

Each evening when Lena entered the foyer of her home, she would open the door wide to remove her key, shut the door, then turn the inside lock, then the deadbolt. She would let her briefcase slide to the floor near the umbrella stand, drop her keys in the ceramic dish on the black lacquer table that she had inherited from her mother, then turn and toss, actually toss, her coat onto the wooden rack in the corner. About nine out of ten times the coat would land properly on the peg; occasionally it would plunge to the floor. Lena would stare at it for a moment, give a small laugh, then pick it up and try again.

From the foyer, Lena could see Nick sitting on the floor, using the piano bench as a desk. A yellow Number 2 pencil notched with bite marks wagged up and down in his mouth as he examined his work. Sancho supervised from above, propped up against the music stand with *Liebstraum No. 3* as his backdrop.

Lena let her briefcase slide to the floor, dropped her keys in the dish, then turned and tossed her coat onto the wooden rack, successfully. Then she turned to Nick.

“What are you doing?”

“Ahahahahahahaha,” emerged from Nick.

“Please take the pencil out of your mouth.”

Nick complied.

“I’m writing you a love letter.”

Lena thought for a moment.

“No really. What are you doing?”

Nick put the pencil back in his mouth and said emphatically:

“AHAHAHAHAHAHAHA.”

Lena paused. It was odd, which with Nick often meant it was true. Nick frequently composed little notes to her signed by Sancho and his troop of stuffed animal companions. And sometimes he would text her, making up secret codes on the fly based on wherever he happened to be, so they would read like:

*The butterfly skips across the daisies of Greenland*

which he would later explain meant he was stopping by the grocery store for pistachio ice cream. But never could she recall any physical notes or letters from Nick as Nick, whoever that might be at the moment.

“Can I see it?”

“It’s a first draft.”

“I don’t mind.”

“I’ll show it to you later.”

“Later when?”

“After the next time we aren’t together.”

Lena drew back her hand. This was something they both knew was a possibility, but they had never spoken of it. They had been married, then divorced. This was a trial...trial what?

Remarriage?

Repatriation?

Lena was not sure, nor was she sure it was going to work, nor was she sure what options she had whether it worked or not.

“What makes you think I will leave you again?”

Nick looked at her and something flashed in his eyes, a passage of emotions so swift and complex as to be unreadable.

“I know things.”

Lena felt a shiver pass through her, starting at the back of her neck and passing down both sides and meeting in the middle of her stomach. He did know things, things only he knew. Sometimes these things did not exist. But sometimes they did.

“Can I see it please?”

Nick handed her the paper.

“You have to promise to act surprised the next time you see it.”

The note was in Nick’s large elegant script, which for some reason always had a hint of the Renaissance for Lena. She read the note three times, then handed it back to Nick.

“This note would not bring me back to you.”

Nick looked at her sharply.

“What would?”

She recognized that tone as the one that would have brought whatever she mentioned to her doorstep in the morning. She thought of saying the mocha espresso gelato from the café across the lake, because she really did want some. But she knew Nick would not stop at buying a cone.

He would buy the store.

Or the building.

Or the Italian company that made the gelato.

Or Italy.

He was reading Dante again. There was no telling what could come from that. So she said:

“This note will not bring me back to you because I will never leave you.”

“I know,” he said. “I’m going to leave you.”

She felt that shiver again, but steadied.

“Maybe. But you’re not taking Sancho.”