

THE HARVEST GUEST

Written by

Roope Rainisto

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INT. MAINLAND HOSPICE - ROOM 12 - BEFORE DAWN

A vinyl visitor chair stands open beside the bed.

ELIN MORA, late 30s, lean, scrub top under a zipped fleece, strides in with a steel dish, gloves, a paper cup of crushed ice. Trauma shears clip her pocket. A penlight rides the other side.

A DYING MAN lies under a thin blanket. The pump clicks. Weather crackles from a wall radio in the corridor -- gulls, then a flat voice under static.

Elin checks the chart at the foot of the bed, finds no pen, writes a time across the back of her glove.

The dying man's daughter sleeps folded in the chair, chin on chest.

Elin touches her shoulder.

ELIN

You can use the family room for twenty.

The daughter jerks awake.

DAUGHTER

I was just --

ELIN

He's settled. Go wash your face.

The daughter looks to the bed, to Elin, obeys. She gathers her cardigan and goes.

The dying man turns his head toward the empty corner by the wardrobe.

DYING MAN

Hello, love.

Elin follows his eyeline. Wardrobe. Coat hook. Nothing.

DYING MAN (CONT'D)

You're early.

Elin slips on gloves, checks the line, presses the tape down where it has lifted.

ELIN

Any pain now?

DYING MAN

No. She's wet through.

Elin tightens the roller clamp a notch, watches the drip chamber.

The corridor radio sharpens for a second.

RADIO (O.S.)
... ferry warning in the Minch from
first light. Gusts building around St.
Brannan --

Elin stills only long enough to hear the island name. Her thumb goes back to the clamp.

She lifts the blanket, smooths a crease near the man's knee, checks his catheter bag, straightens the oxygen tubing over the rail.

DYING MAN
You hear that?

ELIN
I hear you breathing easier.

She takes the cup, chips a piece of ice into his mouth.

DYING MAN
Said she'd wait by the door.

ELIN
Don't talk. Save your mouth.

His hand drifts off the sheet. Elin places it back on top, palm down, then reaches for the visitor chair.

In the corridor, a phone begins to buzz against a hard surface.

Elin folds the chair flat with one motion and sets it against the wall.

She crosses to the door, catches her buzzing phone from the medication cart outside. Screen lit: ISLAND CLINIC.

She looks back once.

The dying man faces the wardrobe, mouth parted toward the hook.

Elin shuts the door.

INT. MAINLAND HOSPICE - LOCKER ROOM - BEFORE DAWN

Metal doors. Damp cuffs over a radiator. Elin shoulders in, phone at her ear, yanks her locker open.

Inside: spare scrub top, packet of dry crackers, peppermint lozenges, folded transfer forms, a weatherproof shell.

ADMINISTRATOR (V.O.)
You there?

ELIN
Yes.

ADMINISTRATOR (V.O.)
St. Brannan clinic called twice. Your father dropped overnight. More confused. They want family on island.

Elin pulls the forms free, checks for a blank signature page.

ELIN
What sats.

ADMINISTRATOR (V.O.)
I don't have that. Nurse said active decline.

ELIN
Who took the call.

ADMINISTRATOR (V.O.)
Marcy. She left notes with leave. You want me to read --

ELIN
No. Put in emergency family leave. Starting now.

She strips off one glove, digs her wallet and hospital ID from the locker shelf.

A frayed ferry tag, folded behind the plastic sleeve, slips loose and falls to the bench.

The card is old, water-soft, its string dark with grime.

Elin stares at it. The administrator keeps talking in her ear.

ADMINISTRATOR (V.O.)
They also said weather may close the harbor after tomorrow. If you need transport booked, do it before shift office --

Elin snatches up the tag and tucks it back behind the ID, hard enough to bend the card.

ELIN

Book me the first ferry. I need return open. Medical transfer probable.

ADMINISTRATOR (V.O.)

You want me to note hospice admission pending?

ELIN

Note family transfer. I'll handle bed search en route.

She stuffs shell, forms, lozenges, penlight into her bag. Adds a pair of trauma shears from the locker lip. Checks a blister pack, then swaps it for a roll of tape and a spare oxygen key from a communal tray.

A NURSE in compression socks comes in, nose red from a cold, searching for something in her bag.

NURSE

You seen my blue pen? The clicky one.

ELIN

No.

The nurse finds it clipped to her own neckline.

NURSE

Right. Great.

She leaves.

Elin zips the bag. Her phone screen fills with the ferry booking page. One sailing left in the morning.

She enters card details with gloved fingertips.

Another call flashes underneath: ST. BRANNAN CLINIC.

Elin answers.

ELIN

This is Elin Mora.

A WOMAN'S voice, careful, local.

WOMAN (V.O.)

Miss Mora. He had a rough night. Best come today.

ELIN

I am. Keep him on his regular dose. No new sedatives unless he's fighting air.

WOMAN (V.O.)

We'll do what's kind till you reach us.

Elin hears the phrase, says nothing.

She ends the call, slips the ID lanyard over her head. The ferry tag disappears behind the badge.

She hauls the bag up and heads for the door.

EXT. ST. BRANNAN HARBOR - AFTERNOON

Wind shoves spray across chipped bollards. Tar-black ropes knock against the quay. The ferry ramp slams down.

Elin strides off with one bag and a folder under her arm. She wears the hospital ID turned inward against her chest.

A few islanders wait with shopping crates and blankets. Too many faces turn at once.

MOIRA KETT, mid 60s, immaculate in a dark wool coat, steps forward before anyone else can. Labeled keys hang from an old nurse's clip at her belt. A child's tin whistle rests on a black cord at her throat.

She carries a lidded paper cup and a faded red ribbon ironed almost flat.

MOIRA

Long crossing. Tea's hot.

Elin does not take the cup.

ELIN

Where's my father.

MOIRA offers the ribbon instead.

MOIRA

This was your mother's. It turned up in the guest chest when we aired things out.

Elin looks at the ribbon. Salt gone stiff along one edge.

ELIN

Keep it.

MOIRA folds Elin's fingers over it anyway, gentle as dressing a hand.

MOIRA

You should have the thing itself.

A DECKHAND wrestles a luggage trolley past them. One wheel squeals and sticks.

Elin pulls her hand free, ribbon trapped in her fist.

ELIN

My father.

MOIRA

Home. June's been in and out. He slept a little this morning.

Elin starts past. Moira turns with her, matching pace.

MOIRA (CONT'D)

Before you go up, there's one matter. We have first bell Saturday.

ELIN

I'm here for a transfer.

MOIRA

Of course. And we'll help where help can be given.

They move along the quay. Islanders watch without pretending not to.

MOIRA (CONT'D)

You know how this week lands here.

ELIN

No.

MOIRA

Then we'll keep it plain. The festival doesn't begin till a Mora stands for the guest. Until then, your family stays.

Elin stops. Wind snaps at her coat.

ELIN

No.

MOIRA

We don't ask it rough.

ELIN

You don't ask it at all.

MOIRA studies her, then reaches to straighten Elin's turned collar. Elin steps back before the touch lands.

MOIRA

Travel's taken it out of you. Come in,
see him, warm up. We'll sort the rest
without a fuss.

ELIN

Book me a boat for dawn.

MOIRA

We'll look at the weather together.

ELIN

No. Book it.

MOIRA

We'll do what's manageable for him. And
for everyone waiting on the bell.

A man carrying oat sheaves pauses nearby, listening. A girl
drags a crate of preserves across the stones. The lid
rattles.

Elin tucks the ribbon into her coat pocket like something
dirty she can't drop yet.

ELIN

If anyone touches my paperwork, I call
mainland police.

MOIRA

Then best get signal while we still
have some.

Elin heads up the harbor road without another word.

Behind her, Moira lifts the untouched tea and follows.

INT. EAMON'S COTTAGE - BEDROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Oxygen hisses from a cylinder with the key taped to its
neck. Damp lifts the skin paper from one wall. Medicine
bottles crowd a saucer. An old raincoat hangs on the chair
back beside the bed. A worn satchel slumps half-hidden under
it.

EAMON MORA, early 70s, hollowed and sea-bent, lies propped
in a loose fisherman's sweater. Old rubber deck boots sit
under the bed, unlaced. He worries a length of net twine
between yellowed fingers. One side of his wedding ring is
filed flat.

Elin sets down her bag and is at the bedside before the door
finishes closing.

ELIN
How long on this tank.

EAMON
You came quick.

She checks the gauge.

ELIN
When did he last stand.

No answer. She turns. A YOUNG WOMAN at the dresser -- JUNE KETT, 20s, sleeves rolled, practical -- has been sorting blister packs into neat rows.

JUNE
This morning. To the commode. Near
dropped after.

ELIN
Dose times.

JUNE
Wrote them there.

A notebook lies open beside the kettle tray, medication times mixed with tide notes.

Eamon watches Elin unpack: penlight, gloves, tape, forms.

EAMON
Did you come because of me.

Elin slips the cuff around his arm, pumps it.

EAMON (CONT'D)
Or because of the week.

ELIN
Don't talk while this is on.

The cuff deflates. She listens to his chest, counts breaths, checks his ankles for swelling.

EAMON
Same answer, then.

Elin opens a transfer packet, peels out a plastic wristband, writes his name and date of birth in block letters.

ELIN
You need mainland hospice. Today if I
can move it. Tomorrow latest.

EAMON rolls the twine across his knuckles.

EAMON
Sea says otherwise.

ELIN
The sea doesn't chart you.

She fastens the bracelet around his wrist. The plastic clicks shut.

Eamon looks at it, then at her.

He lets the twine drop.

Moira enters with the tea tray she carried from the harbor. No one asked her in.

MOIRA
I brought cups. June, love, take one while it's hot.

June takes the tray because someone has to. Elin doesn't move from the bed.

ELIN
He goes at first light.

MOIRA sets out cups, sugar, a plate of seedcake.

MOIRA
If dawn is open, we'll all be grateful for it.

ELIN
I need records, med list, clinic discharge.

MOIRA
You'll have what helps him travel well.

ELIN
All of it.

Moira lifts the old raincoat from the chair back and folds it over the satchel as she clears space for her tray.

MOIRA
Before we drown in paper, one date matters more than the rest. Saturday. First bell.

Elin pulls the raincoat free again and tosses it over a chest at the far wall. The satchel slides into view and

hangs there by one strap.

ELIN

He's not staying to hear bells.

MOIRA

We won't keep him from comfort. We only need the family matter settled before then.

EAMON looks from one woman to the other.

ELIN

No one from this house is volunteering for anything.

MOIRA pours tea.

MOIRA

We use the old words because they're the ones that hold. One of you must take the guest place. Freely. By first bell.

ELIN

No.

MOIRA

If Eamon's too worn, the line passes as it passes.

ELIN

Stop.

MOIRA

We would rather not have it ugly.

June sets down her cup too hard. Tea jumps the saucer.

JUNE

He should rest.

ELIN

Yes.

She raises the bed a notch, tucks the blanket under Eamon's elbow, checks the oxygen line again.

EAMON

Moira.

Moira turns to him.

EAMON (CONT'D)

Not now.

MOIRA

No, not now. We'll leave him quiet.

She gathers nothing. She leaves the tray where it is, a claim on the room.

Elin picks up the folded raincoat from the chest, shoves it and the satchel into the wardrobe, closes the door.

ELIN

Rest. We move early.

Her hand stays on the new plastic band around his wrist.

EXT. RUARIDH'S SHED - DUSK

Sea damp creeps through the lane. Bees mutter inside stacked boxes behind the shed. A rowan cross hangs over the door on rusted wire.

Elin comes up the path with her phone raised, hunting one bar of signal. She checks the screen, gets none, swears under her breath, and plants a boot on the threshold.

White salt streaks under her sole.

A hand catches her elbow before she grinds it away.

RUARIDH SORN, 70s, narrow as driftwood, one cloudy eye, stands with a paper twist in one hand and a hive knife in the other. The knife handle is rubbed smooth where names were once cut in.

RUARIDH

Leave that.

Elin pulls free.

ELIN

I need the high road to the clinic.

RUARIDH crouches, pinches more salt from the twist, repairs the line with two quick taps.

RUARIDH

Road's there whether you ask me or not.

ELIN

Then say where.

RUARIDH nods uphill, studies her phone.

RUARIDH
Dead already?

ELIN
No signal.

RUARIDH
Aye.

He offers the twist. She doesn't take it.

RUARIDH (CONT'D)
Doors matter more than walls here.

ELIN
I'm not salting my father like a
haddock.

RUARIDH looks at her, then at the cottage lights below.

RUARIDH
Thing is, a shut wall's just a shut
wall. Door's different. Door asks
things.

ELIN
From who.

RUARIDH
Whatever knows your name.

Elin gives him a look that has emptied tougher rooms than
this.

ELIN
Useful version.

He points with the hive knife, plain.

RUARIDH
Don't answer a voice through wood after
dusk unless you can see the mouth
making it. Keep salt where folk cross.
If an inner door's lined, leave it
lined.

ELIN
Who's lining inner doors.

RUARIDH
People who got tired of digging.

Wind pushes the bees louder for a second. Somewhere lower in
the village, a bell knocks once. Then again.

A woman across the lane shakes salt from a paper packet along her sill. A boy carries a chair indoors backward and gets laughed at by nobody in particular.

Elin glances from house to house. Every doorway has fresh white at its foot.

ELIN

This your harvest hobby.

RUARIDH folds the twist and pushes it into her coat pocket himself.

RUARIDH

Keep it dry.

ELIN

I asked for the clinic road.

RUARIDH points again, then adds, almost to the bees.

RUARIDH

A vigil is just staying when every useful part of you wants the door.

Elin snorts once.

ELIN

That's not medicine.

RUARIDH

No.

ELIN

Staying while he drowns in his own lungs isn't care.

RUARIDH opens his palm to the wind, testing it.

RUARIDH

Didn't say stand there empty-handed.

Elin takes out her phone. No bars. The screen drops to SOS only.

From below, someone calls her name from the lane -- familiar, female.

VOICE (O.S.)

Elin?

She turns toward it.

Ruaridh catches her sleeve.

RUARIDH

See first.

June appears around the stone wall carrying a loaf wrapped in a tea towel.

JUNE

Moira sent bread. You coming back down or what?

Ruaridh lets go.

Elin pulls the paper twist from her pocket, weighs it once, and keeps it.

INT. EAMON'S COTTAGE - KITCHEN - DUSK

Elin strides in ahead of June, already dialing. Bread hits the table. Her phone stays on SOS ONLY.

From the bedroom, oxygen stutters. Then a wet scrape of breath.

ELIN

Dad?

She drops the phone, snatches her penlight and trauma shears from her coat, and goes.

INT. EAMON'S COTTAGE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Eamon folds over the blanket, fingers dug into the sheet. The oxygen cannula hangs loose across his cheek.

Elin is on him fast.

ELIN (CONT'D)

Sit up. June, pillow. No -- two.

June shoves pillows behind him. Elin seats the cannula, checks the tubing to the cylinder, opens the flow with the key taped to its side.

ELIN (CONT'D)

How long.

JUNE

Just started. He coughed and then he sort of--

ELIN

Bottle.

June hands over a small morphine bottle. Elin checks the label, the level, then her glove. Medication times run across the back in blue ink. She adds a new one with a blunt pencil from the sill.

Eamon reaches for her wrist, misses.

EAMON

Easy water.

ELIN

No water.

She counts his breaths under her own.

ELIN (CONT'D)

You have chest pain?

EAMON

Just the sea in it.

He coughs, brings up ropey sputum into a rag. Elin takes the rag, folds a clean edge, wipes his mouth.

In the lane outside, a bell knocks. Then another from farther off.

June glances to the window before she can stop herself.

