

TENDERLY
I AM
DEVoured



ALSO BY LYNDALL CLIPSTONE

Unholy Terrors

TENDERLY I AM DEVoured

LYNDALL CLIPSTONE



HOT
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BOOKS

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For the quiet dreamers



*If we are strong enough in our souls we
can rip away the veil . . . let God consume
us, devour us, unstring our bones. Then
spit us out reborn.*

—Donna Tartt, *The Secret History*









CHAPTER ONE

Now

THE PALLID SWANS SPEAR THROUGH THE SETTLING DUSK, across a sky the color of bruised plums. I'm framed by their flight as I leave the station, their silent inland progression like an arrow marking my path.

Today is my eighteenth birthday, the time of year when spring takes delicate bites out of winter. There's heat in the air, and some of the trees already have early blossoms, garlanding the shadows pink.

Today is my birthday, and like the swans in the sky I am going home.

I don't want to be back here. Not now, and not like this. With my right arm bound tightly by layers of bandages from wrist to elbow, a healing wound throbbing beneath. With the strap of my satchel cutting into my shoulder and my suitcase dragging behind me, heavy with everything I packed in a hurry.

The train from Astera to our village station leaves only once a day, traveling through the night as it makes the slow crawl northward to Verse. I'd had to run all the way to the station, heartbeat wild as I imagined myself stranded all night on the empty platform.

I would have done it, too, staying the night in the station. Just like how I left behind all the books and clothes and things I couldn't fit

into my satchel or suitcase. I'd have done anything except turn back and enter the grounds of Marchmain Academy again.

Now, I still feel wild and rushed, despite the long overnight ride on the train where I slept with my cheek pressed against the window. By the time I reach the border of our family's lands, I'm sweating beneath my brother's hand-me-down coat.

The rows of bracelets I put on over the ugly linen bandages on my arm clink and clatter as I roll back my sleeves. Inside the collar of my coat is a neat laundry stamp that says *Henry Arriscane*. It's been crossed out and replaced with my own shortened name, a messier, handstitched *Lark*.

Once, generations ago, our family owned all the land between the station and the sea. But by the time my mother came here as a new bride, all that was left was a single acre of woods and the stretch of seashore where our cottage sits above the breakwater. And, of course, the salt mine, where we have hewn our living from the earth for as long as anyone can remember.

The entrance to our woods is marked by a simple fence. Wire stranded between splintery posts, a locked gate. The padlock is simple brass, and when I was twelve, I painted the wooden gateposts with shells and feathers and flowers. That seashore scene made by my inexperienced brushstrokes felt like a talisman. I truly believed that, while those decorations were there, no one except me and my brothers could pass.

I have the key out by the time I reach the gate, but it's already unlocked, propped open by a piece of granite stone. Time has worn away my painting, and only faded patches of color are left. Frowning, I lift the stone away from the gate. It's been there a long time, because there's a deep, muddy divot beneath: filled with a nest of beetles that go scuttling away when I lift the stone.

Without my talismans, the entrance feels so unguarded. The opened latch hangs toothless and wrong. I close the gate, anchoring the stone behind it. Then, taking the ribbon from my hair, I tie it through the

space where the lock should go. With the gate tied tight and safe and closed, I'm all shut up inside the Arriscane woods, a barrier between me and the path back to the train, back to school.

The wind picks up, harsh against my cheeks and whipping my untied hair into knots. It smells of salt, and sea, and is familiar in a way that makes all my bones feel soft. If I closed my eyes I could still find my way home, even after all this time away.

It's the first time I've been back in four years.

If I hadn't been expelled, I'd be making this journey at the end of spring. My exams complete, newly graduated from Marchmain, coming home to tell my brothers that I'd been accepted into the curatorship at the city gallery.

Small and exclusive—accepting only two students each year—the postgraduate curatorship specializes in the works of Ottavio Caedmon. He has been my favorite artist since I first saw one of his paintings in a magazine: a procession of chthonic gods through juniper-green woods. At the rear of the march was Therion, the god worshipped by my family. I'd never seen him painted before, and the way Caedmon had captured him in elegant chiaroscuro made my chest ache with longing for something I couldn't name.

When I learned about the curatorship I was determined to win a place. But that part of my future can only be a dream now.

