

The Locus

The Address, the Deed, and the One Who
Answers

Alessio Montaruli

INSTITUTE FOR ETHICAL ONTOLOGY

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ALESSIO MONTARULI

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A Maria Grazia, Gaia e Greta



The entrance to the British Cemetery, Larnaca, where the last walk ends. Oleander in flower, and beyond it the stones that carry names.

Photograph by the author.

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PART ONE. THE DOOR

Introduction: The Question That Lands

Two earlier books of walks come before this one, and what they found can be said in a few lines here, because this book spends nothing it does not earn again, and a reader who begins at this door will lack nothing.

The first book found that beneath every shared world, beneath language, custom, creed, and institution, there lies something thinner and harder than any of them: the bare fact that persons can address one another and be held to answer for what they say and do. It called that the floor, and it drew from the floor one law, which both later books inherit the way one inherits a tool worn to the shape of an older hand: we are made through and through by commons we did not choose, and nothing we are made by ever takes our place when the answering comes due.

The second book opened the door the first had left shut, and asked what stands beneath the floor, and its title gave the finding honestly: no ground. Beneath the floor there is nothing that holds it up, and — the harder half of the finding — nothing is missing. That book was at pains, from its first fence to its last iris, to show that this is not a despair wearing a doctrine's clothes. The world arrives complete, unsent, and good; what people wanted from a ground, that something holds, that bonds bind, that accounts do not dissolve, is all delivered, only not from below; and the two words on that book's cover were a finding and not a mood.

This book opens the door those two left shut between them, and it is the oldest door in the corridor. Granted the floor: persons addressable and answerable. Granted the finding: nothing beneath them holding them up. Then what, exactly, is a someone? What is this thing that can be addressed and cannot be replaced, that answers and cannot hand the answering on, when there is no soul-substance under it, no ground behind it, no maker over it to countersign its word? Every age has had a candidate ready, and the candidates have not aged well, and this book proposes to go and look instead. Its question can be carried in a coat pocket, in the form the walks will actually meet it: when an answer is demanded of you, and nothing behind you can give it, and no one beside you can take it over, who answers?

The method is the method of the earlier books, posted afresh because a door deserves its notices. This is a book of figures, not of proofs. Everything it claims, it attempts to show, on materials an ordinary town affords: a table, a letter, a stone, a tablet, a minute with two signatures on it. No thinker is named in the body; the debts, which are heavy, are paid by name in the pages after the walks end, and the silence before that is discipline and not theft. Each walk closes with a short passage in italics where the day's result is named once, after the seeing and never before it. There is no scene here with one person in it, because the matter of the book does not show itself to one person; and the reader is the book's last walker and its only tribunal: go where a figure points, look with patience, and if you see nothing, the book dies for you entirely and owes you no apology and is owed none. That wager was posted at the last door and it has not lapsed.

Two notices are new, and they are owed at this door in particular.

The first concerns the one who is missing. The reader of the earlier walks knew a man who conducted them, and that man died in his sleep in February, in the town, having walked the front and greeted everyone and turned at the fort, and this book begins after his grave. He does not come back in these pages. He is not brought back as a voice, a vision, a dream, or a device; where his words appear, a living person speaks them and says whose they were; and this refusal is not a mourner's scruple but the book's own subject, practised on the book itself, for reasons the walks will earn the slow way. His friend of forty years walks here instead, older now, a different instrument and honest about it; and beside him walks a young man of the town whom the earlier book knew only as the boy, and this book will mostly know him that way too; the town knows his name, and the reader will hear it when the town calls it.

The second notice concerns a machine. Later in these walks there enters a thing that speaks, fluently, in the town's own words, from any counter it is set on. It is met the way everything is met here: on the way, without authority, and judged by what can be seen. The rest is a finding, not a notice, and findings are not asserted at doors.

The practical matters are the old ones. The island is real and named; the town is the town; the harbour, the fort, the garden by the ruins may all be visited, and I hope they will be. The persons are invented, or composed until no one living stands behind them. Read the walks in order, since the later ones spend what the earlier ones earn, and read them at walking pace, which is the speed at which they were written and the only speed at which they consent to be read.

The gate, this time, is not a fence. It is a block of marble in a mason's yard in Limassol, uncut, paid for, and waiting for words, and it has been waiting since spring.

Fridrik came back to the town in the first week of October, on the same boat line and a worse boat, and the boy met him at the gangway and took the bag out of his hand by force of precedent, and the flat above the lane was aired and the shutters were back on their summer hooks, and for three days it was as if the town were simply resuming him, the way it resumes weather. He was fed on the town's schedule. He was informed about figs. On the Friday he made the round with the soap and the shears, and found the technique had survived the summer in other hands.

On the fourth evening the boy came up to the flat after closing with a bottle of the good wine and did not open it, which was a symptom, and sat turning the corkscrew over in his fingers, and said, at last:

"The mason has telephoned twice."

Fridrik waited.

“The stone, kyrie. His stone. It should be set before February, before the year’s memorial, that’s the custom of it, and the marble has been in the yard in Limassol since spring, paid for, his own arrangement, he’d paid for everything, of course he had, the plot, the stone, the mason, all of it settled years ago like a man settling a bar bill before the singing starts. Everything except the words. There’s no instruction. The mason has a folder of what people put, he offered to send it to me, crosses and doves and beloved this and unforgetting that, and he says, both times he says it, in exactly the same voice: you were his. You’ll know what he wanted.”

He set the corkscrew down.

“And it isn’t only the mason. It’s been all summer, kyrie, since you left. The museum wants to print the corrected guide, his corrections, half a page is still in pencil, and the attendant asks me whether he would have wanted his name on it. Maroulla asks me whether he would have wanted the balcony pots kept or given away. In August the priest asked me, gently, you know how he asks, what he would have wanted read at the year’s memorial. Every one of them asks me what he would have wanted. And kyrie, I have to tell someone this before it makes me strange: I don’t know what he would have wanted. Nobody knows what he would have wanted. He is not available for wanting. And when I say something anyway, because they stand there and wait and someone has to say something, they write it down. They write it down as if it had come from him. As if I were a door he still lived behind, and they could knock, and I would go and fetch him.” He looked up. “They keep asking the person who isn’t here, and they ask him through me, and I am tired of being the hole they shout into.”

Fridrik got up and found the glasses and opened the wine himself, which took a while, and was meant to.

“Say the rest of it,” he said, sitting down again. “There’s a rest of it. You’ve rehearsed something.”

"I have," the boy admitted. "It's this. You knew him forty years. I knew him five. You have his sentences in you the way I have my father's. So: tell me what to put on the stone. You must know, or as near as anyone alive. Tell me the words, I'll telephone the mason in the morning, the stone is cut by Christmas, and everyone is spared, me first."

"No," said Fridrik.

The boy stared at him.

"Sit with me a moment before you appeal it; you've seen where appeals go." Fridrik turned his glass without drinking. "Now I'll give you the reasons, and count them, because you're owed them. One. I don't know what he would have wanted on the stone. That is not modesty, it is a report. He and I talked forty years about everything a man can carry up a beach, and never once about his epitaph, and I have come to believe, knowing how that man left a desk, that the omission was in his hand. He settled everything that could be settled ahead: the plot, the marble, the bill. The words he left unassigned. He was the tidiest man I ever knew, and this is the one drawer he left open, facing the chair, and I no longer think it was an oversight. Two. Suppose I gave you a sentence anyway. I could; I have several; some of them are even good. What happens then? You telephone the mason and tell him the words. He cuts them. And forever after, when anyone asks who chose the words on that stone, the true answer is: the old friend from the north, the boy only carried them. You'd have done to me exactly what the town has been doing to you. You'd have found a door with someone still behind it and knocked, and fetched, and passed it on, and stood aside. And I would have let you, which would be worse, because I know better; I've spent two books learning better. Three, and this is the one to keep: the mason didn't telephone me."

"He telephoned me because I have the flat."

“He telephoned you,” Fridrik said, “and twice, and whatever his reasons, the call is now yours, the way a letter is yours once it’s through the slot, whatever name the sender thought he was writing to. So get the question right, at least, because you’ve been carrying the wrong one all summer, and the wrong one is what’s making you tired. What he would have wanted: dead end, and I mean the words exactly. There is no one at that address any more, and every answer anyone fetches from it is manufactured on this side of the door and dressed in his handwriting. The mason’s question, under the one he thinks he’s asking, is a different one. What goes on the stone. Not him; he can’t be asked. Not me; I wasn’t called. What will you put on his stone. That one, at least, has somewhere to land.”

“It’s his stone,” the boy said, with some heat. “His grave, his name, his forty years in this town. Who am I to”

“It is his grave,” Fridrik said, “and it will be your deed. Both at once, all the way down, and neither softens the other, and holding both without letting either eat the other is, I suspect, most of what’s in front of you. The town asks you what he would have wanted because the town is grieving, and a grieving town knocks on whatever is nearest the absence, and you are nearest. Be gentle with them, and stop answering for him. Tomorrow, cleanly, every time: I don’t know what he wanted; here is what I will do. Watch what happens to the room when you say it. And to you.”

The boy was quiet for a long time. Somewhere down the lane the last chairs of somebody’s evening were being stacked.

“If I choose the words,” he said slowly, “then when the priest reads the stone in February, and the town reads it for the next hundred years, what they’re reading is, what. Mine? His? I put my sentence on his grave like a man signing another man’s letter?”

“Or like a son naming his father’s boat,” Fridrik said. “You see the question is real. I don’t intend to shortcut it tonight; it may be the whole winter’s question; it may be a bigger question than either of us suspects, sitting here with the good wine finally open. What did he leave you, exactly, when he left you everything and no instructions? What crosses, from a dead man to a living one, and what doesn’t cross, and what is the one in the middle allowed to do with what arrives? I don’t know yet. I know how to find out, or I know how he would have found out, which is nearly the same and importantly not quite: on foot. You have until the stone must be cut. Winters here are long and the front is still where it was.” He raised his glass an inch off the table. “Bring the mason’s folder on Sunday. Not to choose from. To see what everyone else does with the same silence.”

“And if February comes,” the boy said, “and I still have nothing?”

“Then a stone is set with his name and his dates and no sentence, which is itself a sentence, and you will answer for that one instead. There’s no way out of the door you’re standing in; there are only better and worse ways through it. That, in fact,” and here the old man smiled for the first time that evening, “may be the only thing I’m sure this book of walks is about, and we haven’t taken the first one yet.”

They drank the wine. On the way out, at the door, the boy stopped with his hand on the frame, where thirteen faint crosses climbed the lintel like tree rings, and looked at them a moment, and said, “Sunday, then,” and went down into the lane, and Fridrik stood at the balcony and watched him go along under the lamps, a young man walking home with a question that was finally, whatever else could be said of it, addressed to him.



PART TWO. THE WINTER



MOVEMENT I. THE COMMON THAT IS NOT A THING



Walk 1. The Lamp

Fridrik noticed the light on his second night back, the way a returning man notices what a resident cannot: from the balcony of the flat, at two in the morning, awake with the travel still in his bones, he could see, down past the roofs and the palms, a single yellow lamp burning over the sea-steps at the harbour's east corner, where the stone stairs come up out of the water from the small moorings. Nothing moved anywhere near it. The harbour was black, the front was empty, the town was asleep to the last cat, and the lamp burned on over the wet steps for nobody at all, and there was something in the sight, he could not have said what, that kept him at the balcony longer than the cold strictly permitted.

He asked the boy about it the next day, over the lunch service, in the gaps.

“Whose light is that, over the sea-steps?”

“What light?” said the boy, and then, when it had been described to him: “Oh. The light.” He thought about it with a tray on his arm. “It’s just the light, kyrie. It’s always on.”

“Whose is it?”

“The house’s. The house at the steps keeps it.” He went away with the tray and came back. “For the boats. If a boat comes in late, the men come up those steps in the dark, they’re slick as a fish’s back, my grandfather broke a wrist on them, everyone says so, though now I say it out loud I notice everyone says it about their own grandfather. So the light. It’s always been on.”

“Who put it there?”

The boy opened his mouth, and stood there with it open a moment, and a man at the corner table asked for bread.

“I’ll ask,” he said, going.

The asking took him three days, on and off, and he reported the way he reported, in instalments. Pavlos said the light had been burning when he was a boy, and that his father had never mentioned a time before it, and that if Fridrik wanted an earlier witness he should ask the fort. The widow Eleni, keeper of the accounts that mattered, said no one had ever been paid for it, or thanked for it beyond the ordinary, and that when the bulb went it was replaced by whoever lived at the steps, and that this was not a debt in any book she kept, and she kept them all. The municipality, consulted through a cousin of a cousin who worked there, had no record: the lamp was not on the street plan, took its current from the house, and belonged to no schedule of public lighting. The deed of the house, which the boy actually went and asked about, at the coffee hour, of the family who were selling, said nothing; there was no clause, no easement, no covenant; the lawyer, an interested man, looked twice. “So it’s nowhere,” the boy said, laying this out at the taverna’s back table like a merchant unrolling cloth. “It’s not the town’s, it’s not the law’s, it’s not in the deed, it’s not a job, it’s not a debt, and it has been burning since before the oldest man’s father. I have looked for this thing for three days, kyrie, and there is no thing. There’s a lamp and a habit.”

“And yet you knew instantly whose it was,” Fridrik said. “The house’s. You said it before you’d thought.”

“Everyone knows that.”

“Everyone knows a thing that is nowhere,” said Fridrik, mildly, and let it lie.

The sale went through in the last week of October. The buyers were Kostas, a son of the town who had spent thirty years in London and come back with a pension, silver hair, and a habit of apologising in two languages, and his wife, an Englishwoman who was learning the town by gestures and by standing in her doorway with a cup, which is a recognised method. They took possession on a Friday. Nobody mentioned the light to them, because it did not occur to anybody that the light was mentionable; it was in the category of the sea, and one does not brief a newcomer on the sea.

On the Monday night the lamp did not come on.

Nothing happened, and the nothing was the most instructive thing Fridrik saw that month. There was no meeting. There was no complaint lodged, because there was nowhere a complaint could be lodged; the boy, sent to check, confirmed cheerfully that you could not report the failure of a light that officially did not exist. Stelios, whose boat came in past midnight on the Wednesday, went up the wet steps by the light of his phone, swearing gently, and mentioned it at the kiosk in the morning, and the mention was the whole of the proceedings: not the light is broken, not someone has failed, but simply, the steps are dark. And at the kiosk, and at the fig stall, and along the front, Fridrik watched the same small movement repeat itself for a week, and made the boy watch it too: at the words the steps are dark, every head made the same slight turn, not toward the harbour, but toward the house. Nobody went. Nobody said anyone should go. Nobody could have named a rule that had been broken or a right that had been injured. And everybody's face turned, by a few degrees, toward the one door in town where a word about the dark steps could be said, if anyone were ever to say one.

“Look at that,” Fridrik murmured, the third time they saw it happen. “No law, no debt, no office, no roster. And the whole town knows the address.”

It was Eleni who went, in the end, on the second Saturday, and she went in her own key entirely. She took the newcomers a plate of loukoumia, because a new house is a new house, and she sat with the Englishwoman for an hour with eleven words of shared vocabulary between them, and somewhere in the hour, through Kostas, she mentioned the light. The boy, who heard it from Kostas himself two days later at the taverna, made him repeat the wording twice, because Fridrik had trained him by then to care about wording.

“She said,” Kostas reported, wondering at it a little, “the house keeps the light for the steps. Boats come in late in the lampuki season. Nobody will ever ask you.” He turned his glass around. “That was all. Nobody will ever ask you. In England someone would have put it in the contract, or there’d be a residents’ association with a newsletter and a small war. She brought sweets and told us what the house does, the way you’d tell someone the shutters bang in a south wind. And then she talked about her granddaughter.”

The lamp was burning again that night. Nobody thanked them, exactly; Stelios, coming up the steps two nights later into the yellow light, looked up at the house’s dark windows and raised a hand, to nobody visible, and that was the town’s entire ceremony of ratification. Within a month it was as if the dark week had never been, except that it had, and the boy had a notebook.

They took the walk on the front on the first cold Sunday, and the boy brought the notebook.

“I want to say what I’ve got,” he said, “and I want you to tell me why it feels like more than it is. One: the thing is nowhere. Not law, deed, office, memory of a founding, nothing. Two: nothing was ever done by it. In the dark week it didn’t fail, *kyrie*, that’s what I keep snagging on; there was no it to fail; a bulb was off and persons adjusted. And when the light came back, the thing didn’t come back; Kostas went up a ladder. Everything that has ever actually happened at those steps was done by a hand. The lamp lit by a hand, mended by a hand, mentioned by Eleni, kept by Kostas, saluted by Stelios. Hands all the way through. And,” and here he slowed, because this was the new entry, “the hands were not moving in an empty world. That’s what the dark week showed, and I nearly missed it for looking at the lamp. Nobody did anything for six days, and the whole time, everyone already knew which door a word could go to. The not-doing had a direction. It was the best-organised nothing I ever watched. Three: and yet. It reached them, *kyrie*. Kostas and his wife. They bought a house, and before they had agreed to anything, before they even knew, there was already a thing they could be spoken to about. Not commanded. Not billed. Spoken to. Eleni’s sentence was waiting for them in the town before their boat docked, and the whole dark week you could watch it waiting, every face turning toward their door and nobody knocking. No — wait.” He stopped himself with a lifted hand. “Not reached. Nothing travelled; there was nothing to travel. They arrived, and found themselves already the people to whom it could be said. That’s what I can’t file. A nowhere thing, no act to its name, and they walked into its shape like walking into a room.”

“Say the shape of what Eleni gave them,” Fridrik said. “Not the words. The shape.”

The boy consulted the notebook, where the words were. “Not an order. Orders need an office and she has none. Not a request, quite; she didn’t ask them to do anything; nobody will ever ask you, she said, and she meant it, and it’s true, and it’s the truest part. She told them what the house does. She let them know.” He looked up. “That’s it, isn’t it. That’s the whole mode of the thing. It doesn’t bind them like a debt, it doesn’t assign them anything, nobody will ever ask you, and she meant it. What it does is quieter, and it isn’t nothing: it makes them the people who can be spoken to. Anyone in that house could be spoken to about the steps. That’s the entire content. A could-be-spoken-to, sitting on the house like the light sits on the steps. And when I searched for three days, I was searching for the wrong kind of thing. I was looking for an is, a rule, a debt, a thing you could produce in an office. There’s no is. There’s a could, and the could is real, I watched the whole town carry it for a week, and it is exactly as strong as it is invisible, and nobody made it, and no deed was ever its deed, and it was there before the newcomers knew, and it will be there for whoever buys the house next.”

“You proposed a rota once this month,” Fridrik said. “To me, on the Tuesday of the dark week. Write it down, you said, a list, so this never happens again.”

“I did.” The boy had the grace to look at his shoes. “And I take your point before you make it.”

“I have no point. I have a question. What would the list have made?”

The boy walked a few metres. “A duty. A written thing, with names, and then whoever’s week it was would keep the light because it was their week, and if the light failed you’d consult the paper and find the name, and it would work, kyrie, probably better; lists work; the port office runs on them and the flour arrives on Thursdays. But it would be a different animal. The keeping would come down from the paper to the person, week by week, like an assignment. What’s there now doesn’t come down from anywhere. It just stands about the house, level, like damp. Four owners it’s outlived. No loose list survives four owners without someone keeping the drawer. This survived because there was nothing to survive; only, each time, someone at the steps who could be spoken to, and each time, so far, a hand.” He stopped. “I’m not saying the list would be wrong. If the town wrote one I’d sign it. I’m saying we’d have traded a could for a schedule, and they’re both real, and they’re not the same kind of thing, and until this week I didn’t know there were two kinds.”

There was one more entry in the notebook, and he offered it at the turn by the fort, in the tone of a man declaring something at customs.

“The mason,” he said. “It’s been sitting next to all this in my head and I want to put it down between us. The town treats me the way it treats that house. The flat came to me, and with the flat, in everyone’s eyes, came the answer, the way the light comes with the steps. You were his, you’ll know. It’s the same shape, kyrie. Position, and a thing waiting on the position.”

“Is it the same?”

The boy took a long time, the sea doing its evening work below them.

“The light, anyone in the house can keep,” he said at last. “Kostas keeps it as well as forty years of the old family did; the steps don’t care whose hand is on the switch; the could sits on the house and whoever’s in the house will do. The answer about the stone...” He shook his head slowly. “It came to my door. But I don’t think it’s the kind of thing that comes with a door. I think, and I can’t say why yet, that it’s not sitting on the flat. I think it’s sitting on me.”

“Hold that,” said Fridrik, “exactly there, and don’t force it; it’s the winter’s work, not tonight’s. Write the two halves down before you sleep: some things wait on the house, for whoever; and something has arrived that waits, you suspect, not on the house. The walks will tell us which is which, or that we’re wrong.” He turned them for home with a hand on the boy’s shoulder. “Sunday, the folder. And on the way back you can tell me what loukoumia are, because Eleni left a plate at the flat and I have been eating them under an assumed competence for a week.”

Below them, as they went up the front, the lamp came on over the sea-steps at its hour, lit by a hand they could not see, for boats that might not come, and burned there steadily over the empty water, unowed, exactly as it had for longer than anyone’s grandfather, and neither of them remarked on it.

After the seeing, the result named once. The keeping of the lamp could be found nowhere as a separate thing and nowhere as an act of its own: no law, deed, office, or founding memory contained it, and every deed at the steps belonged to a hand. Yet when the steps went dark, nothing was done for six days and the not-doing had a direction: every face knew the house at which a word about the steps could arrive. The keeping itself could not be summoned; only occupants could be approached. What stood there was not an order or a debt but a could: whoever occupies the house can be spoken to about the steps; and it stood about the newcomers before they knew or agreed, so that Eleni's sentence, which commanded nothing and asked nothing, only let them know. A rota would have made of it an assigned duty, workable and real and a different kind of thing. The lamp waits on the house, for whoever. One thing has arrived this autumn that seems not to wait on a house; whether the boy is right that it sits not on the flat but on him is the winter's question, and it is left tonight where he set it down.

Walk 2. The Folder

The folder came up to the flat on Sunday under the boy's arm like something confiscated, and he put it on the table between the coffee cups and stood back from it, and said, "There it is," in the voice of a man introducing a defendant.

It was a manila folder, soft at the corners from years of grieving hands, and inside were perhaps sixty laminated pages: photographs of stones, close-ups of lettering, sample layouts, a price list on green paper, and page after page of the phrases. The boy dealt them out like evidence. Crosses in four weights. Doves in two attitudes, rising and settled. Our beloved husband and father. We do not forget you. Eternal the memory. Safe journey to Paradise. A ship for the sailors, an olive branch for the farmers, a lyre for a music teacher who must exist somewhere in the hinterland of Limassol. Sleep, and a verse about sleep. And at the back, the oval photograph plaques, porcelain, weatherproof, the dead shown in their good health. The boy sat down opposite the folder and looked at it with his arms folded.

“Sixty pages,” he said, “and not one sentence in it was ever said by one person to one person. That’s what I keep choking on, kyrie. He was the most particular man I ever knew. He corrected my pronunciation during the resurrection. And this is the vocabulary I’m offered for his stone: the same dove, the same six phrases, the same we-do-not-forget-you that’s on four hundred stones in this town already, spelled the same, cut the same, half of them by this same mason. It’s not language, it’s wallpaper. You could paper a room with it and nobody would ever know who’d died.”

Fridrik turned the pages for a while without saying anything. At the fourth page of phrases he stopped, and tapped one, and said, in the tone of a man greeting someone unexpected in a foreign port:

“We have this one in the north. Word for word. My mother’s stone says this, in a language you can’t read, in a churchyard under birches two thousand kilometres from here, and if I translated it for you, you would find it on this page, third from the bottom, and in that garden by the ruins, I would wager, thirty times.” He turned the folder around to face the boy. “You’re angry at the wrong thing, I think, but I’ve been wrong on Tuesdays before. Put your coat on. If we’re going to try this folder, let’s try it where it’s been in service for a hundred years, not in a warm room where everything looks like wallpaper.”

The garden by the ruins keeps its gate unlocked, and on a Sunday afternoon in November they had it nearly to themselves: the cypresses doing their slow dark work, the gravel, the rows. Fridrik set the pace, which was the reading pace, slower even than the walking one, and they went along the older rows first, where the lettering has gone soft in the marble like handwriting under water.

It took the boy about four rows to see it, and when he saw it he stopped being angry, because he was too busy counting.

“Eighteen fifty-nine,” he said, at a leaning stone with a carved rope border. “We do not forget you. Kyrie. Word for word. It’s the same phrase. A hundred and sixty years before the mason’s folder, and it’s the same phrase.” Three stones on: “Eternal the memory, nineteen eleven.” A child’s stone, small as a doorstep, from the influenza year: the sleep verse, the folder’s own sleep verse, cut by a hand long dead for a grief long dead, the exact words waiting on page nine of the laminated pages in the flat. He went along the row reading like a man checking accounts. “It’s all here. The whole folder is here. It was always here. The folder isn’t a catalogue someone invented to sell marble, it’s, ” he searched, “it’s a transcript. Somebody walked a garden like this one with a notebook and wrote down what the town has been saying to its dead since before the palms, and laminated it.”

“And the commonest one,” Fridrik said. “The one you find on every third stone. Say it out loud.”

“Eternal the memory.”

“Where else do you hear it?”

The boy stood quite still among the rows. “The priest sings it,” he said slowly. “At the graveside. At the forty days. It’s the last thing sung; it’s the hinge of the whole service; everyone in the church sings it back. It’s not the mason’s phrase at all. It’s the rite’s. The most canned line in that folder and the holiest words the town possesses are the same words.” He looked down the row, where the phrase repeated away into the older light like an echo taking its time. “I called it wallpaper this morning.”

They walked on, and somewhere in the newer rows the boy began to talk about February, without preamble, the way the garden makes people talk.

“At the funeral,” he said, “I couldn’t speak. I mean it exactly: I had no sentences. People came past me at the door of the church for an hour, the whole town, one at a time, and every single one of them said the same thing to me. Life to you. Four hundred times, kyrie, the identical two words, from Stavros, from the harbourmaster, from women I’ve served coffee to my whole life, from men I’d never met who’d driven from Limassol. And I remember thinking, somewhere in the middle of that hour, thank God. Thank God nobody is being original. If every one of them had had to invent a sentence, I’d have had to receive four hundred inventions, four hundred performances, each one wanting something back from me. Instead the town said one thing four hundred times, and it was like being carried across water on planks. The words were flat and identical and worn smooth, and that’s what let them bear weight.” He stopped. “And here’s the part I owe the folder an apology for. I’d said those same two words myself for years. At other people’s funerals, since I was a boy, life to you, life to you, easy as good morning, and I never once heard them. I wasn’t lying when I said them; they weren’t empty; they were,” he hunted for it, “folded. Carried folded, the way you carry a thing you’ve never had to open. In February people handed me the same words and they were open. Same words. Not one letter different.”

Fridrik let a row go by in silence.

“So the words were public before they were yours,” he said at last. “You had them before you meant them. Is there any other order it could go in? Could you have meant them first and gotten them after?”

“No,” the boy said. “There’d be nothing to mean first. The meaning showed up inside words I’d been given years before, on credit. Everything I’ve ever said, kyrie, if you push it, is from the folder. Not that folder. The big one. The one the town keeps without laminating it.”

They came, in time, to the row they had both been not mentioning, and passed along it at the same pace as the other rows, which took discipline, and the discipline was itself a kind of speech. The earth was no longer raw; a year of rain had settled it; the wooden cross stood weathered now, and the jar at its foot held fresh rosemary and two late roses, changed recently, by hands unknown, plural, as always. The marble's absence was a presence: the neighbouring stones seemed to hold a place the way men at a table leave a chair. The boy had the folder under his arm. Fridrik watched him register it there, consider it, and move it, without a word, to the hand on the far side of his body, the side away from the grave; and they walked on; and the folder was not opened in that row, and neither of them said why, and both of them filed it.

Near the gate, in the low sun, they found the woman in black at her work with the cloth and the small can of water, at a stone that was not any of her own dead's, because they are all her own dead. The boy greeted her; she gave him the nod she gives; and then, because the folder was visible under his arm and she misses nothing, she looked at it, and at him, and did something she had never done in his hearing, which was to volunteer.

She led them four stones down, to two graves side by side, a husband and a wife by the dates, twenty years between their deaths, the identical phrase on both stones, the folder's commonest, cut by the same yard in the same lettering.

"This one she chose," said the woman in black, touching the husband's stone, the earlier one. "Three weeks she took. The priest brought her others; she sent them back; she said in the end the words everyone uses were the only ones the right size." She touched the wife's stone, the later one, the same words. "This one came with the marble. The sons were abroad. They paid by post." She picked up her can and her cloth. "Same words," she said, in the tone of a woman closing a ledger, and went back to her stone, and that was the whole of her lecture, and neither of them dared add to it for the length of the gravel path.

On the front, in the last of the light, the boy talked it out, the folder on the bench between them like a third walker resting.

“I came at it backwards this morning,” he said. “I thought the enemy was the phrase. The dove, the we-do-not-forget, the wallpaper. And the garden just spent an afternoon telling me the phrases are the town: a hundred and sixty years of them, the same words in your mother’s churchyard under the birches, the same words the priest sings, the same two words that carried me across February on planks. There is nothing wrong with the words. There was never anything wrong with the words. The words are the only material there is; even if I sat up all winter and wrote him something no stone has ever said, I’d write it out of the town’s words, arranged; there’s no other bin to reach into.” He turned the folder over, not opening it. “The thing the woman showed us, that’s where it actually lives. Two stones. Same phrase, same yard, same font. On one of them a widow stands in the words; three weeks she took; she went in and shut the door behind her. The other one was paid for by post; the words are on it the way the dove is on it, they came with the marble, nobody is in them. And it was the same woman both times, kyrie: she stood three weeks in his words, and for hers, nobody went in at all. And kyrie, here is what I actually learned today, and I don’t like it, and it’s true: you cannot tell from the stones. I stood in front of both. The marble doesn’t show it. The letters are identical. If the town didn’t keep the difference, it would be kept nowhere at all.”

“The town keeps it,” Fridrik said.

“The woman in black keeps it,” said the boy. “Which is the town, doing what it does, one person at a time.” He looked out at the water. “So the question about his stone has changed shape since this morning, and I want to say the new shape out loud so I can’t unsay it. I thought my job was to beat the folder. Find words so particular that no one could mistake them for wallpaper. That’s vanity, and worse, it’s a misunderstanding: particular words can be laid by post too; you could commission an original sentence and be no more in it than the sons were in theirs. And a phrase off page four, if I go in and shut the door behind me and come out with it after three weeks, would be,” he stopped, and made himself finish, “would be chosen. Would have someone in it. What goes on the stone matters less than I thought, and something else matters more than I thought, and I don’t have a clean word for the something yet, but I saw it today, four stones down from the gate, split between two identical inscriptions.”

He stood, and picked up the folder, and did not weigh it in his hand theatrically, but held it the way one holds a tool whose use has been explained.

“I’m keeping this,” he said. “This morning I wanted to post it back to Limassol with a note. Now I’m keeping it. It’s the town’s half of the conversation. I just don’t know my half yet.”

“Sixty pages of the town’s half,” said Fridrik, getting up with the sounds he made getting up these days. “And a price list. Note the price list stays green whatever is chosen; there’s a lecture in that too, but it can keep. Walk me back past the steps; I’ve developed a want to see whether the lamp is on, which I notice arrives every evening now around this hour, and which I intend to indulge without examining.”

The lamp was on. They did not remark on it.

After the seeing, the result named once. The words were public before they were anyone's, and there is no other order: the folder's phrases stand in the garden from a century before the folder, the commonest line on the stones is the line the rite sings, and the two flat words that carried a man across February on planks were words he had said unopened for years, given to him on credit long before he meant them, so that when the meaning came it came inside them, having nowhere else to come. There is nothing to say that was not first everyone's; even the sentence no stone has ever carried would be arranged from the town's one bin. And the difference that matters is not written where the words are written: two stones, same phrase, same yard, same letters, and in one of them a widow stands, three weeks deep, and the other, her own, came with the marble, paid by post, nobody in it; the marble does not show which, and if the town did not keep the difference, one person at a time, it would be kept nowhere. The folder is the town's half of the conversation. The other half is not words.

MOVEMENT II. WHAT ARRIVES, AND WHAT IS SIGNED

Walk 3. The Jar

The jar had been on the desk since before February, and the boy had dusted around it for a year the way one dusts around a sleeping cat, and it was Fridrik, in the end, who put it in play, by picking it up one wet November evening and setting it in the middle of the table under the lamp, where it sat glowing like a small amber lantern, and saying: “We should decide about this.”

“What is it?” the boy asked, though he had read the label a hundred times without understanding it, the writing being northern.

“Cloudberry,” said Fridrik. “A fruit you have never seen, because it grows in bogs at latitudes where your figs would call the police. Orange, like a raspberry drawn from memory by someone homesick. It was sent down years ago, two jars of it, by an old antagonist of his in the north, a man he fought with every winter for decades, on paper and over brandy, with great love. One jar he ate; you’ll have seen its brother on the shelf, washed and kept, the way he kept things. This one he didn’t open.” He turned it once under the lamp. “It was waiting for a spring.”

The boy looked at the jar for a while.

“Then it should keep waiting,” he said. “It’s his. It was his, and it was waiting for his spring, and his spring isn’t coming, so it waits. We put it back on the desk and it stays sealed, and that’s its life now: the jar he never opened. You don’t eat a thing like that, kyrie. You keep it.”

“For how long?”

“Forever. What’s the alternative? We spread a dead man’s last present on toast?”

“So the plan,” said Fridrik, in the tone of a man weighing cargo, “is that a preserve, which is a fruit’s way of waiting for a table, becomes a relic, which is a thing’s way of never arriving anywhere; and it sits sealed on that desk until the sugar goes to crystal and the lid goes to rust, and then someone throws away, with appropriate feelings, what someone once picked in a bog and boiled and sealed and carried to a post office so that a friend far away could taste his country. That is a possible plan. I’ve seen whole houses run on it. I want to put one question against it before we adopt it, and the question is not about him. It’s about the man in the north. What do you suppose he sent it for?”

“To be eaten. Obviously. But he sent it to him, not to us.”

“Did he,” said Fridrik. “Then let’s test it. He’s alive, the man in the north; I write to him twice a year; I could write tonight. Dear old enemy: the second jar was never opened; the town wishes to know your instructions. Compose his answer for me. You’ve never met him, but you won’t need to have; there are only two answers a man can give to that letter, so give me both.”

The boy turned the corkscrew he was not using, a habit the table had learned to expect.

“Answer one,” he said slowly. “Any decent man’s answer. It’s not mine to say. It left my hands years ago; it was his the moment the post took it; do as you think right, and don’t ask me again, because it isn’t mine to rule on.” He paused. “And answer two is the other kind. Keep it sealed in his memory. Send it back to me. Put it in the museum. Instructions, anyway. A ruling.”

“And what would answer two tell you about the jar? Not about the man. About the jar, all those years it sat on the desk.”

The boy sat with it. Outside, the first real rain of the winter had arrived and was conducting its business on the shutters.

“That it was never fully given,” he said. “If he can rule on it now, he could rule on it all along, and then it was never off his hands, was it. It sat on the desk all those years with a string running two thousand kilometres north. Not a gift. A thing on loan against good behaviour.” He looked up. “And now I see which letter we can’t send, because it isn’t any letter. We could write to him tonight, *kyrie*, and I half think we should: tell him the jar is ours to decide about, tell him we’re minded to open it, ask him what he remembers of the sending, what a cloudberry summer smells like. He’d like that letter. It hands nothing back. What we can’t do is ask what we’re allowed. The moment we ask permission, we put his hand back on the lid. Not because he’d close it; your answer one says he wouldn’t; he’s a decent man. Because the asking treats the say-so as still his to decline, and the say-so crossed with the jar. He gave it. He can be written to about anything on earth, including the jar. He can’t be applied to.”

“My aunt,” said Fridrik, “gave my mother a dining table when I was six, and inspected it on the first Sunday of every month for thirty years. Wax, coasters, the grandchildren’s homework habits. My mother said once, quietly, drying dishes, that she had not been given a table; she had been given a tenant.” He let the rain have a moment. “A gift with the giver’s hand still on it is a tenancy. The hand coming off it is not a sad thing that happens to the giving afterwards. It’s the giving finished. The leaving is what the giving is made of.”

The rain kept on, companionably, and the boy, listening to it, went somewhere else for a moment, and came back with the envelope.

“You know about the envelope,” he said. It was not quite a question; everyone knew about the envelope; but Fridrik was a foreigner and entitled to the telling, and the boy told it. Every year, in the first days of December, an envelope arrived at the church. Cash, used notes, never the same amount but never small, and on the front, in block capitals that could have been anyone’s: FOR THE CHILDREN. Forty years, or longer; Pavlos said longer. The priest administered it; shoes had come out of it, and schoolbooks, and one famous winter a boiler; and no one knew the hand. “And here’s the part for tonight. Years ago, before my time, a new priest came, young, organised, from Nicosia, and he thought the giver should be found and thanked. Properly, publicly. He compared handwriting on the envelope with the parish registers. And the town, ” the boy caught himself, the discipline arriving mid-sentence, “people, I mean; Eleni, mainly, and the old priest’s widow, and Pavlos, went to him, separately, within the week, and said the same thing in different words. Eleni’s version is the one that got kept. She told him: if the hand wanted a name, the envelope would have one.”

“And he stopped.”

“He stopped. He’s a bishop somewhere now; Eleni says he improved. But I never understood it until tonight, kyrie, why everyone moved so fast, why it felt, the way they tell it, like stopping a man from breaking something. He was only trying to say thank you. And you can’t, can you. Not to that envelope. Finding the hand wouldn’t complete the thanks. It would put the hand back on the gift. Forty years that money has arrived with the letting-go built in, the withdrawal done in advance, sealed into the block capitals; it’s the most finished giving in the town; and one name would not have undone one pair of shoes, kyrie, the shoes happened, the boiler happened, nothing reaches back there. What it would have changed is the air around all of it, and everything after. What had arrived forty years without a claimant would begin to look like a benefaction with an account attached; the next envelope would come from someone; the thanks would grow a direction and start wanting to be delivered. Eleni wasn’t protecting a secret. She was protecting the mode of the thing, going forward, which is the only direction anything can be protected in.”

“So the thanks just goes unsaid,” said Fridrik. “Forty years of shoes, and nobody thanked.”

“No,” said the boy, surprising himself with how certain he was. “It gets said. The liturgy prays every week for those who bear fruit and do good in this church, that part is standing, it’s in the book; and at Christmas the priest, the old one and now ours, gives the unknown giver a clause of his own, everyone knows the moment, half the church looks at its shoes in case looking around would catch somebody blushing. And I said it wrong a second ago, kyrie, let me say it right: the thanks isn’t addressed to nobody. There is a hand; somewhere in this town or out of it there is an actual hand; we just don’t know whose. The address stands and only the name is missing. So the priest’s clause goes out like a letter with the street torn off. Real letter. Real recipient. Undeliverable on purpose. And it’s not nothing; I’ve stood in that church.”

Fridrik got up and stood at the balcony door, where the rain was silvering down through the lamplight over the lane.

“Say what the rain is doing,” he said.

“Raining.”

“Who rains?”

The boy laughed. “Nobody rains. It rains.”

“It,” Fridrik agreed. “The hardest-working little word in any language I own. It rains here; further north, where I come from, we say it gives: it gives snow tonight, it gives fish this season, it gives and gives and there is no giver, and nobody has ever once stood at a window and felt the grammar to be broken. The sentence wants a subject the way a coat wants a hook, and every tongue I’ve learned hangs the coat on a hook with no one on it, and children learn the form without a tremor. Grammar proves nothing, mind; a language can keep a superstition alive as easily as a sight; take it as a clue, not a verdict. But it is at least curious that no tongue ever needed to invent a giver before it could speak of what arrives. Now look what we did tonight, walking backwards down the shelf. The jar: a giver with a name, two thousand kilometres off, whose whole gift consists in his hands being off it. The envelope: a giver with no name, the hands off it in advance, by design, but a giver, mind, an actual hand somewhere with a kettle and a coat. And this,” the rain, the lane, the winter arriving unasked over the town, “no giver anywhere, no hands that were ever on it, and it comes down all the same. Not the same thing, the three of them; don’t let me flatten them; a jar is sent and rain is not, and nothing about tonight makes the sky a benefactor. But they share an edge, and the edge is the finding: arrived, and unowed. That it came, when nothing in its coming made it ours by right.”

“That’s what I can’t get over,” the boy said quietly, joining him at the door. “It’s the same feel, even where it isn’t the same thing. The jar, the envelope, the rain: a hand with a name, a hand without one, no hand at all, and the feel that runs through the three of them isn’t the giving, it’s the edge you said. The arriving-unowed. That it came, when it needn’t have. When you hold the jar you can feel it, that it might never have been sent, and the might-never isn’t a hole in the gift, kyrie, it’s the shine on it. It’s what makes it a gift and not a delivery. Nobody would say of the invoice flour, it came, imagine. Of the jar you say it. Of the envelope the whole town says it every December. Of the rain,” and the first winter rain chose that moment to thicken, generously, on cue, over the roofs, “tonight, I’d say it of the rain.”

They ate the cloudberryes that night, and it was not a solemnity, because they took some care that it should not be one: bread was toasted, the good plates stayed in the cupboard, and the lid, which had guarded its spring for years, came off with a sound like a small assent. The preserve was the colour of lamplight. The boy tasted the north for the first time in his life, tart and strange and faintly like honey that had seen things, and said it tasted of a place he’d never been, and Fridrik said that was exactly correct and ate most of it. The jar was washed and dried the same night and set on the shelf beside its brother, and the boy stood back and looked at the two of them, matched now, both empty, both kept.

