other camps had come to listen. It felt really nice.”

KJ looks down for a moment.

“It was the last time we went on a camping trip together,” she says.

Johnny rubs her shoulder and she looks at him and smiles.

“But our camping trip was better,” KJ says.

Once the small conversations wind to an end and the last bit of tea is gone, Bill stands and makes an announcement. There’s no smile this time. What most of the Core suspected will soon occur.

“In two weeks,” Bill says, his big hands together as if in prayer, “a beautiful and beloved chapter in my family’s life will come to a close. My wife and I wish to invite you all,” he turns to David Fox, “And John of course, to the final meeting of the old Celtic Society.”

Bill puts his hand on Megan’s shoulder. She grips it with her own.

“Your beautiful faces have graced many a lovely day at our little home,” he says, “Many of you from the early days.” Bill looks at KJ. “And other beautiful faces who have come to us, and who I wish could have been with us from the beginning. My dearest friends, may God bless you. On behalf of my wife and family, I thank you all for the many memories that shall never die in this man’s heart and soul.”

Outside the Hall, Johnny stands beside KJ. His arm is around her waist. She looks up into his eyes and he kisses her on the head.

"I know why those people came to listen to you," KJ says, his mouth still near her hair, "They wanted to hear an angel sing."

James Ford, who was conversing with Garret, excuses himself and comes over to KJ and Johnny.

"I need to speak to each of you, separate," Jimmy says to them.

"Go see what's up," Johnny says to KJ, "Oh and give your shit to Anna, OK?"

"Kay," she says.

Johnny gently squeezes the back of KJ's neck and then walks over to Garret. Ford waits until he and KJ are far enough away that Johnny won't hear their words.

"Do you want to sing when we get together next week?" Jimmy says, "It's probably our last chance."

"Yeah," KJ says, "I would."

"I've got the song down," Ford says, "If you know it we're set."

"I do," KJ says, "Thank you Jimmy."

Jimmy Ford nods and then walks over to Johnny and Garret.

KJ finds Anna, who's talking to Mason and just finishing a good laugh. Gary is nearby and seems to have been the one who provoked the laughter. When Anna sees KJ approaching, she tells Mason to "hang on for a second."

"Hey, KJ," Anna says.

"Hey," KJ says to her red-headed sister-in-law, "Um, I got a new iPod and Kindle, and, God I don't feel right asking this..."

"Yeah," Anna says, "I'll load 'em for you."

KJ removes the electronics from her bag and hands them to Anna.

"Thank you, Anna," KJ says.

Gary puts his arm around KJ's shoulder.

"Don't ever feel bad about asking," Gary says and kisses her head with an audible *mmmwah*.

"You tell me or Anna if you need something," he says, "and we'll make sure you get it."

KJ nods and smiles. It feels like the first time she met all of them at the Hall.

"Come over here," Ford says to Garret and Johnny Bowen.

Ford leads them over to his Dodge Ram Charger. After opening the gate, he stands to the side. In the rear is a long object covered in cloth.

"You're gonna need that," Ford says.

Garret looks at the cloth. It's midnight blue, but in the night it looks black. He lifts the object from the Ram Charger.

"Put it in my Jeep," Johnny says, "We'll take the Jeep tonight."

As Garret carries the bundled mass to the Rubicon, Johnny thanks Ford.

"Whatever I can do, Johnny, you let me know," says Ford, who leans against the Dodge. "If you need anything, just give me a little warning. I'll see what I can do."

Johnny shakes his hand. Their eyes never deviate from each other. Johnny touches Ford's chest with his fist.

KJ and Johnny are among the first to depart the Donnelly Homestead, since the drive lasts over an hour and a half, and Johnny has business upon his return to Markleysburg.

"I like that shirt on you," Johnny says as soon as the road allows him to caress her.

KJ flashes a very brief smile.

"It's all coming to an end, isn't it?" she asks.

Johnny sighs.

"Yeah," he says, "Or it's just beginning."

"I wish I could have gotten to know everyone a little better," KJ says.

"Me too," Johnny says, "You'd have had fun. We used to do all kinds of shit. Then that started to become rarer, and I think we all started to get more serious. It's not bad, it had to happen. It's just bullshit that we're losing even the simple stuff. Everybody has to work overtime just to support a family, and women have to work, which is the fucking cycle: flood the labor pool and drive down wages. Who the fuck even has time to join societies and clubs? Fuck, it was hard just a few years ago, now with gas and all that shit going up."

"Only the ones who do this shit to us have the time and the money," KJ says.

She looks at Johnny. He's wondering when she'll ask.

"Johnny?" KJ asks, "Can you tell me what's in the back seat?"

"What's your guess?" Johnny asks.

"A gun," KJ says.

He says nothing more.

As KJ and Johnny arrive at the cottage, the song "Highest Star" from *Amorphis* is coming to a close. Johnny shuts off the motor and they exit the Rubicon.

"I can't stay," Johnny says.

KJ, who was unlocking the porch door, walks back to him. She accelerates with the last few steps. She leaps into his arms and wraps herself around his body and then she kisses him with intense passion. He holds

on to her back and rear, lest she slide to the earth. KJ's left hand caresses the back of his head while the right holds on for dear life to his back. Then she puts her forehead to him.

"Come home," KJ says, her eyes closed.

Johnny slides her legs down and she drops her feet to the ground. She looks at him with pain on her face.

"I love you, angel," Johnny says, "That's why I have to go."

"I love you too, Johnny," KJ says.

"Listen to me now, this is important," Johnny says, "Anna has the other key to the house. Call her if I'm not here by midnight tomorrow, OK?"

KJ nods.

"I can't be ready for this," KJ says, "It doesn't matter if I know you have to fight."

"I know," Johnny says, "If anything happens to me," he says as he runs his hand over the top of her head and down her back, where he pats her rear, "Remember, angel, you're the joy in my life. You're my woman and that's more than anything else a man could ever have."

He pats her again before lifting his hand up her back. Tears begin to roll down her face.

"I love you so much," KJ says, "I don't want to lose you."

She squeezes him hard and they stand in each other's embrace for as long as he can. Then, with a hand on her cheek and her scent in his nose, Johnny turns and leaves. Tonight, after a brief shower that does nothing to raise her spirits, KJ curls up and weeps.

John Ashley Bowen will not sleep at all tonight. He drives straight to Markleysburg, where he gasses the Rubicon and then proceeds to his and Garret's flat.

The night is clear over southwestern Pennsylvania. Garret waits outside in the darkness. He's dressed for the mission, having donned a hunter's outfit and a dark boonie hat which he currently holds in his hand. Garret looks toward the heavens as he awaits John Ashley Bowen's arrival. Cygnus spreads her bright wings in the inky sky. If Garret Fogarty is to lead his people to battle, he must know how he will react to taking a life. Every warrior must learn in time.

Johnny pulls in at 1AM. He changes to a dark hoodie and hunting pants. In back of the Rubicon is Garret's weapon. Behind the seat is Johnny's – a 12 gauge pump shotgun. If all goes well, he won't fire a shot. In five or ten minutes they depart. For the trip there, they listen to Garret's iPod over the speakers. Gerry Rafferty's "Baker Street" is the first song to play.

"If for whatever reason you can't go through with it," Johnny says, "We'll leave after nightfall. If you can go through with it, then we'll leave as soon as it's done. You'll be driving unless I say otherwise." If Garret loses it badly, Johnny will assume the wheel. "I'll go ahead to the road and give you the signal," Johnny says.

Johnny demonstrates the hand signal indicating that all is clear.

"Once you pull the trigger, you cannot go back," Johnny says, "Be sure and realize that."

Garret does not respond. It's foolish to do so; if he can fulfill the mission, that's proof enough of his understanding and dedication. If not, it would be false bravado to tell Johnny that he understands. Johnny's been there and he cannot go back.

Few of the farmhouses and little housing developments along US-40 are lit at this late hour. Those that are belong to farmers and night owls, the former eating an early breakfast before heading to their fields, and the latter staring at computer screens or books. An occasional vehicle passes by the Jeep Rubicon, many of them making the long trip east to offices and factories, their occupants eager to get the workday over with and usher in the weekend.

Near one of the most attractive and well-manicured farms, Johnny makes a right turn on to a rural highway where the terrain is a fascinating landscape of fields surrounded by islands of trees. In the pre-dawn darkness, oaks and maples form living walls amidst the grass and young corn. At around 5:30, Garret and Johnny come to the north-south road that will take them to the gas line.

Ten minutes before dawn, John Bowen and Garret Fogarty arrive at the field where they parked the Dodge Shadow during the reconnaissance mission. No cars are coming and there doesn't appear to be anyone in the vicinity. Johnny drives off the road and on to the grass of the cleared gas line cut. No one save a few watchful deer and the silent constellations above them witness their deviation from the highway. Johnny parks among some young trees and behind a thick honey locust. To be sure that they're alone, he does a quick sweep of the area while Garret waits inside the Jeep. They remove the necessary items and Johnny covers the Jeep with the tarpaulin. The first rays of dawn color the eastern sky as the two men begin the march toward the Ward trailer.

A gray squirrel scurries across the cut lane and into the trees that surround the old foundation. Garret holds his gun in his arms. It's still hidden in the cloth. The sun begins to rise to their backs, giving light to the pink heavens. Crows yell at each other in the trees but Johnny pays them

no mind. He and Garret press on. Neither man has spoken a word since leaving the Rubicon. Johnny feels no need; Garret has no desire.

When Garret returns to the spot he occupied during the previous visit, he can see the Ward trailer in the rays of morning's light. The LeSabre and the Cherokee are there. Absent is the delivery van, which is a troubling sign. There is no sign of life in or around the double wide. If Ward is gone, or doesn't show by nightfall, they'll scrub the mission. Johnny leads Garret to the location he's chosen for the shot. There, Garret unfurls the weapon. It is a .308 caliber bolt-action rifle with scope and bipod. At the end of the barrel is a long, tubular suppressor.

James Ford manufactured his first successful silencer four years previous. It was a single-use design. Three years later he crafted a replacement that was meant for multiple uses, and months after that, the crowning achievement of his experimentation, a fully-functional suppressor for the Remington .308 caliber rifle. Together with the subsonic ammunition, the suppressor will reduce the noise of a discharge from a sharp crack to a puff of air. If Ward appears and Garret squeezes the trigger, he'll likely never know what kills him.

At 7:30 AM it appears that a cancellation is possible. Garret proves his patience and waits in silence with minimum movement. At 11 he takes his first sip of water. There is still no sign of life at the Ward trailer.

A delivery truck arrives at Bill's garage in Meyersdale, Pennsylvania. In order to receive his package, Bill must sign in person as well as present valid identification. The ordering process was even more rigorous. Three months passed before the shipper mailed the requested items. Bill signs for the materials and then returns to his tiny office at the garage. He lays the box on a metal table, beside a small personal tool box and a couple of ledgers that Excel rendered obsolete before ink ever marked their pages. Bill steps over to the wooden shelves opposite the desk. On one of them is a box cutter knife.

The blazon on the package features a skull-and-crossbones symbol in the center. The contents consist of several small plastic bottles, each featuring the poison symbol and each plastic-wrapped. Most of them will go to the Waynesburg shop, where Bill and his crew engage in some metallurgy work as well as repairs. A few will remain here. The rest will go to James Ford. Next week, Bill will provide him with some of the potassium cyanide that just arrived. Ford already has a box of empty gelatin capsules.

Bill verifies the contents of the package. He removes the little bottles that are to remain at the shop as well as the ones that go to Ford. These



he wraps in a clean cloth and stores in an empty cardboard box from a stack to the left of the desk. He seals the box with tape, marks it with letters the meaning of which only he knows, and lays it on the bottom shelf of the desk. Then Bill leaves the office and locks the door from outside. He will not set eyes on any of the bottles until it's time to take them to Ford.

By noon, KJ has already eaten breakfast and completed her physical fitness and strength routine for the day. She cleans the cottage, washes the dishes and finds herself with a little down time for listening to music. She doesn't try to keep Johnny off her mind, just the possibility of never seeing him again.

Since she's lounging about and has no intention of going out into the sun and heavy air, KJ is wearing a tube bra and one of her thongs. She has a pair of bike shorts on the table beside the laptop in the event that Anna pays her a visit.

When KJ set out the shorts it must have been a premonition. At a little past one, the familiar Subaru Outback pulls in beside the blue Jeep. KJ barely hears the doorbell over the driving beat of 7 *Seconds*. She removes her ear buds and goes to the porch, taking her pistol with her as a precaution. Through the peep hole in the door she sees Anna, who's wearing a floppy white hat and sunglasses.

"One minute!" KJ says, using the power of her voice to come across very clear. She hurries back inside, sets her pistol by the bed and dons the bike shorts.

Anna enters and the two embrace. She, too, is wearing shorts, though hers are denim and her top is a short-sleeved green blouse. This one is up to her neck in front and back.

"Damn it's hot out," Anna says as she removes her shades and hat, "It's nice in here though."

"Have a seat," KJ says, "You want a drink?"

"Yeah, sure," Anna says.

She sets her bag beside KJ's bed and takes a seat at the table. While KJ's getting two bottles of Saratoga water, Anna puts KJ's Kindle and iPod Touch on the table. She glances around the living room. She sees KJ's pistol beside the bed. She sees dog tags on a chain, lying on the left side of the bed. She sees the .30-06 rifle on the cabinet.

When KJ enters she notices the iPod and Kindle.

"Thank you, Anna," KJ says.

Anna smiles; she's about to ask about the dog tags when KJ turns and walks back to the kitchen. Anna can see most of KJ's wings. The qual-

ity of the work is magnificent. KJ returns momentarily with a plate of strawberry cookies.

"Johnny brought these with all the other shit he brings for me," KJ says. She smiles when she thinks of how he takes care of her. "I tried one this morning with coffee. They're really good."

Anna tries one of the pink bear-shaped delights and finds that she agrees with KJ.

"You know, I always trusted Johnny would be a fighter," Anna says, "We've been really close for three years now. I know he loves us and that he would fight for us." Anna, who looked away a moment to relive the past, looks right back into KJ's blue eyes. "But I've never seen him love someone like he loves you. He fucking adores you. He can't say it, which is our fault, you know? We made guys feel weak when they say shit like that. But since I realized what it means when a good, strong man says it, I feel terrible knowing other white women have bought the Jew's lies about sleeping around and treating good men like shit. I don't want a weak man who won't fight. But why should a real man want a woman who won't appreciate him? Why should he want a woman who doesn't adore him, or let herself adore him?"

"God, how I adore him," KJ says. She looks down for a second and smiles. "I do. I fucking adore him. You're, like, so fucking right about all that shit. Oh, by the way, I wore that swimsuit the other day."

"Did he like it?" Anna asks and KJ nods. "He was in control, wasn't he?" Anna asks.

"Yeah," KJ says, "He was. He always is."

"I wouldn't have ordered a suit like that if I didn't think he was," Anna says, "He wouldn't be Johnny though, would he? We're so lucky. I don't know if there are two other girls who will admit that, but we are."

Anna looks down and smiles. It's a sad smile.

"Even if we lose them," Anna says. She looks at KJ again. "Are those Johnny's tags on the bed?" she asks.

"Yeah," KJ says, "They were buried under some tools. I found them yesterday while I was checking out all the shit he bought for me."

KJ sighs. When Johnny described a few of the tools and other items that he'd stored at the cottage, he mentioned that some of his old army paraphernalia might remain among the tools, and that once he had time he'd organize the boxes and throw away the "junk." As soon as he left, KJ started looking into the boxes for any mementoes of his army days, and in the first toolbox she found Johnny's dog tags.

"I don't want to lose him, Anna," KJ says.

"I know, KJ, I know," Anna says, "But they might have to go, you know? That's the thing about loving a man who loves you back. They do this shit to protect us and our children. No matter how many times I tell myself that he's fighting for me, I still feel the same. I don't want Garret to leave."

KJ looks in Anna's direction, but before looking at her face she stares at something that's too far away to see.

"I'll still help Johnny," KJ says, "even if I can't be with him. I might not be able to stop someone from hurting him, but I'll make them fucking pay for it if they do." She exhales sharply and has a look of pain on her face. Then she runs her open hand from her forehead up over her hair. "It's hard," she says, "It's so fucking hard."

"It is hard," Anna says, "There's so much I'm going to lose, no matter what I do. I can't do nothing, KJ, you know? We can't just let this keep happening. That's what everyone does, just let it keep getting worse. We can't be like that."

"No, we can't," KJ says, "Our men are going to fight the enemies of our children, and we're not just going to watch them die."

KJ is so very beautiful, standing in the refuge created by the man who loves her. So is her sister-in-race, who has also crossed the threshold into womanhood. Both have become visual and spiritual examples of the grace and uniqueness of their race.

"They'll come for us when we resist," KJ says, "They want a world without white men and white women who love their white brothers and sisters." She points to her chest with both hands open. "We're the death of those dreams. I know Johnny might have to leave so that he can fight those motherfuckers but I'm not giving up and I'm not giving in. I'm stronger than them and they'll pay for ripping him from my arms. I'm not one of the cowards and I'm not a race traitor or a complacent little ewe. I'm a fucking wolf, and my mate and I are not going to leave this life without a fight. I love my white race because I am fucking white! I'm not just a woman, I'm both! And none of them, not the race traitors or the fucking Jews and those fucking cowards who go along with this insane fucking anti-white cult, none of them can have me! Fuck their money and fuck their love, I'm not their fucking slave!"

KJ breathes hard for a moment.

"I'm not afraid of them," KJ says, "We're their worst nightmare, and I don't fear them. I fear something else, and it's not anything they could say or do. I fear that my Johnny might need a shooter and I won't be there for him. That's what I fear, not those motherfuckers."

Anna rises and takes KJ's hand, and then the two embrace. KJ closes her eyes and squeezes Anna.

"I pray to God that you'll be with him," Anna says. "Somehow, some way, we won't let our men stand alone."

The heat is unbearable, even in the shade of the trees. Garret lies still among the thick forest greenery, awaiting prey that may not come. A stable fly has caught his scent and torments him without mercy. In the end Garret allows it to feed on his left arm, close to his wrist, and the little devil departs after its blood meal.

It's four o'clock and Garret has seen no sign of James Ward or John Ashley Bowen for that matter. He thinks of how nice it would be to watch Anna while she dives off the springboard. She'd be in the mermaid suit, of course, and would undulate through the water before rising to the surface like a silver goddess.

Through the scope Garret sees a milk snake slither out of the dead Jeep Cherokee.

Johnny Bowen is first to notice movement at the Ward place. He sees a very slight perturbation of the outer door, indicating that the inside screen door is moving or that someone has pressed against the outer door. At 4:30PM, the outer door of Ward's porch comes open. It stays that way for a minute or so – long enough to seem like an eternity to Garret Fogarty. And then it opens, revealing James Ward in his long pajama pants and tank top shirt. An unlit cigarette is between his lips and a magazine is under his arm. Garret hears the door creak as it shuts. In the scope, Ward's head looms large. Ward takes his seat on the porch. Garret watches him and then looks both ways down the road. No vehicles or pedestrians are within his line of sight. The air is oppressive and the sickly sweet smell of honeysuckle overpowers the softer smells of grass and wet bark.

No amount of introspection, self-encouragement, or justification could prepare Garret for this moment. He never wanted to do this. Even in his "fight club" days he never intended to kill a human being. True, Ward is vile; true, he's a rapist, a black predator who raped a white woman and possibly destroyed that woman's life. He deserves worse than a .308 bullet. That fact does not make Garret want to fire. There is nothing that would make him want to do this. He'd like to ask Anna to be his wife. He wants to build a house near the Berkshires or in the Laurel Highlands, and live there the rest of his days with his redheaded wife and children.

When Garret looks into the scope he does not think of the hills or his life or even Anna Murphy. There are the mil dots and the target. He

breathes. His motions are fluid as he prepares to take the shot, just as he's learned for years on his own and with Johnny Bowen and Bill Donnelly.

James Ward turns his head to the left as a sound not unlike a gentle tap of cymbals emanates from the tree line. In that instant, a .308 caliber bullet enters Ward's brain via his left eye. He rises from his seat and falls to the porch. A spasm sends the lawn chair sliding backward. Ward's body jerks from a massive seizure. Then he is still. Blood begins to flow on to the wooden planks of the floor.

John Bowen watches as Ward writhes. It's an ugly kill. Johnny hoped that Ward would go easy, for Garret's sake alone, but he does not. Now that his body is broken and bleeding, Johnny surveys the road and the lawn to the left of Ward's place. The area is still devoid of moving vehicles. It's time to move. He looks through the binoculars at Ward. He sees him twitch. Then he hears the cymbal-sound again, and sees a second bullet strike Ward through the top of his head. Johnny hangs the binoculars around his neck and pushes through the vegetation toward Garret.

Garret begins creeping away from the road and the bloody scene on the porch. He pockets the spent shells and wraps the rifle in cloth before dashing across the empty road. Johnny finds him just behind the wood line left of the gas cut. He slips through the foliage close enough to Garret to surprise him.

"Did you leave any shells?" Johnny asks Garret, who shakes his head.

The two men do not run, but move at a brisk pace back to the Rubicon. It is bright and sunny and the air is oppressive. Sweat begins to roll down Garret's face.

"Crouch down behind the Jeep," Johnny says when they arrive. "Don't move until I'm back."

Johnny sets off to do a final sweep. In fifteen agonizing minutes, Johnny returns. He and Garret remove the tarpaulin from the Jeep and Garret assumes the wheel. The Rubicon is torrid inside. Johnny, who forges ahead to check the road, holds up his palm. Someone is coming. Garret feels the adrenaline rise in his body. He feels the beating of his heart. Johnny crouches, the shotgun secure in his grasp. Garret prepares to rush forward should Johnny need a speedy extraction.

A chemical truck flies down the road and past the gas line cut. Johnny gives the all-clear signal. Garret draws near and Johnny wastes no time entering the Rubicon. Johnny throws his hat in back, on top of Garret's shrouded gun, and sits the shotgun between his legs with the

barrel angled toward the window. Once they reach the entrance to Route 416, just before the woodland gives way to farms and fields, Johnny slides the shotgun to the back seat. He's still carrying his pistol inside his outer shirt.

"Get off at the Fairview exit," Johnny says, "It'll be about a half hour or so. I'll gas the Jeep and we'll get a drink out of the cooler."

Johnny takes his iPod from the glove box and connects it to the Jeep's sound system. "End the Era" from *Sick of it All* is the first song to play.

Anna finishes showing KJ her photo stream on the Flickr website. There are a few photos of the monster non-typical stag, including one that Gary took with a smiling Anna kneeling beside the beast. The last few pictures show Anna diving. There is a stunning picture of her on the springboard as she concentrates on her next dive. She looks simply gorgeous in the silver mermaid suit.

KJ notices Anna's account name is "Firelily". She also notices that a user cannot view the account without an invitation.

"Can you stay for supper?" KJ asks Anna after she logs out of the site.

"Yeah," Anna says, "I'll help out. Let's decide what we want to make, and I can pick up the stuff we need in Rowlesburg."

"No, I have shit here that we can use," KJ says.

"I know, KJ," Anna says, "Johnny bought that stuff for you."

Anna knows that Johnny Bowen would insist that they use the food that he purchased. She knows that KJ will let her buy the ingredients if she tells her that Johnny bought it for her. The ploy works, in a fashion.

"I know he wouldn't mind," KJ says, "In fact, he'd say you're full of shit. But since you're trying so hard to guilt me, go ahead and buy some food. How about we make pork with Normandy sauce? Do you mind having that?"

"Hell no!" Anna says, "I know you're good with that French stuff. I'll get some greens, too, and we can have a salad."

"Cool," KJ says, "Johnny left some cherry wheat ale, so we can get all shit-faced after we eat."

KJ's face shows no emotion when she says the words.

Anna raises her eyebrows and KJ laughs.

"I'm just fuckin' with you," KJ says, "We'll have one each."

Garret Fogarty and John Ashley Bowen quench their thirst for water and the Jeep's need for fuel. At around 7 PM they approach Washington, Pennsylvania. The city rises from fields and patchy woodland, its down-

town buildings a contrast of old and new. In the waning light of the afternoon, the industrial sites near the interstate show the dust and rust of their long-abandoned state.

Thus far, neither Garret nor Johnny has spoken of the mission. It remains to Johnny Bowen to say the only related words during the remainder of the trip.

"Garret," Johnny says, "They'll eventually figure out who pulled the trigger. They have all our DNA on record and they'll find a hair or a few skin cells. I imagine they know I killed Strader and they're building a case. There is no going back now. To me there never was any going back, not when they went after us for being white. But that shit isn't important now. Unlike all the traitors and fucking cowards, you stood up today. You stood up."

*Pitbull Daycare* plays over the sound system. Neither man interrupts the music.

The hour approaches 11PM and KJ has been alone since nightfall. She's removed her bike shorts but otherwise has not changes her clothes. While listening to her iPod Touch she glances at the clock. In one hour and five minutes, as per Johnny's instructions, she'll call Anna. In one hour and five minutes, if she receives no sign from her Johnny, it means that he's in some kind of trouble, perhaps serious. KJ closes her eyes. In her left hand she holds the dog tags.

"If they hurt you," KJ whispers, "I swear to God I'll make them pay for it."

A little tear escapes down her beautiful, flawless white face.

The doorbell rings. KJ removes her ear buds and runs to the porch. She keeps enough presence of mind to look through the peep hole. It's Johnny, standing in the dark, waiting for his angel. The door flies open and she looks at him. Hurt, love, affection and longing are on her face and in her soul. He kisses her and guides her inside the cottage. There, the kiss becomes long and passionate. Since she's wearing a thong, all of her feathers save those under the thin strip of the tube bra or beneath her great mane of hair are otherwise unconcealed. Without turning her around or ending their embrace, he traces her feathers with his finger, one after the other.

It takes some effort for Johnny to convince her not to make him supper. As it is, he must relent when she hurries off and makes him a plate of cheese and vegetables. After the sweet little meal, he takes a seat by the living room table and KJ hops on his lap. He's clean, having changed and washed as fast as humanly possible before leaving Markleysburg, and his

t-shirt is thin and snug. KJ nuzzles him and wraps her arms around him. Johnny feels her warmth against his body.

"Is it so bad if you just stay here and hold me," KJ says, "You don't even have to go to sleep, or we could drive somewhere and wait until 8 or 9 in the morning, or whenever you want."

Her voice is just above a whisper.

"I'll stay as long as I can, angel," Johnny says.

"I love you," KJ says, "If they come for you, my wonderful, beautiful man, don't just leave me. Please take me with you."

Johnny kisses her head and she closes her eyes.

After the hour of four, John Ashley Bowen carries a sleeping KJ Campbell to her bed. He retreats before waking her, and locks both doors as quietly as he can. The sky is cloudy and a few drops of rain splash against leaf and ground. Johnny glances at the sky and at the dark figures of the trees, silhouetted against the nocturnal horizon. When he starts the Jeep he grimaces, knowing it will probably wake his sleeping angel.

Before the outside door locks, KJ opens her eyes. She listens for the Jeep to start and when it does, she listens to its departure. She closes her eyes again and returns to sleep.

On the Sixth, a Saturday morning, Bill is walking to the Hall when he sees David Fox's white Ram 1500 pickup coming down Old Braddock Road. He waits for David to pull up and stop.

"Bill," David says from the cab, "I'm a little early. I can wait if you're busy."

"No, not at all," Bill says.

David insists on driving him the short distance to the Hall. It's a polite gesture. Outside, clouds have rolled in and the air is pleasant. Sometime during the night a shower passed through and drove temperatures downward.

David and Bill exit the Dodge and Bill leads them inside the Hall. He offers David a beer or a soda, and David declines. He's dressed in his fireman's dress uniform. In two hours he'll need to be at the station.

Bill, who is also dressed for work, will leave for his Waynesburg shop the instant the two men finish their discussion. He pulls a chair out from the little entrance room table and asks David to sit.

"Bill," David says, "I don't think John's coming back. I think he's worried about these things coming back to haunt him. He'd like a family, and you know what can happen to a white man if he's branded a racist."

"I see," Bill says, "I can certainly understand his hesitation in this day and age."



"He's not giving up the struggle," David says, "He's very clear on that."

"I have no reason to doubt him," Bill says.

"I know he's been arguing the Mantra on God knows how many web-sites," David says, "Hell, he even stays up all night sometimes."

"Good," Bill says, "Please, let him know that we're in his debt."

Fox sighs and looks at Bill. In the background is the door to the little room where John Bowen taught the Fox Brothers a thing or two about self defense.

"I'm sorry, Bill," David says.

"Listen, David," Bill says, "There are many ways to fight our genocide. The path John's chosen is not any less important. It is vital and the hard work and risk is not to be taken lightly. Others will choose as they see fit. Keep in mind, if a man or woman fights our genocide he or she is to be respected and honored, and never betrayed or disparaged. We can abhor acts but we must never abhor those who fight for our race's survival, whether they fight with the keyboard or the gun."

"I know my brother and I know the work he's doing," David says, "I also respect you, Bill, and it means a lot that you see things that way."

"If he keeps fighting them with the Mantra," Bill says, "No man has a right to call him, or any of them a coward. None of those dear to me are cowards."

David nods.

"There's more, isn't there, David?" Bill asks, "What are your thoughts?"

"I'd be a liar if I said I hadn't thought of fighting this sick system," David says, "I'd wager we'd both be liars." Bill nods. "There's a lot to lose. But when do we quit worrying about what we might lose, and think about what we're already losing? If, God willing, I ever have grandchildren, I don't want to have to tell them that their grandfather was too worried about what he might lose to lift a damn finger, and his fear kept him from fighting the terror that they'll have to face. For some time now I've thought about this. Every day, in fact."

Fox's face looks younger minus the moustache. His eyes make him look older.

"That's a tribulation we all face in these difficult times," Bill says. "I certainly sympathize, David, but in the end you'll be the one to choose. However you choose, though, I can promise you, you won't be alone."

"Thank you, Bill," David says.

He rises from the chair.

"Tell your brother I hope to see him at the final meeting," Bill says.

David Fox nods and shakes Bill's hand.

"It's been an honor, Bill," David says, "Thank you for having us."

Bill shakes his hand and they embrace. David Fox leaves the Donnelly Homestead, relieved and delighted that Bill harbors no ill will against his brother, though the joy cannot erase his vexation. The question of how to proceed remains in his mind.

Johnny Bowen arrives in Amblersburg at 10 AM. After a quick breakfast, he and KJ shall depart in the blue Jeep for Fox Chapel and the Fogarty's pool.

"Bring that high-neck suit," Johnny tells her, "We gotta get serious today."

He does like the suit, though she'd look magnificent in any swimsuit. KJ guesses his motive and her conclusion is correct: if their time together is limited, he wants to teach her enough so that she'll be in less danger of drowning before he leaves.

Under cloudy skies and the roof of the semi-enclosed pool, KJ practices swimming as Johnny watches and guides her. In spite of his admonition, they still find time for intimacy and tomfoolery. At one point, he seizes her and takes her under, so that they might kiss in the muted peace of the water.

After a successful day of practice, KJ sits on Johnny's lap near the edge of the pool. She kisses his wet hair and then his chest, and he lifts her chin so that he might look into her eyes.

"If the choice was mine I'd have you stay with me," Johnny says, "Is it wrong to want that? Shouldn't I want you to go far away and be safe?"

"There's nothing wrong with it," KJ says, "We both face the same evil that our children will face. It'll be so much fucking worse if we don't do anything. I love you, Johnny. We'll need each other to fight this war. It's not like a normal war. They want us to die, all of us, both of us. They want to end the little life that would grow inside of me. How could I run away and turn my back on the two of you?"

Johnny looks into her eyes. There is tremendous dedication there, dedication to him and to the cause that she believes in with all her heart and soul. There is also feral passion. Johnny strokes her back with his hand wide open. KJ nuzzles him again and looks into his eyes.

"They'll come after me," Johnny says, "I couldn't go back if I wanted to."

"They're already coming after me," KJ says, "Actually, they were before I was born. All their lies are meant to turn a girl like me into a traitor or some burned-out piece of shit, and kill my heart so I can't love any-

more. I didn't let them have me then and I won't now." KJ stops for a moment and stares deep into his soul. "Only one man will ever have me."

"I hear that from you," Johnny says as he shakes his head and gets a weary little smile. The green flame in his eyes is not so tame. It roars with passion similar to hers. "There's nothing anyone else could do or say that would drive me more to fight this goddamned war," he says, "Nothing more than those words that you just said. Whether I can be with you or not, I'll feel that way forever."

He looks down and caresses her belly. KJ touches his hand as he does and she smiles.

"Everything they do and tell you as a white woman is meant to keep your belly from growing," Johnny says, "Until it's too late. Until you can't love anymore, and you either have one child who you raise in the same goddamned system that abused and lied to you, or you have pets, who can never give you what your own child can give you. So many young white girls fall for that fucking shit. They've fucked us so hard, angel. They've fucked us so fucking hard."

KJ kisses his head and nuzzles his hair. Then her lips get close to his ear.

"Let's make them pay," KJ whispers.

It's like the soft hush of a wind that commands all the power of the sky. It's the voice of the last white angel, the most beautiful to ever grace the heavens, born in darkness and rising from the depths with the blinding white flame of war.

When Johnny and KJ arrive at the Hall, the cloudy skies begin to break, though the temperature remains in the low 70's. After asking Johnny to dry her hair with a towel – a chore that gave him great joy, as she predicted it would – KJ changes into jeans and a red *Threat Signal* t-shirt. She also wears gloves and boots. They'll spend time at the range and then head for Amblersburg.

Bill drops by while KJ's busy shooting her .45 pistol. Johnny's noticed that she brings it every time they travel, and it pleases him. It also pleases him to see her performance at the range. She has become deadly with the pistol, and he has himself to thank for it. Bill watches until she pauses to reload, and then he invites them to supper.

"I just have this," KJ says, pointing to her wardrobe with both hands open.

"KJ, sweetheart," Bill says, "Please come as you are."

Supper is delicious, as it usually is when prepared by Megan Donnelly. On this occasion she benefitted from a helper: none other than

her husband Bill. Today the Donnelly couple dines with Johnny and KJ. KJ is relieved that Megan is wearing a simple floral summer dress. She does not know that Bill requested that his wife wear something less elegant, lest their lovely guest feel a little self-conscious.

During the start of the meal, both Megan and Bill watch as KJ serves Johnny first when the plates of food reach her. They keep in mind her age and where she was born. They don't need to remind themselves that she is not a slave to the suicidal anti-white religion that grips America, nor is she a slave to an ideology that would have her deny her femininity and the bond that should exist between white men and white women.

"Thank you, angel," Johnny says and she smiles.

Bill feels the urge to ask KJ why, after all she's been through, she would choose to live the brutal and often-tragic life of a rebel fighter. She has an idea of what's coming, and what all white children will face. Bill does not need to ask.

"I think the salad is among the best you've made," Bill says to Megan.

The rich vegetable and herb salad, colored with nasturtium and other edible flowers, is indeed outstanding.

After the meal, Megan serves tea and biscuits. Johnny's arm finds its place around KJ.

"How's Sinead?" KJ asks.

"Fine, thank you," Megan says, "She asked about everyone last time I spoke to her."

She wants to tell them that Sinead is engaged. Since it's not her right to decide if KJ and Johnny can spend their lives together, Megan holds her tongue, lest she add to the agony that will surely follow should the war tear them apart. Sinead can have a life with the man she loves; KJ's future is uncertain.

Megan looks at her husband.

"When's Michael going to visit?" Megan asks, "did he say?"

Bill shakes his head.

"We'll know closer to the time," Bill says.

"Where would you like to visit, KJ?" Megan says.

"I'd like to visit France again," she says, "I speak French, and so does Johnny."

KJ looks at him and smiles.

"A little," Johnny says.

KJ's smile fades. It's not the usual reason; her smiles always seem to disappear in seconds. This one doesn't fade, it's forced away.

"It's the same in France as it is here," KJ says, "We're outcasts in every one of our nations."

There is a momentary look of sadness on her face. Johnny rubs her back, looking for words of comfort. She speaks first.

"But I never felt that way here in this little place" KJ says, "Thank you, Bill, Megan, we never were outcasts while we were here."

"No, we weren't," Johnny says as he rubs her back.

"You brought us a lot of joy, the two of you," Bill says, "As did the others. My heart is heavy because our time together is coming to an end, though we all know that it must end."

"You and Johnny saved my life," KJ says, "I'm not trying to be dramatic, honest-to-God it's true. You've done so much for me, so much that I could never repay. I know that's not why you did what you did, and I know I wouldn't have to, like, repay you for saving me, but it's important that you know. You didn't have to help me, but you did, you saved me. I could be who I am while I was here without someone punishing or abusing me for having my own worldview. You cared about me, and you helped me escape my despair."

KJ looks at Johnny.

"And you," KJ says, "John Bowen."

Beneath the table she takes his hand, and lifts it up so that all can see her grip him tightly with her gloved hand.

"If my time with you has to end," KJ says, "I'm not going to say goodbye, because you mean so fucking much to me, and you're always going to live in my heart."

She doesn't mind her words. The feeling is too powerful for reserved expressions.

KJ looks again at Bill and Megan.

"Thank you so much, both of you," KJ says, "I never would have known real joy if not for you. It's not the euphoria of lies or praise or getting high off of weed or shit like that. I never would have known the real thing. I've learned so much, and had experiences that far surpass anything I've had before. I've been to huge gatherings and discussions involving hundreds if not thousands of people, and at every one of them some angry anti-white piece of shit lectured us about the evils of our race or our white brothers. If you agreed with everything they said, they called you a 'rebel.' They told me I was special, because they thought I was like all the others who love themselves but hate their race. Everything was a lie. As long as I was Kaylee, the pretty face who rebelled against acceptable targets, like my own race..." She looks up with pain on her face. "As long as

I channeled my frustration and rage at the approved targets, I was the perfect daughter, the perfect girl. But I began to see the lies, and I rebelled against those who had the real power, and everything changed in an instant. They hated me, just like they hate other whites. I'd suddenly become white like you and Johnny. We're the kind of white people that they hate. We're the ones they want to die."

KJ looks at Bill and Megan.

"Mr. and Mrs. Donnelly," KJ says, "You gave me a place where my life wasn't a lie. I didn't have to deny who I am or who I love. This place was solace and you gave that to me."

KJ looks at Johnny.

"Now I know that you exist," KJ says, "and I'll never be alone again, even if this war takes me far away from you."

"Thank you for those words, KJ," says Bill, who keeps the emotion out of his voice, though the softness of his reply proves that it is not far behind his stoic façade. "Those words are among the kindest I've ever heard. You gave us hope, and you gave so much hope to your Johnny. He was right to believe in you, which he did from the start."

KJ looks at Johnny and squeezes his hand again, this time under the table.

"I knew you were out there, somewhere," Johnny says, "They can't deceive or corrupt every white woman. I knew there was an angel, somewhere. And right here she is. She even has the wings to prove it."

After the foursome finish their tea, KJ and Johnny rise to depart. KJ takes a deep breath and stretches. Bill sees the pistol at her side. Today he watches them leave, the blue Jeep making the turn halfway down Old Braddock Road and disappearing from his view. The wind moans though the siding, like a sorrowful banshee's wail. Later, Bill will call Garret. He'll have a shot of whiskey before turning in for the night.

Since Sunday is sunny and the temperature is rising once more, KJ asks Johnny if they can spend the daylight hours at the Hall and then continue her swimming lessons, the opposite of the original plan. He agrees. Bill and Megan are gone for the day, so Johnny halts their target practice at three in the afternoon so that he can rush off and buy a simple rotisserie chicken with vegetables from a small place outside of town. Upon returning, he and KJ eat a joyous little meal in the entrance room. The meal ends with KJ laying her head on his lap, and Johnny feeding her the grapes he bought on the way back.

At 7PM the sun is waning, thought it's hot enough for any physical activity to result in perspiration. That is exactly what KJ and Johnny do,

since he chases his angel around the pool after she reaches down and flings water at him. Even in her boots she is fleet of foot, and because of Johnny's own teachings and the books he's given her, she slips out of every attempt he makes to trap her. All of a sudden she stops and puts her hands on her hips.

"Why the fuck am I running?" KJ says.

"Because you're nuts," Johnny says and laughs.

Johnny half-expects her to jump in, but instead she walks up to him and they kiss.

KJ changes into her blue bikini, which invites Johnny to kiss her feathers, at least the many visible ones. They do get in a good amount of practice, and although she's not gifted at swimming as she is at singing and shooting, KJ is making excellent progress. At least now she won't have to walk out of the Monongahela.

With practice over, the two lovers play for a while in the water, and then she climbs on his lap as he sits near the pool. They do not discuss the future. They kiss and caress, and each is content to feel the other's body so close to his and her own.

KJ is chatty and animated on the return trip. Johnny encourages her mood. They talk about the latest *Chironex* efforts and a new album from *Evergreen Terrace* that Anna gave to KJ on her iPod. They talk about the morrow, and spending most of the day at Coalsack.

"Hey," Johnny says, "I was thinking, you wanna go on a little hike this Friday? Weather Underground says it's going to be KJ weather."

"I'd love to!" KJ says, "I'll make a basket and we can build a fire. It'll be so cool." She sighs in pleasure. "I'm sure it'll be really nice," KJ says.

Johnny parks the Rubicon beside the blue Jeep. He shuts off the motor and exits with KJ, but he does not walk up to the cottage. He kisses her goodnight and watches her back away toward the porch. As he drives away, he can see her silhouette through the open porch door.

Anna brushes her long red hair and ties the copious strands into a ponytail. She looks into the mirror. Her face is stunning to behold; it's the type of face that a man will recall when asked about the beautiful women he's seen. If not for KJ, and the way her beauty grows ever more powerful with each sighting, Anna would be the most beautiful young woman Johnny or the others have ever seen. Jesse is her other competitor in this regard, though she cannot equal Anna. Like KJ, Anna's face is unique. Extraordinary features can often diminish beauty, but in some instances they can be a powerful magnifier. In the cases of Anna and KJ, the exceptional features further increase their comeliness. Jesse's nose is her

face's one truly unique feature. Her other facial and corporeal features, though gorgeous to be true, are typical of the upper levels of feminine beauty. KJ and Anna are not ordinary in this regard. The little curving hump in the middle of Anna's nose, as well as her well-defined chin cleft, make her beauty unforgettable and unmistakable. Then, of course, there's the thick red hair, the palest of pale white skin, and her flawless blue eyes.

The digital clock in the bathroom shows 5:30 AM. Lemont Furnace is quiet, its birds awaiting the first rays of light to begin their singing and chattering and fighting over territory. Anna will be leaving just as the first rays break the horizon at around six o'clock. She puts on her usual Coalsack attire: camouflaged pants, a dark gray t-shirt and a camouflaged hoodie. She slides on her socks and grabs the backpack that she laid by the bathroom door. In the kitchen she prepares breakfast for one. She sees the note Gary wrote before departing for work a half hour ago. He tells her not to worry about the grocery shopping; he'll take care of it after work. She'd rather he asked her to do it. She adds a few words to the note and then puts on her boots.

Though it is dark outside at ten till six, Anna's instincts tell her that dawn is about to break. Before passing through the kitchen door, she glances outside and then pulls the hoodie over her holster. Anna locks the door. She stands facing it for a minute or two, looking down. She remembers the day school let out early, and standing outside the locked door in the cold and snow. Her father rushed home, though it cost him half a day's pay and his perfect attendance bonus. She remembered him pulling in and running up to the door. She was twelve years old.

On the way to Coalsack, Anna stops at a convenience store near Saltwell, West Virginia for a cup of coffee. She drinks the potent, aromatic liquid during her drive on I-79 between the thick green hills and ridges of Lewis County. North of Duck, she sees the results of a severe accident that must have happened an hour or so previous. For a split second she contemplates stopping. Her CPR card is up-to-date, as is her first-aid training; one of the advantages of going to the aquatic center is the availability of trained personnel who didn't mind teaching an inquisitive young girl. When she sees the ambulances near the destroyed SUVs, she continues her trek. Anna glances through the windshield and toward the heavens and thanks God that neither vehicle was a blue Jeep or a green Rubicon.

The temptation to stop on the entrance road to Coalsack is strong. It's still crisp outside, and the skies are cloudy. Flowers and greenery crowds the margins of the road and the forest beckons to the adventurous



redhead. The humidity is not excessive, and most of all she'd like to stroll through the forests and breathe the clean air. She has a responsibility to maintain her marksmanship skills and to increase them. Anna passes by the poke, the wingstem and the Joe-Pye weed without pausing.

When Anna climbs out of her Subaru to open the gate, she hears a motor shut off in what must be the open area at Coalsack. If she had to guess, it'd be Johnny's Rubicon. Once through the gate she sees that her guess is correct. KJ, who is removing her rifle from the back of the Rubicon, waves to Anna, as does Johnny when he rises from the front seat.

John Boyle's dressed casually again. This time he's wearing a white t-shirt and green shorts. He has sandals on his feet and a cup of tea in his hand. Neither young lady lets his appearance lull them into thinking that he'll be anything but severe. In fact, he is ruthless today. He makes sure that with every shot Anna and KJ are using the proper part of their finger. In KJ's case he chastises her for wearing elbow-length gloves, but cannot criticize the results.

"You're touched in the fucking head," Boyle says and moves on to other concerns.

The ladies spend the entire day at the range, minus a water and lunch break. Boyle watches every shot and every result. He allows no deviation from proper technique to go uncorrected. He analyzes every shot that is not exactly where it should be. The young warriors do not succumb to the pressure, though neither Anna nor KJ is very talkative when the session ends eight hours later.

John Bowen stays in the forest, patrolling and protecting his lover and his sister-in-law. He leaves the training to the greatest sniper he's ever known. When it's time to leave, he appears and joins the young women at the water cistern, where they wash their hands and faces.

"Tough one, huh?" Johnny asks KJ as his arms lay on her shoulders.

She nods.

"It won't get any easier," Johnny says, "Let's get you home, sweetheart."

After they say goodbye to Anna, KJ and Johnny depart. Anna remains for a little while.

"Go home and rest," Boyle says, "We have a hell of a day planned for tomorrow."

Anna eats the supper she prepared and brought in the Subaru in the hopes she'd be staying late. Two days ago she followed one of the many recipes for pemmican, and the results were good, as far as pemmican

goes. It's survival food, though it is nourishing. She finishes her makeshift supper in fifteen minutes and tops it off with a bottle of water. Anna closes the door to the car but does not go to the driver's side. Instead, she walks over to the cabin.

"I want you to correct me when I fire the fifty," Anna says to Boyle in the Irish.

Boyle rises from his seat on the porch. He disappears into the cabin, emerging with the Barrett and a case of ammunition.

"Let's go," Boyle says.

On Tuesday, Anna, KJ and Johnny Bowen return to the Coalsack Site. Again, Boyle pays attention to every detail and is rapid in calling attention to even the slightest imperfection. Johnny disappears as usual and sweeps the premises, from the entrance road to the lonely county road that lies far beyond the Coalsack property. He's not as worried about losing track of the ladies as he normally would be, and ranges far and wide in his patrol. They'll be at the range the entire day.

Beyond the broad forested knob and the small area around the cabin and the garage, the terrain around Coalsack is close and forbidding. Steep hillsides plunge into dark gullies. Streams that trickle can become perilous torrents during periods of heavy rain. The canopy shields the ground from most sunlight and the lay of the land would make chance encounters far too close and dangerous. Johnny Bowen is at home in this element. He does not rely solely upon sight. His ears tune in to each sound, especially those that might be of significance. Angry outbursts from the forest's avian tenants could indicate a threat, though silence speaks to him as well as any commotion.

On the return trip, Johnny Bowen stops beside one of the myriad little brooks. He crouches and eats a handful of dried fruit from a bag in his shirt pocket. It's the first food he's eaten since breakfast. The water of the stream is clear and tempting, but Johnny drinks from his canteen. He sees a few Bradley mushrooms growing on the slope opposite the stream but does not have an adequate container for transporting them back to camp. He'll make sure and tell Boyle where he might find the delectable treats. Johnny looks up toward the tops of the high poplars and oaks that surround him and the rest of Coalsack. The patrol has been a nice distraction from the tempest in his mind, for even John Ashley Bowen, former member of the 10th Mountain Division and a combat veteran, feels apprehension over the changes that are coming, especially those that he does not welcome. Today he concentrates on the mission. He listens again to the sounds of the forest, and sets off toward the range.

Just before Johnny arrives and the four warriors call it a day, Boyle summons the two young sisters-in-race over to the cabin. He addresses them as they stand on the porch.

"The two of you have a lot of room for improvement," Boyle says, "Should you decide to resist the death of our race and all of our people, then you'll have to keep practicing or else the enemy's gonna make your careers rather brief. Remember, your enemy is relentless. He's got some-one training while you're sleeping or eating." He glances at KJ. "Or havin' fun with your fuck buddy."

KJ doesn't respond.

"In one week I will leave this place," Boyle says, "and I don't suppose either of you will ever see me again. Now I know that breaks your hearts, but it's the way things have to be. As far as fightin' goes, the both of you already have the skill to be very effective. That won't mean shit if they see you first, or they get inside your head. Remember, if you join this resistance, the enemy will try everything he possibly can to catch or kill you. If he captures you, trust me, you'll pray for death. He'll humiliate you, abuse you, and you will be raped. He'll force you to betray the others."

John Bowen appears at the far end of the parking spot and begins traversing the lot. He's still holding his AK in his hands.

"Should you decide to join this resistance, you'll need to find someone to help you finish your training," Boyle says, "How you do so is up to you."

Neither KJ nor Anna asks for any suggestions. They enter the cabin and clean their rifles. Anna stores hers in the cabinet; KJ slings hers over her shoulder. Outside, KJ embraces Johnny. They kiss, then KJ hugs and wishes Anna well, and Johnny and KJ depart.

Anna approaches the porch.

"Do you want me to get the fifty?" asks Boyle, who is seated on the top step.

Anna shakes her head.

"I wanted to thank you, John," Anna says in the Irish, "for training us, and for coming here and fighting for our children. This is bigger than me, or Ireland or even our people. We're all white to the anti-whites. Thank you for fighting for us."

"You're a damn fine woman, Anna," Boyle says, still seated, "Take care of that soul of yours."

First thing in the morning, Johnny Bowen drives to Amblersburg from his little apartment in Oakland. After breakfast, he and KJ waste little time in departing for Fox Chapel. Johnny has work late that afternoon and nei-

ther of them wants to miss a practice session. In two days, the Fogarty's return from their vacation and, ready or not, KJ will graduate from swim training. Today she wears a plain black t-shirt with a black bikini bottom that she bought last year, minus the top which she did not like.

"Damn," Johnny says when he sees her emerge from the Fogarty home, "I didn't expect that. You always find something that's so fucking nice."

"It's not a thong," KJ says.

"Doesn't have to be, angel," he says, "That shirt's gonna look nice all fucking wet."

His shirt is off and he stands in the shallow end. She admires his chest and arms. Johnny Bowen looks magnificent. KJ would be surprised if he's not in the best shape he's ever been.

In spite of his comeliness and her gorgeousness, they do manage to practice for quite some time. The urgency of the moment, with time running out, contributes to their seriousness. After two hours, they must depart.

Back at Amblersburg, Johnny exits the Rubicon if only to be close to KJ before he must leave for his job. After they kiss she looks down for longer than he thought she would, which prompts him to lift her chin with his hand.

"What's wrong?" Johnny asks.

"Stay longer tomorrow," KJ says.

"OK, angel," he says and smiles, "But eat supper, OK? I'll be over at about six."

KJ nods and shows a very brief and sad little smile. Johnny kisses her head and holds her tight. She squeezes him and pats his back. It is he who must end the embrace, and even then his heart begs him to stay. He pictures her wings through her t-shirt as she walks toward the porch, where she'll turn and wave, the sad little smile back on her face. John Bowen tried not to think about the future, but in her presence, or even if just the thought of her crosses his mind, he cannot help it. He'll have a lot of time to think about her tomorrow as he drops off an empty trailer at a far-flung scrap yard.

As Johnny pulls out of the yard at Allegany Metals and begins the drive to a recycling facility in rural Virginia, Anna Murphy leaves the women's dressing room at the Pittsburgh aquatic center and walks to the pool. Without stopping, she walks to the edge and hops in, plunging deep and not surfacing until she's near the steps beside the one meter springboard. She considered wearing the mermaid suit but the odds of Garret being present are low. Gary couldn't come, either. He'll be getting home

about the time that she will. Anna tries to concentrate on her first dive, but misses it and over-rotates. The splash is far bigger than it should be, even considering that a strong, beautiful and healthy young white woman will naturally make some kind of disturbance when she enters the water. The missed dive sets the tone for the rest of the evening's practice. Anna misses two more dives, and even though she will make twenty or so attempts, she does not perform as well as usual on any of them.

Before Gary Murphy leaves the Greene County bituminous mine he's washed off most of the coal dust. He tosses his lunch pail into the Jeep Liberty and turns on the ignition. He speeds down highway 21 toward Waynesburg, flying past the alternating fields-and-forests of extreme southwestern Pennsylvania. At Waynesburg he takes a set of keys out of the Liberty's glove box. Once he's free of them he can go on home, to another shower and a change of clothes, and a surprise supper that Anna said she'll make as soon as she returns from diving practice.

Gary does not make the turn on to Pine Ridge Road. He drives straight past Lemont Furnace and down Old Braddock. Past the Donnelly Home, he continues on to the hall, where he sees Garret Fogarty standing beside his Wrangler. The sun is blocked by cumulus clouds that are too large to be fair-weather, though it's actually quite nice outside for July.

Gary tosses the keys to Garret before he says a word.

"There you go, son," Gary says, "Make sure they end up in good hands."

"They will, Gary," Garret says, "I promise you that."

Garret's hair is longer than it's ever been and his arms look a little larger in the short-sleeve strawberry-colored shirt he's wearing. Both he and Johnny have been strength training whenever they get the time.

Gary walks up close to him. Garret isn't certain but he suspects that Gary has a very tough question on his mind.

"Do you know, son?" Gary asks, "Don't tell me what you know, but do you know if she can be a part of your life?"

Garret nods. Gary doesn't know whether to feel joy, or relief, or the sharp and unpleasant sensation he actually does feel. Gary takes the young man into his arms, his big paw on the back of Garret's head.

"Whatever future you have, with or without my Anna," Gary says, "thank you, son, for giving a damn about white children."

Garret takes his hand when they separate and shakes it, while staring into Gary's eyes.

"You've given us a chance to be successful," Garret says, "Thank you, Gary Murphy."

Gary smiles.

"I have to get back," Gary says, "The mermaid's making me a surprise supper and I don't want her to think something's wrong."

Garret nods and smiles, the first smile today that he's felt on the inside.

Two minutes after Gary closes the kitchen door, Anna pulls in behind the Jeep Liberty. While Gary's in the shower she puts the finishing touches on the lemon and cucumber stuffed trout, cuts up the green tomatoes to fry, and starts the seasoned rice. KJ learned food preparation from her mother; the one useful skill that she obtained from Erica, and the one skill at which Erica excelled. Anna and Gary learned together out of necessity, and now Anna is a chef of formidable capability. She's not KJ, though even on an easy day at the mines Gary looks forward to one of her meals.

"I'm gonna visit Hannah tomorrow," Anna says after they sit down to eat.

"Good!" Gary says, "I was hoping you would."

Gary takes a bite of the trout.

"Do you like it?" Anna asks, knowing the answer already.

"It's great, honey," Gary says.

At the end of the meal Anna pulls two Guinness Premium beers from the refrigerator and returns to her seat. They sip from the bottles and she looks at him.

"I don't want to leave you," Anna says.

"You're never getting married?" Gary asks.

"It's not the same," Anna says.

"You're right in some ways," Gary says, "In other ways, though, you're wrong. You'd still have to leave in your own way."

"I'd see you again if I were married," Anna says, "I'm afraid I'll never see you if..." She looks down and shakes her head, but then she summons her strength and looks back into his eyes. "If I resist what's happening to all white people, not just Irish and whites with red hair and skin like ours, I may never see you again. I don't want to lose you, dad, but on the other hand, I don't want a child of mine, or a grandson of mine to end up like those poor little babies in South Africa."

Anna looks down again.

"No one's going to do that to any child of mine," Anna says, "they'll die before they lay a hand on him." The look on her face is severe. Anna is a fighter.

"I'm proud of you, Anna," Gary says, "I'm so proud. You could be begging me for money so you can see that God-awful English singer, but

instead of that shit you're worried about the children you might have someday. I just wish I could make life a little easier for you. I know, Anna, no one can. It's your life, you're a woman now, and though there's no part of me that wants you to ever walk out that door, it's your decision. All I ask is that you be committed when you decide. You know there's no going back once you do."

"There's not anyway," Anna says, "We can't keep living this American lie. We can't keep letting this get worse and worse, and pushing it on to our children. We can't let red hair and white skin disappear."

Gary rises from the table as does Anna. He hugs her and she holds on to him, just as in times long past. The sensitive, affectionate blue-eyed redhead, once a darling little girl and now a gorgeous young woman, still finds comfort in the powerful embrace of her father.

John Bowen knew that his new job would not last. First, it was classified as part-time, with no benefits and with the employer reserving the right to terminate both the employee and the position. Not knowing how long he and Garret would have to wait before they could begin active resistance, he realized that there was a need for money, if only a trickle, at least to pay rent and for the sundry expenses of daily life. Besides, the bulk of the money from the sale of his Deer Park home will go to some other cause.

At 6AM he's already on the road, driving Cab 440 around Morgantown, West Virginia, on his way to a recycling business in Anmoore. The route to the industrial facility and its casket-shaped buildings is circuitous and surprisingly ugly for West Virginia, consisting entirely of interstate driving through some of the only areas of the Mountain State that are growing in size. It's a route that seems to avoid both Amblersburg and Amboy.

Johnny returns to the Allegany terminal at 4 PM. Dispatcher Zwicker is in the office, though the manager has already left for the day. Zwicker is leaning back on his chair watching a YouTube video when Johnny enters. Johnny hangs the keys on a peg on the wall and walks over to Zwicker's desk.

"Well, I'll see you next week, then," Zwicker says without looking up from whatever is amusing him. He still hasn't trimmed his wispy black hair.

"No," Johnny says shaking his head, "It's time to move on."

Zwicker looks up from the screen.

"Are you sure, John?" Zwicker asks, "You'd have the inside track on a full-time position when the next one comes up, and we're due."

It's either a lie, or outrageous optimism.

"I'm positive," Johnny says, "It's time for a change of scenery."

"OK, John," Zwicker says, "I'll email Howard." Howard Wilsey is the terminal manager. Johnny's met him once. "Is the hazmat stuff still in the cab?"

Johnny nods. He never touched it since he started, especially since he hasn't been on a hazardous material haul. Zwicker goes back to YouTube and John Ashley Bowen walks out of Allegany Metals forever.

Johnny doesn't change out of his light blue long-sleeved shirt or his jeans, which bear the marks of greasy, grimy Cab 440. He washes his hands and hits the road, not stopping until he's in front of the blue Jeep. He hurries to the door, and hears the inner door shut. He stands back to see his lover as she opens the outer door. KJ's wearing jeans shorts and a tank top, and although she's not wearing gloves she did put on tall lace-up boots. Her bag hangs from her shoulder. For once, she's the one wearing the pistol.

Johnny takes her into his arms and she plunges into him.

"I tell myself this will never end," KJ says, "I guess I'd rather be a fool. It won't spare me any pain if I'm not."

Johnny rubs her back and kisses her head.

*I tell myself that, too,* Johnny thinks.

"I love you, Johnny," KJ says.

Johnny smells her hair. She washed it this morning but did not use shampoo. The gentle scent of flowers is diminished but still there, along with her beautiful and natural clean smell. That smell is better.

The sky is unsettled and will be for a few days. A thunderstorm rages to the south, but it won't come close to Amblersburg, let alone Fox Chapel. It'll be dark when they enter the Pittsburgh area, so KJ sits up front.

"Did you eat?" Johnny asks.

"Yeah, at three," KJ says.

"What'd you have?" Johnny asks.

"I made some skillet lasagna," KJ says, "It turned out really well." She looks at him and smiles. "I could have used some company."

Johnny sighs.

"What did you eat, sweetheart?" KJ asks.

"I haven't," Johnny says.

"That's fucking bullshit!" KJ says, "I don't want you to fucking do that! Fuck this practice. Take us back so I can make you something. Right now!"

"Shh...Hey," he says, "Listen a minute. We practice, I grab something, and we go home, understand? I'll even stay a while if you want."

KJ closes her mouth tight for a moment, and then nods.



"Alright," she says.

Johnny laughs.

"What?" KJ asks, starting to chuckle from an automatic response to his laughter, though her face shows surprise and still a hint of outrage.

"Yes, mom," Johnny says.

"Ah! You fucking..." KJ says, with that irresistible look of outrage on her face. She covers her face with her left hand before laughing. In an aggressive tone that contrasts with the words she chooses, she continues: "Did I tell you how much I fucking love you?"

"Yeah," Johnny says, his voice now serious, "You just did."

KJ looks at him in silence.

"Did I?" Johnny asks.

"Yeah," KJ says, "Every day of my life."

KJ only brought one suit today. It's the one-piece thong. She knew this was the last time they could use the pool for her swimming lessons. She also knows it may be the last time they're ever together in a pool of any sort. They swim and he teaches her some, but it's no surprise that the pair spend most of the two hours playing and being close, with her showering him in feminine affection and him surrounding her with his powerful body. It's as close as they can come to being one body without crossing a line they'd regret, should the terrible tide of this hateful war pull them apart forever.

After swimming practice ends, and the usual sitting, talking and kissing takes place, Johnny waits for KJ to shower and then takes a short one himself. Before they leave the huge Fox Chapel home, he stands outside with KJ to his right, and looks upon the place. It seems even larger in the soft lamplight.

"You know," Johnny says, "even if I had money I don't see buying you a place like this. I see something smaller, Euro-style, in the mountains of course. I'd buy more land than structure." He gestures toward the mansion with his head. "There'd have to be woods, of course, so we could camp out and our children could be strong, and learn to climb trees and shit like that. What do you think?"

KJ hugs him.

"I think that would be so nice," KJ says, "Garret's family spent their money on, like, this huge fucking enclosure. I'd want a place where I could go outside for a while, but, yeah, there'd have to be trees so the sun wouldn't burn my skin. My skin doesn't like the sun too much." She rubs his shoulder. "You know, I'm glad you don't burn yourself to be tan," she says, "You look so much better with nice white skin"

"No skin's as nice as yours," Johnny says, "Not even Anna's." He turns and looks into her blue eyes. "Angels are white," he says.

On the return trip, Johnny stops at a Save-A-Lot in Waynesburg and makes a couple of sandwiches upon returning to the Jeep. They are crude and to include them in the same conversation with one of KJ's meals would be a travesty, but he is famished and they serve their purpose.

KJ watches him eat. When he's finished he opens a bottle of water. Hers is still unopened in her left hand. She shakes her head.

"I could have made you something better than a fucking sandwich, even in ten minutes," KJ says.

"I know," Johnny says, "But we'll get back late, and I have an idea for tomorrow if you're interested. I'll come by around ten or so and we'll go for a hike."

KJ smiles.

"Yeah, that'd be nice," KJ says, "But don't eat breakfast, at least let me make breakfast, alright? Come on!"

"OK, angel," Johnny says.

He touches her cheek and then puts the Jeep into first gear.

Johnny Bowen finally arrives in Oakland at five in the morning. When KJ awoke, still on his lap and in his arms, she apologized to him and urged him to stay, even if she had to sleep in a sleeping bag on the kitchen floor. He kissed her, lifted her in his arms and carried her to bed. Then he left for the evening.

An hour or so before noon he returns to the driveway of the Amblersburg cottage. The sky is mostly cloudy, and will be so for most of the day. A stationary front may drizzle on the two lovers, which would be fine with them. Tomorrow the heat will return and the front will rejuvenate. Storms will rain and hail upon Appalachia, and then clear out. For today at least, the outside world is pleasant.

Johnny is already dressed for the excursion. KJ greets him at the outer door. Since she could see who had come, she didn't bother to put shorts on over her thong. They kiss and she turns to enter, her t-back top letting him see some of her wings. He looks at them, among other assets.

KJ begins making his lunch – breakfast, actually, though the hour is late.

"Hey," Johnny says, "Go ahead and get ready, I'll make somethin' to eat."

KJ stops and looks at him.

"No," she says, "We're still together, so I'm still your woman. I'll make breakfast."

KJ makes him a vegetable and ham omelet, suitable for breakfast or lunch. While Johnny eats, KJ gets dressed for the hike. She dons a pair of camouflage pants and a thin white t-shirt. Over the soft shirt she wears a brown hoodie. She brushes her long, copious hair and ties it in a ponytail. Around her neck she slides the strap of one of her new hats. Of the four pairs of Oakley assault boots, she reserved two for outside use, and she dons one of those pairs. Then she puts on Johnny's dog tags and tucks them under her t-shirt.

"Are we coming back for supper?" KJ asks from the doorway, her gloved hand on the frame.

Johnny glances at her and looks back in an instant. He scrutinizes her from her tall boots to the dense and heavy ponytail that leads to the top of her head, which, in spite of her hair being brushed back and tied, shows the thickness of her mane. Even in this martial ensemble she is stunning; simply stunning.

*You mean so much to me. I'll resist this fucking urge that would have me take you. But, God, if I can ever have you, and it's right to take you... We wouldn't leave this place today.*" If Johnny's thoughts and feelings were words, that would be their meaning.

"No, angel," he says, "Let's get some of our camping gear and make a campfire supper."

KJ smiles.

"OK, cool," she says.

Johnny will carry the heaviest load, although KJ is strong and insistent enough to carry a ponderous minority of the items.

"We'll find a place to cache some of this shit and then return for supper," Johnny says, "It'll be good practice to see if you can recognize the camp from a distance."

He steps to the bathroom and returns with a bottle of organic mosquito repellent. "I'm glad you usually wear long sleeves when you're in the woods," Johnny says, "We'll be out there when the fucking mosquitoes come out." He gets close to her and brushes her cheek. She smiles as she looks up into his eyes, and moves her shoulders front-and-back in opposite direction. Johnny watches her as she moves and then she caresses his chest. KJ has her pistol on her belt. Johnny has his pistol as well.

Once the final preparations are made, Johnny and KJ set off into the Preston County wilderness. This time, they cross Salt Lick Road and make their way southeast, through the dense forest and over hills and hollows. The sky welcomes them with a taste of "KJ weather;" a large cloud

hovers over the first hill and an occasional drop of rain makes it through the drier layer of air, only to end its brief existence on a leaf or a stone. The forest is alluring and the air is cooler than it has been in a while. Inside, it's dark enough for a pair of phantom crane flies to dance a silent aerial waltz. Owing to the reduced pressure of the approaching front, which steals their grace and ease of flying, their rhythms are clumsy and at times seem quite mad.

Johnny spies a doe from atop the first hill, and KJ gets close enough that, had she been hunting, she could not have missed the shot. Down the opposite slope they find some ripe black raspberries, which are delicious and refreshing. Nearby are an ancient chinquapin oak and two beech trees that flank it. There's a large rock which, together with a sheet that Johnny brought, will make a good spot to sit and take supper.

"Here's a good place for camp," Johnny says.

Johnny lays his heavy backpack on a stone that lies near one of the beech trees.

"Let me have your backpack," Johnny says. KJ hesitates. "We're still together, KJ, and I'm still your man. Give me your backpack."

KJ sighs and shakes her head, and then removes both straps from her shoulders and hands him the backpack. They continue their walk.

"Try and see if you can remember where I left my backpack," Johnny says, "It'll be good practice for you."

Around the base of the hill is a dirt road. It is free from vegetation and must see some use, though on this Friday morning there's not a vehicle or pedestrian in sight. Johnny and KJ cross and continue up a second, larger hill. At the top they pause for a drink of water and then make an abrupt turn toward the southwest. He does not tell her, but to continue to the southeast would mean approaching Amboy, the location of Procyon. They cross another enclosed gully with its own little stream and circumvent a steep southern hill by walking along the gentle slope of its northern side. Most of the way across, they can see the winding dirt road. Johnny verifies that they are alone, and they cross in haste.

When KJ and Johnny departed, leaving behind Johnny's backpack, they moved in a northwesterly direction. Now they must climb the same hill from due south. Johnny is glad for the change; it will provide a greater challenge for KJ. Around 3:30 PM the two begin to approach the camp site. Johnny recognizes the oak in the distance.

"There's our camp," KJ whispers to him before he has time to wonder if she'll see the trees.

"Fucking excellent, KJ," Johnny says.

Supper is not in the same league as other meals she's made. Still, KJ works magic with the simple elements that are in her pack. There are two steaks, which were frozen when they departed and which she wrapped well, according to knowledge she gleaned even before she knew Johnny or the Old Core. She spreads chopped herbs on the steaks, and complements the meal with an impromptu salad made of carrots, broccoli, cauliflower, apple slices and a little dressing that she prepared about an hour before Johnny came, just for an opportune moment such as this. Johnny builds a small fire for the little grill he brought, and which he extinguishes the very minute the steaks are finished. He takes the two plates from his pack and they share their meal. For dessert he opens a bag of dried pineapple and throws in some of his renowned chocolate-covered orange peels, which she finds irresistible. He also has two bottles of sweetened cherry tea. Though not cold, the liquid has not warmed enough to harm the taste. It is a very simple meal, but they enjoy the tastes and the atmosphere, and most of all, being close to one another and rejoicing in the intimacy of eating together. When it's over, she's first to rise, and rubs his head before he can don his cap.

Half the distance back from the camp site, Johnny rubs her neck, her sleeves and her pants legs with the mosquito repellent. He also rubs the lotion on the parts of her body he deems most likely to suffer an attack. Finally he chooses a spot where it's unlikely that a mosquito can penetrate her pants, but there are no complaints when he rubs a little on her rear.

"Good thinking," KJ says, a little embarrassed, "I'm sure they'll go after my ass."

"I would," Johnny says and winks.

KJ shakes her head and laughs in the manner he's grown accustomed to, and fallen in love with.

The darkening sky is quiet, as are the fireflies that light the forest and the little clearing where the cottage stands. There's no rain, nor are there stars in the sky above the forest. When they reach the tiny backyard of the cottage, Johnny takes KJ's backpack and then removes his own, setting them both on the ground. He takes her by her shoulders and looks into her eyes. Even in the dark they shine. Once they entered the yard she shoved her hat off of her head, and it rests on her back, attached with the string around her neck. Johnny strokes her ponytail.

"Let it down," Johnny says.

KJ removes the blue band that keeps her hair in a ponytail, and the mass falls all about her shoulders and back, with more than enough left to spill over her chest.

"My woman," Johnny says, and kisses her, "My woman."

Inside, KJ brews coffee and the two sit at the kitchen table.

"We'll leave a little later than usual tomorrow morning," he says, "We both need some sleep. You have time for a bath if you want, or a long shower, so don't worry about it and don't get up too early, OK?"

"OK," KJ says, looking down at her coffee.

She's removed the hoodie but still wears her camo pants and boots.

"What's on your mind?" Johnny asks.

KJ looks up at him.

"Johnny," she says, and then she exhales loudly for some time, and runs her fingers through her thick hair. "I've been thinking about the war. I know I could kill someone who threatens you. I'm sure of it, it's how it should be because I love you. If someone attacks you I'll help you once your enemy is down, and I'll make sure he doesn't get back up to attack you while you deal with another threat. I'll make sure he never gets up." KJ looks back down for a moment, and then right back into his eyes. "That's not all that's on my mind. I could kill a traitor, or a nigger or fucking kike who profits from the death of our children, fuck them, they're threatening the lives of our unborn children! We'll have to kill some of them, just to get the others to stop. But...there's something else." She looks down again for a moment, before staring into his eyes. "Johnny, I don't want to kill someone who has nothing to do with this."

Johnny smiles and takes her hand.

"We're not an army," he says, "I'm not going to hurt an innocent person, or murder a bunch of people just to kill some asshole. You're my angel. I won't have you become hardened, whether you're with me or not. I'd die before I'd kill your hope, or your desire to have a baby, a little life that you can bring into this world, from that beautiful, angel body of yours. We'll have a target for every mission, and we'll scrub the mission if we can't take the target. I can't promise you no one will get hurt. The fucking pigs will unleash on us if they can, and they won't care who they have to hurt in order to kill a white racist."

"I don't care what they do," KJ says, "and I know you have to do ugly shit. I know a man has to be ugly if his people are in jeopardy. That's their fault; they haven't left us with any choice. But I don't want to just kill someone because he just happens to be there."

"We won't," Johnny says, "If no one tries to stop us there will be one shot, and the target dies. One shot, just one shot."

KJ puts her other hand on his and squeezes. Johnny leans forward and looks deep into her eyes. The green inferno in his eyes burns bright.

"There is an exception, angel," Johnny says, "I will neutralize any threat to the person who I protect. If that means I have to kill some unlucky fucker, I will kill him."

"It's not right that you have to bear that burden," KJ says, "and I know it's going to be a burden for you. I know how much you love. They'll call you a monster because they want you to be one, but you're not. Not one fucking bit. You're a man, and that's something they're not."

"Nothing's right in this world, angel," Johnny says, "Except for you. You're what's right. And I'm going to fight for that."

They embrace before he must depart. KJ closes her eyes and lays her head against his chest as he caresses her.

"Don't go easy on me," KJ says, "Don't hold back. Even if you have to leave me, keep loving me like you'll be with me forever. I want every second to hold on to, for the rest of my life."

Johnny kisses her head and lifts her chin before kissing her lips.

KJ takes a long shower before turning in for the night. After the shower, she looks at the cabinet and catches herself before she takes a step toward the drawer where she keeps the swimsuits. The lessons are over. The Fogarty's are back and time has run out.

John Boyle is on the porch at 8 AM when he sees a familiar green and silver Outback pull up to the gate. He glances at the sky. The day promises to be hot and the air stifling. When Anna enters the gate, she sees that Boyle's wearing jeans. They'll probably spend at least a little time in the woods. She hoped to arrive before KJ and Johnny Bowen and is relieved that she is successful. Anna parks after closing the gate and exits the Subaru. Her hair is in a ponytail, as usual. She's wearing her camo hoodie and usual outfit, including tall lace-up boots. Boyle sees the crucifix around her neck. Anna puts it under her shirt shortly after exiting the car. The shiny silver can't give her away if it's under her clothes.

"John, I wish to talk to you," Anna says in the Irish.

When KJ is absent, Anna speaks in the Irish with John Boyle. He looks at her; at the sincerity on her beautiful face.

"Of course," Boyle says.

It's already getting uncomfortable outside.

"Why did you come?" Anna asks, "Did you come to recruit, or help Bill recruit? Did you come to train snipers and send them to Ireland? Did Bill convince you that our race is in jeopardy and might go extinct? I hope you trust me enough to tell me."

"Ireland is still divided," Boyle says, "I have business there as long as she is, but what's happening to our race is the most important struggle

at the moment. The other war must continue, but this war threatens our survival as a race, and the survival of the Irish people. No one's fighting this war. Anna, I came here because the fight starts here. It will come to Ireland and if we do nothing now, we will not be ready when it comes home. I don't want beauty like yours to disappear from the Earth. Your kin won't let them take away Irish beauty, and soon they'll understand that means white beauty. Someday they'll see that anti-white also means anti-Irish. They'll see that this is our war as well."

Anna nods.

"I hope they do," she says.

"Anna," Boyle says, "I will fight until they understand, until our race is no longer in peril, and until our Ireland is whole again. If that is my life, then so be it."

By the time Johnny and KJ arrive at Coalsack, Anna has already fired a number of shots at the rifle range. At 1:30 PM KJ joins her sister-in-race while Johnny goes on another patrol. The heat is nigh on unbearable, and even Johnny curses the humidity. For KJ and Anna it is hellish, though at least the trees and small roof over the shooting benches shield them from the sun. So, too, do the growing cumulus clouds.

Rian Donnelly, who looks sharp in his short-sleeved shirt with the collar unbuttoned, finishes his cup of tea. Bill still has half a cup remaining. Lunch is over and the two Donnelly men sit with Megan at the kitchen table. Bill wears a similar style shirt, though his is yellow instead of red and gray. All three speak in the Irish, as they always do when they converse in private.

"You didn't invite me to talk about Sinead and Charles Connolly," Rian says, "Not by myself, anyway, did you dad?"

"No, son," Bill says.

Rian glances at his mother. Megan's dress is one that she brought with her when she left her ancestral home. It's enchanting as is its possessor, with its elegant collar and dark pink embroidery against the lighter pink of the surrounding fabric. She has aged well, her youthful beauty replaced by grace, and a firm, loving warmth and loyalty. Jesse hopes to age so well.

"I've been speaking with Garret," Bill says, "He asked me to talk to you about the future. I agreed, son, with the understanding that any decision will be yours and yours alone."

A massive white-and-gray cumulus cloud darkens the sky. It will become the first of the day's storms, and with thunder and lightning blazing it will beat itself to oblivion against the Allegheny Mountains.



Rian looks into his father's blue eyes.

"He's startin' a cell," Bill says, "These lads are going to war, and they need a wheel man."

"Neither of you have a problem if I say yes?" asks Rian, who looks first at Bill and then at his mother.

"What we feel is unimportant," Bill says, "You'll have to do what you think is best. Your mother and I would never send one of our sons to war, but someone's son will have to fight. There's no more time for talk, and even if there were the other side won't allow it. It is not our right to tell another white man's son that he has to fight for someone else's children. You know what's at stake, and you know Garret and Johnny and the others. They'll face these decisions in time. You're a white man, Rian, and you have the right to decide if you're going to be a part of this."

"I'd go back home and fight," Rian says, "I've told you that for years."

"The war is here right now," Bill says, "It will come to Ireland, anywhere there's a white man and a white woman who loves him. If you're convinced you need to go home I'll talk to Gerry."

"I have to decide now?" asks Rian, "I choose to fight, you knew that I would. I haven't decided where, yet."

"I want you to think it through," Bill says, "On Wednesday, Garret will be over. I'd like for you and Jesse to come and meet with him. I believe you can give him an answer when he does."

Rian nods.

"Talk to Jesse," Bill says, "She's going to be your wife. Let her know your thoughts and what you wish to do. She's white like you so she's part of this."

"Does Garret know I'll be speaking to her about all this?" Rian asks.

"Yes, son," Bill says, "Otherwise I wouldn't ask you to speak to her."

"Mother," Rian says, "Would you have me commit to the struggle here in the States?"

His glasses do nothing to diminish the power of his stare, or hers.

"I'd have you marry Jesse and take her home," Megan says, "If our brothers and sisters lose the war over here, I fear there will be no home left for you. I fear for what would happen to you should you stay and fight and even more I fear for your family should you refuse. Either way I will suffer. Mothers suffer in times of war. So do wives and so do sons."

Bill sees his own strength and stubbornness and devotion in the eyes of his son, and he feels pride alongside the pain.

"I'll give my answer on Wednesday," Rian says, "One way or the other, I know there's no going back once I do."

"We'll do what we can to help you, however you choose," Bill says, "So will Garret should you need his assistance. He's promised it."

"I understand what he's doing and I agree with it," Rian says. He looks to the side for a moment and then back into his father's eyes. "I understand what you want to do and I wonder if it wouldn't be better for me to be there with you."

Bill smiles at his son. He rises from his chair and pats Rian on the shoulder. Rian watches him walk through the kitchen door and disappear beyond the dining and recreation rooms.

"Does dad want me to stay?" he asks his mother, "I've thought about it. On the one hand I think it's right, but honestly I'd rather go home."

"Is Jesse fine with that decision?" Megan asks.

"Yes," Rian says.

"Then tell your father if that's your final decision," Megan says.

"It's not," Rian says, "My heart urges me to go, but what then? Do I go there and wait? Do I let these men who are close to me face the enemy without me, and when they need me most I'll be sitting on my ass, drinkin' a pint at McGrath's?"

The kitchen looks smaller than its actual size. With its light blue walls and bright drapes adorned with violets and buttercups it feels comfortable and welcoming.

"I could go and have a family," Rian says. "I imagine McAuliffe or one of the other firms would hire me, but you and dad are always wanting me to fight."

Rian snorts and smiles. It didn't come out with the levity he'd hoped.

Megan looks at him and he regrets his ill-advised humor.

"I've already lost a son, Rian," Megan says, "If it were my decision I'd send you home to live in peace. But I agree with your father. Our peace is surrender. We only have it because they use complacency and comfort to keep us asleep. We can watch the storm from across the ocean or we can have it above our heads. You can go home for the right reasons, and I'll support your choice. But don't even joke about your father's desires, or mine. My heart weeps and rages when I think of what we have to do."

"I'm sorry, mother," Rian says, "Everything is deadly serious now. I've known for a while that it would be, but it's like a death in the family. You can't be ready for this, no matter how much warning or how many times you hear it's going to happen."

"No, son," Megan says, "you can't. Please think about what your father said. And whatever you choose, if you believe in it with all your heart and soul, I'll be convinced it was the right decision."

"Life was easier before we left," Rian says.

"No," Megan says, "We just fooled ourselves."

Darkening skies, distant rumbles of thunder and the furious but unsuccessful attacks of a deer fly send KJ and Anna to the garage before the approaching storm cell can strike the Coalsack area. Severe storms tend to sound different, their thunder sharper than that of the usual thunderstorm and their electrical display more impressive if not awe-inspiring. This one has a vicious crack to its thunder as well as incessant flashes of lightning that demonstrate its severity. Huge drops of rain begin to fall as the two young women take seats on wooden benches away from the walls and open entrance of the structure. Boyle's truck is gone, though the ATVs remain, as do the tools and covers and crates. KJ pays them no mind. She peers out into the now-heavy rain. Both KJ and Anna remove their rifles and lean them against the third bench, which sits to their rear.

"He's fine," Anna says.

"I hope he comes in all wet," KJ says.

Anna laughs.

"You want me to leave if he does?" Anna asks.

KJ looks at her.

"Well, yeah!" KJ says.

A few seconds later Johnny comes around the corner. He steps inside the garage and removes his wet hat. He hangs it on a nail by the entrance and beside the ladies' boonie hats.

"Well?" KJ says to Anna.

KJ motions toward the door with her head.

"You're fucking serious?" Anna asks, "Come on! I'll cover my eyes."

"What?" Johnny says. He looks up to see KJ, her arms folded across her chest, looking at Anna. "Fuck it," he says, "Never mind."

KJ looks at him with a wicked smile on her face. She jumps to her feet and hops over to him. Johnny leans his AK inside the garage door frame. As the lightning crashes he guides her deeper into the garage, away from the open doors. She never alters her stare from his eyes.

"It sucks when I'm the one who's wet," Johnny says, his bare fingers between her gloved ones on both their hands.

"No it doesn't!" KJ says.

KJ slips one hand from his grasp and strokes his neck down his wet shoulders to his powerful right bicep. Suddenly he pulls her very close and kisses her. He runs his hand from under her hair, down the back of her neck to the final tips of her long mane as they lap the middle of her back, and does not stop until his hand rests upon her rear.

