

TWO BLUE WOLVES

SPARROW HALL



HYDROGEN MEDIA

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They were more likely to bomb London, so we chose Paris instead. We had already celebrated Christmas once that year, before the snow had fallen at the house in Brockport. My father drove into town for a bottle of wine and returned with two bottles of expensive French champagne. He'd gotten them at half price. France had not supported the war, and America no longer drank French wine. America no longer did anything French, for that matter. Maybe that was why we had chosen Paris after all—not for safety's sake, but because we longed to be abandoned by the war as well.

You knew Paris better than I. You had spent your summers there, in apartments rented by your mother while she met with curators from the Louvre and the Pompidou. You told me the story of how, when you were twelve, the two of you were beside yourselves without your father there. You rushed out the moment you arrived and bought a chicken at the market before it closed, but had no idea what to do with it once you got it home. Your mother called your father in tears, and the two of you ended up eating at the café on the Place des Voges where the glowing heaters make warm canopies over the tables on the square.

This was where we came when we arrived in Paris, suitcases and all. You didn't touch your menu. You ordered in French exactly as you had seven years before, as if nothing could have changed. That was peace, I thought.

That day, you wore your emerald green coat, the one with

the black buttons that I bought for you at the vintage store upstate. If someone had taken your picture just then, as you sat at the table with your fur collar turned up, warming your hands with your tea, the person looking at the photograph would be challenged to name the time or the place in which it had been taken. Your clothes were part-costume, part-time machine, and fit you in slim dark lines, as if they had been meant for your body alone. Others had worn these clothes to play pretend, to re-imagine themselves as different people in different times. But it was you they were truly suited for, like fragments of a past life.

Our apartment was on the fourth floor of an old stone tower on Rue Saint-Paul in Le Marais. There were windows along the south wall that brought the morning, frosted and blue, and the evening, warm and pink. The windows were hung with thick burgundy drapes, heavy as quilts, and we would keep them closed in the evening so we could be naked and make love whenever we wished. When the drapes were closed and the lamps were lit, the room—the apartment was no more than a room—gave us a deep sense of warmth and wellbeing. When the curtains were open and we were not cooking or eating or making love, we would write—I in my notebook, you at the keyboard, fingers striking the keys like gunfire. The typing fingers of a journalist at wartime, I thought—deliberate and clear.

There's a picture you gave me of John Lennon and Yoko Ono, taken for the cover of *Rolling Stone*. In it, a naked John lies curled in bed, fetus-style, around a fully clothed Yoko. That bed was where they protested, at home, alone. Even with the reporters and the flashbulbs bursting, they were still alone, weren't they?

There were days when I would walk around the city while you were in class, and I would pass the Dakota and imagine John and Yoko still there, still in love, still wrapped around each other. And I

would stand across the street, looking into the mouth of the entrance where John was shot, and I would think of how an agent of death had found them, too.

The wolves in the museum. That was us, you said. Suspended in the night, in their glass case, two blue wolves hunting. I kissed you when you said that, as we hid in the corridor from the soft squeaks of footsteps on the marble floor.

The apartment on Rue Saint-Paul had a kitchen the size of a walk-in closet, and in between meals it smelled of sweet roasted garlic and sage. There we would work in the evenings, elbow-to-elbow, preparing dinner, chopping vegetables we bought at the market and tearing pieces of bread from the loaf in its white paper sleeve. We bought our bread at the bakery on Rue de Rivoli each night in hopes that Sophie would be there and it would just be the three of us in the shop, alone. Sophie was part-Dutch, part-Arab, part-Japanese, and part-Venezuelan. She was a global drifter who'd happened upon the job at the bakery by the same principle of chance that had governed all her life's journeys. Her beauty drew from every corner of the globe, taking the best elements of her ancestors and remolding them into the most exotic and thrilling creature. Her clothes were always dusted with flour, and her skin, a smooth, rich tan, set off a thick mane of crow-black hair that she kept swept back behind a red bandana.

You would tell me stories about Sophie as we lay in bed together, about where she had been and the men who had known her. You told me about the night in the mountains in Argentina, about the man who was her guide—who believed her to be half-goddess and shook when they made love for fear that she would explode his body into a thousand shards of light. Or the businessman in Naples who'd picked her up off the street and kept her at his home and abused her with his touch, and how she'd let him, because she was consuming

him without his knowing.

In your stories, you would make her hot and you would make her cold, and you would tell me to make love to you as though you were her. And in those moments your body would change beneath me—your breasts and your hips and your rhythm—and your soul would lift itself and hover above of the bed, watching you be someone else—a girl who had known so many other men.

I proposed a month after we met, at the hotel in Maine, in our room upstairs, with the sounds of New Year's coming up through the floor. Our bodies hadn't even found their rhythm yet. The nakedness was still new, full of fumbling and awkwardness. And afterward, I would imagine the baby that would one day grow inside you, and how it would be safe there. I knew how healthy and beautiful it would be, and how the world would welcome it, because it was made of us, made of our love.

I told you I would marry you when you were ready. I didn't ask, because it was better if it wasn't a question. "I knew you were going to say that," you said. "And I know it, too."

And at that moment the world changed. We sensed the danger in all things. The agents of death walked among us. We heard their footsteps behind and before us.

TO BE CONTINUED...

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