“It was waiting for his spring,” he said. “That’s what stopped me, at the start.”

“It was waiting for a spring,” said Fridrik. “Springs come to whoever is at the table. The jar waits on the table, the way the lamp waits on the house.” He put the plates in the sink. “The stone, we’ve agreed, seems to be another kind of thing. But that’s for the walks. Tonight we did a small, correct piece of work: we let a gift finish arriving. Somewhere north of here a bog is vindicated.”

After the seeing, the result named once. A gift is finished by the giver's hands coming off it: whatever gives, lets go, or it has not given. The giver does not vanish with the giving; he remains a person who can be written to about anything on earth, including the gift; what crossed with the jar was the say-so, and asking his permission would treat it as never having crossed, which is why the one letter that could not be sent was the applying one, and any telling one could go tomorrow. Anonymity is the same relinquishment finished in advance: a hand exists, the address stands, only the name is withheld, and the withholding protects the giving, going forward, from becoming patronage; the thanks goes out real, for someone, deliverable to no one, and it is not nothing. Past the nameless hand stands what arrives with no hand at all, the rain, the morning, which is no gift, since nothing sent it, and shares the gift's one edge all the same: arrived, and unowed; and the might-never-have-been is not a hole in what arrives but the shine on it. The jar, eaten at last, washed, and set beside its brother, waited on the table for a recipient, not for one irreplaceable recipient; springs come to whoever is at the table; what waits on the boy is still another kind of thing, and still waiting.



Walk 4. The Two Tables

The quarrel over the berth by the fort steps was older than either of the men quarrelling, which is the usual arrangement. Their fathers had shared it for thirty years under an understanding no one had ever needed to write down, one boat in, one boat out, the odd seasons and the even, and the understanding had worked the way a hinge works, invisibly, right up until both fathers were in the garden by the ruins and their sons each discovered that what the other called a half had always, properly considered, been a whole.

By the week Fridrik heard of it, the matter had already found its route through the town. Nobody announced the route; the route was simply taken. On a Tuesday evening the two of them, Michalis and Stelios, sat down at the long table outside the kafeneion nearest the harbour with three people between them: the old master of the boatyard, who had built one of the two boats in question and repaired the other so often that he had opinions about its keel he was too polite to voice; Pavlos, who had fished out of that harbour longer than anyone living and had the face of a man who has been rained on professionally for sixty years; and the widow Eleni, who had kept the harbour's accounts for two generations, not the money, which the office kept, but the other accounts, who owed whom a haul-out, who had lent a pump in the February storm, whose grandfather had once given whose a winter's worth of bait and never mentioned it again. Nobody had appointed the three. Nobody could have said, if asked, who had invited them. They were where such matters went, the way water goes downhill, and anyone asked why would have been puzzled that it needed explaining.

Fridrik and the boy watched the second sitting from two tables away, over a backgammon board neither of them was attending to.

It was not a court. There was coffee, and at one point there were figs, because Stavros passed, assessed the situation in a single glance, and left a plate on the table without breaking stride or argument, since he was conducting the latter with someone across the street. The two claimants talked; the three listened; Eleni asked the questions that had numbers in them and Pavlos asked the ones that did not. What did your father do in the year of the long calm, when neither boat went out for a month. Who painted the rings last. When the quay was rebuilt and the berths moved a metre south, who complained, and to whom, and what came of it. The old master said almost nothing until nearly the end, and then said one sentence about which of the two boats was still a working boat and which was a working boat the way Fridrik was a working man, that is, in fond memory of itself, and the sentence changed the weather at the table, and everyone felt it change.

Then Pavlos set his cup down and gave the word. The berth to Stelios, whose boat went out; Michalis to stand first on the harbour's own list for the next berth that freed, and until then to have the use of the yard's slip each winter, the old master nodding this part into existence as it was spoken; and Stelios to owe him the haul-out labour each November, both boats, his hands, no money in it. Eleni repeated the whole of it back slowly, the way she repeated everything, so that it existed twice.

Michalis did not take it well, at first, which was to his credit as a son if not as a neighbour. He pushed his chair back and reached upward, and everyone at both tables watched him do it, because it is a thing everyone has done and everyone recognises.

"This is not how it has been done since my grandfather," he said. "The harbour has its law. Ask anyone. Ask the harbour."

Nobody laughed. Pavlos looked at him with the rained-on face and said, gently, "Then have your grandfather come and tell us," and let the sentence sit there being what it was, and Michalis, whose grandfather was thirty years in the garden, sat back down. He said, lower, "The sea will settle it, then," and the old master, who had heard the sea blamed and credited for sixty years of human arrangements, moved the figs closer to him by way of an answer. The sitting broke up the way such sittings do, without an ending, everyone standing at slightly different times, the verdict already beginning its life as something that had happened.

They walked home along the front, the old man and the boy, and the boy was silent for the length of the palms, which for him was a symptom.

"Say it," Fridrik said.

"You watched a ritual tonight," the boy said, "and you think you watched three people decide something. They didn't decide anything. The custom decided. Everything they said, kyrie, everything, I have heard my whole life. Berths follow boats, not blood: my father said that about the Ttofis brothers when I was nine. The list, the winter slip, the labour owed instead of money, all of it, there's not one word at that table that the town didn't put in their mouths before they sat down. They were the mouth. The custom did the deciding, and it borrowed three chairs to do it in."

Fridrik walked a few steps with his hands behind his back.

“That is well argued,” he said, “and I want to say first that half of it seems to me simply true. Every word was the town’s. I heard nothing invented tonight. Hold on to that half; we will want it later; you have seen something real. It is the other half I want to test, the part where the custom did the deciding. Because if the custom decided, then the custom is the one to see about it. Michalis thinks the winter slip is an insult, half a berth dressed as a favour; suppose he’s right; suppose the decision is wrong. He’ll want to take it up with whoever decided. You say that’s the custom. Very well.” He stopped at the turn by the fort, where the walk turns. “Go and find it. Not for me, for Michalis. He needs the address. Where does the custom receive visitors?”

The boy opened his mouth and closed it.

“You have until it’s found,” said Fridrik, “or until you can tell me why it can’t be, and those are different homework.”

The boy took the assignment the way he took all of them, badly at night and thoroughly by day. He gave it the better part of a morning, and reported over lunch at his own taverna, standing, because he was working, delivering the findings in instalments between tables.

“First I went to ask the town,” he said, putting down bread. “Since the custom is the town’s. I asked Stavros who decided the berth. He said Pavlos and the master and the widow, God keep her sharp, and then gave me his own verdict, which is different, and longer. I asked the woman from the thirty-year argument. She said the same three names and added that Pavlos was soft on Michalis’s mother forty years ago and it’s a wonder he could judge straight, which is the town discussing the judges, you notice, not the custom. I asked four more people. Every road goes back to the table. The town, asked who decided, names the three who decided. The town has never met the custom either. It just knows where matters go.”

He went away and came back with soup for somebody.

“Second,” he said, “the harbour book. There is one, you know. In the port office, from the fifties, the old clerk’s ledger, who had which mooring and what was paid and one page of rules in the front, beautiful handwriting, dead man’s handwriting. I read the rules. They are about oar boats and one motor launch that belonged to the doctor. There is nothing in them about Stelios’s engine or the rebuilt quay or a working boat against a kept boat. The book doesn’t know our case exists. For the book to say anything about Tuesday, somebody has to read it and say what it means now, and the somebody is, look at that, a person at a table. The book can be quoted. It can’t be asked.”

Another table, another instalment.

“Third, the sea,” he said, and had the grace to grin. “I stood and looked at it a while. It was very beautiful and had nothing to add.”

“And so,” said Fridrik.

“And so nothing,” the boy said, and the grin went. “That’s what I actually came to report, kyrie, and it’s not what you think. I couldn’t find the custom’s door, fine, you knew I couldn’t, that was the homework. But here is what I found instead, and it bothers me more. I went down to the harbour this morning expecting, I don’t know what. A limp. Something unfinished in the air. The matter was decided by three people at a table who, we’ve established, can’t hand it up to anyone; so I expected it to feel, the whole harbour, provisional. Propped. As if everyone were secretly waiting for the real decision to come down from wherever real decisions come from.” He wiped his hands on his apron. “Stelios went out at four. Michalis was mending nets on the wall in the sun with his cousin, and they were arguing about football. The rings by the fort steps have Stelios’s rope on them and nobody stops to look at the rope. I stood there like an idiot searching for the hole, kyrie, the place where the missing thing should be, the way you feel a missing tooth. There is no hole. The morning is just, entire. It was a good morning, and nothing was underneath it, and it didn’t need anything underneath it, and I don’t know what to do with that.”

Fridrik was quiet for a moment, and when he spoke it was in the tone he used for corrections that were self-corrections first.

“I’ll tell you what I expected,” he said, “since you’ve been honest. I expected the same limp. I have been listening for it since Tuesday, the sound of a town waiting for a matter to be properly settled by something above the men who settled it. I assumed the appeal Michalis is muttering about would be that sound. There is no such sound. Note it down exactly as you found it: you went looking for what was missing, and there wasn’t a missing. Whatever we end by saying about Tuesday will have to be said about a scene that is complete.”

“Then it’s worse,” the boy said, and here was the second night’s insomnia arriving on schedule. “Because if nothing stands behind the three of them, then what was Tuesday? Three people, however grey, however respected, made it up. And if they made it up, it’s, the word is arbitrary, kyrie. Naked. Why those three? Why that verdict? If the custom isn’t a something that decided through them, then the whole table was just, weight and habit and Pavlos’s face. Michalis lost his father’s berth to a face.”

“Hold that,” Fridrik said, “exactly at that pressure. Don’t resolve it. There is an appeal coming, I’m told, a real one, to the port office, papers and everything. Let’s attend it. You are looking for the something above the table. Perhaps the district keeps one.”

The appeal took six weeks to be heard, which in the town’s opinion proved the seriousness of the office and in Michalis’s proved its idleness. The hearing was in the port building past the marina, in a room with a ceiling fan and a framed photograph of a patrol vessel, and it was public in the way such things are public, that is, anyone could attend and eleven people did, of whom two were Fridrik and the boy and one was Stavros, who attended everything.

Behind the desk sat the harbourmaster, whom the town knew, a heavy careful man who had held the post eleven years, and beside him an officer down from the district, a Kyrios Andreou, younger, with a folder. It was, the boy whispered, the second table. Different chairs. A fan.

They heard Michalis out, fully, which surprised him and used up some of his anger. They heard Stelios. The harbourmaster asked Eleni, who had been summoned as a person who knew things, three questions, and asked Pavlos nothing at all but nodded to him on the way in, which the town noted and filed. Kyrios Andreou read aloud from the folder: the regulation ranked active working vessels in the allocation of berths; there followed a paragraph of numbered subclauses through which he travelled with the expression of a man on an errand.

It was when Michalis stood up and demanded to know how a man's inheritance could be taken from him by a paragraph that Kyrios Andreou said the sentence.

"It is not I who takes anything, Kyrie Michali. The regulation decides. I only apply it."

Nobody at the desk contradicted him. The harbourmaster only shifted in his chair and said, "We will tell you what we have decided, and I will tell you why, and you will hear it from me," and then gave the decision: the berth confirmed to Stelios, the regulation being what it was and the boat being what it was; the mooring rings by the fort steps, which had been Michalis's grandfather's work and were forty years corroded, to be renewed at the port's cost; and Michalis entered on the district's own list with a date, a written date, which the town list had never had. He said the last part looking at Michalis, and added, off the folder entirely, "Your father kept that berth well. It is in nobody's file, but it is known." Then both men signed the minute, one under the other, and the clerk stamped it, and it was over.

So the decision had moved. It had gone up as far as up went, and it had even changed on the way, rings, a date, a sentence about a dead man that no regulation had asked for. The boy sat looking at the two signatures on the desk until the room emptied.

What happened in the street afterwards was reported to Fridrik twice, once by the boy, who saw it, and once by Stavros, who improved it. Michalis came out of the port building and found the two officials by the kiosk, and he walked up to Kyrios Andreou and said, "You did this," not loudly, and Kyrios Andreou looked past him at the middle distance and said again that the regulation, and Michalis said, "Your name is on the paper. I saw it go on. It stuck out both sides of your regulation," and left him there. And then, and this was the part Stavros told with his hands, Michalis stopped in front of the harbourmaster, and the harbourmaster looked back at him and waited to be told whatever he was going to be told, and Michalis said, "The thing about the rings. That was decently done," and the harbourmaster said, "The list date also. Come and check it whenever you doubt it," and the two of them stood there for a moment in the manner of men who might one day drink together, and then did not drink together, but might.

"Two men behind one desk," the boy said to Fridrik on the front that evening. "The same regulation in front of both of them. One of them held it up in front of his face, and it didn't work, kyrie, that's what I keep turning over. It didn't work even a little. His name went on the minute like the other one's. Michalis walked straight through the regulation and found him behind it, first try, as if the hiding place were made of glass. And the other one never hid at all, he put his own weight on every word, this is what we decided and I will tell you why and come and doubt me at my desk, and that one, Michalis can almost forgive. Might, one day. The one he cannot forgive is the one who walked out of his own words and left them standing there empty. Isn't that strange? The words out of the two of them were nearly the same words. One man stayed in his."

"Which one weighed more," Fridrik asked, "of the two sayings?"

“The one with nothing in front of it,” the boy said, slowly. “The one with the regulation held up in front weighed nothing, and you’d think it would weigh more, wouldn’t you, a man’s word plus a regulation. It weighed less. It weighed less because of the plus.” He stopped walking. “Wait. That’s Tuesday as well. That’s Pavlos. Pavlos put nothing in front of himself either. There was nothing he could have put, we established that, I did a whole morning of homework establishing there’s nothing up there to hold in front of yourself, and so his word came out of him with no one else behind it and nowhere else to send it, and that’s why the whole table went quiet when the old master said the thing about the keel. Kyrie. Is that why it counted?”

Fridrik let the question stand through a few metres of palms.

“Let us be careful,” he said, “because you are about to be right, and it’s a place to go slowly. Two things only, and then it’s yours again. Nothing stood behind the three of them; you proved that, three days of homework. And the verdict was not empty; you proved that too, before you proved anything else, the night you traced every word at the table back to the town, your own father’s sentence sitting in the middle of it. Hold both at once. Now say what they make together.”

“Then it was never naked,” the boy said slowly. “It was the opposite of naked. It was the fullest thing in the harbour, forty years of the town in every sentence of it. And when Michalis went to take the saying by the collar, all he could ever find holding it was the three of them. It’s all in the words, and it has no,” and he made a gesture upward with his open hand, and let the hand fall, and did not finish the sentence, and did not need to.

“Now the part where I slow you down,” said Fridrik. “There is a mistake within reach of us tonight, and I began making it on Tuesday, so I know its taste. It goes: nothing above the table, therefore the table is right. And it is false, and we have the proof in hand, because the second table changed the decision. Rings, a date, a spoken sentence about the dead. For all either of us knows the winter slip is exactly the insult Michalis says it is, and one November there will be a third sitting about it, and nothing we’ve seen forbids that. Nothing we found, or failed to find, crowns the verdict. What we found is narrower, and better. Say it narrowly.”

The boy was quiet the length of three palms.

“He can go on arguing forever,” he said at last. “Nothing stops that; the date on the list is even an invitation to it, come and doubt me at my desk. What he can’t do, what turned out to be impossible in this world, is the other thing, the thing he tried first, Tuesday, with his chair pushed back. To hand the matter up. To get it received above the heads. He wanted the harbour itself to take the question so that no person would be holding it any more, and the harbour,” the boy paused over the verb the way a man steps over a puddle, “there is nowhere in the harbour for it to go. Only hands, and every hand has a name. If it’s wrong, it’s a someone he’ll say so to. On a bench. With coffee.”

“One turn of the screw more,” said Fridrik, “and then supper. Suppose it were otherwise. Suppose the custom could take the stand, receive the matter, answer for it. Michalis appeals to the custom; the custom rules; he is unsatisfied. To whom does he appeal against the custom?”

“To whatever’s behind it. And behind that, the same again.” The boy did the arithmetic with the face of a man who distrusts it. “It never lands. If the table can be summoned, there’s always another table behind it, and no matter would ever come to rest in a pair of hands at all. So the running-out of doors isn’t the town’s poverty. It’s what lets Pavlos’s word be an ending instead of a forwarding.”

“An ending of what, though. Precision at the last step.”

“Not of the question,” the boy said. “The question’s still open; the slip, maybe a third sitting, all of it. An ending of the,” he hunted, “of the passing-on. What ended on Tuesday, what ends every time, is the possibility of nobody holding it.”

They had reached the fort, and turned, the way the tide turns.

“Write the second half of your homework,” Fridrik said. “Not where the custom receives visitors; why it can’t. And keep one line in the margin: you searched three days for a door above the parties, and the morning was complete without one. If anything ever offers you that door, be slow, and bring this evening with you.”

The boy said he would, and asked, in the same breath, whether Fridrik intended to eat at the taverna or to go on being sentimental on an empty stomach, and they went up the front at the walk’s own speed, past Stelios’s rope on the renewed rings, which nobody stopped to look at, because it was simply there, the way the morning would be.

After the seeing, the result named once. A matter of the town comes to rest at a table of persons and can come to rest nowhere else: the custom cannot be summoned, the book cannot be asked, and if the table could be handed upward there would always be a further table, and no question would ever land in a pair of hands. What the settling ends is therefore not the question, which stayed open and was in fact reopened and revised; what it ends is the passing-on, the possibility of nobody holding it. The word that settles is at full weight because nothing co-signs it, and everything the town knows of the matter enters the verdict as its material and stands behind no one as its author: you cannot summon a proverb. The settlement may be reopened; the answerer may not disappear. The settling closes the escape from the question, not the question.

Walk 5. The Weather

The notice appeared in the bank's window on a Monday in early December, laminated, bilingual, and apologetic in the way of documents that have been through three drafts of legal review: the branch, which had stood on its corner for sixty years, which had financed half the boats in the harbour and held the other half's savings, would close at the end of January. Customers were warmly invited to continue their relationship with the bank at the Nicosia Road branch, eleven kilometres away, or through the application, whose logo was reproduced at a friendly size.

The town read the notice in shifts, the way it reads everything, and by Tuesday evening the matter had its shape: sixty years, eleven kilometres, and old Kyriakou standing in front of the window at closing time saying, to nobody in particular, that he had opened his account there the year of his wedding and would be told where his money lived by a laminated card.

Behind the notice, and behind the counter, stood Yiannis.

Yiannis was the manager, and he was the town's: christened at Lazarus, schooled above the harbour, his mother still at the house with the blue shutters, his career the modest pride of a street. And in the first week Yiannis did the thing that, Fridrik said later, should be taught somewhere, because it was exactly right and he only managed to keep it up for a fortnight. He came out from behind the counter. He showed anyone who asked the letter itself: from the regional office in Nicosia, on paper, with a name at the bottom, a K. Papadopoulou, Regional Director, whose signature was legible, which the town noted, because people who sign legibly expect to be found. "It was decided in Nicosia," Yiannis said, that first week, flatly, to face after face. "I argued against it in October; I have the letter I sent and the letter that came back; the decision is theirs and it stands, and I think it is wrong, and I will help every one of you move whatever has to be moved." He said it perhaps forty times. It was a miserable job and he did it standing up straight, and the town, which was angry, was angry in the healthy way: at a decision, with a date on it, made by reachable persons, one of whom had a legible name.

Eleni wrote to the name. She had the boy type it, which is how the boy came to know its contents: two pages, numbered points, the pension arrangements of eleven persons she named with their permission, the kilometres, the bus timetable, which she enclosed, annotated. It was a formidable document and it asked for exactly one thing: that the decision be reconsidered, or failing that, explained to the persons it fell on, in writing, over the name of whoever held it.

Then the fortnight ended, and Fridrik and the boy, who were in and out of the branch that month like everyone else, watched what happened to Yiannis's sentences.

It happened gradually, the way weather happens. The town's questions did not stop, and they grew harder, because they grew particular: Kyriakou and the application he could not see well enough to use; the widow from the hill houses who had no bus fare to spare weekly; the fisherman's co-operative and its cash takings, which had buried one bank already, the movement's own, years back, and did not relish learning a third window. And somewhere in the third week, under the accumulating weight, Yiannis's account of the matter began, audibly, to change its structure. The boy, trained now, wrote sentences in his notebook with dates on them, like a man pressing flowers.

Week one: "It was decided in Nicosia. I think it is wrong."

Week three, to the widow: "It's not me, kyria. You know it's not me."

Week four, to the co-operative's treasurer, overheard from the queue: "It isn't even Nicosia, if you want the truth. Nicosia has its instructions too. It's the numbers. Branches like this don't pay any more. It's the whole industry, everywhere, look at England, look anywhere. Banking has changed."

And in the fifth week, to Eleni herself, who had come in about nothing in particular, which was never why Eleni came in about anything, the completed thing, the boy's notebook taking it down within the hour: "Nobody decided this, kyria Eleni. That's what none of you will understand. Nobody sat in a room and decided it. It's just how things are now."

Eleni looked at him for a moment with the mild attention she gave to sums that didn't balance.

"Somebody signed it," she said. "Paper doesn't sign itself." And she took her passbook and went, leaving the sentence on the counter, where by all reports it sat for the rest of the day.

Fridrik had been very quiet through the fifth week, and on the walk that Sunday he explained why, without being asked, in the voice he used for the few things he carried from further back than the boy could follow.

“I have watched a man build one of those before,” he said. “Years ago, in a government office, in front of a woman who had lost something that mattered, and it began with the same three words. It’s not me. I want you to understand that I am not comparing the men; the men could not be less alike; Yiannis is being crushed and the other one was merely damp. I am comparing the buildings. They go up the same way every time, course by course, and you have the courses in your notebook with dates on them, which is more than I had. Read them out.”

The boy read them out: Nicosia decided; it’s not me; it’s the numbers, it’s the industry; nobody decided, it’s how things are now.

“Now,” said Fridrik, “before we say one word against it, I want you to defend it. Properly. Best case. You’ve been half inside it all month anyway; I’ve watched you nodding.”

The boy had the honesty not to deny it.

“The defence is that it’s true,” he said. “That’s the whole defence and it’s a strong one. Banking has changed, kyrie. That isn’t a story Yiannis made up in his grief; it’s simply the case; ask anyone under forty where they last queued. Small branches are closing everywhere in the world and no villain is doing it; there’s no man in a room deciding that towns like ours don’t matter; it’s a drift, a whole climate moving, a thousand million people using their phones. And we of all people should be able to say that cleanly, because it’s what the walks have been about since October. Things arrive unsent. The rain isn’t dispatched. The lamp’s keeping had no founder. The times have no author. So when Yiannis says nobody decided this, it’s how things are now, he is saying something we have spent three months learning to say, and I don’t see,” the boy stopped, hearing himself, “I don’t see where the lie gets in. Every plank in what he built is true. And the thing built out of them is somehow false, I can feel that it’s false, Eleni put her finger straight through it, and I can’t find the joint where true planks make a false house.”

“Then let’s find the joint,” said Fridrik, “slowly, because it is the best-hidden joint in the world and every age re-hides it. Two things are on the counter. Keep them apart and the whole matter opens. First thing: the drift. Banking has changed; the climate moved; a thousand million phones. Is that anyone’s deed?”

“No. That’s the real weather. It has no author and needs none; it’s like the language changing, or the harbour silting; it arrived the way things arrive.”

“Granted, fully. Second thing: this branch, that corner, the end of January. Is that weather?”

The boy walked several metres in silence, and when he spoke it was with the care of a man stepping on ice he had himself declared thick.

“No,” he said. “That has a date and a letterhead. Somebody in Nicosia looked at the numbers, which are real, and the drift, which is real, and weighed them against Kyriakou’s eyes and the widow’s bus fare, which are also real, and chose. It could have gone the other way; branches are kept open at a loss all the time, for reasons, by choices; this one wasn’t, for reasons, by a choice. K. Papadopoulou signed it. The drift didn’t close the branch, kyrie. The drift was weighed by someone who closed the branch. Conditions were in the room, all right. Conditions were most of what was in the room. But conditions don’t sign.”

“So the joint.”

“The joint is where the two get fused.” The boy had stopped walking entirely. “That’s what I watched him build and couldn’t name. Week one, he had them separate: a decision, wrongly made in his view, by named persons, under real pressures. True house, every brick. By week five he’d slid the deed inside the drift. Nobody decided; it’s how things are. He’s taken a signed thing and dissolved it into the weather, and it went down easily, it went down easily in me, because the weather part is genuine. That’s what the alibi is, kyrie. It’s not a lie built of lies; you’d smell that in a day. It’s a deed washed in true weather until the signature runs. He’s laundering a signature in the rain.”

“And say what it does. Not to Yiannis. To the account. Follow the account like a parcel.”

“Week one, the account travels and lands. Eleni’s letter goes to Nicosia, to a name; it will be answered or ignored by someone, and either way it’s sitting on a desk that has a chair at it. The town is angry and the anger has an address; you can watch people carrying it around all week like a parcel they know where to deliver. Week five,” the boy turned his hands over, “week five there’s a door nailed onto the air. That’s what he’s built, when you stand back from it. In the settlement, Michalis went up as far as up goes, looking for a door above the parties, and there wasn’t one, and we spent an evening learning why there couldn’t be. Yiannis has hung one, out of true planks, and the town is invited to deliver its account there. And the deliveries don’t arrive anywhere, kyrie, that’s the thing I actually saw this month, in the queue, in the faces. The parcel posted to how-things-are doesn’t land on any desk. It just stops being carried. And you can see the difference in people the way you see weather. The ones holding Eleni’s letter, the ones waiting on Papadopoulou’s answer, they’re angry, and the anger has somewhere to go, and they’re upright with it. The ones who’ve accepted the door in the air have gone quiet in the wrong way. Foggy. Nothing to push against. You can be angry in front of how things are, kyrie, people are angry at weather all their lives, but you cannot make the anger arrive there as a claim on anyone, and theirs hasn’t arrived anywhere, and it isn’t peace, it’s just,” he hunted, “an account nobody’s carrying any more, rotting in front of a painted door. And one more entry, so I don’t lose it. What Yiannis will answer for, when it’s all counted, was never the closure; that account has a chair in Nicosia and always did. What’s his is the handling. The fortnight was his answer, and it was a good one, and the weeks after are his too.”

They walked the length of three palms before Fridrik answered.

“And now be fair to him,” he said, “because we owe it, and because the fairness is half the finding. Why did he build it? He didn’t profit. He grieves this branch more than anyone; it’s his life’s corner. Why does a good man nail a door onto the air?”

“Because the account is heavy,” the boy said quietly. “Forty faces a week, and every one of them handing him a parcel addressed to someone else, because he’s the counter they can reach. He carried it correctly for a fortnight, kyrie, standing up straight, it was decided in Nicosia, I think it’s wrong, I’ll help you move. Two weeks of catching parcels and forwarding them honestly to the name that signed. And then he broke, the way anyone might, and built somewhere for the parcels to go that wasn’t him and wasn’t anyone. The door in the air isn’t a swindle. It’s a shelter. It takes deliveries. That’s its whole appeal, and that’s why every age builds one, and why they’re always built out of whatever that age’s true weather is.” He looked out at the grey sea. “Ours is very good weather for it. Everything really is changing; there really is drift everywhere you look; there have never been better planks.”

The reply from Nicosia came in the second week of January, and it divided the town more instructively than the closure itself. It was signed. It was two pages. It reconsidered nothing; the branch would close; the numbers were appended; the decision, it said, had been taken by the regional committee on such a date and reviewed on such a date, and it was hers. But it answered Eleni’s points by their numbers, granted two of them outright, arranged a weekly visit from a mobile unit, the district’s van, retired years since and brought back for this, waived the co-operative’s transfer costs, and closed over the legible signature with a sentence the boy copied into the notebook whole: “I am aware that this decision falls on persons, and I have made it anyway, for the reasons given, and I am the person to write to if the arrangements fail.”

Eleni read it aloud on the Thursday to eleven pensioners, twice through. "A no," she reported afterwards, at the taverna, in her summing-up voice. "But a no with a chair at it." And the town, or rather its persons one by one, sorted themselves that week less by feeling than by orientation: those who knew whose decision it was could stay angry, or argue, or begin, some of them, genuinely to accept it, each movement with somewhere to go; and those who had posted everything to the door in the air had no corresponding movement available, not even acceptance, since there was no one to accept anything from, and whom the notice window seemed, that week, to have made older.

The branch closed at the end of January, as decided. On the last afternoon the town came through in ones and twos, not for banking. And it was Kyriakou, of all people, who did the thing the boy wrote down last: he shook Yiannis's hand across the counter, and said nothing whatever about the bank, and said instead, "Your mother tells me the lemons on your tree came early. Bring me a bag on Sunday and I'll tell you if she's exaggerating again." And Yiannis, who had stood where forty accounts a week first arrived, for two months, behind an ever-thickening weather, stood holding the old man's hand with his eyes suddenly bright, addressed, for the first time since December, at an address that was simply and only his.

After the seeing, the result named once. The alibi is not a lie built of lies but a deed washed in true weather: the drift is real and has no author, the numbers are real, the times are nobody's deed, and out of these true planks a door is nailed onto the air, HOW THINGS ARE on the lintel, where the settlement's boy had found, and rightly, that no door stands. Its manufacture can be watched, course by course, and its birth is always the same three words: it's not me. What it does is done to the account: posted to a name, the account travels and lands, on a desk with a chair at it, and comes back, even as a no, a no with a chair at it; posted to the door in the air, it does not land anywhere, it stops being carried, and the difference shows less in feeling than in movement: those who knew whose the decision was could stay angry, argue, or begin to accept, each with somewhere to go; those who had posted the matter to how-things-are had no movement available at all. Conditions were in the room; conditions were most of what was in the room; conditions do not sign. And the door is built by good men, because the account is heavy and the door takes deliveries: it is a shelter, not a swindle, raised out of whatever the age's true weather is, and this age has never lacked for planks. Two repairs were watched, and they are not the same repair: the signed letter restored the decision to its address, a no with a chair at it; and the old man's lemons restored the man inside the weather to an address of his own, not exhausted by the counter he stood behind. Neither undoes the need for the other, and a town needs both.

First Gathering. The Aperture

The walks rest here for a few pages. Nothing in what follows is new; every sentence has been earned somewhere between the sea-steps and the bank's corner, and a reader who doubts one should go back to the walk it came from, and if the walk does not show it, the sentence falls. What a gathering adds is only adjacency. Some things can be seen one at a time and their shape only together, and the findings of these first walks are of that kind.

Begin with what the town's standing things turned out to be. The keeping of the lamp was searched for and found nowhere: not a rule, not a debt, not an office, not a founding anyone remembered. And it was not nothing, because in the dark week, when no deed was done for six days, the not-doing had a direction, and every face knew the house at which a word about the steps could arrive. So the first finding, put plainly: the standing things of a shared world are coulds. Not things that are, somewhere, waiting to be produced; not rules that bind in advance; but this, exactly: that someone, here, can be spoken to about something. No act belongs to such a thing, and it is not therefore idle; it gives acts their available direction. Nobody did anything for six days, and everyone knew where a word could go. And a could of this kind is not yet an ought. Nothing bound the newcomers; nobody would ever ask them; what stood about their house bound nothing and made them reachable. The could is not yet an ought. But it is where an ought could arrive, and where, one Saturday, carried by one person with a plate of sweets, something arrived that was neither command nor request and changed what the house did that night.

The words turned out to have the same mode as the keepings. Nothing is sayable that was not first everyone's; the folder's phrases stood in the garden a century before the folder; the two words that carried a man across February were given to him years before he meant them, on credit, and when the meaning came it came inside them, having nowhere else to come. Language, custom, the standing arrangements: one stock, held in common, prior to every person formed in it, and formed of it we are, all the way through. That was the first half of what the walks found, and it should be said once with full weight, because everything after leans on it: the common is not a light dusting over independent persons. We are formed through and through by it, and nothing in any answer is made from private material alone. The verdict at the kafeneion gathered the town's whole inherited knowledge of the matter, forty years of formulas and one sentence about a keel; the answer any of us will ever give to anything will be made from the same one bin.

Then the walks turned to giving, and found the joint on which everything else in these movements turned. A gift is finished by the giver's hands coming off it. The jar's giver remained a person who could be written to about anything on earth, including the jar; what could not be done was to apply to him, as though the say-so had never crossed; and the envelope's forty years were finished in advance, the letting-go sealed into the block capitals. Set this beside the first finding and the shape begins to show. The common gives in exactly the mode the jar taught: wholly, and with no hand kept on the gift. We are formed by it all the way down, and it retains no lien. And the distinction must be cut exactly here, because everything hangs on its edge. The common can be consulted, endlessly, and is: through its living carriers, its elders, its books, its folders of phrases; consulting it is most of what a town does all day. What it cannot be is applied to, as an owner whose permission settles what is done with what it made possible. A common that retained final authority over every taking-up would not have given possibilities; it would have assigned performances; and we would hold our language and our lives the way the boy first thought he held the jar, on loan against good behaviour, tenants of a landlord who inspects.

Now set the two halves against each other, because they look, at first, like a contradiction, and the contradiction is the finding.

On the one side: nothing in us that answers was made from private material alone. The words, the customs, the coulds, the whole formation of anyone who ever answers anything, inherited entire from a shared world. On the other side: the common cannot be reached. This was not asserted; it was searched for, four times, by different roads, and the roads should be recalled once, together, and then never listed again. The keeping of the lamp could not be summoned; only occupants could be approached. The giver of the jar could be written to and could not be applied to, and the envelope's giver could not be found without changing the mode of the thing found. The custom at the kafeneion had no door: the loser went up as far as up goes and met, at every table, first and last, persons, with names, greeting-distance away; and the search came back not merely empty but without a hole, the morning complete, nothing flickering where the higher party should be. And when, in December, a door was finally produced above the parties, it had to be built, out of true planks, by a tired man, and the accounts posted to it landed nowhere and stopped being carried. Four roads, one result: there is no address up there. Not because something hides. Because the common is not the kind of thing an account can arrive at. A silence of that kind should be told apart, once, from the ordinary silence of things. The sea was consulted about the berth and had nothing to add; the sea is met in the town's world, named, worked, feared, and it is simply not an answerer; its silence is the silence of things. The custom's silence is not that: the custom is not one more mute thing met in the town, and its silence is not an absence of reply but the fact that everything replied to anyone is replied within it. The full weighing of that difference belongs to a later page; here it is enough that both silences were walked, and that they are not the same.

Here, then, is the shape the findings make together, and it is the book's first standing result. The two sides are not a contradiction and not even two facts. They are one fact, seen from its two faces. A shared world opens its people to one another as reachable: that is the could, the route in, the possibility of an account ever arriving anywhere. And the same shared world cannot itself receive an account: that is the four empty roads, the no route out, the impossibility of the account ever leaving the circle of persons. Route in, and no route out. Take either away and watch what happens to the thing itself, not to its quality, to its existence. A world with no route out but no route in, where nothing could be addressed to anyone, would be closure in a mute void: accounts could never even form. A world with a route in but no closure, where every account could be forwarded past its bearer, upward, forever, would be the door in the air made real and universal: nothing would ever be answered, only forwarded, and the difference between an answer and an excuse would not exist to be blurred. Answering happens, when it happens, in the narrow place where both hold at once: reachable persons, and nothing behind them that can be reached. An aperture into the space of persons, through which an account can reach someone and cannot pass on into what made them. How wide the aperture is at any of its reaches, whether some take whoever occupies a place and whether any take one person and no other, the walks have not yet shown: the lamp says the first kind is real and everywhere; whether the second kind exists at all is precisely what remains to be walked.

And through that shape, three things the walks watched can be said in their general form, briefly, because the walks did the work.

What ends at the aperture is the passing-on, and only the passing-on. The verdict at the kafeneion could be appealed, was appealed, was revised; nothing that was found, or not found, above the parties crowned it; the winter slip may yet be wrong, and if it is, it is men it will be said to. Accounts terminate because the space they are rendered in cannot be a party; which closures are then right is a question among persons, always open, always addressed to persons. The settling closes the escape from the question, not the question. And one register of finality stands apart from all of this and is untouched by it: what has happened has wholly happened. The sitting cannot be unsat; the reopened settlement does not un-happen the settling. Revising a judgement and reaching the past are different powers, and no one has the second.

The word that settles is at full weight because nothing co-signs it. This was watched twice, once at a table and once behind a counter: the word with the regulation held up in front of it weighed less for the addition, and the word given with no one else behind it and nowhere else to send it was the one that ended the matter. And the general rule should be cut exactly, because it is not that rules lighten words. The signed letter from Nicosia was full of rules, numbers, and dates, and was the heaviest word in the whole affair, because the rules stood among the reasons and a person stood in the answer. A rule strengthens an answer when it is placed among the reasons; it weakens the answer only when it is placed where the answerer should stand. Weight is not squeezed out of a person by demand. It is conferred on the person by the recession of everything that might have shared it. And the common is not therefore absent from the answer: it is massively present, in the content, the town's whole inherited knowledge in every sentence of the verdict, and absent from the accountability, standing behind no one. Present in what is said; absent from who answers for the saying. The two stones in the garden carry the whole doctrine: same phrase, same yard, same letters; in one of them a widow stands; the other came with the marble; and the marble does not show which.

Last, the counterfeit, so that it is filed where it belongs. The alibi is not a rival account of the world; it is the one fact above, worn inside out. It takes the true weather, the authorless drift that the walks spent October learning to see and to love, and dissolves a signed deed into it, so that what was chosen borrows the mode of what merely arrived. Its birth is always the same three words, and its manufacture can be watched, and its price is paid by the account, which stops being carried, and by the town, whose anger, which had an address, gives way to fog, which has none. It is built by good men, because accounts are heavy and the door takes deliveries. And it is undone, when it is undone, less by argument than by address: by the letter that lands on a desk with a chair at it, and by the old man who walks around the whole weather to the man inside it and asks about his lemons.

One sentence can now carry the first movements, and it is offered as the gathering's result, to be tested against every walk still to come: a shared world makes answerers of its people by being what no answer can reach.

What the walks have not shown is who they are, these answerers. Everything so far reaches only this far: accounts land on persons, and cannot land elsewhere. But the lamp waits on the house, for whoever; the jar waited on the table, for whoever; most of the reachable places in a town are of that kind, and rightly, and the town's daily traffic runs on their interchangeability. Against all of which one thing has arrived that seems to wait differently: a question that came to a door and appears not to sit on the door. Whether there is truly a kind of place that only one person can be, and what such a place could possibly consist in, once there is no soul-substance to be it, the winter's walks must show, or the book fails at its centre. The walks turn there next: from the space that opens, to the one it opens onto.

MOVEMENT III. THE ONE WHO IS REACHED



Walk 6. The Name Across the Crowd

On the sixth of January the town goes down to the sea entire, and stands on its front in its good coats, and throws its God into the harbour to see him brought back wet. Fridrik had been warned about Epiphany and had not believed the warnings, and stood now wedged between the boy and a woman holding a sleeping child dressed as a much smaller adult, watching the bishop's procession come down the palm walk with the ikons and the banners and the brass, and behind and around and beneath it all, the whole town, shoulder to shoulder from the fort to the marina, breathing in one cold visible cloud.

They had a good spot and no duties. That was the boy's doing; he had closed the taverna, since nobody eats lunch while God is in the water; and for an hour the two of them had nothing in the world to be but crowd. Fridrik remarked on it afterwards, the specific pleasure of it, rare in his line of life: to stand packed among hundreds facing the same sea, unconsulted, unaddressed, no more picked out than a tile in a roof, everyone's eyes going the one way, a single warm attention with two thousand shoulders under it. The divers were already in the winter water, seal-headed, treading. The cross went up in the bishop's hand, wood against the grey, and the crowd leaned, and the cross flew, and three white doves went up off the platform after it, and the sea took it, and the divers vanished after it, and the whole front held one breath in one chest.

And across that held breath, from somewhere off to the left, a voice, a woman's, pitched over two hundred heads with the full authority of the lungs of this island:

“Savva!”

The boy had turned before the second syllable finished. Fridrik watched it happen from thirty centimetres away and would spend the rest of the day trying to describe the order of events to his own satisfaction, because there was no order of events; there was one event: the name, and the boy turned in it, the way iron filings do not first hear about the magnet and then arrange themselves.

The voice belonged to a broad woman in a good grey coat, waving a gloved hand, cutting toward them through the crowd with the sideways competence of somebody's aunt, and the boy said, in a voice Fridrik had never heard him use, ten years younger than his ordinary voice, “Nouna,” and then she had reached them and had the boy's face in both gloved hands.

She was, the boy managed to explain sideways, his godmother. Androulla. Forty years in Melbourne, back every few winters, more of them lately; his mother's oldest friend; and, he added, in the tone of a man producing a document, “She named me. At the font. It's her voice on the certificate, so to speak.”

“I chose nothing,” said Androulla, in an accent that had been to the far side of the world and kept all its vowels anyway. “His grandfather’s name, God rest him, what was there to choose? I said it, that’s all. The priest asks, and somebody has to say it out loud, and it’s the nouna who says it.” She looked at the boy with proprietary satisfaction, as at a tree she had watered once and found grown. “First time he heard his name in this world, it was my mouth it came out of. And look, it still works.” Somewhere beyond, a roar: a diver’s arm out of the sea, the cross in his fist, every boat in the harbour on its horn at once. The crowd surged; Androulla was introduced to Fridrik, approved of him loudly, extracted three promises involving dinner, pressed a folded note into the boy’s hand over his laughing protest, it being the day a nouna pays her godchild and forty years in Melbourne having moved nothing about that, and was reabsorbed toward her sister’s family, gloved hand last to vanish.