"I have to talk to Boyle," Johnny says and then kisses the side of her head. "I'll see you later."

"It's storming, Johnny," KJ says, "Wait a while."

"I'll run," Johnny says.

Johnny kisses her hair again and then takes off toward the cabin. KJ returns to her seat and watches his rain-blurred image charge onto the cabin porch. Then she looks at Anna, who has a smile that seems too discrete and humble to be innocent.

"What?" KJ asks.

"Did he like the swimsuit?" Anna asks.

KJ crosses her eyes and nods.

Anna giggles.

"God, you two are perfect for each other!" Anna says.

KJ uncrosses her eyes, looks at Anna for a moment, and then looks down. Anna puts her arm around her.

"Are you gettin' through this OK?" Anna asks.

KJ nods, still looking down.

"I used to wish that I'd know if he had to leave me," KJ says, "Now I just wish for one more day before he goes. It's one more beautiful thing I can hold on to."

"Maybe it'll work out," Anna says.

KJ looks up and into Anna's blue eyes.

"I might never see you again," KJ says.

"I've thought about that," Anna says, "Among other things."

Anna appreciates that KJ doesn't ask.

KJ looks out at the pouring rain. The air is full of rain smell as each and every green thing opens its pores to the life-giving liquid. The lightning in the rain band becomes even fiercer. Thunder no longer booms, it explodes. KJ scoots just a little closer to Anna before she realizes what she's done. She looks down at her boots.

"I wanted to sing, you know?" KJ says, "I wanted to write music."

Anna, who is watching a toad hop toward the entrance of the garage, looks at KJ, who is staring into the rain. The thunder seems to pause for her.

"My parents and everyone else I knew wanted me to sing and write music," continues KJ, "and they wanted me to be like them. I was the rebel. I'd say fuck you Christians, and fuck you whitey. I'd go to parties with some nigger music executive or a fucking pothead, who I'd say is just a friend, but people would wonder if he's fucking me and that's exactly what I'd want them to think. I'd wear shirts saying, like, 'hands off my body'"

and 'Free Mumia.' I'd be the rebel, the pretty rebel, just like every other fucking rebel who follows the script. They never doubted that I'd accept their worldview and hate my own race. They never doubted that I'd hate people like you, and my Johnny." She shakes her head. "I wouldn't have a man like Johnny; I'd have a lover who wouldn't risk anything for our children's future. And you know what? Neither would I. I'd die someday, we all fucking do, but I'd be in a soft bed and everyone would say they love me. I was controversial, you know? Just like all the other rebels with music contracts and big bank accounts."

KJ looks at Anna, who rubs KJ's upper back.

"Fuck all of that," KJ says, "Fuck them and their safe life. Fuck cowardice and treason and false fucking rebel tools. Fuck their anesthetic comfort and fuck pleasing them. I'm young and I'm white, and this is our fucking war."

Once the storm passes, Anna and KJ stop by the cabin for a drink. To their surprise, Boyle's alone.

"Before you get all hysterical," Boyle says, "You're fuck buddy went up the hill, right where you're goin'. You'll meet him up there. It'll be interesting to see who sees who first. Then he'll have you figure out the distance to a group of targets. He knows the exact distance to each one and we'll see if you've figured out one of the most important skills you can have. Now finish drinking my water and get the hell moving, it's late."

When their forced march ends, KJ and Anna's boots and the bottom of their pants are rather muddy. Anna's wearing her boonie hat, as does KJ, though she removes hers after they crest the ridge since there's no threat of low-hanging twigs or leaves. Anna is first to see Johnny, though KJ spies him less than a second later. He saw them before they topped the hill.

"Good thing John wasn't up here," Johnny says, "He'd have went fucking insane if he saw you two walking like that, without a care in the world."

"Shit!" KJ says, "I'm sorry, Johnny, fuck I wasn't even thinking."

"Just be more careful, angel," Johnny says, "It might not be me next time."

"Thanks, Johnny," Anna says.

"You too, Red," Johnny says, "Don't make the same mistake twice."

Boyle has placed six posts at seemingly random locations down and across the broad slope of the hill. Their tops are bright colors: orange, blue, yellow, red, green and the candy stripe post that appears to be furthest. When it comes to range estimation, experience is Anna's greatest

asset and her deductions of range are very accurate. KJ equals her performance, and part of the explanation is the same. The repeated exercises she's done to help her estimate the distance to a target have taught her well. The second contributing factor is more mysterious. It comes from her uncanny predisposition for targeting and shooting. She has tremendous talent for the lethal art of sniping, in spite of her high-strung and nervous nature, her wild passions, and the natural factors that often hinder women when it comes to the art of combat. Her talent, with the direction of Boyle and Johnny, has given her a lethal capability. Both KJ and Anna have the deadly skill to be highly effective. The disappointment that Johnny felt when he saw the ladies' lackadaisical approach disappears after he observes their ability to correctly assess the range of each post.

Back at the cistern, KJ begins washing her boots when Johnny yells to her.

"Come on, angel!" Johnny says, "You can do that at home."

"I don't want to get mud in your Jeep," KJ says, still holding the hose.

"Get the hell over here, sweetheart!" Johnny says and then beckons with his hand.

KJ hangs the hose and begins walking toward him. Anna comes over and Johnny hugs her as does KJ. Johnny then kisses KJ's head and bids Anna and Boyle goodbye, and the two lovers drive off to Amblersburg. Once there, they enjoy making supper and having the pleasure of a delicious meal and the intense intimacy that she gives to him and that he reciprocates. Johnny will leave around 11PM that night. Although KJ does not fall asleep on his lap, he takes her in both arms and carries her to bed before he departs.

Anna leaves Coalsack alone. At home, she begins supper just before Gary arrives. The two combine their efforts, just like they have for the past thirteen years.

The next morning, Johnny arrives at Amblersburg and he and KJ depart for Coalsack in the blue Jeep. KJ drives all the way to the gate. Her Remington – and Johnny's AK47 – lay on the back seat.

At 8:30 AM, a cell phone rings at Garret's apartment. It's the phone he uses to place orders and make general calls. When he checks the number, he's surprised to see that it's from his father's cell phone. An hour earlier, Brian texted Garret but Garret did not respond.

"What's up, slim?" says Garret's father, Brian.

"Not much," Garret says.

"Not much, huh?" Brian says, "I heard Terradox shut its doors. That sounds like more than 'not much' to me."

"Bought out," Garret says, "It was bought out."

"Same thing in your line of work," Brian says, "Listen up. You're not going to believe this, but Kurt Rathbun told me his original offer still stands. I know you don't like me budding into your business, but son..."

"Tell him I'm interested," Garret says.

There is a silence from Brian's end.

"I'm going to NorCal in two weeks," Garret says, "Tell Kurt I'll meet with him in Portland."

"NorCal, huh?" Brian says, "What for?"

"I'm trying to sell my extrasolar planet program," Garret says, "If I can't get a good deal, I'll accept Kurt's offer."

"Now you're talkin'," Brian says, "I knew you'd see the light. Hey, Garret, I wanted to ask you something else, did you happen to use the pool while we were gone?"

"Yes," Garret says.

"OK, cool," Brian says, "Did you have someone over? Anyone we might know?"

"Just a couple of friends," Garret says.

"OK, I'm cool with that," Brian says, "Why don't you come up and visit next week?"

"When I'm back from the trip," Garret says.

"Great," Brian says, "See you then."

Brian ends the call.

Garret looks at his laptop screen. He's come to another image file that he must delete and remove all trace from the hard drive. It's a picture of Anna, wearing her silver suit and posing on the springboard. It was after her last dive. She waved and jumped feet-first into the deep water, her arms held tight to her side. Then she swam like a mermaid and emerged. Garret snapped ten pictures of her, the last one a portrait shot with her standing a few feet away. It's next up for deletion. Garret looks at it for twenty minutes before erasing it from the laptop forever.

The ground at Coalsack is muddy and the flora is dappled with yesterday's raindrops. The humidity is low, though the sun and temperatures will get higher as the day progresses. Anna and KJ wear hats and hoodies and will feel the heat as usual, although the shade will protect their fair complexion and give them comfort from the excessive warmth. All in all, it will not be an oppressive day, which is the most they can hope for in July.

Anna, KJ and Johnny talk for a few minutes before Johnny kisses KJ and disappears into the woods. Boyle says very little to the ladies as they practice at the range. A couple of hours later, the two sisters meet up with

Johnny Bowen and continue their range estimation and observation training. This time, they are very careful while advancing through the woods, though they keep in mind that speed is vital. Johnny sees them first, but he praises their efforts and the rapidity of their movement.

At the end of the day, Johnny interrupts the ladies' conversation and calls them over to the porch. There, he runs his fingers through KJ's shiny hair and she smiles.

"John needs to talk to you, both of you," Johnny says.

The war sisters sit and wait for John Boyle, who is in the garage. Boyle's shirt is dirty, as are his legs and shorts. He washes his arms and face at the cistern and then walks to the porch, where he passes by Anna and KJ and walks inside without uttering a sound. Johnny stifles a grin. John returns with a bottle of Guinness.

"Tuesday," Boyle says, "will be the last time the three of us meet at Coalsack. I won't sugar-coat what I'm going to say to you. The two of you need more practice, but you've done very well to this point. I believe you both could be very effective snipers, especially if you continue your training and don't fuck off or get a big ego. If it's your fate to be a team, you'll want to listen to what I'm about to tell you. Use your strengths and be aware of your weaknesses. KJ, choose a target that isn't expecting to be shot at, if you can help it. Take your time and don't be afraid of the long shot. You can make it."

"Anna," Boyle says, and then he pauses.

Red looks into his eyes.

"Cover your sister's back," Boyle says in the Irish, "It's up to you to prevent a sniper from killing her, or an enemy from getting too close."

Boyle returns his gaze to the two of them.

"Protect each other," Boyle says in English, "Test each other while you train and protect each other in the field."

Irish John looks back at Anna. For once, his stare is more paternal than piercing.

"If it were my decision," Boyle says in the Irish, "She'd be with Johnny, and you'd be with Garret. If fate smiles on you and you are together, remember, you love him and he loves you for different reasons. Do not deny him. I won't tell your sister. I don't think I need to."

He noticed that KJ is holding Johnny's hand. That's not all he's noticed between them. Boyle sets his beer on the wooden floorboards and walks over to Anna, KJ and Johnny. Johnny shakes his hand and they embrace, as brothers and fellow warriors.

"God be with you," Boyle says.



"Take care, John," Johnny says, "We're not crawling anymore. But take care of yourself. I want to see you in Elysium."

"You will," Boyle says.

Johnny Bowen reaches down and takes KJ by her gloved hand, and then lifts her to her feet. Boyle steps inside the cabin for a minute and then returns with two large bags, one for KJ and the other for Anna.

"Take your rifles home and clean them there," Boyle says, "There's cleaning supplies and two boxes of ammunition in the bags. Store the bullets but bring the guns on Tuesday. We're not done training, but the guns are yours. If you aim them at a human being, aim them at the enemies of your race. And if you do, then do not hesitate to pull the trigger. The enemy's been doing that for longer than you've been alive."

Anna shakes Boyle's hand and he kisses her cheeks. They hug. KJ shakes his hand and he kisses her cheeks as well. He looks at these two beautiful young white women, who wear camouflage clothing and army boots and carry high-powered rifles on their shoulders.

"Should you decide to do more than just play with those guns," Irish John says, "You will surprise and terrify the enemies of our race, from the businessmen who profit from non-white immigration," he looks at KJ, "to those whites who get their jollies from hurting other whites, so that they look more 'enlightened' to their faggot friends. Not to forget the Jew parasites, the most hateful fucking chauvinists on God's green goddamned Earth. They'll hate you alright. They'll seethe with rage more than they ever have. If white men and white women rise together, we will win the fight for our survival as a race, and they know it. That's why they will show you no mercy. If they can kill you, they will whether you're fighting or sleeping or holding your husband's hand while you give birth. If they catch you, they will use you to hurt your brothers in race, and then they will make you beg for death. I am not going to lie to you, neither is Johnny; this war will be terrible and ugly. Very, very fucking ugly. Those who profit from the death of our race will not allow this war to be clean. So be it. They began the war and now it is time for us to fight back."

Boyle drinks from his Guinness. He and Johnny shake hands one last time before Johnny, KJ and Anna walk from the porch. In a little while Boyle will be alone again. He'll have plenty of time to make his supper and relax. He's completed most of the preparations for his move.

When Anna returns home, she cleans her rifle on the porch while supper – Cornish game hens and a vegetable casserole – is baking in the oven. KJ cleans her rifle on the enclosed porch of the cottage, with Johnny beside her dismantling and reassembling the AK47. They find

time for cleaning their weapons and having a bit of fun before they finish making supper.

After the meal, KJ embraces Johnny and he caresses her neck, her hair and her back. They've both showered and changed. He's wearing shorts and a sleeveless shirt, while she's changed into a tank top and black bike shorts. He usually brings a few pairs of clean clothes in a bag in the back of the Rubicon so that he can change should he become sweaty or dirty. KJ appreciated the foresight on his part, and then begins to wonder if the clothes are there so that he can leave everything behind in an instant.

They separate so that they can look into each other's eyes. She smiles a little and then sighs.

"So Irish John's leaving us," KJ says.

"Yeah," Johnny says.

He wants to add something, anything, but there is nothing to add, no promise that they'll ever see Boyle again, or that the Core will ever meet again. Those promises would be lies.

"Are we going to meet tomorrow?" KJ asks.

Her hand rubs his back. Johnny nods.

"Yeah," Johnny says, "I have some shit to take care of tomorrow morning but I'll be here around ten. We'll go to Bill's and get in a little practice at the range. How's that sound?"

"Good," KJ says and nods.

Her smile does not last long.

"I love you, Johnny," KJ says.

Johnny kisses her head and smells her hair.

"I love you too, angel," he whispers.

As Johnny steps through the inner door and on to the porch, KJ stops him. He turns and looks at her. She takes his arm and kisses the back of his hand. Then she looks into his eyes. He touches her cheek, turns and leaves. Neither says a word; neither has to.

Johnny Bowen shows up as he predicted, at 10 AM on the nose. It's warm outside. Today promises to be hotter than yesterday, although the dry trend will continue for at least one more day. He takes a new red backpack from the passenger seat of the Rubicon and slings it over his shoulder. Before exiting, he glances back at the purchases he's made. Several grocery bags sit in the rear. Johnny climbs out of the Jeep and walks to the door, which begins to open before he can push the doorbell.

KJ's already dressed for the trip, which pleases Johnny Bowen. They may have more time later if they get started early. He admires her white three-quarter sleeve shirt. He always likes it when she wears a collar. He

also likes the jeans, which fit her to perfection. Johnny and his angel step inside the porch and share a kiss, and she complements his appearance in his white polo shirt and brown jean-style trousers.

"I have some stuff out in the Jeep," Johnny says.

"Hey, breakfast's done," KJ says, "I'll get that shit, you go ahead and eat."

KJ squeezes him and rubs his chest, and then slips around him and hurries to the Rubicon. Johnny enters the cottage. While KJ grabs shopping bags from the Jeep, he shoves the backpack under her bed. Inside the kitchen he finds a serving of ginger pancakes and a jar of homemade elderberry jam, courtesy the Murphy's, as well as chilled orange juice. He eats as she brings the bags into the kitchen.

Once she finishes the second and final trip, KJ pours them some coffee and sits opposite him at the little kitchen table.

"Did you notice?" KJ asks.

Johnny lifts the cup to his lips but waits to take a drink.

"You changed the drapes," he says. Before, they were white with dark blue stripes. Now they're white with red embroidered cardinals on each side. Johnny takes a sip of his coffee. "Nice," he says.

KJ looks down and smiles.

After breakfast, the two do not hesitate to depart. She's already packed her shoulder bag and puts on her holster as he dons his tennis shoes. KJ's already wearing a pair of tall army boots. Before stepping outside she dons her sunglasses and Mack hat, and put on her gloves. These are one of the pairs that go up near her elbows and are snug on her hands and forearms. The young lovers take the Rubicon, with Johnny driving and KJ nestled in the back. She lays her hat and shades on the floor to the left.

KJ covers up in the sheet and pretends to be sleeping as Johnny fills the Rubicon with gas. Once they're on the road again, she's rocking to the music of *Sonic Syndicate's* "Denied", and even sings most of the song. Johnny smiles, and is surprised and impressed when she gets fierce and growls the most energetic lyrics, and it comes out superb. It is very difficult for a woman to give a good performance with death metal vocals. He's heard her do it before and it never ceases to amaze him. To Johnny Bowen, the limits of KJ's talents are indeed far and wide.

As Johnny and KJ approach the Donnelly Homestead on Old Braddock Road, they can see Anna's Subaru and Garret's Jeep parked this side of the big Chevy truck.

"Nice," Johnny says, "I was hoping they'd show."

Anna is already at the range. She looks magnificent. Her hair is braided rather than in a single ponytail as she usually wears it. Though she's wearing jeans and sneakers, her top makes KJ think that at least Anna will be staying for dinner. She's wearing a lovely pink floral blouse. As is common with the shirts and tops that Anna purchases, the neck stops just short of showing the ample cleavage that she could easily bare should she so desire.

While Anna and KJ discuss music, open a few boxes of ammunition and don their ear and eye protection for target practice, Johnny steps outside the building to meet with Garret, who he could see approaching through the little window beside the entrance door. Though Johnny could see Garret's Jeep at the Hall, Garret had not yet made an appearance in person. He must have been conversing with the Donnelly's. Outside, Johnny closes the door, and he and Garret take a few steps down the outside length of the enclosed range.

"How's KJ?" Garret asks.

It's hot enough that he's dispensed with the long sleeves, though not the usual collar.

Johnny shrugs.

"This is going to be really hard on her," he says.

"She's not the only one," Garret says.

"No," Johnny says, "She's not. She's tough and strong and dedicated. She won't walk away or fall apart. It'll hurt, but life and all the shit she's gone through have made her tough. How's Anna holding up?"

Johnny looks into Garret's eyes.

"She's conflicted," Garret says, "She's worried."

"I figured she would be," Johnny says, "She has a lot of good things in her life. But she knows good things won't last. Her little nephew won't have half of what she does, and his children won't have anything if they're even born at all. She knows. I'd be surprised if she walks away."

"So would I," Garret says.

Johnny correctly interprets what Garret is feeling. He is not thrilled to see Anna go to war.

"Neither of us wants this," Johnny says, "But in a way we both want it. Bringing them in is a huge fucking victory. And it's fucking agony. I'll tell you what I want, man to man, I want KJ to go argue our cause on forums and in songs and shit like that, and I want her to carry a gun to defend herself, and that's it. I don't want her to ever have to use it. I'll even tell her that, but I won't deny her the chance to rise with us. Those children we all talk about, well, they're going to be her children, too, should she somehow

be lucky enough to have children. She has a right to fight for her future children, whether I fucking like it or not."

"I know what we're doing is right," Garret says, "and it was right to include them. It won't get us into heaven, but it's right."

"Who will get there?" asks Johnny, "Who's willing to take a stand? Other white people? Fuck." Johnny gestures toward Uniontown, "They won't quit drinking some shit beverage even when the ads insult them for being white. They sure as fuck won't stand up for themselves in front of a fucking nigger. Who does make it into heaven? Liars? Race traitors? Anti-white kikes? White sheep who let this happen, even though the writing is on the fucking wall? We've known for a few years what's going on. At least we're not sitting there watching the affirmative action Steelers, cheering on some nigger wide receiver who has eight children and got busted for pot and reckless driving but won't serve a fucking day for almost killing some white motorist. Fuck that and fuck them, and if they do make it, fuck their heaven, too."

Garret nods.

"All my life popular culture has told me that I'm nothing," Garret says, "I know what they think of me and others like me. Hollywood, TV, commercials. The blond guy's the rapist, or the coward, or he's obnoxious and wicked. He's the enemy. He's the proxy. They're saying that I'm guilty, I'm stupid and evil, and obsolete. My existence is blasphemy. They reveled in my doom, celebrating the inevitable extinction of my hair and my eyes, and our skin. They told me so," Garret says and then looks at Johnny. "But I don't believe it. I know why they do this. It placates the traitor's hate for his fellow white man. He rests easy knowing we'll disappear in time. Then they said that red hair will be gone in a century or so. Anna, beautiful Anna, the beauty she has is so rare I've only seen its equal once. They celebrate its impending extinction. And now they celebrate the extinction of all white skin, regardless of eye or hair color."

"Garret, come on, fuck those motherfuckers," Johnny says.

"There's more than that," Garret says, "At least some of them are going to learn. There's a price for treason and genocide against our race, and it's more than just a fine or a reprimand."

"No doubt about that," Johnny says.

"We'll win, John," Garret says, "But not with words alone. Even by fighting, we can't stop all of them, not even close. The biggest engine behind our genocide is the coalition of CEOs and managers and bureaucrats, and those types aren't in this ideologically, they're in it for wealth and power. We can't scare away the Jews and anti-white zealots; they're

in this because they hate us as whites. They won't rest until we're extinct, and that cannot be changed, only reduced and eliminated. But like Bill and KJ said, the others profit from our pain and death, and they drive our genocide more than anyone else. If those who profit from our extinction feel real pain and real fear, some of them will quit supporting the war against us. That will take a lot more than words. We will win, John, but I don't think you or I will see the end of it."

"And if they fight," says Johnny, who motions his head toward the ladies inside the range, "You don't think they'll see the end of it, either."

"Do you?" Garret asks.

Johnny looks at his blond war brother.

"No," he says.

They remain outside for a short while. The sound of gunfire is a dull thud outside the walls of the range. Finally Johnny reaches for the door.

"John," Garret says, "whatever you need to say to KJ, tell her soon."

Johnny, his hand on the door, stares at Garret and nods.

By 3:30, KJ and Johnny, Garret and Anna have moved to the hall. The pistols are clean and holstered. KJ sits on Johnny's lap beside the little table. She remembers the first test that Bill gave to her, and the little array of objects on the table. She could take the test right now and still remember each item.

Garret stands by the door. He watches Johnny and KJ and then looks at Anna, who was sitting but rose to get everyone some water from the refrigerator. Garret motions for her to come to him. She walks over and a little smile appears on her face. His arms over her shoulders, Garret looks into her eyes, and they embrace.

The wondrous spark of youth and a desire to defy their somber mood inspires Johnny Bowen to lift KJ in his arms and carry her into the side room where the heavy bag hangs and where he might find the gloves for self-defense training. Garret interprets his motive and cracks a smile. His arm around Anna's shoulder, they both follow Johnny and KJ into the room to the right. Johnny sits KJ on her feet and scrounges through the metal cabinet beside the bench. He finds several pairs of gloves, including one pair that was shoved to the back. Johnny takes those out first.

"Here," Johnny says to Anna.

He hands the gloves to her. Anna puts on one of the two, and discovers that the fingers are webbed.

"What the hell are these?" Anna says.

"You've never seen those?" asks Johnny.

"Yeah, but not for self-defense," Anna says, "They're for swimming."

"We're not gonna hit anything today, not hard at least," Johnny says.

"You want these?" Anna asks KJ while spreading the fingers on her gloved hand to show the webbing.

"Angels don't have webbed hands," Johnny says, "Mermaids do."

"Yeah, but those are fucking awesome," KJ says, "I'll wear them if you don't want to."

"Cool," says Anna, who hands the gloves to KJ and then gestures for Johnny to give her a more orthodox pair.

Johnny hands a more traditional pair to the redhead, one glove at a time, as slow as he can. Anna doesn't lose any of the smug look on her face. Johnny turns to see KJ wearing the gloves and opening her fingers wide so that he can see the webbing.

"Yeah, they are cool on you," Johnny says.

KJ comes over and puts her hands on his cheeks. She has that wicked smile, the one that forces him to kiss her, and it works.

The instant that KJ and Johnny separate, he grabs a pair of gloves from the cabinet top and tosses them to Garret, who lets them fall to the floor.

"So that's how it's gonna be," Johnny says.

Neither gives the other time to limber up or formulate a plan. That's typical for one of their sessions. Nonetheless, the nature of the practice is light-hearted. KJ and Anna also engage in play-fighting and general merriment. No one goes full-contact, or even strikes hard enough to cause discomfort or leave a mark. It's not meant to be a realistic practice, but rather a diversion and a release of stress, which at the moment is far more important than any serious instruction.

Johnny and Garret pause to watch their ladies play-fight. The girls practice throwing punches that would have struck home had they been serious, and of course they laugh and cavort, with much bravado accompanying even the less-than-stellar results of most techniques. Once, Anna and KJ hug, their embrace turning into an impromptu wrestling match that ends with KJ applying a good-natured chokehold on Anna. The price that Anna must pay in order to escape is a light "Dutch Rub", as applied by KJ with the webbed gloves.

"I love those arms," Johnny whispers to Garret as he watches the ladies resume punching and blocking practice. He sees KJ throw a punch, which Anna blocks. When she draws her arms in close Johnny can admire the size of her biceps.

"Yeah, they're really nice," says Garret, who looks at Anna's well-developed arms.

Neither man restricts his gaze to the ladies' biceps, though both limit it to their respective lover.

The much-welcomed antics end with a loud knock on the outside door. Johnny motions for everyone to remain while he walks out to identify the intruder. They watch him peer through the peephole, none more intently than KJ. She breathes an audible sigh of relief when she sees Johnny unlock and open the door. A moment later, she hears the voice of Bill Donnelly.

"Come on up for supper," Bill says, "It's a little early, but I don't think you'll mind."

KJ can picture him winking.

"OK, Bill, we'll be right up," Johnny says.

Johnny closes the door and returns, slapping his hands together once and then grabbing the doorframe as he repeats Bill's invitation, minus the wink.

KJ somewhat suspected the supper invitation; it was one reason she wore the collared top. Still, she packed a knee-length black skirt in her bag, and excuses herself to change into it. She takes the belt from her jeans and threads it around the waist, which is more for look since the skirt fits her very well. It also keeps her holster at her hip.

KJ changes from her boots to tennis shoes, and then reconsiders. The boots look fine. She checks herself in the mirror, brushes her hair and washes her face, and then emerges from the bathroom. Anna, who may also have suspected an invitation but who will not change clothes, is next in the bathroom.

Johnny takes KJ into his arms when he sees her. Her beauty is unique and stirring and even though he may have to leave her forever, that beauty shall never be far from his soul.

"You look gorgeous, babe," Johnny says.

The thought of losing her never enters his mind. It does enter hers. KJ touches his cheek and smiles.

Anna's beauty is likewise unique, and as a man gains wisdom he finds it impossible to choose who might be more beautiful, a young woman like Anna or a young woman like KJ. He allows his personal preferences rather than any actual physical asset to determine the answer. Anna comes into the entrance room and she is a sight to behold. She's applied just a bit of blue eye shadow and a touch of pink color to her lips. Her spectacular braids hang over her shoulders and down her ample chest. She sees Garret's eyes follow the path of her braids and she giggles a little from embarrassment and flattery.



The thought of losing her does not enter his mind. It does enter hers. She rubs Garret's hand and smiles at him when they get close to one another.

Bill Donnelly greets the four at the rear entrance of the house. He, too, abhors the heat of a Pennsylvania July. He shakes the men's hands with both of his, and hugs and kisses the cheeks of the ladies. In his light summer shirt and gray slacks he's as strong and healthy-looking as any 55 year old they've seen. It's clear that Bill has not limited his physical activities to the garage. He leads the four young men and women to the dining room, and then leaves for the kitchen to help Megan put the finishing touches on what must be an impressive dinner, based on the smell from the doorway and the complete spread on the big wooden table.

Megan is first to come in from the kitchen. Carrying a large bowl of salad, she looks the part of a mother and a lovely wife in her purple dress, replete with blue and red flowers, ruffles from her neck to her chest and a white ribbon around her waist. Her hair is down and the reds and browns outshine the gray strands of age, much as her smile and blue eyes mask her 50 years better than any cosmetic ever could.

The salad is the first triumph. Sliced and diced beetroot, onion, red cabbage and chervil fill the bowl and temp the palate beneath a crême fraiche dressing. Bill returns with a bottle of his finest, and gives the men a full shot, and the women a third of a small shot glass each so that they too might taste the best whiskey from County Cork. He asks them to help themselves to the salad before he leaves for the kitchen. A short while later the Donnelly's return, bearing the side dish and the main course; triumphs number two and three.

The main course is braised shoulder of lamb. The rosemary and thyme are the perfect complement to the taste and smell of the meat, which is made to perfection. The side dishes are baked Gubbeen cheese with fresh herbs, and hearty wheaten bread.

Bill makes a toast to their health, and they partake of the whiskey. The sights and smells are exquisite and the whiskey opens up the palate so that it might sense the full range of tastes. The meal begins and KJ again serves her Johnny when it's their turn to take from the serving dishes. As he watches her spoon the lamb's sauce over the portion of meat that she selected for him, which was in her opinion the best of the cut, Johnny thinks of the love he feels for this young woman and the thought of losing her crosses his mind.

As the main course of the meal disappears from each plate, Megan puts on a kettle of tea and the Donnelly's await the familiar whistle

amongst their young friends in the dining room. KJ looks up at the chandelier and the dark wooden ceiling. The last few years have brought nothing but change to her young life and by all appearances the flow of time is not done with her yet. She feels like she'll never see this room again.

The small talk begins with Bill asking if anyone has a relative or an acquaintance who could use several fluorescent lamp bulbs. They're the wrong size for a light in his Waynesburg shop, and rather than send them back he'd like to see if someone might use them.

"No, but I remember disposing of a few once," Johnny says, "Me and Cristi, we were eleven, I think. We found a bunch of them in a dumpster outside BFS. I threw one back into the dumpster, and we saw how it smashed to pieces and some powder flew out, so of course we had to throw all of them. It was a good time. At least until we got caught."

KJ looks at him and a grin begins to appear on her face.

"Not everything we did was smart," Johnny says, and she looks down and laughs.

Then KJ looks into his eyes and the chuckle fades like a flash of lightning.

"But there were other things that you did," KJ says, "Noble and beautiful things. You've already fought for us. You went to Iraq and risked your life and you're still risking and fighting. The ones you fight for don't return your love, but you keep fighting for us."

"One of them returns my love," Johnny says, "and then some."

He rubs her upper back. KJ gasps as she smiles, a union of joy and suffering.

"Cristi tried to convince me not to go," Johnny says, "He said I might die or end up a cripple, and for what? For kikes and neocon imperialists, invade the world, invite the non-white world, kill the Serb, that's like their fucking motto. But I knew that someone had to sacrifice and get the skills to fight a real war. How could I ask someone else? I went to my uncle and he understood, and so I got the tat, signed up and got the fuck out of here." He looks at Megan. "My apologies, Mrs. Donnelly."

Megan smiles.

"None necessary," she says, "I grew up around men of war. I've heard all the words."

"Thank you," Johnny says. He looks at KJ. "Anyway, Cristi and I'd been talking about a resistance. We could see the shit happening to our race, the endless propaganda and escalating anti-white violence. He favored the IRA model; I told him we don't have any support here, not yet. Take workplaces, for example. Let's say some nigger supervisor messes

with me, so I tell two other white workers that the black bastard doesn't like white people, I bet at least one of them runs to HR to tell on me, like a good little faggot tool. Cristi eventually came to agree with me, what I said about lacking support. We have to start small, quiet, in the shadows or the dark of night. Everything that's successful has to have a start, and I knew we'd need people with training. So, I did it. I promised myself I'd never forget why I was there, the real reason, and I'd never kill a white man unless he was a traitor to his race or his people."

Bill looks at KJ as Johnny speaks. He thinks of a time that exists only in fantasy, where KJ and Johnny Bowen can live among the foothills in a beautiful little house, and Johnny can use his strength to raise their sons and daughters good and proper. He sees her in his arms, content and happy, without the nervousness and anxiety the anti-white world has heaped upon her strong young shoulders. When he looks at Johnny, the real, here-and-now John Ashley Bowen, he sees him firing his AK. There is dirt and blood on his camouflaged jacket.

"We shall never forget you, John," Bill says, "You are an extraordinary young man. You've proven you have the courage to fight this war, and my grandchildren will need men like you if they are to have a chance in life. On their behalf, I simply cannot thank you enough."

Johnny Bowen does not speak. He looks at KJ and rubs the back of her neck.

"I love you," KJ mouths.

Anna looks at them, and then down toward the floor by the entrance door. What she sees is in her mind is beautiful and agonizing; an image from far away, perhaps in the future, perhaps never to be.

The time slips away and the four young lovers and fighters retreat to their vehicles.

"This is a hard time for everyone," Johnny says to KJ as they wait for Garret to drive on to Old Braddock Road.

"I know," KJ says, "I feel it too."

The Rubicon purrs as it sits at the edge of the long driveway. Johnny hasn't turned on his iPod yet. It's seven o'clock and bright outside, so KJ must sit in back. She's still wearing the skirt, though she's removed the belt and holster and laid them on the floor. Comfortable, she curls up and covers with the sheet. Johnny stops the Rubicon at the entrance to Old Braddock long enough to start the iPod. The first band to play is *Youth of Today*.

"I like their music," KJ says, her eyes closed and her body wrapped in the sheet, "Too bad most of these guys are pussies when it comes to

their rage. They always pick safe targets, like racism or eating meat. Eating fucking meat! It's embarrassing. You want to impress me? Sing about farm murders in South Africa, or what companies are doing to white working men. Not fucking migrant workers, but white working men."

"Yeah, I know," Johnny says, "Fucking pussies. Hill's not a pussy, though. He's got courage, always telling the goddamned truth, when it will kill your career and maybe even kill you. We weren't born to be cowards, though, were we?"

Johnny glances in the mirror to see her.

"No," KJ says.

KJ doesn't tell him how much she fears for his life, or how hard the system will come down on a courageous white man like John Ashley Bowen. He knows, anyway.

It's dark when they arrive at the cottage. The outside world is peaceful and the temperature is starting to fall. It will be a comfortable night, and the air conditioning won't need to run non-stop.

"Do you want to stay a while?" KJ asks.

"Yeah," Johnny says, "I'd like that."

"Do you have work tomorrow?" KJ asks.

Johnny shakes his head and touches her cheek. She kisses his hand.

Inside, KJ changes into a t-shirt and bike shorts. Johnny pulls his shirt out of his pants and unbuttons the second button down. She turns on the laptop and shows him a YouTube video of a puppy that she finds cute and amusing, and they watch a few more clips, ranging from a time-lapse video of a man playing a drum solo, to the amazing footage of an Alabama tornado. Johnny brings two bottles of Saratoga water from the fridge.

"I'm gonna have to get you more of these," Johnny says, looking at the bottle.

"Hey, Johnny," KJ says, "What else did you do with Cristi? Do you mind telling me?"

"I don't mind, angel," Johnny says, "You really want to hear that shit?"

"Yes!" KJ says and rubs his knee.

Johnny sits his empty bottle on the floor beside the bed.

"Well, we used to go to Pinto," Johnny says, "There's a rail line that runs down from the mountain and the trains fly by. There's all kind of skeletons along the track from animals that weren't fast enough to escape. We used to climb the fence or walk the track up to some limestone caves, where they used to mine. We'd fuck around there in the caves, climb the rocks, do shit like that. And we did stupid shit too."

"Like what?" KJ asks and smiles for a few seconds.

"When one of the loaded trains came down the mountain," Johnny says, "One of us would stand on the track and see how long we could stay there before running like hell."

"What the fuck, dude!" KJ says, "You could have been killed!"

"Yeah," Johnny says, "I had to jump a few times. I left a bit of skin on the gravel, more than once, actually."

The room gets silent.

"I bet you stayed longer than he did," KJ says.

Johnny nods.

"Most of the time," he says, "I'm the only one who had to jump."

KJ runs her fingers through his hair.

"You don't need to prove anything to me," she says. She unbuttons the third button on his shirt and strokes his scar. "I know who you are, Johnny Bowen."

They kiss for a while, slow and quiet, without the urgency but with all the passion that their kisses usually have. Johnny touches the bridge of her nose and tells her how the splash of freckles drives him crazy. KJ immediately nuzzles him, and he smells her hair. In time the hour begins to grow late, and he must depart.

"Angel," Johnny says after rising from the bed, "There's a backpack under the bed. Don't open it unless I tell you to, or something happens to me. OK?"

"Johnny," KJ says, "Please, no. Please don't do this."

He looks at her.

"You're my woman," Johnny says, "If I leave something for you, you'll take it. If I offer my life for you, you'll accept it. That's all I'm going to say."

"Alright," KJ says.

KJ reaches up and squeezes his hand.

"I love you," KJ says.

Johnny strokes the side of her head.

"I love you, too, angel," he says. "My angel."

He touches her cheek.

They walk to the door, where Johnny turns her around and gently lifts her t-shirt. Uncovered except for the very bottom feathers, her wings are magnificent, and he kisses each one once. KJ turns and squeezes him before wishing him goodnight.

Everything seems so quiet once the Rubicon's motor fades away.

The morning of the 16th is calm and bright. Johnny Bowen arrives at the cottage in time for breakfast, which he shares with KJ at the kitchen

table, and when he's nearly done he takes her on his lap so that they might be closer. Before leaving, KJ changes from her bike shorts and tank top into the usual Coalsack gear, including her gloves. She shoulders the Remington rifle. After he caresses her arms and she rubs his chest, the two walk to the Rubicon. KJ stows her rifle in the rear alongside his AK, and then she takes her seat at Johnny's side.

Neither Johnny nor KJ speaks much during the trip. KJ memorizes the trees and the sky, the wolf paw sticker on the glove box and the little *fleur de lis* that now hangs from the mirror – anything she can use to remember the times she spent with the man who she loves. Unbeknownst to Johnny, KJ is wearing his tags under her hoodie and top.

When the two arrive at Coalsack, they see Boyle's truck parked outside the cabin. A tarp covers its entirety. John Boyle is standing on the porch. Despite his solitary life among the trees and stones, he looks to be in excellent shape, if a little too thin. He's wearing jeans and a short sleeve shirt. Prominent at his side is his holster and pistol.

"When Anna arrives," Boyle says after waiting for KJ and Johnny to exit the Rubicon, "I want the both of you to practice spotting. You stay down here first, and we'll see how long it takes you to find her. Then Johnny will try to find the two of you. You won't be shootin' today. You can do that with whoever takes my place."

KJ looks at him for a moment, and then puts her hat upon her head. The sun will be bright today, but she'll give it no flesh to scar.

Anna arrives a little later. She, too, shows up with her rifle, and although they won't be shooting she and KJ will carry their rifles in simulation of an actual mission. Anna is first to set off into the woods, with Johnny providing security for her. KJ sits on the porch step and waits, listening to the walkie-talkie for Anna's signal. While KJ attempts to find her sister-in-race, Boyle will keep track of how long it takes. At 1 PM the moment arrives. The second KJ steps around the edge of the cabin, Boyle starts his chronometer.

A little after one o'clock, Rian Donnelly arrives at Jessica Hanratty's Pittsburgh apartment. He's put on a handsome green dress shirt and dark gray slacks for their meeting. In his hand is a red rose for his beloved. It is a ritual he's performed on several previous occasions. In his mind, he can hear her sultry voice as he climbs the steps to the front door.

Jesse answers shortly after he rings. She's wearing a snug white top and a black skirt not unlike KJ's of the previous evening. They greet with a kiss. She takes the rose and thanks him, and lets him into her place. Rian takes a seat on the soft white couch and Jesse goes to the kitchen

for drinks. Rian turns the book on the coffee table so that the cover faces him. It's an illustrated compilation of short stories, including *The Velveteen Rabbit*. He looks at the excellent artwork until Jesse returns with a Guinness and a Diet Rite soda for herself.

"I'm meeting with Garret tomorrow," Rian says. Jesse looks into his eyes and she nods. "I'd like you to come along."

"OK, Rian," Jesse says.

"They're going to need someone to drive them around," Rian says, "They're going to need someone with skills should they need to get out in a hurry."

"Are you that man?" Jesse asks.

Jesse expects her beloved to fight, yet the prospect scares her. She wouldn't be a good woman if it didn't.

Rian looks into her eyes again.

"Yes," Rian says.

Jesse takes his hand and looks down. He touches her long brown hair.

"Listen to me, love," Rian says, "I know you said you'd stay with me no matter what decision I'd make, whether I left and joined the IRA or whether I stayed. We're coming to a point of no return and I love you enough to let you reconsider without anger or bitterness."

"There were no secrets when you proposed to me," Jesse says, "Either you were going back to the IRA, especially if they became aware of the anti-white genocide, or you'd be a part of some American resistance. I said yes then and the feeling's even stronger now. I'm white, too, and this is my responsibility the same way as it's yours. So much in this world is a lie. What people say and do, what they say they agree with, whether they know it or not, it's a lie, and it's killing us. We're dying and we refuse to accept the proof, right in front of our eyes. What I have with you is not a lie. What Garret's doing is not a lie. You and him refuse to let your people die. I won't walk away from that. This is our chance to live and give life to generations that follow us and there is no way I'd walk away from that."

Jesse smiles.

"You'll just have to put up with me," she says.

Rian takes her hand and kisses the top of her wrist.

"Tell me what I need to do," Jesse says, "I can't fight or shoot, but I know first aid and some medicine, and I'm learning all the time." She smiles. "I can even get water if you need it."

"I think Garret will give us an answer," Rian says, "Come here, love."

Jesse slides close to him on the couch and he pulls her into his embrace. Rian kisses her hair and rubs her shoulder.

"We'll find a way to be married," Rian says, "It'll be private, so those who wish us harm can't use our union to their benefit."

"Do you think we'll ever make it to your old homeland?" Jesse asks.

"Yes," Rian says, "After we win."

It's 4:30 at Coalsack on a warm and sunny afternoon. KJ and Anna come in to the cleared area once they've finished their observation and scouting exercises. To avoid the increasing humidity and the jealous sun that would sting their eyes, the young women retreat to the garage after washing their hands and faces by the cistern. Johnny appears and waves at them before heading to the cabin. Anna hangs her hat on the nail by the door; KJ, who was at the shaded range while Anna came in, had already removed hers. It now lies on the bench to her right; near the .30-06 rifle that leans against the bench within easy reach in case of an emergency.

"Hey KJ," Anna says, "I wanted to ask you what you thought about something. I read on a couple of websites about a pack of niggers beating a tranny to death. They had a link to the local news story, so I know it's not bullshit."

"Didn't that happen a few years ago?" asks KJ, "They thought it was a white woman and that's why they beat him, because he was white, is that what you're talking about?"

"No, this is different," Anna says, "This time they knew it was a tranny. I wanted to ask what you thought about gays. Personally, I can't stand them. I mean, look who they support, they're always allied with anti-whites and hostile minorities. Look who they insult and attack when they have control of a forum, like a television show. They always attack and make fun of whites, especially straight white men. They act like we should be siding with them against our own men. I'm not happy about it, but you know, they want to be allies with anti-whites and non-whites against my race, so I say to hell with them. They're one of our enemies and besides, they're disgusting. Have you seen pictures of their parades? I've seen children watching them march by, with the homos walking around naked and engaging in sex acts right in front of those kids. You know, personally, I think it's a mental illness. Anyone who would do that in public..." Anna shakes her head. "They say they want to be treated with dignity, no they don't. They want approval for their sickness."

KJ looks at her. She has thought about this before. Once she tried to reconcile the friction between homosexual whites and heterosexual whites like her, but the growing hatred on the part of homosexuals for



straight white men and their attempts to disparage the love between white men and white women began to irk her, and eventually led her to realize that, white or not, homosexuals willingly took part in virtually all anti-white movements and coalitions. KJ also remembered her own childhood, and the truth of the homosexual movement that she witnessed with her own eyes, which the media refuses to show.

"It is mental," KJ says, "I used to have a lot of sympathy for them, but I think that was because of my parents and where I grew up. Then I realized, they're gay, not white. That's how they see themselves. Being homosexual is 100% of their identity. Being hetero is not 100% of ours, I mean, we talk about other shit, and Johnny and I listen to music and the other day we went on a nature hike and checked out plants and mushrooms and tried to, like, identify birds by their songs. Yeah, we had some fun, but our lives didn't revolve around the fact that we want to make love to each other. That's part of our identity. It's a big part, but it's not everything. Homosexuals just fucking obsess over their sexuality. A person's gay, and it's more important by far than any other part of his identity. He's oppressed even though he can get you fired if you offend him, and of course in his worldview all straight white males are the enemy. They ally with non-whites and anti-whites, and that's fucking funny because most of them would kill faggots if they had the chance. It doesn't matter, though, because they hate straight white men more than they love their own lives. Neither faggots nor lesbians can handle the idea that a white man and a white woman are happiest together. If they can't recruit, they'll at least try to force young whites to approve of their unhealthy lifestyle. They hate our men, Anna, and they'd hate you and me because we won't be followers and we won't call them normal. I started calling them faggots just to piss them off and to get on my parents' nerves. Faggots and dykes chose to be anti-white, so fuck them."

Anna smiles.

"Yeah," Anna says, "That's exactly what I think. Fuck anyone who's anti-white."

"But you're right, it is a mental illness," KJ says, "I've seen it in person. I've been to marches like the one you described and I was one of the kids watching that disgusting shit. My father used to take me to those kinds of marches. That, and slut walks."

Anna puts her arm around KJ.

"You made it through all that," Anna says, "No one ever seems to make it through! Johnny calls you an angel, and you know, maybe you are."

"I just want our race to survive," KJ says, "I just want our children to be left in peace, without all the threats and lies shoved down their throats. Let them love their race; there's nothing wrong with love. Let them grow in peace, and love one another as brothers and sisters, and men and women. Just...Leave us the fuck alone. That's all I want."

Her arm still around KJ, Anna rubs her sister's shoulder.

The interior of the cabin is a shell of what it once was, and strongly resembles how it looked the day that Johnny, Garret, Boyle, Ford and company met to hear Garret's plan of action. Like all their lives, it is in a state of flux. Within days, Jimmy Ford will return and begin stocking the place anew. John Boyle will be a memory by then. At the moment he sits beside the table and Johnny Bowen leans against the closed door.

"I'm goin' to Cristi's place," Boyle says, "I'll lay low for a while, and then we'll get together for some training before I head west."

"I assume you have a key," Johnny says.

"I do," Boyle says.

"What are you taking?" Johnny asks.

"The Parker-Hale, the fifty caliber we agreed on, my S&W and my Armalite," Boyle says, "I'm takin' two of Ford's experimentals, too."

Ford's "experimentals" are his first attempts to manufacture a small explosive – a "potato masher" grenade. Jimmy brought them, along with some supplies, about a week ago.

"He emphasized that they're for emergency use only," Boyle says.

"You'll find a way," Johnny says.

Boyle flashes a smile.

"I guess this is it," Johnny says.

Boyle rises to his feet and approaches his brother-in-race and now in arms. They shake hands.

"Good luck, my friend," Boyle says.

"Take care, John," Johnny says, "Make 'em hurt."

John Boyle watches as John Ashley Bowen strolls over to the garage and summons the two young ladies. He sees Johnny telling them something just inside the garage entrance, and then the two beauties look in his direction. Anna waves. Neither of them smiles.

Boyle stands on the porch while Anna drives off, followed by Johnny and KJ. In ten days he'll trade the hills of West Virginia for the cool woods of southern Minnesota. From there he will disappear, his only contact with the others via arranged meetings and email sent in code.

On the way past Duck, West Virginia, KJ finally breaks the silence in the Rubicon.

“John’s the only ally we have, isn’t he?” she says, “Actually, he’s white too. So I guess we have no allies.”

“That’s something to remember when we start winning,” Johnny says.

KJ looks at him with hurt on her face. With his presence bolstering her, she fights through the pain and smiles at him. When it fades she touches his shoulder and looks at him for a while.



## Chapter XVIII



## The Friday Decision

KJ and Johnny arrive at the hall around the hour of 10 on Wednesday morning. Before Johnny left his apartment, a call came in over his cell phone. It was Jimmy Ford, and he asked if he could meet with KJ sometime that day. He mentioned something about Thursday's meeting of the Core, which is supposed to be the last ever meeting, at least at the Donnelly Homestead.

Johnny told KJ of the impending rendezvous when they met at Amblersburg earlier that morning as she dressed in a black *Killing Joke* t-shirt and a pair of body-hugging jeans. She left her sunglasses and cap, since clouds had moved in and covered the sky. It is even supposed to rain. When the pair arrives at the Hall, KJ is quiet, as is Johnny. Over the speakers, the melodic and somber "As I Die" from *Eternal Tears of Sorrow* comes to an end and Johnny turns off the iPod.

Inside the Hall, KJ lays her shoulder bag on the table. She stands there, her back to Johnny and the door. Johnny looks at her. The thought of losing her is the only thing on his mind.

"What would you like to do today?" Johnny asks.

He sees her raise her gloved hand to her face and then lower it. KJ makes a fist. A moment later she turns and forces a little smile.

"Hit the heavy bag," she says.

Johnny nods. Once, her blue eyes meet his. Her beauty is immense and to him no other woman can compare. It transgresses the physical. Every little movement, every little look she gives stirs his soul. He's never, ever come close to feeling this way before, not even when he thought he was falling in love with his first girlfriend.

KJ changes her jeans for a pair of exercise leggings. As before, Johnny gives her the best practice gloves in the cabinet. Fifteen minutes after KJ starts pounding the heavy bag, a knock comes from the outside door. Johnny heads over to check and sees Garret Fogarty standing out-

side. Garret's wearing a red polo shirt and beige pants. He won't be engaging in any self-defense practice today.

Johnny opens the door. As soon as the two greet, Johnny sees Jimmy Ford's Ram Charger coming down Old Braddock Road.

"KJ!" Johnny says, "Jimmy's here. I'm going to talk to Garret 'till your done."

"OK, Johnny," KJ says from the side room.

Garret and Johnny wave to Jimmy Ford as he pulls in, and then walk to the edge of the Hall toward the forest and the empty little field. Ford, carrying a large rectangular case sheathed in cloth, goes inside.

"I'm going to talk to Rian and Jesse," Garret says, "I expect them to join Capricorn Cell. If not, I'll ask Ford to be our wheel man."

"That would suck," Johnny says, "We need him for supplies and repairs."

"I know," Garret says, "but we'll just have to deal."

"Cristi could take Rian's place if shit doesn't work out," Johnny says, "When's he leaving?"

"That won't work," Garret says, "He's already got a job lined up and a place, and I suspect other things he can't talk about. Anyway he leaves on Friday. He'll drop by Markleysburg so you might want to stay there tomorrow night and see him off right."

Inside the Hall, Ford removes the cloth. The object is his guitar case.

"We'd better practice a little," he says as he checks the cords.

Ford's blonde-brown hair is trimmed and his black t-shirt, tucked into his pants, shows the solid build of his arms and chest. Aside from the shirt, he's wearing a clean but rather worn pair of jeans as well as safety toe work shoes. No doubt he has some kind of work to do at his private shop. Atypical are his glasses. Ordinarily he wears wire-rims, but today they have larger lenses and wrap-around plastic frames, probably shock-resistant, although the side guards are not attached.

KJ walks over to where Ford has taken a seat. He glances up and sees the hint of sadness on her face. He knows it's just the surface of a deep ocean. Without another word, he begins to play the distinctive start of "Wild Horses." Without hesitation or protest, KJ begins to sing when the moment arrives.

Johnny hears the faint music through the walls. So, too, does Garret.

"Are we doing what's right?" Johnny asks.

"What part of it?" Garret asks.

"I don't mean fighting," Johnny says, "We have to fight. How the fuck can we walk away, they're trying to kill our fucking race. All the big money



companies, kikes and anti-white religious nuts trying to genocide us, of course it's right to fight those cocksuckers. What I mean is, on a personal level. Those who profit from this shit will do anything to kill us. We're going to be the most hated white men who ever lived, because we're challenging the traitors' livelihood and the anti-white religion that almost every goddamned person seems to believe in. That's America now, an anti-white fucking empire. There's only one person who they'll hate even more than us, and you know damn well who that is. Any white woman who fights for her race, especially if she's young and beautiful, especially if she's a real, honest-to-God rebel. Is it right to do this, Garret? Is it right to encourage them like we have, to fight, to be hated and fucking hunted by this goddamned country's army of traitors? I know they want to fight, fuck, they need to, and I'm not being a fucking idiot, either. I know we need them to pull this off. But there's more, you know?"

Johnny stares into Garret's eyes. Garret never falters. The breeze today is a little cool and very pleasant, as are the gray-mottled skies. The trees murmur from a high gust that shakes their branches.

"Anna and KJ are amazing," Johnny says, "KJ's an angel, and after all she's been through she awoke and she refused to surrender. She deserves a beautiful life, like all those goddamned rich traitors have. If she obeyed them she'd be somewhere with a fuckload of money, I know she would. But she refused the chance to have all that beautiful shit, because she wouldn't let them destroy who she is inside. For that alone she deserves everything she could have had, and a whole lot more."

Johnny hears Jimmy Ford's sweet guitar. The man has talent. Johnny does not wait for KJ to continue singing.

"They'll try to destroy her," Johnny says, "She's a white angel, and a real fucking rebel. I know you have the power to change their role, or at least try to keep them out of harm's way or make them auxiliaries. I don't think that you will, not if they choose to fight. If I were you I wouldn't, I'll admit it. But is it right? Is it right what we're doing to them?"

"I'll never know," Garret says, "I know that I need my race to survive. Girls like Anna have to be born. Red hair, blue eyes, pale white skin has to be born. We cannot allow our beauty to disappear from this Earth. Don't fool yourself, John; I've thought a great deal about the women we love. If they do not rise, but instead have children in this hateful, anti-white world, no matter how many white children they have, they will suffer the evil of the system and they will perish from the Earth, if not their children then their children's children. They will be tormented all their lives. I don't know if it's right to send them off to fight, but know what I just told you and I

believe they'll fight anyway. I'd bet my life KJ will fight. They care as much as we do about the future, maybe more because their bodies will carry those white children. Right or wrong, our war is their war. If we do nothing, those like Anna, and KJ, will disappear forever from the Earth. We need every fighter we can to help prevent that."

Johnny can hear KJ's voice, as soft as a whisper, though it must be powerful to penetrate the thick walls and still be intelligible. He can hear a small part of the song, near the end, with the lyrics she chose to sing from the many variations she must have found on the internet.

*"Let's do some living, after we die."*

Johnny does not ask if Garret hears. Garret touches Johnny's shoulder and walks away. Johnny watches him climb into his Wrangler and then depart for his meeting with Rian and Jesse. Johnny waits until he's certain that KJ and Ford have finished practice before reentering the Hall.

Past sleepy little Smithfield, Pennsylvania, Garret makes a right turn toward Friendship Hill Park. The road here runs through dense forest with thick underbrush. Orange day lilies are plentiful, and an occasional Osage orange tree stands among its more common maple and oak brethren. Garret remembers visiting the park in years past, especially during the September festival. He remembers as a youth seeing a remarkable red-headed girl who carried a basket of flowers and who wore a colonial-style dress and bonnet. Twelve years later he would fall madly in love with that girl.

Within the boundaries of the park Garret takes another right and parks among the trees in a small gravel lot. From there, numerous woodland trails snake out into the wild. Garret stops at the far end of the open spot and waits there alone, without even an empty car or bicycle nearby. In the rear-view window he sees an FJ Cruiser drive around the trees that block the view from the park road. It pulls up alongside his Jeep. Garret looks up at the white sky. It won't rain for a while. He exits the Wrangler. Jesse watches him from the inside window of the Cruiser and waves when she sees him look her way. She opens the door about the same time that Rian opens his. The three meet in front of the vehicles, beside a huge log that serves as a barrier between the gravel parking lot and a large grassy field.

Jesse is a remarkable beauty. Her blouse is simple and white, and her jeans snug but not vulgar. Her modest attire does nothing to diminish her comeliness. She's parted her hair down the middle and it shimmers even in the soft light. Her green eyes are clear and bright. For his part, Rian is handsome and smartly dressed in casual yet respectable attire.

Though not the same shirt as yesterday's, this one is green as well. The wind plays in Garret's blond locks and Jesse's brown mane. Rian's hair is a tad too short. The invisible fingers of the breeze cannot disturb his trimmed coiffure.

Jesse hugs Garret, and he and Rian shake hands. The wind that played in their hair now combs the long grass of the field.

"What have you decided, Rian?" Garret asks.

"I'm in," Rian says.

"I assume you two have talked this over," Garret says.

Jesse nods.

"Yes, we have," Rian says, "and we're in agreement that this is the right thing to do."

"Good," Garret says, "You know there's no going back for any of us."

Garret looks at Jesse.

"I know," Jesse says before Rian can answer.

"I have a question for you, Jesse," Garret says, "One that I wished to ask in the presence of your husband-to-be. If your love and dedication to this white man is everything that you can give, it is by far enough. That's the most important thing I can tell you. Should you wish to participate in a more active manner, you might be able to do us a service that we can never repay, except through our eternal gratitude."

"I'm not a fighter," Jesse says, "My nursing skills are getting better, but I wouldn't trust myself to save a life, at least not yet."

"I'd never ask you to fight," Garret says, "That would be your choice alone. In fact, we don't want you to fight. We need you to make supply runs to our safe house. We need you for internet orders and other essential tasks. We also need your occasional presence to ward off any nosy or curious locals."

Jesse looks down and nods, then back into his eyes.

"I can do that," she says, "How often would I drop by?"

"Weekends," Garret says, "Unless something comes up, and you could let us know. Otherwise you'd drop by on the weekends."

"So we have a safe house," Rian says.

Garret nods. He lifts his finger and walks to his Jeep. Inside is a satchel, from which he removes a map. He carries it over to Jesse and Rian.

"Here," Garret says and points to a spot in Preston County, West Virginia, "That, my friends, is Procyon. It's near Amboy, just up from Aurora. I've attached a Google Earth image so you get a better idea. Here, this is the place."

Garret shows them on the image as well. There are no marks distinguishing the place; no ink circles or names written or typed. He hands the maps to Jesse.

"Rian, you and I will meet at the Hall on Friday morning at 7," Garret says, "Remember, Friday at 7. Jesse, please do not come with him. You'll drive to Amboy on Saturday morning and find the place. Park out front and enter as if you own it. Rian, you and I will not use the front. Not ever. I'll show you how we enter and exit. Jesse, please keep those documents safe. Once you learn how to arrive at Procyon please destroy them."

Jesse looks at the maps and then at Garret. He waits for their eyes to make contact.

"Our lives may well depend on it," Jesse says, "Thank you, Jesse."

Garret reaches into his pocket and takes out the key that Gary Murphy gave to him. It's a simple pair of silver keys, one for the front door, and the other for the deadbolt. It dangles from a little metal keychain, which is in the shape of a rabbit.

"Can we count on you, Jesse?" Garret asks as he hands the keys to her.

Jesse closes her hand around them. She was already dedicated to the struggle. She'd seen the constant erosion of freedom for her brothers and sisters in race, and the destruction of working class whites and their families. She's seen feminism's ravages on relations and acquaintances who faced lives of bitter loneliness and an inability to love and feel love. She saw anti-whites growing richer and more powerful at the expense of their own brothers and sisters in race. She saw the other profiteers, from black to brown to the Ashkenazi, synergizing with the anti-white zealots and further crippling the white middle class and the men who keep the lights glowing and the motors running. Long ago she promised herself she'd make a stand, regardless of the loss of her modeling career or job. Some things were more important, like fidelity and the love of one's own. But as convinced as she was, and indeed she was convinced, they were just words; until today when the keys touch the white skin of her palm.

"You can depend on me, Garret," Jesse says as she clenches the keys in her fist. "I promise on my life."

"Thank you, Jesse," Garret says. "Aaron Van Dyke is the owner of the house you'll be visiting. He's an old friend of yours. You're house-sitting while he's away on his expeditions. When we meet at Procyon I have some more things for you."

"Rian," Garret says without turning toward him, "We'll go in my Jeep. John Bowen's going to drop off Jimmy and he'll take the Wrangler off our

hands. On Saturday morning Johnny will pick us up and drive us back to you father's place. Jesse, Rian, on behalf of Capricorn Cell, I thank you."

Jesse smiles. Rian salutes Garret with two fingers to his left temple.

"I'm off," Garret says, "God bless," he says, putting his palms together as he faces the two lovers.

Before he pulls out, Garret sees Jesse putting the maps and a couple of bottles of water into a shoulder bag. It's a good day for a walk around the woods.

Two weeks ago, Bill Donnelly presented Garret Fogarty with several handwritten lists of names. There were six names on the first list. Beside the names were three destinations – the three theaters of operations – with two names for each destination. The second list had five names, and, consequently, one of the destinations (Andromeda Cell, Western Theater) had not two but only one name. And so it went, with various combinations, each contingent upon who might decide to fight, and who might decide to become an auxiliary. There was also a variant list of two names with a single destination – Capricorn Cell. Garret memorized the lists before burning them. He will ask these six if they will dedicate at least part of their lives to their race's struggle for survival. In an ideal situation, he'd know how all six candidates would respond to his appeal, and where they would go. At the moment he cannot be sure. Once Garret leaves Friendship Hill, he drives straight to Lemont Furnace.

No one is home at the Murphy residence. Garret figured that Gary would be at work. He'd hoped to speak to Anna alone. He returns to his Wrangler and then turns back to look upon the house where once a young redhead girl helped him learn the Irish language. She would grow into a beautiful young woman, an affectionate and decent white woman who deserves a joyous, peaceful and fulfilling life. Whether or not she fights for her race or flees to the far corners of the darkening world, those with great power and privilege at the expense of her race have already denied her the chance for a peaceful life.

Garret jumps into the Wrangler and speeds off toward Pittsburgh.

In spite of her melancholy mood, which is unusual for Anna Murphy but completely understandable considering the choice that she faces, she executed her first two dives off of the one meter platform with precision and near-perfection. The red-haired mermaid launched her body and twisted and twirled and entered the water by ripping rather than slapping its surface. True, the first dive was not among the more formidable of her repertoire, but the second dive had quite a high degree of difficulty and yet her performance was exceptional.

Upon surfacing, Anna climbs from the water and wipes her head with a towel. She looks down at her suit, the silver beauty that was last year's birthday present, and she feels pride in the gorgeous body that fills its every alluring curve. She has worked hard to build and keep that lovely body and, although modest, Anna will not feel shame in being beautiful. She unties her pony tail and sets her wet hair free to cling to her back.

Now it is time for her third dive. Anna decides to perform a swan dive and climbs the three meter platform. It will be her only three meter dive of the day. Anna approaches the board but before stepping out and flying into the air, she glances at the audience. Among the handful of people who've come to watch their sons and daughters and friends, there is a very familiar blond man. The surprise on her face is clear, even at his distance. He waves and smiles; so does she. For a moment she forgets the future. She looks back at the board and clears her mind. The swan dive is precise and elegant. The flash of silver, the red hair and milky white skin followed by the clean rip of the surface and the ripples on the water are an amazing sight. So is the mermaid as she undulates under the water, all the way to the left side of the pool. She surfaces and rises from the waters, looking every bit like a mermaid from Irish legend.

For the first time ever in Garret Fogarty's eyes, Anna Murphy's ivy tattoo becomes more than a symbol of familial love; it is an extraordinary work of art.

Anna walks over to him and smiles, but it fades quickly. She fears asking him why he's come. He steps forward and she comes up very close to him. Garret takes her hand and she feels the rise of emotions, though she resists the sea of tears that swells in her soul.

"Anna, sweetheart," Garret says, "Tomorrow night at Bill's place, I'm going to speak to some of the Core members, those I think I could depend on with my life and the lives of those I love. You're one of those I trust, Anna. It'll be your decision how you wish to proceed. You'll have a week after tomorrow to decide, so I wanted to tell you as soon as possible."

"OK, Garret," Anna says, "Thanks for coming by."

Garret looks into her pale blue eyes. He wonders what he can say that will not hurt her. He wants to take her into his arms and kiss her and feel her warmth and the strength and softness of her body. He wants to leave with her, to Ireland or Norway or Switzerland, somewhere they can live among other whites and her beautiful children can grow and thrive in peace, without denigration and despair. But Europe is dying as fast as America. There are no more homelands, only the unforgiving future and the fight.

"Nothing's right anymore,' Anna says, "I knew it would come to this, Garret, and really it has to. But it's not right."

She looks down and some of the pain shows on her immaculate white face.

Garret takes Anna into his arms. He doesn't care that she's wet, and it feels too nice for her to end their embrace just to keep his shirt dry.

"In another place in time," Garret says, "I'd ask you to be my wife."

He feels her tighten her grasp on him.

"I'd say yes," Anna says, and then sighs. "I guess they've taken that away from us, too."

"I know, Anna," Garret says, "I'd take you away if I could, away from all the hate out there for us, where you can love who you are without anyone trying to destroy you." He caresses her smooth back. "Johnny can't be the only one who fights," he whispers, "We can't ask others to sacrifice while we hide from the struggle. This is our war, Anna; everyone with white skin."

When they separate he kisses her. Then Garret touches Anna's cheek and walks away.

Thursday morning dawns cloudy and a shower passes through Amblersburg as the sun rises behind a thick gray veil. KJ continues her exercise regimen, since life does not stop in spite of changes, happy or sad. KJ makes breakfast and saves a portion for Johnny, though she does not expect him so early. Afterward she arranges her clothes for the evening at the Hall. She considers wearing a tiered dress or dress pants with a more formal top, but keeps returning to the blue dress. She does not know if she will see her Johnny again after Thursday night. She knows that he likes the dress. KJ hangs it in the bathroom, beneath the tiered black dress so that he cannot accidentally ruin the surprise. She wipes her pair of dress boots, the ones Johnny bought for her, and admires their shine. Her hands on her hips, KJ looks around the room, thinking of what else needs to be done. Suddenly she hears an engine and a vehicle pulling into the driveway.

The hour is 9:30 AM. She hurries to the porch and glances around the blinds. Her ears have not deceived her. The motor belongs to Johnny's Rubicon. KJ has not yet showered, and still wears a black sleeveless t-shirt and a black thong. She doesn't give the slightest damn. As soon as Johnny arrives at the door she opens it and grabs on to him. She kisses him before he can speak, and then he looks at her gorgeous face and kisses her. His hand finds her rear and he holds her tight. God, how he'd love to get his old job back and move in with her in their little

place near Amblersburg. He'd make her his wife. They'd live here in peace and happiness, and build something a little larger as soon as money permitted. They could move to the Pacific Northwest if she wished it; if they had peace it wouldn't matter to him. He could find a job there. It wouldn't be difficult. And one day he'd come home and she'd tell him she felt the baby move.

Johnny looks into her blue eyes. He sees the sadness and strength on her face. KJ will fight. She will love, with all her heart and soul and being. She will love him, forever, and she will fight this war. Her wings will spread and carry her to battle. It is his greatest dream come to life, and his darkest fear.

"My angel," Johnny says.

It lasts a split second, and is over in the blink of his eyes, but she sees it creep across his face. The agony he feels is immense. She squeezes him and buries her head in his upper chest. After a while she turns and leads him inside the cottage. He takes her by the shoulder and stops her, and then he lifts her shirt to see her wings. He comes close to telling her he'll never forget them, not once for the rest of his life. The thought is searing pain and he keeps it to himself.

"They're so beautiful," Johnny says, "So beautiful."

He lets go of her shirt.

KJ turns and looks into his fiery green eyes.

"My man," KJ says, touching his cheek, "You gave everything for us. At least I know who you are. I wish I could spread my wings and fly away with you."

KJ looks down and he doesn't say a word. He just watches her turn and walk to the kitchen.

After breakfast, Johnny retrieves his clothes from the Jeep. He lays them on the table beside the laptop.

"I'm gonna get some supplies for this place," Johnny says, "Is there anything you think you'll need?"

The question is a knife in her soul. She shakes her head and he turns to leave.

"Wait," KJ says, "Come here."

She rises from her seat beside the little table and beckons with her gloved hand. When he gets close to her she backs up and sits on the bed. He sits beside her. Once he does, she stands and sits on his lap. KJ is still wearing the sleeveless top and thong.

"OK, angel," Johnny says.

"Please stay for a while," KJ says, her arms around his neck.



Her hair flows around both of them and down past her breasts and over his blue "Baltimore Bandits" t-shirt. He sighs and strokes her back. The smell of her hair is soft and beautiful. His mind urges him to avoid it. The pain of missing that smell will be a great and heavy burden on his soul. There is no way he can comply.

In a garage not far from Rockwood, Pennsylvania, James "Jimmy" Ford and Austin Kelly are preparing the black Dodge Stratus for a new paint job. They've already changed the wheels and put a deliberate dent in the left front fender. Today they'll get the car ready for painting and call it a day. There is an important meeting of the Core at the Donnelly Homestead, and neither man wishes to be late.

Outside a shower begins to fall. Ford steps back from the Stratus and notices that Austin's looking outside.

"It's gonna rain like that all the way to Sunday," Jimmy says.

"Oh, I don't give a shit," Austin says, "We're still goin' to Republic, unless something comes up."

"Um-hm," Ford says, "Hey, I got something I need to tell you. I've been talking to Garret, and I'd be surprised if you haven't noticed that we've been talking a lot of shit lately. We're always talking shit. Fuck, since we opened up at the Big Meeting all we've done is talk shit. Anyway, we're done talking. It looks like we're going to fight. Whitey isn't going to be pushed around anymore."

Kelly snaps his head toward his friend. His gray eyes look into Ford's. Jimmy has the stare of the ancient warrior, the man who will face the enemy and show him no mercy. His stare is resolute and unemotional. His glasses might as well be invisible.

"I'm in, Austin," Jimmy says, "Are you?"

"Yeah," Austin says, "I'm in."

The skies over Amblersburg are still an unbroken gray, though the air is heavy and steaming. It is very uncomfortable outside. Johnny Bowen is on his way to a farmer's market near Kingwood, West Virginia. He'll stop at a couple of grocery stores and fill up two new reserve tanks, which he'll leave at the cottage for the blue Jeep. The errands will keep him away from KJ for over four hours. He'd much rather be there, sitting on the bed with her on his lap, or somewhere in the woods walking and talking to the woman he loves. These chores are necessary. For the time being, she will have to drive a considerable distance to safely shop and refuel, and even then there are no guarantees. She will need what he brings her today.

KJ waits for his return before she washes and dresses for the meeting. Her exercises finished and supper already planned should they not

be eating elsewhere, she curls up in bed. She glances over and sees the Remington on the cabinet. Much of her life she wanted to be alone; away from those who told her who she must be and those who would not accept who she is. Now that she can finally be herself, will she be condemned to be alone? Will she get her wish now that she does not want it to be fulfilled? That was before she knew Bill Donnelly and Anna Murphy, and fell in love with John Ashley Bowen. To the left of the bed, down on the floor and out of sight, are his dog tags. She takes the tags and carries them over to the rifle, where she hides them along its side. Then she returns to bed. If she must be alone in order to be true to herself, then she shall be alone. If she cannot love her race and her dear Johnny without the fear of reprisal or ruin, then she must resist those who would stop her, even if she must do so without ever seeing her lover again. Her joy may be a memory, but that memory shall be eternal and his name shall be sacred to her heart. There is nothing eternal or sacred in the soul of a traitor.

KJ closes her eyes.

"Your angel will never forget you," KJ whispers.

David Fox has everything ready for his fishing trip on Sunday. He hasn't been to Seghi's Five Lakes in eight years and is looking forward to a day of relaxation. If luck is with him, he'll equal his previous performance and catch another bowfin. He is off today and tomorrow, as well as Monday. There is a lot on his mind. Tonight is the final meeting of an extraordinary group of people who welcomed him and made him feel like a member from the beginning. They more or less think the same way as he does about race and the peril that threatens their descendants, more than anyone he's ever known. His sixth sense tells him that some monumental announcement waits for him at tonight's meeting. David takes a white dress shirt and charcoal gray pants from his closet and a red tie from his antique bureau. His girlfriend expressed a desire to go out for the evening, but he told her they'd meet on Friday. He knows something very important is going to happen tonight. He has no idea how important.

At noon, John McShane arrives at his Mt. Pleasant apartment. He climbs the steps to the top floor, where his one-bedroom home overlooks the CSX railroad line. He worked from 7 to 11 this morning at his survey technician position, lugging equipment around Laurel Hill. He plans on lounging around until Kevin Toomey comes by and they head for Bill's house. He'll throw on his blue button-down shirt and nicest pair of Dockers, and probably a pair of loafers. McShane goes to the fridge for a cold piece of pizza and a colder bottle of Yuengling before washing his red hair and checking his email.

Before Bill came to America, John McShane knew his native-born relation from pictures and a few childhood memories. He'd been to Ireland twice, but only remembered the second trip, when he was six. Since then, his parents had been too busy or cash-strapped to take him back, and now he has little time off for vacations.

Mason Walker begins going chin-ups on the bar he installed in his apartment. The place is clean and orderly. He has a date tomorrow night with Regina Starkweather, who is showing increasing solidarity with her race. Her feminist indoctrination is minimal and she is no follower of the anti-white cult. Extroverted and vivacious, she is also decent and thoughtful, and once convinced of an idea or a fact, she is resolute without being argumentative in the face of disagreement. On top of it all, Regina is a modest young woman, despite her attractive appearance and well-built physique. Mason could find himself in love with such a woman.

With Cristi's help, Mason found a job at Trane. He begins work on Monday. Mason would like to invite Regina to Bill's place, but he believes it would be an intrusion to bring someone with whom he's just getting serious. Too bad it's the last meeting; he's sure they'd like Regina, and she'd like them. Since things got serious between the two, he's been working out more and cleaning the place with diligence. He won't choose what he'll be wearing tonight until closer to the time of departure, but his selection will be wide thanks to the greater frequency with which he washes and irons his clothes. Likely, he'll dress somewhat casual, but will certainly not wear a t-shirt or shorts. The days of Mason Walker appearing at important meetings and events in such slovenly attire are all but over.

Mason's cousin Kevin Toomey was always an excellent shot. Once he hoped to make West Virginia University's rifle team, but he realized the value of having a skill as opposed to a huge student loan debt and a worthless BA degree. He learned to operate a forklift, and after suffering through the white slavery of temporary services, found work at a warehouse near Scottdale, Pennsylvania.

Toomey is making preparations to move out of his parents' home. By October, he hopes to realize that goal. At the age of 18 he did move into an apartment in Scottdale. When his term ended and the temporary service told him they had nothing but a minimum wage job at a hot and dusty clothing warehouse, impending poverty forced him back to his parents' recreation room. At his current job he earns around \$30,000 per year, and with his debts paid he can finally return to manhood.

Kevin will take a test drive this afternoon before going to Bill's. He has his eyes on a '04 Ford Thunderbird hardtop. He's set out a collared

shirt with red and white stripes and a new pair of jeans for tonight. Since the possibility of moving out has become real, he's considered asking Anna Murphy out on a date, but noticed her holding hands with Garret. It's obvious that beautiful KJ is also off-limits. This does not depress him. Kevin knows that there are other fish in the sea.

At 1PM, Anna Murphy has finished cleaning the rooms of the Murphy Home and she's also done the dishes from this morning's breakfast. Just after noon she completes her cardio routine on the treadmill in the basement. She'll make a pitcher of lemonade for her and her father and then set out her clothes for the evening. She has her mind set on her long green dress with the three-quarter transparent sleeves and floral pattern top. It is elegant and reminds Gary of the kinds of dresses Mary used to wear. Anna will wear her hair in a ponytail, but it will be braided. She will wear her Celtic cross pendant and her ubiquitous crucifix, as well as silver bracelets. This is the last meeting of the Core. It may be one of the last times she sees the man she loves.

A large oval mirror hangs on the wall opposite the bathtub, and a table with drawers and a wooden chair is in front of the metal-framed mirror. The chair is too small for Gary, though it is resistant enough to hold his weight. It's even a little small for Anna but it serves its purpose. Anna is sitting on the chair and brushes her hair as she looks into the mirror. Little birds fashioned from the metal frame seem to look at her but they do not sing. Is she to be alone? Will the men go off to fight for her race and her future children, leaving her behind out of necessity, or mistaken kindness? Does she want to give up her attachments to this life – her father, her relatives, Bryce? Can she help the men in some other way? She looks at the ivy on her arms, first in the mirror, and then she looks down at the right and the left. Her tank top allows her to see every green tendril as it wraps around her thick and beautiful upper arms.

At three in the afternoon, Johnny Bowen returns with his Jeep absolutely full of supplies. There isn't even room on the passenger-side seat or floor. He begins carrying the items to the porch. Once there, he rings the doorbell. It will require five trips and both his arms will be full each time. KJ opens the door. She is still dressed as she was.

"I brought you some stuff," Johnny says, "I'll set the bags on the porch and we can sort 'em out later."

"Can I help?" KJ asks.

No one can see her from the road, and the sky is darkening. Rain will begin to fall after an hour or so.

"OK, angel," Johnny says.

KJ dons the pair of soft brown boots that she took out of her array of footwear and sat by the inside door for just such an occasion. Johnny waits for her at the Jeep. When he grabs a bag she stops him, taking his hand in hers. He looks into her sad eyes.

"Don't go yet," KJ says, "I still have you for today. Don't try to spare me, OK?"

Johnny looks at her for a minute, and then pulls her in close and tight. KJ closes her eyes and squeezes him.

"Angel," is all that he can say.

Inside, Johnny changes into a dress shirt and black tie. He holds his suit jacket over his arm. KJ looks at him and smiles.

"You look magnificent," KJ says. "I mean, you look dashing," she says and bats her eyelids. Then she looks down and smiles.

Johnny strokes KJ's head and her thick hair and he smiles.

"Your turn to wow me," he says, eager to see her when she returns.

A little while later the bathroom door opens and Kaylee Jane Campbell emerges. She's wearing the blue dress and the long black gloves she wore to Easter dinner, back when the present seemed eternal. Johnny steps close to her. Her lips shine from just a touch of pink lipstick, and around her eyelids she's applied the blue eye shadow that mirrors her irises. The rest of her pale white skin is free to breathe, without even the slightest brushing of makeup. She looks down and smiles. Johnny lifts her chin and looks at the freckles across her lovely and distinctive nose. Every feature stands out to him, like a dream too vivid to be real. Her hair drapes over her shoulders in front and back. No race save hers could ever have hair so thick and so very beautiful at the same time. No race save hers could ever have skin so fair and angelic. He looks at every element of her being, and then into her light blue eyes.

"You look absolutely beautiful," Johnny says and then he kisses her hand.

KJ looks up into his eyes.

"This past year, there were times I needed to get away," KJ says, "I'd picture us at Cascade in the fall, or dream about you and me in Victoria. No matter what I did or what you did for a living, it didn't matter, because we were together and everyone who didn't like it could fuck off. We didn't have to live there. We could be here. It doesn't matter because we were always together."

KJ stops and regains the composure she came close to losing.

"Do you regret getting close to me?" Johnny asks.

She looks into his eyes.

"Never," KJ says, "Never in my life will I regret what I've had with you."

The back of the dress reveals the top of her wings. He touches her cheek and turns her around so that he might kiss each wing.

"Don't ever forget you earned these," Johnny says, "I think you were born with them."

"You taught me to fly," KJ says.

When the hour arrives, Johnny opens the front door and holds it for KJ. The rain has passed and the sky is a little lighter, though still gray, and the air remains thick and unpleasant.

"Shall we take your Jeep?" Johnny asks.

"I'd like that," KJ says, though she preferred to hear "our blue Jeep."

Tonight Johnny will wear his pistol inside his suit jacket. KJ checks her handgun and is prepared to bring it as well, when he stops her.

"I'm glad to see that," Johnny says, "But tonight, I'll watch over the both of us."

KJ looks down and smiles. The gun will remain inside her cabinet.

Johnny holds the outside door for his beloved and together they walk the short distance to the blue Jeep. Johnny opens the passenger side door and KJ climbs inside. As he rounds the front of the Jeep, KJ unlocks his door. She has never forgotten to perform that simple but loving gesture.

The meeting place in the Hall is no longer as it once was. Gone are the long table and the smaller but sizable round ones. Now there are five smallish round tables in a group, none far from the others. One has two seats; the Donnelly patriarch and matriarch will sit at that table. Close to the left wall is a different long table – this one with a white surface and somewhat greater length – as well as a smaller round one. The long table will hold the various treats that Megan and Bill have taken two days to prepare. The small table will serve as Cristi's self-service bar.

Bill digs deep into his wardrobe. He will not tell the members of the Core, but the striped suit that he wears tonight was the same that he wore in 1994 when he pledged his gun to Continuity. He has never and shall never forsake that pledge. The struggle remains very much alive, though the peril that his race faces, and his Irish people face as members of the white race, has brought about a much more urgent fight. To William Donnelly, once the survival of his race is assured, it will be time to win back the six counties, once and for all.

That day will surely be beyond the mortal life of Bill Donnelly. Still, he is a Continuity man to the end of his days, and he cannot think of some-

thing more meaningful to wear as young men and women dear to him depart for war.

Megan Donnelly never felt the need to dye her hair. For tonight's meeting she did visit a stylist, and although no dye touched her roots or gave a false look of youth at the cost of damaging her still-resistant strands of hair, the stylist trimmed and arranged her hair in a manner that emphasizes her timeless beauty. To her great pleasure she finds that the dress she wore to her nephew's wedding still fits. He, too, is an IRA man, and three days after the wedding he avenged the death of his second cousin at the hands of the British Army. The dress is a stunning creation, handmade in Ireland, with green and white and yellow colors. It is suitable for seeing young people off to marriage. It is suitable for sending them off to war.

James Ford is first to show. He helps the Donnelly's with food preparations and then practices playing his guitar. He will provide the strings for three tunes tonight: "Peg and Awl," "Carrighfergus," and of course "Wild Horses." Bill suspected that Jimmy would honor them with his music, although he does not know who will be singing the final song. It's clear that James Ford does not take the occasion lightly; he's dressed in a suit and tie.

Austin Kelly also wears a tie. He's dressed in a white button-down shirt and light gray pants. His dark hair is long again and he's let it down. Clean-shaven for tonight's meeting, he is tempted to ask his girlfriend to come but knows that she is not at the same level of racial consciousness as any member of the Core. In time, he believes she will be. Austin parks his black Dodge Avenger beside Ford's Ram Charger. Once inside, he'll help the Donnelly's serve the various dishes of the feast.

Johnny and KJ leave Amblersburg at 5PM. At a quarter before seven they arrive at the Long Hall. The sky is just as gray as it is further south and no one stands outside. The humidity can make a man sweat while standing still. The central air in the Hall will keep everyone comfortable and the two lovers make haste to enter. Johnny opens the passenger-side door and takes KJ by her arm. She smiles at him and they walk, arm in arm, to the front door of the Hall.

Just inside is Cristian O'Toole. He, too, is wearing a tie, though his apparel is a little less formal. His brown eyes and handsome face shine with life, and his physique is ever more powerful. He, Johnny and Garret have spent considerable time strengthening their bodies.

Cristi kisses KJ's gloved hand.

"You look magnificent, KJ," Cristian O'Toole says.

Cristi wants to ask Johnny how he won such a beauty, and tell him he's a lucky man. He does not. He, too, wonders how long the two will be able to remain together.

"Thank you, Cristi," KJ says.