The trees thin to windswept clifftops. A scatter of petals follows me, drifting into my hair as I leave the woods behind. There's a paved road farther inland, but this smaller, private path is only plain earth. My leather lace-up shoes leave prints in the dirt as I walk. In the distance, our cottage is outlined against the lowering sky.

I pause for a moment, drawing Henry's coat tighter around me. For a heartbeat, my despair falls away, and I taste a fleeting, tentative hope that I surely don't deserve. Perhaps the salt wind and the swan calls will cleanse me, and I'll step through the front door and find everything about me has been mended.

But when I move closer, that hope dissolves like a soap bubble. The cottage has changed so much from what I remember. It looks faded, tired, as though it wants to curl up beside the swells of the sea and fall into a dreamless sleep.

It needs a fresh coat of paint and the gutters are filled with moss; ivy drips down from the roof. A thicket of boxthorn lies close to the walls, white flowers like altar candles in the shallow night. The front garden is all weeds and unkept camellia trees that have carpeted the ground with their fallen blooms. I step between the rotting petals, wary of nectar-drunk bees. Scraps of leaf stick to the toes of my shoes.

All the windows are dark except for one, at the front, which is propped open. The sill is lined with candles. I tuck my hair behind my ears, hitch the strap of my satchel higher on my shoulder. Pressing my lips together against the gritty remnants of rouge that smudged off on my journey, I stare at the front door and wonder if I should knock.

I can make out my brothers inside, past the gauzy half-drawn curtains, their shapes as blurred as a thing seen underwater. Voices come slipping out through the open window. Henry, cold and stern, his words heavy with anger. “No. This was not the agreement we made.”

“I’m sorry,” another speaker, a stranger, answers. Their tone is flat and careless, and they don’t sound sorry at all. “We made no agreement. This isn’t a negotiation.”

I put down my suitcase on the front step and edge closer to the window, trying to squint past the candlelight to see more clearly. A piece of the boxthorn, dead and twisted, crunches loudly beneath my foot. The voices inside fall silent. A heartbeat passes. The door opens. I take a step back, the hem of my coat snagged by thorns.

Henry stands in the doorway, with Oberon—my second eldest brother, born between Henry and me—close at his heels. We all share the same features: hair and eyes the color of honey, olive skin that freckles in the summer. They’re both more than a decade older than I am. When I was born, a surprise third baby, they were nearly adults.

But right now, they look impossibly young: Oberon with his cheeks flushed and his glasses askew on his freckled nose, Henry with his lower lip bitten raw and a deep line of worry between his brows.

He takes a step back when he sees me, his mouth slanting into a frown. “Lark! What are you doing here?”

I bend down to unhook the thorns, catching my finger against the wicked sharpness. Hissing, I put my finger in my mouth. My carefully rehearsed explanation vanishes with the coppery taste of blood. A sob catches in my throat, and I fling my arms around Henry, burying my face against his chest.

He squeezes my shoulder with a touch that feels like a warning. Close to my ear, he orders, “Don’t cry.”

Suddenly, I remember that we’re not alone—there is a stranger in the house. I swallow down my sob until it lodges in my throat, a rough-edged stone, and wriggle free of Henry’s arms. He guides me inside while Oberon picks up my suitcase.

The disorientation I felt before, when I first saw the outside of the cottage all worn and overgrown, washes over me anew. Inside is just as changed. The floor is bare of carpets and most of the furniture is gone. The long velvet sofa where we sat together on firelit evenings has been replaced by the threadbare chaise from our father’s old office.

On the wall above the mantel, a square of darker paper marks the place where a tapestry of a white swan—the Arriscane family sigil—once dominated the room.

Henry urges me forward, his hand pressed to the small of my back. Everything ripples, like a glass-flat sea when the tide is changing. The gentle glow from the candles on the windowsill now seems dazzlingly bright. I blink and blink. And then, from the corner, someone steps forward.

He’s briefly shadowed as he moves toward me, still only a stranger. Then my eyes adjust, and I freeze in place, jolted by the shock of realization. Standing before me, like an apparition dragged from the

deepest circle of the Canticle hells, is Alastair Felimath. The oldest—and only—son of the Felimath family.

“Well,” he says, looking me over, his mouth cut into a bored smile. “You haven’t changed at all.”

It’s not a compliment: His tone makes that clear. I fold my arms, conscious of the clanking bracelets, the thick swathe of the bandage visible beneath my sleeve. “And I told *you* that I never wanted to see you again.”