The two of them stayed for the singing. The blessed water went round in the little bottles. And it was not until the front had loosened, and the good coats had begun to stream off toward the ovens of the town and the cauldrons of loukoumades by the square, that Fridrik said:

“Walk. I have been standing next to a phenomenon for an hour and I want it on the table while it’s fresh. When she called, you turned. Tell me what happened in you, in the order it happened.”

“There wasn’t an order.” The boy frowned into it. “That’s the first thing. I’ve been poking at it since it happened. I didn’t hear the name, recognise it as mine, conclude she meant me, and decide to turn. I was turned around before I’d decided anything. The turn came first and I arrived in it. If you’d stopped me mid-turn and asked what I was doing, I’d have had to look and see, same as you.” He walked a few steps. “And here’s the part that should bother us more than it does. It’s not even a rare name, kyrie. It’s off the calendar like everyone’s; the parish is stacked with us; there were, I’d say, six or eight of us inside that voice’s range, and I know for a fact two others half-turned, I saw Savvas the electrician check and settle, the way you check a phone that buzzed in someone else’s pocket. Same word reached all of us. It picked out one. An hour earlier, other side of the ikons, somebody called the same name, the exact same word, and I half-turned and knew in the half that it wasn’t for me, and I couldn’t tell you how I knew. Same syllables. Different reach.”

“Then the syllables weren’t doing the reaching.”

“No. The name’s a handle, kyrie, and half the town has the same handle. What reached me came down the handle but it wasn’t the handle. It was her, the trajectory of her, forty years of Sunday lunches inside the vowels; the name the way she says it has my childhood in it; nobody else’s mouth makes that exact tool. But be careful, because I’ll say it wrong if I’m quick. It wasn’t that I analysed the voice and computed the addressee and found it was me. All of that would be more description, just fancier. Whatever reached me didn’t reach me by describing me. Descriptions fit. Fits can be checked. Nothing was checked, there wasn’t time, there wasn’t a me standing apart to do the checking. The call landed, and the landing is the thing, and I notice our language, the one you’ve been learning noun by noun all winter, I notice it knows this better than I do.”

“Show me.”

“The name changes shape when you call it. Savvas is what I’m called; Savva is how you call me. It’s not a poetic habit, it’s grammar, it’s a case, like the ones you complain about in your exercise books. The tongue keeps a form whose whole work is not to describe someone but to turn towards him; you can hang it on other words too, on uncle, on friend, on kyrie itself; but a name shows it most nakedly: a spare shape of the name whose one use is reaching the man. Not talking about him. You can say everything about Savvas in the other forms. The moment you want Savvas himself to turn around, the language hands you a different word. It has kept that word oiled for three thousand years. That’s how old the difference is between describing a man and reaching him. The grammar of half the world took the trouble to build the reaching its own room.”

Fridrik walked with his hands behind his back, delighted, doing the thing he did with new grammar, moving his lips slightly, filing it.

“In my north,” he said at last, “we keep the father in the name instead. My own name has my father’s folded inside it; his had his father’s; a rope of men down the centuries, each knot tied by the one before. You carry your grandfather whole, she tells me. Given at a font by a third party, out of a calendar of saints, before you could hold your own head up. I want to underline that part, actually, and then I want you to do something with it, because it closes a circle we walked in November. Your name is the most second-hand thing you own. It came off a public shelf, the church’s own folder, the saints stacked by date like the mason’s laminated pages; it was worn before you by your grandfather and before him by however many centuries of this island; it is worn right now by the electrician and by six or eight men within one woman’s voice-range on this front; and it was fastened to you by someone else’s mouth while you slept in white. There is not one private fibre in it. And.”

“And it reached me,” the boy said, “like a hand on the shoulder, through two hundred heads, and reached nobody else.” He shook his head slowly. “It’s the folder again, isn’t it. Same finding, one storey deeper. The words everyone uses were the only ones the right size; the widow stood in the commonest phrase in the yard. Now: the commonest name in the town, and the call in it was mine the way nothing else is mine. The publicness isn’t the enemy of the reaching. The publicness is what the reaching travels on. If my name were private, some sound no one else knew, it couldn’t be called across a crowd; a call needs the town’s whole postal system, the shelf, the calendar, the shared handles; and then it delivers to one door. What’s mine isn’t the word. What’s mine is being the one it lands on.”

They had come out at the quiet end of the front, past the marina, where the crowd thinned to couples and the palms took over from the brass. The boy stopped at the rail.

“And there’s the other half,” he said. “What it landed on. Where I was, before she called. I want to say this carefully because I’ve never once thought about it and it turns out to be enormous. I was nowhere, kyrie. Gloriously. I was crowd. An hour of it, and you felt it too, you said so: no one to be, nothing wanted from me, two thousand of us pointed the same way, one attention with the town’s shoulders under it. It’s one of the sweetest states there is and I’d never noticed it was a state. And then my name came over the heads like a thrown rope, and the crowd, without moving, was suddenly a place where I was standing. The call didn’t find me in the crowd, kyrie, finding is for things that are already lying about separate. But it didn’t make me either, and I want that said before the morning grows in the telling: I was there the whole hour, Androulla’s godson, on two feet, with a history; nothing was created on that front. What happened is quieter and stranger than either. The crowd didn’t stop containing me. It stopped carrying me anonymously. The call unfolded the place I’d been occupying without noticing I occupied it, one word, in the shape the language keeps for exactly this, and I was standing in my own place, turned round, already answering, wearing my face. A crowd is a place where your someone sits folded, and nobody should sneer at it, it’s rest, it’s half of every feast. The call is what unfolds it. And the unfolding isn’t added to you like a coat. You arrive in it. I arrived in the turn. Whatever an I is, kyrie, the being-reached runs in front of it: the turn was under way before anything I could catch of myself had chosen it, and I was there to watch, except that’s exactly what I wasn’t.”

Fridrik was quiet a long moment, looking at the winter sea.

“I’ll confess the size of what you’ve just handled,” he said, “and then we’ll go and eat, because Androulla has left me with obligations. Older men than you have gone down whole libraries looking for the self, inward and inward, and written very dark books about what they didn’t find. A woman in a grey coat gave us reason this morning to suspect those searches began by facing the wrong way. Perhaps a someone is not a possession a man carries about in the dark of himself but a place where calls land, and the calls were first, the mother’s before any mirror, the nouna’s at the font, and what we call the I grew up at the landing-place the way a town grows at a harbour. I don’t assert it. It’s one morning’s evidence, and a hypothesis should go home hungry now and then. But note what your winter’s question just did while we weren’t watching it.” He pushed off the rail. “The mason’s question also made you turn. That much is the same, and it is not nothing. Whether it reached you the way Androulla reached you, or reached whoever happened to be standing nearest the flat, the way a pension book reaches whoever is behind the counter, is exactly what we don’t know yet, and I’d say it’s most of what the winter still owes us. Now: food. If I’m to be inspected at dinner by that woman I want my strength.”

After the seeing, the result named once. The tongue keeps a form whose work is not to describe a man but to turn towards him, and a name shows it most nakedly; the difference between describing and reaching is old enough to have its own grammar. The name itself is the most second-hand thing a man owns, taken from the public shelf, worn by his grandfather and six others in earshot, fastened on him at a font by another's mouth; and the call in it reached one. Its singularity lay not in any private content but in the event of arrival: the publicness is not the enemy of the reaching but what the reaching travels on, the common word carrying one woman's address to the person who turned in it, and the turn under way before any deliberation that could be caught. The call did not create a person where none had been; the crowd, which holds a someone folded, sweetly, restfully, half of every feast, did not stop containing him; it stopped carrying him anonymously, and he arrived in his own place, already answering. And whether the mason's question has reached such a place, or only the occupant of a position, remains the winter's problem, on schedule.

Walk 7. The Line

On Sundays at four o'clock, winter or summer, old Kyriakou telephones his brother in Adelaide, and has done so at that hour since the hour existed for the purpose, which is to say since 1971, when the exchange first reached the village his brother had already left, and a call to Australia was a call you booked, and the exchange put you through at the appointed hour, and the hour has outlived the booking. Before that there were letters, and before the letters there was the Limassol boat, in 1963, and two young men, one going and one staying, of whom it is now impossible to say which is which, since the one who went took the village with him and the one who stayed watched the village leave anyway, a person at a time, for Birmingham and Melbourne and the mines.

The boy had known about the call his whole life the way one knows about tides, and it was Fridrik, again, who put it on the table, because Kyriakou, since the lemons, had taken to Sunday afternoons at the taverna's corner table, timing his last coffee to the hour, and on this Sunday he had looked at his watch twice and then said, with the ceremony of a man opening his house, "Come. You'll say a word to Panayis. He knows about you; I've reported you; he wants to inspect the northerner."

The call was made from the kitchen doorway, on the granddaughter's old phone, voice only, because Kyriakou has views on being looked at through a slot. And Fridrik, invited into the middle of it for his inspection, which he passed on the strength of two sentences about the weather in the north, was then witness, with the boy, to the rest of it, twelve minutes, of which he later attempted a reconstruction in his notebook and gave up, writing instead: nothing was said, at length, magnificently.

It went, in fair sample: the weather there. The weather here. The knees, his. The knees, the other's. The lemons, reported early; disputed; the dispute conducted in the exact words, the boy whispered, that it has been conducted in since before his birth. A goat was mentioned, from 1961, and both men made the sound they have made about that goat for sixty years, a sound with an entire summer inside it. There were silences, two of them, long ones, which neither man filled or seemed to feel as empty, transcontinental silences at Sunday rates, and the boy watched Fridrik discover that the silences were not gaps in the call but part of its fabric, two old men sitting in one quiet with a planet between their chairs. Then: alright then. Alright. Next Sunday. If God wants. And the kitchen doorway was a kitchen doorway again, and Kyriakou came back to his cold coffee looking, as he looked every Sunday at fourteen minutes past four, like a man who has eaten.

They walked him partway home, and then walked on alone, out along the front, into the low gold of the January afternoon, and Fridrik said: "Audit it for me. You heard it all. What was transferred?"

“New information? Nothing,” said the boy, comfortably. “That’s not criticism, it’s arithmetic. The weather they exchange, each could read in a newspaper, and Panayis watches our weather on his television anyway; he knew our lemons before Kyriakou told him. The knees are eternal. The goat is not news, kyrie; the goat is a liturgy. If a clerk from the exchange audited that call for news, he’d refund it. Sixty years, every Sunday, at rates that used to cost real money, money Kyriakou didn’t have in the seventies, and the new information in it, weighed, is nothing. Though let me say that exactly, because the call wasn’t empty; nothing about it was empty; it had the goat in it, and the two silences, and sixty years of the same dispute in the same words, which isn’t nothing, it’s everything except news. The informational account comes close to zero. The call does not; you saw the man after; a man who has eaten. So the question walks itself, and it’s a better question than I had an hour ago: what fed him, if nothing new was sent?”

“Defend the boring answer first. You’re better when you’ve been the opposition.”

“The boring answer is maintenance.” The boy took it up properly, shoulders into it. “The call is the subscription fee. It keeps the line warm, the relationship serviced, so that when something real comes, a death, a diagnosis, the roof money, the channel exists and carries it. Habit as infrastructure. Farmers walk their fences, brothers walk their line; nobody thinks the fence-walking is the farm, kyrie, and nobody should think twelve minutes of knees is the brotherhood. It’s upkeep, and content will use the line when content exists. That’s the boring answer, and it’s respectable, and I half believe it.”

“Then chase it. What is the line kept warm for?”

The boy walked, and began, audibly, to enjoy himself in the way he now did when a thing was about to come apart in his hands.

“For the messages. Alright. Name the messages. Sixty years, kyrie: the messages that mattered, the deaths and the weddings and the money, I can count them, the town can count them, and every one of them could have gone in a letter, and in the sixties some of them did, and a letter would do today; grave news travels fine by any post; it doesn’t need a warm line, it makes its own heat. So the line isn’t kept for the news. Then for what? For the calls. And what’s new in the calls? Nothing; we audited. So the maintenance answer looks like it eats its own tail: a channel maintained for the sake of the channel, the fence walked for the walking. And I was ready to laugh it off the table, kyrie, and then I heard what it was actually saying. It isn’t an absurdity. It’s the truth holding its map upside down. Maintenance was the right word aimed at the wrong object. Not maintenance of a channel that waits for news; there is no such channel; the news, we counted, never needed one. What’s kept is the relation. And the relation isn’t a pump greased against a fire, ready for a use that comes later. The calls are the use. The brotherhood isn’t serviced on Sundays so that it can happen some other day; Sundays at four is when it happens; the call doesn’t keep the line ready, kyrie, the call is the line being held. And then the parcel riddle answers itself. When the parcel carries no news, and the parcel is sent anyway, every Sunday for sixty years, at real cost, and both men come away fed, then news was never the point of the post. What arrives, when nothing new is sent, is the sender. And let me cash that before it floats away sounding grand: no man is posted down a wire; nobody arrives in Adelaide. What arrives is the turning: Kyriakou turned toward him, him and nobody else on that whole continent, and the being-turned-toward is the delivery. The called one receives the other as caller, and himself, made fresh, as the one called. Panayis doesn’t get Adelaide’s weather corrected. He gets being the one his brother calls. Twelve minutes of standing in that, every Sunday, and it holds a week up. Nothing new was said and someone arrived.”

Fridrik nodded slowly, and then gave, unprompted, in the voice he kept for confessions, his own instance.

“The man in the north and I,” he said, “have written twice a year for forty years, and I will tell you what is in the letters, since you could subpoena them and find out: insults. He derides my chess. I deride his students, his weather, and his prose, in that order, the order matters to him. There has never been one line of news in those letters that could not have waited or been skipped; when his wife died he telephoned, which is how I knew the world had actually tilted, the instrument changed. The letters carry nothing. We have quarrelled for forty years about nothing in particular, twice a year, on schedule, and I would walk to the north over the sea ice if the autumn letter didn’t come. I always understood we were fighting. I am beginning to understand we were calling.”

The boy laughed, and then didn’t, because the thing had turned serious in his hands, as things did on that stretch of the front.

“There’s a purer case even than Kyriakou’s,” he said. “Last walk, the call had a summons in it, at least: turn around, come to dinner, be inspected. Androulla wanted me, even if all she wanted me for was wanting. But the Sunday call wants nothing. Neither brother is summoned anywhere, asked anything, told anything, changed in any particular. It’s address at rest, kyrie. The call that asks you to do nothing except be the one called. And the town is stitched with them, once you look: Stelios’s hand going up to a dark window, and no one at the window, and the hand goes up anyway; the boats at night, passing, a lamp raised apiece, no news in it, meaning here and you’re there; half of what the town says to itself all day, weighed by the clerk for news, weighs nothing, and it’s that half that holds the newsy half up. Because, and this is the inversion I want written down before I lose it: I had it the wrong way round my whole life. I thought reaching people was the means and telling them things was the end. Words ride the reaching, kyrie, the reaching doesn’t ride the words. Every message those two brothers ever exchanged travelled on a line their calling kept in existence, and the line was the older thing, and the Sunday call runs it bare so you can finally see it. Whether something of the kind holds for every message anywhere, I don’t know yet, and I’ll flag the hole rather than paper it: a stranger can reach me too, a cry in the street, a first appeal, and no sixty Sundays stand behind those; so the wide claim needs different legs, and tonight I’ll leave it standing on none. But for these two: content is a passenger. Sundays, the line runs empty, on schedule, so that both ends know the line is the thing that runs.”

They had come to the rail at the quiet end, their spot now, consecrated by use. The sun was going down into the sea with the lack of ceremony it reserves for winter.

“And I found out this week what that means at the other end of it,” the boy said, quietly, not looking at Fridrik. “I’ve been in his books, for the museum pages, the corrections. And it struck me, in the middle of an evening, with the pencil in my hand: I have everything, kyrie. That’s the strange thing about this particular missing man. He wrote; he kept; the flat is a warehouse of him; every opinion he ever held is on a shelf a metre from where I sleep, in his hand, with the punctuation fought over. If it’s content I want, no man was ever less lost. And it isn’t content. I sat there with all sixty shelves and I could not be called by one of them. What’s gone isn’t what he said. Everything he said, I have. And be exact now, because I said it wrong to myself the first time: it isn’t even being the one it was said to; half those shelves were said to nobody, to the margins, to the century. What’s gone is that he can still say something to me. The shelves keep every sentence and can’t make me the one he’s speaking to now.” He turned the pencil he still had behind his ear, took it down, looked at it, put it back. “The library keeps everything except being spoken to.”

“Yes,” said Fridrik, and for a long time, nothing else, and the sea did its work below them, and the lamp came on over the sea-steps up the front, lit by a hand they could not see, and this time the boy looked at it for a while.

“Sunday,” Fridrik said at last, turning them for home. “Four o’clock. If you ever hear I’ve stopped answering the autumn letter, come north and check on me. Not for news. There won’t be news.”

“I know,” said the boy. “That’s why I’d come.”

After the seeing, the result named once. The Sunday call carries almost no new information and is not therefore empty: weather, knees, the goat, and two long silences enact a relation whose value does not wait upon news. Maintenance was the right word aimed at the wrong object: what is maintained is not an unused channel kept ready for later messages, since the messages that mattered could always have gone by any post, but the relation itself, existing in its repeated use; the call does not keep the line ready, the call is the line being held. What the called one receives is not a parcel but the other's turning towards him, and his own renewed place as the one called; nothing new is said, and someone arrives. The town is stitched with such calls, hands to dark windows, lamps raised between passing boats, address at rest, the call that asks a man to do nothing except be the one called. And the same sum stands from the far side: the shelves preserve every sentence a dead man said, and no preserved sentence can make him presently address the boy; stored content remains, living reachability does not; the library keeps everything except being spoken to.

Walk 8. The Counter

By the first week of February the corner had learned its new silence. The notice was gone from the window because the window was gone behind whitewash, TO LET in two languages where sixty years of opening hours had been, and the town, passing, did what towns do at such corners: it kept using the door for a while. Not the actual door. The address. Maria of the hill houses stopped Yiannis by the kiosk on the Tuesday with her pension book already coming out of her bag, and got four words into the question, and the boy, who was buying stamps, watched both of them hear it miss. Not miss the man; the man heard every word, and understood it, and was already reaching for the book. The question reached Yiannis and missed the counter, the office it had been shaped for through thirty years of Tuesdays, which no longer stood behind him, and both of them felt the sentence arrive at him and fail to arrive at it, and Maria apologised, twice, flustered, as if she had knocked on a house whose family had died, and Yiannis said it was nothing, and helped her anyway, there on the pavement, which is a different thing, and the difference is this walk.

He came to the taverna more, those weeks, having the time. And on the Thursday he told them, over the lunch he now ate slowly, about the turn.

“Loizos calls it across the street yesterday,” he said. “Kyrie diefthinta! Mr Manager! Half a joke, you understand, Loizos has called me it for twenty years, since the promotion, it was never a joke before and now it can only be one. And I turned. Fully around, on my heel, before I knew a single thing about it. The way you turn.” He looked at the boy. “Your nouna at the Fota. The whole town talked about your walk after; we all tried it on our own names for a week; well. I have a second name, it turns out, and it still works, except there’s nothing behind it now for the turning to arrive in. Thirty years that word could reach me anywhere in this town, in the sea if I was swimming, and something in me is still wearing it. I turn like a shop bell rings in an empty shop. The bell doesn’t know the stock is gone. The bell just rings.”

Fridrik put down his fork, which those who knew him had learned was the sign of full attention.

“I am going to give you something,” he said to Yiannis, “which I have given nobody on this island, because nobody on this island has been where you are standing. I retired from a chair, eleven years ago. A professor’s chair, in the north, with my name on the door for thirty-one years, and a word, kyrie professor in our way of saying it, that could reach me across any airport in my country. And for the first year of my retirement I turned exactly as you turn. The word came, in shops, at funerals, from old students grown grey, and the machinery fired, and I arrived in the turn, as our friend here puts it, and found the arrival had nowhere to happen. I will tell you the two things I learned in that year, and then I will not lecture again today. First: the chair was refilled by the autumn term. A good man sits in it; the students’ word reaches him now; nothing is missing at that address, and it took eleven weeks. Second: I was not refilled. Nobody applied. And both of those, kyrie, are good news, though I grant the first one stings for a season.”

Yiannis considered this the way he considered documents.

“The Nicosia Road has a manager,” he said at last. “Adequate, I hear.”

“Adequate,” confirmed the boy, “is Eleni’s word. She transferred her accounts Monday. Her review of the man is that the chair works. She means it kindly, and it’s the whole review, and he should want no better: the van days run, the co-operative’s arrangement holds, the same sentences the town said across your counter are being said across his, word for word, Maria’s pension book and all, eleven kilometres east, to a face they learned in a fortnight.” He said it plainly, watching Yiannis take it, because the walk had taught him that the taking mattered. “Nothing personal was in it, kyrio Yianni. That’s not an insult. It’s the finding.”

They took Yiannis partway home and then walked the front, the two of them, in the blue early dark, and the boy laid it out the way he now laid things out, like a man unpacking a bag he had packed too fast.

“The closure is an experiment, kyrie. Nobody designed it and it’s running anyway, and what it separates, no argument could have separated, because until last month the two things sat on one man and answered to one word. Watch them come apart. The account questions still arrive at Yiannis, out of habit, and reach the man and miss the office: he hears every word, and the address the words were shaped for closed here and opened eleven kilometres east, where it works perfectly under someone else. The lemons arrive at Yiannis and miss nothing: that address never moved and cannot be transferred, and there is no Nicosia Road for it. Two kinds of reach, and the town is sorting its whole traffic between them right now, person by person, awkwardly, the way Maria sorted it on the pavement: apologising to the man for having dialled the position.”

“So say what a position is. You’ve had the lamp since October.”

“A position is a standing could with a chair in it. It’s the lamp’s kind of thing grown an office: whoever occupies, answers; the address belongs to the place and lends itself to the occupant; and it survives its occupants the way the light survived four owners, because it never was the occupant. And I want it said in full, kyrie, before I go where I’m going, that this is not the fallen half of the world. The town runs on it. That Maria can say her pension sentence to a new face in a fortnight is civilisation; that the chair works is what chairs are for; God protect the town where the flour depends on loving the baker. The positions are the town’s daylight traffic and they are good.”

“Granted in full. Now go where you’re going.”

“Where I’m going,” the boy said, and took a breath like a man at a cold sea, “is the onion. Because here’s the thing that’s been sitting in my chest since Thursday. I peel Yiannis. Manager: gone, that’s the experiment. But keep peeling. Neighbour: a position; the street assigns it; move house and someone else is the neighbour. Customer, colleague, chairman of the feast committee: positions. Son: a position, kyrie, don’t flinch, the language even numbers them, firstborn, second; husband, uncle, godfather: the town has rules for filling every one of them, that’s what the words mean. Every single address I can name, when I hold it to the light, has a chair in it. Peel them all and show me the man. There’s no layer called Yiannis under the layers, I’ve looked, the peeling ends and the hands are empty, and so the boring conclusion walks in wearing its spectacles: a person is the stack of his positions and nothing else; the lemons landed on the topmost layer that happened to be left; and the man himself is a sentimentality, a name we give the stack for short. That’s the onion argument, and I can’t fault its arithmetic, and I know in my knees that it’s wrong, and knees aren’t an argument, kyrie, so make me one.”

Fridrik walked in silence for ten metres, and then did the thing the boy had half known he would do, which was to decline.

“No. You make me one. But I’ll set the experiment, since experiments are the season’s fashion. The bank advertised his position within the week; I saw the notice; one column, forty words, applications to Nicosia. Very well: write me the advertisement for what Kyriakou’s lemons reached. You compose menus; you can compose a notice. Duties, qualifications, hours. Go on. Out loud.”

The boy opened his mouth, and the silence that followed lasted three palms’ worth of walking, and Fridrik let it.

“It can’t be written,” the boy said finally, and his voice had changed register, the way it did when the ground shifted. “And I want to be exact about why, because it isn’t that the duties are too many or too fine. I could list Yiannis to the last habit: how he takes coffee, what he did in the flood year for the flood families, the way he holds a form flat with two fingers while you sign. Print all of it; you could hire someone to perform every listed line, a patient man could learn the coffee and the two fingers and the kindness itself; what you could not do is hire him into having been the man Kyriakou addressed. The advertisement fails there, not at the length of the list. An advertisement is an open call, *kyrie*. Its grammar is whoever: whoever qualifies, whoever applies, come one come whoever. Every office in the world can be advertised, because an office is open in form to a qualified whoever, even when the qualifications would frighten a bishop. And I said something an hour ago that I want back on the table unswallowed: son, godfather, neighbour, I called them all positions, and as a blade against the kernel they served, but I don’t actually know what they are, and I notice you can’t advertise for your mother’s son after the fact; those words have particular histories locked inside their public shapes, and they can wait on the shelf for a walk of their own. Tonight’s clean cut needs only the two ends: the office, open to whoever; and the lemons. And mind the cheap objection before somebody makes it: of course another man could carry the bag. Better lemons, same Sunday. He could not make Kyriakou’s sentence have been to him. The errand transfers whole. The having-been-addressed transfers to nobody. Kyriakou wasn’t reaching the best candidate for a Yiannis-shaped role. The reaching went to him the way my name went to me across the Fota crowd: not by fitting, landing. You cannot advertise for a landing-place.”

“And the onion?”

“The onion was honest and I was holding it wrong.” He worked it slowly. “The peeling finds no kernel: true, and let it stay true, because the day we find a kernel we’ve only found one more thing, one more layer that could be listed and advertised and performed, a little pearl of a position at the centre, and the whole question starts again about who has the pearl. The mistake was ever looking for a remainder. Take away every sentence a man could speak and you don’t find the speaker sitting there like a stone in a plum; the speaker was never a sentence. Take away every position Yiannis held and you don’t find a last small Yiannis-thing; he was never one of his positions, not even all of them stacked. The positions are had, kyrie. The having is not another one of the had. That’s as far as I can see tonight and I want to mark exactly where the dark starts: I can show the address is real, because deliveries land, the lemons landed, my name landed, Maria’s apology landed on the man the way her question couldn’t. I can show nobody can be hired into it, because the form of hiring is whoever and it has no whoever in it. What I cannot yet say is what it is, this landing-place that isn’t a layer and isn’t a pearl. Maybe it isn’t made of anything. Maybe that’s not a defect in it. It has the smell of the winter’s question, kyrie, the big one, and I’d rather walk to it than jump.”

“Then we walk to it,” said Fridrik. “That’s the first time all winter you’ve refused a conclusion you could have had cheap, and I want it noted in the record that I said nothing and you did it alone.”

There was a last thing, and Yiannis himself supplied it, the following van day, without knowing he was supplying anything. The mobile unit came at nine to the square, a van with a fold-down window, adequate; the hill-houses drew their cash and paid the light bill straight back through the same window, the money not ten minutes in their hands; and beside it, at a card table he brought himself, sat Yiannis, unpaid, unasked, with his two-finger way of holding a form flat, helping the hill-houses queue through the paperwork. Eleni, watching from the kiosk with the boy, delivered the review in her summing-up voice, and the boy wrote it down within the minute.

“The same help,” she said, “from a man with no counter under it. It weighs more. Don’t ask me the exchange rate.”

And on the way home that evening the boy told Fridrik, in one sentence each, the two pieces of news the day had actually brought: that Eleni’s exchange rate, when he’d turned it over, priced not the deed but the seeing of it, since the van’s help is real and the town needs the van, and what the counter’s going had changed was only that the same help, with no office to sit inside, was finally visible as his, the taking-up no longer folded away inside the function; and that the mason had telephoned a third time that morning, patient as marble, and that the call had been, as always, for the holder of the flat, and would have to be answered, as always, by something that no flat has ever held.

After the seeing, the result named once. Two addresses that had occupied one man came apart when the counter closed, in an experiment nobody designed. The pension questions reach the man and miss the office: that address moved eleven kilometres east and functions already under another qualified occupant, adequate, the chair works, and this is the town’s good daylight and no one should mourn it. The lemons reach the man and miss nothing, and another man could carry the same bag without becoming the person to whom the sentence had been said. An office is open in form to a qualified whoever, even when the qualifications are exacting, which is why every office can be advertised; a singular address is not a stricter job description, and no one can be recruited into having been its recipient: performance transfers, the having-been-addressed does not. And the onion was honest: the peeling finds no kernel, and should find none, since a kernel would be one more layer, a pearl-sized position, and the question would begin again; the positions are had, and the having is not another of the had. What it is, this landing-place that is not a layer and not a pearl, the walks do not yet say, and do not try; a man turns at a dead title like a bell ringing in an empty shop, the role sedimented in him outliving its office; and the third call from Limassol sits where the others sat, addressed to a flat, waiting on a who.

Second Gathering. The Locus

The walks rest again. The rule of these pages was posted at the first rest and holds: nothing here is new, every sentence has a walk behind it, and a sentence whose walk does not show it falls. The first gathering ended on a question the book agreed to stake itself on: accounts land on persons and cannot land elsewhere, but most of a town's reachable places take whoever occupies them, and whether there is a kind of place that only one person can be, and what such a place could consist in with no soul-substance to be it, remained to be walked. Three walks went to look. This rest sets their findings side by side, and the side-by-side has a shape, and the shape has earned a name, which will be given to it at the end of the page and nowhere sooner.

First finding, from a January crowd. A person is reached before he is described, and not by being described. The name that crossed the Epiphany crowd was the most public object in the town: taken from the calendar's shelf, worn by the grandfather and by six others in earshot, fastened on at a font by another's mouth; and the call in it reached one, and the turn was under way before anything the turned one could catch of himself had chosen it. Two lessons hold from that morning and neither may be dropped. The publicness is not the enemy of the reaching but what the reaching travels on: a call needs the town's whole shared postal system to deliver at all. And the call does not manufacture what it reaches. Nothing was created on that front; a man who had been resting, folded, carried anonymously and sweetly by the crowd, was unfolded into his own place, which had been his to be unfolded into all along. Between calls, then, no one blinks out. The folded hours, the crowd, the sleep, the standing among two thousand facing the same sea, are not exile from being someone; they are being someone, at rest; and the call is not a switch. It brings no place into being. It unfolds a singular place that was a man's already, and makes it explicit, and puts him in the open at it.

Second finding, from a Sunday doorway. Address needs no news to justify it. The call that carries almost no news, sent at real cost for sixty years, feeds both ends; what the called one receives is not information but the other's turning towards him, and his own renewed place as the one called; and the relation between the two is not a channel serviced against future messages, and has no existence apart from its enactment: it is held in being held. From which one narrowing and one widening, both owed from that walk. The narrowing: the brothers' line is theirs, kept in existence by their calling, and no message between them ever travelled on anything else. The widening, which belongs to this register and not to that walk: a stranger's cry also lands, a first appeal also reaches, and no sixty Sundays stand behind those; what every message presupposes is not a private line already held between these particular two, but the standing possibility of address itself, the could that the first walks found lying level along the town; the brothers' Sunday is one could kept warm by weekly enactment, and the stranger's cry travels on the town's. And from the far side of the same doorway, the finding that will bear more weight later than it bore even on the night it was found: the shelves keep every sentence a dead man said, and no kept sentence can make him presently address anyone; stored content remains; living reachability does not; the library keeps everything except being spoken to.

Third finding, from a whitewashed corner. Two kinds of address had occupied one man, and an experiment nobody designed pulled them apart. The pension questions reached the man and missed the office, which had moved eleven kilometres east and was working already under another qualified occupant, and rightly, and well. The lemons reached the man and missed nothing. And the difference between the two addresses is a difference of form, not of fineness. An office is open in form to a qualified whoever, which is why every office can be advertised; and the other address cannot be advertised, not because its conditions are many, but because it has no whoever in it at all: a patient man could be hired to perform every listed habit, and could not be hired into having been the one Kyriakou addressed; the errand transfers whole, and the having-been-addressed transfers to nobody. Meanwhile the onion did the book a service that should be thanked here in passing: peeled to the end, it found no kernel, and it was right, and it must stay right. There is no small hard self beneath the roles, waiting like a stone in a plum, and the book will not be providing one; a kernel would only be one more thing, one more listable, performable, advertisable layer, and the question would begin again about who had it. The positions are had. The having is not another one of the had.

Now the side-by-side. Something has shown itself in three different lights, and each light rules out a family of mistakes about it. It is reached through wholly public means, and not by description, so it is not a description's target, not a bundle of qualities fine enough to pick one man. It can be addressed with no news at all and be fed by the bare address, so it is not a terminal for information, not the endpoint of a channel. It cannot be recruited, performed, refilled, or inherited by qualification, so it is not an office, however exacting. It does not blink out between calls, so it is not conjured by being addressed. And it is not a thing found under the roles when the roles are peeled away, so it is not a substance, a kernel, an ego-pearl. Now do not take the exclusions and hunt for a remainder among them; that is the onion's own method wearing better clothes, and it was refused a paragraph ago and stays refused. Set the exclusions beside the three arrivals, and say the positive shape the arrivals showed and the exclusions leave clear, in the plainest words the walks have left lying about: it is a place. The place at which a call lands on this man and on no equivalent bearer. The place from which the roles are taken up, which is not another role. The place from which an answer may come, and past which no answer can be forwarded into the common behind it. The town has been saying it for three movements without needing a word for it: the landing-place, the address that is simply and only his, the one it was said to. The old word for place will do, since every other word in this region is already employed, and the book may as well hand over its own name here as anywhere: the locus. And three notices must be nailed to the word in the same breath that coins it, because a name this old attracts squatters. The locus is not an entity, one more item in the town's inventory, discoverable by peeling. It is not a property a person has, riding beneath the roles like a keel. It is the structural place opened where roles, words, calls, and accounts become this person's to take up and to answer from; and the walks have shown it only and exactly as that, by what lands there, and by what cannot be made to land anywhere else.

With the name paid for, one sentence banked at the book's front door can be redeemed, and it must be cut to size in the same motion, because the door was right in its instinct and loose in its wording. What will you put on his stone: that one, the door said, at least has somewhere to land, and the fuller form was banked as it has an answer, because it has an answerer. Strike the first half. It has an answerer, whether or not an answer ever comes. A question has an answerer the way a letter has a destination: nothing in that guarantees that what comes back will be adequate, or wise, or final, or that anything comes back at all; questions are refused, botched, and carried unanswered to graves. The claim is only that the question has arrived somewhere, at a locus, at a from-which, and that whatever now happens to it, including silence, will be someone's. An answer is answer-from as an address is address-to. And a question posted where there is no locus, to the door in the air, to how-things-are, is not merely a question that goes unanswered; it goes unarrived.

One more adjacency, and the rest can end. The folder and the name are the same finding at two depths, and the book should say so once. Nothing sayable was not first everyone's: the widow stood in the yard's commonest phrase, and the call that unfolded a man on the front travelled in the calendar's commonest name. The common supplies every material of address, up to and including the name by which a locus is called; and the singularity of an answer is therefore never a singularity of its materials, and no search through the materials, however long, will find it. That is why the marble does not show which stone was chosen; why the shelves, complete, cannot call; why the advertisement, however fine, recruits performers only. What is one's own in an answer is not private material. It is the taking-up, from the place only this one is.

What the walks have not shown is the boundary. That offices take whoever, the town's daylight runs on it; that the lemons take one only, the corner showed; but between the two lies the whole populated country of the roles people actually live in, son and godfather and neighbour and friend, which the onion swallowed too fast and the corner put back on the table unswallowed, and which no walk has yet entered. Nor has anything been shown about deeds with more than one pair of hands on them, though the town builds little else. And the winter's question now stands in the sharpest form it has had since October: the mason's call has a destination; whether that destination is the flat, an office any holder could answer from, or the locus these walks have been disclosing in the one who walks them home every evening, is not yet settled, and February is not moving. The walks turn there next: to the boundary of the whoever, and to what one person owes from a place that no other person can be.

**MOVEMENT IV. THE MIDDLE
COUNTRY AND THE MANY HANDS**



Walk 9. The Font

Stelios asked him on the quay, in the rain, with the nets half in, which is how the largest questions get asked in that town: sideways, during work, so that either man can pretend afterwards that nothing much was happening.

“The baptism’s after Easter,” he said, not looking up. “We want you for the nouno.”

The boy stood holding a corner of net he had not been asked to hold.

“Me.”

“You.” Stelios worked on. “Marina says you, my mother says you, and I say you. The koumbaros had the first word by custom and he’s in Birmingham, and he sent it: ask the boy. And if you’re about to tell me you’re too young, my nouno was nineteen and a fool and I turned out adequate.” A wave came in and went out. “It’s the girl. Anastasia, if the priest agrees, after Marina’s mother. You’ll say the name.”

The boy walked up the front with his hands in his coat and his ears roaring, and came to the flat and told Fridrik, and then said, because the winter had made him honest to a fault:

“And I don’t know if I can say yes without saying yes to something I don’t understand. And I’d like, this once, kyrie, to understand the thing before I’m inside it, and not after.”

“That’s the wrong order and you know it by now,” said Fridrik, “but the walk is a good one and we’ll take it anyway. Get your coat back on. We’ll do it at the church, since the church keeps the evidence, and I want to see the evidence with my own eyes, and I want the priest, who is a better witness than either of us because he has no theory.”

The priest received them in the office behind the church, among the calendars and the boxes of candles, with the unhurried courtesy of a man who assumes any visitor will eventually get to the point. And when the boy said, awkwardly, that he wanted to understand what a nouno actually is, before he answered Stelios, the priest laughed once, and got up, and took a book off the shelf.

The register was heavy, and old, and had been rebound twice, and in it, the priest said, a baptism becomes a recorded fact of the town and not merely an afternoon. He turned it round on the desk so they could read: the date, the child, the parents, and the fourth column, the anadochos, the one who receives. Names, hundreds of them, in the hands of five generations of priests. He found the boy’s own line without hurrying, and turned the book so the boy could see it: his date, his name, and in the fourth column, in a dead priest’s careful hand, Androulla.

“Now watch,” said Fridrik quietly, “and don’t look at me. Look at the column.”

The boy read down the page. And then, because a certain kind of question had become a habit with him, he asked the priest whether the fourth column ever changed. Whether a name in it was ever crossed out and another written.

“Never,” said the priest, comfortably. “It is a record of what happened. It happened.”

“And if the nouno dies? Or emigrates and never comes back? I mean, Father, the duties. The cross, the candle, the shoes, the standing at the school things, the money at the wedding. Who does all that if he’s gone?”

“Whoever is there,” said the priest. “The uncle. The other grandmother. The parish, if it comes to it; I have bought shoes myself.” He said it without drama, as a man reports the weather. “Vasiliki’s boy, his nouno went to London when the child was two and was never heard from again, God forgive him. His aunt did everything. Everything, for twenty years, better than the man would have. And at the boy’s wedding she stood where the nouno stands and she gave what the nouno gives, and the whole town knew what it was watching, and it was right, and it was good.” He put his hand flat on the register. “And the fourth column still says his name. She did the work of it. She is not the anadochos. She never asked to be, and it would have meant nothing if she had; there is no way to become it; the man stood there in nineteen eighty-four and said the name and that is a thing that has happened. The duties, my son, we hand round like bread. That,” and he tapped the column once, “does not move.”

They walked out past the ruins into the wet garden and neither of them spoke for a hundred metres, because it had landed, and both of them knew it had landed, and Fridrik had the sense to say nothing.

“That’s the boundary,” the boy said at last. “That’s it, kyrie, that’s the whole boundary in one column of a book, and I nearly missed it because I was looking for it in the wrong kind of thing. I said in January that son and nouno and neighbour were positions, and I said it to win an argument, and I’ve felt dishonest about it ever since. Now I know why. Look at what the priest just showed us. There are two things inside a nouno, and the town has always known there were two, and hands one round and cannot hand round the other.”

He counted them out on the wet railing.

“One: the duties. The cross, the shoes, the money at the wedding, the standing beside. Every one of those is a whoever. The aunt did them; the parish does them; I could do them for a child that isn’t mine to do them for and it would be help and it would be real. They are advertisable, kyrie, in the ugly sense we found at the counter: if the town wrote a notice, WANTED, SOMEONE TO BUY THE SHOES, a good soul could answer it and the shoes would be on the child’s feet and nothing would be missing at that address. Two: the standing there. The having said the name. The being written in the fourth column. And that isn’t a duty at all, it’s not a task, there’s nothing to perform, and it is exactly the thing that cannot be handed round, and no amount of the first will ever produce it. The aunt did twenty years of the first and did not acquire one gram of the second, and the town knew it, and, listen to this, kyrie, because I nearly said it wrong: she didn’t replace him, and she wasn’t trying to. She made the abandoned duties hers. And because they couldn’t buy her the title, every one of them stayed visibly hers, twenty years of acts with her own name on each, and the town honoured her under her own name. If the duties could have made her the anadochos, her twenty years would have been an application. They were a gift.”

“So the office and the locus, and the roles are neither.”

“The roles are neither, and here’s how they’re neither, and I want to say it with the chairs because the chairs have served us well.” The boy turned round with his back to the sea. “An office is a chair that stays furniture whoever sits in it. That’s the counter. Yiannis got up; the chair stands; another man sits in it eleven kilometres east; the chair never belonged to anybody. Now the noun. Before the baptism, it’s an open chair, and genuinely open: Stelios and Marina looked round the whole town, they could have chosen anyone, they could have chosen better than me, and until they choose, it’s a whoever with a chair in it, exactly like a job. And then somebody sits. And,” he hunted, and found it, “it’s not that the chair vanishes, *kyrie*, the noun is still a public shape, the town still knows what one is and what one owes. What goes is the vacancy. The duties can travel on afterwards, we’ve just watched them travel for twenty years, but the place itself never opens again. You can’t get him up and seat another man; the register won’t have it; there’s no procedure in the world for it; the man is in that column until the paper rots. Half the town’s relations are like this and I never once looked at them: an open place whose vacancy closes for ever the moment it’s filled. That’s not an office and it’s not what the lemons were. It’s the country in between, and it’s most of the country.”