Cristian and Johnny embrace. It lasts a while and ends in back-patting.

"Tell your mom and dad I said hi," Johnny says.

Robert McKenna, who'd been talking to Cristian O'Toole and partaking of a Guinness at the same time, sets his drink on the little entrance room table and steps over to greet the enamored pair. He shakes KJ's hand, and then Johnny's as well. McKenna's lost a little weight but does not look less intimidating. His arms are still huge, as is his neck. His attire is formal, including a tie, which seems a little small on his massive chest.

"How are you, Rob?" Johnny asks.

"Good," McKenna replies, "And you?"

"Good," Johnny says with a weary smile on his face.

"How have you been, KJ?" Rob McKenna asks, "You getting along OK?"

"Fine," KJ says, "Thank you."

Her smile lasts just a second or two. KJ's eyes are sincere, but she cannot show ebullience, for it would be a lie on this somber and introspective occasion.

From somewhere inside the Hall the aroma of unseen delicacies laces the air and stokes the appetite. Neither KJ nor Johnny has eaten supper, and the olfactory stimulant makes the prospect of an excellent meal a most welcome possibility.

As KJ and Johnny approach the open door to the meeting room, Anna, who is standing with her father, notices their coming. Her eyes widen for a moment. She smiles and waves to them. Anna is spectacular in her green dress. Gary turns to see who's arrived after Anna says something and motions with her hand. He, too, has taken this occasion very seriously; no wrinkles mar his suit or his dress shirt. A warm smile comes to his face when he sees KJ and Johnny Bowen.

"What a beautiful young lady," Gary says when KJ hurries over to them.

Gary embraces her, and then so does Anna. Not content to shake hands, Gary hugs Johnny Bowen as well, and slaps him on the back.

"How are you, son?" Gary asks.

"On my feet," Johnny says, "How are you, Gary?"

"About the same," Gary says.



Garret Fogarty enters behind Johnny and KJ. Truth be known, he's been at the Donnelly Homestead for three hours. He hangs his jacket in the entrance room and sports a silk dress shirt, a spotless black tie and dress pants. It's not unusual to see him in such attire. His black shoes shine like KJ's boots. He and Gary shake hands and Gary hugs him. Garret turns to face Anna and kisses her hand. She looks down for a moment, and then back into his eyes. He steps toward her, arriving very close, and takes her into his arms. Her eyes closed, she squeezes him tight. Garret looks up toward the ceiling until he notices a glance from Gary. He looks at the ursine Murphy father, whose eyebrows rise. And then the big man nods.

Johnny and KJ wait for Anna and Garret's embrace to end. Johnny's arm is around his beloved young partner. When Anna opens her eyes she looks at Garret and smiles. She doesn't want to give up her hopes and dreams, but whatever happens at least she is loved, and she most certainly loves in return. It may not blunt the pain but it will give her some consolation.

The two sisters-in-law compliment each other's appearance. They hug and Anna remarks upon the beauty of KJ's dress. Of course KJ repays the compliment, and it is true. Anna looks amazing in her green outfit. When he can interrupt for a moment without disturbing the interaction between KJ and Anna, which is more important to him than a greeting, Garret kisses KJ's hand and then he and Johnny embrace. He looks like he has something to say to Johnny. Garret's face remains stoic but there is no joy in his expression.

"No, don't," Johnny says.

"I won't," Garret says.

Whatever he thought about saying, the gravity of which he telescoped with his hesitance and somewhat grim expression, he does not mention a word.

Jesse and Rian are last to arrive. For once, her hair is in a ponytail. As usual her attire is more than flattering, it is fabulous. Most often Jesse would choose to dress in something elegant or simple yet remarkable to behold, but tonight, for the final meeting, she wears a dazzling blue dress with silver ornamentation along the top and across her breasts. The sentimental and spiritual touches have their place as well. Around her neck hangs the silver necklace and polished staurolite cross that she bought soon after her conversion to Orthodoxy. The little stone emerged in the shape of a Greek cross without the intervention of human hands. Like most of the men, Rian wears formal attire with a tie, his being green. No

one sits until the husband-and-wife-to-be approach and share words of greeting with the others. There is a great deal of hand-shaking and embracing, and a few incipient tears and many smiles. Years went into bringing the Core together. Tonight many of them will go their separate ways.

The members take their seats, arranged more or less as they had been on previous occasions. Ford is the only one who breaks the pattern though he has good reason. Two of the singers who will accompany him later are seated nearby. One of them, KJ, sits with Johnny Bowen, and Ford takes the third seat. Garret Fogarty sits with Anna and Gary to Ford's left. The two tables are close enough to be one.

"My dear friends," says Bill, the only one to remain standing, "What started as a society that indulged our ethnic interests and love of heritage has become a fraternity, a place of friendship, trust and love; love for our people and our brothers and sisters in race, and of course, love for one another."

Bill throws a brief glance at Garret and Anna, and then KJ and Johnny.

"Since the old Celtic Society closed its doors and a new chapter in the life of the Core membership began," he continues, "we have gained new members, we have had beautiful times and remained with irreplaceable memories. We had a terrible fright, but thank the Lord that we did not lose our dear KJ, and that she is safe and able to continue on with her life."

Bill glances at her, as do other members, and she gives a little smile in return.

"Tonight is not an ending," Bill says, "It is a continuation of life. Life is taking us in different directions, but in our hearts and souls we will always share the ties that bind. Brothers and sisters, lovers and friends, members of the white race, we feel these eternal ties and do not deny or resent them. We are not ashamed to be who we are. At the end of this evening, I shall implore a number of you to remain a bit longer, so that Mr. Garret might speak to you. He will contact you during the course of the evening and if you could, please remain once the others depart. To all of you, I offer my deepest appreciation for the love and friendship you've shown this man, his wife and his children. We hope that you enjoy the meal and in the years to come, find peace and prosperity. Again, dear friends, we thank you for brightening our lives."

Bill looks at Cristi, and then Robert and John McShane.

"Cristi, Robert, John," Bill says, "Would you be so kind as to help my wife and myself with the plates?"

In fifteen minutes the large table is full of culinary delights. Cristi's little table is likewise full, though the delights are liquid in nature. Beer, wine and mineral water sit chilled and unchilled, depending on the species of beverage. All eyes return to the main table to survey the nature of the food. To the right of the stack of empty plates and bowls, at the left end of the long table, are the hors d'oeuvres and the salad bowl. Smoked salmon, steamed vegetables, mushrooms stuffed with blue cheese and baked oysters with herbs and bread crumbs share the space with a rich salad that includes young dandelion leaves. The next section is reserved for the main course. Slices of caramelized duck breast glisten from the light that falls upon the juices and the glaze. Cider-braised chicken sits inside a large pan, its flesh surrounded by cabbage leaves. Two large slabs of pork belly, cut into slices, beckon with the contrast of white and pink and the deep red of the hard cider glaze. Near to the pork belly is a dish that will remind KJ of the formidable skills of Erica Chapman. Inside a large bowl there is a mixture of seafood in velouté sauce, with fish, shellfish and lobster all represented. Beyond the main course are the breads and rolls and then there is dessert: a chocolate almond cake for the chocolate lovers, a red velvet cake with vanilla icing and little icing florets, and a cinnamon plumb crumble. Portions of carrageen lemon pudding fill small stemmed glasses, for those not desiring a heavy dessert, or for those wanting a second taste of sweetness. The smell of food permeates the meeting room like an alluring perfume.

Before the meal commences, Megan and Bill serve everyone a small bowl of courgette cream soup. The base includes cheese and the taste is fantastic, as is the soup's appearance. A couple of slices of zucchini float atop the rich, creamy surface. With the soup gone, the meal begins. Naturally, the men defer to the women to begin eating first. KJ beckons Johnny close and whispers in his ear.

"What would you like?" KJ asks.

"Angel, I'll get it," Johnny says.

"Please let me," KJ says.

Johnny looks into her eyes and takes her by the shoulders.

"Alright, angel," he says and half-smiles.

Jimmy Ford sees KJ turn toward Johnny and he can see the top part of her wings. He'll have to compliment his brother, who truly is a master of his art.

Once KJ selects her meal, she sits her plate at her spot on the table and then returns for Johnny's portion. Anna, who is sitting particularly close to Garret, looks into Johnny's eyes. She raises her eyebrows. He

shrugs without a sound. Gary watches KJ returning with Johnny's plate. Mary used to do the same thing for him.

The food tastes as good as it looks, and better in the case of those edibles not blessed with visual attractiveness. The love and relentless effort put into making this meal illustrates, above all else, the deep spiritual meaning that the Core represents to the Donnelly matriarch and patriarch, who realize with exactitude the importance of dining together. It is not merely an act. For far too many of their racial brethren, dining has become a necessary task no more fulfilling than any autonomic response. Other deeply intimate human experiences have also become mere acts of gluttony. Not tonight, however; not among the Core. The quality of the meal and the atmosphere in the meeting room will remain vivid memories for all their lives. This final meal had to be extraordinary. Thanks to the Donnelly's understanding of the significance of the event, and of dining in general, the meal surpasses all expectations.

During the course of the meal Rian disappears for a short while in order to put on some coffee. Once the meal winds down, he and Bill bring the pots and the cups. As they do, the other members select their desserts, and KJ returns to Johnny and her seat at the table with two pieces of red velvet cake, both on the same plate though only one is hers.

"This looked so good," KJ says, "I imagine it's worth extra time on the bike."

"Don't spend too much time," Johnny says, "You don't need to lose any weight. You look amazing as you are."

KJ rubs his arm and smiles.

The coffee is Kona peaberry. The aroma and taste, of the coffee and the desserts, rivals those of the sumptuous meal that came to an end just minutes previous.

Johnny puts his arm around KJ as she sips her coffee, holding the cup in both gloved hands. He looks at her hair. He's never seen hair so beautiful. She sits her cup down after a sip and looks up at him. She comes very close to saying something from the heart, but curls her lip in a stifled little smile and looks down again.

Anna Murphy proves her resilience. When the time comes to share their voices in song, she is faster to rise than Jimmy Ford, who eagerly awaited the chance to play his guitar. He is a fearless player and one of great skill and quite a bit of experience. Though never in a formal band, he's played close to every night of his life since early in high school. For three years he played solo at festivals and gatherings, often taking the stage as indifferent or impatient crowds waited for other performers.

Tonight will be easy for him. The two take center stage – in this case, the open area to the left of the guests' tables. The room becomes silent, with neither whispers nor movements disturbing the calm.

Jimmy begins the intro to "Peg and Awl," and Anna Murphy begins to sing. Anna's voice is melodious and fitting for the song she chose, though her lack of training shows. She doesn't care. She knows that she sounds good enough to please the sympathetic crowd and does not hope or expect to outshine the second performer, none other than William Donnelly. The appeal of her rendition lies not in the refinement of her voice but in her passionate delivery. Though not professional her effort is worthwhile, the result is pleasing to the ears and the sentimental value among those who appreciate and even adore her is very high. She chose to perform the version that laments rather than rejoices in the decline of the shoe pegging profession, and for a working man like her father it is an appropriate choice. When the song ends, Anna has earned the applause that she receives. Anna returns to her seat with a smile on her face, and Gary hugs her before she sits.

Bill slaps his hands together and remarks about how difficult it is to follow such a beautiful and talented young lady. His happiness seems genuine. Neither he nor Megan are allowing the finality of the night's meeting to cast a shadow on the joys of the moment. Instead of "Danny Boy," Bill Donnelly sings the renowned Irish tune "Carrickfergus." He sings it in English, a version that has become sentimental and somber with the passage of time, and Bill's rendition is no exception. No one feels the sting of the song's meaning; indeed, they're not meant to, since this is not, as Bill explained, an occasion for lamentation. His strong, unwavering voice is ideal for a male vocalization of the song and the sound resonates through the meeting room without the need for electronic augmentation. His performance never falters, and neither does Ford's. Jimmy's playing remains impeccable from the very beginning to the final cords. Once the applause fades, Bill thanks his little audience and returns to his seat, where a standing Megan Donnelly hugs him and kisses his cheek.

From the sounds that he heard the other day, Johnny Bowen knew that KJ would be singing tonight. He and Jimmy Ford are the only two who know what's coming. Those who depart, never to see her again in person, will always remember her voice. Even before she ever sings a note to them, when the only recollection they would otherwise have is the spoken word, her voice is the most memorable of her many unforgettable and amazingly beautiful features. There always seems to be passion, whether she speaks of her true love or answers a simple question about the

weather. There is a force and a conviction as well, even in an apology for some minor gaffe. There is enormous strength born of resistance and deep suffering, not all of which this young soul has felt in her lifetime. There is joy and sadness and pain. She can speak with a hush or yell with wild fury and no matter the volume or intonation the sound always stirs a white man's soul. Johnny could imagine a female angel speaking with such a voice, urging a man to resist, and then drawing her fiery white sword and standing beside him when he does. He could see her sheltering the fallen warrior's body with her own, her white wings wrapped around the both of them. He does not carry the image any further.

Jimmy Ford does not move from the stool that is his place on the stage. KJ rises from behind her table and approaches him. When she takes the stage it comes as a surprise to many of those present. Her stunning, beautiful and sad blue eyes look up at those gathered. Ford looks at her for a moment and, once he assures himself that she's ready, he begins the intro to "Wild Horses."

Life would have taken Kaylee Jane Campbell to artificial heights of nonetheless great proportion. In spite of her voice and her look, no one could say if she'd ever have become more than a footnote in the history of the music industry, or if she'd ever have achieved fame as a songwriter. There is no doubt, however, that she would have prospered. At first she could have modeled. Even if she were as physically strong and healthy as she is now, there would still be a market for her look, and, together with her other talents, she would have acquired wealth and creature comforts without the need for luck. She knows this. She's known it since at least the age of 16.

There would have been a price, of course, as there always is. In the world of today that price would have been her loyalty to her race and to any children she might have. It is a price that the great majority of those like her would eagerly pay for the life that she could have had. Kaylee Jane Campbell is the exception; a being more rare than the most beautiful young woman or the most incredible voice. She is a young white woman who will not forsake her true identity, or betray the intense love she's felt all her life for people and principles dear to her.

Had KJ surrendered her convictions and chosen the life she could have had, tonight would be quite different for her. Instead of a small building on a farm in rural Fayette County, she would most likely be singing into a microphone at a recording studio. Instead of thinking about those souls most dear to her, and who she may never see again, she would be thinking about some gig or private party that she'd attend later that night. Had

she rejected her identity and embraced the life she would have had, the glare of her expensive possessions would have grown ever brighter as her young life marched forward. In time their shine would replace the dying flame in her eyes. Life pulled her toward accepting the worldview of those who would have given her the chance to sing, to write music, and to have all the amenities that they believe are worth the price of a man's – or a woman's – soul. She rejected the life they chose for her. To Kaylee Jane there was something much more precious than wealth and the approval and infatuation of others, and that was KJ, the woman inside, the white rebel. Neither good fortune nor blind fate brought Kaylee Jane Campbell to the Donnelly Homestead; she did.

For much of the song KJ keeps her eyes shut, though not the entire time. On occasion they open and their fire ignites the internal passions of those who watch and listen. Even Johnny Bowen, who held her close as she once sang to him, is struck hard by her performance. At the end the applause does not come as it did for Anna or Bill. It takes a moment for those present to recover from such a beautiful emotional beating.

When the members' amazement and appreciation becomes vocal, KJ looks at them and smiles in the short-lived fashion they've grown to expect and to love. Johnny Bowen does not wait for her at her seat. He advances as she approaches and they embrace well ahead of the table. Her eyes closed and her thoughts flying dangerously into the future, KJ squeezes her Johnny as hard as she ever has. There are a few tears among the womenfolk, including Anna, who is next to hug KJ. For the men there is a moment of reflection and recollection, of those most dear or of beloved dreams crushed by the grinding pressure of the American anti-society.

Some time passes before Bill fetches a bottle of whiskey and pours everyone a very small taste. He knows that some of his friends will be departing soon and does not wish to contribute to any vehicular mishaps on their way home. While he's gone, Garret Fogarty moves from table to table, asking certain members to remain and giving each a rolled-up piece of paper the top of which is colored, apparently to differentiate them. When Garret arrives at Anna he whispers in her ear and then removes the remaining papers from his pocket. He hands her the red one. There is only one remaining; this one plain white. He holds it in his palm as he steps around Johnny Bowen to speak to KJ.

"KJ," Garret says, "I'd like you to remain seated after the others leave." His blue eyes are astonishing, just the slightest shade darker than hers or Anna's. "Would you mind staying?"

"No," KJ says, "I don't mind."

"Take this," Garret says and hands her the plain white paper. A thin sliver of scotch tape keeps it furled. "Wait until you're home to open it."

KJ looks down at the paper and nods without looking back at him. Whatever is on that paper must be of vital significance.

Rian and Jesse are first to leave. They hug everyone, with Jesse coming to tears in a stoic and elegant manner that reminds Bill of the way Megan came to tears when he went off to war. Jesse hugs KJ and whispers her praise for KJ's singing, and how she would never forget the night's performance. KJ feels her own emotions rise but does not weep. Rian embraces KJ as well, and then the engaged lovers depart with waves and kisses. KJ, who watches the door even after they've disappeared, feels Johnny's arm around her shoulder and the approach of his face toward her head.

"I have to talk to Rian," Johnny says, "I'll wait for you by the Jeep, once you're all done here."

KJ looks at him when he steps back. A tear finally escapes down her face. He wipes it with his thumb. Before he goes outside, Johnny embraces and shakes hands with the other men. He says something to Cristi that's not meant for other ears. They do not embrace; KJ surmises that the two will meet again, at least one more time.

Robert McKenna and Gary Murphy bear-hug each other, and as athletic and well-built as Anna is, she seems to disappear in McKenna's embrace. He does the same to KJ, who is a tad shorter than Anna. Then he and Garret hug and shake hands.

"Godspeed, Mr. Fogarty," Robert McKenna says during the handshake.

Neither man looks away from the other's resolute stare.

"Good luck, Robert," Garret says, "You know how to contact me if it should come to it."

McKenna nods. He looks at Anna and KJ one last time.

"Make sure you let me know if anyone needs anything," Robert says to Garret.

McKenna spends a little time with Bill and Megan before their final embrace. In the end he kisses Megan's hand and turns and waves to those present. Then Robert McKenna leaves the Long Hall for the very last time.

KJ wonders why Garret did not give a little piece of paper to McKenna. She hears Gary speak to Anna and KJ forgets her curiosity.

"I'll see you at home, then," Gary says.



Anna forces a little smile and then hugs him tight. When they break, she wipes her cheeks. KJ finds it hard to swallow. Gary looks at her and steps around the table where Johnny was sitting. She, too, forces a little smile and fights back the tears. His embrace feels so nice and paternal, and she holds on tight. Her face shows no upset but she can no longer stop the tears from wetting her cheeks.

"You take care of yourself, KJ," Gary says. He wants to believe that she'll be with Johnny and that they'll have the life he hopes they can have. "You call if you need anything."

Gary lets her go and then looks into her eyes. KJ wipes the tears away and he smiles.

"You're a very special young lady," Gary says, "Thank you for the joy you've given us in the short time you've graced our lives."

"Thank you, Gary," is all that KJ can say.

Gary touches her cheek and winks. After making the rounds with the others and talking a little while longer with Cristi, he arrives at the Donnelly's. He and Bill shake hands and embrace, and Bill speaks into his ear. When they separate they shake hands once again and exchange good words, and then Bill pulls him into a second embrace. Gary hugs Megan, who closes her eyes and allows the tears to flow freely down her face. The big man glances back at Anna before he walks from the Hall. KJ looks at the wall and follows where he must be walking. She hears the faint sound of the Patriot's engine come to life. It quickly fades, and the silence makes it hard for her to swallow again.

Cristian O'Toole is next to bid farewell to the membership. He starts with the men, hugging Mason for a very long while, and then shaking hands and slapping the young man on the arm. Cristian and Garret shake hands and embrace as well. Garret puts his left hand on the back of Cristi's head and looks him in the eye as they shake hands. They kiss cheeks in the European fashion.

"Thank you for your sacrifice," Garret says.

"Anything," Cristi says.

O'Toole embraces Anna and lifts her off the ground. He is handsome and his forearms are becoming quite large. His physical preparations, obvious from a distance, are impressive up close.

"I'll miss your smile," Cristi tells Anna and she hugs him again.

Cristi turns toward KJ. She looks down and smiles. Their gaze meets a second time before he speaks.

"KJ," Cristi says and shakes his head, a warm smile on his handsome Romanian face. He takes her hand. "I was against letting you into

our little group back when we first learned about you. How wrong I was! I can't tell you what you mean to the greatest friend I've ever had. I've known Johnny since we were six. He's a damn good man and the best friend you could have. He won't back down from a fight, that's for damn sure. You know, his hopes in you were infectious. After I met you I could see he was right all along."

KJ smiles again.

"You had to be careful," she says, "There are so many who would betray you. I don't blame you for being vigilant."

"At least he found the right one," Cristi says, "Take care, KJ."

Cristian embraces KJ and pats her on the back. When they finish he touches her cheek and smiles. He's close to telling her to take care of his dear friend and brother-in-race, but he knows that an eternal union between KJ and Johnny Bowen may not come to be. Cristi walks away from the ladies and over to the Donnelly table. As soon as he arrives he embraces Megan Donnelly, whose stoicism and tears have not ceased.

James Ford and Aaron Kelly begin making their rounds. Mason holds on to Aaron and for just a brief moment almost loses his composure. He recovers and KJ looks to the side, so that he won't see her looking when he opens his eyes. Jimmy and then Austin shake hands with McShane and Toomey, who received colored papers, and then the two meet with David Fox. Fox, too, received a little paper, though Kelly and Ford did not. The handshakes are vigorous and the well-wishing profound and sentimental. Tonight is not only the final death knell of the old "Celtic Society," it is a new era in everyone's lives. This new dawn is red with a mackerel sky.

Jimmy lets Austin pass by Anna and KJ's table while he talks to Garret Fogarty. Jimmy and Garret embrace and shake hands and then remain together. Austin hugs Anna and she smiles. It's a smile of happiness. KJ figured that Anna Murphy would not allow the sadness of the moment to overcome her resilient character. She hopes she can hold up so well when she faces her own spiritual hell later tonight.

Austin shakes KJ's hand and then embraces her.

"It was so nice to meet someone like you," he says. He steps back and looks into her eyes. "Johnny's a real lucky man."

Austin must not know about their probable separation, brought on by the war that both see as necessary for their race's survival.

"Thank you, Austin," KJ says, "I'm a really lucky girl."

James Ford approaches Anna and KJ as Austin Kelly walks over to the Donnelly's.

"You've become a beautiful and thoughtful young woman, Anna," Jimmy says and the two embrace.

"Thank you," Anna whispers.

"I'll see you around," Ford says as the embrace ends.

Jimmy looks at KJ.

"I think you left a hell of an impression tonight," he says, and then with a smile, "I didn't expect anything less."

Jimmy hugs KJ and then shakes her hand.

"Whether any of us ever see you again, none of us will ever forget you," Jimmy says, "Take care of yourself, and Johnny if you can. You know, I'm gonna buy Paddy a Guinness for the work he did on your tat."

KJ looks down and smiles. When it disappears she returns her mournful gaze to Jimmy Ford's eyes.

"Take care, Jimmy," KJ says.

At the Donnelly table, Bill and Megan await Jimmy Ford and they both hug him when he arrives, with Megan kissing his cheek. She wipes her eyes and laughs when Ford says he always makes the girls cry, and then Bill whispers something into Ford's ear. Jimmy looks at him and then shakes his hand a final time before retrieving his guitar and leaving the Hall. KJ hears Jimmy telling someone that he's ready to leave, though she cannot see to whom he speaks. She would guess it's Austin Kelly.

KJ looks at Bill and Megan. The two walk over to the first table, where Mason, John McShane and Kevin Toomey are now standing. Bill hugs each of them. When he embraces McShane, he puts his hands on the back of John's head.

"I'll visit Gerry and Angela on Wednesday," Bill says, "God bless you, son."

Bill pauses for a moment. He thinks about these beautiful young souls and their march to war. A heartless and fanatical enemy has thrust this unjust fate upon them.

Megan hugs McShane as Bill bids farewell to Toomey and Mason Walker. As Bill rounds the corner, he passes Garret, who's moved a little closer to the open space where KJ sang and Ford played. Megan touches Garret's cheek and smiles, though none of the three embrace or shake hands. They must be saying their farewells at some other time.

No tears run down the elder Donnelly's cheeks as he embraces Anna, though his eyes are full of them. Anna grips his shirt and temporarily loses her composure.

"There, now," Bill says, "I'd hate to see you leave all sad and teary-eyed."

KJ looks down for a moment and then at the wall through which she'd see Johnny and the blue Jeep if two walls weren't blocking her view. Tonight did not seem real, not in its entirety, until she saw Anna grasping at Bill. This really is the end. This had been a place of refuge, where she could be herself and not suffer for her beliefs and her boundless love. In the blink of an eye it will be over. There will be no more dog-watching in the field or self-defense practice in the hall. There will be no more shooting with Anna at the firing range. There will be no more Megan or Bill Donnelly.

Anna sighs and smiles. The pain fades a little from her face. They separate and she shakes her head and smiles.

"You'll always be as close to us as our own children," says Bill as he holds Anna by her shoulders.

They embrace again, and this time she smiles through the tears.

"I love you, Bill," Anna says, "Take care of yourself, OK?"

Bill nods and touches her cheek. Megan hugs Anna and pats her back. KJ cannot watch their beautiful exchange since it's her turn to say goodbye to William Donnelly. She stares into his eyes. When he arrives he embraces her and she holds on to his powerful body. Without thinking, her hands mimic Anna's, and she grasps at him like a daughter who was lost, but who now returns home to find a loving father with arms wide open.

"I had a father," KJ says just loud enough for him to hear, in that voice that penetrates no matter what the words or emotional nuance. "If I'd listened to him and everyone else and just refused to cherish my white skin, or love my white brothers, he'd have remained my father. He couldn't love me for who I am inside."

KJ pulls back just enough to look into his eyes.

"Thank you for being the kind of father who doesn't turn his daughter into a traitor," KJ says.

Bill pulls her in close and holds her tight. He puts his mouth close to her right ear. There is something he is dying to tell her. He takes a deep breath. There is a gift he can give her, something far more valuable than wealth or celebrity.

"God bless you, KJ," Bill says, "You will be in our hearts forever. Forever."

Bill does not tell her what he came very close to saying, and it cuts him deeply not to tell her. The warrior in him stops the father in him from crossing that line. Her joy would have been overwhelming but it would have altered a decision that KJ needs to make for herself.

When Bill and KJ separate, the tears are flowing down her pure white face. No cosmetic could ever make skin so perfect as hers. Bill can see why Johnny calls her angel, and that the reasons are physical as well as spiritual.

"Thank you so much, Bill," KJ says, "for everything you've done for me, and everyone else. Thank you for giving me a place where I could be who I am, and thank you for introducing me to Johnny." A little smile shines through the tears and agony. "Thank you so much for that."

Bill steps to the side to allow Megan to embrace KJ.

"Our sweet, dear KJ," Megan says, her eyes closed and weeping, "I'd take you and Johnny far away if I could."

KJ looks into Megan's eyes once the two women separate.

"He won't go," KJ says, "He loves us too much."

Megan takes her by both cheeks. She shakes her head and looks into KJ's eyes. She wants to tell KJ to be sure and visit them someday. She wants to ask her to promise. Megan grew up in a family of heroic men and women. She married a warrior. She knows there's no way KJ can promise or even say she'll try.

"God bless you," Megan says.

Once the Donnelly's leave the hall and the tears begin to dry, those who remain find places at the now-empty tables. KJ and Anna remain at the same table and the same seats, as if keeping the once-occupied chairs empty in honor of those dear to their hearts. David Fox and Mason Walker sit at the table closest to the open space. McShane and Toomey sit to their left. Garret Fogarty walks to the center of the clear place. He looks at each of them before speaking. Every one of his audience stares at him, offering Garret their full attention.

"Bill Donnelly was right," Garret says, "If you stop a man from being paid for treason, then you will kill the heart of the anti-white beast. If a traitor feels pain, if he understands that there is a real price for betraying his people and his race, then most of them will cease committing acts of treason. They're not suddenly good people. But at least they're not helping the others genocide our race."

Garret looks at each face.

"You've probably guessed that there aren't enough of us to hurt the traitors financially," Garret says, "Time is short; shorter by each day, and the poisoning of the next generation, and the one after that, is more and more intense. We are in an urgent fight against the extermination of our people and we do not have time to rest. My friends, my brothers and sisters, this is a war we face, one that is being waged against everyone with

white skin; every man, woman and child, living and unborn and yet to be conceived. This is a real war.”

Garret pauses, lest they not understand completely what he’s just told them. They are already at war.

“Our white nations are flooded with non-white immigration,” Garret says, “We suffer government-mandated discrimination in hiring and we have lost our freedom of association. We face the eventual confiscation of our firearms, the only means to protect our loved ones and one another. We face continuous anti-white propaganda in the form of pro-miscegenation and anti-white degradation in film, television and print. Why? Anti-white traitors and anti-white Jews monopolize Hollywood and explicitly favor and hire those of like mind and ethnicity. This is no conspiracy. It is open; in fact, it is obvious. The media is no exception. They seek and even fabricate incidences of white racism while suppressing outright acts of anti-white violence, including the rape of white women by non-white males. Why? It keeps their jobs safe in an industry with an anti-white worldview. Traitors and anti-white minorities, from the Ashkenazi to the Negro, profit in the form of wealth and power at our expense and, worse, at the expense of our future children. These are not the symptoms of a fight for equal rights. They are the undeniable signs of a war of obliteration. I ask each of you, since we have been facing this war against ourselves and against our posterity for decades without response: Isn’t it time we fight back?”

Garret sees a nod from KJ, and then Anna and Kevin.

“Each of you has four options,” Garret says, “I have given every one of you a piece of paper. Please do not open and read the paper until you have left this place. Once you can remember exactly what the paper says, I ask you as a brother or a sister to destroy the paper. Whatever decision you come to, please do me that one favor.”

Garret is quiet for a moment. He looks at each of them again. In this day and age, it requires tremendous courage or stupidity to ask fellow white men and women to go to war for the future of their own children. Garret has spent years assessing these people. No one can be certain, though he is as close to it as time will permit him to be. The danger is still enormous. A single anonymous phone call would bring down the terrible force of the anti-white establishment and snuff out his life’s efforts in a matter of minutes. But Garret cannot abide to live as if all is well, and peace reigns, not as long as he knows that it is an abominable lie. The lives of generations of white children are at stake. For them, Garret will now risk his own life.

"I am preparing cells for this war, so that we can begin to fight back," Garret says.

The room is silent. He knows that Anna and KJ are aware of his desire, but the others were not. Their faces range from sudden surprise to stony calm.

"Your first option is to join me in this war," Garret says, "If you so choose, I welcome you. You will be asked to relocate, and preparations will be made to help you adjust. You will not be sent somewhere and expected to suddenly earn a living. Nor will you be expected to engage the army or police, or go on sprees or commit crimes. In time it is our desire that fighters engage in the elimination of key targets, those guilty of perpetrating the genocide against our race and jeopardizing future generations. We do not excuse collateral damage or wanton murder. These strikes will be done with the utmost precision. Excepting the hostile intervention of a third party or circumstances beyond our control that would otherwise result in the death or apprehension of a cell member, the only ones in jeopardy of our wrath will be pre-approved targets. We are not a regular army. We do not kill three hundred in order to get one."

Garret sees David Fox move in his chair.

"Your second option is no less important," Garret says, "We will need support. Should you wish to become an auxiliary, you will not be engaged in active strike missions, and, God willing, will never have to pull a trigger in anger. You will be our eyes and ears. You will perform supply missions and reconnaissance. You will make key purchases and drop-offs, though your personal contact with active cell members will be as little as possible. Some fighters will have to substitute as auxiliaries, and should a fighter find that he or she is not able to pull the trigger, he or she will revert to a full-time auxiliary. This role will require financial as well as physical support of the active cells. In exchange, the auxiliaries will have a much better opportunity for a shadow life among the mainstream of white humanity. You might marry and have children, and may recruit with extreme caution of course, though the particulars of recruiting remain to be seen."

Garret looks at Mason and then at Toomey and McShane, whose arms are crossed although he shows no emotion on his face.

"You might ask, how long will I be a fighter or auxiliary," Garret says, "As long as it takes. Time away from the field will of course be possible, though time away from the war, especially for fighters, will not be. Keep in mind that this war does not relent. It will go on with or without us, until our race perseveres or perishes. You might ask if we can have families. I cannot answer that question. I can only hope. I'm not going to lie in my

attempt to recruit you. Fact is, taking the war to the enemy will be brutal, and we will sacrifice whatever we have to in order to save our people and our race. I could tell you to have as many white children as possible, and to avoid harm to yourself. Until we end this genocide, each white child you have will be forced to live under the burdens and escalating violence of this anti-white establishment, until they or their progeny will suffer ultimate extinction.”

Anna watches this man who she loves. She knows the risk he’s taking. Deep inside, she vows to punish anyone who’d betray him. Anna vows to follow such a traitor until one – or both – of them dies.

“Should you choose not to actively support the resistance,” Garret says, “there is another option available for you, the information war. Spread the Mantra, be aggressive and always on the offense. Do not get bogged down in discussions. Hit them hard. Repeat the Mantra, call the enemy what he is, anti-white. Never relent or allow them the chance to change the subject. They are aiding and abetting the genocide of our race, and that means our children and our future as a race and as distinct white peoples. The whites among them are traitors and must be called as such, as well as anti-white. Do not call anyone anti-racist or just ‘antis’, call them anti-white. Let the observer know that your enemy supports the genocide of our race. When the enemy erupts and melts down in front of observers, you have achieved a victory. Remember, we are not interested in winning anti-white zealots or anti-white minorities over to our cause. They want us silenced and they want us dead. We want to defeat them. We want to make them answer for their crimes against us and our posterity. Should you choose this option of individual resistance, I ask that you destroy the paper I’ve given you, and disregard its message. I also wish you the greatest of luck, and request that, whether you agree with our methods or not, you do not condemn the fighters as individuals or as whites.”

Garret looks at each face and then toward the rear wall, so that his eyes do not single out any of those present.

“There is one final option,” Garret says, “One that you could have taken at any time but have not, at least not yet. You could walk away and abandon this fight. You could trust the fate of your descendants to other men and women, and hope that their sacrifice will justify your inaction. Should you choose this path, we have but one demand, that you do not betray us. Walk away, destroy the paper, and leave us in peace to fight your fight.”

When Garret returns his glance to the members present, he sees KJ staring into his face and eyes. He looks at Anna, who is doing the same.



"In exactly one week I will meet with those who choose to engage the enemy, either as active cell members or as auxiliaries," Garret says, "I have written on each slip of paper a time and place for our meeting. You will find out the particulars of what you must do and where you will go during the course of our meeting. I trust that you will come alone, should you choose to fight. To those who might decide to fight the enemy on forums and websites and spread the Mantra, I wish you the best of luck. Take this coming week to decide. Reflect. Consider every angle of your decision. When next Wednesday comes, be sure of what you have chosen, because any decision will be final when you show up for the meeting. If you are still unsure, I recommend you choose option three. We cannot wait any longer, nor can we put trust in one who will not fight when the moment arrives. To those who will not fight with the sword, I urge you to use the pen."

Anna wants to tell him to be careful. She knows he will be, but it would feel nice at least to tell him. She abstains.

"That is all, my friends," Garret says. He looks down for a moment. "My humble blessings to you and your families."

At this cue the members rise. KJ puts her paper in her shoulder bag and makes sure it cannot escape. McShane is first to arrive at Garret's side and the two shake hands. Toomey does so as well, and then David Fox, who embraces Garret and thanks him. KJ puts her hand on Anna's shoulder and she turns to see her sister-in-race. KJ embraces her and feels the tears flow down her face. She feels Anna return the tight embrace. David Fox looks toward KJ and Anna and wishes to bid them farewell, but, seeing the two in an emotional embrace, believes it better to let them share this moment uninterrupted. As Fox walks toward the exit, Garret watches the two young sisters say what could be a final farewell.

"How can I ever thank you for what you've done for me?" KJ says, "You brought me in from the dark. You fucking saved my life, Anna. You did, you saved my life. I would have never known Bill or Johnny if not for you. Thank you so much. I owe you my life. I owe you everything."

"Oh, God, KJ, no you don't!" Anna says, "You gave us so much hope and we keep going on that." The two separate. Through her own tears Anna looks into KJ's blue eyes. She touches her cheek. "Johnny's angel, I pray so hard that you two can be together. I know we don't have any choice but I can still pray."

"Thank you," KJ says.

"I'll drop by next week," Anna says.

KJ feels enormous relief; she'd hoped to hear that wonderful news.

"I'd really like that," KJ says.

They smile and wipe their eyes. KJ figures that Anna will want to talk to Garret last, so she does not keep her sister waiting. KJ walks over to Garret and the two embrace.

"No matter what happens," KJ says to him, "I want to thank you for carrying this burden for us. You and Johnny are so beautiful. And you give your lives to us, so that we and our children might live in peace. Thank you, Garret. Those who know what you're doing and why you're doing it will never, ever forget you."

KJ embraces him again.

"KJ," Garret says, his blue eyes burning with a gentle yet inextinguishable flame, "You blessed us when you came here, and to know you has been an honor, one of the greatest of my life. We certainly won't forget you, either. Take care, Johnny's angel."

KJ laughs once from the emotion and then wipes her cheeks with her gloved hands. She returns to Anna and takes her into a final embrace. Then she walks out, her pace rapid. She does not turn to see Garret kiss his beloved, or Anna seize him and weep hard into his chest.

There are a few breaks in the clouds and the brightest stars peer through them. Johnny Bowen stands beside the blue Jeep, which, aside from the big Chevy and Anna's Subaru, is the only vehicle remaining in the lot. The crickets are the only sound and Johnny is silent and ghostly from across the lot.

KJ looks up into his eyes when she comes to him.

"Is this it?" KJ whispers.

"I'll come by tomorrow," Johnny says, "Around 5. I'll be free until late." He looks into her eyes. Pain flashes across her face at his announcement. "Are you OK with that?"

"Yes," KJ says and looks down, though she returns her stare to his eyes after a brief moment.

The pain is still on her face.

"I told you not to go easy on me," KJ says, "Give me every second you can give me, Johnny Bowen."

Johnny pulls her into his embrace.

"OK, angel," he says.

Near Amblersburg, Johnny does not stop at the cottage. When they drive by KJ does not ask why. She looks out the windshield into the night. Johnny stops at a service station in sleepy little Rowlesburg on the unpolluted section of the Cheat. A pair of young men, obviously on a fishing expedition, glance at Johnny and his suit-and-tie as they refuel their own

Jeep. The men leave before he does. No one is there to watch the blue Jeep cross the Cheat and drive off to the north.

Before leaving the cottage and driving to Markleysburg, Johnny carries his beloved young woman to her bed. He lies her down and she curls up under the sheet.

"I love you, Johnny," KJ says, looking up at him from the pillow.

"I love you too, angel," Johnny says.

Johnny reaches over and rubs KJ's back, never taking his eyes from hers. She closes her eyes as he strokes her with gentle motion. She's wearing another tube bra, and the thin strap allows him to touch most of the feathers on her upper and middle back.

After Johnny leaves, a tear escapes down KJ's cheek.

Johnny Bowen always liked staying in Markleysburg. The little house is comfortable and quiet, and the few neighbors always left him in peace. There are woods nearby and it's a short trip to gorgeous Ohiopyle and the picturesque Youghiogheny with its falls and cataracts. The region is touristic without being a trap and is remarkable in its cleanliness. The population is also a vast majority white.

At 7:30 AM Johnny Bowen's alarm comes to life and he rises from bed. He looks at the other pillow, which lies unoccupied. He shakes his head and looks away.

By 7:45, he's washed and dressed in jeans and a brown button-down shirt. He does not eat. The events of the day, which he knows are coming, have robbed him of his appetite. At 8 a familiar Land Cruiser pulls into the driveway. When Johnny embarked for his flight to Iraq, he never imagined a day he'd say goodbye to Cristian O'Toole. "See ya," "Take it easy," these were the expressions he assumed they'd always use, and it would always be accurate.

Genetically, Cristian O'Toole took after his Romanian mother. Tall and hauntingly beautiful, the brown-eyed, black-haired *ardeleanca* with the pale white skin was 11-year-old Johnny Bowen's first crush. The crush didn't last for more than a week or two, but his fondness for her and her son remained. She was strong and feminine, loyal to her husband and her children as well as her people and her race. She admired Corneliu Codreanu, a man who Cristian would soon learn to admire and respect. Likewise, Cristi learned to appreciate Vlad Tepes, a Romanian patriot and protector of white Christian Romania during the dark night of Ottoman conquest. Cristi was born to love both his Romanian and Irish people. He soon recognized that the thread connecting them; indeed, all whites, was their race and that race was more important than anything else in deter-

mining the capabilities and proclivities of a person. In an America that forcibly denies the existence of the white race, this was not an obvious conclusion. By thirteen he was convinced, and he had begun to love and respect his race as well as his people.

Johnny meets Cristi at the front door and the two kiss cheeks. Cristi always did that, at first to embarrass his friend, but Johnny never seemed to suffer for it and eventually embraced the act in honor of his own European roots. As of late the two have all but ceased the custom, but today it seems more appropriate than ever.

Cristi is wearing a t-shirt and long shorts. He has a grueling drive ahead of him, and although it's another cloudy day, the heat and humidity are soaring. The two step inside the place, where the air is cool and pleasant.

"Do you remember our old dreams?" Cristi asks, "Remember when we wanted to buy trucks and drive cross-country?"

That was sixteen years ago. Johnny smiles and laughs a little.

"Yeah, I remember," Johnny says.

"You did end up driving," Cristian says.

"One of us had to live the dream," Johnny says. There is a brief silence.

"I feel a lot of sorrow right now," Cristi says, "Seeing KJ last night, alone inside the hall while you were outside with the Jeep. Life's a fucking whore sometimes. You two ought to be together, even if you do fight. Fuck it, you were right. It's their fight, too." He pauses for a second. It wasn't the safest subject to broach. "I don't want to make it worse on you, but I doubt anything I say could make it worse."

"Actually," Johnny says, "I appreciate it. But we have a war to fight. I'll leave her because I have to, so that I can fight for her. My duty to her and her children, and Anna and hers, and yours, Cristi, is a hell of a lot greater than anything personal in my life." He shakes his head. "Even if the heart doesn't agree."

Cristi smiles.

"I'm gonna miss the fuck out of you, man," Cristi says.

He takes Johnny's hand and shakes it hard. They embrace again. When they separate, Cristi puts his hand on the back of Johnny's head. Then he drops it to his side.

"Sit down for a few minutes," Johnny says.

Johnny Bowen hurries to the kitchen to warm up the coffee he made earlier. The two sit down for a cup – Cristi on the sofa beside the brown coffee table, Johnny on the easy chair. There isn't much time for either of

them. Cristi must hit the road, and Johnny must drive to the Hall and pick up Jimmy Ford. There are too many fond memories to recall and the fondest ones remain unspoken. The few they have time to relive are mostly humorous, though not all.

"Graduation night at Steve Gentry's," Cristi says, "Remember that shit? We got so fucked up, we were so fucking glad it was over. I don't even think we knew why, it was enough that we didn't have to go back to that fucking prison."

"I'll never forget that night," Johnny says, "We're lucky we didn't get killed."

"You're damn right we're lucky," Cristian says. He hesitates for a moment. "Hard to imagine Steve's gone. Or that this is goodbye." He drinks down the last of his coffee. "It's gonna take a while for Carina Cell to go active. New place, new job, and I might be alone for a while."

"Take as long as you need," Johnny says.

"Garret knows how to contact me if you need anything," Cristian says, "In the meantime I'll send money to Jimmy. I don't know how much yet, but it'll always be something."

"Thank you, Cristi," Johnny says.

Cristian O'Toole rises from his seat, followed by John Bowen. They move to the door, where Cristi stops and turns toward his lifelong friend. He holds out his hand and Johnny takes it.

"I think we knew for a long time it would come to this," Cristian says, "Good luck, Johnny."

They shake hands.

"We will win in the end," Johnny says, "Our race will survive. Hold on to that."

Cristi looks at Johnny. He wonders if any of them will live to see the day.

"I believe you," Cristi says.

Johnny stands in the doorway until Cristi drives away. Then he grabs his backpack and heads for his Jeep in the garage. When Johnny arrives at the Hall, Jimmy Ford is standing outside his Ram Charger. Otherwise the Donnelly Homestead seems abandoned. Johnny reaches over and opens the door of the Rubicon. Ford tosses his backpack on the floor and jumps inside.

"You're coming back with Garret, right?" Johnny asks Ford.

"Yeah," Jimmy says, "We'll probably spend a few hours. I want to check a few things and Jesse's coming, too, so she can get used to finding the place."

"Good," Johnny says.

"I'm going to start bringing some shit over," Ford says, "Most of the heavy stuff's already there. I'll try to finish the tile job too. I think I can have it done in a week or so."

"Thanks for speeding it up," Johnny says, "Oh, do you think you can get over to Amblersburg later this week or next weekend at the latest?"

"I'll take care of it," Jimmy Ford says, "I gave my word, remember?"

"I know," Johnny says, "Thank you Jimmy."

"Don't mention it," Ford says, "I can see how much she means to you."

Johnny Bowen drives through Lemont Furnace, glancing at the quiet Murphy House as he drives, and then continues on to the Jumonville Road and through the forests of southwestern Pennsylvania.

Anna and Gary Murphy are going to Ohiopyle. They arrive at 8:30 AM and rent a small raft. It's been a few months since they had the time to come here, and over a year since they rafted the Youghiogheny. Strong storms are coming later in the day, but at least until noon the skies will be cloudy and placid. It's a little hot, but the sun cannot sear Anna's fair skin, not today. The trip promises to reward them with hours of enjoyment. Today they'll relive some of the happy moments from their past. Later, they will revisit more moments with Gary's old photo albums. They'll laugh and tell stories and drink tea and, later, enjoy some of Phil's Blend coffee.

Tomorrow Anna Murphy will visit Michael Collins Murphy, his wife and their son Bryce. Right now none of that is on her mind. She's with her loving father and they're about to have a great deal of fun. From the parking area Anna looks over the raging river. Where they'll be rafting is a lot tamer, though not without large stones and swift eddies. The steady roar of the river is placating.

KJ makes breakfast at nine o'clock. Her physical fitness program called for weight training, and by nine she's finished doing her curls and a little other lifting as well. She eats and takes her morning shower. Before entering the tub KJ removes her top. Still wearing her thong, she glances into the mirror. She turns and looks at her wings. KJ takes her thick hair into her hand and holds it to the front, so that only the waistband of the thong obscures the slightest part her feathers. She looks at her stunning figure, and her nearly flawless skin. It is as pale white as Anna's without the slightest trace of melanin from the sun. It is as white and flawless as human skin can be. She flexes her arms and shoulders. It has been a hell of an accomplishment to turn an already beautiful body into one of the most beautiful any man could ever see. She thinks about how it would feel

against the man she loves, without the barrier of clothing between them. She looks down and her soul laments that he has never, and will never, see his angel in the nude.

After her shower, KJ dresses in a black *Amon Amarth* shirt and another thong. She will not greet her beloved Johnny dressed in this fashion. She does not want to torment him on what must be their last night together. She doesn't even consider wearing the shiny leggings. She realized how much he liked those. If they could be together, she'd have them on before he even arrived. Today she'll wear a pair of jeans over her thong. She goes to the kitchen and brews a second cup of coffee. She pulls the table over to the bed and, her coffee mug steaming from its top, she curls up in bed with her Kindle.

Once the coffee is mostly finished, KJ lays the Kindle to her side and looks across the room at the rifle on the dresser. She glances down at the floor. Her shoulder bag is beside the bed. Inside is the rolled-up piece of paper and Johnny Bowen's dog tags. When she rose from bed this morning she removed the pistol from the cabinet and put it near her bed. It's still there, beside the bag. She takes Johnny's tags from the bag and puts them around her neck. She tucks the tags beneath her shirt. KJ finishes her coffee and returns to reading.

The Terra Alta Road, the final leg of the trip from Markleysburg to Amboy, West Virginia, passes through pasture for the most part as it continues south to Highway 50 and the pleasant little town of Aurora. Forest surrounds and often penetrates the pastureland. Within sight of tiny Amboy is the turn-off to a long and secluded county route which plunges deep into the stygian forest and eventually passes the driveway to Procyon House.

Along the route there are numerous spots where a vehicle can disappear from view and still remain close to the two-lane road. There is one in particular that the men call the "pick-up spot." It is known by its distance from Amboy and the Aurora Pike and is about three-quarters distance to the tree-obscured Procyon driveway. When Johnny arrives at the "pick-up spot", he pulls over and stops. Without a word James Ford jumps out of the Jeep. He closes the door and Johnny heads back on to the road. His eyes forward and on the highway, he does not look back to see Ford disappear into the woods.

Johnny Bowen glances to the side as the Rubicon passes by the location of Procyon. He cannot see the house through the tree line. Just beyond it is the open field that surrounds the house on all sides, and the gravel driveway to the front entrance. Sometime this afternoon, Jesse

Hanratty will drive down the lane and enter the house that will be Capricorn Cell's wartime refuge.

Anna and Gary arrive home at 2 PM, just in time it would seem, since a menacing line of black thunderheads is approaching from the northwest. It will soon be dark enough for artificial lights. The rumble of thunder and the clamor of heavy rain will provide the sound. It will be a perfect occasion to sit, sip tea and look at the photo albums.

Gary removes his damp shirt and puts on a light button-down which he does not tuck. He grabs a trio of albums from his bedroom closet and returns to the kitchen. Anna, who's already changed into a black t-back and denim shorts, has a kettle of water on to boil. Her hair is in a ponytail.

The picture albums are a contrast of old and new. The books themselves are from the early 1980's. Two of the three are white, with soft vinyl covers. Several banana stickers remain from the dozen or so that Anna affixed to the covers when she was a child. All of the pictures inside the first book are from film and every one of them predates the birth of Anna. Many are from the old country, particularly those from the first half of the album, and some of the later ones postdate many of the pictures in the second half of the album. Included in the earliest photos is a black and white image from Ireland. A powerful man, who could be Gary in makeup and an old fisherman's costume, stands on a fishing boat, smiling as if it's his birthday. From Gary, Anna knows this is her great-uncle Shane Buckley. It's amazing that he's actually from her mother's side of the family.

Near the end of the "motherland" photographs, a young and handsome Aidan Murphy stands outside his parents' tiny house, his girlfriend at his side, in a 1972 picture from County Cork. Two years later he joined the INLA. Letters and recent emails from Aidan show him to be as comely as ever, his red hair fading to white but his blue eyes still full of passion.

After a few pages of Murphy family history told in black and white photographs, baby Gary makes his appearance. The remainder of the pictures show the Murphy's in the USA. In these photos, Anna sees her father grow from a strapping child to a muscular adolescent, and finally to a powerful young coal miner. The final picture shows him outside the Consol mine, covered with grime save the toothy smile on his face.

The third album is the largest. Its covers are black and hard. The first picture is a photo from the wedding of Alan and Leah Buckley. Next is a lovely little baby with red hair and blue eyes. Anna and Gary stop at the photo. It is excellent indeed, taken by a professional photographer at a long since defunct Olan Mills studio. This babe would grow to become Gary's wife and Anna's mother. As he turns through the pages, Gary



watches his future wife grow to adolescence and then young womanhood. Their wedding photo is prominent and repeated over several pages, from similar and different angles.

There is a picture from around the time of Mary's lost pregnancy and several with the Buckley clan. Her family was a rock during her suffering, as was Gary. Finally they come to a newer picture of Mary. She is pregnant again; this time her belly is growing with a healthy unborn girl. To Gary Murphy, no woman ever looked as beautiful as his wife did, just shy of four months into her pregnancy. The next photo is at six months. To everyone else, even Anna, Mary looks as healthy as ever. Perhaps it's the memory, perhaps it's subliminal hindsight, but in the eyes of the man who loved her as only a good white man can love a good white woman, and cherish her beyond the physical, something in this photo is amiss.

Both Gary and Anna are silent as the photos show the undeniable beginning of Mary's decline. Still they look at each one. It is a labor of love, from a bereaved husband who lost his one true lover and a daughter whose memories of her mother evoke the smells and terrors of a hospital.

With a turn of the page they no longer see Mary. At least they no longer expect to see her. Instead, Anna begins to grow. She's holding her bow, which looks huge in the first picture. A few photos later and her first buck lies at her feet. She is caught suspended above the pool, forever frozen in the middle of a twisting dive. The photographs soon make the transition from film prints to high quality digital images. The huge non-typical stag is one of the newest photos. The vanquished monster lies behind the smiling, red-headed huntress. Anna kneels with her bow, her face now as beautiful as her mother's, her body that of a gorgeous young woman.

The portrait of Anna just before her prom takes up an entire page, as does another that shows the full beauty of her face. In a recent photo, Anna and Michael Collins Murphy sit on Gary's couch. In Anna's arms is little Bryce Murphy.

The rear of the album contains unsorted photographs, as is often the case with family albums. Gary spreads them out on the table. While they examine and often remark about each of them, he's looking for one in particular. He soon finds it; it is one of the most beautiful of all the pictures. On the springboard, at 18 years of age, stands Mary Buckley, poised to begin her dive.

"Mother was beautiful," Anna says.

"Yes she was," Gary says, "So are you, sweetheart."

"Thank you, dad," Anna says.

Anna looks at him as he closes the album.

"Have you decided what you're gonna do?" Gary asks.

Anna looks down and nods. She slowly looks up again, and her eyes meet his.

"You're all I've ever had, really," Anna says, "There's a part of me that wouldn't think of leaving here, not even if I could visit sometimes. Not as long as I have you, or if you might need me. That's something I've thought about, dad, it's deep inside of me and it's so important. But..."

Anna looks down again and sighs.

"Tell me, honey," Gary says.

He puts his huge paw on her milky white hand.

"I have to go," Anna says, looking into his eyes. "There are times when the people who can see have to make a stand. I can't ignore what's happening, or worry so much about being safe and comfortable that I allow my own children to suffer. And I can't just talk about it, dad. They ruin people for doing that. They'll call you racist and that's the end of it, and you lose your job and probably your family. How could I or my man feed our children if we can't find any work? I wouldn't marry a man who doesn't love his race, so he's going to stand beside me and we'd both be out of work. You know, sometime soon they'll start throwing whites into prison for talking like us. They already do in Europe. They took away our right to love our race and they took away our voices. What more do we have? We can die like they want us to, or we can fight. They're not so strong or smart as they think they are. They made it so that we can either die or fight. My children will have the right to love and respect their race. I'm not gonna let them silence me and force my children to face what I'm facing. They're not going to use me like they use other white girls against our race. Mom didn't die so I could be their whore."

Gary feels enormous pride swell within him. It surpasses even the pain of knowing his daughter will fight, and the odds that will be against her. He touches her cheek.

"My beautiful daughter," Gary says, "My wonderful, beautiful Anna. I'd never wish this fate on you, my beautiful girl."

"You didn't, dad," Anna says, "Everyone who hurts my race and my unborn children is forcing me to make this choice."

Anna takes his hand in both of hers.

"Dad," she says, "You and mom gave me life. When we lost her, you didn't divide your love, you gave it all to me. If I could live my life, and get married and give all my love to my husband and my children, I would. It's different now, dad. I have to start giving them that love before I even know

them, or they might never be born. Little white children will suffer if we don't fight against those who profit from their suffering. My children are worth fighting for. They're worth a whole lot more, dad. Mom knew that too."

"Her death killed all the joy in my heart," Gary says, "And then you breathed life back into it. If anyone can save our people, it's you."

Big tears roll down Anna's cheeks, but they are not tears of sadness.

At 1 PM, KJ removes the Kentucky ham from the refrigerator. She was hoping to save it for Christmas and prepare it for her and Johnny for Christmas Day's dinner. There's no point in saving it now. She takes a guess that Johnny will like it, since he bought it for her, though that's not a guarantee. She looks through the six bottles of wine that sit beside the kitchen cabinet and selects a Cabernet Sauvignon. She also arranges the ingredients for the salad that they'll share with the ham. It will be a simple meal, but she's guessing that this evening he'll appreciate that more than an elaborate feast.

James Ford feels eyes upon him but he doesn't see the person or animal responsible for triggering his ancient senses. He's found the tell-tale signs and knows the hidden trapdoor to the Procyon house is one meter left of the center point. He figures it's Garret looking at him. Still, he is tempted to draw his .45 pistol. His assumption proves to be right. Garret Fogarty appears from behind a close stand of red maples. He's wearing a hiking outfit, but nothing noteworthy should a third party witness his comings and goings.

"Good to see you, Jimmy," Garret says. The two shake hands. "Shall we?" Garret asks.

Garret takes two steps backward and lifts the cleverly-camouflaged entrance to the main tunnel. When it closes behind Ford, the trapdoor blends into the surrounding forest floor.

Garret must have already been inside. A battery lamp illuminates the way. Jimmy is glad to see that his friend and brother is testing out the emergency lighting. Garret lifts the light and the two men advance through the tunnel. Very soon they come to the furthest reaches of tile and wood planking that covers the floor. In a week or so, tile and planks will run all the way to the trapdoor entrance.

Ford glances at the recession on the left. While Garret, et al, live here it will hold a pair of pump shotguns.

"Where's the Wrangler?" Ford asks.

"Seven hundred meters to the northeast of the welcome mat," Garret says. Ford knows he means the trapdoor. "Almost due north of the highway."

"OK, cool," Ford says.

They pass through the ventilation room and into the ventilation hallway, bypassing the large room that will serve as a surgical ward should the need arise. Garret unlocks the stairway door and the two climb the steps to the upstairs storage room. Beside the door is a pair of hiking shoes; they leave their own beside the two pairs. The room is full of boxes and containers, shelves and cabinets and could use some rearranging, but otherwise is very clean. He and Gary, during the time that Gary visited Procyon, kept the place that way. Garret does not hesitate in the storage room or in the media room. He and Ford enter the gym.

Jimmy Ford notices movement through the open interior door, and even though he suspects it's Rian Donnelly, he draws his 1911A1 as a matter of reflex.

"Jesus Christ," Rian says, "settle yourself."

Rian's wearing a gray shirt and jeans.

"I'd have shot you if I wasn't under control," Ford says, "This isn't exactly your daddy's fuckin' rec room."

Rian makes a talking gesture with his hand which Ford ignores.

"This is the best personal gym I've ever seen," Rian says.

"We have to stay in good physical condition," Garret says, "There will be long days here, and we'll be holed up from time to time. This will help pass some of the time and it's going to help us keep sharp, not to mention allow us to blow off steam."

New machines join the previous exercise equipment, including a rowing machine and another treadmill so that two persons can engage in exercise at the same time. There is an impressive set of free weights, with everything from smallish dumbbells to multiple heavy plates for either dumbbells or barbells. There is a weight bench, and the exercise cycles that were here when Garret took his first tour.

Ford will be back each day for the upcoming week. Garret and Johnny Bowen will take turns dropping him off and picking him up. Then, when the time comes for the members of the Core to decide their fates, Ford will stay for three or four days and put the finishing touches on the place. If all goes according to plan, Jesse will begin visiting Procyon next Saturday, and in two or so weeks Capricorn Cell will occupy its safe house. Garret, John Bowen and Jimmy Ford know the plan. Garret will soon explain it to Rian and Jesse.

"How'd you afford all this?" Rian asks.

"A lot of the contributions and my own funds went into this," Garret says, "It bought our ammunition, our medicine and personal supplies. It'll

buy clothes too, and so on. All of my own money is tied into this; all of it. I'm not going to ask men and women to sacrifice for our posterity if I'm not willing to put everything into this; everything I have and everything I am."

Jimmy Ford taps Garret's arm. He turns toward Ford, who shakes his hand. Garret knew Ford wouldn't stay for long.

"Alright," Ford says, "I'm out of here. Make sure Jesse understands how important it is for her to use the front door and only the front door."

Though Ford doesn't know with certainty, Jesse is driving south on the Aurora Pike, about five miles north of the Procyon house.

"OK, Jimmy," Garret says, "Be careful."

"No problem," Ford says, "Now's the time to take care of all that shit, before you go active."

Ford nods toward Rian, the other bespectacled member of the Core, and walks back to the storage room. Garret and Rian hear the basement door shut and lock.

"I thought he'd stay for a beer," Rian says.

"He's got a lot of work to do at his shop," Garret says, "He knows how much rests on his shoulders, probably more than the rest of us."

KJ's eyes are closed as *Sick of It All* plays through her earphones. Outside, the approaching front has made the hot summer air insufferable. Inside, it's so cool she feels comfortable under a sheet. She puts the future out of her mind as best she can. Last night she dreamt of her harrowing experience in the waters of the Monongahela. Though she could somehow breathe in the dream, she could still feel the terror and the sensation that she would drown, and when she looked around there was no willow tree to help her. When KJ awoke, ten minutes before her alarm was to go off, she snuggled her pillow and imagined her beloved Johnny pulling her from the depths. She knows that most of her peers would call it sappy or pathetic, but they're the same ones who waste their love and devotion on one-night stands and mind-numbing substances.

When the song "Make a Mark" comes to an end, KJ opens her eyes and jumps from the bed. She checks the ham and then walks to the bathroom. Standing in front of the large mirror, she decides to brush her luxurious mane. She'll ask Anna to trim it a little – not much, just enough so she can let it grow back to its present length before trimming it again. She sets the brush by the sink. The white porcelain shines and the floors are clean and smooth. It's a lovely little house and refuge. Her thoughts wander into painful territory and she brings them back to a safe place. This prompts her to return to the living room and turn on her laptop. She checks the weather radar and sees intense little cells lurking all around

West Virginia and southern Pennsylvania. She checks to see if *7 Seconds* has a new release. There was a rumor on one of the forums, but it doesn't pan out. She tries to confirm it again. Then she opens up the Art Renewal Center's website. And on she goes, reading anything that will keep her mind occupied.

The roadside is aflame with wildflowers, from Terra Alta to Amblersburg. Towering Joe Pye weed and its common partner ironweed add their pink and purple to the goldenrod and the omnipresent Queen Anne's lace. Johnny Bowen pulls on to the shoulder and parks among the flowers. He remembers old summer days riding his bike along roads like this, mostly in western Maryland but on occasion all the way to Kingwood, West Virginia and beyond. Cristian usually accompanied him when Johnny didn't feel the need to be alone. Although Johnny was always stronger, Cristi was the better bicyclist. Johnny hears distant thunder but pays it no mind. Nor does he stop at the nearby black raspberries that are ripe and juicy. He takes out his knife and cuts a small bouquet of soapwort flowers. Back inside the Jeep, he dumps out half a bottle of water and puts the flower stems inside. The hour is nearly five as he drives toward Amblersburg. He sees a distant flash of lightning. So many times he's taken this road and found joy and solace at its end. Tonight his thoughts are troubled and he does not know what he should do.

KJ hears him pull in and she becomes so nervous she jogs her legs as she sits on the bed. The ham is staying warm in the oven and the salad is staying cool and fresh in the refrigerator. KJ hears Johnny knock with two knuckles. She rises and walks to the porch door. She glances through the little spy hole to be sure that her ears have not deceived her. They have not; through the hole she sees John Ashley Bowen. KJ unlocks and opens the door.

"Hi, Johnny," KJ says, looking into his eyes.

"Hi, angel," Johnny says.

He hands her the flowers. KJ takes them in both hands.

"They reminded me of something someone gave to me once," Johnny says, "I think they're beautiful."

KJ fights the powerful rise of her emotions. She will not win that war and she knows it; for now, she does win the first battle.

"Thank you," KJ says, "Thank you so much."

Johnny puts his hand on her back as they enter the cottage. He removes his shoes and she, her flip-flops. She turns and looks at him. He was staring at her when she did. Then she looks down. A few agonizing seconds pass before she looks at him again.

"Are you hungry?" KJ asks.

Her face shows the pain that she cannot hide with a questioning look.

"Yeah," Johnny says, "Whatever you got is good."

"Sit, OK?" KJ says, "I'd like to take care of it."

"OK," Johnny says.

Johnny takes a seat at the living room table. Before she leaves, KJ removes the laptop and places it on the dresser. In its place she sets the bottle with the flowers. She smiles at him for an instant before disappearing into the kitchen. There, she pays a debt to her emotions, though only so much that she'll show little sign when she returns.

KJ brings his plate of food. The slices of ham look magnificent and the carrots she cleaned and cooked will go well with the sweetish meat. To the side of the flower she lays the bowl of salad. It's mostly greens with some onion and radish. She made the simple dressing herself. The two lovers will eat out of the same bowl, as they have from the start of their relationship.

Jesse Hanratty showed up at the Procyon house wearing an informal summer dress and tennis shoes on her feet. She opened the front door as instructed and closed it as soon as she'd cleared the threshold. Rian heard her enter and called out, lest he and Garret give her the fright of her life by appearing out of a doorway or around a corner. Her nerves on edge, his call still startled her a bit.

The tour of the Procyon safe house more than impresses Jesse; it amazes her. She sees the beautiful bedrooms and baths, the large, well-stocked kitchen and the gym. She sees the canopy bed as well.

"I'm so glad you could put this together," Jesse says as she looks upon the two desktop and two laptop computers in the media room. "This must have taken a lot of time and money."

"It did," Garret says, "Not just from one or two of us, either. Bill and his son gave a lot, and Gary did all that he could do. Everyone deserves our eternal gratitude."

"There's so much love here," Jesse says, "That's really what this is all about."

Jesse looks away from the objects and into Garret Fogarty's face.

"What about you and Anna?" Jesse asks, "or KJ?" she says KJ's name so soft it's almost a whisper. "What about Johnny and KJ?"

Garret returns her stare.

"I want them as far away from this war as possible," Garret says, "All three of them, if it was up to me."

"We wouldn't have a war if it were up to us," Jesse says.

Garret shakes his head.

"No," he says.

Garret turns and leaves the room.

Johnny Bowen pours two glasses of wine. He's been wondering how to make a toast. He sets the glasses on the table.

"You know I don't give a shit for people who use words like 'racist' and 'sexist,'" Johnny says, "It's just a way those assholes shut up anyone who disagrees with them. No shit, huh? I know you want the truth and you don't care that there are differences between men and women. What the fuck's wrong with that anyway? I'd say we fit perfect together. But, anyway, most girls, and most women for that matter, need some kind of influence in their lives. It can be family, or a strong man, like Anna and Gary, or Jesse and her father. I don't know what they'd have become without that influence, but they wouldn't have become the women they are, I can guarantee that. Thank God they had someone to give them a hand."

Johnny had been looking to the side and at the flower as much as in her face. Now he focuses on her blue eyes and does not alter his stare.

"But you," Johnny says, "Your influences were the other way, against our race, against your brothers, against reality. But you resisted. I'll never cease being amazed at that. You're so rare." He gets a little smile. "You're the angel."

Johnny picks up his glass and KJ, hers.

"Your life is yours now, my love," Johnny says, "I hope you can find some peace."

He touches his glass to hers and they drink. KJ says nothing. She does not need to. Peace for her would mean peace for him.

Rian Donnelly listens as his fiancée leaves the house and drive away. He cannot watch. No active member of Capricorn Cell can look outside the window without endangering himself or his brother in arms. That includes the wheel man.

Garret, meanwhile, has unfurled their sleeping bags on the living room floor. He sets the air conditioning to 68 degrees and puts water on to boil. In his bag he's brought instant coffee. Until Capricorn Cell is all together, he will not use its supplies.

"Why aren't we usin' the beds?" Rian asks the moment he enters the living room.

"They're reserved at the moment," Garret says, "By the way, one of them is yours, but no one's using them until we're all gathered here."

"Fair enough," Rian says.



After coffee, Rian will climb into his bag. Garret will read his Kindle for at least two more hours. Both will rise at five. According to the plan, Johnny Bowen will pick them up at 7 AM.

A week ago, John Bowen would have picked a bowl full of black raspberries. After dinner, with KJ lying across him, he'd have fed them to her and, laughing and touching, they would have felt the joy of intimacy as only those who love each other can feel. Tonight it would have been fool-hardy and inadvertently cruel. Johnny feels a powerful urge to look upon her wings. Equal in it power is his desire to touch her bare belly. He remembers how it feels, how it is warm and smooth, but still round and very feminine in form.

"Thank you for dinner, angel," Johnny says.

KJ flashes that wounded smile at him, the one he's seen before and hopes to never see again. She rises from her seat and removes the empty plates. As she walks around Johnny she kisses him on the head, and he closes his eyes and sighs.

"I put on some coffee," KJ says upon returning.

KJ takes her seat. She glances at the bouncing bet flowers on the table. Most are pink, though one is white.

"Angel," Johnny says, "I know what you've said about the future. I know how dedicated you are to the struggle. I'd question myself before I'd ever question you."

KJ figured he'd try to convince her to stay out of the larger fray. She'd do the same with him, if the roles were reversed. Even though she understands that a real man will not refuse to fight for his principles, on occasion she still feels the need to ask him to stay safe.

"I know what they'll feel toward you," Johnny says, "They'll want to make you suffer. I killed two snipers in Iraq and I wanted to kill them. With you it'll be worse than that. You're the death of their dreams and they'll want to destroy you more than anything."

"Doesn't that make it more important for me to fight?" KJ asks.

"Angel, your life will change forever," Johnny says, "No more trips to Washington or France, or even fucking Diamond. No more visiting Seattle or going to restaurants or concerts. Ever."

"I know why you're doing this," KJ says and forces a smile through the agony, because she does feel like smiling. "I love you, Johnny, but I've made up my mind. I'll sacrifice what I have to. You're sacrificing, too."

"It's not the only way to fight, angel," Johnny says, his own masculine emotions running high. "Write music and perform, like..." He stops. David Hill did just that, and an anti-white shot him for it.

KJ looks down and laughs for a second. Then she looks at him and the smile disappears.

"We're all in this war," KJ says, "Every white person, and any time they want to hurt us they will."

"You can write music and sing like David Hill," Johnny says, "It's a big risk. Everything is. But you might have a fucking life then."

"I already do," KJ says, looking into his eyes. "Johnny, if everyone who picks up a gun is a guy, they'll use it as propaganda against you. You know they will. Even if there is a girl, they'll say she's brainwashed or a captive. But if there are two or three of us, then they can't deny us. That would hurt them so fucking bad, and they need to be hurt for betraying and abusing us. It's my race, too, Johnny."

"KJ, angel," Johnny says, "I know that. I don't want you to renounce the struggle, don't misunderstand me for God's sake."

"I know, Johnny," KJ says, "I thought about writing and singing, for a long time now, even before I knew you. I thought about attacking anti-whites and all their fucking allies with my voice and on the internet. A young, attractive..."

"Beautiful," Johnny says, "Don't exaggerate the other way."

KJ smiles a little.

"Alright, beautiful," she says, "If a beautiful young white woman takes up our struggle, it would destroy their fucking lies about women always being on the anti-white side. They treat us women as fucking tools and slaves, Johnny, like it's a safe assumption that I'll betray a man like you. That's why it's so fucking important for me to fight by your side. They want a war against my race, well, they get a real fucking war!"

The pain erupts for a moment. Johnny looks at her as she wipes her cheeks.

"I don't want your heart to be hardened," he says, "War does that to people, I know."

"You went to war," KJ says, "and it didn't harden your heart. I'll hold on to you, and all that we've had, even if I can't be with you. That'll keep me from losing myself. I know how important it is for a woman like me to stand with you. You know I'm right. You know what it would mean for a woman like me to stand with her men, to the death if she has to."

"To the death," Johnny says, "To the fucking death."

Johnny knows her unwavering dedication and he would have said that he expected her to say such a thing, but now that the guns are loaded and the resistance is about to begin her words, backed by undeniable conviction, fall heavily upon his soul.

"Listen to me, KJ," Johnny says, "The bag under your bed has thirty thousand in it. It's a start. When you're 18, take the money and the blue Jeep and go home. Not that fucking place where your parents live, either. You have to have relatives that aren't filth, at least one or two decent ones, you have to. I'm not asking you to abandon the struggle. Sing about our race. Write a fucking song about what's happening to us. Use that passion to fight with words. Just...live, OK? Live."

A tear runs down her face. He continues to look into her eyes.

"When I go back to Seattle," KJ says, "and I'm surrounded by white people who hate men like you and hate their own fucking race, do I dream of finding someone like you? Do I dream of you while I'm all alone in my bed? Tell me, Johnny, do I smother my sadness in smoke, or in the arms of some douche who would hate the real KJ? Tell me, Johnny, do I try to act happy when you die?"

Johnny rises to his feet. She watches him for a moment and then stands. Neither says anything for a while. KJ comes around the table so that nothing is between them. She looks up at him. Every bit of his body and soul urges him to take her into his arms but he does not.

"You can still stay out of the ugly part," Johnny says.

"How can I, Johnny?" KJ says, "I'm white! I'm fucking white! My people are going extinct and I can do something about it. I can fight, Johnny! You know I can fight! What the fuck am I, if...if I do nothing? Just like the goddamn rich whites, the singers, the actors, the fucking teachers, fucking cops and fucking every white man and woman who does absolutely fucking nothing and won't risk anything to save their own children! Their own children, Johnny! Our children."

Johnny looks at KJ, this stunning and beautiful angel, full of ferocious love that he'd trade the rest of his life to have, and from which he will walk away tonight. She is the greatest dream come true, more than one of them, actually, and while his cause needs an angel of war as is natural for a man in love he resists the idea of her suffering that sorrowful fate. He does not move, neither closer nor farther away.

KJ looks into his eyes but cannot keep up her stare. She looks down and closes her eyes, with agony growing on her face. Then she summons the strength to look at him again.

"Hold me!" she yells at him.

Johnny exhales sharply. KJ looks into his eyes, the pain on her face so great he wants to look away, but he must not.

"Hold me," she says. He takes her into his arms and kisses her head.

"OK, angel," Johnny says, "We'll make this harder."

"It is hard!" KJ says from his chest, "It's so fucking hard."

"I know, angel," Johnny says, "Goddamn it, I know."

KJ squeezes him tight and he feels her breathing. He hears her soft sobbing and closes his eyes.

"I'll never meet anyone like you," KJ says, "You care about us, and nature, and little babies who haven't even been born yet, and you're going to risk your life for them, for everything that matters in this fucking world. You're not a fucking Alpha asshole or anything like that. You're a man. You're my man! I finally found you and now I have to watch you fucking walk away from me."

Johnny kisses her head and he feels her grab on to him like she's drowning and he's her only salvation.

"I love you," KJ says, "I love you so much. I can't lose you."

Johnny can feel her weeping hard into his chest. He rubs her back and touches her thick hair. He can feel her nuzzle and kiss his chest and he kisses her head again.

"I love you," KJ whispers.

"I love you, too, angel," Johnny says, "Sometimes you're all I have. But that's more than any other man has in his life."

"Don't go," KJ says, and pulls back to look at him.

Her eyes are so beautiful, yet the sadness and urgency are so powerful that he would look away if he did not love her.

"Don't go! Please don't go!" KJ says, pleading, "Don't leave me, Johnny! Please don't leave me."

If Johnny were leaving her for another woman, or on a whim, KJ would never plead with him to stay. She would not feel this way at all. But she knows him, and loves him, and she knows that he loves her as well. It is not him or her that is ripping them apart; it is a war she knows he has to fight, and yet that makes her suffer all the more.

Johnny pulls her back, though his hands remain on her shoulders. She closes her eyes and he sees the pain on her face. He puts his hand on the back of her head, pulling her forward until their foreheads touch.

"KJ, I love you too," Johnny says, "God knows how much I love you. I'll never meet another woman like you. But I have to go, angel. The enemy took away the future, and I have to try and get it back."

He holds her in place as he moves back to look upon her.

"Will I ever see you again?" KJ says, softly, while looking into his eyes.

It is excruciating for Johnny Bowen to look into her blue eyes, full of pain and desire, and to tell her he's leaving.

"I don't know," he says.

KJ looks down. Her face doesn't show the extent of the pain she's feeling. Tears flow down her immaculate face.

"You'll always live inside of me," KJ says.

Johnny embraces her and feels her warm skin and tears.

"So will you, angel," Johnny says, trying to smile, "You're the only one who will ever be in that place."

He looks at her and sees the agony expressed on her face. Her pain, fueled by the abuse and degradation she's suffered for most of her life, surges anew from her inner self. He sees her look to the side and hears her breathing increase. Then she looks up toward him and seizes his forearm. Her resistance to the death of her dearest dream is frantic and desperate.

"Take me with you!" KJ says, "Find a way! Find a fucking way! Tell them that you need me to be there, that you need a woman to be with you, so you won't be alone! Tell them a man doesn't need to be alone!" She looks at him for a moment. The agony on her face fades, though it is still very much in her mind and soul. "Tell them how much I love you," she says.

John Ashley Bowen looks into the eyes of the woman he loves more than anything he's ever known. With loving patience and gentle force, he removes her hands from his arm, and then he kisses her, softly at first, though it soon becomes deep and passionate. When it ends he steps back and looks at her. Her eyes are still closed. Johnny takes two steps backward and waits. She opens her eyes.

"I love you Johnny," KJ says, "Remember that when you feel lonely."

The final words become whispers, drowned in sobbing and pain.

"I love you too, angel," Johnny says, "I always will."

Johnny begins to turn toward the door but then stops. He faces KJ and takes two large steps up to her. He pulls her close for a moment and smells her hair, filling his lungs with the soft and divine scent. KJ closes her eyes and sobs in silence.

She hears him turn and walk to the door. She hears the inner door close and lock, followed by the outer one. She hears the Rubicon come to life. She hears the faint sound of raindrops striking the roof of the porch. The rain is only a prelude to the night's thunderstorms and it does not last.

Later that night, a powerful storm emerges from the darkness and batters Preston and Garret Counties. The aerial cannonade awakens KJ from her fitful sleep. She buries her face in her pillow, and her body moves as she weeps.

The storm rages over Oakland, Maryland. It does not awaken Johnny Bowen; he has not yet fallen asleep. The flashes of lightning illuminate KJ's sketch, which Johnny has framed and hung on the wall. It's duty, he tells himself, and he believes it. Duty compels him to leave her, the only woman he will ever love. There's no point in being angry at those who would not fight for their children when words and courage were all that was required and no one had to die. There's no point in being furious with those who forced him to make these gut-wrenching decisions. He tries not to blame them. Alone in his bed, the night shattered by vivid strokes of lightning, Johnny lies with his side toward the window. He tries not to think about KJ but every image in his mind takes him back to her.

When KJ wakes on Sunday morning, she glances at her alarm clock. It reads 7:30, around the time she wanted to rise. Outside, a blue jay mews and cries. KJ closes her eyes and pulls her body into a ball under the sheet. She wants to sleep for a few more hours, but forces herself to move. Life will go on.

That does not mean that the journey will be easy. KJ draws a bath and before climbing in she removes her tank top. She looks into the mirror. Wearing only a thong, she can see her wings. In an instant she feels her loss, and tears begin to well up in her eyes. She turns away and heads to the tub.

On Friday, David Fox went on a date with his girlfriend Abby. The two caught a predictably bad film at the cinema in West Mifflin before dining at a quality Italian restaurant in McKeesport. At eleven in the evening he returned home. After unlocking his fire-and-water-proof safe, David stored his spending money inside a plastic bank folder that he keeps inside. He left the folder beside a metal box that contains deeds, a will and his birth certificate, as well as the little roll of paper given to him by Garret Fogarty. He paid the objects no mind as he closed the lid.

Early the next morning, on Saturday, the 20th of July, Fox calls his brother and sets up lunch for Sunday. He eats breakfast and puts on his bicycling apparel. He'll bike fifty miles along the Ohiopyle bike trail and when he gets home, he'll have ribs and a Guinness premium beer. The ribs have already thawed.

KJ eats a late breakfast. She scrambles a couple of the cruelty-free brown eggs that Johnny brought and has a slice of last night's ham. She makes a single cup of coffee and sips it in the kitchen. Johnny's tags hang around her neck. They're not tucked in her tank top; rather, they lie among the great strands of her hair that rest upon her breasts and continue beyond. KJ finishes her coffee and lays the mug on the counter. She

glances out the window. Leaves and twigs litter the yard from last night's storm. KJ turns and walks to the living room. Her shoulder bag still sits beside her bed. She stands and stares at the bag.

Johnny doesn't want her to fight because he loves her. He knows how important it is for white women to stand with white men, and to resist the extermination of their one race. But he would rather spare KJ the pain and death of war, and send her someplace far away where she might have a little peace. His wish is touching and beautiful but she cannot fulfill it. She knows how important she is as a white woman, and that it is vital for her to stand with her white brothers in this deadly struggle. Deep in her soul, however, there is another reason why she will not obey his loving desire. She loves him as much as he loves her, more than she has ever loved someone and as much as any person could hope to love another. If she fights the enemy, perhaps there will be less of them to threaten him, her dear, beloved Johnny. If she fights the enemy she will not be surrounded by traitorous whites who celebrate his death, should the hero fall in battle for his race. Should such a cruel fate befall Johnny Bowen, if young rebel KJ does not flee the war, she might avenge his murder.

KJ Campbell reaches into her shoulder bag and opens the little white paper.

*KJ,*

*Should you choose to be active, come to the Cooper's Rock picnic area between noon and 1 PM on Friday the 26th. I will be at one of the tables on the loop to the right of the main concessions stand.*

*Garret*

KJ carries the note and a box of waterproof matches to the diminutive backyard. There, she destroys all trace of the note's existence.

Anna and Gary will be out for most of the day. After breakfast, they'll drive to Pittsburgh. The Phipps Conservatory has added a new exhibit focusing on plants native to Pennsylvania, and Anna has wanted to see it since it opened in April.

After a light lunch, the Murphys will visit the Buhl Planetarium. Gary hasn't taken her there in ten years. The new comet display convinced him that he should. More interesting than the general scientific information will be the myriad photos and works of art, arranged in chronological order, featuring such previous heavenly visitors as Arend-Roland and the 1910 Comet. Unlike Garret, Anna never showed a deep fascination with astronomy, though the images and wide range of celestial objects captivates her, and it's a safe bet she'll love this exhibition. Gary planned on ending

the outing with a meal at Point Brugge but Anna made a change in their plans. Early that morning she checked on-line and found that a troop of Cape Breton fiddlers is visiting the Benedum, and that there were still a few tickets left. The show will feature some of Gary's favorite tunes. For Anna it guarantees an evening spent with her father, and the knowledge that he enjoyed himself.

Despite the clouds, it's bright outside and KJ wears her sunglasses. She puts on a tight, high-collared top and a tight pair of jeans, as well as gloves and a pair of tall lace-up boots. On her waist is the pistol in its holster. She covers it and her arms with a long-sleeve shirt. Then, KJ grabs her shoulder bag and goes outside.