ELIN

Look at him.

June does.

JUNE

Sorry.

Elin reaches for the landline on the bedside crate, dials from memory, listens. Nothing. She dials again, harder this time.

ELIN

Clinic first. Then harbor office.

Static. A click. Dead.

She tries her mobile. No bars. She crosses to the window, phone raised.

Outside, across the lane, a woman shakes salt from a paper twist under her front step. A man at the next cottage chalks a mark beside his door latch. Neither one hurries.

ELIN (CONT'D)

June. Your phone.

June hands it over. Elin dials. Waits. Dead.

JUNE

Mast went in the last blow. It comes back if the weather's kind.

ELIN

When.

JUNE

I don't know. Tonight, maybe. Or--

ELIN

Generator radio?

JUNE

Harbor. Maybe Moira's kitchen set.

Eamon catches at Elin's sleeve. She checks his pulse, then the transfer bracelet still circling his wrist.

ELIN

Stay with me. In through the nose.

EAMON

That'd be easier with a better set.

His breath catches again. Elin leans him forward, thumps his back once, then again lower. A clot of phlegm hits the rag. His shoulders drop a fraction.

ELIN

Good. Again.

He does. Air starts to move.

In the lane, a child trots past carrying a chair backward into a house. An older girl follows with a saucer of salt. June watches, then remembers herself and straightens the blanket over Eamon's knees.

ELIN (CONT'D)

You know the dose he's had today?

JUNE

Half at noon. Tiny one at four. I wrote it on the cereal box because the pad got wet.

ELIN

Get the box.

June runs.

Elin listens to Eamon's chest. Her jaw tightens. She reaches to the little steel dish by the bed, lifts curled patient name bands from a visit long ago, finds nothing useful, drops them back.

EAMON

No point ringing out.

ELIN

There is.

EAMON

Storm's got the wires.

ELIN

Then harbor radio. Then boat.

Eamon's hand drifts to his pocket. He works a bit of net-mending twine between thumb and forefinger while he breathes.

June comes back with a damp cereal flap, dose times in marker.

JUNE

And Moira said she'd send soup. That's not help, that's just soup. Though if she sends the leek one I'd call that a crime.

Elin doesn't look at her.

ELIN

He needs transfer at first light.

JUNE

If the road's open.

ELIN

The road will be open.

She moves to the kitchen phone on the wall, drags its cord taut, dials the mainland hospice liaison, then emergency coast transfer, then the ferry office. Each line gives her the same blank silence.

June stands in the bedroom doorway with the cereal flap. Behind her, through the open back door, an old man salts the threshold of his shed with two fingers and shuts himself in.

ELIN (CONT'D)

Come on.

Nothing.

She slams the receiver down, lifts it again. Dead.

In the bedroom, Eamon tips his head toward the window, listening to the bells carry house to house.

ELIN (CONT'D)

We're moving him at dawn. Pack his meds. Spare cylinder. Blankets. Not that one.

She yanks her mother's old raincoat off a chest to get at the bag beneath. A worn nursing satchel sits half-hidden behind it. She leaves both on the floor and pulls out transfer forms, already damp at the corners.

ELIN (CONT'D)

June, find Tomas or the harbor clerk. I need one confirmed boat. Medical priority.

JUNE

At this hour?

ELIN

Now.

June hesitates at the door, looks once more at the lane where salt lines brighten in the last light.

JUNE

I'll go.

She takes her coat from the peg. Elin kneels by Eamon and slips a lozenge into her own mouth without tasting it.

ELIN

You're stable for the minute. Don't pull the cannula.

EAMON

Minute's a greedy ask.

Elin smooths the transfer papers flat on the blanket with her palm. Outside, one door after another closes over white salt.

INT. EAMON'S COTTAGE - WASHROOM - NIGHT

Steam clouds the cracked mirror. June carries in a basin, clean flannel, folded sheets over one arm, soup tucked under her chin.

Eamon sits on a chair in his undershirt, feet planted in old rubber deck boots without laces. Elin checks his cylinder pressure.

JUNE

Moirra sent the decent spoons. That's how you know she's worried.

No one answers.

June sets the basin down.

JUNE (CONT'D)

Right. Warm, not hot. He hates hot.

ELIN

We need him clean and back in bed in six minutes.

JUNE

Six.

June wets the flannel, wrings it out, then crouches in front of Eamon.

JUNE (CONT'D)

Can I do your face?

Eamon nods.

June washes him slowly, careful around the oxygen tubing. Elin reaches to undo his shirt.

ELIN

Arms up.

Eamon starts, then stops. June glances at Elin.

JUNE

You want the shirt off, Eamon?

A beat.

EAMON

Aye.

June helps him lift his arms. Elin steps back one pace, irritated already. She strips the damp sheet from the cot in the next room, stuffs it into a basket, comes back with the clean one snapped hard between her hands.

ELIN

He'll need barrier cream at the sacrum. Skin's going.

JUNE

I know where his skin is.

Then, softer to Eamon.

JUNE (CONT'D)

Sorry. That came out with elbows on it.

Eamon's mouth twitches once.

Elin checks his ankles, presses a shin, watches the skin stay dented.

ELIN

Any urine since four.

JUNE

Little bit. Dark. In the jug with the chip.

ELIN

Not enough.

JUNE

No. Not enough much of anything.

She slides an arm around Eamon's back.

JUNE (CONT'D)

Can you lean to me a sec?

He does. June washes under his shoulder, his neck, the hollow at the collarbone. Elin opens the cream, ready.

ELIN

Roll him left.

June looks up.

JUNE

Ask him.

ELIN

He needs turning.

JUNE

I know. Ask him.

Elin stares at June, then at Eamon.

ELIN

Can you roll left.

EAMON

Probably.

June helps him shift. Elin applies the cream, efficient, eyes on the skin, not his face.

JUNE

There.

ELIN

Pillow between the knees.

June does it.

JUNE

You're very good at the what. Just--

She taps her own chipped front tooth with a thumbnail, thinking better of it.

ELIN

Just what.

JUNE

Nothing clever. He can hear you like he's a cupboard getting moved, that's all.

Elin tucks the sheet under the mattress, too tight. Eamon catches the edge with weak fingers and pulls a little slack back for his feet.

June sees it. So does Elin.

JUNE (CONT'D)

He likes room at the toes. Your dad's socks taught me that. The thick blue pair. He swore they pinched and they didn't even touch him.

EAMON

They were liars.

June laughs once. It dies quickly.

ELIN

I'm trying to keep him breathing.

JUNE

I know.

She rinses the flannel, wrings it, wipes Eamon's hands one at a time. His filed wedding ring catches on the cloth.

JUNE (CONT'D)
You want soup now or after.

EAMON
After.

JUNE
Good answer.

Elin gathers up the dirty shirt, spots the old nursing satchel on a shelf under spare blankets, and shoves it farther back to make room.

JUNE (CONT'D)
Leave that. It drops dust on everything if you move it.

ELIN
What's in it.

JUNE
Old things. Needles from when your mum did district rounds. A tape, I think. Never mind. Here.

June lifts a key on a bit of red wool from her apron pocket as she reaches for more towels, then stuffs it back without comment.

ELIN
What's that.

JUNE
Nothing. Pantry. I nick everything and then forget why.

She hands Elin the fresh pajama top.

JUNE (CONT'D)
If you want records, not stories, I can get you into the clinic cupboards after dark. Ledger room an' all. Gran keeps old festival lists in the back press because nobody in their right mind would file them proper.

ELIN
Why help me.

JUNE
Because this house smells like being watched and nobody says plain things anymore.

June settles Eamon back, asks with her hands before she lifts the blanket. Elin watches him ease under that pace.

JUNE (CONT'D)

There. Better?

EAMON

Bit.

ELIN

We leave at dawn.

June looks from one to the other, picks up the soup, and blows across the surface.

JUNE

Then eat while you still know where the spoons are.

INT. MOIRA'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Preserves catch the lamp in red and amber rows. A polished brass bell sits by a stack of folded guest ribbons. Keys hang from an old nurse's clip at Moira's belt.

Moira straightens a label on a jar as Tomas comes in, rain still on his shoulders. He sets a thermos lid of black tea on the table and keeps his torch in hand.

TOMAS

She's calling out. Harbor, clinic, mainland.

MOIRA

Of course she is.

She opens a notebook already ruled with names and tasks.

MOIRA (CONT'D)

Mrs. Drennan takes oat bread to the chapel. Boys for the lantern frames. June's at Eamon's.

TOMAS

You heard me.

MOIRA

I did.

She marks something, then reaches past him to fix his collar where it has turned under his weather gear.

MOIRA (CONT'D)

If a sick man goes onto black water tomorrow, we may lose him in sight of the pier. Then what have we done for him.

TOMAS

Boat can make it if the swell stays under two.

MOIRA

Can. Not will.

Tomas waits.

MOIRA (CONT'D)

We need weather precautions taken. Quietly.

TOMAS

Say it plain.

Moira lifts the brass bell, moves it an inch to wipe the ring it left, sets it back.

MOIRA

No scenes at the harbor. No hands on Elin unless she gives you no choice. If a line fails, we mend it later. If fuel goes missing, we share what we have. If an engine won't turn at dawn, nobody will blame a storm this week.

TOMAS

And the ferry.

MOIRA

The ferry master already has eyes and a sky.

TOMAS

Barley.

Moira's hand pauses over the notebook.

MOIRA

Wet packs better.

He studies her. She does not look up.

MOIRA (CONT'D)

We will do what's kind. Kind isn't always pretty from the gate.

TOMAS

If she pushes through me.

MOIRA

Then you keep the road shut and your
temper shut tighter.

He drinks from the thermos lid.

TOMAS

June's nosing.

MOIRA

June has a soft spot for damaged birds
and loud women. She'll tire.

From the back room a child runs in, grabs a paper packet of
salt from the dresser, runs out again.

MOIRA (CONT'D)

Take six sacks to the grain barn. And
the guest chair to chapel storage till
morning. I don't want it left in the
lane for children to climb on.

TOMAS

Volunteering words?

Moirra opens a drawer. Inside, wrapped in clean cloth, a
small barley sickle. She unwraps it, checks the edge with
her thumb, wraps it again.

MOIRA

At first light I'll have them said
through properly. Not in a crush, not
with gossip under it.

TOMAS

If neither Mora steps forward.

Moirra closes the drawer.

MOIRA

One of them will.

She lifts a key from her belt clip and lays it beside his
tea lid.

MOIRA (CONT'D)

Outer harbor shed. Spare stretcher
straps are in there. Bring them to the
office. Better to have things where
they're wanted.

TOMAS

Aye.

He takes the key.

MOIRA

And Tomas.

He stops.

MOIRA (CONT'D)

If Elin asks, tomorrow is still possible. People bear bad news better in the morning.

Tomas pockets the key and goes. Moira turns back to the notebook. She adds one more line, tears the page free, and folds it around a handful of barley.

INT. HARBOR OFFICE - PRE-DAWN

A strip heater clicks on and off under damp walls. Flares, zip ties, and spare batteries sit sorted on shelves behind the desk.

Elin stands at the counter in her weatherproof shell over scrubs, transfer forms spread flat under both hands. The HARBOR CLERK, gray-eyed and tired, squints at a tide table.

HARBOR CLERK

One slot. Dawn medical launch. Out and back if the weather holds till seven.

ELIN

Name it.

HARBOR CLERK

Cormorant.

ELIN

Crew.

HARBOR CLERK

Mair and Lennox.

ELIN

Stretcher on board?

The clerk checks a clipboard.

HARBOR CLERK

Aye.

Elin signs, tears off a copy, shoves it into her coat.
Relief is brief and ugly.

ELIN

I need ferry confirmation too.

The clerk reaches for the radio mic, gets only squelch.
Tries again.

HARBOR CLERK

Ferry's off. Wind came east at three.

ELIN

Canceled by who.

HARBOR CLERK

By weather.

ELIN

I need the launch, then.

HARBOR CLERK

If she's afloat.

Elin looks up.

EXT. HARBOR - CONTINUOUS

Rain needles the basin. Tar-black ropes slap wet bollards.
Diesel blooms in the tide beside the moorings.

Elin runs the planks toward the medical launch berth. Tomas
comes the other way with a coil of rope. He gives every knot
a brutal second tug as he passes.

TOMAS

Road closes after full dark tonight.
You move, you move before.

ELIN

Boat first.

She keeps going.

At the end berth, the CORMORANT lists hard, stern down, half
full of black water.

The orange stretcher floats beside it, straps salted stiff,
tapping the hull.

Elin climbs down the ladder, boots slipping. She grabs the
gunwale and hauls herself onto the tilted deck. The engine
cover is unlatched.

She flips it open.

Wet barley clogs the housing, swollen and packed deep.

Elin stares, then digs in bare-handed, scooping fistfuls onto the deck. Grain and oily water slap her wrists.

ELIN (CONT'D)

No. No.

Tomas reaches the berth above her.

TOMAS

Back up.

ELIN

Who touched this.

TOMAS

Get off the boat.

ELIN

Look at it.

She holds up a fist of barley. Rain pins it to her palm.

ELIN (CONT'D)

This isn't weather.

TOMAS

You got a complaint, file it after the storm.

ELIN

My father won't make after the storm.

She drops to the floating stretcher, steadies herself, then splashes to the quay. Her transfer copy sticks to her coat, soaked through.

Moirra approaches under an umbrella she does not bother to raise over herself. She carries a lidded flask.

MOIRRA

You should have gloves on.

Elin throws the barley at her feet. It spatters the stones.

ELIN

You shut the ferry. You killed the launch.

MOIRA

The ferry's canceled. The launch has
had a bad night.

ELIN

Wet grain in an engine is not a bad
night.

Moira looks at the barley between them.

MOIRA

We've kept worse weather than you here.

Elin steps in close.

ELIN

Say it where Tomas can hear it.

TOMAS

Enough.

He plants himself between them.

TOMAS (CONT'D)

Office. Now, or off the quay.

Elin looks past him to the sunk launch, the stretcher
knocking once, twice against the hull. She takes out her
phone and snaps a photo. The screen glitches, then goes
black with water.

ELIN

Who has another boat.

HARBOR CLERK

Not for transfer. Not in this tide.

ELIN

A fishing boat. A private run. Anything
with an engine and room to lie him
flat.

No one answers fast enough.

She turns to the harbor board. Departure times, chalked
names, a notice about bait bins, a childishly drawn gull no
one has rubbed away. Under the ferry line someone has
scrawled CANCELED in thick red grease pencil.

Elin tears her wet form off her coat, smooths it once
against the wall, and folds it smaller.

ELIN (CONT'D)

Fine. Then I need fuel, spare cylinder brackets, and a chart of every mooring on this island.

TOMAS

Fuel's controlled.

ELIN

By you.

TOMAS

Aye.

Moira offers the flask.

MOIRA

Tea.

Elin knocks it from her hand. It rolls under the bench, leaking black across the boards.

Nobody moves.

Wind shoves rain through the open harbor gate. The sunk launch tugs against its line. The orange stretcher turns in the basin.

INT. EAMON'S COTTAGE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Rain ticks the window. Oxygen hisses steady now. Eamon sits up in bed facing the dark glass, blanket over his knees, twine moving in his fingers.

Elin comes in wet, carrying the soaked transfer papers and her mother's raincoat. She drops both on the chair by the bed. The satchel slips half out of the coat lining and hangs there.

ELIN

The boat was stuffed with barley.

Eamon works the twine. Says nothing.

ELIN (CONT'D)

Look at me.

He doesn't.

ELIN (CONT'D)

I need the truth now. Not village talk.
Not Moira's version. What is the guest.

Eamon rubs the filed side of his ring against the twine.

EAMON
Bad weather with a ribbon on it.