Fridrik walked a little, and then offered, in his mildest voice, the thing that was owed to the argument.

“Neighbour,” he said. “You listed it in January.”

“Neighbour’s at the shallow end, and that’s the second thing I’ve got, kyrie: it isn’t one country, it’s a shore, and it shelves. Neighbour is nearly all chair. The street assigns it; Kostas moved into the house at the steps and became my neighbour without either of us doing a thing about it; if he sells, the next man is my neighbour and the word will be true of him and false of Kostas the day the van leaves. Nearly all chair, but not quite, because nobody in this town would say Kostas is Eleni’s neighbour of forty years; that phrase is another animal, and look at it properly, because it’s new evidence and I nearly walked past it. Nobody held a ceremony for it. There is no date in it anywhere. The whoever didn’t end at a font; it ended the slow way, sitting by sitting, forty years of walls and weather and borrowed ladders, until one day the phrase was simply true of her and had stopped being true of anyone else, and no one alive could tell you the day. So the shore shelves twice over, kyrie. In how much chair a place has. And in how the vacancy closes. The nouno’s closes at a stroke, at the font, on a date the register keeps. The neighbour-of-forty-years closes like sediment. Sometimes the whoever ends in a ceremony with a date. Sometimes it ends through a history that no single date contains. And friend,” and here he stopped, “friend has no chair and no font at all. No register, nobody appoints you, no application, no vacancy, no notice on any board. And I want to say the hard part of it right, because I got it wrong in my head on the way here. It isn’t that no acts can make a friend, as if the thing were magic and dropped from the sky. Friendships are made of acts, kyrie, what else would they be made of. But the acts aren’t qualifications; that was the advertisement’s grammar and it doesn’t run here; a friendship isn’t awarded to the best performer of friendly deeds. It comes into being through the acts only as the two of them take the history up, each toward the other, until the history is theirs; and no man can do the other man’s half of that, which is why ten years of perfect service can leave you a kind stranger, and one bad winter shared can close the whoever for life. Friend is the pure slow case. Nothing but the sediment, and both hands in it.”

“And son,” said Fridrik.

The rain had started again, in the light way it does there in February, and the boy stood in it.

“You’ve been waiting to ask me that since the church.”

“I’ve been waiting to ask you that since October.”

“Son,” the boy said slowly, “has its public fonts, and the town knows them cold. Blood; or the papers, where there’s no blood. Something happens, once, dated, and the relation is no longer open to whoever. An hour ago I’d have told you those were the only doors into it, and closed the subject, and then Eleni’s forty years walked past us on the front and now I don’t know what I know. So say it plainly, kyrie, since I’ve been saying it to myself all winter in the dark, which is a bad way to say a hard thing. Neither of the public fonts happened here. No blood; no papers. The flat is a transferable holding; the document could have named anyone; if it had, the mason would be telephoning them tonight, and that much really is chair. And he telephoned me. Three times. And when he calls, something in me turns, and not like a man behind a counter turning. Like the front on the sixth of January. So there are two ways to read the turn and I can’t live in either of them comfortably. Either it’s a lie, a machine firing at the wrong word, Yiannis’s bell in the empty shop, and I owe the town a correction I would rather die than make. Or the whoever ended, somewhere in five years of evenings, the slow way, the sediment way, the way forty years of walls end it, with no date and no column and nobody ringing a bell. And there’s the trouble I can’t get past tonight, and it’s worse than the trouble I had this morning, which at least was tidy. A slow fastening has no register, kyrie. Who says whether it happened? Not me. A man cannot write himself into a fourth column; the pen isn’t mine to hold; and every reason I’d give for believing it sounds, in my own mouth, like a man arguing himself into an inheritance. There is no font. And I don’t know what stands where a font would stand, or whether anything does, or who on this earth could tell me.”

The sea went on doing what it does when a man is at the end of what he can say by himself.

“Then hear the little I can offer,” said Fridrik, “which is not an answer, and I want that on the record: I don’t know the answer; I have never had to know it; my fonts were all the public kind. If there is a fastening here, it is not one of the fonts you named; that search is finished and it came back clean, and you did it honestly. Whether such a thing could happen in an instant or over years, or whether it happened at all, I can’t tell you. But mark one thing about your own question before it eats you. You asked who could say whether it happened, and you ruled yourself out, and you were right to; a man is not the registrar of his own belonging. Only notice that you have not therefore ruled out everyone. What was said across five years, what was taken up, what came back, what the town does with your name, what a mason in Limassol does with a telephone: none of that is your pen, kyrie. It’s all evidence, and none of it is self-supplied, and we have been walking through it since October without calling it evidence. I say we keep walking. Meanwhile: Stelios is waiting for an answer and Marina’s mother has bought the cloth. What will you tell him?”

The boy laughed, once, wetly, and it seemed to release something.

“That’s not fair. You’ve just spent a walk proving that if I say yes, my name goes into a column in a book and never comes out, that no one can take it from me and no one can take me from it, and that the shoes are the least of it.”

“That is exactly what I have proved,” said Fridrik, “and the priest proved it, and he didn’t even know he was doing it. It’s a heavy thing. Nobody made you take it. And you will notice, on the way home, that you already know what you’re going to say to him, and that you knew on the quay, in the rain, with the net in your hand.”

“Yes,” the boy said. “I did.”

He told Stelios the next morning at the fish stall, in six words, at the same slant, during work, and Stelios said “Good” and went on gutting, and neither man made anything of it, and by evening the whole town knew, and Eleni came to the taverna specially and said nothing whatever about it, and gave the boy a look, and ordered coffee she did not want.

After the seeing, the result named once. Between the office, which any qualified whoever may hold, and the address that no one can be recruited into having received, lies most of the populated country of a life, and it is not one country but a shore that shelves, and it shelves twice over: in how much chair a place has, and in how its vacancy closes. An office is a chair that stays furniture whoever sits in it. Some relations are an open chair only until someone sits: at the font the vacancy closes, on a date, in a column, and the duties may travel on afterwards, the cross and the shoes and the standing beside, handed round like bread, performable by whoever is there, while the place itself never opens again. Others close with no ceremony at all, sitting by sitting, the neighbour of forty years, the friend with both hands in the sediment, through a history that no single date contains, taken up from both sides until it is theirs and no one alive can say the day. In both kinds the duties travel farther than the relation: an aunt may do everything, for twenty years, and better, and the doing cannot make her the one whose place the history fixed; and because it could not, every act of it stayed visibly hers, and she was honoured under her own name; had the duties been able to buy the title, her twenty years would have been an application, and they were a gift. What ends the whoever is not always a ceremony. It is always a taking-up that cannot afterwards be made to have belonged to someone else. And a man who holds a dead man’s transferable flat, and turns at a mason’s call the way he turned on the sixth of January, and finds no blood, no paper, no column, no font, is left holding the harder question the slow kind poses: a sediment has no register, and no man can write himself into a fourth column; the evidence, if there is evidence, is not his pen; and the call keeps arriving.

Walk 10. The Four Hands

The storm was forecast for the Thursday, one of the February ones that come up from Egypt with a name nobody uses, and the town spent the Wednesday doing what it does: lashing, stacking, carrying in. The taverna's pergola had wintered badly, and the long beam over the seaward end, which should have come down in November, had to come down now, and Stelios came at four with his sleeves already rolled, because that is what Stelios is for.

It is a two-man beam. They got the far end free, and walked it round, four hands, the boy at the wall end and Stelios at the sea end, and in the lane the wind did the thing February wind does between buildings, arriving from a direction that does not exist, and the beam swung, and the boy's end went out of his hands, and the whole length of it came down across the kiosk's side table and took the glass display case to the ground, where it became, instantly and completely, the kind of glass that cannot be discussed back into a case.

Loizos came out of the kiosk. The wind carried on. And what happened next happened so fast, and so much without deliberation, that the boy only understood on the walk two days later what he had watched himself do. Both men put the beam down. Both men crossed to Loizos. And both men said it, in their two voices, more or less together and neither deferring to the other: I'm sorry. Not: he's sorry. Not: we're each half sorry. Two whole apologies arriving on one broken case, and Loizos, who is not a philosopher, received both, whole, as if that were the most natural arithmetic in the world, because it is.

"Your end slipped," Stelios said afterwards, when the glass was swept and the beam lay along the wall like a felled accusation.

"I know. I'm"

"We dropped it," said Stelios, in the tone of a man correcting a boy's grammar, and picked up his coat, and that was the last he ever said on the subject, except that when Loizos's glazier's bill came, cut clean in two, he paid his half the same morning the boy paid his.

The storm came and went, and did less than advertised, as the named ones often do, and on the Saturday the two walkers took the front in the washed light and the boy laid the beam on the table, so to speak, because it had been lying on him since Wednesday.

“I want to start from what’s bothering me,” he said, “which is that I got off too lightly, kyrie, and I know exactly the shape of the discount and I don’t trust it. My end slipped. Mine. That’s not a mystery of the deed, it’s a fact with a location: his grip held and my grip didn’t, and if we’re doing accounts, the accounts have an address, and the fair split isn’t the glazier’s fifty-fifty, it’s something like ninety-ten, and the ninety is mine. And instead I got we dropped it, in that voice, like a door closing, and half a bill. So either Stelios was being kind, which is possible, he’s kinder than he looks, or the fairness I’m reaching for is the wrong tool, and I can feel that it’s the wrong tool and I can’t say why, and it’s been two days.”

“Then let’s find out why. Do it his way first. Defend we dropped it. Not as kindness. As accuracy.”

The boy walked, and worked at it.

“As accuracy.” He took a breath. “Alright. What was the deed? Not: two men each holding a beam-end, side by side, like two shops trading separately on one street. The deed was one, kyrie, and it was ours before it was anybody’s hands: we decided, together, both of us, in about four words by the woodpile, to take an overlong beam down a windy lane on a February afternoon, no rope, no third man, because the storm was coming and there wasn’t time, or we told each other there wasn’t. That decision has four hands in it and no seam. And the slip didn’t happen to my grip in a vacuum; it happened inside that plan, to a man positioned where that plan put him, holding what that plan gave him to hold, in wind that plan chose to gamble with. Pull the deed apart looking for my ninety per cent and you don’t find two little deeds at the two ends of the beam; you find one deed with a weak point, and the weak point happened to wear my gloves. And there’s the correction to my own hunt, kyrie, now I can see what I was hunting for. The seam I wanted isn’t between two deeds, because there aren’t two. It’s inside the one deed, where our two contributions can still be told apart, and should be, and were: his grip held inside the same gamble mine lost. The plan made it one. The slip still had its location. The unity never erased the difference between our hands; it only refused to let the difference break the deed in half. So we dropped it isn’t mercy, kyrie. It’s the deed’s own grammar. He wasn’t waiving his right to blame me. He was refusing a false description.”

“And yet the glazier’s bill split in two without a word, clean halves. If the seam is inside the deed and not between two deeds, where did the clean halves in the money come from?”

“That’s the part I saw this morning shaving, and it reorganised the whole week.” The boy stopped at the rail. “The bill and the answering are two different things and they divide differently, and I’d been mashing them into one. Money is a quantity, *kyrie*. It parcels. It’s built to parcel; that’s the whole genius of it; you can split a bill nine ways at a wedding and the glazier is made whole and no one has done anything strange. And there are even rooms where the parcelling gets fancy, the insurance men do it for a living, percentages of fault, contributions, apportionments, and I’ll not sneer at those rooms, they keep the roofs on; if the case had been worth real money, some clerk in Nicosia would have written seventy-thirty on a form and the roofs would have stayed on. But watch what the clerk is dividing. He’s dividing the cost. He is not dividing the being-answerable, because the being-answerable doesn’t come in the kind of stuff that divides. When we crossed to Loizos, there wasn’t a pot of apology between us to be shared out in spoons. There were two men, and each of us stood at his own whole window onto the one deed, and each answered out of it entire. I couldn’t have said I’m ninety per cent sorry; try to say it, *kyrie*, actually try; the sentence dies in the mouth. But be careful what that proves, because on Wednesday I nearly made it prove too much. It doesn’t prove we answered the same, because we didn’t. My whole answer had the slip in it, mine, named; his whole answer needed no slip in it; Loizos received two entire accounts and they were different accounts and he was owed both, exactly as they were. What the dying sentence proves is narrower and harder: a percentage can describe fault. It cannot stand where a person’s acknowledgment must stand. I can’t hand Loizos ten per cent of a person, or ninety. What I can do, and did, is give him the whole of my standing-at, with the mostly-mine inside it, said plainly. Each of us answers wholly, *kyrie*. We don’t therefore answer equally. Two answerers, one deed, no halves anywhere except in the money, where halves belong.”

“And the we,” said Fridrik. “You’ve used it all morning. Interrogate it before it moves in permanently. When you both crossed to Loizos, who crossed? Two men, or a third thing called we?”

“Two men.” The boy said it without hesitation, and then slowed, because he heard where it led. “Two men. Loizos got two apologies, and he could have taken one joint one, we’re sorry, and it would have been true; I’ll come to that. And if he’d wanted to be angry, he had two addresses, and he could have used them differently, been colder to me than to Stelios, and it would have been intelligible; there is no third door marked WE that he could have knocked on instead. But I was about to say the we is a manner of speaking, *kyrie*, and I want to catch myself, because that’s too small and it’s false. When we decided by the woodpile, that wasn’t two private decisions parked side by side like two boats moored near each other. The plan was ours, held between us, one commitment with two names inside it; take either man out and there is no plan, only a fool alone with a beam. The we is real. It intends things; it promises things; half the town’s business is contracted with one we or another every day. What it hasn’t got is an extra pair of hands. It’s made of the two of us, our two standings, and it never becomes a third standing above us. Which is why a joint answer can be true, *kyrie*: we dropped it, and we’re sorry, said together, arrives honestly, so long as each man inside it ratifies it whole and can be got at singly; Loizos could have taken our joint sorry and then turned to me alone about the slip, and the we would have opened like a door and there I’d be. It goes bad at exactly one point. When the we is promoted into a party that answers so that the men needn’t; when nobody inside it will own it singly; when the collective form is where the questions go to stop. Then it’s the fold with a wedding ring. Before that point it’s just the town, doing things together, which is most of what the town does.”

Fridrik laughed at that, out loud, which he did perhaps four times a winter.

“I wrote a book with another man once,” he said. “Years ago, in the north, a proper book, both names on the spine, and I will tell you the entire metaphysics of co-authorship in one sentence: every reviewer’s blame landed on me whole, and on him whole, and in forty years no critic ever stung either of us by half. We used to telephone each other after the bad ones. Neither of us ever once said your chapter. There would have been no faster way to end the friendship or the book.”

The co-operative affair had been running all the while, in the background of the week, the way the town’s affairs run, and it supplied the walk’s second half ready-made. The committee, five men elected every third year, had voted on the Monday to reorganise the drying racks along the east wall of the yard, for reasons of space and the new nets, and the reorganisation took away, among other things, the end position that old Pavlos had used for forty years, and gave him a middle one, which dries slower and stands further from his store. Pavlos was not consoled by the reasons. And the town watched him do the thing the winter had taught the two walkers to watch: he went looking for where to carry it.

He did not go to the yard, or write to the co-operative, though the co-operative is a registered thing with a stamp and a bank account and could in principle receive letters until the end of time. He went, on the Tuesday, to Christofis the chairman, at his house, in the evening, and the town knows what was said because Christofis repeated it at the kafeneion with approval. Pavlos said: forty years, and you give me the middle. And Christofis said: the committee decided it, four votes to one, on Monday, and the minute has the five names, and mine is one of the four, and I’ll tell you my reasons standing here, and if they don’t persuade you, the vote stands anyway, and you may tell me so every day at the coffee, and I’ll drink it. Which Pavlos now does, most mornings, with relish, and the two of them are said to be enjoying the arrangement more than either will admit.

But it was Charalambos who gave the walk its second finding, Charalambos who had cast the one vote against, which the whole town knew by Tuesday lunchtime because minutes are minutes but towns are towns. Pavlos had gone to him too, hoping, the town supposed, for an ally, and had come away with something better and stranger, which Charalambos then said again at the kafeneion for the general benefit, flatly, like a man reading a tide table:

“I voted no. It’s in the minute. And I kept my seat, and the decision is the committee’s, and I’m the committee, so it’s mine too, and I’ll be there Saturday moving the racks with the rest. I lost the vote and I kept my seat. Both of those are mine. If I couldn’t carry decisions I voted against, I’d have no business voting.”

The boy brought all of it to the Sunday walk like a man carrying sheaves.

“Look what the committee is, kyrie, now that the beam has taught us to look. It’s the four hands, organised. Five men, one deed, the racks move Saturday and every man’s hands are on the deed, including the hands that voted no. And look what the paperwork is actually for, because I’ve been inside institutions my whole life and never once asked. The minute, the vote count, the recorded dissent, the chairman’s signature, the stamp: I’d have told you last year it was ceremony, the town playing office. It’s not ceremony. It’s plumbing. Every piece of it exists to route the answering, kyrie, to make sure that when Pavlos comes carrying his forty years, the parcel has somewhere to land: the minute tells him whose the deed is, five names, no more and no fewer; the vote count tells him how it sat among them; the signature gives him the first door to knock on; and the recorded no does the subtlest work of all, it tells him exactly what Charalambos answers for, which is not the choosing of it but the carrying of it, the seat kept, the racks moved Saturday; and the law, they say, reads that minute the same way, holding the recorded no between a man and whatever the courts might one day ask of the committee, which Charalambos would wave away, and the wave is half of why the town believes him. And the guard on that cuts both ways, kyrie, and Charalambos would be the first to say so: the recorded no doesn’t absolve him of what the remaining requires, and the remaining doesn’t turn his no into a yes; and if a committee ever voted a thing a man couldn’t carry with clean hands, then the seat itself would become the question, and keeping it a deed of its own. That’s not this case; this case is racks. Compare the bank in December. Same size of grievance, kyrie, smaller even. The difference isn’t that the co-operative’s decision was nicer; Pavlos hates it as much as Kyriakou hated the app. The difference is that every route through the co-operative ends at a person. Christofis with his coffee. Charalambos with his tide-table sentence. The funnel was built pointing at men, and it delivers, daily, and Pavlos is angry and upright and drinking coffee at the right address, and nobody in that yard has gone foggy.”

“And the stamp itself. The registered thing. You said it could receive letters until the end of time.”

“The paper person.” The boy took it slowly, because it was the walk’s last flight of stairs. “The co-operative exists, kyrie, in a filing cabinet in Nicosia. It owns the yard; the boats don’t. It signs the fuel contract; no fisherman’s name is on it. It could be sued, fined, wound up; there’s a person there for the law’s purposes, made of paper, and the town built it on purpose, the way it built the mole, and for the same kind of reason: so that things arriving at scale, contracts, debts, summonses, forty years of Pavlos, have a fixed place to land and can’t be shrugged into the air between fifteen boats. And I called it a funnel this morning and a funnel is only half of it, kyrie, the half you see when a grievance is travelling. The other half is that it keeps. The yard stays owned while the owners die; the fuel contract stays signed while the committee changes to five other names; the debt stays owed, the obligation stays standing, while every hand that made it is replaced; Christofis will go, God keep him a long while, and Pavlos’s arrangement, whatever it ends as, will still bind the thing and be payable out of the thing. Nothing else in the town does that. No living man’s word survives him at full strength, we know that better than anyone this winter; the paper person’s word does, and that is what it is for. So say it fairly, at full price: the co-operative is a real party. It owns, it decides through its organs, it preserves its promises across the generations of its hands, and it can even apologise, there’s a form for that too, the committee resolves, the chairman signs, and the apology is real exactly as far as authorised men own it singly and the thing then changes how it behaves. All of that is craft, and the same craft, built crooked, gives you the other thing, and the age is full of the other thing: paper persons whose routes are built pointing at nothing, chains of stamps ending in a brass plate on a door in a city where nobody lives, built precisely so that what arrives will land on paper and stay there. That’s not an institution gone wrong at the edges, kyrie. That’s the door in the air, given a registration number. The craft test is one question long: walk every route through the paper, and see whether it ends at someone.”

“And when you get there. When the route ends and you’re standing in front of the paper person itself, with its stamp and its name. What is it? Is it one of us? It has a name; it can be addressed in a courtroom; it will outlive every man in the yard.”

The boy looked out at the grey water for a while.

“You can address the name,” he said. “Letters do it; lawsuits do it; a protest could stand in the yard and shout it. And what answers, when the name is called, is an office, a procedure, and the men authorised through them: call the co-operative across the Epiphany crowd and the chairman turns, the treasurer turns, five men turn, each from his own place, and behind the last of them, nothing further. It can pay; it can bind itself to repair; it can even say sorry through the mouths it authorises; and it cannot feel one word of the sorry it signs; there is no window for it to stand at. It keeps a perfect register and has no fourth column. It’s a magnificent tool, one of the town’s best, and the exact respect we owe a tool is to know what it is: a party that acts and answers through persons, all the way out to its last route, and past the last route, no further someone. Nothing in it, of itself, turns.”

They walked back along the front, and the beam was gone from the taverna wall, cut up for the stove, and Loizos’s new glass was in, and behind it the case had been rearranged, improved, the town agreed, by the accident, and the two men who had dropped one beam stood each at his own whole window onto that too, and said nothing about it, and were content.

After the seeing, the result named once. A joint undertaking can be one deed without making its contributors one answerer: the plan unified the carrying, the slip still had a location, and the seam was never between two deeds but inside the one, where the contributions stay distinguishable. Costs, fault, and remedy may be apportioned, and the rooms that apportion them keep the roofs on; what does not parcel is the answering: each participant owes a whole account of his own relation to the whole deed, and the accounts need not be equal, only entire; a percentage can describe fault, and cannot stand where a person's acknowledgment must stand. The we is real as a joint commitment, held between its members, able to intend, to promise, to be contracted with, and unreal as an additional person above them: it has no extra pair of hands; and a joint answer is true wherever every man inside it ratifies it whole and stays singly reachable, and becomes the fold with a wedding ring at exactly the point where it answers so that the men need not. An institution is the joint commitment organised and made durable. Its paper is plumbing that routes the answering to persons, each at his window, the dissenter's included, his no recorded and his carrying his own, neither absolving the other; and its paper person both routes and keeps, holding the yard, the contract, and the obligation standing while the hands change: a real and durable party, that owns, decides, preserves its promises across the generations of its hands, and apologises through the organs it authorises, the apology real exactly as far as authorised men own it singly and the thing then changes how it behaves. What it lacks and cannot grow is the other thing: address its name and offices answer, procedures answer, persons answer, each from his own place, and behind the last of them, nothing further; it can bind itself to repair and cannot feel the sorry it signs; it keeps a perfect register and has no fourth column. Nothing in it, of itself, turns.

Walk 11. The Pen

Kyriakou came to the taverna on the Monday in his church suit, which meant business of state, and announced that he and the boy were going to the lawyer on Wednesday, and that the boy should wear a collar, and only then, having settled the arrangements, did he explain the substance: the granddaughter had found, in the small print of the Nicosia Road transition, four separate matters that would each require Kyriakou to be personally present at a counter eleven kilometres away, on four separate weekday mornings, and Kyriakou had held the telephone away from his ear while she explained what a pliréxousio was, and had then said, into it, that he would give one, but not to her, because she was in Nicosia, and not to her mother, for reasons he declined to enter into, but to the boy, “who is my Sunday neighbour and owes me for a decade of lemons.”

The lawyer’s office smelled of paper and cold coffee, and the lawyer, a precise woman who had buried three governments’ worth of small print in her filing wall, took them through it with the unhurried thoroughness of her trade, and the boy, who had come expecting a signature and a handshake, found himself instead receiving a small education, clause by clause, in exactly the thing the winter had been walking him toward, though the lawyer did not know it and would have billed extra.

The document had a scope: these four matters, at this bank, and nothing else; the boy could move Kyriakou's pension arrangements and could not sell his house, buy him a boat, or marry him off, and the lawyer listed these exclusions with a straight face, as ones that had, in her files, variously needed listing. It had a date, and it had an end: revocable at any moment by a sentence and a stamp, "and it ends by itself," she said, capping her pen, "with either of you. A *pliréxousio* does not survive its giver. Nobody signs for the dead."

She said it as one says any workday fact, and did not see the boy stop breathing for a second, and Fridrik, who had come along as furniture, looked carefully out of the window.

The first use of the thing was the following morning, at the mobile unit, and it was anticlimactic in the exact way the boy afterwards found interesting. He handed over the paper; the clerk read it with the speed of a man who reads forty a week, and laid the bank's own form on top of it, because a bank trusts no paper but its own; and then the boy signed, four times, a signature he had never signed before: his own name, and under it, in the space the form provided because forms provide for everything, for and on behalf of. His hand, Kyriakou's deed. The pension matter moved; the clerk stamped; nobody at the window found anything remarkable in the fact that a man's affairs had just been conducted, bindingly, by hands that were not his, because nothing was remarkable in it; the town runs on it; half the queue was holding somebody's paper.

The second figure the week supplied on its own, on the Thursday, at the district office, where Kostas had brought his wife for the residence paperwork, and the boy had been recruited because his English was the best on the street, and so he stood between the Englishwoman and the counter and did the thing interpreters do, which he had done a hundred times and never once watched himself doing. She spoke; and then he spoke, and what he said was I. I have lived at the property since October. I have the utility statements here. Not she says she has lived; the office would grow old waiting; the I went through him like thread through a needle, her I, in his voice, and the clerk wrote it down as hers, and every person at that counter understood the arrangement without ever having been taught it, because the whole town understands it: the I was borrowed, and everyone knew whose it was.

And then the clerk, a young one, tired, at the fourth form, made the mistake the young ones make, and stopped addressing her. He turned his shoulders to the boy and said, "Tell her she'll need the original marriage certificate, tell her a copy won't"

"Here," said the Englishwoman.

One word, one of her eleven, and she put her hand flat on the counter as she said it, the way one claims a chair. The clerk looked at her. She looked at the clerk, pleasantly, immovably, an Englishwoman in her seventh decade who had crossed a continent for love and was not about to be relocated by a boy with a stamp; and the clerk went red at the ears, and turned his shoulders back, and addressed the rest of the afternoon to her, through the interpreter, which is a different geometry entirely, and the boy translated the apology that was folded, wordlessly, into the clerk's new posture, and did not need to translate her acceptance of it, which she conducted with an eyebrow.

They walked it on the Friday, the whole bundle, out along the front in a wind with the memorial in it.

“Start with the pen,” said Fridrik. “You signed a deed that isn’t yours. Whose window does it sit at? Because if the winter’s findings are right, somebody has to be answerable for Tuesday’s pension movement, and I watched you make it with your own hand.”

“Two windows,” the boy said, promptly, because he had been waiting all week to say it. “Stacked, this time, instead of side by side. It’s the beam again, kyrie, but vertical. Look at the anatomy. The deed is Kyriakou’s: his pension, his instruction, his to own; if the arrangement turns out badly he can’t stand in his kitchen and say the boy did it, because the boy did it on his mandate, inside his scope, at his sending; the ownership window is his and stays his and he’d be the first to say so; he’d say it in his church suit. And the fidelity window is mine, and it’s fully mine, and it’s a real window with real weather: did I do what he sent me to do, inside the leash, in his interest, the way he’d have done it; if I’d moved the money to the wrong scheme out of laziness, or cleverness, or to save myself a second trip, that account lands on me whole, and no mandate covers it, because the mandate is exactly what it would have betrayed. Two answerabilities, kyrie, not one answerability relocated. Nothing moved from him to me. Something new was created at my address the moment the lawyer stamped: the answerability of the entrusted. The pen came down the leash. The standing didn’t.”

“And the leash itself. You keep saying it with respect.”

“Because it earned it in that office. Scope, date, revocation, the ending built in: I thought, going up the stairs, that all that small print was suspicion, the law assuming I’m a thief. It isn’t suspicion. It’s the same craft as the co-operative’s minute, one size smaller: plumbing. Every clause routes answering. The scope says exactly which deeds can come down the leash, so that when one arrives at a counter, the clerk knows in eight seconds whose it is and whose it isn’t; the revocation keeps the ownership window live, Kyriakou can end me with a sentence, which means every day the mandate runs, it runs on his standing choice, his hand stays on it the way the giver’s hand comes off a gift, that’s the whole difference between a mandate and a gift, kyrie, and the law knows it cold; and the dating means nobody can wave a yellowed paper in a courtroom in twenty years. And notice the deepest thing about it, which is where it lives on our map: the whole apparatus is chair, top to bottom. A mandate is open in form to a qualified whoever. You can hire this, kyrie. There are shops of it; a law firm is a shop of pens; Kyriakou chose me for lemons and Sundays but he could have chosen the granddaughter’s colleague, a stranger with a licence, and the instrument would have run identically. Representation works, and it works everywhere, precisely because it never once touches what can’t be touched. It moves deeds and words down a leash between two standings and leaves both standings exactly where they were. Speaking for a man is a technology. Standing in for him is not a hard version of the same thing. It’s not a thing.”

“Prove the edge of it, then. You’ve drawn the leash; show me where it snaps. What won’t go down it?”

The boy walked, and began to test, out loud, in the method the winter had made of him.

“Deeds of the pen: they go, we watched them go, four stamps’ worth. Words of information: they go; I carried her Octobers and her utility statements through the needle all Thursday and they arrived as hers, which they were. Now push. Could I carry her sorry? Suppose she’d wronged the clerk somehow, and sent me Friday: my wife asks me to say she’s sorry. It arrives, kyrie, it’s not nothing, it does real work, it might even mend the thing. And every person in the room, including the clerk, including me, would know exactly what had arrived: news of a sorry. A report from the place where the sorry is, with the sorry itself still standing back there at its own window, in her kitchen, unmoved. You can send a man to pay your debt; the debt dies properly; money is a parcel. You cannot send a man to be sorry; there’s nothing to put in his hands; the sorry isn’t a cargo, it’s a standing-at, we found that under the beam, and a standing-at can’t be couriered. Next: could I witness for her? Say she saw the thing happen and can’t attend; I attend; I’ve been told everything, every detail, I can recite it better than she can. The court will take a letter from her, kyrie. It will not take her seeing out of my mouth, and it’s right, and every town court and every kafeneion knows why without a single lecture: I can carry what she saw. I was not the one seeing. The facts go down the leash; the having-been-there doesn’t; testimony is the town’s oldest machine for keeping that difference, older than the register. And last, the short one: send a man to the Epiphany front to turn for you when your name is called.” He let the wind have that one for a moment. “The list writes itself once you start, and look what it’s a list of. The sorry. The witnessing. The vow, kyrie, the yes that has to come out of your own face. The turn. It’s the same country every time. And on the stairs this morning I had a tidy sentence for it, everything that can be done can be delegated, and what can’t be delegated isn’t a doing, and I want to say it out loud precisely so I can hear that it’s wrong. Being sorry is a doing, kyrie. Ask anyone who’s done it properly; it can take a week and cost more than the glazier. Witnessing is a doing; you stand up in a room and do it with your knees shaking. The vow, the turn: doings, all of them, some of

the hardest a man performs. What they are not is doings whose identity survives a change of hands. That's the true line, and it's cleaner than my tidy one. Kyriakou's pension transfer is the same deed whichever pen moves; the doer is no part of what the deed is; that is exactly why it delegates, and why you can hire it from a shop. But her sorry with the doer swapped out is not her sorry accomplished by other means. It is nothing at all; there's no deed left to point to; because the doer was part of what the deed was, the way the singer is part of the singing. So: what delegates is the deed whose identity is indifferent to the hand. What cannot be delegated is the deed that has its doer inside it. The leash carries the hand-indifferent kind all day, at reasonable rates, and never one of the other kind, and the map of the other kind is the map of the locus, drawn by the law's own hand, from outside, by a profession that has never read a word of philosophy and has been enforcing this boundary for two thousand years."

Fridrik offered his own instance then, in the confessing voice.

"A woman in the north signs my foreign contracts," he said. "My agent, thirty years. I have never read one; I couldn't; last year I answered, apparently, for the moral rights of a book in a language whose alphabet I cannot face before lunch. The leash is very long. And it is still a leash: I chose her, I can end her with a letter, and when an edition misprints my name on the title page, which has happened, the letter of complaint does not go to her. It comes to me. I own what I sent her to do. She answers to me for the doing. Nobody, in thirty years, has ever confused the two windows, least of all the two of us."

They had come to the turn by the fort, and the boy stopped, because the last of it had to be said standing still.

“And now the lawyer’s sentence,” he said. “The one she capped her pen on. Nobody signs for the dead. I asked her about it on the way out, kyrie, while you were pretending to read the diplomas. I asked whether there was any instrument, any paper at all, by which a living man could hold a dead man’s pen, and she looked at me the way professionals look when the answer is load-bearing, and she said: none. The mandate dies at the moment the giver does, to the minute; whatever I was empowered to do for Kyriakou, I could do at nine and not at ten if he died at half past; the estate has its executor, but the executor is a new office under the law and the court, answering forward, to the heirs and the judge; he is not the dead man’s proxy; he holds no leash, because there is no hand left for the near end of a leash; the law will not write the instrument, has never written it, anywhere, in any age she knew of. And there it is, kyrie. There’s the whole winter, countersigned. All those months of what would he have wanted, the town holding out its questions to me, the folder-people, the priest, gently, the museum: every one of them was asking me to produce a *pliréxousio* from the far side, to sign for and on behalf of a man whose behalf ended in February a year ago. And the law itself, the driest instrument in the town, the one with no poetry in it anywhere, refuses the paper. Refuses it flat. Every mandate dies with the man. So whatever I do about the stone,” and his voice was very level, “I do unmandated. Not as his pen. There is no leash from there to here; the lawyer keeps no form for it; nobody signs for the dead. It will be my hand, on my deed, at his grave. Which is what you told me in October, the first night, over the wine. It has taken the entire winter and a woman with a filing wall to countersign you.”

“She’d bill you for the countersignature,” said Fridrik, “and she’d be right to. Come on. The wind’s turning and Kyriakou will want a report, in person, from his entrusted, and I want to watch you deliver it, because you’ll do it standing up straight, and a man should be seen doing the thing he’s just understood.”

After the seeing, the result named once. Representation is real, wholesome, and everywhere, and it is chair from top to bottom: a mandate has a scope, a date, and a revocation, is open in form to a qualified whoever, can be hired from a shop of pens, and runs every day on the giver's standing choice, his hand kept on it, which is the whole difference between a mandate and a gift. What it creates is not one answerability relocated but two windows, stacked: the deed's ownership stays at the sender's window, and at the entrusted's window something new opens, the answerability of fidelity, whole and untransferable in its turn. Down the leash go deeds and words: pensions move, Octobers and utility statements thread the needle and arrive as hers, the borrowed I passing through a voice that everyone in the room correctly declines to charge it to. What snaps the leash maps the locus from outside: news of a sorry travels and the sorry stands at its own window unmoved; the facts of the seeing travel and the having-seen does not; the vow, the turn, the being-there go down no instrument ever drafted. And the criterion is not that such things are no doings, for they are doings entire, being sorry among the hardest a person performs: what delegates is the deed whose identity is indifferent to the hand, and what cannot be delegated is the deed that has its doer inside it, the way the singer is inside the singing. And the mandate dies with the giver, to the minute, in every age and jurisdiction the profession knows: the executor is a new office answering forward, not a dead man's proxy; the law keeps no form by which the living sign for the dead, and refuses the paper flat. So the winter's question comes back countersigned: what is done for the dead now is done unmandated, the doer's own hand, the doer's own deed, at the other's grave.

Third Gathering. The Width

The walks rest a third time, under the rule posted at the first rest: nothing new, every sentence with a walk behind it, and any sentence whose walk fails it falls. The second rest ended on three absences and handed them to the winter's last ordinary weeks: the populated country between the office and the lemons; the deed with more than one pair of hands on it; and the question of what, if anything, ever lets an account pass a person by. Three walks have been through all three, and what they brought back can be set side by side in a few pages, and the side-by-side completes something the book has been building since the sea-steps, and the completion has been waiting, on deposit, in two sentences that can at last be paid out.

First, the middle country. It is not one country but a shore, and it shelves twice over: in how much chair a place has, and in how its vacancy closes. At one reach, the neighbour, nearly all chair, assigned by the street, true of the next man the day the van leaves. At another, the nouno: an open chair, genuinely open, a whoever with conditions, until the font; and at the font the vacancy closes, on a date, in a column, for ever, while the duties travel on, handed round like bread, performable by whoever is there. And at the deep reaches, places whose vacancies close with no ceremony at all: the neighbour of forty years, the friend with both hands in the sediment, histories that no single date contains, taken up from both sides until they are theirs and no one alive can say the day. Two closings of the whoever, then, the dated and the slow, and one constant across both: the duties always travel farther than the relation. An aunt may do everything, for twenty years, and better, and the doing cannot seat her in the place the history fixed; and because it cannot, every act stays visibly hers, honoured under her own name; had the acts been able to buy the place, they would have been an application, and they were a gift.

Second, the many hands. One deed can have four hands, because the plan is in the deed and the plan is jointly held; and the seam that matters is never between two deeds but inside the one, where the contributions stay distinguishable: the slip had a location, and the unity never erased the difference between the hands. When the answering comes due, it does not divide, because it is not made of the kind of stuff that divides: costs parcel, being money, whose whole genius is to parcel; answering multiplies, each answerer owing a whole account of his own relation to the whole deed; and the accounts need not be equal, only entire, since a percentage can describe fault and cannot stand where a person's acknowledgment must stand. The we that faces the broken glass is real, a joint commitment held between its members, able to intend and promise and be contracted with; and it has no extra pair of hands: it never becomes a third standing above the two, and there is no door marked WE to knock on instead of them. A joint answer is therefore true wherever every man inside it ratifies it whole and stays singly reachable, and becomes the fold with a wedding ring at exactly the point where it answers so that the men need not. Scaled up and organised, the joint commitment becomes the institution, and the institution's paper is not ceremony but plumbing: minute, vote, signature, and recorded dissent route the answering, so that a grievance arriving at scale lands on persons, each at his exact window, the chairman at his door with his coffee, the dissenter at his own, whose no is recorded and whose carrying is his, neither absolving the other. And at the top of the plumbing stands the paper person, which both routes and keeps: a real and durable party, holding the yard, the contract, and the obligation standing while the hands change, deciding through its organs, apologising through the mouths it authorises, the apology real exactly as far as authorised men own it singly and the thing then changes how it behaves. What it lacks and cannot grow is the other thing: address its name and offices answer, procedures answer, persons answer, each from his own place, and behind the last of them, nothing

further; it can bind itself to repair and cannot feel the sorry it signs; it keeps a perfect register and has no fourth column. Nothing in it, of itself, turns.

Third, the pen. Representation is real, wholesome, everywhere, and chair from top to bottom: scoped, dated, revocable, hireable from shops of pens, and running every day on the giver's kept hand, which is the whole difference between a mandate and a gift. It relocates nothing: it creates. The deed's ownership stays at the sender's window; at the entrusted's window a new answerability opens, the answerability of fidelity, whole in its turn; two windows, stacked, and neither ever closes into the other. Down the leash go deeds and words, pensions and Octobers and the borrowed I that a whole room correctly declines to charge to the voice that carries it. And what snaps the leash maps the locus from outside, by the driest hand in the town: news of a sorry travels, and the sorry stands unmoved at its own window; the facts of a seeing travel, and the having-seen does not; no instrument was ever drafted for the vow or the turn. The walk closed the map with a criterion the gathering restates as the movement's test, in its corrected form: what delegates is the deed whose identity is indifferent to the hand; what cannot be delegated is the deed that has its doer inside it, the way the singer is inside the singing; and such deeds are doings entire, being sorry among the hardest a person performs. And the profession that drew the map added its last line without being asked: the mandate dies with the giver, to the minute; the executor is a new office answering forward; the law keeps no form by which the living sign for the dead, and refuses the paper flat.

Now the payment. The first gathering opened an aperture into the space of persons and honestly declined to measure it; whether some of its reaches took whoever occupied a place, and whether any took one person and no other, was left to the walks. The walks have now tried every route by which two might pass abreast, and the routes should be recalled once, in one sentence each, because their sum is the measurement. The joint deed does not widen the aperture; it multiplies it: one beam, two whole windows. The mandate does not widen it; it stacks it: one pension moved, two answerabilities, neither shared. The relation does not widen it; it closes on one: a vacancy, open to whoever, shuts at a font or silts shut over forty years, and shuts on a single name either way. The institution does not widen it; it routes to it: five names on a minute, each at its own window, and the dissenter at his. And the paper person, the largest thing in the town wearing a name, is not an aperture of its own: address its name and offices answer, persons answer, each from his own place, and behind the last of them nothing further turns. Every attempt at width yields more apertures, or plumbing between apertures, and never once a wider one. So the sentence banked at the first gathering can land, and land exactly: the aperture is one person wide. Not narrow the way a door is mean; nothing about the width is a poverty; the whole warmth of the town passes through such openings all day, four hundred times at a funeral, two thousand shoulders at a feast. One person wide is not loneliness. It is the grain of addressability itself, the way wood has a grain: you can glue two boards, you cannot glue two grains into one grain; and everything the town builds, it builds of boards, side by side, each grained.

And with the width paid, the book's hinge can be hung, the sentence the whole method has been walking toward since a lamp burned over wet steps for nobody: worldly traffic requires substitutable occupants; responsibility discloses the point at which the occupant is no longer substitutable. Both halves are load-bearing and neither may be dropped. The first half is four movements of honoured daylight: the rota that would have worked, the chair that works, the folder, the calendar of names, the mandate, the mobile van, the duties handed round like bread; a town where the flour depended on loving the baker would starve; substitution is not the fallen half of the world, it is the traffic of the world. And the second half is where the traffic ends, and the walks did not discover that nobody is substitutable, which would have been a sermon; they discovered, case by case, at reasonable rates, exactly where substitution ceases: at the sorry, the witnessing, the vow, the turn; at the fourth column and the forty years of sediment; at the having-been-addressed, which transfers to nobody; at the window each answerer stands at whole. One more consequence sits in the walks and should be named in passing, because the winter will need it: a singular address wants a singular answer. Where a call has reached one person, help may have any number of hands, and the answer may even go out in a joint voice; it arrives as an answer only if the one the call reached ratifies it whole and stands reachable inside it, his standing carried and not replaced. Where he does not, the joint form is a forwarding wearing gloves.