KJ notices pools of water throughout the yard. She's glad to have chosen one of her older pairs of boots, since she sinks into the mud and grass as she walks out to the blue Jeep. She taps each boot against the side of the frame before pulling her legs inside the Jeep and closing the door. She looks into the mirror and sees Johnny's tags around her neck, and she tucks them into her shirt, just in case someone sees her up close. She knows she's taking a risk, and that she'll use gasoline that she might need later. Still, she can pay cash out of the money she had squirreled away at the hall, and that she now stores in a dresser at the cottage. If she pays cash at some far-flung gas station in West Virginia, the odds of her being recognized are slim. She will not spend the money Johnny gave her, neither the money in the backpack nor the emergency money he left in the dresser. She already has plans for that money.

KJ needs this ride. She drives south and then west, through beautiful countryside and tracts of thick forest. The sky is merciful and remains overcast. She still wears her sunglasses, just as a precaution. There is, however, one precaution that she throws to the wind: When the anguish grows after something makes her think of him, she takes Johnny's tags from under her shirt and lets them fall uncovered upon her chest. Should someone recognize her and attempt to return her to her old, oppressive existence, she will resist to the end, and when they look upon her broken body they will see to whom she belonged.

The West Fork is a muddy torrent. From Shinnston to Clarksburg the river is over its banks, though not up to the highway. Piles of wood and other debris are collecting around the pylons of bridges that cross the stream. The rain has stopped but the world looks dreary and everything for some reason or another looks tired.

In old Shinnston, KJ passes an automotive garage that may or may not have been out of business for years. Outside, an old white man scowls



from his wheelchair. Tattoos emblazoned upon his arms indicate a martial past, and he looks just as tough as he must have looked when he stormed Inchon.

Monongah is much the same: antiquated, run-down and fading. The companies that worked miners to an early grave and fouled the once-clear waters have left the men without jobs and the creeks orange and lifeless. Here and there are ugly buildings, some with ridiculous statues and names, others looking like well-worn trailers with two or three hasty additions. These are the strip clubs, which prey upon what's left of the young female crowd and the desperate, broken men as well. KJ thinks of her Johnny. He'd deal with the parasites that profit from her brothers' and sisters' decline. He already has, in fact.

KJ detours around Clarksburg. She may take risks but will not push her luck to the maximum. Clarksburg is too large, and there is a somewhat better chance that someone might recognize her beautiful and distinctive face. Partly for reasons of secrecy and partly because she enjoys trying a new path, KJ eschews the direct route back to Amblersburg and instead heads south. She remembers a southerly route that she played with on the Google Maps website, and decides to follow it. The two-lane country road will pass through alternating woodland and pasture until entering the deep woods west of Belington. Somewhere along the route KJ intends to find a suitable spot to exit the Jeep and stretch her legs.

By 2:30 PM KJ sees a sign for Audra Park along the boondocks highway that is taking her toward Belington. It's a good place to stop and perhaps enjoy a short jaunt in the woods. She parks in a little lot opposite the largest part of the park, sharing the place with but a single other vehicle. Though the temperature is in the 80's the sky is solid overcast. KJ does not remove her outer shirt because of what it conceals. She does take off her sunglasses, storing them on the top of her head for future availability. Inside her shoulder bag she has two bottles of water and a bag of homemade trail mix, should she feel hungry. She is well supplied for a short hike and begins walking the trail through the thick woodland.

The beginning of the hiking trail runs parallel to the Middle Fork River. Last night's cloudburst has swelled its waters. Even an excellent swimmer should not trust his abilities in such a torrent, and KJ is a little relieved when the trail snakes away from the water. She follows it deep into the West Virginia forest. The air there is fresh and clean and the heat of summer does not penetrate the wet foliage. The rain has brought out all kinds of mushrooms. KJ sees a few large Bradleys, brown mushrooms notable for their latex "milk" and good taste when cooked. For a second

she thinks of picking them and surprising Johnny. She looks down with a sad little smile on her face and presses onward.

A sign points toward a small cave. KJ stops at the wooden railing that eventually runs past the cave entrance, and she takes a bottle of water from her bag. With one boot on the bottom board of the railing, she takes a long drink. Through the trees she can see the raging waters of the Middle Fork. If not for her race, parks like this would not exist. Her white brothers and sisters are the only ones who treat nature as a thing of beauty worthy of preservation; in a world without whites, primitive industry and mass cuttings would consume the trees and leave the blighted Earth poisoned and sterile. The sheer number of non-white immigrants, together with the swelling number of American-born blacks and non-whites, will someday denude the land and replace the last vestiges of wilderness with ugly sprawls and stinking slums. KJ wants her children to know the splendor and invigorating beauty of wild places, of trees, of whippoorwills and luna moths and clear little streams full of dace and darter and the ancient snapping turtles that call those waters home. Her future children deserve a healthy natural world. They deserve everything she has, and everything she can give for them.

KJ looks down at the wild touch-me-not just beyond the fence. She sighs. He's never far away from her thoughts.

There is movement to the right and KJ lowers her bottle of water. A 60-something man and his wife are walking the trail. KJ glances at them and then back at the Middle Fork, which peeks through the rustling leaves. In her peripheral vision she notices that the man is startled to see her standing there. They do not stop their approach, though they do slow down a little.

The woman looks to be about the same age as her husband. Both are white. His hair is graying and hers is dyed too dark. She's thin and has sharp features, but her eyes seem kind. He seems jovial and smiles at KJ, who returns his smile with a short-lived one of her own.

"Are you all alone up here?" the man asks, still smiling, as he comes close to KJ.

KJ nods, a brief, tight-lipped smile on her face. He's never seen a girl this beautiful before; one with a gorgeous and distinctive face, a powerful magnetism even at first sight and an unforgettable stare that is both angelic and severe. He slows further and his wife takes a step or two ahead of him.

"Be careful, if you're up here by yourself," the gentleman says, "A lovely little thing like you shouldn't be alone."

"That's so sweet," KJ says, "Thank you."

He smiles again and catches up to his wife, who stopped to wait.

KJ notices a hummingbird moth flitting in and out of a tall bellflower. Its wings are a blur in the air as its body moves back and forth as if suspended by an invisible string.

At 6 PM, David Fox returns to his Pittsburgh apartment. He drinks a glass of homemade root beer from a large glass jug in his refrigerator and then fancies a second glass. When he opens the door a second time, the frog magnet on the outside comes loose and falls, but his reflexes enable him to catch it before it can shatter on the hard wooden floor. While riding his bike, David thought about supper. He decides to use a rub rather than a sauce on the ribs. That wasn't all that was on his mind. He thought about last night, and how Abby got a little testy when he called Mexican immigrants "wetbacks." He thought about a non-white calling him a racial slur. If he responded in kind, would both of them lose their jobs, or only him? He thought about the ramifications of the ubiquitous anti-white hatred that permeates every aspect of American society, and how it will affect any child that he might have. The bike flew as he thought about that subject.

The new contract at his apartment complex forbids pets. David thought about Bobby, who now lives with David's cousin and her children. At least Bobby has more room to roam. He thought about his favorite sports team, the Penguins, and Evgeni Malkin's imminent departure from Pittsburgh.

Throughout the day, David's thoughts invariably returned to the little paper he received from Garret Fogarty. At 6:15 PM, just after supper, David Fox unfurls and reads the note.

KJ returns to the Amblersburg cottage at 6:30. She parks in front of the porch and hops out. The evening air is pleasant and a light breeze blows. KJ locks the Jeep and enters the house. For a second she hoped he'd be there. She knows it was foolish to hope. If Johnny weren't so dedicated to her and her future, he might have been, but then he could not love her like he does. After she's removed her long-sleeve shirt, her boots and her outer clothing, KJ puts on an apron and sets about making a creamy mustard sauce for the ham. She also takes a raspberry bear from the cookie jar. There is a fresh cabbage in the fridge. She decides to make a cabbage salad, and eats the heart as a snack as she whips up the sauce. She manages to keep her emotions at bay in spite of the bereavement she's feeling, which is especially acute as she makes supper for one. The simple white apron is open in the back. She can imagine Johnny's reaction when he walks into the kitchen and sees his woman

standing in front of the sink, wearing the apron and a thin bra and black thong underneath, just like she's wearing right now. There are so many little things she'd do and that he'd appreciate; sensual things that would further cement their relationship. KJ closes her eyes and takes a deep breath. The dream may be dead but she hasn't quite felt the brunt of it yet, and it is already agony. She can imagine how much it's going to hurt in the days to come.

Anna Murphy rises early on Sunday. It's going to be bright out, so she sets her floppy white hat and sunglasses on her bed. She also lays a long sleeve button down shirt to wear over her top. The old t-back she likes best is a bit too tight and too low on her chest for decency, so she rejects it. Instead, she selects her pastel-blue sleeveless. That, and a pair of jeans, will be perfect for her visit to the Michael Collins Murphy Family. She takes a quick shower, braids her hair into two long tails, and heads for the kitchen to make breakfast. Gary's already there, still in his t-shirt and flannel pajama pants. A cup of coffee is in his hands and one sits on the table, covered with aluminum foil so that it does not cool. That cup is Anna's. Gary kisses her on the cheek and wishes her a good morning.

After breakfast, Anna hugs her father and runs off. She has to be at her cousin's place by nine.

Earlier last week, Anna bought a box full of little plastic vehicles that are big enough and sturdy enough to be safe for a one year old. The box – more like a bucket – includes little cars and trucks and even a train and a helicopter. She can't wait to see Bryce's face when he opens it. As Anna drives to Connellsville, the present sits on the empty passenger seat. It is wrapped in red and white paper and looks like a candy cane. In fact Anna has affixed a plush candy cane to the top of the present. It's too large and soft for Bryce to cause too much trouble with it.

Anna will house sit while her cousin and his family attend church, and then she'll babysit Bryce while they visit Emily's parents and go out for supper. Anna has her iPod for the first quarter of the visit. She'll have Bryce's company for the rest, and she looks forward to it with enthusiasm.

Michael's old Cherokee is parked outside. He meets her at the door. He's boisterous as usual and all smiles when he sees her. There is a lot of Gary in him. He's also handsome in his red shirt and church pants. Anna takes off her hat and sunglasses and then the two kiss cheeks.

Emily Murphy née Rose looks lovely today. Although her pregnancy has only just begun, the psychological effect on Anna is pronounced. Knowing that another little life is growing inside her makes Emily more beautiful than ever. She and Anna hug and then Emily clears the way for

Anna to chirp and fawn over little Bryce Murphy. Anna is alight with joy when she sees the little man in his church suit.

"He's so handsome!" Anna says, her hands on her legs as she bends to look close into his little face.

Bryce smiles open-mouthed, and begins to agitate to be near his redheaded relation. He knows Anna will hold him and the two will play. She picks him up and rubs noses with him.

"If you get bored," Michael says, "We just bought a new IMAX show about Alaska. It's on top of the DVD pile."

"OK, cool," Anna says, "I'll check it out."

Anna hands Bryce to his mother and waves to him from the window as they leave. Quiet returns to the Michael Collins Murphy home.

Before putting on the documentary about Alaskan geography and ecology, Anna goes out and gets the present from her car. It's getting rather hot outside. She remembers that the church in Connellsville has air conditioning and it comforts her knowing that her relations will not suffer the heat. The IMAX team begins with Katmai National Park. As expected, the imagery is breathtaking.

At noon, Michael and his family return home. Anna, who is listening to her iPod, jumps up and opens the door.

"You're sure you don't mind?" Emily asks Anna, referring to Anna's offer to make lunch for Bryce.

Anna shakes her head.

"I don't mind," Anna says; it's an understatement. She continues: "Hey, wait, I have a gift for Bryce. Is it OK if I give it to him?"

"Sure," Emily says, "I just hope you didn't spend too much."

Emily knows that Anna won't listen.

"Check this out," Anna says.

She walks to the couch and fetches the gift.

Before Michael and his wife leave, they watch little Bryce – now in a more comfortable toddler's outfit – grasp for each of his little toys, trying to hold on to all of them at once. Anna tickles his cheek with the soft candy cane and he laughs. Michael and Emily leave their dear child in the capable hands of Anna Murphy, though not before Michael squeezes his cousin's shoulder with his big, powerful hand.

Anna makes lunch for Bryce, which consists of strained carrots and squash as well as some ground meat. Then it's playtime again, and for the next hour or so he pushes and rolls and stacks the little toy vehicles. Toward the end of playtime Anna interacts a little less and watches him more. When he finally tires out a little, she takes him to his crib and tucks

him in with a kiss on his head. Back inside the living room, Anna sits on the couch and glances at the pictures on the wall. There are the usual family portraits, and there is one with Anna together with the family, and one with Anna, Gary, Hannah and her family. The Murphy's and Buckley's are very close, so close that cousins and uncles are a common sight on the living room walls of nieces and nephews. Anna puts the little toys in the plastic bucket and sets it on the table. As she does, tears wash her eyes and threaten to spill. When the task is complete she creeps over to the bedroom door. Bryce is sound asleep and Anna does not make a noise to disturb him, not even when the tears to begin to flow.

"Little man," Anna whispers, the words a soft hush.

To Anna Murphy, Bryce is worth all that she can give, and she will give everything that she has. How she would love to go away with Garret, to Ireland or Switzerland, or to some quiet town in northern Pennsylvania, where they would have their own children, and Bryce would be a big brother to their own son or daughter. Fate denies her that beautiful dream. The living, breathing babe needs her right now. She has to be his big sister. She has to fight for him.

Anna is back to her energetic self by the time Michael and Emily pull into the driveway. Bryce is enjoying his little toys and Anna is encouraging him. As time advances and becomes short, Anna takes him into her arms and hugs him even longer than usual. Then she hugs and kisses the parents. Emily gives her some gourmet coffee she bought for her and Gary as well as a large piece of homemade cake she made just the day before. Anna and Gary will have it for dessert, after they eat supper of course.

Once she's back home, Anna Murphy marches straight to her room, where she opens the little piece of paper.

On Monday afternoon, while KJ completes her cardio workout on the bike in the living room, Anna, who is in the basement of the Murphy Home, finishes her lifting routine. Though John McShane and Kevin Toomey have their own exercise and weight programs, the only lifting they're doing at the moment is at Leo's Pub in Mount Pleasant, and the heaviest objects will be the steins of ale. McShane just returned from a brutal day lugging equipment around the Laurel Highlands in the sun and heat of July. He showered, changed t-shirts and left his apartment. Kevin Toomey took half the day off to get a haircut and meet an old high school friend for a game of pool. He deliberately did not eat or drink any alcoholic beverages, knowing he'd be doing both with John McShane.

McShane ate mostly pasta. In contrast, Toomey had a couple of burgers with fries. Now they drink: McShane a Harp lager, Toomey a St.

Pauli Girl. McShane sees a man reading the sports page of the Tribune. In a huge picture on the front is the new Pirates manager.

"Fucking worthless Pirates," says McShane, who likes baseball.

Once a Pirate fan, since the darkening of their roster he's become disgusted, particularly in light of the team pursuing a black pitcher who is notorious for being a "cancer" in the locker room.

"Did you look at Garret's paper?" Toomey asks in a low voice.

McShane shakes his head. Toomey is surprised. For three years he's known McShane's views, such as his agreement with Bill Donnelly that Ireland is in grave peril from future non-white immigration, and that America is the first and probably most important battlefield in the war for their race's survival. He also knows that McShane holds the IRA and pro-unification groups in the highest regard. The two have talked about what they might have done had they been in the six counties during the Troubles. Without hesitation McShane said that he would have joined the resistance.

"Have you?" he asks Toomey.

"No," Toomey says.

"I have to think some more," John McShane says, "I agree with the idea, but it has to be done right."

The two finish their beers and order two more. Once the steins are full, Toomey mentions something else and changes the subject. There's no more mention of the little papers and not a word about Garret Fogarty or the reasons that he gave them the little notes of instruction. The afternoon ends with a word or two about McShane's female coworker. John would appear to be interested in the young lady.

That night, Kevin Toomey has trouble sleeping. He thought that moving out and resuming dating, maybe even getting lucky a few times, was a good plan for the immediate future. Recent events have rekindled a love for his people and his race that was never far from the surface, but which he ignored since it would have destroyed his chances to find stable employment should he commit the sin of admitting that he wants the white race to survive and prosper. He lies in the bed in his parent's recreation room and feels disgusted at his current state. True, he works, and he pays rent, and he has imminent plans on moving out. Those are all necessary if he hopes to avoid being a sponge or a failure as a man. That's not the entire reason he feels such acute disgust and cannot go back to sleep. Those who profit from importing a non-white working class, at the expense of his brothers-in-race, and those who seek the advancement of their own tribe at the expense of whites have made it more difficult for a man like

him or McShane to escape temporary worker slavery, or to even find a factory job. Should he have a family, and he certainly desires one someday, his descendants will face even greater difficulties and may find it impossible to earn a living wage. They may no longer have a voice. In time, they will not only be silenced and belittled, they will be so heavily outnumbered that they will be in extreme peril of extermination at the hands of hostile and violent non-whites.

By three in the morning Kevin Toomey's had enough. He takes the little paper from his desk drawer and reads it.

John McShane, on the other hand, sleeps like a baby. A little earlier, as he sat alone in front of his desktop computer, his mind returned to the dilemma of what to do with Garret's note. He considered spreading the Mantra and attacking anti-whites. A hate speech law is already in effect, thanks to both parties and both chambers of Congress. The wording of the new law is predictable, being ambiguous enough to create loopholes for non-whites and additional traps for whites. McShane wondered if they hadn't already been forced to cross the line from peaceful and legal to violence. The percentage of whites in America is in a nose dive and yet an increasing amount of the tax burden falls upon their shoulders, with much of the tax money directly or indirectly aiding those who are replacing whites through immigration and miscegenation. McShane thought about the fellow whites and their Jewish allies who continue to raise gas prices in spite of a recent period of calm in the Middle East. He watched a few commercials on YouTube. It was the same ham-fisted propaganda, over and over, and the same anti-white script delivered by intelligent blacks against cowardly, stupid white males, usually with the approval of some treacherous and ill-mannered white woman.

Around midnight, John McShane reads the note and destroys it.

Mason Walker wakes at six on Tuesday. The drive from his apartment to his workplace in Cumberland, Maryland, lasts roughly half an hour and he has to be there by eight. He's very thankful for the job and has begun to prove his mettle. He leaves early every day to avoid being late. It hasn't been a very hot summer, but with jobs scarcer and scarcer and taxes and gasoline prices ever higher, many folks cannot afford to replace old air conditioning units and there are plenty of them in need of repair.

Mason shaves and takes care of other personal necessities, and then dresses for his job. He makes some toast and a cup of tea for breakfast. Then he grabs his lunchbox and thermos and heads for the door. Beyond the kitchen is the little living room, with a TV, a dresser and a desk. The desk has two drawers, both of which Mason keeps locked. Inside one



of them is the little paper that Garret gave to him. Mason almost looked at it on Sunday, and held it in his hands on Monday evening, after work. Today, his hand on the doorknob, he looks at the desk. He taps the knob with his fingers. Then he looks down, and walks out the door.

Around 9 AM, Anna leaves the Murphy home after checking and loading her pistol and putting on a long-sleeve shirt over her tank top in order to conceal the weapon. The sun is cutting through a disintegrating cloud deck, so once more Anna must wear sunglasses. At least her car has good air conditioning.

The route she takes swings south and eventually passes through Chalk Hill. Not long after leaving Lemont Furnace, she passes fairly close to the Campbell House, though trees and other large houses obscure it from her view. At Chalk Hill, Anna stops at the Christmas store and buys a small set of decorative plates and bowls, each featuring characters and scenes from *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*. She also buys a jar full of cookie mix, the ingredients for which come from Pennsylvania farms. Then she's off, down the quiet two-lane highway to Gibbon Glade and through the gorgeous woodland surrounding Canaan Church Road. She knows these forests better than many who have lived there all their lives.

Two hours later, Anna turns right on to the curved gravel driveway of KJ's little home. She's relieved to see the blue Jeep parked to the right of the cottage. Otherwise, there are no signs of life. Anna parks the Subaru in front of the house and, bag in hand, walks to the door. There are still no sounds or movements from inside and Anna begins to wonder if KJ's taken a walk in the woods. She sounds the doorbell and waits. Finally she hears someone unlocking the inner door, and then the outer one. When it opens she sees her sister-in-law standing before her.

"Hey," KJ says, a smile on her face.

"Hi, KJ," Anna says.

"Come on in," KJ says, waving Anna forward with her gloved hand.

Anna enters the porch and has to swing the bag behind her when KJ grabs and embraces her with both arms.

"I didn't know if I'd see you again," KJ says, her eyes closed.

"On the way down I wondered if I'd find you here," Anna says. She rubs KJ's back. "KJ, are you OK?" she asks after stepping back.

KJ nods. Anna removes her sunglasses and looks at her dear friend. She's wearing a button-down long sleeve shirt, with the sleeves rolled up a little, and a pair of jeans. She really doesn't expect Johnny to come.

"Hey, I bought you something" Anna says once they enter the house. She sets the bag on the floor and reaches into it.

"You didn't have to do that," KJ says.

"Bullshit," Anna says, "I was dumb enough to forget a housewarming gift the first time I came. Here, check this out."

She hands the paper-enshrouded plates to KJ, who opens them on the bed.

"They're adorable!" she says, "Thank you."

She hugs Anna again.

Anna removes the cookie mix and shakes the jar.

"Let's make these," she says, "Do you have time?"

KJ looks at her with a somewhat annoyed look on her face.

"Alright," Anna says, "Save that shit for later."

"You want to stay for supper?" KJ asks, "We can make those after, and maybe have a little coffee?"

She shrugs.

"Yeah," Anna says, "Yeah, I have time."

Anna hoped KJ would invite her to stay. Gary is away all day, and she feels the need to be near someone who's sympathetic. She's not the only one who feels that way.

Anna takes a seat at the living room table as KJ removes the laptop. While KJ's in the kitchen getting each of them a bottle of water, Anna notices the tags lying on KJ's shoulder bag, to the right of her bed. Beside the bag is her pistol. Anna stands and walks to the door.

"I'll be right back," Anna yells a split second before KJ enters the living room with two large glasses of mineral water.

Out at the Subaru, Anna goes through her own bag. When she finds what she's looking for she hesitates. She strengthens her resolve and removes the picture from a small album she keeps in her bag.

When Anna reenters the house she sees KJ at the table. KJ smiles for two seconds. She must have taken the gift plates into the kitchen, since the bed is now empty.

"KJ," Anna says as she sits, "Do you want...Do you want a picture of Johnny?"

KJ looks at her for a few silent seconds.

"Yes," she says.

Anna hands the photograph to KJ. The scene is the main parking area at Ohiopyle, when Anna, Gary, Garret, Rian and Jesse and John Ashley Bowen went on a rafting trip down the Yough. It was three months before they met KJ. This picture shows Johnny standing alone with the river as his backdrop. His arms are crossed and in his t-shirt he looks handsome and strong.

KJ stares at the picture in silence. After a short while she rises and lays the picture on the dresser. Her back to Anna, she thanks her.

"I hope that didn't hurt you," Anna says, "But I thought you should have one."

"You were right, Anna, I should," KJ says, "Thank you so much."

Anna smiles when KJ turns around and walks back to the table.

"Your song was really nice on Thursday," Anna says, "Your voice is amazing."

"Thank you," KJ says, "Jimmy Ford plays a really kick-ass guitar. I'd love to hear him play an electric guitar."

"Yeah," Anna says, "I would too. Austin has, you know. He gave it a try once and had Jimmy over to jam with him." Anna laughs. "It was kinda like me singing with you."

"You weren't that bad," KJ says.

"I wasn't that good, either," Anna says.

"Well, no," KJ says with a shrug.

Anna laughs.

"That was for the high school remark, wasn't it?" Anna asks.

KJ starts to shake her head, but the motion becomes a nod.

The cookies are cooling and supper is on when, at KJ's request, Anna brings the little picture album from the Subaru. There's a picture of Gary standing on a flat rock beside the river, a helmet strapped to his head and a warm smile on his face.

"How long does a trip last?" KJ asks when Anna flips to the next picture, one with her and the others inside the raft.

"About five hours or so," Anna says, "Sometimes a little less, but yeah, five hours."

"I think I would have liked that," KJ says, looking at the picture.

"Maybe someday we can," Anna says, "We'll pick a good, cloudy, drizzly day like we did, and we'll all get in Ford's van. It'll be gorgeous up there, late September or, better yet, October. We'll even stay the night at Kentucky Knob."

She sighs and gets quiet.

"It's just shit talk, isn't it?" Anna says.

"It's nice shit talk," KJ says.

Anna looks down, deep in thought for a few moments. She closes her eyes for a few seconds and then looks at KJ.

"Did you look at it?" asks Anna.

"Yeah," KJ says, "I looked at it. If those who abuse us didn't want a war, they shouldn't have kept pushing us. They shouldn't have put our

children in jeopardy. I guess they think we can't fight, or that we won't." KJ looks at Anna for what seems a long time. "But they're wrong. I read the note, and I know how to fight."

Anna nods.

"You're right, KJ," she says, "If they wanted peace they shouldn't have started a war against our children."

"Did you read it?" KJ asks.

"Yeah," Anna says, "There's no going back."

KJ looks down and nods. Then she looks into Anna's eyes and Anna sees that there's pain on her sister's face.

"You sort of came to say goodbye, didn't you?" KJ asks.

"Yeah," Anna says, "I guess I did."

"My life brought me to you and Johnny and the others," KJ says, "And now we all have to go away."

"KJ, we don't know that for sure," Anna says, "I just wanted to speak to you before anything starts."

KJ runs her fingers through her hair.

"We'll do what we have to," KJ says, "It's bigger than us, and it's so much bigger than me, but I'll never forget any of you."

Anna rises and walks over to KJ, who stands as well. Anna hugs her. For the rest of the afternoon, Anna and KJ prepare supper and enjoy the fruits of their labor. Afterward, they try a few of the cinnamon-walnut cookies, which go very well with coffee. They talk about anything that crosses their minds, from music of course to Anna's recent trip to Pittsburgh and KJ's walk around Audra Park. They studiously avoid the subject of love and lovers and pieces of paper that Garret handed out. At six in the afternoon, after Anna finishes helping KJ wash the dishes and baking pan, the two hug and part ways. There is nary a tear between them. Anna's tears come a little later, as she nears Gibbon Glade and a peculiar stand of trees reminds her of their April camping trip. KJ's tears hold off for a little while longer. She has a dream that night, and because it was a very good one and she remembers all of it when she abruptly awakens in the middle of the night, she cannot fight her emotions. It's only been a couple of days since Johnny left, and now her best female friend is potentially out of her life as well. She curls curl up and sobs herself back to sleep.

KJ is up early the next morning. She puts on clothing appropriate for a day at Coalsack and wears a pair of lace-up boots and wrist-length gloves. The weak front that was supposed to have passed has stagnated from a lack of steering winds, but the heat and humidity are giving it energy to fire off a few thunderstorms. At 8 AM the skies are cloudy and look

to remain that way for at least half of the day. KJ puts on one of the soft caps that Johnny bought for her. On her belt is her Smith and Wesson 1911. Again, an unbuttoned long-sleeve shirt will cover it from distant observers.

Her voyage will not cover a lot of territory, but KJ will be out until late afternoon. She takes water and some of the trail mix as well as a knife, in case she might need that most useful of tools. Among the various items that Johnny left for her are two pairs of binoculars, one for observing a wide area, and the other for precision observation. She puts the latter in her backpack, tucks Johnny's tags under her t-shirt, and sets off into the woods. She will spend most of the daylight hours spotting and observing, and practicing range estimation. Her life shall forever be in unison with John Ashley Bowen's, but it did not end when he went off to war. She has her own contribution to make to their common struggle and it does him and their beloved race no good if she succumbs to grief.

From her backpack, KJ removes a yellow towel. She crouches behind a redbud and a patch of vegetation. She notices a large orange jack-o-lantern mushroom to the right of a stand of trees. It will serve as the target in her training scenario. Had she been carrying the Remington, she could have demolished it with ease. When she decides upon a final shooting location she leaves the towel. Then she marches off to the target. From nearby, she scans the shooting area with the binoculars. Sure enough, there's the yellow towel, too easily seen.

"Fuck," KJ whispers.

Next, she spends more time considering the shooting spot from the target's perspective. For a few hours she tries to balance concealment with a good shooting position. It is not an easy task.

Anna doesn't wear the mermaid suit. She knows Garret will not be there to see her. Instead, she wears one of the blue ones that, although not nearly as spectacular as the silver suit, still looks splendid on her fit and shapely body. Today she'll spend more time at the aquatic center. She'll even try three or four dives from the 3 meter board. On a usual day of practice she'll try one; two at the most. But this is no ordinary day. By her reckoning, it's her last ever practice session at the aquatic center.

Gary wanted to see this moment, but his remaining vacation time is very thin. Having used much of it to perfect the Procyon House, he must work today. Tomorrow he is off, however, and the two will spend the day together.

It was clear to most of the Core that they would no longer be meeting at the Hall, or anywhere else on the Donnelly Homestead; that the

fragile refuge, ever imperiled by a simple slip of the tongue, was no more. For Garret Fogarty, Johnny Bowen and Jimmy Ford, key members of Capricorn Cell and its binary cell Orion, there is to be one final meeting. On Thursday morning the three wait outside the Hall for the arrival of Bill Donnelly. Today's meeting is not a formal occasion. The three men look as if they're off to work or assembling for a hike in the forest. Even Garret is wearing jeans, though his shirt has a collar. Perhaps on a subconscious level it's hard for even these men to believe that the meetings and conversations are at an end.

Bill arrives ten or so minutes later. He drives down Old Braddock in his green Cherokee, past the quiet Donnelly House and the full blackberry bushes and then parks beside the big Chevy outside the Hall. When he exits the Jeep he dons his herringbone cap. Bill will be going to his Waynesburg garage at around noon and plans on staying until late. He hopes to keep his mind occupied during the next couple of days.

"Good morning, gentlemen," Bill says.

Bill shakes hands with each one and looks deep into their eyes. Each man returns his look with a stare of his own. The camaraderie between them is not one-way. Bill sees that Garret is holding a manila folder. He also sees that each young man is armed with a pistol. It is likely they'll have to carry a weapon for the foreseeable future, perhaps for the rest of their lives.

"My brothers," Bill says, "It's been a long time coming, but the day has arrived. I know what you're about to do. You should know what I'm about to do, and what I hope to accomplish. I will be going home for a while. I hope to reestablish old contacts and meet with old friends. Perhaps I can convince a few of them of the perils we face. At the very least, I want them to consider the possibility so that they might act before it is too late. I hope that my country never becomes as anti-white as this one, though in spirit it is just as tormented, and just as weak. You, gentlemen, my brothers, are the heroes that our race needs if it is to survive. I pray it shall never come to this in my homeland, but if it does, may there be men like you to save my people."

The breeze that rises is cooler than usual for July. This far north the clouds are breaking apart.

"There is something else," Bill says, "Something that to me is just as important as accomplishing my mission. Whether I'm successful or not, I will create Elysium. Those who fight for our race's survival should not have to give their entire lives while others enjoy the fruits without lifting a finger. I urge you to consider going home once you've done your part.

When a woman is 21 she should do so, so that she and her husband might have a family. After that year of age, excepting some special mission of great importance, a woman should no longer take the field of battle. By then, each of you will have earned your peace, and a great deal more. You can alter your course of action to accommodate a little peace, and the chance to have a family. At the very least, I hope to offer you a place of solace. You'll have to make your way to Ireland, but once you do, you will be safe among my friends and family."

Bill looks at Garret.

"Garret, son," Bill says, "I believe you have something for me."

Garret hands him the folder. It is kept closed with a piece of twine. Inside is a code not unlike that one KJ memorized months ago. There is an email address and a website URL. Should Bill need to contact Garret, he can send or leave a coded message. Once he's memorized his code he will destroy the paper.

"It's a shame we can't use the IRA model," Ford says, "Too many faggots would sell us out for a pat on the head."

"That's why this is going to get really ugly," Johnny says, "There are a lot of fucking traitors, and a race traitor can make a lot of money right now."

Bill looks at each man again. He stops at Garret.

"I feel a need to mention something to you," Bill says, "It's a terrible thing and if I didn't feel it necessary I'd purge it from my mind. But son, someday you may find a traitor in your midst. Do you have a plan of action for such an evil occurrence?"

"If somebody betrays us," Garret says, "We'll try to exfiltrate and reassemble elsewhere. We've already began locating sites where we can meet and make our escape. If we can, we'll go underground for a while until we can reestablish ourselves and go active again. If not, we'll stand firm and make a name for ourselves."

"God forbid it ever comes to that," Bill says, "I trust in those who you've approached, and I hope I've made the right personnel decisions. I can tell you who I believe will fight, but I don't think you're in need of speculation."

"We'll find out soon enough," Garret says, "We can alter the cells based on their decisions, but in the end we'll carry through with this no matter who's in and who isn't. Even if it's just the five of us."

Garret does not tell Bill that if the others decide not to fight, he'll recall Cristi to be the third member of Capricorn Cell.

"I doubt it will come to that," Bill says.

"The others will decide how they'll lead their lives," Garret says, "Anna, KJ, Mason, each of them. If anyone chooses to use his voice alone, we will wish them well and help them however we can."

"Michael has promised to send funds," Bill says, "I will do what I can, and so will Gary."

"Thank you Bill," Garret says, "and please thank them on our behalf. Cristi said that he'll try and send money and whatever else he can send. We'll pay the bills and buy what we need to keep fighting. Thanks to Jimmy we can reuse quite a bit of our equipment."

Bill looks in Ford's eyes, and then into Garret's and Johnny's.

"I can only imagine the odds you face," Bill says, "Yet, in the name of unborn children you have chosen to face them. God bless you, men. You deserve the best in life, and someday I hope you can have it."

Bill looks into Johnny's eyes again. The elder Donnelly steps up to him and embraces Johnny in his arms.

"Take care, son," Bill says, "I am sorry for what you're going through."

"Take care, Bill," Johnny says.

Bill embraces Jimmy Ford.

"I can't thank you enough for your sacrifices," Bill says, "You keep hope alive by keeping these men in the field."

"Those younger than me are worth the sacrifice," Jimmy says, "They have a right to be proud of who they are."

Bill comes to Garret. They shake hands and then embrace.

"God bless you, my son," Bill says in the Irish, "I've longed for this day and I've dreaded its coming. You go to war for our grandchildren and their grandchildren, so that we will endure and survive. You rejected the pleasures that you could have had so that others will have life. Thank you, son, it is a debt we can never repay."

"There is no debt," Garret says in the Irish, "There is only responsibility."

Bill embraces him again. Like the old warrior that he is, Bill successfully fights the tears.

As the three vehicles begin to leave, Bill stands beside his Cherokee. He does not wave, but looks upon them as they turn on to Old Braddock Road and drive away. Bill grasps the folder in his left hand and walks back to his house.

At six in the afternoon, KJ has just arrived home when she hears a vehicle pull into the driveway. She tosses her hat on the dresser and creeps to the front door. She does not draw the pistol, but does put her right hand on the handle. A glance through the blinds on the porch reveals



a familiar vehicle. It's Jimmy Ford's Ram Charger. Currently he's unloading two large grocery bags. He carries the first one to the front entrance and then goes back for the second. Once he returns he rings the doorbell. KJ opens the door. She looks at the bags and then at Ford.

"What's this for?" KJ asks.

"I promised someone I'd bring you supplies," Jimmy Ford says.

KJ looks back down at the bags and feels emotions rise from deep within her. She looks at Ford, her mouth open, but no words come out.

"Good luck, KJ," Jimmy says and turns to leave.

"Thank you," KJ says, and then hesitates a moment. "Jimmy, wait!"

Jimmy turns to look at her.

"Could you give something to Johnny for me?" KJ asks.

"No," Jimmy says, turning back to open the door of the Ram Charger.

"OK," KJ says.

KJ takes the bags inside the cottage. The contents are foodstuffs, beverages – especially water – and some personal items. She stores the perishables first. Looking through the edibles in the refrigerator and kitchen cabinets, KJ gathers the ingredients for supper. She also brews some tea. Before bed tonight she'll have some warm milk and a couple of the raspberry bears. Once supper's on, KJ jogs to the bedroom and sets her alarm for five in the morning. She'll go to bed at nine. There is no way she's going to miss her meeting with Garret Fogarty.

Anna spends most of the day at home with her father. They make breakfast and he has to stop her from doing the laundry. She asks him about childhood memories she's heard dozens of times, and he refreshes her memory. Hannah drops by for tea and although she cannot stay, the visit lifts Anna's spirits. When Hannah leaves she hugs Anna especially tight and is obviously fighting her emotions. Though she does not know why, she suspects that Anna is leaving.

Gary and Anna spend a couple of hours at Ohiopyle, walking the trail, not for exercise, but to recall old trips while living a new one. Once they return Anna makes supper and the two dine at the little kitchen table, as she has done with him all her life. They have coffee after the meal and sit and talk in the living room, where Gary puts on a few DVDs that show the Murphy Family, Michael and Anna as they grew into the young adults that they've become.

After coffee, Anna glances at the clock. It's ten till ten. She sighs.

"Don't go if you're having second thoughts," Gary says, "No one's going to be disappointed in you. Everyone knows who you are, and how special you are. Everyone knows you're not giving up your beliefs."

"I'm not, dad," Anna says, "I'm worried about you."

Gary's thinks about his daughter, who is about to risk her life for her race's survival, and who is herself worried about him.

"I can't tell you how much I'm gonna worry about you," Gary says, "There's nothing either one of us can say to make things easier."

"You sure you'll be OK?" Anna asks.

"Are you sure you want to go?" Gary asks.

Anna nods and then says yes.

Gary rises and steps over to her. She looks up from her seat on the couch. He touches her head and reaches down to touch her cheek. Anna rises and hugs him tight.

"I'm scared and worried," Anna says.

"I'd think something was wrong if you weren't," Gary says.

Anna kisses his cheek.

"I love you so much," she says, "There's never been a better father. God, how I wish everything was good and we didn't have to do this."

"I know, hon, I know," Gary says, "And I love you too, sweetheart."

Gary sees tears about to flow from her beautiful blue eyes.

"What if I never see you again?" Anna asks.

"If you believe this is right," Gary says, "If you truly believe that, then we'll need to get through it, no matter what happens. Even if you never see me again."

Anna breathes sharply and the tears flow.

"Remember, you'll always be as close to me as your mother is, and no one will ever be closer," Gary says, "I'll love you and I'll be proud of you forever, whatever happens. You're a woman now. You're the finest woman I've ever known, just like your mother. I'm gonna worry to death over you but if you believe this is right, I'm not gonna hold you back. I'll keep pray-in'for you to win this thing. Your children deserve it, Anna. They deserve more than I could give to you."

"Dad!" Anna cries.

"Shh..." Gary says, "Go to bed, honey, you have a big day tomorrow."

"I'll be gone when you get back from work," Anna says, "What if I have to leave before I see you again?"

Gary squeezes her tight in his ursine grasp.

"Always remember that I love you," Gary says, "When you need it most, no matter what happens, even if you never see me again, remember I love you and that can never die."

"Thank you, dad," Anna whispers.

Her own embrace is powerful and tight. They hold on to each other until Gary gently separates from her. That does not happen for some time.

A few minutes after midnight, KJ awakens and lies in bed, staring at the ceiling. After a short while she turns on her side and pulls her knees up until she's almost in a ball. She tries but does not fall asleep, not for a little while. She glances at the closed door and the pair of lace-up boots sitting beside the throw rug. KJ closes her eyes again. Fate has been kind. She knows she's not alone in her thoughts and her fears and her wishes. She knows that she's no longer the anesthetized prisoner of an enemy who would destroy the future of children who look like her. She is not their puppet. Fate has been cruel as well. She has known true love but can only gaze upon its heights. Her wings could carry her there, to the open skies, but fate has caged her, and she can only watch as the sky fades to night.

KJ falls asleep again. The night is calm, with the gentle hush of the air conditioning the only sound.

Five hours later, KJ is not the only one to awaken to the sound of an alarm clock. Garret Fogarty and Jimmy Ford wake at the same hour, as does John Bowen. KJ stretches and completes her exercise routine before making breakfast. The men shower and dress according to the predetermined tasks of the day. It promises to be stressful at least. Today is Friday, July 26th, the date of the Friday Decision.

From a trail near Jennerstown, Pennsylvania, to the Coopers Rock State Forest in West Virginia, Garret Fogarty will meet with his young brothers and sisters in race, and, perhaps, in war. The first meeting, with David Fox, will take place around 6:30 AM at the overlook near Chalk Hill, Pennsylvania. Garret makes no assumptions. Any one of the six could choose to be an auxiliary, or not show up at all. All except KJ; Garret would be surprised if she did not choose to go to war.

The overlook is more than picturesque; it is stunning. In the fall, on those uncommon days when the fog and drizzle relent, the view is unforgettable: trees are aflame with reds and yellows and oranges, and just enough green to be spectacular. Today there is fog, which diminishes but does not ruin the panorama.

At 6:30 Garret parks at the overlook. David Fox has until 7:30 to arrive. He does so at 6:35. His red Dodge Ram pickup pulls in beside Garret's Wrangler. The two men exit their vehicles with Garret carrying two sealed folders in his left hand. He wears jeans and a lightweight green shirt with a collar. There's nothing to cover a holster, and he leaves the pistol in the Jeep as he intended all along. Like Garret, David Fox is wear-

ing a collared shirt. He's wearing dress pants rather than jeans; in an hour, he will go to the fire station.

Unbeknownst to Fox, John Ashley Bowen watches them from up the road. Garret dropped him off twenty minutes earlier. He has a cell phone, as does Garret. Should anyone betray Garret, Johnny hopes to notice in time for his brother-in-race to escape. He'll also alert Jimmy Ford who waits in Chalk Hill. For this meeting, Ford provides security. He waits in his Ram Charger, the AK47 at his side.

"It's good to see you, David," Garret says to David Fox.

They shake hands. Both of them look out over the treetops and glimpse the green valley between breaks in the fog.

"What's your decision?" Garret asks.

"I'm in," Fox says, "All the way."

Garret looks into his eyes. He hands Fox one of the folders.

"Read it, memorize the code and follow the instructions," Garret says, "Then destroy everything. If you need to rewrite the code to keep it fresh in your mind, do so, but always destroy the written code."

Fox nods.

"I don't see our race dying," Fox says, "Not as long as we're willing to fight."

"I don't either," Garret says. He shakes Fox's hand again. "Thank you, David," he says.

Fox grips the folder like it's both precious and endangered. That evening he'll remove it from his safe and read the instructions.

David Fox is to join Cristian O'Toole and Carina Cell. He will find employment in Minnesota as soon as he can, and make the move to his new life.

Anna rises at 8 AM. She showers and makes breakfast for one. Gary has left for work and he did not wake her, even when he snuck in and kissed her head. Until noon she'll lounge around the house and then she'll put on jeans, a long-sleeve top and hiking shoes, all suitable for a short walk up the Laurel Highlands trail. If the sun is bashful she'll leave her hat in the car, but in any case she will wear her hair down and will use a little blue eye shadow. A few days ago she thought she'd never see her love again, but at least once more she shall.

KJ dresses in a methodical fashion: first the sleeveless, then the jeans, the long-sleeve that she won't button and then the gloves. She puts on Johnny's tags but does not tuck them. The holster is already on her belt. The pistol, clean and loaded, is in its place. She's ready to use it. It's always possible that the authorities, who salivate over the prospects of

murdering a proud white man like Garret Fogarty, will seek the moment of their meeting to pounce. It's likely they'll bring enough firepower to annihilate any attempt at resistance. KJ does not fantasize about stopping them. She hopes to buy him time to escape, and to shock the world with her final stand. She puts on her boots and grabs her backpack and a bottle of water for the trip.

John Bowen is parked near the Rhododendron Trail entrance, down the road from the proposed meeting place. He'll provide security for this meeting, with Jimmy Ford being the spotter. If all goes according to plan, he will not see the potential fighter with whom Garret is to meet. Three times today he will serve in this capacity. He can guess that one of those meetings will be between Garret and KJ. He can guess that this is the one. If someone follows her, or if someone has betrayed Garret and the powers-that-oppress decide to strike, Johnny will charge to the scene with his AK47 and he will not leave until they carry his shattered body from the field of battle.

Deep inside, John Ashley Bowen hopes not to see her for two reasons. Of course, if she is safe, he won't have to come to her defense. Second, it's been hard enough, these last few days.

Jimmy Ford and Garret Fogarty will arrive a little early to this meeting. At 11AM both are travelling east on I-68 towards Coopers Rock. John Bowen is already near the Rhododendron Trail. KJ Campbell is parked in one of the secluded picnic areas along the loop road, the location Garret specified in the note.

Garret sees the blue Jeep as he drives along the road among the trees and mossy boulders. The sky is cloudy though it need not be; the canopy here is dense. There's just room enough for two vehicles side-by-side at each picnic area, which consists of a table and fire pit. Ford sees the Jeep as well, and he parks well before he arrives at KJ's location. He'll sit at one of the tables and pretend to take his lunch. All the while his pistol will be at his side, and the cell phone near his hand.

KJ sees both of them approaching. When Garret arrives she remains in her Jeep. She watches him removing a small bundle of logs and kindling from the rear of his Wrangler. Garret walks over to the fire pit and proceeds to build a fire. Then he returns to the Wrangler. From the inside he takes a grocery bag and a leather satchel. He sits at the picnic table, removes a Kindle reader from his satchel, and commences reading. It's 11:20. KJ figures she'll have to wait until noon.

About fifteen minutes later, Garret looks up and motions with his head for her to approach. When she emerges, he's glad she did not wear

camouflaged pants. Jeans are perfect for this meeting, as is the unbuttoned blue shirt. He notices that her eyes do not wander from him yet she deftly avoids crushing a daddy longlegs that was walking in front of her. It brings a miniscule smile to Garret's face.

KJ sits opposite Garret at the picnic table.

"Are you hungry? Thirsty?" Garret asks.

"No," KJ says.

Garret removes a plastic container with a salad out of his grocery bag as well as a zip-lock with a bratwurst he bought from an Amish store near Washington. He also takes out a bottle of homemade iced tea. Garret does not begin eating or roasting his lunch. He looks into KJ's eyes. She shows very little emotion. Garret, ever-perceptive, can see a little of the hurt that's inside of her. He takes a deep breath.

"Are you sure of your decision, KJ?" Garret asks.

KJ nods.

"Yeah," she says, "I have been for a while. 'I've lived among those who hate you and Johnny. And they do hate you, don't listen to their lies about tolerance. They're expert haters. Until the last white baby is born, they'll torment our children with guilt and silence them with ostracism and violence. I know the pressure and the pain they inflict and I know they could do much worse. And they will. They think they can live in their gated communities and keep their kids safe, but I know what they'll do to all the other white children and I have to fight that."

"Could you join a cell without Johnny?" Garret asks.

"Yes," KJ says, "But if you pair me with a man he needs to know something. I'll be with him for whatever mission we need to accomplish, but that's it. I'm going to be alone. Don't send me to a cell that needs more than a shooter."

"You won't make the conditions," Garret says, "If that's unacceptable to you, you'll have to leave."

"I'm not making the conditions," KJ says, "I'm being honest. I have a man and I will not lie down with someone else. To me, being faithful is just as important as any part of this struggle. What the fuck are we if we can't be true to one another?"

"What I have inside these envelopes," Garret says, who motions toward his satchel, "is already decided. There will be no changes. You accept what it says in the folder or you leave. Now."

"I'm part of this, Garret," KJ says, "I'm not an auxiliary. I'm a fighter. Please, give me the envelope for that."

Garret does not move.

"One other thing, KJ," Garret says, "None of you women are objects of pleasure. I'll give you the benefit of the doubt and assume you did not think I meant that."

"I never did, Garret," KJ says, "But I have to be up front with you. It's not fair to one of the men if I'm all he'll ever have for company. I can't be what he'll need. That's the truth."

"That will change in time," Garret says.

KJ looks at him but says nothing.

"Are you sure of your choice?" Garret asks.

"I've known for a couple of years that we have to resist," KJ says, "or we're just as fucking guilty as the anti-whites. I choose to resist."

Garret nods. He removes an envelope from the satchel and hands it to her.

"Read and follow the instructions," Garret says, "Study and memorize the code. It's not unlike the one you memorized back in December. Once you do, destroy the papers. All of them."

KJ rises from the bench. Garret rises as well. He shakes her hand.

"Thank you for everything you've done for me," KJ says, "Especially for giving me the chance to fight the genocide of my children."

"Thank you for joining us, KJ," Garret says, "Take care."

KJ turns and walks to her Jeep. Garret walks to his Wrangler and grabs the forked stick he'll use to cook his lunch. Rather than turn around, KJ decides to drive the wide loop that circles back to the concession stand and merges with the main park highway. This one-way loop will take her past the turn-off to the Rhododendron Trail. Sitting at the small parking spot beside the trail is Johnny Bowen's Jeep Rubicon.

Johnny sees her at the same time that she sees him. He feels a weight on his chest. His driver's side window is down and he reaches his hand out to greet her.

KJ sees Johnny's arm extend out the window. The surprise of seeing his Jeep gives way to a sharp rise in her emotions. She keeps it below the surface. When she pulls up close and he retracts his arm, she edges up until the blue Jeep is right beside his. He looks over at her. He could never forget how beautiful she is, but seeing her is far more powerful than memories could ever be. She kisses her gloved hand and then leans over, putting her fingers on the closed passenger side window. KJ forces a little smile.

Johnny raises his right hand and acts as if he caught the kiss. He does not smile. Instead he clenches his fist and touches it to his heart. KJ looks down and resumes her driving position. The emotions rise ever

more powerful and her wings yearn to take her to his arms. She looks forward and drives away.

KJ will not torment another man. She believes she's very rare, and with the exceptions of Anna and Jesse she wonders how many other young women would consider emotional torture to be evil. She knows what such torture feels like, and what it's almost driven her to do. She's seen the propaganda and felt the pressure to behave in a cold-hearted fashion toward her white brothers, and she can see it's been used for dividing and conquering, and taking away the main reason men will fight to the death for their people. If her role in this war should be as a shooter, and her cell has a male sentinel other than her beloved Johnny, from the start she will make it clear to whom her love belongs. She will not give false hope to a warrior who will have a need for female companionship. She will not torment another man, nor shall she give herself to him.

As tempted as she is to hike the sylvan trail to Raven Rock, KJ drives straight home. The cloudy sky and impending light rain beckon to her, and she has a strong desire to remain in the woods but she ignores the urge. KJ enters the cottage and locks the doors. Then she opens the envelope. First thing is the code and she sets it on her bed. Next is a handwritten note.

*KJ*

*On Tuesday, July 30, between 7 and 9 AM, wait at your place for a ride. Pack three days worth of clothing and personal items – no food, water or medicine necessary – and be prepared to bring your Rem. and S&W. You will spend some time in the forest, so take that into account. Do not worry about your place or your other items.*

*G*

The letter is simple to memorize and KJ destroys it after the third reading. Later, KJ will brew some coffee and draw a nice bath. Once the tears come, she'll submerge herself for a minute or so, and then rise to feel the pain all over again. It will be a while before the pain subsides, though her bond with Johnny will never die.

At 1 PM, Anna backs out of the driveway of the Murphy Home and begins the trip to Laurel Mountain. Near Mt. Pleasant the maples are tame, casting humble shadows across grassy lawns, raspy cleavers and tombstones from quiet cemeteries. Beyond, the trees get thicker and wilder as one approaches the mountain. The poplars and oaks and black cherries, even the sugar maples, are abundant and formidable. Beneath their mighty tops is darkness, or as some might say, refuge.



A young woman who does not mind the thick canopy or the resulting shade is on her way to a certain small part of the Laurel Highlands trail. She knows this section which is not far from Jennerstown, Pennsylvania. It is wild and green enough to be a hundred miles from inhabitation. Gary and Anna have hiked and camped here before. Anna recalls the most recent trip, which took place last summer. Gary cooked some slab bacon on a fire and made bacon, cucumber and onion sandwiches on the French bread they bought the day before in Perryopolis. Garret couldn't make it that time, though he promised he'd come someday. In a way, he's fulfilling that promise today.

At 3 PM Anna is nearing her destination. As she approaches on Highway 30, Garret is walking southward on the hiking trail. Among the poplars and oaks are spruce, some ancient, others growing through the corpses of departed forefathers. Garret looks around for the first signs of the coming fall. Though it's only midsummer, he's always kept an eye out for the first sign, and used to bet his father he'd find it by the first of August. Today he sees a fallen maple leaf. It is half red, and today is the 26th of July.

Garret finds a decent place to wait for his beloved Anna. His satchel hangs from his shoulder and there's a bottle of Royal Crown cola in his left hand. His pistol is in his satchel. Johnny Bowen is providing security for this meeting. He's parked down the road from the trail entrance, where he can see any approach on Highway 30. He'll alert Garret if anything unexpected or alarming occurs. Garret will call him if anything happens on his end of the trail, or if Anna doesn't come by 5 PM. Garret does not know if he wants her to come, or if he wishes to never see her beautiful face again. Today is about the struggle and he will put his feelings aside.

Johnny Bowen sees the familiar green and silver Outback coming east on Highway 30. He sees Anna park not far from the trail and he watches as she emerges from her car. A shoulder bag is around her left arm and a hoodie is over her t-shirt. He can guess that she's packing heat, and he smiles.

Anna waves from the long distance. Johnny flashes his lights in acknowledgement, and Anna disappears down the trail.

Garret hiked this trail before, but never with Anna and Gary. He remembers a previous trip, just last fall. The leaves were extraordinary and the October air was clean and crisp. Garret camped alone that night, and he was glad for it, since a great deal was on his mind. He asked himself if his approach to the struggle was right. Wouldn't he rather pursue Anna, who was now 17 and a young woman? He never backtracked from

his plan, though the thought of watching her wed another man was a cruel blow. Still, if that is the price for saving white children from the horrors of a worldwide South Africa, he will pay it.

Anna sees Garret through the trees. He stands with a foot on an old stump and watches her get closer. She looks at him and then down, and finally back into his eyes once she's in front of him.

"Hello, Anna," Garret says.

"Hi, Garret," Anna replies.

Garret breathes deep at the same time that she does. Her thick red hair is down and she is a phenomenal beauty.

"You know, Garret," Anna says, "A girl like me or KJ is supposed to live it up. We're supposed to be concentrating on our careers as if that's all there is in life, that and spending all night at some club, and we're supposed to go out with whatever guy turns us on. Especially us beautiful girls. We're supposed to follow their script."

Garret watches her and listens in silence.

"KJ talked about scripts, and you know, she's right," Anna says, "They have all these scripts for us. Liberation, empowerment, that's what they call it when we reject love and turn against our brothers and our race. They'd like us to be race traitors and lesbians, 'cause then we'd hate white men for feeling the love and affection that we could never feel. There are so many who profit from the death of love between us, and the death of our race."

Anna looks down again. The faint smell of someone's campfire is on the breeze. Garret watches this lovely being who is so dear to his heart, and finds it very difficult not to embrace her.

"But they don't always win," Anna says, looking into his eyes again, "I'm not like most girls, and neither is KJ. Traitors and most non-whites want our race to die. They want to fuck girls like me, but they want my red hair and my pale skin to disappear. And my blue eyes. Garret, I want my children to be white like us. I 'm gonna fight for them so they don't have to suffer, so they don't have to fight this war."

She steps closer to him and he does not move.

"Tell me what I need to do to fight," Anna says.

Garret takes an envelope from his satchel. He hands it to her.

"Memorize the code and read the letter," Garret says, "Anna, do exactly what it says. After you read the letter, destroy it."

"OK, Garret," Anna says.

Anna looks to the side. Garret thinks she's about to walk away, but then she turns back toward him.

"One more thing, please," Anna says, "Tell me KJ and Johnny will be together, especially if we can't."

"I can't tell you that," Garret says.

Anna looks down with a sad smile on her face. When she looks up at him she whispers "I love you."

Garret looks into her blue eyes but does not speak. He watches her turn and she begins to walk away.

"I love you too, Anna," Garret says.

Anna stops and sighs, but then continues walking.

When Anna arrives at her car, Johnny Bowen is nowhere to be seen.

At a quarter till ten in the evening Garret pulls into the parking lot outside Mason Walker's apartment. Johnny and Ford will not be there to cover him. He wants it that way. Now that he's down to the last prospective cell member, should the enemy strike now they will only claim him. The resistance will survive. Garret waits in his Jeep. It's warmed up outside and the sky will rain before dawn. For now, the crickets chirp with a feverish and reckless abandon. Night predators will be on the hunt.

There are no lights at Mason's apartment. Garret is not alarmed. If Mason doesn't show up by midnight, it means he's rejected the proposition. There are no exceptions. At midnight Garret will leave. Tomorrow Garret's life will change forever and he has no time for indecision. Time passes and Garret observes his surroundings – first the door, then the window, then around the parking lot. He does not stop to read or listen to music. Both windows are down and in spite of the rising heat he does not run the motor and air conditioning.

Eleven becomes eleven fifteen. Then it happens; the door opens and Mason Walker jogs down the steps to the parking lot. He's in a t-shirt and shorts. Garret motions for him to come around to the passenger side, so he alters his course away from Garret's window.

"Get in," Garret says when Mason is within earshot of a normal speaking voice.

Mason obeys. He enters the Jeep without a word. Garret rolls up both windows and turns on his iPod. "Swamped," a *Lacuna Coil* song, plays over the Jeep's speakers. It's one of the few metal songs he likes.

"What do you think?" Garret asks.

"Garret, I've thought about it since we met," Mason says, "I'd be useless as a soldier."

"We're not soldiers," Garret says, "I know you can use a weapon. You can learn to fight; we're taking that into account. Most of us need to train before we go active."

Mason shakes his head.

"I'm not walking away," he says, "but I don't think I have it in me. I hope you can understand that."

Garret nods.

"What do we do, then?" Garret asks, "You came out for a reason. If you're not in you wouldn't have come."

"I don't know if I can kill a man who threatens our survival," Mason says, "I'm just being honest." He exhales sharply.

"I'm glad you are," Garret says, "Any one of us who can't pull the trigger when the others need it better tell me now."

"I don't know if I can shoot a man like that," Mason says, "I know why you have to, and I agree with you. Traitors are all over, on the left and right, and there's all those rich bastards who make money by betraying us and flooding white countries with non-whites to drive down wages. They're destroying the future for white children and they have to be stopped. Garret, I can shoot an armed man who threatens me and those I love. But I just don't know if I can jump someone or shoot them down like we'll have to if we take the fight to them."

"OK, Mason," Garret says.

"I can tell you all about guys like that," Mason says, "Where they go, what they do, all kinds of shit like that. You'll need eyes and ears as well as guns."

"Yes we will," Garret says, "We'll also need contributions. Time, money, equipment."

"I can do that," Mason says.

Garret removes an envelope from his satchel and hands it to Mason.

"Learn the code and then destroy the paper," Garret says, "It's critical that you memorize it, we'll be in contact and we'll use that code. Read the instructions and destroy them. One more thing, Jimmy Ford has the papers for Diamond Crossing. You'll be the new proprietor."

"What?" a stunned Mason Walker asks.

"Congratulations, Mason," Garret says, "Use it well."

The news takes a while to sink in. As Mason stares at the envelope, Garret allows him time to collect his thoughts. Mason is the last of the group. Finally he looks at Garret, smiles, and exits the Wrangler. Garret waits until Mason enters his apartment before driving away.

When Anna arrives home on Friday evening, she pauses before climbing the steps to the kitchen. The breeze is strong now and the air heavy. A thunderstorm is coming up from Monongalia County in West Virginia. It will peak near Point Marion, but rain and thunder will reach

Lemont Furnace. Anna has lived through storms like this countless times in her life. Tonight, though, everything seems different. She climbs the steps, the envelope in her bag.

Gary's inside the living room. He comes into the kitchen when she enters. Anna hurries to him and they hug.

"I've got four pieces of pizza in the fridge," Gary says, "Owen dropped it off a few hours ago. I'll put on some coffee while you eat."

No one could make pizza like Owen Buckley. He would buy black olives with the pits still inside – he always said why pay for the oil and then for the dry, rubbery olives that the company used to extract the oil and would otherwise throw away? As far as taste goes, he was right. Owen Buckley bought cheese from a supermarket that offered high quality imports and Vermont cheddar, and the salami came from the same store in Perryopolis where Gary and Anna bought bread, bacon and sausage for special occasions. The Murphy's and the Buckley's are not rich men, but they will not pinch pennies when it comes to quality edibles.

Anna eats the pizza like it's her last meal, savoring every bite. Gary understands. He rubs her shoulders and leaves her in peace.

Sunday is a lovely day, although it's a bit sunny for Anna's tastes. Mary's brother James and his 13-year-old son Brian are in town for a week visiting their friends and relatives. They asked if Gary and Anna would like to visit Laurel Caverns, which Brian has never seen. Anna never got to know Brian very well, and it looks like she won't ever have the chance.

For Anna, the trip might be a nice escape from anxiety and brooding. There is a risk, however. The taste of her old life might make her suffer more when she leaves. Gary saw her burning a letter yesterday morning and can imagine she's leaving soon. He throws caution to the wind and asks her to go with them on one last excursion.

To his delight Anna smiles and agrees with the plan. He watches her lay her book of Yates' poetry on the night stand and then hop out of bed, just like old times. Anna closes the door after Gary walks to his room and she changes into jeans and a long-sleeve hoodie. Just for fun she'll wear her army boots. She always thought KJ looked cool in boots. There is tranquility behind Anna's emotions. She will weep again, come Monday night, but the tumult of not knowing what to do is now over.

KJ would like to find a safe place to practice swimming, but she knows it would be idiotic to risk revealing her identity at this late hour. Swimming will have to wait. There's a chance she'll end up in a cell with Anna, and if that's true she'll have someone to help her progress. She

doesn't figure Garret will assign her to a cell with all men, unless the most incredible dream comes true and she is reunited with her Johnny. She doesn't even consider the possibility, let alone hope for it. On Tuesday she'll likely find out the identities of her companions, and if Johnny is not one of them, the pain of her crushed hopes would be nearly unbearable.

Sunday is a day off from her exercise routines. Instead, KJ reads her Kindle and works with the code. After supper she plays music on the laptop and she sings; first "Murder is Masterbation" and then "A Day to Be Alone."

On Monday morning, John Bowen bids an eternal farewell to what was left of his old life. His items are boxed and all of them are now at the Markleysburg house. His Oakland apartment is empty. Jimmy Ford will collect and move Johnny's things to the Procyon safe house. Just before sunrise, Johnny packs a backpack with items that he might need over the next few days. Included are the pistols, a pump shotgun and the AK47, as well as enough ammunition to create quite a stir. His Rubicon loaded and fueled, John Ashley Bowen drives away from Markleysburg.

On top of the various boxes in the Markleysburg house is a framed drawing of soapwort flowers.

John Ashley Bowen will not know whose life he will protect, and possibly die protecting, until tomorrow morning. He will not ask Garret to tell him, even if he thought his brother in race might comply. He needs to see who comes, not hear it from someone else.

Johnny arrives at the entrance road to Coalsack at 6 AM on Monday, July 29th. The flora is as luxurious as ever, with the urgency of late summer visible in the bright colors of the chicory and the thistle. Fall will come with astounding speed and it will go even faster, just like most of the people dear to Johnny Bowen. Gone is John Boyle, who Johnny thought of as a brother, and who thought of him the same. Gone are the days of making supper in Deer Park and then hurrying to Coalsack so that he might share a meal with the woman he will always love. Gone, too, is that woman, perhaps for all time.

Before he opens the gate, Johnny can see Jimmy Ford's Ram Charger parked in front of the cabin. Ford is on the porch, sitting on a chair he must have brought here these last few days. Johnny parks and, without much ado, he steps up on the porch. Both he and Ford are dressed in street clothes. They will work around the cabin area, and it will be a full day's toil.

"Is your stuff ready?" Ford asks.

Johnny Bowen sits on the little bench.

"Yeah," he says, "I want to talk to you about that. There's a picture on top of my things. Be careful with it, alright? I'd like you to hang it in my bedroom at Procyon."

"Oh yeah? What kind of picture?" Ford asks.

"Flowers," Johnny says.

Some men might shy away from answering. Not John Ashley Bowen; the picture is of inestimable sentimental value to him and he feels no shame for holding it dear.

"Is that right?" Ford says, "Who drew it?"

"KJ drew it for me," Johnny says.

"Do you really want reminded of that, every fucking day?" Jimmy asks.

"There's more than one reason I'm fighting this goddamned war," Johnny says.

"OK, John," Ford says, "It'll be there."

Johnny looks around the place. All is still. There are two large 4-person tents set up alongside the cabin. The cistern is full and there are two new tanks of water nearby. Johnny unlocks his Jeep and removes his gear, which he stores in the tent furthest from the cabin. Garret will be along any time now. The new members of Capricorn Cell will share the other tent, unless one of them is female, in which case she'll stay in the tent nearest the cabin while Garret and the other new fighter will stay inside the cabin. Where Boyle slept there are two new beds, side by side. In the event that both new members are female, they'll share the cabin while Garret occupies the middle tent, but Johnny doesn't much think about that possibility.

There are new screens in the windows of the cabin and the front entrance now has a screen door. Garret was adamant about the changes. Outside, there are two portable showers. Away from the cabin and the tents is a new fire pit, with a grill and ample space for a wood-burning fire.

"You've done a hell of a job, Jimmy," Johnny says, "Thank you."

"Don't mention it," Ford says, "I get to have a life away from safe houses and camps. This is the least I could do for you guys."

Before the end of the day, Johnny, Ford and Garret Fogarty will put the finishing touches on the Coalsack site. Ford goes on one more trip for supplies and then he departs to his shadow life. Johnny and Fogarty make some camp coffee once night arrives.

Garret watches his brother in race and war. Johnny asks him nothing. When the coffee is finished he washes his face and turns in for the night.

The sun will not be up for another hour, though KJ is already in the shower. She slept well in spite of her nervousness over this monumental day. She's already packed her backpack and shoulder bags. Her boots, gloves, jacket and Johnny's tags are by the door. Her keys and sidearm are by her bed and the Remington rifle is alone on the dresser. Her CRKT knife is in the pocket of her camouflaged pants. In one of the two shoulder bags – her favorite – is the picture of John Ashley Bowen and the untamed Youghioghenny.

At 6 AM, KJ drinks a cup of Sumatran coffee and eats a couple of the lingonberry blintzes she made for breakfast. She wraps one for her chauffeur and probable fellow warrior. She'll also bring him a thermos of coffee.

Anna Murphy rises early enough to make breakfast for her father. Gary enters the kitchen and takes a seat. He's already dressed for another hard day at the mines. Anna serves him a ham omelet and some of the Phil's Blend coffee. She used the last of the grounds to brew the pot.

"You'll have to order some more," Anna says.

"Oh I will," Gary replies.

Once the meal is over and he begins to drink his coffee, Anna steps away from the dishes and approaches her father. She wraps her arms around his chest from behind, and puts her forehead to the crown of his head. Gary sets his coffee on the table and rises. He looks into her eyes.

"I won't be here when you get home," Anna whispers.

Gary takes her by the cheeks.

"My beautiful daughter," he says, his eyes full of tears but his willpower defying their flow. They are no match for his strength.

"I'm so proud of you," Gary says, "I love you so much. Do what you have to do, Red. Do all that you can. And when you do, my beautiful Anna, then go home. It'll be enough."

Anna hugs him with all her might. He feels the Murphy strength in her.

Gary leaves a little while later. He looks back at the Murphy Home. He's now said goodbye to the second most important women he could ever know. He feels a peace that to most observers would seem strange, but to Gary it's appropriate. He is so very lucky to have known both of these women, and to have loved them with all his soul.

There is one major consolation for Anna Murphy. Though she has bid her dear father farewell, perhaps forever, she knows her first destination and the identity of one of the members of her cell. The knowledge is most comforting. Anna puts on a camouflaged hoodie, a pair of jeans and a black t-back top. She wears her army boots and is sure to pack her boonie hat. Two days ago she loaded her backpack, and now she grabs it and



her pistol before taking one last look at the interior of the Murphy Home. She stares at the pictures; at her young father and mother as they smile at the camera, at Bryce in Gary's arms and at Mary Buckley on the diving board, and then Anna Murphy walks away from that life, though the memories and the love will live forever inside of her. When she arrives at the Subaru, she checks to be sure her rifle is still on the back seat. After one last glance at the Murphy Home, Anna sets off for Amblersburg.

KJ has no idea who's coming. She listens to her iPod Touch until the clock shows 7 AM, when she packs the device in her backpack. She wraps her rifle in cloth and stands it by the inner door. KJ verifies that she has everything she needs. Among a few small and necessary items is the money that Johnny gave her. She did not count the bills and has no intention of removing the paper wrapping. Once she's sure that she has everything she needs, KJ opens the inner door to the porch but leaves the outer one closed and locked. She'll hear the motor of her ride when it arrives.

As Anna approaches Terra Alta, the skies begin to cloud. It might be good weather for her and KJ after all. KJ must have chosen to fight. The thought does not surprise Anna; it's just a little sobering. She had a romantic notion that KJ and Johnny would flee the pain and death and find some kind of a fairy-tale life far away, among members of their race, and if not them, then perhaps Garret would take her to some far away land where their children would live in peace. It was a wonderful and foolish and impossible dream and she knew it. No matter what, at least the sisters in war will have each other for comfort and support, even if they cannot be with the men they love.

The goldenrod is beginning to bloom along Salt Lick Road. The clusters of tiny yellow flowers caress the air in the gentle breeze beneath the white and gray skies. The sound of the road and the hush of the air conditioning are the only sounds in Anna's Subaru. When she drives up to KJ's little house, Anna feels conflicting emotions. She will be happy to see her friend. She will also feel the razor's edge of finality. For the two young white women, their old lives and dreams end today. Now, though, at least there is honesty, divine and brutal.

KJ tries not to wish but there's really no way to prevent it. She wants to see the Rubicon pull into the driveway. Even better, she wants to see him walk from the woods and open the passenger-side door of the blue Jeep so that she can climb inside and unlock his door. She wants him to put the keys in the ignition and then look at her. She wants to grasp his arm with both gloved hands and let the tears of joy flow down her beautiful face and cleanse her of everything that ever went wrong in her life.

No Jeep drives up to the cottage. KJ recognizes the car at once, and although on most occasions she'd feel tremendous relief and joy at the arrival of Anna Murphy, today there is a dull pain in her soul. KJ sighs and unlocks the front door.

Anna parks beside the blue Jeep. Her adrenaline rises as she sees the porch door begin to open. KJ emerges and immediately turns to lock the front door. Then she looks at Anna and waves. She even smiles, but it does not last. Anna opens her door and steps out of the Subaru as KJ walks over to her. KJ lays her backpack, rifle and shoulder bags on the ground and throws her arms around Anna.

"I hoped I'd see you again," Anna says.

"Yeah," whispers KJ, "So did I." she says.

The two young women end their embrace and a smile forms on Anna's face. KJ looks down for a moment and then returns her gaze into Anna's eyes.

"I wish it could have been him," Anna says.

KJ looks down again and nods.

"Thank you," KJ says while she looks again at Anna, "I'm really glad you're here."

Anna lets a little of KJ's hair slide through her fingers. In the soft light of the white sky she sees the luxurious sheen of her sister's chestnut mane.

They load Anna's Subaru and climb inside. Anna backs out of the driveway. KJ looks one last time at the cottage and the Jeep that John Ashley Bowen bought for her, and that enabled her to live free from those who would try to force her to be a typical American girl, one who has no love of race or feelings of kinship with her brothers. When they saw that she would not be their tool they began to squeeze her, hoping she'd collapse beneath the pressure. Johnny Bowen gave her a place where she could escape from the torment. Now she must leave that refuge behind, and fight the same war as the man who gave her the opportunity to live somewhere far away from the gunfire and the battlefields. But she will not leave. She will fight alongside the man she loves, even if he's a thousand miles away.

"Where are we going?" KJ asks.

Anna can't imagine any reason to withhold the information, since the two women are en route.

"Coalsack," Anna says.

"That's cool," KJ says. She looks at Anna. "Do you know who's going to be there?"

"No," Anna says, "It didn't say anything about shit like that. I'm sorry, KJ, I don't know either."

"To me as a woman," KJ says, pointing with both hands at her chest, "It means more than anything who is, and who isn't there. But as a member of the white race, it can't be all that matters. We still have to fight."

KJ looks out the window and at the ocean of trees that surrounds the area south of Amblersburg. She would have liked to have made a few more excursions into the tranquility of those forests but time ran out, as it did on many things. She lets her mind daydream and pictures the day Johnny was standing in front of her, the AK47 in his strong arms. He looked magnificent. The scene spawned as many pleasant fantasies in her mind as her leggings did in his.

The trip to Coalsack will take around three hours. At 10 AM, Anna makes a brief stop at a service station in Weston and tops off the tank. She buys a couple of bottles of tea and two coffees and hurries back to the Subaru. Once they're on the road again, coffee cups in hand, Anna turns on the music. "Tarvos" begins to play over the speakers.

"This goddamned state is 95% white," Anna says, "They have to see what's happening in other states, but no one resists. There's no resistance to non-white immigration, and they keep sending the same traitors back to Congress who vote for amnesty and open borders. Christ, the football team is 70% black! I read about one of their white teams that went undefeated, came up here and beat some nigger team from Pittsburgh by forty points. Forty points! And who does their university recruit? Niggers! I mean, what the hell? But a few guys from Pennsylvania and Maryland, a Mick chick and a hipster punk from Seattle of all places, are gonna stand and fight. Our states are all pozzed compared to West Virginia and these fuckers won't lift a finger."

"We know the enemy a lot better than they do," KJ says, "Besides, I think there's a big disconnect here. The only non-whites they see are on television or working at the bank, and the place is so overwhelmingly white they can't see that we're going extinct. By the time it reaches these hills it'll be too late."

The subject changes to music and the troubling silence from *Threat Signal*. Anna fears that in spite of assurances on Facebook, the members have gone their separate ways. There are periods of silence between their conversations, and one of the two, usually Anna, begins talking again. Neither will remember much of what was said. It's just a method of putting off any speculation about who will be at Coalsack until they see with their own eyes.

The method works as long as it can. As they pass through Clay, West Virginia, the proximity of Coalsack will make it impossible for the two not to think about their future brothers in war. Anna tries to keep an optimistic opinion. Why wouldn't Garret be one of her associates? Who better than him to fight alongside her? Who better than him to protect her? They know each other and share deep feelings. He would risk his life to protect her. Maybe that intense emotional involvement will be the reason he's not there. She regains her optimism. Why would Garret or Bill or whoever assign her to a cell with men she loves as brothers but not as lovers? The desire and jealousy that would almost certainly arise would destroy the cell. Why not pair her with a man whose proposal for marriage, should he ask her, she would not hesitate to accept?

KJ has one lament. She cannot help but think of Johnny, which she knew would happen. She wishes she could relive one moment, the last time they held each other. Before he walked off to fight a war for her children, she would have looked into his eyes and thanked him.

*Eluveitie's* "Lugdunon" begins to play over the speakers and both young warriors feel the weight of anxiety as Anna pilots the Subaru down the entrance road to Coalsack. The world is lush and gorgeous and the air is comfortable for a summer's day. The light from the gray and white heavens is bright enough to make out every detail on the leaves and stems nearest the road, yet not bright enough to make wide-eyed staring uncomfortable. Up ahead the two sisters can see the gate. Their hearts beat a little faster. Beyond the gate is a black Ram Charger. It is the only vehicle they can see. James Ford must be one of the members of their cell. Based upon the limited number of candidates, both ladies would be surprised to find more than one other member. Both of them assume that someone will be bereft of their dearest love; perhaps both of them.

Anna parks just beyond the gate. Both young ladies scan the area around the Ram Charger. There are no other vehicles within sight. There may be one or two in the garage, or there may be none. Suddenly there is movement. Jimmy Ford, wearing blue jeans and a Mario Lemieux t-shirt, steps from behind a huge red oak and walks over to the lock and chain around the gate. KJ looks at Anna, who keeps her blue eyes ahead. Ford opens the gate. For a second Anna does not compress the accelerator or release the clutch. Then the Subaru eases forward and begins to roll into the parking space at Coalsack.

Mason Walker has light hair, and Aaron Van Dyke is blond. When Anna stops the Outback and looks at the porch, she instantly knows that the blond man standing there is Garret Fogarty. She smiles and shakes

her head. The emotions demand that she release them and she has no reason to resist. She curls her lip and tears begin to fill her eyes. They are warm and beautiful and will roll down her cheeks unfettered. He sees her and begins to walk down the little steps by the porch. His eyes never look away, not even at the rapid movement to his left. Neither does Anna look away, not when the passenger door flies open and remains that way, or when KJ flies from the car as fast as her legs will carry her.

As they passed the gate, KJ looked down. Ford's Ram Charger, normally a welcome sight, was a harbinger of sorrow. When the Subaru stops she looks toward the porch. The man standing there would ordinarily capture her attention, but there is another man coming around the right side of the cabin. This man has brown hair and big, muscular arms. Although she cannot see through the sleeves of his t-shirt, there is a black rabbit tattoo on his shoulder.

KJ shoves open the door and nearly trips in her haste to run to him. John Ashley Bowen braces himself and holds out his arms. He knows what is about to unfold. For a moment he does not trust his senses. This cannot be real. He's had many blessings and a little luck, and came to wonder how many times a man can be blessed in his short life. Once more, at least; KJ, in the flesh, is running toward him.

When she arrives, KJ leaps upon him and wraps her body, legs and arms, around his. He holds her tight, with one arm around her back and the other supporting her rear. She kisses him with great passion as tears streak down her beautiful white face and she whispers his name over and over, as if it might keep him from vanishing, or her from awakening to find it was all a dream.

Anna climbs from the Subaru as Garret arrives. She looks into his eyes and he stares into hers. He runs his hand from her cheek to her hair and lets the strong red strands flow around his fingers. She smiles and he pulls her into his body. There, Anna closes her eyes and nuzzles his chest.

Johnny gently moves KJ's legs so that he might set her down and look into her face. She's now standing though she doesn't move an inch. Johnny stares into her blue eyes and shakes his head. He sighs loud and hard.

"It's really you," is all that Johnny can say.

KJ finally smiles and touches his cheek.

"I love you," she says.

Johnny sees the tags she's wearing. He pulls her close and she squeezes him with both of her arms. KJ buries her head deep in his chest, nuzzles and kisses him repeatedly.

"I love you too, angel," Johnny says.

Today is undoubtedly the happiest day of Johnny Bowen's life. All of his emotions and desires tell him so. His brain whispers something else; today is also a terrible day, perhaps the worst of his life. KJ has chosen to fight. She shall meet the enemy, and that very powerful enemy will seek to destroy her. The most beautiful and most precious of angels has cast off the enemy's bars and shackles, but she did not fly away.

James Ford waits until the hugging and kissing and tears take a brief respite. He knows it will only be a pause. He approaches Anna and Garret, who are still in an embrace.

"Anna, I'll need the keys to KJ's place," Jimmy says, "I'm also gonna need keys to the Subaru. If you have an extra set I'll take those and you can keep your normal set."

Anna looks at him for a second and then blinks and shakes her head.

"Sorry," Anna says, and tosses the keys to him, "I have another set in my bag."

"OK, good," Jimmy says, "Hold on to those."

Anna watches him walk over to KJ and Johnny Bowen. She feels for James Ford. She and KJ showered their love on two worthy men, while this third worthy man was forced to watch. She prays he will find his own good woman, who will bathe him in her love, and for whom he would take up arms and fight.

John Bowen, who was looking into KJ's eyes as she told him exactly how much she missed him, kisses her on the head and then on the lips. She laughs through the tears, rubbing noses with him and kissing him again and again. Johnny notices Ford's approach and the two lovers pause their lavish affections to hear what Jimmy has to say. They still hold on to one another, however.

"KJ, I'm gonna need the keys to your Jeep and the cottage," Jimmy says.

"Sure," KJ says, nodding.

KJ takes the keys out of her pocket. They're held together with a little propeller keychain that she discovered the same time she found Johnny's dog tags. Ford takes them from her and walks toward the Ram Charger.

"Wait, Jimmy," KJ says. She looks at Johnny and speaks to her lover. "I brought the money you gave me. Maybe Jimmy could use it for supplies."

Johnny looks into her eyes.

"I think your angel's got a good idea, Johnny," Anna says.

"Yeah," Johnny says and rubs KJ's back.

KJ smiles at him.

"Go on, get the backpack," Johnny says, and then he winks.

KJ goes to Anna's car and removes the shoulder bag with the money. She takes out the other items in the bag and places them on the passenger seat of the Subaru. Then she gives Ford the bag, which is now devoid of everything except the bundles of cash.

"Every penny goes to your cell," Jimmy says to KJ.

"Thank you, Jimmy," KJ says. She looks back at Johnny Bowen.

"Thank you sweetheart!"

Johnny smiles.

"Best wishes, everyone," Ford says, "Garret, you know how to contact me. Now, everyone, go and have a beer. We've escaped from the lies."

Ford, who was backing toward the Ram Charger, turns and opens the door. KJ and Johnny, Anna and Garret watch him as he leaves. Then the three look toward Garret.

"Anna, KJ," Garret says, "Welcome to Capricorn Cell."





## Chapter XIX



## Capricorn Cell

"The two of you will sleep in here," Garret says as he shows Anna and KJ the two beds in the rear partition of the cabin.

They're the perfect size for two females of similar stature. There's a little nightstand with two drawers, one above the other, and a candle on top. KJ notices that the little cloth doily beneath the glass candleholder is covered with little pink and blue flowers, and one of them is white. Garret knew she'd be here with Johnny.

"In three days we'll move to Procyon," Garret says, "You'll get to know the Procyon House in time. It will be our refuge. We'll have to be extremely careful not to give away its identity, but we'll worry about that when the time comes. As for today, the two of us still have work to do, so just chill for a while. The fridge is full, so if you want a drink help yourselves. There's food, too. Outside we have two showers and we now have two bathrooms. The new one's right beside the older one. Tomorrow's supposed to be a lot like today, maybe cooler. We'll go for a little walk tomorrow morning."

Garret looks at the two of them. He lays a key to the cabin on the left-side bed. Anna, who is sitting on the bed, smiles at him when their eyes meet. He smiles back before leaving.

KJ sits on her bed. She looks at Anna, and then closes her eyes and begins to laugh. She pumps her legs up and down and shakes her head so that her hair flies all around her. Then, with strands down over her face and a wild look in her eye, she stares at Anna.

"You're pretty happy too, huh?" says the redhead.

KJ nods, a smile forming on her face.

A little later, the ladies return to the Subaru to retrieve their possessions. After four trips, the backpacks and shoulder bags lie beside their respective beds, and the firearms are nearby and within reach. Both KJ and Anna still wear their pistols, although both have removed the long-

sleeved garments that covered them. It's warm enough to warrant such action yet the clouds, if anything, have gotten thicker and bar any chance for the sun to force the ladies to put on their long sleeves. Back inside the little bedroom, KJ sits on her bed and lies backward. She closes her eyes for a moment but then she opens them.