ELIN
No.

She drags the old raincoat off the chair and throws it onto the chest. The satchel drops to the floor with a dull thud.

ELIN (CONT'D)
This was hers. You kept all of it in here and never said one plain thing.

EAMON
Plain's costly.

ELIN
More costly than this.

She points toward the window, the village beyond it.

ELIN (CONT'D)
They salted every door while he couldn't breathe.

EAMON
Aye.

ELIN
Why.

EAMON
Because night comes.

ELIN
Stop that.

She crouches, yanks the satchel open. Old papers. A rusted thermometer case. A cassette in a cracked plastic box. She stares at it, then at him.

ELIN (CONT'D)
What is this.

Eamon's fingers falter once on the twine.

EAMON
Put it back.

ELIN
Was she trying to leave. Did they stop her. Did you.

EAMON

Elin.

ELIN

Did she volunteer. Did you let her.

He draws a breath that catches halfway and waits it through.

EAMON

Storms are simpler than people.

ELIN

That's your answer.

EAMON

It's the one I have.

She sets the cassette on the bed between them.

ELIN

Then give me the words. What do they say when they make someone do it.

Eamon looks down at the cassette, then at the transfer bracelet on his wrist. He picks at the edge of the plastic tag with a thumbnail.

EAMON

You came with straps in your bag before you came with questions.

ELIN

Because you need hospice.

EAMON

Maybe.

ELIN

You are in active decline. Your sats drop with ten feet to the toilet. You need meds managed, skin watched, someone who can--

EAMON

Manage me.

Elin closes the satchel, hard.

ELIN

I can still get you out.

EAMON

Water says no, folk say no, boat says no.

ELIN
People did that.

EAMON
Aye.

ELIN
Then tell me how to beat them.

Eamon shifts the twine into his other hand, reaches to the window latch, and cracks it an inch. Wet air threads in with the buoy bell.

EAMON
You don't beat a tide by shouting at it.

ELIN
This isn't tide.

EAMON
No.

He turns onto his side, toward the window, away from her and the satchel.

ELIN
Dad.

No answer.

ELIN (CONT'D)
If you know what happened to her, say it.

He pulls the blanket higher over his shoulder.

EAMON
Not tonight.

Elin stands with the cassette in one hand, the transfer papers stuck to her other palm. Behind her, on the floor, the satchel gapes open beside the raincoat.

EXT. HARBOR ROAD BY CHAPEL - DUSK

ELIN comes fast around the bend with EAMON in a wheelchair, oxygen cylinder hooked to the back with bungee cord. The transfer papers ride under one hand on his blanket.

Ahead, a small skiff knocks at the lower quay. A FISHERMAN in oilskins lifts two fingers.

FISHERMAN

Ten minutes, maybe less.

TOMAS steps out from the chapel gate with a torch and a length of chain already in his hand. The road beyond him is closed with it.

TOMAS

Road shuts at dusk.

ELIN

He's booked out. Move it.

TOMAS

No crossings after bell.

ELIN

This isn't a crossing. It's a patient transfer.

TOMAS

Same road.

Elin angles the chair toward the verge to go around him.

Tomas catches the handles and stops the chair dead.

Eamon's boots scrape stone.

EAMON

Leave it.

ELIN

No.

She pulls the chair back from Tomas's grip and drives toward the chapel side entrance where the gate stands open. The stone threshold is bare. No white line of salt.

June, halfway up the path with a shopping bag, sees it.

JUNE

Elin--

Too late. The front wheels bump over the sill.

Eamon jerks in the chair as if something hit him in the chest. His hands claw at the blanket, then at the oxygen tubing.

ELIN

Don't pull that. Dad. Look at me.

His breath comes fast and shallow. He twists hard, trying to get his feet under him.

EAMON
Back. Back.

ELIN
Sit down.

TOMAS
Take him out.

ELIN
Get away from him.

She drops to one knee, reaches for his wrist, misses when he bats her hand off. The transfer papers slide into a puddle.

JUNE hurries in, sets down the bag, crouches by Eamon instead of touching him.

JUNE
Eamon. Do you want back through or out to the road.

EAMON
Through.

June points.

JUNE
Aye. Through, then.

Elin yanks the chair backward over the sill. The back wheels catch, then lurch free. Eamon folds over himself, dragging air in ragged pulls.

Tomas swings the chapel door shut with one arm and throws the chain across the road with the other.

TOMAS
Done.

ELIN
He needed ten minutes.

TOMAS
He needs indoors.

ELIN
You don't get that call.

TOMAS
I just made it.

The fisherman at the quay casts off without another word.

Elin fumbles for the pulse oximeter clipped to her coat pocket, jams it on Eamon's finger. The screen blinks, wet and useless.

EAMON

Home.

ELIN

One minute.

Eamon slaps the oximeter away. It skids across the chapel stones.

JUNE

Elin.

June lifts the shopping bag. A loaf, a jar, a folded towel.

JUNE (CONT'D)

Let's get him turned round.

Elin looks past Tomas to the dark road, then down at the papers dissolving under rain by her shoe. She stoops, scoops up the mush of them, stuffs them into her pocket, and takes the chair handles.

Tomas stands where he is, torch beam on the wet gate chain.

Elin turns the chair back toward the cottage.

Eamon's fingers keep a hard grip on the oxygen tube all the way down the road.

INT. EAMON'S COTTAGE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Eamon lands back in bed angry, breathing easier but glaring at the blanket as Elin tucks it over his legs.

He shoves at her wrist.

EAMON

Enough.

ELIN

Your sats crashed.

EAMON

I said enough.

June comes in with a basin, a mug steaming in one hand, biscuits tucked under her arm. She warms her fingers on the mug before setting it down.

JUNE

I've got clean sheets. Well. Cleaner.

Elin is already reaching for the drawsheet.

ELIN

We need him higher. On three.

JUNE

Eamon.

June waits until he looks at her.

JUNE (CONT'D)

Do you want up the bed or turned first.

Eamon's mouth works a moment before sound comes.

EAMON

Turn.

JUNE

Right. Toward me.

She holds out her forearm. Eamon takes it. Elin stops with both hands on the sheet.

June and Eamon make the turn slow. Elin catches the pillow sliding and fixes it under his shoulder.

JUNE (CONT'D)

There. That's better than hauling,
isn't it.

The joke hangs there. Nobody takes it.

June strips the damp pillowcase. Elin changes the oxygen tubing over to a dry length from her bag.

ELIN

When did the panic start.

JUNE

At the chapel.

ELIN

Before the threshold or after.

JUNE

After.

Elin writes a time on the back of her glove.

June sees it.

JUNE (CONT'D)
You write on yourself a lot.

ELIN
Paper moves.

June gives her a look, then tucks the sheet under Eamon's hip.

JUNE
He hates being handled when he's got no say. That's all I meant out there.

ELIN
He needed moving.

JUNE
Aye.

She lifts the mug.

JUNE (CONT'D)
Tea.

Eamon nods. June holds it while he drinks. Elin watches his throat work, counts without meaning to.

JUNE (CONT'D)
You can ask him plain.

ELIN
I do.

JUNE
No. You ask like a form asks.

Elin opens a fresh packet of crackers at the sink alcove, eats one without looking away from the bed.

JUNE (CONT'D)
Christ, that is bleak.

ELIN
It's food.

JUNE
There's biscuits right here.

ELIN
Crackers are fine.

June almost smiles, then doesn't. She sets the mug aside and rubs Eamon's cold hand between both of hers.

JUNE
What do you want now.

EAMON
Quiet.

JUNE
Can do.

She starts for the door, then nods at Elin.

JUNE (CONT'D)
You ask one.

ELIN
What.

JUNE
Anything he can answer without fighting
you first.

Elin stands by the bed with a clean blanket in her hands.
Eamon looks at the window, not at her.

ELIN
Do you want the lamp off.

Eamon glances over.

EAMON
No.

ELIN
More morphine.

EAMON
Not yet.

Elin sets the blanket down. Tries again.

ELIN
Do you want me here or out in the
kitchen.

A beat.

EAMON
Here.

June picks up the basin, the damp sheet, the little bag from
the chapel.

JUNE
There. Not fatal.

She reaches into her apron pocket, pulls out a key tied on red wool, shows it only to Elin.

JUNE (CONT'D)

If you're done wrestling roads, clinic
back door. Midnight. Don't bring boots
that shout.

June slips the key back into her pocket and goes.

Elin pulls the chair beside the bed instead of folding it away. She sits on the edge, awkward in it.

Eamon closes his hand around the blanket and leaves it there.

INT. CLINIC STOREROOM - NIGHT

A key turns soft in the back lock.

June eases the door open. Elin slips in after her with a penlight and phone. The damp clinic walls lift paper at the seams. An oxygen key is taped to a cylinder beside the cupboard.

JUNE (CONT'D)

Quick.

ELIN

Which files.

JUNE

Old ledgers first. Cupboard that
sticks.

She braces a foot, yanks the warped door. It gives. Inside: patient bands in a steel dish, festival notebooks, invoices, vials, dust.

Elin works fast, stacking books by date on the counter. June keeps watch at the frosted pane.

ELIN

Who signs these.

JUNE

Moirra. Before her, old Dr. Fane if he
hadn't sailed off already. Then just
whoever had the neatest hand, I
suppose.

Elin flips pages. Names. Temperatures. Rations. Then a repeated column each harvest week.

GUEST PLACE SET. GUEST PLACE CLEARED. GUEST PLACE RESET.

She stops.

ELIN

Every year.

JUNE

I told you there was always one put
wrong at meals.

ELIN

Same date.

She photographs the pages. Her phone screen fills with names
and those same three words over and over.

A scrape at the door. Both women freeze into action, not
stillness. June snatches up a box of dressings and starts
restacking it crooked. Elin flips a ledger open on a random
medication page.

RUARIDH's voice comes through the crack.

RUARIDH

If I was a constable, I'd knock louder.

June exhales and lets him in.

Ruaridh brings wet air and a beekeeper veil looped over one
arm.

ELIN

You followed us.

RUARIDH

Thing is, you weren't hidden.

His cloudy eye lands on the ledgers.

RUARIDH (CONT'D)

If you hear someone you know through a
shut door, leave them there till you
see a face.

ELIN

I heard that already.

RUARIDH

Hear it again.

He opens his palm. A paper twist of salt sits there. Elin
already has one in her coat.

ELIN

What's guest place reset.

RUARIDH

Plate goes down. Plate comes back. Folk sleep easier if the count matches in the morning.

ELIN

That isn't an answer.

RUARIDH

It's what they do.

June edges toward another shelf, pulls a small ledger with a chapel stamp.

JUNE

This one was in Gran's room till supper. I pinched it off the key ring when she went for the soup pots.

She taps the red wool at her pocket.

JUNE (CONT'D)

And this. Don't ask twice.

Elin takes the chapel ledger. Inside, the dates run back farther than the paper should have lasted, recopied in different hands across generations. The same harvest date. The same guest entry. The same reset mark.

ELIN

No gaps.

RUARIDH

Bad years had sloppier ink.

A bell sounds outside.

Elin looks up. The rope hanging in the clinic hall through the open inner door does not move.

The bell sounds again.

June stares at the rope.

JUNE

I hate that.

Elin photographs the open page anyway.

ELIN

Crypt.

JUNE

Now.

EXT. CHAPEL YARD - NIGHT

They cross under rain, heads down. Ruaridh opens the side door with his shoulder and lets them into the lower steps.

INT. CHAPEL CRYPT - NIGHT

Low stone. Lime bloom. The yearly guest chair leans against the wall under a dust sheet, one leg wrapped in red ribbon.

Elin lifts the sheet. Simple wood. Seat polished by hands.

Ruaridh watches her see it.

RUARIDH

Chair's for keeping, not storage, but folk like cupboards.

Elin moves on to the shelves cut into stone. She finds more ledgers, older and fatter, and photographs page after page.

The bells keep sounding above them. No rope shadow moves across the stairwell.

ELIN

These names. Some repeat.

RUARIDH

Families do.

ELIN

Not surnames. First names.

RUARIDH

Aye.

Elin writes dates down on the back of her wet transfer papers, then when the ink feathers she copies them onto the inside of her own forearm.

JUNE

That's new.

ELIN

It won't blow away.

She keeps writing while the bell carries through stone.

INT. CHAPEL CRYPT - LATER NIGHT

A torch beam cuts across the shelves.

TOMAS stands at the foot of the stair, rain on his shoulders, one hand on the forced storeroom latch June left bent.

TOMAS

Step back.

June slips the small ledger behind her leg. Elin lowers her phone but does not pocket it fast enough.

Tomas comes down two steps at a time. He takes in the open shelves, the mud on the flags, the dust cover dragged from the guest chair.

TOMAS (CONT'D)

Phones. Papers. Fuel key if you've got one.

ELIN

No.

TOMAS

Now.

ELIN

You blocked a transfer. You shut a road on a man who can't walk to his own toilet.

TOMAS

And you broke into a clinic and a chapel.

ELIN

You call this order.

TOMAS

I call it night rules.

He holds out his hand. June gives him the storeroom key on red wool. He looks at it, then at her.

TOMAS (CONT'D)

From where.

JUNE

Pocket.

Tomas drops the key into his coat and reaches for Elin's stack. She jerks it back.

ELIN

They're trapping a dying man.

The words come out hard, ready for a room bigger than this.

Then the chapel bell gives one short strike above them, and from somewhere in the dark nave a child laughs and is cut off.

Elin hears her own sentence land in the crypt and not fit cleanly.

Tomas hears the bell, too, but his face does not change.

TOMAS

You don't get to stir folk up and walk away to the mainland after.

ELIN

I'm not stirring. I'm reading.

TOMAS

Reading's done.

He takes the papers from her hand. The wet transfer sheets tear at the corner. He takes her phone next. She lets go of both.

June starts to speak. Tomas cuts her off with a look.

TOMAS (CONT'D)

Out.

RUARIDH appears at the top stair, hat dripping.

RUARIDH

Thing is, if she'd wanted the whole island in a fever, she'd have chosen market day.

TOMAS

Not helping.

He pats Elin down in plain view for anything else. Finds the spare jerrycan key clipped inside her coat.

TOMAS (CONT'D)

Fuel, too.

ELIN

That was mine.

TOMAS

Not tonight.

He moves toward the stair and waits. Not asking.

Elin wipes her forearm with her thumb. The inked dates stay where they are under rainwater and skin.

She goes up past him.

EXT. CHAPEL YARD - CONTINUOUS

Tomas hands the confiscated phone, papers, and key bundle to a church volunteer waiting under an umbrella.

TOMAS (CONT'D)
Harbor office lockbox.

The volunteer hurries off.

Tomas turns back to Elin, June, and Ruaridh.

TOMAS (CONT'D)
After dusk, house to house. No lanes.
No harbor. Next time I walk you myself.

JUNE
Like schoolchildren.

TOMAS
If that helps you hear it.

He shines the torch down the road toward Eamon's cottage.

TOMAS (CONT'D)
Move.

Elin starts walking. June falls in beside her. Ruaridh lags a step behind, palm open to the rain as if testing it.

The torch beam keeps them in one hard strip of white until the cottage gate.

EXT. HARBOR - DAWN

Gray water. Diesel rainbow in the tide. A DECKHAND stands on the quay, staring down.

DECKHAND
There she is.

Elin runs the last yards and drops to the slick boards.

The CORMORANT sits half under, lines groaning at the cleats. Its orange stretcher floats against the pilings, straps salted stiff.

ELIN
Get me a boathook.

The deckhand passes one over. Elin hooks the stretcher in, drags it close, then clambers onto the launch's gunwale and reaches into the open engine housing.

Her hand comes back packed with wet barley.