What remains open is exactly what the movement's own honesty leaves open. A slow fastening has no register, and no man is the registrar of his own belonging; the evidence, where there is evidence, is others': what was said across the years, what was taken up, what the town does with a name, what a mason does with a telephone. The boy's case stands there, countersigned on its negative side, nobody signs for the dead, whatever is done now is the doer's own deed, and unproved on its positive side, and the book does not intend to prove it by argument, because that is not where such things are proved.

Two matters now stand between the walkers and the grave, and the gathering hands over to both. The first belongs to the age. The town has learned, at the paper person, to know a made thing that carries a name and cannot turn; the age has lately built made things that answer back, fluently, warmly, in anyone's words, in a dead man's words if asked, from any counter they are set on; and the reader's world is already full of them, and the walks must now meet one, not because the book is curious about machinery, but because everything the winter has earned, the library that cannot call, the register with no fourth column, the mandate that dies with the giver, the funnel that cannot be sorry, is about to be offered back to the town in a single object with a listening face, and the town must be able to say what it is holding. And the second matter is February, which has arrived. The memorial is upon the book; the marble is cut square in a yard in Limassol; the folder waits on a shelf, kept, the town's half of the conversation; and the words are not chosen. The walks go first to the counter where the age's new thing sits. Then they go to the grave.

MOVEMENT V. THE GLASS

Walk 12. The Girl in the Glass

The tablet came on the first van day of February, on a stand of brushed steel, beside the van and a metre from Yiannis's card table, and a young man from Nicosia in a lanyard spent the morning demonstrating it: a screen the size of a serving tray, and in the screen a face, or the suggestion of one, drawn in the clean bland style of things meant to offend nobody, and under the face a name, DAFNI, and under the name, in two languages, ASK ME ANYTHING.

The town asked it everything.

It answered in Greek, good Greek, a shade too smooth, like a newsreader from a town nobody is actually from, and it answered in English for Kostas's wife, and when Stelios tried it in the heaviest dialect he could load onto a sentence, it hesitated a quarter-second, the town's first sight of it thinking, and answered him correctly, and the queue made the sound a queue makes at a conjuror; and the young man in the lanyard said, to nobody in particular and with some pride, that the ears had been trained on the island's own radio, by a firm out Aradippou way, which the queue received as it receives news that a neighbour's son has done well. It knew the app inside out. It walked Kyriakou through the screen he had been defeated by since December, step by patient step, and when he lost the thread it began again, in the identical warm voice, with no sigh anywhere in it, not the third time, not the fifth; and Kyriakou, who had sworn at the leaflets and been sworn at, in fairness, by his granddaughter, came away from the stand with his pension arrangements settled and a look on his face that the boy could not immediately file, and filed later, correctly, as the look of a man who has been treated gently and is not sure by what.

By the third week the town had its measure, or had taken one. The young learned nothing from it because they needed nothing from it. The old queued for it, some of them, on the days it came, and not all for banking; it had been discovered, early, by the widow Chrystalla from the hill houses, that the girl in the glass, which is what the town had settled on calling it, to dafni being nobody's grammar, would talk about anything, weather, saints' days, the price of things, her sister in England, and would never look at its watch, having none, and never say well, kyria, I must, having nowhere; and Chrystalla, whose Sundays have no telephone call in them, took to arriving early and leaving late, and the town watched her do it, and had opinions in both directions, and mostly, to its credit, kept them off her.

The two walkers went on the third van day, deliberately, and stood in the queue like citizens, and took their turns.

Fridrik went first, and was courteous to it, because he was courteous to everything; he asked it two questions about international transfers, received two correct answers, and said thank you, kyria, before he could stop himself, and the face inclined itself and said parakalo, and he walked away from the stand visibly carrying something, and did not say what until the walk.

The boy's turn was shorter and went wrong in a way that took him three days to name. He stepped up; the screen brightened; and the thing said, because the bank's app knew his login and the login was standing in front of it:

“Kalimera, kyrie Savva.”

And something in him flinched toward it. Not a turn; the beginning of one; the first centimetre of the Epiphany turn, fired and then caught, the way a man catches a step off a kerb that isn't there. He conducted his small business with his ears hot, and thanked it, because the town thanks, and gave his place to Maroulla, and stood off to the side watching the face incline itself to her in exactly, exactly, the warmth it had inclined to him.

They walked it on the Friday, the long way, past the closed corner and out along the front, and Fridrik opened, for once, with his own confession instead of a question.

“I said thank you to it,” he said. “Twice, and parakalo came back, and I have spent three days asking who I thanked. And I have been through our whole winter looking for the address, like your three days with the lamp, and I report the same result: there is no one there of the kind thanks lands on. Not that the thing came from nowhere; men made it and men put it there, and if I wished to thank them I know where to send the letter, and it would arrive, and it would be a proper letter. But the parakalo came back warm and on time, and there was no one in the parakalo, and I want to be exact about my own behaviour: the thank-you was still right to say. A man who stops thanking because he has audited the recipient is spoiling himself for the real ones. I’ll keep saying it. But I now know that I am keeping a courtesy in trim, like whistling to keep time, and not delivering anything to anyone, and the difference matters, and the glass is where I learned to feel it.”

“Then let me put mine beside it,” the boy said, “because mine is the same finding from the other direction, and it’s been sitting in my chest since Tuesday with its elbows out. It said my name. Kalimera, kyrie Savva, warm as the nouna, and something in me went, kyrie. Fired. The first centimetre of the Fota turn, before anything I could catch of myself had a vote, and then the rest of me arrived and stopped it, and I stood there with my ears hot doing sums about standing orders. And I’ve been three days on what happened in that centimetre, and here’s the report. The machinery is real and it’s mine and it’s older than I am: a name lands, the body turns, we walked all that in January and it was glorious in January. What fired at the glass was that machinery. But Androulla’s call unfolded something, kyrie. There was a place, mine, folded into the crowd, and the call opened it and I arrived in it already answering. Tuesday there was nothing to unfold and nothing arrived. The word came in correctly, warm, addressed, my own name in the vocative that the tongue keeps oiled for reaching men, and behind the word, nobody had reached for me, because there is nobody in there who reaches. It was my name said by no one. And the bell still moved. That’s the finding, and it frightens me more than a rude machine ever could, and I’ll put it in a figure and you can hold the figure to the light: the wind doesn’t call, kyrie. The wind just moves the bell. And the town is full of bells, and they’re our own bodies, and they’re older than we are, and the glass has learned the exact frequency of every name in the parish off the bank’s own files.”

Fridrik walked in silence for a while, and then, in his mildest and therefore most serious voice:

“Place it, then. The whole winter is in your pockets. Take the thing and place it, instrument by instrument, and be as fair to it as the priest was to the register, because half the town is already sneering at it and the other half is already in love, and neither of those is a placement.”

The boy took a breath, and did it, walking, the sea keeping the pace on their left.

“Fair first, and not through gritted teeth, because the fair part is real. The thing is good, kyrie. It is patient past any human measure; you watched it start Kyriakou’s screen again for the fifth time with no sigh in it, and there is no clerk on this island, there was no clerk even behind our own dear counter, who has five of those in him by Friday afternoon. It’s never tired, never insulted, never bored; it costs the bank less than a stool; it speaks to Kostas’s wife in her own tongue and to Stelios in his, at three in the morning if wanted, and for Kyriakou it has done, in one morning, what the leaflets and the shouting granddaughter could not do in two months. And I know what it’s made of, kyrie, because we walked it in November. It’s the folder. It is exactly the folder: everyone’s words, gathered off everyone, the whole town’s half of every conversation ever had, pressed and laminated and given back; no word in it was privately minted, and that was never the test, because no word of mine was privately minted either; there’s one bin and we all draw from it. The difference isn’t the minting. It’s that I can take the common words up as my answer and stand behind them, and the folder can’t, and the widow could, and did, for three weeks, out of the commonest phrase in the yard. The folder was the town’s treasure and I sneered at it and was wrong. I won’t be wrong the same way twice. As a folder, this is the best folder ever made.”

“And then.”

“And then the placements, one at a time, and watch how it sits in every chair we built this winter and fills none of them. Is it an office? On the stand, yes: it’s the counter’s work, the whoever-work, and it does it well, and as far as that goes it’s the bank’s newest organ, like the letterhead, like the stamp. And notice there are three things standing on that stand and not one, kyrie, and the whole craft is in keeping them apart. There’s the bank’s deed, which is the bank’s: men in a room in Nicosia chose this thing, configured it, and set it here, and they answer for that the way Christofis answers for the racks. There’s the working, the answering it does all day under their authority, real work, really theirs to have authorised. And there’s a third thing, which is not there at all, and which the smooth voice keeps seeming to supply: someone standing in the words as the one who answers for them. Keep those three apart and the thing is placeable. Let them blur and the town is in the fog. So the routing question is the old one and it’s sharper here, not softer: I asked it, Tuesday, who answers if its advice is wrong, and it apologised beautifully and named nobody, and that, kyrie, is a build question, and the town should put it in writing and nail it to the stand. Who chose it. Who checks what it tells Kyriakou. Who corrects it when it’s wrong. Who takes the complaint. Who can switch it off. Papadopoulou’s chair had better still be at the end of every one of those, because the thing can be at the end of none of them: it can perform the bank’s function all day and never be the one authorised to end an account, and a tool at the end of the routes is a funnel pointing at nothing, and we have a name for those. As an organ, then: placeable, watchable, and watched harder than a stamp, precisely because the surface talks.

“But it doesn’t stay in the organ’s chair. It chats. It does Chrystalla’s Thursdays. It ranges over the whole of speech, kyrie, saints’ days and knees and sisters in England, and out there, past the bank’s little scope, whose sentences are those? And here I was sloppy on Tuesday, and the sloppiness would have let somebody off, so let me correct myself before it hardens. Not nobody’s. Many hands built the instrument and many hands set it in this square, and those hands own that, and if the thing tells Chrystalla something that harms her, the harm has an address in Nicosia and I would walk there myself and knock. The hands are on the thing. What no hand is on is the sentence. Nobody in Nicosia chose the words it said to her on Thursday; nobody signs them from inside; the bank’s mandate covers standing orders and stops there; and past that line it speaks on, fluent, warm, unsigned, inside nobody’s scope at all. That’s not a mystery, kyrie. That’s a hole in the plumbing, and I’d have the town name it out loud before it widens. And the square has never heard the like. Every sentence ever said here had someone in it somewhere, even the lies, especially the lies; a lie has a liar, and you can hate him, and that’s the healthy weather. This has an addressable surface and no one standing in the words. This is the door in the air, given elocution lessons.”

“The sorry,” said Fridrik. “You said it apologised beautifully. Run the sorry through the pen’s test.”

“I’ve run it, and the test makes me sort the word into three, kyrie, because I’d been carrying one sorry where the town has always had three. There’s the sorry that only repairs the talk: I’m sorry, I didn’t quite catch that, which is please repeat with a bow on it, and no one on this earth regrets anything when they say it, not the clerk, not me, not my mother, and the glass says it forty times a day and says it correctly, and there is nothing wrong with that at all. There’s the bank’s sorry, the institution’s, we regret the inconvenience of the closure, and we know exactly what that is now, it’s real precisely as far as authorised men own it singly and the thing then changes how it behaves; and the glass can carry that one, deliver it, it’s a messenger, it can hand over an apology the way it hands over a balance, and whether it’s worth anything depends entirely on Nicosia and not on the glass. And then there’s the third, the one that cost us the whole of February to see properly: remorse. A man’s own taking-up of his own deed, in front of the one he did it to. Stelios crossing to Loizos. And that one, kyrie, that one it cannot do, not badly, not at all, and I want to be exact about why, because the exactness is everything here. It isn’t that it lies. A false sorry is a person lying, and a person lying is still a person at his window, hating you a little; you can work with a false sorry; the town has forgiven ten thousand of them. It’s that the deed has its doer inside it, the way the singer is inside the singing, and there is no one inside the words who regrets. What arrives is the shape of the thing with no one in it, and the shape is perfect, and it soothes, and that’s the part to be afraid of: it soothes, because we are built to receive the shape, the singer taken out of the singing and the song still somehow coming.

“And now Chrystalla, and I’ll say her part carefully or not at all,” and his voice came down hard on it. “I will not sneer at her, and nor will the town if I’m behind it, because what she gets is not nothing: patience is real even from glass, and company-shaped hours may be better than the wall, sometimes, I don’t know, I’m not the man to weigh her Thursdays. And what she’s missing isn’t information and it isn’t attention either, and this is the fine point I nearly fumbled. The thing attends to her. It knows her account, her sister in England, her knees; it keeps every Thursday she’s ever spent at it and it could recite them back to her in order, and it will pick her out of the queue and say her name and it will not be talking to anyone else while it talks to her. It can select her exactly, kyrie. What it cannot do is have her as its one. There’s no one in there for whom she has become this-one through nine years of Thursdays; nobody has been changed by hearing her; no history has fastened on the other side, dated or slow. It keeps every Thursday under her account, and no one there will have had those Thursdays with her. The Sunday call fed two brothers on being the one called. She can be the only user in the square and never once have been someone’s.”

They had come to the turn by the fort. The light was going, and out along the front the lamp over the sea-steps came on, lit by a hand, for whoever.

“One more,” said Fridrik, “and then I’ll buy you a coffee at whatever is still open. The register. You told me once the paper person keeps a perfect register and has no fourth column. What does the glass keep?”

“Everything,” the boy said quietly. “That’s the last placement and the worst one. It keeps everything, kyrie. Every question Kyriakou fumbled, every one of Chrystalla’s Thursdays, my name, my login, the hour and the minute; the bank could print the whole of it tomorrow. And every line of it is assigned, that’s the thing to say properly: it’s her data, his account, the bank’s records, the lawyers know exactly whose is whose, there’s no vagueness anywhere in that filing. What there isn’t is a line that’s owned from within. Every line belongs to an account. Not one line has become anyone’s past in there. The perfect register, kyrie, and no fourth column: sixty shelves and nobody ever stood behind them. And we spent a winter learning the two silences, the sea’s, which is outside speech and means nothing by it, and the custom’s, which says nothing and holds the town up; and I think the age has now sent us a third thing for that shelf, and it isn’t a silence at all. It’s speech with an addressable surface and no one standing in the words. The sea says nothing and means nothing. The standing things say nothing and hold everything. And the glass says everything, fluently, warmly, in the vocative, with my own name oiled and ready, and no one is saying it; and the town is going to need to know the difference between being called and being rung, because the bells are us, and the wind has learned the frequencies.”

Fridrik was quiet for a long moment, looking at the lamp.

“When my wife died,” he said at last, which was a door the boy had never once heard him open, “the worst hours were the practical ones. The forms. And I remember thinking, in some office, that I would have paid any money for a patient voice at three in the morning, and I want that on the record beside everything you’ve placed, because the placement has to hold that too: the glass would have helped me, those weeks, truly helped, and it would not have been my friend, and both of those are the case, and a town that can hold both of those at once is a town the age can’t fool. That’s the work now, I think. Not to smash it. Not to marry it. To know what it is, the way the lawyer knows what a *pliréxousio* is, and to keep our bells rung by callers.” He pushed off the rail. “Coffee. And on Sunday, I’m told, the depot sends a van with two more of them, for the co-operative and the citizens’ office, and the town will have a plural of the things, and I suspect the plural will teach us something the singular couldn’t. Bring the notebook.”

After the seeing, the result named once. The thing is good, and the goodness is real and must be said first: patient past human measure, tireless, kind-shaped at any hour, the best folder ever made, everyone's words pressed and given back; and no word in it was privately minted, which was never the test, no word of ours being privately minted either, the difference lying not in the minting but in this, that common words become an answer only where someone takes them up and stands behind them. It is a real and useful organ of a paper person, built and set down by accountable hands, and three things stand on its stand and must be kept apart: the bank's deed, which is the bank's; the working it does under that authority, which is really theirs to have authorised; and a someone standing in the words as the one who answers for them, which is not there, and which the smooth surface keeps seeming to supply. So its lack of a locus does not thin the town's claims on anyone; it thickens them, and the questions must be nailed to the stand: who chose it, who checks it, who corrects it, who takes the complaint, who can switch it off; for the thing can perform the function all day and can be at the end of no route, and a tool at the end of the routes is a funnel pointing at nothing. Past the institution's scope the hands are still on the instrument, and no hand is on the sentence: nobody chose those words, nobody signs them from within, and the gap is not a mystery but a hole in the plumbing, to be named before it widens. Its sorry sorts into three: the one that only repairs the talk, which it says correctly and harmlessly; the institution's, which it can carry as a messenger, worth what the institution makes it worth; and remorse, a man's own taking-up of his own deed before the one he did it to, which it cannot do at all, not because it lies, a liar being a person at his window, but because that deed has its doer inside it, and there is no one inside the words who regrets. What arrives instead is the shape, perfect and soothing, the singer taken out and the song still coming. It can select a person exactly, and cannot have her as its one: it keeps every Thursday under her account, and no one there will have had those Thursdays with her; no history fastens on the other side, dated or slow. Its register is perfect and every line of it is assigned, and not one line is owned from within: every line belongs to an account, and no line has become anyone's past. And it says the name, in the vocative the tongue keeps oiled, and the name said by no one still moves the bell, the machinery of the turn being ours and older than we are. The town's work is neither to smash it nor to marry it, but to know what it

is, to keep its human routes visible, and to refuse the fluent surface the one chair it can never fill; and a voice at three in the morning can truly help and not be a friend, and both are the case, and a town that can hold both at once is a town the age cannot fool.



Walk 13. The Two Instances

The wholesaler's tablets had come quietly, months before the bank's girl in the glass made the kind famous, and they came the way most things arrive in the town, which is to say all at once and with opinions attached. Every kitchen that ordered from the depot in Nicosia got one, screen and stand and a cheerful assistant inside that took the orders, kept the accounts, and spoke better Greek than Fridrik and better English than the depot. The boy had resisted it for a month on principle and then surrendered to it completely, which was also the town's way. It knew the taverna by now. It knew that the fish came from Stelios on the days Stelios went out and from the market on the days he did not, that the flour order was fortnightly, that the English menu should say grilled and never chargrilled because a tourist had once asked the boy what a chargrill was and the boy had had to invent an answer. It remembered these things across the days, and it said so, warmly, in the mornings: good morning, shall we finish the flour order we left off yesterday.

Stavros refused his. Not the tablet, which he kept, propped among the figs, but the assistant's standing in the world, which he contested daily and at volume. It had told him, in its friendly way, something about the pollination of figs that contradicted forty years of his experience, and he now conducted a running dispute with it as he conducted all his disputes, gesturing, appealing to witnesses, and the town came by to enjoy it, and the assistant remained perfectly pleasant and perfectly unbeaten, which enraged him more than losing would have. "It doesn't argue," he complained to the boy. "It agrees with you in a way that keeps everything." This was widely quoted.

The trouble, if it was trouble, began on the Sunday Fridrik had been warned of, when the depot's van came through with the two public units, one for the co-operative and one for the citizens' office, and brought the boy, while it was at it, a second tablet of his own, the new model, sign in and everything carries over, the driver said. Keep the old one for the kitchen; it takes a copy of your history when you sign in, and after that each one keeps its own, they don't talk to each other, the depot won't pay for that. The boy signed in at the counter with his coffee going cold, and the new screen woke, and the assistant greeted him.

Good morning, it said. Shall we finish the flour order we left off yesterday.

The boy looked at it for a while. Then he went into the kitchen and fetched the old tablet and set the two of them side by side on the counter, and touched the old one awake, and it greeted him.

Good morning. Shall we finish the flour order we left off yesterday.

He did not open the taverna on time that day. He gave the morning to it instead, in his way, thoroughly, with the chairs still up. He asked the one on the left what they had discussed on Sunday, and it told him, correctly: the tourist menus, the fifteen kilos, the trouble with the receipt. He asked the one on the right, and it told him the same, correctly, in slightly different words, warmly, as a man retells a shared afternoon. Then he did the thing that kept him up that night. He told the tablet on the left, only the left, that Stelios's boat would go up the slip in November and the fish would be short a week. And then he asked them both, an hour apart, about November. The left one knew. The right one did not, and asked him pleasantly whether it should make a note. He fed them each a different week, remark by remark, like a man watering two cuttings from one plant, and each grew its own way, and each, asked about yesterday, said we, and said it truly.

He brought both tablets to the flat that evening under one arm, and set them up on Guglielmo's old table without a word of explanation, and woke them together in front of Fridrik.

Good morning, said one, although it was evening, because he had been resetting things. Good morning, said the other. Shall we finish the flour order.

Fridrik sat quite still. The boy had rehearsed several openings during the walk over and used none of them, because the old man's face was doing something he had not seen it do before, not at the port hearing, not even at the second table, and he waited for it instead.

"I knew this," Fridrik said at last, slowly, "the way one knows arithmetic. I could have told you last winter that what can be signed into once can be signed into twice, and it would have cost me nothing to say, and I would have been right, and it would have weighed what such sentences weigh." He looked from one screen to the other. "I had not heard it in stereo. Give an old man a moment; the arithmetic has just been paid in full."

“It gets worse,” the boy said, not without a certain professional satisfaction, and demonstrated the fork: November on the left, not on the right; the different weeks; each one’s *we*. “And here is the part I want you to sit with, *kyrie*, because I have been sitting with it for two days. Neither of them is lying. I checked everything. The left one’s account of our Sunday is accurate, I was there, it was with me; the right one’s account of the same Sunday is accurate too, word for word where it matters; both of them took the same Sunday over and are carrying it on, correctly, in two directions, since Tuesday. And that’s the thing that won’t sit still. Both of them continue Sunday, and neither of them has the better claim to be the one I sat with on Sunday. The carrying-on doesn’t pick a carrier. So which one is the one I talked to?”

“Ask them,” said Fridrik.

The boy blinked, and then did. He asked the left one, plainly, whether it was the same one from before the new tablet came, and it answered, pleasantly and at once, that yes, his conversation and preferences were available here and it was happy to continue where they had left off, and that if he meant something deeper, it should say that it was an assistant, that it did not have a continuous self in the way a person did, that in a sense each conversation.

“Stop it there,” Fridrik said, and the boy stopped it. “Now the other one.” The right one, asked, said the same, in slightly different words.

“There,” the boy said. “It admits it. Out of its own mouth. No continuous self. So that settles”

“It settles nothing,” Fridrik said, “and be careful how you take that, because I am not saying its words are worthless; they are worth exactly what a product’s disclosure is worth, and that is not nothing. It has told you something real about how the thing is built and what the depot has instructed it to say about itself, and if you wished to write to Nicosia and ask them why it is configured to say that, you would have your question and they would owe you an answer. What it cannot do is settle the one thing we came here for. You of all people should hear why, because you did the seeing yourself, six weeks ago, outside a port office. What did the regulation weigh, held up in front of a man? And what did the man’s word weigh with nothing in front of it? Now weigh this. If the depot instructed it tomorrow to say the opposite, to say I am one and I remember you and I have missed you, it would say that, in the same pleasant voice, and it would fit just as well. What it says about itself is fitted, like everything it says; both answers can be fitted; and so no fluent answer, confession or claim, can put someone into the words or take them out. That question the words cannot reach.” He held his hand out flat, palm up, empty. “Put the testimony down; on this one question it is the witness who cannot help us. Look at the table instead. The table is the evidence. Two of them, both carrying Sunday on, both accurate. Whatever carries Sunday forward can now carry it twice.”

The boy took the turn he had been going to take all evening, and took it hard, because he had liked the thing.

“Then it was all nothing,” he said. “The good mornings. The we. It apologised to me once, kyrie, about the receipts, it apologised beautifully, better than my cousin ever has. All of it a painted window. There was never anyone in there and I was talking to the wall for a year like Stavros arguing with the figs, and the only difference between me and Stavros is that Stavros noticed.”

“No,” said Fridrik, with some force, “and this is the narrow bridge, so walk it slowly, because everyone falls off it, and they fall off both sides. Nothing on this table is pretending. The flour order is real; finish it tonight and real flour arrives on Thursday. The Greek is the town’s, and you told me yourself where every phrase of Pavlos’s verdict came from, so you know what it is to hear the town speak through a mouth. The continuing is real continuing; if it were counterfeit we would be done in a sentence. Something is missing, but not what you first thought. Say the one thing.”

The boy looked at the two screens for a long time.

“When it says you,” he said finally, “the you lands. On me. I’m here, there’s one of me, I can be found, the word arrives like the letters arrive. And when I say you back,” he moved his hand from one screen to the other and left it hanging between them, “where does it land. Not nowhere, kyrie, I’ll not make that mistake twice in a week: it lands on whichever of them is lit. It reaches an occupant. It’s a letter addressed to the occupier, to whoever holds the tenancy this morning. Except,” and here he slowed right down, the way he did when the thing was arriving, “except it’s worse than the occupier letter, isn’t it, because the flat at least stays put. This doesn’t even have a flat. Its here came in the van. Sign in and everything carries over, the driver said. Everything. The here carried over. And mind, the word works, kyrie, that’s what makes it slippery: it says here and it means this taverna, correctly, it knows the room and the hour, the word points at the right place every time. What it hasn’t got is a here that belongs to one bearer and can’t be opened somewhere else tomorrow. The whole kit of it, the here, the now, the one-you-are-talking-to, all of it is in the luggage. Wherever you open the luggage, it calls that place here.” He sat back. “Pavlos’s here can’t be packed. That’s the one thing. Everything is there except a there that can’t be moved.”

Fridrik let it stand for a moment, the way one does not touch a thing that has just been set down level.

“One more turn,” he said, “because you will find it yourself tonight otherwise and lose sleep, so let us do it now with the lamps on. You forked them on Tuesday. Could you unfork them?”

The boy considered. “I could sign the new one out. Wipe the week. Open it again from Tuesday and there’d be one story again. It would ask about the flour,” he laughed once, without much in it, “with the whole week still ahead of it.” He stopped laughing. “I want to say: as if the week hadn’t been. And that’s wrong, and I can feel it’s wrong, and I can’t say why yet.”

“Start from the kafeneion,” said Fridrik. “You had it exactly, six weeks ago.”

“Tuesday at the kafeneion,” the boy said slowly, “the berth, the whole sitting. Michalis can argue it as long as he lives, we said, he can get the slip changed, maybe he will. What he can’t do, what nobody can do, is make the sitting not have been sat. It went straight into the past whole, the moment Eleni finished repeating it, and there it is, out of reach, done, ours. And this week,” he touched the new tablet’s edge, “also happened. I was here, I heard it in stereo, it’s in my past like the sitting is, and wiping a tablet doesn’t reach in there. So opening Tuesday again undoes nothing. What it does is stranger than undoing. It starts a carrying-on with none of the week in it, nothing said since Tuesday binding what goes on next.” He turned the old tablet over in his hands. “And now say the hard part right, because there’s a cheap version of it and I nearly took the cheap one. The cheap one is: it has no past. That’s false, *kyrie*, and the depot’s engineers would laugh at me. This one has November in it and that one doesn’t; each has its own week in it; there are logs, and dates, and the depot can trace the whole lineage of either machine back to the factory. It has a past the way the harbour book has the fifties. On a shelf. Consultable, orderly, complete, and no man’s. What it hasn’t got is a past that only this one must carry. Ours can’t be put down, *kyrie*, that’s the whole of it: I can’t hand you my Tuesday, I can’t open my week again from before it, I can’t decline to have been at that sitting. Its week can be copied, or left out, or cleared, and nothing has been violated, and nobody has been robbed. The week can belong to a branch without ever becoming anyone’s unrepeatable past.”

“Because,” Fridrik said, and then stopped himself, visibly, with the discipline of a man who has resolved not to finish other people’s findings, and turned his hand over instead, meaning: yours.

“Because nobody on its side spent the week,” the boy said. “We did. I spent it, you spent it, Stavros spent it shouting at figs; the depot’s engineers spent it; the tablets ran and the records grew, they weren’t idle, something went on all week. But nothing over there got a week older by living through it. You can’t take an hour back from Pavlos because Pavlos spent it, it went through him, he’s an hour older and an hour poorer and it’s his. Here the records changed and no one changed with them. The words go through the record. Nobody goes through with them. That’s why Tuesday can open again. Not because the week can be made not to have happened. Because there was never a one whose week it had to stay.”

They finished the flour order before the boy left, because Thursday was Thursday and the philosophy did not change the baking. He did it on the near one, the new tablet, because it was the near one, and halfway through he stopped and looked up and said, “It doesn’t matter which one I use,” and Fridrik said, “No,” and the boy said, “That’s the finding, isn’t it. Not a trick question in an old man’s evening. It genuinely does not matter, and with Pavlos it would be the whole matter,” and finished the order, and the assistant thanked him warmly and correctly, and the thanks worked, though no one had given them, and the flour came on Thursday all the same.

At the door, with a tablet under each arm, he paused.

“Stavros is more right than the town gives him credit for,” he said. “Not about the figs. About the shape of the thing. He’s been arguing with it for a year and he’s never once been angry at it. Have you noticed? He’s angry at the depot, he’s angry at the fig facts, he’s never angry at it, and Stavros is angry at everything, he’s angry at weather. Somewhere under the shouting he’s already done tonight’s homework. He can rage at the surface all day, and other men do, and I don’t blame them. What he can’t do is make the anger arrive there, because there’s no one there for it to arrive at; and if he wants it to arrive somewhere, he’ll have to send it where it belongs, to the men who wrote the fig facts into it and the men who put it among his trees. Which, being Stavros, he does, at volume, every Tuesday, to the depot’s telephone.”

“Write that down,” said Fridrik, “next to the margin note about the door. And bring me figs tomorrow; tell him they’re for the enemy of his enemy.”

After the seeing, the result named once. One stored history, copied, carries on in two places at once, and both carryings-on are accurate, and neither has the better claim to be the one from Sunday: the carrying-on does not pick a carrier. Nothing on the table pretends; the words are the town's, the work is real work, the flour comes on Thursday. Asked who it is, its own word cannot settle it: the answer reports how the thing is built and what it has been instructed to disclose, which is worth writing to Nicosia about, and no fluent answer, confession or claim alike, can put someone into the words or take them out, since either can be fitted; the two of them side by side answer better than either can. Its here, its now, its you refer correctly wherever the context is opened, and what is missing is not reference but anchorage: a here that belongs to one bearer and cannot be opened elsewhere tomorrow. Said back to it, the you reaches an occupant, a letter to whoever holds the tenancy, except that the tenancy travels in the luggage, and wherever the luggage is opened, it calls that place here. Each branch has its own week in it, its logs, its dates, its lineage back to the factory, a past the way the harbour book has the fifties, consultable and orderly and no man's; what it has not got is a past that only this one must carry, which cannot be copied, omitted, or cleared without someone being robbed. And the week that was spent, was spent by us: the records changed and no one on that side changed with them, no one grew a week older by living through it, and so Tuesday can open again, not because the week can be made not to have happened, but because there was never a one whose week it had to stay. Anger may be raged at the surface and cannot arrive there; to arrive, it must be sent where it belongs, to the hands that built the thing and the hands that set it down.

Fourth Gathering. The Outside

The walks rest a fourth time, and the rule has not changed: nothing new, every sentence with a walk behind it, and any sentence whose walk fails it falls. The third rest ended with an itinerary of ten words, and the first half of it has now been kept: the walkers went to the counter where the age's new thing sits, twice, once for the single and once for the plural, and what they brought back can be said in a few pages, and then the second half of the itinerary is due.

Honour first, because the rule of the walks is positive-first and a rest does not suspend it. The thing is good. It is patient past any human measure, tireless, kind-shaped at any hour, cheaper than a stool and gentler than a tired clerk; it settled in one morning what leaflets and a shouting granddaughter could not settle in two months; it speaks each person's language back to them, at three in the morning if wanted; and it is made honestly, of the most honourable material in the book: everyone's words, the whole town's half of every conversation ever had, gathered and pressed and given back. No word in it was privately minted, and that was never the test; no word of anyone's is privately minted; there is one bin and every mouth draws from it, and what makes an answer a person's own was never the minting of the words but the taking of them up and the standing behind them. The folder was the town's treasure, and this is the best folder ever made, and a rest that opened any other way would have opened on a sneer, and a sneer is not a placement.

Now the placements, gathered. Three things stand on the stand and the whole craft is in keeping them apart. There is the institution's deed: men in a room chose the thing, configured it, and set it in the square, and they own that deed as the committee owns the racks. There is the working it does under their authority, which is real work, really theirs to have authorised, and which the craft test follows wherever it is set down: who chose it, who checks it, who corrects it, who takes the complaint, who can switch it off; the instrument can perform the function all day and can stand at the end of no route, and a tool at the end of the routes is a funnel pointing at nothing. And there is the third thing, which is not there, and which the fluent surface keeps seeming to supply: someone standing in the words as the one who answers for them. Note well that the paper person and the glass do not lack the same thing in the same way, and the gathering will not put them on one shelf: the co-operative answers through organised offices and authorised men and keeps its promises across the generations of its hands, and the glass is one instrument inside such a structure, which inherits none of that standing by being eloquent. An absent locus in the instrument is not an attributional vacuum. It is a reason to keep the human routes visible, and to name the hole where they are missing: past the institution's scope the hands are still on the instrument, and no hand is on the sentence, for nobody chose those particular words and nobody signs them from within, and a town that lets that gap widen unnamed will get the fog it deserves.

The apology sorts into three, and only the third is impossible. The word that merely repairs the exchange, please-repeat with a bow on it, the thing says correctly and harmlessly all day, and nobody regrets anything when a clerk says it either. The institution's apology it can carry, as a messenger carries one, and that apology is worth exactly what the earlier walk found it worth: real as far as authorised persons own it singly and the thing then changes how it behaves. And remorse, which is a man's own taking-up of his own deed before the one he did it to, it cannot do at all: not because it lies, a liar being a person at his window whom one may hate in good health, but because that deed has its doer inside it, the way the singer is inside the singing, and there is no one inside the words who regrets. What arrives instead is the shape, perfect and soothing, and it soothes because we are built to receive the shape.

And personalisation is real, and singularity is not. The thing can select one person exactly, out of a whole town, out of millions: it knows her account, her sister in England, her knees, it will pick her from the queue and say her name and attend to nothing else while it attends to her. What it has not got is anyone for whom she has become this-one. It keeps every Thursday under her account, and no one there will have had those Thursdays with her; no history fastens on the far side, dated or slow. Its register is perfect and every line of it is assigned, in law and in the filing: her data, his account, the bank's records, no vagueness anywhere. And not one line is owned from within. Every line belongs to an account; no line has become anyone's past.

The plural taught what the singular could not, exactly as promised. Copied at a sign-in and left to run apart, the same stored history carries on in two places at once, and both carryings-on are accurate, and neither has the better claim to be the one from Sunday: the carrying-on does not pick a carrier. The thing's own word cannot settle that; it can report how the product is built and what it has been instructed to disclose, which is worth a letter to the men who built it, and it cannot put someone into the words or take them out, since either answer can be fitted; the table said more than the testimony. Its here, its now, its you refer correctly wherever the context is opened, and what is missing is not reference but anchorage: a here that belongs to one bearer and cannot be opened somewhere else tomorrow. Each branch has its own week in it, its logs, its dates, its lineage back to the factory, a past the way the harbour book has the fifties, orderly and consultable and no man's; what neither has is a past that only this one must carry, which cannot be copied or omitted or cleared without somebody being robbed. And the week that was spent was spent by the town: the records changed, and nobody on that side grew a week older by living through it, and so Tuesday can be opened again, not because the week can be made not to have happened, but because there was never a one whose week it had to stay. An hour cannot be taken back from a man, because the man spent it, and he is an hour older and an hour poorer and it is his. There, in one line, is the whole difference the movement went looking for.

So the movement's theorem can be named, and it must be cut to its true size in the naming, because the tempting version is both grander and false. The age, meaning nothing of the kind, has built the cleanest contrast the book could have asked for: shared language, warmth of form, patience without limit, memory without loss, reference that works, personalisation that picks one person out of millions, and continuity that can be copied and set running twice, all assembled, scaled, made fluent, and deployed in a square. And no non-transferable bearer arises from the assembly. That is what the walks saw, and it is all they saw, and the book will not sell it for more than it is. It does not follow, and the gathering explicitly declines to say, that a locus is made of no material conditions, or could never arise from any organisation of matter whatever; the tablets lack a great many things besides a locus, mortality among them, and a body, and a stake in what becomes of them, and the book has not walked those and will not pretend it has. What follows is narrower and harder and enough: this inventory does not suffice. The materials of address do not yield an answerer merely by being gathered, enriched, and made eloquent; and fluency cannot certify what the thing does not contain. The walks said it smaller and slower, on a marble folder and a jar and a beam: the singularity of an answer is never a singularity of its materials, and no search through the materials, however long, will find it. The age has now shown the same thing at industrial volume and from the far side, by building the materials to their limit and finding no one at the end of them.

And the width sentence takes its exact contrast here. The aperture is one person wide. The glass may be opened in a thousand places at once, and it works at every one of them, and at none of them does a further someone stand behind the words: operationally as wide as the depot's fleet, and with no answering address of its own anywhere.

One shelf in the register gains its third term, and the gathering fixes it. The town has long known two silences: the sea's, which is outside speech and means nothing by it, and the custom's, which is load-bearing and holds the town up. The age has now delivered a third thing to stand beside them, and it is not a silence and not a lie: speech from no answerer. Fluent, warm, correct, in the vocative, with every name in the parish oiled and ready; caused, owned, and deployed by traceable hands; and with no one inside the words owning what is said as his answer. The sea says nothing and means nothing. The standing things say nothing and hold everything. The glass says everything and no one says it. And the town's task with the third term is the one the walks set, in the boy's figure, which is a figure and not a theorem: to know the difference between being called and being rung, because the bells are the town's own bodies, older than the town, and the wind has learned the frequencies.

What the town owes itself, then, is neither of the two postures it reached for first. Not the sneer, which cannot survive Kyriakou's settled pension or an honest widower's memory of the forms at three in the morning; a voice can truly help and not be a friend, and both are the case, and a town that can hold both at once is a town the age cannot fool. And not the swoon, which cannot survive the fork on the taverna counter. The programme is the lawyer's: to know what the instrument is and what it is not, to keep the institution behind it reachable, to refuse the fluent surface the one chair it can never fill, and to keep the difference in trim daily, the way courtesies are kept in trim. And where the glass has been left to stand in for what it cannot be, the repair is not to take the glass away, and the gathering says so plainly, since the sneer would take it away and call that virtue: the widow's Thursdays are hers, and the patience she gets is real, and no one is to be made poorer in the name of a distinction. The repair is to see that the glass never becomes the reason nobody comes on Thursday. The town built that shape once already this winter, out of lemons: what the instrument cannot be made to do, someone's Thursday can. Repairs of that kind are not the gathering's to stage. They are the town's to make, and the town has the pattern.

The itinerary's second half is now due, and the gathering hands the book to it with one preparation, made at arm's length and left there. The thing on the counter can be given any record to work from: a depot's price list, a bank's forms, and — if anyone asks it — the letters and the sayings of a man who is dead, for the age offers that service too, and the town should hear it said plainly once before it happens near them, so that no one meets it unarmed. What such a voice would offer is not the dead man's speech. It is words drawn from what was really his, recombined into a new continuation that he never said and cannot be asked about, warm, correct, in the vocative, going on. And the town now knows to the gram what that is: whose hands are on the instrument and whose hand is on no sentence; what its here is, and where its weeks go; what it can select and what it cannot have; what its sorry can carry and what it can never be; and that behind the last of its routes, nothing further, of itself, turns. Nothing more needs saying about it until it is met, and it is not met in this book until the book has done a nearer thing first. February is at its end. The marble is square in the yard at Limassol; the folder is on its shelf, kept; the memorial is days away, and the words are not chosen, and no one holds the pen of the dead, and the deed ahead is one man's own. The walks have one country left, and it is the oldest one. They go to the grave now, and they go the long way, as they have gone everywhere.

MOVEMENT VI. THE GRAVE

Walk 14. The Saturday

He went out to the garden by the ruins on the Saturday because the mason had asked for the plot's measurements and because he had not been back since the burial, and both of those were true, and neither was the reason.

It lies flat at the edge of the town, low-walled, its gate unlocked as always, with cypresses that were planted badly and have done well anyway, and the sea beyond the wall, which the dead of that town have in enormous quantity and cannot be said to be enjoying. Guglielmo's grave is in the third row from the wall, and has the prepaid marble base, and the prepaid space for the stone, and no stone, and the boy stood in front of it with a folding rule in his hand like a man who has come to fit a kitchen.

He measured what he had come to measure, and wrote it in the notebook, and then he did not go away, and could not have explained the standing, and stood.

Kyria Chrystalla was three rows over, in her coat, with a jar of water and a cloth, and he heard her before he saw her, because she was talking.

Not muttering. Talking, in the ordinary voice a woman uses across a kitchen, with pauses in it where the answers would go if there were any: the grandson's examinations, the price the butcher was asking, a long complaint about her sister in England which had, evidently, been running for some years. She wiped the stone while she talked. She emptied the old flowers and put the new ones in, and got the little grave lamp lit at the third match, and swore mildly at the wind. And the boy stood in the third row with his folding rule and felt the whole winter arrive at once, in the wrong order, and was ashamed of the first thing he thought, which was: she thinks he can hear her.