"Shit!" KJ says, "I didn't bring an alarm clock."

"The men will take care of us," Anna says, "They'll wake us when it's time."

"Hey," KJ says, who rises to a sitting position, "Let's start getting shit together for supper. They're out there doing God knows what while we're sitting here on our asses. I mean, look at this place! Look at the shit they did for us!"

Anna looks around as does KJ. The cabin is immaculate. Someone spent a great deal of time cleaning the floors and walls and even made sure to leave a roll of paper towels, a small basin and a jug of clean water, as well as two clean hand towels. There are tissues in a box beside the stand and in the bottom drawer are the last three issues of Fur-Fish-Game and a field guide to wildflowers.

"John had a camping stove," KJ says, "I think it's in the other room. It's covered, beside the window."

"Yeah, I saw that," Anna says, "You wanna start with some soup?"

"Yeah," KJ says, "Let's see what we have in the refrigerator."

Charged with energy from the emotional uplift, the two young warriors hurry to the refrigerator-freezer and begin extracting the ingredients for a celery and blue cheese soup. Around this time John Bowen comes up the porch and opens the front door. KJ smiles in an instant and walks over to him, looking up into his eyes.

"Hi, big guy," KJ says, a smile on her face.

Johnny hugs her, which is exactly what she hoped.

"Whatcha doin'?" he asks when he sees the cheese sitting on the little square table.

"You two are doing the man stuff," KJ says, "It's only fair that we make supper. Why should you have all the fun?"

Her hand on his chest, KJ looks at him and bats her eyelashes. Johnny laughs and looks at Anna. She smiles. Their eyes speak to each other like a brother and sister when each is in the height of happiness, for themselves and for one another.

The men finish cutting wood and storing the various boxes that Ford brought over the last two days. While preparing supper, KJ notices that Johnny's Rubicon is inside the garage. She also notices that someone

has covered Anna's Subaru. Shortly after they finish work, Johnny starts a fire at the pit. The soup is warming and supper – seasoned steaks - will go on the grill as soon as the flames die down a little. The ladies' debate is over. Anna convinces KJ that tea would be better right now. They'll have coffee in the morning. The two move a bench and a couple of wooden trays out to the pit, and then bring the food for the grill.

At 6' and 200 pounds, Robert Arnett is typical for a manager at the Proctor Nitrogen plant in central New York. He is white with light brown eyes and hair. His hair shows little gray for a man of 38 years, in spite of his serving in Afghanistan and investing the last eight years of his life in a supervisor's position. Last year one of his greatest dreams came true. The plant manager promoted him to section manager, thereby increasing his salary and marking him as a rising star among the plant administration.

Arnett's worldview is typical of other members of the managerial class. His attitude towards workers as well as his adherence to the political and racial rules of the game facilitated his move upward. One day he's "one of the guys." He's not averse to engaging in ribald jokes and tomfoolery. The next day, however, he can be callous and eager to inflict punishment for the slightest offense, many of which he is guilty of committing. On any given day, no member of his work force can know what to expect. None, that is, except non-whites and females. The rules of the game forbid even the slightest appearance of racial or sexual discrimination, which often precludes legitimate disciplinary action against non-whites and women. When one of the black males under Arnett treaded contaminated water from a washroom all over a production-area floor, then-supervisor Arnett did not discipline the worker. Instead, he ordered a white coworker to clean up the mess.

Robert Arnett is notorious for disciplining workers who change jobs and leave his department. Four of the last five who did so received letters of censure in their files. The second most recent transfer, a black male, did not. That same black male had sued his previous employer for racial discrimination. The company's Human Resources department does not want any negative racial publicity, and since Arnett plays by the rules of color-blind America, his career advances in predictable fashion.

Two weeks ago, enabled by his new salary, Arnett and several of his managerial colleagues bought a piece of land in the Adirondacks with the hopes of turning the place into a vacation campsite for them and their families. In Arnett's case, this would mean his white wife and two white sons. Arnett's wife insisted on him getting a vasectomy at the age of 30 after the birth of their second son. She is a member of the legal profession, a class

that often shares similar values with the managerial class. Arnett's wilderness camp is nearing completion. By next summer he and his sons will begin to vacation there.

At Coalsack, supper climaxes with sweet corn cooked to perfection on the flames of the fire pit. Johnny Bowen insists on placing and removing the cobs. Once the meal is finished and the blue cups of tea are empty, Garret and Anna head for opposite showers while KJ and Johnny wait on the porch. This suits Johnny and his passionate young lover, since she sits on his lap and wraps her arms around him.

"Did you know?" KJ asks with a little smile on her face.

"What?" Johnny says, "Did I know if you were coming?"

She nods.

"No, angel," Johnny says, "I didn't know and I wasn't going to ask. We had to know if we could do this alone."

"Anna didn't know either," KJ says.

"No," Johnny says, "Garret didn't know for sure what she'd end up doing. He knew she wouldn't walk away, and so did I, but having Gary and her loving family, it must have been brutal not to choose to be an auxiliary."

"Did you know what I'd end up doing?" KJ asks.

"Yeah," Johnny says, "Even when I gave you the money, I knew in my heart."

KJ kisses his cheek and nuzzles him. She runs her gloved hand down his left bicep.

"Big, strong arms," she says, "You're so fine, Johnny Bowen."

Johnny smiles and looks into her eyes. Then he gently squeezes her left bicep.

"Nice," he says, "Yours are fucking awesome, too."

"There's a lot more of me to squeeze," KJ says, a wicked smile on her face.

"Oh I know," Johnny says.

KJ leans over and whispers something in his ear. He looks at her when she returns to her previous position. She bats her eyelashes and smiles. Johnny rubs and pats her leg.

During their shower, Johnny teases KJ, telling her what a good idea it would be to use one shower at a time in order to conserve water.

"OK, come on over," KJ says, turning the tables on him.

There is a brief pause. The sound of the showers prevents complete silence.

"I wasn't ready for that," Johnny says.

KJ laughs in her quiet way and rocks her shoulders side-to-side as the water rolls down her body.

After her shower KJ puts on a thong and a pair of shorts before emerging from the enclosed shower space. Johnny, who crept around the side, ambushes her when she exits, lifting her in his arms and kissing her. She laughs and returns the affection. The night's sleep is deep and untroubled, and though she does not remember her dream she knows that she had one, and that it was pleasant.

The next morning, KJ rises at what must be an early hour. No one's called out to her and Anna is still sleeping. KJ puts on her shorts and a pair of sneakers she brought for lounging around. She creeps to the other room and looks out the window. Through the screen she sees her Johnny brewing coffee at the fire pit. Garret's nowhere to be seen. KJ steps out and of the house and begins walking toward her lover.

"I was just gonna come and get you," Johnny says, "We can have the first two cups."

The sky is cloudy and rather dark. It turns out that the hour is 8 AM and KJ managed to get a full eight hours of sleep. Thanks to the rest, and the proximity of those she loves, she is full of energy.

In a few minutes the coffee's done, and KJ returns to the pit after freshening up a little. She smiles as he hands her a cup of coffee, handle-first of course. KJ notices the polite, loving gesture and, coffee cup in her right hand, rubs his back with her left.

The smell of coffee awakens Anna. Garret was already awake. The others do not know it, but for the last hour and a half he's been reading documents that he saved from the internet. He flips through them on his Kindle, gradually narrowing down a list of potential targets for Capricorn Cell.

Anna's wearing a pair of shorts and sandals, and her hoodie covers the tank top she wore to bed. It also covers her ivy. Johnny fills her cup and pours her a little cream. Garret finally makes his appearance not long after Anna. He kisses her on the head and then pours a cup of coffee.

"OK, put on some long-sleeve shirts and camouflaged pants, or jeans if you want," Garret says, "And bring some water. Leave your rifles but bring your pistols. If any of us see someone, disappear unless they've seen one of us. In that case, act normal. If anyone asks, we're looking for mushrooms."

Anna passes by the shower area to wash her hands and face and then she and KJ return to the cabin to change. Once they've finished, Anna locks the door and they set off on the excursion.

Though dirt tracks and lonesome county roads crisscross the region that surrounds the Coalsack site, for three to four miles there is no permanent inhabitation. Small mountain streams cut deep into dark green gullies and some of them are swollen from the recent rains. Each of the four young fighters will wear their best water-resistant boots. For Johnny it means he'll wear his waterproof ankle-high hiking boots; for KJ this means a tall black lace-up pair that she'll wear over her jeans. Everyone brings their pistols, with the women concealing them beneath long-sleeve hoodies, while John Ashley Bowen will carry a 12-gauge pump shotgun.

The soil is dark among the round hills and the deep hollows, and vegetation abounds as do mushrooms of all shapes and edibility. There shall be no picking today, though a few patches of milky Bradleys and a fresh chicken mushroom tempt all four members of Capricorn Cell. They pass by the natural delicacies and continue their more or less straight route to the east. With care they cross a wide dirt road and another that's seen much better days.

Water has pooled in one very deep gully and the little group halts it progress. Dragonflies dart through the air above the pool and a tree frog ceases calling when he sees Anna approach the west bank. Garret walks up beside his redheaded lover. About ten minutes ago, Johnny gave him the shotgun and asked him to take the lead.

"KJ," Garret says as KJ and Johnny Bowen, who were in the rear, approach the pool. "See how deep it is."

Anna giggles but the look on Garret's face convinces her that he's serious.

KJ begins to look around for a suitably-sized stick to test the waters.

"Go on," Garret says, motioning with his head toward the water, "We don't have time to look around."

KJ looks at him, incredulous. Realizing he's not playing with her, she looks down and then at the water. She glances back at Johnny, who is behind her, and then looks forward. She fills her lungs with air and takes a step into the murky liquid.

Johnny Bowen grabs her and pulls her back. Neither knows how deep it is, but her boot went in past her ankle and she hadn't stepped down with her weight.

"You're not going in there," Johnny says.

Johnny lifts her and spins her to the side where he sets her on her feet. Then he steps into the water. KJ reacts in an instant. She grabs him and pulls him back with all her might. Due to her fit body and impressive arms, her strength is remarkable, even more so for a girl of her smallish



stature. Johnny slips backward from the force. When he stepped in, the water went up to his shins but no higher.

"What the fuck, Johnny!" KJ says.

"It's my job to do this kind of shit, and to protect you," Johnny says, "Now let me do my fucking job!"

"But that's when we're on a mission, not a fucking walk!" KJ says, "That water looks dangerous. What if there's a deep fucking hole?"

"We are on a mission, so stay back!" Johnny says. She looks into his fiery green eyes. "You're not going in there," he says.

To John Bowen, the pool does not look especially perilous and with his swimming abilities he is in little danger even if it is deep. To KJ, who is still uncertain about her ability to swim in a deep pool let alone a dammed-up creek, the water looks ominous.

Johnny enters the pool. He walks out until the water climbs up past his knees.

"Too deep," Johnny says, "I can feel the bottom getting deeper. We'd have to swim it."

Johnny returns to the west shore. The foursome makes a lengthy detour around the pool and climbs a gentle slope to the southeast. There, Capricorn Cell ceases its forward movement. Based on Garret's map, they are three or more miles away from the nearest home, although the rough dirt road is a mile in the distance. To Garret and Johnny, this should be a good spot for a nocturnal training mission. They take a water break on top of the little hill that borders the dammed-up stream.

KJ sits beside Johnny. He puts his arm around her and she looks into his eyes.

"I'm sorry, Johnny," KJ says, "I missed you so much and I didn't know if I'd ever see you again. I was just worried back there."

"Don't be sorry, sweetheart," Johnny says, "This isn't an army, but you still have to let me do my job. You're headstrong and I love that, because you're headstrong in a good way. But you'll learn when we're on a mission you have to let me do shit like that."

"I don't want anything bad to happen to you," KJ says.

He looks into her eyes again.

"You might not be able to stop that," Johnny says.

"I know," KJ whispers, looking down.

Her stare returns to his.

"I'll do what you say," KJ says, "But if I can stop someone from hurting you, I'll drop them, Johnny. I won't let anyone hurt you if I can help it."

Johnny smiles.

"I love you, angel," he says.

"I love you too," KJ says, with a warm little smile on her face.

KJ nuzzles his shoulder and he kisses her.

Garret, who made a perimeter patrol, returns to the group.

"All clear," he says.

Garret gives the shotgun back to Johnny.

Gray and black clouds fill the sky and KJ hears rainfall striking the leaves. On occasion a raindrop penetrates the canopy and splashes her boot. She looks at Johnny who takes a deep breath. He has that confident little smile on his face. She feels the rush of joy and wonders if all this is real. KJ shakes his knee and glances at him with a wicked look on her face.

Johnny and KJ do not notice as Garret lifts Anna's chin and looks into her eyes. The two lovers sit down for a bottle of water. Garret glances at her and her red hair. She's looking down and has a little smile on her face. Her knees move back and forth.

*You're here and my heart sings, he thinks, but part of me grieves. Through all the joy and all the pain, these are our lives now.*

Back at Coalsack, KJ and Johnny shower while Garret and Anna make supper. As the water boils for the salmon pasta and the tea kettle steams by its side, Anna sits on the bench beside Garret, who watches the coals and the objects on the grill. Anna looks at him and flashes a half-smile. Garret notices and looks at her, at the grill, and then back at Anna.

"Yes?" Garret asks.

"She'd have kept going until she went under," Anna says, "I don't have a lot of faith in her swimming ability and I bet she doesn't either."

"I know," Garret says, "I also know Johnny wouldn't have let her go that far. And do you know something else?"

"What?" Anna asks.

"I wouldn't have let her go that far," Garret says, "Or him for that matter, though I know he wouldn't have been in danger. I've seen him swim in Deep Creek Lake. He's as good as you are, you know. Anyway, this wasn't about risking someone's life. I don't do that. I had other reasons to see what they'd do."

Anna looks at the kettle.

"We should go swimming sometime, when the sky's like it is today and it's nice out," Anna says, "Johnny and KJ would have a lot of fun together." She looks at Garret. "So would we."

Anna leans into him and he puts his arm around her. It feels so nice when he squeezes her solid yet feminine body.

"We have a lot to learn as a group," Garret says, "and everyone except Johnny has a lot to learn about fighting. But that's OK. We'll train until we're ready. I'm not going to let anything happen to you or the others, not if I can help it."

Garret kisses her head.

"Tell me," he says, "If I'd asked you instead of KJ, what would you have done?"

"I'd have kept going," Anna says, "We'd have found out if the water was too deep to cross."

Garret looks into her light blue eyes.

"This is our family," Anna says, "For KJ it's the only real family she's ever had. She can't go back to living with traitors. I know what she was thinking. She's not going to fail us or just stand there and be useless. I owe it to you and Johnny and KJ not to be useless, either. I'd find out how deep it is."

Garret breathes heavily.

"This was a good day," he says.

Garret rubs her back and the two look toward the showers. Johnny emerges and ambushes KJ as she exits the shower. He's wearing shorts but no shirt. KJ has on a t-back top and shorts. When Johnny turns and kisses her, Anna and Garret can see part of her wings in the lamplight.

Anna joins KJ in the little bedroom of the cabin. Before Garret turns in for the night, he pays them a visit.

"Tomorrow we'll head out at night," Garret says, "so if you two get to sleep late it's not an issue. Good night, Red," he says.

Garret turns and walks into the other room. Anna jumps up and runs after him. KJ notices for the first time that Anna, too, is wearing a thong. Garret turns to see Anna as she comes around the partition. He steps up to her and pulls her close to his body. He kisses her, slow and deep. When they finish, she steps back and smiles at him. Then she hops, turns, and runs back to bed, her open hands covering her bare cheeks.

Neither young lady is eager to sleep. KJ sits up in bed while Anna reclines in hers, lying on her back. Anna hears KJ exhale.

"One of the most exhilarating things about this," KJ says, "is that it's not just shit talk. We're doing it."

"Oh I know," Anna says, "There's kind of a peace because of that."

"Yeah, exactly," KJ says, "Some people say that white people should never fight for their future, just talk and talk...and fucking talk. Do we just talk when our children live in fear? If we really believe that our race is in danger, what the fuck does it make us if all we do is talk?"

"Cowards," Anna says, "It makes us cowards."

"Yeah," KJ says, "and they're not alone. There are others, too, those who are all bluster and, well, talk shit on the internet. But, you know, we're not shit talking. This is real. My rifle's loaded, and so is my pistol. I'm not fucking talking anymore. When all I did was talk, they made a prison of my life and I came close to getting raped."

Anna sits up on her bed. Due to her excellent night vision and KJ's pale white skin, Anna can easily see her sister in spite of the darkness.

"There's no more time for talk," Anna says, "and thank God we're not."

Both women are quiet for a moment. From outside they can hear the crickets and the first katydids of July.

"I'm scared, KJ," Anna says, "I'm not ashamed to admit it, it's true. I'm afraid for Garret and Johnny and for you too. And I'm afraid for me and dad."

"I'm really pumped for this," KJ says, "but I'll admit I'm afraid, too. Fuck, I'm terrified."

KJ gives a worried and sympathetic look that would have prompted Johnny to take her into his arms, had he been there to see it.

"I probably shouldn't say this," Anna says, "but aren't you wondering how nice it would be to have Johnny's big arms around you, nice and tight?"

"You can say it," KJ says, "I've been thinking it every night since Christmas. I've thought about it and if I could I'd lay my head on his chest tonight. He'd feel his woman sleeping there, with him."

KJ lies back on her bed.

"My hair would go all around him," she says, "and all the shit we've been through would go away, and he'd feel so strong."

"That's one of the powers we've given away," Anna says, "But you and I are taking it back. We're not going to let anyone distance us from our men, and we're sure as hell not going to attack the fathers of our children, like feminists and big companies want. Just look at the ads that make fun of our men." She sighs. "It's fun breaking their rules, isn't it?"

KJ nods.

"We have all the reason in the world to break their rules," KJ says, "Our love breaks their rules."

"Hey, I wanted to ask you something," Anna says, "Would you like to go swimming someday, if we can manage it? The four of us of course. I don't want you to feel left out, I mean Johnny wouldn't let you feel left out."

"Hell yeah!" KJ says, "I'd love it. I really need to practice. And having Johnny there...Well, you saw him by the pond."

"Yeah," Anna says, "He is definitely not going to let you drown."

"Since we're talking about this and that," KJ says, "Do you mind if I ask you something about your family? If you're not cool with that..."

"Oh, it's OK, KJ," Anna says.

"How's your father?" KJ asks, "I imagine this is really hard on the two of you. Again, if you don't want to go there..."

"It is hard," Anna says, "It always will be, because I love him so much. I've been blessed to have a father like him. Really blessed. But, you know, he's strong. I think he knew I would do this someday. He knew I'd love my race enough to fight for our future and our children's future, and that's what we're doing here, you and I and our men."

"Yeah," KJ says, "We are. It's, like, all about love. Everyone says we're about hate but they're just fucking liars." A wicked little grin comes to KJ's face. "They have no idea how much harder a man will fight for love over hate. Or a woman. Only a few of us are fighting, but we'll be the example. We're the real rebels. We're the real revolutionaries. They have all the power and make all the rules. We can't say the 'nigger' word; we can't be proud of who we are, we can't even say our race exists, or that it sucks if we disappear forever. Well, fuck their rules and fuck them. They dared to tell me that I have to betray my race and my white brothers. Who the fuck do anti-whites think they are, to tell me I have to hate a man like Johnny? They'll pay for doing that to us." She breathes deep. "I'll make them fucking pay."

"Stay the way you are, KJ," Anna says, "Johnny won't so much as look at another woman if you do. Trust me. I'm a good-looking girl. Actually, I'm pretty fucking hot," she says and smiles, "He doesn't even look at me like that. You know what I mean, like a piece of ass. But he doesn't look at me like that and I don't mind saying it, either. We need to stand with each other, not tear each other down, and it's true anyway. He looks at you like you're the only woman he'd ever want. Kinda like you're the only woman on Earth."

"Thank you, Anna," KJ says, "God, thank you! That's one of the nicest things anyone's ever said to me. Don't ever worry about me turning away from him. My wings keep me on course."

Anna smiles and lies down on her pillow. She looks at the ivy on both of her arms. What lives forever in her soul can never be taken away. Both young ladies sleep peacefully that night.

The next morning Anna is first to rise. She finds out later that it's 10 AM. Johnny, who is back in his tent, patrolled the area around Coalsack from just before dawn to first light. Anna hears someone unlock the front

door. She looks at KJ, who is still sleeping. She must have kicked off the sheet during the night and now lays with her rear – thong and all – toward Anna and clearly visible from the door. Anna hears feet on the wooden floor beyond the partition. It could be Johnny, who's no doubt seen KJ in a thong, but it could be Garret or even Jimmy Ford. Anna throws her pillow and hits KJ, who awakens in an instant.

"What?" KJ says, "Is something wrong?"

"Cover your butt!" Anna whispers loud enough for KJ to hear.

KJ sits up and grabs the sheet off of the floor. Thought there's now no way that the intruder can see her bottom, KJ covers her lower half with the sheet. At that moment Garret enters from around the partition.

"You could have knocked!" Anna says.

Garret glances at her.

"I've arranged the items for a late supper," he says, "Johnny and I will take care of it today. Go ahead and eat breakfast, but try to keep the refrigerator closed. There's a crate full of water. I know it's not cold, but it'll do. Remember, we still have one more day here."

Garret stops before rounding the partition. He winks at Anna and then knocks before leaving.

Both Anna and KJ brought their iPods. So did John Bowen, though he has yet to use it. The sun cuts through the clouds and the heat and humidity rises on this typical summer day in West Virginia. Although a woodland excursion sounds tempting, and the shade of the thick forest would shield them from both heat and the relentless sun, when KJ mentions it to Johnny as they eat lunch in the cabin, he urges her to conserve her energy for tonight. They will repeat yesterday's hike without the benefit of the soft light of day. The two white sisters return to the little bedroom, where they listen to music and sip water to while away the time.

Johnny Bowen, who left to do a little work and make a short patrol around the entrance road, returns to camp at 2 PM. He washes his face and arms and changes into shorts and a tank top. The temperature reaches 90 F outside and although it's not particularly comfortable in the cabin, at least there's no sun or deer flies to make life more difficult. Johnny pays the ladies a visit.

Anna sees KJ light up when Johnny enters. KJ takes the phones out of her ears and lays the book of wildflowers on the night stand. Johnny sits on her bed. As the afternoon heat began to make the cabin a little uncomfortable, KJ removed her shorts since it was only her and Anna behind the partition. She did not remove her t-shirt, but is wearing her usual choice in lower undergarment when Johnny takes his seat. KJ

slides over and then climbs up on his lap, her virtually bare bottom touching his shorts and legs. She throws her arms around him and lays her forehead to his cheek.

Anna knew that Johnny has enormous self-control. She never doubted him, and certainly will not do so now, since this must not be the first time that the woman he loves has sat on his lap wearing only a thong. Still he waits to take her until it is proper. A part of Anna believes that KJ is acting a little too wild and uninhibited. Perhaps it was bad advice she'd given her sister when Anna bought her the thong swimsuit. Part of her does not agree, however. Baring tragedy, she believes that Johnny will take KJ as his wife. She can see their closeness and affection for one another, which has grown with each passing month. Why not be close, so close that she bonds with him whether they've made love or not, and when the deed comes to pass their bond will be permanent. Anna wonders about herself and the man she loves. He's begun to show his affection in his own way, and she's noticed every escalation. Anna goes back to her iPod and magazines. In her peripheral vision she sees Johnny talking to KJ and rubbing her leg. She sees KJ kiss his cheek and nuzzle him. Then KJ closes her eyes and sits still, surrounded by his arms and body.

Supper consists of chipped beef and mashed potatoes. It is nourishing and palatable but compared to other meals they've shared it is without charm. The tea is very good, however; just the right strength of horehound and mint with a slight amount of maple sugar for sweetness. Once night arrives, the foursome retreats to their domiciles. They will not set out while there is still a ray of sunlight, when mosquitoes are hunting en masse. The window screens protect the ladies from the little biting devils that come out during evening. Long sleeves and pants will frustrate the mosquitoes that emerge during the night. Both Anna and KJ wear t-shirts and long sleeve hoodies. Even though it will be warm and uncomfortable, they both dress in their thickest hoodies for tonight's journey. Both women wear tall lace-up boots as well, and KJ puts on her gloves. This time KJ does not wear jeans, but rather a pair of camouflaged pants. Anna does the same. Johnny told them to leave their rifles but, as always, bring the pistols. KJ puts on the soft cap that Johnny bought for her, and Anna dons a black boonie hat. Both pack very light backpacks, with water, a box of .45 ammunition, and a few other items shared between them.

All her life KJ Campbell has tried to be a morning person. From her pre-teen years she's known that she is wired for night. Her vision, like Anna's, is superb in the darkness. This fortuitous circumstance will serve them well.

Tonight's expedition will be a nocturnal analogue of the previous reconnaissance mission, with two exceptions. Should any member of Capricorn Cell meet an outsider, they are to flee whether they've been seen or not. Second, Garret will carry the shotgun. John Ashley Bowen will carry his AK47. Before they set off, Johnny stands before both Anna and KJ.

"We'll move by night," he says, "In time you'll become intimate with the dark."

Johnny turns and walks into the woods, disappearing in short time.

The eerie trill of a screech owl makes Anna's skin tingle. Luna moths, all but gone from the growing cities in the north, hover in the dull glow of the cloudy night sky. Along the way a flying squirrel glides from a white oak to a shagbark hickory without making a sound. Every so often, the other members of the cell hear the faint sounds of Johnny Bowen's movements. Then they see him, as quiet as a phantom. These hills, rife with tales of ghosts and revenants, seem like a natural home for him.

Johnny returns to the group – rather, they see him again – as they approach the disused dirt road. There they stop for their first water break.

"Have any of you ever seen foxfire?" KJ asks.

Anna shakes her head.

"No," Johnny says.

"I read about it in a nature guide that I used to have," KJ says, "I can understand the science of it, but, is it, like, for real? I was wondering if anyone's ever seen it."

"Were you lookin' for it?" Johnny asks.

He takes a bag from his long-sleeve shirt pocket and gives KJ a piece of orange peel in chocolate.

"Thank you!" KJ says, a little too loud.

"Shh! Careful," Garret says, his brow furrowed.

"Sorry," KJ whispers.

Anna elbows him. Earlier she caught herself before she spoke too loudly. Garret had given her some ripe blackberries he found in one of the little gullies near the first dirt road. There were only six that were fully ripe and sweet, so he gave four to her and two to KJ. Had it been a question of sustenance, he would have split them evenly. Since it was a treat, he gave the majority to his woman.

KJ rubs Johnny's leg and mouths "thank you" when he looks. He takes off her cap and kisses her head. Their break at an end, Johnny rises and picks up the AK 47. The three watch him walk into the gloom of the forest. His footfalls are so soft they quickly become inaudible.



The sound of a bullfrog would seem to indicate the proximity of the dammed stream, and the audible clue proves to be prophetic. Led by Johnny and with Garret covering the rear, they detour around the slow-flowing pool and climb the gentle slope of the southeast hillside. Johnny tells them to wait for him on the hill and he disappears into the woods. He's not gone for long; south of the dammed stream is a gully that has a tiny brook and steeper sides. The sheltered nature of the gully makes it even better than the one downstream of the dammed creek. It will dampen any loud noises better than the other hollows.

Tomorrow night the women will bring their rifles.

When the foursome returns to Coalsack, it's Anna and Garrett's turn to shower first. KJ and Johnny Bowen brew some tea and he fetches some of the raspberry bear cookies for a little snack. Once they've finished showering, Anna and Garret have their tea while KJ and Johnny brush their teeth and then hit the showers themselves. Anna watches them share the cup of water they use for rinsing the toothpaste from their mouths. She can't imagine seeing her and Garret doing that, though French kissing is certainly a possibility. Later, she'll wonder if her thoughts somehow penetrated Garret's mind. Before Anna can get her toothbrush from the cabin, Garret puts his hand on her shoulder. She turns to look into his eyes. Garret then puts his hand on her cheek.

"I often get caught up in the struggle," Garret says, "I have to, but there are times I don't tell you enough how much I love you."

Anna takes his hand.

"It came to me like lightning but it never faded," Garret says, "And I promise you, Anna Murphy, it never will."

Anna kisses his palm.

"I love you too, Garret," she says, "Everyone would say our lives were normal and now they're crazy, but they'd be wrong, so wrong. Everything's clear now. We can love and be proud of who we are. I know you have to devote your time to our struggle. I don't want you to stop that. I wouldn't have come here if I did. I want to thank you for what you do."

Anna rubs his cheek with her left hand and then fulfills a desire she's had for a while. She runs her fingers through his long blond hair. Anna smiles but the passions that rise remove it from her face, and she looks at him with longing. He pulls her close and kisses her. Every part of her soul tells her that this is right; their lives are their own now, and Capricorn Cell is their family.

Anna is first in bed. She hears KJ say goodnight to Johnny and hears their lips smack from a little goodnight kiss. Anna smiles and closes her

eyes. She cuddles her pillow. The reason they're together is never far from her mind, but the intense love between them helps keep the fear and sorrow at bay.

The next evening, KJ and Anna dress about the same as they did the previous night. It's August now and the night is even hotter than the last few. Unfortunately from a comfort perspective, KJ and Anna will have to carry their rifles. Physically they're more than up to the task. Both are worried how they'll perform in the dark. As Garret warned them, they'll get one shot each during this first live-fire expedition.

Both Anna and KJ are nervous during the excursion. An eyewitness could bring SWAT down upon their heads, and the ladies wonder if they'd be able to escape in time. When a startled doe crashes through the spice-bushes and brambles KJ shudders and feels an adrenaline rush. She has both hands on her rifle, which is off her shoulder in an instant. She also has her finger on the safety. Anna, who ducked behind a large oak tree, returns to the group after she realizes the source of the commotion. Garret watches the both of them. He and Johnny will discuss what transpired during and after this fortuitous surprise encounter.

"Deer," says a voice in the darkness.

Johnny does not show himself. Rather, he continues his sweep toward the sheltered gully.

When the group reaches the creek bed downstream of the dammed waters, they see that something must have given way higher up the slope. There is water and mud along the bank and among the grass and goldenrod. Further along, they see that the ramshackle dam has failed. The group avoids the deep mud and turns south.

By Johnny's estimate, the distance from the sheltered gully downstream to a huge piece of limestone is around 350 feet. This is close to Anna's estimation and the same as KJ's. Excepting extraordinary or emergency circumstances, neither of the two should ever take such a close shot. For their first night training mission, just three days since joining Capricorn Cell, the exercise will suffice. Before the others caught up with him, Johnny climbed the limestone boulder and placed a bottle and glow sticks on top. Anna will shoot at the makeshift target; she will have only one chance to prove her mettle. Once Anna fires, she and the others will move in the opposite direction and stop at roughly the same distance as the first shot. There, KJ will have one chance to try and hit another bottle, or the bottle already on the boulder should Anna miss with her attempt. After the two ladies fire their rifles, Capricorn Cell will withdraw to Coalsack, with Johnny Bowen leading the way.

Anna assumes a solid sitting position and lines up her target. The bottle that sits atop the ancient stone is empty but she finds it with ease. The experience from years of hunting and practicing, which John Boyle helped her refine, does not disappoint the redheaded beauty. Her bullet finds its mark exactly where she intended it to strike. The bottle explodes from the impact, and a big smile grows on her face. Anna removes her earplugs as does KJ, who comes over to her triumphant sister.

"Nice shot," whispers KJ, who smiles as well.

Johnny told them to use earplugs even when they're on a mission, but to hold on to the plugs, lest they be evidence of the position of a shot and the identity of a shooter. He told them they'll need to protect their acute hearing. Just as important, if their ears are ringing after a shot, it will be all the more difficult for him to guide them to the extraction vehicle or to warn them of danger. Both women obey his request. KJ keeps her plugs around her neck. She'll need them again very soon.

Johnny leads everyone down the creek bed to a position he estimates to be around the same distance as Anna's shot from the opposite direction.

"There's a bottle on a smaller stone, just left of the big one," Johnny says, "See what you can do, angel."

KJ also uses a solid sitting position and quickly locates the bottle. She takes aim. It's an easy shot for her, but she does not deviate from proper technique or attempt to hurry the shot. When the rifle discharges the bullet finds its mark. KJ rises to her feet and once she's shouldered the rifle Anna hugs her tight. Then it's Johnny's turn. When Anna walks away from the two she sees Garret approach her.

"Good work, Red," Garret says.

Anna thanks him and he takes her into his arms. It feels so nice to be there, and to feel him around her. She closes her eyes, and when she opens them she sees Johnny still holding KJ, her back toward Anna. She sees him pat her butt three or four times.

When Anna and Garret separate, she looks into his eyes, a big grin on her face. She makes a fist and touches it to his heart.

"Let's get going," Johnny says to all of them including himself, "We better clear out of here."

The return trip consists of two parts. They clear the first leg of the journey at a fast clip. Then, after stopping just long enough for a bottle of water and a kiss, Capricorn Cell returns to Coalsack with spirits riding high.

Johnny and KJ shower first. The duration is shorter than they'd prefer, but enough to wash the sweat from their immaculate white bodies.

"Try and make it quick," Johnny says to Garret and Anna when they head for the showers.

Before they can turn on any of the outside lights, Johnny tells them to maintain darkness; they won't even light a candle tonight. There will be no tea, either, just cold water from the refrigerator.

Johnny's admonitions would seem to be foresight. KJ hears a sound coming from the sky and she and Johnny look at each other. Somewhere high above is a helicopter. Johnny lifts KJ by her arm and he sends her inside the cabin. He then walks at a normal pace to the showers.

"Helicopter," he says through the curtains, first at Anna's shower and then Garret's. They were finishing as it turns out, and both turn off the water in less than fifteen seconds.

Anna throws on her undergarments – a bra and another thong – with a t-shirt and sweat shorts covering her scant clothing. Garret puts on his boxer shorts and nothing else. Johnny warns them not to run, so they walk at a brisk pace to the cabin and tent, respectively. Johnny goes to the porch. He's armed with his pistol. There he waits until he no longer hears the whirling motor. Then he goes to his tent. The 12-gauge will be at his side all night.

"This shit isn't right," Anna says from the darkness of the cabin bedroom, "If we took up for our race and if traitors weren't around to hurt us or our children, we wouldn't have to run and hide like fucking rats."

"All the more reason to blow their fucking heads off," KJ says from her bed.

Anna can't help but laugh, and KJ joins her.

The next day, Saturday, August 3, will be hot and sunny. KJ awakens before Anna and when she realizes the morning came without incident she breathes a sigh of relief.

It was a hot night and despite her overall fitness and lack of significant clothing, KJ perspired off-and-on the entire time. She sits up and wipes the sweat off of her forehead and neck before stretching and rubbing her arms. Anna stirs and awakens. She's suffered a little less, since her hair was in a loose ponytail.

"Hot night, huh?" Anna says.

"Yeah," KJ says, "I love my hair, but honest-to-God, it's like a fucking lion's mane when it's hot like this. No, it's like three lion's manes."

"You shouldn't cut it, though," Anna says.

"No way," KJ says, "I'll just sweat all over him. I don't think he'll mind."  
KJ smiles.

"Not a chance," Anna says.

Breakfast is a true delight after a torrid and sweaty night: real yogurt – not the store-bought junk, multigrain pancakes, and blackberries and dewberries that Johnny picked earlier that morning. The milk is cold and fresh and all four partake, with the ladies drinking to their hearts' content. During breakfast the men and women share space at the table in the cabin. After the meal, Johnny takes a few apples from the supply and slices them with his KA-BAR knife. He puts the pieces in a bowl and then takes one and hands it to KJ. Instead of grabbing it with her hand, she takes it with her mouth.

"Come here," Johnny says.

KJ climbs on his lap. Then he feeds her another piece and she kisses him on the cheek.

Garret looks at Anna, who looks down as a tiny smile appears on her beautiful face.

"A good idea's a good idea," Garret says.

Anna looks up at him and her smile grows. Garret winks and she does the same motion as KJ, climbing up on Garret's lap and wrapping her arms around him. She looks into his blue eyes and cannot help laughing, a little from embarrassment, but more from the enormous joy brought to her by his loving gesture. He holds out a piece of apple and she takes it with her lips. Garret rubs her back and smiles. She can imagine the weight that bears on his soul, and though she cannot relieve him of the burden she can help him carry it, and not in a minor way. It is one way a good woman complements a good man.

Johnny rubs noses with KJ and Anna lays her head against Garret. They have a little time before they have to prepare for the departure from Coalsack, and both pairs make the most of it.

Today is a huge day for the foursome; today they make the move to Procyon. At 1 PM, the members of Capricorn Cell have packed the essentials and await their ride out of Coalsack. The weather is hot and sunny, so the ladies wait inside the cabin while Garret sits on the porch. Johnny Bowen, armed with the 12 gauge, lurks around the gate. A little later a red Chevrolet van appears. Johnny must know the vehicle as he opens the gate at once. The driver, James Ford, pilots the van into the clear area by the cabin.

Ford's van is four-wheel-drive, converted to that configuration by a company in Pennsylvania, and then painted red by Ford and Kelly. There are no visible windows on the sides and a removable cover blocks the view through the rear windows. From their seat at the cabin table, KJ and Anna see Jimmy Ford come around and open the rear doors of the van.

KJ sees her Johnny climb inside and then exit after a minute or so. He walks up to the porch. KJ, whose shoulder bag and backpack are by her boots and whose rifle is on the table with Anna's, rises to her feet.

"This is it, ladies," Johnny says, looking at his angel and then at Anna, "Let's go to our new home."

KJ smiles and rubs his arm.

"Grab your stuff, angel," Johnny says, "We'll be riding for three hours. We can't get out unless there's a life-or-death emergency, so if you need to use the bathroom, better do it now. I'll bring some cold water so at least we'll have something to drink."

Johnny grabs KJ's and Anna's backpacks and takes them out to the van. KJ shoulders her bag and her rifle and when Johnny waves, she and Anna walk out to the van. There are six seats inside, none very large but each much more comfortable that she imagined. The six are situated toward the front of the van, with three on one side facing three on the other. Toward the rear doors there are cabinets for storage or perhaps tools. Between the seats and the driver is a wall with a small sliding window that is closed at the moment. KJ climbs in, followed by Anna and then Garret. When Johnny enters he closes the doors and then sits beside KJ on the right side. His shotgun sits on a folded blanket beside his seat. His AK47 is there as well. Johnny sets KJ's rifle beside his shotgun and Garret does the same with Anna's on the opposite side, laying it beside another shotgun that was already present. KJ looks at Johnny and smiles. He reaches over and rubs her leg. When the engine comes alive, the four fasten their seatbelts and wait for the van to roll. The ladies imagine what their home might look like and where it might be. Ford drives out of Coalsack, pausing only to lock the gate.

The ride becomes much smoother as the van enters the highway at Clay.

"Listen a minute, this is serious," Garret says, "What I'm about to say is very important. It's more than that. It's vital to our safety. I will repeat it several times, but for now try to keep this in mind. We're going to our safe house. Thanks to Gary Murphy and a few others," he looks at Johnny and Anna smiles at the mention of her father's name, "we have a hidden entrance and exit to our home. Never, never, never use the front or back door. In fact, the back door is barricaded on the inside. It's just a façade. Never walk by a window unless the blinds are down. We have internet access, but I urge you to never visit pro-white websites. As nice as it is to read a sympathetic voice among this cacophony of traitors and Jews, we cannot jeopardize our location. Take comfort in one another. Unlike some

of the internet warriors, we are not rolling over and accepting the death of our race. By all means, read apolitical pages that are of interest, but do not visit pro-white websites and do not research potential targets. Leave that to me."

Garret takes his Kindle out of his backpack and sets it on the floor.

"Regarding iPods, Kindles, cell and Trac Phones," he says, "Please leave them here in the van. All of them. I have replacements at Procyon that are not in our names. Some of those devices have tracking capabilities and we cannot risk it. The ones we'll have at Procyon are safe, although we will keep the batteries out of certain phones when not in use."

Garret looks at KJ, who takes her iPod out of her shoulder bag and lays it on the empty seat to her right. She complies with his wish but does not seem happy to do so. He can understand the little frown; she's lost a few iPods, and this one was a gift from the man she loves.

"Don't worry about your music," Garret says, "Jimmy copied everything and you'll find all of it on your own personal losafe hard drive once we get to Procyon."

As the van passes Sutton on I-79, KJ looks at Johnny. He breaks away from his thoughts and looks into her eyes. She reaches over and squeezes his forearm and a little smile appears on her immaculate face. He feels the depth of the love inside his soul for this beautiful and extraordinary white woman. There is so much in life that she should know, from a soft rain in Victoria falling upon her smiling face, to the thunderous applause of a stunned crowd, minutes after she resuscitates their weary souls with her unforgettable voice. She should know what it's like to lie in her soft bed and breathe and close her eyes, with peace and love the only sensations that overwhelm her. She should know what it's like to be heavy with child and to weep warm tears of joy when she holds her baby for the first time. Johnny leans over and pulls her forehead to his.

"I love you, angel," Johnny says.

"I love you too," KJ says, "so much."

The excitement of moving into Procyon House, together with the euphoria that the lovers feel in close proximity to one another, transforms what could have been a dull and uncomfortable trip into an enjoyable ride. Three hours don't seem so long, and once the journey is at an end, Ford knocks on the partition between the cab and the seats behind.

"Get ready," Garret says.

Johnny hands the .30-06 to KJ and then takes the AK47 into his hands. Anna shoulders her rifle as well. Garret arms himself with the shotgun that was already in the van.

"Alright, listen up," Garret says, "We'll be exiting into the forest and we'll move out at once. Johnny or I will halt everyone when we reach the hidden entrance. We'll make sure no one's around before we enter. By my reckoning we'll stay three or four days until Rian Donnelly comes by. One other thing, Jesse Hanratty will bring supplies and place orders for us. I expect her in about a week. She and Jimmy Ford will be the only ones using the front door, just so you know."

Johnny shoulders KJ's backpack and creeps to the doors. They feel the van leave the pavement and come to a complete stop. Johnny Bowen opens the rear doors, revealing the heart of the deep forest. Johnny wastes no time in exiting. He inspects both sides and the rear of the van. Garret grabs Anna's backpack and his own small bag and they wait in the van for Johnny to perform a sweep of the nearby woods. Minutes later he returns and waves the others out of the van. After the other cell members enter the forest, Johnny closes the rear doors, taps three times and then departs with the rest of Capricorn Cell. Ford pulls out of the forest and on to the road. They hear him driving off to the east.

Peace returns to the woods. A nuthatch calls from a large red oak not far from KJ. He seems unperturbed by her presence. Though the canopy protects the ladies' skin from the sunlight, the air is hot and humid and the greenery does little to shield the four from the heat. The distance from the drop-off / pick-up spot to the secret entrance tunnel is a bit less than half a mile, which is fortunate considering that every minute spent in the steaming forest is dreadful. The four, led by Garret, crest a ridge and descend the shallow southern slope. Nearby, Garret and Johnny halt the ladies and begin the process of identifying and opening the secret entrance. It must be somewhere nearby, and both women try to identify it for sport. Garret begins using the measure of his gait to narrow the location to the hidden trapdoor. Once there, he reaches down into the leaves until he finds a dirt and leaf covered lock.

"Each of you will receive a key," Garret whispers.

Garret removes a flashlight from his bag and unlocks the entrance door with a key from the ring in his pocket. Jimmy Ford gave him the ring that morning; it contains keys to every vehicle as well as Procyon House. Garret is first inside the underground entrance. At Johnny's urging, Anna and KJ enter and descend the stairs that lead to a tunnel. Finally Johnny Bowen enters. He closes the door behind him. Just below, there is a loop and a lock. Johnny opens the lock and reattaches it when he lifts a short chain up to the loop. Now the outside door cannot be opened without forcing the heavy duty lock or chain.



"Wait here," Garret says to them.

From the illumination of his flashlight, the others see him walk down the tunnel. At the end he turns on the soft overhead lights that extend to about six feet from the entrance. There are enough of them for a soft and revealing glow but not enough to be bright or harsh. KJ looks around the tunnel and sees that the walls are tiled up to her position just beyond the stair, and the ceiling and floor are wooden. The passage is very clean, especially for having an earth-and-plant covered entrance.

"Welcome to Procyon," Garret says from the other end of the tunnel.

Anna begins to walk to him, looking away only when she sees the recession with the imbedded gun case and emergency shotguns. The air is calm and still and aside from each member's breathing and footfalls, there isn't a sound to be heard.

Garret turns on the light in the first room beyond the tunnel. Inside are fans and a few crates and other items. It too is tiled with white squares and the floor and roof are wooden. KJ steps over to the left of the room and looks down a dark hallway. She can see that the hallway is not tiled; rather, it is lined with masonry and the floor seems to be cement. There is nothing down that hallway.

KJ looks back at Johnny.

"Ventilation?" KJ asks.

"Yeah," Johnny says, "We used it mostly during construction but decided to keep it. Air enters down the end through shafts. The door between there and the other room is airtight but we can ventilate the interior if we want."

"Tear gas could get down in here, couldn't it?" KJ asks, "And what about rain? I'd imagine there are drains in the floor..." she adds, looking down the shaft.

"Yeah, there are drains, and the floor's lower than in here," Johnny says, prompting KJ to step up to the edge and look in.

KJ holds her hair in her hand as she leans over to look.

"As for tear gas," Johnny says, "If it comes to that, it's already too late."

KJ turns her head to look at him and he walks up to her.

"Let's go see the house," Johnny says and smiles.

Garret opens the door to the right and turns on the lights of a large room. This one has tile on the wall but the floor is cement. In addition to the ceiling light, there are two hanging lights and four tall lamps. Across the room and flanked by two doors are a pair of beds, while in the center of the room is a high dais that is covered with a sheet. Along the wall are

shelves with closed doors and cabinets made of metal. There are two stainless steel sinks and a counter that looks just like those in a doctor's office as well as two drains in the floor. One of the cabinets is labeled "Dental." KJ notices these features, though her attention returns to the wheeled bed sitting between the two one-person beds. It is a gurney.

"May we never need this room," Garret says.

No one says a word as Garret closes the door.

Garret advances and opens the door in the center of the wall. They enter the next room, which appears to be an armory. There are boxes of ammunition, gun cabinets and plastic boxes that contain books on a myriad of subjects, from survival to household repairs. There are also various other boxes, trunks, and tool kits. In the center of the room are a table and four chairs. Anna and KJ do a tour of the room. They see several weapons, some familiar and others foreign. There are two .50 caliber Barrett Model 99 sniper rifles, one familiar to the ladies, and one that is not. The silenced .308 rifle that Garret put to good use is also among the weaponry, as are two .30-06 Remington rifles just like Anna's and KJ's, and an Armalite .308 and three Armalite .223 semi-automatic rifles as well. One has a folding stock. On the counter is a case containing a .357 magnum pistol. Near the pistol is a metal ammunition box with a yellow stripe around its center.

"This is our little armory," Garret says, "We're hoping it will grow in time, but if not, we'll make the best of it."

There are two doors on the far wall, just as in the medical room. Garret opens one of them and turns on a light. After the other three pass through the door, he turns off the light in the armory and closes the door. This next room angles inward at the half-way point, aiming toward a single door not far from the rear wall and the four doors that enter. Lining the wall are shelves stocked with mason jars, cans and little boxes. At the head of each row of shelves, sitting on the floor, are two barrels on either side of the room. They pass by this little larder and arrive at the final door, which Garret unlocks. He turns on the stairwell light just on the other side of the door frame. It's a short stair and they all ascend in rapid succession. At the top is another door, and Garret passes the key to Anna, who is first to reach it. She opens the door and enters a room full of metal and plastic boxes and other items. This is obviously a storage room. Garret does not turn off the stairway light until the storage room is illuminated.

The storage room has a wooden floor and paneling. The light fixtures above are bowl shaped and flush with the ceiling; they are typical of room lighting in houses. Among the containers of the storage room is a narrow gun rack. In one of four slots is a pump shotgun, and nearby is an

unlocked box of ammunition. To the left, along the wall, are a washer and a dryer. Folded in the corner are strands for drying clothes in the traditional way.

Garret removes his hiking shoes and the rest follow his queue. There are two chairs and a bench, and KJ sits on the bench to remove her boots. Before she can remove the second one Johnny takes it in his hands and removes it for her. He looks up to see her flash him a little smile.

Anna sits on the chair and removes her boots. Garret does not mimic Johnny's actions, and Anna did not expect him to.

To the left and right are doors and there is another one in the opposite wall. Garret opens each of the doors to the left and right, showing KJ and Anna the media and exercise rooms. He continues the tour with the exercise room. The flooring in this room is rubber. There is adequate floor space in the middle of the room for two persons to exercise at the same time. There are also free weights, jump ropes, a pull-up bar, the rowing machine and two exercise bikes. A treadmill is close to the opposite wall near the window, whose blinds are closed and locked. There is a large chest in front of the treadmill that contains other items of use. Sitting beside the two bikes is a stair climbing machine. KJ recognizes it immediately.

"Johnny!" KJ yells to him from inside the room.

Johnny joins her in the little gym.

"You know that one, don't you?" he says.

KJ nods and runs her gloved hand down the rail. Ford must have brought it from Amblersburg. She looks at the identical exercise bikes, and is certain one of them was hers.

"It's cool that he brought this stuff," she says, "Now it won't just sit there."

There is a door to the right that is closed. It looks more like a front door, and has a standard knob and lock. KJ notices it as does Anna, but neither asks what's on the other side. They assume they'll arrive there later in the tour.

Like the little gym, the media room has paneling but the wooden floor is uncovered. Inside is a beige sofa large enough for two, a large monitor that could be used for entertainment such as DVDs or web streaming, and two desktop computers. The desktops each have their own desks with chairs, while two laptop computers sit on round tables surrounded by three chairs each. Along the wall, under the blind-covered window, are several plastic boxes full of books and manuals. The boxes are stacked four-high and rise all the way past the bottom of the window. Just to the

right side of the boxes is a stand with about twenty DVDs and blue ray discs in thin jewel cases.

KJ looks at Johnny, who returns her glance. She calls him down with her finger.

"Take me to a movie sometime," KJ whispers to him.

She motions with her head toward the couch, and he smiles and nods.

Anna glances at the rifle on KJ's back and she thinks about her own. A small piece of tape, hers red and KJ's blue, differentiate the rifles. That tape will come off soon. She has an idea as to how they can tell the rifles apart, and wonders about its feasibility.

Garret opens the door to the left and beckons them to enter the living room. It is a very large room with loaded bookshelves and two tables, one large and one smaller, plus cabinets and drawers. The floor space in front of the tables is sizable. There are a few other items currently stored in the living room: ten plastic boxes and two bedrolls sit beside the front door, which is white. Though it looks like a typical door, it is bullet-resistant and also lightweight.

"Lay your rifles on the table," Garret says.

He puts Anna's backpack beside the larger of the two tables.

Johnny follows his example with KJ's backpack, and the two young ladies lay down their rifles and shed their shoulder bags.

"That, as you no doubt guessed, is the front door," Garret says, "Unless there is a life or death emergency that prevents use of the tunnel, do not ever use that door. Don't even open it. Understand me now, when I say never, I mean never. If we're seen here we have to abandon this place forever."

KJ glances back at the bedrolls. There were six in the storage room and there was enough space for several more. She finds it odd that these two are in here.

Garret opens a long drawer that is behind the "U" shaped counter, which contains many such drawers. Some are large enough for a short-barreled shotgun. There is also room for three people side-by-side on the inside of the curved counter, and it could provide a place of cover or hiding.

"Inside this drawer is a 12-gauge shotgun and four boxes of shells," Garret says, "Several rooms have such defensive weapons. I'll show you the location of each a little later."

Counting the front door, there are five doors in the sizable living room. Garret leads the little group to the door opposite the one they

entered via the media room. It, too, is light brown like the paneling, and like the front door is without a window. Through that side door is an ample hallway with a long rug down the middle. As all the rooms, it is immaculate in its cleanliness. There are two doors opposite the living room door, as well as one at the end of the hall and a further door on the same wall as the living room entrance/exit door. There are two small tables and two chairs in the hall, and KJ immediately notices a framed picture on the opposite wall just to the left of the first door. It is a drawing of soap flowers. The sight stirs her deepest emotions and she looks at Johnny Bowen. He puts his hand on her back and rubs her, and on his face is a little smile for the woman he loves. She embraces him, her eyes closed, until Garret opens the unlocked door to the first bedroom.

It is a lovely and decent-sized room, even if its décor is a bit uninspired. Opposite the entrance is a large wooden bureau with three large and two smaller drawers as well as a large mirror that rises above its flat top. Beside the bureau are a chair and a full-body mirror attached to the wall. The walls are white as is the ceiling. There is a single window, though it is of course covered tight with a dark blind.

"KJ, come take a look," Garret says.

KJ glances at Johnny and then walks into the bedroom. There are two doors on opposite walls to the left and right, one tall dresser with drawers and two dressers for hanging clothes, and a little table with two chairs. Under the window and to the side are several plastic boxes as well as pairs of shoes and boots, which KJ knows to be hers. To the left, close to but not against the wall is a queen sized bed. The bed's frame is a darker color wood than the floor and there is a pair of cardinals engraved into the footboard, which does not rise above the end of the mattress. Beside the bed is a nightstand. In addition to the overhead lights, there is a tall flexible lamp as well as a smaller one on the nightstand.

"This, KJ, is your bedroom," Garret says, "You'll have plenty of time to organize your stuff. Jimmy will bring your laptop the next time he visits but you won't be able to use the internet on it. Just use it for music and reading downloaded files. Anyway, there's a power dock for your iPod in the nightstand and other important things in a couple of boxes and in the bathroom. That," he says pointing to the door to the right, "is the bathroom. The door has a bar that you can lock while you're inside and we've already stocked it with personal items. Oh yeah, that reminds me."

Garret walks to the open doorway.

"I wanted to mention to all of you," he says, "Before Jesse pays us a visit, make a list of things you think you'll need and things you'd like to

have. There are no promises, as you could have guessed, but we'll see what we can do. Make sure you give them to me within three days. If there's anything personal that you don't want me to see, just fold it and put it in an envelope."

Garret steps into the bedroom and walks up to the door that is opposite the bathroom door.

"This is a thin double door," Garret says, "It leads to the second bedroom. Both can be locked from their respective rooms. Go ahead and look at the bathroom," Garret says as he walks toward the open bedroom door.

KJ peeks inside the bathroom. It's larger than the Amblersburg bathroom and, as Garret said, is well-stocked. Unlike the tub in the Amblersburg place, which was purely for function, this one will hold a lot more water, and is much wider. There is a hand shower in addition to the fixed shower above.

When KJ exits the bedroom, Garret closes the door but leaves it unlocked. Johnny, who has been watching KJ the entire time, sees her look up at him. She gets a playful little grin on her face.

Down the hall, Garret opens the next door on the right.

"Come take a look, Anna," Garret says.

He stands by the open doorway as she enters the next bedroom, which will be hers. It is an analogue to the first.

Out in the hall KJ and Johnny Bowen await Anna and Garret's return. She steps up close to him and he puts his arm around her.

"Do you like it?" Johnny asks.

"Yeah," KJ says with a little smile, "I really do."

"You'll see the kitchen soon," Johnny says, "it's pretty fuckin' awesome."

KJ turns and puts her head and right hand to his chest.

"You've given so much," she says, "so that people you'll never know can be happy someday."

"What am I if I don't do this, hmm?" Johnny asks, "If we keep doing what everyone else is doing, and keep putting off this war, someday soon there won't be any white children left to fight for."

"My hero," KJ says, rubbing his chest with her gloved hand, "Your angel will never fly away from you." She looks up at him and says "no" as she shakes her head, the sea of hair drifting in front of her face like waves of the ocean washing the shore.

Anna glances at the bathroom and then turns to look at Garret. He is rendered speechless for a few seconds; she is beauty incarnate, and her image alone is more than enough reason to fight to the death for the sur-

vival of their race. He steps up to her with a look on his face that he doesn't often have; a look of intense desire. He puts his hands on her shoulders and kisses her.

"Is it acceptable?" Garret asks.

"Yes," Anna says, "It's beautiful."

"You can change it how you see fit," Garret says, "Decorate it, hang something, it's yours."

"Where are you staying?" Anna asks.

Garret takes her ponytail and brings it over her shoulder, and then caresses her arms. His eyes never leave hers.

"Let's finish the tour," he says.

When they reenter the hallway Johnny is standing with his arm around KJ.

Before opening the kitchen door, which is the second door on the left-side wall, Garret opens the door at the end of the hallway and lets the young women glance at the third bedroom. It is smaller than the other two but still more than adequate for a single person. The bed in this room is smaller but could still encompass two persons, should they have no objection to being close. This room also has a bathroom, though it is more like the smaller Amblersburg bathroom than either of the other two spacious ones.

Johnny was not exaggerating when he mentioned the kitchen. It is large and very well equipped, with two refrigerators, a large freezer box, wide countertops and numerous drawers, all in white with blue outlines and knobs. In the middle of the room is a table large enough for six persons. Together with the counter and cabinets are two sinks and a dishwasher. At center point of the right-side wall is an outside door. A storage cabinet sits in front of the door and metal strips keep the door bolted into place. The outside door is there just for show; however, there are two more functional doors; one straight ahead, which is different than all the rest, and an ordinary one to the left. Garret walks to the ordinary left-hand door and opens it. KJ and Anna both look at the other door – the carved one, with a standard knob and lock, just like a front door. It brings back the image of the similar door in the workout room.

"Hey, Garret," KJ says, "What's in there?"

"Some other time," Garret says.

KJ looks at Johnny and mouths "what", with a bit of a bewildered and rebuked look on her face. He steps over to her and puts his arm around her shoulder. Then, after whispering for her to come, he leads her back to the living room.

"That's it," Garret says, "This is Procyon, our safe house. Any questions?" He looks at KJ, "Except about the one room?"

"I wasn't going to ask," KJ says, "Seriously, I wasn't!"

"I'm just messing with you," Garret says, "But don't worry about that room. Johnny and I will clean that one. Someday you'll know what it's all about."

He almost says "God willing."

Garret walks over to one of the drawers. He unlocks it with a second key and takes four key rings out of the drawer. He lays them on the smaller of the two tables.

"These are yours," Garret says and then sighs, "Try not to lose them. That'd be a real knee in the nuts."

Anna cannot help but giggle. Garret so rarely talks like that.

"If anyone hasn't wondered," Garret says, "Yes, there will be periods of boredom and sometimes you'll want to get out of here, but no matter how bad either of those get, tell yourselves the importance of this place. This house gives us a chance to be human; to live lives as much outside of the war as any white man or white woman possibly can. We no longer belong to the enemy, and if we're careful, Procyon won't either. There will be ways to spend time as pairs or alone if we wish. We can take supper together or as pairs or even individuals, since we have places all through the house that are suitable. Just be careful with crumbs and spills, and clean up. We need to take care of this place like it's our one and only home in the entire universe. In a way, it is. Today we'll all have supper together, in the kitchen. We can discuss a rotation of household duties while we eat. Now, I'm going to ask for volunteers to make supper today."

Before Anna can say a thing, or Johnny for that matter, KJ speaks.

"Johnny and I would like to make supper," KJ says and looks at her lover, "Is that cool with you?"

Johnny smiles and nods.

"OK, let's hit the showers and you two can get started in about a half hour or so," Garret says.

"Johnny," KJ says as Garret begins to walk to the hallway door, followed by Anna, "Where's your bedroom?"

"Go take a shower, angel," Johnny says.

"Damn it, I didn't think about that!" Anna says. She puts her hands on her hips and looks at Johnny Bowen and then at Garret. "You two are sleeping on the floor, aren't you?" she asks.

"Oh no!" KJ says, "Anna and I will share a bedroom and you two can have the other two."



Johnny folds his arms.

"If you won't think of yourself," KJ says, "And...and I know you won't because you're a fucking fighter, and I can't tell you how much I admire or how much I fucking love you, but goddamn it, Johnny, what do you think it does to me when you do this kind of shit? When you sacrifice and you don't have to, it fucking tears me apart."

"No man is going to sleep in the same room with a woman unless they're married," Johnny says, "Not this man, and I am not going to have you two share a bed when you're both shooters and you'll need your rest. And anyway it's no fucking different than me and Garret sharing a bed. You know how real life works, it's not like the fairy tale fucking bullshit they try and shove down our throats. You spend more than a few days like that, and shit gets fucked up."

Garret doesn't say a word.

"OK, Johnny," Anna says, "But, how about we rotate? We use the three beds and odd man," she looks at KJ, "or odd woman out sleeps on the bedroll. Next night, or next week, or whatever, we rotate. No one has to sleep on bedrolls the whole time." She looks at Garret. "Come on, it's only right."

"You're right, Johnny," KJ says, "but Anna has a better idea." She looks at Anna. "I'll even take the first week or whatever."

"Yeah, I'm gonna let that happen," Johnny says.

"You can take the first week, Johnny," Anna says, "Hell, Garret can take the second one. But it's not right for us to have beds when you two have to sleep on the floor all the time."

"No," Johnny says, who then looks at KJ, "And I'll tell you why it's not going to happen that way. We're men, and you're women. When the women aren't skanks or fucking race traitors, they get the beds and the men sleep on the floor. That's how it's supposed to be and that's how it's going to be."

Garret unfolds his arm and quits leaning against the wall.

"You each have a bedroom and a bathroom," Garret says, "We have the living room, and Rian when he comes will have the smaller bedroom because he's the wheel man. That's written in stone right now, and until that stone is broken, that's how it's going to be. Now get to the showers, I'm starting to get hungry."

Garret walks past them and opens the storage room door. He closes it behind him. Anna looks at KJ and shrugs before heading off to her bedroom.

KJ walks over to Johnny and looks up into his eyes.

"Just once," KJ says, "When you don't have to do this shit, don't!"

He looks into her expressive eyes and gorgeous white face and takes her by the cheeks. Johnny smiles as he does so.

"Not a chance," Johnny says.

"I had to try," KJ says, her voice almost a whisper.

As always it stirs his soul like no other voice can. He kisses KJ's head and sends her off to her own private bathroom. Johnny grabs some clothes from the plastic boxes in the living room and walks the empty hall to Rian's future room, where he and Garret will shower.

After Johnny and the two women finish their showers, Anna offers to put the clothes in the washer. She gathers them and heads off as Garret arrives to use Rian's bathroom. KJ, who handed her clothes to Anna from inside her bedroom door, makes her appearance. She's wearing black snakeskin-pattern leggings and a black t-shirt with a stylized white Celtic wolf on its front.

"Is that new?" Johnny asks from the end of the hall by the kitchen.

Johnny put on his best jeans and a collared short-sleeve shirt, suspecting this would be a little more than just meal-making. He was right. She nods in response to his question.

"It was the last shirt I bought before I left my old life," KJ says, "I just never had the chance to wear it."

"It's awesome," Johnny says and she looks down and smiles.

Johnny waits for her to pass him on her way to the kitchen. As she passes by, he does not look at the back of her shirt. His eyes find something much more interesting to look upon. In all his days and all the times he stared at an attractive girl's rear, having done so like any normal young man but ceasing to stare at others when he fell in love with KJ, he cannot recall seeing one as nice as hers.

It takes a little while for Johnny and KJ to familiarize themselves with the location of various items and ingredients in the large and bountiful kitchen. Once they do, they quickly decide on what to make and set about bringing that decision from promise to delicious reality. There is also time for their affectionate antics, and if there weren't they would make time.

KJ admonishes Johnny that they have to be a little more serious. Then she turns toward the counter, and glances over her shoulder to be sure he's still watching. A wild look grows on her face, and with discrete but unmistakable motion she moves her rear up and down. The resulting outburst makes Anna stop in her tracks as she comes up the hallway. She continues to her room, where she decides to remove her denim shorts and wear a nice black summer dress.

Anna has always appreciated dresses and the occasion to wear them, though it was never strong enough to make her change jeans or other pants when she felt like wearing those. Today seems like a special occasion, though it also seems like a transition and, to be honest, feels a little weird. The dress looks nice on her, so on a whim she takes it from one of the boxes. Before putting on the dress she looks into the full-body mirror. Her underwear, though it does not feature a thong back like so many of her sister KJ's garments, fits her tight and shows every curve of her body. If it didn't seem weird at the time, and had it not become obvious that Anna and Garret were falling in love, Johnny Bowen might have noticed that Anna was the one girl whose body – rear included – might be the equal of KJ's. As it is, Johnny will not focus his attention on her sexuality, not now and not ever, since he is deeply in love with KJ. This does not displease the redhead; she wants someone else to stare at her.

Garret knows that Johnny won't wear a tie and he doesn't care. He puts on a white dress shirt and a black tie, and dress pants as well. They all love each other in many ways, and he and Anna and Johnny and KJ, as well as Rian and Jesse love one another in totality. Johnny won't wear a tie; Garret will. Anna won't dress like KJ. They may be forced to live in these walls, but finally they are free to love and cherish who they are as white men and women, and they will comport themselves accordingly. Garret wouldn't want them to act otherwise, not now and not ever.

When supper is ready, KJ kisses Johnny on the cheek and marches off to the living room. There she finds Anna and Garret seated at the little table, sharing a conversation.

"Supper's ready," KJ says, "I hope you like it."

KJ needn't worry. The tenderloin of beef with its tomato and bouillon sauce, together with zucchini and shallots, is truly delectable; so good, in fact, that it prompts Anna to suggest that the two were showing off.

"Yeah," KJ says, "A little."

After the meal Garret opens a bottle of Taittinger Brut. This is a celebration, after all. Tonight will be their first night at Procyon and Garret was hoping they would have an excellent meal and quality champagne to begin what he hopes will be the protracted use of this house as a refuge and a place of tranquility. He could not be more pleased with the meal or the company with whom he makes the first toast. Garret lifts his glass and the others follow suit.

"To those who have carried us, and who shall carry us in this life," Garret says, "Without them, we would not have this opportunity to win peace for those who shall follow."

They touch glasses and drink. Anna thinks first of her father. Garret thinks first about the three faces in the room with him. Johnny Bowen thinks of KJ. KJ thinks of Johnny. In the soft light of their mountain home she sees him, the man she loves, holding their little son in his big, powerful arms.

Later that evening, Anna comes into the media room. She's carrying two cups of tea and is still wearing her black dress. Garret looks up from one of the desktop computers. He hasn't changed his clothes, either.

"Come here," Garret says, and she sits on the chair next to him.

"Thank you, sweetheart," Garret says when she hands him the tea. It has a smooth mint flavor.

"What kind of questions can we ask you?" Anna asks, "Could you tell us, so we don't mess up?"

She has a nervous little smile.

"Anything, Anna," Garret says, "Anything you want to ask."

"OK," Anna says and looks down.

"What's on your mind?" Garret asks.

Anna looks back into his eyes.

"I think we were blown away by all this," she says, "I don't think I heard anyone thank you for taking care of us. Well, I'll be the first. Thank you, Garret. Do you know how I feel here?"

"Tell me, sweetheart," Garret says.

"You, Johnny, Jimmy, all the others," Anna says, "You were willing to create this place. You sacrificed so much already. I feel like we can win, Garret. As long as there are men like you, we can win."

"Thank you Anna," Garret says, "Is there anything you'd like to ask?"

"Some other time," Anna says.

In KJ's bedroom, Johnny's sitting on her bed and she's sitting on his lap. He feels her lean into him and he goes with it; in fact, he grabs her and lies back on the bed. She turns to be face-to-face with him, her body lying on top of his. She bends her knees so that her boots are in the air and she laughs.

"Hold me so I don't slide off," KJ says.

Johnny does, with one hand on her back and one on her butt. She kisses his lips and chin and cheek.

"You know what," KJ says, "Next time Jimmy comes over we should make him a really nice meal, just for him."

"Yeah," Johnny says, "I think that's a great idea."

Johnny turns to the side and KJ rolls on her back. She turns her head to look at him. Her smile becomes a look of yearning.

"Angel," Johnny says, "My beautiful angel."

He sits up and so does she, after a moment or two. Then he stands and pulls her to her feet, and he kisses her.

"I love you, Johnny Bowen," KJ says.

"I love you too, angel," Johnny says, "I'll see you at breakfast."

Before Johnny leaves her room, he kisses KJ's head, turns to leave, and then returns to smell her hair. The gesture brings her very close to weeping and she throws her arms around him and holds on as tight as she ever has.

"Everything I've been through has shown me what's important in life," KJ says, "It stripped away all the shit I thought I wanted but could never have fulfilled me. Now I know what would fulfill me, and there's a war, here, where we all thought it can never happen. And for any of the good dreams to come true we have to fight."

KJ steps back and smiles through the pain, though this time there is no despair or bereavement over the possibility of never seeing him again. She thinks of the great difficulties that they shall face and the likelihood that at least one of her little war family will die. This life will be unfettered by lies but it will also be brutal. She touches Johnny's cheek. The pain flees his mighty green stare. As long as he draws breath he will be there beside her. No comfort could be greater to her angelic soul. He kisses her head. She wants him to lie beside her tonight, but she knows he will not. She smiles at him and he winks, and then he walks from the room.

At least this time she doesn't have to listen to him drive away.

Later, in the quiet of night, KJ wraps her sheet tight around her young body and pulls its top up to her chin. Johnny's in the other room right now, not a hundred miles away or God knows where. She wishes he was a whole lot closer.

The next morning KJ and Johnny share breakfast a little later than Anna and Garret, having slept in a little longer. Afterward, they make use of the exercise equipment. It so happens that on this day their workout programs require the use of free weights. KJ, who did not know that her lover would be using the facility at the same time, is dressed in sweat shorts. She hurries back to her room and changes into a pair of black exercise leggings that are much tighter. She also changes into a t-back, so that he might see some of her feathers.

"What happened to the other outfit?" Johnny asks.

"It was boring," KJ says.

Anna, whose program gives her the day off from exercise, makes the most of her down time cleaning her rifle as well as sorting and storing her

personal items. When she comes to the third box down she opens the lid and takes two steps backward. Her hand on her mouth, she cannot help shedding a tear. Inside is her mother's wedding dress, altered to fit her perfectly. Gary must have packed it with her items after she left and before Jimmy Ford brought her things to Procyon.

There is also a little box wrapped in blue paper, with "For Garret" written in Gary's handwriting.

Johnny watches KJ finish lifting before he completes his routine. She watches his arms, now bigger than ever, flex from the weight of the heavy dumbbells. When he's done she sits beside him on the bench and squeezes his biceps.

"Fuck..." is all that KJ can say.

Johnny sees her swallow. He rubs the back of her head and lets his hand slide down her right side to the skin exposed by the t-back, where her right wing spreads its top feathers. He kisses her on the side of her head.

"It's Anna and Garret's turn to make supper," Johnny says, "I don't know if you've ever eaten anything she's made but she's really good at it. I'm actually looking forward to it. Then after we eat you can put your stuff away, and whatever else you need to do."

"OK," KJ says, a little smile growing on her face.

"How 'bout we go to a movie tomorrow?" Johnny asks, "I'll tell Garret we're going to make our own supper, let them have some alone time, too."

"Yeah!" KJ says, "I like that. We should do that."

He kisses her head again.

"Is it a date?" Johnny asks, "Hmm?"

"I'll wear something nice," KJ says, and he rubs her back.

Early Tuesday morning, the 6th of August, Garret rises before the others, and, careful not to wake John Bowen, steals away to the media room. There he checks the email accounts he's set up for messages. There is one that he created for a single use only. Immediately after confirming that Rian Donnelly would be the driver for Capricorn Cell, he created a fictitious yahoo account with one purpose in mind: so that they might know when Rian would be joining the cell. At the time, Garret did not know with any precision who would agree to fight, and who would accompany him and Johnny into this revolutionary life. On Tuesday morning there is an email in the inbox. The sender, "MCRedTorn00", writes to "cherrysilverlb55" that the Mt. Carmel Area football team will be having scrimmages on the 6th of August between 9 and 11 AM.

Today Rian Donnelly will formally join Capricorn Cell.

Garret returns to the living room and wakes Johnny Bowen from his sleep. He puts a hand on the shotgun to his right but removes it when he sees that nothing is wrong. Johnny sits up from his bedroll and looks at the clock. The time is 5:30 AM.

"Rian's coming," Garret says.

Johnny stretches. "When?" he asks.

"Between ten and noon," Garret says, "How about you and KJ go meet him? There's off-and-on rain today, isn't that what she likes?"

"OK," Johnny says, "Let her sleep a little more and after breakfast we'll head out."

Johnny rises and collects his clothes from the plastic boxes. First he puts on a pair of gray shorts over the boxers he wore to bed and a tank top over his bare chest and back. He grabs a pair of camouflaged pants and a dark green t-shirt for the short woodland journey to the "pick-up spot," where they'll meet Rian. He collects his socks and boxers, his green boonie hat and a long-sleeve camouflaged shirt that he'll wear in spite of the heat. He'll make sure KJ wears one as well. He also readies his pistol, his holster, and his KA-BAR knife. Last, he chooses a pair of hiking boots as his footwear. He carries the items to Rian's bathroom, where he'll get dressed after breakfast, travelling via the kitchen rather than the hall in order not to risk waking the young women.

Once Johnny drops off his clothing and gear, he returns and lays down in his bedroll. Garret is near the media room door when Johnny enters.

"Wake me when it's 7," Johnny says, "I'll make coffee and get breakfast started."

"OK," says Garret, who closes the media room door behind him.

A knock on her door awakens KJ at 8 AM.

"Wait a minute!" KJ says, "Don't come in yet!"

If she knew it was her man she'd relax and open the door. It might be Garret. She climbs off her huge bed and grabs the pair of bike shorts she set on the nightstand the previous evening, putting them on over her thong and also sliding into a large t-shirt to cover her upper body, which she clad in nothing save a thin bra for last night's sleep.

"OK," KJ says.

Johnny Bowen opens the door but does not come inside.

"Hi, angel," Johnny says, "Come have some breakfast."

"I'll be there in a minute," KJ says.

After KJ brushes her teeth and washes her face, she dons a pair of rubber shoes she uses as slippers and heads to the kitchen. KJ arrives to

see Anna and Garret already at the table, and Johnny serving them whole-grain pancakes with berries and cream and fresh-ground coffee.

Anna and Garret greet her and she waves to them. She smiles and wonders why she feels so shy all of a sudden. It's an old feeling for her, one that accompanied her most of the time until she found herself having to confront antagonists most days of the week. Now that she is free from the Campbell House and those who would abuse her for being racially aware, she no longer needs to fight her own personality just to survive.

Garret's dressed casual and Anna's wearing a sleeveless shirt and tight black shorts not unlike KJ's blue ones. Anna will be exercising later this morning.

"Have a seat, angel," KJ hears Johnny say.

Once Johnny serves KJ her breakfast, he reaches through her thick hair and gently caresses the back of her neck.

"We've got something to do today, angel," Johnny says.

"We do?" KJ asks.

"After breakfast, get your Coalsack clothes together and get dressed," Johnny says, "You can pack a very light backpack if you want, but I'll take care of the water."

"Should I bring my rifle?" KJ asks.

The Remington sits in her room, in a case beside the dressers. Her pistol is on the nightstand.

"No," Johnny says, "I have something else for you."

"OK, cool," KJ says.

"Wear long sleeves or a hoodie over your t-shirt," Johnny says, "And remember, angel, this is a mission. It could get real."

KJ nods and acknowledges that she understands.

Anna looks at them and then at Garret.

"Rian's coming," Garret says.

After breakfast and coffee, KJ changes into her camo gear including a long-sleeve shirt, boots and gloves. She fixes the holster and pistol to her belt and puts her backpack over both shoulders. Inside are a couple of utility knives, her sunglasses, the cap from Cabelas and a little first aid kit. She crosses the hall and enters the living room, where Johnny awaits. Other than the pistol on his belt, he is not carrying any firearms. On the large table is a black Armalite .223-caliber semi-automatic rifle with a retractable stock. Beside the weapon is a full clip of thirty rounds and a small hand-held radio.

"Put that other clip in your backpack," Johnny says, "That rifle's lighter than the others and I'm sure you won't have any trouble with it."



There are thirty in the gun and it's semi-automatic, but if something goes wrong that radio will be the most important thing you have on you. I'll let you know what to do if anything goes wrong."

KJ picks up the radio and looks at it.

"You'll never lose all of that feeling, no matter how many times we do this," Johnny says and she looks at him.

In ten minutes time the two are descending the steps to the armory. Both now have keys, and KJ has the Armalite in her arms. Once they enter the armory she glances at the other Armalite rifles. The others all have fixed stocks.

"Are these all the same caliber?" KJ asks.

"All but one of them," he says, "The one on the left, without the carry handle, that one's a .308."

"This one looks cool," KJ says, looking down at the gun in her hands, "I like the stock."

"To be honest," Johnny says "I prefer a fixed stock, but you got to go with what's available. Anyway, that one's lighter than the others, and someday when we have to spend a lot of time moving you'll appreciate it." He smiles at her. "I'm glad we held on to that one."

When they reach the end of the tunnel, Johnny unlocks the secret entrance and climbs into the light of day. He checks the immediate area for any unwanted visitors and then returns when he's satisfied they're alone. Once KJ emerges, he closes the door. As they move out into the forest she looks back. If she didn't know better, she'd think this was just another patch of woodland.

The two move into the forest as silent as possible, with Johnny in the lead. After a short while they halt and he performs another sweep. Knowing that her own powers of observation are excellent, he whispers to her to keep a look out to her left.

As they advance, Johnny leads KJ a little to the left of the direct path to the highway, where she has a better vantage point of the road as it travels east-west. They find a spot that's clear enough for her to see all around, but also surrounded by jewelweed and false nettles which obscure her from potential observers. The leaves above keep the fine rain from wetting her thick hair.

"I'm going a little further," Johnny says, "If I signal for you to go back, I want you to turn on the radio and say 'blackbird, blackbird'. I'll wave like this. Remember, 'blackbird'. Garret will know what to do." He looks into her eyes for a few seconds before continuing. "If something happens, do the same thing."

KJ continues to stare at him, though her face now shows subtle signs of worry. Johnny starts to rise but doesn't make it but a few inches before turning back to face her.

"One more thing, angel, that gun is for your own self-defense," Johnny says, "Do not fire unless you have to defend yourself. No matter what, OK?"

Johnny watches her as KJ looks down at the rifle. He puts his hand on the back of her head and she looks at him.

"You have to listen to me, angel," Johnny says.

"Alright, Johnny," KJ says.

Johnny kisses her head and she manages a little smile. Johnny begins his advance toward the highway. His footfalls are almost silent, owing to skill and the background noise of the soft rain. KJ watches him until he ceases his movement and crouches down. Unless a car stops and its occupants scour the woodland, she does not believe he's visible to the passer-by. She turns her head to watch the road. The rain begins to fall a little harder, though it is still light. At first the road is deserted. If it were cooler outside, the weather would be perfect. She forces herself not to daydream.

A little while later the first vehicle appears. It is a brown UPS delivery van. KJ shakes her head and sighs when she imagines that Jimmy, Johnny and Bill might have acquired such a vehicle, with matching uniforms as well. It's a foolish thought.

*This isn't a movie*, KJ thinks.

Two more cars pass. A silver one zooms down the road so fast it alarms KJ. She feels nervous but her hands never tremble.

More time passes and the rain slacks off a bit, but then returns a few minutes later. Another vehicle begins its approach to the heavily forested section where the two lovers wait. This one, a red Ford sedan, is coming from Amboy to the east. Not far behind is a two-axle Isuzu truck. Both pass through the forest and continue west toward Rowlesburg and the Cheat. Calm returns as does the hush of rain. Ten or so minutes later another vehicle approaches, this one also from the east. KJ recognizes it at first sight: it's Austin Kelly's black Dodge. Her finger off the trigger, KJ grips the gun a little tighter in her gloved hands.

The car, which is now alone on the highway, slows as it enters the heavy woodland and pulls on to the wider left-side shoulder. KJ glances around to be sure no person or animal has crept up on her, and then with all her attention she stares at the vehicle. A bespectacled figure exits the passenger side door. KJ recognizes him immediately: it is Rian Donnelly,

dressed in jeans and a dark red shirt, and carrying a leather satchel. He strolls up to the road and looks both ways. From her vantage point KJ can see that the road is clear. Rian waves to the driver of the car, who waves back and sets the vehicle in motion. The driver, who KJ can now see through the open side window of the Avenger, is indeed Austin Kelly. He accelerates down the highway toward Amboy.

KJ watches as Johnny rises and greets Rian, who seems a little surprised at the proximity of his warrior friend. Rian crosses the road and walks in normal fashion toward Johnny's position. Once he enters the forest, however, Rian drops his nonchalance and he and Johnny begin a careful march toward KJ and the route back to Procyon. KJ rises to her feet when the two reach her position.

"Our man's arrived, angel," Johnny says to KJ, "Let's get out of here."

Rian looks at her. She smiles, still feeling a little nervous. Rian's eyes fix on the rifle.

"Your own little angel to watch over you," Rian says and winks, which prompts KJ to laugh a little.

On the return trip, Johnny leads them even further north and west before turning south and heading toward the tunnel entrance. When he's certain they're near the hidden door, he halts the two and continues forward. KJ glimpses him through the trees and catches sight of him turning around to come back to them. She does not advance until he arrives.

"We'll try to take a different path next time," Johnny says, "We don't want there to be any obvious trails to the house. Good thing there are deer trails everywhere." In fact, KJ did notice the myriad trails on her first trip in to Procyon, and she recognized the efficacy. "We did factor that in when we bought the place, so it wasn't just luck," Johnny says.

Johnny Bowen performs one final sweep before opening the entrance. Upon returning, he sends KJ in first, followed by Rian.

"Should I turn on the light?" KJ asks from the bottom of the stairs.

"Yeah, go ahead," Johnny says.

The lights come on as he closes the door. Johnny gives Rian a very brief tour before they pass through the armory en route to the storage room upstairs. Once upstairs, the three remove their shoes. Today it's Garret's turn to clean shoes and the floor if necessary. Starting today, Rian Donnelly will enter the housekeeping rotation.

Johnny peeks into the exercise room. KJ watches him as he announces Rian's arrival to whoever is using the equipment at the moment. She hears the Stairmaster machine come to a stop. Anna, wearing a t-back and bike shorts, runs in and hugs Rian. She says something

to him in the Irish and he responds. Then her smile disappears and she says something else, perhaps a question. Rian nods and says a few words, which bring visible relief and even joy to Anna's face.

"Garret's busy right now," Anna says, "He'll come out a little later. You can probably catch him then."

Inside the media room, Garret Fogarty can hear Rian's arrival. He turns off the radio receiver that sits on the table next to a loaded shotgun.

Johnny and KJ give Rian a tour of the house, not knowing that he's seen it.

"Why's mine smaller than hers?" Rian asks when he sees his bedroom.

On the way in he noticed the size of Anna's room, which is open at the moment.

"Because you suck," Johnny says.

"Asshole," says Rian, who shoves Johnny, and then laughs.

"Good to see you in one piece," Rian says.

"Try to keep us that way," Johnny replies.

Johnny puts his arm around KJ.

"When's Jesse coming?" Johnny asks Rian.