Alastair Felimath and I grew up as neighbors, our houses the only ones on this isolated stretch of cliffs. His family owns all the land beyond our bordered acres; from the clifftops past our cottage all the way to the northern coast where the seas become ice.

We were friends once. But that time has long since passed.

And as he stands before me, tall and angular, with his dark, wavy hair stranded gold in the candlelight, he’s as ruinously beautiful as a Caedmonish satyr. I hate him for it.

Alastair laughs, a mirthless sound. “Don’t worry. As I was just explaining to your brothers, I’ll be leaving soon. My father has sailed north, to Gruoch, and I’m to join him there once I’ve settled some . . . overdue matters.”

At this, he casts a pointed look toward Henry, whose hand flexes against my spine. My brother draws me closer to his side. Through clenched teeth, he tells Alastair, “We’ll have to continue our discussion later. My sister has had a long journey.”

Alastair shrugs carelessly, and picks up his black woolen overcoat from where it lay draped over the back of the chaise. “Tomorrow, then. Though to be quite honest, our discussion is much more important than your sister coming home in disgrace.”

He watches me, haughty as a prince, a gleam in his eyes as he notes the flush in my cheeks, the way I flinch at his words. I’ve said nothing of my reasons for being here, yet as his gaze casts coolly over me, I

feel laid bare. It's as though he can see right to the center of my soiled heart—that he knows the very worst of me.

I shake myself free of Henry's touch, stride across the room, and open the door. The last of the sun has slipped from the sky and the early dark has crept across the fields. I glare pointedly to where the path away from our cottage is marked by a scattering of fallen flowers.

“You were asked to leave, Alastair Felimath.”

He pulls on his overcoat unhurriedly, then winds a knitted muffler around his neck. Sleekly, he crosses the threshold, going out into the dusk. Then he pauses, turning back to regard me. His eyes, gray as a storm-washed sea, flash with a poisonous light. His mouth tilts into a cool grin and he dips his head in a mocking, deferential bow.

“By the way . . . happy birthday, Lacrimosa.”



CHAPTER TWO

Now

ONCE ALASTAIR IS GONE, HENRY PULLS A CRUMPLED package of cigarettes from his pocket. He lights one and exhales a plume of smoke. A frown pinches between his brows as he looks at me expectantly. “Are you going to explain why you’re here?”

“Are *you* going to tell me why Alastair Felimath was in our house?” I can’t believe that cold-eyed, mocking boy was once my closest friend. It’s been years since things between us ended and he revealed his true self—stark, arrogant, and cruel. I’ve done all I could to push it aside, erase all thoughts of him from my memories. But his presence here tonight has brought everything back, as indelible as a stain of spilled ink.

“Lark,” Henry says impatiently. “I’m not playing around.”

I fold my arms, matching his frown with my own. Part of me wants to tell him about Marchmain. To confess. Instead, I clench my teeth, biting down on the truth. As though by keeping it trapped and silent, I can prevent what I did from being real.

Henry and Oberon are both watching me now; beneath their stares I feel hot and restless. I push the strap of my satchel from my shoulder and let the bag fall to the floor with a thump. “I want to go to the altar before it gets too dark.”

In the sea caves below our cottage, our family keeps an altar for Therion, the chthonic god worshipped in this part of Verse. It's been our tradition to go there after an extended time away from home, to tell Therion we have returned and thank him for his favor.

I don't feel very thankful right now, but I'd rather be anywhere else than in this room, pinned by the scrutiny of my brothers and the memory of Alastair's snide and bitter-tasting farewell.

Henry releases a taut sigh and crosses the room to take one of the candles from the windowsill. "Come on, then."

He moves toward the open doorway that leads to the back of our house. Oberon hesitates for a moment, then follows him with a sigh. I trail after them, a thread of smoke lingering in the air from Henry's cigarette.

As we go down the hall and through the kitchen, I see how much is missing from the other rooms. The walls have all been stripped bare, with darkened squares and empty picture hooks marking the places where artwork was hung.

What little furniture remains is set out of place; a side table that used to be upstairs is now in the hall, holding an unlit candle and a jar of tapers. In the kitchen, the polished dining set has been replaced by a scarred worktable and three mismatched chairs. The almost-empty rooms catch the sounds of our footsteps as we pass, twisting them into unfamiliar shapes.

