

## Saturday, June 3

No place is safe! I'm followed everywhere. You'd think I'd be used to it by now, but how do you ever get used to this?

This morning I woke at 6:40, as usual. There were two pair of eyes on the wall opposite my bed. They were studying me with a menacing glare. I want to fill the wall with artwork, or even a busy wallpaper—something to remove any blank spot for the eyes—but they won't let me do that. If I block them from here, they'll come after me elsewhere and they won't be happy. Not that they ever are.

The muttering voices were already active, of course. They never go away, but at least I'm mostly used to them. Still, it's disconcerting to come to consciousness knowing you are the subject of a conversation you can't quite make out.

The eyes on my shower wall had a mouth today. That happens sometimes. It was silently shouting at me the whole time I was there. No words, but I didn't need words to tell it was upset with me.

Coffee and toast standing in the kitchen was better—just the mutterers and their never-ending wordless commentary like some sort of personal Greek chorus. I put some Verdi on the sound system to drown them out, but they cut through. They always do.

I had to run into the office and pick up some papers for the Stafford case. I don't like to work on the weekends, but with the case already at trial I don't have the luxury of time. Mara and Kala didn't give me the crucial information to clear Stafford until the day before the trial started, so I've been scrambling to subpoena the new witnesses and build my defense. We'll win, I'm sure, but not without effort.

As I left the apartment to get in the car, I could see a hawk circling. It was too high to identify—probably a red tail or a Cooper's hawk—but it was watching. They ride the morning thermals up to where they can see everything. Hunting their prey. Hunting me. It, or another like it, was at the office when I got there, too.

The office was empty—typical for a Saturday morning, especially in the summer—but that just left more opportunities for eyes and mouths, and a silence for the mutterers to fill. Fill it they did, murmuring their imprecations and chastisements that I can't quite make out, but know nonetheless. Scolding me

for my inadequacies. I grabbed the papers I needed and left right away. I couldn't work there.

Once I got home, I took the papers out into the back garden. I'm just about the only person in the building who uses that little space, and I've pretty much laid claim to the wrought iron lounge and the little matching table as my outside workspace. The overgrown privacy fence means that there are no blank surfaces for the eyes where I can see them. There's the back wall of the apartment building, of course, and they watch me from there, but that's behind me. I can sense them watching me, making the hair on the back of my neck stand up, but at least I don't have to see their angry glare.

It was dry and not too breezy, so I could spread my papers out on the table. The birds in the nearby trees and the feeders I stock were singing merrily, so I knew there weren't any raptors too close. The buzzing of the hummingbirds at their feeder added a little percussive flavor to the droning chant of the mutterers.

I was hoping that Mara and Kala would show up and help me with more information, but they didn't make an appearance. I don't usually see them in the mornings; they tend to come by in the early evening when the sun is just settling behind the mountains. The shadows kill the thermals, discouraging the day hawks. There's a golden hour before the owls and other night predators come out, and that's when Mara and Kala like to visit. There was another Steller's jay that was scolding me from the trees, but it was just an ordinary jay, shrieking like any other bird.

I got maybe an hour of work done before I noticed the birds had gone silent. Looking up, I could see why. There was a sharp-shinned hawk circling low overhead. It had clearly spotted something and was waiting for the best opportunity to strike. Just because it had found a target didn't mean it would ignore other opportunities, though. The birds know this, so they quiet themselves, and hide in the foliage. I know it, too. A hawk couldn't eat me, of course, but that doesn't mean I'm not prey.

I went back inside to escape the hawk's attention, trading one set of eyes for others. *La Traviata* helped mask the mutterings, but the walls hosted several sets of eyes and mouths. They watched me, judging me and wordlessly scolding me while I tried to pull things together for the case.

I thought about taking a hike in the afternoon, but decided against it. It had stormed the last two days and looked like it

could blow up another storm this afternoon. Getting caught up in the hills in a thunderstorm can be dangerous and is always uncomfortable.

I wish I could have gone, though. Hiking in the foothills off Highway 15 is a good escape. Headphones help to quiet the mutterers, but they also leave me deaf to the warnings of the passerines or the hunting cries of the raptors, so I usually don't bother. At least the broken terrain leaves no place for the eyes and I can escape their judgment for a few hours.

I worked until the Metropolitan Opera broadcast—a repeat performance. I listened to it with my eyes closed. I knew I was being watched. I could feel the accusing stares, but at least I didn't have to see them. It was nearly an escape—as close as I ever come.

After the opera I went outside again, hoping to see Mara and Kala, but they haven't shown up. I worked a little more on the Stafford case, but there's not much more I can do until Monday. So now I'm writing here in my journal, killing time until it grows dark.

I'll go in and fix my supper soon and maybe try to figure out a plan for Monday. I'll have court in the morning; that's the easy part. That afternoon, though, I have my first appointment with the new psychiatrist, Dr. JoAnne Filtner. I know nothing about her, other than that Dr. Weber recommended her.

I wish Weber hadn't retired. He wasn't great, but at least he didn't push for too much change. We'd settled into a routine. Appointments followed a conventional script, one that kept my medications stable and kept me out of the hospital. It was rare I was with him more than fifteen minutes. I don't hold out much hope that that pattern will continue with the new shrink, though. I'll have to fight for my stability again.

The birds went silent again. Maybe they're just off to their nests for the evening, but it could be an early appearance of an owl. In any case, it's too threatening to stay outside. Even the garden is unsafe.