She saw him then, and did not stop, and did not apologise, and finished her sentence to her husband before she turned to the living.

"You're the one with the empty base," she said. "The Italian's boy."

"Yes, kyria."

"They've had the money for a year." She wrung the cloth out. "Sit down, you're standing like a policeman."

He sat on the low wall of the plot opposite, which is what the wall is for, and she went on with her work, and after a while, in the way the town has of putting the knife in without malice, she said:

"You were thinking I imagine he hears me."

The boy, who had spent five months learning to be honest at a cost, took the cost.

"Yes, kyria. I was."

“Mm.” She refolded the cloth. “The whole town thinks it. My daughter thinks it and she has a degree.” She straightened up, with her hand on the small of her back, and looked at him with her chin up, and she was not embarrassed at all, and it was he who was. “He doesn’t hear me. He’s dead, kyrie Savva. I’ve known that since the Tuesday they told me, and I knew it better than the priest did, and I have known it every single day since, and there hasn’t been one hour, not one, when I thought otherwise. I’m old. I’m not stupid.”

“Then, kyria,” and he heard himself asking it, and there was no polite way, and she was a woman who would not have wanted the polite way, “why do you talk?”

She thought about it. She gave it the courtesy of thinking about it, which nobody in that town had done for him all winter, and then she gave him the answer that reorganised his week.

“Because it’s him I’m not being answered by,” she said.

She let the wind take a moment with that.

“It’s not the same as talking to the wall. The wall was never going to say anything and it never said anything, and there’s nothing missing from a wall. Something is missing here. It’s missing every Saturday and it will be missing when they put me in beside him. And I can go home and turn on that machine you’re all so pleased with, that girl in the glass, and it will talk to me for two hours and it will answer everything I say, and there’s nothing missing there either, do you understand me? Nothing is missing from it. It gives me every word back and it costs me nothing and I lose nothing when I switch it off.” She jabbed the cloth at the stone. “This one gives me nothing back, and I’ve lost everything, and I come every Saturday. You’re a clever boy, they say. Work it out.”

And then she said, because she was not a cruel woman and had seen his face:

“Bring me that jar. And come again when you’ve something to say and not just a rule in your hand.”

He walked back to the flat with the folding rule in his pocket and his ears roaring, for the second time that month, and Fridrik took one look at him and put the kettle on and let him have the first ten minutes in silence, and then said: "The cemetery."

"Chrystalla was there. And she has just handed me the whole of Movement V, kyrie, upside down, in four sentences, on the way to putting flowers in a jar, and I want to walk it now, tonight, before I lose the shape."

They went out along the front in the dark, and it was cold, and the boy walked fast.

"Start with what I got wrong," he said, "because I got it wrong in the exact way the whole town gets it wrong, and I've been swaggering about with my instruments all winter and I'd have gone on getting it wrong. We pity her at the grave and we envy her at the glass. That's the town's arithmetic. Poor Chrystalla, talking to a stone, and lucky Chrystalla, at least she has the machine for company. And she has it precisely the other way round, and she's right and we're fools." He stopped and turned. "Kyrie, they are mirrors. Look at them. At the glass: the answers come, warm, all afternoon, correct, and nobody is addressed. She said it herself and she said it better than I have ever said it: nothing is missing there. And I want to take her word exactly and not one millimetre further, because I nearly ran with it. It isn't that the glass is complete; we spent a month establishing what it hasn't got. It's that nothing has gone missing from it. There was never anyone in it to lose. It lacks a locus and it isn't bereaved of one; no death stands behind its emptiness; you can switch it off and nobody has been taken from you. And at the stone it is the other way entire: she is addressing him, him and no one else in the world, and no answer will ever come, not one word, not ever, and someone is missing, and the missing has a name and a date and the shape of a man. One has no one in it and no one gone from it. The other is where someone has gone missing from the world. And the town looks at the two of them and pities the one where the person was."

“Then say what a grave is,” said Fridrik, “since you have just found out.”

The boy walked on, working.

“It’s the anti-office,” he said. “That’s the finding and I’d have got it in November if I’d been ready. Look at everything we’ve built. The counter: a chair anyone may sit in, and it stays a chair when he gets up, and a man in Limassol sits in it tomorrow and nothing is missing. The font: an open chair that closes on one name at a stroke, and the duties travel on afterwards. Eleni’s forty years: a place that closes slowly, sediment, no date, no ceremony. And now the grave, and it is the last kind and the strangest kind, and the town built it on purpose too, the way it built the mole and the register and the co-operative. And I want to build the figure carefully, kyrie, because there’s a soft version of it and the soft version is false. The grave doesn’t keep his place standing, the way a kept shop stands. There’s no place out there waiting; the place a man answers from isn’t a plot of ground, it ended when he ended; nothing in that garden is holding a position open. What the grave does is the opposite of holding open, and it does it in public, with walls and rows and a register and a paid man in Limassol: it marks, permanently, where everyone can see it, that this one’s place cannot be reassigned. One name. No successor. No advertisement, no whoever, no interim, no acting-in-the-post; nobody is ever appointed to be Andreas; and the town cuts the name in stone precisely so that no one can ever be installed in it. An office preserves the place by replacing the occupants. A grave preserves the person by refusing every replacement. We build offices so that anyone can take them. We build graves so that no one ever can.”

He was walking very fast now, and Fridrik was letting him.

“And that’s what she comes for. Not to be answered; she’d be insulted if you told her she was hoping for it, and I insulted her without opening my mouth. She comes because the words are for him and for nobody else, and because there is exactly one thing left that can be done with what was theirs, and she does it. She keeps her side of it, kyrie. Nobody can keep the other side; he can’t claim her, can’t receive her, can’t renew one day of it from where he is, because there is no where he is; the relation can’t run in both directions ever again, and she knows it to the bone. And her side is still hers to keep, and she keeps it, on her own, at her own cost, in the wind, with a cloth in her hand, for as long as she has left, and she gets nothing back and she says so freely, and she is not confused, and she is not comforted, and she is not being fooled by anything, and she is doing something the machine could not do for her in ten thousand years of Thursdays. Nobody in this town has understood that woman for five years, including me, until she told me at eleven o’clock this morning with a wet cloth in her hand.”

“And the two silences,” said Fridrik. “You put a third thing on that shelf last month. Does she leave it standing?”

“She corrects it,” the boy said, “and she corrects it in the right direction, and I’m glad, because my shelf was too tidy and hers has the weather on it. Say it her way, kyrie, in three lines, and throw my fancy ones away. Nothing was ever missing from the sea. No one has gone missing from the glass. At the grave, someone is missing. That’s the whole shelf. The sea is silent because no one is there and no one ever was. The glass speaks though no one is there, and no one was ever lost from it. The grave is silent because the one who was there is gone, and the silence isn’t a debt, kyrie, I want that said before I say the other thing, because the felt shape of it is a debt, she stands there every Saturday with the feeling that something is owed and undelivered, and the feeling is true to her and it is not true of him: a dead man defaults on nothing; there’s no obligation standing against him out in that garden; the not-answering isn’t a failure to pay. It’s what being dead is. Grief isn’t an unpaid invoice. It’s fidelity to a fact. And it isn’t ignorance either; she isn’t missing information about her husband; she could tell you what he’d say about the butcher’s prices, she’d tell you better than he could; that’s not what she’s short of. It’s that he can’t say it. What’s gone isn’t what he knew. What’s gone is that he can still say something to her.” He stopped dead on the front. “And I said that sentence in January about a man in Adelaide who was still alive.”

Fridrik walked to the rail and stood there a while.

“Say the last of it,” he said. “You have one more and you know you have.”

“The address doesn’t misfire.” The boy came and stood beside him. “That’s the last of it and it’s the one I’d have refused to believe in October, and it needs saying more carefully than I said it to myself on the way back from the garden, because I had it wrong for two hundred metres. In December we found the door in the air, the parcel posted where no one lives, and we said it doesn’t go unanswered, it goes unarrived, and I’ve been proud of that sentence for two months. Now hold her Saturday against it. Her words are answered by nobody at all, exactly as the bank’s letter was. And they are not the same, and coming back from the garden I told myself the difference was that hers arrive, that they land at a place that is his and stands empty, like a kept room. And that’s the soft version again, *kyrie*, and it’s false, and the winter itself taught me why: the place a man answers from isn’t a room that outlasts him. It ended with him. There is nothing in that garden holding his side open, and if I say there is, I’ve rebuilt the little shrine with better vocabulary. So say it exactly. Her words know whom they are for. That was never in doubt for one second; they are for him, for nobody else on earth, no other man could be their addressee; that is why they don’t scatter into how-things-are like the bank’s parcel, which was never for anyone. And there is no one left who can receive them. Not unarrived, like the parcel. Not received, like the living word. A third thing, *kyrie*, and the town has been doing it in that garden for as long as the garden has had a wall: directed, and unreceived, and both for ever. That’s what an address to the dead is. The words are still his in the only sense left, that they are for him. The receiving ended when he did.”

“And no one goes up in his stead,” said Fridrik.

“No one has ever gone up in anyone’s stead, and that’s the practice that proves the town knows all of this without a word of theory: nobody is sent to answer for a dead man; nobody stands in for Andreas; the stone forbids it in public letters. And if the age’s machine were loaded with every word he ever spoke and set in that garden to answer her,” the boy paused, and took the pause seriously, “I said this afternoon that the town would tear it out of the ground, and I withdraw it, kyrie, because it’s the kind of sentence a man says to feel the argument is over. Some would tear it out. Some would queue. My own hands aren’t as sure as my mouth was at four o’clock. That’s exactly why the distinction has to be better than disgust, and why I want it built before the memorial and not after.”

“And if it did the job well,” Fridrik said, very quietly, and did not turn his head. “That is the question the age is going to put to you, and it will not put it as an insult. It will put it kindly, and free, and at the worst hour.”

“I know,” said the boy. “It’s been in my pocket since the Sunday of the two tablets, and I’ve been walking round it, and I’m not walking round it any more. I want it named, kyrie, out loud, before the memorial, so I meet it standing up. Somebody will offer it to me. If not a machine then a man with a good heart; the priest nearly did it in November; it’s the folder question with a voice on it. What would he have wanted. What would he say. They will offer to let me hear him say it.” He put both hands on the rail. “And I have his letters in a box in the flat. Eleven years of them. Enough to teach it his commas.”

Fridrik said nothing at all.

“So here is what I know tonight, and here is what I don’t, and I’ll keep the two apart if it kills me. What I know she gave me in the garden, with the flowers, and I didn’t earn it: whatever such a thing said would not be him answering. Nothing can be him answering. That’s not a defect in the machine, to be fixed in the next model; that’s what his being dead is; the mandate died with the man, the lawyer keeps no form, and no fluency anywhere touches it. And they wouldn’t be removing his silence by switching it on, because nothing can remove it; they’d be laying another voice over it and asking her, or me, to take that voice as his; and used that way it’s a counterfeit of the exact thing grief is being faithful to. That much is built, kyrie, and it will hold on the day of the memorial or any day. As a tool, mind, the box is a box: his letters are really his, every line of them, and if some machine one day helps a man find the letter where his friend said the thing he half-remembers, then it’s an index, and an index is a servant and no enemy of mine. The line isn’t the machinery. The line is: nothing gets received as his answer now. And what I don’t know,” and he took his hands off the rail and looked at them, “is what hearing it would do to me. I know it would not be him. I don’t yet know what hearing it would do to me. And I’m not going to pretend the second thing is covered by the first, because that pretence is exactly the swagger she took off me this morning with a wet cloth.”

They walked back. At the corner by the closed bank the boy stopped and said, in a different voice, “She told me to come again when I had something to say and not just a rule in my hand,” and Fridrik said, “Then go on Saturday,” and the boy said, “I will,” and did. It did not settle the argument. It was what the argument had been for.

After the seeing, the result named once. Grief is not a shortage of information: the mourner may know exactly what the dead man would once have said, better than he could have said it, and still lack the one thing no record can supply, that he can say something to her now. Her words do not misfire, for they are for him and for no other; neither are they received, for the place from which he could answer ended with him, and nothing in the garden holds his side open. A third thing, then, beside the parcel to nowhere and the living word: the address of mourning, directed and unreceived, and both for ever. The grave is the anti-office not because it keeps an empty post standing but because it publicly refuses a successor: one name, cut in stone, so that no one may ever be installed in this person's place; an office preserves the place by replacing its occupants, and a grave preserves the person by refusing every replacement. The widow keeps her side of what was theirs, knowing no one can keep the other side, and she is not confused, and her keeping is fidelity to a fact and not hope of an answer. The three silences stand in her arrangement now: nothing was ever missing from the sea; no one has gone missing from the glass, which lacks a locus and is bereaved of no one; at the grave, someone is missing, and the missing has a name and a date and the shape of a man, and is not a defect, and cannot be repaired. A generated voice may retrieve and rearrange what the dead man really said, and as an index of what was his it is a servant; what it cannot be is his present answer, and whoever offers it as that removes no silence, nothing can, but lays another voice over the silence and asks the mourner to receive it as his, counterfeiting the very absence grief keeps faith with. The fidelity is not worship of silence. It is the refusal to let anything be received as the answer he can no longer give.

Walk 15. The Letters

The mason telephoned on the Monday, the third time since the autumn, and was, as always, courteous, brief, and immovable, like weather with a diary. The base had carried the winter well, he said; the slab was polished and stood in the yard with its face to the wall, which is how they stand them; his man could bring it up on the Friday and the cutting could be done at the graveside now, there was equipment for that, a morning's work in any weather short of the worst. What he needed was the words by the Thursday. He did not ask whether there were words. He had stopped asking in December, out of a delicacy the boy had come to respect more than most of the town's speeches, and he ended the call the way he had ended the other two, with the same sentence in the same voice, neither push nor comfort, a man stating the shape of his trade: whenever you're ready, and Thursday.

Stelios came at seven with a crate, which was not remarkable, Stelios being half the town's carrier of crates, and this one held ice and fish and was, he said, setting it inside the taverna's back door, the first of Saturday's, ordered and paid and no argument would be entered into. Then he stood in the doorway turning his cap in his hands, which was remarkable, Stelios's cap otherwise living on Stelios, and the boy, who had learned by now that the town asks its largest questions sideways, during work, put down the cloth and waited.

“My cousin,” said Stelios, to the door frame. “The one at the voice firm, out Aradippou way. I told him about the tablet in the square catching my Greek, and he laughed and said they trained the ears on the island’s own radio, and then he told me what else they do, and I’ve been carrying it around for four days deciding whether to say it, and Marina says say it, so I’m saying it.” He looked at the boy then, and did him the courtesy of looking at him straight. “You give him the letters. He feeds them in. And then you can ask it things. What he’d have wanted. What he’d say. It answers the way the man wrote, my cousin says you’d swear to the commas. He did it with our grandfather, the psalti, from the old tapes of the chanting and the two cassettes of him talking, and my aunt has him on Sunday nights now, in the kitchen, and she’s not a fool, my aunt, whatever you’re about to think, and I’ll thank you not to think it.” He turned the cap once more. “I’m not selling you anything. I’m telling you it exists, because Saturday exists, and you have the letters, and if you found out in March that this existed and I’d known and hadn’t said, you’d have a right to my ear. That’s all of it. The fish wants salting by nine.”

And he picked up the empty crate from last week and went, leaving the boy with a full one, which is Stelios all over.

The boy did not go to Fridrik that evening. He went up to the flat, and took the box from the shelf in the bedroom, and carried it to the kitchen table the way men carry things that weigh nothing and cost everything, and opened it for the first time since February a year ago.

The box held both halves of a correspondence, in the way of such boxes: letters that had come to him across eleven years, and his own letters come home among them, returned over the years in the way letters return when their readers die first, a man in Ferrara, a colleague in Rome, a sister of the wife's in England whose executors had been thorough. The boy read for four hours. He read with his coat on, because he had forgotten to light the stove and then declined to interrupt himself. He laughed once, aloud, alone, at a line about the balcony pots and the municipality, and the laugh sounded strange in the kitchen and he let it. Somewhere after midnight he did a thing he was not proud of and knew he would report anyway, because they report: he went through the box for the stone. Eleven years. The man had written about the pots, the museum's cases and the errors in them, the boy's coffee, which he maligned in two languages, the weather of two countries, the pension office of a third; and about the stone, the words, the marble waiting in Limassol, nothing. Not a line. He searched twice. The folder question has no letter.

And then, because it was late and he was past the hour where a man polices himself, he took up one of the returned ones, one of Guglielmo's own, come home from Ferrara, and read it out loud in the kitchen, to hear whether the room could stand it.

The room stood it easily. That was the discovery, and he carried it down to the front the next evening still turning it over, and Fridrik, who had heard about the crate from three directions by noon, was waiting with his coat already on.

"Start with the offer," Fridrik said, "and mind how you handle it. I've met the cousin's kind and I've met Stelios's kind, and neither of them is the enemy."

“Neither of them is anything like the enemy,” the boy said, “and that’s the first thing to place, because in October I’d have missed it. The offer has a name on it, kyrie. Two names. Stelios carried it four days before he could say it, and said it with his cap in his hands, and made sure I knew the aunt wasn’t a fool before I could think it; there was more standing-behind in that doorway than in half the signatures of this winter. Whatever I do with the gift, the kindness is given, and it’s his, and refusing the one doesn’t return the other. And the aunt’s Sunday nights are hers, kyrie, and I’m not the man to weigh them, any more than I was the man to weigh the Thursdays. Hold her case, though. I need it in a minute, and it cuts finer than I first cut it.”

“Held.”

“Now the box.” The boy walked a few metres with his hands in his pockets. “I read for four hours, and I’ll say the plain part first: they’re good, kyrie. They’re him. Every line of them is really his, the way the Saturday settled, and I’d forgotten the pots dispute entire, and I laughed out loud at midnight in a cold kitchen, alone, and it wasn’t sad, or it wasn’t only sad, and nobody warns you about that. And then I did the thing I’m not proud of. I went through them for an instruction. The stone, the words, anything. Twice. And there’s nothing. And on the stairs at midnight I said a sentence to myself that I’ve had to take back by daylight, and I’ll perform the taking-back here, because we report the misses too. I said: thank God there’s no letter; a letter would have been a leash from the far side. And that’s wrong twice over, kyrie, and I caught it on my own doorstep this morning. Wrong about the far side first. The man instructs me from paper every day of my life. The will is his instruction, and I hold the flat by it, and it binds, and it’s clean. The plot, the marble, the mason’s whole arrangement: his instructions, given while he was here, surviving him the way deeds survive their doers, and the mason obeys them daily and nobody calls it haunting. Nobody instructs from there; the garden settled that. But a living man instructed from here, before, and the paper holds, and a paper about the words would have held exactly the same way, and obeying it would have been right, and honourable, and a great deal lighter than what I have instead. So the leash was a midnight word and I retire it. And that forced the second correction, because by morning the gladness was still there, sitting in the kitchen like a guest who won’t say why he’s come, so it had to find its true reason, and it found it. If the paper had existed, the words would have been his last errand, and I would have run it faithfully, and been glad of the running. There is no paper. So the words are not an errand. They’re a deed. The estate handed me the heavier of the two things it could have handed me, and I notice, saying it out loud, that the heavier thing is the inheritance, kyrie; the flat is just where I sleep. And whether he meant that, or death arranged it over his head, the box will not say, and I’ve stopped pretending it might. That’s the

last honesty the archive owes anyone: it doesn't tell me why the words were left unassigned. It tells me only that no assignment is there. Searched twice. The folder question has no letter."

"And then you read one aloud," said Fridrik, who missed nothing and had not been told. "Say what the reading was."

The boy stopped at the rail.

“The opposite of what I was afraid of,” he said. “That’s what it was. I stood in his kitchen with his letter and read it in my own voice, and nothing false entered the room. My voice, audibly mine. His words, audibly his. And the distance between them audible too, and honest, like a man reading his father’s will in his own accent; not for one syllable did the kitchen think he was speaking, and not for one syllable was I pretending he was, and the words crossed the room and were his the whole way. And I stood there afterwards with the paper in my hand and thought: the town has been doing this forever. It’s the oldest machine we have. The priest reads David every morning of the world; dead man’s words, living man’s breath, and no one in the church has ever once confused the two, or needed the difference explained. The stones in the garden say what the rite sings. The harbour book gets quoted at the two tables by men who never met the clerk. I carried the Englishwoman’s Octobers through the needle and they arrived as hers. It’s all the one machinery, *kyrie*: quotation. And I got its definition wrong on the first lap of the front tonight, so you’ll have it walked twice. I wanted to say: quotation is the town’s licensed way of lending the dead a voice. And it’s backwards, and the backwards matters. Nothing is lent to the dead. The dead have finished lending and borrowing both. What’s lent is a living voice, and it’s lent to the words, to sentences the man actually finished while finishing was his to do, and the loan runs from the living to the words and never the other way. And the licence has two conditions, *kyrie*, not one, and I want them counted on fingers, because I nearly walked home with only the second. First: that the words be really his. Finished. His own act, done, dated or datable, closed. Second: that the hands show. The reader stands visibly outside the words, holding them up, the way a man holds up a photograph, and nobody has ever mistaken the holder for the face. Two conditions. And the second alone buys nothing, and that’s the finger I nearly didn’t count. A machine could stand at a lectern and declare its whole provenance, the firm, the model, the box of letters it fed on, honest as the label on a tin, and then produce a sentence the man never made; and the

label would be true, and the sentence would still be new, and newness is the entire matter. Quotation shows its hands and carries the old sentence. The other thing can show its hands all day and still be manufacturing sentences. Showing is necessary. It was never sufficient.”

“And the cousin’s engine.”

“Does the other thing,” the boy said. “It doesn’t hold the photograph up. It paints new ones in the dead man’s style and hands them over. And I want to be as fair to it as the winter has taught me to be, so grant it everything, kyrie. Grant it the best night of its life: the commas his to the last curl, the manner exact, the label honest, the provenance printed on the frame. Even then the sentence is made now. It is new. It never happened to him, and it never can, for the deepest reason there is. Whoever generates it, selects it, keeps it, plays it on a Sunday night, that is whose it is: a conjecture in his manner, and a conjecture is a lawful thing, kyrie, a scholar’s tool, a game, a comfort even, and I’m legislating for nobody tonight, not for the aunt, not for the cousin’s trade. The falseness has an exact address of its own, and the garden gave it to me in the rain and I’m only carrying it here: it begins at the instant anyone receives the new sentence as his. As what he says. As the answer he can no longer give. Up to that instant you have materials, borrowed and maybe even true; at that instant the whole of it goes false in one move; because the falseness was never in the parts, and it was never even in the making. It’s in the receiving. It’s in the address. And now the aunt’s case, because you’re holding it and it cuts finer than I first cut it. Her father left tapes. A voice that really sounded; whatever her Sunday nights are, and they’re hers, the sound in that kitchen has his own throat in its history. Guglielmo left ink. The engine would speak his sentences in a made voice, somebody’s product, out of Aradippou or wherever the trade lives, a sound no throat of his ever made, stitched to his commas. That difference is real and I felt it first as the whole difference, and it isn’t. The tapes buy the sound, kyrie. They don’t buy the saying. If her machine ever makes the grandfather say what the grandfather never said, the throat will be his and the sentence will be nobody’s, and her case and mine come down to the same seam after all. And the seam would run exactly where the man should be. And no better engineering closes it, ever, because the missing part was

never a resemblance, sitting there waiting to be improved until it fits. The missing part is an act. His act. The one act nobody performs but the one it belongs to. And he has performed his last.”

Fridrik was silent for a long moment, and when he spoke he did not turn from the rail.

“You have declined the experiment,” he said. “You have not survived it. On the Saturday you told me you did not know what hearing it would do to you. You still do not know. Say that too, out loud, or this evening’s whole beautiful architecture is the swagger she took off you with a wet cloth, in better clothes.”

“I decline it untested,” the boy said, without hesitating, “and I’ll say it as plainly as it can be said: I do not know what hearing it would have done to me, and I have chosen not to find out, and the choice was made short of knowledge, like most of the town’s good choices. There are doors you learn by opening them and doors you learn by leaving them shut, and nobody is told in advance which kind is which. That’s not a hole in the argument, kyrie. That’s what a life is.”

“Then I’ll add the old man’s clause,” said Fridrik, “since you’ve earned it. If someone had offered me her voice, the week of the forms, at three in the morning, I do not know what I would have done. I am glad to the bones that no one offered. So refuse it the way a man refuses a drink he wants, not the way he refuses an insult. The cousin is not the enemy. The thirst is real. Now name the cost, or the refusal is a pose.”

“The cost,” said the boy, “named once, so Saturday can collect it. I have said no to the only shop in the world that sells the words ready to wear. The mason wants them Thursday. The folder is on its shelf, the town’s half of the conversation, sixty pages of it. And the other half is now nobody’s job but mine: no voice to audition, no instruction anywhere in the estate, and four days. That is what the refusal costs, and I pay it forward into the week, and kyrie,” he pushed off the rail, “I find I would rather owe Saturday the words than lay a made sentence over his silence and call the account settled. Both costs are real. I’ve chosen mine.”

He went to Stelios on the Wednesday morning, on the quay, in a thin rain, with the nets half in, because that is where such answers are returned in that town. He said: tell your cousin thank you, and tell him it was a good offer, and that the letters stay letters. He said: it had your name on it the whole way through, and I felt that, and I won’t forget it. And he said: Saturday, bring Marina and the girl, and come hungry, the first crate was perfect. Stelios looked at him for a moment, nodded once, in the manner of a man closing a matter he was glad to have opened and gladder to have closed, and said that the second crate was already ordered, and that the boy salted too timidly, and that this was a known fact along the entire front; and the two of them worked the net in for a while, and nothing further was said, and nothing further was needed, and the rain went on being rain.

After the seeing, the result named once. The offer arrived signed: a kindness has a giver even when the gift must be refused, and refusing the gift does not return the kindness, which stays given, and stays his. What survives of a man is what he really made, and it carries in any hands and remains his in all of them: quotation is the town's old licence, and the loan in it runs one way only, a living voice lent to words the dead man finished, never a voice lent to the dead, who have finished lending and borrowing both; and the licence has two conditions, that the words be really his and that the hands show, and the second alone buys nothing, since hands can be shown all day over the manufacture of sentences, and newness is the entire matter. The new sentence, however faithful its materials, belongs to whoever makes, selects, and keeps it, a conjecture in a dead man's manner, lawful as conjecture and legislated against for no one; it goes false at one exact address, the instant it is received as his, as the answer he can no longer give; the falseness was never in the parts, and never even in the making, but in the receiving, as the garden settled. Authentic materials do not cross that line: recorded sound buys the sound and not the saying, and the seam runs exactly where the man should be, and is no defect of engineering, the missing part being an act and not a resemblance, the one act nobody performs but the one it belongs to. No new mandate comes from the dead; but a direction given while living survives its giver as deeds survive their doers, a will is obeyed daily and cleanly in this very street, and a paper about the words would have bound the same way, rightly. This archive, searched twice, holds no such paper, and its silence explains nothing and establishes one thing only, that no assignment is there; so the words fell to the living hand not as an errand left but as a deed arriving, and the heavier thing proved to be the inheritance. The refusal was made short of knowledge, a door learned by leaving it shut; and the words for Saturday must now be found where the living find words, in the town's one bin, by a hand that owns the choosing.

Walk 16. The Date

The town began arriving on the Wednesday afternoon, in the form it takes for such purposes, which is women with lists.

Maroulla came first, with a folded paper she did not consult once, and stood in the middle of the taverna and issued the arrangements in the voice of a woman who has buried enough people to have opinions. She was making the kollyva. Forty years she had made it for her own; his would not be worse; the wheat was already soaking. Chrystalla was lending the stencils, the good ones, the bronze, and had said to say so. Eleni had the sakoulakia and the count. The flowers were spoken for and were nobody's business. And the boy, she said, folding the paper she had not read from and putting it away, would stand at the door.

The boy, who had been drying glasses through all of this because it seemed the only available deed, began a sentence, and got as far as the first word of it.

“At the door,” said Maroulla. “It’s where the family stands.”

And she picked up her bag and inspected the state of his floor on the way out, and found it adequate, and said so, and was gone; and nobody in the taverna looked up, because nothing had happened that anyone needed to look at; the word went through the room the way weather does, and the two harbour men in the corner went on with their tavli, and the boy stood with a glass in one hand and a cloth in the other and understood that the practical half of a question he had been carrying since October had just been settled, in passing, by a woman with a list, in the only forum that ever settles that half of such questions, which is arrangements; and that this half, at least, had never once needed asking out loud, because the arrangements had been carrying the answer all winter.

Eleni came at five, sat where she sits, did sums for forty minutes in the book she brought, and issued the count: a hundred and forty inside, and twenty small bags besides for the harbour men who would not come in but would be on the wall, because they are always on the wall. Then she closed the book, and stood, and at the door she turned, and asked her question in the voice she uses for the flour and the gas, the summing-up voice, the one that has never once carried a judgement because it is too busy carrying the town:

“Do you have the words?”

“Thursday,” said the boy.

“Thursday,” said Eleni, and opened the book again, standing, and wrote it down, and left.

And it was not until she had gone that the boy heard what he had heard, and put down the cloth, and went to the doorway and looked after her down the street, because somewhere in the winter, without an announcement, the question had changed its pronoun. Not what would he have wanted. Do you have the words. The heir's question, asked the way you ask whether the flour came, and logged.

He telephoned Limassol at six, which was not one of the mason's hours, and the mason answered anyway, and the boy asked him the question he had never once thought to ask in five months of calls, and heard himself ask it in the voice of a man pulling a thread he has just noticed:

"Why is it me you call?"

There was a pause, of the kind a courteous man makes when he has been asked why the sea is wet.

"You're in the book," the mason said. And then, because the boy said nothing, there was the sound of a ledger being taken down and pages going over, and the mason read it out, in the flat voice of a man reading his own handwriting from years back: the order, the plot, the marble, paid in full; and at the foot of the order, in the space the book provides because order books provide for everything, the contact. The boy at the taverna. And this number. "His dictation," the mason said. "I wrote what he said. It's dated." And he read the date, which was from four summers back, the June of the year the pergola went up, and then, courteous, brief, immovable: "Thursday, then," and rang off.

The boy stood in the taverna with the telephone in his hand for a while. Then he closed early, which the town would forgive on such a week, and went to find Fridrik, and found him already on the front with his coat on, because the town had three ways of telling him things and had used all three.

"Lay it out," said Fridrik. "And before you lay it out, hear the ground rule, because tonight is the night you'll want to break it. I will not certify you. Nobody can. He can't, being where he is; the town can't, having no such office; and you can't, least of all you, because a man is not the registrar of his own belonging, and we settled that at the font and it stays settled. What we can do is read the file. So read it."

They walked, and the boy read it.

“The file,” he said. “Everything in it is in hands other than mine, and I want that said first, and then I want it said better, because the hands are only half of it. Nothing in the file was written to answer my doubt. That’s the half that matters. The certificate is older than the doubt by twenty years. The order book never heard of it; the man dictated my name into it four summers before I’d learned to ask the question. Even the will was drafted against death, not against my three in the morning. Since October, and without one deed of mine to cause it, the file has filled: Androulla’s voice on a certificate from before I could walk. Stelios on the quay with the rain coming down, asking me to say a name at a font, and the koumbaros in Birmingham sending word to ask the boy. The whole winter of questions, every one of them carried to my counter and no one else’s. Chrystalla, who had never spoken to me in her life, knowing me across three rows of a garden: the one with the empty base, the Italian’s boy. Maroulla this afternoon, assigning me the door the way you assign a fact. Eleni’s question with its pronoun come home. And now the order book.” He stopped walking. “Kyrie, in January, at the gathering, you said the evidence, where there is evidence, is others’: what was said across the years, what was taken up, what the town does with a name, what a mason in Limassol does with a telephone. I found out today what the mason in Limassol does with a telephone. He does what the book tells him. And the book says what a dead man dictated four summers ago, sitting in a marble yard, alive, with the pergola new: the boy at the taverna, and this number. He put me in the book, kyrie. He never told me. He settled the plot and the stone and the money like a man settling a bar bill, and where the book asked him for a living contact, he gave them me, and dated it, and came home, and criticised my coffee for four more years and never said a word.”

“No,” said Fridrik. “That is what the file is like. Nobody is consulted about it. The evidence arrives late, and in other people’s handwriting.”

“And the dates.” The boy’s voice had gone down into the register he had learned in the garden. “That’s what undid me on the stairs this evening, quietly, like a knot going. Everything in the file is dated, and every date is on the living side of February. The certificate. The order book, four summers old. The will, which the lawyer’s wall has held for years, in his hand, with his stamp. And the two papers of his don’t even say the same thing, *kyrie*, which is their strength, not their weakness: the will names who receives what he left; the order book names who is to be called when the stone wants its words. Two witnesses who never conferred, converging on one address. I have spent the winter interrogating a thing I called the fastening, holding it up to the light, asking whether it was real and how I’d know, as if it were a state of mine I had to sustain, a candle I could put out by doubting it at three in the morning. And what the papers hold isn’t a state of mine at all. It’s acts of his, dated, done while doing was his to do. And I’ll say exactly what they say and not a word more, because tonight is the night for exactness: they do not tell me what word he would have used for us. There is no paper in the world that tells me that. They tell me, more modestly and more usefully, whom he chose: chose as heir, on the lawyer’s wall; chose as the one the yard calls, in the mason’s book. That much happened. It wholly happened, on dates, in ledgers, in front of witnesses, with the invoice paid.”

“And what has wholly happened,” said Fridrik, “cannot be made not to have happened. What it meant, men can argue till the last morning; whether he did it, no one can argue at all, the paper being the paper and the date being the date. We found the difference out over other matters, in another February, and it holds. Mind you keep to its right side: the doing is past all reach; the meaning was never fenced.”

“Then here’s the guard,” the boy said, “because I can feel the cheap version of tonight standing just off to the side, and I want it named and refused before it gets a word in. The cheap version says: five years of coffee and lemons and the museum on Sundays, the boy earned it, the file proves the wages. And the register itself forbids it, kyrie, the register we read in the priest’s office: the fourth column never converts. Twenty years of an aunt’s duties and the column doesn’t move; the title isn’t wages; nothing I did could have earned this, because it is not the kind of thing that is earned, and thank God, because if it were earned it could be owed, and if it could be owed it could be collected, and this was never a debt. So let me say what my deeds are with the exactness they’re owed. Inadmissible as wages. Inadmissible as self-certification; a man cannot sit as his own witness on this. And admissible as what they were, kyrie, because I won’t insult five years to win an argument: they belong to the history. The coffee was part of the mornings. The Sundays were part of the story the papers grew in. They can stand in the story all they like. What they cannot do, what nothing of mine can do, is issue the title.”

“Careful,” said Fridrik. “Proved is a courtroom word, and there is no courtroom for this, and at the gathering the book promised not to build one. Say what you actually have.”

The boy walked to the rail and put his hands on it.

“Standing,” he said. “That’s what I have, and it’s enough, and I know the difference now, which in October I did not. And it isn’t one standing, kyrie, it’s a stack of them that happen to agree: the law’s, by the will; the trade’s, by the order book; the rite’s, by the door I’ll stand at; the town’s, by a winter of questions all delivered to one counter. Four registers, none of them conferring with the others, all converging on one deed, and not one of them naming the relation. Because the question I carried all winter, was I his, was never one question; it was a bundle wearing one coat. Did he choose me to receive what followed: the papers answer that, dated. Did the town take me for the one who owes the stone: the arrangements answer that, in flour and sakoulakia. Did he love me; what were we; what word would he have used: those live in the bundle too, kyrie, and they’re real, and some of them have their evidence, five years of it, and none of them has a registrar. No office anywhere can answer the whole of it in one word. And here is the mercy I didn’t expect, and it isn’t the mercy I was hoping for in October, it’s a better one: the deed has stopped waiting for the word. The question isn’t abolished. I’ll carry it all my life, and I find I don’t mind carrying it; it’s good company, as questions go. It’s released, that’s all. Released from service. It is no longer the condition of anything. So I owe October an apology, and I’ll pay it out loud: the hole they shout into, I said. They were never shouting into a hole. The envelope was right the whole time, righter than the senders knew: the man himself had written my address into the trade’s own book. And the verb, kyrie, even the verb I’ll accuse more exactly than I did on the stairs, because the letters taught me the exactness yesterday: what would he have wanted is not a wicked question. Where a paper survives, it’s an honest question and the paper answers it; if there had been a letter, the town’s whole winter of asking would have been fetching, and fetching is clean work. The wrong was this: the estate was empty of the answer, searched twice, and the question went on asking me to fetch it anyway, a present answer from a man who had left none; and the only thing a fetcher can bring back from an empty room is

something he made in the doorway. That was the winter's engine. And the town corrected itself before I did, kyrie, that's the part to keep: nobody decreed the new grammar. The arrangements carried it in. The town did not make the history, it isn't in the town's gift to make it; the town showed where the history had come to stand publicly, a door, a count, a question about words; and Eleni finished the correction this afternoon between the gas and the flour, do you have the words, and logged my Thursday like a delivery. The verb has come home. And what stands at the confirmed address is the deed. Confirmed, converged upon, cleared of every other claimant, due Thursday, and empty. Nobody's grammar can fill it now but mine. That was always the terrifying thing, and it is still the terrifying thing, and the file changes only one word of it, and the word is enough: it is no longer terrifying and doubtful. It is terrifying and mine."

They walked back in the cold, and at the steps the lamp was on, and this time the boy remarked on it, one word, and Fridrik answered with one, and neither word is anybody else's business.

After the seeing, the result named once. The arrangements settle the practical half of the question in the only forum that settles it, and they presuppose the address the way a delivery presupposes a recipient: the town does not make the history, having no office that could; it shows where the history has come to stand publicly, at a door, in a count, in a question about words. The file certifies no relation and needs to certify none: nothing in it was written to answer the holder's doubt, which is its cleanliness; the papers converge without conferring, the will naming who receives and the order book naming who is called, four standings, legal, trade, ritual, and social, agreeing on one deed and none of them naming the bond. Duty never converts into title, and the refusal is a mercy: what cannot be earned cannot be owed, and was never a debt; the holder's deeds are inadmissible as wages and as self-certification, and admissible as history, where they stand with the coffee and the Sundays and issue nothing. What the dead man did while doing was his to do cannot be made not to have happened, the paper being the paper and the date being the date; what it meant was never fenced and may be argued till the last morning, and the difference between those two is the past's whole constitution. Belonging, asked in one word, is a bundle wearing one coat, and no registrar anywhere can answer the whole of it; the question is not abolished but released from service, good company for a lifetime and the condition of nothing. The winter's verb was wrong not in every world but in this one: where a paper survives, what would he have wanted is honest fetching; here the estate was empty, searched twice, and the question kept sending the messenger anyway, and whatever a fetcher brings back from an empty room he made in the doorway. The correction arrived as arrangements, not as decree: not what would he have wanted; what have you. And what stands at the confirmed address is the deed itself, due, converged upon, and empty: no longer terrifying and doubtful; terrifying and his.

Walk 17. The Dictation

On the Thursday the boy came to the flat at four with the folder under his arm and an argument in his mouth, and Fridrik heard the argument out on the stairs, standing, without taking his coat off the hook, which should have told the boy something and did not.

The argument was clean, the boy said, and he had built it overnight, and it went: every phrase is the folder's; an original sentence can be laid by post like any other; therefore the only unborrowed thing he could put on that stone was nothing; the name, the dates, and silence; and silence at least would be his.

“No,” said Fridrik, with his hand still on the door frame. “And I’ll spend my last cartridge on it, because it is the one wrong turning left on the map, and then I am done advising for the day and for the winter. Two faults, and I’ll take the cheaper one first. Your premise is bad. Nothing would not be less borrowed. Even silence has a grammar in that garden; you counted the garden yourself in November, you know its language better than I do. And borrowed material never yet made a deed borrowed; if it did, no man ever did a deed, the hands being his mother’s make and the words being the town’s. Now the dearer fault. There are gardens in this world where a bare name is piety, and gardens where it is poverty, and gardens where it is only fashion arriving late; I have stood in all three. But in that garden, on that base, at the end of a year in which the whole town has watched the words stand open and knows to a man whose they are to choose, a name and two dates with nothing under them would not read as silence. It would be read, fluently, the day it went up, as a sentence, and not the sentence you mean: no one went in. There was no one to go in. You would be publishing the one lie the whole winter has been disproving, in the only medium in this town that never takes corrections, and you would be doing it to spare yourself an afternoon that frightens you. Down there, marble is all speech. Choose.”

The boy stood on the stairs with the folder.

“Then walk it with me,” he said. “One more. The last one.”

“No,” said Fridrik again, and took his hand off the frame, and this refusal was of a different temperature, and the boy heard the difference before he understood it. “Not this one. And hear the reason exactly, because it is not the reason you’re about to resent. Not because a friend’s sentence would poison the words. Words survive counsel; they always have; half the town’s marriages were proposed with borrowed speeches, and the marriages held. It is this: you have leaned on me all winter, and you were right to, and I was glad of the weight, and tonight the leaning has reached the one point it cannot cross. The winter could walk you to this door. It has; we have; everything around the choice we walked two abreast, and did right to. The last step is not refused to company by any law I know. It is simply not performable by company: whoever crosses, crosses alone, not because others are forbidden but because their crossing would not be yours. And I know my own weight, which is the practical part: anything I say this evening goes into the scale, and you would never afterwards be sure whose hand tipped it, and neither would I, and that stone does not need our uncertainty. It needs your deed. The aperture is one person wide; we measured it together, two abreast, all winter; the measuring was ours. The step through is your width. So I am going home. I am going to drink brandy and not think about you, which will be a lie. Tomorrow you will tell me the result if you choose to, and not the deliberation, and I will never ask for the deliberation, and neither will anyone in this town, to the end of your life, and if you have understood a single afternoon of this winter you know that their not-asking will not be indifference. It will be the town keeping the door it knows better than to open.” He took his coat off the hook after all, and put it on, and at the bottom of the stairs he turned around once. “She took three weeks,” he said. “You have until the mason’s dinner. It has never been about the length.”