"Friday," says Rian as he picks up his satchel and tosses it into his room.

Most of his stuff is already inside the cabinet and dresser.

After exercise, a shower and his own private supper, Garret returns to the media room where he's spent most of the day. He's still there when Johnny visits KJ at 7:30 PM and he's still there when they drop by to watch a film at 8:00.

"I don't think this is a good time," Johnny says after he cracks the door and peeks inside.

"I have those little speakers for my iPod," says KJ, who dressed for their date in tight jeans and a t-shirt that she tucked until it hugs her body in the nicest way. "We could listen to music in my room."

A smile grows on Johnny's face.

"Thanks for understanding, angel," he says.

Johnny puts his hands on her shoulders.

"We'll watch a movie some other time," KJ says, "Actually, I just want to be with you."

Johnny embraces her and she nuzzles his chest. A few short days ago she never thought she'd see him again. It's still surreal to be here with him, the man she loves above all others; her warrior, her sentinel. Garret hears the two lovers retreat toward her bedroom.

At 9PM a soft knock draws Garret's attention to the living room door.

"Come in," Garret says.

Anna opens the door, and then she turns to retrieve a tray from the top of one of the plastic boxes in the living room. On the tray are two steaming cups of tea.

"I thought you could use a cup," Anna says.

Anna is wearing a robe that's tied tight, and her hair is down. Garret wonders what she might have on underneath the robe. She sets the tray beside him at the computer table, but then she hesitates.

"Stay, please," Garret says.

It's what she wanted, of course. Anna sits beside him and they enjoy their tea. It is the beginning of a ritual; one of the first to be born at Procyon. While KJ and Johnny Bowen were out in the woods, Anna gave the little wrapped box to Garret. She doesn't know it, but he placed it – still wrapped – in a drawer in the closed room. As the cups of tea empty, Garret takes her by her pale white hand, looking at her lovely fingers and then into her unforgettable eyes.

"The life I'd give to you," Garret says, "if only I could."

"I know what you're doing in here," Anna says in the Irish, "You're trying to give life to my children. That is so much more."

"The River Flows Frozen" from *Eternal Tears of Sorrow* begins to play on KJ's speakers. Johnny rises and takes her hand, pulling her up to his embrace. They slow dance, as he holds her and she lays her head upon his chest. For the duration of the song they remain in a quiet union.

Once the music fades at the end of the tune, KJ and Johnny return to their seats at the little table.

"So," Johnny says, "Are you sleeping alright? Is everything OK?"

"It's gorgeous!" KJ says, "It's so nice, Johnny." She looks down for a moment, and then back into his eyes, though her face still aims downward. "Only one thing's missing."

KJ looks down again and rubs his leg.

Johnny's raw emotion urges him to make haste to the living room, and to return with something he bought not long ago. He is strong enough to resist.

"Johnny," KJ says once the silence seems to last too long, "I know what Garret's doing right now. I can, like, guess what he's doing." She looks up from his leg. "Since I'm going to pull the trigger, do you mind if I ask how he decides on a target? Or do we decide? Who do we choose?"

"That's fair, angel," Johnny says, "It starts with him. He makes a list and narrows it down based on his knowledge and expertise, and how eas-

ily he thinks he can obtain information without giving us away. Then he'll show me the list and the Google Earth images and I'll narrow it down further. Rian's next, since he's the wheel man. He'll take a look at escape and alternate escape routes. All three of us will look out for suitable camp sites and any dangers that might be lurking around. Then the two of you will see what we have, and let us know what you think. As for a veto power, Garret, myself and Rian can cancel a mission while it's in the planning stage. You and Anna make that call at the site."

"Who ends up on the list?" KJ asks.

"Those who take advantage of our pain and suffering," Johnny says, "Those who profit from white genocide regardless of color or race. They need to be reminded that not every white man and woman has given up this fight. No one has a right to jeopardize our race's future. But most important are the traitors among our own, traitors we can touch. They're the most important. It may not seem that way, because they're not as vocal as some cocksucker on television or the head of some big anti-white organization, but they do the most damage. They keep the organizations and the establishments in power. They give the money and they make the money. Right now, treason is profitable, so there are millions of traitors. Make it painful, and many of them will fade away. We can't punish all of them, but that's not important. Your children's survival is what's important."

KJ nods.

"Thank you, Johnny," she says. She rubs his leg again and he smiles for a moment. "They need us, thank you so much for keeping them in mind. I won't let them down, and I won't let you down, either. When the time comes, I'll do whatever the fuck they need me to do. I'll kill if I have to."

KJ looks down for a moment, her hand still on his leg. Her hair flows all around her and slides across her shoulders as her head tilts downward. His deepest desires would have him stay a lot longer, but it's getting late and they have an important duty for tomorrow. Johnny rises to his feet and KJ follows.

"Johnny, please," KJ says, "Do whatever you can to be safe. You mean so much to everyone and to me. I love you."

Johnny steps forward and puts his hands on her cheeks.

"I love you too, angel," he says, "Let me look at you for a little while."

As Johnny holds KJ, he looks deep into her blue eyes. There has never been anyone so beautiful, of that he is certain. As she approaches her 20's she will certainly grow even more beautiful, which is unbelievable to him, as he cannot imagine her more beautiful than she is. He cannot imagine it possible. This young woman of astounding beauty, who inspires

such intense love, this white angel has just said that she will strike down the enemy, and Johnny believes every word.

"My angel," Johnny says, but he does not finish his thought with words. Later, as he lies alone in the living room and Garret finishes up on the computer, he thinks about KJ and the life she will have.

*Have I led you astray? I knew you could never live like they wanted you to, and I knew that you would not flee the responsibility you have toward your future children, though most of our people do just that. But will the price of their salvation be your own life? My angel, my savage angel, full of love and wonder. My wild angel, you did not fly away, you returned to me when I broke apart your cage. You must fight for your children if they are to live, but must you die as well?*

Johnny Bowen does not sleep well that night. Ever-perceptive, KJ does not either.

The 7th of August is cloudy with large areas of light-to-moderate rain and embedded thundershowers, according to the Weather Underground site. Today all five members of Capricorn Cell share breakfast in the kitchen at around 9 AM. KJ put on a t-shirt over her tube bra and leggings over her thong and came in after brushing her teeth, as did Anna, although the redhead donned a pair of shorts and a loose sleeveless t-shirt over her lingerie bra. When they arrive they find Garret in jeans and a short-sleeve shirt, likewise Rian, but Johnny Bowen is dressed in dark green pants and brown t-shirt. His holster and pistol are on his belt. He's going outside today.

KJ sits beside him and he puts his arm around her. Under the table she puts her hand on his leg.

Garret and Rian made breakfast, with Rian doing the mundane chores. He did not inherit his mother's skill and never had his father's interest in learning to make good food. No matter; someone needs to peel potatoes and clean up messes during his turn in the kitchen. Though Garret's fare is a simple ham-and-egg omelet and a fruit salad, with coffee and milk to drink, the omelet is moist and very tasty and the salad is varied in composition and also quite satisfying. After breakfast, Garret and Anna begin a project they discussed the day before, i.e. arranging the storage room and doing a little tidying up around the place.

Johnny Bowen finishes his coffee and leans over to kiss KJ on the head. Afterward she turns to look at him and he returns to kiss her lips.

"I'm going on patrol today," Johnny says, "I was down the tunnel about an hour ago. It's KJ weather outside, you know. Do you feel like coming?"

He rubs her back as he asks.

"Yeah," KJ says, "I'd like that."

"Good," Johnny says and gently squeezes the back of her neck, "Don't worry about bringing a backpack; I'll take care of that. But bring your rifle."

After washing her face, hands and arms a second time, KJ dresses in her hiking gear for the patrol. Johnny said to keep the camouflage clothing to a minimum of two items for now, so she puts on a pair of older jeans, her black *Nevermore* tee, and a long sleeve hoodie. As usual, she wears a pair of gloves; these like most of her pairs are black and fit her like a second skin. Like several of her pairs, these also go up close to her elbow. Back at the Campbell House, KJ had a black beret which she would like to wear today, mostly to be different. She accidentally left it there. She did, however, write a replacement on her list for Jesse, under the big note "Don't spend too much!" Her pistol on her belt and her rifle on her shoulder, KJ leaves for the living room.

Standing in front of the open storage room door is Johnny Bowen, the AK47 in his arms and a light backpack on his back. He's not wearing anything over the t-shirt and she can see the bottom of his biceps. The hard look that he always had, which is now greater than ever, is enough to captivate her attention and her fantasies but not win her heart. That came from knowing him, and knowing that he is more than man enough to go to war for the most noble of reasons and yet he is man enough to love and cherish her, and to resist taking her body when she pretty much threw it at him. She also knows that, when the time is right, he will take her, without hesitation and without supplication. No political affiliation or Greek letter can describe this Johnny Bowen; he is a man, both simple and complex.

Anna and Garret are discussing what's to be done in the storage room.

"We've got supper today," Garret says.

It's KJ and Anna's turn.

"What?" KJ says, "No, it's not your..."

"We've got it," Anna says, "Garret and I have a date planned for tomorrow. We thought you could use the time today."

"OK, thanks," Johnny says.

Johnny opens the door to the underground rooms and begins to descend the stairs.

KJ turns back to look at Anna. Her palms and fingers together, KJ mouths a "thank you" to her redheaded sister, who smiles and nods.

Garret laughs after KJ closes the door behind her.



"And she's a shooter," Anna says.

The forest is damp and cooler than it was yesterday. KJ even puts up the hood on her hoodie to keep the drops of water from wetting her hair. Would it not then soak her t-shirt or wind up in her eyes she wouldn't mind. The leaves, though, are thick and spectacular, especially the maples which await the coming of fall to show their full polychromatic splendor.

Johnny leads KJ in the general direction of the road to Amboy.

"When we start night patrols we'll get a lot closer," he says.

The two halt not far from where she waited the day before and hunger down together for a little while. Big drops of water, swollen by yesterday and today's rain, fall from the canopy, giving the false impression that the rain is heavy. Few vehicles come over from the Aurora Pike and none approach from the west. After a while, Johnny signals with his head and they move out into the forest.

Deep in the woods, to the west of the entrance to Procyon, Johnny halts their advance. The forest floor is clear here except for a patch of ramps that grow along a tiny brook. In August, they're well past their season for harvesting. Johnny shoulders his AK and turns toward KJ.

"We'll start training again soon," Johnny says, "And it won't be long until we start night patrols. I don't think we'll be doing too many day patrols, it's too risky. It gives us some initiative, but ramp and mushroom hunters and sportsmen are liable to run into us if we take too many gambles, and we don't want that. We will get out, though. You think you'll be OK with going out at night?"

"It's probably better for me," KJ says, "I'm wired for night, actually. And then there's my skin."

She shrugs and smiles.

"I figured you were a night person," Johnny says, "I think I always knew. You pick up on shit like that when you pay attention."

"And when you love someone," KJ says. She takes his hand into hers. He feels the smooth glove and her gentle but firm grasp. "I know there's a lot on your mind," she says, "I could tell last night. Just remember, Johnny, I'm with you through all of this. I made up my mind. This is about those dearest and most precious to me, who mean everything to me, whether they're unborn," she touches his cheek, "or right here by my side."

"Alright, angel," Johnny says, thinking about the object that he bought, "Since you've decided to go to war by my side, then be mine. Be mine and only mine."

"I was going to be yours no matter what, Johnny," KJ says, "Whether I ever saw you again or not."

Johnny lowers her hood and kisses her. They stand for a moment, forehead-to-forehead, before he pulls her back so that he might look into her eyes.

"We'll fight this war, together," Johnny says, "But you must do as I say, no matter how much it hurts."

"I will, Johnny," KJ says, "but never ask me to abandon you if there's any hope. I'll never do that. In your heart you have to know that I won't."

He shakes his head.

"What have I done to you?" Johnny asks as he puts his hands on her head.

"You loved me for me," KJ says, "not for a lie or for a chance to fuck me. You could have done that already, but you didn't. You wanted it to be right, for me even more than for you. You gave me a chance to live my life as I see fit, not how they wanted me to live. I've made my choice. Without you, I wouldn't have these wings on my back."

He steps forward to smell her hair.

"It seems so long ago you came into my life," Johnny says, "But I think you were always there, somehow. Now I can touch you and smell you. I love you angel, and no power of heaven or Earth could ever change that."

"I love you too, Johnny, and I always will," KJ says and smiles, "My wings brought me to you, but they won't take me away."

To a man whose own mother betrayed his father, KJ's words breathe life into his soul.

Three hours before supper the two warrior lovers return to Procyon. KJ showers and changes into a simple long-sleeve top and a new pair of tight, shiny black leggings. She also dons her long black gloves; she noticed how Johnny rubbed her hands when she held on to him the last time that she wore them. The long sleeves cover her arms and gloves down to her wrists. It's been many years since KJ has worn makeup, but on occasion she does put on lipstick and a little eye shadow. Today, however, she does neither. She'll forsake even the minimal cosmetic enhancements for their date, and she knows that Johnny will like seeing her beauty shine without false colors and pastes. It's one of the good practices of her old life that she will continue to uphold.

KJ assumes that Johnny will ask her to go on a date, as much as Procyon House will allow considering the size of their little world. Indeed he is going to ask, but the question is far more serious than a simple

request for a date. KJ lies on her bed and awaits her lover. She puts in her ear buds and selects an *Opeth* album on her iPod.

A knocking on the kitchen-side door wakes Rian from a light nap. He looks at the clock. It's too early for supper. He clears the maps he's been studying from on his lap and walks to the door, where he finds John Ashley Bowen.

"What's up, John?" Rian asks.

"I'd like to use your shower," Johnny says.

Rian is about to give him a hard time when he notices that, among the items that Johnny is carrying, is a black dress suit and a white dress shirt. Rian moves from the doorway.

"I see you have plans," Rian says.

He retrieves his glasses from the nightstand.

"Yeah," Johnny says, "Big plans."

Johnny heads straight for the bathroom. Once his shower is finished, he removes an object from among his accoutrements. It is a simple silver band, beautiful in its own right, shiny and spotless, but not a ring any ordinary woman would accept for Valentines, let alone as an oath of loyalty and affection for all eternity. Johnny Bowen looks into the mirror. His body is in peak physical shape. He's as strong as McKenna ever was, but Johnny is sleek and chiseled. Still, he's never felt so nervous. He's asked girls out before, on dates and to dances and movies. In the past, he's known two women with whom he thought he might share this moment. He never felt half this nervous. KJ is not the first woman he's thought about asking the question. She is the first one he truly wants to say yes, and yet if she does there will be no chance that she will leave him should he tell her to, even if staying means certain death. Faced with grave danger, most ordinary women would leave; Kaylee Jane Campbell is not an ordinary woman.

John Ashley Bowen risked his life for his race and for those dear to him. He bears the scar on his chest from his triumph over a traitorous predator, and in his soul he carries the memories of the horrible, unwinnable war in Iraq. He would give his remaining days so that unborn white children could live lives of peace and dignity. There is so much that he would give and indeed has given. But what is a man who only gives? He is nothing but a shadow, and Johnny knows it. There is a beautiful young woman, the most beautiful he's ever seen, who will be his wife, and who will fulfill his desires and longings and who will love him for all time. John Bowen will not give away everything. He desires her as his love and his mate and he longs to be the one man who will have her. He will not

take her unless it is right to do so, but if she shall be his wife, then not only will he give all of himself to her, he will take all that she has to give.

Johnny puts on his suit and wears his black tie in a Windsor knot. He pockets the silver ring and walks out of the bathroom.

"Go get her," says Rian from his bed.

KJ opens her eyes and removes her ear buds. She pulls the tags out from between her long-sleeve top and tube bra and lets them hang over her breasts. A few days ago she replaced the chain with a black string. KJ turns off her iPod and lays it on the nightstand, next to a book on electrical schematics that she brought in from the living room. She's wearing one of the pairs of assault boots that Johnny bought for her, one of the two pairs she keeps for indoor use. Right before taking a shower, she shined them and cleaned every inch of their surface and underside. She made sure that, although she'd wear footwear on their date, she wouldn't track dirt or other contaminants around the house. KJ sits up and takes her hair in her hand, letting it escape and flow all around her. She looks down at the lustrous black fabric that encases her lower body. Not long ago she'd wear tight, shiny leggings just to piss off Erica. Now the reason is so much better, and so much dearer to her heart.

A resolute knock on her door ends KJ's daydreaming. She figures it's Johnny.

"Come in!" KJ yells.

KJ slides forward so that her legs hang over the bed and her boots touch the carpet as she sits.

In KJ's mind she pictures Johnny in a short-sleeve shirt with a collar, tight on his arms, and jeans that are a little tight as well. He never wears skin-tight jeans like hers, but she can hope. When John Ashley Bowen does enter, what he's wearing stuns her. Her eyes become wide and her magnificent face shows her surprise. His black suit is elegant and fits him to perfection, and his dress shoes are as shiny and spotless as her boots.

"Hello, angel," Johnny says, looking at the enthralling creature that he loves.

"Hi, Johnny," KJ says. She swallows and the look of surprise remains for a while longer. "You... You look amazing!" she says.

"Thank you, angel," he says, "So do you."

Johnny enters and takes a seat beside KJ. He pats her thigh and tells her again that she's beautiful. A little smile grows on her face.

"Before I saw you at Coalsack," Johnny says, "And before I knew if I'd ever see you again, I made a vow that I'd never get this close to any other woman."

KJ rubs his back as he speaks.

"As long as you lived, you and your children would need men like me to fight this war," Johnny says, "and I wasn't going to lose sight of that by trying to find someone else. So I bought something to remind me of my vow."

Johnny reaches into his pants pocket and removes the ring, but does not yet reveal it to her. He puts his left hand on her leg. Her blue eyes shine. Once she could have been a dream, a painful image of what he could never have. Against all odds, she is here by his side; beautiful beyond measure and passionate like no woman he's ever met, she is the wild and fierce angel with whom he has fallen madly in love, and who has fallen madly in love with him. Her love is divine and frightening and irresistible, and it drives her to fight for unborn children she may never know, and may never have.

"You mean everything to me," Johnny says, "You're why I have to fight. I can't allow our race to perish from the Earth because white sisters like you can and do exist."

"Johnny," KJ says.

She lays her hand upon his and looks into his eyes.

"I want to do this right," Johnny says, "We deserve the nice things in life, you and I."

KJ sees him slide off the bed and begin to get down on one knee. Now she knows why he's wearing the suit, and what might be in his right hand. The emotion that rises in her soul is immense, and whatever despair, desperation or anguish she's ever felt withers beneath the power of the love he's awoken in her soul. Tears well up from deep within her, from places sacred to her and forever hidden from everyone except the man she loves. She will do nothing to prevent the liberation of those tears. These are the tears that a good woman longs to feel upon her beautiful white face.

Johnny takes KJ's hand. He looks into her eyes.

"Kaylee..." he says, and it is all that he manages to say at the moment.

"Yes!" KJ says, pulling him to her as she leans over and puts her forehead to his head. "Yes! I'll be your wife! Oh, Johnny! I'll be your wife!"

Tears begin to run from her eyes. She has never in her life felt such overwhelming joy.

"I'll be your wife," KJ says again.

"I didn't get to finish," says his voice from the mass of hair, arms, nuzzling and kisses.

Johnny wraps his own arms around her body.

"No, I guess you didn't," KJ says, still surrounding him with her entire being. "Now you don't have to. Yes, Johnny, my answer is yes." Her wild emotions are nowhere near subsiding. "Fucking yes!" she says.

KJ kisses him several times on the forehead and then she retreats a little so that he might give her the object that's in his right hand.

Johnny takes her right hand and places the ring upon her finger. Even with the glove it's too large, as he suspected.

"Shit," he says, "I knew it'd be too large. Goddamn it!" He sighs in frustration.

"Shh..." KJ says, running her hand through his hair. "It's all good, Johnny."

KJ removes the string and tags from around her neck. She looks up at him for a moment and smiles. From the nightstand she grabs a pair of scissors and she cuts the knot from the string. Johnny watches as she slides the silver band on to the string and then connects the ends in an impressive knot. She places it around her neck, lifting her hair so that the string touches her skin and then letting her hair fall into place again. Johnny rises from his knee and sits beside her as she lifts the string to examine the little silver band. As she holds it in her gloved hand he puts his arm around her.

The band is pure silver. No fragile decorations or vain displays destroy its aesthetic purity; no diamonds whose purchase enriches a pathological, anti-white minority clutter its flawless surface. The ring is silver and unblemished. It is exactly the kind of ring that appeals to the heart of a unique woman like Kaylee Jane.

"Do you like it?" Johnny asks.

"I love it!" KJ says, "It's so real and honest, and it's love, Johnny, it represents your love for me."

She looks at him with those eyes that could haunt the hardest of souls.

"I'm sorry it's too large," Johnny says.

"No!" KJ says, as if someone just threatened her. "It's perfect. It's right here, by my heart."

KJ leans over and kisses his cheek. Johnny then takes her and kisses her lips. When they separate she wipes the tears from her cheeks and gets a wild look on her face. She laughs and pumps her legs, and then jumps up and runs out of the room.

For a moment Anna thinks that something is wrong. KJ flies into the room and grabs her. She quickly realizes from the tightness of the em-

brace and the little squeals that emerge from KJ that nothing at all is wrong. This is good news, for once.

"What?" Anna asks, "What is it, KJ?"

KJ pulls back but keeps both hands on Anna's shoulders. Anna can tell by the look on her sister's face that something of vital importance to her has just occurred.

"Johnny proposed to me!" KJ says.

The amused smile on Anna's face becomes a look of surprise, and then sympathy and joy.

"No way!" Anna says, "That is so nice, KJ!"

Anna moves some of the hair from in front of KJ's face. It falls right back where it was when Anna removes her hand.

"Look," KJ says, "Check out this ring."

KJ holds up the tags and the silver band.

"He bought it before he knew we'd be together," KJ says.

Anna sees its simplicity and purity. She could have guessed that Johnny Bowen would buy such a ring.

"It's not like those fucking show-off rings with diamonds and other expensive shit," KJ says, "It's not like my mother's ring. Hers is perfect for their lie of a marriage. This is honest and from the heart, and it's so fucking beautiful."

KJ wipes her eyes. This time it's Anna who embraces KJ.

"I am so happy for you," Anna tells Johnny's fiancée.

They hug again and a little smile and a look of deep emotion flash across KJ's face. She backs up a few steps, and then turns and hurries down the hall to her waiting beau.

Johnny rises from KJ's bed the instant she enters the room. He takes her in his arms and kisses her. She returns his affection and they hold and touch one another. After a while, the two find their way to the edge of her bed, where they sit side-by-side.

"When's the big day?" KJ asks, "Any idea?"

"Once we settle in we'll figure it out," Johnny says, "I'm going to ask Jesse to pick up a new suit for me, one that's even better than the ones I already have. I'll tell her to get two wedding bands, so make sure and let me know your ring size. I could replace that one with one that fits..."

"No!" KJ says, "Don't ever do that, please! This one belongs to my soul."

Johnny sees that she's gripping it in her hand.

"OK, angel," he says, and runs his hand through her hair.

KJ closes her eyes as he does.

"I love you so much," she says, her eyes still closed.

Johnny kisses her head.

"My angel," he says, "You've made me the happiest man in the world. No man can have as much as I have right now."

Anna comes to announce that dinner is ready. She knocks first, suspecting that KJ is sharing her intimacy with him. The silence before they answer, which resulted from a long and passionate kiss, confirms Anna's suspicion.

"Come in," KJ says.

Anna smiles when she sees them together.

"Hi Johnny," she says.

"Hello, Anna," Johnny says.

"Supper's ready," Anna says, "We set up the table in the living room. I hope you don't mind eating in there."

Another surprise awaits KJ when she enters the living room. This one catches both her and Johnny unawares. At the little table there are but two prepared places. A lit candle sits in the center of the table. KJ looks at Johnny and smiles, and then she looks at Anna.

"Thank you, Anna," Johnny says.

"It's my pleasure," Anna says.

KJ steps over to Anna and they embrace. Anna pats KJ's back before she brings them their food, which is excellent: beef and dumplings, with rich gravy and a chilled tomato and onion salad. The meat is moist and savory. Anna became a master with roasts and gravies during her years of making supper for her father, who loves those types of dishes. Still, she could not have pulled off the entire meal on such short notice without the help of Garret and Rian. The two gents took care of the mundane but necessary chores while Anna worked her magic. She worked hard to make a special supper for the two lovers, and Rian set up the living room for a private meal. Though the three workers will eat according to the original plan, and the fare will be good though banal, they are pleased that they could make dinner as nice and as memorable as possible for the husband- and wife-to-be.

After supper, a couple of glasses of wine and a light-hearted conversation at the table, KJ and Johnny go to her bedroom. There, she removes her iPod from the power dock that was charging it, and she connects the device to the little speakers.

"Dance with me," KJ says when she turns toward him.

Johnny takes her into his arms as *Penumbra's* "Testament" begins to play. With one hand on her rear and one on her back, he holds her close



and tight. Once the song ends she creates enough space between them so that she can unbutton his dress shirt.

"Now, angel," Johnny says, "Slow down."

"Johnny, you're hand's on my ass," KJ says, glancing up into his eyes, "Let me have some fun, too."

He laughs.

"OK, angel," Johnny says.

KJ looks back down at his chest.

"You're so fucking hot," she says as she runs her gloved finger down the little exposed area of his chest and a little further down his shirt. "I have fantasies too, you know."

When the song "Ice Queen" begins to play Johnny pulls her close again, this time leaving just barely enough room to kiss her, which he does. KJ holds the back of his head and plunges into the passion between them. The two pause and whisper their pledges of love and promises of forever. Otherwise, it would have been the longest kiss they've ever shared.

It is late when the music stops, and Johnny runs his hand through her hair. She will be his wife, and the euphoria is so great he cannot yet comprehend its depth though the weight that has born upon him all the days of his life seems to be gone, washed away by her promise and never-ending affection. The freedom from stifling despair and loneliness is both utterly strange and immensely powerful. But they are not yet one in marriage, so he must go.

"Goodnight angel," Johnny says, a smile on his face.

"Goodnight, Johnny," KJ says, rubbing his chest one last time before he departs for his bedroll in the living room.

Garret Fogarty and Anna Murphy are not in their usual places for tea time. This evening, the two share their tea in the kitchen.

"When their wedding day comes I'll serve as witness," Garret says, "I won't make them wait. There's nothing wrong with it if you can't find a priest, and I'm pretty sure we can't."

Anna smiles and stirs her tea.

"You know, sweetheart," she says, "I had the biggest crush on you when I was younger."

"I have one on you right now," Garret says and winks.

Anna laughs.

"Are you going to grow out of it?" she asks before sipping her tea.

"No," Garret says, "This is one of those you don't ever grow out of."

"Really?" Anna asks, barely containing her joy and amusement.

"Yeah, really," Garret says.

Anna reaches over and squeezes his hand.

"Our little family," she says, "Johnny and KJ came all this way and went through so much pain, and now she's going to be in his arms forever. They're so sweet and dear, you know? He always carried on about how much she matters. Sometimes I worried that he couldn't see how much he matters. I think he knew, though, and he's really gonna know once they're married."

"I wish they were far away from here," Garret says. He looks at her.

"Don't say it," Anna says, "I'm not running off to watch you fight for me."

"That's what I want," Garret says, "But I know you won't run away. They won't either. That's part of the reason I'd want them to leave, and you for that matter."

Anna rubs his hand before withdrawing hers.

"Everything suffers from the lies and deceit," she says, "but there's truth here, among our little family." She smiles. "I wouldn't want to be anywhere else."

Anna sips her tea as Garret looks into her big blue eyes. He finally drinks from his own cup.

On Thursday morning, Anna and KJ engage in their aerobics routines in the little gym. They arranged their workout schedules so that they might meet for their aerobics routines and speed up the time with conversation and music. The first such occasion proves the sagacity of the decision.

"You know, maybe we can have, like, an outside webcam," KJ says during their glute-toning exercise, "It'd be kind of nice to see what it's like outside without relying on the internet or Weather Underground."

"I bet we do," Anna says, "I'd be surprised if we don't. Let's ask Johnny."

"Johnny!" Anna yells.

She knows he's in the storage room sharpening knives, axes and other blades.

"What?" Johnny yells.

"Come here!"

Anna does not have to wait for long. He steps around the corner and looks at the two, his eyes fixing on his fiancée's beautiful face and then on the skin-tight black exercise leggings she's wearing.

"What do you need?" Johnny asks without looking at Anna.

"Do we have an outdoor webcam?" Anna asks.

Johnny looks at her after hearing the question.

"Yeah," he says, "We have enough to cover each angle from the house. Jimmy and Garret installed them before we came here."

Anna looks at KJ and then back at Johnny.

"Can we have a look sometime?" Anna asks.

"I don't see why not," says Johnny, who becomes silent for a moment as he looks at the both of them. "OK, look," he says, "There are things you can't do, hell, there are things I can't do. And Garret, too. But we're not a fuckin' army or political cell or any shit like that. We want our race to survive and we're willing to fight for it. That's all. So just tell me what you want to do, and I'll see if we can take care of it."

"That's cool," KJ says.

"I'll see you at breakfast," Johnny says.

He winks, causing his fiancée to smile.

Once their routines are complete the two sisters sit together for a few minutes.

"I like your ring," Anna says.

"Oh, thank you," KJ says, "I fucking adore it. He could have bought something arrogant with blood diamonds and a thin band of gold, but this one's so much nicer, you know? Like I told him, it's honest." She shrugs. "And, seriously, I fucking love it."

KJ's little smile fades away. She looks down and then into Anna's eyes.

"Last night I thought about everything that's happened in my life," KJ says, "I could have walked away from this, several times, actually, and my parents would have taken me back. I could have avoided the struggle. Even if I felt the same way as I do now, I could have suppressed it. Before I left that life behind, you know, they made me a lot of offers, and they weren't lying. They'd have come through with every one of them. I think I could have been a singer and I know I could have been a songwriter. I'm not being a bitch right now, but why belittle myself? I might have had luck, and I do have the talent and dedication. My parents and all their friends would have helped me, Anna. They didn't lie when they made their offer."

KJ looks down and smiles for a brief second, and then looks at Anna again. Anna watches her and says nothing.

"You're probably wondering why I'd say all this," KJ says, "There's a very good reason, Anna. It's very important to me and I need to tell you. I know what I've lost, and I know what I've gained. If something happens to me during a mission, I want you and Garret to know that I could have had my selfish dreams fulfilled. I gave all of them up to be here. I love who we

are and I love you and Garret, and your father and Bill, and all the rest of the Core. And I love Johnny Bowen more than anything in the universe. I will never have the material things I could have had and there will never be an audience to applaud me. But if I die on the leaves and grass with my rifle beside me, I did more in life for those who matter than if I'd written a thousand incredible songs and sang the most unforgettable fucking vocals any voice has ever sung."

Anna puts her hand on the back of KJ's head and pulls her closer until their foreheads touch.

"He loves you so much," Anna whispers, "He's my brother and I can read him. God, how he loves you."

"I love him, too," KJ says. She sighs. "More than fucking anything."

Anna leans back as does KJ.

"The two of you deserve a good life, but it doesn't matter," Anna says, "Our own people let it get this bad, and now we're in danger of disappearing forever."

"Everything I could have had is nothing if I'd turned away from our unborn children," KJ says, "They need me to give up that life. They need us to fight."

Anna squeezes KJ's hand and manages a smile.

Johnny Bowen isn't eavesdropping, though the door to the storage room is not closed and it allows him to hear their words. He looks up at the wall, which, if transparent, would allow him to see his lover.

"Angel," Johnny says so softly his voice is but a puff of air.

At a little after two, KJ closes her book, turns off her iPod and rises from her seat at the little table in her room. The string with the dog tags and ring hangs from her neck. She puts on a pair of jeans and a tee and leaves for the kitchen, hesitating only to glance at the artwork she made and that Johnny hung on the wall. When she enters the kitchen she sees him already there, cleaning sweet peppers in preparation for another special dinner. This one isn't for them; it's for Garret and Anna, who are already on their own little date in the media room.

KJ walks up to Johnny and grabs his face with both hands. Her eyes closed, she kisses him and then rubs her nose to his.

"Hi, angel," Johnny says and smiles.

"Hi," KJ says, not telling him how deeply it touches her that, when he thought he'd never hold her again, he had the picture hung to remind him of her.

"I don't like being confined," Johnny says as he washes the last pepper, "but, you know, this place doesn't seem like a prison."

"It's not," KJ says, her arms around his waist and her head against his back.

She lets go after a short while, so that she might tend to the rice.

"The juice's downstairs, I'll get it," Johnny says, "That's something we'll have to remind Jimmy, to bring more of Hacksaw's tomato juice and canned goods."

"I feel kind of bad that we have to ask for shit like that," KJ says and shrugs.

"Don't, angel," Johnny says, "He's a damn good man and he's been giving the Society preserves and other stuff for a long time now. He'd be upset if we refuse."

KJ smiles at him and rubs his arm before he goes after the home-made tomato juice.

Rian Donnelly sits at the little table in his bedroom. Instead of hard-copy maps, he pours over images and Google Earth screenshots on his laptop. Only the media room offers internet connectivity, but Garret has saved enough information to the hard drive of the laptop that Rian is actually hard-pressed to finish his cursory examinations by the beginning of next week. Of particular interest are the roads and terrain features around Pennsylvania State University.

Anna and Garret thoroughly enjoy their candlelight meal, which they share at a little table in the living room. The stuffed peppers are neither rubbery nor hard while the meat and rice are in ideal proportions. The sauce, which is tomato based with a little of yesterday's wine, is neither harsh nor watery. The simplicity of the ingredients – the fresh vegetable larder is in need of its weekly resupply – does not mask the skill of the preparer. On the contrary, it highlights her talents.

The two lovers find the fare delicious and the blackberry cobbler dessert most delightful to both nose and tongue. With the dessert, KJ brings them two cups of coffee. Johnny "Irished up" Garret's with a little Jameson. Garret is sharp as usual and very handsome in his dark blue jacket and pants and accompanying white shirt and tie. Anna's dress is known to KJ; it's the green dress she's worn on previous special occasions. Her hair is in a long and thick braided ponytail and she is, as always, stunning. When KJ handed her a cup of coffee, she noticed that Anna's fingernails were blue like her eyes. KJ does not linger while making her little observations. She hastens from the room, leaving Garret and his woman in peace.

"I didn't want to bring up anything that might disturb the mood," Anna says, "but forgive me sweetheart, I think I need to ask you something."

"Of course," Garret says, "You're not disturbing me. If it's that important I want to hear it."

"What if one of us can't go through with it?" Anna asks, "It's going to be really different, and scary. I'm pretty confident I can go through with it. But you can't know until you do. Please, Garret, you know I won't walk away and I don't want to leave. I'd still want to stay. I'm absolutely sure KJ would, too. But if I can't go through with it I still want to help. I could take care of this place, or be a scout."

"Whether or not you or KJ can pull the trigger," Garret says, "You'll still have a very big part to play. Scouting would be perfect for you. In fact, you'll do some of that even if you can pull the trigger."

Anna exhales in relief.

"Thank you, Garret," she says.

While Anna and Garret enjoy their supper, Johnny and KJ make their own meal. He takes the block of Stilton cheese from the refrigerator and she gets to work preparing the ingredients for Stilton pâté on rump steak. Once the food is finished and KJ places the steaks on the plates, Johnny returns from the storage room with a lilac-colored candle, which he lights and places in the center of the kitchen table.

"This is kinda like a double date," Johnny says, "Except there's a wall for privacy."

KJ smiles and gives the salad a final mix.

Early Friday morning Anna and Garret rise before the others. He dons his dark green hiking pants and a similar-colored long sleeve shirt over a dark undershirt. Anna chooses a pair of green pants that have four pockets in front, each with a zipper, and over a tight black t-shirt she wears a long-sleeve camouflage shirt. She ties her hair in a ponytail and fastens her holster to her belt. After making sure it's loaded, she straps her pistol into the holster. Anna grabs her light backpack and olive boonie hat and leaves for the kitchen.

John Bowen comes by to have a cup of coffee as Anna and Garret finish breakfast.

"What are you taking?" Johnny asks.

"Shotguns," Garret says, "and our pistols. That won't draw any attention around here."

"I'm hoping you're not seen at all," Johnny says.

"We're not going near the road," Garret says, "Not yet."

Johnny has faith in Anna's abilities to move unseen, but not so much in Garret's. Anna has years of hunting experience while Garret does not. They'll rectify any deficiencies shortly, but for now the questions remain.

"Be careful," Johnny says.

KJ rises at 10 AM.

"Shit," she says when she looks at the clock.

KJ rubs her hair and stretches. At noon she and Johnny will use the exercise facilities. For now, she brushes her teeth and washes her face, and then she removes her rifle from its case and sets it on the little table. Inside the bureau is a cleaning kit and extra pads. KJ slides on her bike shorts and begins cleaning her rifle.

Johnny Bowen must be of like mind, since he's dismantled his AK47 and is cleaning each part. He is meticulous and thorough, though experience enables him to speed through the upkeep and reassembly. He returns the AK to its place near the plastic boxes. Then, he pulls a pair of jeans over his boxers and heads for the kitchen.

KJ, who's finished cleaning her Remington, still sits at the little table when she hears a knock on the door.

"It's me, angel," says the voice most dear to her in all the world.

KJ jumps to her feet.

"Come in," she says, and when he does she's just a few steps from the door.

Her black exercise top doesn't quite reach her beautiful little belly.

"You ready for breakfast?" Johnny asks.

"Yeah," KJ says, nodding her head.

KJ looks down for a moment, and then up into his face and she steps up to him. When she's close to his body he hugs her and they kiss.

"I love you, Johnny," KJ says between the shows of affection.

"I love you too, angel," Johnny says.

As the two walk down the hall toward the kitchen, Johnny stops at Rian's bedroom. He listens at the door and hears a page turn in a book. He knocks and opens the door.

"You want to join us for breakfast?" Johnny asks.

"Yeah, I'll do that," says Rian, who closes his copy of DeLorme's West Virginia Atlas.

Johnny can see that he's been writing something in a spiral notebook. Rian is in shorts and a Penguins t-shirt, and resembles a bespectacled John Boyle just enough for the fact to be noticeable.

Inside the kitchen, KJ begins to collect the ingredients for ginger pancakes. There is ample cream and even a mango among the fruit.

"Hey sweetheart," says Johnny, who puts his arms around her and gently rocks her from side-to-side. "I'll take care of breakfast today."

"Johnny!" KJ says but he does not let her finish.

"Angel," Johnny says, "I wanted to bring you breakfast in bed but I was too busy with the guns." He turns her to look into her eyes. "I'll make breakfast."

KJ smiles a little and says "OK."

Once the pancakes and coffee are served, Johnny mentions that Jesse will be coming later. Rian doesn't show his enthusiasm but Johnny knows him well enough to realize that a deep passion burns beneath the surface.

"KJ," Johnny says, returning his gaze to where he wanted it to be, "Do you have a list ready for Jesse?"

KJ nods and a little smile flashes on her face. It lasts a second or so, but it is a little devious. Johnny doesn't know that, in addition to the items for her and all the notes imploring Jesse not to spend too much, she's requested a couple of items for him to wear.

Garret Fogarty is first out of the hidden entrance, followed by the young warrior woman he loves. Today is meant to be a "safe" patrol, if indeed any patrol can be deemed such. It will also be the opposite scenario to the Johnny-KJ patrols, in which Johnny performed little sweeps and in general led the two from start to finish. Anna is the experienced one and Garret has quite a bit to learn. He'll continue his lessons today.

The greatest danger to the anonymity of Capricorn Cell aside from some terrible mistake or betrayal is the existence of a trout stream about a mile east of the secret entrance. Garret Fogarty, et al, knew of the creek before purchasing the property near Amboy, but there was no other place suitable for Procyon House in terms of topography and affordability. It being August, the chances of someone wandering this far up the creek are minimal, in spite of the pristine nature of the stream and the healthy population of native trout that swim its waters. The more-or-less abandoned nature of the stream will not always be the case. Beginning in the late winter and extending to June, the banks of Wolf Creek and its tributaries, including the tributary that flows nearest Procyon, will see their share of fishermen. At that time, there shall be no more day patrols. It is one of the prices that Capricorn Cell must pay in order to fight for the children of those who refuse to lift a finger.

Anna and Garret both carry 12-gauge shotguns. They both have hunting licenses; back in March, Garret was sure to obtain licenses for himself, Anna and KJ. Johnny purchased one as well, in advance of their camping trip. He knew they'd be carrying firearms and his foresight told him that any encounter with the WVDNR would have a much greater chance of successful resolution should they have the little documents on



their persons. Now the licenses serve their purpose once more. In the off-chance they encounter a trespassing fisherman or DNR agent, they can claim that they are hunting nuisance pigeons at the request of a local property owner. If pressed, they will supply the number for a cell phone that Garret has given to Jesse. It's one of the "public use" cells that he presented to her, to Aaron Van Dyke and the Neely's. The phone will be off, but her voice will request that the caller leave a message. The name will match that which Garret gives to the agent. It's one reason Garret stays up so late most nights. He thinks of any potential problem or irregularity, and then attempts to circumvent them. Not all the solutions will be perfect, nor will he think of every eventuality, but the exercise will give him a definite edge when misfortune strikes.

Anna leads them toward the west. The twosome detours somewhat to the south in order to avoid a dead-end dirt road that hasn't seen travel in what looks like years. The chicory is thick near the northernmost edge of the road to nowhere, and the blue flowers remind Garret of Anna's eyes. High above the trees the sky has a paler hue that resembles her irises even more than the flowers, but Garret can hardly see that blue through the leaves. In the late fall and winter the green aegis of the trees will become brown and fall to the earth, and it will be another compelling reason for night-only patrols. Anna and Garret continue westward, avoiding the road and detouring around another tributary of Wolf Creek.

Anna, on point, skirts a small field and approaches another nameless little branch of the trout stream. This brook flows south and is easily forded on foot. Anna observes the area around the creek and both banks and, after giving Garret the all-clear signal, they cross the whispering waters. The brook may seem a trifle, but years and floods have carved a slope out of the smallish ridge to the east, which is fortuitous for Anna and Garret. The ridge is just high enough to completely shield them from the eyes of the farmer or his family who live northwest of the field. Anna turns south and follows the brook until it disappears into some mossy rocks. She continues until breaks in the thick woodland reveal well-maintained pastureland that is due south. Anna halts well in advance of the pasture, where a herd of milk cows spends a sleepy summer day munching and staring. Everything seems so peaceful that it's very hard to believe that a war has descended upon them. It's very hard to conceptualize that the war did not begin yesterday, but many decades if not centuries ago. Anna reminds herself that this is not a war for terrain or riches; it is a war of extinction. The peace they have at the moment is the silence of a slow death.

"I'm gonna go shower," Johnny says, "I imagine you'll want to do the same. We'll share making supper with Garret and Anna; I was thinkin' we'll get the dessert ready, since Jesse's coming, and it'd be nice to have something good with coffee."

Their lifting routine finished for the day, Johnny begins to head for Rian's bedroom. KJ jumps up and latches on to him.

"Wait," she says, laying her head on his chest, "Hold me for a little while first."

Johnny is enthusiastic to obey.

"My angel," he says, and smells her hair, "I'm so blessed to have you."

"I love you, Johnny," KJ says. She nuzzles and kisses his chest. "I want you to feel it every day of your life. I'll be sure to remind you."

KJ caresses his back with both gloved hands and the feeling is divine. There is nothing more majestic or inspiring as a woman in love, and who is unafraid to show it.

Johnny kisses her and then rocks her in his arms, patting her rear before they separate and he departs for Rian's room.

KJ watches him and remains standing for a while after he leaves.

Anna and Garret make a short pause before crossing the northern end of a nameless little brook. It is a beautiful little stream, and Anna feels a little ashamed having to muddy its waters with her boots. A gray squirrel sees Anna's red hair and flees to the other side of an oak tree. Once Anna is sure that she and Garret – and the squirrel – are alone, she turns toward Garret and sees him removing two bottles of water from his rucksack.

"It might be a risky going on patrols," Anna says after taking a drink of the cool water, "I mean, I love getting out, I'm sure you know what I mean. It's just...What if we're seen? If we keep to the house, and just check out the entrance to be sure no one's messing with it, isn't that better than taking a risk? There's probably going to be hunters or fishermen soon, especially when November comes around."

"You're right," Garret says, "but this isn't all about security. We're going to need away time. We love each other. I know that. We all love each other. But we're not always going to get along."

"Oh I know," Anna says, "But it's a big house."

"Wolves need their space," Garret says, "And so do we. It's not always going to be easy; even marriages face that kind of problem."

"Marriages?" Anna asks.

"Yeah, marriages," Garret says.

"You mean Johnny and KJ?" Anna says, "Because..."

"Yeah, Johnny and KJ," Garret says, "Rian, too. At least he'll have a chance to get out and travel with Jesse. We can't afford to do that. Although I do have some plans that will take us out of here for a little while."

"That'd be cool," Anna says, "Don't get me wrong, I love the place. I've never stayed in a house half this large. It's nice to get out, though. But I wonder if these patrols aren't too big a risk."

"We'll change to night patrols soon enough," Garret says, "We need some training first. On Monday we're going on another night training mission, except this one won't be to Coalsack."

"We're not going to Coalsack?" Anna asks.

"Not this time," Garret says.

Anna doesn't ask. The mystery intrigues her, and even if he might answer she'd like to preserve the surprise. Silver-spotted skippers fly around both banks of the unnamed stream, landing on sweet peas and thistles that hug the waterway. The sense of peace returns and for the moment there's no risk in enjoying it.

Back in the kitchen, KJ is quite pleased with how the black walnut roll turned out. She is happiest with her culinary creations when those dear to her are enjoying them, and she sees the pleasure on their faces. Johnny jokes with her about sneaking a piece, and in spite of being just a joke she's awfully tempted to do so. Considering the relative lack of items to work with, she manages to make a delightful dessert for tonight's supper. Anna and Garret have arrived and cleaned up after their woodland excursion and now take over in the kitchen.

"Are you busy?" KJ asks Johnny in the hallway.

"No," Johnny says, "Not until Jesse comes by. We'll load up the kitchen and stock all the shit she brings while she and Rian have a little time to themselves."

KJ motions toward her room with her head.

"Come listen to some music," KJ says.

Inside the bedroom, Johnny sits on the corner of her bed as she prepares the iPod and speakers to play *Walls of Jericho's* first album. She turns and walks over to Johnny and sits upon his lap, wrapping her arms around his shoulders.

"I love our little world," KJ says, "I'm going to love it a lot more soon."

Johnny rubs her leg. The tight jeans are like another layer of skin, though nowhere near as nice as the pale white, warm skin they encase.

"A lot of hell's waiting for us out there, angel," Johnny says.

"That's why we have to give them hell," KJ says and kisses his cheek. She nuzzles him and squeezes tight.

At 4PM, Garret and Anna are busy in the kitchen. Johnny and KJ are together in the media room, watching *Le Pappillon* (Johnny let her choose) on one of the desktops. Rian is killing the long hours by reading in the living room. *The Death of Grass* is his choice. Beside the counter in the living room is a large brown bag. Among the items inside are the four lists that Garret requested, including his. At that exact hour, a silver Suzuki SX4 pulls into the secluded driveway of Procyon House. Johnny glances at the laptop that shows the outside feed and he sees the approaching vehicle. There is no great concern or worry, though he tempers his enthusiasm until he can verify the identity of the driver. He knows that Jessica Hanratty owns such a car.

Jesse follows Garret's directions to the letter. She does not ring the doorbell but rather unlocks the door and steps inside as if no one is home. Rian is sitting at the little table to the left. He smiles as she enters and she returns the gesture. Jesse does not speak or show any other signs of joy until she closes and locks the door. Then, with Rian rising from his seat, she hurries to him and they embrace.

"Life's a little different now, isn't it?" Rian says after they kiss.

"I always knew it would be," Jesse says.

Even in a simple white top and jeans Jesse is elegant and beautiful. Her hair is pinned back, though Rian will free it later.

The nursing program at West Virginia University will begin in less than two weeks. Jesse has begun the process of transferring from Pittsburgh so that she might attend in the spring. Until then, she'll stay in Pittsburgh during the week and in her new apartment in Morgantown on the weekend. It will be a difficult and hectic fall and winter for Jesse Hanratty; one of the sacrifices she must make in order to help those who fight for her children's lives.

KJ and Johnny enter the living room. Jesse loses a little of her composure when she embraces KJ.

"I am so happy that you two are together!" Jesse says and then wipes her eyes as the two end their embrace. "I prayed so hard that you would be."

"Thank you, Jesse," KJ says, looking into Jesse's green eyes. A smile grows on KJ's face. "But it's even better." She looks at Johnny, who puts his arm around her. "We're getting married."

Jesse's tears flow again though there is great joy on her lovely face. She hugs KJ again.

"I worried about you," Jesse says, "I worried about everybody. God, I'm afraid to ask who else is here."

"Anna and Garret," Rian says.

Jesse looks at her fiancé.

"That's so sweet!" Jesse says, "My God, everyone's together!"

She looks back at KJ and Johnny. They're still holding on to each other.

"Anna and Garret are making supper," Johnny says, "It won't be too long."

"Oh, you don't have to," Jesse says.

"Yes we do," Johnny says, "And we will. Next week it's our turn. I don't think you've ever had anything that KJ made, have you?"

Jesse shakes her head and Johnny smiles and kisses KJ on hers.

"Oh, you'll be impressed," Johnny says, "Be sure and bring your appetite."

Jesse pays Anna and Garret a quick visit before she returns to the living room. They hug and the women squeal, with Anna and Jesse beside themselves with joy at the sight of each other. The compliments are many and sincere. Jesse asks Garret how everyone's been, and how they're making out; Anna asks Jesse for news about the others. Jesse knows little, but she did see Bill and Megan for a short while on the 6th. The Donnelly's called Jesse and told her to come by for a short visit that turned out to be all too short. Jesse has to control her emotions when she says it's probably the last. As it is, her eyes glisten from the incipient tears. She does not tell them that the reason for the visit was so that Megan could give Jesse the blue flower pin she wore on the day of her wedding. Jesse doesn't think about it or she'll lose her battle with her tears.

When she returns to her car, Jesse unloads the supplies she brought on her visit. On her own initiative she's filled two bags full of fresh fruits and vegetables. Among the supplies are objects of a hygienic nature, including new toothbrushes and dental floss. Soaps, both bar and soft, as well as hand sanitizer and antiseptics share space with the other imperishable items. Jesse purchased four small transistor radios during a visit to Morgantown and she'll leave these in case Capricorn Cell can make some use of them.

It is torment for Johnny Bowen to watch her carry each bag and box to the living room and then return for the others, but he has no choice and they both know it. They have to keep up the charade. It is one of the prices they must pay, and nowhere near the heaviest. Once Jesse's finished transporting the items, she closes and locks the door. Johnny and KJ

begin storing some of the supplies. Not long after, Anna appears to set the little table for Rian and his fiancée. At this cue, Johnny and KJ hug and thank Jesse once again, and then leave for the kitchen.

"Mmm...The duck is excellent," says Jesse once their private meal commences.

Rian nods. The candlelight flickers in the two glasses of Merlot.

"I'm so happy for Johnny and KJ," Jesse says, "But I'm scared to death for them; all of them. All the power in America will try to kill them. I reject the anti-white lies, but KJ and Anna are going to fight them, and that's the enemy's worst nightmare." She's silent for a moment. "I worry about us, too, Rian. I worry about you."

"I know, Jesse," Rian says, "They'll kill all of us if they can. It's just like it was for dad and Séamus. That's why a big part of me wanted to take you away. But I know you wouldn't go, and neither would I. I know what the anti-whites would do if they got hold of any of us."

"I'm sorry, honey," Jesse says, "I just worry a lot."

"I know," Rian says, "Everyone here feels fear, if not for himself than for someone else. We've made our choices and I for one am glad for it. They'll kill us no matter what we do, our children and their children, until no more white men walk the Earth. There's millions of whites who had the opportunity to fight for their children, and they refused. We're making a stand, in the name of our race, our people and our children. I say thank God for it."

Jesse smiles.

"I found me a strong one," she says in a fake Irish accent.

"That you did," Rian says, "And so did I."

Rian lifts his glass as does Jesse.

"To the white man and his woman," he says, "to Continuity and to our very own Ireland, may her white sons and daughters live in peace."

They touch glasses and drink.

As Jesse and Rian dine in the living room, the four guns of Capricorn Cell enjoy their dinner at the table in the kitchen. When coffee is done Anna serves Rian and Jesse a cup each with two slices of walnut cake on the side. Inside the kitchen, Johnny lifts KJ and sits on his chair with her on his lap. He feeds her the cake from her plate and they laugh and kiss. Anna and Garret experience their own, less obvious exchange of affection. He rubs her leg beneath the table and she grabs and holds on to his arm.

KJ and Johnny head for her room at 9:45, leaving Anna and Garret alone in the kitchen. Anna and Garret kiss and profess their love, and she

wishes him goodnight. He watches the gorgeous redhead turn to leave, her jeans skin-tight on her beautiful behind. Garret cannot resist but give her a playful slap on the rear. Anna turns and laughs, her embarrassment obvious but far less powerful than the joy she feels at him letting loose.

"Goodnight, Red," Garret says and smiles.

Anna giggles as she runs off to her room.

Garret pours another cup of coffee. He hears the soft sounds of Rian and Jesse kissing and preparing for their departure. Coffee in hand, he walks to the living room door. At the counter he picks up the brown bag and hands it to Jesse.

"Take care," Garret says to Jesse. He looks at Rian. "Be careful, Rian."

Rian nods.

"You're secret's safe," Rian says.

"You're life's what matters," Garret says, "Do you want me to accompany you?"

Rian will depart from Procyon House via the tunnel and the secret exit.

"I'll be fine," Rian says.

He's wearing his own pistol on his belt.

"Thank you for coming," Garret says to Jesse.

Jesse smiles. Rian kisses her and heads for the storage room and, eventually, the underground exit; Jesse opens the front door and walks out into the night. She does not wave or say a word as she closes and locks the door. Garret waits until he can hear the Suzuki drive down the dirt driveway. When silence returns, he sips his coffee and walks to the media room.

Johnny Bowen completes one of his favorite new traditions. Once KJ is dressed and ready for bed, they sit for a short while together on one chair, and then he carries her to bed. After a kiss and a gentle squeeze of her right bicep he leaves her to curl up under the covers. Inside the living room, he checks the thermostat to be sure no one's fiddled with the central air, and then he goes to the underground steps. Garret's still at work on the desktop. Johnny walks all the way to the secret exit, where he checks to make sure Rian locked up before leaving. His precaution turns out to be unnecessary but cathartic. When he returns he removes the shotgun from the drawer and lays it beside his bedroll before he, too, dresses for the night's rest.

At 10:00 on Saturday morning, KJ is running on the treadmill, Anna's loading the washer, Garret's making breakfast and Johnny Bowen is

cleaning the bathrooms. Meanwhile, Jimmy Ford's Ram Charger is rounding Shaffer Mountain toward Aurora, West Virginia. He passes by Cathedral State Park and its huge and ancient hemlocks. A love of wild places moved previous owners to preserve the unique woodland, which an Asian invader now threatens to annihilate. Once he's through sleepy Aurora, Jimmy Ford makes a turn away from the state highway and up a quiet two-lane that would eventually take him north to Terra Alta and, if he continues in that direction, all the way to Chalk Hill. He will not drive to either. Not far from Aurora, Ford makes the turn on to the tortuous road that leads to Procyon.

The rural route winds among thick forest and steep hillsides and gullies. When Jimmy arrives at Procyon, he turns on to the long driveway that cuts through the woods and crosses a teardrop-shaped field before it ends at Procyon House. The hill rounds off in the vicinity of the house, after a gentle climb. Deep forest surrounds the rest of the property, making Procyon House invisible from the two nearby roads. There could not have been a better location and those in the know stretched every effort and dollar to purchase the property when they discovered it up for sale. Ford continues driving until he reaches the grassy parking area just outside the front entrance. There he parks the Ram Charger, the rear end facing the house.

KJ finishes her cardio exercise and takes out her ear buds. She hears a faint sound toward the front of the house and someone moving quickly inside. She looks over at the little cabinet between the weight sets. Johnny showed her the .45 they keep in there for emergencies. Just then the door opens and Anna appears.

"Jimmy's here," Anna says.

KJ feels instant relief.

Ford has quite the task lugging supplies from the Ram Charger to Procyon House, but as with Jesse, the members of Capricorn Cell must watch him complete the task by himself. KJ, who went to her room to wash her face and change from her very tight exercise leggings to a pair of jeans shorts, comes in when he's about halfway finished. Johnny is standing well inside the door, getting ready to lift a large cardboard box, when KJ sees Jimmy approaching from his vehicle. He's juggling two bags of groceries and walking rather slow. Without thinking she begins walking toward the door.

Johnny Bowen was attentive yesterday when Jesse brought a few supplies and he's attentive now. It pays off. He hops from beside the large box and grabs KJ before she can emerge into the light of day. He spins



her around and holds her tight. She realizes in a flash what just happened and why.

"Shit!" KJ says, "Oh fuck, I'm so fuckin' sorry, Johnny!"

Johnny lets her go and she turns. KJ's face shows that she's quite upset. Anna, who just came in, stops and waits for Johnny to speak.

"It's OK, angel, you didn't go out," he says, looking into her sad eyes, "Just be careful."

Johnny touches her cheek.

"I'm sorry," KJ says.

"Right now it's not as big a threat as it will be," Johnny says, "You probably read about their goddamned little drones that look like birds and other shit. That's what we'll have to deal with. It's best to condition ourselves not to use the front door."

He sees that his words have some effect, but it's not enough.

"Hey," Johnny says, lifting her head by her chin, "We're human. I know that can get us killed, but I was ready from the moment you came in. All of us will get used to this but it will take time."

KJ manages a tiny smile and he runs his hand over her hair and shoulder.

"I'm your sentinel, remember?" Johnny says, "I'm supposed to look out for you."

Once all the boxes are inside and the perishables are in their proper place, James Ford takes a seat in the living room. Anna brings him a Guinness from the fridge and Garret, Johnny and KJ follow her into the living room. The imperishable items can sit and wait for a while.

"Is Rian with Jesse?" Jimmy asks.

Garret responds that he is, and then he and the others take seats near Jimmy Ford, who wears a plain but not unattractive short-sleeved shirt with a collar. He's wearing jeans as well, and looks to have very little fat on his body. His hands look like they could go through the table should his wiry but strong arms bring them down with fury.

"How's Austin?" Johnny asks.

"Good," Ford says, "He'll be picking me up later."

Johnny's brow furrows.

"At the usual place," Ford says, "I'm leaving the Ram Charger for now. I think it's a good idea for a vehicle to be here. Make the place look normal. Also, you might need one if the shit hits the fan. I was thinking of alternating vehicles each week."

"Good," Johnny says, "I didn't want any of ours out there with the plates exposed. We're not going to be anonymous forever."

"Not a problem," Jimmy says.

Anna interjects.

"Do you think you'll see my father?" she asks.

"Yeah," Ford says as he nods.

Anna glances at Garret, who is not looking at her. He knows that being away from Gary will be a great burden on her. He knows that it's a risk having her here. Her potential and her dedication are worth the hazard.

"Just...when you can," Anna says, "could you tell him I'm OK?"

"I'll do that," Jimmy says.

Ford declines an invitation to supper, even an early one. He'll be leaving at one in the afternoon to meet Austin Kelly. After a while, KJ leaves to shower off the morning's sweat and Anna departs for the media room where she'll change the playlist on her shuffle. After her shower KJ puts on a pair of jeans shorts and her *As I Lay Dying* t-shirt. She removes the cleaning kit from her bureau and takes it and her rifle to the little table where she begins the meticulous task of cleaning the .30-06.

At around noon KJ hears a knocking on her door. It's Anna, and she's come to discuss the very object that KJ is maintaining at the moment. Upon entering, Anna pulls out the second seat at the table and finds a spot near KJ, who for the moment ceases her cleaning activities. Anna glances at the bottle of solvent and the polymer cleaning rod which distract her for a moment. She recently performed this exact same routine.

"What's up?" KJ asks.

"Hey," Anna says, "I was thinking, you know how we use colored tape to tell our rifles apart?"

KJ nods.

"Why don't we paint something on the stock rather than rely on a piece of tape?" Anna says, "The guns will feel like they're ours."

KJ smiles and nods.

"Yeah," she says, "I like that."

"Can I ask you a favor?" Anna asks.

"Sure," says KJ, who returns to wiping the barrel.

"I've seen your flowers," Anna says, "They're beautiful, KJ. Do you mind painting our rifles?"

"No," KJ says, "I'd be honored. What would you like?"

"A cross," Anna says.

Her faith means a great deal to Anna Murphy, and if she is to take a life in order to save her children and the children of other whites, she hopes to do so in good standing and with the blessing of her Lord.

Anna goes to the kitchen to do some preparatory work for supper, and a short while later KJ rejoins the men in the living room.

"I'll concentrate on reloading the .30-06 shells," are the words KJ hears from James Ford when she opens the door from the hallway.

"Come here," says Johnny, who pulls the seat out for KJ. She sits by his side and he caresses her back.

"I'm hoping you don't have to abandon Blacklight," Garret says, "But if you do, so be it. I agree that reloading takes priority."

"Oh, no," Ford says, "It's way too much fun."

KJ looks at Johnny.

"What's 'Blacklight'?" she says mostly with her lips.

"That's where we extract poison from plants, mushrooms, and other shit like that," Johnny says, "So far we've loaded a few shells with aconite and colchicine. It's mostly for experience value right now, but I'm sure they'll have a use someday."

"KJ, I wanted to ask you," Jimmy says, "How were the bullets last time you shot with Irish John?"

"Good," KJ says, "I didn't notice any problems with accuracy."

"That's good to hear," Jimmy says, "Me and Austin loaded them."

"Cool," KJ says.

"Let me know if there's any problem next time you practice," Jimmy says, looking at KJ and then at Garret, "Let me know what Anna says."

Not a minute later Anna passes through to the hallway.

"Anna," Garret says.

"Hold on a second," Anna says.

"OK," Garret says.

Anna hurries to her bedroom, returning with her rifle.

"How were the shells last time you shot with John?" Garret asks, "Was the accuracy good?"

"Yeah," Anna says, "As good as always, why?"

"Jimmy and Austin loaded the shells," Garret says.

"Really?" Anna says, "Awesome!"

"Let me know if there's any drop-off, OK?" Ford says.

"OK," Anna says, "Hey, could I ask you something about my rifle?"

"Shoot," Ford says. Nobody laughs. "Go on."

"We have pieces of tape to tell each other's rifle apart," Anna says, "But the tape could come off and it's colored so I imagine that could be a problem. I was wondering if you could buy us some paint that'll stay on this kind of stock. I checked and we already have little brushes."

"Yeah, I can do that," Ford says, "You OK with it, Garret?"

"What color?" Garret asks.

"Black paint on the gray stock," Anna says.

"That should be alright," Garret says to Ford.

"Who's the artist?" Ford asks, looking at KJ.

His guess is correct.

"KJ," Anna says.

Johnny Bowen does not ask what KJ wants to paint on her rifle. He's sure he'll see it when the time is right.

Jimmy Ford heads down the underground tunnel at 12:30. He does not take a weapon; he's carrying his own .357 magnum revolver. Neither Johnny nor Garret fears for his safety. They know of his marksmanship with a pistol as well as his willingness to use one. When he arrives at the rendezvous spot, he finds Austin Kelly already there. Ford jumps into the white Toyota Land Cruiser and they drive away.

Sunday is quiet at Procyon, though an event of significance occurs late in the evening. While staring at the screen of the Dell desktop, Garret decides to do a little peripheral research and makes a discovery that will be of great interest to Johnny Bowen. There is a name that is often on his mind during such peripheral searches. Today Garret happens to find an article about a so-called minority leadership dialogue that took place just one week ago in Homestead, Pennsylvania. Among those in attendance is a person of interest to Capricorn Cell. Garret made a similar discovery in the past, but aside from a mention of the person's name Garret could not find an address or an image. This time, however, there is a picture of the participants and some of the attendees of the conference.

Standing third from the left, with a scar across his face, is "local youth" Markael Yates.

"Can I come in?" Johnny asks through KJ's door.

KJ stretches in bed and rises to a sitting position. It is 10 AM Monday, and she is wearing a minimal amount of clothing but the voice belongs to her fiancé. She calls him inside.

Johnny slips inside and closes the door behind him. He expected her to be in a thong or something similar.

"Good morning, angel," Johnny says.

"Good morning, Johnny," KJ replies.

Johnny sees that she's wearing a black tube bra. KJ turns her back toward him and stretches again. Her wings are close to completely visible. Johnny comes over to her and rubs her shoulders. She looks down and closes her eyes.

"That's so nice," KJ says.

"I'll help you pack your backpack after breakfast," Johnny says, "We're going on a training mission tonight."

Anna is awake when Garret arrives at her door. She's wearing sweatpants but has yet to cover her bra, and her cleavage is rather massive. When Garret knocks she looks at her dresser. There is a t-back top sitting over there.

"Come in, Garret," Anna says without touching the top.

Garret expects Anna to be gorgeous when he sees her. She always is. Today, though, his lofty estimation will still be too low. The milk-white skin of her exposed cleavage and the uncovered part of her bosom is a vision of beauty so powerful it gives him pause, and together with her long, thick red hair draped over her shoulders, it is a sight he shall never forget. He's seen her in tight swimsuits and is very much aware of her ample build, but nothing could prepare him for this magnificent vision. Garret takes a seat beside her and when she looks into his eyes he sees a little worry and uncertainty on her face.

"Good morning," Anna says with a nervous giggle.

"Good morning, Red," Garret says and smiles.

"Sometimes, I..." Anna says and then looks down. "I don't know what to wear, or how to act, or even what to do sometimes."

"Neither does KJ," Garret says, "if you hadn't noticed."

"Oh I know," Anna says

"You're both young and sincere," Garret says, "You don't know because you haven't been frivolous with your bodies. They're valuable to you. I can see that in the way you take care of your bodies. Your identity and ability to love means a great deal to you. There's a tremendous attractiveness with decency, Anna, and that includes not knowing what to do."

Garret touches her chin and turns her face toward his. His eyes look upon her wonderful chin cleft before staring into her blue irises.

"Don't underestimate innocence," Garret says, "In spite of what movies tell us, it's much more desired than the alternative. The effect it has on a dedicated man is simply amazing."

"Thank you, Garret," Anna says.

He looks at her ivy and begins to trace it around her right arm.

"I guess you can put up with my ivy, huh?" Anna says, and then she looks a little worried. "Right?"

"I can love it, Anna," Garret says as his finger continues around the winding vines. "I can love it for what it means to you."

Rian will be having a late breakfast, late enough, in fact, to be more properly called lunch. He arrived late last night and upon entering woke a

lightly-sleeping John Bowen. Johnny checked out the underground rooms and tunnel before returning to sleep. Today, they let Rian stay in bed until it's nearly noon. He'll be driving tonight and his mind and body will have to be sharp.

There will be a quarter waxing moon tonight, and the skies over West Virginia will be more or less clear. The forecast calls for a warm night. KJ and Anna must still dress in long pants and sleeves; both will choose to wear hoodies over their undershirts. They put on their boots and – in KJ's case – a pair of gloves, and then strap on their pistols and KA-BAR knives. Johnny helped the both of them pack so as to bring the essentials and very few other items. Of the five, Rian is the one who does not need to change his clothes for the mission. He'll be staying with the vehicle, so a t-shirt, jeans and tennis shoes will suffice. As arranged via email with Austin Kelly, Rian's FJ Cruiser is waiting for them near the pick-up spot. It is nicely concealed in the woods.

Anna and KJ temper their emotions as they walk the tunnel to the outside world. This is no patrol, and although the targets are not supposed to be living, breathing persons, this still seems like a combat mission. KJ's nervousness and Anna's apprehension subside a little when Johnny returns from his sweep of the pick-up spot and beckons for everyone to follow his lead. The forest is devoid of humanity, save the members of Capricorn Cell.

There's enough sun for KJ, Anna and Garret to wear sunglasses for the trip south, in spite of the enclosed vehicle. One reason is to reduce eye strain; they'll need rested eyes for tonight's challenge. The effects of the late afternoon sun may be minimal, but the lack of room makes the ride less than comfortable. Anna, KJ and Johnny Bowen squeeze into the rear of the FJ Cruiser, with Johnny to the left and KJ in the middle. Aside from their own side arms and knives, the bolt-action rifles, Johnny's AK and Garret's shotgun are in the rear. So, too, are the backpacks and other items. Johnny added two extra clips for his AK and two boxes of shells for the shotgun. They all hope the shells will accompany them back to Procyon.

There are other items inside the cruiser and on the top rack. Among them are the two targets: human silhouettes painted dark green. There are two lighter ovals painted on the faces of the targets, which represent eyes. KJ and Anna both know why the targets have such eyes. When the mission involves a living mark, he'll have eyes, too.

The road south is beautiful, with streams and trees omnipresent in this section of unspoiled West Virginia. KJ recognizes the route as well as

the town of Parsons and the little restaurant where they enjoyed a meal and each other's company during the April camping trip. Nothing's changed, except everything.

The blue light of dusk filters the surroundings as Rian turns on to a dirt road about ten miles out of tiny Bartow, West Virginia, whose lumber mill is as large as the town. Here the forest does not encroach; it muscles its way to the very roadside. The knobs, ridges and gullies are dark and lush even as summer begins to wane. It is beautiful country to those who love wild places, and to Anna Murphy it hints of Divinity.

Rian has no trouble finding the turn-off. No more than a Jeep trail with a number, the dirt road winds through the hollows of northern Pocahontas County until it crosses a better-maintained highway that is just as deserted at this hour. Even with the air conditioning it is quite warm in the rear and the young women have stored their hoodies until they disembark from the truck. KJ is wearing a black tank top and her arms are exposed. Johnny has also shed the long-sleeve shirt he was wearing over his sleeveless t-shirt. Their bodies are pressed together for want of space and Johnny feels the warmth of KJ's immaculate skin against his own. It stirs him in the deepest places in his soul.

Garret Fogarty marked several spots on the maps and pictures that he gave to Rian in the days before the mission. One of them is at the point where a mountain run joins the East Fork of the Greenbrier River. Near the confluence of the streams Rian finds a suitable sheltered location in which to park. He turns off the lights, lowers the windows and shuts off the motor. The sounds of the wilderness and the darkness of a place so far from light pollution soon conquer the senses. The five remain inside the dark vehicle for a hot and uncomfortable forty minutes until their eyes are accustomed to the night. Johnny gives everyone a bottle of cool water from their cooler behind the rear seat and they enjoy a little break from the heat. Once they've finished drinking, the shooters and sentinels of Capricorn Cell depart on the first part of their training mission.

Garret remains with the two shooters while Johnny performs a precautionary patrol. As they await his return, the three remain alert among the chirping crickets and chattering katydids. KJ adjusts the brown cap that Johnny bought her at Cabela's. Anna looks upward and glimpses the crystal-clear sky. They can hear the rushing waters of the East Fork, whose beauty they can only imagine in the darkness of early night. Johnny returns after a short while and they set out, minding the water and mud of the little creek that flows due west and into the river. Though somewhat wide, this creek is only ankle-deep and is easily fordable. Still, Johnny goes first

and scouts the stream to make sure there are no deep holes waiting to swallow up an unfortunate soul. The crossing is uneventful and they continue toward the second tributary of the East Fork. Today Garret has the toughest job; though Johnny will be keeping a sharp eye out for interlopers, Garret will have to carry the man-sized target to its destination.

A night wind rustles the leaves of oaks and maples before descending to the goldenrod and ragweed that grows along the bank of the run. The wind brings physical relief to Anna and KJ, but also concern. They think about the increased difficulty of the shots they'll be taking. KJ tries to estimate the wind speed and what effect it might have. During her days of training with John Boyle, the CIRA sniper emphasized the proper use of the Leopold scope to the extent that it sometimes seemed like fanaticism on his part. Actually it was wisdom. Eventually KJ could adjust the scope for wind and movement without having to read the numbers or look at the knobs. The previous night shots took place in calm atmospheric conditions. Tonight the wind will play a significant role, and KJ already realizes that her previous training will serve her well.

Anna, too, is attentive to the external conditions that will affect her accuracy. She could already adjust the Leopold scope with her eyes closed before she began to join KJ at Coalsack. One of the rifles that went west with Cristi used to be at Bill's place, and it served as a practice model for young Anna over the previous three years.

Johnny Bowen halts the little group after a short march up the run. He looks through his binoculars and into the darkness of the narrow clearing that parallels the stream on both sides. Then, with a wooden silhouette under one arm, he goes to set up the first target. He'll place the silhouette around 100 yards in the distance. The light should be just enough for the shooter to discern the target. If not, Johnny will move it closer. As usual during a night training mission, the women will get one shot each.

Anna breathes deep as her brother-in-law becomes a mere shadow in the darkness. She feels the wind in the hair that her boonie hat does not cover. KJ puts in her earplugs and Anna follows suit. Their hearing will be vital after the shot is fired; the mission does not end with the pulling of the trigger.

Once Johnny returns, Anna gets into a strong sitting position. The rifle's stock is in the exact position she prefers. Anna scans the inky darkness. She can tell the slight difference between tree and sky, stone and grass. Her excellent night vision catches shapes and contrasting shades. There is an object to the right of the streambed that is a shade lighter than the surrounding blackness. It looks like it has shoulders. It has a head.



She waits a moment. Perhaps it's not the target, but a real person. Garret, KJ and John Bowen are all nearby, and Rian is in the cruiser. Anna watches the silhouette. The wind moves the vegetation around the figure. By her estimation, the wind is around 15 mph. Anna adjusts the Leopold and sights the target. It has not moved. A thought flashes through her mind. If it is not the wooden silhouette, it is still a foe; an incidental one but one that will jeopardize those who she loves. The thought is like a final flash of lightning and it fades to nothing. Anna breathes long and steady. Then comes the little pause when her body ceases its respiratory movement. The trigger feels the steady pressure of her finger.

The crack of a .30-06 echoes down the run. As soon as Anna fires, Johnny Bowen hurries toward the target. Garret rises and keeps a sharp eye on all sides of the position. They'll have to move out as soon as Johnny returns. When he does approach, he says nothing about Anna's success or failure. He hands the target to Garret and the four fighters move out of the run, turning south near the confluence of the little creek and the East Fork of the Greenbrier. No one speaks, not even a hushed word. In short time they come to the mouth of the second run, where Rian sits inside the FJ Cruiser. Finally they exchange words and examine the target. Anna's bullet struck the wooden man right in the center of the forehead. It was a killing shot.

Johnny Bowen pulls the second silhouette off the top of the truck and stores the other one in its place. This second wooden silhouette will be KJ's target. He glances into her face and smiles after he hands the new target to Garret. KJ returns his smile. Again Johnny performs a quick sweep before the group sets out along the north bank of the second – more southerly – run.

For a quarter mile this stream is a twin of the previous one where Anna took her shot. Then the banks of the creek deepen while the edge of the woods recedes. Here, the creek meanders and creates a wider flood plain. Grass, clover, sporadic trees and masses of elderberry, milkweed and other plants replace the forest along the plain. In the darkness the foursome is careful not to approach too close to the bank, lest it collapse and give someone a nasty spill onto the rocks and pebbles of the creek. With Johnny in the lead, the other three can move much quicker than they might if they were each alone. A flashlight would draw unwanted attention and degrade night vision. The quarter moon suffices to keep them out of trouble with the terrain.

The flood plain forms a broad arc, and at its apex Johnny halts the others. They move to the very edge of the forest and he asks KJ to find a

good spot for shooting. There are several trees out from the forest and in the plain, and she chooses a pair that will shelter her from view yet afford the maximum visibility of the area upstream. Johnny takes the second target and advances along the creek. KJ watches him as he does. Eventually he stops. By that point, he's a phantom in the night, but her sharp eyes can still make out his form. She hears the wind pick up in the trees. Watching Johnny, she hears but does not see something small moving in the forest. Garret will have to investigate. It turns out to be a fox. The little hunter's curiosity brings him close enough to be seen by Anna and Garret, while his sense of self-preservation sends him scurrying off into the deep woods.

"It was a fox," Anna whispers to KJ, "He's gone now."

KJ nods as she watches Johnny returning.

Once the group is together, KJ assumes a strong sitting position. She knows the location of the target, about 100 yards in the distance. She looks at the surroundings through her scope. Johnny put the target down the bank and right along the water. Only the head and shoulders rise above the sides of the creek. KJ concentrates. Her ears catch an eerie sound from the part of the creek where the flood plain widens. Though she's never heard it before in person, she recognizes the sound as the call of a whippoorwill. She knows that they were once common here, but are now rarer and rarer from the destruction of their habitat. Those who supported massive non-white immigration, and who could afford to move away from their old towns and cities once they became multicultural cesspools are cutting these woods and draining these wetlands to build their huge new houses. Someday there will be no more whippoorwills or beautiful wilderness, only burned-out cities and slums and hordes of starving brown masses killing each other over scraps of food. Someday there will be no more whites to appreciate what their cowardly parents and traitorous brethren gave away.

KJ clears her mind of the depressing thought. The whippoorwill's voice becomes music in the air that surrounds her. She watches the movement of the vegetation at the target. The wind is stronger than it has been. It's no longer a gust, but has become steady. She makes adjustments to the Leopold. The faint outline of the target sits within the mil dots on the scope. KJ's gloved right trigger finger begins to apply steady pressure.

For miles around the remote wilderness of Pocahontas County the report of the Remington rifle echoes through hollows and over hills. Again Johnny Bowen charges toward the target, and again they move out with

nary a word when he returns. This time they make only a cursory examination of the target before loading the truck and beginning the circuitous drive back to Procyon. The bullet struck the target right between the eyes.

"Shit," KJ whispers and Johnny hears.

He says nothing as they prepare for a hasty withdraw.

Once the rifles are inside the truck and the rucksacks are stored in the rear, the members of Capricorn Cell climb inside the cruiser so that Rian Donnelly can begin the three-hour trip home. Part of the reason for the length of time is the nature of the tortuous roads in this part of Appalachia. Another is the desire of Rian Donnelly to leave no indication to any but the most fanatical observer as to the final destination of the drive. He will continue past the turn-off north of Amboy, and then on the second approach he will drive past Procyon so that he can observe the pick-up spot before parking. Only then will he consider pulling off and hiding his FJ Cruiser among the trees and greenery of Procyon.

The darkness of the forest that surrounds this leg of the return journey does not intimidate any of the young rebels. The forest and the darkness are their shields. When the cruiser arrives at the crossroads in tiny Gladys, West Virginia, it is apparent that Rian has done very well memorizing the maps for this mission. He does not stop, but rather presses on to the north, a route that continues through the massive woodland that surrounds Spruce Knob. Their road will continue past the Dry Fork River and its fields of flood-strewn boulders, onward beyond the green beauty of Canaan and the rustic towns of Davis and Thomas. Beyond Davis, Anna will fall asleep. So, too, will KJ, her head lying against John Ashley Bowen's shoulder. Before then, around the time that Capricorn Cell passes by Canaan, Johnny looks at KJ and sees that she's a little cross. No one else in the vehicle could tell that even in the light of day. He knows her subtle expressions so well and their effect is so potent that he can often read them correctly.

"What is it?" Johnny asks.

KJ looks at him. Her pale skin is a light in the darkness.

"I underestimated the wind," KJ says, "It was a fuck-up, Johnny. I fucked up."

"With the size of the bullet it's still a killing shot," Johnny says.

He is not trying to hide her error. He will discuss that with her tomorrow.

"Not at 400 yards, it's not!" KJ says.

"This wasn't 400 yards," Johnny says, "and you need to keep in mind why we're doing this. Do you know how well you two have performed? It's

goddamned unbelievable. There, that's the last compliment I'm giving you about your shooting. Your hair, your gorgeous face, that awesome ass you have, yeah, I'll complement those every day of my life. But not your shooting. You did fuck up a little, you're right about that. We'll go over it sometime tomorrow and we'll talk about how you fucked up, and how we're going to fix it."

KJ looks at him. Anna, who laughed a little out loud when he mentioned KJ's ass, stifles her laughter.

"What if you were depending on me?" KJ asks.

"It doesn't work that way, angel," Johnny says, "You depend on me. My AK was ready the whole time. It's more important for you to escape than to make a shot. We can always find another cocksucker to kill but we can't find another you. We couldn't ever find another you, even if every young woman joined us."

"I'll get it right," KJ says, "Thank you, Johnny."

Johnny smiles and removes her soft cap so that he might run his hand unhindered from the top of her head and down the back.

Before Anna and KJ doze off, Johnny hands out the last bottles of water and they drink the cool liquid. It feels good going down and KJ sprinkles a little on her neck, from which it meanders under her shirt and below the fabric and the tags with the silver ring. Then she snuggles Johnny's shoulder and closes her eyes.

In his mind Johnny Bowen counts the hours until October.

Anna, Garret, KJ, Johnny, Rian and even Jesse who gets to have a life away from Capricorn Cell all realize that there can be no dependable routines for a resistance group such as theirs. If the powers-that-be ever identify Capricorn Cell as the beginning of armed resistance against white genocide, the most powerful nation on Earth will rein its full might and unmerciful wrath upon those who dare oppose the anti-white status quo. That nation was willing to bomb a Serbian city on Easter morning when the faithful were in the streets unprotected; it will show even less mercy toward white rebels within its own borders. The members of Capricorn Cell know this.

Yet, life and even a bit of normalcy go on for the five rebels. Dishes are washed, rooms are cleaned, dumbbells are lifted and stairs are climbed. KJ showers all of her affection upon her fiancé and he reciprocates with kisses, gentle caressing, and snug embraces. Of course his hands find her bottom, and hers finds his chest, biceps and stomach. Anna brings tea to Garret, who will now take her upon his lap and gently run his hand up and down her back. There are supply runs and news from

Jimmy Ford. Jesse comes and Rian leaves aside his stoicism to laugh and dance and spend as much time as he can with his arms around his lovely wife-to-be. During Jesse's late August visit she trims KJ's and Anna's hair, though at the insistence of both young women Jesse leaves their hair long, all the way down to their breasts. There are two more night training missions; one to Coalsack, and a second to a remote spot in northeast Nicholas County. Johnny takes Anna and Garret on a couple of night patrols around Procyon. He and KJ make nocturnal patrols on three occasions.

Around the 22nd of August, as Johnny and KJ sit on her bed and she cuddles with him, KJ asks if he might have the slightest idea when he won't have to leave anymore for the night. This time he answers: October. She smiles and comes very close to weeping tears of joy. October was always her favorite month, even in Washington but especially after she came to Pennsylvania. The leaves and the sky and the cleanliness of the autumn air are dear to her heart. Soon she will have more reason to love October, more reason than she has ever had by far.