She stares at it. Gold mash, diesel-black at the edges.

Behind her, a thermos lid clicks. Tomas drinks black tea from it, watching but not speaking.

Moira arrives under an umbrella with a lidded soup pot wrapped in towels.

MOIRA

You'll have something hot.

ELIN

You sank it.

MOIRA

It's taken water.

ELIN

This was put in by hand.

She holds up the fist of barley.

MOIRA

Then somebody was afraid.

ELIN

Who.

MOIRA

If I knew that, we'd have a different morning.

Elin jumps down from the boat. Water splashes up her trouser legs.

ELIN

You keep saying we like weather did this. Your dock, your road, your bells, your soup. Which one of you did it.

Moira sets the soup pot on a bollard and unwraps bowls from a cloth.

MOIRA

You've not eaten.

ELIN

Don't.

MOIRA

You'll shake harder if you don't.

Elin opens her hand and slaps the wet barley against Moira's coat. Kernels stick to the wool and slide down.

Nobody moves.

The deckhand looks at the water. Tomas looks at the stretcher bumping the pilings. Moira glances down at the barley on her coat, brushes two grains off her sleeve, and lifts the ladle.

MOIRA (CONT'D)

Leek and potato. June made it too thin,
but it will do.

Elin laughs once through her nose. Wrong sound for the place.

ELIN

You want me fed so I stop shouting.

MOIRA

I want you upright.

ELIN

I had transfer papers.

TOMAS

Not now.

Elin turns on him.

ELIN

You took them.

TOMAS

Boat's gone either way.

She looks back at the engine housing, at the barley in the bilge water, at the stretcher tapping wood with each swell.

No one around her takes up the accusation. No one argues. Gulls wheel once and peel off inland.

MOIRA

We'll do what's kind. Bring your father
broth. Keep him warm. Sleep if you can.

ELIN

Stop saying that.

MOIRA

Then don't hear it.

Moira offers the bowl. Elin does not take it.

Across the harbor road, the chapel bell rope hangs slack in the wet air.

Elin wipes her barley hand on her coat, leaving a dark smear, and looks past them all toward the headland path above the village.

ELIN

Where's the fever house key.

June, halfway down the quay with her cap pulled low, hears that and stops.

INT. GRAIN BARN LOFT - DAY

June climbs the loft ladder with a crate of lantern chimneys against her hip. Oat dust clings to her sleeves. Below, voices drift in and out, men moving trestles.

Moira stands by the loft window with a guest ribbon draped over her palm and an old nurse's clip of keys hanging from two fingers. A wrapped sickle lies on a bale beside her.

MOIRA

Set those there. We'll keep the clean glass away from Tomas's elbows.

June lowers the crate. One chimney knocks another with a thin note.

JUNE

If he breaks one he can light the hall with his temper.

Moira smooths the ribbon flat on the bale.

MOIRA

We'll give him lanterns instead.

She lifts the wrapped sickle, shows June how to cradle it with both hands, then takes it back and sets it down again.

MOIRA (CONT'D)

Not bare. Not in front of children. Words first, then cloth off. You know the order.

JUNE

I know the order.

MOIRA

And the words.

June looks at the window.

JUNE

Aye.

Moira picks up a lantern, checks the wick with her thumbnail, and passes it over.

MOIRA

You carry these at dusk. Ribbon in your pocket till I ask. If Elin comes asking after the cliff house, you send her to me. If she says her mother's name, you let it pass by.

JUNE

She's already asking.

MOIRA

Then she'll ask again.

June sets the lantern down too hard. Kerosene sloshes in the belly.

JUNE

And if she asks me plain.

MOIRA

You'll be kind.

June rubs her chipped front tooth with a thumb.

JUNE

Kind's doing a lot of lifting this week.

Moira steps in and straightens June's collar where oat chaff sticks to the knit.

MOIRA

We're nearly there. No need to make rough work now.

From below, someone laughs at a joke that dies fast.

JUNE

Ruaridh's been up the headland again.

MOIRA

He likes to feel useful.

JUNE

He says the old room should stay shut.

MOIRA

He says many things when weather turns.

June glances at the keys.

JUNE

You're sleeping with those on.

MOIRA

Old habits.

Moirra turns her back to hang the ribbon on a peg driven into the post. June's hand drops to the bale beside the wrapped sickle. Another key, smaller than the rest, lies apart on a red wool loop.

MOIRA (CONT'D)

June Kett.

June looks up.

MOIRA (CONT'D)

Loyalty is a quiet trade. We do not chatter our dead into other people's mouths.

JUNE

She's not other people.

MOIRA

She is, for now.

Moirra faces her again, soft as ever.

MOIRA (CONT'D)

We will bring her in when she can stand in the right place. Not before.

June nods once.

MOIRA (CONT'D)

Come here.

June steps in. Moirra folds her into a brief hug, one hand firm at the back of her neck.

June's fingers slide under the red wool loop. She draws the small key into her sleeve and closes her fist against Moirra's coat.

MOIRA (CONT'D)

That's my girl.

June pulls back with the lantern in one hand and the key hidden in the other.

EXT. CLIFF PATH GATE - NIGHT

June appears from the dark with her cap low and a lantern wrapped in her coat. Elin waits by the gate, wet hair stuck to her jaw, penlight between her teeth while she rewrites copied dates on the back of her glove.

JUNE

You came alone.

ELIN

How long have patrols been running.

JUNE

Since supper. Tomas goes chapel road, then the smokehouse, then back round. We've got maybe ten minutes unless he stops to piss.

June pulls the small key from her sleeve and works the gate.

ELIN

You took that from her.

JUNE

Don't sound so pleased. Come on.

EXT. FEVER HOUSE YARD - NIGHT

They cross bent grass silvered with mist. The fever house sits above the drop, limewash flaking, one wall striped with tide marks. Quarantine pegs lean beside the door. June lifts the latch after a hard upward jerk.

JUNE (CONT'D)

It sticks. Everything here sticks unless you flatter it.

INT. FEVER HOUSE - NIGHT

Lantern light crawls over iron bedsteads bolted to warped boards. A speaking tube hangs clogged with nest fluff. Damp beads on the stone.

Elin moves fast, penlight out, hand on bedsteads, walls, hooks.

ELIN
Any record room.

JUNE
If they called it that, yes. Here.

She opens a cupboard built into the wall. Inside: ledgers, tied bundles, a chipped mug with dead pencils.

Elin takes the top ledger to a table and opens it with both hands. Pages buckle from damp.

Names. Dates. Short entries in different inks.

Guest place set.

Guest place cleared.

Guest place reset.

Farther in, older pages. A column for fever names. Another for watchers. Another for release.

Elin turns faster.

ELIN
Where are the death marks.

JUNE
Some years there are none.

ELIN
Someone kept this by hand for decades.
There'd be an end entry.

She stops.

A page near the back. Her mother's name in a neat hand. Beneath it: admitted at first bell. Watched through tide turn. Guest place set.

No death line.

No release.

No burial note.

The next page is blank except for tide figures.

Elin presses the paper flat with spread fingers.

ELIN (CONT'D)
That's it.

JUNE
I told you it was odd.

ELIN
Not odd. Missing.

JUNE
Aye, all right, missing.

Elin looks up.

ELIN
No witness names.

JUNE
Only one crossed out. Could be ink run.
Could be-

ELIN
Don't guess.

A drip lands somewhere deeper in the house.

June turns her lantern toward the stairwell.

JUNE
Nobody uses the upper floor.

ELIN
But someone cleaned the ledger last
month.

ELIN closes the book and reaches for the next. June does not
move.

JUNE
Elin.

Fresh water shines on the floorboards beyond the table. One
print, then another, bare and narrow, leading to the sealed
stair.

Elin crouches. Touches one with two fingers. Lifts them.
Wet.

ELIN
You've got a leak above.

JUNE
No rain gets in there.

ELIN
Then what is that.

June doesn't answer. Her lantern glass fogs with her breath.

ELIN (CONT'D)
You said nobody uses it.

JUNE
Nobody says they do.

Elin stands, ledger under one arm.

JUNE (CONT'D)
We can take the book and go. You've got
a name, a gap, enough to shove at her
with.

ELIN
This doesn't prove murder.

JUNE
Good.

ELIN
It doesn't prove anything.

She walks to the stair. A salt line rims the first upper
step, thin but unbroken. The wet prints pass straight
through it.

Elin looks back once.

ELIN (CONT'D)
Hold the light.

She starts up after the prints.

INT. FEVER HOUSE UPPER LANDING - NIGHT

The landing is narrow enough for shoulders to brush both
walls. One door at the far end is banded with old wood and
lined in a thick white rim of salt. Water glistens on the
boards leading to it.

Elin reaches the top. June follows two steps behind, lantern
low.

RUARIDH
That's far enough.

Ruaridh stands in the dark recess by the stair with a
beekeeper's veil rolled under one arm and a paper twist of
salt already open in his hand.

June flinches.

JUNE

Christ.

RUARIDH

No, not him.

He comes toward them, quiet, quick for his age.

ELIN

You have access here.

RUARIDH

Thing is, access and welcome aren't the same job.

He sees the ledger under her arm, the prints, the door.

RUARIDH (CONT'D)

You should be down the hill by now.

ELIN

Whose room is this.

RUARIDH

Not a room for names.

ELIN

Then give me the rule.

Ruaridh nods once at that.

RUARIDH

If a voice comes through wood after dark, you don't answer unless the mouth is in front of you. If a door's lined, it stays lined. If it calls you by the name only one person used, you bite your own tongue before you answer back.

June swallows.

JUNE

I told her we could leave.

RUARIDH

Then leave now.

A soft knock from the salted door.

Three spaced taps.

Then a woman's voice, muffled by the boards.

VOICE (O.S.)

June?

June's lantern jerks in her hand.

JUNE

No.

RUARIDH

Don't give it your no either.

ELIN

Who is in there.

RUARIDH

Thing is, it can use what's near. Your ears give it half the work.

VOICE (O.S.)

June, open. I can't get my hand-

June clamps her own wrist.

ELIN

She said hand. That's June.

RUARIDH

Could be your mother next. Could be a child with a cold. Same door.

He presses salt into Elin's palm and closes her fingers over it.

RUARIDH (CONT'D)

If the line breaks, mend it before you breathe. If it speaks, let it spend itself.

VOICE (O.S.)

Elin?

Elin's eyes lift to the door.

VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Elin, love-

Ruaridh steps between her and the threshold.

RUARIDH

Do not answer.

June edges back, almost missing the stair.

JUNE

We need to go. We need to go right now.

A scrape from behind the door, like a chair leg dragged once.

VOICE (O.S.)

June's in here. Please.

Elin shifts around Ruaridh, staring at the salt line, at the wet footprint ending on the far side.

ELIN

If someone is trapped, I need the latch.

RUARIDH

No, you need your feet facing downhill.

VOICE (O.S.)

Elin. Don't leave me again.

Elin's hand tightens on the salt until grains spill through her knuckles.

RUARIDH

Don't answer.

Behind the door, June screams.

INT. FEVER HOUSE UPPER LANDING - NIGHT

The scream hits the boards and stops.

Elin lunges.

Ruaridh grabs for her arm and catches sleeve. June catches the lantern before it drops.

RUARIDH (CONT'D)

Elin-

ELIN

Move.

She slams her shoulder past him. Her boot skids through the salt line, smearing white across wet wood. She claws at the latch and drags the door inward.

Dark room. One iron bed. One chair on its side. Water dripping from nowhere anyone can see.

June stands beside Elin on the landing, lantern raised, very much outside the room.

JUNE

I was here. I was here.

From the dark corner, a woman steps into the lantern wash.

Hair plastered to her face. Red ribbon dark against a soaked dress. Skin pale with cold water shine.

Elin sees her mother's face.

ELIN

Mam.

The woman lifts a hand. Water runs off her fingers to the floorboards.

Ruaridh hits the door with both palms and drives Elin backward out of the opening.

RUARIDH

Back.

He kicks the door hard enough to shake the frame and throws himself across the threshold, tearing at his salt twist with his teeth. Grains scatter from his hand to the broken line.

The woman turns her head toward him. Her mouth opens on black water.

June drags Elin by the coat down the landing.

JUNE

Don't look, don't-

Ruaridh jams the door with his shoulder and slaps salt against the frame. The woman reaches him before the line closes.

What hits him is fast and close, hidden by the door edge and his own body. A wet crack. His beekeeper's veil falls to the boards.

Ruaridh folds at the knees.

The door swings half-shut against him.

June screams now with her own voice and hauls Elin down the stairs. The lantern bangs each riser. Light spins over bedsteads, walls, the clogged speaking tube.

ELIN

Ruaridh!

A hand slaps the banister above them. Then another, slower.

They hit the lower floor. Elin twists back toward the stair.

June shoves the outer ledger into her chest and fumbles for the front latch.

JUNE

Out. Out.

The upper door slams once overhead.

They burst into the yard.

EXT. FEVER HOUSE YARD - NIGHT

Mist drives sideways. June drags Elin clear of the threshold and throws a line of salt from her pocket across the sill with a shaking hand.

Elin stands in the grass staring through the open doorway.

On the upper landing, beyond the rail, a wet bare foot plants on the top step.

June yanks Elin downhill by both sleeves.

They run.

INT. CHAPEL HALL - PRE-DAWN

The hall is full before light. Wet coats steam on pegs. A kettle mutters on the range. The yearly guest chair sits against the wall, dust sheet stripped off, one leg still wrapped in red ribbon.

Two men carry Ruairidh's covered body in on a door lifted from its hinges. His hive knife hangs from a belt loop under the blanket edge. June stands near the back with a bruise rising at her temple and oat chaff in her hair. Elin is beside her, soaked through, eyes on the blanket.

Nobody speaks until the men set the body down on trestles.

Moira steps forward with a folded sheet in her arms. She lays it straight over the shape, tucks one corner under his shoulder, and smooths the cloth flat.

MOIRA

Mind the stove side. He hated drafts.

A woman starts crying into a dish towel.

TOMAS

We found him on the upper landing.

He stops there.

Another VILLAGER, younger, face white from no sleep, looks from the sheet to Moira.

YOUNG VILLAGER

Then we stop. We don't ring tonight. We don't send anyone up there.

The room shifts on its feet. A spoon drops in the sink.

Moira turns to the speaker as if he's asked about chairs.

MOIRA

We'll sit with what happened first.

YOUNG VILLAGER

He knew the rules best.

MOIRA

He did.

YOUNG VILLAGER

And he's dead.

Moira takes the whistle cord at her throat and feeds it once through her fingers, then lets it fall.

MOIRA

We have lost people by rushing. We have lost people by pretending weather would wait for us. Delay kills more than obedience ever has.

Silence. A few heads lower. Tomas looks at the floorboards.

ELIN

Obedience to what.

All eyes turn.

Elin steps out from the wall, the damp ledger under her arm.

ELIN (CONT'D)

I saw no death record for my mother. No burial. No release. You send people there and then you shut the book.

Murmurs. June looks at Moira, then away.

MOIRA

You're tired.

ELIN

Answer it.

MOIRA

Not like this.

ELIN

When.

Moira lifts a cup from the trestle near Ruaridh's feet and offers it across the space.

MOIRA

After you've had tea and dry clothes.

Elin does not take it.

JUNE

Gran-

Moira's head turns slightly. June stops.

MOIRA

What happened on the hill was why we keep lines where we keep them and why we do not drag names through closed wood. Whatever else is argued after sunrise, that much stands in front of all of us.

She takes the cup back and sets it by the kettle.

MOIRA (CONT'D)

We'll bring Eamon in closer today. No one walks alone after dusk. Lanterns in pairs. Salt at every door, proper this time.

TOMAS

I'll post the lanes.