The changes in the house fill me with a foreboding that I can't escape.

Henry opens the kitchen door and we step out into the rear garden. It's just as overgrown as the front, with a tangled lawn of seaside daisies and oxalis, and more camellia trees that have carpeted the ground with their dropped flowers. The wisteria vine, which covers a wooden arbor behind the house, sends wayward, spiraling tendrils up against the fading sky.

I tug at Henry's sleeve. He turns toward me, the end of his cigarette

glowing like a coal, the candle flickering in his other hand. “What happened while I’ve been away? Why is everything . . . like this?”

I gesture from the house to the garden, and Henry sighs. He slips his arm around my shoulders, and we continue onward to the breakwater that separates our cottage from the sea.

“You know,” he begins, “that Mom and Dad borrowed a lot of money from Marcus Felimath before they died.”

His voice has the tired gravity of someone beginning a story he doesn’t want to tell. I manage a nod. Our parents died only a scant few months after my unexpected arrival, and the debt they owed to Alastair’s father was part of the reason why.

They had gone on an expedition to the frozen north, to offer a harvest contract for a potential new salt vein. It would have been enough to repay what they owed, twice over. Instead, with a sudden storm and a lethal, ice-slicked coast, Henry, Oberon, and I became orphans.

An ache throbs in me, stark as a bruise, whenever I think of it. The senseless loss, the way I can’t even mourn them because I have no memories of them at all. Only an echo, an absence, the sadness I catch glimpses of in my brothers’ eyes.

I drag in a breath, renewed anger surging up at Henry’s mention of that debt. Our parents might still be alive if not for the money they owed to Marcus Felimath. “We’re paying him back, though,” I say, insistent, wishing I could sever this horrible bond between our families with my words.

My brothers pause at the apex of the stairs that lead down from the breakwater. The tide is drawing in, the waterline creeping higher up the shore.

I stare down at the silvery waves capped by their latticework of froth. The taste of it paints over my tongue: salt and shell grit, the stippling haze of sea spray clinging to my lashes. Usually my first sight of the ocean is a balm. No matter how I felt, all my fears and sadness

would melt away when I looked out across the crescent-shaped cove that bordered our home.

But now, apprehension winds so tight around me that I can hardly breathe. I turn to Henry, waiting for his answer. “Wasn’t that the agreement you and Oberon made, to pay back the debt with the annual salt harvest?”

Henry continues onward without response. Oberon takes my hand and squeezes it gently, urging me to keep moving. We climb down the stairs and walk a short distance across the beach, to the base of the cliffs where a hollowed arch creates a large sheltered grotto.

Most people outside of Verse worship the Canticle god, a single, omnipresent deity who rules over the space between the worlds. In Astera, the city where Marchmain Academy is, there are chapels in every quarter. Their bells rang at dawn and dusk, a familiar part of my days when I lived there. Inside those chapels, the hallowed silence reminded me of an art gallery. How everyone moved with quiet reverence, the stillness unbroken except for a low murmur of voices.

The gods of Verse are as numerous as a menagerie, different for each region. On this isolated stretch of coastline, we worship Therion, who is sometimes depicted as a swan—the reason our Arriscane ancestors chose that creature for their sigil. Therion has affinity with the untamed sea, and the salt mine, and the wild woods; and I can’t imagine him anywhere near a Canticle chapel, all neat rows of benches and white-painted walls.

Our altar is on a ledge at the rear of the cave, laid with a velvet cloth and decorated by iron candlesticks, an array of seagrass, driftwood, and shells. As we enter the space, the captured sound of the ocean is like an indrawn breath.

Henry takes a listless drag from his cigarette. “The mine has failed, Lark.”

I reel to a sudden stop, but he continues inside the grotto. I watch his retreating back, struck silent with confusion. He sets his candle

into one of the iron holders, then takes a small flask of chthonic liquor, a spirit made from steeped herbs, from beside a scalloped seashell.

The mine, filled with veins of black salt, has been part of our family for so long it may as well have been forever. Each season, the salt is hewn from the ground and shipped to faraway cities—Asteria, mostly, but also Gruoch, in the north, and Trieste, across the sea—where it is turned into energy in power plants. Everything from gramophones to lamps to the train that brought me home is powered by salt.