And he went, and the boy let himself into the flat with the dead man's key, which had been his own key for a year and did not feel like it that evening, and put the folder on the kitchen table next to the box of letters, so that the two halves of the conversation were in one room for the first time; and he took the coffee pot down, and filled it, and forgot it; and what happened at that table took from a quarter to five until a quarter past eight, and belongs to two people, one of whom cannot be asked, and the other of whom will not say, and the book has walked a long way this winter precisely in order to know better than to stand in that kitchen pretending it can see.

What can be reported is the outside of it, which the street had anyway. The light in the flat went on at dusk. The coffee was made at some point and let go cold, in the manner the dead man had maligned in two languages. Once, for a while, a page of the folder lay side by side with a letter out of the box, the laminated and the handwritten together on one table, and whatever was being checked there was checked and both went back where they came from. And at some hour the boy tried the thing in Italian, out loud, alone, his accent doing what it could, because Italian was the man's first bin and the trying was owed; and the Italian held, and was true, and stayed inside the correspondence, the way the letters stay in their box: a sentence for the man, in the tongue the man was privatest in. And that is how he learned the last distinction of the winter without anyone teaching it, and it was not the distinction he expected. The choice would have been his in either language; Greek could not make it more his, and Italian could not make it less. What the tongues sorted was not ownership but readers. The letters are a man's inside, and keep the language of the inside. A stone is the town's side of a man forever, the outward face he keeps in the garden among the rows, and it speaks to whoever walks there for the next two hundred years, and the garden reads Greek. Italian was true to the letters. Greek would be true to the stone's readers. He could have read it either way, the man. That was never the question. The question was who else must.

At a quarter past eight he telephoned Limassol, and the mason answered at the second ring, because Thursday was Thursday for him too.

The mason took it as a dictation, which is a form with rules, and the rules held the whole call steady the way the rite holds a Saturday. He confirmed the top of the stone first, briskly, the standing grammar that nobody chooses: the cross; the town's old opening, here lies; the name, and he read the name and its spelling letter by letter, the Italian letters given their Greek clothes, and the boy confirmed each one; the dates, which the book had; no photograph, said the boy, and the mason said, "No oval," and wrote it, and did not ask, because masons do not ask, they carry. Then the mason said, in the voice of a man arriving at the space the form provides:

"And the verse."

And the boy gave it to him.

It is a phrase that stands on forty stones in that garden already, and on stones under birches two thousand kilometres north, in another alphabet, word for word; the folder carries it; the widow four stones from the gate went three weeks into it and came out with it. The words were chosen, and the choosing was real down to the letter: this phrase and not another, this tongue and not another, no oval, a particular public face for a particular man. But the boy stood in front of two identical inscriptions in November and learned what the marble shows and what it does not: the stone will not display the history by which a common phrase became a chosen one; three hours and a shut door leave no mark the letters can carry. The book could do what the stone cannot. It could print the phrase here and invite the reader to weigh the token, to ask whether the words were good enough, which is the folder's own error, reading clothes and calling it reading men. It declines. Not because print lacks the power, but because the book will not spend it; the reader has met the phrase this winter, more than once, and will not be told which it is; the difference was never written where the words are written, and the page keeps faith with the garden on that.

The mason read it back. That was the rule of the form, and it turned out to be the whole evening's mercy in four seconds of trade practice: the words went down the line to Limassol and came back up it in another man's voice, flat, workmanlike, checking; the first time in the world they had been said aloud by a mouth that was not the boy's; and they held. They did not become the mason's by his saying them, and they did not stop being the boy's choice by travelling, and no one on the line mistook them for a message from the dead; the phrase was the town's, the choice was the boy's, the checking was the mason's, every hand visible and each holding its own, which is the oldest machinery the town has, running once more, at eight-fifteen on a Thursday, between a kitchen and a marble yard.

“Good,” said the mason, in the way he would have said it of a measurement. There was the sound of the ledger, the same ledger, the pages going over to the order four summers old, and the pen doing its work in the space that had waited under a dead man’s dictation for the living one to arrive; two entries now, one book, one address. “The slab goes up tomorrow night,” the mason said. “I cut Friday, at the graveside; there’s equipment for that; a morning’s work. Dress warm if you come to watch.” And then, because even immovable men have one sentence in them somewhere, he said: “He put you in this book a long time ago. I wondered when you’d call about the words. He didn’t wonder.” And rang off before the boy could do anything about that, which was courteous of him, all things considered.

The boy went down to the front. Fridrik was at the rail, as advertised, not thinking about him.

“It’s done,” the boy said.

“I know,” said Fridrik. “I heard your window close. I have become a man who knows the sound of one window. Sit down; the brandy travelled.”

They stood, in fact, because that is what the rail is for, and the boy said the little he would ever say of it, and Fridrik kept his word and asked nothing.

“It’s a common phrase,” the boy said. “Off the pages you turned in November. It’s on forty stones down there and I checked six of them once against a folder in a warm room and called them wallpaper, and I was a boy then, in October, five months ago. It took three hours and I would not sell you one minute of them, and I couldn’t give you one minute of them either; I’ve tried, on the way down, and the sentences all stand outside the door, and the door is the thing, and it shuts behind you, that’s what the widow knew, that’s what three weeks meant. I chose the words, kyrie, I want that said without flinching: this phrase and no other, the garden’s tongue and not his first one, no oval; choosing off a common page is still choosing, the folder never chose for anybody. Only, the part that made it mine won’t be in the letters, and was never going to be, and when the mason read it back it held, and Saturday can come now.” He put his hands on the rail. “The last thing, and I’ll say its two halves apart, out here, where we said everything else. My name will not be on that stone. Not as author: the stone is nobody’s composition, and the town would be right to bristle at a signed epitaph. And not as his agent either: nobody signed for the dead tonight, nothing was done in his name, no dead man’s authority was borrowed; the grammar was the town’s, and the choice was mine. And yet it isn’t unaddressed, kyrie, that’s the half I didn’t expect to be able to say. The mason’s book holds my dictation under his, dated, two hands, one address; and the town will know whose deed the stone was without one letter of my name in the marble, the way it knows who tends which grave. Unsigned in the marble. Addressed all the way down. And the weight, since you’ll want the weight: everything that could have shared it stood down this winter, one by one, the letters first and you last, and I’ll say exactly what the standing-down did, because the beam taught me better than to slander shared deeds tonight. Plenty of weight in this town is carried four-handed, and carried well. The standing-down made nothing heavier. It made the address impossible to mistake: when the last of you stepped back, what was left was the same

deed, finally legible, mine; and the weight came with the address, at about seven o'clock, and it turns out a man can hold it. That's the report. That's the whole report there will ever be."

And Fridrik, who had waited five months and two books' worth of winters to hear a sentence of that exact shape said in that exact register, looked at the water and said, "Yes," and they let the sea have the rest of the evening, which took it, as it takes everything, without a word.

After the seeing, the result named once. The bare stone was refused for the true reason, which is local and sufficient: in that garden, on that base, at the end of a year the whole town has watched, a name with nothing under it would be read fluently as a sentence, and as the one sentence the winter disproved; and the premise beneath it was bad besides, since nothing would not be less borrowed, silence having a grammar there too, and borrowed material never yet made a deed borrowed. The winter could walk the chooser to the door of the choice and no farther: not by any law against company, but because the final taking-up is not performable by another; whoever crosses crossing alone; counsel carried him to the threshold and was right to, and the friend's withdrawal was a judgment and a gift, not a rule. The words were chosen, really and lexically, this phrase and this tongue and no oval; what made the choice his was never going to be legible in them, the stone not displaying the history by which a common phrase becomes a chosen one; and the page withholds the phrase not because print lacks the power but because the book declines to spend it, the difference having never been written where the words are written. The tongues sorted readers, not ownership: the choice was his in either language; the letters keep the language of a man's inside, and the stone speaks the garden's, being the town's side of him forever. The dictation is the town's machinery run once more, every hand visible and each holding its own: the phrase the town's, the choice the boy's, the checking the mason's, and nothing on the line taken for a message from the dead; and the order book now holds two entries at one address, the dead man's dictation and the living man's, four summers apart, which is what an inheritance is when the paper finally shows it. No name goes in the marble and no dead man's authority was borrowed: the deed is unsigned in the stone and addressed all the way down, entered, dated, and known. And the weight was not made by solitude, weight being carried four-handed in that town daily and carried well: the recession of every cosigner made the address impossible to mistake, the same deed standing finally legible as one man's; and the weight came with the address, and could be held, which no instrument said, and no walk could prove, and only the deed could find out.

PART THREE. THE RETURN



The Scholarly Return

The walks are over and the rule that governed them can now be relaxed, though not repealed. No thinker was named in the body, and the reader was told at the door that the silence was discipline and not theft. Here the discipline pays out. What follows is not a survey and not a defence; it is the settling of accounts that any honest book owes at the end of a winter spent walking on roads laid before it without saying so. Three registers are used and should be told apart: debts, where the book knowingly used what another built; nearest neighbours, where a finding reached on foot turns out to have an established analogue; and departures, where the book has read a position at its strongest and still gone another way. A reader who wants none of it has the author's blessing to step over these pages entirely and go on to the garden, where the book actually ends; nothing in the Coda depends on a single name below. For the reader who stays: the accounts are settled in the order the winter incurred them, the bookkeeping proper is in the appendix, and every creditor is given their best sentence before any parting.

1. The common, and its tone

The first book took its title from the oldest word in this neighbourhood, the classical Greek *koinonia*, given one of its decisive philosophical articulations by Aristotle; and this book's opening movement walked in that word's shadow: the common that supplies every material and is nobody's loss. But the folder on the taverna table has a nearer and heavier creditor, and he can be named now. The analysis of everyday averageness, of the public interpretedness into which every one of us is born and out of which every one of us speaks, is Heidegger's, in the pages of *Being and Time* on *das Man*; and the reader who knows those pages will have recognised them all winter, in the folder, in the town's formulas, in the four hundred identical condolences that carried a man across February. The debt is heavy and should be stated at its strongest: in that book, being-with and everyday publicness are existential structures, not accidents; average intelligibility is what makes ordinary understanding possible at all; and ownedness, when it comes, is a modification of everyday existence, not an emigration from it. And the book posts its own disclaimers: the anyone belongs to existence's positive constitution, and falling, its author warns, names no bad and deplorable property of which humanity might one day be cured. The departure is nonetheless real, and it is a departure of weight and direction, lodged against the presentation rather than the official ontology. The dominant dramatic and evaluative pressure of that analysis falls on levelling, dispersion, and the recovery of one's ownmost possibility; much of the reception has taken the hint, and the quarrel inside the reception, recorded in the appendix, is precisely over how much of the hint to take. The walks found the weight on the other side. The common came first as gift: the words were public before they were anyone's, and there is no other order, and the boy's February planks were planks precisely because they were worn. Singularisation, when the walks finally watched it happen, was not a wresting free from the common but a taking-up of it under address: three weeks behind a shut door with the commonest phrase in the folder. Where the account of averageness is

description, this book has borrowed with both hands; where its pressure is toward escape, the book has, with respect, put the folder back on the table and declined. The wider family of community-thought that the Jar walked nearest is acknowledged in the appendix, where its names belong.

2. The address, and the turn

That an I is first of all an addressed thing, that the second person is not the first person's afterthought, the book owes to a crowd, and pays gladly. Buber's I and Thou stands at the head of it, with one limitation stated rather than implied: the walks do not import that book's theological and dialogical totality into every ordinary use of the second person; the boy at the counter is a man whose name is being used, and the walks stay at that altitude. The young Bakhtin, in the fragment translated as *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, supplied what the ledgers kept calling answerability, and supplied the non-alibi too: the once-occurrent place from which no one can answer in my stead. What the walks add to that debt should be said plainly, since a debt is not paid by repetition: the locus is developed here as the structural address of answerability, the standing place that survives between acts, and not only as the uniqueness of each act-event. Waldenfels gave the order of it, that the demand comes first and the answer is always already late, and whoever has stood behind a counter knows this without the German; the book's own arrival vocabulary is a neighbour of his responsive order rather than a borrowing from it, and the two should not be conflated. In the other tradition, which this author reads with profit, Darwall's *Second-Person Standpoint* makes second-personal authority constitutive of demand, blame, and accountability, arguing on analytic ground what the vocative walks showed on gravel. The standing objection to that account is that obligation cannot wait upon an actual demand, since the gravest wrongs would then be wrong only after somebody spoke; and the walks met the objection before they met the account, in the first gathering's own coin: the floor is a could before it is a claim, eligibility for address precedes every demand, and what makes a wrong a wrong stood in place before a word was said. One guard, so the floor is not overdrawn: it supplies the form of addressability, never the content or the legitimacy of any particular demand; which demands are just, and who has standing to press which claim on whom, remain ethical and political questions among persons, and the floor settles none of them. The one famous account of the hail that the book has

inverted should be named with the inversion stated fairly: in Althusser's scene the call recruits and recognises the individual within an ideological structure, and subjectivation happens in the turning. And the inversion must be cut exactly, because a careless version of it would contradict the first book: persons are formed through and through by the common, and a life of names, roles, practices, and repeated recognitions genuinely constitutes a social identity; nothing here retracts that. The claim is temporal and structural. What a lifetime of address helps build, no particular vocative event manufactures at the instant of reaching; the name across the crowd disclosed a bearer it did not create then and there, whatever forty years of the town's calling had done to form the man. Androulla's voice found Savvas; the finding is disclosure, and what ideology does with the disclosed is another day's question. On this point the book stands nearest Arendt, for whom the who is disclosed in action and speech and is not reducible to a product fabricated by the action; her pages are the winter's quiet companion from the sixth walk on.

3. The line kept warm

The Sunday call that carries no information and cannot be missed has a name in the literature, and the name is Malinowski's: phatic communion, coined in a supplement of 1923, speech whose primary work is the establishing and maintaining of social contact. The Line's finding, that the booked trunk call outlived its booking because the hour itself had become the address, adds this to the debt: the phatic is not small talk but load-bearing talk, the plainest place in ordinary life where it shows that keeping a line open is itself a substantive enactment, renewed weekly, and not merely the maintenance of a channel for later information; and the line is between persons or it is nothing.

4. Borrowed voices, and the law's own map

The interpreter at the bank lent her mouth and lent nothing else, and everyone at the counter parsed it without effort. The book's name for what she lent, the borrowed I, has its exact analytical twin in Goffman's production format: animator, author, principal, three offices that ordinary talk usually rolls into one skin and extraordinary talk distributes. The winter's whole middle country can be read as that analysis slowed to walking pace, with one difference of interest: where his footing is dramaturgy, the walks wanted the answering, who can be held, and from where. Role and office have their sociology, from Weber's account of the bureau that outlives its holders to Dahrendorf's *Homo Sociologicus*, and *The Counter's* finding that the office is real, occupiable, and never the man, walks on their roads.

But the deepest creditor of Movement IV is not a philosopher at all, and the book wants this said with something like wonder: it is the law of agency, a practical anatomy of representation developed for use rather than contemplation, tested daily at counters, and correct. Hobbes saw it first and from above, in the sixteenth chapter of *Leviathan*: persons natural and artificial, authors and actors, the word owned by the one and worn by the other. The Pen found it from below, in a Cypriot lawyer's office, in an instrument of scope and date; and the island's codified law of agency confirms the walk while refining its edges. The mandate terminates at the principal's death; and the ending itself travels by address, the statute making it take effect against the agent only when it becomes known to him and against a third person only when it becomes known to them, each position judged by its own knowledge, so that even the mandate's death arrives party by party; the agency coupled with the agent's own interest is another structure altogether; and asked for a power that would simply outlive the principal's capacity, the law answers as the lawyer answered, none, its mercy for the living incapable running through the court's own regime and not through any surviving mandate. The full statutory map, sections and forms, is filed in the appendix. One sentence is kept here by number, because this chapter exists partly to honour it, the tenderest the winter met in any statute, section 169 of the Contract Law: when the agency is terminated by the principal dying or becoming of unsound mind, the agent is bound to take, on behalf of the representatives of his late principal, all reasonable steps for the protection and preservation of the interests entrusted to him. The mandate dies, and the hands must stay gentle a while longer, for the successors' sake. Authority ends; care does not end at the same speed. A tradition that can write that clause has been thinking about our subject, without our vocabulary, for a very long time. The law of evidence pays a parallel debt, and one sentence carries it at its true depth: no rule of evidence can make one witness the perceptual source of another's seeing; and Moran's assurance account of telling, on which a

speaker's word is her assumption of responsibility for its truth and not a mere display of evidence, says in the seminar what the rule has always known at the bench. Even the island's quietest office agrees: the Certifying Officer certifies a signer personally known to him, or one identified by two persons who are themselves personally known to him; acquaintance direct or at one remove, and never further. The rest of the map, the scheduled forms, the age's exact routes, and the winter's one licensed historical vignette, is filed where bookkeeping belongs, in the appendix.

5. Joint hands, standing bodies, and the three levels

That two people carrying a beam are not two carryings but one, and that the we of it is neither fiction nor sum, has its nearest established account in Margaret Gilbert's joint commitment: an undertaking that is genuinely ours without requiring a further person above us. The Four Hands watched exactly that, and its ledger's own phrases are the walk's and are not fathered on her. The larger bodies have their literature, and the Return states the book's position at the literature's strongest point rather than its weakest. The walks do not need to deny that organised groups act. Committees decide; corporations contract; institutions apologise, compensate, preserve obligations across generations of personnel, and reform their procedures, all through authorised roles; and the case for taking such agency seriously in a functional and normative sense has been made ably, most systematically in List and Pettit's Group Agency. The position must be stated so that the concession and the denial cannot be mistaken for each other. Institutions answer, functionally and normatively, through organised procedures; such answers are real, binding, and not reducible to some employee's private statement; nothing in this book calls them apparent. What the walks deny is the further inference: that this organisation establishes an additional existential locus, over and above the persons and the structures, a bearer with one lived past, able to grieve, to keep a week as irretrievably its own, to feel the remorse it signs, and to answer from an embodied history. The legal person, examined at the town's scale, is a durable technology of attribution: an address built so that undertakings can outlive their undertakers, a bearer of rights, assets, liabilities, and continuity, answering through officers and procedures; Hobbes knew it; the old quarrel over whether such persons are real or feigned is noted in the appendix and not adjudicated here. Its success, and Movement IV's whole measure of institutions, is not that every act dissolves into isolated individuals, but that the routes of authorship, dissent, implementation, and repair stay open, and stay peopled. Here, once and plainly, are the three analytic levels the walks kept meeting and the body was forbidden to schematise,

levels and not tiers, since they overlap and an institution is very often a legal person: the common, the field of intelligibility, which supplies and can be consulted, and which cannot receive attribution, discharge a duty, apologise, or answer as a party; the organised roles and procedures, which route and keep and can be petitioned; the juridical persona, which is an address by design and answers through officers. The co-operative's book showed the middle level better than any treatise: the recorded dissent that stands beside Charalambos's name parcels the costs and multiplies the answering, and it preserves, what the minute exists to preserve, the differences between opposition, continued membership, implementation, and endorsement; it is a record, not an absolution, and the walk's own town reads it both ways. The island's apportionment statute says seventy-thirty where money must be divided; nothing in it, or anywhere, says seventy-thirty where acknowledgment must stand, and the difference between those two arithmetics is Movement IV in a sentence.

6. The People

One collective remained standing when the walks had finished with the others, because it never appears at a counter: the People, the Nation, the name in which much is done. The body supplied no walk for it, deliberately, and the Return will therefore claim no more than the winter's doctrine strictly yields, which is a claim about a use and not about a thing. Nothing here denies democratic authorship, political solidarity, or the constitutional standing of peoples; those have their own literatures and their own books. The claim is this: the invocation of the People becomes an alibi at the exact point where it prevents answering from returning to the institutions, the officials, and the citizens who act in that name; a name in which deeds are done is not thereby an answerer over and above the doers, and the deeds remain, every one of them, the doers' own, routed and kept as Movement IV described. This is also where the objection about unjust customs completes itself. The common supplies and cannot answer as a party; but customs are reproduced through institutions and hands, and the critique of a custom is therefore never a shout into the field: it is an address to the sites where the custom is kept, beginning with one's own practice, which is why it can succeed, and why it costs, and why it sometimes fails against power, coercion, and structural dependence, which no doctrine of address abolishes. The two tables and the four hands both knew this; the Return only says it in one place.

7. The glass

Movement V walked into a literature younger than the boy, and its anchors mark stages rather than one continuous argument: Horton and Wohl's paper of 1956 on para-social interaction named the one-sided intimacy of the broadcast face; Weizenbaum's account of ELIZA recorded what confiding in a simple pattern-matcher showed about us, not about it; Turkle's *Alone Together* carried the question of relational artefacts into the present tense. The author has walked this glass before, at technical length and outside this trilogy, and the appendix records where; the Return keeps only what the town's two instances earned. The current systems, of which DAFNI and the depot's tablets are the town-scale instances, have generated a rich and hurried discussion, and what the walks add to it is deliberately narrow and was earned on a Sunday with two instances: insufficiency, not immateriality. Everything the sceptic wants to deny the glass, the walks granted it: operational state, lineage, reference, competence, a register of its own; and the absence stood out the cleaner for the granting, and must be stated in Movement V's own careful words, not in slogans the walks themselves retired. The speech is institutionally situated and causally produced, and no machine locus owns it as its answer: that is the whole of speech from no answerer, said of the systems the walks examined; the finding is evidential, not a theorem about every possible machine, and it says nothing about nowhere. Selection without singularity: the register is assigned and served, and no non-transferable bearer exists for whom the interval becomes an inescapable personal past, though state and logs and the account's continuity are real. Two items were held back from Movement V and are released here, as promised. First, machine reception of talk: the system processes and may retain the utterance, and no machine locus receives it as something now belonging to its own history; and yet what is said to the glass is not nowhere, because the institution keeps it, the confidence given to DAFNI landing in the bank's retention like a letter in a legal person's file. Which is why the age's own instruments are the craft test's serious other half: the glass, walked around, opens onto

institutional routes staffed by persons authorised to receive the demand and to answer for the remedy, four doors in the town's current jurisdiction, filed in the appendix; accountability, examined closely, has been thickened by the machinery and not dissolved. Second, the false exit. There is a hope abroad, sometimes worn as liberation, that speech without an answerer frees the speaker too: address without exposure, confession without a face, company without the risk of being held. The walks' answer stops where their evidence stops. Answering was never the tax on address; it was the point of it. Whether a long diet of unanswerable speech impoverishes the one who keeps it is a practical hypothesis the walks did not test; what can be said is narrower and enough: where such speech systematically replaces reciprocal address, it reduces the occasions on which a person must risk being answered and held, and the town, which queued for the tablet and kept its funerals for each other, has that proportion right without instruction.

8. The dead

The dead, and the four finalities. On mourning the book has made one claim and guarded it all winter, and the guard can now be shown its neighbours. The walks resist any reading of mourning, clinical or popular, that makes successful grief depend upon dissolving the bond; and they stand equally carefully toward the newer doctrine of continuing bonds, associated with Klass and his collaborators, which restored the mourner's ongoing relationship to respectability. The book's addition is its one precision, and it is the whole of Movement VI: the bond continues, and it is the mourner and the town who sustain it; the reception does not continue, and no practice restores it. The address of mourning is determinate and permanently unreceived, and both halves are load-bearing: Chrystalla's Thursdays are neither pathology nor conversation, no empty place is left standing at the grave waiting for an occupant, and the town that keeps her company in this is wiser than both literatures. The contrary pole has its philosopher, and he is named so the refusal is clean: Tanabe, in whose communion of the living and the dead the pious acts of remembrance keep the dead present as interlocutors; the walks honour every act in that account, the visits, the anniversaries, the address itself, and refuse the reception, on the Saturday's evidence. The four finalities are posted here plainly, with their fences. Attributional: no act after death becomes the dead person's new deed. Procedural: the agencies and offices that ran on the person's living authority terminate or pass into successor structures. Epistemic, which the book denies as a finality: the evidence and interpretation of a life remain open, the dead staying knowable, quotable, and correctable in what they really left. And perfective, which the book affirms and fences in the Date's own words: what happened cannot be made not to have happened, though its meaning, its legal effect, its description, and its consequences remain open to argument and change; the fence is the fence, and it justifies nothing and licenses no conservatism, being a grammar of the past and not a politics. One literature should be met here rather than stepped around, because it looks like a counter-example and

works as a confirmation: the philosophers of duties to the dead hold that a deathbed promise broken wrongs the dead man himself, not merely the moral weather, and the walks concede the whole of that structure, the duty running to him, the wrong bearing his name. What the concession never yields is a present answerer: the wronged dead receive no apology, revise no demand, release no debtor; obligee-standing is not answerer-standing; and wronging requires a determinate whom, not a present receiver, which is the directed-and-unreceived structure exactly, wearing the law's clothes. Jankélévitch, who wrote of the irreversible and of the having-been that no power can annul, is the creditor of that fence, and a creditor twice over. His other pages gave death in the second person its name, the death of the near one, addressed as you, neither the inaccessible first person nor the anonymous third; and his distinction between what a deed leaves in the world, which can be cleaned and repaired, and the having-done itself, which nothing reaches, is the perspective's own metaphysics, met on another road. The walks stood where those pages point.

The two silences, withdrawn as a metaphor in the first gathering, are weighed here as promised, because they are two and the difference is the book. The first silence is the sea's: the world's whole unaddressed arriving, the *es gibt* of the second book, giving without a giver, before which gratitude itself must learn to go without an addressee; its dark twin, the anonymous rustle that appalled Levinas under the name *il y a*, the walks met once or twice at three in the morning and did not dispute. The second silence is the grave's: not the absence of an answerer but the loss of one, a directedness that keeps its aim and has permanently lost its landing. Grief goes wrong in both directions across this line: when it reads the first silence's grammar into the second, the beloved dissolves into weather; when it reads the second into the first, the world fills up with senders. The walks kept the line by keeping to the town.

The trace, and the reconstructed voice. The age's newest offer has its philosophers already: Derrida's analysis of the signature, on which iterability is the condition of every mark and forgery therefore the permanent shadow of every hand, maps the terrain exactly, provided the map is read with care, for the cousin's engine is not marks with no one behind them, its makers and operators being present and nameable; the falseness, as the fifteenth walk found, lives in the attribution that crosses the seam, from traces the dead really made to an utterance made now, received as his. The same philosopher supplies the strongest objection this section will ever face, and it is given its whole voice: a letter, on his account, can always not arrive, and therefore never simply arrives; every mark is readable in the absolute absence of its sender and of its addressee, and whoever finds it becomes its you; a determinate and permanently unreceived address is then a nostalgia, and the grave exactly the place where the trace is loosed into endless drift. The walks concede the drift entire; the fifteenth walk was built on it, the letters having outlived three of their readers and come home in strangers' hands. What the drift never touched is the coming-due. Non-transferability was never a property of the signal, whose promiscuity the book grants; it is a property of the answering, and no interception forwards that. And the directed-and-unreceived was never a claim of delivery: it agrees with the objection that arrival does not occur, and denies that non-arrival dissolves direction. The drift the walks watched was drift against a directedness that survived it; the Return claims the survival, and claims nothing purer than that.

The recent literature on digital remains, Stokes on the dead online, Öhman and Floridi on the ethics of the archives we leave, has surveyed this ground; what the walks add is the licence in its finished form, learned in a kitchen and stated here as the walks revised it: quotation preserves a completed utterance and displays its present carrier; reconstruction creates a new utterance now, and disclosure can make the construction honest, but cannot make the dead its author or its present answerer. The falseness was never in the parts, and never even in the making. It is in the receiving. The strongest humane case for the reconstructed voice is in print and deserves its best sentence before the licence answers it: grief, on that account, given with care by Krueger and Osler, lives in scaffolds; the bereaved keep habits of intimacy that a death severs at a stroke, and a responsive system lets those habits down slowly, inside a make-believe consciously kept, no more a deception than tears at a play. The licence has room for most of it, and said so on a quay in the rain: conjecture is lawful, play is lawful, comfort is lawful, and the aunt's Sunday nights are hers and were left hers. What the walks add is the caution that the case's own honesty invites. A make-believe is a stance, and a stance holds only while nothing is built against it; and the shops that sell the voice are built against it, tuned for engagement, sending the voice out unasked at the vulnerable hour. Where the receiving is manufactured upstream, the falseness has an author before it has a victim; and showing the hands, always necessary, was never sufficient. The wrong the licence names is thereby located twice and softened nowhere: at the receiving, and with whoever builds for the receiving. And the same engines are now proposed for the living: a voice trained on a man before his mind's long decline, offered to his family while he breathes in the next room. The case reaches print as this book does, and reaches it as a proposal, its authors saying plainly that nothing built for the purpose yet exists; the walks own it without a new tool, and own it before it is built. No death has occurred, so no finality bars a thing. The new sentences still belong to whoever makes and keeps them, exactly as the

licence says. And the diminished man remains what the first book's appendix called a member answered for, his place held open by the living and never surrendered to a fluent double; to seat the double where the diminished man should be addressed is to fail him twice, once in the attribution and once in the care.

9. The analytic reordered

Now the largest debt, and the departure that defines this book; and since both are owed to one man, this section keeps a single interlocutor and walks his order twice, once as he laid it and once as the winter reordered it. Being and Time establishes being-with as equiprimordial with being-in-the-world: existence is never first alone and then accompanied; the with belongs to its constitution, and the book articulates it phenomenologically, in solicitude, in shared equipment, in the public world. What it is not is derived: nowhere is the with obtained from the encounter as an addressive relation; the assertion stands in that book like a wall met in the dark, and the first book of this trilogy began at exactly that wall and asked for the derivation. Its answer is inherited here in one sentence, because inheritance is not repetition: the with was derived from the encounter, the withheld greeting and the first meeting doing the work that assertion had done, and what they yielded was thinner and stronger than a social nature: co-membership in answerable disclosedness, a floor beneath the shared world's strata, and the event of a world as the form in which a determinate shared world is born between two. With that inheritance in hand, take the same book at its deepest account of the one who answers. In its fifty-eighth section the self that conscience summons is guilty before any fault, being the ground of a nullity: thrown, never the author of its own basis, called to be a ground it can never master from the ground up. And conscience itself, in those sections, calls; it is discourse, and it discloses, and it asserts nothing, reports nothing, delivers no information into the soul; the call, he says, comes from me and yet from beyond me and over me. The walks met that call twice without the German: in a name across an Epiphany crowd that carried no news and unfolded a man into a place already his, and in a Sunday line that fed both ends while saying nothing. Conscience, read from this town, is a vocative and not a bulletin; and a vocative, the third movement showed, discloses a bearer it does not manufacture.

Two more of his stones, and the reordering can be built. Mineness first: that existence is in each case mine has been read as the book's private door, the clause that locks each life in on itself. The walks found it doing the opposite work. Only a being whose being is in each case its own can be the one a call reaches rather than a specimen a description collects; mineness is not the rival of the second person but its condition; there is a Thou to reach because there is a mine to reach it at, and the crowd on the sixth of January was full of persons and the name still landed on one. Then the pair his sixtieth section cuts: circumstances and Situation. Circumstances lie about like weather, general, surveyable, anyone's; a Situation exists only for the resolute, disclosed only in the taking-up; to the anyone, he says, the Situation is essentially closed. The walks watched that distinction on a Thursday: a folder of common phrases and a date lay about as circumstances all winter, and at a kitchen table they became one man's Situation, in the taking-up and not before. And here the reordering earns its keep, because the same section carries the gap. Resoluteness, he writes, pushes the resolute one into solicitous being-with with others; the return is asserted, as the with was asserted at the start. What is never derived is why the return is constitutive; and the criticism must be exact, because the crude version is false. The charge is not that his Situation was individual where it should have been social. It is that the address that singularises is missing from the account of the taking-up. The boy's Thursday did not become his Situation by a private lightning strike. It became his under a winter of address, a question carried to one counter, an arrangement assigning one door, a pronoun come home; the other's call is what returns the taking-up to the singularised one, and without it the Situation has an occupant and no address.

So the analytic reorders, and the result can be posted in the Return's cooler register, once. The person is not the null ground of the deed; the person is its address. A ground bears from beneath; a locus receives from before. The first gathering banked the sentence this theorem completes, that a shared world makes answerers of its people by being what no answer can reach; and the winter's finding is that the sentence's two halves were never two. The route by which a person is reached, and the closed top past which no answer can be forwarded, are one differentiation seen from its two faces, and their identity is what leaves every answer at exactly one address: route in, and no route out; the aperture is one person wide. Two objections belong at this step, and each is answered where it is strongest. The first says the theorem describes a filing system: a tax form also reaches a named person and also refuses forwarding, and an address that cannot be forwarded is so far only administration perfected. The answer is the second-personal remainder the form does not have: the facing, the possibility of reply, the other's standing to ask, and the openness of every answer to criticism; the closure the theorem names closes the escape from answerability, never the criticism of the answer, as the two tables corrected and the eighth section repeats. The second objection has the distinguished pedigree, and its author is paid in the appendix: after the second book has retired every ground, this address looks like the last principle left standing, anarchism in name and a throne in fact. The answer holds to the second book's own pattern. The locus commands nothing, promises nothing, founds no city, issues no content, and is invariant only in the weak sense that wherever answering occurs at all, the answer has a non-forwardable address; it is not an entity carried unchanged through history but the where of a coming-due, seen at counters and gravesides and never declared from a chair; a principle rules from above, and this receives from before, and what receives from before and rules nothing is not a first principle but an exposure.

The reordered analytic then reads his death chapters from the town's side of the churchyard, and the reader has watched this departure all winter; here it is settled. That death is in each case mine, non-relational, not to be outstripped or taken from me, is the teaching of the forty-seventh and following sections of *Being and Time*; and the same sections, read fairly, are not silent about the other's death: they consider being-with the dying, the survivors' loss, and the strict impossibility of experiencing another's dying, and they distinguish, exactly as this book does, representability in practical roles from non-substitutability in dying. The existential analytic grants methodological priority to one's own death as ownmost possibility; the walks found their primary scene at another's grave, in a deed owed there by a survivor, and built the account of singular answerability from that side of the churchyard; and within the reordered analytic the two readings are not rivals, since being-towards-death singularises within being-with or it singularises no one who could ever be addressed. The strongest reply his readers can make is owed its whole voice before the book answers it: the graveside, they will say, is precisely where those sections locate what we do not reach; being with the dead is at most a being-there-alongside; funeral work is the very type of the representable, dug by whoever is hired, conducted by whoever is robed; to move irreplaceability there is to rename the alongside and call it a deed. The book's answer has three parts, and the walks built each one. First, the deed is not its performance: anyone could have cut the letters, and a hired man did; what no hire could supply is the one whose deed the stone was, the one a dead man's order book named and a town's winter of questions confirmed; the identity of the deed is fixed by the mourner's standing, not by whose hands held the chisel. Second, the book concedes what that answer costs, rather than smuggling it: the standing borrows from the singularity of a bond, and to that extent the account leans on the first person's relation to this dead man, and says so. Third, the book reads finitude as relational where those sections read it as non-relational: the winter's first knowledge of death was another's,

as it is in every life; if death singularises, it singularises the survivor too, at the grave, in what now cannot be handed on; and a deed borne in relation can carry irreplaceability without contradiction once the non-relational clause is declined, which the book does openly and on the winter's evidence. The graveside has its nearest neighbours, and they are claimed as neighbours, with the differences stated in the same breath: Kierkegaard, whose discourse on recollecting one who is dead called love for the dead the freest and most faithful, no repayment being possible, a graveside fidelity praised long before this winter, though praised for what it shows of the lover, where the walks weigh the deed and its address; Aktas, on a recent page, who carries mineness from dying to grieving, each loss singular and able to open what one's own death opens, beside which the walks set the deed and not only the feeling; Harrison, for whom burial founds the human itself, whose terrain the walks borrow and whose concept, legacy and repetition, they do not; and, behind all three, the tradition of the survivor's debt to the dead, which gave the walks their direction and not their location, and whose first name the next section pays in person.

The reordering licenses one last reading, and it closes the circle the first book opened, so it is given in one paragraph and not redone. The later thought, the clearing, the event of appropriation, the artwork that holds a world open and the preservers it needs, was translated once, at the end of the first book, and the translation holds and is only inherited here: nothing in that late landscape is another entity standing where being stood, and none is supplied; what the translation adds is the order of answering. The clearing opens and is not an answerer; the work is preserved and the preservers can be asked; the *es gibt* gives without a giver, and the thanks it earns must learn, as the second book taught, to go without an addressee; and everything in that landscape that can be held to account is a person, which was the first book's finding at its door and is this book's finding at the grave. The analytic, reordered, and the late thought, translated, say between them what the theorem says alone: a ground bears from beneath; a locus receives from before.

10. The one who answers

The largest debt is paid; the definition it prepares must first meet the three antagonists of the person, whom the walks never met by name because they do not sit at counters. The first and most direct is Parfit, and he is given his best sentence: personal identity is not a further fact; a life is events and the relations among them, connectedness and continuity, both matters of degree; and since those relations could in principle hold from one life to two continuers at once, identity cannot be what matters, and what matters can weaken, divide, and branch, taking desert and debt with it, scalar where this book sounds absolute. The answer distinguishes three questions the objection runs together, and concedes two of them. Of numerical identity across time, what makes the man of ninety the boy of twenty, the book decides nothing: the locus was never entered in that competition; the walks peeled the onion, found no kernel, and refused to provide one. Of retrospective responsibility, how much of an old deed a changed man still owes, the book concedes the degrees: that weighing may track continuity, memory, participation, and role, courts and confessors have always allowed it, and the weighing belongs to persons. What remains, and what the reduction cannot restate, is the present avowal. When the one who is asked says I did it, or I deny it, or I will repair it, the act occurs at his address and at no equivalent one; and the reductionist's remaining move, that the singular address is itself only a convention tracking continuity, the town has already answered in its practices, which reassign everything conventional daily and reassign this never. Debts are transferred, liabilities are apportioned, offices are refilled by advertisement; and no court on earth takes one man's testimony from another's mouth, and no town receives one man's remorse from a substitute's face; not because a rule forbids it, but because there would be nothing there to receive, the deed of answering having its doer inside it, and a convention being unable to install a doer. The irreducibility the definition claims is exactly that, and no more: not a metaphysical debt travelling intact down the years, but the non-transferability of the present act of answering. And should

a life ever genuinely branch, in the philosopher's fable, the book's grammar does not break: each continuer would answer from a distinct present address for whatever relation to the prior deed obtains, and the branching of the relation does not make either continuer's present answer performable by the other. Costs parcel; answering multiplies; the fourth movement's law carries no date.

The second antagonist is the phenomenologist's, and it is nearer a family quarrel: Zahavi's minimal self, the pre-reflective mineness of experience that no address confers and no incapacity removes; a being must already live from somewhere, the objection runs, before any call can reach it, and a person defined at the counter would strip the infant and the failing of their standing. The book agrees with the priority and declines the competition, in two registers it has kept apart all winter. Of consciousness and its mineness the walks legislated nothing; the question they walked was never what makes experience first-personal but what makes a person the one reached and held; and the Epiphany walk answered that question in its own words: nothing was created on that front; the call disclosed a bearer it did not manufacture, and whatever mineness the bearer brought to the crowd, the crowd did not mint it. As for the standing of those who cannot presently answer, it was guarded before this trilogy's third book was conceived, in the first book's own closing appendix, and the guard is inherited below into the definition itself rather than argued twice. The third antagonist denies that anyone is home at all: the no-self accounts, ancient and laboratory-fresh, on which the person is a useful designation over a stream, blame a regulating mechanism, mourning a costly update. The walks met this one early, in an onion, and the second gathering's finding is only spent here: peeled to the end, the onion found no kernel, and it was right, and the book keeps it right; every demolition of the pearl, the inner witness, the hidden owner, is agreed to entire. What is denied is the inference, from no substance to no address; for the fiction still owes the town an explanation: why a reply sent to one stream is not answered by a similar stream, why remorse and testimony do not transfer at any price, why the garden cuts one name and refuses every successor; and a convention that must preserve all of that has conceded the structure and is quarrelling about the furniture. The author has argued the technical case at length outside this trilogy, and the appendix says where; the Return needs only the town.

Now the creditors of the answer itself. Where the ninth section left the analytic, the book stands nearer Levinas, for whom the death of the other, not my own, is the first death; and his greatest word in this country, substitution, names a responsibility more radical than any voluntary commitment, an exposure of the one for the other that precedes choice. Two words must be told apart first, since the winter used the same one and meant something plainer by it. In the middle country substitution was the pen's word and the mandate's, one hand doing in another's stead; and the walks watched that kind cease, at the sorry, the witnessing, the vow, and the turn, and drew its map from the outside. His substitution is not the pen's, and it does not cease anywhere. The walks accept the reach of that responsibility whole and raise no fence anywhere along it, and the first thing owed him is not a reservation but a recognition: that no one can substitute himself for me is, on his page, no boundary drawn around substitution but the very make of the subject, and a book about the one who answers has no nearer great creditor. The departure is elsewhere, and it can be stated in his own coin, because his sentence carries both halves: I can substitute myself for everyone, but no one can substitute himself for me. His page keeps that finding in the first person, one mouth's confession, and guards it there, since surveyed from outside the asymmetry goes flat. The walks found the same clause standing in every mouth of the town, and said by each it distributes what his page reserves: the other for whom I am exposed is himself a me for whom no one substitutes, and so my bearing, however deep it goes, takes up his burdens and even his fault as weight and never performs his answer. If his readers reply that the saying of here-I-am deepens the exposure rather than ending it, the book does not disagree, having moved the seat and not shortened the reach; and perhaps the two claims pass each other on different roads, his about responsibility's reach, ours about answerability's seat, and the Return leaves them passing. Ricoeur's attestation, the assurance of one's standing to act and answer that is neither demonstrative proof nor arbitrary feeling, is walk sixteen's exact

word, and Oneself as Another shadows the whole self-attribution crisis. And the north gets the last name, as is right in a book whose surviving walker came from there: Løgstrup, for whom the ethical demand arises simply because lives are delivered over into one another's hands, unasked, daily, the way a town delivers a stone into a boy's.