August 24th dawns more like a day in late September. The morning is cool, even brisk, and the plentiful gray-and-white stratocumuli are more like a fall sky than a tepid August one. Carl Bowen is out on his driveway in Oakland, Maryland. His push lawnmower is upside-down and thanks to some overzealous nitwit at the factory, he has to use a breaker bar to loosen the bolt that secures the blade. It's one thing after another: the socket Carl chose is too large for the bolt on this lawnmower. He goes back to his garage for a smaller one.

When Carl returns he places the socket on the breaker bar. Before he can take another step, a police cruiser that he wasn't watching rolls up his driveway.

Carl rises to his feet as two officers exit the squad car. One is big and white; the other is black. The big white one seems familiar to Carl, though he cannot recall his name.

"Mr. Carl Bowen," says the white officer, "I'm Officer Hale of the Maryland State Police. We're going to take a look around your property."

As he speaks a second car arrives. Both of these officers are white. Carl looks at them and then at the black officer before returning his stare to the big white policeman. The officer's face looks like that of a cherub that aged a little too much. Carl summons the only defiance that remains inside of him.

"You'd better have a search warrant," Carl says.

He knows they don't have to show it to him if they do.

Two days later, on Monday, the 26th, Garret checks his usual news sources on the internet. He sees a sight that, although not unexpected, is nonetheless chilling.

"Johnny," Garret says, "Come here."

Johnny, who is in the living room discussing night sniping techniques with KJ, excuses himself and enters the media room.

"Close the door," Garret says.

Garret maximizes a window on the desktop computer. On the webpage of a Garret County newspaper is a picture of John Ashley Bowen. A judge in West Virginia has issued an arrest warrant in connection with the Strader shooting.

Johnny snorts.

"It was a matter of time," he says, "They must have found a hair at the site. Cocksuckers keep everything on file, you know, from the time you're fucking born."

Johnny sees the cursor move.

"Leave it up," he says.

Johnny walks back to the door and opens it.

"KJ," Johnny says, "Come here for a minute."

KJ puts down the sniping manual she was reading and comes over to him. A smile is on her face as she nears his body.

"Take a look," Johnny says, motioning with his head toward the desktop. Garret sits there, his eyes on KJ.

KJ peruses the short article. She shows no emotion.

"They must have found a hair that matched my DNA," Johnny says, "I knew they would."

KJ turns toward Johnny and puts her hands on his sides. She leans her head against his chest and holds him tight.

"I guess we're both fugitives now," KJ says.

Johnny kisses her head.

"Yeah," he says, "So much for the little cottage I bought for you. They'll be watching it, even if it's in my cousin's name."

"We'll build another one someday," KJ says, "Where the mountains are higher. Maybe we'll go to Switzerland. We could speak French there. I mean, I know it's not the majority language but we'd get along."

Johnny pulls her back so that he can look into her blue eyes. She smiles just a little.

"I love you, angel," Johnny says, "There's no pain that can compare to the happiness you give me."

"That's how you make me feel," KJ says before returning to his chest.

Before they separate he smells and nuzzles her hair.

That evening, in KJ's room, she and Johnny show their affection for one another, as much as they can before she shares his family name. Before kissing and cuddling, she thanks him.

"For standing up for us," KJ says when he inquires as to why. "Most girls wouldn't understand why you shot that guy, but I do. You might have given some poor white girl a second chance to keep herself whole. Now, maybe she can bond with a man and find real love. That means more than if you saved her life. Thank you, Johnny, whether they ever say it or not doesn't matter, because I will. Thank you."

Johnny kisses KJ with slow and intense passion, and as they hold on to each other he caresses her back, where the angel has her wings.

During the last week of August, Johnny Bowen knows the other four are planning something for his birthday, though he'll act surprised when the moment arrives. He observed their private conversations when they thought he was too busy to notice. When it came time for each of them to give Jesse another list of desires and needs, KJ must have presented hers when Johnny was absent.

Now the day is coming. In the wee hours of the night, before the sun rises behind a sheet of clouds, Johnny lies on his bedroll in the living room of Procyon House. He is wide awake as Garret Fogarty sleeps a body's length away.

"Garret," Johnny says, "Garret," a little louder.

"Hmm?" says the awakened Garret, "What's wrong?"

"Let's take a camping trip," Johnny says, "Like we did in April. The winter's bound to get tedious and I don't think we need to start off the fall that way, too, don't you agree?"

Garret sits up.

"Has someone said something?" he asks.

Garret hadn't noticed anything out of the ordinary. Everyone gets a little bored and even testy on occasion, but the groups' relationships and dispositions have been remarkable, much better than even Garret in his optimism had expected.

"No," Johnny says, "I'm telling you I'm restless. I think it would be good for everyone, maybe this week. I think we have enough stuff and I'm hoping Jesse can join us for the last couple of days. Can you contact her and Jimmy?"

Garret yawns and nods.

"Yeah," he says, "I think it's a pretty good idea, actually. Tell KJ and I'll tell Anna."

Johnny looks at the clock, which reads 5 AM. He doesn't have any trouble going back to sleep.

"Wake up, sweetheart!" says the dearest voice that Johnny Bowen could ever hear, "Breakfast is ready." Johnny cracks his eyelids and sees KJ standing at the door to the kitchen. She is alone. Johnny springs to his feet wearing only a pair of boxers. She looks at him from head to toe.

"Damn! You look good, birthday boy!" KJ says with a little smile on her face.

Johnny walks over to her. His own smile hints of his desire. He does his own scrutinizing. She's wearing one of her tight pairs of exercise leggings and a snug sleeveless top. He takes her in his arms and kisses her.

"Your breath's like peppermint," KJ says when they finish.

"Yeah," Johnny says, "I ate a couple of Altoids before you came in. I kinda figured you'd come wake me."

"You're supposed to be surprised!" KJ says.

"Oh," Johnny says, "Wow! What a surprise!"

KJ laughs and looks down, shaking her head. Then she looks into his eyes and her smile disappears.

"I love you, birthday boy," KJ says.

Johnny kisses her head and rocks her gently in his arms. As she leaves for the kitchen he gives her a playful slap on the rear, and then he throws on a t-shirt and shorts before following her to the breakfast table.

After a sumptuous breakfast made by all four of his fellow members, with special touches added of course by his lover, Johnny Bowen enjoys a cup of peaberry coffee. The moment he's finished, KJ grabs his hand and leads him back into the living room. While he ate, Rian and Anna brought his gifts from some unknown hiding place and sat them on the smaller of the two tables. Johnny does not tell them that his birthdays never meant very much to him, and one reason for his silence on the matter is that he does understand what it means to those who are celebrating with him. Jesse, who had to return to her apartment to prepare for the morrow's classes, wished him a happy birthday on Friday and gave to him the gift she had bought – a new suit with the dimensions he provided. He opens that gift first and tells Rian that she spent too much money.

Anna looks at KJ and winks.

"Try it on later," KJ says.

"We'll use Rian's room," Johnny says.

"Like hell you will," says Rian, who came in late last night and who wants to sleep a little more. He didn't even get the usual four hours of motel sleep he normally gets when visiting Jesse in Morgantown.



Johnny smiles at Rian and opens the gift that came from the Donnelly son. Inside is a brand new pair of stabilized binoculars. Johnny stares at it for a little while.

"Jesus Christ," Johnny says.

"Dad went in on those," Rian says, "He gave the money to Jesse the last time they met."

Johnny looks up at Rian and thanks him.

Anna and Garret assumed the responsibility of outfitting Johnny Bowen with the less spectacular but even more important items, such as new hiking boots, camouflaged clothing and more commonplace apparel. He thanks them and Anna walks over and hugs him, not forgetting to kiss the head of her brother-in-law and in law.

"There's one more for later," KJ says when Johnny comes to her gift, which he saved for last.

Anna says "Really?" and raises her eyebrows, prompting a friendly slap to the shoulder from KJ. Johnny opens the box. KJ wrapped it on Friday immediately after Jesse brought the gift, which KJ bought with the little money she had remaining from her previous life. Inside is a brand new Gerber Mk II knife, complete with a sheath for his belt and one that he can strap to his leg. He removes the knife from the belt sheath and examines the blade. It is fast and lethal, and he'll make it even sharper.

"It's beautiful," Johnny says, looking up at her. "Thank you, angel."

"I wanted to get something nice that would help take your mind off of what we have to do," KJ says, "But you might need that. I think that's more important."

"It is," Johnny says, "Thank you."

When the others finish their hugs and handshakes and KJ patiently waits for them to go about their business, she comes over to Johnny and embraces him.

"You take my mind off the war," Johnny says, "You're what gives me peace, my angel."

KJ closes her eyes and squeezes him tight.

Around noon, as KJ and Anna continue their aerobics routine, Johnny, Garret and Rian meet in the living room for a short discussion.

"Rian," Garret says, "Johnny and I've discussed going on a short camping trip, much like we did in April."

"When?" Rian asks.

"We leave this Wednesday," Garret says, "We'll return Saturday. I'm hoping Jesse can join us on Friday. If you have nothing against it, I'll let her and Jimmy know and we'll start making the necessary arrangements."

"Fine with me," Rian says, "What are we taking?"

"Hopefully we'll take one of the Jeeps and the cruiser," Garret says, "and Jesse can come in either my Jeep or KJ's since it's not in our names. Let me make sure I'm not wanted by the police."

"Now's the time to go," Johnny says, "Before we're all known and wanted."

"Get me some maps so I can take a look over the next two days," Rian says, "Even if it's a return trip I want to know the roads better."

"I'll have them to you by tonight," Garret says.

"I have a suggestion," Johnny says, "I know a place that might be perfect. My uncle used to take Cristi and me fishing not too far from where we just had a training mission, maybe ten, fifteen miles away. We wouldn't go the same roads or spend any time down there, so I'd say it's safe. I'd suggest we take your Jeep and KJ's, and then Jesse can bring the van. We'll meet her in Glady on Friday. Anyway, we'd camp between Shavers and Cheat Mountain. If I recall correctly there are Jeep trails around there. If the maps check out, I'd say it's a good spot."

"Why's it better than Parsons?" Garret asks.

"This one has a nice, deep swimming hole," Johnny says.

"I'll take a look," Garret says.

That evening, Johnny and KJ meet at the little table in her room. The final birthday gift sits in front of the seat that is furthest from the door. After a greeting they share their intimacy and sit at the table.

"This is just a little something extra," KJ says, "I didn't want anyone else to watch you open this one."

Johnny removes the ribbon and opens the box. Inside there is a black bodysuit, obviously made for a female. It is high-necked and, if KJ should wear it, the suit will be quite tight on her lovely body. The rear is a thong, as he hoped it would be. Just as nice, from the rear waistband to the neck it is just like the thong swimsuit in that the fabric does not cover most of her wings and feathers.

"I don't think it'll fit me," Johnny says, holding it up.

KJ laughs and it makes him want to wrap his big arms around her for the rest of the night. Her laugh, discrete and quiet, and her voice and mannerism are among the dearest things in life to John Ashley Bowen.

"It's for you in other ways," KJ says, "I'll have another suit to wear when you don't have to leave for the night. I think you'll like that one," she says and smiles.

"Yeah," Johnny says, looking at the suit once more before placing it in the box, "I'll like it, a lot. Thank you, angel."

He reaches over and touches her hand.

"Happy birthday," KJ says.

"Sweetheart," Johnny says, "I've got something to tell you." He smiles and so does she. "Me and the guys are putting together another camping trip. Hopefully we can leave Wednesday morning. What do you think?"

"I'd like that," KJ says, "Are we going to Parsons?"

"I don't think so," Johnny says, "Oh and when you pack, be sure to bring a couple of swimsuits."

"Yeah?" KJ says.

Johnny nods. If they can visit the place where he and Cristi used to go, they'll put their swimwear to good use. He and KJ kiss and embrace a final time before he retires to his usual sleeping place.

Anna, dressed in her robe, is walking through the living room with a tray and two empty teacups when Johnny enters. She smiles and he hurries to get the kitchen door for her. Before turning in, Johnny opens the media room door. Garret is clearing the temporary internet file on the Dell.

"Well?" Johnny asks, "What's up with the trip?"

"If Rian's OK with it we'll go to Shavers Fork," Garret says.

It's what Johnny wanted to hear. He'll begin preparations in the morning.

The young women are packed before nightfall on Monday. The two are together in the hallway making sure they haven't forgotten anything when Garret takes advantage of the impromptu meeting in order to make an announcement. The ladies cease their conversation and give him their attention.

"I wanted to speak to the two of you, about our trip and our current situation in general," he says, "This week we get a nice little respite from our routines. Let's enjoy this, because we won't be able to do it very often. We are a combat cell. It may not seem like it yet, but we are. One of the sacrifices we have to make is boredom. Restlessness, cabin fever, whatever you want to call it, that's one of the costs of waging this war for our children. This is a war and if we do not resist, or sacrifice, we cannot have an effect on the future. Keep that in mind. We are a combat cell, and we're trying to stop the darkest genocide ever perpetrated in all human history. Boredom is a small sacrifice for being a part of this resistance. I could be in Portland right now, getting over 100 grand a year. Both of you could be off having fun or studying at one of the enemy's institutions. We rejected the plan they have for us. If either of you feel restless, like you have to get out of here for a while, let us know. Don't hide things so they can fester.

We'll work something out. There's a reason we go on occasional patrols, aside from the obvious, and why we made sacrifices and built this house as big as it is. Soon our patrols will be at night but you'll still be outside, and have a little space. We'll vary who goes out. But you have to let us know if you feel restless. The same goes for all of us. We're not going to keep secrets about such things. After our trip we're going to do some dry-fire training in the woods around here, and then we'll spend a couple of days at Coalsack for live firing. That'll be a daylight trip. We'd better make use of Coalsack while we still can."

Once the establishment begins to call Garret a criminal, Capricorn Cell will have to forsake Coalsack, which is in his name.

Later that night, during teatime, Garret shuts off the desktop for the final time before their trip. He takes Anna's hand before he drinks his cup of cherry tea.

"We'll be OK, Garret," Anna says, "We knew this would be hard, but to be honest it's been easy so far. We can live with boredom."

"Just let me know when it gets bad," Garret says, "The last thing we need is resentment between us."

"OK," Anna says.

Garret rises and so does she. The tea is hot and can wait. They share their great affection for one another in a kiss reminiscent in its passion of those between Johnny and KJ.

James Ford and Austin Kelly pull off their greatest camouflaging feat to date. It wasn't particularly difficult to hide the blue Jeep, but Garret's Wrangler Sport together with the Jeep trailer was another matter entirely, and together both Jeeps represented a somewhat more challenging prospect. Ford and Kelly manage to hide them from the view of passers-by and when the members of Capricorn Cell arrive at the point of departure, Johnny is much impressed with Ford and Kelly's work. He and KJ remain at the covered Jeeps while the other three begin bringing the items they've assembled in the exit tunnel. It takes a while, but the loading is methodical and done with the utmost care so as not to attract unwanted attention. It is a great help that Jimmy Ford already loaded non-perishable items and large containers of water inside the trailer. Once the Wrangler and the trailer are loaded, Johnny removes the tarp over the blue Jeep. KJ suspected the second vehicle was hers; now, with a growing smile, she sees that she was right.

For the trip to Gladys and beyond, Garret Fogarty will drive the Wrangler with Anna at his side. Rian will drive the blue Jeep, while KJ and the fugitive Johnny will ride in back.

"How's it feel to ride with the criminal element?" KJ asks him once they're inside.

Johnny grabs her Seahawks cap.

"It's cloudy, angel, you don't need this," he says, and she lays her body upon his.

Though the leaves are green, fall is in the air. It's in the steel overcast and the barely 70-degree temperature. The autumnal weather is supposed to persist all week. It could not be a better scenario for a camping trip. This will not be a training mission. The Remington rifles remain in Procyon House. The men are not derelict in their duties as sentinels, however. In addition to the side arms, which all five have brought, Garret, Johnny and Anna each have a 12-gauge pump shotgun. Available for KJ should the need arise is the Armalite with folding stock. Both the semiautomatic Armalite and Johnny's shotgun are in the rear of the blue Jeep. These are precautions; none of the five hopes to fire a single shot over the next four days.

"This place is going to be awesome in a month or so," Anna says as she looks out the window at tree-covered Shavers Mountain.

The landscape from Spruce Knob south is as picturesque as anywhere on Earth.

"I'm going to try and organize little expeditions from time to time," Garret says, "I can't give you a normal life but each of you deserves a little time away."

Anna looks at him.

"None of us can have a normal life," Anna says, "Life can't be normal for white people. Normal life for white people is just surrender. This is our life, Garret, and we all chose to be here."

"I know," Garret says, "But I'll never want less for you."

Anna looks at him and smiles. Her face, with its little array of freckles and pale white perfection is radiant in the soft light.

At Gladys, Garret, whose Wrangler is in the lead, turns right and begins the short drive to Bemis, West Virginia. From there, they will follow a Jeep trail around the gap that the Shavers Fork River cuts into Shavers Mountain. They hope to make camp just beyond the trail, somewhere in the privacy and shelter of the deep woods.

Inside the Wrangler are two tents, each more than large enough for three persons. The men plan a set-up similar to that on their previous camping trip, with the women's tent between the men's and the Wrangler. The five men and women, having showered and eaten an early breakfast, arrive at the end of the Jeep trail just after 10 AM. This gives them ample

time to set up camp before dusk. Johnny and Anna perform a short patrol, and to their relief they find the immediate area free of campers and fishermen.

Capricorn Cell plans to remain three nights at their campsite. On Thursday, Rian will make a supply run to Elkins for fresh food. It will not be necessary, but since this is a vacation of sorts it will be desirable. Garret has established via email a meeting with Jesse Hanratty, who will arrive at Glady on Friday afternoon. She and Rian will leave the campsite together in his RJ Cruiser. Once his plans are either fulfilled or in motion, Garret can finally relax and feel the joy of the excursion.

After breakfast on Thursday morning, the moment that Garret, Anna and Johnny have been looking forward to finally arrives. For KJ there is similar anticipation, though she also feels quite nervous. Today the four will be visiting the swimming hole with its clear and, in some places, very deep water. Rian will remain at the camp, though this selfless act will not curtail his fun. Tomorrow afternoon, while the others are busy with supper, he and Jesse will have their own private time at the natural pool.

For the trip in and out, the foursome will follow an active railroad line. Johnny warns them before they set out. An excursion train runs these rails, and it will probably come at some point today. They will carry their pistols in a concealed manner and only one of them will have an open firearm. Johnny takes the Armalite from the blue Jeep, and, keeping the stock folded, hands it to KJ.

"Put it on your shoulder," Johnny says, "I'll carry your stuff with mine."

The day is a mirror image of Wednesday, with the high reaching 70 and the skies gray with clouds. Today, however, it will rain in places. The wind will be light and the air pleasant. Johnny, who suspected KJ might wear something a little racy, warns her that the water may be cool. She packs the water-polo type suit. Though it covers most of her upper body, it fits like skin and she knows that Johnny appreciates the view from behind. She caught him staring several times when she wore it at the pool in Fox Chapel. For the trip to the swimming hole, KJ wears jeans and a loose t-shirt, and packs another shirt just in case this one gets wet. Over her shirt she wears an unbuttoned long-sleeve top. When she emerges from the tent Johnny hands something to her.

"Here," Johnny says, "You can put these to good use."

KJ looks down to see the gloves with the webbed fingers.

"Ahh!" Anna says, "I want those!"

"Too bad," Johnny says, "You had your chance."

Johnny looks at KJ and winks, and she smiles at him.

The rails are silver-tipped and the weeds trimmed or absent from around the ties. A region that no longer loads its trains with minerals or merchandise now fills them with tourists hungry for natural splendor and a decent meal. Based on the smooth, silver tops of the rails, it's clear that Johnny was right. Sometime today a train will probably roll down this track.

Two miles up the rails, the sentinels and shooters of Capricorn Cell approach the swimming hole, with neither stranger nor locomotive in sight. A whitetail doe crosses the track, but the banks and the deep hole in the Shavers Fork River are devoid of humanity. It's not too surprising, being noon on a workday. With dark clouds and dreary skies above them, it is likely that the four swimmers will remain alone.

The Shavers Fork is a stony trout stream and around the deep swimming hole there are flat rocks that provide the perfect place to leave clothes and other material objects. KJ advances onto one such table rock, though not far enough to accidentally fall into the deep water. Johnny looks at his lover, from the top of her thickly-haired head to her tall black boots, pausing at places he likes to examine closer. About the time his gaze reaches her ankles, she turns and walks back to the group.

"Where can we change?" KJ asks.

"Come with me," Johnny says, "Oh, and leave the gun with Garret."

Johnny walks with her a short piece up the left bank. From where she stands the bank is steep and forested enough that the passengers of the train cannot see her from the front, should they somehow pass by while she disrobes. In that spot, Johnny removes a sheet from his backpack.

"I'll hold this up so no one can see," Johnny says.

KJ smiles and takes off her boots and gloves. With the sheet blocking the view from the river, KJ strips and puts on her swimsuit, the sandals she brought and the gloves with webbed fingers. When Johnny folds the sheet she hugs him.

"Take it easy out there," Johnny says, "OK?"

"I will," KJ says.

The river is cool but not unbearable, and once she's used to it, warm KJ will find it pleasant. When she and Johnny return to the hole, Anna, who was wearing her brilliant silver suit under her elastic-waist pants and t-shirt, is already in the water. Garret jumps in seconds later, his cannonball throwing water toward Anna, who avoids getting splashed by going under. KJ looks at Johnny. He removes his shirt and jeans, revealing his swimsuit. Johnny takes her hand and leads her to the edge of the hole, where the water is up to her chest. Before he enters, he returns to the

clothes and covers them, and the rifle, with the sheet. Then he climbs in and swims over to KJ.

"I'm gonna loosen up," Johnny says, "I'll be right back and you can show me what you've learned."

He winks and KJ smiles.

Johnny tears through the water as if it's his natural element. KJ watches him undulate beneath the surface, and sees a silver flash to his right. There, underwater as well, Anna slides by with the motion of a mermaid, a stream of lovely silver bubbles escaping from her nose and adding their beauty to her spectacular movement. She breaks the surface as does Johnny, who swims by like an Olympian. Meanwhile, Garret, no amateur himself, does laps at the far end of the hole. Anna watches Garret, her wet red head remaining above the surface just long enough for her to yell to him. Then she plunges under, her rear and legs rising like a mermaid. Garret follows her under the surface.

In the clear liquid world of the deep hole, Garret sees Anna moving along with impressive speed. It's all the more impressive considering her undulating motion. The gorgeous silver suit flashes like a fin. He assumes she'll swim under an overhanging boulder that forms a little underwater tunnel. She's always been adventurous in the water. Instead, she turns, her arms tight to her side as usual, and her body swaying up and down with her front toward the surface. Her eyes are closed and little bubbles stream from her nose again. Then she slows and comes to a rest on the sandy bottom. There, Anna opens her eyes and puts her hands behind her head, as if she'll remain there, relaxing in the airless depths. She glances at Garret as he approaches and she blows a few bubbles before pretending to yawn and closing her eyes as if she's going to sleep.

KJ edges out into the water. There, a wicked smile forming on her face, she shoves off and swims toward Johnny Bowen. He smiles at her, feeling both affection for his woman and pride in his accomplishment.

"You wanna come with me?" Johnny asks and motions with his head toward the depths.

"Yeah," KJ says.

"Don't worry," Johnny says, "I'll keep an eye on you."

KJ breathes deep a few times and then, with a big gulp of air, she plunges under the water. She is not graceful in her motions like Anna, though the webbed gloves help her mimic a little of the mermaid motion. KJ cannot match any of the others in swimming ability though she can hold her breath as long as any of them, and probably longer. She swims out into the twenty-foot deep water, and stops about two-thirds the way to



the bottom. There, suspended by the liquid, KJ blows her own stream of bubbles and watches them swim through her unfettered mass of hair and continue up to the surface. There is none of the fear or desperation that she felt the last time she watched her breath rise from the deep. The man who swims toward her is the reason why.

Johnny approaches his woman. Further out in the clear water, KJ can see Garret and Anna kissing. They rose to the surface and, after a quick breath, went back under to enjoy each other in a place free from the noise and interruptions of the surface world. Johnny Bowen arrives beside KJ and they look into each other's eyes. The gentle water plays with her long hair, and Johnny brushes aside the strands that have begun to flow in front of her face. She closes her eyes and imagines that she's flying, her wings strong and beautiful as they carry her and her lover to the mountain in their dreams.

A light rain falls but it does not send the lovers fleeing, nor does the approach of the excursion train, its black diesels and red coaches a splendid sight in the soft light of the rainy September day. To the passengers, the four swimmers are just young lovers enjoying a rare chance to have fun and show their affection for one another. Today, the passengers are right.

For the next two hours, Johnny, KJ, Anna and Garret swim, play, kiss and embrace at the edge of, within and beneath the waters of the deep swimming hole. KJ plods rather than darts, but she proves she can indeed swim, much to the delight of her man. Anna the mermaid continues her dolphin-like antics even leaping up as high as she can and then kicking the water as she submerges, just like the mythical creature that she strongly resembles. Johnny, meanwhile, uses his considerable power to propel his body through the water, and the feeling is invigorating and satisfying. All the while, he keeps a sharp eye on his woman. Near the end of the two hours, KJ sits on his lap at the edge of a flat stone, and as he dangles his legs in the water she caresses his hair and cheek with the webbed gloves.

Johnny rubs KJ's hair with a dry towel. They hear Anna and Garret talking, as Anna brushes her long red mane.

"You really are a mermaid, aren't you?" Garret asks, knowing she'll enjoy the question.

"Yeah, I'm a mermaid," Anna says, and then a troubling thought crosses her mind. "Not all mermaids are bad, though," she says, "Irish mermaids make good wives."

KJ laughs a little to herself.

Anna wipes the excess water off her body and puts on her pants. She does not put on her t-shirt, opting to leave the top of the swimsuit uncovered. She looks magnificent, and so does her shirtless beau.

"Hold on a minute," Johnny says, recapturing KJ's attention.

He begins to brush her damp hair. She closes her eyes and enjoys every second. Afterward, the two proceed to the spot where she changed into her swimsuit. There, she removes the webbed gloves and puts on her original pair. With the sheet covering her from behind and the forest and bank shielding her from the front, she removes her swimsuit. For a brief moment, once he makes sure Anna and Garret aren't looking and there are no other prying eyes, Johnny moves the sheet slightly. He gets a glimpse of her perfect rear and back, seeing each and every feather of her wings and the smooth white features of her extraordinary body. Before he can return the sheet to its shielding position a wind descends and blows it toward her. Since he was holding it a little to the side, only a small part of the sheet manages to touch her body.

KJ finishes putting on her clothes and slips on her tall black boots. As she kneels to tie the laces, she gets another wicked little smile.

"Did you like what you saw?" KJ asks.

"Yes," Johnny says, "I did, it was nice. Real nice."

KJ rises and kisses his cheek.

Supper is simple and delicious. Rian, who made a trip with the blue Jeep to a small market in Elkins, returns with fresh steaks which taste excellent cooked over a hickory-fed flame. Together with steamed vegetables, the meal is well worth the wait. Everyone except for Rian sleeps very well that night. He is too excited to sleep soundly. Jesse is coming by, and she'll be joining him for a swim.

On Friday morning KJ awakens before Anna. She pulls a pair of her bike shorts over her thong, but leaves on her t-back sleeveless top. She puts on her sandals and steps out of the large, comfortable tent to stretch and breathe the sweet forest air. Johnny is up, and so is Garret. They're building a fire. She wishes, somehow, that Johnny had been alone, with a cup of coffee in his hands, just like in April. She still walks over and squeezes him when he stands to receive her.

"Hi, angel," Johnny says.

Multi-grain pancakes from Tait Farms are the breakfast fare, and another simple meal comes out excellent. Anna sifts the pancake mix and tends to the cooking while KJ checks the clothes they left out to dry during the night. Some are, and some aren't; she leaves the damp ones on the clothesline that runs from the ladies' tent to a nearby maple.

When KJ comes to breakfast Johnny Bowen is returning from the woods. He lays his shotgun by the men's tent and takes a seat on one of their collapsible footstools. KJ sits on the one to his left. Anna and Garret sit together, opposite Johnny and KJ on the other side of the fire pit. No one talks for a little while. The men put their arms around their women and look into the flames. The day went too fast.

That afternoon, Rian drives the blue Jeep to Gladys to meet his fiancée and Garret and Johnny take a walk in the woods that turns into a short training session for Garret. Anna and KJ discuss pleasant but unimportant matters while they keep the water boiling so that Jesse can have a cup of tea when she arrives. An hour and a half later, the blue Jeep returns, followed by Rian's Toyota with lovely Jesse at the wheel. Her hair is down and her jeans are snug, as is the blue shirt she's tied in front. Rian plants a little kiss on her lips when they embrace.

The intermittent rain makes a pause and Rian and his beloved set off for the swimming hole. He takes his pistol in the off chance something unfortunate would occur, but since neither he nor Jesse are "persons of interest" to the law, there's no need to worry should passers-by or fellow swimmers see them. Their departure is a cue for the others to begin supper preparations. Together they decide to make something special for their two selfless friends. Once the creamy vegetable soup is on the fire and the dried chanterelles are rehydrating for wild mushroom pasta, the master and assistant chefs begin to realize that they will achieve their goal. The meal will indeed be special.

Jesse and Rian return blissful and elated. Johnny, who is cutting some deadwood into kindling outside of camp, hears them coming through the woods from further away than he can see their movement. There will come a day when they will not be so careless, but today all is well. Before attending to his task, Johnny, who cannot afford to reveal his identity to strangers, made a quick patrol of the camp perimeter. He returns to camp before Jesse and Rian approach the tents and the fire pit.

When Jesse and Rian discover the meal that the other four have prepared, they fall silent in admiration. The taste is as good as the visual extravagance. Campfire meals, when done right, are often the best.

After supper, each person takes a refreshing shower or – in the case of Jesse and Rian – washes off the river water before relaxing near the fire. Jesse will stay with Anna and KJ tonight, but for now each young woman sits with her respective love interest.

"Do you have a wedding date?" Jesse asks KJ and Johnny.

"The First of October," Johnny says and KJ looks at him.

She smiles and kisses his cheek. Then the smile disappears, replaced by a serious look.

"How do we make our vows?" KJ asks, "Do we make them up or take them from a list?"

"We'll use the traditional vows," Johnny says, "I'm sure we can find a list on the internet."

Jesse rubs Rian's leg.

"You know," Jesse says, "October 1st sounds like the perfect day. Fall is really beautiful in West Virginia."

"Yeah," Johnny says, "The most beautiful season for my angel."

With his hand, Johnny brushes some of the innumerable strands of KJ's hair from in front of her face and then pulls even more of them back. She looks at him with that feral look that drives him wild. All the while, Garret rubs Anna's back but he does not speak; neither does she.

For the return trip, Garret is alone in his Wrangler. Since neither KJ nor Johnny Bowen can safely drive during a weekend that promises increased traffic, Anna will pilot the blue Jeep. She laughs from being a little nervous as she puts the Jeep into first gear.

"Don't fuck up my Jeep," KJ says to torment her best female friend.

Anna drives like a pro, never popping the clutch or hitting the brakes too hard.

Rian and Jesse do not stop at Procyon House. As usual for a weekend, they proceed to Morgantown, where he'll stay the night at a motel and drive back to the drop-off point at Procyon on Sunday night. Late Sunday afternoon, after sharing a private meal in Jesse's apartment, the two relax on the couch before he must depart for the week.

"When we make it home I'm going to give you a dignified wedding," Rian says, "And I won't give a damn if everyone knows that we're married."

Jesse kisses his hand.

"I know, Rian," she says, "If you were an IRA man and fighting for your people, we could be married in a church. But since you're here, fighting for all white people, not just our Irish kin, we have to hide everything. I can't help you and the others if the police know we're together."

Jesse's smile is warm and she squeezes her lover's hand.

"I'll just dream about our big wedding," she says and smiles. "They're usually overrated, anyway."

"I'd like to give you that, sweetheart," Rian says, "Right now, it's a sacrifice we have to make," he says, "We can't walk away from this. I won't walk away from it. Our sons and daughters need us to stand firm. Some-

day soon I won't be able to visit you here, or take a trip to the mountains. We know that can't last, and I'm sure that doesn't make it any easier. But this war won't last forever, either. We will win and then we'll go home."

Jesse moves close and lies against his body.

"Shall we join Johnny and KJ on the First?" Jesse asks, "We said we'd marry in the fall but we haven't fixed a day yet. Shall we?"

"Yes," Rian says, "We can be each other's witnesses." He turns her face so that he can look into her green eyes as she lies across him on the couch. "I will walk you down the aisle someday, in a proper church and a proper wedding," Rian says, "And all the Donnelly's and Grew's and O'Reilly's in Strabane will come out and honor the warrior's wife."

Jesse holds his hand and looks into his eyes. He doesn't just convince her, he makes her want to believe.

For the next few days, Anna and KJ have an arduous task to perform in addition to the assorted chores and exercise routines that are a part of daily life at Procyon. This week they begin dry firing their rifles, often beyond the walls of the safe house. On Tuesday morning Johnny Bowen affixes bipods to their Remingtons. Jimmy Ford's bringing the paint for the ladies' artwork on Friday, and Johnny imagines what his KJ might paint on her rifle's stock. Once he's done with the bipods, he sets several snap caps – mock bullets with an internal spring that lessen wear on a firing trigger – next to each rifle. His job finished, he turns out the light to the armory and heads upstairs to breakfast.

As Johnny, KJ and Anna exit the tunnel for the outside world they are especially mindful of keeping a low profile. Based on information gleaned during Johnny's excursions with Garret, there is an ATV trail to the south that the three will avoid. Johnny leads the two shooters about a half mile to the east, where they turn toward the northeast. Another half mile's distance and the three warriors come to the edge of the forest. Ahead are a long field and a farm house, and beyond – at a distance of 700 yards – is the lonely road that passes in front of Procyon. There, amidst the weeds, pieces of wood and ancient stones, Anna and KJ unfold their bipods and set up for a shot. Inside their rifles are snap caps. Inside Johnny's pocket are dimes.

"Look at the road," Johnny says to both of them, "There's a sign at the intersection of the farmhouse driveway. The sign is 600 yards in the distance. KJ, you're up first. When you're ready let me know."

KJ watches the leaves on the tree for signs of the wind. They hardly move, when they move at all. She contrasts the dots in her scope with the distance Johnny provided. It's spot-on.

"OK," KJ says, her gloved finger on the trigger.

Johnny steps over and puts a dime on the end of her barrel.

"When you're ready, take the shot," Johnny says.

Johnny and Anna watch with acute attention at KJ's rifle. They hear the click when she takes the shot. The dime does not move.

"OK, Anna," Johnny says, "You're next."

Again, the dime does not move.

The two young women will spend hours over the next three days dry-firing from the shade and gloom of the thick woods, each taking turns watching the other and noting even the slightest error, which they reveal and explore with ruthless honesty. During the third day's outing, the dime does not move nor does either Anna or KJ show any obvious mechanical errors during the dry shots.

While the ladies practice, Johnny continues training Garret. Unlike their lovers, the men's weapons are fully loaded. Johnny carries his favorite weapon, the AK47, while Garret carries the Armalite .308 with fixed stock. They do not encounter any strangers, and would practice avoidance if they had, unless the shooters happen to be in jeopardy. The weapons are kept loaded for a reason.

On the 14th of September, Capricorn Cell takes a break from training in order to celebrate the birthday of Anna Murphy. Garret wakes his beloved Anna early that morning. Today she is 18. Garret insisted on making her breakfast, acquiescing only to KJ's insistence that they all make her a supper to remember. Anna washes her face and braids her hair into a thick ponytail. She puts on jeans and a green blouse and joins the others at the kitchen table.

Although he'd recognize that KJ and even Johnny Bowen are his superiors in culinary ability, years of solitude have taught Garret to be proficient with the oven and the range. The breakfast quiche that he made is excellent, and Anna lets him know it. So, too, do his brother and sister in war, who are growing much closer to his heart than his cousins and second cousins ever could.

On Friday, Jesse and Rian left Anna's gift and after numerous hugs and well-wishes, they insisted that she open the present, which turned out to be an iPod classic. Since it's in Jesse's name, Anna will be able to use the iPod while it's connected to the internet. Rian and Jesse also gave her a portable Bose sound system, should she and another soul wish to enjoy a little music together.

Today Anna opens the gifts that the others requested and that Jesse was diligent in purchasing. From KJ and Johnny come the necessities:

casual and hiking clothes, new boots and toboggans and hats for winter and summer. There is also a new pair of Serengeti sunglasses. Garret presents Anna with armguards and shooting gloves, as well as a new back quiver with arrows. The target is standing at the end of the entrance hall downstairs. She'll practice shooting a little later. Garret also put together a new rack, so that she might move her bow from the storage room to her bedroom.

Attached to his gift is a box with several lingerie combinations, from the simple and sexy to the elaborate and exquisite. He tells her to open that one later, when she's alone in her room.

At 1PM, Jimmy Ford pays Capricorn Cell a pre-arranged visit. In addition to the usual supplies, he brings a major surprise for the birthday girl. After he unloads the food and other items in the living room, Ford returns to his Ram Charger for a final item. Anna, who waits for news from Ford about her father, has an idea that Gary has sent her a birthday present. There are two, in fact. One is quite large and wrapped in sea-green paper with a white bow.

"This is from your father," Ford says. Anna looks at him with pleading eyes. He smiles. "Gary's doing fine. He misses you, of course."

As soon as Anna lays the gifts on the little table, she hugs Jimmy Ford.

"Thank you so much," Anna whispers.

"Open the smaller one first," Jimmy says.

The others gather around to see what Gary's given his beloved daughter. Inside the smaller package is a brand new copy of the compilation of Yeats' poetry. It was the one item she forgot to bring. Now she has a new copy, one with a note of fatherly love written on the inside cover. The words bring her to tears.

The large rectangular gift must wait until Anna wipes her eyes and smiles. She unties the bow and removes the wrapping paper. Beneath is a framed print, on canvas, of Waterhouse's *A Mermaid*. The carved wooden frame and superior quality print are breathtaking in their beauty.

"My God," Anna says.

"Fuck," KJ says, shaking her head, "It's like Waterhouse had a vision of you!"

"There's an empty spot on your wall, Anna," Garret says, "It's perfect for that."

That evening, as Johnny visits KJ after their weight training routine, Anna glances up at the mermaid painting that now hangs on her bedroom wall. She hears the faint sound of music through the wall and the closed

door to KJ's room. She then hears a rapping on the hallway door. When she opens the door, she sees Garret Fogarty dressed in his finery. For a moment she is speechless.

"Come in, Garret," Anna says.

She returns to her seat on the bed as he closes the door behind him.

"You look so handsome," Anna says with a smile.

The emotions rise within her. Anna has an idea where this is going, and she prays in her soul that she is right.

Garret stands before her. He touches her head and then he kneels in front of her, taking her hand into his. If she weren't looking into his eyes she'd see that his other hand holds a small box.

"Anna," Garret says, "I've loved you for some time now. First as a friend, and then as the admirer of a young lady who thought for herself and rejected the hateful lies of our enemy. Over the last year, I have come to love you as a woman, and to love you as only a white man can love a white woman. You have chosen this martial future that I have offered to you, and my selfish heart rejoices though my soul would have you a million miles away from the trials and tribulations that we shall face. I have never known such a selfless and loving soul as you, one who is dedicating her life to unborn children and who will raise the sword to protect them. No man dare dream of a woman such as you, since the odds of finding such a principled and beautiful young woman are smaller and smaller, as to be almost an impossibility. But I have found you, and this is no dream. Anna Murphy, beloved daughter of Mary and Gary, I wish to make you my wife."

Garret presents her with the little box that contains a beautiful engagement ring. The box is the same size as the one that her father wanted her to give to Garret.

"Will you marry me, Anna Murphy?" Garret asks, staring into her bright blue eyes.

The tears come forth, and so does the loving, intimate smile and look of genuine affection on her beautiful face. Anna nods and says "yes."

Garret rises to his feet and so does Anna. He puts the ring on her finger. It fits perfectly, and they kiss to seal their pledge. After wiping away her tears, Garret embraces Anna and holds her close to his body. He can feel her breathe in his tight embrace.

When Johnny Bowen goes to breakfast the next day, he enters the kitchen and sees KJ and Anna hugging one another, both chirping and Anna wiping her eyes. KJ turns to see her man.

"Garret proposed to her!" KJ says.



A smile grows on Johnny's face. He looks at the two of them. Anna smiles and nods, and shows him her ring.

"It's beautiful, Anna," Johnny says.

Johnny walks over and hugs her. She is his sister, in race and in war, and now that Anna and Garret are to wed, the six will all share the happiest day of their lives.

After a full day of archery practice and dry-firing in the house, during which the dime remains upon the barrel, Anna brings tea to Garret as he works in the media room. This time he rises and kisses her, and turns off the computer for the duration of her stay. He mentions how John Waterhouse must have known a beauty like her in order to paint his masterpiece, and she thanks him with a big hug and a kiss on the head.

"Garret, before I ask you something," Anna says, "I need you to understand me. I don't want you to take it wrong, OK?"

"Of course, Anna," Garret says, "Go on."

"If you say forever, or until we win," Anna says, "I need you to know I'm in, Garret, I'm going to be your wife and I'll go whatever distance we need. But Garret, my love," she rubs his leg, "Do you think we can ever have children?"

"The war isn't over until we end the genocide against our race," Garret says, "But we will have lives. We'll move on to other approaches and let those we inspire pick up the gun. If no one will fight, we won't give the rest of our lives to them. We'll have our own children, and we'll protect and save them, just like the rest."

Anna grabs his knee and smiles, looking down.

"Thank you," she says.

"God willing we'll all get through this," Garret says.

Garret leans forward and touches his forehead to the thick red hair on her crown.

That night Johnny and Garret lie awake for a while. Neither says a word to the other, though both share the same thought. Soon the long nights of sleeping alone will come to an end.

While the ladies continue their dry-firing exercises in the shade and shadows of the thick forest, Johnny Bowen continues his instruction of Garret Fogarty in the arts of a sentinel. They reassemble Armalite rifles in the dark, practice their own dry-firing, stalk and sweep the forest. Johnny makes sure Garret's clothing will ensure the best camouflage during clandestine missions and he helps his brother increase his speed when drawing his pistol and knife. The fashionable apparel will have to wait until they're back at Procyon House, as will the philosophies.

"You won't have time to moralize," Johnny says, "If you cannot neutralize a threat to Anna, then don't accompany her. When it comes down to her or them, you must choose without consideration. You have to eliminate a threat. It's your burden to carry the weight of that decision, not hers. It's my burden, as well, as a sentinel. No matter what the threat looks like, you must deal with it."

Late September is, as usual, among the most pleasant months of the year in Appalachia. Mornings are cool, days are comfortable and sunsets are brilliant. The leaves begin to change and good food seems to taste even better. At Procyon House, it is a time of anticipation. For KJ and Johnny, Anna and Garret, Jesse and Rian, the coming of October will ring the greatest event of their young lives. Greater than going to war; on the first day of October, all three couples will wed.

On the 20th of September, a rainy and cool Friday, Jesse visits as usual. She brings an usual cargo, however, which she gives to Garret and Johnny while KJ and Anna are absent from the room. From the lists written early in the month, Jesse knew to find four rings: two gold and two silver. These are the wedding bands that the men and their wives shall wear beginning on the First of October.

The next day, Jimmy Ford makes his weekly supply run. Today he stays for supper. During the meal, John Bowen makes a surprise request. He asks Ford to leave the Jeep Rubicon in the forest near the drop-off spot. Johnny asks if Ford can do so on the evening of the 30th of September. Later, while KJ is downstairs dry-firing with Anna, Johnny tells Jimmy what he'd like loaded in the Rubicon.

"The usual camping gear and as much water as you can fit," Johnny tells Ford, "Also that new tent I had you buy. Make sure there's enough gas for a round trip to Harman."

James Ford accepts the challenge.

"Procyon has a beautiful room for that kind of event," Johnny says, "But we need some space. My angel is not tame and I'll be damned if I try and cage her."

After Jimmy departs in his '99 Ford Contour, leaving the Ram Charger for this week, Johnny Bowen finishes storing the supplies. Among them are several boxes of match-grade ammunition. Each box bears the same lot number. During Jimmy's previous visit, he, Garret and Johnny decided that, until Ford can create a stockpile of reloaded ammunition, the ladies would shoot match-grade shells from a gun shop in Chalk Hill. Over two weeks, alternating with Austin Kelly, Ford purchased 500 rounds of ammunition.

Gary Murphy is home alone. He will not be working this weekend. The rain that falls on Lemont Furnace is more a mist than a shower and it's cold. Jesse Hanratty dropped by yesterday. His Anna is to wed Garret Fogarty.

When Gary finishes his tea he walks into the living room. There, he stares at the portrait of Mary, the one in which she's wearing the ivy dress. Cancer took her away from him. The anti-white establishment will not take his daughter away. Whether driving, sleeping or even at work, his .357 magnum will never be far from his reach.

On Monday the 23rd of September, while the members of Capricorn Cell drink coffee at the breakfast table, Garret tells them to prepare for a night's stay at Coalsack. The next morning, before the break of dawn, the five emerge from Procyon to find Rian's cruiser in the woods near the highway. They load the Toyota and depart for Clay County.

KJ feels a little nervous during the journey, even with Johnny's arm around her. Their movement towards a live-fire mission is inexorable. At the same time, she can feel a little relief at the thought that the day will come. There is finality in crossing that line, one that she knows they are training to cross. There are also grave consequences. Garret mentioned that it will take some time until they're ready to engage in active resistance. This training mission is another step forward. Based on the number of rounds they're taking, and the fact it will be a daylight training mission, it might be a big step toward that bittersweet goal.

Tonight's meal and tomorrow's breakfast will come from simple ingredients, canned and dried foods. There is no time for the loving care and preparation that the members enjoy putting into meals. The young women will spend most of the two days at the range. Johnny will put a target 50 yards beyond the end of the old range so that the shots will be longer than before. KJ is thankful that the days will be cloudy and cool. She wears her black toboggan, while Anna wears a soft brown cap.

The atmosphere on this trip is martial. While Anna and KJ practice both dry and live firing, Johnny and Garret patrol the forest. It is an essential task and a major learning exercise for Garret. Later, while the ladies clean their rifles, Johnny and Garret will use the range for their own shooting practice. Garret's accuracy is very good. It will soon be excellent.

Later that night, after the four have showered and eaten their bland but nourishing supper, Johnny comes by the cabin and sits with KJ on her bed. Anna, her eyes closed, listens to her iPod as she lies on the other bed. Sheets of plastic sit folded in the corner. Ford must have visited Coalsack and covered the beds in order to keep them clean.

"Next time we'll all sleep in tents," Johnny says, "The beds will be gone, and the refrigerator, too."

The fridge is already wrapped and empty.

Johnny rubs KJ's back, and eventually puts his hand under her tank top to rub the skin graced by her wings.

"Do you think you'll miss the unmarried life?" KJ asks, a playful smile on her face.

"Not a chance, angel," Johnny says, "Will you?"

The smile disappears.

"Right now I have to watch while the man I love leaves for the night," KJ says, "For the rest of my life I will never miss that."

Johnny kisses her head. He thinks about her words as he walks to his tent. The soft whistle of a screech owl comes from somewhere in the dark forest.

## Chapter XX



## Men Must Not Divide

During her visit on the 20th of September, Jessica Hanratty took KJ's measurements. Unfortunately for KJ, she does not have a wedding dress tailor-altered for her like Anna, nor does she have the ability to visit a seamstress and have a dress made for her, as Jesse has. Still, Jesse does her best, and she orders a dress that she hopes will both fit and satisfy KJ on the most important day of her life. Now that today is the 27th and October is just around the corner, Jesse drives to Procyon with KJ's dress on the back seat of the Suzuki. As she approaches Amboy, her worries about the suitability of the dress grow even stronger. She leaves the package with KJ's dress in the car until she's carried all the other bags into Procyon House. Then, her breath held, she lifts it from the back seat.

KJ is inside helping the others store the supplies. It's a one-person job, but she always shows up to help. Jesse looks at KJ as the latter opens a big plastic bundle of paper towels. Young KJ is an enthralling beauty. She can bring to the surface a man's strongest desires, and yet the sound of her voice would turn his lust into a fierce desire to protect and to love her. In her simple attire – jeans and a plain gray t-shirt – she is as beautiful as if she wore an elegant gown. Jesse feels a little less worried. She interrupts KJ's activities to give her the package.

"KJ," Jesse says, "This is for you."

KJ looks at Jesse and then at the box before taking it.

"Thank you, Jesse," KJ says. Then she looks toward Anna, who no longer has any supplies to unload. "Anna," KJ says, "I have to try on something while Jesse's here. Could you tell Johnny I'll be back in a little while? He can't see this." KJ smiles a little.

"Yeah, sure," Anna says, "I'll keep him away."

KJ and Jesse withdraw to KJ's bedroom. The door closed, KJ can finally open the box. Jesse knows that there is no way that the wedding dress can be the dress of KJ's dreams. It is the best Jesse can do for her

under the circumstances. She will never tell KJ how much it cost out of her own personal money. It is another sacrifice; another give of love from one white sister to another.

Jesse had no choice but order the dress. It is white, of course. Based on KJ's measurements, it should fit her well, being snug in the chest and rear and a little sexy but in no way vulgar or revealing. The drop veil is long on all sides, to cover KJ's long and thick hair, and the white gloves she chose are shoulder-length. It is an elegant dress, to be sure, but Jesse wanted more. She tells herself that a better dress was beyond her means. It's no consolation.

KJ removes her jeans and t-shirt. Wearing only a thong, she slides into the dress. To Jesse's enormous relief, it fits KJ very well. She looks into the mirror, and then at Jesse. A smile is on her face.

"Is it OK?" Jesse asks, finding it much harder to speak than she anticipated. Her words are barely above a whisper.

"It's beautiful," says KJ, who looks at the dress several times from the front and the back. She tries on the gloves as well.

"Thank you so much, Jesse," KJ says, "Thank you for taking care of this. It means so much to me."

"I hope it's OK," says Jesse, her voice stronger.

"Of course it is," KJ says. She checks out the dress once more in the mirror before taking off the gloves and then the rest.

Once she's wearing her jeans and shirt, KJ sits beside Jesse on the bed. Jesse looks at the tags and ring that hang from the black string around KJ's neck.

"When I was younger, I never imagined my wedding," KJ says.

"No?" Jesse asks, surprised.

KJ shakes her head and smiles for a second. It's not a happy gesture.

"Before I awoke," KJ says, "it just wasn't that important to me. Most women I knew told me I didn't need a man. Of course they meant a white man. The examples they gave of failed marriages were always the man's fault, and he was always white. Marriage, I thought, was for older women with established careers, after they'd had their fill of travel and romance. Then I broke out of the darkness and everything changed."

"Did you think about it then?" Jesse asks, though she fears the answer.

KJ shakes her head.

"A lot of guys would fuck me," KJ says, "and some would say they love me." She shrugs. "A few might think they do. But what if I was myself?"



Not the rebellious tool who pisses off safe targets like good white men and Christians, but KJ Campbell, the girl who defies the privileged and the powerful. My parents once took me to see an ex-porn star, who was giving a speech about men. What if I told that old skank the next time she says white men have small penises, I'd shove her dentures up her ass? What if I told the next black who hit on me to fuck off, he doesn't have a chance because he's black, and I'm not going to look at my children and see the death of my race? What man would love me then? Who would risk being called 'racist' in this insane country to love a woman like me? It would have ripped me apart to imagine my wedding. I didn't think I'd ever find someone like Johnny. There are guys who'd walk the aisle with my body or with a lie that looks like me, but not KJ Campbell. I won't kill who I am, Jesse. I'll just suffer for it."

Jesse takes KJ's hand.

"KJ..." Jesse says.

"But you know," KJ continues, "Something strange happened. I found a man who loves me, KJ Campbell. He loves me, not a lie, not a fool who looks like me. Jesse, I'd walk the aisle with him if all I had was a torn cloth."

Jesse hugs KJ tight.

"Hold on to him," Jesse says, "Hold on tight."

"I'll never let go of him," KJ says and smiles.

The 30th of September dawns and KJ is in bed asleep. Yesterday the four shooters and sentinels were at Coalsack and arrived late at Procyon House. Today they'll rest for a few extra hours, especially in light of what will be a very full day tomorrow. Before going to sleep on Sunday night, KJ thought about the wedding. After one more night she'll no longer sleep alone. After one more night, she will give one of the greatest, if not the greatest, of her gifts to the man who shall make her his one and only wife.

A knock on KJ's inner door prompts her to look at the clock. It is 10 AM. She's been awake for a half hour, but spent the time thinking about the rest of her life. She finds herself dreaming about the little house in the mountains. KJ knows the knock comes from Anna, so she does not put anything on over her bra or underwear when she unlocks the door.

"Hey," says Anna, who is also wearing her night clothes. "You in the mood to talk?"

"Yeah, sure," KJ says, her arm raised and holding on to the door frame.

"Come on in," Anna says, "I grabbed some milk from the refrigerator."

Anna turns to walk to her own little table. Her thick ponytail washes her back in hair and, to KJ's surprise, she too is wearing a thong.

"Are you nervous?" Anna asks after pouring two glasses of milk.

"Bad," KJ says. She smiles for a very brief second and looks down, but her gaze returns to Anna's blue eyes. "This is one of the greatest events of my life," KJ says, "Second only to the birth of our children. I just can't help being nervous."

"I can't either," Anna says, "Was that your dress Jesse brought yesterday?"

KJ nods.

"Yeah," she says, "She's worried it's not perfect. But it doesn't matter. I'm not like those girls who make their men go into debt to feed their egos. We're getting married and that's what matters to me, not how the ceremony looks. Those guys spend money to satisfy a girl's vanity. My man will lay down his life to protect me and my children. I want him to like the dress, yeah, that matters. But I think he will."

Anna smiles.

"That's so nice, KJ," she says, "Have you memorized your vows?"

"Yeah," KJ says.

"I'm so glad the men decided to use traditional vows," Anna says, "We're not feminist sheep who refuse to say all the words. We know what's right."

"And we'll live it," KJ says, "If everything goes right, we'll all be safe. But it won't always go right and that's when our men will rise and fight for us. I fear that moment. But when it happens, we'll really need them. We'll need to do what they say, and we'll need to, like, stand by them. For better and for worse. There's wisdom in those vows that we couldn't see when we lived in blind comfort. For us it's a promise to be loyal and to give love. For them it's an oath to fight and sacrifice for us and our families. Only a fool refuses to honor vows like that. Only a fucking fool."

"Thank you for coming into my life," Anna says, "It feels nice knowing I'm not alone."

Anna squeezes KJ's hand. KJ glances at the mermaid portrait.

"You're not, Anna," KJ says, "When we're done we'll both see that we weren't alone."

Johnny finishes lifting and cuts through the living room. Garret and Rian are inside, drinking the morning's coffee. Johnny pulls up a seat and opens his mineral water. He's ready to speak but finds himself at a loss for words. He's not the only one. Johnny waits for a while but neither Garret nor Rian say a word. Finally he breaks the ice.

"You know," Johnny says, "I've never known an asshole named Roger. I mean, of all the Roger's I've known, not one of them was an asshole."

"How many have you known?" Rian asks.

"Four," Johnny says. He looks up, thinking, and then changes his response. "No, wait, five. Five."

"You know, it's true" Garret says, "I've known two and they're both good guys."

The silence returns for a few moments.

"I guess we're not going to see the ladies much today," Johnny says, "I don't think we're supposed to, anyway."

"No," Garret says.

"Did you tell Bill to put us all together?" Johnny asks.

"Hmm?" Garret says, but the meaning of the question dawns on him in a second.

"Yeah, I asked him to do so," Garret says, "or to send you both someplace far away. But I knew you and KJ would choose to fight."

"I had no idea how Anna would choose," Johnny says, "I knew she wanted to fight, but with Gary and Bryce it must have been really fucking hard on her."

"That's why this feels so strange," Garret says, "They've accepted our proposals, and by doing so they've affirmed that they'll stay and fight." He looks at Rian. "Don't be fooled, Jesse is taking the same kind of risk."

Rian does not respond. His arms crossed, he looks at Garret and then Johnny.

"Get over yourselves, gentlemen," Rian says, "Tomorrow isn't about the war."

"Yeah," Johnny says, "Tomorrow is the best day of our lives. You know, you're pretty perceptive, for a stupid fucking Irishman."

"And you're pretty fucking lucky to have a woman like KJ," Rian says.

"Go on," Johnny says, a little smile on his face.

"Ya feckin' Hun bastard," Rian finishes.

Johnny laughs.

"Nice," he says.

Garret gets back to reading the hockey news. He doesn't make a sound, though he laughs behind the unfolded magazine.

"You're holding that a little high, there, bud," Johnny says, his huge arms folded across his chest.

Since there can be no priest at the weddings, the members of Capricorn Cell will bear witness to the eternal event for each other. On the

night of the 30th, Anna tries on her wedding dress. It is a perfect fit, and is among the most elegant she's ever seen. It was the wedding dress of a miner's wife, which adds to its elegance and beauty. For a moment, Anna feels the sheer agony of the loss of her mother, but the joy of the step she's about to make overwhelms the sadness. Anna sleeps well that night, though she, too, anticipates the time when she'll no longer sleep alone.

Jessica Hanratty has prepared her own dress and all the other trappings necessary for a wedding. Since she and Rian are not fugitives, at least at this time, they can have a honeymoon in the Poconos. Still, a church wedding is impossible, as they must not allow their marriage to become common knowledge. To the outside world, Jesse and Rian may have dated once, but their relationship is over. After the wedding, Jesse will leave through the front door, and she will pick up her husband at the usual spot in the woods. From there they will head north for a three-night stay in the mountains.

All six members of Capricorn Cell, including auxiliary Jessica Hanratty, rise and shower early on Tuesday morning. Yesterday was a day of rest, with a few exceptions, and each member managed eight or so hours of sleep. Today is a different matter entirely. Her hair still damp, KJ, who is dressed in bike shorts and a t-shirt that she will easily shed when the time comes to don her dress, raps on Anna's inner door. The redhead answers on the second knock. Anna is wearing a black summer dress that will likewise come off with ease when the moment to dress arrives. Anna and KJ stand there, looking at one another for a moment and then embrace without saying a word.

"Did you ever think this day would come?" KJ asks her sister.

"It probably sounds like a lie," Anna says, "But for some reason I did."

"For me too?" KJ asks.

Anna falls silent. KJ wasn't part of the premonition.

"It came," Anna says, "That's all that matters."

"Yeah," KJ says, "I'm sorry, I'm just nervous as fuck right now. I just know I'm going to forget something, or trip and fall on my ass."

"He'll catch you when you do," Anna says and smiles.

KJ looks into her eyes.

"Yesterday you thanked me for coming into your life," KJ says, "Thank you for letting me into yours. Everything that happens today is all thanks to you. I owe you my life for that."

"I knew you weren't like the other girls the day I met you," Anna says, "I prayed you'd be strong enough to resist the pressure to go back, and you did. They couldn't have you."

"Only one man will," KJ says.

The five permanent residents of Procyon House meet for breakfast. The two ladies embrace their lovers, but the contact is less intimate than usual, and Johnny kisses KJ's head but not her lips as is their usual display of affection. Though there's been no discussion, open or hushed, between any of the members about such a thing, there is a sense of restraint before the big moment. After today not only will there be no more reason for such restraint, it will become unwise to hold back. For now they share small talk and a light breakfast before attending to various tasks. Johnny and KJ meet in private in the storage room, where he tells her to prepare clothes and necessary items for a three-night stay in the mountains. Still at the table, Garret tells Anna that they'll be remaining at Procyon House, which they'll have to themselves for three days. Rian has already packed a suitcase for his honeymoon in the Poconos. KJ does not know that Johnny has prepared food and drink for their private excursion, or that he requested that Jimmy Ford ready the Jeep Rubicon for their stay near the Roaring Plains. He's asked Ford, via coded email from Garret, to use some of the money that he left him to cover the expenses. That money is independent of the cash that KJ gave to Jimmy.

At 9 AM, Jessica Hanratty pulls up in front of Procyon House. She's wearing a long-sleeve blue dress and a scarf, as the wind has bite today in spite of the 65 degree temperature. A couple of leaves have fallen upon of the stone pathway to the front door. Fall has crept in and will fly by with its usual speed. Jesse carries a large box to the door, setting it on one of two benches that flank the entrance. Once the door is open, Jesse takes the box inside.

The ladies collect in KJ's room. Being the youngest – a month and a half younger than Anna, in fact – KJ will be the first to dress.

"This is the beginning of the rest of our lives," Jesse says, "It's a wonderful, beautiful feeling."

Jesse's hair is untied and free to flow about her chest and back. All three young women leave their hair unfettered by pins or bows.

"Where are you going after your wedding?" Anna asks.

"We've rented a place in the Poconos," Jesse says, "It's beautiful. When my sister was married she thought about staying there for her honeymoon but she got the crazy idea of going to California. She regrets it to this day."

Jesse doesn't mention that the reservations are in her name alone. Rian can stay with her, but he cannot reveal his identity.

"Are you two able to go somewhere?" Jesse asks.

"Anna gets the house," KJ says, "Johnny and I are going to the mountains."

Though she did not imagine her wedding before she became racially conscious, KJ could have imagined her honeymoon. It would be as private as possible, and in a beautiful place surrounded by nature. That is exactly the kind of place where she's headed. She might have imagined a chateau rather than a tent, but that detail means very little to her right now.

Anna finds herself wondering what the closed room looks like. She has no doubt that she'll find out later today.

KJ stands and removes her veil from the bureau. She tries it on in front of the mirror. It is a long drop veil with lace edge and she adores it instantly.

"God, it's beautiful, Jesse," KJ says, emotion creeping into her already unforgettable voice, which affects both Anna and Jesse.

Jesse approaches.

"It's time to get ready," she says, "We'll help each other."

Rian is in his room, dressing up in his absolute finest. His father gave him this suit on the evening he announced his engagement to Jessica Hanratty. Now he will wear it down the hallway, which must serve as their secret aisle. He puts on his tie and looks into the mirror. Rian is getting stronger and it's beginning to show more and more in his physique. The suit, which was too large on him the first time he tried it on, now looks quite good.

John Bowen and Garret Fogarty dress in the living room. Today all the interior doors are closed, and there's an understanding that before opening any of them a person will knock. There will be no ruined surprises on this monumental day.

KJ strips down to her thong and she puts on a white tube bra. Then, with Anna and Jesse assisting her, she dresses for the most important ceremony she will ever experience in her life. Jesse was most worried about the chest of KJ's gown, since the dress is strapless, but the measurements that Jesse took and retook were precise and KJ fills the dress to perfection without any vulgarity. The long gloves are a lovely touch and KJ is very happy with them. Anna fastens the rear of the drop veil with a little pin to KJ's thick hair and leaves the rest of the veil free to drape from the top of her head down to her legs.

Next is Anna, who puts on her mother's wedding dress. She must pause for a moment after donning the gloves in order to regain control of her rising emotions. Her gloves are elbow-length and the dress is traditional and gorgeous, with a lace halter and white floral pattern. Jesse

helps her put on her elbow-length veil and sees her smile through the transparent white.

"I'd hug you right now," Anna says to KJ after turning toward her sister-in-law, "but I'd mess up our dresses."

Instead, KJ takes her hand.

Jesse is used to dressing in wedding gowns, since one of her highest-paid modeling jobs was for an internet bridal store. Anna folds her veil over her head so that she can help her sister, which is not necessary but is much appreciated by the future Mrs. Donnelly. Jesse's gown is a ballroom-style dress and is simply stunning on the brunette beauty. She places her veil, which is the shortest of the three though still long and full enough to cover her from head to chest.

All three dresses are completely and honestly white.

Anna hears a distant knock and the door between the living room and hallway opens. It must be time for the ceremony. Again she feels the rush of emotions, but she smiles instead of weeping. The inevitable knock comes to her bedroom door, though there is no attempt to open the door. Only when the three ladies are in the hallway will the men enter. They will see their future wives at the precise moment when tradition allows. KJ, being youngest, is first into the hall, followed by Anna and then Jesse. The door to the living room is closed but the men have without a doubt gathered on the other side. Jesse calls out to the men.

"Come in, gentlemen," she says.

The door opens and Garret Fogarty enters. He sees his Anna and a gentle smile appears on his face. He does not take her hand at the moment. He has a duty to perform.

Next is Rian Donnelly. He clears the doorway and looks at the beautiful young women who stand shoulder-to-shoulder in the hall. His glance ceases its wandering when it arrives at the woman who shall be his wife. He smiles and winks.

"You're a beautiful sight, my love," Rian says, and Jesse smiles and blushes.

Jesse, used to being complimented for her beauty, takes such words differently when they come from the man she loves. She takes them to heart.

Johnny Bowen, just as dashing and sharp-dressed as the other men, is last to enter the hallway. As much as he would love to observe the elegance of the other two ladies, his eyes find KJ first and do not wander. He is speechless at what he sees. She is beyond beautiful, even beyond the indescribable beauty that she has always been in his eyes. KJ smiles, a

little shy, a little nervous, her love and her passion never far behind. Johnny stands there for a minute and then mouths the word “angel” when she looks at him through her veil.

The men stand opposite the ladies at the far end of the hall. For now Johnny Bowen holds the digital camera that will record a ceremony that means more than anything else to the members of Capricorn Cell. Garret takes a few steps backward so that he might address all of them before the monumental occasion.

“There is a beautiful scene in *Braveheart*, where William Wallace marries his beloved in the dark of night, with a loyal priest giving the Lord’s blessing to their union,” Garret says, “How far we have fallen that we cannot trust a single man of the cloth, so permeated is the clergy by treason and hatred. Today I will give my blessing, and bear witness for the four of you. I ask that one of the men do the same for Anna and me. Should any part of this endeavor be sinful in its nature I cannot see it, but I pray that the sin shall be mine alone. God bless you all, and may he bless our unions for all eternity. Rian, Jesse, since your engagement has stood the test of time and the trials of this war longer than any other, it is your right to walk this aisle first.”

Garret walks through the living room door and continues through the kitchen, until he reappears at the head of the hallway. Rian takes Jesse’s hand and walks her the distance to Garret. As Garret looks upon handsome Rian, he asks the couple to declare their wedding vows. Garret has never had difficulty memorizing long passages though he spent a great deal of time going over the traditional Roman Catholic wedding vows. He hopes to help his brethren, should they stumble over the words in their excitement. He also wishes to recite these vows to Anna without making a mistake in the process. Rian and Jesse recite their vows with eloquence and deep feeling, and there is no need for Garret to intervene.

“What God has joined men must not divide,” Garret says.

Jesse and Rian exchange wedding bands. Once the rings are on their fingers, Rian lifts her veil and kisses his wife. He takes her arm and they walk the hallway to the living room entrance. Both Rian and Jesse stand on the left side, with Johnny Bowen, who looks over at his beloved KJ. It is their turn to walk the aisle. When Rian comes up to him, Johnny gives him the digital camera. From now until the end of the ceremony Rian will photograph the grooms and brides. Very few eyes will ever see these pictures, though among those who do will be Gary Murphy.

Johnny takes KJ’s hand and feels the soft glove that covers her fingers. He looks through the veil and into her blue eyes. For a moment they



transfix him and his longing to embrace her is as strong as it's ever been, even in times when she was suffering. She gives him a little smile and they begin to walk toward Garret.

As is customary, Johnny is first to declare his vows. He does so with a resolute voice. His eyes never look away from hers. The long drop veil reminds him of the times her hair is all around her face and shoulders, just like a wonderful veil. Her hair is down right now and surrounds her beneath the white fabric. He couldn't imagine any other dress being so beautiful on his young bride.

Johnny finishes his declaration of fidelity and eternal love for KJ, and continues to hold her hand and look into her eyes as she begins her own declaration of loyalty and undying affection.

The longing to take her into his arms grows even more with the sound of her voice and the words she utters. KJ pledges to be his and his alone, to love him above all others and to remain loyal to their union for all time. His stoicism gives way to a faint smile. A man's greatest dreams do not often come true and John Ashley Bowen finds it difficult to believe that this is not some magnificent dream.

"For all the days of my life," KJ says at the end of her declaration.

Johnny slides the silver wedding band upon KJ's finger and then lifts the drop veil above her face. She was as close as a woman could be to him before this moment, but now and only now is she truly his. He looks into her passionate eyes and kisses her. She holds on tight for a short while before they return down the secret aisle where Anna, Jesse and Rian wait. Now only one of the ladies still wears a veil over her face.

Johnny kisses KJ once more before letting her gloved hand slip from his grip. He then repeats Garret's movement, passing through the living room and kitchen before appearing at the other end of the hallway. Garret, meanwhile, passes him in the kitchen on his way to joining Anna at the far end of the aisle. Johnny watches as Garret takes Anna's hand, and looks upon the stunning redhead. Garret is familiar with her past and he can imagine that Gary felt the same way he feels when he looked upon his dearest Mary as she wore this exact dress. Anna looks down, and then up into Garret's eyes. She is such a powerful vision of beauty and her sincerity and innocence stir his soul like no other could. The extraordinary beauty of a pale-skinned redheaded girl like Anna is reason enough for Garret to resist at all cost the extinction of those uniquely white traits. That she would have a loving and deeply affectionate soul strengthens Garret's resolve to fight for the future of their race, and the survival of the Murphy Family genetics.

After enjoying the sight of Anna's beautiful face behind the veil, Garret takes her arm and the two walk the aisle toward Johnny Bowen. As they approach, Johnny glances at the drawing of soap flowers that hangs from the wall.

Garret Fogarty declares his vows to Anna Murphy. Jesse watches and wipes the tears of joy and high emotion from her eyes. Like the two other men who share this momentous occasion, neither Garret's words nor his gaze ever wavers as he recites his vows. And like the two men who preceded him down the aisle, Garret means every word that he says.

Like the two women who preceded her, Anna Murphy feels stronger than she has ever felt, and although she shall commit her body and soul to this one man alone, she feels a freedom she has never felt before. This man has pledged his eternal love for her because of who she is, a young white woman who is unafraid to love her brothers and sisters in race and who will not tolerate a threat to their white children. She is free to be Anna Murphy, and to love and honor those who she has chosen to love, without fear of reprisal or ostracism. This man loves her because she is Anna Murphy. He will fight for her and her white children.

Anna declares her vows of marriage while she looks at her beautiful man through the veil, and she continues to look upon him without the wispy barrier as Garret lifts the veil from her face. Johnny Bowen repeats the words "What God has joined men must not divide," and Garret kisses lovely Anna.

The two walk down the aisle toward Jesse, Rian and KJ, followed by Johnny who wraps his arms around KJ as soon as she's in reach. Rian gathers everyone along the wall opposite the little table and chairs. First he finds the best position for the camera, and then programs it to take a photograph. He returns in time to put his arm around Jesse and smile for the photograph. The others embrace and await the little click of the digital camera. When Rian looks into the display panel he sees that the first picture is perfect. To be safe, he and the others pose for two more. The first is still the best.

Everyone hugs at least twice before Jesse and Rian retreat to Rian's bedroom, where she changes into her light dress. KJ and Johnny change as well, since they too will be travelling though not nearly as far as Rian and Jesse. Fortunately, Jesse will be able to make up for lost time at the university, and the two will enjoy three days and three nights of togetherness at a beautiful resort. Jesse wishes everyone well as does Rian, and then she grabs her things and exits through the front door. Rian, suitcase in hand, hurries toward the storage room and the steps downstairs.

KJ hangs her dress in the tall cabinet and stores her veil in a special bag that Jesse gave to her. She grabs much less elegant clothes for the journey to the mountains, though she plans on wearing much more interesting apparel once they retire to their tent.

Anna does not remove her wedding dress. She and Garret sit at the kitchen table as the others make haste. When KJ comes into the kitchen, Anna rises and the two sisters embrace. It starts with a firm hug, but the two ladies squeeze tighter and tears begin to flow from KJ's closed eyes. Garret watches her, and understands why his brother loves her so very much. Anna kisses her on the side of the head and whispers into her ear. Garret does not try to listen, but cannot avoid hearing the faint words.

"Go love him," are the words that Anna tells KJ.

The pair separates, and KJ smiles through the tears. She turns and grabs Garret's forearm. He puts his right hand upon hers.

"God bless you, KJ," Garret says, smiling at the young angel.

KJ lets go of Garret and rushes off toward her room. She's in jeans and a t-shirt now, but she wants to grab a few more items of clothes that will no doubt prove pleasing to her husband's eye. That being done, KJ loads her shoulder bag and grabs it, her backpack and her pistol. Though she wears her wedding band, the black string with the tags and silver ring is around her neck. KJ puts on a pair of tall black boots and elbow-length black gloves and hurries through the hallway and living room to the storage room, where Johnny Bowen awaits.

Both Anna and Garret hear the faint sound of the downstairs door closing. She lays her veil on the table and runs her hand along the white silk. She looks up at Garret and a little smile forms on her face. He reaches over and runs his finger down the cleft in her chin. When he rises she does as well, and he walks to the door of the only room she has not seen. The men have been inside, to clean she assumes, but always shut the door and locked it once they emerged. Garret unlocks the door and leaves it very slightly ajar. He steps over to Anna and sweeps her up into his arms. She holds on tight as he shoves the door with his foot and maneuvers her around the doorway. Her arms around his neck, Anna looks at the splendor of the secret room. She expected it to be lovely but her expectations were too low.

In the right-center of the room, with its headboard against the wall, is a fabulous queen-sized canopy bed with drapes and bedspread decorated with roses. There is a tall dresser and a door to the left that leads to a private bathroom, much like the other bedrooms. The walls are adorned with pictures: prints of Parrish's *Misty Morn*, Courbet's *The Young Ladies*

of the Village, Watts' *Choosing* and Fragonard's *The Storm*. Two Bibles sit on the nightstand; one in the Irish, one in French.

"We have the room and the house, and the forest if we want, for the next three days," Garret says.

Anna looks into his eyes and smiles.

Garret lays her on the bed but does not join her. That will come later. First she'll enjoy the sights of the room, and then they will create a culinary feast for two. After supper, they will retire to her room to listen to music and spend a couple of hours that will begin with little shows of affection and intimacy and that will grow ever more powerful and intense. Then, Garret will carry her once more to the special room.

Anna notices candles beneath the drawer of the nightstand. There are no clocks, and for some reason it makes her happy.

The trip from Procyon House to the hidden campsite, which is south of the Roaring Plains near Seneca Creek, will take a little over two and a half hours. Even considering that the month is October and the sky is overcast, Johnny and KJ will have more than enough daylight time to set up their tent at the back of the Rubicon and to build a fire for supper. Tomorrow they'll spend time at the creek, which will be cool and clear beneath gray, drizzly skies. It will be a source of water for washing – Johnny requested a pot for boiling water and several collapsible jugs for storing it – and for some fun.

In spite of the less than optimal water temperature and the general shallow nature of the creek, the water isn't freezing yet, and there are some very deep holes, especially in the wide area near the waterfall. Depending on how much fun they have there, the newlyweds might hike to the Roaring Plains, though that excursion is much more likely to take place on Tuesday.

The route that Johnny takes winds through the Spruce Knob and Seneca Rocks area, perhaps the most beautiful natural panorama that the Mountain State has to offer. He is tempted to stop at the rocks but he knows better than tempt fate to the point of mockery. A passer-by might just recognize him or KJ, and the risk would be greater at a popular natural landmark like Seneca Rocks. He's glad that Ford loaded the Rubicon and attached the Jeep trailer. There will be no need to visit any of the little villages and have KJ make purchases. Johnny doesn't allow himself to forget that he's wanted in West Virginia, and KJ herself is at the very least a runaway. The license plate on the back of the Rubicon is not the original. Jimmy Ford has replaced it with one that he managed to come across a few months ago.

When the road straightens for a little stretch, Johnny reaches over and runs his hand down KJ's back, not stopping until it finds her jeans. This time he does not retreat, but finds the space between her thong and the pants that cover it.

Anna and Garret are busy in the kitchen. He's changed into jeans and a sharp-looking collared shirt, with ochre, brown and black colors fit for autumn. Anna wears a frilly black dress that manages to flare outward a little and yet hug her in all the important places. Underneath her dress, she wears only a thong, even though she is quite a buxom young woman. If she planned on wearing the dress for the rest of the evening she'd certainly wear a bra. Anna and Garret begin making a celebratory supper during which they will drink not only to one another, but to all of those dear to them. When Anna opens the refrigerator she sees that two lemon carrageen desserts are waiting for after the meal. Jimmy special-ordered the carrageen, and Garret, possibly with Johnny's help, must have made the delights sometime last night or yesterday. It brings a little smile to Anna's face. Although she's not in Clifden or on the Aran Islands, Anna feels no disappointment or sense of loss. He would take her if he could.

In no time Johnny and KJ raise the tent at the back of the Rubicon and turn its spacious interior into a comfortable bedroom. Nestled in the perfect spot along a Jeep trail, their campsite is out of sight of Seneca Creek but within easy walking distance to the clear waters of the trout stream. Johnny hangs the camp shower and sets up a curtain, though the woods provide enough cover around the shower site to make his act more symbolic than necessary. He makes a final check of the tent supports. It is anchored very well. The tent could easily fit 5 persons. For two, one of whom is a young lady of shorter-than-average stature, it will have ample space for much more than sleeping.

KJ looks up at the leaves. Many are yellow and most show signs of the impending explosion of color. She closes her eyes and fills her lungs with the clean air. She could be miserable in Victoria, with a man who does not love KJ Campbell, or she can be in this splendid little place, far from those who would hate her for being honest and perceptive, together with the man who she will adore for all the days of her life. There was a time she would have thought "fuck them," but today "they" don't even cross her mind.

Darkseed's *Winter Noon* finishes on the speakers and Gloria Furey's *Maggie* begins. The playlist is a mixture of Anna's and Garret's songs. Anna chose titles she thought he'd like, or at least not hate; he did the same. They sit on her bed listening to the music. His arm is around her.

"I wish I'd thanked your father more often," Garret says, "He raised such an amazing and understanding young woman, and he deserves a lot of credit for that."

"He does," Anna says. She kisses Garret's cheek. "Thank you, Garret."

Garret looks up at the Waterhouse painting and smiles for a moment.

"I'd take you to the Berkshires and then we'd go to the mother country," Garret says, "I'd have bought you one of those realistic tails so you could be a real mermaid the next time we went swimming. We'd do that sometime tomorrow."

Anna puts her hand on his knee and he looks into her eyes.

"I know you'd do everything nice for me," Anna says, "But you can't. You chose to do something vital for our children, and that means so much more to me, Garret."

He runs his hand through her red mane.

"I know, Red," Garret says, "I wish I could do both."

His hands find her cheeks and he kisses her. It lasts for a long while.

Johnny's experience shows in the seasoning, and the flame-kissed steaks, juicy and rare but not cold, are a delicacy. So, too, are the rehydrated bolete mushrooms and the tomato salad he made while KJ was sleeping this morning. September tomatoes outclass other garden bounty and these came from Hacksaw's chemical-free garden. Simple and excellent, Johnny's meal is a great delight for both husband and wife.

After the meal, Johnny opens a bottle of Dom Perignon that he hid downstairs a few days after they moved into Procyon House. He knew there'd be a good reason for opening it someday.

"Wait," KJ says as he's about to make a toast, "Just once, let me make the toast. And please, Johnny, don't add anything or change anything, alright? Just touch my glass and drink, OK? Promise?"

"OK, angel," Johnny says.

"To the man of my dreams," KJ says, "To the hero, to the lover who isn't afraid to fight or to show his affection for the woman he loves. To the man who I am blessed to know and who I will love for all time. To him, to his health and happiness, and to the day that we can have a family in peace."

Johnny honors his promise, and they drink the champagne. He then takes her into his arms and kisses her head.

"There is always a passion in your voice," Johnny says, "No matter what you're saying. It's always there. I always cherished my sight above all the other senses, but when I hear your voice I wonder if I should."

"I love you, my husband," KJ says from his chest.

Rian and Jesse have rented a chalet north of Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania. When Rian drives the Suzuki on to the grounds of the resort, he and Jesse see the little houses. Nestled among pines on the mountain-side are white chalets with peaked black roofs. It is a gorgeous sight and well worth the travel time. The newlyweds will unpack and change into more formal attire before having supper at an excellent restaurant in Blakeslee. Then they will return to their quiet little refuge, where they can be alone together, far from fear and foreboding. After Jesse checks in and returns to the car with the key to the chalet, Rian drives her up the winding road to the front door. He carries his smiling wife to the entrance before setting her down and unlocking the door. Then, the door wide open, he removes his glasses, takes Jesse into his arms and kisses her.

At Procyon House, the first light of evening is fading. The musical playlist that Anna and Garret prepared is all but over. She is now on his lap and her arms are around his shoulders. He lifts the thick red strands from around her face and lets them fall back into place.

"It's selfish to want you here, rather than somewhere safe and far away," Garret says, "But I do want you here."

"A woman needs a man," Anna says, "and a man needs his wife. I had a choice and I stayed."

Garret lifts Anna as he stands to his feet. They enter the hallway, where today they declared their eternal union, beneath the flowers that KJ drew and the cross that Anna hung before the ceremony. He carries her through the kitchen door and sets her on her feet outside the beautiful room. She walks inside, turns and takes his hand, leading him across the threshold. Inside, they kiss. Then she takes several steps toward the opposite wall, turns and looks at him. Anna is so very beautiful. Her red hair is all around her and her pale skin and blue eyes shine like those of a goddess; a goddess of love and honor. Her profile toward him, she turns her head to look upon her husband. And then she slides the black dress off of her beautiful body. Ivy was never so lovely to Garret Fogarty as it is now. Nor was it ever so sacred or precious.

Johnny rubs KJ's back as the two sit in their tent. It's been rather warm for October, though the sky is a perfect solid overcast with mist and drizzle. A faint rumble of thunder adds to the atmosphere of closeness. Late tonight and during the early morning there will be thundershowers and rain, and tomorrow it will be cooler, though still cloudy and perfect. KJ's removed her jeans to reveal a black thong, though her t-shirt is still on her body.

"That's so nice," KJ says as his hands caress her shoulders, "Thank you, Johnny."

"I love to rub you," Johnny says and kisses her shoulder.

Then he kisses her head and smells her hair.

KJ rises on her knees and, her back still toward Johnny, she removes her top. Other than the small part that is beneath the thong's waistband, her wings are uncovered and he can see every stroke of every feather.

"As God is my witness, angel," Johnny says, "No one ever deserved wings like you do, and yours are the most beautiful I've ever seen."

Johnny touches her wings, tracing the feathers all the way down to her rear. Then KJ faces him and he does not turn and walk away. He pulls her close and she moves to sit on his lap. From there she unbuttons and helps him remove his shirt, leaving him wearing only a pair of jeans. KJ traces his scar and then nuzzles and cuddles him.

"You were so beautiful in your dress and veil," Johnny says and she smiles, "It was perfect, angel." He kisses her head again.

"It was," KJ says, "I couldn't have dreamt of a wedding more beautiful than this one. Not in the largest cathedral or forest, not with thousands of guests. That's always fake, anyway. This was real. The people who love me were there, and the man I love, the only man who will ever have me."