The last time I went into the mine was the night before I left for my first term at Marchmain. There was no sign that anything was wrong. And not once in any of the letters my brothers sent in the past four years have they mentioned this. They wrote together, in separate shades of ink. Stories of their days, told innocuously in red and blue. A new book Henry had read. A song Oberon learned for the piano. Nothing about the failed mine, nothing about the debt.

“How long have you known?” I ask, hating the way my voice is wavering. There’s a hot ache behind my lashes, and I know I’m about to cry.

Henry opens the flask and drinks a mouthful of the sea-dark liquor. “At first, we thought it was just a bad harvest, the same as when Mom and Dad went north. But each year, there was less and less salt. We managed to keep up with the repayments at first, though we barely had enough to pay the harvest crews.”

He holds out the flask to Oberon, who moves forward to take it from his hand. Oberon drinks, then wipes his mouth on his wrist, leaving an inky smear. “Last year we didn’t even need a crew. The mine is empty. There’s nothing left.”

His lips are stained dark as he speaks. He offers the flask to me. I approach my brothers at the altar slowly, betrayal sinking through me, as heavy as a leaden weight. “Why didn’t you tell me? I would have come back right away if I’d known.”

Though we’re siblings, our dynamic has never been wholly even,

since Henry and Oberon are the ones who raised me. But I'd never expected they would keep something so important—so dire—a secret.

Oberon presses the flask into my hands. "Leaving behind your education wouldn't have solved anything."

I raise the flask to my mouth and drink. The chthonic liquor tastes of herbs, of altars. The burn of it across my tongue always felt, until this moment, like solace, like home. Now it only sends a spike of headache to my temples.

"You might have used my tuition money for the debt."

I'd been a scholarship student at Marchmain, but even so, my brothers had needed to pay a large deposit to secure my place. I remember the check, signed in Henry's looping hand, how he'd put it in an envelope that he pinned inside my coat pocket so I wouldn't lose it.

Henry shakes his head. "That money is for your schooling, Lark. But even if we had it back, it wouldn't be enough."

"What do you mean?"

"Alastair has claimed the debt—immediately, with interest."

I stare at him helplessly. Maybe, if I wait for long enough, his words will reorder themselves into a different meaning. But no matter how hard I try, I can't escape the raw truth: It wasn't enough for Alastair to hurt *me*; now he's come after my whole family.

It's calculating and cruel, and so typically *Alastair*, to step eagerly into the place left by his father. There's a painful, personal edge to it—he was so vicious in the past when he destroyed our friendship. Now, he's claiming the debt with the same ruthlessness. "Anything," I whisper, the words catching between my teeth. "Anything but this, anyone but him."

My hands have started to tremble. Oberon takes the flask from me, closes it, and places it back on the altar. "It's all right, Lark," he soothes. "We're going to take care of it."

"How, if the mine is empty?"

He hesitates, then glances toward Henry, as though to steel himself.

“We’re going to sell the estate. Even with the mine not operational, between the house and the land there will be enough to settle what we owe.”

“No,” I say, choked. “You can’t.”

“It’s already been decided. There will be enough left over to rent a small apartment near the city. We’ll be close by when you’re in college. You know that we’ve always promised to take care of you. And we will. You don’t need to worry.”

I thought I was immune to shock, numb to it, after everything that happened at Marchmain. But a stark, sudden hurt reverberates through me like a slap; my ears ring, my breath stutters. I clutch at my bandaged arm, fingers pressed down hard. “So I’m supposed to let the Felimaths take everything from you, from us, because you don’t want me to *worry*?”

“It’s decided,” Henry reiterates, fixing me with a steel-hard look. “What we want, Lark, is for you to be in school. Your application for the curatorship was to be decided this month, not to mention your graduate exams. So, tell me: Why aren’t you at Marchmain?”

I turn away from Henry’s searching gaze, focus instead on the altar. The candle flame shifts and dances like a fluttering moth. The light blurs as my eyes fill with tears. “I was expelled.”

Swallowing back a rising sob, I stumble forward to the altar. I lay my hand over a shell, rasping my thumb across its fluted edge. Oberon touches my shoulder gently. “Why?”

I think of loveless eyes and shattered glass. The way my body felt hollow and bird-boned when I realized what I’d done. Shame turns me hot, makes my voice small. “I broke the rules.”