The young villager looks sick but nods with the others.

Moira turns to the women by the range.

MOIRA

Tea first. Then broth to the watch house and the cottages on the north side. June, fresh cloths.

June doesn't move.

MOIRA (CONT'D)

June.

June takes a stack of folded cloths from the sideboard without looking up.

Moira faces the room again.

MOIRA (CONT'D)

We will not hand the island over to
panic before bell.

Elin watches her gather the room back in, one practical task at a time.

Under the blanket, a drop of water falls from Ruaridh's sleeve to the chapel floor.

INT. LIGHTHOUSE KEEPER'S ROOM - DAWN

Elin shoulders the door open with a folded camp cot and a canvas medical bag. June backs in after her with Eamon's oxygen cylinder bumping her shin. Eamon coughs in the stairwell below.

The keeper's room is bare except for a rusted iron bed, a table, two chairs, and a cracked chart of shoals pinned to the wall.

Elin moves fast. Blackout cloth over the window. Tape across the frame. Salt under the door, across the hearth, around the bed legs. She sets the oxygen key on the table, opens morphine ampoules, writes times on the back of her glove.

JUNE

You could ask before turning a room
into a coffin.

ELIN

Not a coffin. Hand me the other tape.

June tosses it. Elin catches it one-handed, keeps working.

Eamon appears in the doorway, bent over his own breath, old deck boots wet at the soles. The transfer bracelet still circles his wrist.

EAMON

Bit high up for a sick man.

ELIN

Chair first. Then bed.

She guides him down. Checks his pulse. Counts his breaths with her watch.

On the floor by the wall: Eamon's old raincoat, dragged up with the rest. Half out of one pocket, the edge of the nursing satchel.

Elin sees it, leaves it.

She crosses to the inner cupboard, salts its threshold, then stops with the paper twist in her hand.

A memory catches her -- wet salt smeared by her own knuckles, Ruairidh's shoulder hitting the upper landing.

June watches her from the table, warming both hands around a mug she brought and has forgotten to drink.

JUNE

Elin.

ELIN

What.

JUNE

You're spilling it.

Salt runs from Elin's clenched fist onto the floorboards. She sweeps it into a line with the side of her hand.

ELIN

Doors stay shut. If either of you hears me outside wood, you do not answer unless you see me.

EAMON

Aye.

ELIN

No one opens an inner door. No one breaks a line to be kind.

June flinches at that. Elin takes a folded tide chart from her pocket and pins it beside the shoals map. Another paper below it: a rough plan of the lighthouse, doors marked in block letters.

JUNE

Moirra will ask where we've gone.

ELIN

Let her ask.

JUNE

She'll send broth. Blankets. Half the island with worried faces.

ELIN

Then the door stays shut.

She checks the latch, wedges a boathook under the handle, then tests the window catch twice.

Eamon fingers the flat side of his wedding ring against the chair arm.

EAMON

Your man in there.

ELIN

What.

EAMON

Ruaridh.

Elin unwraps a syringe. Draws clear liquid. Taps out air.

ELIN

He died because I opened the room.

No one answers that.

She lays out four loaded syringes in a row beside alcohol wipes and orange stretcher straps gone stiff with salt.

June looks from the straps to Eamon.

JUNE

You planning for weather or prison.

ELIN

For night. For if he panics. For if I have to move him fast at first light.

She drags one chair away from the bed and folds it flat against the wall without looking at it. Then she catches herself. Her hand stays on the metal frame a second. She opens the chair again and leaves it beside Eamon.

The battery radio spits weather and static. No voices, just squelch.

Elin kills it.

She checks each line she has made. Window. Door. Cupboard. Bed. Syringes. Oxygen.

June picks up the mug at last and sniffs. Cold tea.

JUNE

You'll not sleep.

ELIN

No.

JUNE

And if you do.

ELIN

Wake me before dark. Hard.

Eamon leans back, eyes on the taped window.

EAMON

Used to keep creels up here in a blow.
Never trusted the sheds.

ELIN

Good.

June heads for the stairs.

JUNE

I'll fetch more blankets. And the big
kettle from ours.

ELIN

Leave them at the door. No one else
comes in.

June stands there a beat, mug in hand, then goes.

Elin slides the bolt home after her. She presses her thumb
into the fresh salt line to mend a gap near the jamb.

Her thumb comes away white.

INT. LIGHTHOUSE KEEPER'S ROOM - LATER MORNING

June comes in backwards with blankets over one shoulder and
a tin kettle banging her knee. She shuts the door with her
heel.

Elin stands at the table, drawing another syringe from a
morphine ampoule. Beside her: two preloaded syringes, one
small vial, the orange straps, and Eamon's transfer papers
under a spoon.

June sets the kettle down hard enough to slosh.

JUNE

No.

Elin doesn't turn.

ELIN

He's more short of breath. I want options ready.

JUNE

That's not what those are for and you know it.

Eamon lies on the iron bed with his eyes closed, not asleep.

ELIN

He needs rest.

JUNE

He needs his own mouth. Tonight of all nights.

Elin caps the syringe.

ELIN

If he hears things, if he gets agitated, if we have to move quickly once the weather lifts--

JUNE

Move him. There. That's the word again.

Elin sets the syringe with the others, lined by dose.

ELIN

I am not doing this with you in slogans.

JUNE

Slogans. Christ. You've got him trussed in your head already. Like sacks in a van.

Elin reaches for the straps, shifts them aside.

ELIN

Those are for transfer.

JUNE

He's your dad.

ELIN

He's dying.

JUNE

I know he's dying. I wash him. I know where he keeps the clean socks and the bad biscuits he says are for gulls and

(MORE)

JUNE (CONT'D)

then eats himself. Don't talk to me
like I wandered in from the quay.

Eamon opens his eyes. Looks at the ceiling.

ELIN

I'm keeping him alive till dawn.

JUNE

By putting him under so you don't have
to hear him if he says something you
can't chart.

Elin turns on her.

ELIN

Safer sedated than listening tonight.

The words hang there.

June stares.

JUNE

Safer for who.

Elin opens her mouth. Nothing comes.

The kettle ticks on the table as it cools.

JUNE (CONT'D)

You hear yourself.

ELIN

If he answers a voice through wood, if
he opens a door, if he decides to be
noble for ten stupid seconds--

JUNE

Then sit with him. That's the job. The
actual one. Tea gone cold, arm going
dead, hearing the same daft story
twice. Not this.

She points at the syringes.

JUNE (CONT'D)

My gran does enough tidying with
people. I'm not helping you do your
version.

Elin looks at Eamon. He keeps his eyes on the ceiling, one
hand working a piece of net twine under the blanket.

ELIN

June.

JUNE

No. You don't get to say my name like that after laying him out in doses.

She grabs the blankets she just brought, then drops them again because Eamon is watching now and she can't take his warmth.

JUNE (CONT'D)

I thought maybe you were different from her. Just louder and from the mainland. Turns out you all like deciding for him.

ELIN

That is not what this is.

JUNE

Then what is it.

Elin reaches for the chart, the room, anything.

ELIN

Respiratory rate twenty-six. No sleep. Exposure. If he spirals after dark I lose the window to stabilize him.

JUNE

There you go. Window. Stabilize. Like he's a ferry crate with one busted corner.

She wipes at her chipped front tooth with her thumb, catches herself doing it.

JUNE (CONT'D)

If he says he wants to stay awake, you'll hear him. If he says he wants his hand held, you'll hear that too. Or don't. But don't ask me to stand here while you make him small enough to manage.

June heads for the door.

ELIN

If you leave, don't come back after dusk.

JUNE

Hear that? That's you asking for help.

She slides the bolt, steps out, and pulls the door shut behind her.

Elin stands with the loaded syringe in her hand.

On the bed, Eamon turns his wrist. The plastic transfer tag flashes white, then disappears under the blanket.

EXT. LIGHTHOUSE PATH - GRAY DAY

A casserole dish waits on the step under a tea towel. By the gate, an old man in a wax coat pretends to fix a latch with no tools in his hands.

Elin comes out with an empty oxygen cylinder and a list on the back of a funeral card. She sees both of them.

OLD MAN

Morning.

ELIN

Where's Tomas.

The old man points downhill with his chin.

Halfway to the lane, a girl hurries up with folded blankets. At the lane, two women carry seedcake in tins. Past them, Tomas stands by his truck with her red fuel can at his boots.

The whole road feels occupied without anyone admitting it.

WOMAN WITH TIN

Moira said he'd take broth thin.

ELIN

Leave it there.

GIRL

We've brought hot water too.

ELIN

There.

She keeps walking. Tomas lifts the fuel can by its handle before she reaches him.

TOMAS

Emergency authority. Fuel's pooled at the harbor.

ELIN

That's mine.

TOMAS
Not today.

ELIN
I need generator backup.

TOMAS
Then you should've logged it yesterday.

ELIN
Yesterday Ruaridh was alive.

Tomas looks past her a second, then back.

TOMAS
Road checks start at dusk. Lantern
pairs after dark. Door stays shut.

ELIN
You posting me or helping me.

TOMAS
Both if needed.

He loads the can into the truck bed.

Behind them, another neighbor arrives with a pan covered in
foil.

NEIGHBOR
We did lentils. Less salt.

Elin laughs once through her nose. No one joins her.

INT. LIGHTHOUSE KEEPER'S ROOM - DAY

The table fills by inches. Broth. Seedcake. Blankets. A jar
of rowan tied with blue string. Eamon sits up in bed, shaved
badly, color a shade better from oxygen and heat.

Moira's voice carries from outside the door.

MOIRA (O.S.)
We'll leave these on the landing, love.

Elin freezes with the medicine tray in her hands.

MOIRA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Fresh bread as well. June says he still
likes the heel.

Eamon looks toward the door.

ELIN

Don't answer.

MOIRA (O.S.)

No need. Only letting you know what's
where.

Footsteps recede. Another set replaces them almost at once.

A boy's voice through wood.

BOY (O.S.)

Mum said the kettle's still warm if you
need.

ELIN

Go home.

Silence. Then running feet.

Elin opens the lockbox. Counts ampoules. Fewer than she
wants. She takes up one loaded syringe, holds it over the
steel dish.

Eamon watches.

EAMON

That for me.

ELIN

It was.

She uncaps it. Pushes the plunger. Clear liquid threads into
the dish.

Another syringe. Then another.

Eamon rubs his thumb along the filed edge of his ring.

EAMON

Weather turning your mind.

ELIN

Maybe.

She drops the empties into the sharps tin and shuts the lid.

A knock. Not Moira this time. Fast, two taps.

Elin opens the door a crack. June stands there in the same
clothes, hair damp, one cheek bright from wind.

JUNE

You left your antibiotics at ours when you raided the cupboard. Gran's in the lane with Mrs. Vale and a pie the size of a wheel.

She slips a blister pack through the gap.

Elin takes it.

ELIN

You shouldn't be here.

JUNE

Aye.

Down below, Moira's laugh drifts up with other voices.

JUNE (CONT'D)

Tomas is doing north road every forty minutes. Cuts through the smokehouse side on the half hour. If you go anywhere, don't use the main path.

Elin looks at her.

JUNE (CONT'D)

I'm only telling you because if your dad needs the toilet you'll be carrying him yourself and you've got arms like coat hooks.

Neither of them laughs.

Elin nods once.

JUNE (CONT'D)

He awake.

ELIN

Yes.

June glances toward the bed, then back to Elin.

JUNE

Good.

She goes down the stairs. Elin closes the door softly this time.

Inside, Eamon has turned his face to the window under the blackout cloth. The medicine tray sits half-empty beside the steel dish clouded with wasted clear fluid.

INT. LIGHTHOUSE KEEPER'S ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Eamon sits on the bed edge with the oxygen line looped over one ear while Elin changes cylinders. The spare hisses, then dies.

ELIN

Empty.

She grabs the dead cylinder and the tubing coil.

ELIN (CONT'D)

There's another in the lower store if they didn't move it. Five minutes.

EAMON

Take ten. Stairs don't shorten for you.

She checks the salt at the door, checks him, then goes.

Her steps clatter down the iron stair.

Quiet. Wind on glass. The tick of the little travel clock on the crate.

A soft knock.

Moira's voice through the door.

MOIRA (O.S.)

I won't come in.

Eamon says nothing.

MOIRA (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I've brought the better blanket. The blue one your wife liked for the boat seat.

Eamon lifts his eyes to the door.

EAMON

You kept that.

MOIRA (O.S.)

We keep many things.

The blanket edge appears under the gap, then stops at the salt line.

MOIRA (O.S.) (CONT'D)

How is the breathing.

EAMON
Still at it.

MOIRA (O.S.)
A stubborn habit.

He almost smiles. It doesn't last.

MOIRA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
She's wearing herself to threads up
here.

EAMON
That's her trade.

MOIRA (O.S.)
And yours was to know bad weather
before it took the boat.

He looks down at his hands.

MOIRA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
One willing step, Eamon, and she
needn't spend the night fighting every
hinge on the island.

He works the net twine between his fingers until it knots.

EAMON
You make it sound light.

MOIRA (O.S.)
No. Only clean.

Outside, somewhere far down the slope, a bell is tested
once. Then stillness.

MOIRA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
She's your child. She'll tear herself
open before she leaves a room she
thinks is hers to hold. You know that.

EAMON
Aye.

MOIRA (O.S.)
Then spare her the tearing. We can
carry the rest with you.

He pulls the knot tight until the twine bites his thumb.

EAMON
Won't spare much.

MOIRA (O.S.)
It will spare her your place.

Elin's feet scrape metal below. Not close yet.

Eamon clears his throat.

EAMON
What are the words.

On the other side of the door, Moira does not answer at once.

Then:

MOIRA (O.S.)
At the lanterns, when the sickle's in
hand. I'll guide you through.

Eamon stares at the blue blanket stalled against the salt line under the door.

INT. GRAIN BARN - NIGHT

Lanterns hang from the rafters in two rows. Oat sheaves lean at each post, tied with red wool. Villagers stand shoulder to shoulder with their caps in their hands. The yearly guest chair waits near the far wall, empty.

Elin pushes through the side door, breathless, hair loose from its tie. She spots Eamon at once -- coat on, oxygen gone, one hand on June's shoulder as if she is the only solid thing in the room.

June's temple is yellowing where the bruise came up after the fever house. She sees Elin and starts toward her.

MOIRA
We'll begin.

Moira stands at the center with a lantern in one hand and the guest sickle in the other, cloth unwrapped now. Tomas keeps the aisle clear with one arm.

ELIN
No. He comes with me now.

Heads turn. No one moves.

TOMAS
Back up.

ELIN
He's hypoxic.

EAMON
Still here, girl.

He steps away from June before Elin can reach him. Moira offers the sickle handle first. Eamon takes it.

Elin lunges into the aisle. Tomas catches her by both arms.

ELIN
Dad.

MOIRA
Only if freely given.

Eamon looks at Elin. Not past her. At her.

His thumb finds the flat side of his ring. Then he draws the sickle across his palm.

A thin red line opens. Blood beads and drops onto the packed floor.

JUNE
Eamon--

MOIRA
Speak when ready.

Eamon closes his hand around the blood.

EAMON
I take the place.

Elin bucks against Tomas.

ELIN
Don't. Don't say another word.

EAMON
I go willing.

The lanterns flutter all at once.

A wet sound moves through the barn that does not belong to any person there. June flinches first. Then the row of women by the meal table. Their lantern light jumps over a shape near the guest chair.

A soaked woman stands there in Elin's mother's face, dress clinging black to her shins, water dripping from her hair to the boards.

No one breathes for the space of a blink.

Then Elin tears free and runs.

JUNE

Elin, no--

The Long Guest turns its head toward June at the sound. Fast. One arm lashes out.