"A part of me wishes I could have taken you to Victoria or Seattle," Johnny says, "Of course it's natural for a man to want to do something special for his woman. But that part is small, you know? I think this is better. It's real and it's just, us."

"It's so much better," KJ says, looking into his green eyes, "I don't need it to be a show. I just need it to be honest." A little smile grows on her face. "And it is," she says as she touches his cheek.

KJ straddles him and they kiss. He caresses her back, and she wraps her arms tight around her mate.

Rian awaits his wife in the bedroom of the chalet. Everything in the room is visual elegance, from the twin bed to the wooden ceiling and its engraved boards. Elegant, too, is the lingerie that Jesse wears as she enters. Rian leaves aside any thought of the room or its décor when he sees his gorgeous wife approach. He rises from the bed and takes her into his arms. His masculine passions have burned for this night since their relationship became serious. Now she is his, and he will take her this night. Jesse's passion and desire equal those of her husband. Her hands are warm and caress him with slow and deliberate motion. Rian presses Jesse tightly to his body and they kiss.



The tent is high enough for Johnny to stand, let alone KJ. This they do, and again they share a passionate kiss.

"Turn for me," Johnny tells her and she does.

Once more he looks upon her wings and the rest of her immaculate body, so white and strong yet soft and feminine, the perfection of diligent exercise and knowing when to stop lest her femininity be destroyed. As a hungry young adolescent, Johnny dreamt of conquering a woman of great sexual attractiveness. He had no idea that his flesh-and-blood wife would not only be the fiery and affectionate creature that stands before him, she would exceed those women in sheer sexuality and physical beauty. He turns her around to face him and holds her tight, his hands just where they need to be for a gentle show of affection.

"I love you so much, Johnny," KJ whispers.

Johnny kisses her neck, letting her hair brush every part of his face and shoulders and loving the feeling and the faint, clean smell.

Darkness falls upon Seneca and the ancient stones of Appalachia, and upon the hidden tent where a man and his wife shall sanctify their union before the coming of dawn's light. This night belongs to KJ and Johnny, and it is theirs for all time.

KJ awakens from her blissful slumber. Rain is falling and the soft beat against the tent is soothing. She keeps her eyes open to avoid its lullaby-effect. By the light outside, it's just after dawn. With her head on Johnny's breast and her hand on his stomach, she feels his chest rise and fall. She closes her eyes and nuzzles him. His right arm rises and his hand squeezes her left bicep. She sighs with the pleasure of being close to him, and now she is truly free from her past life.

"Isn't that nice?" KJ says, "The pitter-patter of rain on the tent. You couldn't have planned a better honeymoon."

She kisses his chest and he caresses her.

"No, I couldn't," Johnny says, "My little wife, anytime I used to hope for this it really, really hurt. I didn't think I'd ever wake up with your head on my chest."

"You will now," KJ says and smiles, her eyes now open again. "You don't have to leave anymore at night." She rubs his well-toned stomach. "My bed's far too big for one person."

Johnny is quiet for a while. The rain continues its gentle drumbeat and he strokes her arm and hair.

"Angel," Johnny says, pausing for a while, "They'll kill me someday."

"I know," KJ says, "We kill our heroes. I think that's one reason we suffer so much."

"I love you, angel," Johnny says, "I always will."

KJ closes her eyes and nuzzles his chest. It's too early to get up this morning, and she is in ecstasy laying this close to him. They can rise later.

"I love you, too, my hero," KJ says, and lets the rain sing her back to sleep.

The three days are wonderful. North of Gettysburg the sky remains mostly cloudy, with large white and gray masses of cumulus that promise fair weather and pleasant temperatures. South of the Mason-Dixon Line, a dying weather system resists the sun and the skies remain gray and black. It is perfect for all three pairs of newlyweds. But with such pleasantness and joy in each other's company, comes an unavoidable acceleration of time. As quickly as they can forget about the war, the dawn of the final day of their honeymoons brings back the realization that they cannot avoid its resumption.

On the drive back, Johnny turns on the radio for the forecast. The dull-witted weatherman laments another day without sunshine, prompting the annoying DJ to sing an off-key line from the song "You are My Sunshine." Johnny turns on the iPod.

*You're not my sunshine, Johnny, KJ thinks, you're my storm.*

She reaches over and rubs his leg.

"My angel," Johnny says and smiles.

Once they arrive at Procyon House, Johnny Bowen parks the Jeep near the drop-off spot, hiding it among the trees. Soon it will be more difficult to camouflage a vehicle, but not impossible. As he and KJ unload the Jeep, Johnny begins collecting the clothes that need washing.

"I'll take care of that," KJ says.

Johnny looks at her for a moment. She smiles but it fades.

"I didn't accept their lies, Johnny. I'll wash the clothes," KJ says, "I'm a woman, and that's what I want to be."

"I'll carry them in for you," Johnny says.

Her smile returns.

"That'd be nice," KJ says.

After the chores are over and KJ and Johnny come to the stairway door, Johnny takes her in his arms and they kiss. Before opening the door Johnny pushes the little buzzer that announces their arrival to Anna and Garret, who leave the kitchen and wait for their brother and sister in the storage room. It's almost 3PM on Friday the 4th.

KJ, who is first through the door, looks at Anna and smiles. Anna rushes toward her and they embrace. With her hand behind KJ's head, Anna closes her eyes and hugs her sister tight. There is another bond

they share, thanks to the two of them now being married women, and Johnny being as dear as a brother to Anna.

"We'll take care of supper," Garret says, "You two unpack and relax."

Once Johnny and KJ do so, and segregate their used and unused clothes and items, they remove their shoes – in her case, boots – and depart for her room. They take turns in the shower, with him graciously insisting on showering second. Afterward, he takes his wife by her shoulders and looks deep into her blue eyes. A hungry little smile is on his face. He has yet to put on his shirt.

"We don't always have to take turns in the shower," Johnny says.

KJ laughs a little in her discrete fashion and then mouths the word "no" and bats her eyelids.

Rian will be returning on Sunday. He'll spend two nights at Jesse's apartment in Morgantown. It's a smallish place, but the bed is large enough for two. She hoped he could visit her sometime, after the biggest day of their lives. They spend most of Friday afternoon travelling south from Stroudsburg. In the Laurel Highlands more of the leaves are beginning to change and the beauty of the region will rival the mountains of West Virginia as October speeds to a conclusion. Though it's still too early for their most radiant colors, the trees from the Poconos to Point Marion are a lovely sight.

On Friday night, Johnny and KJ listen to music from her iPod and speakers. She sits on his lap, as usual, wearing a tank top and thong. There is a fundamental difference with the past. Though they will not make love tonight, John Ashley and Kaylee Jane Bowen will sleep in the same bed, her body entwined with his.

Anna and KJ resume their exercise routines on Saturday morning. The two engage in aerobics, while sharing the memories of their honeymoons that each is comfortable with discussing. Though sisters now, there are memories that must remain between man and wife alone. Anna tells KJ about the secret room, but not much of what took place there. That is her and Garret's cherished memory.

Jimmy Ford arrives while the ladies are exercising. He unloads the weekly supplies and informs Johnny that last night he and Austin Kelly secured the Rubicon. The next time Johnny sees his old Jeep, it will be black. Garret brews coffee and brings them each a cup.

"There's one more thing," Ford says.

He knows they've just had their honeymoons, and the task at hand is loathsome to him, but he must carry through with it. The war has not paused. Jimmy is glad, however, that the women are not present.

As the three drink their coffee, Ford removes seven little boxes from his backpack. Each is made of opaque green plastic and a little larger than a matchbox. There are no labels or lettering on any of them.

"What's this?" Garret asks.

He hears Johnny breathe deep.

"That's fucking death," Johnny says.

Garret looks at Jimmy for a moment. There are seven. Ford takes two and puts them into his pocket.

"Capricorn won't talk," Jimmy says, "And neither will Orion."

Johnny grabs a box and puts it into his pocket. Garret takes two. This prompts Johnny to take a second box. This one he does not grab. Garret takes the final box and rises with it in his hand. He stores the box in a drawer along the countertop.

"I'll see that Rian gets it," Garret says.

There is silence. Then Johnny thanks Ford.

"Don't," Jimmy says, "I hate this as much as you do."

Ford leaves before the ladies finish their aerobics. Today he simply does not want to see them.

That evening, Johnny is late to bed. KJ is lying down, reading her book on schematics when he enters. She removes the sheet and lies on her elbow, her hand on her head and a smile on her face. She's wearing the thong bodysuit she requested from Jesse.

Johnny Bowen sits on the bed without removing his jeans. KJ's smile disappears. She sits up and puts her chin on his shoulder.

"What's wrong, Johnny?" KJ asks.

"I have something for you," Johnny says in a low voice.

Garret is not late for bed but he chooses a similar moment to present the little box. He rises from the bed where they were lying. Anna has her hand on his chest. She'd been smiling and caressing him, but soon realized that he was perturbed. She lets him choose the moment to reveal the reason.

Garret's pants lie neatly folded on one of the wooden chairs. From the pocket he removes the two little boxes. He sets one of them on the table. The other he takes over to the bed.

"What's that, sweetheart?" Anna says, now sitting up in the bed.

Garret sits on the edge and faces her. She takes the box and looks at it and then at her husband.

"Go ahead," Garret says.

Anna opens the little green box. Inside are four capsules. Anna looks up at Garret.

"Carry that with you on every mission," Garret says, "I am too. Johnny is and he's giving one to KJ. There's one for Rian, too. We cannot betray each other, but we know they'll force us to if they capture us. We can't do that to each other."

Garret does not look into her eyes when he speaks of this. It's one of the very few times she remembers him doing that.

Anna closes the box and places it inside the nightstand drawer.

"I understand, Garret," Anna says, "I'll put it with my gear."

Garret nods and slides into bed. She runs her hand down his chest and lies close to him. KJ isn't the only one with a beautiful bodysuit, though the one Anna wears tonight is white and although form-fitting all around, is not a thong. Garret turns his head to look into her eyes.

"You look beautiful, Anna," he says, and she smiles.

KJ will sometimes sleep with her head on Johnny's chest, at least for part of the night. For Anna, who stays close to her husband but is more apt to lay her hand rather than her head upon him, it will be a very rare event for her to sleep with her head upon Garret's chest, though tonight she does. The war that none of them want, but each of them must pursue, has returned with an ugly and insidious vengeance. Anna asks if he minds her head being upon his chest, and he assures her that he does not.

In early October, Mason Walker still shows the signs of his late-August trip to Cape Hatteras. His hair is more blond than usual and his skin is golden in color. So is his girlfriend, who he hopes will be his fiancée sometime in the next year. Today Mason has a meeting with none other than Bill Donnelly at Diamond Crossing. It is Saturday and the club was closed last night, pending a change in management.

Mason drives his gray Kia Forte through Murrysville and on toward Diamond, a little to the east on U.S. 22. He turns left into the secluded, tree-surrounded lot where Diamond stands. It won't seem the same without Anna and Rian. Or KJ for that matter; it never will, he supposes.

The gate is open and a familiar green Cherokee sits in the parking lot. Mason parks to the left and hops out. Today he dressed in casual business attire – a rust-colored shirt and slacks. This is a business meeting, after all.

Bill is alone inside Diamond. He greets Mason at the door. Bill's lost weight in a good way and he looks healthy and strong. His hair isn't any grayer though perhaps the lines on his face are a little deeper. He, too, considers this a business meeting, since he's wearing a jacket and tie. Bill shakes Mason's hand with vigor and the two sit at a small table by the storeroom double doors.

"It's good to see you, Mason," Bill says as he opens a folder that was on the table. "I was up to see my son last week. He's very pleased with your interest in taking over Diamond Crossing."

Bill wants to ask about Rian and Jesse, Garret, Anna, KJ and Johnny, but Mason would know even less than he does.

"I'd like to keep the same staff, if I can," Mason says, "I talked to Robert and he says he wants to keep working Fridays."

McKenna wishes to remain a part of Diamond's security.

"Of course," Bill says, "You're the owner, Mason. Diamond is all yours."

Mason, startled by the revelation that he will not share ownership, looks at Bill for a moment.

"I do hope you'll keep playing the same dreadful music that our side seems to favor," Bill says.

He smiles and Mason laughs.

"Yeah," Mason says, "That's one thing I'll do right."

"You'll do a lot more that's right," Bill says, "But be sure to tell me if it gets to be too much for you. I'll be visiting Sinead and my relations for Christmas. That means I'll be gone for December and part of January. If you think you'll be having any difficulty you might want to keep the place closed until the New Year."

"OK," Mason says, "But I hate to ask, what about money? I can't afford to run this place by myself."

"My son and I will help with the finances as long as we're able," Bill says, "When we no longer can, I'll let you know, and you can do as you see fit. The place is yours, Mason. If worse comes to worst, sell the club and the property."

"I hope I won't have to," Mason says, "I understand the reason for this place."

That next Friday, *Chrionex* returns to Diamond Crossing. Though a hate speech bill has recently become law, David Hill does not temper his lyrics and no one comes to arrest him or the men of the band.

Capricorn Cell continues their routines. They exercise, lift weights, dry-fire and travel to Coalsack and other remote places for live-fire training. There are occasional patrols, including night excursions, completed just as much for privacy's sake as for actual observational experience. Johnny is relentless with Garret when in the field and he is making a sentinel out of his blond brother. On occasion the two shooters and two sentinels must remind themselves that the relative peace of the moment is not only the calm before a storm, it is treacherous and could change with-

out warning. Such a false peace must not be internalized lest the cell members allow their guard to become lax. This is so important to Garret, that they have three meetings about maintaining vigilance.

The “secret room” becomes a place for special occasions. Garret has a discussion with Anna, KJ and Johnny and they agree that in the future, when Rian will no longer be able to visit Jesse on the weekend, the Donnelly pair will have the room should they wish on Friday nights. Otherwise, the Fogarty’s and Johnny’s will alternate on a weekly basis. This includes not only use of the room, but cleaning and washing the room and the bedding. Garret spoke to Johnny about the alternating plan a little before their meeting. For Saturday, October 26th, Anna and Garret will have the room to themselves should they so decide. The reason was not one of selfishness; it is the last weekend before KJ’s birthday, and Garret thought it appropriate to give her and Johnny the room for that Saturday. During the meeting, KJ does not challenge the decision. She quickly realizes the reasoning based on the date and smiles when Anna looks at her.

The day of October 26th is not kind to Garret Fogarty. The night before, he continued his intense internet research, burning the midnight oil until he could no longer look at the screen without nodding off. On Saturday he and Jimmy Ford replace a defective light fixture while Johnny and KJ make supper and Anna does some sweeping and dusting. Today the internet service is down for a few hours and Garret decides to clean the Armalite rifles. While doing so, a tired Garret Fogarty pinches his finger between the rifle and the clip. He rubs his finger in vain; a blood blister is certain to form.

In fact, Garret has had a few long days in a row. So at eight in the evening, while Johnny and KJ watch *The Great Raid* and Rian is in Morgantown with Jesse, Garret comes into his and Anna’s bedroom and opens the drawer with her intimates. She continues reading as he looks through her clothes. Once he finds an ensemble of his liking, he lays it beside her on the bed. She looks at him and a little smile grows on her face. Anna closes her copy of “Flowers for Algernon and Other Stories” and she rises from the bed, where Garret takes her into his arms. He carries his wife – with the lingerie – to the secret room and lays her on the canopy bed. The bedding that was present when Anna and Garret first slept in the bed, the night that Garret Fogarty took her for his own, is washed and dried and graces the bed once again.

“I’ll be right back,” Garret says.

It’s a hint for her to change into the lingerie, which Jesse just brought for Anna and which she hasn’t had time to examine. The sexy outfit con-

sists of two pieces: a black bodysuit that covers her from neck to toe, and a black thong bottom. The bodysuit, although black, is sheer. Anna closes her eyes and laughs a little from embarrassment, but does not resist putting on the sensual apparel.

Garret pours two shot glasses of Jameson and grabs a bottle of Saratoga water. He walks to the closed door of the secret room, which he left unlocked. Once it's open he stops, glasses and bottle in his arms, and looks upon the stunning young woman who smiles at him from her standing position beside the bed. She turns and takes her hair into her hand. Garret shakes his head and sighs. She's becoming more beautiful by the day.

It is a sad necessity that all six members of Capricorn Cell must try and prevent something that each of them strongly desires to have and to experience. It is, however, a necessity during the first phase of the war. The men have decided that they will assume the responsibility of preventing a pregnancy during the time of combat, before they can alter their campaign and move on to Elysium. There, at least, they might live in relative peace, at least enough peace to have children. None of the women have ever expressed a desire to use any type of birth control pill to prevent pregnancy and the men are in complete agreement with them. None of the women will take carcinogenic hormones. For now, the men take whatever precaution they must to fulfill their unfortunate but necessary task, wearing prophylactics of the highest quality and comforting themselves and their wives with the knowledge that, barring tragedy, this is a temporary situation.

There is another reason the men take care of this essential preventative measure: the temptation for the women to neglect their preparations and become pregnant will not be as potent. But aside from giving them his strongest imploration to be careful, Garret can only hope that the men will take the necessary measures and that the women will remind them even as passions flare. He has to rely on trust, and this he does. Should a pregnancy nonetheless occur, they will have no choice but to alter their plans. He is not the only one resolved in that conclusion: the life that grows inside of his wife, KJ or Jesse will at that time be more important than continuing active combat operations. There is no exception to that rule.

The last week in October is a time of growing elation for Johnny Bowen. Though the leaves are well past their prime and the march of seasons will not slow until it pushes the world through Christmas and into the bleak winter, the 1st of November is the birthday of his beloved KJ. This will be the first birthday she'll celebrate away from the Campbell House,



away from the oppressive ideological conformity of public school and from those who do not love her for who she is. It is the one year anniversary of her crossing the threshold into womanhood, and one month since they were wed. The only unease that Johnny Bowen feels is the usual one. When they are ready, they will go to war, and KJ will be there with a gun. He is already a fugitive. By Johnny's reckoning, Garret soon shall be as well. The enemy will use their wives to get to them if they possibly can.

The sun on the morning of the 1st rises in mostly clear and cool skies. It will be around 50 F today with a few cirrus strands on the endless blue. Inside, the Bowen's bedroom is comfortable and quiet. Johnny excused himself a little earlier, and KJ curled up in the blanket, awaiting his return. She sank back into slumber and remains sleeping as he finishes the last preparations for her birthday. Anna and Garret join him, as does Rian eventually. Before Johnny left the bedroom, he turned off the alarm clock. First of all he will do something he's wanted to do but has yet to accomplish: he will serve her breakfast in bed.

Johnny takes the wooden tray with orange juice, cranberry-poached apples and a couple of Scotch eggs, and sets it on the table in the hallway. He cracks the door to see if his beloved is awake. She is not. He can see her face, eyes closed, and her chestnut hair that contrasts with the white sheets. The strands that drape over her face make it look like she's wearing a veil. He knocks on the door, the first knock being soft so that he does not frighten her. KJ awakens on the third. Her mind is quick to realize who's there and she smiles.

"Good morning, angel," Johnny says, "Happy birthday."

"Thank you, Johnny," KJ says.

KJ looks at her husband. In his jeans and collared blue shirt he looks very handsome and as solid as stone. She knows that those iron muscles can be so tender with her, and the thought makes her hug herself before she stretches.

Johnny brings her the tray. She looks at it and then up at him.

"Johnny, thank you so much," KJ says, her deep feelings apparent in her expression.

He climbs on the bed and sits beside her. Her sleeveless t-shirt shows her strong arms, whose skin is the equal to Anna's in whiteness. He does not believe it possible for skin to be more fair or flawless. He kisses her shoulder and then sits up straight so that she can eat uninterrupted.

"Do you like that?" Johnny asks after she tries the egg and smiles at him.

"Yeah," KJ says, "It's really good. It's so sweet of you to do this."

The guys who would fuck her would not do this, nor would they care for the great emotional effect it has on her inner being. This man understands the effect of a loving gesture. The other guys might buy her objects and adornments in the hopes of possessing her until their pleasure fades or time robs her of her astounding beauty. This man found her a refuge when she needed it most. He did not give her money so that he could conquer her body. He gave her his money so that she could flee from a war that she could not forsake, but his love for her drove him to make the offer anyway. Instead of trying to possess her for his own desires he offered her a means to escape a war that he himself cannot escape, perhaps not ever.

Johnny stays until she's finished her breakfast. He kisses her and takes the tray, and she thanks him again and tells him she loves him. KJ watches him leave the room. Before showering and changing, she takes the black string from the nightstand and kisses the tags.

Johnny returns before KJ exits the bathroom. He waits until she does. He'd like to escort her to the living room, where the others will give her the gifts that they requested and Jesse bought from the pool of money that each and every member collected. KJ emerges wearing a pair of jeans and a *Sheer Terror* t-shirt. She'll change clothes later. KJ figures that the others will make a special supper for her and Johnny. She's right. She also knows that she'll change clothes at least once more today.

KJ looks down as Johnny approaches her. A little smile is on her face. He puts his hands on her shoulders and then pulls her close to him. Her hair is still damp and it smells wonderful.

"Happy birthday, angel," Johnny says, "Our four buddies are going to make us supper. God, how I'd take you someplace nice today, but they'd take you away from me if I tried."

"No, they wouldn't," KJ says, "They might try, but I won't allow it. They'll never take me away from you."

Johnny opens the door that leads from the hallway to the living room and lets KJ enter first. Jesse, Rian, Anna and Garret are there, as are several gifts on the large wooden table. Each gift is wrapped in blue, white or candy-striped paper with large bows and ribbon. It is a beautiful sight in its own right, and it touches KJ deep in her soul.

KJ knows little about Jesse's politics, whether she's an environmentalist like KJ, or if she thinks that health care and assistance for destitute whites is a necessary government function. She does know that Jesse stands with her white brothers and loves her white race. She knows Jesse will help her and Johnny fight for their race's survival. Whether she agrees

with KJ that the wealthy should pay more in taxes, or that imports should have a tariff, or that there should be a strong EPA is irrelevant at this time. They both love their brothers, their race and all unborn white children, and that is what matters most.

To the Campbell's and the Chapman's, KJ's love of her race made her more than a pariah. She became dead to them, or worse, a living embarrassment. It didn't matter that her relations and their friends usually agreed with KJ on other topics of political and social interest. Even before KJ began questioning atheism and abhorring the abortion of white babies, her relations began to shun and in some cases despise her due solely to her opinions on race. She wanted her race, the white race, to survive and prosper and that was the darkest of desires to the members of her family. She's had birthdays with many presents, given by those who thought she'd follow their anti-white religion. Once they realized the sincerity of KJ's love and conviction, her relations ceased celebrating her birthday. They gave gifts, but often those gifts were unwrapped or the wrapping was impersonal, like empty boxes wrapped for an advertisement. Her family did not cherish her for who she is, or the love that burned inside of her. None of them, not even the ones who could speak to her with civility, cared for her as does Anna, or Jesse, Garret or Rian. None came close to valuing her like Johnny Bowen. Rian Donnelly may not worry about the future of a pine forest in Washington State, but he cares enough about white children – his and Jesse's, and KJ's – to risk his life in this war. As KJ sits down in front of the gifts, she does not forget this beautiful truth, not for an instant.

Rian and Jesse hand her a box that must contain a gift of clothing, based on the size and weight. She looks at them and smiles, and Jesse touches her cheek. Inside is a dark brown Moncler jacket with smooth panels and a high neck. It will keep her warm on winter patrols or hikes with Johnny. KJ admires the jacket, which may have been on sale but still must have cost quite a bit of money.

Then KJ recognizes the brand. She's owned them before.

"This cost too much!" KJ says, holding it in her gloved hands.

"Shh!" Jesse says. It's all any of them say on the subject.

Anna and Garret are next to give their sister a present. Garret holds his wife from behind as they watch KJ open the gift. The box is large and contains a medley of items, from mundane but necessary clothing and garments, to a pair of sunglasses and 4 sets of high-quality ear buds. The objects have little meaning to KJ, though she will use and enjoy them. It is the fact that these people are giving her gifts because they value her

that means the most to the young warrior. She knows that if she had followed the path that her parents desired her to follow, not only would she in her ignorance hate these dear, beautiful people, but she would give them no reason to appreciate her, either. She would be another white sheep, or worse, an anti-white traitor.

KJ thanks Anna and Garret. Her expression is one of joy and deep emotion, somewhat like she's surprised to be happy. Johnny wants to take her in his arms and hold her tight. His first gift is furthest from her seat, so that she might open it last, and now he gives it to her. She looks at the paper, which is blue with white dots and adorned with a white bow and a little silver star key ring. Inside is a beautiful long-sleeved, form-fitting dress. The fabric is shiny silver in color and will no doubt look stunning on lovely young KJ. Anna praises it to high heaven. KJ looks at the dress and then holds it and the box to her lap, as if she fears someone will try and take it from her.

"Thank you, Johnny," KJ says, her blue eyes wet from tears of joy. "Thank you, all of you."

"It's our pleasure, angel," Johnny says.

She tries to smile and looks down at his present.

"I'm not good at this kind of thing," KJ says.

Johnny puts his hand on the back of her head and she looks up at him. The angel is resilient, but she needs to feel the strong arms of her man. He kneels to be closer to her face.

"Remember where you are, angel," Johnny says, "We love you, because you're exactly the way you are, unsure at times and more confident than anyone else at other times. Full of passion and love and undying loyalty to your white brothers and sisters, which you've proven time and again. We love you, KJ. I love you as my wife, but we love you as our sister, too, and you will always be dear to us. You gave up so much to be here. I don't know how many people would have had the strength to resist what you resisted. Very few, I do know that. If those traitors won just one time, you'd be lost to us. But you didn't let them win, not once, and you called them out on their lies and you rejected the soulless life they offered you. You're just 18 now, but you have done more for white children than anyone I've ever known. And you're not done yet."

Johnny sees the tears in her eyes as she looks at him with great affection on her face. He kisses her head and rises, and she does as well, before throwing herself into his arms and burying her head in his chest. Anna steps forward and then backward, and does not approach until Johnny motions with his hand for her to come. She, too, hugs KJ.

"We're stronger than they imagine," Johnny says, "We know we'll never betray each other. They don't."

A little later, after KJ's wiped her eyes, the six sit down for tea. This time they all laugh and talk. Johnny's arm is around KJ the entire time and she smiles often. It is a warm, sincere smile.

In the privacy of their bedroom, Johnny watches KJ try on the clothes, beginning with a new pair of boots and ending with the dress he picked out for her. She's wearing the dress when Anna comes knocking at the door.

"The two of you are invited to a private dinner," Anna says after gaining permission to enter, "This is a formal occasion, need I remind you, so no business-casual, please!"

"OK, Anna," Johnny says and shakes his head.

Anna giggles as she leaves, but not before winking at Johnny.

"We'd better do what she says," Johnny says, "We don't want to be thrown out."

KJ laughs and messes up Johnny's hair. It's just long enough to mess up.

Johnny dresses first. KJ lavishes him with complements when he exits the bathroom. He's wearing one of his suits with a blue tie. He tries to see what she'll be wearing, but it's wrapped in a sheet.

"You'll have to wait," she says when she catches his obvious attempt to peek.

While KJ dresses, Johnny retrieves his second gift, a dozen red roses. Jesse bought them fresh and brought them earlier today. Johnny holds the bouquet of red roses and waits for his wife to appear. He has a guess as to what she'll wear and it turns out he is right. However, no amount of visualization can prepare him for the sight of her in the blue dress. When the door opens and she emerges wearing the dress and the long black gloves Johnny cannot speak, but only stare at his beautiful wife. Her hair is down and she's wearing a little blue eye shadow and just a touch of lilac-colored lipstick that Johnny has never seen on her before. As always, her perfect skin is untainted by creams or pastes.

"How do I look?" KJ asks and shrugs.

"Magnificent, angel," Johnny says. His mind returns to the flowers. "I asked Jesse to pick these up for you."

"Ahh..." KJ says, taking the wrapped stems into her gloved hand, "Thank you, Johnny!"

He takes her arm and leads her to the living room. There is a blue and green floral spread on the little table, and three lit candles in the cen-

ter. The light above is dimmed; Johnny was not aware of that capability. He wonders if it's a recent change. Johnny pulls out the right-hand seat and KJ sits. Then he joins her at the table.

Anna must have been waiting, or her acute hearing picked up the opening and closing of the hallway door. She enters the living room from the kitchen just after KJ and Johnny come in from the hallway.

"Good," Anna says, "You didn't wear t-shirts and jeans."

Anna is wearing a t-shirt, of course.

"I'm glad you're feeling good," Johnny says.

"Always, Mr. Bowen," Anna says.

"Oh, Jesus," Johnny says, "Bring us our supper."

"Do I get a tip?" Anna asks, her hands on the kitchen door. She's in full form today.

"I'll give you a tip," Johnny says but she does not flinch. "Go on!" He waves his hand to encourage her to move.

"Right away," Anna says.

"Anna!" KJ says, "Could you put these in water?" She hands the roses to Anna.

"Sure," Anna says and smiles.

The meal is delicious; so good it's clear that Anna took on the lion's share of the responsibility of creating it. Stuffed trout is the main dish and the taste is superb. Each of the numerous ingredients is fresh and the fish is moist and of superior quality. Neither husband nor wife knows it, but the fisherman responsible for the feast is none other than Gary Murphy, who provided the trout when Jesse visited him on Thursday. The taste of the main course is so good, in fact, that in days past it would have reminded KJ of meals she's had in the Campbell House. But it does not; those days are gone forever, and Erica is a ghost.

To go with the meal are two glasses of Burgundy from France, which is also of high quality. When Anna brings the dishes and the wine, Johnny looks at the sumptuous food for a moment before he and KJ begin eating.

"Wow," Johnny says, "They really worked hard on this." He looks into KJ's eyes. "We have a good little family, don't we?"

"Yeah," KJ says, "It's the best."

After supper, Johnny and KJ pass through the kitchen to thank Anna and Garret. They embrace one another, and then Johnny and the birthday girl retire to their bedroom. The time is seven in the evening, and the next hour and a half they sit and talk, and share their intimacy.

"How do you feel tonight?" Johnny asks her.

"I'm good," KJ says, and smiles.

"Yeah?" Johnny says and rubs her arm. "Hey, put on some shiny leggings. Tight ones."

"OK," KJ says, "All mine are tight, just so you know."

Her look of affection begins to show her wild side.

"Put on a sleeveless or short-sleeve top," Johnny continues, "One that isn't loose. And leave on the gloves."

"Oh, OK," KJ says, "You like that, huh?"

"Yes I do," Johnny says.

He didn't know he liked gloves on a woman until he met her.

When KJ exits the bathroom she's wearing shiny black leggings and a tight green short-sleeve top. She's still wearing the shoulder-length gloves. The eye shadow and lipstick are gone and she's just as beautiful as ever. Before approaching her eager husband, she puts on a pair of the assault boots that he bought for her. Then she comes over and sits on his lap.

"We're going someplace else tonight," Johnny says.

KJ nuzzles and kisses him, and runs her gloved hands through his hair and over his cheeks and shoulder.

Inside the secret room, Johnny turns on his iPod and speakers. *Be My Angel* starts to play, and they slow-dance. His hand finds its place on her rear and her hand finds its place on his chest. Later, when the music gets harder, she dances as she did on their second date, wild and provocative. He lets her energy and aggression rise before taking control. Johnny leads her to the bed and, while she's on his lap, he leans back so that she lies atop him. She unbuckles his belt and this time he does not stop her. This time he reciprocates the slow undressing. She's his wife now, and he takes her as he should.

KJ awakens to Johnny running his hand through her hair. Her head is on his chest again. The sheet is up to her shoulders, or she would be naked.

"Mmm...It's so nice in here," KJ says as she nuzzles him.

KJ looks up at *The Storm*.

"Especially now," Johnny says, caressing his woman as she kisses his chest.

Outside it is cool and clear. The trees have fallen asleep; the only leaves remaining are the brown and red foliage of oaks and what remains of the leaves of poplars and a few sheltered sycamores. The azure sky and the autumn forest are glorious even without the fiery colors.

When Thanksgiving week arrives, Robert Arnett will take three days' vacation and go hunting with his son in the Adirondack Mountains. Arnett

loves both his sons. The older one, Jonathan, is the hunter. He is also a skilled football player who hopes to play halfback in spite of his father's insistence that he play linebacker or tight end. Jonathan has the perfect physique and speed to play the halfback position, but his father knows that physical ability isn't all that matters at the collegiate and professional level. Jonathan isn't the right color for a halfback.

Recently, there was an altercation at the factory. Two white men beat another white man who refused to take their torment in good cheer. One of the antagonists made a remark about the third man's mother, and when he returned the favor they attacked him. The perpetrators are well known for such ignoble behavior, especially among men who desperately need to keep their jobs in tough economic times and who cannot fight back for fear of losing their ability to feed and shelter their families. Conspicuously absent from those who the miscreants' have targeted are the 45 black and 12 Mexican workers at the plant. It's not that the two have any love for non-whites; they're just cowards who chose their targets based on the impotence of the victim. Non-whites have the power of the company, indeed the entire United States police apparatus behind them. A single charge of racism can end a career. The two vicious cowards restrict their wrongdoing to the members of their own race.

The violent altercation happened during Arnett's work hours. A few days later, the plant manager excoriated Arnett for a minor breach of operating procedure that every supervisor commits on a daily basis. Arnett is looking forward to the time off. Hunting with his son will be catharsis. In the Adirondacks, there are no HR departments or allegations of racism to make a manager's life more difficult.

The first snow of November comes later than most years, falling during the night of the 27th and melting by noon on Thanksgiving. It's still a cold day, with a high of 37 F. Jesse is off from her classes and her internship all the way from Thanksgiving Day to Sunday, and she spends the holiday at Procyon House. It pains her to not spend the day with her parents, with Rian at her side and her cousins enjoying the pumpkin pie she loves to make. Instead, it will be her brothers and sisters of Capricorn Cell who will enjoy the pie. Anna and Johnny make the bird and the stuffing. It is the first time in her life that KJ has turkey for Thanksgiving, a fact she tells only to her husband.

Long after the meal, the six retire to the living room for coffee and small talk. Jesse tells them about her studies. First aid and other essential skills are becoming second nature to her. After a while she offers to bring each of them a refill from the pot, and disappears into the kitchen.



KJ is seated on Johnny's lap, while Anna and Garret sit side-by-side on the little sofa. Rian awaits his wife with the back of his chair to the counter. Anna begins speaking to Garret in the Irish. After a while they laugh, and Rian cracks a smile for he, too, understands her words. KJ does not, nor does Johnny. She looks at her husband and begins speaking in French. By the end of her little speech she has a wicked smile on her face. He catches most of it; but a few words are slang and he's not quite sure what she's saying, though he can guess. A laugh from the kitchen door interrupts KJ's soliloquy. It's Jesse, who does not speak Irish but is fluent in French.

"I'm gonna get some soap so Johnny can wash out that mouth of yours!" Jesse says.

KJ puts her hands on her hips and looks at her with exaggerated outrage on her face. Johnny laughs when she does.

"That might be fun," Johnny says, and draws KJ's look of outrage away from Jesse.

"What?" Johnny says, and touches KJ's lips, "A big bubble on your lips would be cute."

Anna and Garret are silent. They're enjoying the show.

That evening, under a cold November sky, Johnny and KJ engage in a short patrol. For this patrol, he carries a shotgun and she brings the AK. Their course runs southwest until they come to Wolf Creek. The forest is very dense and the air is clean and cold. Here the creek is shallow and whispers rather than roars, though neither KJ nor Johnny will ford it. He turns to look at her. She's wearing the coat she received for her birthday and a black toboggan on her head. It's pulled down over her mass of hair and the top of her ears, which are submerged in the brown strands. Her undershirt is a turtleneck. Though she's warm-blooded, a fact that Johnny simply loves, especially in bed, she's still dressed for a winter's night. He opens his backpack and pours her a cup of warm milk from his thermos.

"Here, angel," Johnny says.

KJ smiles and takes it in her hands. The warm gloves she's wearing are as much for protecting her hands as for the look and feel. She takes a drink and then exhales, her breath a pall of steam in the dry November air.

"Johnny, my husband," KJ says and smiles again before her face takes on a serious look, "Garret mentioned the future a few days ago. Do you think what he said can ever happen? I mean, like, in a few years, once we show them we're not taking this shit anymore?"

"I don't know, angel," Johnny says, "I can only hope so."

KJ nods and finishes the milk. Once she's handed him the cup he pours some for himself. As he drinks she rubs his back.

"I'm hoping, too," KJ says.

When he's packed the thermos he hugs KJ and pats her rear.

"Let's go," Johnny says.

A few flakes of snow begin to fall.

Seventeen miles away, the flakes fall a little heavier around the Amblersburg cottage. Inside, the lonesome structure is devoid of even the smallest scrap of trash.

December comes in a hurry. Johnny Bowen is busy working on some project. Jimmy Ford brought him some small pieces of wood, though not even Jimmy knew the reason Johnny wanted them. Around the 10th it becomes apparent what he was up to when another drawing takes its place on the wall outside of the Bowen's bedroom. The subject of this piece of artwork is a species of Gentian flower that never opens. KJ drew this one based on internet images and a picture from a large book of flowers. It is the second addition to KJ's little "flower garden" and it's just as beautiful as the soapwort drawing.

Anna continues her archery practice downstairs and in the exit tunnel, as well as outside during the occasional night patrol. She does not tell Garret, but this is the first year since she was eight that she did not go hunting. It is a painful loss to her, not so much because of the delicious venison she might have won, but it reminds her of such good times with her father.

The winter's first major snow falls on the 15th of December. It's a Sunday, and Garret is a little concerned that Rian will not be able to make it back tonight. Outside it's well below freezing even after four hours of daylight, and the temperature will not differ much for at least a week. Anna, who loves a white Christmas, told him that this might happen. The inevitable warming, and melting, will happen just before the 25th.

In the exercise room, Anna and KJ engage in aerobic exercise while Johnny and Garret are out in the frigid woods on a training mission. That's unfortunate for both men; their wives are wearing tight exercise leggings and body-hugging tops. During a break in the routine, Anna and KJ sit down to have a drink of water.

"Christmas is coming fast, isn't it?" Anna asks.

While cleaning the storage room Anna noticed that there is a small artificial tree stored there in a cardboard box. The sight brought considerable joy to her heart.

KJ pushes her hair back from her face and nods.

"I remember one time we spent Christmas Eve at Nemacolin," Anna continues, "We had a huge family reunion; a few of them came in from Ireland. It was cool, but, you know, I liked being home with dad a lot better. Sometimes, I think you have to spend one Christmas away from home, so you can really appreciate what it means."

Anna's too excited by the coming of her favorite holiday to think about discretion.

"Did you ever go anywhere for Christmas?" she asks KJ.

"We didn't celebrate Christmas," KJ says.

"Oh, shit," Anna says, "I'm sorry, KJ. I didn't think or I wouldn't have said anything."

"It's cool, Anna," KJ says, and she smiles, "Please, tell me about it. Don't hold back."

Anna looks into her eyes.

"We'll celebrate this one," Anna says, "Christmas belongs to us. It's a white man's holiday and we'll keep the spirit alive. It's just really nice, the feeling of Christmas coming, and the peacefulness on that one day. It's not the gifts or any of that, it's just...Christmas. I've always loved it. We'd go to my aunt and uncle's for Christmas Eve, sometimes I'd help them cook and that was really cool. The next morning my dad would carry me in to the living room and there'd be gifts in there, and I'd be too happy for a kid who just got a pair of pajamas. It wasn't the pajamas that made me so happy."

KJ looks at her.

"You have to be here, don't you?" KJ asks.

"Yeah," Anna says, "We can't let our race die. We can't let them take the joy away from our children. Our children have to know what it feels like on Christmas morning."

KJ puts her arm around Anna.

"You're, like, so amazing, Anna," KJ says, "Garret came up with the idea for this place, but you brought us together. You did that even before I met you. I think in a large way you're the one who kept everyone together. I think it gave them strength to know you."

Anna looks down and smiles, and then back into KJ's bright eyes.

"I saw the cross you painted on my rifle," Anna says, "It's beautiful, KJ, thanks for painting it."

"No problem," KJ says and nods.

She has not shown Anna the design on her rifle. Only Johnny has seen it, and although in time the others will also see the artwork, KJ will only show it to her beloved husband.

Although KJ spent last Christmas Eve with those who have come to cherish and love her, and who she loves deeply as well, this will be her first true Christmas. She will be away from the Campbell House and Gene Campbell, who even more than his destructive and disloyal wife stifled the joys of the holiday. Erica was happy to leave the house undecorated, though she did make a grand meal. Gene, however, was the zealot when it came to religion. He did not question his own faith in all races being equal, or his belief that whites have an unfair advantage because of racism. Gene cannot explain why only white countries are forced to accept non-white immigration though he will accuse the person asking of being a racist.

Like many members of his profession, Gene believes that the white race does not exist, but that other races do. He believes that the non-existent white race is to blame for the woes and misbehaviors of the other races. To hold such contradictory beliefs requires a leap of faith that rivals even the most dogmatic of religions. This does not trouble the "rational" Gene Campbell. It's Christianity and Christianity alone that he considers "backward" and "sexist." For that reason, no wreath adorned the front door, not a single colored light or candle shined in the cold December night, and no excited children gazed in wonder at the ornaments hung upon a Christmas tree. On the 25th of December the Campbell House, whether it was in Kirkland, Washington, or Uniontown, Pennsylvania, was a sterile and joyless place.

When Anna sets up the tree, KJ hangs her silver star key ring on one of the lower limbs. It's the first ornament on the tree.

The tree and the ornaments are not the only preparations that the members must make for the upcoming holiday. There are discussions and lists for Jesse, and one deep concern that Johnny presents to Garret. He has been keeping a rough track of expenditures, and expresses his strong desire not to spend Jesse's money on unessential items. Garret is in agreement, though they both know that the funds they contributed to the group will not last forever, and there will come a day in which all monies come from Cristi, Bill, Michael and the others, including Jesse Donnelly.

"Look at it this way," Garret says without a smile or smirk, "When we're dead they can start saving their money."

Johnny looks at him without saying a word.

"I hate it too," Garret says, "But it's their choice. It was our choice to fight, Anna and KJ included. We both wanted them to have nothing to do with this. But it's not our place to tell them not to sacrifice, especially when they feel indebted to us for the risk we're taking. I'll never demand from

them but if they want to make our Christmas a little brighter, I won't stop them, either."

"Yeah," Johnny says, "I know that. It just fucking sucks."

"That is does, John," Garret says.

Anna takes on the decorating of the house, with two notable exceptions. She cannot hang a wreath outside the home, nor can she put up candle-shaped bulbs in the windows. Therefore, on the 20th, Jesse hangs a beautiful white and red wreath on the front door, and, while the others are safely out of the living room, she places electric candles with white bulbs in the windows. The other exception comes from Kaylee Jane and Johnny Bowen.

The 21st is another snowy day. That evening, Anna and Garret have rights to the secret room should they so desire, and Johnny and KJ roam around in the cold winter forest. Though he carries his usual AK47, this time KJ carries her bolt-action rifle. She wears her new coat again, and covers all of her flesh including most of her face. Johnny gave her a scarf that she puts to good use. In the dark he can still see her blue eyes.

About a quarter-mile from Procyon House, which is the maximum length they plan on hiking tonight, there is a small stand of Virginia pine. On a previous trip, one with Anna and Garret, they found a pine sapling that Johnny remarked looked just like a little Christmas tree. He didn't mention the artificial tree, but did voice his dissatisfaction that many young pines end up in living rooms, and then rot on garbage piles. Better to use artificial and let the forest have its Christmas trees, he said. His thoughts made her feel quite good inside. Now, at the site of the pine stand, KJ and Johnny see that disaster has befallen one of the elder trees. An ancient oak, its branches weakened by October snows and ice storms, has lost its upper third. That massive piece of wood crashed into one of the young pines and sheared off most of the branches on one side.

KJ pulls her scarf down below her mouth.

"We can't put them back on the tree," she says, "But we could use them in the house. We could make a nice little garland of pine branches and cones, don't you think?"

"Yeah," Johnny says, "That'd be nice. I'll cut some of the small branches when I get time."

KJ smiles at him and rubs his arm.

Though the entrance tunnel is heated only by what warm air creeps out of the medical room and armory, it's much warmer than outside. Before ascending the steps to the storage room, KJ removes her scarf and toboggan. Upstairs she removes her boots. She turns toward Johnny,

ready to fall into his arms and then giggle and kiss. She stops when she notices that he has not yet removed his toboggan or his hiking shoes.

"I'll be back a little later," Johnny says, "About an hour or so. Put on some tea, OK?"

"No, Johnny, don't go!" KJ says, "I don't want you to go out just to get a fucking branch."

"Shush!" Johnny says, "Christmas is once a year, and you're going to have a proper Christmas, damn it!"

"Thank you, Johnny," KJ says as he begins to descend the steps.

The snow-mantled Murphy Home is mostly quiet, with the ticking of the kitchen clock the only noise. Gary adds a little sound when he sips his coffee. He looks at the empty chair that is opposite him at the little table. There's a white rose in the vase on the table, and the pattern of the tablecloth is one of Anna's old favorites. Scattered on the white cloth are black-eyed Susan's and butterflies. After the cup is empty, Gary goes straight to his bedroom. He's moved the computer in there. Every evening after coffee he checks the email account that Garret created for him. Thus far the inbox has been empty. He's also memorized the code that Garret provided and taken the time to write it down every day, only to destroy the paper as per Garret's instructions.

Today, when Gary opens his email account, the inbox is not empty. Gary jumps to his feet when he sees the coded message. He wipes his mouth with his hand and forces himself to sit. Pencil and paper in hand, he begins to decode the message.

Anna was right. The high on the 23rd is 45F and with the exception of sheltered piles of dirty snow, the white is swept away and the ground turns to dark brown mud. The saving grace, aside from the bliss of the holiday itself, is that by nightfall on Christmas Eve the temperature will fall below freezing. At least it will feel like Christmas.

The weather is more or less the same in Connellsville. Beneath gray skies, the small town looks as it has for as long as Gary can remember. The hills and the lazy river and the red brick buildings from an older time remind him of his childhood spent there. He has a little time, so he drives past the rail yard before heading for Chestnut Street and the little white house where Hannah, Clyde and their daughter Chloe reside.

On the phone Gary told his sister that Anna would not be joining them for Christmas. Now he will tell her that he, too, shall be absent. Hannah did not press for an answer when Gary told her about Anna. It was all he could tell her without the two of them accidentally jeopardizing Anna and the others.

It's almost 11 o'clock and Clyde is at work. Gary sees Chloe coming around the house when he pulls into the driveway. She recognizes him and waves. Chloe is ten now. At least in Connellsville a ten-year-old girl can walk around her house without a guardian, at least for now. She has the red hair of most Murphy's. Although she will probably not be a fiery beauty like Mary and Anna, she is fit and cute as a button, and if her personality continues to develop she will someday make a magnificent wife. Gary hugs her when she runs up to the Liberty and he shows her the Christmas gift he bought, relishing in teasing her a little since she can't open it for two days. He knows she'll love it, too; together with a blouse and a pair of tennis shoes, he bought her a little toy frog that jumps in the sunlight.

Gary knocks on the big oak door. The wreath is huge, a physical symbol of the family's enthusiasm for the culmination of Advent. White lights line the front porch and the window, while antique metal reindeer prance in the yard. Life hasn't changed at the Moore household.

Hannah gives him a huge hug when she opens the door. She's still lovely as she ages, and has regained some of her vigor now that she no longer works midnight. Her floral dress may be better suited to summer or late spring, but she had the day off, and plans on spending her time in the kitchen. Hannah yells for Chloe before leading Gary toward the focal point of her day.

He smells the cookies baking before he crosses the hallway and enters the quaint little kitchen. He remembers it having white and green walls with a red and green phoenix painted on the white part, and an antique gas range that probably could sell for money if Hannah didn't use it so often. His recollection is correct with the exception of the range and oven; wear and tear has finally forced Hannah to replace it. Hannah puts on a pot of coffee and she and Gary sit at the table, mindful not to disturb the cutting board or the dough that nearly covers its surface.

"How's Mark?" Gary asks.

Mark, Hannah's first child, is now 20 years old and lives in Texas, where he drives for a hazmat transportation corporation.

"Good," Hannah says. She puts a little cream into Gary's coffee, just like he likes it. "He's got a girlfriend now."

"Is that right?" Gary says, "I hope she's deserves him. Mark's a fine young man."

Hannah nods and drinks her coffee. Gary wonders if Mark's girlfriend knows his convictions on race and kin.

"How's Anna?" Hannah asks.

"Strong and healthy," he says, not entirely sure how to answer, since he does not know Anna's mental state but does know from the email that she is physically fine. He might as well be up front with Hannah, who deserves to know everything he can safely tell her. "Hannah, I'm going to spend Christmas with her, I'm sorry I won't be able to come to the reunion."

Hannah does not speak for a moment. She considered this possibility but still finds it painful. This year everyone was supposed to meet here for Christmas Eve, and then at Billy Buckley's somewhat larger house in New Stanton for Christmas dinner. Billy is an engineer for a short line railroad and managed to get the week off when another engineer, who likes the extra holiday pay, offered to work Christmas. It was to be a rare and joyous occasion, but without Anna and Gary it will be less so.

"OK," Hannah says and hesitates, but it is uncommon for one of the Murphy's not to speak their mind. "What's she into, Gary?"

"This is one of those times you're gonna have to trust me, Hannah," Gary says, "She's made a choice and I could not be more proud of her. So would Aidan."

His stare is that of a loving brother, but with the final words of his explanation his look becomes severe. Hannah met Aidan during her one trip to Ireland. She also met his cousin, who was in the Provos. Gary does not need to tell her that Anna is involved in some kind of guerrilla organization. Their previous conversations about race, the bigger peril that both America and Ireland face and the lack of a response by whites to their own genocide, gives Hannah an idea as to the nature of Anna's fight.

"I'm sorry, Hannah," Gary says.

He takes her hand.

"I can understand, Gary, but..." Hannah stops. Gary may or may not have a guess as to what it was, but she cannot finish what she was going to say.

"Bryce is gonna miss her," Hannah says instead.

"Oh, I know," Gary says, "She'll miss him, too. I guarantee that."

Hannah sips her coffee.

"She'd sacrifice everything for him," Gary says.

"I know," Hannah says, "God, to see her hold him. She'll be a wonderful mother someday." Hannah looks up at Gary. "Tell her we love her, OK?"

"I will," Gary says.

It gets cold a little early on Christmas Eve, the air temperature dropping to the freezing mark before sunrise and never going back. Jesse



comes to Procyon House before breakfast is finished and takes her place in the kitchen, which Anna and KJ claimed as theirs. Johnny, Garret and Rian will have to be content with the rest of the house. Tonight's meal promises to be splendid. Jesse will stay for the night, but cannot remain for Christmas. She's promised her parents she'll be there with them. As much as they love her and share her love for her race, they must not know the truth about Rian and Procyon House. It pains her to the core, but she must tell them that her relationship with Rian is over. She promises herself that she'll tell them the truth someday, and why it was necessary to lie. She asks God's forgiveness for the unavoidable sin.

No one will use the secret room for the time being. Garret, Anna, Jesse and Rian have observed at least part of Advent and will refrain from sexual relations. Johnny and KJ have not spoken to the others about such things, but neither feels right about spending the night there until Christmas has come and gone. For KJ, the buildup to Christmas is a new experience, and she feels a little awkward right now. She's tried not to swear in the two weeks before the holiday since it's obvious that Christmas has great religious significance for Anna and Jesse at least. After so many years of relentless atheistic proselytizing by her father, KJ's finds it difficult to feel the full sanctity of the holiday. Christmas was, for most of her life, just another day. Out of respect for her dear sisters-in-race she no longer treats it that way.

Johnny, on the other hand, always felt that Christmas was a time of great personal and spiritual significance. Deep inside, his wife is coming to agree with him.

Last Friday Anna told KJ that she would not be sleeping in the secret room until after Christmas. KJ asked Johnny if he wanted to spend the night there. She said nothing about her hesitation to make love that night, or the spiritual reasons that compelled her to have those feelings. She resolved before they were wed that she would not deny him unless a clear and urgent physical or emotional reason made denial necessary.

"Let's wait until after Christmas," Johnny told KJ, to her enormous relief. "The anticipation is nice sometimes. A couple of weeks, and then..." He rubbed her back and winked. He noticed her anxiousness and then the sudden relief on her face.

"It'll be so nice," KJ told him. A wild little smile replaced the nervousness.

The first of the two big days, Christmas Eve, has arrived. While the women are busy in the kitchen, the men do not remain idle. After breakfast they begin preparing the drinks. There will be double bock and "Old

Fezziwig” and Guinness. Megan Donnelly taught Rian to make old fashioned eggnog with brandy and spices, and at this one culinary challenge he excels. The smells from the food and drink are enticing and permeate all of Procyon House. After the noon coffee, once Anna, Jesse and KJ have returned to the kitchen, Johnny and Garret place two bedrolls in the corner of the living room. They bring the necessary bedspread as well.

Johnny Bowen happens to be inside the living room when a familiar Jeep Liberty pulls up beside Jesse’s Suzuki and the white Toyota Land Cruiser that Jimmy Ford recently bought. Johnny hears the engine and the closing of the car door. Garret sees the truck on the monitor in the media room.

“It’s him,” Johnny hears Garret say.

Gary takes a heavy sack and a big bag and handles them like they’re children’s toys. Garret hurries to the kitchen and grabs Jesse from her chores. Rian, who managed to sneak into the kitchen and now has to roll dough, stops to watch. He realizes why Garret pulled Jesse away from the kitchen; Garret told him they’d be expecting a guest.

“Gary’s here,” Garret whispers and continues speaking before Jesse can express her joy with sound, “Shh!” Garret says, “We can’t answer the door, you’ll have to.”

The sound of the doorbell shocks everyone in the kitchen. KJ grabs the pistol from one of the drawers.

“Whoa!” Rian says, “It’s cool, we’re expecting someone.”

“Why didn’t you tell me?” KJ asks before returning the pistol.

“I wanted to see what you’d do,” Rian says to tease her a bit.

Rian is interested in the rapidity of her reaction.

Ana looks at the closed kitchen door. She does not return to work.

Gary whispers a greeting to Jesse and hugs her. She is neither short nor emaciated as many of her modeling peers always were, but still she seems to disappear in his arms. The door now closed, Johnny enters from the hallway. Gary seizes his hand and hugs him.

“How’s KJ?” Gary asks in a whisper.

“Good, thank you,” Johnny says, “She’ll be really happy to see you.”

Gary sees Garret, who approaches from the media room.

“Hello, son,” Gary whispers and takes Garret’s hand. He then embraces his son-in-law. “You’re all looking well, I’m happy to see that.”

They haven’t dressed for supper yet, though concerning the physical state of their bodies, Gary is absolutely right. Good eating, hygiene and of course frequent exercise have produced undeniable results. The members of Capricorn Cell are in the peak of health and attractiveness.

The kitchen door begins to crack open and everyone looks to see who is there. It's Rian, who enters and is careful to close the door so that the two young ladies cannot see who's come. Gary hugs him, too, and whispers to him how well the Donnelly parents have been. Rian shows his relief on his face, an unusual occurrence for the stoic young man.

"No one told us to stay," KJ tells Anna. "Let's find out who it is."

She expects it to be Jimmy Ford, though her intuition, and the sound of low voices tells her it's someone else. Anna looks at her and, being closer, puts her hand on the door. She closes her eyes and pushes it, opening them when she hears the door touch the wall.

In Anna's mind, she tried not to picture her father. The disappointment over seeing Ford or Cristi or any of the others in his place would be both intense and disgraceful. There would be no way to hide it and it would be a terrible disservice to whoever had taken the time to come and risk being seen at this place. When she opens her eyes there's no need for the desperate emotional struggle. Standing just a few steps away is her father.

"Anna," is all that Gary can say.

Anna runs to him in an instant. Her tears are nearly as fast in arriving.

KJ follows Anna through the door. Her eyes grow wide as she looks at the father and daughter who are hugging in the living room. KJ looks at Johnny as a little smile grows on her face, and she walks over and embraces her husband. Together they watch Anna and Gary's reunion.

"Shh..." Gary says, "You look so beautiful. You're such a beautiful young woman, my dear Anna."

He rubs her back. Her long red ponytail hangs over his hand.

Anna opens her eyes and leans back to look into his face. The love and pain of missing him are clear in her expression.

"Are you OK, dad?" Anna asks, her voice altered by her emotions.

"I'm fine, sweetheart," Gary says.

"Will you stay for Christmas?" Anna asks, her eyes pleading.

"Yes," Gary says, and she squeezes him again.

Anna is stronger than ever. She certainly has that part of his genetics, among other attributes that come from the Murphy line.

It takes a while for father and daughter to calm down, but everyone is patient. Finally Anna goes over to the other man in her life, the one who is taking the primary place in her heart. Gary walks up to them.

"We're married now, daddy," Anna says. Garret's arm is around her. "I wish you could have been here for the wedding."

"I know, sweetheart," Gary says, "I couldn't come. I know you're a wife now." He looks at Garret for a moment and then back at Anna. "I got Garret's message from Jesse, but I couldn't make it. I'm sorry, sweetheart."

Gary ruminated on the decision for two days. He came to the conclusion that he would not ask Anna to delay her wedding. It was too important, especially considering that each couple was cementing their relationship at that time. At the time, Gary had an unbelievable stroke of bad luck: he'd been called for jury duty. In the end he had to report just three times, but there was no way to avoid serving and not jeopardize his daughter's secrecy.

"This was your secret ceremony; each of you," Gary says, "It's deeper than any fancy wedding ever could be." He touches Anna's chin. "Don't worry, I'll be at the public ceremony, when all this is finished."

Anna smiles.

"Mr. and Mrs. Bowen," Gary says as he steps over to Johnny and KJ, "What a beautiful wife you have, Johnny!"

Garret's email message mentioned the Bowen's as well.

"It's so nice to see you," KJ says.

Gary hugs her and kisses KJ's cheeks. He looks into her eyes when they separate. They're so much like Anna's.

"I better return to the kitchen," KJ says, "I don't want to ruin supper."

"Yeah," Jesse adds, "I'd better go too."

KJ steps toward the kitchen but pauses to hug Gary again.

Johnny steps in front of the kitchen door before KJ can enter.

"Go the other way," Johnny says.

KJ looks at him, her eyebrows raised. She looks at the hallway door. Plastic mistletoe hangs over the doorway. Johnny must have hung it while they worked in the kitchen. She turns back toward him and smiles. KJ hops and walks over to the door, and then stops beneath the mistletoe. She looks at Johnny again.

Gary walks over to her and takes her by her arms. She looks up at him, surprised, and then begins to laugh. He kisses her cheek and hugs her, and then she's off to the kitchen. Rian steps over to the door so that he's the only one who can kiss Jesse as she passes. Johnny hasn't moved from the kitchen door. He and Gary share a laugh when the Murphy father approaches.

Garret takes Anna's hand and they walk side-by-side to the door. There, he kisses her, and she smiles at him as she disappears into the hallway.

Anna's surprise and longing cannot hold back her joy. For the rest of the time spent cooking, she is feisty and energetic. She even smacks KJ on the butt when a request of hers goes unfulfilled.

The theme of tonight's meal is seafood. Jesse brought the ingredients and hid them from the men when she unloaded the usual supplies. KJ is master chef for tonight's meal. When it comes time to eat, the men stare in hungry awe at the creations. There is a seafood salad with fennel, fresh vegetables, lobster and scallops. Scallops with wine, garlic and herbs will share the plate with fish filets *à la Parisienne* and one of KJ's specialties, Lobster Thermidor. The salad looks delectable, especially for winter. There's even an appetizer in the form of cream-of-mussel soup. Lately, the meals that KJ's made have been simpler yet always delicious. Now, she has a chance to let her creativity shine again. Shine it does, as does her ability to bring out the best taste from each creation. She hoped that the Christmas Eve meal would be unforgettable, and it is.

"I couldn't spend much time on the gifts," Gary tells them after the meal, as they sit down for coffee. The men have the Irish variety. "I did what I could. I hope you like them."

"The ham's more than enough," Garret says, referring to a ham that is among the gifts. "Thank you, Gary."

"I'd have brought venison but I didn't have any luck this year," Gary says. "The ham is good though. It's from Tennessee."

Gary doesn't tell them that he planned on making Limerick Ham for New Year's, before he knew he'd be able to spend Christmas with his dear Anna.

Anna rises and disappears into the living room. When she returns she has the wedding pictures. She'll cry as he looks at them, she knows. Gary will get misty-eyed. He has a picture for her, as well. He'll leave it on the counter in the living room before he leaves the day after Christmas. It's a picture of Bryce, who is growing bigger and stronger. He's a true Murphy.

Gary shuffles the pictures to see someone other than his daughter first. That experience he'll save for last.

"My God, you look so beautiful!" Gary exclaims when he sees KJ in her dress and drop veil.

Jesse hoped the veil, and KJ's spectacular beauty would compensate for the lovely but uninspired design of the dress. She is quite relieved to see Gary go on about KJ's look during the wedding. She does not believe it to be mere flattery.

Johnny rubs KJ's back as he listens to Gary comment on the beauty of his young wife. To Johnny, everything was perfect. A simpler dress

was more appropriate in his opinion. Her natural beauty, undisturbed by artificial makeup, and her veil, which was truly the most spectacular of the three, were to him the visual highlights. With more than a little luck, Jesse chose the right dress for KJ.

Gary comes to Jesse's photos. Her dress is the most elegant, and as the tallest of the brides by far, she wears it very well. She reminds him of Owen Buckley's wife, who is also half French.

"What a handsome couple," Gary says when he sees the photo with both Jesse and Rian.

"Take that one to Bill and Megan," Garret says, "They won't let anyone see it who shouldn't."

Jesse smiles at Garret.

"Thank you, Garret," Rian says.

"I'll be happy to," Gary says.

Jesse looks at her husband and kisses his cheek.

Gary finds a picture of Johnny and KJ kissing after they've dedicated their vows.

"You two belong together," he says as much to himself as to anyone present.

Then Gary turns to the first picture of his daughter. Even an outsider would say her dress is the most beautiful. It is traditional unlike Jesse's more elegant one, and more interesting than KJ's. Gary is no outsider; the sight of his gorgeous daughter in her mother's wedding dress brings tears to his eyes. It is one of the exceedingly rare times in his life.

Anna, too, comes to tears, though hers escape down her face. Gary clears his throat.

"You look so much like her," Gary says.

Anna rises and walks over to him. She hugs her seated father and rests her head against his.

"I love you so much, Anna," Gary says, rising to hold her.

Everyone is quiet. Jesse wipes her face and KJ climbs on to Johnny's lap and nuzzles him.

Gary pats Anna's back, and after allowing her an emotional release he seizes the moment.

"This is a happy time!" Gary says. "Go sit on your husband's lap like KJ, and show me a big smile."

Gary touches her cheek and Anna returns his smile.

Gary continues looking at the pictures. The quality is superb. Garret requested the best paper. Gary looks at the group photos and in the end returns to the first one that shows all six members of Capricorn Cell.

"Keep that one," Anna says, "And the others if you like, we have copies."

"I'll be back to get them when it's safe, honey," Gary says.

He doesn't tell her about the .357 magnum or why he takes it to bed with him.

That night, Gary puts his foot down and flat-out refuses to stay in Anna's room or in the secret room. The bedrolls are fine, he tells her, and he ends the discussion. Later that night Gary places his gifts beneath the tree in the hallway. There are several other gifts there. He plugs in the tree for a few minutes to see it one last time before going to bed. The tree is full of ornaments. He finds Anna's rocking horse ornament that he put in the box with her wedding dress. He also sees a silver star.

Christmas morning brings a wonderful surprise, especially for Anna who loves a white Christmas even more than the others. The long arm of the Alberta clipper that hammered Erie and Buffalo has dropped two inches of snow around Amboy. It's not much, but the cold and clouds shield the snow, and it will last for several days. Although Anna has to view the snow through the lens of the surveillance camera, the sight makes her smile and chirp with joy.

There is a touch of sadness to the celebration. Jesse must depart. The others clear out of the living room, all except for Rian who kisses and hugs her before he, too, must duck into the hallway. She bundles up for the cold and wraps the cookies that she, KJ and Anna made yesterday. Then she grabs the gift Gary brought for her, and sets off for dinner with her relations. Though she loves them, she'd rather be here with her man and her beloved brothers and sisters in race. But this is war, and war demands a heavy sacrifice from those who do not wish but who must pursue it.

There is now one helper missing from the kitchen. KJ walks into the living room and over to Johnny. She gives him a pleading look that she knows she doesn't have to give, but she also knows that it will appeal to his masculinity.

"Will you help us with supper?" KJ asks.

A smile grows on Johnny's face and he jumps up from his chair. KJ grabs his hand and leads him, not through the kitchen door, but beneath the mistletoe. There, he dips her and kisses her lips, and the others applaud and whistle.

While Anna, KJ and Johnny finish the preparations for a traditional Christmas feast, Gary, Garret and Rian chew the fat of years and good times gone by. Hunting, fishing, hiking, rafting, diving and coal mining are all prominent subjects.

"How's the tunnel?" Gary asks when the subject turns to the mine in Greene County.

Garret invites him for a tour.

"Sweet Jesus!" Gary says when he sees the tile work and cleanliness of the entire underground structure.

"James Ford did the tile work," Garret says, "We take turns cleaning."

"God bless him," Gary says, "Is he taken care of this Christmas?"

"He's with his family," Garret says, "Them and the Kelly's are celebrating together."

"Good!" Gary exclaims, "He's a good man. I can see how much this fight means to him."

"As much as it means to anyone," Garret says, "Us included."

When Gary and Garret return to the living room, two bottles of Guinness await them, courtesy of Rian Donnelly. The three have a drink and continue their conversations, which pause only when they hear some interesting sound or words from the kitchen. At one point they hear KJ's voice loud and clear.

"Don't you dare!" KJ says.

Two minutes later, KJ enters, pulling Johnny by the hand. A little smirk is on her face. They walk to the hallway door. Johnny lets her enter, and then pulls her back and motions up at the mistletoe.

KJ closes her eyes and takes a deep breath, trying not to laugh. Johnny pulls her close and kisses her. As they enter the hallway and the door closes behind them, Anna opens the kitchen door. She's shaking her head.

"Dad, lecture those two!" Anna says.

Gary laughs.

"I hope you and Garret have fun like that," he says.

The only lights in the hallway come from the bulbs of the Christmas tree. Those and the star on top, illuminate the alternate path to the kitchen. It's the path Anna takes with Gary when they're dressed and the meal is almost ready. She's wearing that frilly black dress Garret loves, and which led to the greatest memory of his life. Around her neck is her largest cross necklace – the gold one that her mother wanted her to have. It came from Ireland. Gary is wearing a collared shirt and sweater. Anna opens the door and shows him the bedroom that she now shares with her husband. She notices when he looks at the mermaid picture, and she hugs and thanks him.

Anna and Gary are returning to the living room when KJ opens the door to her and Johnny's room. She emerges, wearing the silver dress



Johnny bought her for her birthday. She's also wearing gloves and high-heels for once. They look at her and a little of their surprise must show on their faces.

"I know how to wear heels!" KJ says.

Anna laughs.

Johnny follows KJ. He looks very sharp in his long sleeves and tie, and his dark blue pants. The foursome moves to the living room and the two ladies continue to the kitchen to begin serving dinner.

Anna was boss for this meal, though KJ contributed her expertise and especially her talent. There is stuffed goose and a gorgeous glazed ham, sweet potatoes that are just sweet enough and roasted chestnuts beside green bean casserole. Christmas plum budding is the featured dessert, and there is wine during and eggnog and coffee after the meal.

Gary rises to toast to the three chefs.

"Anna, love," he says, "I knew not to worry about you eating well. I can see I was right. My regards to these excellent young chefs. Beautiful work, thank you."

Gary downs his shot of Jameson.

KJ grabs Johnny's little shot glass and downs its contents. He looks at her, one of his eyebrows raised.

"You did that because of what happened earlier," Johnny says.

"Yeah," KJ says, and then she whispers something in his ear.

"I'm sure I will," Johnny says, and she touches his lips with her gloved index finger.

A brief, ornery smile appears on KJ's face.

"Later" her lips say without sound.

Anna shakes her head. Under the table, Garret squeezes her leg, prompting her to look down and smile.

Gary adds a short wish to his toast. He keeps this one to himself. He prays that the three couples will live happily ever after, somehow. The love they share is too great to suffer tragedy. He looks at the empty shot glass, and then sets it on the table. His eyes meet Anna's and he smiles.

"Shall we begin?" Gary says.

"Of course!" Anna says, "Help yourselves."

KJ prepares a dish for Johnny before serving herself.

After the Christmas meal and a helping of plum pudding, they each enjoy a cup of peaberry coffee and then it's time for the presents.

"Open mine first," Gary says.

He doesn't want his gifts to be opened last. He won't have the heart-felt but hurried results of his shopping interfere with the beauty of the other

gifts, which no doubt took much more time and care to procure. Anna protests, but as usual with him it's in vain.

Aside from the gift for Jesse, a pair of boots for KJ and a turtleneck sweater for Anna, the other gifts from Gary are for the general use of all the cell members. There are tools, in particular replacements for heavy-use items that might break, as well as solder and wire. And there is money, which elicits objections from all others present, because the sum is large – \$5000 in fact.

"Quiet, all of you!" Gary says, "You're as much family to me as my own and I'll be damned if you'll suffer a need for emergency money. Now you'll take it and say thank you. No more bullshit, I'm your elder!"

Anna comes over and hugs him.

"That's more like it," Gary says.

Johnny gives his gift to KJ, more pairs of camouflaged pants and jeans, and two more pairs of Oakley assault boots that he found somehow and that must have cost twice what the older pairs cost him. She reciprocates with the gift of a fur-lined hat for frigid patrols, and a beautiful wooden box for intimate items like rings and easily-lost items like keys. There's also the French version of Rosetta Stone, so that he can keep up practice while he's all alone cleaning the guns. Johnny kisses her after he's opened the box. She still has another gift for him, a little box wrapped in shiny blue paper, but she'll give that one later.

"This one's for tonight," KJ says before laying that gift to the side.

Anna whispers something to Garret, and he holds back a gift as well. Gary just smiles. He knows fantasy gifts are not for his eyes to see.

Jimmy Ford left his gift last weekend. Tonight they open it. The box is full of pistol, AK47 and Armalite ammunition. On top is an envelope. Inside is \$2000 in one-hundred dollar bills.

"Emergency use" is written on a note in the envelope.

"Do not give that back," Gary admonishes them.

Rian opens his gift from Jesse: a Mac Mini, so that he can peruse maps and detailed information from the comfort of his bed. Garret did not tell the others, but his trust in Rian's discipline is such that he allows this one exception to the rule: the Mac Mini will have internet access, so that Rian can study Google Earth. Rian gave Jesse her Christmas gift last time she spent the night in Morgantown. Ford had purchased it on Rian's behalf so that it would be a surprise. Today she opens it, away from the rest of her family. It is a traditional Irish dress that he requested and that Sinead found at a boutique in Galway. Jimmy ordered the dress, as well as the Rosetta Stone for Irish. During Jimmy's last visit, Rian gave him a note to

affix to the Rosetta Stone box. When Jesse reads the note she closes her eyes and dares to dream.

*Study our language, my love. You'll need to know it someday.*

After all the other gifts are opened, with the exception of the two private ones, Anna comes to Garret's second gift for her. The other gift was a thick camouflaged jacket, not unlike KJ's in form. Anna suspected she'd get a new coat. She has no idea what this one could be. The box is large but not very tall. The paper is sea green and the bow is pure white. Anna looks at Garret and shakes her head.

"Garret..." Anna says.

"Merry Christmas, Anna," Garret says.

Anna opens the box and finds one of her oldest dreams fulfilled. Inside is a shiny silver mermaid's tail, with webbing and striations on the fin. It looks exactly as she'd picture a mermaid tail should look. At first glance it appears to be just the right size for her body, and will look like an actual tail as it hugs her from waist to foot.

"Oh my God!" Anna says, "This is fucking awesome!"

She gasps and looks up at Gary.

"I'm sorry dad!" Anna says.

"It's alright, Anna," Gary says, "You just got a little excited."

Again she looks at her father and mouths "sorry." Anna's enthusiasm is more powerful than her regret, however, and she stands while holding the tail. It shimmers in the light.

"I...How...", Anna says, "Garret," she says as she looks at her man. Anna takes a deep breath and a smile grows on her face. "Thank you so much!" she says, shaking her head.

Anna lays down the tail and runs to Garret.

"You'll get a chance to use it," Garret says, "I promise, you will."

They kiss and Anna runs to her father to hug him.

That night, after Anna gives cookies to Gary and he eats them with milk, much as Santa Claus used to do in the Murphy Home, Anna takes the tail to her bedroom. Garret waits outside for her to put it on, so that the first time he sees her with her tail she's not in the process of putting it on, but rather, she'll be a full-fledged mermaid. It's a tight fit, which is perfect, especially as it's built for swimming.

"Come in," Anna says, and when he does she giggles with excitement.

The tail is extraordinary. In retrospect, considering the craftsmanship, it was well worth every dollar he spent. Anna lies on the bed, the front of her body resting on her elbows and forearms, and her lower legs moving

up and down to wave the fin. Her red hair is free to cover her upper back and shoulders.

Anna rolls on to her back and pulls her legs up and down, again waving the tail and fin.

"This is so awesome, Garret," she says, her head turned to look upon her husband, "I just can't believe it. I always dreamed I'd have one, thank you so much! I mean, this is a dream, you know?" she says as she admires the fin.

"You deserve something nice," Garret says, "Something that makes you happy."

Anna gets a warm little smile that touches him even deeper than her adorable display of happiness. She whispers a word of thanks. He looks at her from head to fin. She's wearing a tube bra, and fills it beyond capacity. Garret resists the urge to carry his Irish mermaid to the secret room. This is a good night to let her enjoy things as they are.

"I'm not good at shit like that," Johnny says to KJ that night, as she lays her head on his chest. "If you want a gift like that, you're gonna have to tell me, because I'll fuck it up if I try to guess."

"No, Johnny, I'm good," KJ says, "I think I'd drown if I tried to swim in that."

"Yeah," Johnny says, rubbing her arm, "Still, let me know if you want something different or weird, OK?"

KJ kisses his chest.

"OK," she says, "Thank you, Johnny."

"I think it's nice he bought that tail for her," Johnny says, "When we were unpacking the bedrolls he told me about it. He had some money set aside for a wedding gift. I think it was a good idea for him to buy it. Do you know why?"

"I think I do," KJ says, "It lets her know that we have a life outside of the struggle."

"My angel," Johnny says, "You see so much."

Johnny rubs her belly and she sighs with pleasure.

"Merry Christmas, Johnny," KJ says, closing her eyes.

"Merry Christmas, angel."

The 26th of December begins like it always does. Christmas is over, and the trials and tribulations of life return without further adieu. For Anna Fogarty there is one tribulation greater than that felt by her peers. Today, Gary Murphy must leave, and when he shall return is impossible to know.

Anna rises at eight and puts a robe on over her rather scant night clothing. Garret kisses her but remains in bed. When he stretches his

arms, she feels his growing biceps. They were already pleasing to her, and are now becoming quite large. Anna smiles and rubs his arm.

Gary has already packed the clothes that he brought for his stay. He's in the kitchen, with coffee already on the flame. He's made Anna a mushroom omelet and a fruit salad, just like old times.

"Did the tail fit?" Gary asks when she comes into the kitchen.

Anna nods and smiles.

"Come eat," Gary says, and she sits beside him.

Her smile disappears and she struggles against her emotions. Of course she knows he's leaving.

"Now, now," Gary says, "I don't want to see any tears before I go."

Anna's inner strength wins for the moment. She smiles and nods.

"Thank you, dad," she says, "It's so nice you came."

"I wanted to see you again," Gary says, "Just like you are, beautiful and married. I'm so proud of you, Anna, my little Anna."

For a moment he has to fight his own emotions.

Gary and Anna talk about the gifts and she expresses her regret over not having a gift there for him, but she does not dwell on it; to do so would erode her strength and she'd weep in front of him.

"No, sweetheart," Gary says, "You did give me a gift. You've given me one hell of a son-in-law, and you did everything the right way. You waited until it was right to be his wife. You couldn't give a better gift to your father."

Anna takes his huge hand and squeezes it tight.

The others trickle into the kitchen, beginning with KJ, who starts breakfast before Johnny arrives.

"I started it already," KJ says when Johnny comes in; "You'll just have to sit and wait."

KJ pours him some juice.

The ginger pancakes she makes are delicate and tasty.

"Anna," KJ says to her sister, "We'll do aerobics a little later, OK? Is noon-ish good for you?"

"Yeah," Anna says.

KJ rises from the table and kisses Gary on the cheek. He stands and hugs her.

"Take care, Gary," KJ says from within his big arms.

"You too, KJ," Gary says, "God bless you." He looks into her face. "And take care of that young man."

Gary squeezes Johnny's shoulder. Johnny rises and shakes Gary's hand. Then Johnny and KJ leave the kitchen.

Rian finishes his pancakes and he, too, shakes Gary's hand.

"When I see Bill I'll tell him you're doing good," Gary says.

They hug and Rian departs toward his room.

Garret is late to breakfast. He pours a cup of coffee and sits it on the table. Without sitting, he kisses Anna's head and shakes Gary's hand. They hug, and Gary holds on to him for a while.

"God bless you, son," Gary says, "Take care of my angel."

"With my life, I promise you," Garret says.

Gary, his hand on the back of Garret's head, looks into the young man's bright blue eyes. Gary pats his shoulder with his other hand and smiles.

Once Garret departs for the media room, Anna and Gary are alone in the kitchen. She will not accompany him to the front door, where his possessions await. She cannot. He'll open the door and she'll have to be out of sight. She is a rebel now.

"Daddy," Anna says upon standing, "I love you so much. Please be careful."

Gary takes her into his arms. Though her strength keeps her face from showing pain, tears do wet her cheeks. She wipes her eyes.

"Sorry, dad," Anna says.

"Thanks for trying," Gary says and smiles.

Gary kisses her forehead and embraces her for a final time. Then he rubs her arms and turns to leave. As he closes the living room door, he looks back at her and winks.

"Merry Christmas, Anna," Gary says.

"Merry Christmas, dad," Anna says.

Anna stays there for quite a while after the front door closes. That night, as she lies on her husband's chest, Anna caresses him over and over. He knows something is up with her when she lays her head on him.

"Tell me," Garret says.

Anna looks up toward his face and touches his thick shoulder-length hair, which is no longer constrained in a small ponytail.

"I don't want them to spend too much on us," Anna says, "I was so happy I lost sight of all the sacrifices the others make. Jimmy, Austin, Aaron, Jesse, Bill. God, I could go on."

"I bought your gifts from money I set aside," Garret says.

"Oh I figured you did, thank you, sweetheart," Anna says, "I just...It doesn't feel right, somehow, I don't know. I just..."

"Anna, I've agonized over this, too, so has Johnny and KJ," Garret says, "They all came to me about this. I told them what I think and I'll tell

you, too. The others want to do this. I've told Jimmy and Bill not to make any larger sacrifice than absolutely necessary. Do you know what they said? Both of them? What you're doing is bigger. They said we need to have a life, not just exist. And I agree."

Anna kisses his chest and he caresses her arm. He even traces the ivy.

"Come on, Red," Garret says, "Let's get some sleep."

January begins cold, and a major snowstorm strikes Preston County, West Virginia on New Year's Day. It is bad enough to keep Jesse away for the weekend, and Jimmy Ford can only arrive after a herculean effort with the blue Jeep. Unlike Christmas, the first is just another day for each member of Capricorn Cell. KJ and Johnny lift weights, followed by Anna and Garret. The ladies practice dry-firing in the basement while Johnny practices his knife fighting techniques and Garret researches potential targets. His list for the New Year is down to a dozen candidates.

There is one major change to their routines during the cold, tedious January month. On the 12th of January, Johnny and Garret depart for Coalsack in Johnny's now-black Rubicon. The snow and ice are minimal by that date, but a cold snap ensures a dreadful stay. The two men will remain there for three days and two nights on a sentinel training mission. This one is brutal, and when the men return they're both a little worse for wear, especially Garret. It is good for him, though, and he knows it. Not a complaint comes from his lips.

Garret will greatly appreciate Anna's warmth when she cuddles up to him that night.

Diamond Crossing does not close on any Friday or Saturday during the month of January, though early on the crowds are miniscule. Everyone from the old Core Group to Capricorn Cell would prefer larger crowds. The existence of Diamond, and the chance to reach someone like KJ, is the real reason the doors remain open. *Chironex* plays for two nights in mid-January. After that, a racially-aware doom-death metal band from Tennessee plays on the last Friday of the month. They are scheduled to return in February.

Robert McKenna relishes his role as security guard at Diamond. He hasn't had much luck with Dullahan, though he does have a small class of three pupils that is set to begin in the spring.

The rest of January sees no major snowfall, but it is cold and seems to grind on endlessly. February begins in the same manner. Capricorn Cell continues its training. There is a trip to Coalsack for live firing exercises, and fortunately the sky is cloudy and the day a little warmer. The evening

is still cold, and the ladies are thankful to have their men with them during the night. Blankets and residual heat from fires and heaters cannot match the warmth of a beautiful white body.

During the first of their two-day stay at Coalsack, the ladies' primary targets are two windshields from a Mercedes-Benz C-class automobile. It is an interesting, if unsettling, addition to the usual man-sized wooden targets. On two previous occasions, John Boyle went over the nature of firing into glass and even conducted live-fire exercises into a windowpane and an old windshield. These, however, are brand new, and the young women spend considerable time shooting into the windshields and noting the results.

After KJ asks Johnny about the exercise, Garret tells the group that Ford has ordered several such windshields, from the Mercedes-Benz examples to Ford SUVs and Toyota sedans. The young female warriors will become familiar with the ballistics when bullet hits glass.

"It's a godsend to have a man with a repair shop," Garret tells them.

The next week, Rian drives the shooters and sentinels to one of the alternate training spots in the West Virginia wilderness. As usual, this is a night mission. The combat teams move out from where Rian parks the van, but they do not make it very far. Johnny, KJ and Anna each spot suspicious movement. It's probably an animal, but Anna is deeply alarmed by the silhouette she glimpsed among the high weeds. For reasons of secrecy and safety, the mission ends before it begins. The men and women return to the van and Rian drives them away without asking why.

A few nights later, the five rebels visit the second alternate spot, and this time there is no need to cancel the mission. Anna and KJ each take a single night shot, and both perform flawlessly.

To KJ, the routines and training have a definite purpose, but down in her soul she wonders if it will ever come to an end. Is this the war? Training, waiting and more training? She fights such thoughts. They're dangerous, and diminish both the seriousness and terrible truth of war. Actually, they all have such thoughts, even Johnny Bowen, and they all fight the impatience. Then the middle of February rolls around and everything changes.