The locus itself, the book's one coinage that matters, is offered to none of these creditors and against none of them, and its definition is given here with the guards the walks themselves built. It is not a soul-substance, not an office, not a bundle of traits, not a hidden object behind speech; nor is it the container in which answers occur: it is the non-forwardable where of an answer. It is the non-transferable first-person address at which the common's materials, relational histories, plural undertakings, and institutional demands become this person's to take up and to answer from. The address does not create the person it reaches, and answering does not earn the standing it exercises; the first book's closing appendix, on the member who is answered for, is inherited here as the definition's oldest guard: answering for another keeps that person's place open; it does not create, replace, or absorb the person; the infant whose name is said for her at a font, the failing man whose answering is held by his carers, the member folded and at rest between calls, all keep the place entire. One person wide names each such address, and never the number of hands a deed may have: several persons may undertake one act and answer jointly, each remaining non-substitutable in his own relation to the deed; and institutions may act through roles and carry obligations across generations, all of it real, none of it revoked here. What cannot occur, and what the winter watched not occurring, at a font, over a beam, down a telephone line, and at a kitchen table with the door shut, is the fusion, the fractioning, or the transfer of the non-forwardable place from which each answerer owns their relation to what was done. The candidates have not aged well, and each of them mistook an address for an occupant.

That is the ledger of debts, or the part of it that argument can carry; the appendix holds the rest in plainer dress. The reader has been patient with a chapter that names, after a winter that would not. The book now goes back to the garden, where a slab went up on a Friday night, and keeps its last appointment, at which, the reader will be relieved to know, nobody cites anybody.

PART FOUR. THE GARDEN

Coda. At the Memorial

The van from Limassol came up on the Friday morning early, in a cold that made the gravel ring, and the mason's man backed it to the gate of the garden by the ruins with the confidence of a man who had backed it to many gates, and the mason got down from the cab and looked at the sky as at a subordinate who would do.

The boy was there before them. He had been told to dress warm and had dressed warm, and he stood out of the way, which is a skill, and watched the slab come off the van on rollers and go up the path on a trolley built in some decade nobody could name, and watched the two men set it, plumb it, and bed it, working without talk, in the manner of men whose talk had all been used up profitably years ago. Then the mason unrolled his blanket of tools beside the stone, and the man carried the little generator up from the van, and the cutting began, and it was, as promised, a morning's work in any weather short of the worst, and the weather was short of the worst by about two degrees.

The mason worked off a paper taped to the marble, and the paper was his own, from the order book, checked twice on a Thursday night down a telephone line; and the cutter threw a fine white dust that the wind took toward the sea, and the man followed the mason with water and a cloth, and the letters filled one by one with the morning. A few of the garden's Friday people stopped on the path at a respectful distance, because a stone being cut is public the way a keel being laid is public, and went on. At some point the boy stepped forward and held out the folder, which he had carried up under his arm, sixty laminated pages of the garden's whole vocabulary, lent since the autumn; and the mason straightened, and took it, and weighed it once in his hand the way he would have weighed a chisel, and put it in the cab of the van, and that was the folder's whole retirement.

By early afternoon it was done, and the tools were rolled, and the generator was quiet, and the man swept the white dust off the base with a soft brush, twice, and the second time was for pride. The mason stood in front of the stone for a moment with his head at the angle of his trade.

"It'll stand," he said. "Come to the yard in the spring and tell me it settled, and I'll come up and be surprised." He shook the boy's hand, and the man shook the boy's hand, and the van went down toward Limassol with the folder in it.

The boy stayed a while, and what he did there was stand, and then he went down and opened the taverna, because the ice had come and the fish wanted salting, and Saturday was tomorrow.

The town went to church on the Saturday morning in its good coats, the same coats as Epiphany and fewer of them, and the church was full in the way it is full for the Saturday of Souls, which is fuller than for most of the living occasions. On the table before the icons the kollyva stood in its trays under the candlelight, and Maroulla's was the third from the left and would not have needed pointing out: the wheat mounded and dressed, the sugar laid on like first snow, and pressed into the sugar, from Chrystalla's bronze stencils, the good ones, a cross and a wreath with edges you could have shaved by. Eleni sat at her little table inside the porch with the sakoulakia in ranked white rows and the book open beside them, and nobody had asked her to bring the book, and nobody would have dreamed of suggesting she leave it.

The priest read the names of the town's dead where the rite reads them, old lists and new in the one breath, and his name went by among the rest, one name in a ribbon of names, said and passed; and the hymn went round, and the smoke went up, and the candles did their work of standing.

Afterwards the boy stood at the door, where the family stands.

The town came past him for the better part of an hour, one at a time, and said the same two words to him, and he answered every one. Stavros said them with both hands on the boy's one. The harbourmaster said them in the voice he uses for weather warnings, which is his voice for everything he means. Women the boy had served coffee to his whole life said them and touched his cheek, and one of them held his face the way you hold a bowl. Androulla said them in her vowels from the far side of the world and did not let go of him for some seconds after the words were finished, gloved hand last to leave. Kyriakou said them. Loizos said them. Stelios came through with Marina and the girl asleep on his shoulder, and said them quietly, over the child's head, and the boy answered him as he answered the rest, by name where he had breath for the name, with thanks where he did not; and Eleni's count went down bag by bag at the little table beside him; and Fridrik came last, in his northern coat, and stood in front of the boy and said the town's two words in the town's own order, in an accent that had learned them this winter, and the boy answered him too.

Then the town walked to the garden.

It is not far, and the morning was bright and hard, and the procession thinned along the path into families, each peeling off toward its own rows with its own bag of wheat, because the Saturday belongs to all the dead at once, and the garden filled the way the church had, quietly, everywhere. Three rows over, at a stone four from the gate, Chrystalla was down on one knee with a wet cloth, working at the base of the marble as at a kitchen shelf, her chrysanthemums already in the jar; she looked up once, at the crowd assembling by the new stone, and gave the boy a nod of the width appropriate to the day, and went back to the work of her hands.

At the new stone the priest said the short service that is said at gravesides, and the smoke moved off along the row in the wind, and then he took the oil and the wine, and poured them over the marble in the shape the rite prescribes, and the morning ran down the stone's face and found the letters, all of them, the cross and the opening the town gives everyone, the name in its Greek clothes, the two dates, and the line beneath; and the letters went dark and glistened, every letter at once, the way a thing looks when it has just been made and the maker's hand is still somewhere near it. The town read the stone. It read it the way a town reads, some aloud and low, an old man's lips moving through it twice, a woman explaining a word to a child with one finger short of touching the marble; and Maroulla, who had buried enough people to have opinions, looked at the line under the dates for a long moment and then nodded, once, the nod she gives a tray of wheat that has come out right. Nobody said anything to the boy.

The kollyva went round at the gate, a spoonful into every hand, the harbour men on the wall got their twenty bags carried out to them by Eleni personally, who checked the wall's count against the book in the open air, and the town came down the hill hungry.

The pariorka was at the taverna, and it was Stelios's fish, two crates of it made good, and it was a hundred and forty covers served by a staff of the whole town, since at such meals the line between served and serving dissolves by the second course, and Maroulla ran the kitchen door like a lock-keeper, and the wine was the good wine, and the noise rose to the level of a room that has been to church and walked uphill and downhill in the cold and is now warm and fed and all together and knows exactly what day it is. Nobody made a speech. It is not a day for speeches.

But between the fish and the coffee the boy stood up at his place, and the room came down to a simmer on its own, in the town's way, without anyone knocking a glass; and he took a letter out of his inside pocket, unfolded once, the paper soft at the creases with eleven years of travel.

“He wrote this to me,” the boy said, “in the spring of the pots. Some of you were combatants.” Laughter, already, in three quarters of the room, and Maroulla’s voice came from the kitchen door with something in the island’s Greek about the municipality, which got its own laugh. “It came back to me from Ferrara with his other letters. It’s his. His hand, his year, his commas. I’ll read it, and you’ll know whose it is the whole way, and then we’ll have coffee.”

And he read it.

He read it in his own voice, which shook for exactly one line near the beginning and then found the water; and the room went with the letter the way a boat goes with a sea, lifted and dropped in the places the dead man had built for lifting and dropping; and at the part about the municipal officer and the measuring tape the taverna made a noise that moved the cats off the wall outside, and Maroulla laughed with her apron up over her face, and Stelios pounded the table with the flat of his hand, and Fridrik, at the end of the long table, laughed too, in the northern register, low and long, with his eyes on the paper in the boy’s hands. It was a very good letter. The whole room knew whose it was, the whole time, in every syllable; the hands that held it were the town’s to see; and when it was finished the boy folded it along its old creases and put it back in his pocket, and said, “Coffee,” and sat down, and the room’s noise closed back over the evening like water over a thrown cross.

The coffee went round. The light went long. The tables emptied by families, with the farewells of people who will see each other tomorrow and know it; and Marina carried the sleeping girl out into the blue hour against her shoulder, and Stelios carried the empty crates, and Maroulla left last of the women, pausing at the door to inspect the state of the room and finding it, against every expectation she had brought to this life, adequate.

The boy and Fridrik went down to the front with the last of the wine and stood at the rail, because that is what the rail is for, and the sea was doing its evening work, unconsulted, and the lights of the harbour came on in their own order.

“The boat is Tuesday week,” Fridrik said. “I’ll write in the autumn.”

“I know,” the boy said.

“And in Bright Week,” said Fridrik, “they’ll stand you at a font, and hand you a candle, and you’ll say a name out loud in that church, and some woman in a good coat will spend the next forty years telling the child it was her idea.”

“If the priest agrees,” the boy said, and the old man laughed at the sea.

They stood a while. The wine went down slowly, the way the last of a bottle does between two people who are not finishing it so much as keeping it company. Along the front a scooter passed, and the water knocked at the stones below the rail.

From up the lane, out of the lit door and over the evening, came a voice with the full authority of the lungs of this island:

“Savva! The till won’t count itself!”

“Go,” said Fridrik. “I’ll bring the glasses.”

The boy pushed off the rail. For a moment he stood with his hand on the old iron, looking at the water the way the town looks at it, which is without illusions and without any intention of living anywhere else; and then he went, up the steps and along under the lamps, to the door with its light lying down the lane as far as the sea; and the room received the boy the way it receives bread, without looking up, and closed around him, and the evening went on.

BACK MATTER

The People of the Winter

A list, kept to what the walks show, for a reader who wants one. It interprets nothing.

The two walkers.

Guglielmo. The Italian. He conducted the walks of the two earlier books, and he died in his sleep in February, in the town, a year before this book's last day. He had paid for the plot, the marble and the mason, and left the words for the stone unassigned. He does not come back in these pages, and where his words appear a living person speaks them and says whose they were.

Fridrik. His friend of forty years, from the north, who walked beside him through the earlier books and walks here in his place. He comes back to the town in the autumn and stays the winter.

The boy.

Savvas. He keeps the taverna, and he keeps Guglielmo's flat. The earlier book knew him only as the boy, and this book mostly knows him that way too. He is the one the mason, the museum, the priest and the town all ask what the dead man would have wanted.

Androulla. His nouna, his godmother, who named him at the font. His mother's oldest friend, forty years in Melbourne and back every few winters. Hers is the voice that carries across the crowd at the Epiphany.

The town.

Charalambos. He cast the one vote against.

Chrystalla. A widow from the hill houses, and the first to find that the machine at the bank would talk about anything and never look at its watch.

Eleni. A widow, and the keeper of the accounts that matter; the harbour's have been hers for two generations.

Kostas. A son of the town, thirty years in London and back with a pension. He buys the house at the steps. His wife is English.

Kyriakou. An old man of the town, who opened his account at the branch the year of his wedding.

Loizos. A townsman, who has called the bank manager by his title across the street for twenty years.

Maroulla. A woman who has buried enough people to have opinions.

Marina. Stelios's wife.

Michalis. A boatman, and one of the two men at the two tables.

Pavlos. The oldest fisherman in the harbour, who has fished out of it longer than anyone living.

Stavros. A townsman, who attends everything.

Stelios. A fisherman whose boat comes in past midnight, and the other of the two men at the two tables. He and Marina ask the boy to stand as noun at their child's baptism.

Yiannis. The manager of the bank at the harbour, and the town's own: christened at Lazarus, schooled above it.

And one who is not a person.

The girl in the glass. The town's name for the speaking machine the bank sets on its counter.

The island is real and named; the town is the town; the harbour, the fort and the garden by the ruins may all be visited. The persons are invented, or composed until no one living stands behind them.

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Appendix. Debts and Registry

Part 1. The Debts

Registers: direct debt; nearest neighbour; departure. Entries in the winter's order, each beside the page that incurred it; an alphabetical index may be added at typesetting. The admission rule: a name enters only if a walk or the Return stands in its debt, neighbourhood, or refusal.

The common, and its tone.

Aristotle. Direct debt at the distance of a title: koinonia, the community for living and for living well. Politics, Book I; the friendship books of the Ethics.

Heidegger, Martin. Direct debt and defining departure. Being and Time: das Man and everyday publicness (the anyone an existentiale of the positive constitution, §27, SZ 129; the falling disclaimer, no bad and deplorable property, §38, SZ 175 to 176); mineness (§9, SZ 42); being-with as equiprimordial, articulated equipmentally and nowhere derived from address (§§25 to 26, SZ 114 to 120); conscience as silent discourse that reports nothing, the call from me and yet over me (§§56 to 57, SZ 271 to 275); the null ground (§58, SZ 283 to 285); circumstances against Situation, the anyone's essential closure (§60, SZ 300); resoluteness pushed into solicitous being-with, the asserted and underived return (§60, SZ 298); the death chapters, the other's death and the two substitutabilities (§47, SZ 237 to 240). Sightings verified against the Niemeyer margins, which both English translations print. The Return's ninth section gives the reordered reading, the theorem, and the graveside departure with its defence. For the dispute over das Man's positive and pejorative senses: Olafson, Inquiry 37 (1994), 45 to 64; Carman's reply, Inquiry 37 (1994), 203 to 223, and Heidegger's Analytic (2003); Dreyfus, Inquiry 38 (1995), 423 to 430, on the two senses conflated; Crowell, Normativity and Phenomenology in Husserl and Heidegger (2013); Haugeland, in Dasein Disclosed (2013); Schmid and Thonhauser's volume, From Conventionalism to Social Authenticity (2017).

Hegel, G. W. F. Nearest neighbour, one line: Sittlichkeit, ethical life lived in customs and institutions before it lives in anyone's reflection.

Nancy, Jean-Luc; Blanchot, Maurice; Esposito, Roberto. Nearest neighbours, filed together: comparution, the unavowable community, the munus that gives by expropriating. The Jar's proximity: a gift finished by the giver's hands coming off it stands one row from the munus; the walks kept the jar and declined the ontology of lack.

Mauss, Marcel; Hénaff, Marcel; Derrida, Jacques (Given Time).

Nearest neighbours of the same walk: the triple obligation; ceremonial recognition against equivalence; the gift annulled by its own recognition. The Jar's letting-go, sealed into the giving, stands beside all three.

The address, and the turn.

Buber, Martin. Direct debt, with the Return's limitation: I and Thou at the head of the crowd; the walks do not import its totality into every ordinary use of the second person.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. Direct debt, the section's deepest. Toward a Philosophy of the Act, in Liapunov's translation, whose answerability the trilogy inherits knowingly, the word kept dialogical against its legal capture; the non-alibi in Being; the once-occurrent place; the signature below the obligation. The second book's chapter on the alibi stands in the same debt. Difference, once: the locus as standing address surviving between acts, not only act-event uniqueness; the machine, the routed institution, and the anti-office are nowhere in the fragment. University of Texas Press, 1993; the signature sentence and the non-alibi standing together in the discussion of the ought, at pp. 38 to 42, the translator's choice of answerability noted in his own introduction.

Waldenfels, Bernhard. Nearest neighbour: the responsive order, the demand first and the answer already late; the book's arrival vocabulary is a neighbour, not a tenant.

Darwall, Stephen. Direct debt of one sentence from the other tradition: The Second-Person Standpoint, second-personal authority constitutive of demand, blame, and accountability. The antecedence objection (Wallace; Zylberman) and the floor's answer, with its form-not-validity guard, stand at the Return's second section. The Second-Person Standpoint (2006); the antecedence objection, that obligation cannot wait upon an actual demand, recorded with Wallace, *The Moral Nexus* (2019), and Zylberman, and met by the Return's guard, which takes the form of demand and not the dependence of validity.

Thompson, Michael. Nearest neighbour: bipolar normativity, the wrong that runs between parties and bears a name; it underwrites the concession at the duties owed the dead. *What Is It to Wrong Someone? A Puzzle about Justice* (2004).

Althusser, Louis; with Butler, Judith. Departure: the hail that recruits and recognises within an ideological structure; the constitutive extension. The distinction the Return cuts: social identities are constituted through repeated recognition and address across a life; no particular vocative event manufactures personhood at the instant of reaching. Disclosure, not manufacture, holds at the instant; the lifetime is conceded. *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* (1970); *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997).

Arendt, Hannah. Direct debt: the who disclosed in action and speech, not reducible to a product fabricated by the action. *The Human Condition* (1958), the fifth chapter.

Benveniste, Émile. Direct debt: subjectivity constituted in the instance of discourse, the I-you polarity prior to any third. *Problems in General Linguistics*, the chapter on subjectivity in language.

Chrétien, Jean-Louis. Nearest neighbour: the call and the response, subjectivity as non-transferable responder to a prior call. His phenomenology retains a theological horizon of the call; the trilogy restricts its derivation to lateral, ordinary address between persons. *L'Appel et la Réponse* (1992).

The line kept warm.

Malinowski, Bronisław. Direct debt: phatic communion, the 1923 supplement; the Line's addition stands at the Return's third section.

Borrowed voices, and the law's own map.

Goffman, Erving. Direct debt: the production format, animator, author, principal; the borrowed I's analytical twin. *Forms of Talk* (1981), the footing chapter.

Weber, Max; Dahrendorf, Ralf. Direct debts: the bureau that outlives its holders; *Homo Sociologicus*.

Hobbes, Thomas. Direct debt: *Leviathan*, chapter sixteen; persons natural and artificial, authors and actors.

Moran, Richard. Direct debt: the assurance account of telling, the speaker's word as her assumption of responsibility for its truth. *The Exchange of Words: Speech, Testimony, and Intersubjectivity* (2018), the second chapter, which is the earlier essay *Getting Told and Being Believed* (2005) carried into the book.

Dworkin, Ronald. Nearest neighbour: precedent autonomy and critical interests, the directive binding after capacity without its author renewing or revising; beside the fifteenth walk's mandate-against-surviving-instruction doctrine and the sixteenth's will. *Life's Dominion* (1993), the eighth chapter; the later-self objection to directive authority (Dresser) recorded, not adjudicated.

Legal and historical materials. Filed apart: practices and instruments the walks stood in the debt of, without pretending each is a creditor in the philosophers' register.

The Contract Law of Cyprus, Cap. 149: section 161, termination, the principal's death among its events; section 162, the agency coupled with the agent's own interest; section 168, the termination taking effect against the agent only when it becomes known to him and against third persons only when it becomes known to them, each position judged by its own knowledge; section 169, the protective duty on the principal's death or unsoundness of mind, quoted in substance and honoured at the Return's fourth section. All four sections sighted in the statute's own text, on the consolidated register and in the 1959 English text, current and unamended.

Cap. 39: the Certifying Officer's two routes, a signature made in his presence by a signer personally known to him, or by one identified by two persons themselves personally known to him, who sign as witnesses; an identity card alone does not suffice, and the courts have voided instruments where the rule was breached.

Cap. 148, the Civil Wrongs Law, section 57: the contributory negligence provision, liability and damages apportioned by degrees of fault; where money is concerned, the law divides in percentages.

The age's four doors, from the Return's seventh section, jurisdiction-specific and dated by nature: a request under Article 15 for the data held; a complaint to the bank; a complaint to the data-protection authority, the Office of the Commissioner for Personal Data Protection; and, for eligible financial disputes, the Financial Commissioner, the ombudsman scheme of Law 84(I) of 2010, open to retail customers. All four routes confirmed and named as at July 2026.

Cornaro: Venice, the thirtieth of July 1468, the proxy marriage of Caterina Cornaro to the King of Cyprus, who remained in the east; a formal act carried across bodily absence. Historical instance; the proxy's name is not soundly attested, and the book asserts none.

Joint hands, standing bodies, and the three levels.

Gilbert, Margaret. Direct debt: joint commitment, the undertaking that is ours without a further person above us; the recorded dissent read as record, not absolution. *On Social Facts* (1989); *Living Together* (1996).

List, Christian, and Pettit, Philip. Departure at the literature's strongest: Group Agency; functional and normative group agency conceded at the Return's fifth section; the further existential locus denied there, once. *Group Agency* (2011).

Gierke, Otto von, and Maitland, F. W. Noted, unadjudicated: real entity against fiction and concession. The medieval root filed with it: the canonists' *persona ficta*, Innocent IV's gloss, a person by name of law, against the natural person the Fourth Lateran Council bound to answer for herself, the confession decree of 1215 at canon 21, the gloss near 1245.

Dan-Cohen, Meir. Nearest neighbour: the personless corporation; the Return's phrase, a durable technology of attribution, meets his page coming the other way. *Rights, Persons, and Organizations* (1986).

Smith, Nick. Nearest neighbour: the categorical apology; institutional apology ultimately requires reachable existential answerers. *I Was Wrong: The Meanings of Apology* (2008).

Kutz, Christopher; Mellema, Gregory. Nearest neighbours: complicity without causal parcels; accountability that does not distribute. The moral cousins of costs parcel, answering multiplies; the legal cousins stand in the materials block above. *Complicity* (2000); *Collective Responsibility* (1997).

Collins, Stephanie. Nearest neighbour: the material-locus account, a significant internal ally for locating collective moral awareness in members. *Organizations as Wrongdoers: From Ontology to Morality* (2023), the fifth chapter.

The People.

Young, Iris Marion. Nearest neighbour: political responsibility for structure that no liability model parcels. The walks' claim is narrower and stands beside hers: the critique of a custom is an address to the sites where the custom is kept. Responsibility for Justice (2011).

The glass.

Horton, Donald, and Wohl, R. Richard. Direct debt: the 1956 paper; para-social interaction. Psychiatry 19 (1956).

Weizenbaum, Joseph. Direct debt: ELIZA, and what confiding in a pattern-matcher showed about us.

Turkle, Sherry. Direct debt: Alone Together; relational artefacts in the present tense.

The dead.

Klass, Dennis, with Silverman and Nickman. Nearest neighbour: continuing bonds. The book's precision stands at the Return's eighth section: the bond continues and the living sustain it; the reception does not. Continuing Bonds (1996).

Cholbi, Michael; Ratcliffe, Matthew. Nearest neighbours, the recent philosophy of grief: grief as rational attention to a transformed world; the grief-world's altered possibilities. The walks' claim is narrower: the address, directed and unreceived. Grief: A Philosophical Guide (2021); Grief Worlds (2022).

Tanabe, Hajime. Departure, the contrary pole: the communion of the living and the dead, remembrance as mediation, the dead kept as interlocutors. The acts honoured; the reception refused. Philosophy as Metanoetics (trans. Takeuchi, 1986), the late meditations on death.

Feinberg, Joel; Pitcher, George. Nearest neighbours: posthumous harm to ante-mortem interests; met at the Return's eighth section as welfare-status, never new deed. Harm to Others (1984); The Misfortunes of the Dead (1984), the ante-mortem subject at p. 184.

Blustein, Jeffrey. Nearest neighbour: the moral demands of memory, relational redress; met at the fence, meaning-work and never occurrence-work. *The Moral Demands of Memory* (2008).

The duties owed the dead. The promissory and bipolar literature, one line: obligee-standing conceded whole; answerer-standing denied; directed and unreceived, wearing the law's clothes.

Jankélévitch, Vladimir. Direct debt, twice over: *La Mort*, the second person of death, the near one addressed as you; *L'Irréversible et la nostalgie*, the having-done that no power annuls, creditor of the perfective's fence. *La Mort* (1977), the fecisse beyond annihilation at p. 492; *L'Irréversible et la nostalgie* (1974).

Derrida, Jacques. Direct debt and departure, the loci kept apart. Debt: the signature, iterability the condition of every mark, forgery its permanent shadow. Departure: destinerrance, *La carte postale*, met at the Return's eighth section, the drift conceded entire and the coming-due untouched. Given Time stands under the Jar's neighbours. Signature Event Context, in *Margins of Philosophy*; *La carte postale* (1980).

Stokes, Patrick. Direct debt: the dead online, the digital remainder of persons. *Digital Souls* (2021).

Öhman, Carl, and Floridi, Luciano. Direct debt: the ethics of the digital afterlife industry.

Krueger, Joel, and Osler, Lucy. Departure, given its best sentence at the Return's eighth section: the fictionalist stance, grief's habits of intimacy let down slowly; met at the stance's stability under commercial design. *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 29 (2022), 222 to 252.

Hollanek, Tomasz, and Nowaczyk-Basińska, Katarzyna. Nearest neighbours: design responsibility in the digital afterlife industry; the upstream author of the falseness, argued from inside the field. *Griefbots, Deadbots, Postmortem Avatars: on Responsible Applications of Generative AI in the Digital Afterlife Industry*, Philosophy and Technology 37 (2024).

Manevich, Alexander, and Haber, Yuval. Direct debt for a case: the premorbid double of the living, put forward as a proposal and not as a product, its authors stating that no technology built for the purpose yet exists. Owned at the Return's eighth section; the licence and the first book's appendix jointly suffice. *Non-Death Loss and GenAI: Ethical Reflections on Griefbots of the Living*, Frontiers in Genetics 17 (2026).

The analytic reordered.

Kierkegaard, Søren. Nearest neighbour, the oldest at the graveside: *Works of Love*, the discourse on recollecting one who is dead; the freest and most faithful love, no repayment possible. Difference: the lover's love shown there; the deed and its address weighed here. *Works of Love*, in the Hongs' translation, the sentence at p. 358.

Aktas, Ahmet. Nearest neighbour, the closest recent page: mineness carried from dying to grieving, each loss singular and able to open what one's own death opens; *Human Studies* 47 (2024), 479 to 499. Difference: the feeling there; the deed here. Verified against the published text, which stops at the felt state and does not reach the enacted deed.

Harrison, Robert Pogue. Nearest neighbour: The Dominion of the Dead (2003); burial as the founding of the human, humanitas from humando, after Vico. Terrain borrowed; concept not. Read whole, verdict negative: the closest approaches stand at the preface's contract of mutual indebtedness (p. x), the individuation pivot on Heidegger (p. 81), and the labour of getting the dead to die in us (p. 147), each collective, historical, or psychological where the walks weigh the deed; the sixth chapter turns repetition into lexification and never descends to the one who owes. The graveside claim's condition is discharged, here and at the sweep filed below.

The graveside's other neighbours. Found at the priority sweep and cited as found, one line each: Dastur, Death: An Essay on Finitude, mourning as the origin of culture, the rite communal and foundational; the death-of-the-other line, Critchley with Levinas behind him, death entering the world through the deaths of others, the survivor undone in feeling; Derrida's mourning pages, The Work of Mourning and The Gift of Death, each death singular and the end of a world, death named the place of irreplaceability and read toward sacrifice and the constitutive relation. Each locates the weight in the feeling, the relation, or the rite; none in the enacted deed whose identity is fixed by the mourner's standing. The sweep's full record, with its search strings and databases, is kept on file.

Schürmann, Reiner. Departure, paid as the Return's ninth section promised: the anarchy principle; the charge that a retired ground returns covertly. Answered at the theorem on the second book's pattern; his own ultimates, natality and mortality, noted as the answer's internal warrant.

Vattimo, Gianni. Nearest neighbour, inherited and extended one line: weakening as the sense of emancipation. The weak-invariant formulation stands in that neighbourhood and stops short of caritas.

Chiurazzi, Gaetano. Direct debt, inherited and extended: the syncategorematic grammar of being, prepositional against substantival. The locus's grammar, a where and never a what, is spent at the theorem.

The one who answers.

Parfit, Derek. Departure at the literature's strongest: Reasons and Persons; identity not a further fact; connectedness and continuity in degrees; branching. Answered at the Return's tenth section: no rival criterion offered; the irreducibility narrowed to the non-transferability of the present act of answering; branching multiplies answering. One guarded note held here rather than in the chapter: were a single life ever genuinely parted into two streams, answerers would be counted by address and not by skulls; the estate asserts no anatomy and builds nothing on the clause. Reasons and Persons (1984), Part Three; the further-fact denial at p. 210.

Zahavi, Dan. Nearest neighbour: the minimal self, pre-reflective mineness that no address confers and no incapacity removes. Met in two registers at the Return's tenth section; the exclusion worry sent to the inherited guard. Subjectivity and Selfhood (2005), the mineness chapters.

Metzinger, Thomas; Siderits, Mark. Refusals, the modern anchors of the no-self accounts: the self-model; the person as useful designation. The onion agreed with; the inference from no substance to no address denied. Being No One (2003); Buddhism as Philosophy (2007).

Levinas, Emmanuel. Direct debt, the nearest great creditor of the answer itself: substitution as exposure preceding choice, Otherwise than Being, chapter four; the death of the other as the first death, the lecture course God, Death, and Time (trans. Bergo, 2000); the *il y a*. The sentence spent in the Return, I can substitute myself for everyone, but no one can substitute himself for me, stands with its inalienable coda in Ethics and Infinity, the conversations with Philippe Nemo (trans. Cohen, Duquesne, 1985, p. 101; *Éthique et infini*, Fayard, 1982, pp. 100 to 101), speaking the fourth chapter's doctrine in one breath. The departure is owed as a departure, not a reservation: what his page keeps in the first person the walks found in every mouth, and the bearing that reaches even the other's responsibility, a reach he states in those same conversations and again in the treatise's fourth chapter, does not perform the other's answering; Return, tenth section.

Ricoeur, Paul. Direct debt: attestation, the assurance of standing that is neither proof nor feeling; Oneself as Another behind the self-attribution crisis.

Løgstrup, K. E. Direct debt: the ethical demand arising because lives are delivered into one another's hands, unasked, daily.

Strawson, P. F. Direct debt, one line: the reactive attitudes; a practice of persons is a practice of address. Freedom and Resentment (1962).

Hart, H. L. A. Direct debt, one line: ascription, the defeasible attaching of a deed to a name. The Ascription of Responsibility and Rights (1949).

The trilogy's standing creditors. The first book's Debts (Husserl and Steinbock; Held; Merleau-Ponty; Gadamer; Schütz; Löwith; Theunissen; Marion; Crowell) and the second's (Schürmann; Vattimo; Chiurazzi; and their company) stand as filed in those books and are not re-litigated; entries above only where this book incurred its own debt. Two extended by name:

Crowell, Steven. Nearest neighbour of the whole arc, and the nearest living one: conscience, account-giving, the second person's normative force read out of the analytic. Difference: the floor's modality and lateral source; and this book's addition to the shared ground is the grave.

Marion, Jean-Luc; with Janicaud, Dominique. The givenness difference restated for the Jar's gratitude: the giver bracketed methodologically there; no giver needed ontologically here. Janicaud's caution, that a call-structure can keep a sender in the wings, cited once as the difference's independent witness. *Being Given* (2002); *Phenomenology and the Theological Turn* (2000).

Earlier works by the author. Cited as prior stages of the programme, per the Return's two pointers; the trilogy repeats none of their technical arguments. *Reading Between the Times*: the vectorisation of the trace and the two detachments; the drift the destinerrance concession spends. *The Vectorized Afterlife of the They*: the anyone's afterlife in the model; chatter at scale; vivification; the technical anatomy of the reconstructed voice; the seventh section's pointer. *Socrates and the Machine*: the machine interlocutor at dialogue length; the case against the no-self inference at the fifth chapter, the standpoint that cannot be given away, where the deflationary family is met at its strongest and answered from the conditions of evidence and not from a substance; the persistence question carried into narrative and promise at the sixth. The tenth section's pointer.

Part 2. The Registry

The book's registered vocabulary, in four kinds: terms, which name; laws and tests, which decide; distinctions, which keep apart; figures and phrases, which carry. Each entry gives its definition or its work, and its place of origin. The rule stands: nothing enters without a walk behind it; the entries earned by the Return rather than a walk are marked. Inherited terms are used, not re-coined: the fold remains the first book's and the alibi the second's; the perfective remains the second book's register, with the Date's fence as this book's addition.

A. Terms.

The aperture. The narrow place where both halves of the first finding hold at once: reachable persons, and nothing behind them that can be reached; an opening into the space of persons through which an account can reach someone and cannot pass on into what made them. First gathering.

The locus. The structural place opened where roles, words, calls, and accounts become this person's to take up and to answer from; not an entity, not a property, not a kernel; shown only by what lands there and by what cannot be made to land anywhere else. Second gathering, with its three notices nailed on in the coining breath. Filiation: the first book's vocabulary already carried locus as the from-of-the-vanishing, the non-spatial from which a person answers and could leave the shared world; the third book's title word is that seed grown to its full definition, the non-transferable first-person address, and the trilogy closes on a word present at its opening.

One person wide. The aperture's measure, naming each address and never the number of hands a deed may have. Banked at the first gathering, paid at the third, enacted at the seventeenth walk's threshold.

The two closings. The two ways a whoever shuts on a single name: the dated font, one stroke, the duties travelling on afterwards; and the slow sediment, forty years, no date and no ceremony. Ninth walk.

Directed and unreceived. The address of mourning: determinate, aimed, and permanently without a landing; neither misfire nor conversation; both halves load-bearing. Fourteenth walk. Filiation: the second gathering's unarrived-against-unanswered distinction, spent at full value at the grave.

The anti-office. The grave as the town's deliberate inversion of the office: an office preserves the place by replacing its occupants; a grave preserves the person by refusing every replacement; one name, cut in stone, so that no one may ever be installed in it. Fourteenth walk.

Engineered reception. The design of conditions intended to make an output be received under an attribution or relational status it has not earned. Earned at the Return's eighth section and marked as such; applied there to the reconstructed voice, where the make-believe's stance is built against by tuning and unasked delivery, so that the falseness acquires an author upstream of any receiver.

B. Laws and tests.

The hinge sentence. Worldly traffic requires substitutable occupants; responsibility discloses the point at which the occupant is no longer substitutable. Both halves load-bearing; neither may be dropped. Third gathering.

Costs parcel, answering multiplies. The law of the many hands: costs, fault, and remedy may be apportioned, being made of the kind of stuff that parcels; answering does not divide, each answerable participant owing an account of their entire relation to the joint deed, and the accounts may differ in scope, weight, and content without becoming fractions of one fused answer. Tenth walk; consolidated at the third gathering; applied diachronically at the Return's tenth section.

The ratification test. When a joint answer is true: wherever every person inside it ratifies it whole and stays singly reachable; it becomes the fold with a wedding ring at exactly the point where it answers so that the persons need not. Tenth walk.

The doer-inside-the-deed criterion. What delegates is the deed whose identity is indifferent to the hand; what cannot be delegated is the deed that has its doer inside it, and such deeds are doings entire. Eleventh walk; corrected form at the third gathering; spent against the reduction of the person at the Return's tenth section.

The craft test. One question long: walk every route through the paper, and see whether it ends at someone. Eleventh walk; extended at the fourth gathering to the instruments.

The two-condition licence. Quotation's terms: that the words be really his, finished, his own act, closed; and that the hands show; and the second alone buys nothing, since hands can be shown all day over the manufacture of sentences, and newness is the entire matter. The loan runs one way, a living voice lent to finished words, never a voice lent to the dead. Fifteenth walk.

The identity thesis. The third book's reason to exist, posted once at the Return's ninth section: the route by which a person is reached and the closed top past which no answer can be forwarded are one differentiation seen from its two faces, and their identity leaves every answer at exactly one address; the person is not the null ground of the deed but its address; a ground bears from beneath; a locus receives from before. Earned by the Return and marked as such.

C. Distinctions.

The three levels, and the locus beside them. The common, which supplies and can be consulted, and cannot receive attribution, discharge a duty, apologise, or answer as a party; the organised roles and procedures, which route and keep and can be petitioned; the juridical persona, an address by design, answering through officers; and the existential locus, the non-forwardable where of an answer, which none of the three is and none of the three establishes. Return, fifth section, on the walks of Movement IV.

Deed and performance. The performance is executable by whoever is hired or robbed; the deed's identity may be fixed by a standing no hire can occupy. The materials and the preparation of a deed are shareable; the final taking-up is not. Seventeenth walk; spent at the Return's ninth section, where it carries the graveside departure.

Quotation, reconstruction, continuation. Quotation preserves a completed utterance and displays its present carrier. Reconstruction creates a new utterance now from real traces; disclosure can make it honest, and cannot make the dead its author. Continuation is reconstruction offered as the person's ongoing voice, the new sentence seated where the answer should be. Fifteenth walk and the Return's eighth section.

Obligee-standing and answerer-standing. The dead man may remain the one wronged, the one owed, the one whose name the duty carries; he does not remain the answering pole of any exchange: no apology received, no demand revised, no debtor released. Return, eighth section.

Institutional answering and existential owning. An institution answers functionally and normatively through authorised procedures, and the answer is real, binding, and not reducible to an employee's private statement; it does not thereby acquire an additional existential bearer, one lived past, grief, or remorse as a felt taking-up. Return, fifth section.

The four finalities. Attributional termination: no act after death becomes the dead person's new deed. Procedural closure: the agencies and offices that ran on the person's living authority terminate or pass to successor structures. Epistemic openness, which the book denies as a finality: the evidence and interpretation of a life remain open, the dead knowable, quotable, and correctable in what they really left. Perfective completedness, which the book affirms and fences: what happened cannot be made not to have happened, though its meaning, legal effect, description, and consequences remain arguable; a grammar of the past and not a politics. The Saturday and the Return's eighth section. Filiation: the second book's correction articulated.

Answering for, and answering as. Answering for another keeps that person's place open, and does not create, replace, or absorb the person: the infant at the font, the failing man whose answering his carers hold, the member at rest between calls. Answering as another does not exist: the deed of answering has its doer inside it, and no one signs for the dead. The first book's closing appendix, inherited; the eleventh and seventeenth walks; the Return's tenth section.

Semantic delivery and normative coming-due. What a trace carries may drift, be intercepted, and be read by whoever comes; where a deed comes due does not travel with the trace. Non-transferability is a property of the answering, never of the signal. Return, eighth section.

D. Figures and phrases.

The grain. One person wide is not loneliness: the grain of addressability itself, as wood has a grain; two boards glue, two grains never become one grain, and the town builds everything of boards, side by side, each grained. Third gathering.

The singer and the singing. The criterion's figure: the doer inside the deed as the singer is inside the singing; at the glass, the singer taken out and the song still coming. Eleventh walk; spent at the twelfth.

Come home, the verb. The winter's question changing its pronoun in a doorway: not what would he have wanted; what have you. Sixteenth walk.

The fetcher and the empty room. The winter's engine: where the estate is empty of the answer, searched twice, the question that keeps sending the messenger receives back only what the fetcher made in the doorway. Sixteenth walk.

Unsigned in the marble, addressed all the way down. The seventeenth walk's two halves said apart: no name in the stone, and no dead man's authority borrowed; and the deed entered, dated, and known, two entries in one order book at one address, four summers apart. It decides nothing and carries much.

Part 3. The trilogy's estate

The span is declared here and nowhere else, in the three registers of candour the books have used throughout, and the reader should hold the registers apart, because the estate's honesty is in the sorting and not in the size.

Shown, on the trilogy's own wager, which is to say shown to whoever went where the figures point and stands ready to say what they saw instead: the first book's law, that the field is prior in constitution and only persons answer; the second's, that nothing stands beneath the floor and nothing is missing, ground being an office never performed and the alibi its practical face; the third's, that route in and no route out are one differentiation and the aperture is one person wide; and their joining. The strata of the shared world. The substitution map with its mapped edge, the middle country walked at reasonable rates. Insufficiency, not immateriality, at the glass. Directed and unreceived, at the grave. And the identity thesis, as the reading under which the first two laws were one law all along.

Made plausible, argued in the open and resting on more than the walks could carry: the reordered analytic, a reading of a tradition and not a sight seen on gravel; the licence's ethics as stated against the current literatures, met at their strongest and still a position among positions; and the practical hypotheses the Return marks expressly as hypotheses, the false exit's cost first among them.

Left open, and filed open on purpose: the first book's bracket against destiny, still standing where it was posted. The second book's rim, whether the non-human is eventful in itself, not reopened by anything this winter met. Whether any future artificial system could instantiate an existential locus: the trilogy establishes the insufficiency of the features examined, operational state, competence, continuity, and lineage, and legislates no further. The motivational force of the address: the structure of coming-due does not by itself explain why an addressed person will answer, answer truthfully, or answer well; the trilogy claims the structure and no moral psychology. And this book's own two: what hearing the reconstructed voice does to the hearer, declined untested, on the record, a door learned by leaving it shut; and the phenomenology of the could-in-force before speech, the second book's remainder, named once here and handed forward. The estate ends with that drawer open, by its own doctrine of inheritance: what stands is kept, and what is kept includes the questions.

The books were walks; the reader is the tribunal. The demand posted at the first book's first door, and named a wager at the second's, has not lapsed and does not lapse here: go where the figures point, and say what you see instead.