“Which rules?”

Tears spill over my cheeks, and I shake my head. Closing my hand tighter around the shell, I begin to recite the prayer we have always spoken at homecoming. “Therion, lord of sea and woods and salt, I have returned to your lands and ask that you hold me safe.”

I press my lips together, tasting the inky remnants of chthonic liquor. Now I've begun, I should lay it all bare, confess my transgressions to my brothers and our god. But the words catch in my throat. I cannot speak.

All I can do is stand at the altar with my head bowed and candlelight gilding my tear-wet lashes. When the final harvest was taken from our dying mine, I was miles and miles away, working fervently on my essay for the curatorship and imagining my future surrounded by Caedmon's greatest works.

And while I dreamed of that future, while I ruined my chances at getting it, my brothers gave up almost everything. Now Alastair Felimath is going to take what is left.

Suddenly, the space inside the grotto feels airless, heavy with sooty candle smoke and liquor fumes. Pushing away from the altar, I hurry out of the cave and onto the beach. My head drops back as I drag in a desperate breath, scrubbing the tears from my eyes with the sleeve of my coat.

The tide has crept higher. A wave breaks near my feet. Heavy clouds blanket the sky, and far offshore, a flicker of lightning blooms. The air crackles with the promise of a storm.

When Henry and Oberon return from the caves, we walk the path back to the house, colored by the muted hues of evening. The white-washed walls of our cottage are the same softened lilac as the wisteria flowers.

"I don't want you to sell the house," I murmur, as we stand together outside the kitchen door.

Henry shifts restlessly, his gaze drifting back toward the grotto, now laid in the shadows that have gathered at the base of the cliffs. He takes a final drag from his cigarette before stubbing it out in the ashtray he keeps beside the back door. "It's decided, Lark."

He puts his arm around me, his touch gentle. Oberon reaches for my hand. His fingers graze my wrist and he feels the bandage. Frowning, he pushes back my sleeve. "You're hurt. What happened?"

I open my mouth but the words don't come. Yet when I close my eyes I can see it all, lucid as a dream. The Marchmain greenhouse, the glass walls shining in the moonlight. Humid air, the crunch of gravel. And Damson Sinclair, the girl who was—until our final year at school—my closest friend.

She stands before me, and I am alight with fury. I see her cruel grin, hear her careless laugh. My hands as I shoved her, hard, against the greenhouse wall. The shatter of glass, shards like stars, the moon newly bright through the empty frame. Damson, sobbing. The shallow cut on her cheek, my arm dripping blood.

I pull away from my brother and tug my sleeve back down. The row of stitches on my forearm is throbbing beneath the bandage, and I curl my hand over the ache. "I fell against a window."

Before he can respond, I go back into the house. I pick up my satchel from where I dropped it, then take another candle from the sill.

"Lark," Henry calls to me from the hall, his voice soft.

I slip the satchel strap over my shoulder, cradle my bandaged arm against my chest. "All of them," I tell my brothers. "You asked what rules I broke, to be expelled? I broke them all."



On the landing, everything is dark and empty. I hesitate at the top of the stairs, listening for the sound of footsteps. My brothers don't follow me. So much has changed, but they still know when I need to be left alone.

My bedroom is at the center of the hall. It's been four years since I was last in here, and though I expect to find it as empty as the rest of the house, everything is still the same. My brothers have left my room untouched, a time capsule of my fourteen-year-old self. The pale dresses I used to wear spilling from their hanging rack, the art magazines I bought at the library bookstall, my white-painted dresser cluttered with old perfume bottles.

I drop my satchel on the floor, near the end of my bed. The buckled flap comes open, spilling a sheaf of papers and books. The topmost one—a hardcover collection of Caedmon's early sketches—falls open, revealing a penciled inscription on the endpaper.

Happy thirteenth birthday, Lacrimosa. Love, Alastair

I snatch up the book and slam it shut, and fling myself onto my bed.

Eline, the knitted bunny that was my favorite toy as a child, is tucked under the pillow. I hold her against my cheek, the way I did when I was small, my thumb worrying against the worn fabric of her ears. Then, burying my face against the mattress, I let out a muffled scream.

Outside, the storm that gathered over the sea has reached the shore. As the heavy droplets beat against my window, I'm grateful for the sound of it, a thing I can hide beneath.