June flies sideways into the barley bins. Wood cracks. Barley spills over her shoulder and down her neck as she folds to the floor.

The barn breaks open in noise.

Tomas shouts for the door. Someone drops a lantern and another man kicks it upright before flame catches. Villagers surge back from the center, pinning Elin between bodies.

ELIN

June!

She drops to her knees at the bins. June gasps, one hand clamped to her ribs.

JUNE

Go. Go get him.

Across the churn of bodies, Moira has reached Eamon. Not touching him, only guiding him with the lantern and her shoulder angled uphill.

TOMAS

Path clear! Move!

Two men throw the grain barn doors wide. Wind drives mist and cold inside. Eamon, bleeding into his own palm, walks out with Moira beside him.

Elin tries to rise. June catches her sleeve, then loses it.

By the time Elin reaches the doorway, the lantern line is already climbing the dark toward the cliff -- one light, then another, then Eamon's bent shape between them.

At the threshold, blood from his hand marks the wood.

INT. SMOKEHOUSE - NIGHT

Elin shoulders through the smokehouse door with June half under one arm. Rain needles through the gaps in the boards. Hooks sway above blackened rafters. June folds against a worktable, one hand jammed to her ribs, barley stuck to her wet jumper.

ELIN

Look at me.

June does, then squeezes her eyes shut again.

ELIN (CONT'D)

Any blood when you coughed.

JUNE

Just swore at it.

Elin peels June's hand away, checks fast, presses along the rib line. June jerks.

ELIN

Not broken through. Can you walk.

JUNE

Like an old aunt. Not quick.

Outside, lantern light skates past the wall slats and goes uphill.

ELIN

How long since they took him.

JUNE

Minute. Two. Moira had him by the elbow. Tomas cleared the path.

Elin digs in her coat, finds the paper twist of salt gone soft with damp, splits it into June's apron pocket and her own glove. She writes on the back of the glove with a stub pencil: NORTH 40 / SMOKE 30.

ELIN

His sats were already low.

JUNE

Don't do numbers at me.

ELIN

I'm doing time.

June breathes through her teeth, reaches under her collar, and pulls out a key on red wool.

JUNE

Took it before supper. Thought maybe we'd need... something less stupid than what happened.

The iron key drops into Elin's palm.

ELIN

Inner door.

JUNE

Aye.

Elin stares at it once, then starts emptying the smokehouse shelf into a grain sack: two wax matches, a stub lantern, a coil of rowan wire left for kindling, a filthy dishcloth, a tin of salt gone clumped hard at the corners.

JUNE (CONT'D)

You're not waiting till light.

ELIN

No.

JUNE

Tomas does the cliff road with the torch. He swings wide by the oat field. Half hour on the smokehouse side. Forty on north road. If he's just done the barn, we've got--

She winces, loses the count.

ELIN

Enough.

June lets out a laugh that hurts too much to finish.

JUNE

Good. Because I haven't got a grand speech in me.

Elin tears a strip from the dishcloth and binds it around June's ribs, tight enough to make June curse.

ELIN

If you can't run, you drop flat. No shouting through doors. If you hear me somewhere I'm not visible, ignore it.

JUNE

I know the rules.

ELIN

Tonight you don't trust your own ears.

June watches Elin check the lantern wick, check the key, check the salt again.

JUNE

Elin.

Elin keeps moving.

JUNE (CONT'D)
He cut his hand. He said it clear. If
the house takes that as done--

ELIN
Then I get there before the bell.

JUNE
And if he says stay.

Elin snaps the grain sack shut.

ELIN
He comes out on oxygen. Upright if he
can manage. Drag if he can't.

June touches her chipped front tooth with her tongue,
thinking, hurting.

JUNE
Your dad hates those straps.

ELIN
He can hate them on the way down.

A torch beam washes white across the smokehouse crack. Both
women duck by instinct. Boots grind outside, then fade
toward the causeway.

June lifts her chin toward the door.

JUNE
That's the sweep. Now.

Elin hauls June up. June nearly buckles, catches herself on
a hanging hook, and they go.

EXT. SMOKEHOUSE / CLIFF PATH - NIGHT

They break into rain and dark, bent low against the wind,
the grain sack banging against Elin's leg, the red-wool key
clenched in her fist.

EXT. CAUSEWAY - NIGHT

Spray bursts over the stones as Elin and June cross the
narrow causeway below the cliff. The sea throws white at
their knees. June slips once. Elin catches the back of her
coat and keeps them moving.

Ahead, Tomas's search lamp skims the road above, then sweeps
off toward the oat field.

JUNE (CONT'D)

Now. While he's looking inland.

They scramble off the causeway into shoulder-high oats flattened in patches by rain. The stalks slap their faces and hiss against their clothes.

A voice carries through the dark.

EAMON (O.S.)

Elin.

June grabs Elin's sleeve at once.

JUNE

No.

The voice comes again, closer than the house should be.

EAMON (O.S.)

Bottle's empty.

Elin keeps her eyes on the fever house windows, two dull squares above the rise.

ELIN

He's uphill.

Another voice cuts in from their left, Moira's mild kitchen tone.

MOIRA (O.S.)

We'll do what's kind. This way.

June mutters to herself like she's reciting shopping.

JUNE

Tea towel, kettle, don't be an idiot.

They crawl the last yards to the fever house wall. Limewash sweats in the lantern glow leaking under the eaves. Elin tries the outer lock. It sticks. She lifts, turns, lifts again. The bolt gives.

INT. FEVER HOUSE - LOWER HALL - NIGHT

The door opens on damp stone, iron bedsteads, tide stink. Water ticks somewhere inside the walls.

Elin salts the threshold behind them before she shuts the door.

JUNE (CONT'D)

You did remember one thing.

ELIN
Keep breathing.

They start up the first stair. June drags a hand along the wall for balance. On the landing, a speaking tube clotted with nest fluff hangs crooked beside quarantine pegs.

A girl's voice slips down it.

ELIN'S MOTHER (O.S.)
Pet.

Elin stops with one foot on the next step.

Rain taps at the shutters. June is behind her, visible, shaking.

ELIN'S MOTHER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You left your bag.

Elin's hand goes to the penlight in her coat by reflex. Nothing there but wet fabric and the key.

JUNE
Don't answer. Don't even swallow loud.

Elin moves again.

The second landing is slick with seep water. A search beam flashes through a crack in the shutters and bars the stair with white for one second. June presses into the wall, biting down on a cry as her ribs catch.

Tomas's shout carries from outside, far enough away to help them.

TOMAS (O.S.)
Check the lower path!

They wait through the footsteps in the yard below. Elin's hand works salt into the wet seam of the next threshold, quick, clumsy, enough.

JUNE
Go. I'm slower now.

ELIN
You're here because of the key.

JUNE
I'm here because you miss things.

The top landing answers with three knocks from the room above. Then Eamon's voice, worn thin by breath.

EAMON (O.S.)
 Girl. Come on, then.

A beat later, the same voice from the stair below them.

EAMON (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Wrong way.

June closes her eyes against the pain and points upward without looking.

JUNE
 That one. The one that sounds tired.

Elin goes up.

INT. FEVER HOUSE UPPER PASSAGE - NIGHT

The passage is narrow and bowed. Salt marks stain the boards outside the last door. Light leaks under it in a weak line.

Elin fits the red-wool key into the lock. Her wet fingers slip. She wipes them on her trouser leg, tries again.

Behind them, her mother's voice comes soft as a bedside whisper.

ELIN'S MOTHER (O.S.)
 Elin, don't shut me out.

The key turns.

Elin opens the door and slips inside, dragging the grain sack. June follows, one arm wrapped hard around her side, and pulls the door almost closed behind them.

INT. FEVER HOUSE UPPER ROOM - NIGHT

A lantern burns low on the floor. Tide marks climb one wall higher than a man can reach. Eamon sits on the iron bed in his fisherman's sweater, oxygen gone, palm wrapped in a blood-stiff cloth. The transfer bracelet still circles his wrist.

He looks smaller than he did in the barn. He looks at Elin, then at the stretcher straps hanging from her shoulder.

EAMON
 Brought the whole weather with you.

ELIN
 Sit forward.

She is already opening the sack, finding the small oxygen bottle she stole from the lighthouse run, fixing the key, checking the seal. June drops onto a stool by the door, white with pain.

JUNE

I can hold it. Bit. Not forever.

Elin sets the mask over Eamon's face. He takes two rough pulls of air, pushes it aside.

EAMON

Enough.

ELIN

Not enough.

She threads one strap under his knees, another behind his back. Eamon watches her hands do the work he knows too well.

EAMON

You'll skin me on the stairs.

ELIN

Then keep your feet under you.

He reaches for her wrist. Not hard. Just there.

EAMON

Listen first.

ELIN

We do that downhill.

EAMON

No.

The word lands because he almost never uses it clean.

June shifts at the door, looking anywhere but at them.

Rain thickens on the roof. Somewhere below, the house answers with a wet creak.

EAMON (CONT'D)

Your mother wasn't dragged.

Elin keeps buckling the strap.

ELIN

Save air.

EAMON

Hear me.

He takes the flat-sided wedding ring between thumb and finger, works it once the way he does when he is trying not to cough.

EAMON (CONT'D)

She asked me stay the night. Just stay.
Tide turned, bells gone. She said sit
by the bed and mind the door.

Elin's hands stop on the buckle, then start again, tighter.

ELIN

And.

EAMON

I went out.

June lifts her head.

JUNE

Eamon--

EAMON

Couldn't do the room. Couldn't do the
waiting and the listening and nothing
to put a hand to. Stood at the
threshold. Then the yard. Then farther.

He looks past Elin at the salt line near the door.

EAMON (CONT'D)

Told myself I'd fetch help. Told myself
I'd come back when light changed. Door
was easier than the chair.

Elin yanks the second strap through so hard the metal ring
knocks the bedframe.

ELIN

You left her alone.

EAMON

Aye.

ELIN

For how long.

EAMON

Long enough.

The lantern wick spits. June presses a fist to her mouth,
then lowers it.

JUNE

Moira said your mam went willing and that was that.

EAMON

Moira says a great deal once folk are dead.

Elin stands over him with the strap in both hands.

ELIN

You watched me grow up with that in the house and never said it.

EAMON

What use after.

ELIN

Use.

She laughs once through her nose. Ugly, brief.

ELIN (CONT'D)

That's what you picked.

Eamon nods because the word fits and he has nothing better.

EAMON

Storm work. Net work. Anything with a knot in it. Not the chair.

Outside, a bell carries faint through the rain. Not the first bell. A nearer one, wind-shoved from the chapel.

Elin bends, puts the mask back to his face.

ELIN

We're moving now.

EAMON

Girl--

ELIN

No. Up on three.

She shoulders under him, all task again. June pushes off the stool to help and nearly folds. Eamon sees it.

EAMON

She can't.

JUNE

Can enough.

Eamon looks at Elin's face, at the set jaw, at the way she will not leave him room.

EAMON

You're on my old ground now.

Elin gets him to his feet anyway, his weight sagging into her and the straps biting across both of them.

INT./EXT. FEVER HOUSE UPPER PASSAGE / STAIR / THRESHOLD - NIGHT

Elin gets Eamon through the door and into the passage. June limps ahead with the lantern. Eamon takes two steps, three, then his knees soften.

ELIN

Stop. Wall.

She eases him down onto a chair left against the passage wall. One of the old quarantine chairs. He sags, mouth open, breath skidding short.

JUNE

He won't make the stairs like this.

Elin's hand goes into her coat and comes out with the syringe she kept anyway, wrapped in a cuff of dry cloth.

June sees it.

JUNE (CONT'D)

Elin.

ELIN

Small dose. Smooths the panic.

JUNE

That's not what that does.

ELIN

It gets him down alive.

Eamon looks from the syringe to her face. He is too winded to fight with strength.

EAMON

No needles.

ELIN

You need your legs to stop throwing themselves away.

He grabs weakly for her wrist. She catches his hand, turns it, and the transfer bracelet flashes white in the lantern light.

EAMON

Don't make me cargo.

Elin holds him by the shoulder and puts the needle into his upper arm before June can reach her.

June stares at the emptying barrel.

JUNE

Christ.

ELIN

Lantern. Now.

The drug buys them one minute of softness. Eamon's body unclenches. His breath eases. Elin gets one arm around him and hauls him down the first flight while June takes the lantern and the oxygen bottle.

On the lower landing, the house gives a deep knock from somewhere in the wall.

A soaked voice whispers through the speaking tube.

ELIN'S MOTHER (O.S.)

That's enough, pet.

Elin keeps moving.

They reach the lower hall. The outer door shudders under wind. June gets it open. Spray blows across the stones.

EXT. FEVER HOUSE THRESHOLD - NIGHT

Elin drags Eamon over the threshold, boots scraping, shoulder under his chest. June throws salt behind them with a shaking hand.

For one second they are out.

Then Eamon wakes hard.

His elbow drives back into Elin's throat. He tears free of the straps with a strength pulled from someplace mean and final. Elin stumbles on the wet step. Eamon turns, shoves her full in the chest with both hands.

She goes backward off the threshold and hits the stones outside.

JUNE

Eamon!

Eamon slams the door. The bolt drops from inside with a metal crack.

Elin is up at once, ramming the wood with her shoulder.

ELIN

Open it. Open it now.

She pounds the panels with both fists. June reaches for her, misses.

ELIN (CONT'D)

Dad!

Inside, his breath rasps close to the door.

EAMON (O.S.)

No more dragging.

ELIN

You need oxygen. You need monitoring.
Open it.

EAMON (O.S.)

You've done enough hauling for one
life.

Elin kicks low by the lock. The old wood jumps and holds.

ELIN

I can still get you down.

EAMON (O.S.)

I know.

Rain sheets off the eaves between them.

EAMON (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Won't leave you carrying it same as me.

Elin presses both palms to the door, forehead nearly touching the boards.

ELIN

What are you talking about.

Nothing for a beat but the weather and June's ragged breathing.

Then Eamon, thinner now.

EAMON (O.S.)
Your mam asked for the chair. I took
the door.

Elin closes one fist and hammers once, useless against the bolt.

ELIN
Don't do this through wood.

EAMON (O.S.)
Best I've got.

A final scrape of his boots retreats across the floorboards.

ELIN
Dad.

No answer.

From the top of the frame, black barley begins to sift from the gap above the door and stripe the wet threshold.

EXT. FEVER HOUSE CLIFF PATH - NIGHT

Elin keeps pounding until her fists skid red on the wet planks. June has sunk onto the step beside the wall, one arm wrapped around her ribs, lantern guttering between her boots.

Below, lights bob on the path. Tomas climbs fast with two men behind him, rope over one shoulder, torch in hand.

TOMAS
Back off the door.

Elin turns on him before he reaches the landing.

ELIN
Get it open.

TOMAS
Move.

ELIN
You sealed him in.

The two searchers slow at the sound of that. Tomas takes the last steps, sees the barred door, sees the blood Elin left on it, sees June on the stone trying not to breathe deep.

TOMAS
Where is he.

ELIN

Inside. Alone. Because you cleared the path for them.

Tomas sets the torch against the wall and tests the handle. The door doesn't give.

TOMAS

Bolt's dropped.

ELIN

Then break it.

TOMAS

With what.

ELIN

You tell me. Rope, axe, your hands, I don't care.

He glances at his men, at the cliff edge, at the house windows where no face shows.

JUNE

She means now, Tomas. Not after a meeting and a kettle.

One of the searchers shifts his weight.

SEARCHER

Moira said once the words are through--

TOMAS

Quiet.

Elin steps into Tomas's space, rain running off her hair, one fist clenched around the red-wool key.

ELIN

Your obedience just locked a dying man away.

Tomas does not answer. He looks past her to the black barley caught in the door seam, then to June's side where she is holding herself together by force.

TOMAS

You two seen anything else move.

ELIN

No. Only all of you.

The smallest of the men half-smiles from nerves and loses it when no one joins him.

Tomas picks up his torch again.

TOMAS

You.

He points to the searchers.

TOMAS (CONT'D)

Downhill. Keep folk off the path. No one comes up alone. No one opens a door because they hear a mother or a priest or me. Say it back.

SEARCHER

No one opens.

TOMAS

Go.

They go, fast, glad for an order.

June watches Tomas, surprised enough to forget her pain for a second.

JUNE

And us.

TOMAS

You stay put.

ELIN

I'm not leaving.

TOMAS

I know.

He takes the rope off his shoulder, sets it by the wall, then looks at the shutter hinges, the outer stone, the line of the roof as if measuring what tools would matter and which won't tonight.

TOMAS (CONT'D)

I've got pry bars in the harbor gear.
Ladder in the shed below the road.

ELIN

How long.

TOMAS

Too long for this bell.

The answer sits there in the rain.

Tomas turns to June.

TOMAS (CONT'D)
Can you walk downhill.

JUNE
Ugly, yes.

TOMAS
Do it. Slow.

June gets one hand under her knee, pushes up, sways. Elin reaches for her. June bats the hand away on instinct, then takes it anyway for one step.

TOMAS (CONT'D)
I'll send nobody to drag you, Elin. But
when the bell goes, door stays shut.

Elin looks at him like she might hit him or beg him or both. She does neither.

ELIN
Get your bars.

TOMAS
Aye.

He starts back down the path, then stops and looks over his shoulder at the house.

TOMAS (CONT'D)
If anything calls from in there, don't
answer it.

Elin turns back to the door. Her bloody hand leaves a print on the wood beneath the falling barley.

Tomas heads downhill into the rain, his torch beam dropping away among the rocks.

INT. EAMON'S COTTAGE - KITCHEN - BEFORE DAWN

Elin stumbles in, rain still dropping off her coat. One knuckle is split open. She shuts the kitchen door with her hip and misses the latch the first time.

The range has gone low. A kettle sits on dead heat. On the table: Eamon's inhaler, a cereal-box flap with medication times, her damp glove with dates written up the back.

She yanks her mother's old raincoat off a peg to wipe her face. Something thumps inside the lining.

Elin freezes only long enough to feel for it. She reaches in through a torn seam and pulls free the cracked leather

satchel.

She drops it on the table. The clasp sticks. She works it with both thumbs, hard enough to reopen the cut on her hand. Blood marks the leather.

Inside: folded gauze gone yellow, a small notebook swollen with damp, a wrapped spoon, two glass ampoules clouded with age, and the cassette.

Elin stares at it. Her jaw works once.

She digs through a cupboard, shoves aside tea tins and a biscuit tin full of plugs, finds an old cassette recorder under a stack of church circulars. The batteries are dead.

She curses under her breath, pulls them out, rubs them on her sleeve, puts them back in. Nothing.

Then she sees the radio by the window with its battery pack taped on. She tears the back off, swaps batteries, jams the cassette in.

The machine whirs, catches, almost eats the tape.

MAIRE'S VOICE crackles through static. Older than Elin remembers. Tired. Working.

MAIRE (ON TAPE)

If this runs, then I hid it well
enough.

Elin lowers herself into a chair without meaning to.

MAIRE (ON TAPE) (CONT'D)

It's Saturday night. First bell gone.
Eamon's downstairs sick with fear and
saying he'll come up, then not coming
up. If you're hearing this years from
now, I'll keep to the useful bits.

A scrape on tape. Pages turning.

MAIRE (ON TAPE) (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

The guest is not for giving away. The
guest stays with the bed. That's all.
Stay, keep the threshold marked, answer
no voice you can't see, open nothing
lined from the inside once the tide
turns.

Elin wipes at her face with the heel of her hand. Smears rain, blood.

MAIRE (ON TAPE) (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
 Set a place in the room. Chair. Plate.
 Lamp if you've one. Not welcome. Terms.

The recorder clicks. Elin hits the side of it.

MAIRE (ON TAPE) (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
 If it comes in a face you know, you say
 the name and nothing else. You do not
 ask in. You do not answer through wood.
 If the salt breaks, mend it before you
 cry.

Elin lets out one rough laugh that breaks in the middle.

MAIRE (ON TAPE) (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
 Moira thinks keeping the village calm
 is the same as keeping the rules. She's
 wrong. This was never an offering. It
 was a watch. One person with the dying
 till dawn so the thing had no cause to
 roam.

Elin grips the table edge.

MAIRE (ON TAPE) (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
 If Eamon found this, stop blaming the
 weather and get upstairs.

A long hiss of tape. Then softer:

MAIRE (ON TAPE) (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
 Elin, if it's you--

Elin's hand shoots to the stop button. She hovers there.
 Doesn't press.

She lifts her hand away.

MAIRE (ON TAPE) (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
 You're quick when you're frightened.
 You always were. If you can't mend it,
 stay anyway.

Elin folds over, both forearms on the table, the recorder
 talking into her sleeve.

MAIRE (ON TAPE) (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
 Nobody kept that from me. I chose it.
 The bad part was the room after. The
 bad part was being left.

Outside, wind knocks something loose against the wall. Elin
 flinches and looks to the door.

MAIRE (ON TAPE) (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
 The guest does not die for them. The
 guest keeps the night in one room.

The tape runs on with sea hiss and a breath close to the mic.

Elin reaches for her transfer forms sticking out of her bag. Soaked, bent, still clipped together. She looks at them, then at Eamon's empty chair by the wall.

She tears the forms free of the clipboard and sets them beside the recorder.

The tape spins.

EXT. VILLAGE SQUARE - STORM DAWN

The square is half mud, half standing water. Villagers gather under coats and lanterns. The yearly guest chair sits under the chapel eave, its dust sheet stripped off, red ribbon still tied round one leg.

Moira stands by the chapel steps with Tomas's two SEARCHERS and a bundle of guest cloth over one arm. Her nurse's clip of keys hangs at her waist.

June, pale and tight around the ribs, leans against a post with one arm folded in. She spots Elin coming out of the lane and straightens.

Moira lifts her voice just enough.

MOIRA
 We'll keep this short. Eamon made his
 choice before witnesses. We can spare
 his daughter more upset if we finish
 what was begun.

A murmur moves through the crowd.

Elin walks straight into the middle of it. Hair soaked flat. Transfer bracelet tag still looped from her pocket where she tore it loose from the chart bag, not from Eamon.

ELIN
 No.

Moira turns as if making room for a grief she can accommodate.

MOIRA
 You needn't force yourself out here in
 this weather. We'll see him through.

ELIN

You won't.

She pulls the transfer papers from under her coat. Water has glued half the pages together.

MOIRA

The mainland can wait a few hours. We all know what matters first.

ELIN

I know now.

Moira gives her a small, patient look.

MOIRA

Then you know the village cannot stand open.

ELIN

Open how.

MOIRA

To whatever comes when a place is left empty.

Elin steps up onto the first chapel step so the square has to look at her.

ELIN

He wasn't meant to be shut in there alone.

A few faces turn toward Moira, then away.

MOIRA

No one is speaking of alone. He went willing.

ELIN

And you left the rest out.

Moira's eyes flick once to June.

MOIRA

Grief makes people hear scraps and call them the whole.

Elin holds up the packet.

ELIN

These got me this far. Bed request. transfer code. signatures. Times. All of it.

She rips the stack in two. Then again. Wet paper sticks to her hand.

Gasps, more from the act than the words.

ELIN (CONT'D)
No stretcher. No boat.

She lets the pieces slap into the puddle at Moira's feet.

ELIN (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
I take the place.

The square goes quiet except for the wind and a loose chapel gutter ticking.

Moira does not move.

MOIRA
If that's what you can bear to offer,
we receive it.

ELIN
Not offer.

Moira waits.

ELIN (CONT'D)
Chair, plate, lamp. Salt at the
threshold. One room till dawn.

A woman in the crowd makes the sign of the cross.

MOIRA
Who told you that.

ELIN
My mother.

June's hand goes to her mouth. Tomas, just arriving from the harbor road with a coil of line over one shoulder, stops at the edge of the square.

MOIRA
Maire was brave, but she was one woman
in a hard night. We have kept this
island fed by doing what works.

ELIN
You kept it easy.

Moira's courtesy tightens.

MOIRA

We kept it contained.

ELIN

Then hear me plain. A guest stays with the dying. That's the job. I'm taking it.

She turns to the villagers, not to Moira.

ELIN (CONT'D)

No one shuts the door behind me.

Moira steps down one stair.

MOIRA

The house has its ways. Once entered, the room must be sealed.

ELIN

By who.

No answer.

Elin looks at Tomas.

ELIN (CONT'D)

You hear that.

Tomas doesn't answer. His eyes stay on Moira.

Moira folds the guest cloth once over her arm.

MOIRA

We are close now. Don't make a public muddle of what your father cleaned up for you.

Elin doesn't look away.

ELIN

Where's the inner key.

June pushes off the post.

JUNE

Here.

Every head turns. June holds up the key on red wool.

Moira's face changes by a fraction.

ELIN

Good.

She steps down through the villagers. No rush now. She reaches June, and June puts the key in her palm.

The wet scraps of transfer paper flatten into the mud.

INT. SMOKEHOUSE - MORNING

Thin smoke hangs in the rafters. Hooks, a chopping block, sacks shoved to one wall. June kicks the door shut behind Elin and drops the bar.

Tomas stands near the far table, dripping on the floorboards, a harbor tool bag at his boots. He looks too large for the room.

Elin puts both hands on the table.

ELIN (CONT'D)

I need lamp oil. Matches. Morphine ampoules if there are any left. Fresh salt.

June blinks at her.

JUNE

Morning to you too.

Elin looks up.

ELIN

Sorry. Salt first.

June snorts once, then winces at her ribs. She goes to work. From an apron pocket: a roll of tape, folded gauze, a paper twist, rowan berries on string. From a shelf: a storm lantern.

JUNE

Sit. No, there. The stool. If you fall over in my grandad's smokehouse after all this, I'll be furious.

Elin sits. June takes one of Elin's hands and starts winding gauze over the split knuckles.

JUNE (CONT'D)

You asked. That's new.

ELIN

I know.

JUNE

I nearly missed it.

That almost passes for a joke. Elin doesn't spoil it.

Tomas opens the tool bag. Pry bar, cold chisel, short-handled sledge, coil of line.

TOMAS

Outer wall's stone and lime. Sea side's softer at the base. I can get one shutter or a lower panel. Not both.

ELIN

Shutter's enough.

TOMAS

Need timing with the swell.

JUNE ties off the bandage with her teeth.

JUNE

Hear that. Useful words. Keep going.

She stuffs the paper twist of salt into Elin's left coat pocket, then another into the right.

JUNE (CONT'D)

Don't be tidy with it. Throw it if you have to. And rowan-- no, don't make that face. Just take it.

She pushes the rowan string into Elin's palm.

Tomas watches, jaw working.

TOMAS

Moira said once the place was taken, door stays shut till morning.

June rounds on him before Elin can speak.

JUNE

Aye? She say the person inside could come out breathing?

Tomas says nothing.

JUNE (CONT'D)

Did she.

TOMAS

No.

June nods like a punch landed where she expected.

JUNE

There it is.

She sets the lantern on the table, checks the wick, fills it from a dented tin.

JUNE (CONT'D)

You hauled men, ropes, all your big rule voice up there, and nobody thought to ask if the thing had ever been done right.

TOMAS

I asked what was required.

JUNE

Not the same question.

Elin reaches for the lantern. June slaps her hand away, then gentler, adjusts the bandage she just tied.

ELIN

He still has his bracelet on.

JUNE

Your dad?

ELIN

Yes.

JUNE

Then cut it when you're in. Not before.

Elin nods.

June takes the inner key on red wool from her own neck and loops it over Elin's wrist.

JUNE (CONT'D)

I should've done this two days ago. Or nicked the whole key ring and thrown it in the sea. Too late now.

Tomas picks up the flare gun from his bag and checks the breach in the barrel.

TOMAS

First bell in minutes.

JUNE

Then choose quick.

He looks at her.

JUNE (CONT'D)

Road or door. Her or my gran. Pick one
and stand there.

Tomas pockets the flare, takes the lantern, then gives it
back to Elin instead.

TOMAS

You go up the east path. I hold the
bend. No one passes me.

June puts two matches books on top of the lantern glass.

JUNE

And if she says your wife's name to get
you moving?

Tomas stares at the chopping block, then lifts the tool bag.

TOMAS

I know her voice.

June opens the door. Wind pushes smoke back into the room.

She puts one hand on Elin's shoulder and squeezes once,
hard.

JUNE

Chair first. Then the plate. Then him.

Elin nods, takes the lantern, and goes.

EXT. CLIFF ROAD - FIRST BELL

The bell starts as Elin reaches the lower bend. Slow. Heavy.
Sound carrying through fog.

The cliff road shines black with rain. On one side, gorse
and stone wall. On the other, the drop to the tide.

Tomas strides ahead of Elin, tool bag in one hand, flare gun
in the other. He plants himself across the road where it
narrows.

Lanterns bloom below them in the fog. Villagers coming up in
a line. Moira at the front, coat buttoned to the throat, the
guest cloth under one arm.

MOIRA

Tomas. Good. Take her up and see the
door made proper.

Tomas doesn't move.

TOMAS

Road's shut.

Moira stops a few yards off.

MOIRA

We haven't time for stiffness.

TOMAS

No one past me.

A ripple through the villagers. June hangs back by the wall, one arm tight to her side, watching Elin keep walking uphill behind Tomas without looking back.

MOIRA

You'll have your order. She goes in,
you seal, we hold till dawn.

TOMAS

No seal.

Moira studies him, then softens her tone for the crowd.

MOIRA

He's tired. We've all had too little
sleep.

TOMAS

Back down.

MOIRA steps closer.

MOIRA

Your wife died because men stood
arguing in weather and let the window
go. Don't do that again now.

Tomas's grip shifts on the flare gun. He doesn't blink.

TOMAS

Back down.

MOIRA

We remember that night with you. We
carried you through it. Don't shame her
by making this messy.

Tomas raises the flare gun and fires into the air.

Red light blows open over the road. Every face goes raw in
it. Gulls burst up from the cliff.

The villagers flinch back. One lantern drops and rolls smoking in the wet.

TOMAS

I said back down.

Silence after the flare. Then the bell again, farther off now.

Moira's eyes go to Elin, already halfway up the road with the lantern swinging low and the key red against her wrist.

MOIRA

If she leaves that room wrong, it's on all of you.

No one answers.

June steps out from the wall and kicks the dropped lantern upright.

JUNE

Then maybe don't send her in wrong.

Moira turns her head toward June, but Tomas cuts the line of sight by taking one step forward.

TOMAS

Enough.

The villagers stop at him because he has always been the one who means it.

Up the road, Elin reaches the gate to the cliff path. She doesn't turn. She lifts the lantern, unhooks the latch, and slips through.

The gate swings back against the post.

Tomas keeps the road with the flare gun smoking in his hand.

INT. FEVER HOUSE - LOWER HALL - NIGHT

The first bell carries through the stone as ELIN shoves the key into the lower lock. The door sticks. She lifts it, shoulder to wood, and gets it open.

Brine-dark water slicks the floorboards. Her lantern throws quarantine pegs, a speaking tube furred with nest fluff, tide marks up one wall.

Above, a bed frame knocks once.

ELIN

Dad.

A thud answers from the stairwell. Not his weight. Loose wood in wind.

She starts for the stairs, stops, backs up to the door.

She drops to one knee and pours a hard white line of salt across the threshold. Her wet fingers mend the corners.

The lamp from June goes on the table by the wall. Elin strikes a match, cups it, lights the wick. Yellow steadies.

She drags a chair from under the stairs. One leg catches in a warped board. She jerks it free, sets it square to the table.

From her coat, a plate wrapped in cloth. White enamel, chip at the rim. She sets it in front of the chair.

Another knock overhead. Then a scrape, slow, bed against floor.

ELIN (CONT'D)

Two minutes.

She unwinds the rowan string from her wrist and loops it over the stair post. Salt next: a line at the first step, another at the upper landing where the boards narrow.

A woman's voice above.

MAIRE'S VOICE

Elin.

Elin doesn't look up.

ELIN

Seen or shut.

She takes the stairs fast now, lantern low.

INT. FEVER HOUSE - UPPER CHAMBER - NIGHT

The upper door stands barred from inside with a rusted bed rail through the handles. Elin drops the tool bag, works the rail loose, and shoulders in.

Sea water has found the room under the skirting. EAMON lies half-turned in the iron bed, blanket soaked at the hem, oxygen gone, his breath dry and shallow.

He looks at the lantern first, then her.

EAMON

You came back.

ELIN

Yes.

She hangs the lantern on a peg. Checks his pulse. Opens her bag. Morphine ampoule. Syringe. Her hands shake once against the glass, then settle.

ELIN (CONT'D)

Pain.

EAMON

Aye.

ELIN

Breath.

He gives a small tilt of his hand. Enough.

She draws the dose, slides it into the port she taped in earlier. Watches him swallow against the next breath.

Outside, rain hits the shutter in bursts. Below them, the lower door gives one soft bump, as if someone leaned on it from the dark.

MOIRA'S VOICE

Elin. We'll keep it orderly if you open.

Elin strips the wet blanket off Eamon's legs and pulls a dry one from the bag. She tucks it around his knees, lifts them clear of the seep.

EAMON

Should've run.

ELIN

No.

She crosses to the inner threshold and checks the salt there. Broken by a boot at one edge. She kneels and pours more, pinching it into the gap with her thumb.

A second voice floats up from below. June's this time.

JUNE'S VOICE

Mind the lamp, you'll smoke the whole rotten place out.

Elin glances to the hall, says nothing.

She goes back downstairs.

INT. FEVER HOUSE - LOWER HALL - NIGHT

The place waits the way a room does before visitors arrive too early.

Elin straightens the chair by inches. Plate. Lamp. She looks at the bare table, reaches into her pocket, and adds one peppermint lozenge to the plate.

At the door, three knocks.

MOIRA

You don't know the words for the close.

ELIN

Door stays shut.

MOIRA

We can help you through it. Same as always.

ELIN

No.

She takes one last strip of salt and draws a half-moon around the chair legs, leaving the front open to the table.

Then she carries the second chair upstairs.

INT. FEVER HOUSE - UPPER CHAMBER - NIGHT

She sets the chair beside Eamon's bed, close enough that the blanket brushes the rung.

Eamon watches the doorway over her shoulder.

EAMON

Is it in.

ELIN

It has a place.

He wets his lips.

EAMON

That all.

ELIN

That's enough.

Below, the lower room gives a small creak, chair leg on board.

Elin pulls her chair to the bedside and sits.

INT. FEVER HOUSE - UPPER CHAMBER/LOWER HALL - NIGHT

Water taps the bed legs. The lamp flame shivers and rights itself.

From below, a chair scrapes back.

MAIRE'S VOICE

You set it right.

Elin keeps one hand on Eamon's wrist, counting.

ELIN

I see the chair. That's all.

MAIRE'S VOICE

You were small. Yellow coat. You wouldn't let go of the gate.

Eamon turns his head toward the open chamber door.

EAMON

Don't.

The voice moves nearer the stair without footfall.

MAIRE'S VOICE

Eamon. Love.

Elin stands, goes to the threshold, and plants her palm on the frame where the fresh salt lies.

ELIN

You stay where I put you.

Silence. Then a wet laugh that dies halfway through.

The next voice is a man's, frail, familiar for the wrong reason.

OLD PATIENT'S VOICE

Nurse. Nurse. I'm not ready yet.

Elin's jaw works once.

OLD PATIENT'S VOICE (CONT'D)

Get the trolley. Call my daughter.
Don't leave me here.

ELIN

No trolley.

OLD PATIENT'S VOICE

You said ten minutes.

Eamon watches her from the bed, breath catching on the room's edges.

Another voice overlaps the first. A woman from the mainland hospice. Thin. Panicked.

WOMAN'S VOICE

I need the loo. I need my shoes. Don't let them put me in that van.

ELIN

You're not here.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Then come see.

The lower boards groan. The flame in the hall lamp drops blue at the wick, then climbs back.

Outside, fists hit the lower door.

MOIRA

Elin. Hear me. If he dies unclosed, it walks.

ELIN

I hear you.

MOIRA

Then do it proper. Cloth over the face. Door unlatched before tide turn. We all know the steps.

ELIN

No.

MOIRA

Child, don't make a trial of him for pride.

Eamon drags in air, pushes the words out with it.

EAMON

Not pride.

Moira pounds again. Harder this time. The latch rattles below but holds.

From the stair, June's voice, breathless and close.

JUNE'S VOICE

Elin, open. Tomas slipped. He's down.
Open, quick.

Elin grips the frame till salt sticks to her palm.

ELIN

If it's June, show me June.

Nothing.

JUNE'S VOICE

For God's sake.

ELIN

Show me.

The voice thins into a whistle, small and tinny, then goes.

Eamon coughs. Elin is back at the bed in two steps. She raises him, hand between his shoulders, waits through the spasm, wipes his mouth on the blanket edge.

EAMON

It's got your work voices.

ELIN

I know.

EAMON

Mean little trick.

A small sound escapes her. Not quite a laugh.

ELIN

Yes.

Below, the chair scrapes again. Slow. Patient.

MAIRE'S VOICE

He left me.

Elin closes Eamon's blanket at the chest.

MAIRE'S VOICE (CONT'D)

You'll leave him cleaner. That's all.

ELIN

No.

MAIRE'S VOICE

You already did. All those rooms.

Elin reaches for the syringe case, checks it, puts it back unopened.

MAIRE'S VOICE (CONT'D)

You know the kind way. Little push.
Wheels under the bed. Doors open. Gone
before the bad bit.

ELIN

Not tonight.

The room changes pressure. The lamp flame leans toward the hall.

For one second her mother stands at the chamber door. Water falling from hair, red ribbon pasted to her throat, one hand on the frame above the salt.

MAIRE

Look at me.

Elin does. She doesn't move.

ELIN

I can see you.

MAIRE

Then ask me in.

ELIN

No.

MAIRE takes her hand off the frame. The skin there smokes where salt dust clings.

Downstairs Moira's voice cuts through again, stripped of softness now.

MOIRA

You don't get to make new rules in
there.

ELIN

They're older than you.

A beat. Rain. Water at the boards.

Then the old patients return. Two at once, then one, then none. Pleas, names, transport times, wrong rooms, a son delayed on the road, a taxi, a discharge, another nurse calling for help from the far end of a corridor that does not exist here.

Elin answers only what is in front of her.

ELIN (CONT'D)
Small breath. Good.

She wets a sponge and touches it to Eamon's lips.

ELIN (CONT'D)
Again.

A borrowed voice whispers from the stair.

VOICE
Save what you can.

Eamon opens his eyes to her.

EAMON
Hear that.

ELIN
Yes.

EAMON
Good nurse would.

The water reaches the rung of her chair.

INT. FEVER HOUSE - UPPER CHAMBER - NIGHT

Eamon turns his head toward the shutter, listening past the rain.

EAMON (CONT'D)
Still time.

ELIN
For what.

EAMON
Road. Window. Any hole that opens.

His hand lifts off the blanket, searches, finds the orange stretcher strap hanging from the bed rail.

EAMON (CONT'D)
Get me on it.

ELIN
No.

EAMON
Elin.

He takes a breath, loses half of it, starts again.

EAMON (CONT'D)

A good nurse saves what she can.

Her eyes go to the bag. To the straps. To the syringe case.

Below, the chair in the lower room bumps once against the table.

EAMON (CONT'D)

Don't sit and watch me drown in this place.

Elin stands. For one hard second it looks like motion toward the gear. Her hand closes on the dangling transfer bracelet at his wrist instead.

The plastic band is gray with damp. The paper tag under it has blurred ink from the first day.

Eamon looks down at her hand.

ELIN

Hold still.

She slips her trauma shears from her pocket, slides the blunt edge under the band, and snips.

The bracelet falls onto the blanket. She tears the tag free with it and crumples both in her fist.

EAMON

You paid for that fight.

ELIN

I know.

She drops the bracelet and tag to the floorboards where water noses them toward the bed leg.

Then she unhooks the orange straps from the rail, coils them once, and lets them fall beyond her chair.

Eamon watches her drag the chair in until it touches the mattress.

ELIN (CONT'D)

I am here.

EAMON

Bad trade.

ELIN

Maybe.

He looks past her to the hall.

EAMON
Your mother asked for my hand.

Elin sits.

EAMON (CONT'D)
I gave her talk instead.

She reaches across the blanket and puts her hand in his.

ELIN
You don't have to now.

His fingers close on hers with what strength he has.

Below them, the lower chair stays quiet.

INT. FEVER HOUSE - UPPER CHAMBER - PRE-DAWN

The room has gone the color of old tin. Water slaps under the bed frame now.

Eamon's breaths come farther apart. Elin counts without moving her lips.

A hammer blow hits the outer shutter.

TOMAS
Inside. Stand back.

Another blow. Wood cracks. Cold gray light knifes through a split board.

ELIN
Tomas.

TOMAS
We have seconds. Get him up.

The lower hall answers with a sudden rush -- chair skidding, table legs scraping, something wet moving fast against the stairs.

Elin is on her feet. Eamon's hand slips from hers.

Tomas drives the pry bar in from outside. The shutter gives. One side hangs crooked. Spray lashes the room. Beyond it, cliff, rope line, Tomas braced on the sill with rain in his beard and two men below him on the ledge.

TOMAS (CONT'D)
Straps. Now.

The Long Guest rises into the chamber doorway behind Elin in her mother's shape, then not, then a patient in a hospital gown, then June with blood at her mouth. It leans toward the broken shutter as if the opening has weight.

TOMAS (CONT'D)

Move.

Eamon's chest works twice, empty on the second pull.

EAMON

No more roads.

Elin looks at the sill. The rope. The drop. Tomas reaching. The thing behind her gathering at the doorway.

TOMAS

Elin.

She bends for the straps on the floor. Gets them in one hand.

The thing at the doorway takes one step over dry boards and stops at the salt line she mended.

MAIRE'S VOICE

Take him.

TOMAS

Now.

Eamon's fingers twitch over the blanket, searching the air where her hand was.

Elin looks down at the straps in her fist.

Then she opens her hand.

The straps hit the water with a slap and slide under the bed.

ELIN

Shutter stays open. Door stays shut.

TOMAS

You won't get another shot.

ELIN

I know.

She sits. Takes Eamon's hand again. Pulls the blanket higher on his chest with her free hand.

The Long Guest leans hard at the broken line toward the window. The lamp flame gutters flat. Salt at the chamber threshold lifts in a white scatter, then settles. The thing does not cross.

TOMAS

Elin.

She doesn't turn.

ELIN

Hold it there.

Tomas stares at her through spray and the smashed shutter, then jams the pry bar across the opening to keep the hanging board from swinging wider. He plants his shoulder against it.

Outside below, one of the men loses footing on the ledge and curses. Tomas barks down at him.

TOMAS

Line tight. Tight.

Inside, Eamon's grip loosens. He looks at Elin, not the door.

EAMON

Weather's off.

ELIN

Yes.

EAMON

You're cold.

ELIN

I'm all right.

He tries for more breath than he has. Fails. Tries smaller.

EAMON

Stay till light.

ELIN

I am.

His thumb shifts once over her knuckle. Then stops.

The next breath doesn't come.

Rain drums the shutter. Tomas holds the opening. Elin keeps her hand around Eamon's and reaches with the other to close his mouth.

Below, in the lower hall, the extra chair gives one long scrape backward across the boards and then nothing.

Gray brightens at the broken shutter.

INT. CHAPEL - DAWN

The wake kettle steams on a side table. Seedcake tins sit open. Wet coats drip by the door.

Eamon lies in the front of the chapel on trestles, washed and dressed in his fisherman's sweater. His filed ring catches the window light.

The yearly guest chair stands beside him, dust sheet gone, red ribbon still wrapped on one leg.

Villagers crowd the walls, hats in hand, voices low and failing.

Moira stands in the doorway under the porch shadow, coat buttoned high, the child's tin whistle dark on its cord. No one goes to her.

June carries in a mug, sets it near Elin, then looks at the chair.

JUNE

Right. Well. Can't have it sitting there like a cursed lamp.

Nobody moves.

June puts a hand to her sore side, winces, keeps going.

JUNE (CONT'D)

If you're here, sit a turn. That's all. Ten minutes, twenty, till your tea's cold. Whatever you've got.

A man near the back studies the floorboards. A woman starts to step, stops when Moira shifts in the doorway.

Then Tomas comes in from the vestry with his weather gear stripped off, shirt damp at the collar. He sees the chair. Sees Moira. He doesn't ask.

He crosses the aisle, turns the chair, and sits beside Eamon.

Wood creaks under him. He puts his cap in his lap and looks at Eamon's hands.

The room changes around that plain fact.

One of the older women leaves the wall and brings a saucer to the side table. Another man takes off his boots by the door and lines them neatly out of the way. Somebody sniffs from a cold that has nothing to do with crying.

June nods once, brisk because otherwise she won't manage it.

JUNE (CONT'D)
Good. That's good.

She points at a lanky teenage boy frozen by the hymn boards.

JUNE (CONT'D)
You next, Cal. Don't stare at me. Sit
when he's done.

The boy swallows and nods.

Moira steps one pace in.

MOIRA
We should mind the words said over him.

June turns.

JUNE
Then say one from there.

Moira holds her place in the doorway. The porch light behind her makes the chapel floor stop at her shoes.

No one opens a path.

Elin stands at Eamon's head, one hand on the trestle edge. She watches Tomas finish his turn, rise, and touch the chair back with two fingers before he steps away.

Cal takes the seat.

Then the older woman.

Then another.

INT. MAINLAND HOSPICE ROOM - DAWN

Fluorescent light. A weather report murmurs from a radio at the nurses' station beyond the half-open door.

A thin man in bed breathes with the uneven hitch of the nearly gone. His daughter and son stand on opposite sides of the room with their coats still on, as if they have not decided whether to stay.

Elin comes in with a steel dish, a syringe driver check sheet, and the habit of someone who knows every corner by touch.

She stops at the visitor chair folded against the wall.

The daughter wipes her nose with the heel of her hand.

DAUGHTER

Are we in your way.

ELIN

No.

She sets the dish down. Checks the line. Straightens the blanket at the man's shoulder. Looks to the family.

ELIN (CONT'D)

What do you want in here.

They glance at each other, caught by the question.

SON

I don't know.

DAUGHTER

Can we... just be here?

ELIN

Yes.

She unfolds the chair. The hinges click. She sets it beside the bed, not against the wall.

The daughter moves first and sits. The son comes around to the other side, puts his hand on the bed rail, leaves it there.

Elin could go. Instead she pulls a second chair from the corner, sits near the foot of the bed, and checks the man's breathing with her eyes, nothing else.

Morning light begins to thin the window.

No one speaks.

The chairs stay open.